



Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

September 2016

Dear colleagues and all those who access the CJA website,

AS I messaged the CJA Exco, big thanks for the words of encouragement sent for CJA India earning registration and recognition with the authorities. Jayanta and Saroj of the International Exco and Harvir Singh, Treasurer of CJA India, made it possible.

A small thing, but it is important if you are approaching anyone in the government. The High Commissions and embassies would take you seriously if you are registered. And, of course, donors and advertisers whom one needs to approach at times.

Since we are all media practitioners and access the social media, here is something worth looking at. A note by the Public Editor of The New York Times says: "Leave the Editorializing to Our Colleagues on the Opinion Side".

Liz Spayd, 7 September, 2016.

"For the second time in three months, The Times's associate managing editor for standards sent a note out to the newsroom warning journalists to avoid offering up their own political opinions through Twitter, Facebook

or other social media. The standards editor, Phil Corbett, says no particular incident prompted the note.

"By now, I find it hard to imagine that violators are unaware the policy exists. Maybe repeat offenders need a little kick in the pants.

Here's Corbett's note:

Colleagues:

As we enter the home stretch of the presidential campaign, all of us in the newsroom should keep in mind our longstanding policies on social media. On personal social media accounts, Times newsroom staffers should avoid editorializing, endorsing candidates or otherwise promoting their own political views.

This applies to every newsroom journalist in every department. Even if you personally are not involved in coverage of politics, our colleagues are working hard to maintain The Times's reputation for credibility and fairness, and we should not do anything to make their jobs tougher.

While you may think of your Facebook page or other social media platforms as a private area completely separate from your Times role, in fact everything we post online is to some degree public — and everything we do in public is likely to be associated with The Times.

If you are linking to other sources, aim to reflect a diverse collection of viewpoints. Sharing a range of news, opinions or satire from others is usually fine. But consistently linking only to one side of a debate can leave the impression that you, too, are taking sides.

As I've noted before, people following Times newsroom staffers online expect them to be well-informed and thoughtful. But we should leave the editorializing to our colleagues on the Opinion side.

Let me know if you have any questions, and thanks.

Phil:

The note above raises many issues that concern us, particularly the journalists. Although no par-

ticular incident is supposed to have caused this note, this is timed for the ongoing US presidential elections campaign that has turned rather acrimonious and has the media taking sides. This is more so because media has itself come under attack – even physical one.

In India, and I guess in most other Commonwealth countries where the media must report on political developments, the media gets targeted whenever things go bad, for whoever. The person cornered resorts to blaming media for misquoting and/or for bias.

Secondly, the note above warns against a practicing journalist-employee, whether or not he/she is dealing with the election campaign in the US, expressing his/her views freely on the social media. This is often done to give vent to views that could not be expressed in one's 'copy'.

How far can or should the media organization that you are working for place restrictions on your expression of views 'outside'? How fair and practicable is it?

There already are restrictions, included in an employment contract, placed on a journalist employee against engaging in anything creative outside of the organization. This is included for those engaged in writing in prose, writing even poetry or play. Appearing on TV channels is another no-no.

These are just points to ponder, individually, or on this web site, collectively. ■

Mahendra Ved
President,
[Commonwealth](#)

Features:

World Press Freedom Day – 3 May

[Politico has reported](#) that the New York Times is planning expansion into the Canadian and Australian markets. The political website said that the Times had already sent research teams to lay the groundwork and recruit journalists for small newsroom hubs in both countries. The move will be along the lines of the paper's expansion into Latin America earlier this year. Politico said that 'Canada and Australia are obvious targets since they are both English-speaking regions. The Times will of course have to compete with well-established Canadian and Australian media outlets with bigger native footprints, and there's no guarantee any of these foreign offerings will catch fire'.

Politico described the move as part of the US \$50m investment by the Times to increase the size of its paid digital audience and attract new readers abroad.

