

Declaration by the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day 3 May 2016

On this day we celebrate the World Press Freedom Day. On the 25th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration the EU wishes to recall the principle that *"the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development"*.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information. It is a key component of democratic governance and development. People need to be fully informed to be able to form an opinion and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Freedom of information also contributes to better governance as it enhances transparency in public affairs and can be used as a tool to make governments accountable for their actions, in particular when access to information results in the exposure of human rights violations or corruption practices.

Ensuring access to information can serve to promote justice and reparation, in particular after periods of grave violations of human rights.

The EU is committed to continue promoting and protecting freedom of opinion and expression worldwide, not only offline but also in relation to the cyberspace and other information communication technologies, as highlighted by the adoption in 2014 of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline.

It condemns the increasing level of intimidation and violence that journalists, Human Rights Defenders, media actors and other individuals face in many countries across the world when exercising the right to freedom of opinion and expression online and offline.

In addition to combating outright violence the EU is determined to fight against laws or practices that impose censorship, encourage self-censorship or provide legal penalties, including criminal, financial and administrative sanctions, as well as against the misuse of market powers and poor economic conditions.

The EU reaffirms its determination to promote and support, freedoms of opinion and expression as rights to be exercised by everyone everywhere, based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality – through any media and regardless of frontiers.

This is your Right!
