

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 204

Recognizing escalating threats to freedom of the press and freedom of speech worldwide, including increasing harm to journalists reporting in conflict zones and under repressive regimes, reaffirming the vital role that a free and independent press plays in upholding democracy, fostering economic prosperity, and keeping the public informed, and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority of the United States Government in supporting democracy, human rights, and good governance in commemoration of “World Press Freedom Day” on May 3, 2025.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 5, 2025

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

RESOLUTION

Recognizing escalating threats to freedom of the press and freedom of speech worldwide, including increasing harm to journalists reporting in conflict zones and under repressive regimes, reaffirming the vital role that a free and independent press plays in upholding democracy, fostering economic prosperity, and keeping the public informed, and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority of the United States Government in supporting democracy, human rights, and good governance in commemoration of “World Press Freedom Day” on May 3, 2025.

Whereas freedom of the press is foundational to American democracy and has been enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and in various State constitutions;

Whereas a free and independent press around the world supports United States foreign policy goals of countering authoritarianism and promoting democratic governance by refuting propaganda and enhancing public accountability, transparency, and participation in civil society;

Whereas a robust independent press plays a key role in exposing and refuting malign influence campaigns used by authoritarian governments, including the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China;

Whereas the censorship, victimization, and killing of journalists around the world, particularly in war zones, has profound implications for the ability of the public, including Americans, to be informed about conflicts with local, regional, and global ramifications and other issues;

Whereas the United States has advanced press freedom globally, including by leading the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations in Paris on December 10, 1948, and states, in Article 19, “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 the third day of May of each year to be “World Press Freedom Day”—

- (1) to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom;
- (2) to evaluate press freedom around the world;
- (3) to defend the media against attacks on its independence; and
- (4) to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives while working in their profession;

Whereas Congress has passed legislation supporting press freedom abroad, including—

- (1) the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–166), which expanded the examination of the freedom of the press around the world in the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices published by the Department of State; and
- (2) the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328), which has been used to place targeted visa and economic sanctions on individuals for their roles in the targeted killings of journalists;

Whereas, in 2021, in an effort to combat attacks against journalists, the Department of State adopted the Khashoggi Ban pursuant to section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(C)), which imposes visa restrictions on individuals who, acting on behalf of a foreign government, are believed to have been directly engaged in serious, extraterritorial counter-dissident activities, including activities that suppress, harass, surveil, threaten, or harm journalists, activists, or other persons perceived to be dissidents for their work;

Whereas the United States Government has—

(1) supported broadcast journalism around the world to provide news to millions of people living under authoritarian regimes; and

(2) provided emergency assistance to journalists facing immediate risks to their lives as a result of their reporting;

Whereas 2024 marked the 19th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with an estimated 40 percent of the global population living in countries deemed “Not Free”;

Whereas 2024 marked the 14th consecutive year of decline in global internet freedom, with people in at least 56 countries who are facing legal repercussions for expressing themselves online and people in 43 countries who are facing physical assaults or death for their online commentary;

Whereas infringement on freedom of expression, including media freedom, has been one of the key drivers of broader declines in global freedom during the last 50 years, including attacks and prosecutions against journalists, pressure on media outlets, repressive regulatory and legal frameworks, internet shutdowns, unlawful efforts to undermine strong encryption, and blocks on online sources of information;

Whereas there are alarming indications about growing divisions resulting from the spread of authoritarian information campaigns with the potential to weaken democratic societies;

Whereas punishments against women journalists are increasing disproportionately, with 30 percent more women journalists being held in prison in 2022 than in the previous

year, and with most of the longest prison sentences handed down against journalists in 2023 given to women;

Whereas journalists and media workers are murdered, imprisoned, attacked, and harassed around the world, including—

(1) at least 124 journalists and media workers who were killed worldwide during 2024 and at least 15 journalists who have been killed during the first 4 months of 2025;

(2) approximately 361 journalists who were imprisoned during 2024, with 50 of these journalists imprisoned by the People's Republic of China;

(3) between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2024, impunity for the killing of journalists persisted, with nearly 80 percent of the 241 journalist murders during this period occurring without accountability; and

(4) journalists and media outlets targeted by government actors with sophisticated spyware products that pose a severe risk to their privacy and the security of their sources and families;

Whereas more than 375 writers and public intellectuals, including columnists and editorial journalists, were imprisoned across 40 different countries during 2024; and

Whereas United States journalists have been killed, injured, and imprisoned while reporting abroad, including—

(1) Christopher Allen, who was killed while covering the conflict in South Sudan on August 26, 2017, and for whom there has been no credible investigation to pursue justice after nearly 8 years;

(2) Austin Tice, who was kidnaped in Syria and has been held in captivity since August 13, 2012;

(3) Brent Renaud, who was killed by Russian forces while covering the war in Ukraine on March 13, 2022;

(4) Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed by Israeli forces on May 11, 2022, while reporting in the West Bank;

(5) Evan Gershkovich, who was wrongfully detained in Russia on baseless charges of espionage from March 2023 to August 2024;

(6) Alsu Kurmasheva who was wrongfully detained in Russia on bogus charges of failure to register as a foreign agent from October 2023 to August 2024; and

(7) Dylan Collins, a journalist at Agence France-Presse (AFP), who was injured in an attack on a group of journalists in southern Lebanon by Israeli forces on October 13, 2023: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) declares that a free press—

3 (A) is a central component of free societies
4 and democratic governance;

5 (B) contributes to an informed civil society
6 and government accountability;

7 (C) helps to expose corruption;

8 (D) enhances public accountability and
9 transparency of governments at all levels; and

10 (E) disseminates information that is essen-
11 tial to improving public health and safety;

12 (2) expresses concerns about threats to the ex-
13 ercise of freedom of expression, including by the
14 press, around the world;

1 (3) recognizes and commends journalism’s role
2 in providing trusted, accurate, and timely informa-
3 tion and in holding governments and leaders ac-
4 countable to citizens;

5 (4) recognizes the indispensable role of journal-
6 ists and media outlets in informing voters and the
7 international community about elections in multiple
8 countries worldwide in 2025;

9 (5) pays tribute to journalists who made tre-
10 mendous sacrifices, including the loss of their lives,
11 in the pursuit of truth and justice;

12 (6) condemns all actions around the world that
13 suppress press freedom and endanger the safety of
14 journalists;

15 (7) calls for the unconditional and immediate
16 release of all wrongfully detained journalists;

17 (8) reaffirms the centrality of press freedom to
18 efforts of the United States Government to support
19 democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote good gov-
20 ernance domestically and around the world; and

21 (9) calls upon the President and the Secretary
22 of State—

23 (A) to preserve and build upon the leader-
24 ship of the United States on issues relating to
25 press freedom and journalist safety, on the

1 basis of the protections for freedom of the press
2 afforded the American people under the First
3 Amendment to the Constitution of the United
4 States;

5 (B) to transparently investigate and bring
6 to justice the perpetrators of attacks against
7 American journalists;

8 (C) to support transparent investigations
9 and efforts to ensure accountability for attacks
10 against journalists of other nationalities; and

11 (D) to promote the respect and protection
12 of press freedom around the world.

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