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S. RES. 688

Recognizing widening threats to freedom of the press and free expression around the world, reaffirming the vital role that a free and independent press plays in combating the growing threats of authoritarianism, misinformation, and disinformation, and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority of the United States Government in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2024.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 15, 2024

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. SCHATZ, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Recognizing widening threats to freedom of the press and free expression around the world, reaffirming the vital role that a free and independent press plays in combating the growing threats of authoritarianism, misinformation, and disinformation, and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority of the United States Government in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2024.

Whereas the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and various State constitutions protect freedom of the press in the United States;

Whereas Thomas Jefferson, who championed the necessity of a free press for a thriving democratic society, wisely declared, “Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.”;

Whereas Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris on December 10, 1948, states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”;

Whereas, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the third day of May of each year to be “World Press Freedom Day”—

- (1) to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom;
- (2) to evaluate press freedom around the world;
- (3) to defend the media against attacks on its independence; and
- (4) to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives while working in their profession;

Whereas the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–166) expanded the examination of the freedom of the press around the world in the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices published by the Department of State;

Whereas, on December 18, 2013, and December 18, 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution

68/163 and Resolution 74/157, respectively, on the safety of journalists and the problem of impunity by unequivocally condemning all attacks on, and violence against, journalists and media workers, including torture, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and intimidation and harassment in conflict and non-conflict situations;

Whereas the United States Government has used the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114–328) to place targeted visa and economic sanctions on individuals, including for their roles in the targeted killings of journalists;

Whereas, in an effort to combat attacks against journalists, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in February 2021, announced the Khashoggi Ban, a policy allowing the Department of State to impose visa restrictions on individuals who, acting on behalf of a foreign government, are believed to have been directly engaged in serious, extraterritorial counter-dissident activities, including activities that suppress, harass, surveil, threaten, or harm journalists, activists, or other persons perceived to be dissidents for their work;

Whereas compiled data from Reporters Without Borders provides alarming indications about growing divisions resulting from the spread of disinformation with the potential to weaken democratic societies;

Whereas, as of December 14, 2023, according to Reporters Without Borders, a total of 521 journalists were in prison and 84 journalists were missing;

Whereas Reporters Without Borders notes that punishments against women journalists are increasing disproportion-

ately, with the number of women journalists in prison rising by 30 percent in 2022 and with most of the longest prison sentences handed down against journalists in 2023 given to women;

Whereas Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2024 report marked the 18th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with an estimated 38 percent of the global population living in countries deemed “Not Free”;

Whereas Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net 2023 report marked the 13th consecutive year of decline in global internet freedom, with people in 55 of the 70 countries covered facing legal repercussions for expressing themselves online and people in 41 countries facing physical assaults or death for their online commentary;

Whereas infringement on freedom of expression, including media freedom, has been one of the key drivers of declines in global freedom over the last 50 years, according to Freedom House, including attacks and prosecutions against journalists, pressure on media outlets, repressive regulatory and legal frameworks, internet shutdowns, efforts to undermine strong encryption, and blocks on online sources of information;

Whereas journalists and media workers are being murdered, imprisoned, attacked, and harassed around the world and the Committee to Protect Journalists has reported that—

(1) at least 99 journalists and media workers were killed around the world during 2023, and at least 27 journalists have been killed in 2024, as of May 15th;

(2) approximately 320 journalists were imprisoned during 2023;

(3) between September 1, 2013 and August 31, 2023, the vast majority of murders of journalists oc-

curred with impunity, with nearly 80 percent of the perpetrators of 261 murders of journalists facing no punishment; and

(4) journalists and media outlets around the world have been targeted by government actors with sophisticated spyware products that pose a severe risk to their privacy and security and the security of their sources and families;

Whereas, according to PEN America, more than 339 writers and public intellectuals, including columnists and editorial journalists, were imprisoned across 33 different countries during 2023;

Whereas the censorship, victimization, and killing of journalists around the world, particularly in conflict zones, has obvious and profound implications for the ability of the public, including the American public, to be informed, including about conflicts with local, regional, and global ramifications;

Whereas, since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Reporters Without Borders has documented attacks directly targeting journalists, including—

(1) the killing of 11 Ukrainian and accredited international journalists and media workers by Russian armed forces;

(2) the torture by electric shock, beatings, and mock executions of journalists working for the international press;

(3) the targeted kidnappings of journalists and their families in occupied regions of Ukraine to put pressure on their reporting;

