



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Representative on Freedom of the Media

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Recommendations by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

following the conference

Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict

Vienna, 15-16 June 2015

The conference “Journalists’ Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict,” organized and hosted by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 15-16 June 2015, brought together some 400 journalists, media experts and government and civil society representatives from OSCE participating States.

The aim of the conference was to examine and review the current situation relating to the safety of journalists and discuss ethical journalism, propaganda and broadcast regulation in times of conflict. The participants shared problems and best practices contributing toward the formulation of recommendations.

The following are the key recommendations by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media derived from the discussions and endorsed by the representatives of Ukrainian and Russian media organisations (National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine, Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, and Russian Union of Journalists)¹ that are part of the "Two Countries - One Profession" process.

Participating States should:

- Treat violence against journalists as a direct attack on freedom of expression and freedom of the media and publicly condemn all acts of killing, violence or intimidation against journalists.

¹ <http://www.osce.org/fom/118691> and <http://www.osce.org/node/118692> (19 May 2014), <http://www.osce.org/fom/120453> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/120451> (27 June 2014), <http://www.osce.org/fom/124541> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/124537> (26 September 2014), <http://www.osce.org/fom/131556>, <http://www.osce.org/node/131646> and <http://www.osce.org/node/131636> (11 December 2014), <http://www.osce.org/fom/142746> and <http://www.osce.org/ru/fom/142751> (25 February 2015), <http://www.osce.org/fom/153131> and <http://www.osce.org/fom/153111> (23 April 2015)

- Give their full support and effectively use and apply the existing international legal framework, political commitments and recommendations,² including those of the OSCE,³ related to protection of safety of journalists and other media actors, regardless of their means of communication.
- Encourage the adoption of legislation that fosters media freedom including the improvement of safe working conditions for journalists and guarantees unhindered access to information. Actively engage with international and regional mechanisms and fora to improve the safety of journalists.
- Respect the status of journalists in armed conflict according to the guarantees established by international law and acknowledge that the protection of journalists carrying out assignments in conflict zones is necessary at all stages of the conflict cycle.
- Make it their priority to carry out swift and effective investigations, sending a message to society that perpetrators and masterminds of violence against journalists will be efficiently brought to justice.
- Abandon practices of surveillance of journalists' activities and forced disclosure of confidential journalistic sources.
- Guarantee that in conflict situations – as during peaceful times – any restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the media should be fully in line with well-established criteria of international law.
- Be reminded of their commitments agreed in the Helsinki Final Act that it is their duty to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression.⁴
- Condemn propaganda for war and hatred that leads to violence and discrimination and take practical steps to eliminate it in the OSCE region in line with the Helsinki Final Act.
- Be cognisant that propaganda for war and hatred imposed on the media by governments or proxies contributes to the escalation of violence and discredits journalism as a profession that serves the public interest.
- Promote media plurality and free, factual and investigative journalism as the best antidote for propaganda.
- Be reminded that the dissemination of propaganda for war and hatred does not justify introducing new restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.
- Guarantee independence of media regulators, in particular when dealing with issues of hate speech, as well as licensing.
- Respect and support journalists and their self-regulatory bodies for prominently speaking out for integrity of their profession and against propaganda.

² International Mechanisms on Safety of Journalists, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/safety-of-journalists/basic-texts/>

³ OSCE Commitments on Freedom of the Media, Freedom of Expression and Free Flow of Information, <http://www.osce.org/fom/99565?download=true>
OSCE Safety of Journalists Guidebook, <http://www.osce.org/fom/118052?download=true>

⁴ Helsinki Final Act, *Questions relating to Security in Europe I. (b) Matters related to giving effect to certain of the above Principles, point (i)* <http://www.osce.org/mc/39501?download=true>

- Support media self-regulation instruments – including an efficient code of ethics and an independent media body – as the best option to promote responsibility and fair content.
- Promote ethical behaviour of the media professionals through an enabling environment beneficial to the high standards of the profession and its self-regulation.
- Provide social and job security to journalists who have been displaced or have lost their jobs as a result of a conflict.
- Stimulate and promote dialogue between journalists from the conflicting sides related to the safety of journalists and the standards of the profession.
- Promote media literacy across the OSCE region to help citizens make more informed choices about their sources of information.
- Make wide use of the best practices for the safety of journalists analysed in the publications of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.⁵

Journalists and media organizations should:

- Adhere to a common understanding of the mission of their profession through a continuous dialogue among journalists reporting from all sides of the conflict and their self-assessment.
- Refrain from any engagement in propaganda and information wars.
- Enjoy necessary legal and material protection in dangerous conflict zones, including proper contracts, insurance, vests and helmets to be provided by the employers.
- Promote self-regulation mechanisms that will properly and effectively address any use of hate speech in conflict reporting.
- Engage with journalism associations and NGOs protecting and promoting journalism locally and internationally.
- Not take arms or sides in a conflict but fairly serve the public, duly respect human dignity and equal rights of all, as well as advance peaceful settlement of disputes.

⁵ Safety of Journalists Guidebook, Second edition <http://www.osce.org/fom/118052?download=true>