

## Press Release

1st November 2019, 3PM New Delhi

- The sixth annual '**United Nations Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**' (2nd November 2019), Crime against Journalists in India is alarming high, urgent need to deal with problem collectively.
- **Nine out of ten cases across the globe, accused have not been successfully prosecuted**
- **NCRB is collecting separate data since 2018 for Crime in India report.**
- *Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh only two state in India working on Media Violence*
- Data from UNSECO, International Press Institute (IPI), Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) & Reporters without Borders (RSF) indicates that India must act to end impunity for crime against journalist, non-profit organisation, 'the Vision Foundation' will work with likeminded media association & publish its research & survey report on November 16.



(Courtesy: UNESCO)

Across the world including India, journalism remains a dangerous profession. Speaking truth to power, investigating crime and corruption, holding governments to account and reporting from insecure contexts often carry risks of violent retaliation, harassment and arbitrary detention. Journalists' safety remains an urgent concern across all the countries.

November 2 is United Nations 'International Day for commemorating the journalists who lost their lives' in line of their duty. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (Resolution A/RES/68/163) which marked the date, on which the two French journalists were killed, as the '**International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**' (2nd November).

The objective of commemorating the day by small NGO "The Vision Foundation" is to draw attention to the low global conviction rate for violent crimes against journalists and media workers, estimated at only one in every ten cases.

**"In recent years, there has been a rise in the scale and number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers, and of incidents infringing upon their ability to do their vital work, including threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access and failures to investigate and prosecute crimes against them."**

*António Guterres, Secretary General of UN said in message on its website.*

## **Data on Journalist Safety and Impunity**

### **For journalists in India, 2018 was a deadly year.**

At least Six journalists have been killed in India in 2018 and Five already in 2019

Growing concerns of physical safety and in some cases, death of journalists in India need to be addressed urgently. The alleged killers of Gauri Lankesh, a female editor, who was gunned down outside her house in Bengaluru in September 2017 & Syed Shujaat Bukhari, the editor-in-chief of Rising Kashmir, who was killed on June 14 2018 outside his office, suspects have been identified but not yet brought to justice.

According to United Nations, in the past twelve years (2006-2017) close to 1010 journalists have been killed for reporting the news and bringing information to the public. In nine out of ten cases, the killers go unpunished. Impunity leads to more killings and is often a symptom of worsening conflict and the breakdown of law and judicial systems.

In any democracy, the most important job of media person is to uphold the freedom of expression and the right of the people to know. *"The threat is very high in India and many a time goes unnoticed at national level when crime is against non-English language reporters outside of major cities. It is high time that all media person extend the helping hand to our colleague working at grassroots", said Shri Umesh Singh, Senior Journalist, main researcher in this survey.*

### **Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh only two state in India working on Media Violence**

'Maharashtra Media persons and Media Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to property) Act, 2017' is only special law passed till date in India by any state government whereas Chhattisgarh Govt. also prepared one draft.

The Maharashtra law provides for a punishment upto 3 years or fine upto Rs 50,000, Act of violence against media person will be cognizable now, non- bailable, triable by a first class magistrate (JMFC) and most important investigated by an officer not below the rank of DySP/ACP.

## Journalist Safety & Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs endorsed by UN are very essential to achieving developmental objectives especially in a developing country like India.

SDG 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements “**Indicator 16.10.1: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months.**”

The Paris-based nongovernmental organisation **Reporters without Borders (RSF)** works for the safety of journalists. India is ranked 140 out of 180 countries in Reporters without Borders’s 2019 World Press Freedom Index, two places lower than last year. This index is the global benchmark for media freedom and the situation in India has continued to deteriorate.

