



PRESS RELEASE

Nepal Celebrates World Press Freedom Day on 3 May

OHCHR, UNESCO and UNRC: “All principles of freedom of expression must be brought to the on-line world”

Kathmandu, 3 May 2011. Nepali journalists join the worldwide celebration of World Press Freedom Day, observed yearly on 3 May, with a seminar of media professionals on “21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers”.

In 2011, the focus of the celebration is on the potential of the Internet and digital platforms to contribute to freedom of expression, democratic governance, and sustainable development.

“The arrival of the digital revolution - the Internet, the emergence of new forms of media, and the rise of online social networks - has started to shape the media landscape in Nepal. This development has a great potential to expand the ability of people in the country to enjoy their rights to freely seek, receive and impart information”, says Robert Piper, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal.

But in Nepal, public access to media, traditional or online, remains far from universal. Print media, TV and the Internet are mostly within reach of the urban population only.

“Less than 10% of Nepalis have access to the Internet. At present, radio, with a coverage of approximately 82% of the country, is the sole media that can reach out to remote areas. This is a good reason to foster freedom of expression of new and traditional media alike”, says Axel Plathe, Head of UNESCO Office in Kathmandu.

Although there has been promising advances to guarantee press freedom in Nepal, many challenges – such as self-censorship by journalists, inflicted by frequent attacks and legal impunity - remain to be tackled in order to lift Nepal from its ranking of 119 on the World Press Freedom Index.

“UN Human Rights Office in Nepal notes that the use of new communication technologies by the media in Nepal offers novel avenues to expand freedom of expression. However, this also reinforces an already digitally-divided society as marginalized communities are further alienated from new media”, says Jyoti Sanghera, the Head of UN Human Rights Office in Nepal, adding, “communication policies need to be reviewed from human rights perspective”.

This year World Press Freedom Day is celebrated globally for the 20th time. During the 20 years, many press freedom challenges have been overcome, but many still remain. Furthermore, new barriers and new attempts to block, filter, and censor information are being created simultaneously with the emerging new forms of media. The day is an occasion to recognize the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists, who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

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Attachment: Joint Message by UN Secretary-General, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO Director-General on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day.