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Freedom Of The Press

“Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy- it is democracy,” Walter Cronkite said. In this perspective, democracy is toppling. Authors Charlie Savage and Leslie Kaufman of The New York Times elaborate on an event with the infringement of press freedom taking place. Journalists of the Associated Press had two months of phone records, news gatherings, and road maps of operations secretly seized by the U.S. government. For the government to understand that they cannot violate a freedom meant to be inherited ever since the establishment of the Constitution and rightfully given to citizens, the Associated Press is already protected by the First Amendment, wanting to evade is repetition of this from the past, and existing is the importance of the freedom of press, despite the claims of someone with such a great extent of power: a President.

The liberty of press granted to the Associated Press is preserved by what is written in the First Amendment. This right originated from the words, “Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...” (U.S. Const, amend 1). The First Amendment is a component of the U.S. Constitution, which altogether is acclaimed as “the most democratic deed the world has ever seen” by historians. Therefore, since the press freedom of the Associated Press is being undervalued *and* abridged, the First Amendment is in the same

condition as well. Moreover, since the First Amendment is shown in this light, the U.S. Constitution must also be cast the same; but without the Constitution, the government would not have existed, so there is no reason for them to undervalue *or* abridge it this way. As a contributor to the U.S. Constitution, James Madison, whose statements are much like the words of the First Amendment in which he wrote, are used by an author of The Washington Post to explain, “Scores of newspaper editors had been tossed into jail, and it was... James Madison who led the fight to declare the act [of taking away the freedom of press] unconstitutional: ‘It [not only] exercises a power not delegated by the Constitution, but... [it is also] expressly and positively forbidden by one of the amendments...’” (Post, 2017). With both pieces of evidence showing the superiority of the First Amendment and how it is intolerant of abridging press freedom by what is already written, it can be interpreted that these are two essential things the government must have forgotten when seizing what had only belonged to the Associated Press. After all, the First Amendment and the U.S. Constitution were created earlier in time for them to know these things- and so there would be a possibility that they would learn from them.

The government needs to avoid repeating the act of breaching the freedom of press. Josh Daniels, a policy advisor of the Libertas Institute, writes, “... the United States.... expressly prohibit[s] “ex post facto” laws... This principle was so obvious to the Constitution’s framers that some even opposed its inclusion, arguing that it was unnecessary...” (2017). To clarify, the U.S. Constitution forbids ex post facto laws, laws that make an act that was once committed legally made illegal. It was evident to the framers to assume that what was done in the past should be immediately learned from and not made again. Besides it being the government, there still must be guarantee of a punishment when this occurs. For instance, as the Constitutional Rights

Foundation confirms, “The Constitution sets specific grounds for punishment. They are ‘treason, bribery, and other high crimes and misdemeanors.’” (2017). However, not only can the government receive punishment in which their seizure applies to as a misdemeanor, but it is also considered retroactive. In other words, it seems that, because the violation of the freedom of press was repeated in the past, nothing was learned. This affects the significance of past events of the same act, which is why the importance of the freedom must be remembered.

In spite of the power of a President opposing it, the importance of the freedom of press is still able to wriggle through. As President Trump refuses to accept that there was actually a much smaller amount who attended his inauguration, The Washington Post quotes the exact words on an attack in which he enlists Jefferson’s support: “[Journalists] have their own agenda and their agenda is not your agenda. In fact, Thomas Jefferson said, ‘nothing can be believed which is seen in a newspaper.’ ‘Truth itself,’ [Jefferson] said, ‘becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle’... but despite all the [journalists’] lies, misrepresentations, and false stories, they could not defeat us... and we will continue to expose them for what they are...” (Post, 2017). In the same situation, the fact that the government’s actions are considered a misdemeanor can lead them to also claim it is false, especially since they could get punished from the punishments they enforced themselves. Even if the press had truly lied, The Washington Post still demonstrates, “It is certainly the case that Jefferson had a very rocky relationship with the press, and said some very uncomplimentary things... about them... [but] he could not have been clearer: a rambunctious and occasionally scurrilous and abusive press... is the price we pay to maintain and safeguard *all* of our other rights.” (Post, 2017). The value of press freedom is described by Thomas Jefferson, in which it protects all other rights of the

people. As illustrated before, there should be no reason as for a freedom this important to be undervalued or abridged for the Associated Press.

Based on the government violating the freedom of press for the Associated Press, many factors also appeared in the process. They not only undervalue and abridge the First Amendment and the U.S. Constitution but also learned nothing from the same actions done in the past, had a chance of receiving a punishment, and disintegrated the importance of press freedom after the violation was repeated. If this action is done once more by the government, the United States could develop a bad reputation in the eyes of other countries since the government cannot follow their own democracy.