

UN says free expression vital for good governance

UNITED NATIONS - Freedom of expression and press freedom are critical to the successful implementation of good governance and human rights around the world, top United Nations officials declared Sunday as they inaugurated the 2015 edition of World Press Freedom Day.

In a joint message, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Director-General of the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, observed that quality journalism 'enables citizens to make informed decisions about their society's development' while also working 'to expose injustice, corruption, and the abuse of power.



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'For peace to be lasting and development to be sustainable, human rights must be respected,' the UN officials affirmed in their statement.

'Everyone must be free to seek, receive and impart knowledge and information on all media, online and offline.

' World Press Freedom Day, which was established by the UN General Assembly and is celebrated annually on 3 May, is designated by UNESCO as an opportunity to celebrate worldwide the fundamental principles of press freedom; assess the state of press freedom throughout the world; defend the media from attacks on their independence; and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

This year's theme – 'Let Journalism Thrive!'– is a three-pronged message that advocates for quality journalism, the tackling of gender imbalances in media, and digital safety.

Ahead of the 2015 observance of the Day, UNESCO, the United Nations agency mandated to promote and protect press freedom worldwide, named renowned journalist and CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour as its Goodwill Ambassador for Freedom of Expression and Journalist Safety. 'We need every voice to speak out and be heard – especially those of women,' the UN officials' statement continued.

'Twenty years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, women remain underrepresented

throughout the media, at decision-making level but also in the coverage of issues.

'We cannot let this stand,' they added.

'Men and women must participate equally in making and sharing the news. ' At the same time, Mr. Ban, Ms. Bokova, and Mr. Zeid underscored the troubling scenario of violence and insecurity in which thousands of journalists operate in every day, noting that at least one journalist is killed each week in both conflict and non-conflict zones.

'Journalism must be able to thrive, in an enabling environment in which they can work independently and without undue interference and in conditions of safety,' the statement declared. 'This is our message today, to let journalism thrive!'

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