



The speaker
CH-3003 Bern

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TRUE STORY AWARD 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Journalists,

I welcome you this evening in Bern not only as the President of the Swiss Parliament, but also as a citizen who profoundly believes in the power of journalism to shape societies, protect freedoms, and uphold our democratic system.

Today, we gather not simply to hand over awards. We gather to celebrate a force —

A force that is as fragile as it is fearless.

A force that thrives not in comfort, but in challenge.

That force is called: truthful storytelling.

You see, in parliaments like mine, we debate, legislate, and represent. And these processes are made public for the sake of transparency and accountability.

But we depend on journalists to report and to explain.

Without you, democracy becomes less transparent, and the



citizens, who should be the highest authority in any democracy, become less powerful.

Journalists inform the voters, journalists question power, and journalists give voice to those who have none. Journalism is the architect of accountability. Your work lays the foundations for political debate that is not only free – but also fair and factual.

Journalism is not simply a profession. It is a public service. And often, journalism is also an act of courage.

The practice of journalism is time and again under siege – from censorship, harassment, disinformation, and, tragically, violence. In many corners of the world, telling the truth means risking one's freedom – or even one's life.

This is not acceptable.

Every time a journalist is silenced, a piece of our collective freedom of expression is silenced too.

Every time a newsroom is threatened, our democracy is under threat too.

Every time facts are replaced by propaganda, we lose the compass that helps us navigate the world with integrity.



So let us be clear: telling the truth should never be a dangerous act.

But because it still is, those who dare to do it deserve not just our applause – they deserve our protection, our solidarity, they deserve our unwavering support.

Even in cases where we disagree with the truth they tell.

In a free society, it is essential to respect diverse experiences and viewpoints. This often leads to the tempting notion that “everyone has their own truth.”

However, to safeguard our freedom and civic rights, we must also acknowledge that truth is not merely a matter of personal taste.

Truth and facts are the foundation upon which we build trust — trust in our institutions, in one another, and in the future, we strive to shape.

Truth must be our non-negotiable moral and civic compass.

Yet truth is rarely simple. It is often complex, it is contested, and fragile. It requires effort — to uncover, to verify, and to communicate.

And when emotions, ideology, and digital noise threaten to



drown out facts, truth becomes both - more precious and more vulnerable.

Journalists serve the public precisely by doing the hard work of seeking out truth — not the truth that flatters, but the truth that challenges by applying the same standards of scrutiny and honesty to all sides; not the truth that confirms our biases, but also the one that unsettles our assumptions.

Dear Guests,

This Award – the True Story Award – does more than honour excellence.

It honours empathy in a time of polarization, and it honours listening in a time of shouting.

The True Story Award and the True Story Festival remind us that behind every headline is a human story – one that deserves to be told with care, with context, and with conscience.

The stories we honour tonight carry a light that no regime, no algorithm, and no tyrant can extinguish.

But that is only possible when there is space – political, legal, and cultural – for journalists to do their work.



That is why we must all act as guardians of press freedom – as legislators, as citizens, and as readers.

It is not only the job of journalists to be brave. As readers, citizens and legislators, it is our job to ensure that their bravery does not cost them their fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression or protection from retaliation.

Dear Journalists,

Your stories do more than inform — they touch our hearts, spark conversations, and remind us what it truly means to care.

Your work stands as a testament to courage and compassion.

You show us that journalism, despite all the challenges, is ((fiercely)) alive — in your words, through your pictures, and with every voice that dares to speak truth.

To the organizers of the True Story Award and the True Story Festival: thank you for creating a platform where integrity is celebrated. In an era where press freedom is increasingly challenged - whether through political pressure, economic constraints, or the fragmentation of digital media - the True



Story Award stands as a beacon of independent, courageous journalism.

By elevating journalism from around the globe - spanning languages, regions, and contexts - you're not only broadening our perspectives but actively strengthening civil society.

In hosting conversations tonight and at the festival, you foster direct dialogue between journalists, citizens, and decision-makers. This bridges cultural divides and reinforces journalism's unique capacity to connect communities across borders.

Thank you for championing the values that underpin healthy democracies and mutual understanding. Your commitment reminds us that journalism is about forging connections, holding the powerful accountable, and building bridges between us all.

To the tonight's award winners, and to all journalists – including those who cannot be here tonight because they are imprisoned, persecuted, or forced into hiding:
We see you. We hear you. We stand with you.

Thank you for your work. The world needs your courage.