

Parliamentary Assembly: Press Freedom & Journalists in Conflict Zones

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On 28 April 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted its Resolution 1438 (2005) and Recommendation 1702 (2005), both entitled, “Freedom of the press and the working conditions of journalists in conflict zones”.

The titles of the texts point to their underlying, context-specific, concerns. The importance of freedom of expression and information is heightened when it is threatened in war, conflict or lawless areas. The same is true of the safety and independence of journalists and other media professionals.

The PACE “deplores the great number of murders, kidnappings and disappearances of journalists working in conflict areas or on dangerous subjects and regards these as grave acts of aggression against freedom of expression and information in the media”. It calls for the immediate release of hostages being held in conflict areas. It “pays tribute” to non-governmental efforts to support journalists and the media in conflict areas and “welcomes” the Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas drawn up by the organisation Reporters Without Borders.

The PACE calls on all Council of Europe member and observer states to: “respect the right to freedom of expression and information”; “refrain from restricting the use of communication equipment [...]”; “instruct their military and police forces to give protection and assistance to journalists”; “facilitate access to the territory of destination by issuing necessary visas and other travel documents to journalists”; “respect the confidentiality of journalists’ sources”. It also calls on them to “ensure that journalists can work safely on their territories” and to “investigate all acts of violence or lethal incidents involving journalists which occur on their territories as well as those occurring abroad in which their armed or security forces may have been involved, including those due to friendly fire”.

Other focuses in the Resolution concern training programmes, media professional responsibilities, embedded journalism and the confidentiality of certain information vis-à-vis ongoing military operations.

For its part, Recommendation 1702 recommends that the CM monitor relevant questions in conflict areas within Council of Europe member states and also

collaborate with the United Nations on these issues.

“Freedom of the press and the working conditions of journalists in conflict zones”, Resolution 1438 (2005), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 28 April 2005

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/ERES1438.htm>

“Freedom of the press and the working conditions of journalists in conflict zones”, Recommendation 1702 (2005), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 28 April 2005

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