[Nieman Lab](#) said that the expansion is part of a wider trend with both BuzzFeed and The Huffington Post developing outposts in Toronto and Sydney, and The UK Guardian making Australia one of the pillars of its international growth strategy.

- **Happy Birthday Derek:** One of the co-founders of the Commonwealth Journalists' Association Derek Ingram marked his 91st birthday this summer. The CJA posted congratulations on [its Facebook](#) page.
- **To CJA members:** The CJA's International Executive will be preparing a policy paper on training for Commonwealth journalists. If you would like to contribute ideas to this paper, please send your thoughts via our [website](#). Use subject: CJA training suggestions. ■

IN THE HEADLINES:

Africa

African fund for innovative journalism

The foundation, Knight International's African fund for innovative journalism is now accepting pitches for investigative stories. Journalists in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia [can apply](#) with ideas for innovative or data-driven investigative stories to the impactAFRICA fund. ■

South Africa

Highway Africa: Media and the Internet

[Highway Africa](#), the continent's biggest gathering of journalists took place at the end of August in South Africa. Its theme was Media and the Internet. [Topics this year](#) included the challenges of media sustainability and revenue streams in the digital age, digital activism and internet regulation in Africa. ■

Nigeria

Nigerian journalist challenged over Boko Haram sources

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) has come to the defence of a Nigerian journalist who has been put under pressure to reveal his sources during the 2014 Boko Haram kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls.

The [Nigerian military](#) told freelance journalist Ahmad Salkida that he could face terrorism charges for refusing to provide information about the group Boko Haram. The military's comments followed the April 2016 release of a video showing some of the kidnapped girls, whose abduction had been the source of a worldwide #Bringbackourgirls campaign.

In August 2016, Nigeria's Director of Defence Information Brigadier General Rabe Abubakar said that the military had only invited Mr Salkida and two civil society workers in for questioning to help "shed light" on military efforts and that the intention had not been to arrest them.

Another army spokesman Colonel Sani Usman said that the three had "links with Boko Haram terrorists" and must come forward to tell the military where the Chibok girls are being kept. Colonel Usman told the news agency AFP that, under the 2011 Terrorism Prevention Act, Nigerians can be punished for failure to disclose information about terrorists and terrorists' activities.

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ)'s [West Africa Representative Peter Nkanga](#) said that journalists must sometimes rely on the trust of dangerous people. He said that "coercing them to become informers risks putting all journalists under suspicion and in danger."

[The CPJ](#) has called on the Nigerian military to cease threatening Mr Salkida.

Mr Salkida told the CPJ that he believed the military had been trying to punish him for his persistent reporting of Boko Haram since 2006. ■

Asia

Bangladesh

Bangladesh arrests three journalists

The arrest of three journalists over the refuting of a rumour has sparked off fresh criticism of a law which criminalises the publication of online material deemed to be ‘fake and obscene’. Article 57 of Bangladesh’s 2006 [Information and Communication Technology Act](#) criminalizes publishing material online that is ‘fake and obscene’ or creates a possibility of threatening ‘law and order’.

On 7 August, [police arrested](#) Executive Editor Maksukul Alam, acting Editor Shahadat Ullah Khan, and reporter Pranta Palash of the website banglaimail24 after the publication of a report refuting a rumour that the prime minister's son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, had died in a plane crash.

Police Lieutenant Colonel Khandker Golam Sarwar said: "They criticized the rumour, but...they also became part of spreading rumours on the death of the Honourable Prime Minister's son, who holds an important government post".

The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) [issued a statement](#) a few days later calling Bangladesh’s Information and Communication Technology Act ‘restrictive’. CPJ Asia Program Coordinator Steven Butler said. "Arresting journalists for refuting a false rumour reaches the point of absurdity. Bangladesh should release Maksukul Alam, Shahadat Ullah Khan, and Pranta Palash without delay."

