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The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and its potential to foster freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists

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A GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS¹

INTRODUCTION

The role of journalists in bringing facts to light and holding the powerful to account has never been more important, but for journalists to be able to do their work and exercise their freedom of expression, it is important that the fundamental rights set out in international human rights law are respected in their countries.

In many cases, national governments have already accepted and recognized the fundamental human rights aspects that should apply within their jurisdictions. That said, they may not yet have been fully incorporated into national legislation or customary practice by the executive authorities, regulatory bodies, law enforcement agencies or the courts. This is where the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a unique process for monitoring the protection and promotion of human rights established by the UN Human Rights Council, comes in and where journalists have a key role to play.

¹ This guide was developed with the assistance of journalists covering all the regions in which UNESCO operates. We would particularly like to thank Tamer Aboalenin, Stéphane Bussard, Nick Cumming-Bruce, Catherine Fiankan-Bokonga, Rolando Gómez, Marta Hurtado, Nina Larson, Ann Lecroq and Stephanie Nebehay for their contributions.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide aims to provide information to help improve press coverage of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on issues relating to the right to freedom of expression, the safety of journalists and access to information with the purpose of improving their ability to inform the public, to a professional standard, about the various parts of the process and, in doing so, increase the accountability of the various players involved in the review.

Journalists themselves are victims of human rights violations around the world. These guidelines are also relevant to helping them understand how to report any violations of their freedom of expression and/or safety that might occur.



KEY ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE UPR

United Nations (UN): an international organization founded by the 1945 Charter, it currently has 193 Member States that come together, discuss common problems and identify joint solutions that benefit humanity as a whole. One of its main responsibilities is to protect human rights. UN Country Teams coordinate the work of all UN actors in countries with UN programmes to support their development needs. **UNESCO** is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its mandate includes promoting freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): the main UN body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights for all. Among other things, it coordinates the provision of information to Member States for the UPR by civil society organizations.

Civil society organization (CSO): any voluntary, non-profit group of people organized at local, national or international level. CSOs can play various roles, such as providing humanitarian services and functions, presenting people's concerns to their governments, monitoring policies and work plans, and promoting community-level involvement in official processes.

I. WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)?

The UPR is a process that involves a **periodic** review of the human rights records and commitments of all 193 UN Member States. The process is **universal peer review** which treats all countries equally. It provides an opportunity for all states to declare the measures they have taken to ensure and promote human rights. The UPR is also a platform for sharing best practices relating to human rights among the various actors concerned.

Furthermore, it provides a unique opportunity for accountability, giving various stakeholders (other Member States, CSOs, the UN and other actors) the opportunity to question the state under scrutiny and reinforce its accountability in areas concerning its human rights policies and potential human rights violations. The other unique feature of the process is its potential for comparison, in that journalists can report on how a country's human rights policies have evolved from one cycle to the next: have they improved? Have they stagnated? Have they got worse? Given its universal nature and frequency, there is currently no other similar mechanism when it comes to promoting and protecting human rights. It is therefore important that the press in each Member State has the necessary tools to provide timely and objective coverage of the review.

The UPR was created when the Human Rights Council was established by the United Nations General Assembly's [Resolution 60/251](#) on 15 March 2006. This resolution mandated the Council to “undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States.” The first UPR cycle took place in 2008 and since then, all 193 UN Member States have been required to report on their human rights record and commitments every four and a half years.

The process assesses the extent to which states are fulfilling their human rights obligations, as set out in the following:

- ❑ the Charter of the United Nations
- ❑ the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ❑ human rights documents to which the state is a party (human rights treaties ratified by the State in question)
- ❑ voluntary pledges and commitments made by the state (e.g., any applicable national human rights policies and/or programmes)
- ❑ the applicable international humanitarian law.



In practice, a growing number of states refers to the Rome Statute.²

At every UPR, the right to freedom of expression, access to information and the protection of journalists is a key issue that several countries consider when it comes to evaluating another state. According to an internal report produced under UNESCO's supervision by students at Sciences Po, a university of political sciences in Paris, around 4% of all recommendations issued in the first three cycles have concerned issues relating to freedom of expression, including the safety of journalists and access to information. Although this is a significant percentage in global terms, these issues need more attention to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is fully exercised at the local level.

2 <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

II. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO COVER THE UPR PROCESS?

Freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, is a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

Freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists are usually a good barometer for measuring a state’s performance in matters of human rights. Freedom of expression is a necessary condition for achieving the principles of transparency and accountability which, in turn, are essential for the promotion and protection of other human rights. Coverage of the UPR in the national and international press is an **unrivalled** opportunity to bring to light the victims of gross human rights violations and give them a voice, and to force the state under review to improve the effective exercise and protection of these rights.

The role of journalism in promoting peace in society was once again highlighted by awarding the [2021 Nobel Peace Prize to journalists Maria Ressa and Dmitri Muratov](#), and their example should serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement for those performing this noble task. It is also a reminder that journalists have **the right, not to mention a duty**, to defend the right to freedom of expression.

Media coverage is a crucial piece of the UPR puzzle when it comes to realising the potential that can lead to greater respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights.

Independent, free and pluralistic press coverage of the process can:

- ❑ **Provide the public with background information about the national situation regarding the protection and promotion of human rights;**
- ❑ **Put issues that are relevant to the human rights of all citizens on the national agenda (so-called “agenda setting”);**
- ❑ **Hold the relevant actors responsible for the implementation of public human rights policies to account, including through the work of investigative journalists who follow the human rights agenda and who can use much of the material arising from the UPR process.**

If media coverage of the UPR steps up to a professional standard across the various stages of the process, the UPR will become better known and have **more impact** on the international community. **The UPR should become a press event and enjoy extensive coverage in national media to promote the full exercise, protection and promotion of all human rights.** Journalistic work on the UPR can be essential to each country improving the implementation of its public policies, especially regarding freedom of expression. For many states, freedom of expression is simply not a priority, which is why journalists play a key role in making it visible, and in this respect the fact that it is a recurring theme in the context of the UPR serves as an important anchor point.

One useful tool for following up on the UPR with the view to further elaborating on the issue of freedom of expression, the safety of journalists and access to information is the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#).

Furthermore, it would be advisable for journalists to take note of the [Foundational Primer on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the main purpose of which is to report, in general terms, on the programmes and actions implemented by all UN entities, including their engagement with governmental and civil society partners.

Of special relevance to journalistic work is **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16**: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

The UPR and the 2030 Agenda are universally applicable tools and as such are mutually reinforcing. The information gathered by journalists can prove useful in following up on the recommendations of the UPR and the Agenda 2030 [Voluntary National Reviews](#).

III. WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?

The UPR of each state is based primarily on three reports that form the **cornerstone** of the Review and that the journalist should study in depth:

- ❑ The **national report**, developed by the UN Member State under review³;
- ❑ The compilation of information **from the United Nations**, produced by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)⁴;
- ❑ A summary of reports submitted by civil society and other associations known as the **“other stakeholders”** summary⁵.

The **national report** contains all the information that each state considers relevant to the UPR and is normally submitted in writing and presented orally during the session.

The **OHCHR** report refers to information gathered by the Office from treaty bodies, special procedures, including observations, comments, special communications and state responses to a particular issue, and other information gathered by specialized UN agencies, such as UNESCO, or the UN Country Team.

TOP TIPS

All three reports are published ahead of the session, and it is essential that journalists read and analyse them in advance to understand the context in which new recommendations will be issued.

These reports include information that could potentially contribute to more in-depth press coverage. What has happened since the last report? Has the government implemented the recommendations it had accepted? What do victims of human rights violations have to say? What are the personal stories behind the reports and what impact have they had on public policy?

3 See the guide that UNESCO has prepared with practical suggestions for recommendations that can be drawn up for the State under review in relation to freedom of expression: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381721>

4 See the guide that UNESCO has prepared with practical suggestions for UN Country Teams on how they can improve their reporting on freedom of expression: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377808>

5 See the guide that UNESCO has prepared, in conjunction with Amnesty International, with practical suggestions for civil society organizations on how they can improve their reporting on freedom of expression: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382049>

The “**other stakeholders**” report involving civil society contains relevant information from other entities involved, which may include NGOs, national human rights institutions (NHRIs),⁶ the ombudsman, defenders of human rights, academic institutions and research institutes, and regional bodies, among others. **Journalists, including analysts, freelance journalists, bloggers and others who self-publish in the traditional or digital media can also contribute to this stakeholder report.**

Between the end of one review and the start of the next, states should be taking practical steps to implement the accepted recommendations. States, stakeholders and UN entities can, on a voluntary basis, submit [UPR mid-term reports](#)—periodic updates reflecting the situation at the time and the extent to which recommendations are being implemented. The three reports that form part of the UPR across all cycles are available [here](#) in the six UN official languages⁷.

