

## Artists at risk: Learning from the experience of journalists UNESCO publication launch and announcement of the recipients of the UNESCO-Aschberg programme call for projects

IFACCA's 9<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Arts & Culture, Stockholm, Sweden  
Space A1 (Level 4), Waterfront Congress Centre

**Date and time:** 4 May 2023 (13:00-13:30)

**Language:** English

**Organizer:** UNESCO

### Roundtable:

During the 9th World Summit on Arts & Culture, UNESCO hosts a roundtable dedicated to the safety of artists featuring the launch of the publication “**Defending Creative Voices: Artists in emergencies – Learning from the safety of journalists**” and the announcement of **over US\$ 1 million investment** in artistic freedom.

Freedom of artistic expression is a prerequisite for cultural diversity and democracy. Creativity can nourish, sustain, and foster debates and pluralism, while artists and cultural professionals can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights. As essential drivers of innovation and change, artists can foster public democratic debate, social transformation, economic development and peacebuilding through their creations.

However, their capacity to question the status quo frequently makes cultural practitioners a target of vital threats and censorship, undermining their already precarious livelihoods and restricting their freedom of expression. In recent years, the threat against artists has seen an alarming rise, with more than 1,200 violations of artistic freedom and 39 murders of artists worldwide documented in 2021 alone ([Freemuse](#)). Emergency situations including conflicts exacerbate the risks faced by artists and cultural professionals. An urgent protection of artistic freedom is therefore needed, as underscored by [UNESCO's 2022 Global Report Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity](#).

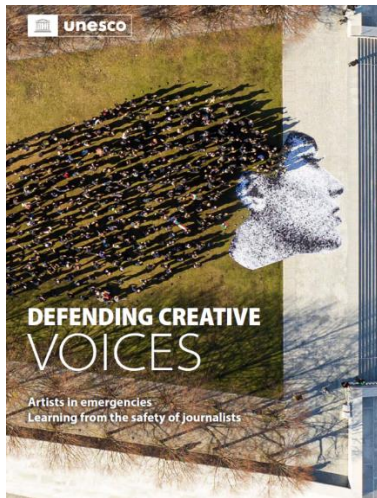
In this context, the UNESCO roundtable presents the findings of “**Defending Creative Voices**”, building on the lessons learned and good practices concerning the safety of journalists to enhance the protection of cultural professionals. The discussion will bring an intersectoral perspective, duly noting that the protection mechanisms available to artists are less robust than those available to journalists despite the many challenges they share.

Furthermore, UNESCO announces the **recipients of the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme** following a call for projects launched in December 2022, inviting governments and public institutions of UNESCO Member States, as well as civil society organizations, to submit initiatives aimed at the enhancement of the rights of artists. A total of US\$ 1 million will be invested towards the enhancement of artistic freedom in countries around the world.

### Objectives:

- Raise awareness about the challenges faced by artists in emergency settings and call for their reinforced protection, as an especially vulnerable group to be prioritized when emergencies occur;
- Inspire concrete follow-up actions through a discussion focused on how key stakeholders from the arts and culture sectors could collaborate with UNESCO in taking forward the report's recommendations;
- Announce the selected projects to receive support of the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme towards the enhancement of artistic freedom and the status of the artist.

## Context: UNESCO publication “Defending Creative Voices”



### The study examines:

- The legal instruments, mechanisms and assistance networks available to artists and journalists in emergencies;
- The opportunities to improve support to artists by taking stock of advances made in the protection of journalists—particularly since the adoption of the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)— as well as the related challenges;
- Opportunities for facilitating synergies between media-freedom advocacy and the stakeholder community promoting artistic freedom.

