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OF NORWEGIAN EDITORS

H.E Mr. Esam Abid AL-Thagafi

Ambassador

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Freedom of press in the Middle East

The Saudi Arabia coalition sent out an ultimatum to Qatar with 13 demands to be met within the next 10 days to end the Qatar crisis. To our strong disappointment, one of the requirements is that Al Jazeera and other news channels must be closed. At the end of May, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates blocked the website of Al Jazeera and other Qatar media. On June 7, Jordan closed Al Jazeera's Amman office. Saudi Arabia followed the day after closing Al Jazeera's office in the capital Riyadh.

The Norwegian Press Association, The Norwegian Union of Journalist and Association of Norwegian Editors protest over this attack on one of the key human rights, requesting that the claim be withdrawn and that freedom of expression and freedom of press will be respected.

The signatory organizations strongly encourage the authorities of Saudi Arabia to respect that media, editors and journalists every day make an important contribution of keeping the people in the Arab countries and in the rest of the world informed of what is happening.

We join President Philip Leruth at the International Journalist Federation, IFJ, in his statement that "Al Jazeera is a source of information for citizens in the Middle East. The restriction of freedom of speech and media pluralism in the region risks worsening the crisis, instead of solving it."

We emphasize that the Middle East, as the rest of the world, needs media companies to report news and current events, and give the public information and background analysis on what, when, how and why they occur.

A ban on any media outlet is an outrageous attempt to censor the public debate. In a conflicted world, freedom of press is more important than ever.

Kind regards,

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