

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 150

Recognizing threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 3, 2017

Mr. CASEY (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. WYDEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Recognizing threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance.

Whereas Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris, France, on December 10, 1948, states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”;

Whereas, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed May 3 of each year as “World Press Freedom Day” to celebrate the fundamental principles of freedom

of the press, evaluate freedom of the press around the world, defend against attacks on the independence of the media, and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession;

Whereas, on December 18, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 163 (2013)) on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, that unequivocally condemns, in both conflict and nonconflict situations, all attacks on and violence against journalists and media workers, including torture, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and intimidation and harassment;

Whereas the theme for the 2017 World Press Freedom Day, is “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies”;

Whereas the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 (22 U.S.C. 2151 note; Public Law 111–166), which was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate and signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2010, expanded the annual Human Rights Reports of the Department of State to include the examination of freedom of the press;

Whereas, the 2016 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders in April 2016, indicated “a climate of fear and tension combined with increasing control over newsrooms by governments and private sector interests”;

Whereas, the 2016 World Press Freedom Index identified a decline in media freedom across all indicators, especially the destruction of media infrastructure, like the facilities and equipment of media, and the adoption of legislative

frameworks that unjustly penalize journalists for doing their work;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, in 2016, the three deadliest countries for journalists were Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, with more than half of the journalists killed in combat or crossfire, for the first time since the Committee to Protect Journalists began keeping records;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, in 2016, 48 journalists were killed in cases where the motive was confirmed to be related to their reporting, 28 journalists were killed in cases where the motive was unconfirmed, and 2 media workers were killed;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, impunity for the murder of journalists remains systemic, with the killers going free in 9 out of 10 cases;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, as of December 1, 2016, 259 journalists worldwide were in prison, the highest number recorded since the group began systematically tracking imprisonment in 1990;

Whereas, according to the Freedom House report “Freedom of the Press 2017”, only 13 percent of the world’s population enjoys a Free press, meaning “coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.”;

Whereas freedom of the press is a key component of democratic governance, activism in civil society, and socio-economic development; and

Whereas freedom of the press enhances public accountability, transparency, and participation: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) expresses concern about the threats to free-
3 dom of the press and expression around the world;

4 (2) welcomes the celebration of World Press
5 Freedom Day 2017 on May 3, 2017;

6 (3) commends journalists and media workers
7 around the world for their essential role in pro-
8 moting government accountability, defending demo-
9 cratic activity, and strengthening civil society, de-
10 spite threats to their safety;

11 (4) pays tribute to journalists who have lost
12 their lives or liberty carrying out their work;

13 (5) calls on governments abroad to implement
14 United Nations General Assembly Resolution (A/
15 RES/68/163) by thoroughly investigating and seek-
16 ing to resolve outstanding cases of violence against
17 journalists, including murders and kidnappings,
18 while ensuring the protection of witnesses, and by
19 reporting on the status of investigations;

20 (6) condemns all actions around the world that
21 suppress freedom of the press;

22 (7) reaffirms the centrality of freedom of the
23 press to efforts of the United States Government to
24 support democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote

1 good governance domestically and around the world;
2 and

3 (8) calls on the President and the Secretary of
4 State—

5 (A) to preserve and build upon United
6 States leadership in freedom of the press, on
7 the basis of First Amendment protections;

8 (B) to improve the means by which the
9 United States Government rapidly identifies,
10 publicizes, and responds to threats against free-
11 dom of the press around the world;

12 (C) to urge foreign governments to conduct
13 transparent investigations and adjudications of
14 the perpetrators of attacks against journalists;
15 and

16 (D) to highlight the issue of threats
17 against freedom of the press in the annual
18 Human Rights Reports and year round.

○