

EFJ General Meeting (GM)

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 25-26 April 2016

Declarations

The General Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 25-26 April, 2016, with 53 affiliated organisations from 38 European countries has adopted the following statements.

A. Regarding assistance to journalists covering the war in Ukraine

Tabled by IMTUU and NUJU (Ukraine)

The Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine recognises that during the dramatic events taking place in our country, International professional solidarity has greatly helped Ukrainian journalists.

On December 1, 2013 Ukrainian journalists in Kyiv became targets. A unit of special police, the "Berkut," beat up approximately thirty journalists who were covering events on the Maidan, the central square of the capital. Thereafter, police and paramilitary troops continued to beat journalists. They paid no heed to ID tags and vests with the word "Press". In total, about two hundred journalists were injured during the months-long protests. Two journalists, our colleagues, were killed.

A similar situation took place when Russia began its annexation of the Crimea and instigated the war in the Donbas region. Journalists including foreign colleagues, were seized, held captive and tortured. The Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine set up a Joint Center of Assistance for Journalists, which aims to help injured journalists and those who wish to cover the dramatic events in our country.

In particular, representatives of the Joint Center took part in April 2014 in negotiations with the so-called Army of the Crimea and liberated an operator of the French TV channel Canal+, David Geoffrion, who had been captured while doing his work.

Organisers from the Joint Center have repeatedly made public statements regarding the requirements for releasing illegally seized journalists. The International and European Federation of Journalists, the Association of Polish Journalists and the Union of Journalists of Russia joined our two Ukrainian organisations. Today there are no journalists being held captive any longer in the occupied territories.

The Joint Center has created a Fund for providing aid to the affected journalists. The International and European Federation of Journalists and the Association of Polish Journalists helped us to create this fund.

In addition, the Joint Center, through the IFJ, has trained six trainers who teach their colleagues safety rules for working in hot spots, has created a psychological assistance unit,

opened up a repository of protective gear which can be used by journalists who highlight the war. Other useful projects have also been initiated.

The Independent Media Trade Union and the National Union of Journalists thank all the international journalists' organisations and journalists' organisations of other countries for their help in the formation of the Joint Center.

We continue to gladly accept any help for Ukrainian journalists. In turn, we are ready to organise training for journalists from other countries to share their experience in hot spots, as well as provide for the legal protection of journalists.

B. Statement on Palestine

Tabled by NUJ UK & Ireland, supported by the SNJ and SNJ-CGT (France)

condemns in the strongest terms the arrest of Palestinian journalist board member, Omar Nazzal, as he was crossing from the West Bank into Jordan to attend this meeting and his subsequent incarceration at Etzion prison near Bethlehem. GM demands that Omar Nazzal is released forthwith.

GM is appalled by the continued attacks by Israel border guard police on the Palestinian and international journalists gathering news in the West Bank as reported in many statements issued by the Jerusalem-based Foreign Press Association. The FPA is made up of several hundred professional print, TV and photo journalists, many of whom work for European media.

GM recalls the statement passed at the Moscow Annual Meeting in November 2014 in support of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate in their effort to defend and protect their members, to campaign for their rights to free movement as journalists, and to raise in international forums an end to impunity and that the perpetrators of crime against journalist be brought to justice.

GM is deeply concerned that the situation of Palestinian journalists has worsened in particular following the decision by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to shutter Palestinian media outlets, claiming that they "incite" attacks against Israeli citizens.

Since last October, three Palestinian radio stations in Hebron – Manbar al-Huriya, Radio Hebron and Dream Radio were shut down, leaving scores of journalists jobless. More recently, "Palestine today" TV and "Trans-Media" were raided and closed.

GM notes that the accusation of "incitement" was levelled in an earlier case where the Washington Post's Jerusalem bureau chief, William Booth, and the paper West Bank correspondent, Sufian Taha, were arrested, taken to a police station, questioned and then released. The FPA then protested against this accusation which they described as "absurd" stating "we do not think that it is coincidental that a baseless accusation of 'incitement' was made at a time when blanket accusations of bias are being levelled against the foreign press by Israeli officials and commentators.

GM joins the IFJ Executive Committee in making the point that the notion of "incitement" is not pertinent in international law, and that there was no due process of law in any of these closures. It was left to the military commander to make a unilateral judgment without a

normal court of law to rule on the allegations, and to use Defence (Emergency) Regulations, enacted during the British Mandate government in Palestine in 1945 to make the order.

GM applauds the effort by IFJ affiliate, the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, in support of its members at these stations and demands that the Israeli Government reopen the media shut down by the Israeli army and end the increasing attacks against media freedom in Palestine, particularly, arrests and physical harassments that have escalated over the past months, and to hold all the perpetrators of these violations to account.

The GM welcomes the efforts by the Israeli and Palestinian guests at the conference to overcome the problems and establish a mechanism, as suggested by the Israeli federation, to help solve future problems on the ground through direct contact between the two federations.

C. Repression against journalists in Crimea reached a new level

Tabled by IMTUU and NUJU (Ukraine)

The Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine have issued a statement condemning increased levels of politically motivated repression against journalists in Russian occupied Crimea. Earlier repressive actions were directed against one or two journalists but this has now expanded to a wider level of repression with the Russian occupation authorities searching 7 journalists. One of the journalists, pensioner and former correspondent of the Ukrainian newspaper Day Mykola Semena has been charged with supporting separatism ('incitement to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation) and faces a sentence of five years in imprisonment.

During the last two years the Russian occupation authorities of the Crimea have infringed numerous international and domestic legislative acts, including a third criminal case under Art. 280.1 of the Criminal Code (incitement to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation) against journalists for their professional activities.

