

Roundtable Discussion

A Multidisciplinary Inquiry on the

Culture of Impunity

in the Killing of Filipino Journalists



September 2009



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

A Multidisciplinary Inquiry on the
Culture of Impunity
in the Killing of Filipino Journalists

September 15, 2009
Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan

Roundtable Discussion

A Multidisciplinary Inquiry on the **Culture of Impunity** in the Killing of Filipino Journalists

September 15, 2009
Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan

background

The UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (NatCom) created an Ad Hoc Task Force to respond to the concern of UNESCO Headquarters on the killing of Filipino journalists. In its report to UNESCO, the Task Force noted that previous and ongoing initiatives at the national and regional levels have focused on political interventions (e.g., protest actions, public statements, meetings with government officials) and media-related activities (e.g., training of journalists on safety and ethics, support to families of slain journalists, monitoring and documentation).

To date, however, there has been no study made by any of the media agencies on impunity against journalists from a multidisciplinary perspective. The Roundtable Discussion seeks to fill this gap.

In organizing the Roundtable Discussion, the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) made the following assumptions:

1. The existing culture of violence shown in the killing of journalists and militant activists in recent past is often characterized as one of impunity. But this concept has yet to be further examined as a behavioral construct that is also manifested in other areas of the social, economic and political life of the nation.
2. Among the indicators of impunity are disregard for the rule of law, violations of existing regulations that govern everyday life (e.g., traffic and waste management, transparency and accountability in government procedures and transactions), and continuing violations of human rights and democratic processes.
3. People's distrust of the capacity of duly-instituted authorities to address these manifestations of impunity, including corruption, is high.
4. The erosion of ethics in governance is also seen in other institutions including the media.

AIJC also suggested the following units of analysis:

1. Existing cultural values and practices, as manifested in: (a) child-rearing practices, (b) relationships within the family, (c) learning methodologies in formal and nonformal learning, and (d) practices in governance - election behavior, practices of transactional politics, etc.
2. Responses to various work and learning situations in everyday life.

3. Social and political factors (e.g., perpetration of violence in broad daylight, “silencing” of witnesses, continuing postponement of court hearings, lack of political will to ferret out the truth, legal remedies like the writs of amparo and habeas data).
4. Country rankings in some indicators related to impunity.

convenors of roundtable discussion

The Multidisciplinary Inquiry on the Culture of Impunity in the Killing of Filipino Journalists, a roundtable discussion among experts in the various social science disciplines, was convened by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) and the Communication Committee of the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (NatCom) on September 15, 2009 at Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila.

The UNESCO Office Jakarta provided funding for the project. Cooperating partner organizations were the Philippines Communication Society (PCS) and Philippine Association of Communication Educators (PACE).

The Roundtable Discussion started with the singing of the National Anthem. Ms. Ann Lourdes C. Lopez, AIJC Associate Director, welcomed the participants to the meeting.

overview of the project



DR. FLORANGEL ROSARIO-BRAID, Chair of the Communication Committee, UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines (NatCom), presented an overview of the Roundtable Discussion. Citing statistics of the killings since 1986, she underscored the concern of UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura who had requested for a status report on the continued violence against Filipino journalists and had issued strong press statements calling on Philippine authorities to act on the murders.

Dr. Braid reported that the UNESCO Regional Office in Jakarta has included, in the Final Draft of the Philippines-UNESCO Country Program Document 2009-2011, a comprehensive project to address the Culture of Impunity in the Killing of Filipino Journalists, with components on research, action program, and advocacy.

After providing definitions of impunity, she explained the objective of the project, which is to examine the problem of

impunity in the killing of Filipino journalists from a multidisciplinary perspective. She gave the specific objectives as the following: examine the root causes of impunity through a multidisciplinary approach; raise awareness about impunity and its high cost to the rule of law and to a free and democratic society; validate assumptions about impunity; and identify case examples and indicators of impunity.

Dr. Braid then discussed the expected outputs as follows: multidisciplinary insights (e.g, root causes, indicators of impunity, research methodologies), policy options/ action program (e.g., legislation and constitutional reforms to address impunity), and a prioritized research agenda. (Please see **Annex A** for the PowerPoint presentation of the Overview.)

introduction of participants

After the overview, each participant introduced himself/herself. A total of 23 persons were present in the Roundtable Discussion. (Please see **Annex B** for the list of participants.)



highlights of roundtable discussion

MR. RAMON R. TUAZON, AIJC and PCS president, served as facilitator of the Roundtable Discussion. He started the discussion by asking the question: From your particular social science discipline, what are the possible root causes of impunity and the factors that influence its persistence?

