

**Inaugural meeting of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists**  
**13 July 2020 10-11.30**  
**Minutes**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

The Minister for Media and Data introduced the Committee and highlighted that journalists play a crucial role in democratic society and in holding power to account, and therefore must be free to do so without fear of violence or abuse. Key to this is working together across the UK to ensure that we are proactive in creating a supportive and safe environment. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, spoke about the international context for the Committee.

**2. Confirmation of the Terms of Reference**

The Committee formally confirmed the Terms of Reference.

**3. Overview of how the criminal justice system seeks to protect journalists**

The Minister for Safeguarding, and representatives of police and prosecutors, outlined the role of the criminal justice system in protecting journalists.

*Action: The Minister agreed that Home Office officials will look at how to improve collation of data on threats and attacks against journalists.*

**4. Overview of the situation for journalists in the UK**

Michelle Stanistreet and Ian Murray gave an overview of the safety concerns for journalists in the UK.

The key issues raised included the increasing prevalence of online abuse, particularly of female and BAME journalists; attacks on journalists at protests and threats in Northern Ireland. It was noted there was a challenge in monitoring threats against journalists, making it difficult to quantify the problem.

**5. Overview of the international context**

Rebecca Vincent explained the international context on journalistic safety, and its relevance to the UK. Covid-19 has exacerbated threats to media freedom across the world. The UK's work in this area is important, will be critiqued and hopefully emulated, and the establishment of the Committee will lead to a greater recognition of the importance of media freedom across government more widely.

## **6. Reflections from other members**

Other Committee Members shared their reflections on points raised by the speakers.

## **7. National Action Plan**

It was agreed that Committee members would be engaged in the development of the Action Plan in the coming months, with the aim of presenting a draft at the next meeting.

## **8. Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **9. Wrap up and next steps**

The Minister thanked attendees, and noted that the next meeting would take place in the winter.

## **Attendees**

Minister for Media and Data

Minister for Safeguarding

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth

Chief Superintendent Sam Donaldson, Police Service Northern Ireland

Greg Miles - representing Chief Constable Gavin Stephens of Surrey Police and the National Police Chiefs' Council

Superintendent Tim Ross, Police Scotland

Sue Hemming, Director of Legal Services, Crown Prosecution Service

Anthony McGeehan, Head of Policy, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Rebecca Vincent, Director of International Campaigns, Reporters without Borders

Ian Murray, Executive Director, Society of Editors

David Newell, CEO, News Media Association

Jonathan Munro, Head of Newsgathering, BBC

Ruth Smeeth, CEO, Index on Censorship

Michelle Stanistreet, Secretary General, National Union of Journalists

## **Observers**

Professor Ivor Gaber, UK representative, UNESCO Communications Sector

Tom Gibson, EU representative, Committee to Protect Journalists

Rozita Lofti, Head of BBC Persian, BBC World Service

Maria Ordzhonikidze, Director, Justice for Journalists

Ernest Sagaga, Head of Human Rights and Safety, International Federation of Journalists