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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 July 2025

59/15. The safety of journalists

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recalling relevant international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 8 June 1977,

Recalling all General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions on the safety of journalists, in particular Assembly resolution 78/215 of 19 December 2023 and Council resolution 51/9 of 6 October 2022, as well as Council resolution 56/7 of 10 July 2024, on freedom of opinion and expression, and Security Council resolutions 1738 (2006) of 23 December 2006 and 2222 (2015) of 27 May 2015, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict,

Recalling also the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and the important role of the network of focal points throughout the United Nations system in enhancing the safety of journalists and media workers, and taking note of the Political Declaration adopted at the high-level international multi-stakeholder conference entitled “Safety of journalists: protecting media to protect democracy” on the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, held in Vienna in November 2022,

Recalling further the Pact for the Future, particularly action 14 (f) on the need to respect and protect journalists, media professionals and associated personnel working in situations of armed conflict,

Recalling the Global Digital Compact,¹ particularly the commitment to promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems, including by strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers, and the commitment to design and roll out digital media and information literacy curricula to ensure that all users have the skills and knowledge to safely and critically interact with content and with information

¹ General Assembly resolution 79/1, annex I.



providers and to enhance resilience against the harmful impacts of misinformation and disinformation,

Welcoming the important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as initiatives taken by States, media organizations and civil society organizations with regard to the safety of journalists, including their role in monitoring developments in this area and in awareness-raising, capacity-building and coalition-building,

Recognizing the importance of freedom of expression and of free, independent, plural and diverse media, online as well as offline, in building and supporting the functioning of inclusive societies and democracies, an informed citizenry, the rule of law and participation in public affairs and in holding public institutions and officials accountable, including by exposing corruption,

Underlining that the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in accordance with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, includes the right to seek, receive and impart information held by public authorities, subject only to any restrictions that fully comply with international law, and stressing the importance of access to information to the work of journalists and media workers and that they themselves also play a critical role in the enjoyment of this right,

Recognizing the importance of public trust in and the credibility of journalism, in particular the challenges of maintaining media professionalism in an environment where new forms of media are constantly evolving, where targeted disinformation and smear campaigns to discredit the work of journalists are increasing and where the spread of disinformation is often facilitated and amplified by the algorithms of digital platforms, including social media platforms,

Welcoming the United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity, launched by the Secretary-General, defining information integrity as a pluralistic information space that champions human rights, peaceful societies and a sustainable future that involves empowering people to exercise their right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds and to hold opinions without interference, and recognizing that information integrity is achievable only with an independent, free and pluralistic media,

Recognizing the importance of investigative journalism and that the ability of the media to investigate and to publish the results of their investigations, including on the Internet, without fear of reprisals, plays an important role in societies, including in contributing to holding public institutions and officials accountable or detecting cases of corruption, and in revealing human rights abuses by business enterprises,

Expressing concern about the ongoing and deepening threats to media diversity and independence as a result of, among other things, the shutting down of media resources under political pretexts, the significant reduction in advertising revenues for legacy media and the migration of advertising revenue to the digital space, which is dominated by large technology companies, the undermining of news production, especially local and investigative journalism, the increased concentration of media ownership, the political control over, and insufficient financial allocations to, public service media, the failure to develop community broadcasting sufficiently and ongoing attempts to exert control over the media, including through regulation,

Underlining that journalists and media workers serve a crucial function in times of crisis and that States must take active measures to ensure that individuals and communities are fully informed about the full scope that any threat poses to the lives and health of journalists and media workers, in order to make appropriate personal choices and decisions,

Recognizing the crucial role of journalists and media workers in the context of elections, including to inform the public about candidates, their platforms and ongoing debates, and expressing serious concern that attacks against journalists and media workers increase during election periods,

Deeply concerned that the work of journalists and media workers often puts them at specific risk of human rights violations and abuses, including killing, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and arbitrary detention, arbitrary expulsion, forced displacement, physical, racial, sexual and gender-based violence, acts of other forms of violence and extraterritorial targeting, as well as online and offline intimidation, threats and harassment of all kinds, including by the targeting of their family members or arbitrarily raiding and searching their residences, which often deters journalists from continuing their work or encourages self-censorship, consequently depriving society of important information,

Expressing grave concern about repressive activities conducted abroad by States, outside their own jurisdiction, to harm, silence and intimidate journalists and media workers through digital, physical and other means, including through the misuse of spyware and other intrusive surveillance software, and the targeting of family members, representatives and associates,

