MFC Media Freedom Coalition

Communications Toolkit

How to communicate about media freedom and the MFC – a guide for MFC member countries

Prepared by the MFC Secretariat
November 2023

Contents

Overview

This toolkit provides practical guidance for government officials, embassy staff, and other stakeholders from member governments of the Media Freedom Coalition on how to communicate about or in connection with the MFC.

The first part includes facts, talking points and resources for anyone communicating about the MFC and/or media freedom more generally.

The second part is specifically for embassy networks of the MFC (also known as diplomatic networks), which take collective actions to promote media freedom where they are based. Embassy networks sometimes communicate under the auspices of the MFC and this guide includes some useful guidelines and resources on how to do this.

Why we created this toolkit

1. **Raising Awareness of the MFC:** this toolkit is intended to make it easier for stakeholders to raise awareness about the MFC's goals, objectives, activities and overall significance.

2. **Informing Stakeholders:** the toolkit provides important resources and stats about media freedom, the challenges faced by journalists globally, and the role of the MFC in addressing these challenges.

3. **Consistent Messaging:** the toolkit provides evergreen messages that help ensure that anyone communicating about the MFC, from any government, can be consistent with the MFC's overall objectives and identity.

4. **Easier communication:** by producing this toolkit alongside guides and templates we aim to make the task of communicating about the MFC easier.

PART I

Communicating about the MFC & Media Freedom

MFC Factsheet

The MFC in a sentence: The Media Freedom Coalition is a partnership of countries working together proactively to advocate for media freedom at home and abroad.

**Establishment:** Formed in July 2019 at the Global Conference for Media Freedom.

Membership: 50 member states from six continents as of November 2023. Check this page on the MFC website for latest information on members. All members have signed the Global Pledge on Media Freedom, which commits them to promoting media freedom at home and abroad.

Activities:
- Advocacy: Public statements and diplomatic interventions on media freedom issues.
- Embassy Networks: Leverages embassies to promote media freedom.
- Case Interventions: Public/private action when journalists are threatened or situations are deteriorating. Many cases are raised by the MFC's Consultative Network (below).
- Legal Reforms: Promoting policies and laws supporting media freedom. This work is informed by the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom (below).
- Events: Organizes/participates in global media-related events.
- Global Media Defence Fund: Supports projects for journalists' legal protection and media freedom enhancement. The fund is administered by UNESCO.

Stakeholders and Groups Involved
- Member Countries: Signatories to the Global Pledge on Media Freedom.
- High-Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom: an independent group of expert lawyers and judges that acts as an independent advisory body of the MFC.
- Consultative Network: an independent group of civil society organisations from around the world that advises the MFC and highlights cases needing intervention.
- UNESCO: Administers the Global Media Defence Fund, participates in MFC discussions and makes expertise and resources available to MFC members.
- MFC Secretariat: a dedicated team supporting the MFC which focusses on operations, communications, and tracking the MFC's activities and impact.
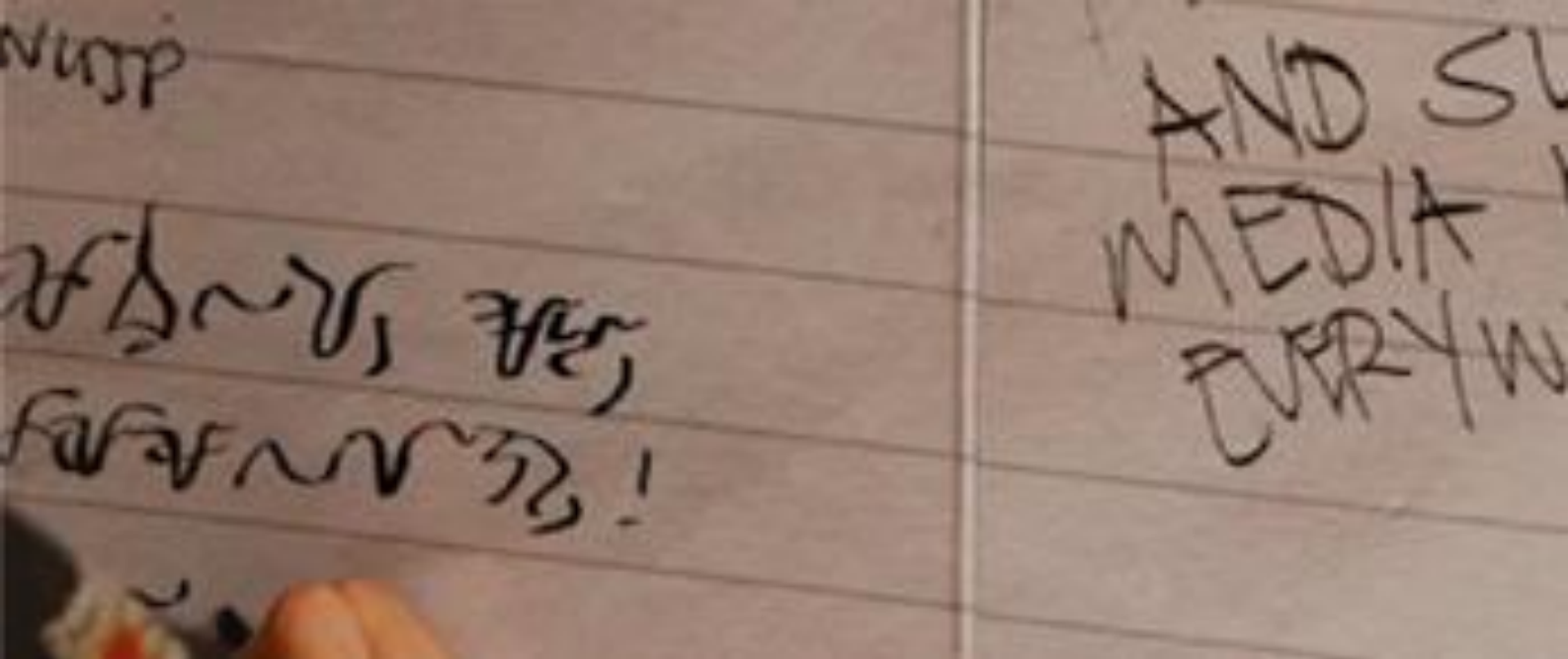
MFC Key Messages (1)

