



Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

June 2022

President's Report

Chris Cobb writes:

June 2022 is an important, perhaps pivotal month for the Commonwealth.

First and most obvious is the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kigali.

After the summit, Rwandan president Paul Kagame becomes chairman of the Commonwealth for two years.



Paul Kagame. *Source: World Economic Forum*

The Commonwealth Foundation's People's Forum precedes the summit.

And on June 30, just ahead of the Commonwealth Games: the conference/symposium titled *Excitement and Risk: Prospect of Journalists in the Digital Age*.

The Leaders' Summit (June 24-25)

The choice of Kigali for the long-delayed Commonwealth leaders' summit is controversial. For journalists, and others concerned about freedom of expression, it's an undeserved prize.

Reporters Without Border (RSF) says this in its [assessment](#) of Rwanda:

‘Several high-profile critics have been arrested or threatened and authorities regularly fail to conduct credible investigations into cases of enforced disappearances and suspicious deaths of government opponents...

‘Beaten down by decades of oppression, the Rwandan media landscape is one of the poorest in Africa. TV channels are controlled by the government or by owners who are members of the ruling party... Media owners must pledge allegiance to the government, and many journalists have been forced to attend a patriotism programme or become members of the ruling party. The authorities can intervene directly to fire those who resist.’ It isn’t just Rwanda but the nation’s Commonwealth role during the next two years gives it a special status – a chance, at least, to show leadership.

As my UK colleague William Horsley notes in a piece in this newsletter, the latest [RSF World Press Freedom Index](#) lists ten Commonwealth countries in the bottom 50 places - meaning these countries are seen as having the worst records among 180 countries.

Commonwealth member states have committed themselves to upholding ‘peaceful, open dialogue and the free flow of information, including through a free and responsible media’.

It’s clear that committing doesn’t necessarily lead to doing.

The People’s Forum (June 21-22)

At the Commonwealth Foundation’s People’s Forum a debate on the CJA-driven Commonwealth Media Principles is on the second day agenda.

‘Can the Commonwealth be more assertive when these principles are violated?’ asks the Foundation.

The answer to that, according to William Horsley, is a resounding ‘yes’.

The Foundation also asks: ‘How can this initiative (the Media Principles) help advance freedom of expression? In its present form is the draft strong and comprehensive enough to support meaningful change? Should Member States be looking at also expanding the principles to include the specific challenges arising in recent years: the diminishing space for civic expression and the unregulated dominance of social media networks?’

All good questions.

Those of us who have been part of the People’s Forum at past Commonwealth summits know that hopes of influencing the leaders’ summit deliberations are rarely immediately realized. If ever.

That doesn’t mean we have to stop knocking on the door. It means we have to knock louder.

In the [words](#) of the great Canadian poet/singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen: ‘There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.’

The Commonwealth has a loyal underpinning of civil society organizations. We all do our bit because we believe in the Commonwealth – the good it does, the great potential it has to do even better.

That potential can’t be achieved without committed leadership – and certainly not by leaders who make commitments they have no intention of honouring.



Source: Telegraph India

A note about the June 30 conference Excitement and Risk: Prospect of Journalists in the Digital Age

The all-day [event](#), in Birmingham UK, will precede the Commonwealth Games beginning on July 28 in that city.

The conference will feature young Commonwealth journalists – virtually and in person – and has been organized with tireless enthusiasm by CJA-UK member Richard Bourne (see below) and sponsored by the CJA and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

It has been organised by a committee comprising representatives from the CJA's UK branch, and student editors from Redbrick (Birmingham), the Glasgow Guardian, DUbeat (Delhi), the Dal Gazette (Dalhousie, Canada), Ibadan, Nigeria, and The Boar, the student paper at Warwick University.

Included will be panels on topical issues, such as reporting on violence and oppression, a workshop on digital tools led by Google and an opportunity to network with fellow journalists.

Events such as these have the potential to create permanent personal and professional relationships – bonds of friendship that from leaders on down have proven to be among the Commonwealth's greatest strengths.

Chris Cobb is CJA President ■

World Press Freedom Day - 3 May

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) writes:

World Press Freedom Day: IFJ calls for global solutions to combat surveillance of journalists

Cases of spying on journalists and media workers using sophisticated spyware programs have multiplied in recent years all over the world. To mark World Press Freedom Day on May 3, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and all its affiliates urge governments across the world and international bodies to work together with journalists' unions to develop strict regulations that ban surveillance of journalists and recognise the inviolability of journalists' communications.

Click here to read the full statement: <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/world-press-freedom-day-ifj-calls-for-global-solutions-to-combat-journalists-surveillance.html>

The Economist reported for World Press Freedom Day on how global journalism is being eroded through more subtle attempts to muzzle the media. Click here for the Economist video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojvsUv_08Zk ■

World Copyright Day - 23 April

The IFJ statement: World Copyright Day: Journalists must be paid for tech giants' use of their work

This year's World Book and Copyright Day – celebrated on 23 April – at a crucial point in the conflict between authors and the internet giants as unions increase calls to ensure journalists are paid for the use of their work. The International and the European Federations of journalists (IFJ/EFJ) call on governments and civil society to ensure that internet giants do not control information and that journalists receive a fair share of the benefits collected when their works are being used by the tech corporations.

