

## **Yemini Journalists Solidarity Conference**

### **Yemini Journalists Syndicate (YJS) in Co-operation with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ)**

**23 February 2016: at the Jordanian Press Association/Amman**

Senior Yemeni Journalists and union leaders met under the auspices of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, the International Federation of Journalists and the Federation of Arab Journalists to discuss the challenges confronting journalists in the country and to agree common principles and strategies that will help protect journalists, strengthen solidarity in the media sector and start the process of building a safe, independent and ethical operating environment for journalists in Yemen.

Participants agreed on the following:

### **Safety Plan of Action for Yemen Media**

#### **First: Yemeni authorities, political groups, military forces and armed groups must**

1. Respect the independence and role of journalists in a conflict, provide free access and movement, ensure their safety and enable them to operate in an environment free of interference in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 1738 and 2222.
2. Release all kidnapped and detained journalists unharmed
3. End the deliberate targeting of media, and further ensure that all is done to avoid media becoming collateral damage of the conflict.
4. Publicly denounce the targeted attacks against Yemeni journalists. Those who fail to do so become associated to the crimes committed against journalists.
5. Ensure that all incidents of violence against journalists are fully investigated and those responsible held to account. Full reports on the investigations should be made available to the victims' families and the journalist syndicate.
6. Impunity for those who terrorize journalists must not be permitted.
7. Guarantee the free movement of media and ensure the safety of media personnel without interfering in their right to gather and disseminate news on the conflict
8. Ensure all military and security personnel are fully trained on the rights of journalists in a conflict and on their responsibilities to protect and facilitate the work of media.
9. Respect all forms of journalists identification

#### **Second: Media management must fulfil its duty of care to its workers through:**

- I. Developing and implementing in-house safety protocols, with the support of safety experts, for all staff engaged in potentially risky assignments.
- II. Ensuring that all staff are fully trained on operating in hostile environments and that a security plan is developed for all assignments
- III. Ensuring that all staff are fully equipped with the necessary safety protection
- IV. Ensuring that all staff have the necessary insurance to protect and compensate them in the event of injury or death
- V. Ensuring that all the above are applied equally to any freelance operator and to all members of the media team regardless of role or status.

**Third:** The meeting called on the UN General Secretary and his special envoy to Yemen to implement the UN security council resolutions on attacks against journalists, especially article (12) of Resolutions 2222/2015 which: **Affirms that United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, where appropriate should include in their mandated reporting information on specific acts of violence against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict.**

**Fourth: the meeting urges the international organisations to:**

- Support all efforts to create a pluralist independent media environment for Yemen to ensure that even the most remote are able to access essential information.
- To support the continuing dialogue between media professionals that seeks to build bridges, ensure the rights and safety of journalists and promotes the highest standards of journalism
- To support the provision of a comprehensive safety programme for journalists across the country

**Recommendations for follow up actions:**

1. For YJS, IFJ and FAJ to send letters to the warring parties in Yemen to stop all attacks on journalists, to investigate all cases of killings of journalists and media workers and to take all necessary actions to prevent further casualties.
2. For YJS, IFJ and FAJ to take all necessary steps to put pressure on the Houthi Group to release all journalists in their detention and to immediately stop torturing them. This includes using international mechanisms mandated to follow up on the practice of torture including the UN Committee Against Torture and the Special Rapporteur on torture other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
3. For the FAJ and IFJ to organise a joint delegation, in co-ordination with the YJS and all relevant parties, to visit Sana'a to secure the release of imprisoned journalists.
4. **For the IFJ to continue to support the YJS in:**
  - I. Developing the safety training expertise to make available to all Yemeni media systematic training programmes for all journalists
  - II. Ensuring all journalists are fully informed of the risks of conflict reporting and that basic safety training on risk identification and management is available to all members either through direct training programmes or the development of safety materials
  - III. Developing an information bulletin, hotline and alert system on safety situation for all media
5. To provide legal support to defend journalists including specialised training for journalists on the role of journalists in conflicts in the framework of international law and international humanitarian law.
6. For the YJS to follow-up on the case of the Journalist Wahid al Soufi, who disappeared in April 2015, and to share a report with the IFJ, FAJ and all relevant organisations.
7. For the YJS to work on a database listing all journalists who received threats and the ones who lost their jobs.

8. For the IFJ and FAJ to support the right of Yemeni journalists for free movement especially those who need medical treatment abroad.
9. For the IFJ and FAJ to write to the Yemeni president to put an end to all violations against journalists in the territories under the control of Yemeni state.
10. For the IFJ and FAJ to write the Coalition forces through the Saudi defence minister on the cases of the journalists who were killed by the Coalition bombing including compensation for their families.

**Regarding the spread of incitement and hate speech, the participants noticed the serious fall in media standards and agreed on the following Declaration:**

### **Yemeni Media Declaration on Incitement and Hate Speech**

- The main mission of journalism is a force for good and peace, to serve the public interest by reporting the truth in total independence and with a sense of responsibility
- At the same time there is a long history of Media being manipulated to stoke hatred and incite violence among communities in conflict
- Hate speech thrives in times of war where media are most exposed to pressure to take sides both to maintain support for war and to create the conditions of division and distrust in which war can exist
- Journalists must be enabled to respond by aiming for the highest journalistic standards in reporting politically sensitive matters, that avoid bias, prejudice and manipulation and are guided by the truth
- Journalists and their unions must unite together to build professional independence, reject the forces of division, and support honest journalism.
- They must reject in particular pressure to distort facts, dehumanize opponents, and denounce fellow media professionals
- They must support the core journalistic principles of professional independence, respect for the truth, professional solidarity, high ethical standards and the right to resolve ethical dilemmas according to conscience and free from external pressure.

#### **Recommendations for follow up actions:**

**First:** For the YJS invite all editors-in-chief to join the Yemeni Editors Forum as a platform for professional dialogue in Yemen.

**Second:** For the YJS to organise several meeting across Yemen to discuss and promote this Declaration.

**Third:** For the YJS to monitor political and media reports and statements inciting against journalists and to purplish a monthly report.

**Fourth:** For the YJS and IFJ to organise a meeting for the Yemeni editors who were engaged in the professional dialogue and solidarity against incitement and hate speech.