



May 3, 2015

## **World Press Freedom Day 2015**

“Let Journalism Thrive! Towards Better Reporting, Gender Equality, & Media Safety in the Digital Age”

Friday, 1 May 2015, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

On Friday, 1 May 2015 WLCU United Nations Representative’s Sid Chidiac and Anttoinet Atie joined WLCU United Nations Youth Representatives Rima Cario and Grace Shamoun in a briefing celebrating World Press Freedom Day.

The UN General Assembly declared May 3<sup>rd</sup> as World Press Freedom Day in 1993 following a recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO’s General Conference in 1991. It serves to inform the public of the violations of press freedom; a reminder that several countries around the world publications, online ,and social media are censored, fined, suspended , and closed down while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked and murdered. It serves as a day to reflect, encourage, and develop initiatives in favor of press freedom.

Opening remarks conducted by Susan Malcorra, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who delivered the message of the Secretary General. She emphasized the killings of 61 journalists over the past year as well as the need of necessary commitment to the safety and freedom of journalists to “open a window of hope”.

H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President, United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the UN and Chairperson of the General Assembly Committee on Information participated on the opening panel as well.

George Papagiannis, Representative, UNESCO New York Liaison Office emphasized the rights of women in the world of journalism and women’s issues around the world,” Women’s issues is lagging in the media.” In a male dominated media industry women subjects and issues have been placed separately and not on the same level as males.

Papagiannis also highlighted the violence of not only women in the world of journalism but, the overall violence against journalists. He noted the honorary presence of John Foley, the father of James Foley, an American journalist and video reporter who was abducted in Syria on November 12, 2012. Foley was later publicly brutally murdered by ISIS in a chilling YouTube video entitled “A message to America”.

Papagiannis, commended journalists all over the world stating, "Without them we would be no where!" Relaying the message to remind everyone that journalists are our source of information, they are our news.

Kahraman Haliscelik, First Vice President, UN Correspondents Association was also in attendance.

A panel discussion moderated by Mr. Maher Nasser, Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information.

The panel included Pulitzer Prize Winner Mr. David Rohde, Journalist, of Thomson Reuters who created "Call for Global Safety and Practices" guidelines that have been adopted by several news organizations and translated in multiple languages to protect the rights of freelance journalists around the world.

Mr. Frank La Rue, RFK Centre and Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression stressed diversity and plurality in the media and in journalism.

Ms. Nighat Dad, Director, Digital Rights Foundation who joined via skype from Pakistan, noted that "women should be seen and not heard," that equal rights in media and around the world need to stand the same for both genders.

Dr. Michelle Ferrier, Associate Dean, Scripps College of Communication, Ohio University covered the presence of online harassment. Calling a realization that the internet is "real life" it is not just a fantasy anymore, 4/10 Americans fall victim of online harassment.

She demanded that, "Switching our Ideas of the media should be from a communication model to one that serves the people." Demanding we should dilute hate that is so often seen on social media by giving "need".

Thereafter a panel discussion was held after where WLCU members had an opportunity to give thanks and make comment of the discussions that took place.

Mrs. Antoinette Atie thanked the panel and commented on the excitement of joining others around the world in the discussions via skype, noting that the use of skype should be more often used to connect even more people around the world in the discussion

Ms. Grace Shamoun presented her statement that there was minimal talk about media ownership and freedom of speech in an oligopoly media market stating, "Without freedom of ownership there is no freedom of press".

Mr. Sid Chidiac questioned the United Nations ability to help journalists that get thrown into jail for reporting in other countries around the world and how UN representative's from these countries can assist these journalists and their rights.

Rima Cario  
UN Youth World Lebanese Cultural Union Representative