

the PEACE JOURNALIST

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- Nigerian press stirs religious animosity

Special Report: PJ and Covid-19



Discussing PJ, trauma, and reporting divided societies in

Northern Ireland

Cover photo--
Paul Gallagher, WAVE Truama Centre in Belfast, by Allan Leonard

The **Peace Journalist** is a semi-annual publication of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. The Peace Journalist is dedicated to disseminating news and information for teachers, students, and practitioners of PJ.

Submissions are welcome from all. We are seeking shorter submissions (300-500 words) detailing peace journalism projects, classes, proposals, etc. We also welcome longer submissions (800-1200 words) about peace or conflict sensitive journalism projects or programs, as well as academic works from the field. We do NOT seek general submissions about peace projects, but are instead focused only on articles with a strong media angle.

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What is Peace Journalism?

Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. (Adapted from Lynch/McGoldrick, *Peace Journalism*). Peace Journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable.

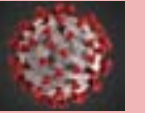
A number of valuable peace journalism resources, including curriculum packets, online links, as well as back issues of *The Peace Journalist* can be found at www.park.edu/peacecenter.

Center for Global Peace Journalism

The Center for Global Peace Journalism works with journalists, academics, and students worldwide to improve reporting about conflicts, societal unrest, reconciliation, solutions, and peace. Through its courses, workshops, lectures, this magazine, blog, and other resources, the Center encourages media to reject sensational and inflammatory reporting, and produce counter-narratives that offer a more nuanced view of those who are marginalized—ethnic/racial/religious minorities, women, youth, and migrants.

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Special Report: PJ and Covid-19



Pandemic coverage informed by PJ principles

By Steven Youngblood

There is no more challenging situation for a journalist than covering a traumatic event, especially when this event affects the journalist, her family, and her colleagues. Add to this difficulty the need for the reporter to explain complex scientific information, and the necessity of being factual without creating panic, and one sees the challenge that covering the Covid-19 pandemic creates for journalists.

The principles of peace journalism, as they do for so many other types of reporting (about refugees, elections, civic unrest, race, terrorism, etc.), can provide valuable guidance to reporters who are covering perhaps the most difficult story of their careers.

Three peace journalism experts from Kenya, the UK, and Cyprus offer some interesting perspectives on the application of peace journalism to covering Covid-19. In email interviews, two of these experts emphasize responsible media's role in supporting collectivity and rejecting polarization.

Prof. Fredrick Ogenga, Director of the Center for Media, Democracy, Peace and Security Rongo University, Kenya, believes that peace journalists should apply traditional African principles to Covid-19 reporting. "'We are in this together' (as reflected by these principles) should be applied to coverage of Covid-19," Ogenga observed.

He recommends Covid-19 reporting using the principles of Utu (humanity), Umoja (unity), and Harambee (collective responsibility). In the book *Peace Journalism in East Africa*, Ogenga elaborates about these principles. He writes, "The idea of using African lenses for peacebuilding and conflict (and trauma) reporting...is a refresh-

ing path toward transformative journalism in Africa by imbibing pan-African institutional and methodological approaches and African philosophies of Utu (humanity), Umoja (unity), and Harambee (collective responsibility) as news values as opposed to copy and paste journalism that leads to sensationalism..." (2020-Routledge).

Giuliana Tiripelli, author of *Media and Peace in the Middle East* and senior lecturer in digital journalism and media discourse at DeMontfort University, Leicester, UK, concurs, especially when it comes to the notions of collectivity. She writes, "At this moment it is essential to bring hope and trust, and to avoid polarisation, and PJ has a great role to play in this direction. The best thing that journalists can do now is to make sure they inform the public fully and clearly about how they have to behave, but also focus on stories where similar challenges have been won by communities acting as a whole (e.g. Ebola, others), so that people believe that this challenge can be won, and adopt appropriate behaviours based on a strong sense of community.

"Stories focusing on the community itself may also help to support a constructive rediscovery of local identity and the benefits of interdependence (per Prof. Ogenga's Utu, Umoja, and Harambee). It's a massive cultural shock to access this new dimension, for many citizens who were supportive of individualistic philosophies, and PJ needs to support a peaceful transition 'back to reality,'" Prof. Tiripelli said.

Steven Youngblood is director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism (Park University), author of *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices*, and editor of the *Peace Journalist* magazine.

A third PJ scholar and author, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Metin Ersoy, faculty of communication and media studies, new media and journalism and department vice chair, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus, believes peace journalists should seek guidance from three principles originally articulated by Dr. Johan Galtung, the originator of the concept of peace journalism. These principles are truth orientation, people orientation, and solution orientation.

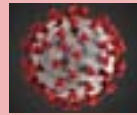
Dr. Ersoy writes, "Peace journalists needed to uncover all cover-ups related with the Covid-19. The 'propaganda' here means frightening people, giving false information, and causing trauma in the public. Another problem of the journalists while they are covering Covid-19 news stories is 'numbers.' Instead of focusing on the numbers, journalists should focus on the people. We need more people-oriented stories about Covid-19 to understand the realities. However, journalists prefer to provide numbers like in the election race," he said.

Ersoy continued, "My last suggestion for journalists is approaching the health issues with more of a solution orientation. During this process, the mass media broadcast public announcements about the protection of Covid-19 virus. But if we look at the news stories we may see that they are focusing on the numbers instead of the solutions. Journalists need to be highlight health initiatives, and give voice to public, not elites only.

