



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT:

THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2025

VENUE: Uganda Media Centre

DATE: 28 April 2025

The Uganda Media Sector Working Group (UMSWG) joins the world in commemorating World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2025 at a time of both reflection and renewal.

First, we pay tribute to His Holiness Pope Francis. He leaves behind a profound legacy of compassion, humility, and fearless advocacy for human dignity. Throughout his life, Pope Francis championed the rights of every human being — urging the world to build societies rooted in mercy, justice, and inclusion.

As we honor his memory, we are reminded that the true measure of progress lies in how we uphold the dignity of all people, regardless of who they are. The best way to continue his legacy is by standing against discrimination, fostering unity, and ensuring that every voice — especially the most vulnerable — is heard and protected. Press freedom is a vital part of this mission. It is a fundamental human right, the lifeblood of democracy, and the guardian of human dignity.

The World Press Freedom Day calls upon governments, civil society, the media, and citizens alike to recommit to safeguarding a free and independent journalism. This Day reminds us that a strong press strengthens accountability and drives inclusive development.

In Uganda, UMSWG brings together diverse actors to mark this important day. State and non-state partners stand side-by-side in reaffirming their commitment to a vibrant, resilient media sector. Key partners include the Uganda Human Rights Commission, Uganda Communications Commission, Media Council of Uganda, African Centre for Media Excellence, Uganda Editors' Guild, Media Focus on Africa, Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda, Media Challenge Initiative, Uganda Media Women's Association, and the National Association of Broadcasters.

This year's celebrations stretch across a full World Press Freedom Week. Activities begin today, April 28, and will include debates, dialogues, and a National Symposium at Makerere University on May 6.

The international theme is: *“Reporting in the Brave New World – The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media.”* It focuses on the opportunities and risks posed by new technologies to journalism and democratic governance. Artificial intelligence is reshaping how news is produced, shared, and trusted. It affects media viability, journalist safety, electoral transparency, and the future of public discourse.

UMSWG has also adopted a national theme: *“Defending Truth in the Age of Polarization and Distrust.”* This theme reflects the growing challenges facing journalism in Uganda today.

Misinformation, disinformation, and growing distrust in professional media pose real threats to press freedom. Political, ideological, and social divisions are making independent journalism harder, but more important than ever.

The environment for media work has become more complex. Journalists face increasing pressures – financial, legal, and social – as they pursue truth and accountability.

Uganda’s media sector also faces evolving risks both online and offline. Instances of harassment, undue restrictions, and digital threats have impacted the ability of journalists to sometimes report freely. It is essential that all stakeholders work to ensure a safe and enabling environment for media workers.

The upcoming 2026 elections heighten the urgency of protecting press freedom. During electoral periods, the media’s role in providing credible information and fostering informed participation is critical. The media must never be targeted for doing its work. All journalists deserve protection, dignity, and unfettered access to information spaces. Safety, dignity, and access must be guaranteed for journalists without fear or favor.

Recent events during by-elections highlight the urgent need to safeguard media freedoms through vigilance and open dialogue. Protecting journalists from intimidation is essential to upholding the credibility, transparency, and integrity of Uganda’s democratic processes.

A free, independent, and professional press is the fourth pillar of democracy. It strengthens transparency, protects human rights, and supports inclusive national development. We therefore call upon all actors – state and non-state alike – to renew their shared commitment to safeguarding media freedom, particularly through:

- Addressing the impact of misinformation and polarization by strengthening public trust in journalism.
- Promoting financial sustainability to shield editorial independence from external pressures.

- Strengthening legal protections for journalists and ensuring transparent, fair, and independent media regulation.
- Guarding against any form of media capture such as economic coercion, editorial interference, and manipulation of information ecosystems.
- Championing ethical journalism and building public media literacy to distinguish facts from falsehoods.

World Press Freedom Day is also a time to honor journalists who, often at great personal sacrifice, keep the public informed. In 2024, the Uganda Media Sector Working Group recognized outstanding contributions to media freedom and excellence. Today, we recommit to defending the rights of journalists. We recommit to protecting the vital role of a free press in advancing democracy, human rights, and development for all Ugandans.

The detailed schedule of activities is outlined in the accompanying table.

	Activity	Details	Timeline
1.	Media and Publicity Campaign	Launch a social media campaign using #DefendTheTruthUg, including a TikTok challenge, cartoons, and myth-busting posts. Run radio and TV shows, publish op-eds, joint editorials, and share content aligned with the national WPFDD themes.	28 April - 9 May 2025
2.	Joint Press Conference	UMSWG will hold a press conference to issue a joint statement and conduct media interviews.	29 April 2025
3.	Inter-University Debate on Press Freedom	Organize a university debate competition on press freedom, media ethics, and journalism's role in democracy.	2 May 2025
4.	Press Conference on the Uganda National Press Index	Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-U) will release the annual Press Index Report.	2 May 2025
5.	World Press Freedom Day Procession and Dialogue	Hold a public procession in key areas of the city to raise awareness, followed by a dialogue led by UNESCO and the Uganda Journalists Association.	2 May

	Activity	Details	Timeline
6.	High-Level Stakeholder Symposium	Host a roundtable discussion with government officials, media regulators, journalists, and civil society to discuss challenges and opportunities for press freedom.	6 May 2025
7.	Journalist Trainings	Conduct three parallel trainings for journalists, content creators, and students on: (1) physical safety, (2) digital security, and (3) fact-checking skills.	6 May 2025
8.	Regional and Local Events	Local partners will organize additional events across various regions to amplify the WPFD celebrations.	April/May 2025 (Dates TBC)