

MONDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2008 (16.30pm – 18.30pm)
Workshop 1: Protecting Journalists reporting crime
MACEDONIA B, LEVEL 1 , English

Workshop Title: Protecting Journalists who Cover Organized Crime, Corruption and other Dangerous Stories

Workshop Coordinator: Drew Sullivan

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Language: (Please mark one) English

Workshop description:

1. What are the main points you want to raise in the workshop?

Paul Klebnikov, Daniel Pearl, Veronica Guerin and Ana Politkovskaya have all become journalism martyrs and we rightly talk about their courage and bravery. We also rightly set up programs to seek out their murderers and bring them to justice. But oddly, we seldom talk about what we can do to protect those who continue their work -- what editors, journalists and NGOs could have done to prevent these sad occurrences.

Reporting on organized crime and corruption is very dangerous but everyday reporters work in this area and do courageous work. For progress in developing countries to continue toward democracy, decades more of this dangerous work is needed. We need to better prepare ourselves.

This panel will look at some of these cases and identify where we as media organizations or NGOs might have been able to provide greater protection and safety. We will discuss where there are serious threats and help NGOs and media organizations become aware where the dangers often are. We will outline the threats and the forms they often take and we will look at the programs, procedures, skills and practices all newsrooms should have in place for dealing with these issues. We will also identify common practices and misconceptions on reporting in this area and how these misconceptions can lead to greater dangers to the reporters.

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The workshop will then outline a simple program all NGOs can give the organizations they work with to help improve safety.

2. Give some background information to the issue you want to raise.

The Center to Protect Journalists considers the nexus of organized crime and politics as the most dangerous area a journalist can work in. Many journalists report on organized crime and courageously risk their life. Yet journalists continue to die – some needlessly. And there is precious little that outside organizations can do to protect them on a daily basis. No NGO, media development organization or law enforcement body can provide the protection that a well designed safety program scrupulously followed by the reporter's co-workers and editors can provide. This area is badly misunderstood by media development organizations who are at the same time pushing for more investigative reporting and some of these organizations are unnecessarily risking the lives of the people they seek to help.

3. List three key questions you want the workshop to address.

a) How can an organization report safely on organized crime, corruption or other dangerous issues?

b) What and where are the real dangers in reporting on these dangerous issues and what practices typically used by journalists are putting them at greater risk?

c) What practices should media organizations adopt to protect their reporters? What practices should development organizations insist their clients adopt if they are encouraging them to report on dangerous topics?

4. What would be the main desired outcome of the workshop?

I would want the participants to leave aware of the real risks, which common practices that should be avoided and which practices can improve safety.

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