

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 143

Recognizing the threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in the efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2013.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 16, 2013

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

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority in the efforts of the United States Government to promote democracy and good governance on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2013.

Whereas Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted at Paris December 10, 1948, states that “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, to evaluate freedom of the press around the world, to defend the media from attacks on its independence, and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession;

Whereas 2013 is the 20th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, which focuses on the theme “Safe to Speak: Securing Freedom of Expression in All Media”;

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 examination of freedom of the press around the world in the annual human rights report of the Department of State;

Whereas, according to Freedom House, the percentage of people in the world who live in countries with a free media environment fell to 14 percent in 2012, the lowest percentage in more than a decade;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, 88 journalists and 47 citizen journalists were killed in 2012 in connection with their collection and dissemination of news and information, an increase of 33 percent and 840 percent, respectively, compared to 2011;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, the five deadliest countries for journalists in 2012 were Syria, Somalia, Pakistan, Mexico, and Brazil;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 593 journalists have been murdered since 1992 without the perpetrators of those crimes facing punishment;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the five countries with the highest number of unsolved journalist murders since 2003 as a percentage of the population of that country are Iraq, Somalia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Colombia;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, 879 journalists and 144 citizen journalists were arrested in 2012;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, there were a record 232 journalists in prison worldwide on December 1, 2012;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, the five countries in which the most journalists are imprisoned are Turkey, China, Eritrea, Iran, and Syria;

Whereas the abuse of anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws to incarcerate journalists and suppress freedom of the press occurred on numerous occasions abroad in 2012;

Whereas freedom of the press is a key component of democratic governance, the activism of civil society, and socioeconomic development;

Whereas, in the ongoing political transition of Burma, notable progress was made in advancing freedom of the press in 2012, although certain problems remain; 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

1 on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on
2 May 3, 2013;

3 (2) commends journalists around the world for
4 the essential role they play in promoting government
5 accountability, defending democratic activity, and
6 strengthening civil society, despite threats to their
7 safety;

8 (3) pays tribute to the journalists who have lost
9 their lives carrying out their work and calls on gov-
10 ernments abroad to thoroughly investigate and seek
11 to resolve all cases while ensuring the protection of
12 witnesses;

13 (4) condemns all actions around the world that
14 suppress freedom of the press;

15 (5) reaffirms the centrality of freedom of the
16 press to efforts by the United States Government to
17 support democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote
18 good governance domestically and around the world;
19 and

20 (6) calls on the President and the Secretary of
21 State—

22 (A) to improve the means by which the
23 United States Government rapidly identifies,
24 publicizes, and responds to threats against free-
25 dom of the press around the world; and

- 1 (B) to highlight the issue of threats
- 2 against freedom of the press year-round.

