



# Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

Unit 1, Upper Level, Elan Place, 137 Eastern Main Rd,

St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

T: 1 (868) 296-8009

E: [acmmail@gmail.com](mailto:acmmail@gmail.com)

W: [www.acmediaworkers.com](http://www.acmediaworkers.com)

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## Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago - World Press Freedom Day

As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, the Media Association points out that under the threat of job losses in the economic downturn, it is not only media workers who stand to lose.

Many media houses in developed countries have already cut staff or closed down as a result of the worldwide recession. The same has happened in this country, where a much smaller market supports a large number of print and electronic media houses.

But in that event, the loss would be felt not only by their staff, but also by the public, as closures would also reduce the number and diversity of opinions and issues covered by the local media. Those media owned by major conglomerates are the most likely to survive, but this may lead to the over-representation of corporate or political interests, an outcome which is not for the best in a developing democracy.

Cost-cutting efforts may also lead to misguided decisions when reducing staff numbers. In today's world, where a barrage of information is readily available from numerous sources, experienced journalists are needed more than ever to sift through the raw data and make sense of it for their viewers, listeners and readers.

The local media must also adapt to today's rapidly evolving technology and the changing needs and expectations of their consumers if they are to remain relevant and viable. This is not a matter for media workers alone, but also for managers and owners, who need to be aware of these changes and to provide the financial and managerial support they require.

Another challenge faced by media workers is that of dealing with politicians, the police and sometimes members of the public who may not understand the role of the media. In the past year there have been direct and indirect threats to the media from politicians who ought to know better.

But the freedom of the press is not only commemorated on a special day but enshrined in the Constitution, whose framers recognised the importance of a free press in discovering the facts and reporting even inconvenient truths.

For further information or a comment contact President, Marlan Hopkinson at 689-0848 or Vice President Judy Raymond at 685-0952.