1. The Importance of Media Freedom

As a cornerstone of democracy and human rights, media freedom makes people's lives better. An independent and thriving media holds the powerful to account, exposes human rights abuses, and empowers citizens to make informed decisions.

Journalists and media workers should be able to do their work freely without hindrance. Societies will only get the full value of independent journalism when journalists are free to identify stories and report them free of outside pressure and threats to their safety (both online and offline).

Free media counters disinformation and guarantees a flow of accurate information that fuels societal progress by way of enabling an informed citizenry, good governance, and civic engagement.

Serving as a voice for the voiceless, independent media amplifies the voices of people who would otherwise not be heard. This guarantees diverse perspectives and fosters inclusivity, enriching societal discourse.

A robust and diverse media cultivates social cohesion by providing a platform for shared narratives, enabling dialogue among diverse communities, and promoting mutual understanding that bridges divides.

MFC Key Messages (2)

2. Threats to media freedom

Threats to media freedom are on the rise, both in their frequency and diversity. For example, according to V-Dem's Democracy Report 2023, out of all aspects of democracy tracked by the report, freedom of expression has the most negative trend of all.

No country is completely free from threats or barriers to media freedom. While some countries have a much freer media environment than others, media freedom threats can occur anywhere, be they physical, digital, financial, legal or psychosocial.

Governments – which have a responsibility to protect human rights – are too often the source of threats to media freedom. This is one key reason why the Media Freedom Coalition was formed.

Threats to media freedom include:
• Restrictive laws
• Punitive legal measures, SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation)
• Physical violence and threats
• The high rate of impunity for crimes against journalists
• Online violence, intimidation and harassment
• Financial/economic challenges for news media
• Arbitrary and/or unlawful surveillance of journalists
• Censorship
• Undue interference in the circulation of information online (including internet shutdowns)
• Attacks on websites (e.g. DDoS attacks)
• Mis- and disinformation, "fake news", and propaganda techniques
• Acts of transnational (or cross-border) repression directed at journalists and media workers

Many media freedom threats are experienced disproportionately by women journalists. Such threats can also target other people in vulnerable situations, on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or other dimensions of diversity.

MFC Key Messages (3)

3. The role of governments – and specifically the MFC – in upholding media freedom

Governments have a critical role to play and responsibility in upholding media freedom. Governments are responsible for laws and policies that can enable media freedom, as well as their implementation. They have a significant influence on public attitudes to the media. Their resources, convening power, and diplomatic footprint are essential in protecting journalists from violence, intimidation and repression.

The Media Freedom Coalition plays a valuable and unique role in promoting media freedom. The MFC fills a gap by organizing and better coordinating the actions of governments with civil society, media, and other stakeholders. It always works in collaboration with those stakeholders, never alone.

MFC member governments – and their embassies - are taking a range of concrete actions to uphold media freedom. These include providing safe refuge to journalists fleeing their country, intervening in cases of concern, reforming laws to enable media freedom, and embassies monitoring trials of journalists.
→ Find the latest examples of the activities and impact of the MFC at the News section on the MFC website. Look out for recent reports, such as this Activity Report capturing MFC activities in 2022. Contact the Secretariat to get updates on recent activities.