IV. THE PHASES OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW: ADVICE ON HOW TO PREPARE BETTER COVERAGE

The UPR is divided into three phases: before, during and after the review.

While every journalist has their own style of working, following certain practical advice will make the job easier and ensure greater impact:

Before the UPR session

- ❑ With regard to the OHCHR report, it is advisable to find out who was involved in the drafting process, which Special Rapporteurs or Special Procedures have sent communications to the state under review, especially if information from [the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#) and UNESCO is available.
- ❑ With regard to the “other stakeholders” report, journalists are encouraged to further their contact with members of civil society involved in the drafting of the report. Talking to members of national CSOs is key to understanding the challenges a country is facing in terms of freedom of expression.
- ❑ It is also advisable to establish contact with the [UN Country Teams](#), which have first-hand knowledge of the situation in each state under review, hence the importance of establishing communication in order to obtain background information.
- ❑ Fact checking is essential. It is important to cross-check the information submitted by the state, including the statistics and data presented. Journalists can submit requests for access to public information⁸ to the relevant government institutions (where they exist) to gain a thorough understanding of the information presented.
- ❑ It is also vital to compare the reports submitted for a new cycle with those of the previous cycle. Journalists can shed important light on what has progressed, stalled or worsened.

6 See the guide that UNESCO has prepared with practical suggestions for national human rights institutions on how they can improve their reporting on freedom of expression: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381509>

7 The official languages of the UN are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

8 See the UNESCO guide with practical suggestions for national bodies responsible for implementing laws on access to public information: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380590>

During the UPR session

- ❑ For background information, it is advisable to profile **the delegation in Geneva, including the head of delegation**, to find out what roles they have previously held, whether they are involved in human rights programmes in the country and any other useful information. This will be important when it comes to documenting the UPR process.
- ❑ The journalist should have the list of speakers and take note of who is participating on behalf of each state during the interactive dialogue. Practical details on **how to do this** can be found in Chapter IV.
- ❑ In the event that a state's UPR reports or interactive dialogue mention journalists and/or those killed or attacked in the country under review, it is important to note who they are, inquire about their stories, put them into context, understand the reasons or motives for the attacks, establish whether they have been resolved in the national justice system and observe how the state responds when questioned about these events.
- ❑ Other essential elements include any mentions in and omissions from the government report that relate to wider access to information and freedom of expression policies (e.g., laws that may be restrictive where such rights are concerned).
- ❑ Recommendations can sometimes use legal language that might be difficult for the general public to understand. When circulating content, it is important to use wording that most local stakeholders will understand.

After the UPR session

- ❑ Report, with context, on the recommendations accepted and observed by the state to boost their visibility and encourage all actors at local level to implement and monitor them.
- ❑ It is advisable for the journalist to know which state authority is responsible for honouring the commitments made and to seek to establish contact with the relevant officials at the local level. Creating a table of past and current recommendations and establishing who is responsible for following up on them can facilitate this exercise. It is useful to consult the [matrices](#) developed by the OHCHR.
- ❑ Highlight instances of reprisals against journalists and other defenders of human rights who participated in the UPR mechanism.
- ❑ Continue to report on whether and how the recommendations received are being implemented on a regular basis over the next four and a half years.

V. OTHER SPECIFIC ELEMENTS FOR IMPROVING UPR COVERAGE

Before the UPR

- ❑ **Establish contact.** The first thing a journalist should do is to register with the press service of the UN Human Rights Council.
- ❑ This can be done by simply e-mailing hrcmedia@ohchr.org to be added to the mailing list. It is also advisable to contact the Council's press team and spokesperson. This is important when it comes to clarifying any doubts, requesting copies of speeches and receiving **media alerts, advisories and related documents**.
- ❑ **You are advised to follow** the Human Rights Council's Twitter account, [@UN_HRC](https://twitter.com/UN_HRC).
- ❑ It is essential to assess whether there is any real dialogue with civil society on the part of the state prior to producing the report and where the country stands with regard to freedom of expression (see further details on this point in section V).
- ❑ **Read** the questions submitted by States prior to the review and meet with CSO representatives from the country.
- ❑ **Review** the latest news on the state under review and reports and/or press releases from the OHCHR.
- ❑ **Investigate** the authenticity of the NGOs that sign the report submitted by the country in question. Compare this report with the one submitted by the OHCHR and, in the event of disparities, look to global organizations and/or various sources to understand what the real challenges are and where this disparity stems from.
- ❑ Ensure that minorities are heard to include a wide range of views in the UPR coverage. Identify violations of fundamental freedoms relating to the work of journalists in the country under review prior to the session and incorporate them into the report.

