

Reporters Committee statement on jailing of Judith Miller

July 6, 2005

Statement of RCFP Executive Director Lucy Dalglish on jailing of Judith Miller

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press fully supports Judith Miller in her insistence that she not betray her source. She does not believe, nor do we, that reporters are above the law, but instead holds that the work of journalists must be independent and free from government control if they are to effectively serve as government watchdogs.

Allowing prosecutors to demand testimony and evidence from reporters, particularly in a case of such clear public importance as to White House responses to a critic's arguments about Iraq's access to nuclear materials, means that journalists will be treated as unpaid investigative agents of the federal government, with no regard for the resulting loss of credibility or independence that will ultimately prevent the truth from reaching the public.

The role of a free press is enshrined in our constitution, and a free and independent news media is recognized by our own State Department as one of the essential elements in a democracy. It is what we expect of emerging democracies around the world, and we must demand the same from our courts here at home.

We plan to continue working with members of Congress to pass federal shield law legislation to ensure that sources receive at least as much protection in the federal system as they do in virtually every state court.