



October 19, 2018

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Society of Professional Journalists, the nation's largest and most broad-based journalism organization, to express our deep concern over the disappearance of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, as well as your ongoing rhetoric attacking press freedom, a crucial pillar of our democracy.

While our organization takes no political party stance, like all free speech groups we are partisan on the issue of press freedom and the other rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which you have sworn to uphold.

Today, we implore you to lay aside political rhetoric and stand up for press freedom worldwide. As President of the United States, a position long viewed as the leader of the free world, we urge you to insist on a full and transparent independent investigation into the disappearance and alleged extrajudicial killing of Mr. Khashoggi. That would send a strong message to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — where journalists critical of the royal family have been jailed — that attacking, jailing and murdering journalists is an affront to the people's right to know and the people's right to participate in the democratic process.

That message, Mr. President, must be followed by a sincere commitment on your part to condemn those who would seek to weaken our democracy by silencing a free press. We were extremely disappointed by your apparent praise of Congressman Greg Gianforte's assault on a reporter who asked him a question — behavior for which the congressman himself has publicly apologized. Assaulting or otherwise threatening a journalist is not macho behavior to be commended at a campaign stop. It signals a cynical disregard for the safety of journalists to repressive political leaders around the world.

Now it is time to take a stand for global press freedom. We expect you as our President to remind Saudi Arabia that there are grave consequences for an ally of the United States if it takes, as alleged, the unconscionable step of silencing a journalist by premeditated ambush, torture and murder.

Respectfully,

J. Alex Tarquinio
President
Society of Professional Journalists