The CPJ also called on 24 August for Bangladesh’s legislature to scrap the proposed Digital Security Act 2016 which was approved by cabinet on 22 August and is at the parliamentary stage. [The CPJ said](#) that the

cyber-security legislation would impose severe penalties for disseminating online material deemed to be anti-state or a threat to national security or public order. ■

India

Dangerous Pursuit

The CPJ has published a special report on the dangers faced by journalists in India called [Dangerous Pursuit](#). [The report](#) details the challenges facing journalists and a list of journalists killed in relation to their work. It looks at the price paid by India's Right to Information activists and by those who report on corruption. ■

Indian newspaper uses technology to aid coverage of sexual abuse stories

The Hindustan Times has developed the use of [Snapchat filters](#) to allow sexual assault survivors to speak freely on camera about their experiences without being identifiable.

The paper's mobile editor [Yusuf Omar](#) used the face-mapping software filters of Snapchat to disguise people's faces without blurring or silhouetting – the usual format used for victims being interviewed.

Mr Omar said "I thought there must be a more accessible way to disguise someone's face using new technology, and Snapchat was just that."

The process allowed the Hindustan Times to conduct one-on-one interviews with young participants in India's first [Climb Against Sexual Abuse](#) with their faces being transformed through the software filters into the creature of their choice. Snapchat choices include the face of a lion, a dog and a fire-breathing dragon and the filter has been used in the past for posting fun messages.

Mr Omar told [journalism.co.uk](#) that the technology can have "serious applications for journalism".

He explained that "recording with a mask gave them [the interviewees] the sense of legitimacy and security that I wasn't going to be able to

show their face, as opposed to trusting a journalist saying 'yes, we will blur you afterwards', so they felt empowered and in control of the narrative." ■

Maldives

Al Jazeera programme challenges new Maldives defamation laws

The Maldives Government has threatened to use controversial defamation laws against anyone who took part in an Al Jazeera documentary which looked at alleged corruption in the Maldives.

The [new strict defamation laws](#) had been introduced in August provoking criticism from journalism and international rights groups.

The UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye, had described the legislation as a “direct attack on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression in the Maldives [that] will have a strong chilling effect on media and civil society, making reporting and criticism truly risky”.

The Maldives Independent Editor, Zaheena Rasheed, had told [Reuters](#) in an interview that the legislation was “a final push to shut down the remaining media outlets”.

Days before the Al Jazeera broadcast, on 30 August, the majority leader from the governing party in the Maldives parliament, Ahmed Nihan Hussain Manik, said on state TV that “protecting your reputation is a religious and human right. I repeat that if there are falsities, and if these people cannot prove in court what they have claimed is true, then they will have to bear responsibility for it.

“Those who also assist in publicising such false information, those who produce it, broadcast and rebroadcast it – the Defamation and Freedom of Expression Act as well as other such laws provide measures to take legal action against them.”

When the Al Jazeera programme [Stealing Paradise](#) was posted online on 7 September, the network withdrew a number of journalists from the Maldives stating that it feared repercussions.

Hours after the posting of the programme, the Maldives Independent reported that its offices in Malé had been raided by police with a court warrant over an alleged coup plot. The news outlet also said that one of the interviewees, its editor Zaheena Rasheed, had left the country ahead of the programme going out.

The court warrant accused The Independent of trying ‘to overthrow the elected government, getting external help to overthrow the elected government, trying to create hatred between the public and the state institutions, and planning to create discord and unrest in Malé.’

The [Committee for the Protection of Journalists](#) (CPJ) has condemned the police raid of the newspapers offices. CPJ’s senior Southeast Asia representative Shawn Crispin said that “to raid a newspaper on the preposterous pretext that it was plotting a coup because its editor appeared in a documentary alleging corruption is a transparent attempt at intimidation...The authorities should immediately stop all attempts to intimidate the press, and send a clear message to Maldives Independent editor Zaheena Rasheed that she can return home without fear of persecution.”