Root Causes of Impunity

DR. MA. LOURDES A. CARANDANG, child psychologist, offered two explanations. One is the “culture of intimidation,” which is manifested in bullying or exercising “power over” someone. She said that this culture starts in families. Two is the “culture of lying” or lying as a way of life. Truth-telling today has become dangerous, as experienced by journalists. This culture of lying is evident in child-rearing practices, where truth is covered up (*pinag-tatakpan*) because of pity (*naaawa*) or leniency (*pinagbibigyan*). There are no clear limits of discipline. Consequences are not enforced for following the rules (affirmation/ reward) or for violating them (punishment).

DR. AMBETH R. OCAMPO, historian and chairman of the National Historical Institute, said that he was wary of the term “culture of impunity.” We need case studies, more data, more thorough research. Right now, the patterns of the killing are that the violence happened in the provinces and the journalists killed were in radio. Perhaps it is not impunity but what the journalists were saying and how they were saying it. He cited the case of a high-profile print journalist, who has been writing about controversial issues and people for thirty years or so and remains alive. Perhaps it is the medium, radio, which is “open and direct.” We need to define “culture of impunity,”

“Why do listeners or management tolerate these things? There are decision-makers who can put a stop to it.”

because it is too broad and the killings do not just involve journalists. Also, we need to look at other related issues like the justice system and corruption.

DR. CARANDANG shared an anecdote about a famous television journalist who had told a whistleblower that he (the journalist) needed to show him (the whistleblower) on television, since “visibility is a protection.” Anonymity is a factor in the murders. When she advised the

journalist to “lie low” because of his coverage of controversial issues, she was told that, all the more, he should be more visible in media for his own protection.

MR. REY HULOG, executive director of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (National Association of Philippine Broadcasters), pointed out the need to look at individual cases, since we have not yet established a pattern. Why is this happening? What is the background? What’s common? For example, are journalists being silenced when they report on events as they happen, like witnesses being preempted? Our present approach of trying to convince government to act is not enough. We need to go deeper; there must be something else. Why do listeners or management tolerate these things? There are decision-makers who can put a stop to it. “*Pera-pera din yan*” (Money is also a factor). Other concerns are advertising and listenership.

DR. CLARITA R. CARLOS, professor of political science at the University of the Philippines-Diliman, said that “explaining” the killing of journalists will require an identification of the various factors and forces that led to this result which we shall label our Dependent Variable (DV). The putative causalities will be

labeled independent variables (IV). Explanations are almost always “flawed” or incomplete because we are not able to identify all the plausible putative IVs; we may also not be able to determine their relative potencies, i.e., how much of each is contributing to the DV?

She expounded on her thoughts on a “democratic deficit in freedom of thought.” Journalists represent this freedom, and we should be concerned when they are being killed for doing their job. A related issue is the nature of journalism today, or investigative journalism, which has breached into or crossed over to critical inquiry. For example, she cited the “collusion” of certain American journalists in perpetuating the myth of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. At the same time, she also discussed the military mindset, which follows the order to “decimate” from the commander-in-chief – the President.

She identified institutional factors such as a justice system which is genuinely compromised, a sanctions/punishment system which fails in implementation or which implements on a case-to-case basis. Also, the bureaucracy is so deep-seated that we cannot break the rhythm of the way we do things.

DR. BERNARDITA CHURCHILL, chair of the Technical Committee for History of the Commission on Higher Education, cited the need to instill values and ethics in the very young. This is where we begin. Schoolchildren today are not learning what was being taught before in the educational system.

Impunity and Violence

DR. NESTOR T. CASTRO, associate dean of the U.P.-Diliman Department of Anthropology, observed that the killings are not unique to journalists and should be seen in relationship to the culture of violence in general. This culture of violence is being studied by the Ateneo de Manila University in its ongoing

research on electoral violence in Abra. He pointed out that two political systems exist: the state and the local communities. Among traditional communities, violence such as the *rido* (clan war) exists, but they also have systems to check that violence. It is the traditional political systems that are being eroded today. He added that why the violence against journalists occurs in the rural areas needs research work.

“Filipinos may have developed a tolerance or high saturation experience for violence, and media may have contributed to this.”

DR. ROLAND B. TOLENTINO, dean of the U.P.-Diliman College of Mass Communication, commented that Filipinos may have developed a tolerance or “high saturation experience” for violence, and media may have contributed to this. We consume media in extended ways, including violence; and entertainment, with the pretty women and reality shows, has made violence acceptable. Radio and television have been complicit in this culture of violence and, being profit-driven, have been shifting to “info-tainment.” There is a need to examine media’s economic imperative and its accommodation of violence.