Click here to read the full statement: <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/world-copyright-day-journalists-must-be-paid-for-tech-giants-use-of-their-work.html> ■

Media Freedom Principles

William Horsley, Member of CJA Executive Committee and UK Branch writes:

CJA members have been asking what is the state of play regarding the long-drawn-out campaign to put journalists' deep concerns about the worldwide assault on press freedom on the Commonwealth's active agenda. The main focus has been on Commonwealth member states agreeing on a set of written principles against which the actions of the 54-member state governments can be measured. This effort got a boost last year when, thanks to the support of friendly governments and our partners among other Commonwealth professional associations including the CLA (Commonwealth Lawyers Association), an official process was started with the aim of adopting a set of Principles on the Role of the Media in Good Governance.

The Principles will not be legally binding as Commonwealth countries are not bound by treaty commitments, but they would be politically very significant. For a long time the Commonwealth was unwilling to enter this arena. But in recent years the active role of multi-national organisations - including the African Union, the Organisation of American States and the Commonwealth - in countering the drastic rise in violence and legal harassment of media workers has come centre stage. The latest [RSF World Press Freedom Index](#) lists ten Commonwealth countries in the bottom 50 places - meaning these countries are seen as having among the worst records among 180 countries. Analysis [by UNESCO](#) also revealed that in Commonwealth states judicial impunity shields those responsible for killing journalists from facing justice in as many as 96% of cases – even more than the global average of about 90 percent. These things deserve to sound a loud alarm among decision-makers in the Commonwealth, in view of its Charter commitments to upholding freedom of expression and the highest standards of international law.

Half a year has passed since the end of the regular online meetings,

spread over four months’, in which a group of Commonwealth member states examined and partly revised the Commonwealth Media Principles, first drawn up and [published by six Commonwealth accredited organisations](#), including the CJA in 2018. A meeting of Law Ministers which was due to discuss the matter early this year has been delayed until near the end of 2022. The CJA exists to promote the cause of free and independent journalism through our affiliation with the Commonwealth. So here is a summary of the state of play and the CJA’s stance as we await progress:

OUTLINE STATEMENT OF CJA AIMS FOR
“COMMONWEALTH PRINCIPLES ON THE ROLE OF THE
MEDIA IN GOOD GOVERNANCE”

Following the postponement of a Commonwealth Law Ministers meeting until the last quarter of this year, and keenly aware of the need for effective protections so that journalists across the Commonwealth can do their work safely and without fear of reprisals, the CJA:-

1. Welcomes the mandate given by Law Ministry officials to the Secretariat in 2021 to establish and host the work of an Expert Working Group of member states which [developed a set of Media Principles for the Commonwealth](#), prompted by the collaborative work of six Commonwealth Organisations that was published in 2018
2. We urge member states, in keeping with the spirit of partnership with civil society organisations, to take public note of the submission made by six-organisation Working Group in November 2021, in which we communicated a request for a small number of specific amendments to the text of the Principles so as to ensure that commitments made in the Principles are consistent with those in the Commonwealth Charter and relevant international law.
3. We invite Law Ministers and officials to consider and approve the Commonwealth’s active alignment with projects and goals of the UN Plan of Action on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity which marks its tenth anniversary this year; and to propose and take forward practical ways in which the Commonwealth will ensure respect for the international human rights obligations referred to in the Principles.

4. The CJA and other concerned Commonwealth Organisations stand ready to contribute positively with our networks and resources of knowledge and expertise to achieve agreed goals related to the Commonwealth's activities to strengthen respect for freedom of expression and the role of the media in good governance. We invite Commonwealth governments to enable and participate in an action-oriented dialogue with accredited organisations and representative civil society groups for that purpose.

William Horsley, 27 May 2022

The Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwWS) and the UK branch of the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) hosted a 27 April discussion on The Commonwealth and Media Freedom: Where do we stand?

The discussion marked the 20th anniversary of the United Nations action plan on the safety of journalists.

Speakers discussed journalism across the Commonwealth during and after the pandemic and looked at ways in which the Commonwealth could stand up against the growing trend to attack journalism as well as journalists in member countries.

Click here for the report and video:

<http://commonwealthjournalists.org/2022/05/03/what-are-our-governments-doing-to-end-media-oppression-in-the-commonwealth/>



William Horsley at the 'Is the Commonwealth working?' conference

Editor's note: The Media freedom Principles came up for discussion during a pre-CHOGM conference on "Is the Commonwealth working?" organised by a number of Commonwealth organisations. [Click here to view the session](#) on Commonwealth Values which included CJA's William Horsley as a panellist. ■

BRANCH REPORTS

CJA Uganda's Alice Drito writes:

A Private Members Bill for 'The Computer Misuse Amendment Bill' will soon be tabled in Uganda's Parliament by Member of Parliament Kampala Central (Independent), Nsereko Muhammad.