Ranking since 2015			
Year	Ranking		Score
2019	140/180	↑	45.67
2018	138/180	↑	43.24
2017	136/180	↓	42.94
2016	133/180	↑	43.17
2015	136/180	↑	40.49

Rank	Abuse Score	Underlying situation score	Global score	Difference in 2018 score	Difference in 2018 rank
140	65.25	40.78	45.67	+2.43	-2

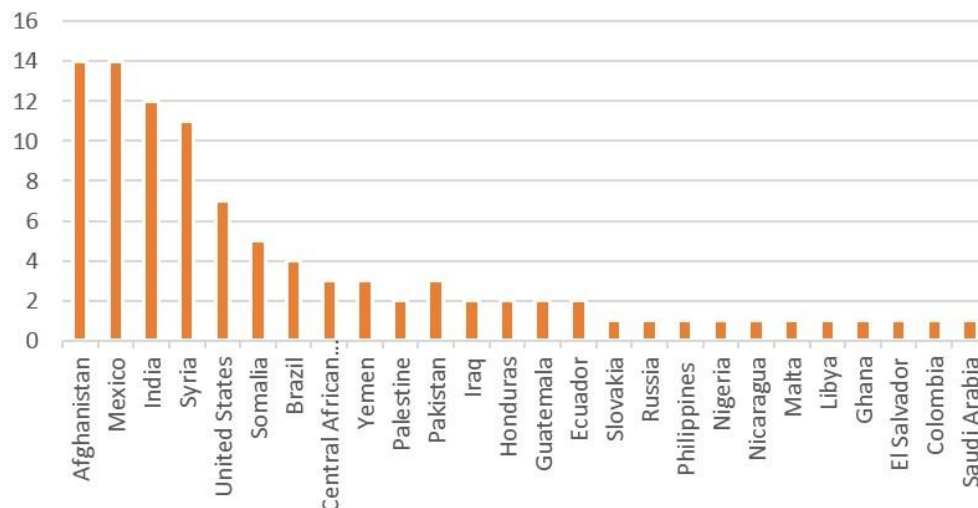
Source: **Reporters without Borders (RSF)**

Since 1992, the New York based non-governmental group Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has recorded the killing of 1357 journalists worldwide. Since the early 1990s, more than 60 journalists have been killed “with complete impunity” in India. India’s rank is unchanged as compared to year 2018. India ranks at 13<sup>th</sup> most danger country for journalist in World. **CPJ had claimed that during the 10-year index period ending August 31, 2019, 318 journalists were murdered for their work worldwide and in 86% of those cases; no perpetrators have been successfully prosecuted. The 13 countries on the index including India account for more than three quarters (222) of the global total of unsolved murders of journalists for the index period.**

The Vision Foundation

The Vienna-based **International Press Institute's (IPI)** in its famous report **Death Watch** reported that Governments around the world are failing to investigate the murders of journalists, but Mexico and India are the two countries where the greatest number of recent cases are pending investigation. Highest number of journalists lost their lives covering armed conflict; a majority of them in Afghanistan but safety issues of journalists in democratic countries like India is major concern.

*Journalists killed by country, September 2017 – October 2018. (Source: IPI Death Watch)*



There is a gap between the reality of lack of safety of journalists and measures adopted as many media organizations do not have clear mechanisms in place for dealing with the problem. The existing legislations have not made matters better, and State agencies, regularly violate the journalists' rights on the pretext of public order and national security. Besides, the cases of threats and harassments have a serious gender dimension as well.

The Vision Foundation will also urges all state governments to do their utmost to prevent violence against journalists and media workers, to ensure accountability, bring to justice perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media workers, and ensure safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without any fear. The Vision Foundation urges all editors, working (online, print or TV) journalists and media organisations to observe 'International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' on November 2 in a befitting and appropriate way. The group will soon launch advocacy campaign in association with like-minded media organizations for the establishment of a "concrete mechanism" that enforces international law which could reduce the number of journalists killed/threaten every year while on duty.

#### **Survey on threat perception & other aspects of harassments**

We are even conducting a 5-minute survey (Please find the link to the survey:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfRyQfm\\_rKlAtM0eIHG1N\\_hrM-geJNXhY0MVVy0ppXUsaaipw/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfRyQfm_rKlAtM0eIHG1N_hrM-geJNXhY0MVVy0ppXUsaaipw/viewform?usp=sf_link))

Survey is consisting of 15 questions related to physiological, psychological trauma, mode of threats, harassment, remedial measures etc with the aim of shedding light, real situation assessment, generate public interest and discourse on safety issues of journalists and provide a knowledge-based platform according to which future interventions and initiatives to address the violations against the media persons can be established.

The findings of the survey will be published on November 16, 2019, which is celebrated as National Press Day in India along with research report on this issue.

On this International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, let us stand up together for journalists, for truth and for justice.

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