



International Association of Women in Radio & Television
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IAWRT STATEMENT ON THE 31ST ASEAN SUMMIT IN THE PHILIPPINES

November 9th, 2017.

As we gather to hold our 37th Biennial Conference in the Philippines, we take this occasion to call on the leaders of the 11-member nation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its partner-countries to uphold press freedom and protect journalists from murderous killings, harm, threats and harassment.

Over the last few years, we note the increasing number of attacks against journalists, whether in print, tv, broadcast or online in this part of the world. The IAWRT also notes that online media women are subject to attacks at three times the rate of their male colleagues.

This is especially true in the Philippines, host of the 31st ASEAN Summit, a country which is ranked 5th in the 2017 Global Impunity Index by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Since 1986, the “restoration of democratic institutions” in the Philippines, 178 journalists have been killed, five of them under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Twelve women journalists have been killed in the line of duty since 1986, four were among the victims of the infamous 2009 Ampatuan massacre. Like the rest of the cases of media killings, not one of the perpetrators has been brought to justice.

Our colleagues paid with their lives for what they wrote or said, whether in the Philippines or elsewhere. Just this September, in [India, a well-respected woman editor and critic of right-wing Hindu extremism was shot.](#)

The threat to press freedom has come from all directions. In Cambodia, the Cambodia Daily stopped publication due to government pressure, according to CPJ. In Myanmar, the Telecommunications Act and the unlawful Associations Act have been used by the government to arrest journalists. Cases of sedition had been filed against journalists in Thailand.

We are calling on the ASEAN heads of state to uphold media freedom and stop the attacks on our colleagues. These are not random acts of violence. They are more often than not political persecution. And women journalists are even more exposed and vulnerable.

Women’s rights and media freedom are human rights that must be safeguarded and protected at all times.

Gunilla Ivarsson,
IAWRT President