



Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

April 2023

## President's Report

The CJA newsletter reports all manner of abuse of journalists and journalism across the Commonwealth. Sadly, there is never any shortage of material.

But now we have another major obstacle in our efforts to bring facts to our readers, viewers and listeners.

It's fake news.

Not the 'fake news' we associate with former U.S. President Donald Trump. He coined the phrase to describe anything written or broadcast about him that he doesn't like.

But the sort of fake news generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Ironically, it is fake images of Trump generated by AI in recent weeks that has heightened concern about AI's troubling potential.

The images of Trump you see here are part of a package that blogger Eliot Higgins generated using an art tool called Midjourney.

Higgins generated them for fun and circulated them on Twitter, after Trump announced he was about to be charged for one of the many crimes for which he is being investigated.

The images are deliberately absurd. They feature Trump in numerous poses including lifting weights and cleaning a jailhouse toilet.

As the images circulated social media, they didn't fool all of the people all of the time. Most appear to have got the joke. Some didn't. Those that didn't were outraged by Trump's arrest. Like all fake news—genuine fake news!—people tend to believe what conforms to their existing prejudices. They see no need to check its authenticity.

And that's the problem. As we've experienced with every aspect of the Internet, if it can be corrupted by criminals, conspiracy theorists and rogue states, corrupted it will be.

So what of [ChatGPT](#) rolled out at towards the end of last year? And [Bing](#) and [Bard](#) following close behind but still something of a mystery as regards their capabilities.

ChatGPT is an AI-driven tool that allows users to have human-like conversations. It can also answer questions and help with writing emails and essays. And news stories?

In a remarkable intervention on March 29, a group of influential tech leaders [called for a temporary halt](#) to AI development because of concerns of its potential negative consequences.

Let's return to those Trump images.



Trump's AI images that went viral. *Source: Eliot Higgins/Twitter*

Al Tompkins, Senior Faculty for Broadcast and Online at the [Poynter Institute of Media Studies](#) in Florida, USA offers some great advice on how to spot a fake image.

“Look for oddities, called remnants,” he advises. “This is your best shot at an easy detection. I find that most often AI has trouble with hair and jawlines. Also look for mismatched earrings and eyeglasses.” (Other experts recommend looking for strangely shaped fingers).

Tompkins also suggests:

[ThisXDoesNotExist](#)

[MakeUseof.com](#) which also recommends:

[Spot the Deepfake](#) is a Microsoft quiz to educate about fakes.

[MIT's Detect Fakes](#) is also a quiz.

['Which Face Is Real?'](#) is a test that might surprise you.

As well as educational, they are all good fun.

This AI technology in its current incarnation is so new that it is impossible to say how it will develop or where it will take us - as impossible as it was back in the day to predict the many unintended negative consequences of the internet.

Essentially, they are the latest generations of search engines that comb the internet for information but apparently have no capability to differentiate between fact and fiction, or between truth and conspiracy theories.

Many humans have that difficulty so why shouldn't a machine?

Chris Cobb is CJA President. ■

---

---

More on this topic:

Did you know about the [BBC's Disinformation Watch newsletter?](#)  
[I thought I was immune to being fooled online. Then I saw the pope in a coat](#) – Guardian opinion ■

---

---

Bangladesh – CJA international executive member Shyamol Dutta has been elected as General Secretary of the Dhaka Press Club.

UK – CJA President Emeritus Rita Payne received an award honouring her achievements at an event organised by Educating Beyond Borders.

---

CJA Vice President Drito Alice writes from Uganda: The arrest of a Ugandan Journalist, Andrew Arinaitwe in early March presents yet another lack of readiness by the authorities to embrace freedom of expression and press.



Andrew Arinaitwe. *Source: CPJ*

Arinaitwe was arrested at a school while investigating a story on alleged sexual abuse.

Arinaitwe, a freelance journalist on assignment for the weekly magazine [The Continent](#), was charged with criminal trespass. He was imprisoned but later released on bail following pressure from media freedom and human rights groups.

Legal harassments, arrests, detentions, imprisonments and other mechanisms have become commonplace as Ugandan authorities try to silence journalists and frustrate them as they go about their work.

The authorities are in conflict with the Commonwealth Charter which embraces democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and free, responsible and pluralistic media among other core values.

As we celebrate 10 years of Commonwealth Charter, Commonwealth member countries, including Uganda, must renew their commitment to press freedom and embrace the Charter's spirit of good governance and freedom of expression.