Expressing concern at the arbitrary and unlawful surveillance, both in physical and digital spaces, including online, of journalists, including through the use of closed-circuit television and aerial surveillance vehicles, as well as through the use of new and emerging digital tracking tools, such as biometric technologies, including facial and emotional recognition and international mobile subscriber identity catchers (“stingrays”), in violation or abuse of their human rights, including the right to privacy,

Noting that companies, including technology and social media companies, have a responsibility to respect human rights and to ensure that human rights are respected on their digital platforms and should follow the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which involve, at a minimum, conducting due diligence with a view to identifying, preventing or mitigating any potential or actual adverse impact of their policies, products and operations on human rights, conducting regular human rights impact assessments and putting in place a remediation process,

Alarmed at instances in which political leaders, public officials and/or authorities denigrate, intimidate or threaten the media, including individual journalists, which increases the risk of threats, reprisals and violence against journalists and undermines public trust in the credibility of journalism,

Alarmed also at acts of intimidation and reprisal directed against foreign journalists and media workers, including by political leaders, public officials and/or authorities through, inter alia, the arbitrary and unwarranted denial of accreditation or visas in connection with their journalistic work,

Recognizing that national legal frameworks consistent with States’ international human rights obligations and commitments and prevention measures are an essential condition for a safe and enabling environment for journalists, and expressing deep concern about the misuse of national laws, policies and practices to hinder or limit the ability of journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference,

Deeply concerned about all attempts to silence journalists and media workers, including by legislation that can be used to criminalize journalism and by the misuse of overbroad or vague laws to repress legitimate expression, including defamation and libel laws, laws on misinformation and disinformation, laws covering financial crimes, or counter-terrorism and counter-extremism legislation, when not in conformity with international human rights standards,

Expressing serious concern at the rise of strategic lawsuits against public participation, including by business entities, to exercise pressure on, intimidate or exhaust the resources and morale of journalists, and thereby stop them from performing their work, including on matters of public interest,

Underlining that any measure or restriction introduced under emergency measures must be necessary, proportionate to the evaluated risk and applied in a non-discriminatory way, have a specific focus and duration and be in accordance with the State’s obligations under applicable international human rights law, and that the right to seek, receive and impart

information requires that media freedom and the safety of journalists are protected during a state of emergency, including in the context of protests or during health crises,

Deeply alarmed at the specific risks faced by women journalists in relation to their work, and underlining in this context the importance of taking a gender-responsive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists, including in the online sphere, in particular to effectively tackle gender-based discrimination, violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, threats, including threats of rape, intimidation, harassment, online gender-based harassment and abuse, including blackmailing with private content, inequality and gender-based stereotypes, to enable women to enter and remain in journalism on terms of equality and non-discrimination, while ensuring their greatest possible safety, and to ensure that the experiences and concerns of women journalists are effectively addressed,

Expressing serious concern at attacks and violence against journalists and media workers in situations of armed conflict, including the specific risks faced by women journalists in this context, and recalling in this regard that journalists and media workers engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict are civilians under international humanitarian law and are to be protected as such, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians,

Stressing the importance, sometimes vital, of access to accurate and timely information for civilians and of access for local and foreign media in conflict situations and occupation, while recognizing their protection as civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law, stressing that media facilities that are civilian objects are protected under international humanitarian law, and noting that direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects as such are a violation of international humanitarian law,

Expressing deep concern at the growing threat to the safety of journalists posed by non-State actors, including terrorist groups and criminal organizations,

Emphasizing the particular risks with regard to the safety of journalists in the digital age, including the particular vulnerability of journalists to becoming targets of unlawful or arbitrary surveillance and/or the interception of communications, hacking, including government-sponsored hacking, malware, spyware, forced data handover or denial of service attacks to force the shutdown of particular media websites or services, in violation of their rights to privacy and to freedom of expression, and recognizing the psychological impact of such risks,

Emphasizing also that, in the digital age, encryption, pseudonymization and anonymity tools have become vital for many journalists to exercise freely their work and their enjoyment of human rights, in particular their rights to freedom of expression and to privacy, including to secure their communications and to protect the confidentiality of their sources,

Recognizing the important role that national human rights institutions can play in promoting and protecting human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and in addressing human rights violations against journalists through monitoring, educating and awareness-raising activities, as well as through the examination of complaints, and recognizing also the contribution that national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up can play in the prevention of human rights violations against journalists,

