

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks on Signing the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 and an Exchange With Reporters

May 17, 2010

The President. Well, hello, everybody. I am very proud to be able to sign the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, a piece of legislation that sends a strong signal about our core values when it comes to the freedom of the press.

All around the world there are enormously courageous journalists and bloggers who, at great risk to themselves, are trying to shine a light on the critical issues that the people of their countries face, who are the frontlines against tyranny and oppression. And obviously, the loss of Daniel Pearl was one of those moments that captured the world's imagination, because it reminded us of how valuable a free press is and it reminded us that there are those who would go to any length in order to silence journalists around the world.

What this act does is it sends a strong message from the United States Government and from the State Department that we are paying attention to how other governments are operating when it comes to the press. It has the State Department each year chronicling how press freedom is operating, as one component of our human rights assessment, but it also looks at countries that are—governments that are specifically condoning or facilitating this kind of press repression, singles them out and subjects them to the gaze of world opinion in ways that I think are extraordinarily important.

Oftentimes without this kind of attention, countries and governments feel that they can operate against the press with impunity. And we want to send a message that they can't.

So this legislation, in a very modest way, I think, puts us clearly on the side of journalistic freedom. I want to thank Adam Schiff in the House and Senator Chris Dodd in the Senate for their leadership. And I particularly want to thank the Pearl family, who have been so outspoken and so courageous in sending a clear message that despite Daniel's death, his vision of a well-informed citizenry that is able to make choices and hold governments accountable, that that legacy lives on.

So we are very grateful to them. I'm grateful to the legislative leaders who helped to pass this. It is something that I intend to make sure our State Department carries out with vigor. And with that, I'm going to sign the bill.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The President. There you go. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

Q. Mr. President, speaking of press freedom, could you answer a couple of questions on BP?

The President. You're certainly free to ask them, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News].

Iran

Q. Will you answer them? How about a question on Iran?

The President. We won't be answering—I'm not doing a press conference today, but we'll be seeing you guys during the course of this week. Okay?

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 3714, approved May 17, was assigned Public Law No. 111–166.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009, remarks; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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