ATTY. JOSE MANUEL DIOKNO, dean of the De La Salle University College of Law, said that journalists, like lawyers and judges, work at the edge of keeping order. Order is kept not so much by the severity of punishment but by its certainty. In the country, there is no such certainty. Forms of impunity in the legal system exist, such as: the lack of a mechanism to preserve or perpetuate testimony; a long-drawn process; and the absence of recourse or no right of appeal in administrative cases, if the aggrieved party is government (e.g., police). There is a need for legislation that will make the testimony records of a witness part of the case. The Witness Protection Law also needs amendment to strengthen it.

ATTY. AMPARITA DE LOS SANTOS-STA. MARIA, executive director of the Ateneo Human Rights Center, said that impunity exists at all levels and cited as example the Kuratong-Baleleng case (a rub-out case where members of the Kuratong-Baleleng gang were all killed by the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission allegedly in a shoot-out, although the evidence showed that no shoot-out occurred). Laws exist, but enforcement is weak. In certain cases, although forgiveness for wrongdoing is not sought or acceptance of guilt is not done, amnesty has already been granted. She underscored that the right to know is a collective right, just as the right to justice and the right to reparation. Witnesses are killed, and this creates a chilling effect not only on other witnesses. Even judges also fear reprisal.

ATTY. PRIMA JESUSA BERONGOY-QUINSAYAS, legal counsel of the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists (FFFJ), cited the case of Marlene Esperat, a Mindanao-based columnist who exposed the fertilizer scam and was gunned down inside her house in 2005. She said that the prosecution's success is relative, because only the gunmen, but not the mastermind, have been convicted. The conviction is the result of a persistent group of prosecutors. She observed that the government's Task Force 211 has not done much.

She stressed that while it is true that killings are not unique to journalists, journalists represent an important institution in society – the press or the Fourth Estate. The press concretizes the abstract concepts of free press, free speech, and right to know. Thus, killing journalists means killing those freedoms and rights.

Atty. Quinsayas added that in dealing with the issue of the culture of impunity, access to logistics must also be considered. The witness protection program does not have much funds. Neither does the FFFJ have enough financial

resources. Prosecutors are overloaded with cases, like 25 cases a day per prosecutor. Judges also are overloaded, and the Philippine National Police is understaffed.

Patterns of Impunity

MR. TUAZON asked if the use of the word “culture” in the term “culture of impunity” is appropriate. He said that the group has seen the obvious patterns of impunity, but the unseen patterns must be identified in order to be able to address the issue.

PROF. FLORDELIZ L. ABANTO, president of the Philippine Association of Communication Educators and radio program host, said that broadcast journalists have provided listeners access to media to report their concerns by phone or by text. Frustrated with government, they prefer to report to the media. Although this entails risk for them, journalists cannot turn their backs on listeners who report abuses or corruption. She also said that, generally, radio journalists in the provinces have no formal schooling in journalism and are there because they are very brave and have a good voice. They need training on journalism ethics. While the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) does have a Code of Ethics, it is not strictly enforced. Mass media education will help teach future journalists how to raise the ethical bar in journalism practice.

DR. CARANDANG underscored the power of media over the psyche, especially among children. Although TV cartoons show the triumph of good versus evil, the fight is done through violence. In entertainment, verbal abuse is prevalent and accepted as funny, but it is most dangerous because it assaults the dignity of a person. All these lead to the acceptance of violence as normal.

She also commented on the Task Force 211 report to the UNESCO director general, which she finds reactive, superficial

and without compassion. She added that the report shows that the task force has no picture of the situation, which is “totally out of its consciousness.”

MR. HULOG clarified that KBP does get cases in Metro Manila and is able to address the use of foul language in broadcasting. However, it is more difficult to get cases of bias in commentaries.

MR JOSE L. PAVIA, executive director of the Philippine Press Institute, noted that media has become part of the problem. Journalists must go back to the basics of accuracy and excellence. Their role of reporting is necessarily investigative. There is no bad news or good news, but just news. He cited research in the U.S. that showed the majority of Americans as having lost trust in their media because of bias. He said that this relates to accuracy. The “citizen journalist” cannot replace good journalism, which checks and double checks the facts and which disregards when in doubt. While news is “history in a hurry,” citizen journalism has become merely “news in a hurry” without the guarantee of accuracy. Journalism can only have one advocacy, and that is advocacy for truth. He also cited the problem of block-timers. Journalists must take up the challenge of excellence in their job.

