



**15th INTERNATIONAL  
ANTI-CORRUPTION  
CONFERENCE**

**MOBILISING PEOPLE:  
CONNECTING AGENTS OF CHANGE**

**BRASÍLIA BRAZIL  
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### **Short Session Report: Global Solutions**

**Session Title: Media as Agents of Change: Exposing Corruption,  
Empowering People**

**Date & Time: 8 Nov. 2012 9:00-11:00**

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**Experts:**

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**Name, Position, Organisation**

**Moderated by:**

**Session coordinated by: Galina Sidorova, Chairperson, Foundation for  
Investigative Journalism – Foundation 19/29, Russia**

### **Main Issues Covered (500 words or more, narrative form)**

The reality is that more journalists are killed covering crime, especially organised crime and corruption, than in traditional conflict zones. However, this is an underreported little-known fact. Journalists are in fact on the front line in the fight against corruption. And they pay a very heavy price. Not only are they killed, and physically assaulted in a variety of ways, they are also harassed, arrested, jailed after unfair trials on trumped-up evidence, accused of criminal defamation over critical and investigative reporting, tortured, and often forced to flee into exile. One of the primary fuelling factors in the targeting of journalists is a climate of impunity. In the vast majority of the cases involving the targeting of journalists the perpetrators are never found, or brought to justice. The result of all of this is censorship and self-

**censorship, which results in interruptions in, and the absence of, the flow of information about corruption, and therefore the public's right to know**

**An example of the threats faced by investigative journalists was the recent attack on a Bolivian journalist who was set on fire as he aired his live radio show.**

**Economic interests and others lead to self-censorship, which is a lot more frequent than official censorship, because it happens inside the newsrooms.**

**Investigative journalism prizes show that small sparks can lead to big investigations.**

**Investigative journalists are experts in official corruption but private corruption has been left aside, because of economic pressures from corporations that attempt to limit investigative journalism. The magnitude of corruption in the private sector is much bigger than in the public sector.**

**Journalists have found online spaces, including blogs, to tell stories about corruption that cannot be told in standard media outlets. There's also historical investigative journalism, holding people to account for historical crimes.**

**The methodology in investigative journalism has changed over the years.**

**Two decades ago searches began in libraries, of official records, and administrative memorandums. Weeks were spent reviewing documents for evidence of bribery and official corruption. It was difficult to demonstrate evidence of large-scale corruption. It was easier to find small-scale irregularities.**

**People planning large-scale corruption create legal platforms allowing such corruption. There's a parallel world to the official world with controls in theory. Journalists are well placed to observe this parallel dimension because of their access to a diversity of sources, big and small. But there are sources adept at providing journalists with snippets of information to manipulate and control their agenda. So**

**journalists need a critical understanding of why a person is providing information.**

**Increasingly investigative journalists have been working with public databases, where they can put all the public information they collect, placing it on a big server. This is analysis of public databases. Journalists have been creating relationships between different databases, to find out the backgrounds of mayoral candidates for eg. This leads to online graphics both in traditional media, and online. Thus, citizens can make informed decisions.**

### **Main Outcomes/Outputs**

- The systematic targeting and intimidation of journalists covering corruption results in censorship, self-censorship and the interruption of the flow of information – which is linked to fundamental human rights.**
- The sustenance and development of modern and varied forms of investigative journalism allow citizens to make informed decisions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**
- Fusing modern methods of investigative journalism with advanced technology allows the creation of informative graphics for publication that expose corruption, inform, and hold accountable.**
- The advance of data-sharing possibilities through online technologies allows for cross-border cooperation between investigative journalists from different countries.**
- The highlighting of successful journalism investigations into corruption, through for eg journalism prizes, helps highlight the dynamics and challenges of investigative journalism.**
- No story is worth the life of a journalist. On the contrary, a journalist's life is worth more than the story.**
- Private security for journalists can stifle independent reporting,**

especially when security agents are not to be trusted and may even be part of systemic corruption.

-There's no way to prevent attacks and targeting for sure, but you can diminish risk by being fair in your reporting. You always have to respect the integrity of reporting. The reporting must be impartial.

-The protection of journalists is the protection of information.

-Increasingly physical databases are being translated into virtual ones. But this creates issues with data protection laws, especially in European countries.

### **Recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)**

-Create a safe online platform on which journalists from different countries can share information, databases, etc thus strengthening the quest for journalists everywhere to report on corruption.

-Combine the skills of professional journalists with those of bloggers who want to use the information they have but do not have the traditional skills of journalists.

-Hold seminars for bloggers to arm them with basic journalism skills, including how to handle legal and judicial aspects.

-Promote the role of citizen journalists in conjunction with traditional journalism.

- Promote integrity-driven reporting that is impartial, professional and respects the foundations of the profession.**
- Threatened journalists should where appropriate share their stories and concerns with journalists overseas.**
- Advance understanding in the public sector of the role and rights of journalists as frontline actors in the fight against corruption.**
- Continue to advocate for a rollback of impunity.**
- Continue to advocate for Access to Information laws where they do not already exist or where they are not being properly implemented.**
- Promote the creation of investigative journalism cooperatives which provide strength in numbers, especially for independent freelance journalists.**
- Promote pro bono work by lawyers and lawyer groups to defend journalists involved in unfair and trumped-up trials**

**Highlights (200 words please include interesting quotes)**

**“(The threat of) killing is part of the job” – Galina Sidorova**

**One of the three winners of a prestigious investigative journalism prize this year in Latin America was a purely online work about how fishermen were being cheated by purchasers incorrectly weighing fish**

**“I go to court often” – Giannina Segnini on the threat of legal action against journalists.**

**“Everywhere there are journalists who will not bow to threats of assassination, assault and other forms of targeting and who courageously and at great risk continue to report on corruption.” – Anthony Mills**

**“Hopefully we will find a sustainable financial model for investigative journalism cooperatives.” – Giannina Segnini**

**“The more access citizens have to varied forms of information the more of a complete picture they have.” – Galina Sidorova**

**“Do you think that big corporations are interested in promoting investigative reporting?” – Gerardo Reyes**

**“Credibility is the main asset of any media outlet.” – Giannina Segnini**

## **Key Insights Recommended to be included in the IACC Declaration**

**The rights of online journalists, given the rapid advances in online news, need to be underscored, promoted and advocated for.**

**Governments and state stakeholders need to be reminded of their duty under international law to ensure the safety of journalists, including those covering corruption, and threatened because of it, in non traditional conflict zones.**

**The declaration should make reference to existing UN resolutions on the safety of journalists and the duty of countries to respect them, for example the five-year-old UN security Council resolution on the safety of journalists in conflict zones, and the recent unanimously passed UN Human Rights Council resolution referencing the right of journalists to safety everywhere and at all times, and the duty of states to ensure that safety.**

**Rapporteur: Anthony Mills, IPI**

**Submitted on: 8/11/2012**

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