



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN & CULTURAL

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE

While the Committee's areas of concern and its work often overlap with other United Nations organs, the Third Committee focuses its discussions on social, humanitarian and cultural concerns that arise in the General Assembly. The Third Committee discusses issues with, recognizes reports of, and submits recommendations to the General Assembly in coordination with other United Nations organs, such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). For more information concerning the purview of the United Nations General Assembly as a whole, see page 25.

Website: www.un.org/ga/third/index.shtml

THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY

Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* declared freedom of opinion and expression as fundamental human rights. A free press is key to achieving this goal. To secure these rights, the United Nations has worked to reduce persecution of and retribution against journalists. Over the past decade, 700 journalists have been killed as a result of their reporting—one journalist every five days. Since 1992, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) counts 1,187 reporters killed as a direct result of their work; in approximately 90 percent of those cases, no conviction was obtained. In addition to those killed in the line of work, 221 more journalists were imprisoned in 2014 and 2015. Even more frequently, journalists are subject to bodily injury, mistreatment and intimidation. Especially with the advent and widespread use of the internet and expanded definitions of journalism that stem from its use, more and more journalists are at risk of intimidation, harm and death for publishing their works. The United Nations struggles to bring Member States into agreement on standards for domestic law and protections for journalists and especially struggles to ensure adoption of these standards on a domestic level.

Domestic laws have long provided cover for many States to detain journalists without recourse. Many laws used to detain or otherwise harm or impede journalists have been passed in the past ten years. Journalists have been prosecuted or detained under provisions of domestic anti-terrorism laws, libel laws and military protocols in a number of countries, including both developing and developed States. Vaguely worded and overbroad laws pose some of the greatest threats to journalism and journalists' safety.

In 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference adopted 29C/Resolution 29, which condemned violence against journalists. The resolution tied safety of journalists to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and to goals that would later be incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals. In the early 2000s, the United Nations laid out standards for the protection of journalists in conflict areas and war zones in the United Nations Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas and in Security Council Resolution 1738. While these protections are in place for conflict areas, the vast majority of journalists are detained, imprisoned or otherwise harmed domestically. Despite the framework and recommendations made by

the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity established in 2010, many States have failed to implement safety standards for journalists.

In 2013, the General Assembly designated 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI), a continuation of a long history of similar days meant to raise awareness. These actions, and the ones that follow, still rely heavily on commitments from States and, by and large, their commitment to regional agreements and organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Notable action plans have been created by numerous organizations, including the International Declaration on the Protection of Journalists (IDPJ), by the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Global Safety Principles and Practices, which was created by a news and journalism coalition.

In Operationalizing the United Nations Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issues of Impunity at the Country Level, the Special Rapporteur's 2012 update and the 2013 implementation review of the Plan of Action, the same key problems were identified: a lack of political will in regions known for crimes against journalists; difficulty in reporting incidents on behalf of victims and their organizations; lack of preventive as opposed to reactionary measures; and an increased severity in punishment when the victims are women, minorities or other vulnerable persons. At present, only 50 percent of United Nations requests for statistics on violence and crime against journalists are answered. The most recent Resolution A/RES/70/162 unequivocally condemns all forms of violence against journalists; continues to expand the definition of journalism for a modern age; and calls upon governments, relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programs to unite to protect the safety of journalists and end impunity.

Protecting journalists from intimidation, threat and harm as a result of their work is key to providing stability, transparency and accountability in government. With the expanding definition of journalism and consistent underreporting of retaliatory or work-related incidents, the Third Committee faces a significant challenge on this topic. Incentivising reporting, encouraging adoption of policies that support United Nations recommendations and providing guidance on policy implementation are key to progress on this topic. Solutions need to focus on implementation of existing standards and the expansion of those standards and definitions to include forms of journalism that have arisen in the modern age.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- What can the international community do to encourage domestic policies in compliance with United Nations standards for journalist safety?
- How has the use of the internet expanded the definition of journalism?
- What can the United Nations do to increase reporting and get more accurate statistics on journalists and impunity?



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PROTECTION OF AND ASSISTANCE TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person forced or obligated to flee or leave their homes in order to avoid the effects of natural disasters, armed conflict, violence or other violations of human rights. IDPs differ from refugees in that IDPs have not crossed an internationally recognized border, whereas refugees are outside their home State or place of habitual residence. IDPs remain within their own countries and retain their citizenship status in addition to their protection as a citizen of their country under human rights and international humanitarian law.