“Journalism can only have one advocacy, and that is advocacy for truth.”

For the research to be done, he suggested including the widows and children of the slain journalists.



DR. BRAID noted that dehumanization grows with the culture of impunity. She cited the “moral exclusion theory” (Susan Opatow, 2001) which sees moral exclusion as a psychological orientation that views those excluded as expendable and undeserving. It provides a perspective on injustice, particularly social-psychological factors that support and exonerate harm-doing. Dr. Braid suggested that we should look at how media contributes to such exclusion.

DR. CARLOS said that political history provides an insight into the legal framework of impunity. A disjunct exists between the political infrastructure and the political culture (or the grass roots), between the political system and the interaction between groups. There needs to be a genuine rethinking of political structures as barriers. She cited local power brokers like the police or soldiers - some, if not many, of whom are in the pockets of politicians.

Political culture factors in the killing of journalists include the following: a public being inured to the level of corruption/violence; a violence/corruption fatigue that has set in; and a continuing political patronage which involves the two major armed forces, the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Other factors include a

less than discerning electorate that is not willing to vote out of office erring politicians.

She also discussed the socialization of violence. The home, much more than the church or peers, should be the major socializer of the young in their formative years. In her own experience for example, “*palô*” (the rod or parental discipline) and “*takot*” (fear), helped build the “integrity of the self.” A genuine sanctioning environment starts at the home. This sanctioning environment is absent or weak even in government. She cited how “stealing” in government involves not only one person but about six people, who are all involved in signing documents that make possible the “stealing.”

She added that the link between childhood experiences and adult behavior may be a bit tenuous unless we demonstrate through path analysis that, indeed, certain socialization during childhood is carried over to adulthood.

Journalists and Critical Thinking

DR. OCAMPO noted the changes that have taken place in the family, media and business, e.g., absentee parents, television as “yaya” (nanny), news stories that are just e-mailed, research that is done through Google. In training journalists, it is important to include the social sciences in the curriculum. He noted how news is filtered, that critical thinking is deficient in news reports, and that editors do not check sources. He also noted the entry of blogs in covering news and how screaming on radio seems to have become a normal way for broadcasting.

DR. CASTRO noted that students today have resources other than the school, so there is competition between these

sources and the teacher. There is no facility to discern what is real and true. He cited a proposal he made for schoolchildren to be given different versions of history to enable them to hone their critical thinking, but he was told that it could not be done. He recommended a look at socialization, including child-rearing practices.

DR. TOLENTINO pointed out the inadequacy of merely training journalists to enable them to be accurate in their work. He added that, with the killings, journalism and communication students will not dream of becoming investigative journalists. What is needed in the educational system is to put in place the critical tools of political and social analyses of the Philippine state and of media practices.

DR. BRAID said that the levels of socialization should be identified, and the new media should be looked into as a venue for interaction. This should be related to the problem of impunity. Also, how can we relate psychological concepts to impunity? What are the values and how can these be developed?

ATTY. QUINSAYAS recommended that the killings be viewed also from the perspective of political economics, and even media structure should be considered.

MS. MA. AURORA R. FAJARDO, project coordinator of the Philippine Human Rights Reporting Project, suggested that how institutions look at and deal with the media must be examined. She noted that, in the provinces, politicians do not bother to write a letter to the editor but just directly threaten the media. She asked whether prosecutors and politicians know the role of media. She recommended that the group should look into the impact of the killing of journalists on the family of the victim, as well as the cost of the killings.

DR. CARLOS said the issue is that we, even in a liberal democracy, regard our views as most important. A significant part of the research agenda is to determine how we handle opposition to our points of view. She noted that killing the person who disagrees with another is not the way to go because it is the ideas which collide, not the persons.

DR. CARANDANG said that, aside from a “culture of intimidation” and “lying as a way of life” which she had earlier discussed, “narcissism” is also a factor in the culture of impunity. Narcissism is a way of thinking where one can see only his or her own point of view, which implies a lack of empathy. She thinks the killings are a clear indication of this lack of empathy and compassion.

Research Areas and Approach

MR. TUAZON posed the question: What is the core/central area of the research on the culture of impunity? Where can subtopics come in?

DR. CARANDANG recommended that the central area be the Individual and Family, then the School and the Community, while considering the developmental aspect from early childhood, preschool, elementary, high school to college.

DR. CARLOS suggested the Institution and the Individual and proposed that Political System and Power Brokers be included. Variables such as Moral Barriers must also be identified, and Time Frame must be introduced showing human development from childhood to adulthood. Time frame also affects institutional development. Also, political economy should be considered.

