

**A fuller use of the UN human rights monitoring system may create new alliances and collective action to defend the right to freedom of expression**

UNESCO, Member States and civil society must work together to renew their inter-sectoral vision. This calls for action in three strategic areas:

- Raising awareness on the work of UNESCO; condemning attacks on artists, journalists and scientific researchers; pushing for preventive measures; and increasing global messaging
- Improving the monitoring of UNESCO's key instruments; sharpening the focus on freedom of expression and safety issues; collecting data on COVID-19 restrictions; appointing focal points; and including other attacks in addition to killings
- Strengthening UNESCO's participation in UN coordination; developing UN action plans for artists and scientific researchers, in addition to journalists; engaging UN human rights bodies in highlighting freedom of expression for all three professions

The publication and other relevant documentation are available on [unesco.um.dk](https://unesco.um.dk)



PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF DENMARK TO UNESCO



**UNESCO's Instruments  
in Defence of Freedom of  
Expression of Artists,  
Journalists and Scientific  
Researchers**

Permanent Delegation  
of Denmark to  
UNESCO 2021

# CRITICAL VOICES

**Freedom of expression is under attack** – not least for those artists, journalists and scientific researchers who play a critical role in the democratic discourse in any society. The COVID-19 pandemic has led many governments to adopt restrictive emergency measures beyond what the health crisis requires, breaching general human rights principles of necessity, legality, proportionality and transparency.

Artists have faced censorship and harassment for expressions characterized as “misinformation” about the pandemic, and “likely to cause panic”. Journalists have been confronted with police intimidation, detention and questioning while conducting fact-finding inquiries. And while some scientific researchers have become global heroes, numerous others have experienced attempts to restrict their research and the flow of information about the virus.

**UNESCO’s instruments must counter the increasing number of threats and attacks – and push for professional working environments without fear**

UNESCO played a key role in the preparation of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Since then, UNESCO has developed specific instruments dealing with the rights and professional standards of artists, journalists and scientific researchers, demonstrating its role as the UN agency with a mandate to “promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”:

- The UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Artists; and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- Decisions of the UNESCO 1980 International Programme for the Development of Communication; and the UN 2012 Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity
- The UNESCO 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers