



Council of Europe launches online discussion forum on freedom of speech in times of crisis

Strasbourg, 29.04.2008 - To mark **World Press Freedom Day** on 3 May, the Council of Europe is today launching an online discussion forum on media freedom in times of crisis.

The forum seeks to promote debate and analysis among journalists - but also anyone concerned about freedom of expression – on how tighter security measures enforced by governments during wars, terrorist threats or political instability could affect the way journalists access information and make their reports.

Promoting freedom of speech is a key aim of the Council of Europe and this initiative reflects the Council's concern with threats to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists in crisis situations.

Media professionals are invited to contribute their opinions and personal experiences to create an ongoing debate and analysis of these issues, which are critical for the important social role they play.

Contributions may be made at <http://mediafreedom.cws.coe.int>.

Initially journalists may share their opinions on how governments sometimes limit their freedom of movement - by arguing for the need to guarantee their safety - or their access to information, or requesting journalists to reveal their sources. They can also publish their views on whether or not information that may be considered offensive for religious groups should be sanctioned, as well as any other topics they may wish to raise.

According to Reporters without Borders, at least 86 journalists were killed around the world in 2007, most covering wars. It is the highest figure since 1994, when 103 journalists were killed.

In 2005 the Council of Europe created a specific group of experts to address freedom of speech in crisis situations. The Council has adopted three specific documents on this issue:

- [Declaration on freedom of expression and information in the media in the context of the fight against terrorism](#)
- [Guidelines on protecting freedom of expression and information in times of crisis](#)
- [Declaration on the protection and promotion of investigative journalism](#).