In summary, the participants identified the following research areas:

- definition of “culture of impunity”
- patterns of impunity: manifest and latent
- child-rearing practices
- political system vs. political culture
- views and practice of democracy
- educational system
- socialization in the home, school, media, etc.
- evolution of the role of media
- training of journalists
- media content
- impact of the killing of journalists

For the research approach, three platforms were agreed upon, namely:

- institutional
- individual/ group
- developmental (time): from infancy to adulthood

Regarding the involvement of different institutions in doing the research, DR. CARLOS suggested that each one contributes per discipline, e.g., Dr. Ocampo writes on the historical aspect and Dr. Carandang writes on the child psychology component.

MR. TUAZON asked if historically there has been a culture of impunity against journalists? The name of Dr. Vic Torres came up because he has a historical study on killings.

MR. PAVIA posed the questions: Is religion a factor? Or are the killings viewed by the public as entertainment? He pointed out that, seemingly, no one is outraged, that the public is indifferent.

DR. CARLOS suggested that the discussion can be continued

through e-mail before the group looks into the data. She also posed a challenge: Where are the other sectors of society like the religious groups, the NGOs, etc., and how do they react to these killings?

MR. TUAZON said we can create a Yahoo e-group for this purpose.

DR. BRAID said, that in looking deeper into the culture of impunity, CMFR has a number of studies we can use.

“We should look into how the news media is shaped by power brokers and the interaction between them.”

MR. HULOG enjoined the group to look into the underlying causes of the killings; otherwise, we may not be addressing the problem. He cited the book *Losing the News that Feeds Democracy* and stressed that the problem of violence against journalists should always relate to the function of the press in a democracy, which is bearing witness. He lamented that the news is getting smaller, while commentary or opinion is getting bigger. We should also look into local power brokers and determine if the victim is part of the system. There should be an understanding of the journalists and where they are coming from, e.g., whether they have been trained professionally. Also, we should look into how the news media is shaped by power brokers and the interaction between them.

DR. CARLOS said we should look at both Institution and Individual and focus on the journalist as Individual. We should also consider how a news report lacks substance – the elegance of the language should not substitute for content.

MR. HULOG noted that in the provinces, some broadcasters follow a career path that leads to becoming a “respected” local politician.

DR. CHURCHILL said that the lack of knowledge and understanding of history is an issue. News doesn't come out correctly because it is deficient in historical context. It is not just journalists who lack historical perspective, but the entire educational system itself where history is learned.

DR. CARLOS stressed that it is history that provides the foundation and the content; while the other disciplines provide the theory and the approach.

DR. OCAMPO said knowledge and understanding of history helps build nationhood. In helping write history, journalists should get their facts right and make sure the chronology is correct.

MS.MELANIE PINLAC, representing the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), observed that the impunity against journalists is a result of a weakening of democracy and its institutions. The government, the justice system, the public – they are interconnected. The culture of impunity may be connected to other facets of the social sciences.

Specific Case Examples

MR. TUAZON said that what is emerging is that the group would like to get a comprehensive multidisciplinary study and, at the same time, to look at specific cases to be able to get empirical basis. He also noted that the group should go back and look at case studies which CMFR can probably provide. He suggested that in doing an in-depth study, some roundtable discussants may wish to give a frame on how to look at the problem. If we do a follow-up of the case studies, we may be able to see the problem from a broader perspective and at the same time, we could do the study on its own because there are many variables which we could look into.

DR. OCAMPO suggested we should go back to culture and involve anthropologists and social scientists and find out what is the threshold that makes perpetrators kill journalists. He said case studies are important to give context, and from there patterns will come out from basic research.

DR. CARLOS suggested that the study can start with Pagadian City and look into not just the individual victims but also their community. The pivot of the study will be stories about the journalists, their families, the communities; and the prism will be the multidisciplinary approach. Independent variables will be the causalities. To be able to do such a study as this, we will need people on the ground.

MR. TUAZON noted that Pagadian is where the most number of killings occurred.

DR. CARLOS said the people on the ground are the stories. The fundamental question is, what are the causalities? Variables are independent so people on the ground are very important. She noted that it can be a very productive way to start the structure of explanation.

DR. CARANDANG noted the history of the individual, the community, the interaction with the powers is a case study in itself which can give us a point of view. She said it is a rich resource which the group can take as a first step, and each discipline can be a part of this case study.