"Journalists focus on the visible effects of the Covid-19. Nevertheless, we also need to focus on invisible effects of the health issues and social isolation. They can give more voice to psychologists and experts on this issue. In so

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Covid from Pg 3

doing, journalists provide quality news for the public and contribute for the public health in general," he concluded.

Aside from the truth orientation, people orientation, and solution orientation discussed by Dr. Ersoy, there are other principles of peace journalism, outlined in my textbook *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices*, that can offer useful advice.

In reporting Covid-19, peace journalists should consider the consequences of their reporting (am I creating unnecessary panic?); give a voice to the voiceless (how everyday people are impacted—hourly workers, the homeless, inmates and their families); and avoid inflammatory language (“deadly,” “devastated,” “gruesome”) and images (unnecessarily graphic photos, photos that exaggerate or misrepresent an event).

As always, PJ looks to break away from mainstream narratives about the pandemic and offer counternarratives (how retirement portfolios of everyday people have been gutted, how and if small businesses will recover, who might profit from the outbreak, on the impacts of social isolation, as mentioned by Dr. Ersoy, etc.)

Also, peace journalism eschews propaganda, especially partisan political posturing (polarization, as mentioned by Prof. Tiripelli). PJ reports respectfully about victims, using the guidelines we recently discussed at two trauma reporting seminars in Northern Ireland. (See report on page 6).

In fact, Covid-19 coverage recommendations from other journalism organizations reflect these peace journalism and responsible trauma reporting principles, whether they're labeled

“peace journalism” or not. For example, the Ethical Journalism Network recommends that journalists:

--Avoid sensationalism and scaremongering in language and images that could heighten anxiety; for instance pictures of empty supermarket shelves, stockpiling – which can inflame tensions and create more panic

--Avoid racial profiling – you don't need to repeat where the virus was generated each time you report new cases.



Stories focusing on the community itself may also help to support a constructive rediscovery of local identity.

--Giuliana Tiripelli

--Ensure you protect affected people: do not identify names, images or identifying material without the permission of the relevant people...

--Be accurate and report facts; avoid rumour and try not to speculate; there's a huge amount of misinformation circling, so be aware of how to spot and debunk misinformation.

--Seek expert opinions – from medics and scientists with relevant credentials – but note that scientific advice is frequently changing

--Provide context and point people to authoritative and credible information sources and resources (<https://tinyurl.com/w66pzu9>)

Problematic practice, best practice

While it's too early to rely on any quantitative or content analysis studies of Covid-19 coverage, the three experts still have strong opinions about

the reporting they've seen thus far.

Dr. Ersoy observes a mixed bag when it comes to virus coverage. He writes, “There is huge misinformation and propaganda-oriented news stories in new media and mass media. (Specifically), Cyprus is a small island in the Mediterranean region. Our mass media was very sensitive about the language that they are using on Covid-19 news stories. However, some online media companies, which are expecting to get more clicks, are using click bait strategies in news headlines. Somehow, they publish either fake news about the solutions for Covid-19 or are giving false hope to readers by writing headlines like, ‘vaccine found.’ We can say that Cypriot media is doing more peace journalism on the health issues than online media. I can say that online media are exacerbating the situation, frightening people, giving false information, and causing trauma in the public.”

As far as Kenya is concerned, Dr. Ogenga has been impressed with the reporting thus far. He writes that “Covid 19 coverage in Kenya is peace journalism ‘par excellence’ using pan African values of Utu or humanity and Harambee in the solidarity around discourses regarding the outbreak. There is that promise (in the coverage) of ‘we will overcome.’”

For example, in the Standard newspaper from Kenya, recent virus reporting included “we will overcome” stories like “No Coronavirus hitches at (Nairobi airport)” and counternarrative stories like “Coronavirus provides unexpected boost for Kenyan fishermen.” (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/>)

In analyzing Covid-19 coverage in the UK, Prof. Tiripelli observes, “It depends on what media you follow.

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Special Report: PJ and Covid-19



Covid from Pg 4

Local radios may be pretty good at showing aid and support available, because much of the first stage change has happened at the local level. There is little success stories in the mainstream news media, but this is unavoidable given the situation and the fact that many countries have

Covering another epidemic: Ebola in 2014

By Rexford Johnson

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally ran in the October, 2017 edition of the Peace Journalist magazine. Note the emphasis on collaborative media roles, consistent with the discussion in the previous article on Covid-19.

On May 25 2014, Sierra Leone recorded its first confirmed case of Ebola which was traced from neighbouring Guinea. The virus would later spread exponentially to affect all regions, districts, and sectors of the nation.

Communication problems

At the initial stage of the outbreak, government was unwilling to involve media in its health education campaign. Quoting the scientists, the media reported Ebola to be an incurable disease. Society viewed infected people as victims instead of patients which undermined efforts to mobilize the public to seek medical attention if they develop symptoms.

Communication strategies flopped as government sources differed with information from international Medics on the frontline – like MSF. The public was getting confused, fears were heightened, rural communities were in information blackout, and myths were riding the tide. With the situation rapidly deteriorating, journalists realised that we could not continue with traditional media functions while

just started with the new policies. I would say the coverage in the UK has become more balanced and accurate now, and not exacerbating divisions, after governments have taken clearer measures and put policies in place that reassure people. However, a stronger focus on countries which have had more success so far will help,” she said.

the communication abyss that existed between key stakeholders and the dying population continues to expand. Media had to switch its focus to a collaborative role.

