

# UK and Canada lead global campaign to defend media freedom

Jeremy Hunt, the UK Foreign Secretary, and Chrystia Freeland, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, co-hosted the first ever global conference on media freedom in London. It is part of an international campaign to shine a global spotlight on media freedom and increase the cost to those that are attempting to restrict it.

The conference was structured around 4 themes:

- protection and prosecution, including impunity
- national frameworks and legislation
- building trust in media and countering disinformation
- media sustainability

Over 1,500 global leaders, representatives from the media industry, journalists, civil society and academia gathered to attend interactive panel discussions. The first day focused on defining the challenges, the second on framing solutions. View the [full conference agenda](#).

In his [opening speech](#), Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt highlighted the importance of investigative journalism in uncovering corruption. He said:

In Peru, Gustavo Gorriti of IDL Reporteros has brought to light a series of corruption scandals involving business, the government and the judiciary.

Peruvian investigative journalists Paola Ugaz and Pedro Salinas attended the conference. Gustavo Gorriti delivered a video message from Lima on media freedom.

IDL-Reporteros published an [article](#) on the universal value of media freedom.

## **Media Freedom Coalition Pledge**

In London, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland 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.

The [global pledge](#) was published and signed as part of the conference and commits those governments that sign it to:

- speak out and take action together, through a Media Freedom Coalition
- harness the power of diplomatic networks, through a new Media Freedom

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- reinforce international initiatives to champion media freedom
- meet annually to renew our commitments and to address emerging threats and opportunities

## **High-Level Panel of Legal Experts**

Lord Neuberger, Chair of the [High Level Panel of Legal Experts](#), and Amal Clooney, Deputy Chair of the Panel, announced at the conference the composition of the independent High Level Panel of Legal Experts. The panel convened for the first time in London to develop the legal frameworks to help defend media freedom.

The High Level Panel is an independent body convened at the request of the UK and Canadian governments and chaired by Lord Neuberger, former President of the UK Supreme Court.

## **National Committee for the Safety of Journalists**

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Jeremy Wright announced at the conference that the UK will set up a [National Committee for the Safety of Journalists](#).

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.

A free and independent media plays a vital role in protecting human rights and holding the powerful to account. Media freedom is the lifeblood of democracy and can be the foundation for economic prosperity and social development. It means that society can be free, fair and open. Journalistic scrutiny is an essential part of a vibrant and healthy democracy.

The world is becoming a more hostile place for journalists. Reporters Without Borders called 2018 the deadliest year on record for journalists. UNESCO confirms that at least 99 journalists were killed, a further 348 imprisoned and 60 held hostage. Freedom of expression is being stifled and barriers are preventing the functioning of an independent media. We must address this and the dangers it presents.

## **Facts and figures about media freedom**

This information is sourced from organisations including the Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, International Federation of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and UNESCO:

- 2018 is the worst year on record for violence and abuse against journalists: more than half of the journalists were deliberately targeted and there has been a 15% increase in such killings since 2017. Source: Reporters Without Borders: [2018 round-up of deadly attacks and abuses against journalists](#)

- in 2018, at least 99 journalists were killed, a further 348 imprisoned and 60 held hostage. Sources: United Nations press release [‘Informing is not a crime’ UN chief calls for better protection of journalists press release](#) and Reporters Without Borders: [2018 round-up](#)
- almost 1,000 journalists and media workers have been killed in the past decade. Source: Committee to Protect Journalists data on [journalists killed, 1992 to 2019, with a confirmed motive](#)
- 93% of those killed are local journalists and 7% are foreign correspondents. Source: UNESCO press release [International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists 2017](#)
- 9 in 10 cases of killed journalists remain unresolved. Source: [UNESCO International Day](#) press release
- only 10% of the world’s population enjoys a free press, and media independence and the autonomy of independent regulators has faced increased pressure. Source: [Freedom of the Press 2019](#)
- there has been an increase in incidents against journalists across all categories including murders, imprisonment, hostage-taking and enforced disappearances. Source: Reporters Without Borders [2018 round-up](#)
- journalists face dangers beyond warzones and extremism, including increasing intolerance to independent reporting, populism, rampant corruption, crime and the breakdown of law and order. Source: International Federation of Journalists press release [2018 reverses downward trend in killings of journalists and media staff with 94 victims of violence](#)
- impunity for crimes against journalists remains the norm, with justice in only 1 in 10 cases. Source: [UNESCO International Day](#) press release