DR. TOLENTINO said we should give equal emphasis to the victim and the perpetrator, for context. And the challenge is for media practitioners to be vigilant in the killing of their colleagues.

ATTY. DIOKNO commented that we might want to consider the unwritten initiation practices of the PNP in recruiting police officers, which may be related to impunity or corruption.

ATTY. STA. MARIA suggested a look into community connections where “goodies” are viewed as a privilege, reinforcing the mind-set of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) and *pakikisama* (comradship/ camaraderie). This has an implication in pursuing human rights cases. She noted that her organization is looking at the facilitating and mediating factors in perpetuating the culture of impunity. She said that educating community members on their rights can help emancipate them from their state of powerlessness.

DR.CASTRO said that he will share with the group the framework of the study on electoral violence in Abra.

Synthesis

PROF. ABANTO acknowledged the role of each discipline present in the roundtable discussion. In synthesizing the discussion, she reiterated that the killing of journalists has an impact on the democratic institutions of our country and can be a threat to the country’s development if we allow the killings to continue.

The roundtable discussants have agreed that the best way to look into the problem is to study specific cases of journalists who have been killed. The group may select the provinces where there is a bigger number of journalists killed.

The study to be undertaken may involve PACE, UP and AIJC, representing various perspectives. They can look at the content and context of the works of the victims and the environment that existed at the time of the killings. They can look at sociopsychological factors, the political system, and why the impunity continues.

UNESCO and AIJC can then define a research agenda which could be pursued by the U.P. College of Mass Communication, PACE and other universities. The next step should be to identify appropriate methodologies which could be used in pursuing the research agenda.

As soon as the study is completed, various disciplines may further analyze why this culture of impunity exists and its various implications.

It was agreed that an e-group will be organized among the roundtable discussants and other social science experts, a directory of participants will be shared, and papers and relevant materials will be shared.

AIJC and UNESCO NatCom will organize a follow-up workshop to finalize the research framework and objectives, determine the research methodology and tools, and identify the research team.


Annexes

**A Multidisciplinary Inquiry
on the Killing of Filipino Journalists**
A Roundtable Discussion

OVERVIEW

By Florangel Rosario Braid, Ph.D.
Chair, Communication Committee, UNESCO Philippines

Sponsored by:



15 September 2009, Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan

CMFR, August 2009

- 134 Filipino journalists killed since 1986
- Of this number, 80 are work-related
- Since start of 2009, 6 journalists have been killed



UNESCO has expressed concern on the continuous killing of journalists in the Philippines:

March 2009:

- DG Koichiro Matsuura requested Philippine Permanent Delegate to UNESCO for status report on investigation into killing of six Filipino journalists, e.g., Cañete, Pace, Batul, etc.



June 2009:

- UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines – Communication Committee submitted status report to UNESCO through Ambassador to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO Rora Navarro-Tolentino.



August 2009:

- Killing of journalist Godofredo Linao on July 27 prompted DG Matsuura to issue press statement urging Philippine authorities to act on journalist murders.

"I trust the authorities will spare no effort in bringing to justice the culprits of these crimes which undermine the rights and freedoms of all the citizens of the Philippines."



Final Draft of Philippines-UNESCO Country Program Document 2009-2011 to be issued by UNESCO Regional Office in Jakarta:

- Has included as priority a comprehensive project to address Culture of Impunity in the Killing of Filipino Journalists
- Project has components on research, action program, advocacy, etc.



Definition of Impunity:

"The impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account – whether in criminal, civil, administrative, or disciplinary proceedings – since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, and if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims."

United Nations Commission on Human Rights
Feb. 8, 2005

Definition of Impunity

"Exemption from accountability, penalty, punishment or legal sanction for perpetrators of illegal acts."

Affito, 2000, McSherry & Molina, 1992

Objective of Multidisciplinary Inquiry:

To examine the problem of impunity in the killing of Filipino journalists from a multidisciplinary perspective. This involves research that shall look into the causal link between violence against journalists, impunity, and self-censorship

Specific Objectives:

- To examine the root causes of impunity through a multidisciplinary approach
- To raise awareness about impunity and its high cost to the rule of law and to a free and democratic society
- To validate assumptions about impunity
- To identify case examples and indicators of impunity

Expected Outputs:

- Multidisciplinary insights
 - Root causes
 - Indicators of impunity
 - Research methodologies
- Policy options/ Action program- Legislation and constitutional reforms to address impunity
- Research agenda (prioritized)

THANK YOU!



