



The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 3, 2021

Senator Brian Schatz:

On behalf of Reporters Without Borders, an international press freedom watchdog, I am pleased to express support for the “*Advancing Universal Press Freedom Act of 2021.*”

Press freedom is a fundamental human right that is critical to preserving democracy and good governance, and the United States has long been considered a leader in promoting this democratic principle. However, global press freedom has been in decline for more than a decade and in 2021, threats to press freedom continue to grow. Journalists are facing arrests, attacks and threats to their safety as they report on the COVID-19 pandemic, cover protest movements, and attempt to do their work amid hostile environments. If these trends continue, the space for independent media throughout the world will continue to shrink.

The Advancing Universal Press Freedom Act of 2021 would strengthen the United States’ response to these global threats by creating an Office of Press Freedom in the State Department, led by an Ambassador-at-Large for press freedom who would advise and advocate for the U.S. government’s efforts to promote press freedom and protect journalists worldwide. The bill requires that the Secretary of State develop a press freedom curriculum for incoming Foreign Service Officers on regional press freedom issues and ways the State Department can help protect journalists. The bill also calls for a Government Accountability Report on the implementation of the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, which was signed by former President Obama in May 2010 and expanded the information on press freedom included in the State Department’s country reports on human rights.

When the press is silenced, corruption, violence, inequalities and abuses of power can escape unnoticed. The Advancing Universal Press Freedom Act of 2021 would create additional resources for the U.S. government to ensure government officials are working to advocate for the safety of journalists and the promotion of press freedom in places that are unsafe or hostile toward journalists. Reporters Without Borders strongly supports this bill and thanks you for your leadership on this legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CD', followed by a horizontal line.

Christophe Deloire
Secretary-general
Reporters Without Borders