

# National Safety Mechanisms for Safety of Journalists in Africa

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity [hereafter UN Plan of Action] was adopted in December 2013 by the UN General Assembly, as an acknowledgement of the necessity for the creation of a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in both conflict and non-conflict situations.

It is the first systematic mechanism that brings together all stakeholders including the UN system, Member States, civil society, international and regional organizations, academia and the media itself to solve the challenges of safety of journalists and combating impunity at the global, regional and national levels.

The UN Plan of Action underscores the fact that crimes against journalists are multifaceted and cannot be addressed by a single organization. They require a multi-stakeholder approach, involving all actors at the global, regional and country level to comprehensively address the three PS: Prevent violence against journalists, Protect journalists in danger and Prosecute the perpetrators. It is therefore an urgent need to develop comprehensive formal national mechanisms to promote the safety of journalists at the national level. It is for this reason that UNESCO and IMS have joined efforts to contribute to the ongoing debate on rolling out the national mechanism for safety of journalists on the African Continent.



In 2017, IMS launched '[Defending Journalism](#)', a new global study analysing efforts to safeguard journalists in seven countries where conflict and instability challenge the ability of journalists to produce quality journalism.

## COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL SAFETY FOCUS

To drive forward a comprehensive approach to tackle safety and impunity challenges, the UN Plan of Action has created cross-purpose links between all the actors working on the safety of journalists with the four pillars of democracy – the judiciary, executive, legislature and the media. This multi-stakeholder approach involves all the respective sub-branches of the four pillars, including but not limited to courts, political parties, chambers and owners/editors, working with all the safety of journalists' stakeholders.

International and national actors working on safety of journalists and impunity acknowledge that the task is complex and that relevant actors need to develop strategies, which are comprehensive and able to address the complexity of threats against journalists ranging from reactive measures, from assistance to journalists in distress, to preventive measures, such as advocacy, training and particular focus on ending impunity through effective judicial measures.

## IMS and UNESCO

As one of the implementing partners for the UN Plan, **International Media Support (IMS)**, under its Global Safety Programme, has taken a lead role in researching and documenting the work of local actors to build safety mechanisms that adapt to the needs and realities of their respective countries. The first phase of this work concluded with a publication of best practices – '[Defending Journalism](#)', a new global study analysing efforts to safeguard journalists in seven countries where conflict and instability challenge the ability of journalists to produce quality journalism.

**UNESCO**, as the UN lead Agency on freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and safety of journalists, acknowledged in the 2017/18 UNESCO world trends in freedom of expression and media development, that the space for media freedom is shrinking and journalism is on fire! In spite of the many efforts to address safety of journalists' concerns and the many resolutions that have been passed globally, regionally and nationally, media violations continue to increase at an alarming rate especially in post-conflict and conflict countries. This is largely due to the shortcomings of essential national mechanisms that brings together all the national, regional and international actors.