DIRECTORY

Resource Persons

**DR. MA. LOURDES A. CARANDANG
(CHILD PSYCHOLOGY)**

Room 231 Medical Arts Building
Cardinal Santos Medical Center
10 Wilson Street, San Juan
Tel: 727 0001, (0917) 628-5947; Telefax: 721-0498
Clinic Hours: 9am-3pm (M-F), Edna
E-mail: *mlac.etal@gmail.com*

DR. CLARITA R. CARLOS (POLITICAL SCIENCE)

Professor, Department of Political Science
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Faculty Center 3135, University of the Philippines, Diliman,
Quezon City 1101
Telefax: 920-7246, 981-8500 loc. 2379, 2380
E-mail: *polisci@kssp.upd.edu.ph, cenapsis@yahoo.com*

DR. NESTOR T. CASTRO (ANTHROPOLOGY)

Associate Dean for Administration and External Affairs
Department of Anthropology
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City 1101
Tel: 4261454; Fax: 9262511
Email: *ncastro@kssp.upd.edu.ph*

ATTY. JOSE MANUEL DIOKNO (LAW)

Dean, College of Law
Bro. Andrew Gonzalez Hall Room 1207
De La Salle University, 2401 Taft Avenue Manila
Tel: 724-5576, 0919-5271287, 524-4611 local 285 & 286

E-mail: *law@dlsu.edu.ph, cheldiokno@yahoo.com, dioknolawcenter@gmail.com*

DR. ROLAND B. TOLENTINO (JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION)

Dean, College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel: 928-3188, Fax: 926-3465, 920-6864
E-mail: *cmc@up.edu.ph, rolando.tolentino@gmail.com*

DR. AMBETH R. OCAMPO (HISTORY)

Chairman, National Historical Institute
T.M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila
Tel: 523-0905 (Melanie), 524-9952; Fax: 536-3181
E-mail: *admin@nhi.gov.ph, aocampo@ateneo.edu*

DR. BERNARDITA R. CHURCHILL (HISTORY)

Chair, Technical Committee for History
Commission on Higher Education
Quezon City
Tel: 921-4575; E-mail: *nitachurchill@hotmail.com*

Participants

MR. JOSE L. PAVIA

Chair, Board of Trustees, Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists
Executive Director, Philippine Press Institute
Rm. 308 BF Condominium, A. Soriano cor. Solano Sts.,
Intramuros, Manila
Tel: 527-9632, 527-4478 (PPI), 438-6201, 912-4852 (Mabuhay),
(0917) 325-9627; Fax: 527-3390
E-mail: *ppi1@mozcom.com, mabuhaynews25@yahoo.com*

MR. REY HULOG

Executive Director, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas
6th Floor LTA Building, 118 Perea St., Legaspi Village,
Makati City

Tel: 815-1990 to 92; Fax: 815-1989, 815-1993

E-mail: *reyhulog@yahoo.com*, *info@kbp.org.ph*,
reyhulog@kbp.org.ph

MS. MELANIE PINLAC

Staff Writer and Press Alerts Officer, Center for Media
Freedom and Responsibility

2/F Ateneo Professional Schools-Salcedo,

#130 HV dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City

Tel. 894-1314, 894-1326, 840-0903, Telefax: 840-0889

Email: *staff@cmfr-phil.org*, *melanie@cmfr-phil.org*

MS. MA. AURORA R. FAJARDO

Project Coordinator, Philippine Human Rights Reporting
Project

Center for Community Journalism and Development

Penthouse 2, FSS Building, 89 Scout Castor Street, Quezon
City

Telefax: 376-5550, E-mail: *roriegirl@yahoo.com*

ATTY. AMPARITA DE LOS SANTOS-STA. MARIA

Professor, Ateneo de Manila Law School

#20 Rockwell Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City, 1200

Tel: 899-7691 to 96 loc. 2109; 729-2000 loc. 2304, 2305 to
2307; Fax: 899-4342

E-mail: *astamaria@aps.ateneo.edu*

ATTY. PRIMA JESUSA BERONGOY QUINSAYAS

Legal Counsel, Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists
c/o Department of Communication

St. Scholastica's College, Manila

2560 Leon Guinto St., Malate, Manila

Tel: 524-4611 loc. 322, 524-7686, locals 274, 227

E-mail: *pj1215@yahoo.com*, *pj.quinsayas@ssc.edu.ph*

PROF. FLORDELIZ L. ABANTO

President, Philippine Association of Communication Educators
Chairperson, Department of Communication
St. Scholastica's College, Manila
2560 Leon Guinto St., Malate, Manila
Tel: 524-4611 loc. 322, 524-7686, (0922) 860-1024
E-mail: *lizaban2@gmail.com*

