

Meeting of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists

13 January 2021 10-11.30

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions

The Minister for Safeguarding, chairing the meeting, welcomed the Committee and thanked the members for their input into the National Action Plan, reiterating the operational independence of law enforcement and the freedom of the press.

2. Update on international media freedom work

The Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, updated the committee on the work HMG is conducting in increasing international support for Media Freedom through the Media Freedom Coalition. It is important for the UK to lead by example and the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and the National Action Plan will strengthen our position internationally.

[Lord Ahmad left the meeting]

3. Introduction to the National Action Plan

The Minister for Safeguarding introduced the plan emphasising its aim was to reduce the number of attacks and threats on journalists in the UK and provide practical help and support. The plan itself will continue to evolve and be updated as needed. Janis Makarewich-Hall, Deputy Director for Press, Radio and Media Freedom at DCMS and Michael Cordy, Head of the Police Integrity Unit at the Home Office explained the structure of the plan, its key themes and plans for monitoring delivery against it.

[The Minister for Safeguarding left the meeting]

Committee members provided comments and reflection on the document, noting their involvement in its development and making suggestions on material that could be covered in future iterations. The committee endorsed the document and noted that it would be published soon, once the government approval process was complete.

4. Survey findings and personal experiences of abuse and harassment

Samantha Harman, Head of Media at Oxford Brookes University and former Group Editor for Newsquest Oxfordshire, presented the findings of her survey into threats and abuse against journalists. She highlighted how women in particular face increasing levels of abuse; the challenges created by online anonymity; the significant impact on journalists' and editors' mental health, and the willingness or otherwise of individuals to remain within the profession. She noted the particular importance of training on safety issues for journalists.

5. Any other business

There was no other business.

6. Wrap up and next steps

The Minister for Media and Data thanked attendees, and noted that the National Action Plan would be published in due course, and that the next meeting would take place in July.

Members

Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Safeguarding, Home Office [**Co-Chair**]

Rt Hon. John Whittingdale MP, Minister for Media and Data, DCMS [**Co-Chair**]

Michael Agnew, Deputy Director, Public Prosecution Service of Northern Ireland

Sue Hemming, Director of Legal Services, Crown Prosecution Service

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

Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, National Police Chiefs Council

Acting Assistant Chief Constable Sam Donaldson, Police Service Northern Ireland

Jonathan Munro, Head of Newsgathering, BBC

Ian Murray, Executive Director, Society of Editors

David Newell, Chief Executive, News Media Association

Jessica Ní Mhainín, Senior Policy Research and Advocacy Officer, Index on Censorship (representing Ruth Smeeth, CEO, Index on Censorship)

Superintendent Tim Ross, Police Scotland

Michelle Stanistreet, General Secretary, National Union of Journalists

Rebecca Vincent, Director of International Campaigns, Reporters without Borders

Observers

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

Elena Consentino, Director, International News Safety Institute

Jeremy Dear, Deputy General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists (representing for Ernest Sagaga, Head, Human Rights and Safety)

Prof. 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

Other

Greg Miles, Staff Officer to Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, National Police Chiefs Council

Holly Morton, Director of Legal Services, Crown Prosecution Service

Samantha Harman, Head of Media at Oxford Brookes University and former Group Editor for Newsquest Oxfordshire

Government officials

Robert Specterman-Green, Director, Media and Creative Industries, DCMS

Janis Makarewich-Hall, Deputy Director, Press, Radio and Media Freedom, DCMS

Michael Cordy, Head of Police Integrity Unit, Home Office

Kanbar Hossein Bor, Coordinator, Global Campaign for Media Freedom, FCDO