

Moscow Declaration of Journalists for a Culture of Peace

International Congress of Journalists of
Russia, CIS and Baltic Countries
“Tolerance, Human Rights, Press Freedom”

Moscow, Russia, 14 November 1998



The participants of the International Congress of Journalists of Russia, CIS and Baltic Countries, held in Moscow (Russian Federation) with the support of UNESCO, Council of Europe, International Federation of Journalists and British Government's Foreign and Commonwealth office, **declare the following:**

In some countries of the region, independent and pluralistic press is constantly harassed and persecuted which can be considered as a prelude to large scale political repression and spread of violence. To this end, in particular, media laws are being revised, organs of ideological control are being installed in organizations and territorial structures, direct or indirect censorship is being introduced, various methods of economic pressures, administrative and court prosecutions, physical coercion are being used. Opponents of glasnost, with the connivance and sometime with active support of authorities, raid editorial offices, beat journalists and destroy their equipment and results of their work. At the same time, authorities do not react, as a rule, to manifestations of aggressive nationalism and political extremism. Such practice constitute a scandalous contradiction with generally accepted international norms on human rights and prevent the consolidation of a culture of peace at local, national and regional levels.

The freedom of mass information is an absolutely imperative condition of a stable development of the region and the consolidation of a culture of peace which is a global perspective of the development of humanity in 21st century.

It is precisely through independent and pluralistic media that openness of information and free dissemination of ideas are secured in the contemporary society, as well as the dialogue by means of which social groups, ethnic minorities, religious and other communities get to know each other, overcome their alienation and reach agreements. Freely functioning media can make a key contribution to achieving internal harmony within societies and understanding between nations and that means to a culture of peace in the region through disseminating truthful information and independent commentaries, through restoring lost cultural and spiritual ties in a climate of respect for others.

The media are also an important channel of transmitting moral values based on respect for the life, rights and dignity of human beings. They are capable to make as everyone's possession an understanding of the fact that the life deprived of high spiritual beginning, striving only for consumer goals - such a life is inferior.

This information is provided by

UNESCO
Culture of Peace Programme
Networking & Information Section
7, Place de Fontenoy
75352 PARIS 07 SP
FRANCE
Tel (+33.1) 45.68.12.19
Fax (+33.1) 45.68.55.57
e-mail: cofpeace@unesco.org
URL: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp>

In transition period, the media are capable to help all and everyone to adapt themselves to new conditions of labor and leisure, to new conditions of life undergoing the deepest transformations. The media possess the great educational potential which should be used to achieve understanding and tolerance within societies, maintain democratic values and as a result to root ideas of a culture of peace in people's minds. The dignity of people is based on this, as well as a true culture of human community.

In consequence, participants of the Congress:

Confirm their commitment to internationally recognized principles of tolerance and condemn any acts of violence towards journalists and media;

Declare about their determination to strengthen the journalists' solidarity and mutual help;

Express their intention to improve mechanisms of co-ordination of activities of journalists' organizations of the region to counteract the growth of violence in any form, to prevent threats to the freedom of information and expression, as well as to protect legal and social interests of journalists;

Proclaim that the independent and pluralistic media constitute an important guarantee of the citizens' right to information and a clear objective index of the reality of democratic transformations in the region countries;

Reiterate their commitment to understanding journalism as a free profession striving for public welfare, and resolutely condemn any attempts to corrupt journalists;

Call upon all journalists of the region to actively come out against any action which may result in rousing the discord, spread of political extremism and aggressive nationalism, growth of violence and spread of dictatorships;

Unconditionally condemn the limitation of the freedom of information introduced by the authorities in some countries, including economic, administrative and court pressure on the media editorial staffs, journalists, publishers, distributors and advertisers;

Express their concern at the continuing monopolization and concentration of the media, including in the hands of state, which threaten the freedom of expression and impose restrictions on the diversity of information;

Welcome the efforts by authorities of some countries of the region to provide economic support for all media, independent of their political orientation, in overcoming hardships of the transitional period and adaptation to market economy;

Call upon UNESCO, OSCE, Council of Europe, International Federation of Journalists and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to support efforts by journalists of the region to develop regular exchange of information about the situation on human rights and others aspects of forming democratic traditions and a culture of peace.

Moscow, November 14, 1998