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**Message from Ms Irina Bokova,**

**Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the Inaugural International Day to End Impunity for  
Crimes against Journalists**

**2 November 2014**

Freedom of expression is a basic human right that is essential for human dignity, for the rule of law and for good governance. In times of change as we are now living, it is especially important to provide citizens with the information they need to make knowledgeable decisions about their lives and societies.

For this, we rely on journalists and the news media, together with social media producers who practice journalism. But their safety is not guaranteed -- they face threats, harassment, violence, and even death.

The threat is grave. On average, one journalist is killed per week, and while fatalities include foreign correspondents, the vast majority of victims are local, covering local stories, living in a climate of impunity. This allows perpetrators to continue attacks without restraint, further crippling the free flow of information. Impunity is poisonous – it leads to self-censorship for fear of reprisal, depriving society of even more sources of significant information.

In December 2013, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2 November as the *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*, to raise awareness about the challenge of impunity and mobilise action against it. The date marks the assassination of two journalists, Gislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon, in Mali on 2 November 2013. The United Nations General Assembly tasked UNESCO as the lead UN agency of this Day, working with all relevant partners. This is the goal of the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*,

spearheaded by UNESCO, bringing together UN agencies, governments, international community and civil society, to make real progress on the ground.

On this first *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*, I appeal to all Governments to ensure a swift and thorough investigation every time a journalist is killed, and to all partners for stronger cooperation to enhance the safety of journalists.

Impunity must not be allowed. On 2 November, we must stand together to ensure every journalist can do their job safely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irina Bokova