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S. RES. 191

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, 2023.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 3, 2023

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. KAINE, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. MERKLEY, 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, 2023.

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 new 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 Reporters Without Borders, in their compiled data from 2022, provide alarming indications about growing divisions resulting from the spread of disinformation with the potential to weaken democratic societies;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, a record total of 533 journalists were in prison as of December 1, 2022, and the annual number of women journalists in prison has recently risen by nearly 30 percent;

Whereas Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2023 report marked the 17th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with an estimated 39 percent of the global population living in countries deemed “Not Free”;

Whereas worsening media freedom has been one of the key drivers of declines in global freedom, including attacks and prosecutions against journalists, pressure on media outlets, repressive regulatory and legal frameworks, internet shutdowns, and blocks on online sources of information;

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

(1) at least 67 journalists and media workers were killed around the world in 2022, representing a rise compared to the previous year of almost 50 percent;

(2) the vast majority of murders of journalists occur with impunity, with nearly 80 percent of the perpetrators of 263 murders of journalists from September 1, 2012, to August 31, 2022, facing no punishment;

(3) Iran, China, Burma, Turkey, and Belarus were responsible for nearly 60 percent of all imprisoned journalists; 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 security and the security of their sources and families;

Whereas, according to PEN America, at least 311 writers and public intellectuals, including columnists and editorial journalists, were imprisoned across 36 different countries during 2022;

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 8 journalists and media workers;
- (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; and
- (4) the deliberate attacks targeting media facilities;

Whereas, 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 of Vladyslav Yesypenko Iryna Danylovyeh, Amet Suleimanov, Asan Akhmetov, Marlen Asanov, Nariman Celal, Oleksiy Bessarabov, Osman Arifmemetov, Remzi Bekirov, Ruslan Suleimanov, Rustem Sheikhaliev, Server Mustafayev, Seyran Saliev, Timur Ibragimov, and Vilen Temeryanov;

Whereas media workers face heightened dangers in Russia, such as harassment, repression, censorship, and imprisonment, with 22 journalists imprisoned as of April 17, 2023, of whom 10 were arrested after the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, including—

- (1) Evan Gershkovich, a United States reporter with the Wall Street Journal, who was wrongfully detained on baseless espionage charges in March and faces up to 20 years in jail;
- (2) 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;

(3) Maria Ponomarenko, a correspondent with the RusNews independent news website, who was sentenced to 6 years in prison for spreading false information about the Russian military on February 15, 2023;

(4) Sergey Mikhaylov, publisher of independent newspaper Listok, who was arrested for 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 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 the country’s foreign agents law; and

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

(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;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Government of the People’s Republic of China had detained at least 43 journalists, as of December 1, 2022, and has unleashed an onslaught of attacks on press freedom in China and Hong Kong, including through—

(1) state-sponsored censorship and disinformation campaigns limiting access to information about any dissent, including recent protests against then-imposed COVID–19 restrictions, and by censoring protest-related keywords on social media platforms;

(2) attacks on press freedom in Hong Kong, including the passage of the National Security Law, which poses an existential threat to the city’s tradition of press freedom, and the arrest and subsequent conviction of Jimmy Lai, owner of Hong Kong’s largest media outlet, Apple Daily, and an outspoken democracy advocate;

(3) arrests or other repressive actions against independent journalists and others in mainland China attempting to share uncensored news or opinion about current affairs, including Sophia Huang Xueqin, who has written about women’s rights and the protests in Hong Kong, and has been arbitrarily detained for more than 500 days;

(4) the detention of journalists critical of the Government 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 incommunicado detention; and

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

Whereas Afghanistan, under the control of the Taliban, remains one of the most repressive countries for journalists, with journalists in Afghanistan being subject to arrest, beatings, and arbitrary restrictions on their work, including journalists Mortaza Behboudi and Khairullah

Parhar, who have been detained by the Taliban since January 2023;

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, imprisoned, or otherwise retaliated against for their work, 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 Lukashenko 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 distributing 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; and

(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;

