

COUNTRY: France

TOPIC: Preserving Freedom of Press

COMMITTEE: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee

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The French Republic values promoting press freedom, protecting journalists, and battling against impunity for crimes against journalists. We see freedom of the press as one of the most important human rights. According to The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which was set in 1789 by France's National Constituent Assembly and is a human civil rights document from the French Revolution, “The free communication of thoughts and of opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: any citizen thus may speak, write, print freely, except to respond to the abuse of this liberty, in the cases determined by the law.”.

The fundamental concept of press freedom is the ability to express oneself and communicate through all forms of media, such as newspapers and social media, should be considered a right that can be freely expressed. This freedom is possible without interference from an oppressive state; the constitution or other legal protections and security measures must be employed to protect this right. While the freedom of one's expression is fundamental, it is not absolute. In cases which this expression is a speech that can result in a violent act or discrimination of others, the freedom of expression shall be limited. But freedom of the press is starting to get more oppressed by legal and illegal threats.

Legal threats to the press can be explained as politicians or certain groups using laws against journalists and the press, trying to cancel the expressions that they are not fond of and harass them, claiming that journalists' and press's claims are defamation or an insult to the individual or the group, espionage, revealing state secrets, having relations with foreign powers, encouraging terrorism, or praising terrorist ideals, regardless of whether the statement is true or not.

Illegal threats can take many forms, such as harassment based on differences like gender, sexual orientation, immigration history, or race, as well as physical threats. These threats, whether big or small, are a daily occurrence that prevents journalists from fulfilling their duties. Moreover, they can intimidate others from covering topics that may result in similar threats, thereby violating a journalist's freedom to express themselves, freedom from discrimination, right to privacy, and freedom of information. According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), 120 journalists and media workers lost their lives in 2023 alone. In addition, the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, done by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), claims out of the 180 countries and territories, the environment is considered “bad” in 128 countries.

France is committed to the freedom of the press, speech, and protection of journalists around the globe and is taking measures to allow journalists, who are threatened, to continue their work. It is why we offered protection to a large number of Afghan and Ukrainian journalists because of the conditions in their country that prevent them from doing their jobs.

Together with our partners from Europe and The United Nations (UN), France is continuing its efforts to create a global place for free and reliable information with The International Partnership for Information and Democracy, which was launched by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in 2019 which has 50 participating countries as in right now. France is contributing to improve independent media outlets with Canal France International (CFI) and its contribution to the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), which announced that it would have its headquarters located in France at the Paris Peace Forum last November.

The United Nations (UN) takes actions to improve the freedom of the press worldwide. Such as raising awareness by organizing International Days such as World Press Freedom Day, on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, setting an example to regional and national policies with the UN Plan of Action, monitoring and reporting on press freedom worldwide and ensure the safety of journalists to ensure positive and lasting change, and assisting governments in developing legal frameworks about freedom of expression and freedom of information. The freedom of the press, expression, and information is an urgent problem growing bigger with the current conflicts around the world. We have to provide and protect this freedom to all of mankind and this will be unachievable unless we work together.