MS. JACQUELINE GROSSE

c/o UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines
DFA Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Manila
Tel: 834-4887, 834-3447, Fax: 831-8873

Convenors

DR. FLORANGEL ROSARIO-BRAID

Chairperson, Communication Committee
UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines
President Emeritus, Asian Institute of Journalism and
Communication
5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila
Tel: 724-1276, 740-0396; (0917) 899-1731; Telefax: 743-4321
E-mail: *florbraid@yahoo.com*

MR. RAMON R. TUAZON

President, Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication
Vice Chairman, Philippine Social Science Council
President, Philippines Communication Society
5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila
Tel: 740-0396, (0920) 926-0963; Telefax: 743-4321
E-mail: *rrtuazon722@yahoo.com, info@ajjc.com.ph*

MS. ANN LOURDES C. LOPEZ

Associate Director, Asian Institute of Journalism
and Communication

5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila

Tel: 740-0396; Telefax: 743-4321

E-mail: *annlourdeslopez@yahoo.com*

MS. EMMY ANNE YANGA

Development Management Officer III

UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines

DFA Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Manila

Tel: 834-4887, 834-3447, Fax: 831-8873

E-mail: *emmyyanga@yahoo.com*

MS. NIMFA D. CAMUA

Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication

5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila

Tel: 740-0396; Telefax: 743-4321

E-mail: *wordscraft@yahoo.com*

MS. LORIE MACAPUGAY

Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication

5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila

Tel: 740-0396; Telefax: 743-4321

MR. ZANDRO ESPOLONG

Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication

5/F Next Mobile Bldg., 2244 Espana Avenue, Sampaloc, Manila

Tel: 740-0396; Telefax: 743-4321

Critique of the State in the Killings of Journalists

by Dr. Rolando B. Tolentino
UP College of Mass Communication

The killing of journalists, and the larger phenomena of political killings, abductions and torture, with impunity is indeed a sorry state of affairs. This is how it has become. From an academic point of view, the issue needs to be examined in relation to the state that ensures a systemic dose of fascism to quell dissent, especially in the enforcement of newer social relations in neoliberalism—the intensification of the economic imperative of the free market in contemporary experience.

The state has zoomed in on journalists and activists as purveyors of social dissent that threatens the cooptation of the Philippine state for global capitalism through privatization of state operations in favor of big businesses, deregulation of services and industries, and commercialization. Indeed, many of the victims are killed by private paramilitary units, if not by the military elements of the state itself.

It is in this condition that even academe is going the route of a state-sponsored neoliberalism, whether directly through enactment of laws deregulating new industries and services, or indirectly through budget cuts. Tuition fees are increased to commercial rates, idle resources are developed through income-generating activities, programs and researches cater to the markets, university charters revised to cater to economic driven goals.

In other words, it is through the examination of the killings in the context of state orchestration to neoliberalism, a shared

experience in the present operation of academe, that underscores the necessity of political and cultural tools of analysis. In the particularities of media and communication studies, how media and academe neutralizes the political imperatives of a state critique, or the state being made accountable to the systemic phenomenon of the killing of journalists and activists.

If indeed Philippine society has been transformed to a society of spectacle, then how is it possible that the worst spectacle of the state—the public and publicized killings—does not mitigate larger concern, worry and action among the citizenry? How is it possible for media to transform lived experiences into the realm of the depoliticized, rather than to empower the public?

Media, of course, remain complicit to the experience of politically motivated killings. Telenovellas highlight the professional quality of military and police figures and their operations. Starred by heart-throbs, matinee idols and the biggest stars of showbusiness, military and paramilitary work are glamorized, devoid of any politics other than to serve the best interest of the public. How is it then possible to critique the main perpetrators of state killings and violence? Or reality television and televisual quests being the dominant television genres of this time?

The killings are frontpage news, but the investigation land in the fringes. Media highlight only the actual incident. The killings end up in a growing statistics, and when statisticized—ending in a numbers game—the killings can never be enough. What then needs to be highlighted is the vigilance of media in the killings of its practitioners and the eventual demise of its tortured profession.

Journalism and communication students will not dream of becoming investigative journalists for the heroism it entails. The killings cower dreams of being the fourth estate, shaping and transforming public opinion, and so on as past relics. The

killings themselves become demonized, pedestrianized, and massified. What then needs to be emplaced are the critical tools of political and social analyses of the Philippine state on the one hand, and the gentrified shift of media practices and aspirations on the other hand. These cover the present experience of media in Philippine neoliberalism.