The anti-media bill proposes tougher penalties for misuse of computers and abuse of social media platforms, disinformation, cyber bullying. It will be punishable by a heavy fine of the equivalent of US\$4,000 (Ush.15,000,000/= (15 million Uganda shillings) or a seven year jail term when the bill becomes law.

Uganda has a number of existing unfriendly media related laws and regulatory mechanisms, including cyber crimes.

For instance, the Computer Misuse Act (2011) provides for the "protected computer", programmes or data for the security details, defence, international relations, law enforcement as well as public safety.

Similar legislation includes the Regulations of Interception of Communications Act (2010).

Critics of the bill say that crafting legislation of this nature will leave media practitioners with their hands tied and the bill has also been branded as "ancient" and a project of the state which will work in favour of the enemies of media practitioners.

Putting in place more anti-media legislation will enhance the deepening of media freedom vulnerability and push Uganda down the media freedom index ladder.

World press freedom index bodies and rights-based organisations raised red

flags over Uganda's systematic and continued decline in the media freedom space.

Journalists and civil society activists have argued that these moves are part of an intensified state-inspired crack down on the media, with excessive use of force by the police and other security agents and see this as a cause for concern.

The peak of these hostilities took place during the country's militarized elections in 2021, marred with disruptions of social media platforms and internet, infringed freedom of expression and of media and citizen's access to information.

Media freedom is a litmus test for democracy and good governance. According to Reporters Without Borders, Uganda was the 135th out of 180 in 2022, down seven places, compared to 125th in 2021.

This year's global theme for World Press freedom Day was Journalism under 'Digital Siege', focusing on the digital era, freedom of expression, safety of journalists and access to information. The theme speaks volumes to Commonwealth member states and beyond. It reminds countries which have failed to pass the test of the Commonwealth's democratic principles and values on freedom of expression and media - one of the core tenets of democracy and good governance.

There's a chance to renew these commitments to press freedom at the Rwanda CHOGM. ■

CJA-UK The new Chair Raymond Whitaker writes:

On May 17, the CJA-UK held its AGM, the first in-person meeting since the start of the pandemic. I was confirmed as Chair, succeeding Rita Payne (you can read Rita's outgoing thoughts below), not only a long-time holder of the office but a former international President of the CJA.

In contrast to Rita's background in broadcasting, I come from the world of print journalism. I spent 22 years on the foreign news staff of the Independent titles, retiring as Foreign Editor of the Independent on Sunday. Previously I worked at the Financial Times, Reuters and newspapers in two Commonwealth countries, South Africa and Australia.

Though the pandemic played havoc with the work of the CJA-UK, making it impossible to organise virtually any activity for over two years, work continued throughout on one core issue: the ongoing campaign to get the Commonwealth to adopt a formal set of Media Principles that can genuinely help towards effective protection of independent journalism across the Commonwealth.

Media freedom is at the heart of the CJA, and the UK Branch has played a leading role with other Commonwealth professional associations in promoting the Principles. The AGM strongly endorsed the continuing efforts of William Horsley and David Page to move the campaign forward.

Also central to the post-pandemic revival of the CJA-UK is a [one-day conference](#), aimed at student journalists, to be held in Birmingham on June 30. Entitled “Excitement and Risk: Prospects for Journalism in the Digital Age”, it is timed to coincide with the Commonwealth Games and the parallel cultural festival in the same city.

The hybrid conference, to be held in-person and online, has an impressive line-up of media figures in the UK and around the Commonwealth. Students seeking to embark on a career in journalism should gain valuable insights and contacts. I am working with Richard Bourne, the moving spirit of the conference, in the hope that their engagement with the CJA will help to refresh and energise our membership.

Both in Birmingham and London, the CJA-UK is continuing to work closely with London University’s Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwS). Under Dr Sue Onslow’s term as Director until the end of 2022, the ICwS has an impressive schedule of recent and upcoming events highly relevant to the media, including one on the situation in Rwanda, which will take place before the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in that country. ■

CJA UK Youth Conference in Birmingham ahead of the Commonwealth Games. CJA UK executive member Richard Bourne writes about the event:

How the Games will help us inspire winners in student journalism

How best can the CJA reach and help budding journalists round the Commonwealth? A one-day conference in Birmingham, UK, a week after the summit in Kigali and three weeks ahead of the city's Commonwealth Games, sees the UK branch trying something new which may open fresh paths for the Association in future. The title is, "Excitement and Risk – Prospects for Journalism in the Digital Age."

The aim is to recruit 100 students, working on university papers and news websites in Britain, attending in a city centre building – joined by many more coming online. A varied and attractive programme is launched by Rachel Corp, Editor, ITV Network News, with Nancy Lee, in charge of TV and Radio Sport at CBC, Canada, making the concluding address. Other sessions cover reporting in situations of danger, sports reporting, the state of the Commonwealth on the eve of its main youth festival, and issues in higher education such as decolonisation of the curriculum and limited access.

Click here for more:

<http://commonwealthjournalists.org/2022/05/15/how-the-games-will-help-us-inspire-winners-in-student-journalism/> ■

Africa

Gambia: Human Rights Watch has raised concern over the first prosecution concerning rights violations committed during the Jammeh regime

[All Africa reports:](#) Human Rights Watch has raised concern over little outreach to Gambian communities regarding the trial of Bai Lowe, an alleged member of Jammeh's former hit squad, popularly known as the 'Junglers', currently facing trial in Germany for alleged serious crimes under international law.

