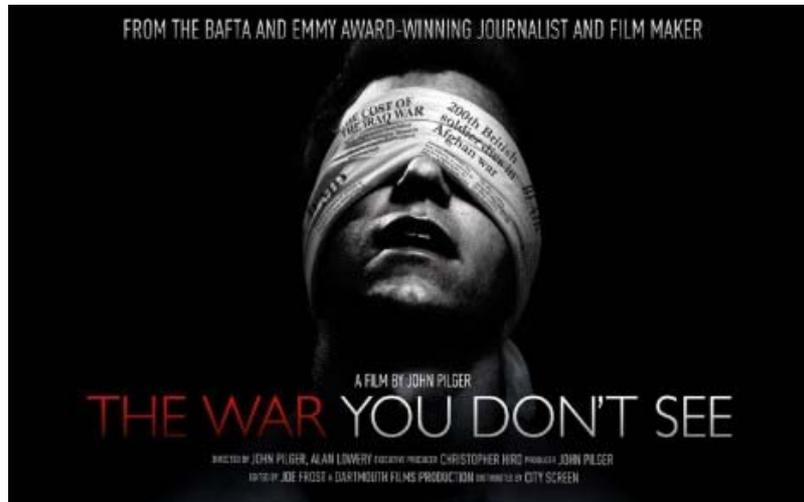


To celebrate World Press Freedom Day

the United Nations welcomes you to the screening of



The documentary is a powerful and timely investigation into the media's role in war, tracing the history of embedded and independent reporting from the carnage of World War One to the destruction of Hiroshima, and from the invasion of Vietnam to the current war in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Documentary-maker John Pilger has returned to a subject that can't be revived often enough: the grotesque untruth of "weapons of mass destruction": a cloudy concept, eagerly amplified and lent credibility by credulous and submissive journalists who, after 9/11, lost their nerve en masse. Pilger's contention is that on Afghanistan, on Iraq and on Israel and the Palestinian territories, the mainstream media simply take the official line.

Mort Rosenblum, reporter, author, and educator, has written from 200 countries, some no longer with us, on subjects ranging from war to tango dancing by the Seine. He covered the Biafra secession from Nigeria, Vietnam, the violent birth of Bangladesh, Central American mayhem, Israeli wars, the Iron Curtain collapse, Bosnia and Kosovo, and two Gulf Wars, among other major conflicts. He was editor of the International Herald Tribune; special correspondent for The Associated Press; AP bureau chief in Africa, Southeast Asia, Argentina, and France; Rosenblum left AP in 2004. In 2008, he launched the quarterly, dispatches, with co-editor Gary Knight and publisher Simba Gill. For part of the year, he is a professor of journalism at the University of Arizona, Tucson. In summer, he takes Tufts University students to such places as Kosovo and Kashmir.

He has written 12 books and contributed to Foreign Affairs, Vanity Fair, the New York Review of Books, Le Nouvel Observateur, Travel & Leisure, and Bon Appetit, among others. His honors include a 2001 Harry Chapin Award for a series on water, a Mencken Award for African Famine, a James Beard Award for OLIVES, and an IACP Cookbook Award for CHOCOLATE.



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MEDIA STATEMENT



“At this historic juncture, Governments must choose reform over repression”, state UN expert on World Press Freedom Day

The following statement was released by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Frank La Rue, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day (3 May 2011).

2 May 2011

We commemorate the World Press Freedom Day* this year against the backdrop of extraordinary events in the Middle East and North Africa. People from all walks of life, in particular the youth, have peacefully and collectively stood up against decades of oppression and denial of basic human rights.

I commend and stand in solidarity with these courageous individuals, including journalists, bloggers, and activists, who have risen above fear to express their legitimate grievances and to demand reforms, democracy and transparency, using at great risk their freedom of expression and new information communication technologies.

At the same time, I am deeply shocked and saddened that thousands of individuals have lost their lives, and journalists, human rights defenders and opposition leaders in particular continue to be targeted in countries such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen. I extend my condolences to the families of the victims and urge authorities to immediately stop any further bloodshed. I call on the international community to respond urgently and effectively to these human rights and humanitarian crises.

I believe that we are currently in a historic moment. Never in the history of humankind have individuals been so interconnected across the globe. Social networking platforms have given individuals the means to share and disseminate information in “real-time”, and have played a key role in the recent demonstrations. As one activist tweeted during the protests in Egypt, “we use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world.”

Indeed, the Internet has become an essential tool to exercise the right to freedom of expression, a topic which is discussed further in my next report to the United Nations Human Rights Council to be presented on 3 June 2011.

At the same time, the power of the Internet to awaken individuals to question and challenge the status quo and to expose corruption and wrongdoing has generated fear among the powerful. As a result, Governments are increasingly censoring information in cyberspace and, in some cases, disconnecting users from Internet access entirely.

Such censorship measures are often combined with age-old tactics of harassment and intimidation, arbitrary arrests, torture and other cruel or inhuman treatment, enforced disappearances and even killings – not only to directly silence dissent, but also to generate a climate of fear within society. I remain deeply concerned about such practices around the world, and in particular the continuing persecution of journalists, bloggers and activists covering the ongoing demonstrations.

On this World Press Freedom Day, I would like to remind all States that the strongest governments are those that allow democratic participation of citizens, and diverse views to be expressed openly. The events in the Middle East and North Africa have shown that it is never a viable long-term option to suppress the voices of the people. They have also served as a reminder that the role of the Government is to serve the people, not those in power.

I therefore call upon all Governments to choose reform over repression, to embrace diverging views, to listen to the people, and to build a strong society based on the consent of the governed, whose freedom of opinion and expression must be upheld.

(*) 3 May was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993. It is a day to commemorate the fundamental principles of press freedom and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide.