

## **Statement by Media Freedom Coalition on World Press Freedom Day**

Today, on World Press Freedom Day and the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration, we celebrate the fundamental principles of media freedom and stand together for its protection around the world.

The Windhoek Declaration is a historic call for media freedom. It upholds this freedom as a crucial component of the right to freedom of expression, as enshrined by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and underlines that an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy and to economic development. A free media, both online and offline, is essential to upholding freedom of expression as a human right. Access to reliable and independent information is paramount, as exemplified by the dissemination of information during the COVID-19 pandemic. We need journalists to report the facts, keep us informed and to hold those in power to account.

While we have witnessed important progress regarding media freedom in the past 30 years, many of the old threats to media freedom persist and new challenges are appearing. The safety of journalists is declining worldwide. Journalists and media workers increasingly face physical and verbal violence, threats and intimidation, lawsuits and imprisonment with the aim of silencing them. Online harassment against women journalists has increased exponentially. The repeated use of anti-media rhetoric by some politicians and government leaders is eroding media freedom and is putting individual journalists at risk.

To counter threats to media freedom, a global effort is needed to take urgent action. If violence against journalists triumphs, media cannot be free and democracy cannot function.

We urge all states to promote and protect media freedom at home and abroad, offline and online, and call upon all states to release all arbitrarily detained journalists and to prosecute all perpetrators of crimes against journalists.

The Media Freedom Coalition strongly reaffirms its continued support for media freedom around the world. Without media freedom, there can be no true progress in human rights, democracy and prosperity.

Signatories:

Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Ukraine, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, The United States, Uruguay.