

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Giroir nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, freedom of the press is a fundamental human right, a foundational pillar of democracy, and an indispensable check on authoritarian overreach. Over the past months, as we have collectively come to appreciate a new understanding of "essential workers," we have witnessed once again how essential the work journalists do is to maintaining our democracy. From Wuhan, China, to conflict zones in Venezuela, to cities and towns in the United States, journalists are risking their lives to report, investigate, and keep people informed on the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, responses to this global crisis have also reminds us that press freedom is under assault across the globe, including in the United States. Fearful of negative coverage of their capacity to protect their citizens and address a global health crisis, autocrats and other governmental figures around the world have focused their attention on concealing information. As journalists fight to advance truth and objectivity under dire circumstances, far too many governments have responded with verbal attacks and prison sentences. Today, we applaud the work and the courage of all those involved in bringing stories from around the world to our fingertips.

Amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries across the world from Algeria to Zimbabwe have imposed restrictions and threatened journalists for their work. As they do when credible, reliable, and timely information is an essential commodity, journalists have persisted.

In China, in an effort to educate his community and the world about its po-

tential threat, Chen Qiushi documented the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China, in dozens of videos online. On February 6, 2020, Chen's family and friends lost contact with him, and he is presumed to have been disappeared by the CCP.

In Niger, journalist Kaka Touda Mamne Goni reported on a suspected COVID-19 case, was arrested by police on March 5, 2020, and faces up to 3 years in prison on charges of "dissemination of data likely to disturb the public order."

In Venezuela, a group of masked police agents detained freelance journalist Darvinson Rojas on March 21, 2020, and interrogated Rojas about his reporting on COVID-19 cases in the state of Miranda. Rojas remains in detention.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred new restrictions and harassment, these stories of abuse and resilience are nothing new in the field of journalism. Since 1992, the Committee to Project Journalists has reported 1,369 journalists killed around the world, including at least 25 killed in 2019. Last year also represented the 14th year in a row that Freedom House has noted a global decline in press freedom. As of April 20, 2020, at least 299 journalists were imprisoned for their work worldwide.

Of course, the global decline in press freedom and access is not limited to foreign lands. In the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the struggle of local news organizations to stay afloat. The shuttering of local print publications has left rural populations and marginalized communities without critical sources of information and has chipped away at the foundation of the U.S. free press.

From the White House, President Trump continues to target journalists and the media, referring to journalism as "an evil propaganda machine" and the free press as the "enemy of the people." Most recently and severely, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration restricted most on-the-record access to administration officials and reportedly instructed all officials, including scientific and medical experts, to have public statements cleared through Vice President PENCE.

This episode is unfortunately the latest in an ongoing saga. Countries around the world have followed President Trump's lead in attacking journalism as "fake news." Between January 2017 and May 2019, at least 26 countries have enacted or introduced laws restricting access and media in the name of "fake news." In attacking the media, President Trump not only undermines the hard-hitting work journalists in the United States do to hold our leaders accountable and keep the public informed, but provides foreign leaders with the permission and vocabulary to do the same.

In spite of the unprecedented assault on the free press, journalists continue to take significant risks in the pursuit

of truth and transparency. In January 2020, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists revealed how Isabel dos Santos amassed one of Africa's largest fortunes in Angola, one of the world's poorest countries, through embezzlement and corruption using a network of companies and subsidiaries. In May 2019, Caixin journalists reported on business and government actions that resulted in the 2019 Jiangsu Tianjiayi Chemical Plant explosion in China that killed 78 people and injured over 600. Journalists have also continued to report on the situation of Uyghurs and other minorities held in detention centers in China's Xinjiang region, including new revelations from hundreds of pages of leaked CCP documents published by the New York Times in November 2019.

I join the international community in honoring and defending the brave journalists seeking to report on the truth and tell the stories that deserve to be told. Over 200 years ago, our Founding Fathers had the foresight to recognize the importance of a free press to a democracy, enshrining it in our First Amendment. Today, that importance cannot be overstated. Recognizing that societies where informed citizens can hold their governments accountable are more stable, secure, and prosperous, we have a responsibility to stand up for the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and a free press.

This week, I introduced a resolution commemorating World Press Freedom Day. The resolution highlights increasing threats to freedoms of the press and expression worldwide, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirms the centrality of a free and independent press to the health of democracy, and reiterates freedom of the press as a priority of the United States in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance. On this World Press Freedom Day, I call on the Trump administration and our world leaders to recommit to advancing press freedom, protecting journalists, and embracing the important role they play in a healthy and secure society.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I rise to commemorate World Press Freedom Day, which was this past Sunday, and to celebrate the brave journalists all over the world who safeguard the values of truth, democracy, transparency, and justice through their work. Every year, we set aside this day to reaffirm our commitment to the free press. This year, however, is a little bit different. This year, we are in the midst of a brutal global public health crisis. One of the reasons that the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked so much havoc—taking hundreds of thousands of lives and devastating the economy—is that people with power have propagated misinformation about the virus. In the words of the World Health Organization, we are witnessing an "info-demic." Now, more than ever, it is vital that the public receives the truth, and that means protecting the