



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

14 May 2020

Dear Members of the #FreeThePress Campaign,

I wish to thank you for your letter dated 5 May 2020 expressing concern for the welfare of journalists in detention during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for sharing the petition, “Release imprisoned journalists worldwide”.

I have been following with great attention developments in relation to cases of detained journalists, as well as broader trends of arrest and intimidation of journalists across the world, in particular during the current situation.

As I underscored on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day this year, since the start of the pandemic, many journalists around the world have been subjected to tougher restrictions and disproportionate sanctions simply for doing their job. I have urged governments and leaders around the world to do everything in their power to protect journalists and media professionals, and to strengthen press freedom during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

In the three years since I became Secretary-General, I have repeatedly spoken out against the sustained campaign of harassment, abuse, kidnapping, detention and even torture of journalists. I have insisted that the international community cannot remain silent and that this culture of impunity cannot become our new normal. My call to protect journalists and media workers during this pandemic has been echoed throughout the United Nations system, both through advocacy with Member States, cooperation with Member States and civil society, and through public statements.

Members of the #FreeThePress
Campaign

In that regard, I wish to reiterate my personal commitment, and that of the United Nations as a whole, to continue to defend media freedom and the safety of journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, including by advocating, publicly and bilaterally, for the release of journalists detained arbitrarily. No democracy can function without press freedom, which is the cornerstone of trust between people and their institutions, and which is most critical at a time of crisis when citizens demand accountability. We shall also continue to work together with civil society organizations and governments to protect the human rights of journalists.

Yours sincerely,

with my warmest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

António Guterres