During the UPR

- ❑ The UPR can be watched live on the [UN Webcast](#). It is advisable to organize coverage with other journalists for the purposes of exchanging thoughts and ideas. If you travel to Switzerland, you can watch it in Room XX of the Human Rights Council at the UN headquarters in Geneva.
- ❑ Interview other relevant actors such as the ombudsman, members of civil society and OHCHR staff.
- ❑ Note which countries make recommendations relating to freedom of expression, the protection of journalists and access to information. This will help identify which Member States show the greatest commitment to these issues, along with listening to the observations of like-minded countries that tend to overpraise their ally's progress.
- ❑ **Pay particular attention** when several states agree on a recommendation and when there is consensus on what a particular country should do in terms of changing its legislation or practices. This strengthens the information that can then be included in media coverage.

The "do no harm" principle

Stories have greater impact when they are told by those affected, which is why journalists need someone to humanize events. That said, if a journalist approaches a story in an inappropriate manner, ineptly or incorrectly, they run the risk of damaging their sources, often leading to re-victimization, and failing to make an impact in the public sphere.

When it comes to writing about the UPR and a particular human rights violation, it is important that the victims' voices be heard and respected so as not to re-victimize them. Exposure to potentially traumatic events can also affect the journalist. See [here](#) for more information on how to cover traumatic events.

- ❑ Listen to all the countries participating in the UPR as there will be comments that might be particularly relevant. **It is not important to cover every detail, but to highlight the main challenges for the country under review, since there will be hundreds of questions raised by the states.**
- ❑ On the day of the review, it is wise to organize a meeting with civil society to hear their initial impressions of the review and compare information with other colleagues.
- ❑ NGO [UPR Info](#) is very helpful in understanding the UPR and following up on the recommendations of the three cycles. The [Universal Human Rights Index \(UHRI\)](#) compiled by the OHCHR is a useful database for following up on human rights-related recommendations and commitments.
- ❑ If a state does not cooperate with the UPR (i.e., does not actively and systematically participate in the sessions), the Human Rights Council will determine the measures that will need to be taken. It is important for journalists to reflect this in their coverage.

After the UPR

- ❑ The UPR tends to be misunderstood because it does not provide journalists with breaking news. It is, however, a process that often brings to the fore a country's real human rights problems, which is why it should be given extensive coverage in the print and digital media, on radio and TV, depending on the medium of the journalist in question.
- ❑ It is always important to keep in mind those recommendations that the state has “taken note”⁹ of as it is often the very commitments that have not been made that make the news. It is vitally important that press coverage should seek to explain to audiences the reasons for which the state under review has accepted certain recommendations but not others. Lots of journalistic pieces can be produced from this type of analysis.
- ❑ The state may decide later whether to implement the recommendations of which it has taken note. The UPR mechanism cannot be used to dismiss a human rights-related issue or concern.
- ❑ Processes such as the UPR are based on the formation of coalitions and the promotion of multilateralism. It is wise to organize working groups with other journalists to assess how to better cover or follow up on the recommendations made throughout the cycle, especially in terms of a country's commitments regarding freedom of expression.
- ❑ Given that states are reviewed every four and a half years, the journalist is encouraged to write one or more stories mid-cycle on the situation on the ground regarding the UPR. The aim is to maintain the UPR as a continual process, so the more coverage there is between one cycle and the next, the greater the visibility of the progress made in terms of commitments and challenges.
- ❑ Publishing short summaries of the interim reports submitted by the parties can be useful in bringing the process closer to the reader.

TOP TIPS

The large number of recommendations accepted by Member States can make it difficult to follow-up on a national level, though linking current news to previous commitments in the UPR can facilitate this task.

