NEW YORK, United States—The United Nations agency mandated to defend freedom of expression and press freedom has called for improved safety for journalists and other media professionals working in areas of conflict or social unrest so they can carry out their duties.

The call follows the publication last week of year-end analysis by the non-governmental organization Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) which found that at least 42 journalists were killed in 2010.

"While the number of journalists killed in 2010 represents a decline from previous years, it nonetheless remains unacceptably high and underlines the violence that journalists confront on a daily basis," said Irina Bokova, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

According to the CPJ, suicide attacks and violent street protests caused an unusually high proportion of deaths. In addition, the countries ranked the highest for journalism-related killings are Pakistan (8), Iraq (4), Honduras (3), and Mexico (3).

Bokova also deplored the death of Iraqi television journalist Omar Rasim al-Qaysi, who was killed in a suicide bombing on 12 December. A-Qaysi, an anchor working for the satellite television channel Al-Anbar TV, died when a car bomb exploded as he was walking to work in central Ramadi in al-Anbar province.

His brother Mustafa al-Qaysi, a cameraman for the same channel, was injured in the attack, which killed at least 13 people and injured 40. The Islamic State of Iraq, an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group, claimed responsibility for the attack, according to news reports.

"As bombings and attacks continue in Iraq and other areas of conflict or social unrest, journalists are paying an unacceptably high toll for defending the basic right of freedom of expression," said Bokova.

"I call on the Government of Iraq, and on the governments of all countries where similar campaigns of violence are being waged, to do their utmost to improve security conditions. Only then will journalists be able to carry out their important work in relative safety."

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