

Malaysia: Journalists call for media reform and greater press freedoms

Journalists in Malaysia are concerned at increasing controls on press freedom as they advocate for much-needed reforms to protect media workers from political power changes in the country. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) together with its Malaysian affiliate, the National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM), today launched the media advocacy campaign #MYMediaMatters to highlight the ongoing challenges faced by journalists in Malaysia.



The IFJ and NUJM campaign is the launch action out of a major multi-year media development project, funded by the European Union. *Strengthening Malaysia's Media for Change* is a five-year project aimed at strengthening the capacity of media organisations to instigate and lead sustainable media development in Malaysia, undertake national industry consultation and engagement, support media innovation and drive needed media reforms, including the development of the country's first press council as key priorities.

The #MYMediaMatters campaign includes insights from Malaysian journalists on media freedom issues. Among them: **Alyaa Alhadjri**, a senior reporter at *Malaysiakini.com*, says archaic legislation and government controls continue to restrict press freedom; *Sin Chew Daily* journalist **Chin Sung Chew** and general secretary of *NUJM*, laments the historic control of media in Malaysia by ruling governments; independent broadcast journalist **Tehmina Kaosji** argues for commitments to remove censorship and self-censorship by abolishing repressive laws and addressing journalist harassment; and journalists **Farah Marshita**, and **Noor Hayati** highlight the need to strengthen public trust in media and increased support strategies for journalists to perform the vital role of informing and supporting a democratic and open society.

The Malaysia project launches as media workers globally face increased job insecurity and legal restrictions under Covid-19. As a priority, the project will examine the impacts of Covid-19 on media workers in Malaysia and develop strategies to counter those issues and support journalists' right to organise collectively.

Her Excellency Maria Castillo Fernandez, head of the European Union Delegation to Malaysia stressed: "Journalism plays an essential role in upholding freedom of expression in democratic societies and fostering transparency and accountability. A free and independent media means citizens have access to reliable information that is fact-checked and without undue interference and influence, contributing to a more resilient society. The EU fully supports the work of committed and courageous journalists to counter self-censorship and restrictive legislation, and who are promoting trustworthy journalism."

The NUJM said: "***Journalists need to strengthen capacity to organise and lead on key governance issues. As the main journalist union in Malaysia, the NUJM welcomes the opportunity to work with our stakeholders in contributing to legislative reforms and transforming the media landscape.***"

The IFJ said: "***Much remains to be achieved on media reform in Malaysia and certain fundamental protections must become non-negotiable, including laws or regulations that permit censorship or chill the practice of journalism. Importantly, journalists should be free to form unions and there is a critical need for comprehensive defamation law reform and development of a press council. Through this project the IFJ and NUJM will work with journalists, media organisations, unions and civil society to advance a strong, independent and diverse media in Malaysia. As the journalists have said #MYMediaMatters – and that message is fundamental for all society.***"

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See more on the #MYMediaMatters campaign and IFJ's global work [here](#).

Join the IFJ's self-paced online reporting course Reporting on COVID-19: SAFETY [here](#)

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The IFJ represents more than 600,000 journalists in 140 countries

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