Cases relating to freedom of expression, the safety of journalists and access to information, for example, can be linked to previous UPR recommendations in a specific country. Journalists can look up the current situation regarding freedom of expression in the country under review using information generated by UNESCO, UN and/or regional (OSCE, OAS, African Union) Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, freedom of expression NGOs or think-tanks, and compare this actual information with the national report and the discussions that do or do not take place in the framework of the UPR.

9 All recommendations made to a state are listed in the process. That said, the state might accept some (which it commits to implementing) and take note of others (meaning that it makes no firm commitment to implementing them).

VI. HOW CAN JOURNALISTS USE THE UPR TO PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS AND SAFETY?

According to UNESCO, [a journalist is killed on average every four days when working to provide information to the public](#). Journalists around the world are subjected to harassment, threats, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests, digital violence, judicial harassment and other harmful situations and must often resort to self-censorship or exile in order to survive.

With this in mind, in addition to covering the process, journalists can use the UPR to protect their own rights by including their issues, allegations of harassment and main concerns in the “other stakeholders” report involving civil society.

Practical advice for contributing to the stakeholder report could include the following:

- ❑ Maintain regular contact with UN Country Teams to ensure that the situation of journalists is also included in their reports.
- ❑ Bear in mind that the UPR is not about listing individual cases but rather shedding light on systematic patterns of human rights violations and recommendations for improvement.
- ❑ Coordinating with local CSO members who work on issues relating to freedom of expression and have experience of the process can facilitate this task.

In addition to covering the process, journalists can also participate through joint reporting with NGOs working on freedom of expression issues. The following can be analysed with the view to providing useful information:

- ❑ Murders of journalists in the period covered by the UPR;
 - ❑ What the legislative framework governing freedom of expression, the safety of journalists and access to public information looks like; how the law is implemented;
 - ❑ What the new challenges to freedom of expression in the digital world are and whether states are dealing with these challenges in a way that respects international standards of freedom of expression;
 - ❑ Recommendations to the state: specific, achievable, relevant and time-restricted.
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- ❑ Read the commitments made by the state in question regarding freedom of expression and see whether it has made any substantial progress. To complement this, the journalist might also want to read specific reports on freedom of expression and journalists’ rights published by specialist NGOs such as [Article 19](#) and [Reporters Without Borders](#), as well as other organizations such as [IFEX](#) and [FOIANet](#).
 - ❑ Although not compulsory, the OHCHR encourages Member States to hold consultation meetings prior to drafting their national reports. Pay attention to how broad these consultations have been, if there have been any, and whether there were restrictions on the participation of civil society actors or journalists.
 - ❑ Journalists who are threatened or harassed because of their participation in the process can apply at the behest of the UN to have their testimony included in the OHCHR reprisals report. Providing facts, examples, dates and details is vitally important to establishing as complete a picture as possible of the guarantee of the right to freedom of expression in the state under review.

Technical requirements for contributing to the process

The OHCHR requires that submissions fulfil the following criteria:

- ❑ Highlight any progress made since the last review, including the implementation of previous recommendations;
- ❑ Provide credible and well-documented information supported by first-hand data or independent sources;
- ❑ Avoid references to other governments' reports as this will result in the submission being rejected by the OHCHR;
- ❑ When using first-hand information, be as thorough as possible to increase credibility (bearing in mind the potential risks of retaliation);
- ❑ More information on the reporting methodology can be found [here](#).

Advice on working with other civil society organizations

The OHCHR actively encourages civil society actors to work in coalitions when participating in the UPR. Here are things to consider if you plan to work in partnership with others:

- ❑ Research the backgrounds of the organizations you are considering working with to find out what they work on and check that they work on issues relating to freedom of expression;
- ❑ Do not use abusive language;
- ❑ Do not exceed 2,815 words (or 5,630 words in the event of a joint submission), excluding notes and annexes;
- ❑ Write in one of the six official languages of the UN.

Retaliation

There are various forms of retaliation for cooperating with the UN, including travel bans, threats and harassment, smear campaigns, surveillance, the introduction of restrictive legislation, physical assault, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, denial of access to medical care and even, in the worst cases, killings.

As the Secretary-General stated in his [2021 report to the Human Rights Council](#), the most commonly reported instances of retaliation concern defenders of human rights, activists and journalists.

