

**Special World Press Freedom Day Message**  
**H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**  
**World Press Freedom Day**  
**May 3, 2012**

Fellow Liberians:

Today, May 3, is World Press Freedom Day. On the occasion of this worthy celebration, I congratulate all journalists here in Liberia, and around the world. The world press, and indeed, all Liberian journalists ought to celebrate this day with pride.

As you celebrate, let me join my voice to the many who have condemned the humiliation, intimidation and repression being meted out to journalists in the performance of their sacred watchdog duties in other parts of the world.

While we have some ways to go – and I renew the pledge of this administration to continue to do what is required of us – I am, however, pleased by what has been achieved so far in our desire to expand the space for a freer press and the advance of rights, freedoms and civil liberties in Liberia.

We have passed the Freedom of Information Law. Very soon, we will name an Information Commissioner whose job will be to assist us to implement this law. We expect that the Commissioner will show respect for the spirit and intent of the law, and, at the same time, demonstrate an appreciable understanding of where our country has come from; where we are today; and, importantly, where we hope to be tomorrow.

Lately, also, I have given consent to the relevant functionaries to prepare for Liberia's accession to "The Table Mountain Declaration". This Declaration seeks to adjust the statutes under which journalists may be prosecuted in court by decriminalizing those statutes.

All of these, and more, we will continue to do to advance the cause of a free press and a more expressive society. I imagine that our signature contribution to this cause, for which some have even criticized us, has been demonstrated in our exceptional tolerance for free speech in the country.

However, we must never forget that freedom is not absolute. Freedom comes with responsibility. Here, therefore, I must express my concern that some members of the Liberian media have not conducted themselves well in line with the ethical standards of the profession.

In protecting this freedom now and in the future, the Liberian press must do more to regulate itself. The Press Union of Liberia has a particular responsibility in this regards. This is necessary because history has shown that where gaps exist between freedom and responsibility – where we fail to show due regard for the responsibility that comes with the freedoms we enjoy – such failures are compensated for at the expense of freedom itself.

Happy celebration of World Press Freedom Day!