

Lord Ahmad: There is a 'moral imperative' to stop threat to media freedom

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister for Human Rights, has said today that the current crackdown on journalists across the world is a deep-rooted problem, and a rebuke to the rule of law.

41 journalists and media workers have been reported killed so far in 2019, with 383 journalists and media workers imprisoned in countries like Turkey, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Eritrea.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Lord Ahmad said that a free media is essential to any democracy, and the bedrock on which other freedoms are borne and built. He said that it is needed for free and open debate, to root out corruption and hold governments to account. He set out the UK's commitment to being a force for good in the world, and to championing media freedom and other key values in the face of those who want to undermine them.

Lord Ahmad made the remarks during an event he hosted on media freedom, alongside the UK's Special Envoy on Media Freedom Amal Clooney. He said that 32 countries will come together as the Media Freedom Coalition, and commit to lobby on individual cases, as well as wider abuses against the media.

The UK Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, said:

"The UK is committed to being a good global citizen and we believe there is a moral imperative to stop the threat to media freedom, whether it's violence, unduly restrictive laws and regulations, imprisonment, detention or internet censorship.

"Securing the freedom of media around the world is no easy task. It cannot be accomplished with the will of the few. It must be tackled with the resolve of the many. Because those who put their lives on the line every day in pursuit of the truth deserve no less."

He also reaffirmed the UK's intention, after Brexit, to establish a UK global human rights sanctions regime to hold those who commit serious violations of human rights to account, including when journalists, whistleblowers and human rights defenders are targeted.

The UK is also taking steps to establish a National Committee on the Safety of Journalists, tasked with developing a National Action Plan to ensure that those who threaten journalists are held to account. And a new dedicated international Task Force, led by UNESCO, will assist governments around the world in developing their own plans, tailored to the needs of their own legal systems.

Further information