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## UN expert calls for accountability “in the midst of a very serious crisis” of attacks on journalists

### First International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists - Sunday 2 November 2014

GENEVA (2 November 2014) – *The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, calls upon all governments to take steps to prevent attacks on journalists and to hold accountable those who commit them.*

*On the first annual International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, the human rights expert reminds all Governments that accountability and a culture of respect for transparency and journalism are critical elements in reducing attacks on all journalists:*

“All the data shows that we are in the midst of a very serious crisis. It’s not just one attack here and another there; dozens of journalists have been killed and hundreds detained or threatened in recent years. And yet the perpetrators are virtually never held accountable.

Impunity for crimes against journalists is a serious and pervasive problem that threatens the protection of journalists around the world. According to the UN, over 700 journalists have been killed over the last decade in the exercise of their profession. So far in 2014, says the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 40 journalists have been killed because of their reporting activities.

Most of these deaths were deliberately committed in connection with journalists’ denunciation of crime and corruption. One in ten of these cases are not investigated, either because of insufficient resources or a lack of political will. Ninety percent of the perpetrators of crimes against journalists go unpunished.

Impunity for attacks against journalists seriously endangers the right to freedom of expression and everyone’s right to information. By not fully investigating these crimes and prosecuting those responsible, States are failing to uphold their human rights obligations and perpetuating a culture of unpunished violence against journalists.

Last December, the UN General Assembly proclaimed November 2nd as the International Day to End Impunity, and condemned unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers.

The UN General Assembly also urged its members to monitor and report on attacks on journalists, ensure government officials -including law enforcement and security officials- understand the critical role played by journalists in enabling access to information, and publicly condemn all such attacks.

States must adopt law and policies that generate respect for the work done by journalists. States must also take steps to prevent attacks on journalists and to hold accountable those who commit them.

“Unless potential perpetrators know that their attacks will have legal consequences,” Kaye concluded, “these instances of violence against journalists will persist. And victims are not only the journalists themselves but also societies as a whole that end up being deprived of critical information.”

David Kaye (USA) was appointed as Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in August 2014 by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Learn more, log on to:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx>

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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