



May 3rd, 2023

Greetings to all Guyanese media workers on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2023.

This year's theme is **“Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights”**

Freedom of Expression is one of the fundamental human rights that is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights which was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948.

This is mirrored in Article 146 of Guyana's Constitution, the Supreme Law of the Land, which states that “except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference and freedom from interference with his correspondence.”

Therefore, we can appreciate the critical role the media plays in creating awareness about the other human rights and fundamental freedoms that Guyanese are entitled to.

In particular, journalists are regarded by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as playing that key and critical role of disseminating ***verifiable facts and making complex matters intelligible for the public at large.***

This is why the Guyana Press Association (GPA) has embarked on a concerted effort at educating Guyanese and media practitioners themselves about their various roles and responsibilities. The integrity of journalism will continue to be under threat in Guyana not merely because of partisan interests, but because everyone who disseminates clearly partisan, and unverifiable content that passes off as interviews or discussions self-classify and hold themselves out as journalists.

This year's World Press Freedom Day is being observed at a time when there appears to be a creeping intolerance to media that seek answers especially from the political directorates across Guyana's major political divide. The resort to defaming the character of journalists on a politically-aligned social media page or the expletive-laced response to a journalist are

themselves a violation of Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that protects people against attacks upon their honour and reputation.

Today, we see renewed efforts by the sitting government to use its leverage in the State Media and its aligned privately-owned media to violate the inalienable right to freedom of association as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of Guyana. The sitting government is evidently coercing those workers to engage in practices that are inimical to the Guyana Press Association at the altar of political expediency, hence the collective well-being of their organised body. There had been failed attempts in the past to do so through the partisan Union of Guyanese Journalists (UGJ).

Decades later, the government has embarked on a two-pronged strategy of using its leverage and pressure on media workers in the State media and sympathetic privately-owned media to take over the GPA, and if that fails to form what it sees as a parallel organisation.

The GPA is of the clear and unambiguous position that the government's sole interest is to control the narrative of the reality of the Guyanese media landscape locally, regionally and internationally.

Our international partners and affiliates are being kept abreast of these efforts to derail the GPA.

This is being resisted. The GPA seeks the solidarity of all freedom-loving Guyanese including civil society actors and international development stakeholders.

Journalists will soon have an opportunity to elect a new executive of the Guyana Press Association that will be free from partisan control. This ultimately depends on media workers coming out to vote.

At the end of the day, what matters is that **“Freedom of expression is a driver for all other human rights”**

Happy World Press Freedom Day 2023.