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Hillary Clinton attacks Trump for 'all-out war on truth, facts and reason'

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Hillary Clinton has excoriated Donald Trump, telling an audience in New York press rights and free speech are “under open assault” under an administration she compared to an authoritarian regime that threatened “the end of freedom”.

“We are living through an all-out war on truth, facts and reason,” Clinton said at the PEN America World Voices Festival in Manhattan on Sunday.

“When leaders deny things we can see with our own eyes, like the size of a crowd at the inauguration, when they refuse to accept settled science when it comes to urgent challenges like climate change ... it is the beginning of the end of freedom, and that is not hyperbole. It’s what authoritarian regimes through history have done.”

The former presidential candidate, secretary of state, senator and first lady was delivering the Arthur Miller Freedom to Write lecture. She began by discussing threats to press freedom and free speech including in Vladimir Putin’s Russia. But she soon turned her remarks to the US under Trump, saying such freedoms were “in the most perilous position I’ve seen in my lifetime”.

“Today we have a president who seems to reject the role of a free press in our

democracy,” she said. “Although obsessed with his own press coverage, he evaluates it based not on whether it provides knowledge or understanding, but solely on whether the daily coverage helps him and hurts his opponents.

“Now, given his track record, is it any surprise that according to the latest round of revelations, he joked about throwing reporters in jail to make them talk?”

The reference to revelations from memos by former FBI director James Comey was Clinton’s only reference to Comey, who was fired by Trump.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Clinton’s remarks were followed by a conversation with novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Under friendly questioning, Clinton was asked if she had “hit back” enough during the campaign – a reference to a childhood episode in which, Clinton has written, her mother gave her permission to hit back at a bully.

“I now think that I didn’t,” Clinton said. She described the much-discussed moment when Trump was “stalking me on that debate stage”. She recalled thinking: “What do I do? Do I turn around and say: ‘Back up, you creep?’” But then, she said, “the coverage would have been, ‘She can’t take the pressure, she got angry.’”

And so, she said she told herself: “You just have to be calm and in control. Because ultimately what the country wants is someone who is not blowing up in the Oval Office.”

“Well, you know that did not work out so well,” she said, to laughter.

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