



JOINT MESSAGE FROM
MR. BAN KI-MOON, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
AND MS. IRINA BOKOVA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

3 May 2013

Freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential for empowering individuals and building free and democratic societies. A fundamental right on its own, freedom of expression also provides the conditions for protecting and promoting all other human rights. But its exercise does not happen automatically; it requires a safe environment for dialogue, where all can speak freely and openly, without fear of reprisal.

Today, the twentieth anniversary of World Press Freedom Day is an opportunity to renew our commitment in challenging times.

Every day, freedom of expression faces new threats. Because they help ensure transparency and accountability in public affairs, journalists are frequent targets of violence. More than 600 journalists have been killed in the last ten years, many while reporting in non-conflict situations. A climate of impunity persists -- nine out of ten cases of killings of journalists go unpunished. Too many media workers also suffer from intimidation, threats and violence. Too many experience arbitrary detention and torture, often without legal recourse.

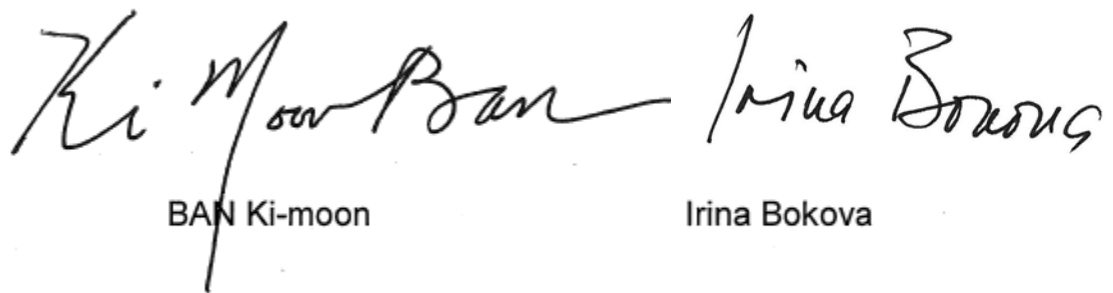
We must show resolve in the face of such insecurity and injustice. The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day, "Safe to Speak: Securing Freedom of Expression in All Media", aims to rally international action to protect the safety of every journalist in every country and to break the vicious circle of impunity.

These goals underpin the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The UN system is strongly committed to coordinating action, raising awareness and supporting countries in upholding international principles and developing legislation for freedom of expression and information.

Action must encompass both traditional media and the digital world, where news is increasingly produced and consumed. Bloggers, citizen reporters and social media producers, as well as their sources, face increasing threats to their safety. In addition to physical dangers, they are being targeted with psychological and emotional violence through cyber-attacks, data breaches, intimidation, undue surveillance and invasions of privacy.

Such assaults not only limit the right to freedom of expression and threaten the safety of online journalists and their sources -- they undermine the ability of all people to benefit from a free and open Internet.

On this World Press Freedom Day, we call on Governments, societies and individuals to do their utmost to protect the safety of all journalists, offline and online. Everyone has a voice; all must be able to speak freely and in safety.



BAN Ki-moon Irina Bokova