

Director-General condemns killing of Afghan reporter Jawed Ahmad

News

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The Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, today condemned the killing of Afghan reporter Jawed Ahmad on 10 March in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan.

“I condemn the killing of Jawed Ahmad,” the Director-General said. “The life of a dedicated reporter has been cut short, depriving the whole of Afghan society of a brave promoter of democratic debate and a defender of the basic human right of freedom of expression.”

Also known as Jojo Yazemi, Jawed Ahmad worked for the Canadian media, including CTV News. He was gunned down by two men as he was getting out of his car in the centre of Kandahar.

According to Reporters Without Borders, several Afghan journalists have said that they suspected the murder may have been ordered by the Taliban. Jawed Ahmad was detained by the U.S. army in November 2007, allegedly for having contacts with the Taliban, and was released 11 months later.

Reporters Without Borders says that Jawed Ahmad had defended his “right” to talk to the Taliban as a necessity for his work as a reporter in southern Afghanistan.

UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom. Article 1 of its Constitution requires the Organization to “further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.” To realize this the Organization is requested to “collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image...”