

Human Rights Council - 26th session
(10th June – 27th June 2014)

Panel discussion on the Safety of Journalists

Statement by Ireland

11 June 2014

Mr. President, High Commissioner Pillay, distinguished panelists,

Ireland thanks you all for your valuable contributions to today's discussion and reiterates its support for the initiatives which have been taken in this Council and elsewhere to maintain a spotlight on this issue.

When Veronica Guerin, an Irish crime reporter and a recipient of the International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists, was murdered by criminal elements in June 1996, Ireland's then-prime minister described her killing as "an attack on democracy". Violence against journalists entails an array of human rights violations perpetrated against individuals, as detailed in the report prepared by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in advance of this discussion. At its core, it is an attack on free societies.

A free and independent media is indispensable for democracy. Journalists play a vital role as part of civil society by informing the public, demanding transparency, and calling for accountability. Attacks on journalists are attacks on those values and on the fundamental human right to freedom of expression, and need to be understood in this light.

Ireland welcomes the focus of the aforementioned report on the need to end the widespread impunity associated with attacks on journalists. Punishment can make an essential contribution to prevention by deterring would-be attackers. Unfortunately, attacks on journalists are often committed at the state's behest or with its tacit consent, exacerbating the problem of impunity.

With this in mind, Ireland would like to ask the panelists to elaborate on how states which have historically embedded cultures of impunity for attacks on journalists can take the first steps toward ending that impunity.