

Workshop on safety, protection of African journalists

ADDIS ABABA: The media has been invited to attend a workshop on the safety and protection of African journalists to be held from 2-3 September 2010 at the headquarters of the African Union Commission (AUC) in Ethiopia hosted by the Division of Communication and Information (DCI) of the AUC, in collaboration with the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ).

The theme of the workshop is 'Peace and security for African journalists'.

Renew peace-building efforts

The AUC and the FAJ plan to celebrate accomplishments in partnership with the international community, and review current efforts to peace building on the continent, with a view to strengthening and, where appropriate, launching new initiatives for peace and security during the Year of Peace and Security.

Such a goal, says the partnership, cannot be reached if freedom of expression and a free media, key conditions for good democratic governance, are not able to flourish and journalists cannot work in a safe and secure environment. Thus, the need to join forces in organising this workshop on the safety and protection of African Journalists.

Objectives:

- African journalists need the establishment of enduring and effective safety standards throughout the continent so they can do their legitimate and much-needed work to keep citizens informed.
- Safety training and protective equipment have in a few instances been provided to journalists but they are not enough to guarantee their safety. In the end it will be up to the political will of African leaders to spell out the measures necessary to help protect journalists.
- Policies must be developed and implemented to minimise the risks faced by journalists. Such measures will send a powerful message of support and solidarity for the newsmen and women who are committed to tell the story of Africa to the Africans and to the rest of the world.

The draft resolution resulting from this workshop is expected to set out extensive policies that will impel member states, their legislative institutions and law enforcement agencies to deal with issues of protection of journalists and impunity.

Participants

The workshop aims to gather over 35 unions and associations of journalists across Africa; politicians; diplomatic corps; African Union officials; officials from the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ); officials from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ); journalists leaders in Africa; international and regional lawyers; advocacy groups and safety experts amongst others.

Draft agenda

- Promoting the safety of journalists and overview of media security in Africa: General trends and main challenges:
- The risks of death, real and serious: The case of Somali journalists
- Deadly trap of investigative journalism: Crimes against journalists in Nigeria
- Silence over crimes and end of press freedom: The case of DR Congo
- Precarious working conditions of North African journalists
- Legal prospective: Who has responsibility to protect journalists and Why?
- Women reporting wars - The challenges
- Key role of the African Union in protecting journalists' safety: Identify basis for action and draw up a plan
- Measures to uphold the safety and protection of journalists in Africa
- Impunity: Source of insecurity and continuous danger

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