

# UK commits £18m to protecting journalists in danger zones

The new Global Media Defence Fund – to be administered by UNESCO – will support, train and provide legal support for journalists in the most dangerous parts of the world.

The UK will provide £3m and Canada, the co-hosts of the Global Conference for Media Freedom, will make an additional Can \$1m contribution to help kick-start the Fund.

The UK and Canada will use the Global Conference for Media Freedom to lobby countries to contribute to the fund, and sign a pledge committing them to leverage diplomatic networks and take action together on abuses against the media.

The fund will support media freedom in a variety of ways, including:

- Defending journalists, including through supporting access to legal services
- Training journalists, including in personal safety
- Establishing peer support networks for freelance journalists
- Promoting citizen journalism, including in conflict and post-conflict settings
- Supporting countries in developing National Action Plans through a dedicated Task Force involving UNESCO and others
- Assisting a High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom by funding its Secretariat

Separately, from Department for International Development funding, the £15m Protecting Media Freedom programme will seek to tackle the root causes of the global crisis in independent media.

During a keynote speech at the Global Conference for Media Freedom the Foreign Secretary made the argument that media freedom is “a universal cause”.

Jeremy Hunt, Foreign Secretary, said:

Today we are joined by delegations from over 120 countries, including 60 ministers, and more than 1,500 journalists, academics and campaigners....never before have so many countries come together in this cause.

And today we send a strong message that media freedom is not a Western but a universal value.... At its best, a free media both protects society from the abuse of power and helps to release the full potential of a country.

He argued that “the strongest safeguard against the dark side of power is accountability and scrutiny – and few institutions fulfil that role more effectively than a free media”.

The Foreign Secretary added: “The open exchange of ideas through a free media allows the genius of a society to breathe, releasing the originality and creativity of the entire population. Societies which embrace free debate make a disproportionate contribution to the advance of human knowledge.”

The Foreign Secretary also argued that global stability is enhanced by a free media:

Of the 10 cleanest countries in the world, as ranked by Transparency International, seven are also in the top 10 of the World Press Freedom Index.

Meanwhile, of the 10 most corrupt countries, four appear in the bottom 10 for media freedom.

Powerful people value their reputations and the sunlight of transparency provides the greatest deterrent to wrongdoing.

Today’s announcement is part of a number of measures to help protect journalists around the world including the High Level Legal Panel on Media Freedom, a group of the world’s top legal minds that will work with governments and other partners to advise on legal measures that will allow journalists to do their jobs freely and hold those in power to account.

### **Notes to editors:**

- Earlier this week the Foreign Secretary announced £18m package from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund over three years to counter disinformation across Eastern Europe and strengthen independent media in the Western Balkans.

### **Further information**