Role of the media

On July 26 2014, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalism established an Ebola Response strategy to respond to the outbreak. Forty eight private and community radio stations across the country donated airtime to the network and run a daily simultaneous broadcast under the umbrella of the Independent Radio Network. The objectives were; “to provide an early response outlet for the Ministry of Health and the Social Mobilisation Committee, (and) increase the level of awareness and understanding of the virus and educate the public...”

Programs were designed to raise public awareness about then signs and symptoms of the virus, the role of the key service providers, and the significance of new medical infrastructures. Control activities like contact tracing, safe burial, surveillance quarantine, and isolation and stigma issues were also recurring program themes.

Local media focused on information and sensitization, not investigation. The radical / watch dog role was rejected by the journalists who themselves were beleaguered by the deadly virus. The design and content

In conclusion, while there is excellent, responsible virus reporting taking place, there is no doubt that this reporting can be augmented using peace journalism principles.

If there was ever a time for reporters and editors to carefully consider the consequences of their reporting, and report in the public interest, it is now.

of the magazine-formatted message was persuasive as it appealed for safe, healthy practices. Soon radio became the nerve centre in the fight against Ebola.

Conclusion

Living in Ebola territory was a walking nightmare. Imagine a year with no Christmas holiday, no Easter break, no birthday celebration, no vacation, no social gatherings, hugs, handshakes and sometimes no church gathering. The fear of death was so strong you could almost touch it. Fear of contracting the virus, fear of touching a door knob at the office, fear of using headphones in the studio ... fear of headache, fever or worse.

Radio was essential in relaying round the clock info during the two major countrywide lockdowns in Sept 2014 and Mar 2015 respectively. It was more than packaging reports and anchoring programs; we were giving hope to the nation.

Rexford Johnson has over 15 years of experience in Journalism. He is Programs Director at Believers Broadcasting Network and Producer at Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone.



Broadcasting Network and Producer at Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone.

Amid Covid threat, seminar analyzes trauma

By Kathryn Johnston

The overnight snow had frozen on my windscreen when I left home at dawn on Thursday, 12 March 2019.

As I drove through Derry, I passed the spot where almost a year ago my friend, colleague, and fellow member of the National Union of Journalists, Lyra McKee, became the latest victim to die in the Northern Ireland Troubles. She was shot dead in Derry by a gunman from the New IRA while observing a riot with other journalists.

Lyra, who was dedicated to investigating the unsolved mysteries of the Troubles, would have thrived on these two inaugural workshops where victims and survivors of the troubles, students and practicing journalists, academics and peace builders would discuss the reporting of trauma – and most importantly, hear how it could be improved.



Her life and enthusiasm were at the forefront of my mind at both the Derry and Belfast trauma and journalism workshops on 12 and 13 March 2020.

I spoke of Lyra's vision, the trauma experienced by her, her partner Sara, and her

family, before reflecting on the pain and grief of the years when the political violence that almost tore these islands apart left around 3,700 people dead.

Many more thousands were injured. They, their families, friends and neighbours – and the greater population of Northern Ireland who bore witness to the troubles - bear the scars to this day.

Later I spoke of the bursary which will be established in

Kathryn Johnston is a journalist and researcher based in Northern Ireland. She is co-author of *From Guns to Government: an unauthorised biography of Martin*



McGuinness has worked for *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish Times* and *BBC*. Kathryn is also a member of the *Irish Executive Council -National Union of Journalists*.



(Left)-Prof. Jake Lynch at the trauma workshop in Derry. (Top)-Students analyze the role of media in trauma. (Above)-BelfastMet student Delyth Cook discusses her group's findings. (Photos by Allan Leonard)

Lyra's name to support young journalists engaged in investigative journalism and exploring alternative platforms where narrative and long form pieces might be published. Details are still being finalised but will be announced later on this year.

I was proud to speak in the company of Steve Youngblood from the Centre for Peace Journalism, who discussed socially responsible trauma journalism; Alan Meban and Allan Leonard from FactCheck NI; who spoke of the use of emotive language and alternative websites for fact checking; and Paul Gallagher from WAVE Trauma, a PhD student

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NI trauma

from Pg 6

from Queens University Belfast, who had lost the use of his legs during the troubles. Gallagher highlighted trauma and victims, pointing out that victims are not homogenous, before leading a stimulating discussion on how journalists may compound trauma, and how journalists can contribute to creating a more trauma-informed society.

Dr. Jake Lynch from the University of Sydney, who is also a Visiting Professor at Coventry University this year, shared insights from his ground-breaking work on media interventions for peace during conflict.

Lynch spoke of how the media could structure itself to

promote 'justpeace' - the concept of justice aligned with peacebuilding pioneered by American Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, John Paul Lederach, a frequent visitor to Northern Ireland. After praising VIEWdigital's Amnesty nominated Victims and Survivors issue, he spoke of Lederach's 'justpeace' approach.

This concept was illustrated by Hands Across the Divide, the sculpture unveiled in Derry in 1992 on the twentieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when 13 unarmed protes-

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Social media, ethics, PJ pondered in Belfast

By Steven Youngblood

Two events the week of March 9 helped to conclude a nearly year-long peace journalism project in Northern Ireland sponsored by the U.S. Embassy-London and the U.S. Consulate-Belfast.

The first, a roundtable discussion, was held at the consulate. I've had some interesting discussions about whether journalists should use the term "martyr," but none so engaging as our interchange during this session.

