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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Platform for Youth Integration and Volunteerism, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Freedom of expression

Human rights Defenders and journalism is often associated with the reporting of human rights abuses, especially against the victims of political violence, and sometimes with freedom of expression, which is also a fundamental human right. Journalists are not safe in India because the Indian government harasses them for independent reporting. Faced with sectarian violence in the country's northeast, the government has responded by disputing reports on the clashes and punishing those who covered them. Indian Government arrested two female journalists from Assam for reporting on anti-Muslim riots in neighboring Tripura state on November 13, 2021, accusing them of instigating communal disharmony. The journalists were held in custody until they were granted bail by a court on 15 November. The two journalists had been in Tripura to cover large-scale anti-Muslim violence which broke out in October 2021 and saw several arson attacks on mosques. They had also published a series of tweets with images of burnt mosques. The Tripura police accused them of spreading fake news based on a written complaint filed by Kanchan Das, a member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the religious arm of the RSS, a Hindu fundamentalist group. The arrests have raised serious concerns about the freedom of the press in India. According to the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), a French NGO, India ranked 142nd among 180 countries in 2021. My organisation is concerned that these two women have been targeted for doing their jobs. Press freedom is vital for any democracy; however, it does not seem to be a reality for too many journalists in India. We urge the Indian government to safeguard freedom of the press and other fundamental human rights and take measures to ensure that journalists can function in their space without fear of intimidation and reprisals. We also urge this council to ask India for an immediate investigation into Anti-Muslim violence in Tripura and ensure the safety of journalists.
