



World Press Freedom Day 2020 Journalism Without Fear and Favour



The writer is:

Nicolaj A. Hejberg Petersen,
Ambassador of Denmark to
Uganda

World Press Freedom Day is observed annually on May 3rd to remind us all that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights.

It is a great pleasure for me on behalf of the EU Member States in Uganda, to join Ugandans in commemorating the World Press Freedom Day 2020.

This year, we are observing the day in the unprecedented and uncertain era of COVID-19. It is only right to express gratitude to the many committed journalists who are working tirelessly to provide a public understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic that contains so many unknown factors: How many cases do we have? What will happen next? What are the directives we need to adhere to in order to contain the spread of the virus? Let it be clear that we commend the Government of Uganda for having addressed the crises resolutely, and for the citizens of Uganda for acting responsibly. This has so far prevented large outbreaks in Uganda.

Equally important in this troubling time of COVID-19 is the need to appreciate the role of journalists covering the socio-economic implications of the crisis – globally and in Uganda. Access to information concerning the social, political and economic environment, in which we live, is crucial in building democratic societies and for upholding rule of law. We all rely on professional journalism to shed light and uncover human rights violations. We need journalism to cover the socio-economic consequences of the Corona crisis.

Today, we therefore express our gratitude to the many journalists, who are committed to professionalism

through responsible reporting and adherence to the ethical principles of journalism. The importance of accurate and reliable journalism cannot be underestimated.

At the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, we join the global call for all stakeholders to promote independent journalism. These include governments, the justice, law and order sector institutions, journalists and media houses, internet businesses, civil society and academia.

This year, the theme is **“Journalism Without Fear or Favour”**. Uganda has a vibrant media. However, over the past decade, Uganda has unfortunately seen incidents when enjoyment of press freedom has been curtailed. The latest Human Rights Watch report indicates that violations of freedom of association, assembly and expression in Uganda do exist. New regulations restricting online activities, stifling of independent media and attempts to suspend reporters for covering opposition politicians are worrying signs.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, it has also been reported that more than 10 journalists have been victims of assaults by the police and LDUs. The World Press Freedom Report 2020 indicates that acts of

intimidation and violence against reporters are common occurrences in Uganda with the security services being the leading violators.

Safety of journalists is essential for press freedom and continued progress in Uganda. We therefore commend security agencies for recently taking action against officers who allegedly committed human rights violations against journalists. We urge that such violations do not happen again. This is fully in line with the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, which calls upon member states to develop and implement strategies for combating impunity for attacks on journalists.

The vibrant and strong media Uganda has built is commendable – but it needs to be protected and strengthened.

We will continue to explore ways of supporting state institutions and journalists to provide reliable, fact-based information to the public during these challenging times. To this end, combatting misinformation and ensuring the safety and protection of reporters must be key priorities as Uganda moves through the uncharted waters that the COVID-19 crisis present.