In previous seminars in Kashmir and Beirut, journalists told me that they labeled anyone who died fighting Israelis or Indians a martyr. Here in Belfast, the discussion centered around those who self identify as martyrs as they commit some heinous act like blowing themselves up. Should the press call them martyrs, since that's what they call themselves? Several attendees said yes, that it's journalists' obligation to use people's self identification. I'm not so sure, I said. What if the bomber called himself a hero? Should the press repeat that label?

We also had a vibrant talk about false equivalencies, and the pitfalls they pose for journalists. This topic is especially fraught here, given Northern Ireland's history.

Another session was held during a conference sponsored held at the Girdwood Community Hub, a former army barracks during the Troubles repurposed as a community center. At the event sponsored by Belfast Metropolitan College, I spoke briefly about social media and peace journalism. I led off with an interesting stat, a poll showing that only 22% of Northern Irish trust social media. My message was that social media can better serve the public, and peace, using peace journalism principles.

In a vibrant discussion, the most difficult question thrown my way asked me to predict the future of social media.

My "glass half empty" response was that social media will increasingly empower demagogues and authoritarian regimes. My "glass half full" response was that an increasingly media literate public will use social media as a tool to build bridges and facilitate dialogues for peace.

My presentation was part of a conference at BelfastMet that introduced participants, to a program called Live Skills, which helps young people develop careers in fields using digital technologies (creative media, digital art and design, and digital marketing).



PJ events in March, 2020 were held at the U.S. Consulate (top) and Belfast Met College in Belfast.

NI event looks at media in divided societies

By Allan Leonard

A two-day international conference examined the role that media plays in divided societies and in creating more peaceful and stable communities. Organised by the Social Change Initiative in partnership with Conciliation Resources and the University of Edinburgh's Political Settlements Research Programme, the event was attended by journalists from South Africa, Colombia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Turkey, the Middle East, the Balkans, Kashmir, Somalia, Syria, Nepal, and Northern Ireland.

Irish broadcaster Charlie Bird led a conversation with Mohamed Nanabhay of the international Media Development Investment Fund. Bird stated that we live in a society where free and independent journalism is under threat, citing this year's murder of Lyra McKee. "We have to be careful. The fourth estate is so important for us, with everything at stake," he said.

Allan Leonard is co-founder and editor-in-chief at FactCheckNI, Northern Ireland's first and only dedicated fact-checking service. He



is also editor of Shared Future News, which reports on peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

Mohamed Nanabhay explained the Media Development Investment Fund. The fund makes an equity investment in independent media companies, in order to earn interest income that is reinvested into the fund. It has clients globally, including South Africa, the Balkans, Hungary, and Poland.

In a discussion with the conference attendees, someone asked whether it takes a revolution in order for news media to notice the work of civil society. Nanabhay answered that at

Al Jazeera they tried to show the view from the street, not centres of power. "News organisations shouldn't be there to report on the institutions of power. We need to cover civil society and social media is leading on this," Nanabhay said. He added that speaking truth to power is not inconsistent with understanding wider societal attitudes, saying, "Do this by reporting on the ground work; don't report outrage all the time."

The role of media in analysing peace agreements

The Political Settlements Research Programme at the University of Edinburgh presented new research on the role of the media in international peace accords. Professor Christine Bell led a conversation with programme research associate, Tim Epple, along with Jeremy Adams (BBC Northern Ireland's Head of Television Current Affairs) and Anup Kaphle (Editor-in-Chief of Kathmandu Post).

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Trauma

from Pg 7

tors were shot dead in Derry by the Parachute Regiment. (Hands Across the Divide pictured below).



The students who made up most of the body of the audience at the Belfast Met on Friday 13 March also heard from Angelina Fusco, the former BBC NI Head of News, who holds a prestigious Ochberg Fellowship awarded by the Direct Action on Research and Training (DART) Centre on Journalism and Trauma.

She was joined by the eminent film maker Sean Murray, whose feature-length documentary investigates the role the British government played in the murder of over 120 civilians in Counties Armagh, and Tyrone from July 1972 to 1978, and Barry McCaffrey, an award winning journalist who, with Trevor Birney, whose film, *No Stone Unturned*, an in-depth look at the unsolved 1994 Loughinisland massacre, where six men were murdered while watching the World Cup at the local pub in Loughinisland, Northern

Ireland. This remains a touchstone for press freedom in Northern Ireland.

The trauma reporting workshops in Belfast and Derry were the culmination of a nearly year-long peace journalism project in Northern Ireland sponsored by the U.S. Embassy-London and the U.S. Consulate-Belfast.



Group discussion at the trauma reporting conference at Belfast Met.

NI event

from Pg 8

Tim Epple described five roles that media has played in peace agreements: (1) media as a promoter of the values of human rights (citing the Nepal agreement (2015)); media as a promoter of the value of inclusion (citing the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998) and its call for Irish language rights, including media provision); (3) media as a watchdog, reporting on what protagonists do post-agreement; (4) media as disseminator of information about the agreement to the public; and (5) media as bulwark against propaganda (citing the Kenya agreement and monitoring of hate speech).

Anup Kaphle described how recent laws passed in Nepal run counter to the declarations made in its 2015 peace agreement. He explained this as a consequence of the Maoists and Communists coming into power, with their desire to police morality. Kaphle said that media is fractured and highly partisan in Nepal, and the challenge is to write for the truth instead of political or opinion journalism.

Jeremy Adams remarked that at the times of the paramilitary ceasefires in Northern Ireland, he thought that perhaps the role of media in reporting the conflict there might diminish. On the contrary, he sees at least as much a role as before. "We have found a role. It's now about corruption, financial incompetence, and accountability to power," he commented.