All UN mechanisms, including the UPR, have specific locations for reporting UPR-related reprisals, including travelling to sessions and reporting on the process.

They can also be reported directly to ohchr-reprisals@un.org to facilitate coordination and follow-up. UN Country Teams and the OHCHR offices can be contacted for follow-up on a case both in the country in question and in Geneva.

- ❑ **Highlight** statistics presented in reports and cross-check with statistics from other sources in the report submitted to the UPR, such as [UNESCO Observatory](#) statistics on journalists killed. This report helps to paint a clear picture of the degree of impunity and the state's responses to UNESCO's requests for information on the judicial process.
- ❑ The [Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity](#), which the Director-General of UNESCO submits every two years and which analyses information received on a voluntary basis from Member States on the status of legal cases involving murdered journalists, is also a great source of support.
- ❑ Furthermore, [UNESCO's report on Global Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#) can be used to understand trends in the regions in which we work and include them in media coverage as supporting information.
- ❑ Audio-visual materials can also prove very useful in promoting freedom of expression, the safety of journalists and access to information in the national media, such as materials produced by UNESCO under its "[Protect journalists, protect the truth](#)" initiative.

VII. WHEN AND WHERE?

It is important for media professionals to know where and when to find UPR-related information to follow up on it:

- ❑ Statements by national delegations and representatives are publicly available on the [Extranet](#) of the Human Rights Council 48 hours after each review.
- ❑ Detailed UPR schedules can be found [here](#).

Other dates to bear in mind:

- ❑ Publication of the three reports: the state's report, the OHCHR report and the report prepared by civil society or other stakeholders.
- ❑ The state's national dialogue with civil society prior to the UPR (if there is any).
- ❑ UPR-related events held on a national level or abroad.



- ❑ Adoption of the report in which the state acknowledges its commitments and/or takes note of some of the recommendations made.
- ❑ Use [World Press Freedom Day](#) (3 May), the [International Day for Universal Access to Information](#) (28 September) and the [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists](#) (2 November) as opportunities to expand coverage of these issues. These provide valuable opportunities to link the UPR to the issue of journalists' safety and access to information.
- ❑ If you are able to attend the session in person, you will find all accreditation and practical details on the [UNOG](#) website.
- ❑ You can follow the session in its entirety without the need to attend in person via the UN's [Webcast](#) and contact the Human Rights Council's press department (hrcmedia@ohchr.org) should you have any question or requests for ensuring good coverage.

VIII. KEEPING IT ALIVE

It is vital that the UPR process be made visible through media coverage, especially since the beginning of its fourth cycle in late 2022, when states returned to outline progress made in honouring their past commitments. The new UPR cycle is also a time when states will be held accountable to their peers for the reality of the situation on the ground, and it is vital to bear witness as to whether states are making the same recommendations as in the previous review to the country under review, as each state will need to provide verifiable figures to demonstrate how they have acted upon these commitments and set out new challenges. The press must be there to provide continuity and follow-up and, most importantly, to try and hold the various actors involved accountable at different stages of the process.

Media coverage is essential when it comes to revitalising the UPR since silence in such cases often works against freedom of expression. The UPR needs to be taken out of the confines of the UN building in Geneva to benefit the public. Media coverage has the power to bring the UPR to a wider audience that extends beyond those already involved or interested in the process.

The combination of access to information and civic participation in the media can only contribute to an increased sense of ownership and empowerment among citizens. **The media has an incredibly important role to play in highlighting progress and setbacks, in accountability and in the enjoyment of human rights around the world.**

Journalism professionals must tell the story, publish it, circulate it, delve deeper in investigating human rights violations and ask the uncomfortable questions. The UPR could be at risk of becoming a dead letter, hence the key role of the press in **keeping it alive**.

IX. REFERENCES

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Other references:

- UPR Info: *UPR Interim Report Optimizing Sustainable Implementation. Good practices for UPR Stakeholders.* https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2018-03/upr_midterm_report_web_v1_high.pdf (available in English only)
- Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/>
- Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/>
- Article 19: <https://article19.org/>
- Committee to Protect Journalists: <https://cpj.org/>
- Danish Institute For Human Rights: <https://sdgdata.humanrights.dk/>
- Free Press Unlimited: <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en>
- IFEX: <https://ifex.org/>
- Reporters Without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en>
- Centre For Law and Democracy: <https://www.law-democracy.org/live/>



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