(4) the deliberate attacks targeting media facilities;
and

(5) the near universal censorship, imprisonment, or exile of Russia's independent news media;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders, in the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, Ukrainian journalists and bloggers have repeatedly been threatened, arbitrarily arrested, and tortured for resisting Russian occupation, such as the detentions and imprisonments of Vladyslav Yesypenko Iryna Danylovyh, Amet Suleimanov, Asan Akhmetov, Marlen Asanov, Nariman Celal, Oleksiy Bessarabov, Osman Arifmemetov, Remzi Bekirov, Ruslan Suleimanov, Rustem Sheikhaliev, Server Mustafayev, Seyran Saliev, Timur Ibragimov, Vilen Temeryanov, and Lutfiye Zudiyeva;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Ukrainian journalists Viktoria Roshchina, Iryna Levchenko, and Dmytro Khilyuk remain in the custody of Russian forces after their full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022;

Whereas journalists and media workers face heightened dangers in Russia, such as harassment, repression, censorship, and imprisonment, with 30 journalists and 4 media workers imprisoned as of March 27, 2024, according to Reporters Without Borders, including—

(1) Evan Gershkovich, a United States citizen and reporter with the Wall Street Journal, who has been wrongfully detained on baseless espionage charges since March 29, 2023, and faces up to 20 years in jail;

(2) Alsu Kurmasheva, a Russian-American journalist for congressionally-funded Radio Free Europe/

Radio Liberty, who was arrested for violating Russia’s “Foreign Agents” law and has since been charged for violating Article 207.3 of Russia’s Criminal Code, which effectively criminalizes reporting about Russia’s war in Ukraine;

(3) Ivan Safronov, a correspondent with Russian business dailies Kommersant and Vedomosti, who was sentenced to 22 years in jail on treason charges in September 2022;

(4) Sergey Mikhaylov, publisher of independent newspaper Listok, who was arrested for allegedly spreading false information about the Russian military in April 2022;

(5) Mikhail Afanasyev, editor-in-chief of the online magazine Novy Fokus, who was arrested and charged with allegedly spreading false information about the Russian military in April 2022;

(6) Novaya Gazeta, a landmark independent newspaper founded in 1993, which—

(A) suspended operations in Russia in March 2022 after receiving warnings from the authorities citing Russia’s “Foreign Agents” law; and

(B) was stripped of its print and online media licenses in September 2022;

(7) Meduza, a leading independent bilingual news website based outside of Russia, which—

(A) was designated by Russian authorities in January 2023 as an “undesirable organization” under the 2015 Undesirable Organization Law; and

(B) was banned from operating in the Russian Federation;

(8) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, an independent nonprofit media outlet, which was designated by

Russian authorities in February 2024 as an “undesirable organization” under the 2015 Undesirable Organization Law;

(9) RusNews, an independent news website with few remaining correspondents in Russia, whose journalists—

(A) Maria Ponomarenko was sentenced to 6 years in prison for allegedly spreading false information about the Russian military on February 15, 2023, and is facing a second criminal charge for alleged violation of prison rules;

(B) Roman Ivanov was sentenced on March 6, 2024, to 7 years in prison for allegedly disseminating false news on the war in Ukraine;

(C) Igor Kuznetsov, who has been in detention since September 2021, was given a 3-year suspended sentence on alleged extremism charges on March 20, 2024, and was given a 6-year prison term on April 5, 2024, for allegedly inciting mass disturbances in group chats on Telegram;

Whereas, Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Washington Post contributing columnist and the winner of the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for commentary—

(1) has been imprisoned in Russia since April 2022 for his criticism of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine; and

(2) received an unjust 25-year prison sentence in April 2023;

Whereas Russian authorities continue harassing and prosecuting journalists in exile, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(1) exiled Russian journalists Ruslan Leviev and Michael Nacke, who were each sentenced in absentia to 11

years in prison in August 2023 for allegedly distributing “fake” information about the Russian military;

(2) exiled Russian journalist Denis Kamalyagin, editor-in-chief of the exiled Russian newspaper Pskovskaya Guberniya, who was charged in late 2023 with failing to comply with the foreign agent law and with discrediting the Russian army;

(3) United States-based Russian-American journalist and writer Masha Gessen, against whom Russia issued an arrest warrant in 2023 for allegedly spreading “fake” information about the Russian army;

Whereas other Russian journalists living in exile have also been targets of harassment, surveillance, and suspected poisoning, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(1) exiled Russian journalists Elena Kostyuchenko and Irina Babloyan, who reported in August 2023 that they may have been poisoned in Germany and Georgia, respectively;

(2) Prague-based IStories’ reporters Alesya Marokhovskaya and Irina Dolinina, who received threats and fear they have been under surveillance;

(3) Galina Timchenko, the Latvia-based head of Meduza, whose phone was infected by Pegasus, a form of zero-click spyware produced by the Israeli company NSO Group, while she was in Germany in February 2023;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, as of December 1, 2023, the Government of the People’s Republic of China had detained at least 44 journalists, and has unleashed an onslaught of attacks on press freedom in the People’s Republic of China and Hong Kong, including through—

