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Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media's role in advancing peaceful, just, inclusive societies

UNESCO and OHCHR celebrate World Press Freedom Day 2017



Ramallah and Gaza 3 May 2017 – To mark the global celebration of World Press Freedom Day (WPFD), under the theme **Promoting the media's potential as a catalyzer of peace and mutual understanding,** UNESCO within the framework of EU funded NET-MED Youth project and OHCHR organized two parallel events in both Ramallah and Gaza.

The round-table discussion in Gaza was organized in collaboration with the Press House, with two panel discussions facilitated by UNESCO and OHCHR on how media can contribute to peace, dialogue and mutual understanding.

The first discussion focused on the media's role in peace building. The media, as a community, can prevent and help to resolve conflict by disseminating accurate and timely information, creating awareness and knowledge, promoting transparent, accountable and participatory governance.

While the second discussion tackled the topics of "How media contributes to peace, dialogue and mutual understanding" and "the role of media in promoting human rights and tolerance and in countering hate speech", panelists elaborated on the legal and non-legal measures to combat the proliferation of hate speech online. Panelists led the discussion between media and civil society to promote balanced narratives.

Dr. Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative, opening the event in Gaza said : *At a time largely seen as critical for journalism, today we are celebrating Press Freedom around the world and in Palestine by stressing again and again that it is vital to strengthen independent and quality journalism, so that media act not only as a reliable source of information but also as a platform for dialogue and mutual understanding. UNESCO will continue to stand for safety of journalists and for media development.*

In Ramallah, **Mr. James Heenan**, Head of OHCHR Office in the occupied Palestinian territory said in his opening remarks *People expressing their views should provoke controversy, dissent, reaction and discourse, pluralism, the development of opinion, critical thinking, even joy, anger, frustration or sadness — but never punishment, fear or silence.* A representative from the Delegation of the European Union was present during the round table discussion organized on the occasion and as part of the EU-funded project Net-Med Youth. The EU reaffirmed that the role of media is crucial in promoting universal values as well as advancing peaceful and inclusive societies.

Every year, on 3 May the international community gathers to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. It is an opportunity to commemorate the fundamental principles of press freedom; assess the state of press freedom throughout the world and pay full tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

At a time critical for journalism, the global celebration of WPFD 2017 took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 2-4 May 2017. It focused on why it is vital to strengthen independent and quality journalism to enable the media to effectively contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16. Specifically, the interrelationships between freedom of expression, justice for all and the rule of law, peace, and inclusiveness were explored.

The Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET MED Youth) project is implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union. It aims at mainstreaming youth issues and priorities across national decision-making and policy implementation in Eastern and Western Mediterranean countries by building the capacities of youth and youth organizations and promoting their active engagement in the development and implementation of national policies and strategies on youth, ensuring that youth issues are adequately covered by national and regional media and by identifying workable models for improving youth access to employment and youth inclusion in different sectors. For more information on NET-MED Youth, visit en.unesco.org/netmedyouth and on Facebook: Networks of Mediterranean Youth or follow #netmedyouth

For more information on World Press Freedom Day, please visit: http://en.unesco.org/world-press-freedom-day-2017

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit our website www.unesco.org/ramallah and on Facebook: Unesco Ramallah Office

For more information on OHCHR's activities in Palestine, please visit us on Facebook: UNHumanRightsOPT

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