The accused has been implicated in 3 'jungler' attacks that were carried out, alleged to have participated in the gruesome murder of journalists Deyda Hydara, Haruna Jammeh and Dawda Nyassi and in the attempted assassination of Lawyer Ousman Sillah, who was considered an obstacle to Jammeh by defending some of those who were targets of Jammeh's brutality.

The TRRC has also involved Bai Lowe in the murder of 59 West African Migrants in 2005.

The government of The Gambia has revealed that it is working closely with German authorities in evidence gathering and provision of information relevant to the alleged offences, but fails to give detailed disclosure concerning the supposed collaboration. ■



Bai Lowe. Source: *The Chronicle*

Nigeria: Premium Times writes: The [National Human Rights Commission](#) (NHRC) has said Nigerian journalists deserve a better deal in the discharge of their constitutional duties

The Executive Secretary of the NHRC, Tony Ojukwu, said this in a statement commemorating this year's World Press Freedom Day, which is marked globally on May 3 every year.

He said journalists deserve a better deal than they currently have, where many of them face poor working conditions as well as censorship, harassment, intimidation, and, sometimes, assassination.

According to him, the press, which battled hard to return Nigeria to its current democratic status and continues to struggle to sustain democracy and development, has to be supported in order to successfully execute its constitutional duties as the society's watchdog.

He reminded Nigerians to continue to see journalists as "The oxygen of democracy and agents of change and development".

Click here for the full article:

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/527405-world-press-freedom-day-nigerian-journalists-deserve-better-deal-nhrc.html> ■

Nigeria's Cybercrime Law

Forbes writes: Nigeria has been ordered to change its cybercrime law by the court of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), following concerns that it's being used to silence journalists and dissidents.

The case was filed by the non-governmental organization Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (Serap), and centred around Section 24 of the 2015 Cybercrime (Prohibition) Act. This criminalizes pornographic content, false or aggravating information, and cyberbullying - as well as 'insulting or stalking public officials online'.

The act mandates a prison term of up to three years or a fine of N7,000,000 for knowingly sending a false message online, with the aim of causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury,

criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred, ill will or needless anxiety to another.

Click here for more:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/emmawoollacott/2022/04/04/nigerian-cybercrime-law-ruled-illegal-over-human-rights-concerns/> ■

VOA News writes: Media Analysts Welcome Demand for Nigeria to Repeal Cybercrime Law

Abuja, Nigeria — "Even if they shut down all the courts in Nigeria, they must not shut down the court of public opinion," said Agba Jalingo.

The investigative journalist and founder of the news website CrossRiverWatch was speaking to VOA via phone from Lagos in Nigeria.

His commitment to media freedom is what gave Jalingo the resolve to keep going through one of the most difficult - and defining - moments of his career as a journalist.

He was imprisoned in 2019 on charges including cybercrime. His case triggered a chain of events that last month resulted in a landmark ruling.

A ruling by the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, in Accra, Ghana, ordered Nigerian authorities to amend the law. The presiding judge, Keikura Bangura, said the law flouted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Click here for more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/media-analysts-welcome-demand-for-nigeria-to-repeal-cybercrime-law/6547534.html> ■

Uganda

The Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) in Uganda strongly condemns the continued state-inspired attacks and baseless threats of journalists in Uganda by security operatives.

We are gravely concerned with the treatment of freelance journalist, Lawrence Kitatta of New Vision and Bukedde newspapers, forcing him to

flee to neighbouring Kenya for fear of his life. Kitatta fled after he suspected surveillance on his movements.

Authorities should immediately drop the charges against Kitatta to enable him to come back to do his work freely and re-unite with his family. It is outrageous for a journalist to be trailed by plain clothed men believed to be security operatives and forced flee his country simply because he is doing his job in a modern democracy.

Speaking to the Vice President of CJA International, Alice Drito from Nairobi, Kitatta said that he fears for his life and that of his family after being hunted by security agents at his workplace. He said that his house has been raided twice.

Journalists are not enemies of the state, Kitatta said. ■

CPJ on Lawrence Kitatta

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also writes: Ugandan authorities should investigate a February 22 assault on and several incidents of suspected surveillance of freelance journalist Lawrence Kitatta, and hold those responsible to account, the Committee to Protect Journalists said Thursday.

Kitatta, a photojournalist and reporter, has been in hiding and unable to work since March 11, he told CPJ via messaging app, after a group of 12 men thought to be plain-clothed government security officers were seen allegedly surveilling the offices of the Vision Group, a Kampala-based state-owned media company that publishes Kitatta's work in its New Vision and Bukedde newspapers, according to a [report](#) by New Vision and a [statement](#) by the local press rights group, the Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda.

Click here for more:

<https://cpj.org/2022/03/ugandan-journalist-lawrence-kitatta-goes-into-hiding-after-assault-suspected-surveillance/> ■

Americas

Canada reveals its Australia-style big tech news media bargaining code

Ottawa: The Canadian government has introduced a bill that will require tech platforms profiting from news content to negotiate a price for that content with the originating news outlets.

