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DANIEL WICKHAM

Monday 12 January 2015

13

The Paris march was an emotional display, but it was full of hypocrisy on press freedom

Here are the countries whose show of support for press freedom at the weekend was at odds with their records at home

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World leaders assembled in Paris in support of press freedom yesterday, following the brutal murder of 12 people at the offices of French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

The rally was meant to show solidarity with the victims of the attack and defiance against those who wish to curtail free expression. However, many of the countries represented have poor records when it comes to press freedom at home.

SAUDI ARABIA

On the Friday before the rally, Saudi Arabia had blogger Raif Badawi publicly flogged for setting up a liberal website which they deemed to be insulting to Islam. He is currently serving a ten year prison sentence, along with countless other Saudi activists and dissidents.

BAHRAIN

Bahrain imprisons the second highest number of journalists in the



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world per capita, and has also been accused of torturing France 24 correspondent Nazeera Saeed for covering 2011's pro-democracy demonstrations.

EGYPT

Sixteen journalists are currently imprisoned in Egypt for doing their job, including the Al Jazeera trio Peter Greste, Baher Mohamed and Mohamed Fahmy, and photojournalist Mahmoud 'Shawkan' Abou Zied.

TURKEY

Turkey was the top jailer of journalists in the world in 2013. Today, it still holds seven in prison, and in December police detained a further 23 people following raids on media outlets linked to opposition cleric Fethullah Gülen.

RUSSIA

Russia has jailed journalists and bloggers for such crimes as "insulting a government servant" and "insulting a judge." Its government has also been heavily criticised for press censorship and blocking independent media websites.

ISRAEL

According to Reporters Without Borders, Israeli forces killed up to six journalists during the war in Gaza over the summer. They have also been accused by Human Rights Watch of "targeting civilians" in a string of attacks on media facilities two years ago. The Foreign Press Association also alleges that the Israeli army has been "deliberately targeting" journalists covering protests in the West Bank.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

There are four bloggers currently imprisoned in the United Arab Emirates: Osama al-Najjar, Obaid Yousef al-Zaabi, Saleh Mohammed al-Dhufairi, and Khalifa al-Nuami. In 2013, the UAE also held a journalist incommunicado and without charge for a month over alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood.

[In pictures: Charlie Hebdo Demonstration, Paris](#)

QATAR

Qatari poet Muhammad ibn al-Dheeb al-Ajami was sentenced to life in prison in November 2012 for publicly reciting the Jasmine Poem, which praised the uprising in Tunisia against president Ben Ali.

PALESTINE

Courts in the occupied West Bank sentenced two Palestinians to jail for insulting president Mahmoud Abbas in 2013, including journalist Mamdouh Hamamreh who shared a satirical photo of Abbas on Facebook.

ALGERIA

Algeria has detained journalist Abdessami Abdelhai without trial for the last 17 months. In November he began a hunger strike to protest his imprisonment.

TUNISIA

In December a military court in Tunisia jailed blogger Yassine Ayari for three years on charges of "defaming the army" in a series of



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Facebook posts. Amnesty International have since called for his “immediate release.”

UNITED STATES

In Ferguson, police arrested Washington Post reporter Wesley Lowery after slamming him against a soda machine in a McDonald’s, while other journalists have also been detained and threatened during the unrest.

GREECE

Riot police in Greece injured photographer Tatiana Bolari at a protest in June last year, after beating her legs and back with riot shields. Another journalist, Marios Lolos, was also beaten by the authorities. Reporters Without Borders described their behaviour as “intolerable.”

UNITED KINGDOM

In 2013, Reporters Without Borders accused the British authorities of “an extremely grave violation of freedom of information” after they forced The Guardian to destroy computer hard drives containing documents provided by Edward Snowden.

POLAND

Police arrested two journalists while they were covering a protest in November last year. They did not inform their families for more than 24 hours and allegedly prevented one of the detained reporters from having access to a lawyer. Reporters Without Borders condemned their arrest.

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OLD



OZPETEGG 22 hours ago

Netanyahu looks like he is wearing 100 kgs of body armor, he should have put a bag over his head as well to hide that ridiculous comb-over.

REPLY

+ | 0 | -

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FREE_SPEECH 1 days ago

Why didn't the Independent republish Mohammed cartoons in the wake of Charlie Hebdo massacre like so many other newspapers in Europe? It would have been the most powerful rejection of the censorship the Muslim terrorists are seeking to impose on Europe. But it would have required courage.

REPLY

+ | 2 | -



PHILIP 1 days ago

This would not be a rejection of censorship but an insult to what others consider holy. Freedom of the press means speaking the truth- and not insulting people! Your proposal is childish as it has nothing to do with freedom of the press.

