

4 May 2015

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2015

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 30, 2015

On May 3, the world will mark World Press Freedom Day, a day designated to raise awareness of governments and their citizens of the necessity to uphold and protect the right of freedom of expression. Today, regrettably, free press is under assault in some places, and the journalists, bloggers, photographers, editors, publishers, broadcasters, commentators, essayists, satirists, and cartoonists are in danger. Secretary of State John Kerry framed this issue succinctly: “Freedom of the press -- whether symbolized by a pencil, a pen, a camera, or a microphone -- is under siege, purposefully.”

Reporters face detention, abduction, and, in some cases, even torture and death because of their work. Within the OSCE region, journalists in some participating States have been intimidated into self-censorship or arrested without valid cause. Some are imprisoned without judicial recourse or killed with outright impunity. In many countries, undue restrictions are placed on access to the internet and other media. We must not allow these negative trends to continue.

As we affirm the importance of World Press Freedom Day, we repeat our calls to participating States to uphold their OSCE commitments in supporting freedom of expression and freedom of the media both online and offline. We urge all participating States to avail themselves of the assistance and expertise of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in addressing shortfalls in upholding their commitments.

We also pay homage to the courageous members of the media who put their life and liberty on the line to tell the stories the world would otherwise never hear. We reaffirm our commitment not only to stand by them, but to stand up for them this day and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.