In March 2015, the FSB opened a criminal investigation into a publication of the Centre for Investigative Journalism by Crimean journalist Anna Andrievska who has been forced by threats of political repression to seek political asylum in mainland Ukraine. Her parents' apartment in the Crimea was searched and her father was twice summoned for questioning by the FSB.

The Russian occupation authorities have allegedly found examples of separatism on the Crimean web site [www.Blackseanews.net](http://www.blackseanews.net) against whose chief editor Andrew Klymenko criminal proceedings were launched under Article 280.1 of the Criminal Code in summer of 2015. Further searches by the FSB were conducted in the offices of former employees of [www.Blackseanews.net](http://www.blackseanews.net) who still live in the Crimea.

The two largest and influential Ukrainian journalistic organisations believe that the opening of these criminal proceedings is a purely political action with the aim of intimidating independent Crimean journalists. According to independent information, during the last two years of the Russian occupation of the Crimea there have been dozens of violations of journalists' rights, bans on coverage of certain events, criminal prosecutions and targeted vigilante violence. Because of pressure and threats from the Russian occupation authorities, Crimean government and the Russian secret services over 12 journalists who worked in the Crimean media have been forced to seek political asylum in mainland Ukraine.

D. On the death of Giulio Regeni in Egypt

Tabled by FNSI, Italy

Noting that the Egyptian authorities have so far provided the most amazing versions of the assassination of Giulio Regeni, compromising evidence, telling the truth of convenience with lack of credibility, insulting the memory of the young researcher including denying the torture inflicted.

A practice, that of torture, still widespread in Egypt and reserved - as evidenced by the data released by Amnesty International - to thousands of people who, like Giulio Regeni, have become innocent victims of dictatorships around the world.

Places in which the violation of human rights is practised systematically; where it is difficult to express thoughts and to be curious can cost your life.

The same young man's mother, during a press conference at the Italian Senate, said that "what happened to Giulio was not an isolated case, as it has been said by the Egyptian government."

The Italian civil society was immediately mobilized to obtain truth and justice for Giulio Regeni and also the Italian Government, with the Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, reiterating - only a few days ago - that the search will not stop until it sheds light on the affair. But, at least so far, this was not enough.

Calls on the authorities of EU countries to engage with the Egyptian government, together with the Italian Government, so that truth and justice will be done in the story of Giulio Regeni, the young researcher at Cambridge University, who died in Cairo on January 25, and was found dead on February 3, 2016.

Calls on all European journalists to keep a very high attention, focusing on the story of Giulio Regeni and many "Giulio" from all over the world, to play an active role in pressing their respective governments to support the Italian executive to search for truth.

E. BH Journalists Association Statement

Tabled by BHJA, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The European Federation of Journalists strongly supports the BH Journalists Association, which has been a member of EFJ since last year, in its battle to raise professional standards and to strengthen the solidarity between the journalists both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Europe.

It is inadmissible and of utmost concern that attacks against journalists stay unpunished.

EFJ calls upon competent authorities in BiH to urgently investigate these cases and process them, and EFJ supports its colleagues from the BH Journalists Association in their fight to

protect fundamental rights of journalists to freedom of expression, dignity of reporting in safe environment.

We support the efforts to strengthen the joint activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina journalists aimed at protecting their social status. Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are part of European family of journalists, and they are entitled to work in dignified conditions in line with European standards, to organise trade unions and foster Social Dialogue.

In particular we support the efforts to keep public RTV services operational, and we support their stable development in BiH since public media are required for the development of democracy and protection of public interests in any society, but also a tool to promote the most professional and ethical standards of journalism.

F. Solidarity with the journalists in Greece on strike

Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT, France

The journalists united at this year's General meeting in Sarajevo express their full solidarity to their Greek colleagues in strike.

The Greek government, under pressure from the Troïka, wants to transfer the journalists' special fond in the state treasury.

The journalists wish to keep their pension and retirement scheme that guarantees them a decent future.

G. On Azerbaijan

Tabled by JOURNALISTS' TRADE UNION (JUHI), Azerbaijan

Given the current war situation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the EFJ calls for the protection and safety of all journalists working on conflict zones.

H. On ban of foreign correspondents in Turkey

Tabled by TGS, Turkey

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) is extremely worried about the ongoing negative trends in Turkey targeting foreign press correspondents. "During the last six months, we have recorded at least 10 cases of grave violations against foreign press correspondents in Turkey or willing to enter the country to report about the situation. The free access to information in Turkey is seriously blocked which is unacceptable for a country candidate to the EU", said EFJ.

Condemns the action of Turkish authorities who on April 20 imposed an entry ban against Russian journalist Tural Kerimov, the Turkey bureau chief for Sputnik news agency, who "was stopped by a border control officer who said the journalist was flagged as persona non grata by the Turkish authorities". Turkish authorities seized Kerimov's press card as well as his residence permit before sending him back to Russia and banned the website of Sputnik press agency;

condemns a similar entry ban imposed by Turkish authorities on April 19 to the German journalist Volker Schwenk, the Cairo correspondent of Germany's ARD TV; Further condemns the detention by Turkish authorities of Dutch-Turkish journalist Ebru Umar on April 24 for critical tweets about Turkish President Erdogan, although released after interrogation, the journalist still face a travel ban and cannot leave Turkey,

Condemns the entry ban imposed by Turkish authorities on April 23 against Greek photojournalist Giorgos Moutafis who was prevented from continuing to travel to Libya via Istanbul airport.

Further condemns the entry ban by Turkish authorities imposed on April 25 against US journalist David Lepeska, based in Turkey for the last three years and who cannot reach his home anymore.

Delegates from the EFJ support the international press correspondents and call the Turkish authorities to put an end to the systematic ban imposed to foreign journalists, to respect press freedom and allow full access to journalists willing to cover the situation in Turkey.