(1) state-sponsored censorship and disinformation campaigns limiting access to any information that runs contrary to Chinese Communist Party propaganda narratives, and censoring politically-sensitive keywords on social media platforms;

(2) the passage and implementation of legislation that severely curtails press freedom in Hong Kong, including the National Security Law of June 2020, and Article 23 of the Basic Law of March 2024, both of which pose an existential threat to the city's tradition of press freedom;

(3) harassment, intimidation, arrest, and imprisonment of journalists in Hong Kong, including the arrest and subsequent conviction of journalist and outspoken democracy advocate Jimmy Lai, and the closure of his once widely popular Chinese-language newspaper, Apple Daily;

(4) arrests or other repressive actions against independent journalists and others in mainland China who are attempting to share uncensored news or opinion about current affairs, including—

(A) Sophia Huang Xueqin, who has written about women's rights and the protests in Hong Kong, who was detained arbitrarily beginning in September 2021, who went on trial in September 2023 on charges of “inciting subversion of state power”, and whose current status remains unknown; and

(B) citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, who provided uncensored news regarding the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan and who has been imprisoned since May 2020 on politically-motivated charges of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”;

(5) the detention of journalists critical of the Government of the People’s Republic of China, including Ruan Xiaohuan, who, after blogging about programming and politics, was sentenced to a 7-year term of imprisonment in early 2023, following 21 months of detention; and

(6) the continued detention of Uyghur journalists, who account for nearly 50 percent of imprisoned journalists in the People’s Republic of China, including Ilham Tohti, founder of the news website Uighurbiz, who was detained in 2014 and is serving a life sentence;

Whereas Belarus has witnessed sweeping attacks against the press since Alexander Lukashenka’s fraudulent election in August 2020, with journalists and media workers harassed, assaulted, and imprisoned, with 28 journalists imprisoned as of December 1, 2023, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(1) Katsiaryna Andreyeva, a correspondent with Poland-based independent broadcaster Belsat TV, who, while serving a 2-year prison term for filming a live broadcast of the violent dispersal of a protest against Alexander Lukashenka in November 2020, was sentenced to 8 additional years in prison on treason charges in July 2022;

(2) Ksenia Lutskina, a former correspondent for the state broadcaster Belteleradio, who was sentenced to 8 years in prison on charges of conspiring to seize state power in September 2022, and who is not receiving appropriate medical care despite having a preexisting brain tumor that has grown during her detention;

(3) Maryna Zolatava, chief editor of independent news website Tut.By, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison on charges of incitement to hatred and distrib-

uting materials calling for actions aimed at harming national security in March 2023;

(4) Andrey Kuznechyk, a journalist who, while working for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was detained in November 2021, and sentenced in June 2022 to 6 years in prison on charges of forming an extremist group;

(5) Ihar Losik, another Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist who was arrested in June 2020, and sentenced in December 2021 to 15 years in jail on bogus charges of preparation of actions that violate public order, who attempted suicide in March 2023, and whose wife Darya was sentenced in January 2023 to 2 years in prison on a charge of facilitating extremist activity;

(6) Alyaksandr Mantsevich, who was detained in March 2023, and is serving a 4-year prison sentence after being convicted in November 2023 on charges of discrediting Belarus;

(7) Dzianis Ivashyn, a freelance journalist who has been serving a sentence of 13 years and 1 month since being convicted in September 2022, on charges of treason and “illegal collection and dissemination of information about private life”; and

(8) Ihar Karnei, a former freelancer with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, who was sentenced on March 22, 2024 to 3 years in jail for participating in an extremist group;

Whereas Belarus has weaponized “extremism” laws against independent media outlets, with around 25 media outlets labeled as extremist groups or organizations as of March 2024, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, and has jailed journalists on allegations of creating or participating in extremist groups or facilitating extremist activities;

Whereas Belarusian authorities continue to prosecute journalists in exile, including exiled journalists Stsypan Putsila and Yan Rudzik, who had covered protests during the 2020 presidential election and were sentenced in absentia to 20 years and 19 years in jail, respectively, in May 2023, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas, in 2022, the Islamic Republic of Iran was the world's leading jailer of journalists, including female journalists, and the Government of Iran subjected these journalists to arbitrary summonses, arrests, travel bans, torture, inhumane treatment, and unsubstantiated and unjust sentences, and where, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 17 journalists and media workers remained behind bars as of December 1, 2023, including—

(1) Niloofar Hamedi, a correspondent of the daily newspaper Shargh, who was imprisoned in 2022 for trying to document the death of Mahsa Amini on charges that could result in the death penalty;

(2) Elahe Mohammadi, a journalist for the daily Ham Mihan, who was also imprisoned in 2022 for the same action and on the same charges;

