



Journalists' safety is a cornerstone of free media, not least in times of conflict, and must be ensured and strengthened, participants said today at a two-day conference on journalists' safety and conflict reporting in Vienna. The attendees also stressed the importance of tackling the issue of propaganda, pointing to free and independent journalism as one tool.

The conference "Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict", organized and hosted by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, brought together some 400 journalists, media experts, and government and civil society representatives from OSCE participating States. The participants discussed journalists' safety and journalism ethics, conflict reporting, measures to deal with propaganda, and media regulation.

Keynote speaker Roy Gutman, Middle East Bureau Chief for McClatchy Newspapers and Pulitzer Prize winner for International Reporting for his coverage of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993, said journalism plays a vital role in exposing the origins of conflicts and stressed the need for knowledge of humanitarian laws for journalists.

"Covering conflicts as a journalist is always a challenge but the hardest thing is to determine who's telling the truth and who's lying," Gutman said. "One must be aware that it often takes time to find your compass as a journalist in these extreme conditions, and perhaps the best way of doing that is to have knowledge of humanitarian laws."

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, during his speech at the closing plenary session, stressed the importance of condemning any attack on members of the media.

"Violence against journalists in its various forms is a harsh violation of the freedom of expression and of the media, the very foundations of every democratic society," Dačić said

"It is our deepest belief that freedom of expression is a prerequisite for a free and democratic society," Dačić said. "Therefore, it is very important to condemn most vehemently every manifestation of violence against media representatives and freedom of the media."

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, said that safety of journalists must be ensured at all times, before, during and after times of conflict. She also stressed measures to deal with the vicious tool of propaganda, which is always part of conflict

coverage.

"We need to join our forces and voices to ensure journalists' safety at all times, and especially in times of conflict," Mijatović said. "At the same time, we must counter propaganda and the best way to do that is ensuring free media and promoting good, independent journalism."

During the conference the attendees put forward suggestions and proposals on what could and should be done to make life safer for media in conflict zones. Based on the discussions at the conference, the Representative will issue her recommendations on journalists' safety, media freedom and pluralism in times of conflict.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States. She provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promotes full compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments. Learn more at www.osce.org/fom , Twitter: [@OSCE_RFoM](https://twitter.com/OSCE_RFoM) and on www.facebook.com/osce.rfom.

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