Adams was asked whether the media should take a step back, at times of its reporting, for the sake of a peace process. He answered, "If you suspend a commitment to truth, you can exacerbate the festering of conflict." This was also his rationale for the production of the latest Spotlight programme, *The Troubles: A Secret History*. That is, he observed that Northern Ireland's contested history has become a contested present. Adams said, "Without some sort of truth



Nadine Hack discusses the safety of journalists. (Photo by Allan Leonard)

telling, this effort of rewriting history will continue."

The role of the media in promoting peace

Jonathan Cohen, Executive Director of the international peacebuilding organisation, Conciliation Resources, led a discussion on whether media has a role in promoting peace and stability in divided societies. The panellists were Vikki Cook (Director of Content Media Policy at UK broadcast regulator, Ofcom), Noel Doren (Editor of the *Irish News*), and Milica Pesic (Exec. Director of Media Diversity Institute).

Cook spoke about recent Ofcom commissioned reports, particularly in regards to how the UK public service broadcaster, the BBC, represents and portrays society. The findings were that accuracy of reportage has been maintained, as well as impartiality (she added that neutrality is not always required, for sound reasons). Diversity is found in regional reportage, less so from London headquarters (which is seen as white and male).

Noel Doren said media can help create a climate to progress peace." We at

the *Irish News* took a stand against paramilitary violence." He gave the example of the three Northern Ireland newspapers (*Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish News*, *News Letter*) coming together during the multi-party talks (that concluded with the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement): "We had a phone-in for peace, with 160,000 received calls."

Conclusion

Padraic Quirk (Deputy Director at SCI) concluded the event by noting, "We need to think long and hard about how we can report the peace well and concentrate on the issues that are important to peacemaking in divided societies."

Quirk finished by declaring that SDI is very keen to engage and further this conversation around the role of the media in deeply divided societies by saying, "We will be reaching out to people to follow that up, both [in Northern Ireland] and internationally ... It now has to be about some of the doing, the practical things that can be done as a result of having this expertise in the room."

This article first appeared on Shared Future News.

Event considers human rights, journalism

By Janette Jasperson

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” – Article 19, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Student journalists, academics, and interested community members gathered at Park University in Parkville, Missouri on Friday afternoon, November 1, to discuss “Human Rights and Journalism: Challenges and Opportunities.” This discussion was the second session of the Greater Kansas City Peacebuilding Conference, “Human Rights: The Foundation of Peacebuilding.”

Journalists and human rights activists are “kind of like cousins,” said Sarah Margon, Foreign Policy Director at the Open Society Foundations and the afternoon’s first speaker. “We’re both trying to expose the truth.” Margon elucidated this relationship by answering three questions.

Why do human rights matter to journalists?

In the words of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, journalists depend on the fundamental right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.” Margon pointed out that journalists cannot work effectively in countries which don’t honor that right. At an operational level, journalists depend on human rights organizations for reliable information, both from the organizations’ own research and from their local contacts in areas where journalists cannot go (because of cost or access issues).

Why do journalists matter to human rights organizations?

Margon called journalism a “force-multiplier” that can help set the agen-



Lewis Diuguid and Bette Tate-Beaver discuss the media’s role in ongoing oppression during the peacebuilding conference at Park University.

da and maintain pressure for change. Many abuses happen at the local level, so the public will not hear about them without media involvement. In three recent situations, journalists have successfully pressured the U.S. government:

- Stories on the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi have led to a “crack” in US support for the Saudi government, which human rights activists are trying to exploit.
- Weeks of reports on the violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar finally forced the U.S. government to act.

Janette Jasperson is the International Education Coordinator at Johnson County Community College in the Kansas City area.



She is passionate about the importance of introducing college students to the world beyond American borders.

- After the New York Times Magazine ran a front-cover story about civilian casualties in Iraq, the Pentagon and Congress acknowledged the problem.

Why does reporting on human rights matter to individuals?

“Although we are super polarized in the United States,” Margon said, “the threat of the truth can still hold us together.” When journalists tell us the truth, we can develop an informed opinion and then take action.

Lewis W. Diuguid (author, lecturer, and journalist) and Bette Tate Beaver (executive director of the National Association for Multicultural Education) continued the discussion by looking at media’s role in “continuing oppression” in society. One root is the lack of diversity in newsrooms. In 2016, minorities made up one-third of the U.S. population, but only 17% of newspaper journalists and 23% of on-line-only journalists according to the ASNE Diversity Survey. As a result, journalists often are silent about challenges facing minority communities,

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Peacebuilding

from Pg 10

such as opportunity gaps for people of color or the widespread belief that the oppressed created the conditions of their oppression. According to Diuguid, when journalists are silent on these issues, they reinforce the actions and attitudes of the oppressors.

Diuguid then presented information about the functions of media, discussing how these functions (surveillance, correlation, transmission, entertainment, economic) make some minority groups (Asians, Native Americans) invisible, while relegating other minorities (African Americans, Latinos) to ne’er-do-well status--those who need to be watched closely (surveillance). Women of all ethnicities are presented either as damsels in need of rescue or as suspicious characters who must be watched (e.g., Hillary Clinton). White men, however, are positively and prominently featured in all of the functions of media.

Journalist and syndicated columnist Mary Sanchez spoke next, further emphasizing the importance of diverse newsrooms. She noted that you “have to have connections to tell real stories” inside the Latino community. She said that she’s used Human Rights Watch for years as a reliable source of data. Sanchez also explored the fine line between journalist and

activist, arguing that good opinion pieces “need to be fact-based, not just outrage pieces.”