REPLY

+ | 0 | -



CONTRARIAN VIEWPOINT 17 hours ago

I think the gross hypocrisy highlighted in this article is correct, but I don't go along with the line spouted by almost every politician and much of the media, that these attacks in Paris were specifically about an attempt to stifle our traditional freedoms.

The Paris attacks were retribution in the ongoing and hugely destructive 'war on terror' - CH were certainly targeted, but not merely because they published a cartoon of the prophet, but by their actions(which I fully support their right to do) they put themselves in the spotlight. The attack on the Jewish kosher butchers, doesn't fit the 'freedom of speech' narrative, in any way; the shop was selected because it was Jewish and this brings us to the chief reason for these attacks. Israel is a central player in the 'war on terror'; this disastrous, ideological and totally unjustified, more than a decade long campaign, waged by the west, against, seemingly a new and different villain, every week, who unfortunately all appear to Muslim. Those who fail to acknowledge the historical and world context of these barbaric murders are, either burying their heads in the sand, or attempting to deflect attention away from the enormous culpability western governments bear for pursuing long term policies, which these Paris attacks stem from. Hundreds and thousands of overwhelmingly peaceful, unarmed and innocent Muslim men, women and children had died in recent years, as a direct result of the 'war on terror' and these attacks are far more about revenge or reprisal, for the outrage and injustice, many Muslims feel. Indeed, some in Islam may want to challenge our traditional western liberal values, but that is not chiefly what the Paris atrocities were about.

REPLY

+ | 1 | -



WDC2301 2 days ago

Hypocrisy is thy middle name.

If this Government believed in freedom of speech and freedom in the written word then let them produce the Chilcot Report forthwith.

REPLY

+ | 2 | -



TOM OCTOPUS 2.0 16 hours ago

"The written word"?

Why does that not sit well with me...

REPLY

+ | 0 | -



DUBLINDAVE 2 days ago

All true, but worse than that, press freedom in France may extend to blasphemy, but there are many other restrictions — say on holocaust denial (not that I myself am a

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denier, but I doubt whether it is for elected bodies to determine historical truth). French governments have (twice) sought to criminalise denial of the Armenian genocide (to curry electoral favour with Armenians). The magazine Closer has got into trouble for reporting things which are true, but inconvenient, like Presidential visits to Ms Gayet. There was an attempt to hush up a report a prominent Front National member is gay... It seems every sensibility is protected... except that of the Muslims!

REPLY

+ | -2 | -



ARCHIEBALD AUCHENLECH 2 days ago

Hang on. These were journalists butchered by a terrorist organization while at work in the middle of Paris in the land of Liberty fraternity etc and very far from any war / combat / violent demo zone .All the above examples (free world examples not Turkey etc) happened in combat / violent situations (journalists are not sacrosanct in war zones, they are there to get a story and in every war that had ever been in many cases they become part of the story . Journalists who cover wars 100 % know the risks they face) To hammer home the point during D Day 76, 000 French civilians were killed (36000+-by Allied bombing !) whiles scores of jounarlists were killed as well (ie Robert Capa) What should we do with this info. Why not as the above article suggest equate the atrocities of Nazi Germany to " atrocities " (collateral civilian casualties including the deaths of journalists) committed by Allied Forces in combat and in the attempt to destroy Nazi Germany. Please think carefully next time before you start going down this disgusting road.

REPLY

+ | 1 | -



BRUCE REYNOLDS 2 days ago

Hang on...Snowden was a traitor, and the hard drives contained information that could have compromised our security.

But no mention of Leveson...?

REPLY

+ | -3 | -



RETARIUS 2 days ago

No traitor....a true hero is Mr Snowden.

REPLY

+ | 5 | -



RUCKINGGRAY 2 days ago

Arrest, arrest, arrest, lashings, arrest, killed, arrest, arrest...

United Kingdom - Destroyed hard drives with national security information being smuggled out of the country.

Little bit of a stretch in just one case there

REPLY

+ | 3 | -



TOM OCTOPUS 2.0 2 days ago

It's still a bit rich of the UK to laud the principles of the freedom of speech. Added to that Cameron's hasty and ill-timed decision to renew his plans for a Snoopers' Charter - Which if passed, will (almost) inevitably lead to people being arrested for saying too much of the wrong thing..

REPLY

+ | 2 | -



BIG PHILL 2 days ago

The UK also arrested people in the case mentioned... And it wasn't national security information, it was information about them spying on us!

REPLY

+ | -1 | -

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