(3) Iranian journalist Navid Seyed-Mohammadi, a Kurdish reporter for the state-run Islamic Republic Radio and Television broadcaster, who was arrested in May 2020 and is serving a 7-year prison sentence for “espionage for hostile states”;

(4) Kayvan Samimi, a 76-year-old veteran journalist, who was initially imprisoned in May 2019 and is serving a 6-year prison sentence on anti-state charges of “spreading propaganda against the system” and “colluding against national security”;

(5) sisters Hoda and Zahra Tohidi, who are freelance journalists, and were imprisoned in 2022 alongside Zahra’s husband, Alireza Khoshbakht, a fellow journalist, for documenting the nationwide protests after the death of Mahsa Jina Amini; and

(6) Mohammad-Bagher Moradi, an exiled freelance journalist, who was extradited to Iran from Turkey, was immediately imprisoned in 2022 for his work, and is serving a 5-year prison sentence;

Whereas, since the beginning of the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, at least 105 journalists and media workers have been killed during the ongoing war in Gaza, Lebanon, and Israel, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, and other significant attacks on the press have been documented, including according to Reporters Without Borders, the killing of at least 22 journalists in direct connection to their work;

Whereas the Government of Egypt’s repression of the media has expanded under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since 2013, and, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders, has included—

(1) attacks on independent media outlet Mada Masr, which the Egyptian Government has targeted with spurious charges brought against editor-in-chief Lina Attalah and journalist Rana Mamdouh; and

(2) the imprisonment of at least 13 journalists, as of December 1, 2023, including—

(A) Alaa Abd El Fattah, a blogger who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for “broadcasting false news” and who embarked on a hunger strike on April 2, 2022, to protest his mistreatment, which he escalated to a near-fatal “water strike” that

prompted a forced medical intervention by prison officials upon the start of the United Nations COP 27 climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt on November 6, 2022; and

(B) Mohamed Ibrahim, a blogger who is also known as “Mohamed Oxygen”, who has spent more than 4 years in pretrial detention, which is 2 years beyond the legal limit for a pre-trial detention;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Lokman Slim, a Lebanese political commentator and columnist, was murdered in southern Lebanon on August 4, 2023, after warning that he had been threatened and accused of treason by supporters of Hezbollah and, as of the date of the enactment of this resolution, no arrests or charges have been made in the investigation into his murder;

Whereas the Office of the Director of National Intelligence concluded that the 2018 murder of Washington Post journalist and United States legal permanent resident Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul was approved by Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman and impunity continues for the Saudi officials involved in this crime;

Whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia maintains a hostile environment towards journalists through transnational repression, systematic and arbitrary arrests, torture and inhumane or degrading treatment, lengthy pre-trial detentions, and conditional release restrictions, which inhibit reporters and columnists from traveling or returning to their professional work post-detention, including—

(1) Abdulrahman Farhana, a columnist who was detained in February 2019, and charged with membership

in a terrorist organization, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(2) Zuhair Kutbi, a journalist who was jailed in January 2019, and reportedly suffers from torture, malnourishment, and denial of cancer treatment in prison, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists; and

(3) blogger Raif Badawi, who, according to Reporters Without Borders, recently completed a 10-year prison sentence on blasphemy and apostasy charges, and who remains subjected to a further 10-year travel ban, which prevents him from reuniting with his family who received asylum in Canada;

Whereas Reporters Without Borders has asserted that due to oppression by the military junta, “press freedom in [Burma] has been set back ten years in ten days” after the February 1, 2021 military coup, including through—

(1) media workers forced into hiding and confronting censorship, harassment, internet blockages, beatings, interrogations, threats, and torture at the hands of the military;

(2) multiple independent media outlets forced to cease operations or close altogether or having their licenses revoked by the military; and

(3) journalists being detained at alarming rates, with 75 journalists in prison as of April 17, 2023, including photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaike, who was sentenced to a 20-year prison term in May 2023 while covering the aftermath of a deadly cyclone;

Whereas, in India, government authorities have taken a series of actions limiting the space for free and independent media, including—

(1) frequently imposing internet and communication blackouts in Indian-administered Kashmir and in the Indian state of Manipur, among certain areas;

(2) calling for the temporary blockage of journalists and media accounts on X (formerly known as “Twitter”) and other online platforms;

(3) increasing restrictions on foreign journalists, and subjecting journalists to searches and arrests, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(A) revoking the journalism permit of French reporter Vanessa Dognac, who, as the spouse of an Indian citizen, holds permanent residency status, known as an Overseas Citizens of India, forcing her to leave the country in February 2024;

(B) the continued detention of Kashmiri journalist Aasif Sultan since April 2018, including his re-arrest for the third time by Indian authorities in February 2024, days after his release from five and one-half years of preventative detention;

