

## **Conclusions – working document 16.12. 2016**

### ***High level Seminar co-organised by the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)***

*on*

### ***Freedom of expression – role and powers of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and other national mechanisms***

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- We have so many important resolutions and statements at European level as well as a global level, where states, governments and inter-government institutions have promised and committed themselves to ensure safety of journalists, report on violations and counter impunity.
- Despite all good attempts and thoughts, we will soon end another violent year regarding journalism and free speech. It is overdue time to turn the good intentions and resolutions into practice in a way that makes a difference. We want to see a significant decrease of violence.
- 4 journalists killed in Europe – in Ukraine, Turkey and Serbia – and another two journalists recently in Finland but most likely not targeted because of their profession. An investigation will show.
- 127 journalists in jail in Europe – surely the highest number of jailed journalists since WW II.
- 124 reports for the alert platform created by the Council of Europe and eight NGO's and according to the platform only 28 replies from the states. We also still wait for resolved cases. That's why it is so important to counter impunity.
- It must never be free risk to kill or violate journalists.
- While it seems there are less responses from the states on the alerts, within UNESCO, we see an increase in responding. Anyhow, regarding impunity nothing in reality has changed.
- At the last council for the International Program for the Development of Communication we for the first time enlarged the discussion also to be concerned about arbitrary jailing of journalists, harassments and threats against female journalists in particular. We raise our voices.
- When Sweden and Finland celebrated their 250 anniversary for the first act of press freedom in the world, the topic of a conference held in Stockholm was harassments against female journalists. The Swedish foreign minister opened the conference and showed a significant commitment to take leadership in countering the violence.

- Coming back to turn resolutions into practice and looking at the particular topic of this panel, I would suggest the following recommendations from EFJ regarding cooperation between national human rights institutions, Council of Europe and NGO's:

1. At national level both governments and human rights institutions should react firmly each time an alert is reported to the platform for safety of journalists.
2. All member states of the Council of Europe should create mechanisms for an immediate response and action taken each time, at alert is raised, and they should benefit from letting human rights institution look at the cases. They should be asked each time an alert is raised.
3. The member State should always inform and involve other media stakeholders as journalist unions, media associations, media institutions, the academic environment and not least the human rights institutions.
4. There must be a link from the state Member to the national human right institution (which always should be independent) and further to the media stake holders. This will pave the way for the states to be responsible as we need the states to be part of the solutions.
5. The Human Rights Institutions should be involved in media support programs as it is the case regarding the International Media Support in Denmark.
6. It is a prerequisite that there the principle of keeping at arms length is respected regarding human rights institute.
7. The Human Rights Institutions should be visible and engaged in journalism education. The dimension on fundamental rights is one of the cornerstones in media excellences.
8. The Human Rights Institutions in Europe should share best practices and take part in conferences as this one.
9. Last month I attended the UNESCO meeting among the friends of safety of journalists. I think it was the third UN-meeting of its kind. This is an important signal, and the Human Rights Institutions as the second level of friends could bring this forward sending concrete messages of how legislation should be improved in order to fight the violence and not least to counter impunity.
10. Let's use this opportunity to urge for conferences at national level involving NGO's, Human Rights Institutions and Governments with a clear aim to develop the right mechanisms for the safety of journalists and to counter impunity.
11. We need common mechanisms to reach out to the citizens.