Alarmed at the high level of impunity for crimes against journalists, and bearing in mind that impunity for attacks and violence against journalists constitutes one of the greatest challenges to the safety of journalists and that ensuring accountability for crimes committed against journalists is a key element in preventing future attacks,

Emphasizing the crucial role of the judiciary, prosecution services, forensic professionals and law enforcement officers in ensuring journalists' safety, access to justice and effective remedies and ensuring accountability for crimes and attacks against them, thereby contributing to upholding the rule of law,

1. *Condemns unequivocally* all attacks, reprisals and violence against journalists and media workers, such as killings, torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and arbitrary detention, expulsions, intimidation, arbitrary or unlawful surveillance, threats and

harassment, online and offline, including through attacks on or the forced closure of their offices and media outlets, in both conflict and non-conflict situations;

2. *Also condemns unequivocally* the extraterritorial targeting of journalists and media workers, including killings, enforced disappearances, harassment, surveillance and online attacks, and urges States and non-State actors to cease and/or refrain from such attacks or measures;

3. *Further condemns unequivocally* the specific attacks on women journalists and media workers in relation to their work, such as gender-based discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, threats, intimidation and harassment, online and offline;

4. *Strongly condemns* the prevailing impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, expresses grave concern that the vast majority of these crimes go unpunished, which in turn contributes to the recurrence of these crimes, and stresses the need to combat impunity by ensuring that those responsible for violations and abuses against journalists and other media workers are promptly brought to justice;

5. *Condemns unequivocally* measures in violation of international human rights law aiming to or that intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online and offline, which undermine the work of journalists in informing the public, including through practices such as Internet shutdowns or measures to unlawfully or arbitrarily restrict, block or take down media websites, such as denial of service attacks, and calls upon all States to cease and refrain from these measures, which cause irreparable harm to efforts aimed at building inclusive and peaceful knowledge societies and democracies;

6. *Expresses concern* about the spread of disinformation, information manipulation and propaganda, including on the Internet, such as through digital platforms and enhanced by the misuse of artificial intelligence systems, which can be designed and implemented so as to mislead and to violate and abuse human rights, including the rights to privacy and to freedom of expression, and so as to spread hatred, racism, xenophobia, negative stereotyping or stigmatization and to incite violence, discrimination and hostility, and emphasizes the important contribution by journalists in countering this trend;

7. *Urges* political leaders, public officials and/or authorities to refrain from denigrating, intimidating or threatening the media, including individual journalists, or using misogynist or any discriminatory language towards women journalists, thereby undermining trust in the credibility of journalists and respect for the importance of independent journalism;

8. *Urges* the immediate and unconditional release of journalists and media workers who have been arbitrarily arrested, arbitrarily detained or taken hostage or who have become victims of enforced disappearance;

9. *Calls upon* States:

(a) To bring their laws, policies and practices fully into compliance with their obligations and commitments under international human rights law and to review and, where necessary, repeal or amend them so that they do not limit the ability of journalists and media workers to perform their work independently and without undue interference;

(b) To establish prevention and protection mechanisms, such as an early warning and rapid response mechanism, and to give journalists and media workers, when threatened, immediate access to authorities that are competent and adequately resourced to provide effective protective measures;

(c) To refrain from targeting journalists, media workers and media facilities, including in conflict situations and situations of occupation, or from conducting any kind of reprisal against them for their coverage, and to abstain from using, or disseminating or encouraging third parties to disseminate, information in ways that could result in harm being inflicted on journalists;

(d) To ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, prompt, thorough, independent and effective investigations into all alleged cases of violence, threats and attacks against journalists and media workers falling within their jurisdiction, including by following and exhausting lines of enquiry that determine whether violence, threats and attacks result

from the journalistic activities of the victims, to bring perpetrators, including those who command, conspire to commit, aid and abet or cover up such crimes to justice, and to ensure that victims and their families have access to appropriate restitution, compensation and assistance;

(e) To develop and implement strategies for combating impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, including by (i) creating special investigative units or independent commissions; (ii) appointing a specialized prosecutor; (iii) adopting specific protocols and methods of investigation and prosecution that are in line with States' obligations under international law, gender-responsive and take into account relevant international human rights standards; and (iv) considering the designation of a government focal point to coordinate policies and liaise with other relevant stakeholders on the issue of the safety of journalists;

(f) To ensure that measures to combat terrorism and preserve national security, public order or health are in compliance with their obligations under international law and do not arbitrarily or unduly hinder the work and safety of journalists, including through arbitrary arrest or detention or the threat thereof;

