

Two special rapporteurs call for accountability in crimes against journalists

LONDON, UK: ARTICLE 19 welcomes the unusual event of two reports concentrating on the same issue being presented at the twentieth session of the UN Human Rights Council on Tuesday 19 June 2012.

The reports, by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, both focus on the issue of impunity for violations of journalists' human rights.

Both reports urge relevant state and non-state actors to secure journalists' rights by implementing international human rights law and monitoring this implementation. ARTICLE 19 strongly endorses the Special Rapporteurs' recommendations and hopes they signal the start of more concerted global efforts to protect journalists.

It is unusual for two Special Rapporteurs to focus on one particular issue. Each has done so from the perspective of their particular mandate:

- The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (SRESA), Christoph Heyns, has investigated the mechanisms in place to provide greater protection to the right to life of journalists
- The Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression (SRFOE), Frank la Rue, has focused on the protection of journalists and media freedom, particularly in situations which do not involve armed conflict.

The overlap of the reports' content suggests that they are intended to be mutually supportive. This impression is reinforced by the fact that both documents are being presented on the same day of the current session of the Human Rights Council. It also shows how urgently the protection of journalists worldwide needs to be addressed.

The two reports should spur the international community to:

- Take a more comprehensive look at the current shortfalls in the protection of journalists' rights
- Take positive steps to implement the Special Rapporteurs' recommendations for addressing these problems.

ARTICLE 19 welcomes both reports and hopes they will lead to states improving how they respond to violations of journalists' rights: to date, these have been grossly inadequate.

Read more http://www.ifex.org/international/2012/06/20/special_rapporteurs/.

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