(C) the June 2022 arrest of Teesta Setalvad, a journalist and civil rights activist, by the Anti-Terrorism Squad of the Gujarat Police, for allegedly conspiring to implicate the Gujarat government in the 2002 Gujarat riots, and who has since faced legal harassment and arbitrary detention over the last year for her work; and

(D) the Government of India’s efforts to censor the British Broadcasting Corporation’s documentary critical of prominent Indian political figures;

Whereas Pakistan maintains high levels of media censorship, and impunity persists in cases of killings and physical attacks on journalists who criticize the military and state institutions, including—

(1) the repeated arrest of journalist Imran Riaz Khan, including his arbitrary detention in solitary confinement without due process for 142 days in 2023, according to Reporters Without Borders;

(2) the July 1, 2022 assault of Ayaz Amir, an employee of Dunya News, which occurred days after he had made comments criticizing former Prime Minister Imran Khan and the military, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists; and

(3) the February 2024 arrest of Pakistani journalist and video blogger Asad Ali Toor on charges of orchestrating a campaign against the state and its officials against them through his social media platforms, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas Afghanistan, under the control of the Taliban, remains one of the most repressive countries for journalists, who are subjected to arrest, beatings, and arbitrary restrictions on their work, including journalist Sultan Ali Jawadi, who was sentenced to 1 year in prison by a Taliban court in December 2023, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas violations of press freedom are persistent in South Asia and Southeast Asia, where, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists—

(1) in Vietnam, journalist and writer Pham Doan Trang, in December 2021, following a year in pretrial detention, was sentenced to 9 years in prison for “anti-state propaganda” in a judicial proceeding, which imprisonment has been declared “arbitrary” by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention;

(2) in Bangladesh, journalists are subjected to arbitrary arrests and suffer killings and physical attacks with near total impunity;

(3) in Sri Lanka, the enactment of the recent draconian Online Safety Act, which undermines freedom of speech, incentivizes self-censorship, and could be misused to suppress dissent;

Whereas Cuba remains a highly restricted environment for independent media, marked by internet restrictions and constant state-directed harassment of journalists and news outlets, and the preponderance of arbitrary arrests, threats, police summonses, and forced exile, which remain among the repressive suite of measures applied by the government against activists and journalists, with victims including Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca, a journalist who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for “enemy propaganda and resistance” in July 2022, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, evidence the Government of Cuba continues to employ retaliatory tactics to silence and jail journalists or force them into exile to maintain its censorship regime;

Whereas assaults on press freedom in El Salvador, including verbal attacks on journalists by political leaders and the use of state power to intimidate and pressure independent media, imperil its fragile democracy, and, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and the Knight First Amendment Institute, include—

(1) spyware attacks by the Government of El Salvador against journalists of the media outlet El Faro, who were subject to 226 infections between June 2020 and November 2021, many of which attacks occurred when the journalists were communicating with confiden-

tial sources and reporting on abuses by the Salvadoran Government, and which intensified around El Faro's publication of major stories;

(2) the ongoing criminal investigation against El Faro, which was launched after El Faro reported damaging information about the Salvadoran Government, and the relentless harassment by Salvadoran law enforcement officials toward El Faro journalists, which led the media outlet to relocate most of its operations to Costa Rica following harassment by Salvadoran police;

(3) the online attacks and threats to journalists from the outlet Revista Factum, which has been banned from press conferences at the presidential residence; and

(4) the adoption of a new law that imposes prison sentences ranging from 10 to 15 years for certain reporting on criminal groups, such as gangs;

Whereas in Mexico, which continues to be one of the world's deadliest countries for journalists, 25 journalists are counted as missing, according to Mexico's National Human Rights Commission, and where the Committee to Protect Journalists has recorded 88 killings of journalists and media workers since 2012, of which 37 were murdered in response to their reportage, and where reporters covering stories concerning political corruption and organized crime are frequently assaulted and murdered;

Whereas Haiti is the second deadliest country in the Western Hemisphere for journalists, with 9 journalists killed since 2022, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, following a steady uptick of violence in the country, including violence against the press, as the country's security situation continues to deteriorate following the 2021

assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, with violence claiming the lives of—

(1) Garry Tesse, a Haitian radio reporter who reported on political and government corruption and was believed to be tortured and killed in retaliation for his reporting; and

(2) Dumesky Kersaint, a journalist for an online news outlet who was killed while attempting to cover another killing in his community;

Whereas in Nicaragua, the persecution of journalists by the Ortega regime continues unabated, including through forced closures of independent media outlets, and journalists in the country are continually threatened, harassed, sued, surveilled, jailed, and forced into exile, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, includes—

(1) Miguel Mendoza, who, along with 6 other journalists and media workers, was among the group of 222 political prisoners released by Nicaraguan authorities in February 2023, sent to the United States, and subsequently stripped of their Nicaraguan citizenship; and