The CJA had been among the 86 groups that developed a joint statement promoted by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. CJA UK executive committee members William Horsley and David Page had been part of the Media Freedom principles negotiating team. The principles were [adopted by Commonwealth Law Ministers in 2022](#).

Following the November 2022 Commonwealth Law Ministers' adoption of the Media Freedom principles, David Page wrote that this move:

“Must be seen as a hopeful sign – official recognition that more needs to be done to strengthen the Commonwealth’s performance in this field. But that will also require over the course of the next eighteen months the development of a more detailed plan of action to address some of the key areas of present concern. The CJA in its response to the Mauritius decision has called on the Commonwealth to match its words with action: to review over-restrictive laws, to ensure the safety of journalists, to end the high incidence of impunity and bring those responsible for the killing or injuring of journalists to justice. It also calls on the Commonwealth to align itself more closely with the UN Action Plan on the safety of journalists and to strengthen its implementation by member states. The working group of Commonwealth organisations which drafted the original principles has offered to work closely with the Secretariat to develop such a plan of action. Now that the Law Ministers have made their decision, we hope a stronger partnership can be developed to turn the media principles into a more positive reality.”

[Click here](#) to read David’s full statement.

---

### **In other media freedom news:**

The London-based Institute of Commonwealth Studies now produces a monthly [Media Freedom update](#) which you can access online.

Press freedom featured at a March media freedom conference hosted by the UK Society of Editors. In [a speech delivered at the conference](#), BBC journalist Clive Myrie said:

*Press freedom is not any longer for some people a signifier of a healthy democracy. For the powerful, for the zealous true believers in any political party, for the financial backers and influencers, freedom of the press is annoying, frustrating, even dangerous. A plurality of opinion is not what they want. They seek propaganda and the bolstering of their own narrow point of view. They seek affirmation, not debate. They want to shut down conversations, not open them up.*

Media freedom also came up at a January conference organised by the **Commonwealth Round Table**, exploring the challenges facing the Commonwealth. In a panel session on human rights, press freedom and democracy, a wide range of issues affecting Commonwealth journalists were discussed in [the panel and during the Q&A session](#). ■

---

---

## Africa

### Cameroon

[Reuters](#) writes: A Cameroonian businessman has been charged with complicity in torture, a spokesperson for his business group said on Saturday, after he was arrested last month in connection with the murder of a prominent journalist, [Martinez Zogo](#).

Businessman Jean Pierre Amougou Belinga was transferred from a detention centre and officially charged in Kondengui prison in the capital Yaounde on Saturday, said Ines Arielle Zamo Belinga, spokesperson for his business group Groupe L'Anecdote. ■

---

### Nigeria

[The Committee to Protect Journalists has asked](#) the Nigerian authorities to thoroughly investigate incidents involving journalists and media workers harassed and attacked while covering state elections and hold the perpetrators to account. The CPJ said that at least 28 members of the press were obstructed, harassed, or attacked while covering gubernatorial and state assembly elections across Nigeria on March 18 and 19, according to news reports and journalists who spoke with CPJ. ■

[The CPJ](#) also reports: A federal court in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, on Monday ordered the detention of CrossRiverWatch publisher Agba Jalingo for allegedly publishing false news that caused "annoyance, ill will and insult," in violation of Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act, according to a [report](#) by the outlet and CrossRiverWatch editor Jonathan Ugbal, who spoke to CPJ by phone. The charge relates to a June 2022 CrossRiverWatch article alleging that Elizabeth Alami Frank Ayade, sister-in-law to Cross River State Governor Ben Ayade, paid someone to take a law school exam for her.

"Authorities in Nigeria should swiftly ensure the release of CrossRiverWatch publisher Agba Jalingo, drop the charges against him, and allow him to work freely," said Angela Quintal, CPJ's Africa program coordinator, in New York. "Frivolous detention and criminalization of journalism in Nigeria have become far too commonplace, and legislators must reform the country's laws to prevent this." ■



---

## Rwanda

[The Commonwealth Human Rights Institute has called for](#) an independent, impartial and effective investigation into the death of the Rwandan journalist John Williams Ntwali. The CHRI said that 86 civil society organizations and media associations had joined a 31 January [appeal](#). The CHRI said that a “credible process should be carried out given the hasty conviction of the driver of the car allegedly involved in a collision with the motorcycle he was travelling on and the lack of transparency surrounding the investigation”. Ntwali was editor of the privately-owned The Chronicles newspaper which exposed human rights abuses in Rwanda; he had [received death threats](#) and had expressed heightened concerns for his safety before his death. ■

