

Leading journalists join call for EU copyright reform

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Leading journalists from more than 20 countries joined a call Tuesday for European MPs to approve a controversial media reform aimed at forcing internet giants to pay for news content.

European Parliament lawmakers return in September to discuss the proposal, a first draft of which was rejected last month after a fierce debate.

The so-called copyright and neighbouring rights law aims to ensure that producers of creative content—whether news, music or movies—are paid fairly in a digital world.

But the plans have been firmly opposed by big US tech firms such as Google and Facebook, as well as advocates of internet freedom.

An open letter signed by more than 100 prominent journalists from major news outlets warned Tuesday that "this fleecing of the [media](#) of their rightful revenue" was "morally and democratically unjustifiable".

"We have become targets and our reporting missions cost more and more," said the letter written by AFP foreign correspondent Sammy Ketz and published in several European newspapers including France's Le Monde.

"Yet, even though (the media) pay for the content and send the journalists who will risk their lives to produce a trustworthy, thorough and diverse news service, it is not they who reap the profits but the internet platforms, which help themselves without paying a cent," the letter said.

"It is as if a stranger came along and shamelessly snatched the fruits of your labour."

The editorial urged the European Parliament to "vote massively in favour of neighbouring rights for the survival of democracy and one of its most remarkable symbols: journalism".

Major publishers, including AFP, have pushed for the reform—known as Article 11—seeing it as an urgently needed solution against a backdrop of free online [news](#) that has wiped out earnings for traditional media companies.

But opponents have called it a "link tax" that will stifle discourse on the Internet.

Resistance has been especially heated to Article 13: the proposal to make online platforms legally liable for copyrighted material put on the web by users.

Music legend Paul McCartney as well as major music labels and film studios had lobbied politicians urging them to come together and back the changes.

Critics, however, argue the reform will lead to blanket censorship by tech platforms that have become an online hub for creativity, especially YouTube.

They say it will also restrict the usage of memes and remixes by everyday [internet](#) surfers.

But the journalists on Tuesday rejected this as a "lie".

"Free access to the web will endure because the [internet giants](#), which now use editorial content for free, can reimburse the media without asking consumers to pay," the open letter said.

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