Leading opposition figures and former members of watchdog bodies who appeared in the programme have also left the country. The NGO Transparency Maldives has called on the government to cease the intimidation of individuals who spoke to Al Jazeera stating that ‘the right to express oneself in matters of national and individual importance is a constitutional right’. The NGO [has also called for an independent investigation](#) into allegations of corruption in the Maldives. ■

Pakistan

Tributes paid to veteran Pakistan journalist

[Tributes have been paid](#) to Zahid Malik who died on 1 September after a protracted illness.

Mr Malik was the founder, editor-in-chief and publisher of the English daily Pakistan Observer. He was also Patron in Chief of Nazaria-e-Pakistan Council. He received a Writers Guild of Pakistan First Prize for his book 'Public Relations' which was first published in Urdu in 1971. Another of Mr Malik's works, 'Mazameen-i-Quran-i-Hakeem', an 800-page subject-wise classification of verses of the Holy Quran was translated into English, French and German. Tributes came from the journalist community as well as from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. ■

Sri Lanka

Freddy Gamage campaign continues

Local and international journalists' bodies have continued to campaign following the [2 June attack on journalist Freddy Gamage](#). Mr Gamage, who is also convenor of the Professional Web Journalists Association, has played a key role in exposing corruption and political links to organised crime in Sri Lanka. He was attacked in broad daylight as he walked to his car after a reporting job. Two people with motorbike face helmets on a bike without a number plate assaulted him. Mr Gamage was hospitalised.

[Sri Lanka campaign for peace and justice](#) said that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had promised an "immediate investigation." The organisation said 'this attack is part of a broader pattern. Sri Lanka has a torrid record when it comes to protecting journalists and while harassment of journalists has reduced, it has not stopped entirely'.

The [Committee for the Protection of Journalists](#) (CPI) reported that Freddy Gamage had returned to hospital later in June to deal with the after-effects of the attack.

News website [Hiru News](#) said that two men who had originally been questioned had been held again in June for the attack . ■

Americas

Canada

Series of redundancies in the Canadian media

The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) has called for government action to foster and support public interest reporting. The CAJ call follows another series of redundancies in the Canadian media, this time at the Toronto Star.

The Globe and Mail reported that the Star's parent company Torstar Corp laid off 52 staff members. The Globe and Mail reported on 9 August that 'less than a year after the Toronto Star launched an ambitious tablet edition designed to reshape the newspaper's digital future, parent company Torstar Corp has slashed 52 jobs, dramatically shrinking the project's core staff.

'The layoffs represent a major retrenchment in resources devoted to the tablet edition as the company lowers its expectations for the project's popularity with readers, but also shows the deep financial troubles afflicting Torstar. The publisher of newspapers including the Star and The Hamilton Spectator recently closed its printing plant in Vaughan, Ont., outsourcing printing of the Star and putting 285 people out of work, and posted a [Can]\$23.9-million loss in the first quarter of 2016.

"The moves are in response to declining advertising and our need to allocate the company's resources as cost-effectively as possible," Bob Hepburn, a spokesman for the Star, said in an interview.'

[CAJ President Nick Taylor-Vaisey](#) said "These cuts will inevitably compromise the paper's capacity to cover public issues in Toronto, Ontario and Canada as a whole – resulting in less-informed citizens, less-informed consumers and a more ignorant society".

He said that the panel of MPs currently studying the state of the Canadian media should move from study to action and suggested that measures could include the removal of restrictions that obstruct charitable support for non-profit journalistic endeavours. ■

St Vincent and the Grenadines

St Vincent and the Grenadines extend defamation laws to online

[Associated Press](#) has reported that lawmakers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have passed a bill allowing defamation on the internet to be punished by prison sentences of up to two years. Parliament approved the legislation by 12-9 votes. The legislation extends penalties that apply to the print and broadcast media to online publication. AP said that ‘local rights organizations and international press groups have expressed concern that the provisions will be used to stifle free speech and online journalism. They have called for the government to revise the law and decriminalize defamation...Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has rejected such criticism and says the legislation has been years in the making’.