Whereas Reporters Without Borders asserts 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 blocks, beatings, interrogations, threats, and injuries at the hands of the military;

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

(3) journalists being detained at alarming rates, with 75 journalists in prison as of April 17, 2023;

Whereas Cuba remains a highly restricted environment for independent media, marked by internet restrictions and constant harassment of journalists and news outlets, including journalist Lázaro Yuri Valle Roca who was sentenced to 5 years in prison for “enemy propaganda and resistance” in July 2022, a clear sign that the Cuban regime continues using the extreme measure of jailing journalists to maintain its regime of censorship;

Whereas Egypt’s restrictions on the media have accelerated under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since 2013, with at least 21 journalists imprisoned as of December 1, 2022, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, including—

(1) Alaa Abd El Fattah, a blogger sentenced to 5 years in prison for “broadcasting false news” 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;

(2) Hisham Abdel Aziz, an Al Jazeera journalist who is on the verge of losing his eyesight following untreated glaucoma while in prison; and

(3) Mahmoud Abou Zeid, who was released after 5 years in prison, but remains subject to a 5-year probation term that requires his continuous presence at a police station between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. daily;

Whereas assaults on press freedom in El Salvador imperil its fragile democracy and include both verbal attacks on journalists by political leaders and the use of state power to intimidate independent media, such as—

(1) the ongoing criminal investigation against outlet El Faro, which was launched after it reported damaging information about the government, and which led the media outlet to relocate most of its operations to Costa Rica following harassment by Salvadorian police;

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

(3) 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 India, government authorities frequently impose internet and communication blackouts in certain areas, and have recently detained and charged journalists covering political demonstrations, called for the temporary blockage of journalists and media accounts on Twitter,

and subjected journalists to searches and arrests, including—

(1) the February 2023 raid on the British Broadcasting Company offices in Delhi and Mumbai, during which tax authorities seized employees’ laptops and mobile phones, following an Income Tax Department order the previous month, widely viewed as an attempt to censor the outlet following the release of a documentary on key political figures in India; and

(2) the house arrest of Gautam Navlakha, a journalist and activist, who has been awaiting trial since April 2020 on charges of “instigating caste violence”;

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 arrest of journalists Imran Riaz Khan, in July 2022, under sedition charges for his criticism of the military; and

(2) the assault of Ayaz Amir, an employee of Dunya News, on July 1, 2022, days after he had made comments criticizing former Prime Minister Imran Khan and the military;

Whereas Iran was the leading jailer of journalists and the most prolific jailer of female journalists in 2022, subjecting media workers to aggressive intimidation, arbitrary summons, arrests, travel bans, conditional releases, torture, inhumane treatment, and unsubstantiated and unjust sentences, including—

(1) Niloofar Hamedi, correspondent of the daily newspaper Shargh, who was imprisoned in 2022 for try-

ing to document the death of Mahsa Amini on charges that could result in the death penalty;

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

(3) Yalda Moaiery, a prominent female photo-journalist who—

(A) while covering the nationwide protests in Tehran, was arrested by anti-riot police despite having press credentials;

(B) was later charged with “spreading propaganda against the system” and “acting against national security”; and

(C) was sentenced to 6 years in prison;

(4) freelance journalist Fariborz Kalantari, who was sentenced on February 7, 2021, to 7 years in prison and 74 lashes for using his telegram channel to circulate articles about corruption charges brought against the ex-Vice President’s brother;

(5) Mahmoud Mahmoudi, the editor of the weekly newspaper Agrin Rozh, who was arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj after issuing an open letter calling for the release of detained Kurdish activists;

(6) freelance photojournalist Nooshin Jafari, who was arrested in 2021, and sentenced to a 4-year prison term for “spreading anti-state propaganda” and “insulting sanctities”; and

(7) 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”;

Whereas Mexico continues to be one of the world’s deadliest countries for journalists, where 25 journalists are currently counted as missing, and reporters covering stories on political corruption and organized crime are frequently assaulted and murdered, including—