The proposed legislation is like a recent Australian bill but in the Canadian case, the country's arms-length agency, the Canadian radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, will decide which platforms and news publishers qualify as legitimate news generators.

The Canadian bill still has to be examined, and is subject to amendments by parliamentary committees.

If it ultimately passes into law, which is likely, the so-called Online News Act is expected to generate more than \$100 million annually and cover roughly 30% of Canadian newsroom costs.

The Online News Act defines a 'qualified Canadian journalism organization as one that gathers and disseminates "news content that is primarily focused on matters of general interest", employs at least two journalists, and reports a mix of hard news and typical newspaper content such as sports, arts and entertainment.

The bill, as currently written, will force major online platforms and news generators to negotiate a price. If they are unable to agree, an independent panel of assessors will make the decision for them.

The legislation is effectively targeting the five tech companies that account for nearly half of the world's advertising revenue.

According to industry reports, Google, Facebook, Alibaba, TikTok and Amazon generated ad sales of \$296 billion in 2021, or 46% of the world market.

Given the pushback by Google and Facebook in Australia, Google

Canada's reaction to the Canadian government bill was predictable and dire.

Vice-president Sabrina Geremia released the first salvo against the bill in an [online post](#). She claimed it would hurt the Canadian news industry and restrict Google searchers from finding quality content.

She added that Google is also concerned about an overly broad definition of what qualifies as a news outlet.

Canadian newspapers have experimented with catching Google's attention through Search Engine Optimisation-attractive language.

The theory is that if a Google search gives prominence to a story, it would push more readers to the news provider's own website.

Those efforts, which give control to Google, have largely failed because Google allegedly routinely thwarts that level of attempted manipulation.

The Canadian mainstream news business is arguably at its lowest ebb in generations with a large swath of the industry now owned by U.S. hedge funds that have slashed budgets and staff to a point where coverage of local news and local politics (in particular) has been reduced to bare bones level.

Related articles: <https://pressgazette.co.uk/google-canada-online-news-act/> ■

Asia

Bangladesh content producers debate the potential impact of the proposed Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms

Dhaka - [Voice of America reports](#):

Bangladesh is planning to introduce legislation, almost certain to be enacted, that experts say would curtail freedom of expression and the press and result in an effective government seizure of digital media.



Source: Voice of America

The government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League Party and in power since 2009, has already passed controversial laws, such as the Digital Security Act, in 2018, which has been used to put politicians, journalists and ordinary citizens in jail and, according to multiple human rights groups, to curtail freedom of expression.

The proposed [Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms](#) legislation would establish an aggressive set of rules for digital platforms.

The draft has been published on the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission website for public comment before being considered within the government and then sent to Bangladesh's parliament, the unicameral House of the Nation, where it is expected to pass. ■

Pakistan's new government urged to revisit plans for the Media Development Authority

[The News on Sunday writes](#): The former government planned to introduce the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) and had promulgated the draconian PECA ordinance aimed at clipping the wings of digital media. This underscores the importance of this form of journalism and the need to make concerted efforts to promote and support digital media all over the country...

Given the current political turmoil and the economic crisis, helping the digital media is not a top priority for the new government. However, the

government needs to realise that media is linked to the day-to-day affairs of the country and significantly affects how the people perceive the aforementioned crisis. Therefore, investing time and resources in aiding and reforming digital media is not a bad idea. ■

[OBITUARY Dawn Newspaper: Senior journalist Talat Aslam passes away in Karachi](#)

26 May: The journalists' community woke up on Wednesday morning to the devastating news that Talat Saleem Aslam, aka Tito, was no more. He was 67.



Talat Saleem Aslam. *Source: Twitter*

It was a great shock for all those who had been lucky enough to work with the creative, witty, simple, humble, caring but thorough professional journalist and editor that he was.

Suffering from kidney failure for some years now, Tito was undergoing regular dialysis, which had left him weak physically but in no way mentally.

He was buried at the DHA Phase-8 graveyard in the presence of a large number of his relatives, friends and admirers. ■

The Rural Media Network of Pakistan (RMNP) organised the World Press Freedom Day Roundtable on 10th May 2022 in Mubarakpur town. It was attended by regional leaders of mainstream political parties, academics, press freedom advocates, civil society representatives, presidents and general secretaries of five press clubs.

Speakers highlighted the safety issues confronted by rural journalists. Prince Bahawal Abbas Khan Abbasi heir apparent to Amir of Bahawalpur was keynote speaker. Press Club President Naushera Jadid highlighted his kidnapping and torturing incident while eleven five press clubs office bearers received " UNESCO Resource Material for Journalists in conflict. Five presidents of rural press clubs also received " Journalists Friend Awards" on the behalf of daily newspaper Nawa-I-AhmedpurEast. ■

Sri Lanka

[Global Voices reported on the challenges facing journalists covering Sri Lanka's economic crisis:](#) The cost of pursuing journalism - Yet Sri Lankan journalists continue to file reports.

