

U.S. Embassy Oslo
PO Box 4075 AMB
0244 Oslo

Oslo, 8 January 2021

The Norwegian Union of Journalists, the Association of Norwegian Editors and the Norwegian Press Association have adopted this statement in connection with Wednesday's attacks on representatives and journalists in the United States:

Trust in the media is trust in democracy

In the recent days and months, we have been able to see in practice how attacks on journalists in one of the world's largest democracies undermine and endanger democracy itself.

The world has seen how easily a head of state can manipulate his supporters if he previously has done a job undermining the trust in the country's media. People will have trouble trusting facts and it becomes difficult to separate truth from lies. In this way, heads of state can create dangerous divisions, dissatisfaction, and insecurity. In addition, the lives of journalists are endangered.

When the US Congress building was stormed by Trump supporters as the election result was to be confirmed, the journalists outside were attacked, while the journalists inside the building had to be evacuated instead of staying and reporting on what happened. The police considered them particularly vulnerable. The media hatred coming from Trump supporters was planted during the last four years by the president himself.

The attacks on journalists from people in power - whether by words or by abuse of power – is at the same time attacks on democracy. Here in Europe as well, we have observed a growing contempt for media. Journalists have been assaulted, even killed, just because they do their job. This has happened after journalists have been subjected to hate-speech by political leaders - in Russia, Malta, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, among others.

When authorities do not tolerate media's critical scrutiny and respond by undermining the public's trust in journalists, they create a dangerous situation. Everything that has happened in the United States, and here and the rest of the world over the past year has shown the importance of mutual respect and understanding of the roles of those who govern a country, and the media monitoring the decision makers. Even though the authorities and the media should look at each other with a critical eye, it is in everyone's interest that the public trusts the editor-controlled media. All leaders and politicians of democracies should recognize that freedom of expression and press freedom is pillars of democracy.

We have a hope that politicians and leaders - both near us and globally - who have praised the president of the United States for the contempt he has shown media and journalists - have taken notice of what such contempt can lead to. Trust in the serious media is closely linked to trust in democracy and all the democratic institutions - such as electoral and judicial systems and legislative assemblies.

Our other hope is that the US authorities in the future will do their utmost to help recreate good working conditions for the important journalism for which the American media, rightly, has garnered worldwide recognition. The prerequisite for the media to be able to play its crucial democratic role is that journalists and editors can safely perform their role - without putting their own lives and health at risk.

Sincerely,



Elin Floberghagen
General Secretary
Norwegian Press Association



Hanna Relling Berg
Chair of the board
Association of Norwegian Editors



Hege Iren Frantzen
President
Norwegian Union of Journalists