



## PRESS STATEMENT

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### WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY: UN IN AFGHANISTAN URGES PROTECTION OF MEDIA FREEDOMS

**KABUL** - On World Press Freedom Day, the United Nations in Afghanistan expresses its solidarity with the country's media sector, where challenges including *de facto* authority restrictions and economic constraints are threatening public access to essential information.

"World Press Freedom Day stands as a crucial reminder of the essential role journalists and media play in Afghanistan. They are the foundation of an informed and vibrant society, and their role must be protected," said Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan.

"A diverse and healthy media sector is indispensable in ensuring transparency, public trust, and good governance. But in Afghanistan we are seeing the steady erosion of a free and independent media," said Otunbayeva.

Afghanistan's media sector has been hit by faced a sharp decline in revenue linked to the country's economic crisis, which has forced numerous outlets to close. In addition, significant restrictions have been enforced by Afghanistan's *de facto* authorities, with media professionals facing threats, arrests and detention, and torture and ill-treatment, with women journalists being especially hard hit by disproportionate risks and barriers.

Afghanistan is also not immune to the challenges brought by the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the theme for 2025's World Press Freedom Day commemorations.

"AI presents significant risks: it can be misused to reproduce misinformation, spread disinformation, amplify hate speech, enable new forms of censorship and surveillance of journalists and citizens, creating a chilling effect on freedom of expression," said UNESCO Representative in Afghanistan, Patricia McPhillips.

"This means national and international cooperation is all the more essential," said McPhillips

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