

We need every country to recognise that attacks on media freedom are beyond the pale

- [Press release]
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-ahmad-there-is-a-moral-imperative-to-stop-threat-to-media-freedom>) issued at the ministerial meeting on Media Freedom at the UN General Assembly 2019
- [Statement]
{<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-need-every-country-to-recognise-that-attacks-on-media-freedom-are-beyond-the-pale>} on the conclusion of the ministerial meeting on Media Freedom at the UN General Assembly 2019

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it's my immense pleasure to be here. I am delighted to be joined here by Amal Clooney, who's the Special Envoy for the UK on the issue, the important issue, of Media Freedom, and in the time since the Conference and the lead up to the Conference that we held over the summer in London, I pay tribute to how she's worked tirelessly on this primary and priority objective for the UK Government.

At this time, I am also truly delighted to welcome on the panel this morning His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Sudan, who really epitomises how change can happen very quickly. Just before we came in I remembered visiting Khartoum not so long ago, and what we've seen happen on the ground so rapidly is a tribute to how civilian rule can be instigated and I'm sure we're very much looking forward to his contribution this morning. Thanks to the efforts of his government, for the first time in three decades Sudan's journalists will be free to report without fear or favour.

I am also delighted that we welcome the UNESCO Director-General here this morning as well and she is representing also of course the Secretary-General in her capacity this morning.

And finally to my right is journalist Jason Rezaian. Many of you know Jason. I said to him this is the first occasion we've had to meet, but I know about him, I've heard about him, and many of you will recall that he was imprisoned for 544 days in Iran, and he'll be speaking about his insights and experience as well.

From our perspective, I'm proud to come from a country that has been a beacon of free speech for more than four centuries, from the abolition of the Licensing Act which set free the printing presses of the 17th century to the invention of television, which changed the landscape of how we receive news.

It is the home of George Orwell, whose caustic criticism of Newspeak and the Thought Police shone light on the chilling totalitarian efforts to silence

the press.

And it is the home of William Russell, who became the first modern war correspondent when he brought the bloody battles of the Crimean War to British broadsheets, shocking a nation with his description of, famously quoted, “the thin red line.”

We have much to be proud of in our rich tradition of media freedom. And yes, like many countries, we are grappling with the balance between free speech, national security and privacy. But those are tough questions we are willing to ask of ourselves.

Because ultimately a free media is essential to any flourishing democracy. It is the bedrock on which all other freedoms are based and indeed preserved.

As Thomas Jefferson poignantly wrote, ““The liberty of speaking and writing [...] guards our other liberties.”

We are gathered here this morning because as member states of the United Nations, we have all long recognised the importance of media freedom in building more just, peaceful and prosperous societies, as reflected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We need it to ensure free and open debate. We need it to promote discussion and the exchange of ideas, technological and economic ideas as well as political ones. We also need it to root out corruption, hold governments to account. We need it to inform and engage people around the world, on the issues that matter most to them in their day-to-day lives.

Today, that freedom is under threat. Freedom House reported this year that, and I quote from the report, “Freedom of the media has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade,” – indeed that is true even in the most influential democracies in the world.

In their pursuit of the truth, just for simply doing their jobs, journalists, often in the front line, have become the targets of censorship and intimidation. And too many, too many your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, have paid the ultimate price. We are approaching the anniversaries of the tragic deaths of journalists Martin O’Hagan, Jamal Khashoggi and Daphne Caruana-Galizia.

While the world continues to express its outrage at these and other murders, the violence hasn’t stopped. Just this year, and I’m sure we’ll hear from UNESCO as well, UNESCO itself reports that 41 journalists and media workers have been killed. According to Reporters Without Borders, 383 journalists and media workers are imprisoned in countries such as Turkey, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Eritrea.

We must remember journalists like Javid Noori, a citizen journalist who was executed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Or the Venezuelan journalist, Luis Carlos Diaz, who was arrested, charged with ‘public incitement’ linked to the nationwide extended blackout in March

and banned from leaving the country.

Or Huang Qi, himself a human rights reporter, who was sentenced to 12 years in a Chinese prison in a flagrant violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This tide of oppression against free media across the world harms the countries affected, and offends others against the values we hold so dear.

So we all have a moral imperative to stop the threat to media freedom, whether it's violence, unduly restrictive laws and regulations, imprisonment, detention or indeed internet censorship.