In 2011, there were an estimated 26.4 million IDPs around the world. An additional 14.9 million people were displaced by natural disasters globally in 2011. In five years time, numbers have escalated to nearly 38 million internally displaced people globally. The majority of this increase in displacement was the result of crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

The status of IDPs and providing for their care are difficult problems for the United Nations. Because IDPs remain within their home States, the United Nations has little formal power over their care. Instead, the United Nations has worked to create viable standards and foster international cooperation on the issue. Issues surrounding the protection of IDPs include the lack of a centralized body responsible for IDPs and the need for additional environmental, structural and political supports for countries with elevated IDP populations. Because of the varying causes of internal displacement, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and the displacements often go hand-in-hand with existing problems within the country. Political tensions or infrastructural and monetary constraints limit States' ability to respond to IDPs. In many cases, the State has failed, leaving IDPs in even more precarious positions with little to no assistance. As a result, the Third Committee has focused not only on coordination of United Nations and non-United Nations organizations, but also on garnering widespread adoption of generalized standards for both prevention and protection of IDPs, including preventative measures like sustainable development.

The 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, commonly known as the Fourth Geneva Convention, sets the international norms for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. States developed the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which provides internationally agreed upon standards for the treatment of both refugees and IDPs. In 1992, the General Assembly requested that any existing best practices and standards regarding internally displaced people be collected and compiled into comprehensive guidelines for States. As a result the Secretary-General's office provided the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998. These principles are non-binding and cannot be mandated, only promoted; they expand upon preexisting standards and regional agreements. In the Principles, Member States are given direction on how to address internal displacement, as well as how to prevent it.

Currently, the United Nations is working both to ensure that IDPs are granted access to their human rights without discrimination and on resolving the unique issues facing IDPs displaced due to conflict or instability, particularly the special concerns facing women and girls. While the responsibility for the protection of these persons remains with the State, the United Nations has urged for increased cooperation between United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and States in burden-sharing, provision of resources and creating policy frameworks to respond to the issue. The United Nations began enhancing the predictability of its operations regarding IDPs through the March 2014 release of a provisional guidance on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement. The subsequent launch in April 2014 of the Solutions Alliance, an organization focusing on coordinating and expediting services for IDPs, has provided a platform for humanitarian and development actors to come together to provide durable and lasting solutions to the problem of displacement.



In recent resolutions, the General Assembly has recognized the need for regionally-specific and applied IDP standards such as the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, otherwise known as the Kampala Convention, as well as for the international support for IDPs. The General Assembly requested that the Office of the High Commissioner look into the sustainability of voluntary return, reintegration and resettlement of IDPs and further requested the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to continue to seek contributions from States and relevant institutions to assist in creating a more stable base for this work, as well as to compile a report on the implementation of the resolutions. The Special Rapporteur subsequently released reports on IDPs generally and on specific instances and topics related to IDPs. Additionally, the Office of the High Commissioner has been working to open new camps, such as the two opened in Baghdad in September, 2015.

In the face of continuing displacement globally, the General Assembly Third Committee has been seeking durable solutions, stronger links between humanitarian relief and longer-term development programs, burden-sharing and preventative measures that can keep the number of internally displaced peoples down. In light of the ongoing displacement within Syria and Iraq as well as the ongoing threat of manmade and natural disasters, the Third Committee continues to look for collaborative solutions. The scale of this humanitarian issue, however, has continued to test the capacity of the international community. Standards for care are not universally used; women, children and the disabled are still highly vulnerable and often without adequate protections and oversight; and preventative measures like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development need much improvement. The Third Committee struggles to get enough funding and the commitment of Member States to address these problems. Solutions should include the reintegration of IDPs safely into their places of origin, integration into their current communities or safe integration into another part of the country, while ensuring that IDPs retain the ability to make informed choices that best meet their perceived needs. The United Nations will be working toward including IDPs in all State development planning programs, as well as to place the protection of IDPs and refugees at the center of humanitarian actions, through accessible expert and technical resources, clear guidance and appropriate tools.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How could regional cooperation provide for and better protect internally displaced persons?
- How can coordination of services be streamlined and what services need to be prioritized?
- In what ways can the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement be strengthened? Are there principles that are outdated, inefficient or ineffective?
- As vulnerable groups, what can be done to assist women, children and persons with disability who are internally displaced?

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