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Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good evening to you.

I am very happy indeed to be with you on such a day, such an important day which highlights the importance of the cartoonists. I'm so happy to be here on such an occasion!

Allow me first to congratulate all journalists on World Press Freedom Day and editorial cartoonists, and I would like to highlight the plight of those who are currently behind bars for being journalists in many countries.

In many countries journalists are deprived of the freedom you have in your countries. One such country is my country: Iran.

At present, some hundred journalists in Iran and bloggers who are in prison and they've been charged for what? For telling the truth, because they've been trying to highlight the truth, and the regime does not want the people to know the truth. Anyone who says anything and be it in the press, be it on internet, be it through art, through cartoons has to face the wrath of the regime.

I would like to highlight the plight of a young man, who is a rapper, and who is now on death row just because he's a rapper and he raps and we are all worried that they [will] carry out this death sentence.

Why? Because - his name is Toomaj Salehi - just for singing a few songs! A very courageous man who through his lyrics and rap has tried to highlight these atrocities of the Iranian regime.

I would like to pay my respect for the cartoonists, whose job is to highlight the truth through their art, not through writing but through their art. This is an art which especially in countries that have been suffering from dictatorship for many years, is even more important.

Why? Because in such countries there is so much depressing truth and every day people have to hear about deaths, arrests, death sentences and cruelty of the government and brutality of the government. People are frustrated: they're tired of even listening to the news anymore. I have heard this from my compatriots. I say to them : « this something really horrible has happened » and they say to me « look what can we do ? We've learned to live with that. »

They are so upset but they're trying to ignore it. But when they see a cartoon - because cartoon has the element of irony - it catches their attention more than piece of writing.

And all these cartoons start a dialogue, so the art of this cartoonists is to wake up people who are suffering from fatigue and are tired of listening to upsetting news or reading about it. Of course dictators don't like cartoonists, just as they don't like journalists, because they don't like freedom of expression. And in my Country, we have some excellent cartoonists who have experienced prison. Many of them have had to escape the country because they couldn't work in the country.

At present we have a young cartoonist, a young female cartoonist, Atena Farghadani, who is currently behind bars and we have called for her freedom. Athena had already experienced prison earlier she'd experienced two years imprisonment and she's been rearrested and reimprisoned because she drew a

cartoon of Iranian missiles. Iran is a country which is very advanced when it comes to military weapons... however this very country which is initially a very rich country, has a population 70% of whom are poor and 40% are under the poverty line and it's important to highlight this and to tell this regime what they're doing is so wrong: while people are looking in rubbish bins to find food this regime is building weapons. The more more advanced weapons... But the dictators don't like to be told off about this. Wherever you see a successful dictator, be sure that this dictator wants to rule his people and oppress. So once again I would like to thank journalists, cartoonist... those who use their pen their, art, their words to stand up to these despotic regimes and I know that they will be victorious, because Freedom will victorious!

Thank you.