Last year, the United Kingdom launched a campaign to shine a global spotlight on this crucial issue.

And this summer, the then Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, used the convening power of the UK and Canada to bring together 1500 representatives from over 100 countries to the world's first Global Conference for Media Freedom in London. I know many in this room were there and both Amal and I were delighted to be part of that landmark event.

Together with our Canadian friends, we asked ministers, leaders in civil society, academics, and of course, the media themselves – what are the challenges facing journalists and the media? How can we galvanise support in holding the powerful to account?

It is clear there are some countries who are unable to protect media freedom. And there are others who are simply unwilling to do so.

First, to those unable to protect media freedom. We know that creating legislative protections in domestic law, and I'm sure that will come up in our discussions this morning, provides the foundations for media freedom.

So we are encouraging countries around the world to sign the campaign's Global Pledge, and to live up to the commitments within it.

Today, I am proud to announce that I believe 30 governments have signed the Global Pledge, and in doing so, we have become founding members of the new Media Freedom Coalition.

For each signatory, being part of this Coalition means that laws within our own countries will be held to the highest of standards. But some countries need technical support to turn their ideals into legal protections.

So we are delighted to support the independent high-level panel of legal experts, which has been convened by Amal to advise countries on how to strengthen their legal protection of journalists, whether it's advising governments on new international commitments or indeed assisting with the repeal of outdated or restrictive legislation.

All members must also ensure their country frameworks are up to task – and of

course the United Kingdom is no exception.

So we are taking steps to establish a National Committee on the Safety of Journalists, tasked with developing a National Action Plan to ensure that those who threaten journalists are held to account.

And a new dedicated international Task Force, led by UNESCO, will assist governments around the world in developing their own plans, tailored to the needs of their own legal systems.

Next, we must protect journalists and help them avail themselves of these legal resources. With that in mind the second prong of our approach is helping journalists enforce those legal protections.

The Global Media Defence Fund, administered by UNESCO, will support, train and indeed provide legal support and advocacy for journalists in the most dangerous scenarios, whether it's covering the Taliban on the battlefields of Afghanistan or cartel violence in Mexico.

The UK government has already pledged £3 million worth of support for this new fund and I strongly encourage those gathered here today to consider making a commitment and contribution too.

And third part of our strategic approach: we will act as the advocacy group to lobby those who are not just unable, but also importantly unwilling, to sign up to the commitments currently in the Global Pledge.

And we will raise our voices on behalf of journalists who have been imprisoned or indeed tragically murdered.

Ultimately, we need every country to recognise that attacks on media freedom are beyond the pale. And just like any assault on human rights, and I speak as the UK Human Rights Minister, we must hold abusers accountable, both legally and financially.

We want to make sure that no profit comes from serious human rights violations or abuses anywhere in the world.

So when we leave the European Union, we will be introducing a UK Magnitsky law.

This will allow the United Kingdom to impose sanctions in the form of barring entry and freezing assets against anyone is responsible for the most serious human rights violations or abuses, and yes that includes against journalists or whistleblowers.

And we won't give up the fight for justice on behalf of those who have suffered or been killed. More than two years has passed since the death of young freelance journalist Christopher Allen in South Sudan. But sadly no investigation has taken place into this murder. We are re-doubling our efforts to ensure justice for Christopher and for his family.

Many remain imprisoned such as Erick Kabendera in Tanzania. Others such as

Maria Ressa from the Philippines, here with us today, live under threat of prosecution.

In every case, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, in every case and on behalf of every journalist and indeed every family, we will continue to press for justice and accountability to keep the flame of media freedom burning in some of the darkest corners of the world, where the work of reporters is so very, very important.

In concluding, I'm touched by and I'm sure many of us recount, in a speech before she was killed, the renowned Sunday Times war correspondent Marie Colvin once described her work as "send[ing] home that first rough draft of history." She died doing just that.

But with each abuse of power against media, those drafts of history – and the reporters who bear witness to them – risk being lost.

Our mission, simply put, is to secure those basic freedoms for the media around the world. But I fully accept it is not an easy task.

It won't be accomplished with the will of the few. It will take the absolute commitment and resolve of the many.

We hope we can count on your support. Because those who ultimately put their lives on the line every day in pursuit of the truth deserve no less. Thank you.

