



# High-level Media Freedom Symposium

1100 GMT, Monday 19 April 2021

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## The rapid decline in media freedom around the world is perilous for citizens everywhere.

The rapid decline in media freedom worldwide is perilous for citizens everywhere. Despite the increased need for accurate, quality news and information during the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists and news organisations are facing alarming levels of harassment. Every day, they are threatened and attacked for simply doing their jobs.

From media capture in Hungary and Poland to political interference in Hong Kong, these threats are having a significant global impact on the news people receive. More so than at any time in recent history. However, coverage of issues of media freedom worldwide is sporadic and inconsistent.

The lack of a media spotlight on media freedom issues is of great concern to both the Association for International Broadcasting (AIB) and the Public Media Alliance (PMA). As a response we are inviting you to participate in a special symposium run with the support of the Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN). Our aim is to work with key players in order to identify ways to improve coverage of media freedom abuses worldwide.

Our concerns are shared by our keynote speaker, David Kaye, former UN Special Rapporteur on Media Freedom.

## Outcomes

The participants of the symposium will be senior representatives from news media organisations and journalists.

These organisations have a strong voice and substantial reach.

By working more closely together they can influence both governments and society.

The aim of this symposium is to go beyond “discussion” and explore ways to inspire real change in order to shine a media spotlight on issues of media freedom worldwide. Concerted action is required by media organisations and governments to increase public awareness and inspire positive change. The aim is to identify proactive outcomes.

## What we would like from you

On Monday 19 April 2021, we will bring together leaders of broadcasting organisations from across the globe for a 90-minute high-level symposium.

The aim of this is two-fold:

- Firstly, the discussions will provide a context that demonstrates the need for increased collaboration in order to tackle media freedom and inform citizens about the issue. The debate will also be used to consider the obstacles to improved coverage of media freedom issues.
- Secondly, we will seek agreement from delegates to work together to develop a rapid-response toolkit to support all participating media companies who face media freedom infringements. The event will also be used to ensure that media companies’ collective voices are better heard by governments, regulators and other opinion-leaders.

**We invite you to take part in this high-level event and to contribute to collaborative work on media freedom.**

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## Why this is important

**The combined weekly audiences of the broadcasters that are members of the AIB and PMA are well in excess of one billion people.**

Our members deliver news, information, entertainment and education across television, radio and digital platforms. However, in an increasing number of territories, restrictions are being imposed on their operations.

Citizens are deprived of access to information that is crucial to their daily lives. This can force them to seek information from other, unreliable, sources that may be seeded with disinformation and misinformation. This in turn can lead to social unrest, impacting the rights of citizens and depressing economic growth.

By working together, media companies can harness their immense collective power to place pressure on those who would seek to restrict media freedom.

## The event

In a 90-minute virtual session, we will explore the threats, hear about work that is being undertaken to improve coverage and discuss the most appropriate ways to collaborate to achieve better coverage of media freedom issues.

This will be a proactive event, where contributions from participants will be welcomed.

## Outline agenda

### Welcome

Sally-Ann Wilson, Public Media Alliance  
Simon Spanswick, Association for International Broadcasting  
Abdulla Al Najjar, Al Jazeera Media Network  
Richard Gizbert (Chair), host of [The Listening Post](#) on Al Jazeera English

### Keynote

David Kaye, former UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

### Research presentation

Media coverage of media freedom issues - a collaboration between Dr Martin Scott, [UEA] and Dr Mel Bunce [City, University of London]

### Working session

This symposium will include a round the room discussion that aims to deliver an outcome that the participants are willing to endorse and to implement. This important working session will be actively chaired and directed by Richard Gizbert.

### Participants

This event will bring together senior representatives from both publicly-funded and commercial broadcasters including all AIB and PMA Members. Participants will also include representatives from other media organisations that are able to contribute to the debate and have offered to support this initiative.

Confirmed participating organisations include Al Jazeera Media Network, ABC, BBC, CBC/Radio-Canada, Doughty Street Chambers, DW, France Médias Monde, USAGM and others.



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**Participation in this high-level event is by invitation only.**

To register your interest, please complete our [online form](#). We will contact you to confirm your place at this event which will take place online in the English language.

**Key contacts**

<b>Association for International Broadcasting</b> <b>Tom Wragg</b> T +44 20 7993 2557 <a href="mailto:tom.wragg@aib.org.uk">tom.wragg@aib.org.uk</a>	<b>Public Media Alliance</b> <b>Kristian Porter</b> T +44 7450 217579 <a href="mailto:kristian@publicmediaalliance.org">kristian@publicmediaalliance.org</a>
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