In a [statement issued on 4 August, the Association of Caribbean Media Workers](#) (ACM) expressed concern about what it described as ‘continuing efforts by some countries of the Caribbean to address legitimate issues associated with harmful online content through legislation which, in our view, tramples on important principles associated with freedom of expression and freedom of the press’. The ACM urged the Vincentian government to reconsider the legislation.

The ACM said that its own media code of conduct held for all platforms.

ACM added: ‘we are of the view that the criminalising of expression brings with it clear and present dangers to an environment in which the value of free expression is respected and observed. This is a point that has been embraced by governments in Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada,

Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago where our campaigns against criminal defamation have led to a better understanding of the inherent dangers of invoking criminal law under such circumstances'. ■

Europe

United Kingdom

Brexit and journalism

As the angst continues over the media's role in the UK's Brexit referendum campaign, media outside the UK have started to analyse the role of reporting during the campaign.

Foreign analysis publication Foreign policy said in early August: 'How did the country that produced the BBC and the Economist fail so spectacularly at journalism in the lead up to Brexit?'

Foreign Policy continued: 'There is a conceit among many senior editors in the UK that Britain has "[the best journalism in the world](#)." At its best, certainly, British journalism is very good indeed. From the sober analysis of the Financial Times and the Economist to the tub-thumping of the tabloid press to the BBC's worldwide reputation for accuracy and impartiality, the British public has access to a healthy mixture of domestic, foreign, and investigative reporting. On many occasions, democracy has been well served by journalists here who make important stories accessible and hold power to account.

'At its worst, however, journalism in Britain can be truly awful. Five years ago, much of the world was rightly shocked by revelations of phone-hacking on the Rupert Murdoch-owned Sunday tabloid News of the World. The subsequent judicial investigation into the culture, practice, and ethics of the press, led by Lord Justice Leveson, exposed the tasteless practices on which some British tabloids had come to rely: the invasions into personal privacy, the gross intrusions into private grief.'

Foreign policy continued: 'In the lead-up to the June 23 European Un

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of this newsletter or share your thoughts on any of the topics above, click below on our contact details:

Commonwealth Journalists Association

890 Yonge St., Suite 200

Toronto, ONM4W 3PW, Canada

Tel: 647-389-6086 (Mobile)

www.commonwealthjournalists.org

President

- Rita Payne, London

Vice Presidents

- Chris Cobb, Canada
- Mahendra Ved, India
- Joshua Kyalimpa, Uganda
- Farid Hossain, Bangladesh

Editor

- Debbie Ransome

Honorary Treasurer

- Murray Burt, Canada

Regional Representatives

- Drito Alice, Uganda
- Newton Sibanda, Zambia
- Adnan Jafari, Pakistan
- Ehsan Sehar (RMNP), Pakistan
- Alice Wee, Malaysia

ion referendum British mainstream failed spectacularly. Led inevitably by the viscerally anti EU Daily Mail.

Mail, Sun, Daily Express, and Telegraph papers, most of Britain's national press indulged in little more than a catalogue of distortions, half-truths, and outright lies. It was a ferocious propaganda campaign in which facts and sober analysis were sacrificed to the ideologically driven objectives of editors and their proprietors.

'The interests of readers, much less the interests of British democracy, were barely considered.'

[Click here](#) to read the full article. ■

Goodbye to journalism on Fleet Street

The [last two journalists working](#) on London's famous Fleet Street closed up their office in July, sparking off goodbyes to a street seen as the spiritual home of British journalism. The UK Guardian reflected [in pictures](#) on the history of journalism on Fleet Street. ■

If you would like to share your views with the CJA as a journalist about the lessons of Brexit and journalism or any other thoughts on Commonwealth journalism, email our editor debbieransome@gmail.com with your views for inclusion in our next CJA newsletter. ■