Statement on the Conclusion of the Ministerial Meeting on Media Freedom: A Global Responsibility

- [Statement]
{<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-on-the-conclusion-of-the-ministerial-meeting-on-media-freedom-a-global-responsibility>}
delivered by Minister Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon at the ministerial meeting on Media Freedom at the UN General Assembly 2019
- [Press release]
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-ahmad-there-is-a-moral-imperative-to-stop-threat-to-media-freedom>) issued at the ministerial meeting on Media Freedom at the UN General Assembly 2019

The meeting brought together representatives of governments, international organisations, civil society and the media in the cause of promoting and defending media freedom. The panel discussion was chaired by UK Special Envoy on Media Freedom, Ms Amal Clooney, with contributions from the Prime Minister

of Sudan, HE Mr Abdalla Hamdok, UNESCO Director-General, Mme Audrey Azoulay, representing HE the UN Secretary General, and prominent Washington Post journalist Mr Jason Rezaian.

Building on the Global Conference for Media Freedom co-hosted by the UK and Canada in London on 10-11 July 2019, participants discussed how to turn political statements into practical action. Speakers noted that media freedom is crucial for a well-functioning democracy, for economic prosperity and for security. Attacks on the media are attacks on human rights. Media freedom is a global issue that requires global action.

2018 was one of the deadliest years for media freedom, with at least 99 journalists and media workers killed worldwide, almost 350 detained and 60 held hostage. Yet despite the risk of death and the pressure from physical threats, restrictive laws, punitive legal measures and other forms of intimidation, participants applauded journalists' continuing courage in the face of adversity. Their reporting is critical in holding the powerful to account.

The meeting marked the formal launch of the Media Freedom Coalition, with 32 governments announcing that they will be members. They have each signed the Global Pledge on Media Freedom that the UK and Canada opened for signature at the Global Conference. Signatories take on a commitment to take action to improve media freedom and the safety of journalists at home and abroad.

Coalition members have committed to speak out and to lobby on individual cases and to take collective action on abuses against the media. Members of the coalition have pledged to "work to ensure that those who violate or abuse the human rights that underpin media freedom – be they governments or private entities – are held to account". They will publicly highlight cases where action needs to be taken immediately, use diplomacy to push for systemic change, and show solidarity with countries that work to build media freedom.

HE the Prime Minister of Sudan set us all an example with his firm commitment to media freedom under Sudan's new leadership. Members of the Coalition were clear that where there is political will to change, they will provide support and encouragement.

Ms Clooney highlighted how the work of the independent High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom will support governments with specialist advice and recommendations for legal and other mechanisms that protect and encourage the functioning of a free media and prevent and reverse abuses or violations of media freedom.

Ms Azoulay set out how UNESCO will continue to champion implementation of the UN Plan of Action and how the Global Media Defence Fund will provide assistance to journalists and to governments seeking to improve their domestic legislation.

In May this year, after spending more than 500 days behind bars, and following concerted international pressure, Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were freed from a Yangon prison in Myanmar. However, many more

journalists remain behind bars not just in Burma, but around the globe including in Turkey, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Eritrea. The meeting heard a moving account from Jason Rezaian of his detention in Iran for 544 days.

Death is the ultimate price that journalists can pay for simply doing their job. For exposing the truth. In August, two years have passed since the death of freelance journalist Christopher Allen in South Sudan. In the coming weeks, we will mark the anniversaries, amongst others, of the tragic murders of prominent journalists Martin O'Hagan, Jamal Khashoggi, Daphne Caruana Galizia, and the disappearance of Azory Gwanda. A reminder of the risks journalists face.

The Media Freedom coalition will work to find ways to take more effective action on cases where journalists are persecuted and killed and on wider abuses of the media.

Lord Ahmad confirmed that the UK was developing legislation that would allow it to introduce human rights ('Magnitsky') sanctions when the UK leaves the EU. This will allow the UK, like the US and Canada, to impose sanctions against those who commit the most egregious human rights violations and abuses, including against those working in the media.

The Coalition will next meet at official level in November 2019 and then annually at both Ministerial and senior official level.