(g) To support capacity-building, training and awareness-raising in the judiciary and the prosecution, and among forensic professionals, law enforcement officers and military and security personnel, as well as among media organizations, journalists and members of civil society, regarding States' international human rights and international humanitarian law obligations and commitments relating to the safety of journalists;

(h) To take into account the specific role, exposure and vulnerability of journalists and media workers observing, monitoring, recording and reporting on protests and assemblies, and the need to protect their safety, even if a protest has been declared unlawful or is dispersed;

(i) To ensure that defamation and libel laws are not misused, in particular through criminal sanctions, to illegitimately or arbitrarily censor journalists and interfere with their mission of informing the public, and where necessary to revise and repeal such laws, in compliance with States' obligations under international human rights law;

(j) To take measures to protect journalists and media workers from strategic lawsuits against public participation and from misuse notably of financial, defamation or libel laws to pressure, silence or intimidate journalists and, where appropriate, to adopt laws and policies that prevent, disincentivize and/or alleviate such cases, including by ensuring early dismissal of unfounded proceedings, remedies for victims of abusive lawsuits and appropriate penalties against those who brought cases found to be abusive, upholding the protection and defence of public interest, ending "forum-shopping" and providing legal support to victims, in addition to training prosecutors, judges, lawyers and forensic professionals in recognizing and dealing with such cases;

(k) To protect in law and in practice the confidentiality of journalists' sources, including whistle-blowers, in acknowledgement of the essential role of journalists and those who provide them with information in fostering government accountability and an inclusive and peaceful society, subject only to limited and clearly defined exceptions provided for in national legal frameworks, including judicial authorization, in compliance with States' obligations under international human rights law;

(l) To adopt and implement transparent, clear and expedient laws and policies that provide for the effective disclosure of information held by public authorities, including online, and a general right to request and receive information, for which public access should be granted, except within narrow, proportionate, necessary and clearly defined limitations that comply with international human rights law;

(m) To refrain from imposing new restrictions, and to lift existing ones, on the free flow of information and ideas that are inconsistent with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including through practices such as the use of Internet shutdowns and online censorship to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or the dissemination of information online, the banning or closing of publications or other media and the abuse of administrative measures, criminalization and censorship, and restrictions on

access to or use of information and communications technology, inter alia radio, television and the Internet;

(n) To refrain from interference with the use of technologies such as encryption and anonymity tools, and from employing unlawful or arbitrary surveillance techniques, including through hacking or the use of spyware;

(o) To put in place effective regulatory frameworks on the use of surveillance technologies to mitigate and remedy the harms they can cause, and to ensure that targeted surveillance technologies are only used in accordance with the human rights principles of lawfulness, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality and that legal mechanisms of redress and effective remedies are available for victims of surveillance-related violations and abuses;

(p) To promote the availability and accessibility of the broadest possible diversity of media content and the representation of the whole diversity of society in the media, and in this regard to do their utmost to reduce the economic and socioeconomic vulnerability of journalists and to address the financial viability of media organizations, in particular local news media;

(q) To take measures to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including threats, threats of rape, intimidation and harassment against women journalists, to encourage the reporting of harassment or violence by providing gender-sensitive investigative procedures, to provide adequate support, remedy, reparations and compensation for victims, including psychological support as part of broader efforts to promote and protect the human rights of women, to eliminate gender inequality and tackle gender-based stereotypes in society and to prohibit incitement to hatred against women journalists, online and offline, and other forms of abuse and harassment through relevant policy and legal measures that comply with international human rights law;

(r) To give full support for and to raise public awareness of the importance of independent, plural and diverse media, inter alia, by government representatives publicly, unequivocally and systematically condemning violence, intimidation, threats and attacks against journalists and media workers and refraining from verbally attacking or discrediting journalists or inciting hatred against them or distrust towards independent journalists;

(s) To establish or enhance information-gathering and monitoring mechanisms, such as databases, including by benefiting from data collected by media and/or civil society organizations, to permit the collection, analysis and reporting of concrete quantitative and qualitative disaggregated data on threats, attacks or violence against journalists, and to do their utmost to make data, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.10.1, available to relevant entities, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(t) To provide for an enabling environment for civil society organizations to contribute to monitoring and reporting cases of violence against the media and other infringements of freedom of expression, to provide assistance to journalists and media workers against wrongful prosecutions and to advocate for crimes against them to be properly investigated and, where appropriate, for improvement of legal frameworks governing an enabling environment for journalists and media workers;