The final speaker was Kathryn Johnston, veteran journalist and officer for the National Union of Journalists in Northern Ireland. She decried coverage of conflict in Northern Ireland as “too binary. You’re either a victim or a perpetrator.” This approach ignores perpetrators’ history of being victimized themselves and overlooks the long history of inequality.

Johnston lamented that journalists too often settle for a “slick quote” rather than digging deeper into the story. And she observed that journalists can re-victimize those who have been traumatized, if they are not sensitive to the impact of the story. This type of journalism “strips people of their humanity.”

Johnston noted that women have been excluded from peace processes and newsrooms in Northern Ireland, to the detriment of both. She praised Jo Berry, founder of Building Bridges for Peace, who searched out the man who had killed her father. Berry’s purpose was not to hear an apology but to see his humanity, an approach that journalists should take when covering violence.

When asked about Brexit, Johnston discussed the impact of a hard border. She said that this possibility has already led to violent threats. If the hard border is established, she “fears” it will lead to a resumption of violence, and she voiced concern that her community overall has been desensitized to violence.

Steven Youngblood, Director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, concluded the afternoon by pointing out four common threads in all the presentations:

1. Journalists too often “strip people of their humanity” through the way a story is reported.
2. Journalists play a constructive role in advancing human rights by bringing deserving stories to the public’s attention and keeping them there.
3. People speak in different ways, so journalists need to be representative of those voices.
4. The principles of peace journalism are essential for effective reporting on human rights, especially the principles of giving a voice to the voiceless and of offering counter narratives to those advanced by the dominant culture.



Sarah Margon, Foreign Policy Director at the Open Society Foundations, discussed the intersection of human rights and journalism. (Photo by Jon Hokenson)

Rohingya reporting often ignores PJ approaches

By Shameem Ara Sheuli

Despite the growing acknowledgment of peace journalism as a worthy concept to promote peace and non-violent solutions to conflict, newspapers in Myanmar, Bangladesh, China and India have largely chosen to follow war journalism approach in reporting the decades-long Myanmar-Rohingya conflict, according to a new study.

A little over 58 percent of the stories published by the newspapers followed war journalism style against only 13.54 percent peace journalism, meaning those couldn't act as peace-building tools and create an atmosphere to engage the involving parties in negotiation.

Shameem Ara Sheuli, a Bangladeshi journalist conducted this study on 'Reporting Myanmar-Rohingya Conflict: War Journalism or Peace Journalism?' as part of her Masters Thesis at Swansea University following the war/peace journalism model of Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung.

She analyzed 251 stories, published since the latest violence broke out on 25 August 2017 until the post-

Shameem Ara Sheuli is a Bangladeshi journalist with more than a decade of experience. She is a founding member and former Executive Director of Institute of Communication Studies (ICS), an organization dedicated to build capacity of journalists. She is a Fulbright Scholar of Erasmus Mundus Journalism with a specialization on War and Conflict.



ponement of a repatriation process of Rohingya refugees on 23 January 2018, in six English language newspapers—two each from Myanmar and Bangladesh and one each from China and India. The newspapers are Myanmar Times and Global New Light of Myanmar from Myanmar, New Age and The Daily Star from Bangladesh, Global Times from China and The Hindu from India.

And surprisingly, her study revealed that the number of peace journalism stories in war/conflict reporting by newspapers of Asian countries was on decline while the number of war journalism was increasing. Earlier studies that analyzed newspaper coverage of Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, Tamil Tigers Movement in Sri Lanka, Maluku and Aceh conflict in Indonesia and Muslim separatist movement in Mindanao in the Philippines between 2005 and 2010, researchers found more than 30% of the coverage followed peace journalism style. It was more than two times the latest study spotted in the coverage of Myanmar-Rohingya conflict.

After violence broke out on 25 Au-

gust 2017 following an offensive of Myanmar military in retaliation to the attacks on police posts in Northern Rakhine by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the latest study found journalists in Bangladesh, Myanmar, India and China mostly followed war journalism style while writing their stories and the trend continued till the postponement of a repatriation process of Rohingya refugees scheduled for 23 January 2018.

Reporters described clashes between Myanmar military and ARSA, the enmity between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims minority, focusing on human casualties and damages of properties. News stories were confined to a closed space and time, what was happening in the Northern Rakhine, Bangladesh Myanmar borders and Cox's Bazar refugee camps at the moment of reporting. The areas of agreement or peace initiatives were ignored while voices of victims and soldiers in the field were not heard in reports.

The media highlighted violence and insecurity expressing doubts over

Continued on next page

Rohingya from Pg 12

the repatriation process instead of discussing the flaws in the agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar authorities in November 2017. Sheuli's study presumed this might have jeopardized the repatriation process of Rohingya refugees, which was postponed at the last minute and yet to begin.

Contradictory Trends, Different Narratives

This study identified some fascinating facts depicting a contrasting trend between the two Myanmar newspapers and narratives of the conflict circulating by Bangladesh and Myanmar media.

It found Global New Light of Myanmar was on top of using war journalism style while Myanmar Times showed more peace journalism approach compared to coverage of other newspapers. The coverage of state-run Global New Light of Myanmar was highly partisan while the coverage of privately owned Myanmar Time showed a neutral stance.