Countries who have so far signed the Global Pledge:

- UK
- Canada
- Switzerland
- Germany
- Ghana
- North Macedonia
- Latvia
- Greece
- Luxembourg

- Lithuania
- Iceland
- Argentina
- Seychelles
- Uruguay
- Kosovo
- Lebanon
- France
- Montenegro
- Finland
- Czech Republic
- Serbia
- Maldives
- Costa Rica
- USA
- Ukraine
- Honduras
- Bulgaria
- Slovenia

- Netherlands
 - Estonia
 - Austria
 - Sudan
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Education Secretary: Do more for disadvantaged students

Universities must deliver on plans to improve access and participation for disadvantaged students and put an end to the high rates of students dropping out of courses, the Education Secretary has said today (26 September).

While the number of people from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university has risen, new data from the Office for Students shows that mainstream state school pupils from the most advantaged areas are 2.4 times more likely to go to higher education than those from the most disadvantaged areas.

There also remains a stubborn disparity in drop out levels with students from less well-off backgrounds more likely to drop out of university. Data published earlier this year showed that in 2016/17, disadvantaged students were more likely to drop out of university in their first year (8.8% of full-time first degree students under-21) compared to their better off peers (6.0%) – a figure that slightly widened from the previous year.

Ahead of a visit to Kings College London, which offers a range of initiatives to help disadvantaged students, and the publication of new statistics on access and participation by university regulator the Office for Students, Mr Williamson has underlined his determination to take action and ensure every student choosing to go to university – regardless of background – is supported to get the most out of the experience.

Mr Williamson will write to Universities UK to acknowledge the work being done in the sector but to say that more needs to be done to make progress on access and participation at our world-class institutions. He will urge all universities to follow in the footsteps of institutions like Kings College and improve their offer for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It is not good enough that white working class boys are far less likely to go to university and black students are far less likely to complete their courses than others. We cannot let this wasted potential go unchecked any longer.

I am pleased to see the work that some universities are doing. It was a privilege to address vice-chancellors on this important issue at the recent UUK conference, but disparity remains a problem.

I want all universities, including the most selective, to do everything they can to help disadvantaged students access a world-class education, but they also need to keep them there and limit the numbers dropping out of courses. My message is clear – up your game and get on with it.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Progress is being made to ensure that more disadvantaged young people are going to university than ever before, but it's not enough to get students through the door – they must then get the right support to complete their courses too.

Dropouts will be a key focus of mine as Universities Minister and I will be watching carefully to see how universities respond to this challenge. I fully support the OfS in taking action if providers fail to do all they can to deliver their commitments.

Mr Williamson's challenge follows a recent speech he made at the [Universities UK annual conference](#), where he addressed vice-chancellors from across the country, and called for more to be done to ensure wider access to universities for students from all backgrounds.

The latest UCAS figures show that a record rate (21.2%) of disadvantaged English 18-year-olds are starting university this year, up from 19.9% at the same point last year.

The Government's wide-ranging reforms to higher education has led to the publication of access and participation plans for 41 universities so far. The remaining providers which are required to have plans and have not yet published them will be asked to in due course. The OfS will closely monitor all these providers to make sure they follow through on their plans.

The Education Secretary welcomed the plans set out by universities and wants all institutions to deliver on the commitments they have made, with the support of the ongoing work by the Government in driving up standards and closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at school to make sure students are getting the grades they need to go on to university.

Mr Williamson praised Kings College London for blazing the trail through a number of projects to widen participation for under-represented groups, such

as the K+ Attainment Raising programme which offers intensive revision sessions for disadvantaged students.

It also partners with charities like IntoUniversity which aims to raise aspirations among young people who may not have thought university was for them, and Parent Power which educates parents about their child's post-18 choices so they can help them choose the best option for them.

Matthew Rycroft speech on impact investing to unlock more capital for the Sustainable Developments Goals

UK highlights role of private sector for meeting Global Goals at UN General Assembly side event in New York.

Matthew Rycroft speech on impact investing to unlock more capital for the Sustainable Developments Goals

Thank you very much Gillian [Tett, FT journalist] for facilitating us today. Thank you to my friend and colleague Anthony Phillipson, in whose home we are having this meeting. He is the British Consul here in New York, whom some of you will no doubt know and thank you to all of you for coming along, particularly in the circumstances of it being me rather than the Secretary of State Alok Sharma who is kicking this off. He was very interested in doing this event. We initiated this event because of his interest.