(1) Gustavo Sánchez Cabrera, a reporter who covered crime and politics and who was murdered in front of his son;

(2) Ricardo Domínguez López, the founder and editor of news website InfoGuaymas;

(3) Lourdes Maldonado López, a broadcast journalist, and Margarito Martínez, a photojournalist, who were both killed in Tijuana in January 2022;

(4) Juan Carlos Muñoz, a reporter who covered crime for the news website Testigo Minero; and

(5) Fredid Román, the founder of the newspaper La Realidad and a columnist for the newspaper Vértice Diario de Chilpancingo;

Whereas Haiti is the second deadliest country in the Western Hemisphere for journalists, with 7 journalists killed during 2022, following a steady uptick of violence against the press over the last several years;

Whereas the years-long persecution of journalists in Nicaragua continues, including news outlets being forced to close and individual journalists being threatened, harassed, sued, surveilled, jailed, and forced into exile, including—

(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 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 criminal defamation lawsuits and legislation have been used in Peru to harass and silence investigative journalists who write about prominent political figures and the violent repression of protestors has also increased the risk to journalists covering ongoing social unrest in Peru;

Whereas the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has concluded that the 2018 murder of Washington Post journalist and American 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 an especially hostile environment towards journalists through systematic and arbitrary arrests, torture and inhumane or degrading treatment, lengthy pre-trial detentions, political persecution, and conditional release restrictions, which inhibit reporters and columnists from traveling or returning to their professional work post-detention, including—

(1) Maha Al-Rafidi Al-Qahtani, a journalist and writer arrested in September 2019, held in solitary confinement and physically abused while in prison;

(2) Abdulrahman Farhana, a columnist detained in February 2019, charged with membership in a terrorist organization;

(3) Zuhair Kutbi, a journalist jailed in January 2019, who reportedly suffers from torture, malnourishment, and denial of cancer treatment in prison; and

(4) blogger Raif Badawi, who 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 the battle for a free press continues to be fought in South Asia and Southeast Asia, where—

(1) Bangladeshi journalists are subjected to arbitrary arrests and charges under the Digital Security Act, and suffer killings and physical attacks with near-total impunity

(2) journalist, Nobel Prize laureate, and United States citizen Maria Ressa, despite rulings in her favor, continues to face lawfare for her reporting on President Duterte’s “war on drugs”, among other topics;

(3) Vietnamese journalists Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, and Le Huu Minh Tuan were each sentenced to more than 10 years in prison; and

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

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

(1) Ethiopia, where a crackdown on the press has included—

(A) the arbitrary arrests of journalists, which was exacerbated during the civil war and has continued even after the signing of a peace agreement in November 2022;

(B) internet disruptions deployed during times of political tension, including as recently as April 2023, making it difficult and dangerous for the press to report the news;

(C) the January 2023 suspension of 15 media outlets, including the BBC's Somali service, and their representatives from operating in the Somali Regional State; and

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

(2) Nigeria, where journalists have been repeatedly detained and charged for their work, 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; and

(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, and released on bail on March 1, 2023;

(3) Eritrea, which is one of the world's most censored nations, and where 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) Cameroon, where—

(A) 5 journalists were imprisoned as of December 2022;

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

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

(5) Rwanda, where—

(A) at least 4 journalists were imprisoned as of December 1, 2022, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists; and

(B) journalist John Williams Ntwali, who, after reporting on cases of torture, disappearances, and forced government evictions, was killed under suspicious circumstances;

(6) Somalia, where recent violations include the months-long legal harassment of the freelance journalist and press freedom advocate Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, who was detained several times and convicted of disobeying government orders in connection to his objection to government plans to censor media coverage of security issues and was released on March 26, 2023, after more than 1 month in prison;

(7) 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;

(8) in Mali and Burkina Faso, where foreign journalists have been expelled and French media outlets have been banned; and

(9) in Zimbabwe, where the country's overly broad cybercrime legislation has been used to detain journalists and silence the press;

