

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND UNESCO PARTNER TO STRENGTHEN CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

## PARTNERSHIP WILL STRENGTHEN CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN UN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

Freedom of expression is under threat worldwide and urgent measures must be taken to protect this fundamental right, which is an enabling right for everyone, said Amnesty International and UNESCO today as they announced a new eight-month partnership.

*“The UPR process is unique as it is the only mechanism that engages all UN Member States in a review of their human rights record. UNESCO’s partnership with Amnesty International aims at ensuring that civil society organizations have the tools to engage the UPR including via follow up to recommendations”* said Tawfik Jelassi, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information.

The project will strengthen freedom of expression in the UPR mechanism, in which all UN member states have their human rights record reviewed by their peers every five years. It will enable greater use of the mechanism to also promote the safety of journalists and access to information.

*“In an era characterized by repeated attacks against UN human rights bodies, the UPR remains one of the few mechanisms that can still provide effective monitoring and deliver recommendations for human rights protection. Such a mechanism could be used with greater effect to deliver respect for freedom of expression,”* said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

The partnership will provide tools for civil society organizations across the world to help them engage more effectively with the UPR, which is entering its fourth cycle this year. It will empower civil society organizations to raise freedom of expression concerns in their UPR engagement and to follow up so those commitments are actually implemented at a local level.

Enabling civil society groups to use the UPR more effectively to ensure protection for freedom of expression, and the right of freedom of peaceful assembly, will have a multiplier effect on protecting the right to peaceful protest which is also gravely under threat in many parts of the world, according to Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

Tools will include guidelines on how to engage with the different stages of the UPR and advice on why and how to include freedom of expression concerns in advocacy efforts. They also offer video tutorials and a fact sheet to support the drafting of specific and measurable recommendations – which are much easier to monitor and help ensure accountability. These will be available in the six official UN languages.

*“By bringing all stakeholders to the table, the UPR process enhances multilateralism and ensures that the voices of civil society organizations are not only heard but amplified,”* explained the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information.

The views of civil society organizations from around the world will inform the co-operation. Experiences of using the UPR during the previous cycle are being collected and analyzed, and the tools will be introduced to a pilot group of civil society organizations and Amnesty staff through a series of webinars to collect feedback.

The final toolkit will be widely disseminated to civil society organizations through Amnesty and UNESCO’s networks and promoted throughout the fourth cycle of the UPR to strengthen attention to freedom of expression as key to human rights and sustainable development.

This project is funded by UNESCO's Multi-Donor Programme on freedom of expression and safety of journalists.

**For more information contact**

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**About the Multi-Donor Programme for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP)**

The MDP serves to further strengthen UNESCO work at a global, regional, and national levels, by channeling funds towards emerging priorities and the most pressing needs to achieve its mandate on freedom of expression. It enables UNESCO Communication and Information Sector to address complex issues through the design and implementation of holistic medium and long-term interventions at national, regional and global levels. The clear advantage of this mechanism is that it allows UNESCO and its partners to achieve greater impact and sustainability, whilst reducing fragmentation of activities in the same field.

Protect journalists and freedom of expression, visit: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression/mdp>