We put it on because this is an absolutely existential issue for us as we seek to deliver the Global Goals. In my previous role I was the British Ambassador to the UN, living a couple of blocks down the road and in the three years that I was here, the agreement of all 193 countries to that [Global Goals] framework was the single best thing to happen while I was here by a very long way. That was 2015. We are four years out of 15 through the process and we have nowhere near done four fifteenths of the work toward 2030, so we have got to accelerate and one of the really big things we have got to accelerate is the private sector and even if every country in the world was as generous as the UK and the Nordics we all know that Official Development Assistance would be a drop in the ocean of roughly a tenth-ish of the total amount needed for all of those SDGs to be met in all the developing

countries in the world.

So, mobilising private capital to come into developing countries is absolutely crucial.

And yet it isn't happening. Indeed, there is a net flow of capital out of developing sub-Saharan Africa.

So, we've identified three big things, that need to be happen to turn that around.

Firstly, getting a pipeline of investible deals. Secondly, developing the right products to mobilise the money. And thirdly, responding to savers' demands.

I just want to say briefly a word about each of those.

So, on the investible deals, in Ethiopia last month DFID launched the International Development Infrastructure Commission.

That's 10 global experts on infrastructure, who will come together to advise my Secretary of State Alok Sharma on how the UK can turbo-charge investment in green, sustainable infrastructure.

And it will also make recommendations on how the UK can improve financing and delivery of infrastructure projects in developing countries.

The chair, I am delighted to say is going to be Gregory Hodkinson, who has got forty years' experience in civil infrastructure and transportation projects and was previously Chairman at the global infrastructure firm Arup.

Another member Jennifer Musisi, who is an infrastructure specialist and former Executive Director of Kampala Capital City Authority in Uganda, is here with us today.

I don't think any of the other members of the Commission are here today, but I did want to tell you who they are. And what we have sought to do in the creation of this Commission is to bring together the best and the brightest of both British and international individuals with infrastructure backgrounds, within industry companies and banking.

So, the Commission is going to comprise the following:

- The Chief Executive Officer of the London Stock Exchange Nikhil Rathi;
- Subhash Thakrar, who is the former partner of Blackstone Franks
- Mark Hoban Chairman of FloodRe;
- Julia Prescott, Partner at Meridian Fund;
- Richard Threlfall, Global Head of Infrastructure at KPMG;
- Kathie Painter, with a strong infrastructure background within industry companies and banking;
- Jo da Silva, Director of International Development at Arup;
- And the Chairman of Global Infrastructure Partners investment fund Adebayo Ogunlesi

Those are the Commissioners and as I say they've got decades of experience between them and their job is to help us boost opportunities for businesses while promoting lower-carbon, better value for money infrastructure that will deliver not just for the developed world but for the poorest people in the poorest countries in the world.

On the second thing, on products, the UK Government is working closely with the City of London and developing country capital markets.

We're developing innovative new financial products.

And yes, we need new structures and funds to share risk. So, for instance developing the Masala bond market has allowed Indian issuers to raise \$7.5 billion in rupees in London.

We want to build on that blue-print.

And there is significant potential, we think, in offshore local currency bonds.

It's a scandal frankly that so many structures are passing forex risk through to poor consumers. UK aid is changing that.

Next is Green bonds. The UK has been working to build green bond markets in Africa.

We have put in place the listing rules which will allow Kenya and East Africa's first certified green bond, raising funds for sustainable student accommodation.

We also have to deepen capital markets, with local and international markets working side by side.

And then thirdly, and this was a point which one of my previous Secretaries of State Penny Mordaunt really pushed us on, which was about listening to savers in our countries.

And over the last year, as a result of her initiative, we have been consulting UK savers about what they want from their savings, their pensions. The report is released this week. It's important reading.

Nearly 70 per cent of UK savers want their investments to consider people and the planet.

And it rises above 70 per cent for younger people. But they don't trust the system.

They need simple solutions for knowing which financial products offer what impact – and that, at the moment, is where we fall down.

We need to sort out measuring impact – with proper standards and frameworks in place. That's work the Impact Management Project is leading, and the UK is supporting.

So those are the three big things we think and if we could get all of your advice, and input and experience and recommendations and concrete deliverables on any or all of those three I think we'd be in a position of strength.