(2) journalist Victor Ticay, who was arrested in April 2023, in connection to his April 5, 2023 reporting about a Catholic Easter celebration;

Whereas Honduras remains one of the Western Hemisphere's most dangerous countries for journalists, where those working for opposition media or who are outspoken critics of the government are subjected to harassment, intimidation, and death threats by the country's security forces and its affiliates;

Whereas in Peru, criminal defamation lawsuits, legislation, and restrictive accreditation schemes for journalists that undermine freedom of expression have been used to har-

ass and silence investigative journalists who write about prominent political figures, and the unlawful state repression of protestors has also increased the risk to journalists covering ongoing social unrest in Peru, as corroborated by the wounding of several journalists by rubber pellets and tear gas canisters in police and military operations throughout 2022 and 2023, which have been condemned by international organizations as violating international standards on the use of force, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and Amnesty International;

Whereas in Ecuador, a group of presumed gang members stormed a local news station in Guayaquil on January 9, 2024, during a live broadcast, which evinces the country's worsening security condition amid organized crime activity that, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, forced at least 5 journalists to leave Ecuador between April and October 2023;

Whereas in Venezuela, the Maduro regime continues to target independent media outlets, to restrict the exercise of freedom of expression, and to severely limit access to accurate information, with local civil society organization Public Space (Espacio Público) registering 349 attacks on journalists and media workers between January and November 2023, including censorship, verbal attacks, and intimidation;

Whereas in Sudan, the United Nations Panel of Experts reported that at least 15,000 people died as a result of the Rapid Support Forces offensive in West Darfur in 2023, tens of thousands more people are believed to have been killed, and more than 8,000,000 people have been displaced, and where freedom of the press and the safety of

journalists has severely deteriorated, as evidenced by attacks on independent media and the killings, arrests, detentions, harassment, and beatings of journalists, which, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, includes—

(1) the killing of Halima Idris Salim, a 29-year-old reporter for local independent online news outlet Sudan Bukra, on October 10, 2023, when Rapid Support Forces soldiers ran her over with their car while she was covering health conditions of a hospital’s emergency wing in Omdurman;

(2) reports that the Rapid Support Forces has cut access to telecommunications and internet services since early February 2024, leaving civilians in a communications blackout and making reporting on the war nearly impossible; and

(3) the forced closure of all print media in the country, the banning of foreign news channels, and forcing journalists into exile;

Whereas press freedom continues to face challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, including—

(1) in Ethiopia, which, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, is the second-worst jailer of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa, and where a crackdown on the press has included—

(A) an entrenched pattern of arbitrarily detaining journalists, with at least 8 journalists behind bars as of December 2023;

(B) significant due process and fair trial concerns in the cases of detained journalists, such as the May 2023 arrest of online journalist Gobeze Sisay in neighboring Djibouti and subsequent transfer to Ethiopia under unclear circumstances;

(C) the detention of journalists arrested under state of emergency provisions at a military camp in eastern Ethiopia without judicial oversight or access to family or legal counsel;

(D) the use of Internet disruptions during times of political tension or in restive parts of the country, including the Oromia and Amhara regions, making it difficult for journalists to report safely and freely;

(E) the failure to provide a credible accounting for the 2021 killings of journalists Dawit Kebede Araya and Sisay Fida;

(F) the consistent persecution of media trying to cover the conflict and violence in the Oromia and Amhara regions, including the detention of at least 6 journalists, as of March 27, 2024, who were reporting on events in Amhara, according to Reporters Without Borders; and

(G) the forced exile and deportation of independent journalists;

(2) in Nigeria, where journalists have been repeatedly detained and charged for their work, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and PEN America, including—

(A) Luke Binniyat, who was arrested in November 2021, released on bail in February 2022, and is facing 3 years in prison if convicted of sending false information under the Cybercrimes Act;

(B) Agba Jalingo, publisher of the CrossRiverWatch news site, who was arrested on March 27, 2023, charged under the Cybercrimes Act for allegedly publishing false news, and released on bail on April 3, 2023;

(C) Haruna Mohammed Salisu, publisher of the *WikkiTimes*, who was arrested while covering the February 25, 2023 Federal elections, charged under the penal code with inciting the public to disturb the Bauchi state governor, released on bail on March 1, 2023, and faces ongoing prosecution in that case and in several others; and

(D) Saint Mienpamo Onitsha, founder of the online broadcaster *NAIJA Live TV*, who was arrested on October 10, 2023, at gunpoint at the home of a friend, charged under the Cybercrimes Act over a report about tensions in the southern Niger Delta region, and released on bail after nearly 4 months in jail;

