

North-South Dialogues 2026

Reporting from the Frontlines: The safety of journalists in conflict and crisis zones

Lisbon, Portugal, 18 May

Concept note

In response to an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, the North-South Centre (NSC) of the Council of Europe launched the "[North-South Dialogues](#)" in 2024, as an initiative aimed at fostering inclusive, action-oriented dialogue on critical issues shaping North-South relations. The North-South Dialogues bring together stakeholders from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and beyond to identify concrete avenues for cooperation and jointly address shared challenges. By identifying key areas of contention and fostering collaborative solutions, these discussions aim to build trust, strengthen partnerships, and promote coordinated responses in line with the values and standards of the Council of Europe that are shared in other regions.

Inspired by the exemplary work of the 2025 North-South Prize laureates – Mr Bragi Guðbrandsson, founder of the Barnahus model and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and Mr Rami Abou Jamous, a Palestinian journalist reporting from Gaza – the 2026 Dialogues will focus on two key themes, being one of them the safety of journalists operating in conflict and crisis contexts.

Journalists and other media actors (hereinafter referred to as journalists) around the world are increasingly vulnerable to censorship, political and economic pressures, intimidation, misuse of legal frameworks, job insecurity, and physical attacks, often within a climate of impunity. These risks intensify in conflict settings, where disinformation campaigns flourish and obstruct public understanding, jeopardise democratic processes, and endanger journalists through access restrictions, harassment, arbitrary detention, and violence.

Alerts reported to the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists demonstrate the scale and severity of these threats, including the growing dangers in the online sphere. In active conflict zones such as Gaza and Ukraine, members of the press continue to be killed or subject to high rates of detention, physical attacks, and intimidation. Since October 2023, more than 200 journalists, mostly Palestinian, have been killed in Gaza, and many more wounded or detained. Access for international media remains highly restricted, with those permitted entry operating under stringent control that limits the independence of their reporting. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, through [Resolution 2623 \(2025\)](#), has joined hundreds of international media organisations in urgently calling for free access into Gaza and the strengthened protection of journalists in line with international humanitarian law.

Journalists play a vital role in ensuring the dissemination of accurate, timely and reliable information in conflict situations, thereby protecting civilians, preventing escalation, and exposing human rights and humanitarian law violations. Recognised by the European Court of Human Rights as “public watchdogs”, journalists hold both the right and duty to report on matters of public interest under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Restrictions on this right are permitted only in narrowly defined circumstances. In line with Council of Europe standards on freedom of expression in times of conflict, this role is essential not only for informing the public but also for protecting civilians and ensuring accountability.

The Council of Europe plays a relevant role in promoting the safety of journalists through its standard-setting, monitoring and capacity-building work. Its key instruments include:

- Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, and its [Implementation Guide \(2020\)](#);
- the [Campaign for the Safety of Journalists \(2022–2027\)](#);
- the [Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#), which works with international partner organisations to document threats and support national reforms.

Recognising the growing pressures on journalists, renewed political commitments have also been made through the [Resolution of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society \(2021\)](#), as well as Parliamentary Assembly [Resolution 2317 \(2020\)](#) and [Recommendation 2168 \(2020\)](#).

These efforts are reinforced by complementary regional and international frameworks, including the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity \(2012\)](#), [EU Recommendation on the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists \(2021\)](#), and the [OAS Resolution AG/RES. 2908 \(2017\)](#). In Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has similarly established a framework for protecting journalists through the [Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information](#), [Resolution 468 \(2020\)](#), and the [Arusha \(2022\)](#), [Lusaka \(2023\)](#) and [Accra \(2024\)](#) Declarations.

Organised by the North-South Centre, the North-South Dialogue 2026 “Reporting from the frontlines” will bring together renowned journalists, policymakers and experts to:

- Shed light on the evolving risks faced by journalists in conflict and crisis contexts;
- Examine the existing legal and policy frameworks designed to overcome these risks;
- Share operational experiences and good practices across different regions;
- Identify avenues for strengthened international cooperation on protecting journalists.