

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 715

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, 2026.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 30, 2026

Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. WELCH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. COONS, and Mr. BENNET) 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, 2026.

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 and human rights, including rights enshrined in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 et seq.) and other laws, 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 Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2026 report marked the 20th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with an estimated 40 percent of the global population living in countries deemed “Not Free”;

Whereas media freedom declined more than any other rights tracked by the Freedom in the World report during the last 20 years, fueled by 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, according to the Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index, press freedom is at a 25-year low and, for the first time in the history of this Index, more than ½ of the world’s countries now fall into the “difficult” or “very serious” categories for press freedom;

Whereas Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net 2025 report marked the 15th consecutive year of decline in global internet freedom, with people in at least 57 of the 72 countries covered facing legal repercussions for expressing themselves online (a record high) and people in 44

countries facing physical assaults or death for their on-line commentary;

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

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 missing 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 from March 2023 to August 2024 on baseless charges of espionage;

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

Whereas more journalists and media workers were killed in 2025 than in any other year since the Committee to Pro-

tect Journalist began collecting data more than 3 decades ago;

Whereas, since October 7, 2023, at least 227 journalists and media workers have been killed in Israel, Gaza, and Lebanon, 207 of whom were Palestinians killed in Gaza by the Israeli military, making the Gaza conflict the deadliest on record for journalists, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas for the fifth year in a row, more than 300 journalists were imprisoned worldwide at the end of 2025, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including Zhang Zhan in the People's Republic of China, Yeris Curbelo Aguilera in Cuba, Mzia Amaglobeli in Georgia, RFE/RL journalist Nika Novak in Russia, RFE/RL journalist Farid Mehralizada in Azerbaijan, and former RFE/RL journalist and dual United States-Iranian national Reza Valizadeh in Iran;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists 2025 census, more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of these detained journalists are serving terms exceeding 5 years, including—

- (1) French journalist Christophe Gleizes in Algeria;
- (2) Sevinj Vagifgizi in Azerbaijan;
- (3) Dzianis Ivashyn in Belarus;
- (4) Thomas Awah, Jr., Tsi Conrad, Amadou, Vamouké, and Mancho Bibixy in Cameroon;
- (5) Ilham Tohti, Jimmy Lai, and Dong Yuyu in the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong;
- (6) Frenchie Mae Cumpio in the Philippines;
- (7) Rukhshona Khakimova in Tajikistan;
- (8) Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov in Uzbekistan; and
- (9) Pham Doan Trang and Le Huu Minh Tuan in Vietnam;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists 2025 census, nearly 1/2 of these detained journalists have never been sentenced, including—

- (1) Dawit Isaak and Seyoum Tsehaye in Eritrea;
- (2) Palestinian journalist Ali Al-Samoudi in Israel;
- (3) Elsbeth D'Anda in Nicaragua; and
- (4) Ukrainian journalists Anastasiya Glukhovska and Iryna Levchenko in Russia;

Whereas, according to PEN America, more than 400 writers and public intellectuals, including columnists and editorial journalists, were imprisoned across 40 different countries during 2025;

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

Whereas press freedom—

- (1) is a key component of democratic governance, human rights, activism in civil society, and socioeconomic development; and

- (2) enhances public accountability, transparency, and participation in civil society and democratic governance: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) declares that a free press—

1 (A) is a central component of free societies
2 and democratic governance;

3 (B) contributes to an informed civil society
4 and government accountability;

5 (C) helps to expose corruption;

6 (D) enhances public accountability and
7 transparency of governments at all levels; and

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

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

13 (3) recognizes and commends journalism's role
14 in providing trusted, accurate, and timely informa-
15 tion and in holding governments and leaders ac-
16 countable to citizens, including for human rights
17 abuses;

18 (4) recognizes the indispensable role of journal-
19 ists and media outlets in informing voters and the
20 international community about elections in multiple
21 countries worldwide in 2025;

22 (5) recognizes the critical importance of inter-
23 national journalists' access to conflict zones to con-
24 duct independent reporting;

1 (6) pays tribute to journalists who made tre-
2 mendous sacrifices, including the loss of their lives,
3 in the pursuit of truth and justice;

4 (7) condemns all actions around the world that
5 suppress press freedom and endanger the safety of
6 journalists;

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

9 (9) reaffirms the centrality of press freedom to
10 efforts of the United States Government to support
11 democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote human
12 rights and good governance domestically and around
13 the world; and

14 (10) calls upon the President and the Secretary
15 of State—

16 (A) to preserve and build upon the leader-
17 ship of the United States on issues relating to
18 press freedom and journalist safety, on the
19 basis of the protections for freedom of the press
20 afforded to the American people under the First
21 Amendment to the Constitution of the United
22 States;

23 (B) to transparently investigate and bring
24 to justice the perpetrators of attacks and
25 threats against American journalists;

1 (C) to support transparent investigations
2 and efforts to ensure accountability for attacks
3 against journalists of other nationalities; and

4 (D) to promote the respect and protection
5 of press freedom around the world.