---

## South Africa

[The Conversation Africa writes](#) about the role played by tabloid news coverage of Covid-19 in South Africa. It said that the tabloids had played an important role in reaching audiences left out by mainstream print media during the pandemic. ■

---

## Togo

[The Committee to Protect Journalists writes:](#) (March 17, 2023) In response to news [reports](#) that a Togolese court on Wednesday sentenced journalists Ferdinand Ayité and Isidore Kouwonou to three years in prison for insulting authorities, the Committee to Protect Journalists released the following statement of condemnation:

“Togolese authorities should not contest the appeals of L’Alternative publisher Ferdinand Ayité and editor-in-chief Isidore Kouwonou, and must ensure that independent journalism can continue to hold those in power to account,” said Angela Quintal, CPJ’s Africa program coordinator. “Public officials must be held to high standards of scrutiny and legitimate criticism should never be criminalized.”



Isidore Kouwonou and Ferdinand Ayité. *Source: Media Foundation for West Africa*

At the sentencing hearing on Wednesday, March 15, the court in Lomé, the capital, also fined the journalists 3 million Central African francs (US\$4,860) each, those reports said, noting that Ayité and Kouwonou are presently in hiding. The L'Alternative newspaper issued a statement, which CPJ reviewed, saying a warrant had been issued for the journalists' arrests. ■

---

## Uganda

CJA's Drito Alice writes: The Computer Misuse Act 2011 Section 25 on offensive communication has suffered a decisive major defeat and was declared null and void in a Constitutional Court verdict in Uganda on 10 January.

Section 25 of the law stated “any person who willfully and repeatedly uses electronic communication to disturb the peace, quiet or right of privacy of any person with no purpose of legitimate communication whether or not a conversation ensues commits a misdemeanor and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty-four currency points (Ush.480, 000, equivalent of about \$126) or imprisonment not exceeding one year or both.”

The law has been used as a weapon by the state to enforce arbitrary arrests, oppress, detain, promote self-censorship and silence journalists and rights activists, human rights defenders and political opposition in Uganda.

In the judgment, lead Justice Kenneth Kakuru (RIP) had stated that the impugned Section 25 was vague, overly broad, unjustifiable and ambiguous in the legal context in definition of what constitutes offensive communication.

It was ruled that the law shrinks civic voices and space, is not in conformity with Uganda's Constitution and violates accepted human rights standard practice of freedom of expression and media in modern democracy.

The Constitutional Court ruling comprised of a panel of five Justices including; Deputy Chief Justice Richard Buteera, Kenneth Kakuru (RIP), Elizabeth Musoke, Monica Mugenyi and Geoffrey Kiryabwire.

The derailed communication law came two months after the signing of the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022 by President Yoweri Museveni in October 2022 in the midst of stiff criticism from international media freedom bodies, [human rights bodies](#) and journalists. ■

---

---

# Asia

[Reuters writes](#): India leads world in cutting internet access for 5th year in a row.

It added: “India imposed by far the highest number of internet shutdowns in the world in 2022, internet advocacy watchdog Access Now said on Tuesday, as the country topped the list for the fifth successive year.

“Out of 187 internet shutdowns globally recorded by Access Now, 84 took place in India, including 49 in Indian-administered Kashmir, the New York-based digital rights advocacy group said in a [report published](#) in February.”

**BBC India office raids:** The Press Club of India has strongly criticised the government over the searching of the BBC offices in Delhi by the tax authorities. [A statement said](#) the action against an international broadcasting network would damage the reputation and image of India as the world’s largest democracy, and it urged the government to “restrain its agencies from misusing their powers to intimidate the media”.

[Reuters wrote on the subject that](#) the BBC tax raids shine a light on shrinking media freedom under Prime Minister Modi. ■

---

## Pakistan

Clashes between police and Imran Khan supporters:

[The International Federation of Journalists \(IFJ\) writes](#) that the ‘Pakistani news and current affairs channel ARY News has had its license suspended for broadcasting clips of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, whose speeches Pakistani authorities are claiming undermines state institutions and incites enmity. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and

its Pakistan affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) call on the Pakistani authorities to immediately withdraw transmission suspension orders and restore the license of the TV channel.’

Dawn newspapers said that a US human rights report cited Pakistan as remaining a [‘country of concern’](#).

The paper said that the report notes that during this period, judges ordered media regulatory agencies to enforce constitutional bans on content critical of the military or judiciary, “compelling media to censor politicians’ speeches and election-related coverage deemed anti-judiciary or antimilitary.”

