

World Press Freedom Day

2016 - Helsinki, Finland



What is World Press Freedom Day (WPF)?

Every year, 3 May is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. 3 May was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991.



Why is UNESCO organizing WPF?

WPF serves as an occasion to inform citizens of violations of press freedom - a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained, and even murdered. It is a date to encourage and develop initiatives in favor of press freedom, and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide. It serves as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom and is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Just as importantly, World Press Freedom Day is a day of support for media which are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.



What is the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize?

On 17 December 1986 the Columbian journalist Guillermo Cano was brutally murdered in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador. Two hired killers waited for him by the newspaper's exit in Bogotá and fired the eight shots that killed him. Cano was a victim of drug trafficking cartels. He denounced them fearlessly and reported about their harmful effects on Colombian society even when his own life was threatened. The life of Guillermo Cano, his courage, his unwavering professionalism and the tenacity with which he fought for his country are an example for the rest of the world to follow. Guillermo Cano's fate exemplifies the price paid by journalists all over the world in exercising their profession; journalists are imprisoned and ill-treated every day and the fact that these crimes, for the most part, go unpunished is even more alarming. The prize is awarded on the recommendation of an independent jury of 12 news professionals. Names are submitted by regional and international non-governmental organizations working for press freedom, and by UNESCO Member States.



UNESCO's mission to end impunity

In recent years, there has been an ever increasing amount of evidence for a number of attacks against the physical safety of journalists and media workers. Threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, and denial of journalistic access have become part of the daily lives of journalists and media workers in the world's most volatile regions. The failure to investigate and prosecute those crimes against journalists and media workers has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community by inter-governmental organizations, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.



Go to the official [World Press Freedom Day 2016](#) website to find more information on UNESCO's activities in fostering Freedom of Expression!