



**03.05.16 – UNESCO’s flagship celebration of World Press Freedom Day takes place in Helsinki, Finland, this year from 2 to 4 May, an event highlighting the link between freedom of information and sustainable development.**

The significance of [World Press Freedom Day](#) is now greater than ever, given the intensity of the attacks on journalistic freedom and independence by governments, ideologies and private-sector interests during the past year. The event comes at a time when human rights, democratic societies and sustainable development are jeopardised by repression on the free flow of information.

[World Press Freedom Day](#) unites over 100 national celebrations each year around the world with one objective: for a free, independent and safe media environment. As led by UNESCO, the overarching theme of this year’s celebration is Access to Information and Fundamental Freedoms with a focus on:

- Freedom of Information and Sustainable Development
- Protecting press freedom from censorship and surveillance overreach
- Ensuring safety of journalists online and offline.

2016 also marks a special commemoration for three important milestones:

- The 250th anniversary of the world's first ever freedom of information law, covering both Sweden and Finland.
- The 25th anniversary of the adoption of the [Windhoek Declaration of Press Freedom](#) – a landmark action on media pluralism and independence.
- 2016 is the first year in which a link between press freedom and sustainable development has been officially recognised through the 15 year life-cycle of the new [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (See [SDG 16 point 10](#)).



*This year the prize goes to journalist Khadija Ismayilova from Azerbaijan*

Every year, the [UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize](#) is named in honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his

newspaper, El Espectador, in Bogotá, on 17 December 1986.

Khadija Ismayilova, a freelance investigative journalist from Azerbaijan and contributor to the Azerbaijani service of Radio Free Europe, will today be awarded the \$25,000 Prize in recognition of her outstanding contribution to press freedom in difficult circumstances.

Detained in December 2014 and in September 2015, Khadija was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment on charges relating to abuse of power and tax evasion. Her struggle for freedom is sadly just one case amongst many that demonstrate the increasingly restrictive environment for media and workers across the world.



[Reporters Without Borders](#) release an annual *World Press Freedom Index*

Results from the [2016 World Press Freedom Index](#) present a snapshot of the climate of fear and tension which grips journalists today. The data compiled from questionnaires rank 180

countries by evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists, on a scale of 0-100 (0 being the lowest). This year the figures range from the eights (Finland, Netherlands, Norway and Denmark) to the 80's (China, Syria, Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea).

Journalists continue to be threatened, harassed, obstructed or even killed in the pursuit of information. Many languish in detention, some in appalling conditions, for shedding light on governance failures, corporate malfeasance or societal problems. [World Press Freedom Day](#) demands the protection of the independence of the media and calls for the recognition of media workers who risk and have lost their lives in their professions.

On this day, Ban Ki-moon urges governments, politicians, businesses and citizens to commit to nurturing and protecting an independent, free media:

*'Constraints on freedom of expression place shackles on progress itself... Without this fundamental right, people are less free and less empowered. With it, we can work together for a world of dignity and opportunity for all.'*

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#### UNRICs Related Links

- [UNESCO World Press Freedom Day](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize](#)

- [Reporters Without Borders](#)

Photos:

1 World Press Freedom Day logo 2016

2 & 3 ( [OCCRP](#) )