



# *World Press Freedom Day*

*By: Eden Pinhas*

**The Israeli Model United Nations Association**

*Dedicated to the Next Generation of Diplomatic Leadership*

## World Press Freedom Day

During the civil war, November 19, 1868, U.S president Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech in which he defined democracy as - "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth." As the first amendment of the United State of America taught us, freedom of speech is a vital and crucial aspect of democracy. To be precise it is the backbone of an independent democracy. Freedom of speech allows reporters and media to inform, criticize, and stimulate debate, therefore allowing supervision over the government, protection over the people, and a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves.

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S.G. Tallentyreb once said, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." On May 3rd of each year, we celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom. By doing so, we raise awareness regarding freedom of the press around the world, and defend the media from attacks on their independence. This day also give us the opportunity to pay our tributes to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. Today serves as an occasion to inform and remind citizens about the violations of press freedom in dozens of countries around the world. The examples that have been accumulated over the years are endless, holding among them stories on publications that are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors, and publishers are being harassed, attacked, detained, and even murdered.



I would like to take this grand opportunity and expose you to different examples of such stories that have taken place over the years. These stories are of men and women who glorified their professional vision, life and, livelihood in the name of journalism and freedom of speech.

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I would start with one out of many examples of the events that have taken place both in Iraq and Syria in the early 2000s'. Where according to 'Reporters Without Borders' article (2013), ISIS movement took over those parts of the middle east- "This Jihadi group uses all means possible to further its goal of controlling news and information, systematically targeting journalists and media that do not share its ideology. Intimidation, abduction, torture, and murder – ISIS rules nothing out in order to impose a reign of terror." As part of their awful terrorist actions, they have taken the lives of hundreds of journalists and reporters from around the world, in the name of their job and country.

Steven Joel Sotloff was an American-Israeli journalist, one of the many victims that have been fallen in the name of journalism. He was kidnapped in Aleppo, Syria, and held captive by militants from The Islamic State of Iraq. His abduction attracted a massive response and gathered a petition calling for President Obama to save Sotloff's life. The petition attracted thousands of signatures within days. Unfortunately, Sotloff could not be saved. We shall remember him for his bravery and commitment to his profession.



Another important story, which I was greatly inspired by and would therefore like to share it with you, in the name of all the brave women journalists out there, is the inspiring story of the British-American reporter Marie Colvin. Marie worked as a foreign affairs correspondent for the British newspaper 'The Sunset Times', from 1985 until her death. In February 2012, Colvin crossed into Syria, ignoring the Syrian government's attempts to prevent foreign journalists from entering Syria to cover the Syrian Civil War without permission. Colvin was stationed in the western Baba Amr district of the city of Homs, and made her last broadcast on the evening of February 21st, via satellite phone. She described "merciless" shelling and sniper attacks against civilian buildings and people on the streets of Homs by Syrian forces, describing the attacks as the worst conflict she had ever experienced. Marie Colvin died in February 2012 in Homs, Syria, alongside French photographer Remi Ochlik, when the building they were in was shelled.

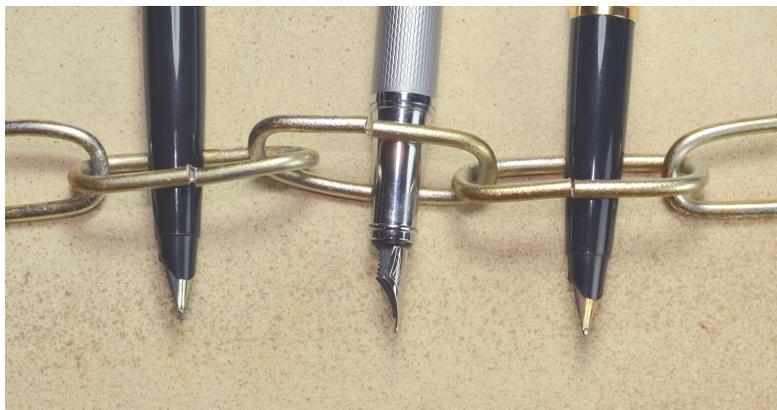


Marie's sister Cathleen Colvin has brought a claim to a federal district court in the US stating her death was "an extrajudicial killing" and asking for compensation from the Syrian government. In 2019 Judge Amy Berman Jackson of the US District Court in Washington DC wrote: "She was specifically targeted because of her profession, to silence those reporting on the growing opposition movement in the country." Therefore, accusing the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad as for the extrajudicial killing of the Sunday Times war correspondent Marie Colvin, the US court ordered to pay \$300m in punitive damages. (continue on next page)



Her verdict should be celebrated by every person to whom freedom of speech is important. At a time when journalists are frequently vilified and threatened, it acknowledges the significant role we play in exposing war crimes and injustice.

One of the cornerstones of our democracy is a free and independent press. It holds our government accountable and allows us to actively participate in our democracy. We must protect the press and society's freedom of speech, as it is one of our most fundamental right as human beings.



Let us acknowledge and honor today for the countless souls that have risked their lives so the truth would be set free. For the men and women who are putting their hearts and souls into their jobs, allowing the voice of those who cannot be heard to be valued and counted. In this modern era, a large number of local, and even national, newspapers are experiencing great dill of crises that have been intensifying for more than a decade.

Let us all together value their hard work and continue to support their important profession that allows us to keep exercising our right for freedom, criticism, and truth above all.





*MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR*  
*For World Press Freedom Day*

**"Life's true goal is to create yourself a world where liberty, honor, and peace are your guiding values. Then you manifest them into reality with the different actions you take every day."**

- Eden Pinhas -

*MEET THE AUTHOR*  
*Eden Pinhas*

Eden Pinhas, 23, from Haifa, is currently a first year B.A student of Political Science and Communication at the University of Haifa. As a kid she was always intrigued by different cultures and languages, during high school, she had the privilege to volunteer for the Jewish Agency of Israel where she traveled abroad to Montreal, Canada. This program allowed her the opportunity to speak about the importance of intercultural connections and staying connected in this modern world. Eden finds that her studies are allowing her to learn and expand her knowledge in different fields such as marketing, international relations, and the impact it has on an evolving connected world.

This year, Eden became a member of the Model United Nations delegation of the University of Haifa. She participated in the National 2020 IMUNA Conference on the topic of the Economic Exploitation of Women and Girls.

As a delegate, women's empowerment is a dear topic of hers therefore she strongly believes in the importance of creating equal work and life balance for all genders.