Apart from rising costs, journalists covering the economic crisis and growing public protests around it have to prepare for the possibility of violence.

From gas masks to social media blocks, follow how journalists continued to work in Sri Lanka - <https://globalvoices.org/2022/05/17/covering-the-economic-crisis-in-sri-lanka-the-cost-of-pursuing-journalism/> ■

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) calls on the Sri Lankan government to respect press freedom amid nationwide state of emergency

The CPJ wrote in April: The government of Sri Lanka should respect press freedom, ensure unrestricted access to social media and communication platforms, and allow the media to work freely and independently during a nationwide state of emergency, the Committee to Protect Journalists said Monday.

On Friday, April 1, the Sri Lankan government declared the emergency, which allows authorities to conduct warrantless arrests, and imposed a curfew to contain protests after violent demonstrations over the country's economic crisis erupted last week, according to [news reports](#).

On the evening of March 31, Sri Lankan police and security forces arrested at least six journalists covering a protest outside President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's private residence in the Mirihana district of the capital

Colombo, according to a [report](#) by Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS), a local press freedom group; a [statement](#) by the Federation of Media Employees Trade Union (FMETU), a local network of trade unions for journalists and media workers; [news reports](#); and a JDS representative, who spoke to CPJ on the condition of anonymity due to fear of government reprisal.

Police arrested over 50 people at the protest, used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the demonstrators, and filed a complaint against over 50 individuals, including the six journalists. According to the JDS representative, the six have been accused of violating Section 120 of the [penal code](#), which makes it an offense to “excite feelings of disaffection” against the president or government. If convicted, the journalists could face up to two years in prison.

<https://cpj.org/2022/04/cpj-calls-on-sri-lankan-government-to-respect-press-freedom-amid-nationwide-state-of-emergency/> ■

Australia

[The Conversation reflects on the changing face of coverage of Australian elections](#): More than 30 years ago, it became obvious to editorial executives that having their senior political correspondents travelling with the leaders was a waste of time and resources.

Instead, the senior correspondents were encouraged to base themselves in Canberra and to be selective about where and when they went on the road. They attended campaign launches and major set-pieces such as leaders’ debates or National Press Club appearances, but otherwise they focused on analysing issues and trends as they emerged.

Relatively junior staff took their places “on the bus”.

The reason it became a waste of time and precious resources to keep the senior people on the bus was that the party apparatchiks and campaign managers imposed increasingly limited access to the leaders, and increasingly absurd secrecy about the travel schedule. ■

[The Press Gazette](#) on a news content licensing deal with Google in Australia:

A group of 24 small Australian publishers has secured a content licensing deal with technology giant [Google](#). The deal, brokered by a billionaire's charity on behalf of members of the [Public Interest Publishers Alliance](#), was facilitated by Australia's [divisive](#) News Media Bargaining Code. Advocates of the legislation, and those hoping similar laws are adopted in other countries, say this week's deal should challenge "baseless criticisms" of the code.

[Click here](#) for more. ■

Europe

Malta

[LovinMalta newspaper writes](#): The Maltese government will be providing financial assistance to newspaper publishers due to a "substantial increase" in the price of paper.

The fund was announced following a meeting held with Prime Minister Robert Abela at Auberge de Castille, where the committee of Malta's newspaper publishers together with the Institute of Maltese Journalists (IGM) discussed their situation and concerns.

They said that around 66 journalists work in the print media sector full-time together with several part-timers, and issue 14 different newspapers between them, published daily, weekly, and on Sundays.

The government said that the newspaper is "an integral part of contemporary media" and has a "key role as a strong instrument of democracy".

In view of this crucial role, the government was "stepping in" and assisting the sector accordingly. A fund of €500,000 has been allocated to support the work of printed journalism that has been impacted by the current extraordinary circumstances, in addition to the major challenges already being experienced by this sector.

The price of paper has increased as a result of a number of factors, including ongoing shipping issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the war in Ukraine. ■

United Kingdom

Journalists from Mail Online, Sky News and Reuters have defended UK coverage of the war in Ukraine from suggestions of double standards

Press Gazette writes: The Russian invasion has received more coverage in the UK than any other global conflict of recent years and prompted questions over why that is. The ongoing Ethiopian civil war for instance is believed to have been more deadly, but received only a fraction of the coverage.

The subject was discussed at the UK Society of Editors conference in London on Wednesday, 11 May.

Click here for more: <https://pressgazette.co.uk/journalists-defend-ukraine-coverage-double-standards/> ■

Is social media the 'Wild West' of the media world?

[From the Press Gazette:](#) BBC digital director - 'Social media platforms are often working against us'

BBC digital director Naja Nielsen accused social media companies of “working against” journalists as she called on publishers to build up audiences on their own platforms.

Nielsen also described social media platforms as a “pure Wild West” full of “bullying, violence, racism [and] hate crimes” and showed support for tighter regulation of the tech giants.