### The study calls for:

- A UN-level declaration or resolution that recognizes artists and culture professionals as a vulnerable group in need of specific attention in emergency contexts, drawing on the advancements made in media freedom following the adoption of the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#).
- Increased State-level support to artists and culture professionals in emergencies, for example through setting up temporary residencies, expediting visas, implementing evacuation and resettlement programmes, facilitating safe passage to other countries, and granting asylum, refugee status or other forms of international protection.
- Training that can equip judicial and legal actors to exercise their full capacity in protecting artists, including through investigations and prosecutions for attacks against artists and by advancing litigation towards landmark resolutions adopted by international, regional and national courts.
- Operationalizing the recommendations through diversified mechanisms for artists in emergencies with a focus on (1) ground monitoring and assessment, (2) assurance of physical safety and artistic expressions, (3) safeguarding of culture infrastructure, goods and services, and (4) sustainability of livelihoods
- Enhanced collaboration between actors in the fields of artistic and press freedom at high- and grassroots levels, particularly through monitoring and advocacy, research and dialogue on areas of mutual interest, and joint safety-focused sessions in artistic and media freedom; while also offering complementary trainings on artists’ protection to actors in journalists’ safety.

### Round table agenda

<b>13:00-13:07</b>	Opening words and presentation of the report’s findings <b>Mr Ernesto Ottone R., UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture</b>
<b>13:07-13:22</b>	Moderator: <b>UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture</b> Discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr Shahidul Alam</b> Artist, photojournalist, educator and social activist</li> <li>• <b>Ms Basma El Husseiny</b> Founder, Action for Hope</li> <li>• <b>Ms Julie Trébault</b> Director, Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) - PEN America</li> </ul>
<b>13:22- 13:30</b>	<b>Q&amp;A</b> and conclusion by UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture

## Biographies



### **Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO**

Mr Ernesto Ottone R. is the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO. Prior to this position, Mr Ottone R. served as Chile's first Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage from 2015 to 2018. As Minister of Culture, he created a Department of First Peoples, a Migrants Unit and strengthened copyright laws and heritage protections. During this time, he also chaired the Regional Centre for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean (2016 – 2017).

From 2011 to 2015, Mr Ottone R. served as Director-General of the Artistic and Cultural Extension Center of the University of Chile, which manages the National

Symphony Orchestra of Chile, the Chilean National Ballet (BANACH), the Chile Symphony Choir and the Vocal Camerata. From 2001 to 2010, he held the position of Executive Director at the Matucana 100 Cultural Center in Santiago.



### **Shahidul Alam, Artist, photojournalist, educator and social activist**

Time Magazine Person of the Year 2018 and CASE Art Fund's Humanitarian of the Year 2021, photographer and writer Shahidul Alam obtained a PhD in chemistry before switching to photography in 1983. He has been documenting the struggle for democracy in Bangladesh ever since. He has received the highest national award given to Bangladeshi artists. Exhibited at MOMA, Centre Pompidou and Tate Modern and a speaker at Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge universities, Dr Alam is a professor at RMIT and Sunderland Universities and an Honorary Fellow of Royal Photographic Society. He chaired the international jury of World Press Photo. Dr

Alam's *The Tide Will Turn* was featured on the list of Best Art Books of 2020 by The New York Times. An institution builder, Dr Alam also introduced email to Bangladesh. He was arrested in 2018 for criticising his government but released following a global campaign.



### **Basma El Hussein, Founder, Action for Hope**

Basma El Hussein is a cultural manager, an activist for social change and a defender of cultural rights. For the past 30 years, she has been involved in supporting independent cultural projects and organizations in the Arab region. In 2004, she founded Al Mawred Al Thaqafy (Culture Resource), the first non-governmental regional cultural organization in the Arab region. In 2007, she initiated and co-founded the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), the region's first independent cultural foundation. She currently leads the organization, Action

for Hope, which she founded in 2015 to address the cultural and social needs of distressed and displaced communities in the Arab region. Between 1988 and 2003, Ms El Hussein worked for the British Council in Egypt and the Ford Foundation in the Middle East and North Africa. Ms El Hussein has been a member of the EU/UNESCO Expert Facility on the Governance of Culture for the implementation of the 2005 Convention, since 2021. In October 2018, she won the UCLG Agenda21 for Culture International Award in Mexico City for her contribution to the relationship between culture and sustainable development.



### **Julie Trébault, Director, Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) - PEN America**

Julie Trébault is the director of the Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), a project of PEN America that aims to safeguard the right to artistic freedom by connecting threatened artists to support, building a global network of resources for artists at risk, and forging ties between arts and human rights organisations. She has nearly two decades of experience in international arts programming and network-building, including at the Museum of the City of New York, the Center for Architecture, the National Museum of Ethnology in The Netherlands, and the Musée du quai Branly in Paris.