



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

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For Immediate Release

**STATEMENT BY SECRETARY KERRY**

May 5, 2015

Commemorating World Press Freedom Day

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, we honored journalists who defend democratic ideals through their commitment to discovering and telling the truth. In doing so, we also paid tribute journalism itself, a profession to that is essential to good governance and the functioning of democracy. This is a critically important time to acknowledge the contributions of journalists. As the Committee to Protect Journalists recently reported, this is the “most deadly and dangerous period for journalists in recent history.” From violent extremists and criminal gangs who abduct and kill reporters to authoritarian governments that persecute them, press freedom is under attack.

The most common reason journalists are targeted, of course, is to limit and control the free flow of information and ideas. Censorship gives power to dictators and tyrants; it allows them to mask the truth, to propagate false narratives that play to their self-serving interests. That’s what’s happening in places like Syria, where those in power, and the extremists present there, want nothing to stand in the way of their ability to distort the truth.

But journalists aren’t just under attack in war zones. In Paris, journalists and cartoonists were murdered for exercising their right to free expression. In China, journalists continue to suffer surveillance, censorship, and detainment. In Russia, the government has expanded its control over the media and prosecuted bloggers for failing to conform to its increasingly strict definition of “legitimate views.”

At the State Department, we’ve launched the Free the Press campaign, highlighting individual journalists who remain wrongly imprisoned. The list includes Gao Yu, a 71-year-old Chinese journalist, who was sentenced to seven years for allegedly leaking state secrets to foreign media; Mazen Darwish, who remains imprisoned by the Assad regime for trying to expose the regime’s brutal atrocities; Ta Phong Tan, who is serving a 10-year sentence in Vietnam for unmasking government corruption; and Reeyot Alemu, who was imprisoned in Ethiopia for writing an article critical of her government.

The United States calls for the immediate release of these individuals and all journalists imprisoned for doing their jobs. We will continue to speak out when journalists are unfairly arrested and detained; we will continue to raise these issues with foreign officials at every level; and we will continue to promote journalists’ physical and digital safety. Freedom of expression is one of our country’s core values and one which we will continue to defend both at home and overseas.

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