



ICSC and DCHRS Organize Workshop on Media and Transitional Justice

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), along with the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS), a member in the ICSC, held a three-day workshop from 10-12 December 2013 for journalists working on issues related to Syria.

The workshop aimed to: raise awareness amongst local journalists on the role of memory in conflict and peace building and how memory and Sites of Conscience can be used to engage the public in dialogues on current social and political issues; train journalists to focus on human rights and transitional justice issues thereby contributing to truth-telling and social justice; train journalists to document gross human rights violations in a way that is sensitive to victims of conflict; and raise awareness on the role of citizen journalists and the media in building a movement for human rights, justice and peace.

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a worldwide network of historic sites, museums, and memory initiatives dedicated to remembering past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies. The Coalition includes more than 180 members in 53 countries and a communications network of 2500 from 75 countries.

The Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies is an independent, non-governmental organization, established in 2005, located in the Syrian capital of Damascus. Its mission is to foster a spirit of support and respect for the values & standards of human rights in Syria. As such, DCHRS recognizes and adheres to all pertinent international human rights agreements and declarations issued by the UN.

On the first day of the workshop, the participants were given an introduction to Sites of Conscience and the role of memorialization in transitional justice. Trainers outlined the key principles and five main “pillars” of transitional justice and given examples of transitional justice undertakings around the world. Later, participants learned about the role of the media in conflict and post-conflict situations. Workshop attendees also received an introduction to criminal justice and methods journalists can use to conduct comparative analysis. A unique comparative chart of the seven main contemporary war crimes tribunals was shared and discussed with participants to promote broader knowledge, context, and useful analytic tools in reporting. Finally, participants engaged in a discussion on challenges in reporting on transitional justice, including: presumption of innocence, witness protection, confidentiality of sources, access to information, and interviewing victims.

On the second day, Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, the executive director of the [Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies](#), discussed [Syria Transition Roadmap](#), a document presenting an opposition consensus vision of the post-conflict political transition in Syria. Participants were given a general introduction to the roadmap before discussing in detail the report’s recommendations on transitional justice and national reconciliation and how to achieve them.

On the third day, [Secdev](#), an organization seeking to improve the online safety and security of the Syrian people and to enhance the free flow of information in Syria, gave a presentation on communication and Internet security. Additionally, participants discussed social media, blogging, video journalism, tools and tips for publishing op-eds, and memorialization in the online sphere.

Finally, workshop participants were given the opportunity give in-depth presentations on their own media efforts, institutions, and websites and gave suggestions and ideas on how best to implement the concepts of transitional justice and memorialization in their media outlets.