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## Paris forum adopts draft UN action plan to improve safety of journalists



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Participants at a United Nations forum that met in Paris have drafted an action plan to improve the safety of journalists and ensure that crimes committed against them do not go unpunished.

More than 500 media professionals have been killed in the course of their duties over the past decade, according to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), which hosted last week's forum.

It points out that many more have been assaulted, abducted, sexually violated, intimidated, harassed, arrested or illegally detained.

In addition, the vast majority of these crimes did not concern international war correspondents but journalists working in their home countries, often in times of peace, and covering local stories. The instigators for the most part, remain unpunished.

The draft plan adopted by the forum, which brought together representatives of UN agencies, programmes and funds, envisions the establishment of a coordinated inter-agency mechanism to handle issues connected to the safety of journalists and impunity.

Safety and impunity are also to be incorporated into UN contributions to national strategies, notably development assistance programmes and the possible inclusion of media stakeholders in some of the preparatory processes of the UN's development projects.

The draft also foresees the extension of work already conducted by UNESCO to prevent crimes against media workers, including assisting countries to develop legislation and mechanisms favourable to freedom of expression and information.

Awareness-raising campaigns will also be conducted with Member States, civil society, non-governmental organizations and concerned bodies about issues of freedom of expression, journalists' safety and the danger of impunity to democracy, UNESCO stated.

The draft plan will be presented to UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) at its next session in March 2012 and will then be submitted to the bodies in charge of UN-wide coordination.

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