“I believe we [news companies] are actually not competing with each other any more,” said Nielsen, appearing on a panel on social media at this week’s Society of Editors conference in London. ■

Pacific

[Global Voices writes:](#) The Chinese foreign minister's visit to the Solomon Islands has been shrouded in secrecy and press restrictions

Local journalists have threatened to boycott the state visit

Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Damukana Sogavare met with China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Prime Minister's Office in Honiara, the country's capital, on May 26. However, Solomon Islands journalists have criticized officials for seemingly imposing press restrictions during the visit and failing to offer adequate information about the meetings or policy agendas.

Also Peter Greste — the director for the Alliance of Journalists' Freedom and a professor of journalism at Macquarie University [wrote for ABC News:](#)

China's visit to Pacific highlights growing threat to journalism in the region

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's whirlwind visit to the Pacific has seen press conferences and media access heavily restricted, highlighting the growing threat to journalism in the region.

— what has played out during the visit to the region was troubling but not particularly surprising.

"What we've seen in this particular trip is the latest and perhaps the more extreme version of a trend that we're seeing play out in the Solomon Islands, in Fiji, and across the region," Professor Greste said. ■

Outgoing CJA-UK President and CJA International president emeritus, Rita Payne writes:



Rita Payne. *Source: Rita Payne Media*

CJA Reflections

During my 30 years at the BBC, where I was appointed Asia Editor for BBC World Television, I had the privilege to meet many leading politicians, academics and activists from the Commonwealth. When I retired from the BBC in 2008, I had no clear thoughts on what I would do next. I came to know Derek Ingram, founding President of the Commonwealth Journalists Association, because as a recognised authority on Commonwealth matters he was regularly interviewed in the media, including a programme which I edited, *Asia Today*.

It was Derek who suggested that I might like to join the CJA and he invited me to join him for dinner with Hassan Shahriar, a dynamic journalist from Bangladesh who was current President. Derek had backed Hassan because of his firm belief that the leadership of the Association should not be Britocentric and that the presidentship should pass on to someone from the global south. Relatively soon after I joined, I was elected chair of the UK branch at a very informal meeting in Derek's house. Since the CJA did not have a fixed office, Derek's home served as our informal headquarters.

Early days

Under Derek Ingram, Patrick Keatley, David Spark and other distinguished journalists who were instrumental in establishing the CJA in 1978, the Association had become a bastion for journalists from around the Commonwealth. It ran training programmes and organised ground-breaking conferences in many Commonwealth countries. When I was approached to stand for election as International President, I was hesitant about taking on the role since my predecessors had all been print journalists while most of my experience was in TV and radio. However, I accepted the opportunity and was elected as the first female President in 2012 at the conference in Malta. My network of contacts built up at the BBC proved to be helpful in persuading prominent figures to speak at CJA events. Until Covid restrictions severely curtailed our activities our regular debates and discussions on topical issues were attracting large audiences and helping to raise the profile of the CJA in the UK.

Suppression of the Media

Sadly, conditions for journalists to report freely on abuses of power and hold governments to account are increasingly dangerous. The 2022 edition of the World Press Freedom Index, which assesses the state of journalism in 180 countries and territories, paints a disturbing picture of the state of the media proving that journalism remains a dangerous profession. In 2021 alone, 293 journalists were imprisoned across the world; 28 were killed. Of those 28 cases, 22 remain unsolved.

The Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) highlights the disastrous effects of news and information chaos – the effects of a globalised and unregulated online information space that encourages fake news and propaganda. The main findings of the report highlighted growing divisions within democratic societies as a result of partisan media following what is described as the “Fox News” model. The spread of disinformation has been amplified by the way social media functions.

Media and Governance Principles

A significant boost to the CJA’s efforts to counter attempts to suppress media freedom has been the support of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. The CJA is immensely grateful to Professor Philip Murphy, the previous director of the Institute and his successor Dr. Sue Onslow for their staunch backing for the Association. Dr. Kiran Hassan a Senior

Fellow at the Institute deserves special mention for her tireless work in helping to organise joint events with the CJA. Under Dr. Onslow's leadership the ICWS has established itself as a hub for defending media freedom. It is a key partner with the CJA in drawing up the Commonwealth Principles on Freedom of Expression and the Role of the Media in Good Governance. The Principles are intended to serve as a set of guidelines to assist member states and their agencies, as well as Commonwealth legislatures and judiciaries, civil society and media, to make appropriate contributions to promoting and developing democratic, accountable and open societies, in accordance with Commonwealth values, international norms and standards, and the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative was welcomed by the Commonwealth Secretary General, Patricia Scotland.

Conferences

The CJA's biennial conferences held in different Commonwealth countries have been central to enabling members to meet face to face, share information about media developments and review future strategy. Unfortunately, funding problems have meant that the intervals between conferences have been getting bigger.

I had to use my persuasive powers to raise funds for the conference in London in 2016. My contacts at Google, Reuters Foundation, the Telegraph Group of newspapers and one or two other sponsoring organisations helped to raise money for the conference. By general agreement, the gathering was deemed to be a tremendous success. Having served for four years as President, I stepped down at the London conference and was succeeded by Mahendra Ved, the president of the Indian chapter and Jayanta Chowdhury was elected as Secretary, CJA International and General Secretary, India Chapter.

