



Journalists at risk - Let's protect media freedom!

UN General Assembly side-event in Geneva on freedom of expression and media freedom

Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XX – 1 September 2020, 11h-13h CET



**Let journalists do their job!
So that the public is informed
For democracy to work and thrive**

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” *Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948*

Free, uncensored and unhindered media is essential to peaceful and inclusive societies, and is crucial for accountable institutions. The free communication of information and facts is the foundation of public participation in democratic governance. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated how the free flow of information, openness, transparency and the involvement of those affected in decision-making builds public trust, fosters public ownership of measures adopted to protect public health and increases accountability. States and private actors play a central role in providing an enabling environment for freedom of opinion and expression as well as access to information offline and online.

Yet throughout the world, media freedom is under increasing pressure: journalists and other media workers are being harassed, attacked, arbitrarily detained, and have their capacity to carry out their vital work restricted, both by State and non-State actors, in and outside of conflict areas. The criminalization of the media and increased electronic surveillance are also increasingly a concerning trend.

As a prologue to the forthcoming UN General Assembly, the President of the Swiss Confederation Simonetta Sommaruga and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet extend this invitation to a panel discussion with journalists from around the world. These journalists will give insights into their daily work, present challenges they face and propose solutions in order to safeguard the right to freedom of opinion and expression and strengthen democracy. They will call on States to respect, protect and fulfil the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in particular media freedom, and to respect their international obligations in this field while ensuring the human rights of journalists and other media workers.

Keynote speakers:

- **H.E. Simonetta Sommaruga**, President of the Swiss Confederation.
- **H.E. Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Testimonies from journalists:

- **Felix Marquez** (online), Mexican photojournalist, recipient of the Breach-Valdez Prize in journalism and human rights.
- **Bodi Hugger**, Chinese journalist and president of the Assoc. of Accredited Correspondents at the UN.
- **Maher Akraa**, Syrian journalist and photographer in exile (supported by Reporters Without Borders).

Panel discussion:

- **Gaëlle Borgia** (online), Malagasy journalist and 2020 recipient of the Pulitzer Prize.
- **Chappatte**, press cartoonist and founding-member of *Cartooning for peace*.
- **Luisa Ballin**, Vice president of the *Press Emblem Campaign*.
- **Jamil Chade**, Brazilian journalist.

Moderation:

- **Serge Michel**, Swiss journalist, Editorial Director of Heidi.news

The event is open to Member States and everyone, especially the international and national media, as well as young trainee journalists.

Registration is mandatory for physical participation in room XX until 29 August 2020:

<https://indico.un.org/event/34890/>

(As the number of places is limited, registration will be on a "first come, first served" basis.)

Covid-19: wearing a mask is compulsory at all times within the UN premises.

Live streaming with UN TV: <http://webtv.un.org/live/>

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