



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

CHRISTOPHER WARREN
President
AIDAN WHITE
General Secretary

4 January 2005

The Honourable Kofi Annan
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017 - USA

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Via email: sg@un.org and ecu@un.org

Dear Mr Annan,

The world community of journalists joins the grieving over the tragic loss of lives and devastation as a result of the Asian tsunami.

Journalists and media workers have not been immune from the tragedy and we already know that many of our friends and colleagues from the countries affected are dead or missing.

Many have had to confront the immensity of the tragedy in bringing news of the disaster to their local communities and to the world.

The International Federation of Journalists is the global voice of journalists, representing over 500,000 journalists in 130 organisations in 105 countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Somalia and Mauritius.

We have launched a global appeal among journalists' organisations to assist journalists and their families directly affected by the tsunami in those countries.

Many of our member organisations are actively involved in raising funds in their own countries for the general appeals.

Indeed, there can be no doubt that the media has played a critical role in alerting the world to the dimensions of the tragedy and to encouraging the genuine outpouring of support for aid organisations.

Unfortunately, there can equally be no doubt that in too many of the countries affected restrictions on the media and state interference in the media has limited the information available to the communities. Worse, in some cases it has seen wrong information spread.

We welcome the decision of the Indonesian Government to open up Aceh to both local and foreign journalists. This is an important step in the continuing democratisation of that country.

We also welcome the withdrawal of treason charges against four leading democracy activists in the Maldives.

However, it is not too much to say that the inability of journalists in some of the affected countries to simply do their job has cost lives -- whether it be through the lack of external journalistic scrutiny



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in Aceh, the continued repression in the Maldives or the interference in government run media in Sri Lanka.

As the world community moves to the needed reconstruction in the affected countries, it is essential that that reconstruction go hand in hand with the continued process of media reform.

That's why I am writing to you in advance of this week's Jakarta summit on aid to the affected areas to ask that you convey a simply message: a free media, independent public broadcasters and democratic societies are among the most significant safeguards – now and in the future.

In the reconstruction of the affected areas, we ask that you urge all countries to continue to build on the process of transparency and democracy.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Warren', is written in a cursive style.

Christopher Warren
President
International Federation of Journalists