



PRESS RELEASE ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Every year, May 3rd is a date journalists, media workers, writers, artists and members of civil society organizations around the world celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom and freedom of expression. We evaluate press freedom in the country, region and around the world, in order to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives.

The Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan (UJOSS) joins the world's media fraternity in celebrating the day in Juba, the regional capital. Although this year's celebration theme at the international level is "21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers", UJOSS has chosen a local theme; "Free Media for Democratic Governance" as the new nation in the African continent will be born on July 9, 2011.

This year's celebration in Juba is aimed at reminding governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom.

Here in Southern Sudan, UJOSS has serious concerns about the recent arrests and harrassment of journalists. This year, a journalist from the daily newspaper the Citizen was beaten by security forces as they tried to report on a demolition at Juba University. The Citizen's editor Nyial Bol was also arrested after reporting on the attack of his driver and journalist.

Elsewhere, Juba's Bakhita Radio and Liberty FM were threatened with closure by Central Equatoria security for dubious reasons. The editor of the Juba Post, Michael Korma, was harrassed by police after publishing an article that the government said was a threat to security in the country. Police confiscated the newspapers.

World Press Freedom Day is a day of support for these journalists who are targets of the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom.

This year's World Press Freedom Day also marks the 20th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration for the promotion of free and pluralistic media. The Declaration was adopted after a conference held in Windhoek (Namibia) on the development of a free African press. It emphasized the importance of an independent press for the development and preservation of democracy and economic development. Two years later, the UN General Assembly established World Press Freedom Day.

Speakers at the celebration will include the Minister of Information in the Government of Southern Sudan, the Chairperson of the Specialized Committee of Information and Culture in the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, the South Sudan Human Rights Commission Chairman and many others

All media practitioners will assemble at the New Sudan Hotel along the Airport Road in Juba for the celebration commencing at 2:00 pm Sudan time.

Wishing you all the very best and happy celebrations

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