

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

## **Statement on World Press Freedom Day**

*May 3, 2024*

The free press is an essential pillar of democracy, and the women and men worldwide who uphold it do vital work. Journalists go to great lengths to expose corruption, document wars and other urgent world events, bring to light threats to public safety, and bring citizens the information they need to participate fully in their societies. Some journalists have given their lives to this work. Others have suffered grievous injuries or lost their freedom.

Journalism should not be a crime anywhere on Earth. On World Press Freedom Day, we honor the bravery and sacrifice of journalists and media workers around the world risking everything in pursuit of truth.

This is especially resonant today: 2023 was one of the deadliest years for journalists in recent memory. One reason for that is the war in Gaza, where far too many journalists, the vast majority of them Palestinian, have been killed. Additionally, over 300 journalists were imprisoned around the world last year, the highest number in decades. In Russia, American journalists Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva have been imprisoned in connection with their work for the Wall Street Journal and for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. And Austin Tice is still being held hostage in Syria after nearly 12 years.

On World Press Freedom Day, the United States calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all journalists who have been put behind bars for simply doing their jobs. And we call for the protection of journalists everywhere, including during military operations. My administration will continue to support free and independent media worldwide. We have brought together a coalition of countries to counter the proliferation and misuse of commercial spyware, which is often used to monitor journalists worldwide. And we're taking action to combat crimes against journalists, strengthen security for independent media outlets, and provide legal support for investigative journalists around the world.

In the coming weeks, I will be taking executive action in response to the global crackdown on press freedom, as exemplified by the wrongful detention of journalists around the world. I will declare this crackdown on press freedom a grave threat to national security and will authorize measures, including sanctions and visa bans, against those who take abusive actions to silence the press.

Journalists and media workers are an essential part of any democracy, because well-informed dissent is critical to building stronger and more successful societies. Today and every day, we recognize their courage, support their right to do their jobs, and stand with them for press freedom.

NOTE: The statement referred to Evan Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal reporter who was arrested by Russian authorities on March 29, 2023; Alsu Kurmasheva, a journalist with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tatar-Bashkir Service who was detained in Kazan, Russia, on October 18, 2023; and Austin B. Tice, a reporter for McClatchy Newspapers who was abducted outside Damascus, Syria, on August 14, 2012.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : World Press Freedom Day.

*Names:* Gershkovich, Evan; Kurmasheva, Alsu; Tice, Austin B.

*Subjects:* Civil and human rights, U.S. promotion efforts; Freedom of the press; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Russia, detention of U.S. citizens; World Press Freedom Day.

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