
AJK Observes Press Freedom Day with Renewed Resolve:



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MIRPUR (AJK), May 3 – Like other parts of the world, World Press Freedom Day 2026 was observed across Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday with renewed commitments to uphold freedom of expression and strengthen the safety and security of journalists worldwide.

The day was marked with strong appeals from media organizations, press clubs, and civil society

representatives urging international human rights bodies to ensure complete protection of press freedom, particularly in conflict-affected and disputed regions such as Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), where journalists continue to face severe restrictions, surveillance, and intimidation.

Participants said that press freedom remains under serious threat in several parts of the world, especially in conflict zones where journalists face risks without adequate protection, safety protocols, or timely provision of essential safety equipment, including protective gear for field reporting.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, major events were held in Mirpur and other districts under the coordination of journalist bodies including Kashmir Press Club Mirpur, Jammu Kashmir Free Media Association, and other local media organizations. The central ceremony included a rally and peaceful demonstration held outside the Kashmir Press Club Mirpur complex, attended by senior journalists, media workers, and representatives of various press organizations.

Speakers strongly condemned what they described as increasing restrictions, legal cases, and intimidation against journalists in IIOJK. They said such measures were aimed at silencing independent journalism and suppressing the voices of those reporting on ground realities in the region.

They stated that journalists in the disputed territory have faced repeated legal actions and administrative pressure for reporting on human rights conditions, covering families of victims, and documenting political developments. According to them, such practices violate international norms related to freedom of expression and media independence.

The participants urged the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and international media watchdogs to take immediate notice of the situation and intervene to ensure the protection of journalists. They also called for unrestricted access for international media and human rights organizations to report independently from the region.

Speakers emphasized that press freedom is a fundamental pillar of any democratic society and a key requirement for transparency, accountability, and informed public discourse. They said that without a free press, societies cannot progress or address injustices effectively.

The rally also highlighted that no international journalist or human rights observer is currently allowed unrestricted access to several sensitive areas of IIOJK, which they said limits global understanding of the situation on the ground. They stressed that this information gap contributes to further marginalization of affected populations.

Journalists participating in the event reiterated their commitment to continue raising their voices for freedom of expression and standing in solidarity with colleagues facing restrictions in conflict

zones worldwide.

Speakers also acknowledged challenges faced by journalists in Pakistan, including threats and pressures during field reporting, while noting that media in the country currently enjoys comparatively greater freedom than in previous restrictive eras.

The observance concluded with a collective pledge by media workers to continue highlighting issues of press freedom, journalist safety, and human rights violations, while urging the international community to ensure that press freedom is protected as a universal and inalienable right.