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RWU First Amendment Blog: David Logan's Blog: Recognizing The Free Press In The Crosshairs Across The Globe 12-12-2018

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Recognizing the free press in the crosshairs across the globe

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December 12, 2018

Edward Fitzpatrick

David A. Logan, professor of law and former dean of the RWU School of Law, who has studied and written extensively about First Amendment issues:

TIME chose the right time to name four journalists and a newspaper as the magazine's "Person of the Year."

This is an entirely appropriate salute to journalists who have the temerity to speak truth to power while facing arrest and even beheadings at the hands of governments unwilling to tolerate criticism.

TIME also salutes a small Maryland newspaper, which far from the media power centers saw five members of its newsroom killed by a crazed neighbor who was angered about his press coverage.

I wish that TIME had gone further and honored journalists in other democracies, [such as Turkey, Hungary and Venezuela](#), who are under intense pressure to parrot the party line of powerful government executives. Those countries are seeing a decrease in objective news coverage and thus, as an unsurprising result, a less informed citizenry.

But there is another current news item of note: A list of notable quotes for the year was topped by the assertion, made by Rudy Giuliani (who represents President Donald Trump in the Mueller investigation) that “truth isn’t truth.”

Giuliani’s comment was no outlier: President Trump and his supporters have engaged in a furious campaign to undermine public trust in the news media (at least any news outlet not named Fox) such that virtually any unfavorable revelation is dismissed as “fake news,” spread by the “[enemy of the people](#).”

It turns out there may well be a correlation between these developments in the United States and events overseas, recognized in [an editorial in the Dallas Morning News](#): Constant attacks on the press, from the leader of the free world, not only sow distrust in the United States but embolden autocrats around the world.

I have such great confidence in the durability of the core institutions that make America great — especially a vigorous press and an independent judiciary — that I expect our democracy to survive this difficult period. But I do not have the same confidence in the resilience of other governments, which have much shallower democratic roots.