

Statement by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Freedom Online coalition to mark World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2012

Today people around the world are celebrating World Press Freedom Day. Press freedom is a cornerstone of human rights and a guarantor of other freedoms. In many countries, however, individual freedom of expression is still being violated, in printed, audiovisual and online media alike.

The internet and communications technologies provide people all over the world with a new platform for exercising their freedom of opinion and expression. Yet some governments are increasingly resorting to a variety of measures to restrict such freedoms, contrary to their international obligations in the field of human rights.

The coalition's member countries met in The Hague last December to send a clear message that the human rights that people enjoy offline must also be respected online. The coalition supports individuals, organisations and institutions that use information and communications technologies to promote human rights, democracy and development.

To mark World Press Freedom Day, we, the Freedom Online coalition, call on all governments to protect everybody's internet freedom in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which refers to the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.