Whereas, in Turkey, where the Erdogan government maintains one of the world's most repressive environments for journalists and continues to imprison at least 40 journalists in retaliation for their professional work, including 15 Kurdish journalists who were arrested in June 2022, but were never publicly charged;

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 that she had little hope for freedom in her current retrial;

Whereas, in Georgia, the free press is increasingly threatened, as evidenced by the conviction of former government minister and journalist Nika Gvaramia to a 42 month prison sentence on May 16, 2022, on charges widely denounced as politically motivated, and attempts to pass laws modeled after the Russian Federation's infamous "foreign agents" law, and insufficient prosecution of frequent physical attacks on members of the press;

Whereas, in Tajikistan, where the government continues its systematic repression of the free press in 2022 by sentencing 6 journalists to lengthy prison terms on spurious

charges in secretive, closed-door trials held in detention centers amid allegations of torture and forced confessions, including—

(1) Ulfatkhonim Mamadshoeva, a 66-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, in Kyrgyzstan, where the government has taken worrying steps to undermine the country’s relative press freedom since the start of 2022, including by—

(1) blocking news websites under an arbitrary new “false information” law, including that of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; and

(2) imposing spurious charges of illegal drug manufacture on investigative journalist Bolot Temirov and deporting him to the Russian Federation in retaliation for his reporting on corruption in the government’s procurement processes;

Whereas the Government of Morocco has imposed severe crackdowns on freedom of expression and supporters of a free press and is currently detaining 13 journalists, including—

(1) Taoufik Bouachrine, the publisher and editor-in-chief of Akhbar al-Youm, who was arrested in February 2018 on retaliatory charges related to his journalism and is serving a 15-year prison sentence;

(2) Soulaimane Raissouni, a columnist and editor-in-chief Akhbar al-Youm, who succeeded publisher Taoufik Bouachrine and was arrested on similar retaliatory

charges in May 2020, and is serving a 5-year prison sentence;

(3) Ali Anouzla, a journalist and editor of the news website Lakome, who has been repeatedly arrested on retaliatory charges relating to his journalism including “apologism for terrorism”, “material aid for terrorism”, and “incitement to terrorism”;

(4) Maati Monjib, a historian and advocate for free press, who was detained in December 2020 for 3 months on specious national security and fraud charges and remains subject to restrictive bail conditions; and

(5) Omar Radi, a journalist who was arrested on suspicion of espionage in June 2020 shortly after Amnesty International reported that the Moroccan authorities hacked his phone and monitored his activities;

Whereas, in 2022 and 2023, press freedom in Algeria continued to deteriorate at an alarming pace, with the newspaper *Liberté* closing after 30 years in print following a decision by its owner, as a result of the interminable pressure exerted at the highest level in recent months against its editorial line, with the newspaper *El Watan* being subjected to strong pressures that led to a radical change in its editorial line, and before the recent adoption of an alarming media law, several journalists were summoned and prosecuted for their work, notably—

(1) Nadir Kerri, who was placed under judicial supervision;

(2) Belkacem Haouam, who was detained for 2 months in response to an article he published in late 2022; and

(3) Ihsane El Kadi, who was prosecuted several times and remains in prison after he was ultimately sentenced to 3 years in prison in April 2023;

Whereas the Maduro regime of Venezuela continues to target independent media outlets, restrict the exercise of freedom of expression, and severely limit Venezuelan access to accurate information;

Whereas American 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 whose killing has yet to be investigated by authorities after nearly 6 years;

(2) Austin Tice, who was kidnapped in Syria and has been held in captivity since August 12, 2012;

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

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

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) is dismayed that, under cover of the
20 COVID–19 pandemic, many governments have re-
21 stricted the work of journalists reporting on the pub-
22 lic health crisis and on peaceful protests on a variety
23 of issues;

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

4 (6) condemns all actions around the world that
5 suppress press freedom;

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

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

12 (9) calls upon the President and the Secretary
13 of State—

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

20 (B) to transparently investigate and bring
21 to justice the perpetrators of attacks against
22 journalists; and

23 (C) to promote the respect and protection
24 of press freedom around the world.

○