(3) in Eritrea, which is one of the world's most censored nations, and where, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 16 journalists, including editors Dawit Isaak and Amanuel Asrat, are detained, with most of these detentions commencing during a 2001 crackdown on the independent press, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(4) in Cameroon, where—

(A) 6 journalists were imprisoned as of December 2023;

(B) at least 2 journalists have died in government custody under suspicious circumstances since 2010;

(C) journalist Martinez Zogo was abducted, tortured, and killed in January 2023; and

(D) journalist Jean-Jacques Ola Bebe was killed in February 2023, with no police investigation into his murder;

(5) in Rwanda, where the media landscape is heavily restricted by censorship and authoritarianism, and where, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists—

(A) at least 4 journalists were imprisoned as of December 1, 2023, 2 of whom, YouTubers Aimbale Karasira Uzaramba and Dieudonné Niyonsenga, have alleged torture while in state custody; and

(B) journalist John Williams Ntwali, who, after reporting on cases of torture, disappearances, and forced government evictions, was killed in January 2023 under suspicious circumstances, and whose death has never been credibly investigated;

(6) in Burundi, where journalist Floriane Irangabiye is serving a 10-year prison sentence, following a January 2023 conviction in connection to her critical commentary on governance issues in the country, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(7) in Mali and in Burkina Faso, where foreign journalists have been expelled in the aftermath of the coup d'état in each country, French-language media outlets have been banned, and local journalists work under threat of reprisal for reporting on security issues, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists and PEN America;

(8) in Niger, where journalist Samira Sabou was detained for 11 days in October 2023, and charged with cybercrime and treason in connection with her reporting, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(9) in Senegal, where journalists have been repeatedly arrested and prosecuted for their work, attacked by security forces, and struggled amid Internet shutdowns;

(10) in Togo, where journalists have faced arrests and prosecutions for their work and other forms of in-

timidation, including spyware surveillance, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists; and

(11) in Zimbabwe, where journalists have been banned from covering government meetings, and the legal framework for journalists remains harsh, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas, in December 2023, the Parliament of Hungary passed a Russian-inspired national sovereignty law that created the “Sovereignty Protection Authority” (the “Authority”), an institution with the publicly declared objectives of targeting journalists and identifying individuals and organizations that receive foreign funding and which the Authority suspects undermine the country’s national sovereignty, objectives that local media outlets have warned will empower the Authority with the ability to stifle independent journalism supported by overseas donors;

Whereas in Serbia, journalists suffer regular online harassment, smear campaigns, and physical attacks, and the 1999 killing of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija remains unpunished after those formerly convicted for his murder were acquitted, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas in Slovakia, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, more than 6 years after the brutal killing of investigative reporter Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, and despite the hitmen and intermediaries receiving lengthy prison sentences, authorities have been unable to convict the alleged mastermind;

Whereas in Turkey, the Government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan maintains one of the world’s most repressive environments for journalists and continues its revolving door policy on detaining journalists, with at least 13 jour-

nalists in jail in retaliation for their professional work at the time of the Committee to Protect Journalists' most recent prison census, which was published on December 1, 2023;

Whereas Hatice Duman, the longest imprisoned journalist in Turkey, who has been serving a life sentence on terrorism charges since April 9, 2003, told the Committee to Protect Journalists in November 2022 that she had little hope for freedom in her retrial, while her continuing retrial has not instigated any changes on the part of government authorities;

Whereas in Azerbaijan, the Government of Ilham Aliyev, who secured a fifth term in an uncompetitive early presidential election in February 2024, mounted a renewed assault on independent media in recent months by detaining 10 journalists, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, from outlets Abzas Media, Kanal 13, and Toplum TV; namely Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinj Vagifgizi, Mahammad Kekalov, Hafiz Babali, Elnara Gasimova, Nargiz Absalamova, Aziz Orujov, Shamo Eminov, Alasgar Mammadli, and Mushfig Jabbar, constituting a crackdown on journalists that was in part retaliation for their reporting on official corruption;

Whereas, the Government of Tajikistan continued its systematic repression of the free press in 2022 and 23 by sentencing 7 journalists to lengthy prison terms on spurious charges in secretive, closed-door trials held in detention centers amid allegations of torture and forced confessions, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(1) Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva, a 67-year-old ethnic Pamiri journalist and human rights defender, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison; and

(2) journalists Daler Imomali, Abdullo Ghurbati, Zavqibek Saidamini, and Abdusattor Pirmuhammadzoda, who were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 7 to 10 years on spurious charges of extremism;

Whereas the Government of Kyrgyzstan, since the beginning of 2022, has taken worrying steps to dismantle the country's previously vibrant press environment, including by—

