

Media Freedom Coalition launched to address attacks on journalists

Following their landmark Global Conference for Media Freedom, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland have announced the launch of a new Media Freedom Coalition.

The Coalition will be formed by governments who sign up to a Pledge that commits them to speak out and take action together when media freedom is at risk, and to champion the cause around the world.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

2018 was the deadliest year for journalists.

The fact that over 100 countries were represented at the Global Conference for Media Freedom, with over 1500 delegates from all regions of the world, demonstrates the global resonance of this issue.

I am delighted that governments are committing to firm action and to working together as an international community to create a safer environment for journalism across the globe. By shining a light on attacks against journalists, the new Coalition will aim to change political calculations and increase the costs to those who abuse media freedom.

The Conference is set to become an annual event, gathering the world's governments, civil society and media to take stock of the state of media freedom around the world, with Canada hosting the next conference in 2020. As part of the ongoing global campaign, media freedom will be bolstered through the new Global Media Defence Fund, an international task force to help governments design better national frameworks and action plans, and an independent high-level panel of legal experts, chaired by former President of the UK Supreme Court Lord Neuberger and involving prominent international lawyers including Amal Clooney, the Foreign Secretary's Special Envoy for Media Freedom.

The UK government is determined to set an example for the rest of the world by continuing to improve media freedom at home in the UK. The government has announced the creation of a new National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, which is expected to bring together representatives from journalism organisations and relevant government departments. The Committee will be asked to devise a National Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists and ensure that those who threaten journalists are held to account. The plan will examine current protections offered to journalists in the UK, and consider how to work together to build on existing strengths.

The government has also decided to establish an autonomous UK human rights sanctions regime once it leaves the European Union. The sanctions could be used against individuals and governments that abuse human rights, including acts against the media.

Notes to Editors

- The new Media Freedom Coalition will shine a light on violations and abuses of media freedom, bringing them to the attention of the global public and working towards accountability; stand together to intervene at the highest level with the governments of countries where media freedom is at risk and to show solidarity with countries that work to build media freedom; and consider all available measures to address violations and abuses of international human rights, including rights related to media freedom. A number of governments signed up to the Pledge and joined the Coalition while at the Conference, while others have indicated their interest to do so once Cabinet approval has been completed. The list of participating governments is expected to be announced in September at the UN General Assembly.
- The text of the Pledge is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-pledge-on-media-freedom/global-pledge-on-media-freedom>
- More information on announcements from the Global Conference for Media Freedom can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/global-conference-for-media-freedom-london-2019>

Further information