

Statement by Media Freedom Coalition on World Press Freedom Day

The undersigned members of the Media Freedom Coalition today issued the following statement for World Press Freedom Day:

Today, we celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom around the world.

The protection and promotion of a free, independent and diverse media, online as well as offline, is critical to the functioning of inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. Journalists and media workers provide the public with critical information, broaden our view of the world, and help us hold individuals and institutions to account.

As the world responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, these principles have seldom been more urgent or important. As recognised in the recent statement from the Executive Group of the Media Freedom Coalition, journalists and other media workers reporting from the front lines of this health crisis keep societies informed, promote proper health measures and counter false or misleading information. We commend their work.

In times of crisis such as these, the role of a free press is more important than ever.

Unfortunately, many states continue to restrict and censor the media and journalists face increasing danger in a growing number of countries. Too often, journalists and media workers are threatened, intimidated, and even killed – often with impunity – just for doing their job. Today and every day, we pay tribute to those we have lost, and commit to a world where every journalist and media worker can report without fear.

To counter threats to media freedom, all states must take action at a national level to ensure these fundamental rights are upheld within their own borders, and advocate for these rights elsewhere in the world.

The coalition is a partnership of countries, civil society and other stakeholders working together proactively to advocate for media freedom and safety of journalists. It responds to the need for ensuring better cooperation and coordination through an international and multi-stakeholder approach.

We commend those governments that have taken bold and decisive action to strengthen the protection of media freedom. At this critical time, journalists and media professionals need our support and protection. We welcome the launch of the first call for proposals from UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund that was set up with contributions from our members.

Together, we remain committed to promoting media freedom and standing against

any efforts to undermine it.