



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

September 5, 2022

Dear Mr. Jolly:

Thank you for sharing this letter with me on behalf of news organizations and press freedom groups across Canada.

I would like to express, in no uncertain terms, that the ongoing online hate and harassment campaigns targeting journalists – and the profession of journalism as a whole – are unacceptable. More often than not these are specifically directed towards women, Indigenous peoples, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and journalists of colour. This has absolutely no place in Canada.

Our government strongly condemns these campaigns and the deeply troubling actions of the people behind them.

I agree with the statement in your letter that hate and threats towards journalists do indeed have a “chilling effect” on democracy. A free and independent press is the backbone of a strong democracy, and any attempts to undermine that need to be denounced by leaders across the board. All of us need to work together as we stand up against the actions of those few who spread abuse, division, and choose intimidation over respectful debate in our country.

On September 1st, the Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety, spoke with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police about the need to recognize and treat the pattern of hate and harassment targeting journalists, and other public figures, seriously and as a systemic issue. It was an occasion to further discuss the roots of the issue, while swiftly exploring various avenues to address it, both in the short and long run. Important questions surrounding the need to tackle bureaucratic red tape while receiving complaints, prevention, education, and the role of social media, were discussed. This also followed-up on a meeting between the Minister and some representatives from your organization, as well as other media organizations, during which he stressed the need to work together to address this issue.

Mr. Brent Jolly
National President
Canadian Association of Journalists

We are also discussing options through which the Federal Government can help ensure that the RCMP has the resources they need to tackle cyber and digital crime across the country. This includes providing them with additional funds needed to take on this specific problem.

Meanwhile, through the Digital Citizen Initiative and investments in Budget 2022, we have been working directly with people to provide them with the tools they need to distinguish facts from disinformation – in an online ecosystem inundated with the latter.

However, as your letter mentions, we need more ways to tackle this social harm. I appreciate the recommendations that you have made. As they fall under the portfolios of Minister Mendicino, the Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Quebec Lieutenant, by way of copy I am asking that they give them due consideration.

Please know that we will always continue to defend press freedom, and stand up for the right of journalists to do their critical work, including holding our government accountable, in the face of abuse and intimidation.

With my warmest regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Justin Trudeau', written in a cursive style.