



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**World Press Freedom Day 2018
Message from the Honourable Minister of Public Administration and
Communications
Marlene Mc Donald M.P.**

I am happy to join with members of the local media fraternity, media organizations and the rest of the world in commemorating the 25th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day 2018, with the theme “**Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law**”.

This year’s theme, according to UNESCO, was chosen to cover issues of media and the transparency of the political process, the independence and media literacy of the judicial system, and the accountability of state institutions towards the public. The day will also examine the challenges facing press freedom online.

Freedom of the press is pivotal to participatory democracy in our country, ensuring our citizens continue to contribute in the democratic process. You cannot have a free press without the right of the citizen to free speech.

With the exponential growth of social media, our local media fraternity and indeed media organizations worldwide enjoys unrivalled access to the citizenry. Gone are the days of the so called ‘silent masses’. However, with great freedom comes an even greater responsibility. Our media houses must strive to continue to maintain their high level of responsible, balanced and accurate reporting.

I must also note the preponderance of “fake news” with possible damaging emotional effects on those affected by these inaccurate reports. New emerging

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Tel: (868) 625-6724 Ext 2301/ 2083 Fax: (868) 623-8636

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technology empowers each citizen to be his or her own reporter which requires us to bear the same duty and responsibility as would a traditional media house to ensure that when we exercise free speech, we do so in the same responsible and balanced manner that our media houses do. The advent of citizen journalism means everyone now has a stake in the news we consume. This therefore means we all owe a duty of care to our audiences to fact-check the veracity and accuracy of the information we share.

As we consider the many disruptions to the way we curate, consume and distribute news, I am guided by Thomas Jefferson who said “The people are the only censors of their governors: and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers... The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right.”

On World Press Freedom Day 2018, let us recommit to being open and informed!

As the Minister with responsibility for Communications I am giving you the commitment that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago supports press freedom and will continue to ensure there is an enabling environment that allows the media to do its job unhindered and unfettered.

Happy World Press Freedom Day 2018!

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For further information, please contact Sharon Farrell, Senior Corporate
Communications Officer, 625-4724 ext. 2072, 384-3752 or email:
farrells@mpa.gov.tt

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