



**For immediate release 28 June 2021**

## **Family of photojournalist murdered in Libya call on the United Nations Human Rights Council to act in his case**

***Ten years on, a call for justice for the murder of photojournalist Anton Hammerl  
#JusticeforAnton***

**London – Geneva:** The widow of photojournalist Anton Hammerl, Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl, is appealing to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva to act to secure justice for his murder in Libya in 2011, after a decade with no action, no answers, and no accountability for his death.

She is supported in her campaign by leading media organisations, unions and NGOs, including the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, Justice for Journalists Foundation, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the James W Foley Legacy Foundation, Reporters without Borders (RSF), the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and the Redress Trust.

To coincide with the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council, representatives from the International Federation of Journalists and South African National Editors' Forum will join a [virtual 'side event'](#) later today, **15.00 – 16.00 CET/ SAST (14.00 – 15.00 BST)**, to raise awareness of Anton's case and continuing impunity for crimes against journalists in Libya. The full line-up is:

- Chair: Jeremy Dear, Deputy General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists
- Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl, widow of Anton Hammerl and journalist
- Jeremy Bowen, BBC Middle East Editor
- Sbu Ngalwa, Chair, South African National Editors' Forum
- Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, Doughty Street Chambers, legal counsel for Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl
- Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Director, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and Member, High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom

**Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl** said, *"Ten years is too long to have lived without any answers as to what happened to Anton after he was murdered. We trusted the governments involved to help us bring Anton home and investigate his death. None of that has happened. We appeal to the international community to consider this and act to end this injustice."*

On 1 April 2021, just days before the tenth anniversary of Anton's death, Penny Sukhraj-Hammerl's lawyers, Doughty Street Chambers, submitted complaints to UN Human Rights Council experts: the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, Irene Khan, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Dr Morris Tidball-Binz, and the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances.

The complaints state that there was *"a clear indication from the outset that Mr Hammerl, a civilian, had been unlawfully targeted and that there were reasonable grounds to suspect that his killing constituted a war crime"* in violation of international law.

The family is requesting that the UN raise concerns with the Libyan authorities, urgently request information from the South African, Austrian and UK authorities and take steps to ensure an

investigation into the circumstances of Anton's death, including an investigation into the whereabouts of his remains.

Anton Hammerl was killed by Gaddafi loyalists on 5 April 2011 while covering the civil war. For over six weeks, his family was falsely led to believe by the Libyan authorities that he was alive and well. His remains have never been located and there has been no investigation into the circumstances of his death or the aftermath by the Libyan, South African, Austrian or UK authorities, or any other law enforcement or investigative body. He was a dual South African and Austrian national and a UK resident at the time of his death.

**Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, counsel for the family**, said, *"Anton Hammerl was a brilliant photojournalist who travelled to Libya to bear witness to what was happening away from the world's gaze, including suspected serious human rights abuses by al-Gaddafi forces. He then became a victim of such abuses by those very troops. For ten long years Libya has failed to comply with its legal obligations to locate Anton's body and investigate his murder. If Libya will not take action, the world must not continue to stand idly by. The international community must now act and end this unacceptable impunity."*

**Committee to Protect Journalists Advocacy and Communications Director Gypsy Guillén Kaiser** said, *"Anton Hammerl's death left a void with his family and friends, but it is also a deep loss for journalism. Every killing of a journalist that is met with impunity only perpetuates further deadly violence. We join in solidarity with #JusticeforAnton and demand that once and for all, this case and that of every journalist killed globally be met with justice."*

**Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation Director Matthew Caruana Galizia** said, *"A group of men murdered an innocent person, a journalist, in cold blood and have so far gotten away with it. Anton's family need justice, but they don't even know where his body was buried. Libyan authorities must work with Anton's family and representatives to make sure that those who murdered him are held to account."*

**International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) General Secretary Anthony Bellanger** said, *"Anton's family and friends deserve justice. They have waited ten long years for answers and the truth. Instead, they have faced a lack of action, cover-ups and lies. The impunity must end. The Libyan authorities must fulfill their legal obligations and the international community must step up the pressure for action, answers and justice."*

**Justice for Journalists Foundation Director Maria Ordzhonikidze** said, *"We stand with the family of Anton Hammerl and our partners in campaign efforts to bring attention to the legal limbo that the families of the murdered media professionals find themselves in when the loved ones lose their lives in the countries not motivated to investigate. It underlines the necessity of an international investigative body with a mandate to end the impunity of criminals going after the journalists with no fear and no accountability."*

**RSF's Director of International Campaigns Rebecca Vincent** said, *"We stand in full solidarity with Anton Hammerl's family and are proud to support their campaign for #JusticeforAnton. No family should have to endure what they've been through over the past decade, left with few answers and no accountability for his murder. Every time impunity is allowed to prevail in the killing of a journalist, the door is left open for further such attacks, making it less safe for journalists to do their jobs around the world. When we campaign for #JusticeforAnton, we campaign for an end to impunity for the killings of journalists, and for better protections for journalists everywhere."*

**South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) chair Sbu Ngalwa** said, *"As an organisation whose efforts are to campaign for media freedom and the rights of all journalists we stand with Penny and her family in seeking the answers about Anton's death. We ask all those with the necessary power to help bring closure to this very traumatic and painful period for Penny and her children. Hammerl was a respected photojournalist and he paid the highest price for his contribution to journalism."*

Anton's family request that those who wish to show their support for the campaign join supporters in posting a selfie to social media wearing a yellow ribbon and using the hashtags #JusticeforAnton or #JusticeforAntonHammerl.

A decade on, the family is once again calling on people around the world to don a yellow ribbon for Anton, to support the new campaign for justice. The Yellow Ribbons of Hope campaign for Anton was first launched on 14 May 2011 to mark the devastating milestone of 40 days and 40 nights of Anton's disappearance in Libya.

## **Ends**

For any media queries, please contact Bronwyn Friedlander, Justice for Anton campaign, on +44 (0) 7939 320 759 or [bronwyn.friedlander@gmail.com](mailto:bronwyn.friedlander@gmail.com).

## **Notes to Editors**

Pre-registration is essential for this afternoon's panel discussion event, for more information and to register visit <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/event/international-media-freedom-impunity-and-journalists-deaths-case-anton-hammerl>

The Justice for Anton campaign is grateful to the Justice for Journalists Foundation (JFJ) for its support. JFJ is a London-based non-governmental organisation which funds journalistic investigations into violent crimes against media workers and helps professional and citizen journalists to mitigate their risks. The foundation was established in August 2018 by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, founder of the Open Russia pro-democracy movement, an Amnesty International-recognised prisoner of conscience, and Putin's most prominent critic, together with his former business partner, philanthropist, and member of the Free Russia Forum's standing committee Leonid Nevzlin.

Anton Hammerl was an award-winning photojournalist, to learn more about him, his work, and the #JusticeforAnton campaign visit [www.justiceforanton.com](http://www.justiceforanton.com)

## **What are the UN Special Procedures?**

The Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights issues, supported by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## **Why do the UN Special Procedures matter as a first step in Anton's case?**

Although Anton's family are entitled to an investigation as a matter of international law, it is ten years since his murder and no steps have yet been taken to investigate within Libya. The family is now asking the UN Special Procedures to act, exercising their powers to act in cases of reported violations of human rights and gathering information. What is needed now is an investigation, to answer the family's questions and secure evidence.