(u) To integrate the issue of the safety of journalists and media freedom and access to information into national development frameworks under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(v) To consider developing national action plans or similar measures, where appropriate, to improve the safety of journalists, or to review existing plans in order to take into consideration new and emerging threats, including in the digital space;

(w) To ensure better internal coordination and sharing of information, in particular within and between relevant ministries, law enforcement and the judiciary at the local and national levels;

(x) To sign, ratify and implement more effectively the international and regional human rights instruments relevant to the safety of journalists and media workers and to

implement relevant resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies and regional intergovernmental organizations and the recommendations made by the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and in the context of the universal periodic review relating to the safety of journalists;

(y) To promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems, including by strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers;

(z) To take appropriate steps to prevent the spread and amplification of disinformation and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with international human rights law, especially against the integrity of democratic processes, including through effective policies and regulations ensuring that their efforts to counter disinformation promote, protect and respect individuals' freedom of expression and freedom to seek, receive and impart information;

(aa) To seek technical assistance and capacity-building from relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as other multilateral organizations, with a view to strengthening national frameworks on prevention, protection and prosecution for ensuring the safety of journalists, combating impunity and ensuring accountability for crimes against journalists and media workers;

10. *Also calls upon* States to encourage journalists and media workers to report threats and attacks against them to the relevant authorities or agencies or through relevant platforms, at the national level, as well as at the regional and international levels, including to the relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council;

11. *Calls upon* all business enterprises, including surveillance technology companies, to publicly affirm and fulfil their responsibility to respect human rights in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to conduct and publicly disclose robust human rights due diligence for all proposed transfers of surveillance technology and to refrain from exporting surveillance technology if there is a significant risk that it will be used to commit human rights violations and abuses;

12. *Emphasizes* the important role that media organizations can play in providing adequate safety, risk awareness, digital security and self-protection training and guidance to journalists and media workers, in particular for journalists on dangerous assignments, together with protective equipment and insurances, where necessary;

13. *Stresses* that there is a need to ensure better cooperation and coordination at the international level, including through technical assistance and capacity-building, with regard to ensuring the safety of journalists, and encourages national, subregional, regional and international human rights mechanisms and bodies, including the relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies and national human rights institutions, in the framework of their mandates, to continue to address the relevant aspects of the safety of journalists in their work;

14. *Also stresses* the need for digital platforms and social media companies to take effective, transparent and accountable measures to prevent the spread and amplification of disinformation and the enabling of harassment, including gender-based and coordinated attacks on journalists and media workers, to conduct regular human rights impact assessments of their products, operations and policies and to implement due diligence processes with a view to identifying, preventing or mitigating any actual or potential adverse impacts on human rights and the safety and work of journalists, and to establish accessible escalation channels that allow journalists to easily report online violence;

15. *Invites* United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, other international and regional organizations, States Members of the United Nations and all relevant stakeholders, when applicable and in the scope of their mandates, to actively exchange information and enhance cooperation, including, where appropriate, through the United Nations network of focal points on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity and, at the local level, with United Nations country teams, and to cooperate further in promoting awareness of and implementing the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and to this end calls upon States to cooperate with relevant United

Nations entities, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Office of the High Commissioner, relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and international and regional human rights mechanisms;

16. *Encourages* States to share information on a voluntary basis on the status of investigations into attacks and violence against journalists, including in response to requests by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization through the mechanism operated by its International Programme for the Development of Communication;

17. *Also encourages* States to continue to address the issue of the safety of journalists through the universal periodic review mechanism;

18. *Invites* States, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and all other relevant stakeholders to follow up on the recommendations and outcomes from the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity to strengthen the implementation of the Plan of Action by, inter alia, strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalition-building and by fostering a coherent and comprehensive policy approach that encompasses the three pillars of prevention, protection and prosecution;

19. *Requests* the High Commissioner, in consultation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other stakeholders, to conduct a comprehensive study to assess the effectiveness of national frameworks for the protection of journalists, identify lessons learned and make recommendations on how they should be adapted to respond to new threats, including digital, legal and criminal threats, affecting journalists and media outlets; to organize online consultations to gather inputs for the study, and to present the outcomes of the study and activities conducted by the Office of the High Commissioner on these issues in the form of a report to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-fifth session;

20. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the safety of journalists in accordance with its programme of work.

32nd meeting
7 July 2025

[Adopted without a vote.]
