World's Press Calls on President Trump to Stop Targeting Media

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International media leaders have signalled their deep concern with the US administration's persistent attacks on the press by calling on US President Donald Trump to halt his 'fake news' accusations and to ensure White House briefings remain accessible to all media. A letter, sent to the US administration, firmly rejects President Trump's repeated accusation that media is the 'enemy of the American People', and calls on his administration to build a better professional relationship with the media.

Over 40 editors in chief, CEOs and publishers representing media from around the world have signed a letter addressed to President Trump

outlining how his regular labelling of mainstream news outlets as 'fake news' as well as the exclusion of critical media outlets from a recent White House press briefing signalled a worrying decline in accountability for his administration.

"It is deeply unhelpful to see the President of the United States of America fuelling antagonism towards news outlets by labelling them – misleadingly - as 'fake news'," the letter to President Trump said. "We fear that the overall climate for media freedom currently being fostered by your presidency seriously jeopardises the on-going ability of a free press to hold power to account in the United States."

The letter, sent to the US administration on behalf of the Executive Committee, World Editors Forum and Media Freedom boards of the Paris-based World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), highlighted the damage the president's comments – regularly made using the social media platform Twitter – are having on an industry attempting to respond to the phenomenon of disinformation and 'fake news'.

Signalling growing concern from among the international press community, the letter highlighted the United States' historic relationship with a free press to underline how the president's actions since coming to office risk inspiring leaders in countries with weaker press freedom safeguards to repress or stifle essential freedoms. The letter also firmly rejected President Trump's repeated accusation that media is the 'enemy of the American People'.

"At a time when journalists and news media are being increasingly targeted for violent reprisal (and, in too many cases, often deadly retribution as a result of the work they do), the tone of your comment is highly inflammatory," said the letter. "In a deeply divided America, a country facing many challenges on numerous fronts, the need for a vocal and critical press to act as the watchdog over essential freedoms on behalf of society seems more urgent than ever."

WAN-IFRA urged the president to "welcome and encourage the kind of rigorous self-criticism a free media upholds as a means of ensuring the highest attainable standards of governance," calling for a meeting between his administration and

representatives from the global media to discuss rebuilding a better relationship.

Read the full letter here: http://www.wan-ifra.org/node/170915/

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