Both the Bangladeshi dailies tend to frame war journalism and less likely to follow peace journalism, but New Age covered the least number of peace journalism stories among the six newspapers. The Chinese newspaper, Global Times comes at second in following war journalism style while the Indian daily, The Hindu was the other newspaper least likely to follow peace journalism.

It has been apparent from the study that Myanmar and Bangladesh have different versions about how the fighting started, who are the antagonists and who are the protagonists. The newspapers, in general, sided with national policies circulating their version of narratives.

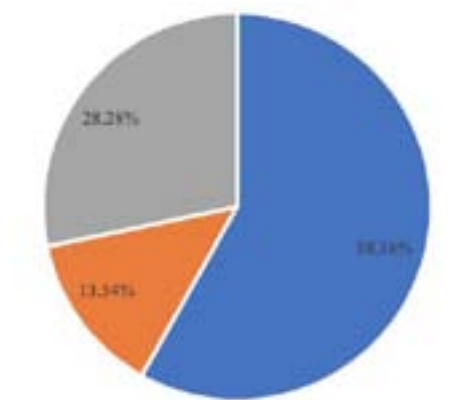
The newspaper coverage of the Chinese daily Global Times presented the Myanmar version of narratives reflect-

ing Pro-Myanmar national policy. On the other hand, the Indian daily, The Hindu showed a neutral position in its coverage, balancing the two version of narratives promoting by Bangladesh and Myanmar authorities.

ARSA appeared as a terrorist organization in Myanmar newspapers who started the fighting, while Rohingyas were portrayed as accomplices of ARSA. On the other hand, Bangladeshi media persistently reported that Rohingyas are the victims of longtime discriminations and persecutions by Myanmar authorities. Myanmar newspapers, especially Global New Light of Myanmar branded Rohingyas as 'extremist terrorists' highlighting the atrocities of ARSA for legitimating military campaigns of Myanmar. Newspapers highlighted sufferings of Buddhist and Hindu citizens of Rakhine while ignored human rights abuses against the Rohingya minority population. Myanmar newspapers criticized the international community of deteriorating the situation.

By contrast, Bangladeshi dailies portrayed the Myanmar military and Rakhine Buddhists as villains and blamed them for attacking Rohingya Muslims. They criticized the Myanmar leader Aung Sung Suu Kyi for supporting the Myanmar military. To some extent,

Overall News Coverage by Six Dailies



War Journalism Peace Journalism Mixed Framing

Peace, stability restored in northern Rakhine, troops withdrawn



A Rohingya village in northern Rakhine, Myanmar, showing a peaceful scene with a wooden fence and trees.

they demonized ARSA for provoking the Myanmar military but branded Rohingya citizens of Rakhine always as victims. Bangladeshi newspapers highlighted human rights abuses by Myanmar military against Rohingya population quoting humanitarian agencies. A large number of stories covered sufferings of the refugees in Bangladesh.

Can Peace Journalism Bring Out Facts?

Though this study detected over 13% stories published in six newspapers followed peace journalism style in reporting Myanmar-Rohingya conflict, the researcher claimed that those stories failed to use strong language as required to comply with the peace journalism concept though peace journalism, in general, discourages journalists to use strong emotive languages such as genocide or ethnic cleansing. It asks to preserve these phrases for the gravest case.

The latest situation of Rohingyas in Rakhine was a gravest case. Human Rights Watch claimed the military in Myanmar carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims. Satellite images released in September 2017 by Colorado-based Digital Globe showed Myanmar

Continued on next page

authorities torched empty Rohingya villages as part of the campaigns even after ARSA called a ceasefire .

Amnesty International termed clearance operations of Myanmar military as crimes against humanity while the UNHCR claimed that human rights violation against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine is a 'textbook example' of ethnic cleansing .

The UN Human Rights Council investigation found evidence of genocide in Rakhine. Its report describes indiscriminate killing, mass raping of women and abuses of children. The investigators allege that 'the gravest crimes under international law' were committed in Rakhine in August 2017 according to a BBC report. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) estimated that at least 6,700 Rohingyas were killed in the violence . Therefore, journalists were expected to use strong languages.

But Myanmar newspaper did not report human rights abuses by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya population in their articles. The sufferings of the Rohingya citizens caught up in fighting between the Myanmar military and ARSA was overlooked. They fled to Bangladesh and are now living in refugee camps in dire humanitarian conditions depending on foreign aids. Since the latest crisis began more than half of million Rohingyas crossed the Myanmar border and took refuge in Bangladesh. It seems Myanmar newspapers tried to cover up the cruelty of the Myanmar

military. They failed to bring out the facts which is not compatible with the best practices of peace journalism.

Giving the example of the Rwanda genocide, Sheuli warned of the failure of reporting accurately and choosing strong languages in conflict reporting. Referring to Schimmel's study, she said, its consequence is devastating. She mentioned that local media shaded the cruelty of the conflict in Rwanda while the Western media downplayed the genocide as a 'tribal war' instead of describing it a systematic and political project of ethnic cleansing. It was one of the reasons international community did not pay much attention and intervene in time which cost lives of 250, 000 Tutsi population in 1994, Sheuli reminded .

Hopes Still Alive

One of the striking findings of the study is Myanmar Times showed neutrality in 75 percent stories and ignored government instructions in many instances. It did not term ARSA as a terrorist organization and its members as extremist terrorists, instead put words like 'ARSA' and 'ARSA fighters'. It avoided calling the minority population as 'Rohingya' but did not use 'Bengali' either, which is a burning issue of the dispute.

