

PRESS RELEASE

Press Freedom Day 2023

3rd May 2023

The need for a robust, credible and highly impactful media could not be more pronounced than during this time of transition, and heightened citizen interest in political, economic and social issues.

This need is more pronounced this year, as the nation heads to the polls amid tensions from the main players in the country's political structures, and growing calls for sustainable livelihoods.

Against that backdrop, the Campaign for Free Expression, a non-partisan, non-profit organisation that defends and promotes free expression for all across southern Africa, in collaboration with the Eswatini National Association of Journalists (ENAJ) jointly hosted an event commemorating Press Freedom Day, on Wednesday 3rd May, 2023.

The event was held at eMafini Country Lodge in Mbabane.

The successful event was attended by British High Commissioner Simon Boyden, MP Macford Sibandze, Laila Nazarali, the Senior Human Rights Adviser in the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, and Prof Anton Harber, the Executive Director of the Campaign for Free Expression, among others.

"Whichever side you are on in the debate over eSwatini's future, we can all agree on one essential thing: this debate cannot take place without a free, critical and independent media. We know that a critical media can be difficult, intrusive and even irritating, particularly for those in power," said Prof. Harber.

"But without it, there can be no debate about the future, there can be no citizen participation in that debate, no informed and empowered citizenry and no free elections. And the economy cannot thrive without a free flow of the information that drives it. We have to work hard to ensure that media is independent and is able to be critical, honest and outspoken. We need to protect journalists and their right to speak out and tell us the hard truths, to confront reality, however difficult."

Nazarali said: "For this **#WorldPressFreedomDay**, we are encouraging everyone to publish a single message: 'Everything is alright.' Because if everything is alright in the news, then something is wrong with journalism. And when journalism is compromised, we cannot protect human rights."

She added: "The third of May acts as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom and is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Just as importantly, World Press

Freedom Day is a day of support for media which are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who lost their lives in the pursuit of a story.”

Celebrated every 3rd of May, this year’s theme for the Day will be “Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights”, signifying the enabling element of freedom of expression to enjoy and protect all other human rights.

The event also put ethical standards at the heart of media operations and encourage journalists and media workers to renew their commitment to ethical, and professional standards. Journalists were also engaged on a pledge to subscribe to existing ethical guidelines for election reporting in Eswatini.

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