The work of the Media Freedom Coalition benefits journalists and media workers, as well as the wider public, all over the world. Its work makes journalists safer and helps create the conditions in which independent media can thrive. Its work makes sure the public has access to vital information that helps them lead informed, fulfilled lives.

Media freedom facts and resources

There are various resources that can provide you with the latest facts and data on media freedom. This list was put together in 2023; please follow the links or search online to find the latest data from these sources.

Global trends
UNESCO World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report. At the time of writing the [most recent version is for 2021/22](#). **Selected facts:**
- About 85 percent of the world's population experienced a decline in press freedom in their country over the past five years.
- From 2016 to the end of 2021, UNESCO recorded the killings of 455 journalists.

RSF World Press Freedom Index – available [here](#)
- According to the 2023 index, "the environment for journalism is 'bad' in seven out of ten countries, and satisfactory in only three out of ten."

V–Dem's Democracy Report provides analysis of the state of democracy worldwide, including in specific areas such as freedom of expression. 2023 report available [here](#)

RSF round–up – captures data on journalists detained, killed, held hostage or missing in the previous year. 2022 version available [here](#)

Killed journalists
UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists – available [here](#)
- At least 86 journalists and media workers were killed in 2022, an average of one person killed every four days.
- Over 1600 journalists killed since 1993.

Other resources on killed journalists:
- The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) – available [here](#)
- The International Press Institute – available [here](#)

Journalists in prison
CPJ data on journalists imprisoned – available [here](#)
- As of December 2022, [CPJ reported 363 journalists in custody](#), surpassing the previous year's count by 20%.

Impunity for crimes against journalists
UNESCO Director–General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity – 2022 report available [here](#)
- In 2022, the global impunity rate was measured by UNESCO at 86% compared to 89% in 2018.

CPJ publishes an annual Global Impunity Index – 2023 version available [here](#)

PART II

Communicating as an MFC Embassy Network

Why & How to Communicate as an Embassy Network

In the MFC's embassy networks initiative (also known as the diplomatic networks initiative), embassies work together to take joint actions on media freedom where they are based. Some of these actions involve communicating publicly, such as when embassies make a joint statement or publish a joint op-ed.

On these occasions, embassy networks are welcome and encouraged to use the MFC brand to emphasise that they are part of a diverse global coalition comprising many member countries that take action on media freedom at home and abroad.

Embassy networks might choose to communicate under the auspices of the MFC when:

1. Important international days take place (see p19), such as World Press Freedom Day (3 May); on these days, joint statements can express solidarity with journalists and media workers and highlight pertinent issues.

2. Specific media freedom cases have occurred, like attacks on journalists and media workers. Embassies can make a decision on whether, how and when to speak out, informed by their contacts in-country and in line with the principle of "do no harm" (whereby only actions that do not risk harming the journalist(s), media worker(s) or anyone else affected by the case, are pursued).

3. They wish to highlight joint activities undertaken to promote media freedom, such as events, visits or capacity building.

For more on the different types of public communication that embassy networks can undertake, and how to approach them, please consult the MFC Diplomatic Toolkit. If you do not have a copy, please request one from the [MFC Secretariat](.

Logo and font

Download the MFC logos, fonts and background templates here.

Logo guidance

The MFC logo typically appears at the top of an MFC communication or statement.

Depending on the colour of the background, the logo can appear in dark blue or white. When the logo appears on a coloured background, we recommend using one of the MFC colours from the colour palette as the background (see next page).

Please use the full logo including MFC acronym and full name together, rather than cutting out elements of the logo. Allow reasonable space around the logo.

Logos are also available in **French** and **Spanish**. Please contact the MFC Secretariat to request these.

Fonts

The MFC's primary fonts are DM Sans and DM Serif (both open source fonts). Download them at the link above.

If you are not able to use them, we recommend using Arial.

It is often easiest to use one font or the other in a communications output, rather than mixing the two.

DM Sans

Good for text as well as headings next to the text

DM Serif

Good for large titles and headlines

Colour palette

The MFC's colour palette should be used for any other graphic elements within communications, such as background colours for social media tiles.

MFC Light Blue
HEX #C4aD5ED
RGB (196, 213, 237)
CMYK (21, 10, 0, 0)

MFC White
HEX #FFFFFF
RGB (255, 255, 255)
CMYK (0, 0, 0, 0)

MFC Extra Light
HEX #E8EEF8
RGB (232, 238, 248)
CMYK (6, 4, 0, 3)

MFC Gray Blue
HEX #8492B7
RGB (132, 146, 183)
CMYK (51, 38, 12, 0)

MFC Blue
HEX #0A2670
RGB (10, 38, 112)
CMYK (100, 94, 26, 17)

MFC Navy Blue
HEX #071C54
RGB (7, 28, 84)
CMYK (100, 94, 34, 37)

MFC Black
HEX #000000
RGB (0, 0, 0)
CMYK (0, 0, 0, 100)

Options for joint statements

When speaking out jointly, embassies can employ various approaches on a case-by-case basis in order to maximise a statement's impact. For example:

➤ **Joint Drafting:** One member country takes the lead in drafting a statement and shares it with other MFC missions for input. After finalising the statement, they set a sign-on deadline and publish on member mission websites.