According to tradition, the home country branch of the President is responsible for organising the CJA conference. Faced by the restrictions during the lockdown, the CJA branch in India broke new ground by hosting the first virtual conference from New Delhi in March 2021. Mahendra Ved, Jayanta Chowdhury, and their colleagues assembled an impressive range of speakers from India and other Commonwealth states. The conference ended with the election of Chris Cobb as the new President of the CJA. Chris, with his long-term interest in digital technology, is well placed to move the CJA forward.

Every organisation has its peaks and troughs and the decision by the Commonwealth Foundation and UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to stop funding organisations like the CJA has been a severe blow for the association. When I joined the CJA, we were able to pay for Bryan Cantley who was Executive Editor at the time. He took care of the running of the CJA including planning and organising conferences until he sadly died in 2013. His successor, Pat Perkel, also from Canada, held the association together with her exceptional diplomatic and organisational skills until it became clear that we could no longer afford to pay her and she moved on to a better paid position. The responsibility for running the organisation fell on overstretched executive members who do not get paid for their work for the CJA.

Promoting young Commonwealth journalists

The CJA has come a long way since Derek Ingram, possibly one of the first British journalists of his generation to question the tradition of white middle-aged men reporting from what were then termed developing countries, made it his mission to train and promote journalists so that they could report and comment on developments in their own countries. Throughout his life, Derek was uncompromising in his deep commitments to the Commonwealth, media freedom, human rights and the training of young journalists from developing countries. Following his death in 2018, his legacy has been used, according to his wishes, to set up a CJA/Derek Ingram bursary at Wolfson College, Cambridge University, for journalists from the Commonwealth. Derek had a chequered and eventful career. Having worked for The Daily Mail for 17 years he founded the Gemini News Service (GNS) in 1967 and edited until 1993. Many notable journalists from Africa and Asia owe their success to the GNS for launching their careers. I am indebted to Derek myself for publishing my first reports after moving to the UK in Gemini News Service.

The media landscape has been transformed since I joined the CJA fourteen years ago when there was just print, radio and TV. Since then, there has been a proliferation of media outlets with digital technology channelling information from a bewildering multiplicity of sources. We are bombarded with news, fake news and misleading information, especially on social media. The CJA could play a vital

role in helping young journalists to deal with this information overload. Many of these issues will be discussed at a CJA-UK conference in Birmingham on June 30 specifically for young journalists.

The media landscape has been transformed since I joined the CJA fourteen years ago when there was just print, radio and TV. Since then, there has been a proliferation of media outlets with digital technology channelling information from a bewildering multiplicity of sources. We are bombarded with news, fake news and misleading information, especially on social media. The CJA could play a vital role in helping young journalists to deal with this information overload. Many of these issues will be discussed at a CJA-UK conference in Birmingham on June 30 specifically for young journalists. The overarching theme of the conference is ‘Excitement and Risk: Prospects for Journalism in the Digital Age’. The hope is that young journalists will leave the conference with a greater understanding of the benefits and risks of new media and learn to value, as I did, the integrity and vision of Derek Ingram and his fellow journalists who created the CJA more than forty years ago. With Chris Cobb as International President and Raymond Whitaker in position as UK chair I am pleased to bow out, confident that the CJA is in good hands. ■

Before we wrap up...

[News Rewired](#) held an end-of-May conference to explore **media in a polarised world**. [Organiser Adam Tinworth writes](#): Can news tackle polarisation and mend democracy?

Polarisation has been on the rise in many societies for the past decade. Is news stoking the conflict — and can better reporting be part of the solution?

Is it inevitable that news will stoke polarisation? Or can great reporting help bring communities together? A panel of experts from diverse parts of journalism explore the problems — and some solutions.

Has climate reporting fallen down the agenda?

The [Covering Climate Now](#) project reports that ‘Nations Are Nowhere on Their Climate Commitments, and Too Few Journalists Are Holding Them Accountable’.

Newsletter Information

Editor

Debbie Ransome

Editorial Team

Chris Cobb

Alice Drito

William Horsley

Rita Payne

Formatting

Athira Suresh

Six months ago in Glasgow, Scotland, world leaders at the COP26 climate summit hailed themselves for “keeping alive” the Paris Agreement goal to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Skeptics noted, however, that few countries were walking the walk vis-à-vis their climate rhetoric—and if the 1.5-degree-C target was alive, it was [“on life support,”](#) in the words of UN Secretary General António Guterres. To make good on their COP26 commitments, global leaders would need to act fast, with purpose and precision.

Flash forward to the present, and a raft of separate crises—a stubborn and frequently resurgent pandemic; Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; inflation; and, in the United States, profound attacks on long-standing abortion rights—would seem to have stalled whatever momentum came out of COP26. On Monday, Alok Sharma, the UK minister who presided over COP26, was [in Scotland](#) to mark a half-year since the summit. There, he acknowledged how dramatically the world had changed in a short time, but pleaded that new crises “should increase, not diminish, our determination to deliver on what the world agreed here in Glasgow.” Russia’s war in particular, Sharma added, had thrown “into stark relief” [the need for clean energy.](#) ■

[Contact us and join the CJA if you’d like to make a contribution and share your thoughts](#) with fellow Commonwealth journalists.