



World Association of News Publishers

WAN-IFRA

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The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20500

12<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing on behalf of the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, which represent 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries, to express our deep dismay at the hundreds of reports of violence being perpetrated against journalists covering ongoing protests in the United States and to call on you to forcefully condemn these attacks and show unwavering support for a free press.

We have watched with growing alarm over recent weeks as the number of attacks against journalists reported by the [US Press Freedom Tracker](#), a non-partisan online resource that documents press freedom violations in the United States, has steadily risen. There have been over 400 reported incidents related to coverage of current nationwide mass protests against police brutality and in support of social justice following the death of George Floyd in police custody.

The United States is looked to by countries around the world as a beacon of democracy – a steadfast light that strengthens the resolve of allies whilst deterring adversaries. One of the pillars upon which this faith rests is the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees the rights of journalists to report freely. This is backed up by a long history of outspoken intervention in support of freedom of expression wherever it is threatened.

Mr President, we respectfully suggest that this would be an appropriate time to reinforce this historical commitment to a free press, clearly and unambiguously, so that it is heard across the country and may resonate around the world. Attacks against journalists must stop. Attacks already perpetrated need to be investigated to the full extent of the law, and the press must be free to carry out its essential role safely and without fear of reprisal.

These are not merely words; they express the deepfelt convictions upon which many of our shared international values are based. They show the extent to which our societies have progressed, what remains to be achieved, and provide warning when we fall short of eradicating all forms of prejudice, repression and hatred. When such principles are imperilled, it is to the highest authority that we look for their rigorous defence.



We urge you – in these unprecedented times – to carefully consider your power to influence action and opinion, both at home and abroad, and to find the appropriate language that will stem the violence and protect journalists from further attack. We echo similar appeals made to you by journalists, press freedom organisations, and industry groups for you to ensure state and local officials take responsibility in ensuring perpetrators of violence against journalists are brought to justice and that such attacks are not repeated. They, the American people, and the world need to hear this from you.

If justice is to be delivered, if the nation is to address the historic failures at the root of these latest protests and begin the long process of healing, then citizens, policymakers and law enforcement officials need reliable independent information to assist them in this process. Journalists need to operate freely and in safety, without fear of attack.

The value a country places upon a free press is a fundamental measure of the health of its democracy, a means to encourage transparency and ensure accountability across public institutions and amongst powerful individuals. We therefore implore you, as Commander in Chief, to reassert this fundamental value as a means of restoring confidence in the ability of the United States to positively lead and influence the global system.

We look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Yarza'.

**Fernando De Yarza Lopez-Madrado**  
President, WAN-IFRA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Fernandez'.

**Warren Fernandez**  
President, World Editors Forum



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