



**International Federation of Journalists**

**Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate**

### **Iraqi Media; Ten years on**

Journalists' rights, safety and legal reform

**Istanbul, 28-29 April 2013**

#### **Draft Conclusions**

We, the participants in the conference "Iraqi Media: Ten years on: Journalists' rights, safety and legal reform" held in Istanbul on 28-29 April 2013 in co-operation between IJS, IFJ and UNESCO, representing the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate (IJS), journalists, media editors and managers, the Iraqi parliament, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and international and regional organisations including the International Federation of Journalists, the Federation of Arab Journalists and the Centre for Law and Democracy, adopt the following statement:

- *Remembering* more than 380 journalists and media workers who lost their lives in Iraq during the last ten years;
- *Denouncing* the ongoing physical and psychological attacks on Iraqi journalists and media workers, as well as all other threats, intimidation and other forms of obstruction of their duty to report to the Iraqi people on the events and issues shaping their country at this crucial junction.
- *Expressing* our deep concern that the failure to bring those who have murdered journalists to justice is contributing to an environment of impunity in the killing of journalists that encourages more cowardly attacks;
- *Emphasising* that journalists' professional rights, editorial independence, social rights, job security and dignity are pillars of a free media that can serve the public and contribute to building democracy;
- *Expressing* our deep disappointment that, despite all the efforts made in the last ten years to adopt laws to protect press freedom and freedom of expression, and support media independence, the results so far are limited;

- Believing that, through building partnerships and redoubling our efforts we can still achieve our goals;

Recommend the following:

### **First – Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity**

1. The safety training for journalists should be continued and the programme broadened to include more part-time journalists, freelancers and media workers.
2. A dialogue should be established between journalists, the State and media owners regarding the duty of care for the safety and welfare of journalists, including covering the cost of safety training, provision of safety equipment, health and life insurance. This dialogue should lead to the full recognition in agreements with employers of their responsibility regarding protection and safety of the journalists and other media workers they employ.
3. The authorities and legislators in Iraq should move beyond condemnation of attacks on journalists to set up, urgently, a mechanism that ensures independent investigations into attacks on journalists and freedom of expression, with a view to bringing aggressors to justice.
4. Calls on the government, media owners, and international organisations working in Iraq to support the UN Plan of Action on the Safety Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and the opportunity it offers to make concrete progress towards increasing safety of journalists and decreasing impunity for attacks and killings against them through multi-stakeholder co-operation.
5. Calls on the authorities to publish a detailed report on the investigations into killings of journalists.

### **Second – Journalists Professional and Social Rights and Media Development**

1. We welcome the declaration by *Parliament Newspaper* that it is ready to engage in immediately negotiations with the IJS to reach a collective agreement and call on all media companies to make a similar commitment to signing collective agreements that provide better protection for journalists and editors from political and economic pressures, and that guarantee minimum wages, working hours, transparency in the process of employment and promotions, and the provision of health and social benefits.
2. Legislative and executive authorities in Iraq should strengthen the “Iraqi Media Network” as a public service broadcaster, including by making a commitment to respect its editorial and financial independence and to allow it to play its role as a public service broadcaster in the public interest.

3. The right of citizens to have full information about their news providers should be respected, and media outlets should make available to the public full information about their mission statements and ownership structures.
4. All Iraqi stakeholders should work together to set up a national institute for media training that offers specialised training programmes for journalists.
5. Partnerships should be established between the media and national institutions such as the High Commission for Human Rights and civil society organisations, with a view to bolstering the ability of the media to promote and defend human rights.
6. Provide training programmes and expertise for media and journalists in the area of documenting and reporting on human rights abuses.
7. Design and implement media literacy programmes targeting all sectors of the society.

### **Third – Media Laws**

*Agreeing* that the future of Iraq as a democratic country depends on the existence of free and independent media that is able to play its role as a watchdog that informs the citizens about the government's economic and social policies;

*Noting* that this requires all decision-makers, led by the Iraqi government and the parliament, in partnership with the IJS, the High Commission for Human Rights and legal and human rights organisations, to work together to ensure the putting in place of a legal framework for the media which protects freedom of expression and media rights, as well as media independence, in accordance with international law.

In this regard, priority should be given to:

1. The adoption of a right to information law.
2. The development of a mechanism for media self-regulation to deal with complaints and to promote press freedom and freedom of expression.
3. The amendment of laws which restrict freedom of expression and association contrary to international standards.
4. Refraining from adopting laws which do not conform to international standards.

### **Fourth – the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate**

1. IJS should build a database to record the deaths of and all acts of violence against Iraqi journalists.
2. IJS should promote a strong professional culture among journalists through:
  - a. developing a national code of conduct to be adopted by all media outlets; and
  - b. demanding the inclusion of a conscience clauses in employment contracts that recognise the right of journalists to refuse assignments that breach the IJS code of ethics and which are recognised by the regulatory body.

3. IJS should campaign for recognition of the public service role of journalists in holding power to account through strong ethical standards and union rights
4. IJS should campaign for regulatory rules that impose limits on concentration of media ownership and that promote pluralism and transparency in the media.

Finally, noting that the meeting is being held in Turkey, the participants highlight the pressures imposed on their fellow Turkish journalists, and especially the ongoing plight of over 60 Turkish journalists currently imprisoned because of their professional work, and send a message of solidarity to their colleagues and call on the Turkish government to release all imprisoned journalists immediately.

Istanbul, 29 April 2013