

Beat: Miscellaneous

UN condemns recent killing of journalists in CAR, Tanzania and Pakistan

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) on Tuesday condemned the killings of journalists in three separate incidents across Pakistan, Tanzania and the Central African Republic (CAR) in recent days. The Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova, who is tasked with defending press freedom denounced the killings.

Community radio journalist Elisabeth Blanche Olofio was killed in CAR, another radio reporter, journalist Issa Ngumba was killed in Tanzania, and three other journalists were reportedly killed during the recent bombings in Pakistan. Olofio lost her life when rebels stormed her radio station, Radio Be Oko, last Tuesday in the town of Bambari in CAR, and media reports said Ngumba was found in Tanzania's Kajuhuleta Forest, exhibiting signs that he had been strangled or hanged. "I condemn the killing of Elisabeth Blanche Olofio and feel grave concern about the safety of her colleagues," said Bokova, while also urging all the fighting factions in the African country to "respect the civilian status of journalists." Bokova underlined the importance of community-based media, noting that journalists like Ms. Olofio provided news for most of the population and contributed to "the well-being and development of ordinary citizens." The UN detailed that over the past month, CAR has experienced an increase in violence, with a number of cities reportedly falling under the control of armed groups, which, in turn, has led to thousands of people fleeing areas where fighting has taken place. Following the attack on Radio Be Oko, press freedom associations operating in the area reported receiving no news regarding the safety of Olofio's colleagues and the radio station has had to cease its broadcasts. Meanwhile, Ngumba had been missing for three days before his body was discovered in Kajuhuleta Forest, becoming the second journalist killed in Tanzania in recent months. Bokova underlined the importance of prosecution as a basic human right of freedom of expression and deplored the killing. She also appealed to local authorities to investigate the crime as thoroughly as possible. "Safety contributes to journalists' ability to inform public debate, the bedrock of democracy," said Bokova. In Pakistan, a series of bombings in Quetta last Friday reportedly killed at least 100 people and injured at least 200 more. Among the fatal victims were three reporters, who were reportedly killed during the second wave of bombings after arriving at the scene. Imran Shaikh, a news cameraman for Samaa TV, and Mohammad Iqbal, a photographer with the news agency News Network International (NNI) were killed instantly while Saif-ur-Rehman, a Samaa News reporter, was transported to a local hospital where he later died from his injuries. "The bomb attacks in Quetta last Friday, which targeted civilians as well as rescue services and media, were particularly shocking," Bokova stated, adding that the attacks violated democratic values and human rights. Bokova urged the Government of Pakistan to do everything within its power to bring those responsible to justice.

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