(1) detaining 11 current and former staff of the investigative reporting outlet Temirov Live, who have reported on corruption allegations among high-level government officials, since January 2024, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(2) imposing spurious charges of illegal drug manufacture on Kryrgyzstan-born investigative journalist Bolot Temirov and deporting him to the Russian Federation in retaliation for his reporting on corruption in the government's procurement processes, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(3) shuttering and blocking investigative outlet Kloop, which is known for its reporting on high-level government corruption, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

(4) enacting the so-called "Foreign Representatives" legislation, which will establish extensive state control over externally-funded press freedom groups and non-governmental organizations that run prominent news sites; and

(5) raiding independent news agency 24.kg on fabricated charges, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists;

Whereas in Algeria, press freedom continued to deteriorate at an alarming pace in 2023, with 3 journalists in jail as of December 2023, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 2 of whom are the country's most prominent journalists, including—

(1) Mustapha Bendjama, the editor-in-chief and director of local independent news website Le Provincial, who was arrested on February 8, 2023, on foreign funding charges and is currently serving a 6-month prison sentence for “committing an illegal immigration crime”; and

(2) Ihsane El Kadi, editor-in-chief of local independent news website Maghreb Emergent and Radio M, who was arrested in December 2022, and is serving a 7-year prison sentence on charges of receiving foreign funding for the news outlet he manages;

Whereas in Tunisia, press freedom has gravely deteriorated following President Kais Saied's dismissal of the prime minister on July 25, 2021, and his concomitant suspension of the Parliament of Tunisia, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, in addition to the Tunisian Government's imprisonment of journalists in 2023, which evince a national context in which the government has broadly suppressed press freedom in the country, including by—

(1) raiding multiple local and foreign media outlets and news organizations, and security officers, in several cases, confiscating the organizations' broadcasting equip-

ment and ordering their offices to close, notably the office of Al Jazeera; and

(2) approving a new constitution that is devoid of necessary protections for journalists to pursue their work without fear of censorship and repression;

Whereas United States journalists have been victimized while reporting abroad, including—

(1) Christopher Allen, who was killed while covering the conflict in South Sudan on August 26, 2017, and for whom there has been no credible investigation to pursue justice after nearly 7 years;

(2) Austin Tice, who was kidnapped in Syria and has been held in captivity since August 13, 2012;

(3) Brent Renaud, who was killed by Russian forces while covering the war in Ukraine on March 13, 2022;

(4) Evan Gershkovich, who was arrested in Russia on charges of espionage on March 29, 2023; and

(5) Alsu Kurmasheva, who holds dual United States-Russian citizenship, and who was arrested in Russia on October 18, 2023, on charges of failure to register as a foreign agent;

Whereas, under the auspices of the United States Agency for Global Media, the United States Government provides financial assistance to several editorially independent media outlets, including Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks—

(1) which report and broadcast news, information, and analysis in critical regions around the world; and

(2) whose journalists regularly face harassment, fines, and imprisonment for their work; and

Whereas press freedom—

(1) is a key component of democratic governance, activism in civil society, and socioeconomic development; and

(2) enhances public accountability, transparency, and participation in civil society and democratic governance: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) declares that a free press—

3 (A) is a central component of free societies
4 and democratic governance;

5 (B) contributes to an informed civil society
6 and government accountability;

7 (C) helps to expose corruption;

8 (D) enhances public accountability and
9 transparency of governments at all levels; and

10 (E) disseminates information that is essen-
11 tial to improving public health and safety;

12 (2) expresses concerns about threats to the ex-
13 ercise of freedom of expression, including by the
14 press, around the world;

15 (3) recognizes and commends journalism’s role
16 in providing trusted, accurate, and timely informa-
17 tion and in holding governments and leaders ac-
18 countable to citizens;

19 (4) recognizes the indispensable role of journal-
20 ists and media outlets in informing voters and the

1 international community about elections in multiple
2 countries worldwide in 2024;

3 (5) pays tribute to journalists who made tre-
4 mendous sacrifices, including the loss of their lives,
5 in the pursuit of truth and justice;

6 (6) condemns all actions around the world that
7 suppress press freedom and endanger the safety of
8 journalists;

9 (7) calls for the unconditional and immediate
10 release of all wrongfully detained journalists;

11 (8) reaffirms the centrality of press freedom to
12 efforts of the United States Government to support
13 democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote good gov-
14 ernance domestically and around the world; and

15 (9) calls upon the President and the Secretary
16 of State—

17 (A) to preserve and build upon the leader-
18 ship of the United States on issues relating to
19 press freedom, on the basis of the protections
20 for freedom of the press afforded the American
21 people under the First Amendment to the Con-
22 stitution of the United States;

23 (B) to transparently investigate and bring
24 to justice the perpetrators of attacks against
25 American journalists;

1 (C) to support transparent investigations
2 and efforts to ensure accountability for attacks
3 against journalists of other nationalities; and

4 (D) to promote the respect and protection
5 of press freedom around the world.

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