

**WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY  
MAY 3, 2012**

**[New Voices: Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies](#)**

**A Concept Paper**

**INTRODUCTION**

The United Nations General Assembly officially proclaimed May 3 as the World Press Freedom Day in 1993 at the initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), to commemorate the Windhoek Declaration of 1991, when African journalists asserted the rights of the press to function independently.

Thus every year, May 3 is a day to remember and uphold the fundamental principles of press freedom and freedom of speech. It serves as an occasion to inform citizens about the violations of press freedom globally – as in many countries around the world journalists continue to face perilous situations in the carrying out their duties. And newspaper publications are being censored, fined, suspended or face closures.

The theme for this year as declared by UNESCO is “**New Voices: Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies**”. The confluence of press freedom and freedom of expression, through various traditional as well as new media, has given rise to an unprecedented level of media freedom. Media freedom entails the right of any person to freedom of opinion and expression on a public basis, which includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This newfound media freedom is promising to transform societies in ways perhaps unimaginable only a year ago. It has enabled the emergence of new ways to communicate, to share information and knowledge, and for people to widen their sense of participation, identity and belongs. Media freedom includes online freedom, also plays a dynamic role in the economic transformation of society.

The Day will be an occasion for many stakeholders to celebrate the significance of media freedom, to examine how to deepen it, and to deliberate on how to best resolve the new challenges of elaborating this right in complex and changing circumstances.

## **IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES**

Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To sensitise media practitioners and general public on the value of press freedom and the role the press plays in a democratic society;
- To provide a platform to the participants to exchange critical views on press freedom, which will result in a better understanding of the significance of freedom of expression.
- To use media freedom to improve the democratic development of a county.
- To capture and sustain the gains on freedom of expression created by social media, and on the internet more broadly.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

A Forum will be organized which will comprise a Keynote Address, followed by a Panel Discussion. Based on the recent fascinating and exciting developments in Turkey, the organisers feel that it would be pertinent to have the Keynote Speaker this time to come from the Country. Last year, following the Arab Spring, the Keynote Speaker was Amina Gamil Khairy, Feature Editor from Al Hayat International Daily, Cairo, Egypt. The members of the panel will comprise Malaysian senior journalists, as well as prominent human rights / press freedom advocates. A detailed programme is attached.

## **VENUE / DATE**

The event will be held at the Universiti Selangor, Shah Alam, Selangor on May 3, 2012 from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm.

## **ORGANISERS**

The Asian Institute for Development Communication (AIDCOM) has been organising this event every year since 1998. Like in the previous year, we are planning to organise this event jointly with the Universiti Selangor (UniSel) with the cooperation of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), as well as media professionals and academicians. This event will be marked by bringing together a broad array of media professionals, journalists, communicators, academicians, human right activists, students, and the public on a theme that addresses the status of media freedom helping to transform societies faced by media in our rapidly changing world. AIDCOM has been assured of active collaboration by prominent Malaysian educational institutions, NGOs and the media.

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