Organisations that monitored press freedom “reported direct pressure on media outlets to avoid content on possible military influence over judicial proceedings against politicians and positive reporting of opposition leaders,” the report added.

[Dawn newspaper also reported](#) on how the international media tried to cover attempts to arrest former Prime Minister Imran Khan. ■

---

# Europe

Times of Malta Editorial: Broadcasting reform needed now

The paper said that TV Malta and the country’s Broadcasting Authority had failed to act efficiently on opposition complaints about not receiving impartial treatment. [In its editorial](#), the Times of Malta called for broadcasting reform. ■

---

## United Kingdom

[The Press Gazette reports](#): Reporters from the Guardian, the Mirror and Independent newspapers were excluded from a trip to Rwanda with UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman. The Home Office told the Gazette that it is not always possible to invite all media outlets on every trip.

The Gazette said that the Guardian’s editor-in-chief Katharine Viner has condemned a “chilling” pattern of behaviour from the Government after

her newspaper was excluded. The Mirror’s editor-in-chief Alison Phillips similarly warned of “really damaging” consequences from the way press places were handled on the visit.

The Press Gazette said that it understood that a crew of Africa-based [BBC](#) journalists did manage to report on the Rwanda visit even though the BBC had not been initially invited. The Gazette said that the BBC Africa journalists negotiated accreditation with the Home Office and Rwandan authorities from Rwanda. ■



Suella Braverman. *Source: Sky News*

---

### Discussing UK cancel culture

A media panel organised by [the London Press Club](#) has been focusing in London on the challenges of cancel culture. The Press Club reported that: “the editorial line-up at the event held at Stationers’ Hall delved deep into the origins of cancel culture and its roots, whether it actually exists, its impact on society, media and free speech, and its relationship with “wokeism”.

The panel spoke of different perspectives on the definition of cancel culture, and linked back to examples including social media responses surrounding Prince Harry and Meghan, and Jeremy Clarkson’s controversial Meghan Markle column in The Sun.

Editor of Glamour UK Deborah Joseph noted her experience of generational differences in news rooms, and the implications that had in defining cancel culture and what constitutes being cancelled.” ■

---

**British journalist and presenter Laura Trevelyan** [announced in March](#) that she’s leaving the BBC to become an advocate for slavery reparations. The announcement followed her pledging £100,000 (US\$120,000) in reparations after presenting a 2022 documentary in Grenada exploring the role her family had played in the island’s slavery history. Trevelyan, who

---

has often fronted the BBC's American news programme, [said that more families should look](#) at their ancestors' role in the slave trade. ■



Laura Trevelyan. *Source: The Guardian*

Meanwhile, the UK Guardian newspaper [apologised publicly on 29 March](#) after its commissioned research indicated that its founder and his backers in the 1820s had made their wealth in connection with transatlantic slavery. The paper's trustees published the research and announced a programme of what it called "restorative justice". The programme will include increased reporting in the Caribbean, South America and Africa and on Black communities in the UK and US, a fund to support American and Jamaica communities affected by the founders' slavery interests and a fund to expand journalism training. More details can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/2023/mar/28/the-scott-trust-publishes-review-into-the-guardians-historical-connections-with-transatlantic-slavery-issuing-an-apology-and-outlining-a-programme-of-restorative-justice>. ■

---

**BBC Gary Lineker row:** How do other publishers control social media use? Following [a showdown](#) with its most highly-paid freelancer, Gary Lineker, the BBC is reviewing its social media guidelines. [The Press Gazette](#) looked at how other publishers protect themselves online. ■

---

[Prince Harry made an unexpected appearance](#) on 27 March at the UK High Court as legal proceedings began in a high-profile privacy case. The Duke of Sussex and other individuals are suing Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL), publishers of the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday. The duke, singer Sir Elton John and actresses Sadie Frost and Liz Hurley are among the individuals who are alleging unlawful information gathering. The publisher has described the allegations as "preposterous smears". ■

# AND FINALLY...

## Newsletter Information

### Editor

Debbie Ransome

### Editorial Review Team

Chris Cobb

Rita Payne

### Formatting

Athira Suresh

Indian journalist [Yashraj Sharma](#) was the winner of the Thomson Foundation's Young Journalist Award 2022. [Check here](#) for other winners within and beyond the Commonwealth. You can also sign up to follow news on the 2023 nominations process. ■

---

---

Find out more about the [Commonwealth Journalists Association](#) ■

---

---