

Cartooning

The Addis-Ababa Declaration – May 3 2019

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THE ADDIS-ABABA DECLARATION

FOR THE RECOGNITION OF CARTOONING AS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

We the signatories of this declaration « For the Recognition of Cartooning as a Fundamental Human Right », represented or assembled in Addis-Ababa on may 3 2019 at the World Press Freedom Day 2019 of the UNESCO,

Recalling that drawing, illustration, painting, graffiti, etc., form a specific and universal language: the language of the image, that is present in all cultures since the origin of humanity.

Recalling that, like language, images express both the whole of the culture and the individual as well as their respective particularities: the uniqueness of a culture as subjectivity inherent in the artist's point of view. The diversity of cartooning reflects the richness and vitality of a democratic society. It is constitutive of culture, and therefore, of humanity itself.

Recalling that freedom of expression is an essential indicator of the quality of social life and a condition that is indispensable to the right of opinion and freedom of conscious; it is also enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights.

Recalling that cartooning, which entered our “modern” societies in the 19th century, is one of heirs and one of the forms of this image-language. By telling her or his story, the cartoonist can bring debates or emerging phenomenon to light. She or he can even constitute a real counterforce: the freedom to critique any government or institution is the affirmation of the citizen's right to scrutinize public affairs. The right to scrutinize is the pedestal of democracy.

Recalling that cartooning is a means of expression that requires specific attention because of its uniqueness: it is a means of expression based on an assumed connivance between the cartoonist and the reader. This connivance is founded on the codes of language, and notably, humor, derision, reflection, satire, exaggeration, irony, or metaphor... this method of expression is thus particularly subject to subjective interpretation. The development of the internet, a tool that circulates cartoons from all over the world instantly, thus favoring its de-contextualization, has fueled the tensions and feelings around this means of expression.

Recalling that, today, the freedom of cartooning is especially threatened. Reports from Cartooning for Peace, Human Rights Watch, The International Federation for Human

Rights, Reporters Without Borders warn about the situation of cartoonists suffering from censorship, prosecution, unfair dismissal, imprisonment, or death threats.

Thanking the Government of the Federal democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the African Union, UNESCO and Cartooning for Peace for their contributions to the organization of this seminar and to the process of this declaration. UNESCO strives for peace and works for each citizen of the world to enjoy the full freedom of expression, the pedestal of democracy, of development, and of human dignity. As part of this fight for peace and freedom of expression, UNESCO promises and supports the freedom of the press in general, and the freedom of cartooning in particular.

We declare the following:

1. We solemnly recall that the freedom to draw is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under which “every individual has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Similarly, the UNESCO General Conference Resolution 25 C/104 of 1989 recalls the right to “the free circulation of ideas by work and by image at national and international levels.”

2. We recall the intangible right to the physical integrity of the cartoonist and our opposition to all threat or pressure of any kind to the cartoonist. We propose that a specific report be submitted each year to the UNESCO General Directorate and transmitted to Member States.

3. We call on the Member States and the international community to open processes of discussion and reflection on “the right to satire and irreverence”.

4. We take up the initiative envisioned by several press organizations and we ask UNESCO to establish an International Day of Cartooning.

5. We ask the UNESCO General Directorate to transmit this declaration to the international community at the next UNESCO General Conference.