- Pros: Builds strong buy-in.
- Cons: Time-consuming if all members review the text.

➤ **Amplifying an online statement:** One or two member missions publish an agreed-upon statement on their websites and invite other missions to amplify it.

- Pros: Quicker than the central drafting method.
- Cons: Level of buy-in from other member missions may vary.

➤ **Social Media Posting:** One or two member missions directly publish statements on social media platform/s, like Twitter / X. The statement text could be contained in a graphic, or in a Tweet thread (the text would need to be short). Other missions then amplify the statement, potentially adding their own language if needed.

- Pros: Quick to do; easily shareable and amplifiable; allows for mission-specific language
- Cons: Level of buy-in may vary; attention to the statement may be fleeting.

Other guidance (1)

General

➤ When communicating as an embassy network, make clear that it is the network that is communicating, rather than purely "the Media Freedom Coalition".

Examples:
– The MFC's Embassy Network in [country] calls on...
– The MFC's Diplomatic Network in [country] strongly condemns...
– The Members of the Media Freedom Coalition in [country] welcome...

Statements that are made purely by "the Media Freedom Coalition" need to be made at central government level through a separate process.

➤ Translate statements into relevant national/local languages where possible, to increase their reach.

➤ Make clear which countries have signed a joint statement.

Social media

➤ When communicating on Twitter / X, please tag the MFC's account (@mediafreedomc) in all posts. The MFC Secretariat will then be able to amplify your communication.

➤ Use a graphic or image where possible, such as a tile with the title of the statement or the statement text itself (see examples on p17). If sharing the full statement text on a tile, keep the statement concise so it is easy to read.

➤ Use multiple graphics/tiles if publishing in multiple languages.

➤ Ask other embassies in the network to share or amplify the original message.

➤ Adding the flags of the participating countries (via icons within a Tweet and/or on a graphic) can emphasize the broad support for a statement. See example on p18.

➤ If producing joint video messages for social media, include the MFC logo where possible and consider consulting the MFC key messages included in this toolkit.

Other guidance (2)

Writing statements

➤ Start the statement with the most important information to ensure that valuable points do not get lost, diluted, or buried in the details.

➤ Include the "call to action" (e.g. urging authorities to take a particular action) as part of your opening paragraph if possible, although you can reiterate this with further detail later on.

> **Example:**
> – The MFC's Diplomatic Network in [country] is deeply concerned at the killing of [journalist] on [date] and calls on the authorities to thoroughly investigate.

➤ Look on the MFC website statements page to find language that the MFC has used in previous joint statements.

➤ Avoid jargon. Keep sentences short and split up longer sentences.

Example graphics (1)

There are various free online tools that can be used to make simple graphics, data visualisations and animations, such as Canva, Animaker, Datawrapper, Google Charts, VistaCreate and SVGator.

All background templates, as well as logos and fonts, can be downloaded via the link on p12.

Twitter tile to announce joint statement

➤ Uses MFC background template

➤ Logo at top

➤ DM Serif font used for headline text

Twitter tile to publish statement

➤ Uses MFC background template

➤ Logo at top

➤ DM Sans font used for text, including title

➤ Text is short enough to fit on graphic; broken into separate paragraphs for readability.

Example graphics (2)

Twitter tile to publish statement (example from embassies in Vietnam)

➤ Background and text are colours from the colour palette

➤ Logo at top and date included

➤ Flags included

➤ Shared as part of Tweet which included graphics in three languages (below)

Key dates for the calendar

There are various **international days** that diplomatic networks can use to plan statements, events and other activities.

> World Radio Day – 13 February
> International Women's Day – 8 March
> World Press Freedom Day – 3 May
> World Telecommunication and Information Society Day – 17 May
> International Day of Democracy – 15 September
> International Day for Universal Access to Information – 28 September
> Global Media and Information Literacy Week – 24–31 October
> World Development Information Day – 24 October
> International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists – 2 November
> World Television Day – 21 November
> Human Rights Day – 10 December

The **anniversary of the inaugural Global Conference for Media Freedom** (in effect, the MFC's "birthday") is on 9 July. The MFC was founded in 2019.

Also consider **relevant days in the national context**, as well as dates of **elections**.