



MESSAGE

BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY**

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World Press Freedom Day is an annual reminder to the international community that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We need to defend these rights because they are a fundamental cornerstone of democracy and make a true difference in people's lives around the world.

World Press Freedom Day is also an opportunity for the international community to pay tribute to the media professionals who have lost their lives in the line of duty over the past year. We need to strengthen our resolve to ensure the safety and security of journalists around the world.

The theme for this year's observance is 'Media, Development and Poverty Eradication'. It draws attention to the role of the media in eradicating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). If free and independent, with unhindered access to the free flow of information, media can help to inform and educate the public and to check corruption and mismanagement, thus contributing to the process of development.

As recent events have demonstrated, with freedom comes responsibility. It may be one of the downsides of our globalized world that cartoons published in one local newspaper in one country can just a few months later result in prolonged protests around the world, attacks on diplomatic missions, the loss of lives, and a lingering sense of alienation and anger on all sides. This illustrates the need to foster global tolerance and understanding and to strike a balance between press freedom and responsible reporting.

Press freedom is intrinsically related to human rights and democracy. In recent months, the General Assembly has made important decisions in these areas. In December of last year, the Peacebuilding Commission was set up. One of its main functions will be to support the rebuilding of democratic institutions in countries emerging from conflict. In March of this year, the General Assembly created the Human Rights Council. It is a new human rights mechanism, which signals a new beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. With these two new institutions, the United Nations will be better equipped to work for peace, development and human rights for all.