Press cartoonists in danger: ending impunity

"International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists", celebrated every 2 November

Boligán (Mexico)

This year's commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists "aims to promote a broader discussion on the safety of journalists working in crisis and emergency situations"*.

Given the clear upward trend in crimes committed in these contexts, a dedicated event is being held from 6 to 7 November at the headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, co-organised by UNESCO.

On this occasion, Cartooning for Peace has a duty to raise the fate of Lebanese cartoonist **Hassan Bleibel**, who recently lost his home in an Israeli army bombardment in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and that of Gazan cartoonist **Mahasen al-Khatib**, who died on 18 October in the bombardment of the Jabalya camp for displaced persons. To name but a few. The displaced Gazan cartoonist Safaa Odah is reduced to surviving in inhuman conditions in Gaza and drawing on her tent for want of paper.

Impunity is the common thread running through the alerts that Cartooning for Peace has published in recent months, particularly in the context of legal proceedings in which arbitrariness prevails and which are used as instruments of repression by regimes that despise freedom of expression. Such is the case of the Saudi cartoonist Al Hazza, who has just been sentenced to a further 23 years in prison, after serving an initial 6-year sentence and being subjected to enforced disappearance and ill-treatment. The same goes for the Egyptian cartoonist Ashraf Omar, also a victim of enforced disappearance and ill-treatment, who has been detained for almost 100 days without any possibility of defending his rights. And the Iranian cartoonist Atena Farghadani, sentenced to 6 years in prison after being beaten up when she was arrested, and the victim of attempted poisoning and ill-treatment during a previous detention. The physical safety of each of these cartoonists in detention is under threat.

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We must, each at our own level, bear witness to these lives shattered by arbitrary treatment and ensure that their fate is not ignored. We must relentlessly denounce the impunity of these crimes, which are the mainspring of their repetition.
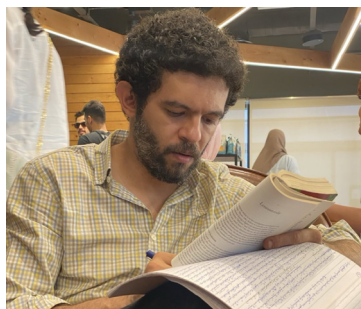
Ending impunity for crimes committed against journalists is also "a fundamental necessity to guarantee the full exercise of the right to freedom of expression and the possibility for all to participate in an open, free and dynamic exchange of ideas"*.

Safaa Odah (Palestine)   Al Hazza (Saudi Arabia)   Ashraf Omar (Egypt)   Atena Farghadani (Iran)

CARTOONING FOR PEACE

The Cartooning for Peace organisation was created in 2006 at the initiative of Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize and former General Secretary of the United Nations, and press cartoonist Plantu. Now chaired by French press cartoonist Kak, Cartooning for Peace is an international network of cartoonists committed to the promotion of freedom of expression, Human Rights and mutual respect among people upholding different cultures and beliefs, using the universal language of press cartoons.

www.cartooningforpeace.org

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*Source: International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists | United Nations