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**Free Speech, Press Groups Call President’s Attacks on the Media a Threat to Democracy**

New York, NY, 3/2/2017- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) and the American Society of News Editors (ASNE), along with more than 80 other organizations committed to the First Amendment right of freedom of speech and the press, condemn efforts by the Trump administration to demonize the media and undermine its ability to inform the public about official actions and policies. In a joint statement released today, the groups stress that the administration’s attacks on the press pose a threat to American democracy.

The statement cites numerous attempts by the administration to penalize and intimidate the press for coverage the President dislikes, including refusing to answer questions from certain reporters, falsely charging the media with cover-ups and manipulation of news, and denying certain media outlets access to press briefings. Official designation of the media as “the opposition party” escalated when the President described the New York Times, CBS, CNN, ABC, and NBC News as “the enemy of the American people!”

The statement emphasizes that an independent and free press is the Constitution’s safeguard against tyranny. Its job is not to please the President but to report accurately on the actions of public officials so the public has the information to hold power accountable. Efforts to undermine the legitimacy or independence of the press, the statement reads, “betray the country’s most cherished values and undercut one of its most significant strengths.”

“The press plays an essential role in democracy, by serving as an independent watchdog on government conduct and as the main source of information for the public,” said NCAC’s Executive Director Joan Bertin. “The constitutional right to freedom of speech and to petition the government for a redress of grievances cannot be exercised in a meaningful way without access to information about what the government does in our name.”

“Given his actions and rhetoric during the campaign, the attacks on the press by President Trump should not be a surprise to anyone,” said Mizell Stewart III, president of the American Society of News Editors. “Every American should be concerned about this administration’s coordinated attempts to marginalize journalists and threaten the public’s right to know.”

[READ THE STATEMENT](http://ncac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Press-Freedom-Statement-2.28.17.pdf)

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