



Committee to Protect Journalists

Secretary of State John Kerry
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Sent via email

Dear Secretary Kerry:

A year ago you [convened](#) a critically important conference on the safety of freelance and local journalists that brought together the media industry, journalists, NGOs and members of your staff. We are writing to update you on the efforts being made by media organizations, journalists, and civil society organizations to better protect freelance and local journalists and request an update from you on the commitments made by the State Department.

On February 12, 2015, a coalition of major news companies and journalism organizations gathered to endorse the [Freelance Journalist Safety Principles](#), a comprehensive set of practices aimed at embedding a culture of safety with international news organizations. To date, the Principles have been endorsed by over 90 organizations, including major U.S. and global TV networks, wire services, NGOs, and journalist representatives.

We have also formed the ACOS Alliance, an unprecedented collaboration between news organizations, press freedom NGOs, and journalists committed to improving access to the resources needed to keep journalists safe and cultivating A Culture of Safety (ACOS). Our initiatives include security information sharing, safety training, insurance, and communications.

In your [remarks at The Washington Post](#) a few weeks ago, you said that it is “up to the defenders of liberty to close ranks,” and we have done so. But you also rightly mentioned the role that U.S. government and its embassies abroad play in protecting press freedom.

We welcome the commitment you made to create a “roadmap” for the State Department’s work on journalist safety and the additional resources that have been provided to the S.A.F.E. Initiative for safety training for local journalists. However, we are concerned about progress on the three other commitments that the State Department made in the conference summary and next steps document: more fully integrate the issue of impunity against journalists into the U.S. bilateral and multilateral agenda; develop worldwide protocols within the U.S. embassy community on when and how to provide assistance to journalists working in conflict zones or other hostile environments; and coordinate with relevant countries on possible exemptions for accredited journalists carrying protective gear across

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international borders. We would welcome an update from you on the status of these initiatives and actions that have been taken over the past year.

Your support for press freedom and journalist safety is welcome and can play an important role in helping to protect journalists around the world. There are specific actions that you could take that would ensure the agenda you launched last year continues and leaves a lasting legacy.

Specifically, the signatories of this letter respectfully request that you consider taking the following actions:

1. Appoint a senior member of your staff to be responsible for implementing the State Department's journalist safety roadmap and liaising with the ACOS Alliance;
2. Send a message to all posts worldwide laying out a new protocol for how to deal with journalists when they get in trouble (e.g. arrested, imprisoned, injured, threatened or kidnapped);
3. Engage regional security officers in the effort to keep journalists safe by linking media organizations and freelancers to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Overseas Security Advisory Council, which provides crucial advice on security;
4. Make best efforts with relevant countries on exemptions for accredited journalists carrying protective gear across international borders;
5. More fully integrate the issue of impunity against journalists into the State Department's bilateral and multilateral agenda.

As you have recognized, there has never been a more dangerous time for journalists. We welcome your contribution to counteracting the unprecedented threats to the media and hope you will support our efforts by creating a culture of safety in the State Department and U.S. embassies around the world.

Sincerely,

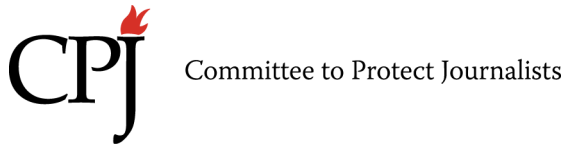
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Frontline Freelance Register (ACOS executive committee)

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John Daniszewski (Vice President, International News, The Associated Press), ACOS executive committee

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2LIVES / Steven Joel Sotloff Memorial Foundation

Afghan Journalist Safety Committee

Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, Columbia University

Free Press Unlimited

Freedom House, Emergency Assistance Program

Global Journalist Security.

GRNlive/PayDesk

The GroundTruth Project

International Center for Journalists

International Media Support

International News Safety Institute

International Press Institute

International Women's Media Foundation

Judith Matloff, freelance media safety trainer

Overseas Press Club

Overseas Press Club Foundation

Pakistan Press Foundation

Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues, Inc (RISC)

Storyhunter

Trauma Training for Journalists

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