

PII-ICRC media workshop begins at Hyderabad tomorrow



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The Press Institute of India (PII) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have jointly organized a daylong workshop on Media, Conflict Reporting and International Humanitarian Law at Hyderabad on September 5. The workshop is expected to pave way for journalists and advocacy groups for a wide range discussion on the freedom of press and the protection of the journalists, who continue reporting from the conflict zones.

Organized in collaboration with the Department of Journalism, Osmania University, the workshop is designed to sensitize the participating journalists about the existing rules and norms of conflict, the role to be played by media while reporting conflict, safe practices and the management of dangerous assignments. Working journalists from different parts of the country have been invited for participation.

The workshop will be addressed by a host distinguished personalities like V Murali, Director of Press Institute of India, Manoj Joshi, Comment Editor of Mail Today and Justice Subashan Reddy, Chairman of Human Rights Commission, Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, the Communication Coordinator of ICRC, Philippe Stoll, the President of Indian Federation of Working Journalists, K. Vikram Rao, Communication Officer of ICRC,

Surinder Oberoi, Bureau Chief of Andhra Jyothy, A. Krishna Rao and the Deputy Editor of The Hindu, K Srinivas Reddy will attend the technical sessions as resource persons.

"For journalists, the issues at the root of the violence are becoming more difficult to understand and to report about. Furthermore, journalists are being more directly targeted and many of them get killed, injured or go missing in situations marked by armed violence. At the same time, the general lack of knowledge of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Laws creates a situation that prevents reporters from drawing all necessary elements of analysis needed to adequately report about conflict or violent situations," said the official statement of the organizers.

Citing the source of the International News Safety Institute, where it was reported that 167 journalists were killed in 2006 and altogether 1000 journalists and support staffs had to die on duties during the last 10 years around the globe, the statement also added that the Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) highlighted the year 2006 as one of the deadliest years for the profession in the recent past. Quoting the record of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the statement also revealed that 615 journalists had to pay their lives on the job between 1992 and March 2007.

Apart from the lack of awareness, the other important reason to carry out the task of educating journalists is to ensure their safety during conflicts. There are numerous reports indicating the deterioration of safety of the media staff and increasing numbers of attacks on journalists and their teams in situations of violence. The past decade is illustrative of the growing lack of protection and government inaction towards the protection of journalists that exists in conflicts around the world, it concluded.

"By highlighting these problems, violations of laws, bad or good conduct, journalists will be able to influence important policy decisions at the government level and create pressure groups among civil society members who play a vital role in the future of the countries," said Sangeetha Rajeesh, Editor - PII, an independent non-profit society founded in 1963.

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BY NAVA THAKURIA

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