

Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2014

On the 21th anniversary of World Press Freedom day, the EU reiterates that free, diverse and independent media constitutes one of the cornerstones of a democratic society by facilitating the free flow of information and ideas, and by ensuring transparency and accountability.

The EU calls upon all governments to abide by international norms and to put an end to the intimidation, harassment, censorship and arbitrary detention of journalists and to impunity. Efforts to protect journalists should not be limited to those formally recognised as such, but should also cover support staff and others who use new media to reach a mass audience.

Technological innovations in information technology and communications have created new ways of promoting freedom of expression but have also brought new challenges. The EU is firmly opposed to any unjustified restrictions on the internet and other new media. All human rights that exist offline must also be protected online, in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The EU will soon adopt the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. The aim of those guidelines is to address unjustified restrictions on freedom of expression, promote media freedom and provide valuable guidance to EU officials and staff across the globe.