

Gun Laws and Freedom of Speech: a Clash of Rights at the Capital Gazette



What are your thoughts on this?

Much has been in the news in the past several months about gun laws in America. A tragic incident last week brought this topic back to the fore.

Under the US constitution it is a right of every US citizen to carry arms including guns. The intention of the right is for personal protection.

The US constitution also recognizes another very important right - the right to the freedom of speech. This right is the backbone of any democracy. It recognizes this as a natural right that people can respectfully express their thoughts and opinions without fear of punishment or threat to their lives. Similar to the freedom of speech and another pillar of democracy is the freedom of the press. This is recognition that the media is free to report news or question governments and other authorities in power without any threat.

Tragically, in Annapolis (Maryland, USA) last week, a gunman opened fire in the office of the Capital Gazette, a newspaper with whom he had a longstanding legal battle and grudge. In 2011, the newspaper had reported that this man was charged with a crime. We do not know the real reason he shot the people who worked at the newspaper. Perhaps he was still very angry or maybe even unwell. But incidents like this raise complex questions:

Should there be stricter gun laws? Clearly such incidents show a misuse of the right to carry arms. How can people feel safe while exercising their natural right of freedom of speech? Should the media not be free to report news accurately without a threat to their lives?

These questions go beyond this incident and gun laws in the US. These are some complex issues for societies across countries to address in order to protect the natural rights and freedoms we have been so fortunate to be born to.



Contributed by: Purnima Thacker, a keen art admirer, nature enthusiast, intellectual property lawyer and mum to a curious 8 year old.