

Papal nuncio expresses concern for journalists in conflict situations

By Catholic News Service

UNITED NATIONS – Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Vatican’s U.N. nuncio, acknowledged the “tremendous contribution to our world” made by journalists, and extended the Holy See’s prayers for the journalists who have lost their lives through exercising their profession.

He also expressed solidarity with their families on behalf of the Vatican.

In a May 27 presentation at a U.N. Security Council open debate, Archbishop Auza recognized the vital role that journalists play in providing objective information, saying it is fundamental for “sustaining the human community.”

Journalists provide the information necessary “to make informed and responsible decisions on how to end conflicts and assist those affected by them,” he said.

To be able to provide this information, journalists often find themselves in the midst of strife, and he noted that in 2014, 69 journalists were killed and 221 were imprisoned. In the past five months, 25 journalists have given their lives, with 156 more taken captive.

The nuncio said his delegation deplores the situation and declared that “there is no excuse for parties in conflict not to respect and protect journalists.”

Archbishop Auza went on to state that reliable objective information cannot always be provided by the parties in conflict, because “the need to justify military operations often trumps the right” to such objectivity. As a result, he said, the parties involved in conflict often target journalists who believe in objective reporting.

He stressed that although the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols provide protection for journalists, these are insufficient and sometimes nonexistent

in places. He acknowledged the urgency of the situation.

“My delegation believes it is relevant to re-examine the current rights and protections of journalists in conflict situations, to see if they are still adequate, or whether more specific protection measures for journalists are needed.”

The responsibility of providing safety for journalists is not solely the responsibility of governments, though. According to the archbishop, it also is the duty of media organizations, and the journalists themselves.

“Journalists themselves should exercise tact, especially in situations in which the duty to objective reporting seems to collide with respect for cultural values and religious beliefs of people involved in the conflict”, he said.

His delegation, he said, “salutes those who put their lives on the line so that the cries of those trapped in conflict situations can be heard and the voices of those longing for peace can find an echo.”

Archbishop Auza expressed hope all could work together to end war, “so that no one may ever have to risk life and limb.”

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