"It was a brave move by Myanmar Times when Reporters Without Border claims that media freedom is clearly not one of the priorities of the Myanmar government," Sheuli said, adding, "This keeps the hope of promoting peace journalism alive."



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it and detailing its evolution and status among scholars and practitioners.

Chapters include:

- Constructive Journalism
- Civic Journalism
- Participatory Journalism
- Engagement Journalism
- Explanatory Journalism
- Solutions Journalism
- Peace Journalism

By Steven Youngblood

Disinformation is a menace to democracies around the world. Yet, there are those around the world who are fighting disinformation using fact checking, literacy program, and peace journalism.

These anti-disinformation efforts were detailed at a session called "Mythbusters," which was part of the Council of Europe-sponsored World Forum for Democracy last week in Strasbourg, France.

My presentation was titled, "Disinformation, Democracy, and the Peace Journalism Solution." I began by defining disinformation, which is the use of lies, half-truths, and irrational content to manipulate public opinion. We discussed its purposes (distracting, obscuring truth, inspiring action, and shaping the information environment) and characteristics (it works best when targeting pre-existing divides and prejudices within a society). Disinformation succeeds because trust in media is low, and because consumers embrace information that confirms their biases.

Then, I discussed how peace journalism is an effective tool for countering disinformation. First, PJ's principles, as taught during hundreds of seminars around the world, are antithetical to disinformation, including seeking to unite parties (disinformation divides), carefully choosing language (disinformation leverages inflammatory, sensational language), and offering counternarratives that debunk stereotypes (conversely, disinformation relies on and rein-



The "Mythbusters" session was held in the historic Strasbourg city hall in a room used for formal occasions.



Austin Augbe (right) discusses countering disinformation in Nigeria during the World Forum for Democracy.

forces stereotypes).

Other presenters in the "Mythbusters" session included Anna University (India) Prof. Sriram Arulchelvan. He discussed his university's media information and literacy program that helps high schoolers spot fake news.

Austin Augbe, director of the Nigerian Centre for Democracy and Development, then presented about countering disinformation in Nigeria. He said that democracy is on the "verge of collapse" in Nigeria, and that disinformation is one reason why. His center has a project to fight disinformation through fact checking, training 500 fact checkers, spreading the word about a #StopFakeNews campaign, and conducting research on fake news.

Beatrice Simoncini then gave a different perspective on disinformation. She is a member of a working group on disinformation and spokesperson for the government of San Marino, a small nation of 33,000 surrounded by Italy. The working group's efforts include convening conferences, fostering cooperation among entities battling disinformation, and sponsoring media literacy programs in schools.

Wrapping up the session were respondents Titus Alexander and Matthew Golozia. Alexander suggested that universities should lead the way in fighting disinformation, and act as "intelligence agencies" for democracy. This would include changing the story (in PJ terminology, counternarratives), speaking truth to power, and following the truth. Golozia concluded by opining that government regulation of internet providers and cell phone companies is needed so that everyone has equal access to information.

"Mythbusters" was hosted by the City of Strasbourg in its historic city hall in a room used for formal occasions and, frequently, for weddings.

It's Just Good Journalism: Theory, Practice, and Effects of Reporting Beyond the Problem
Lang Publishing; Summer 2020 release
Editors:
Karen McIntyre and Nicole Dahmen

PJ Bookshelf
About the book: Experts argue that the news media's emphasis on problems has had a negative effect on the public, the press itself, and democracy. This book provides an in-depth examination of socially-responsible news reporting practices. Each chapter focuses on one reporting form, defining

PJ, Rotary peace initiatives discussed in California

By Steven Youngblood

Like most attendees at the Rotary World Peace Conference in January 2020 in Ontario, CA, I came away with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I depart deeply concerned about conflicts that plague our world. On the other hand, I head home encouraged and inspired by the amazing work being done by Rotarians and others in the cause of world peace.

My presentation on the basics of peace journalism typifies this binary. I started my presentation with a discussion about low public approval ratings of the media, and the ills that plague the profession. Then my talk took a hopeful turn as I described peace journalism and its ability to create an atmosphere conducive to peace without compromising the principles of good journalism.

A large, engaged audience showered me with perceptive questions both during and indeed after the presentation. One attendee wanted to know if anyone is practicing peace journalism. I mentioned the Guardian, Nicolas Kristof, and many radio journalists in Cameroon and Uganda as positive examples.

It was interesting to see many of the themes I touched upon in my talk echoed by other speakers at the conference. This includes the need to reject “us vs. them” constructs, and to give a “voice to the voiceless” in everything we do.

Day one plenary at the Rotary World Peace Conference in Ontario, CA.



The other speakers were amazing.

Azim Khamisa’s son was killed by gang members 25 years ago. Instead of retribution, he launched the Tarik Khamisa Foundation, dedicated to breaking the cycle of youth violence. “There is nothing quite as painful as a broken heart,” Azim Khamisa told the approximately 1,000 attendees. “But a broken heart is an open heart” that can be taught to embrace empathy and compassion.

Dr. Ira Helfand spoke movingly about the potential horrors of nuclear war, and of the need to eliminate all nuclear weapons. He urged the attendees to get involved in a group called Rotarians for a Nuclear Ban. Helfand’s organization, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr. Fazim Alvi broke the attendee’s hearts with horrifying, tragic stories about the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar. She has traveled on medical missions to refugee camps in Bangladesh that house Rohingya refugees. Alvi is haunted by the unsanitary, dangerous conditions there, and by the faces of children she met in the camps, including one she calls simply “girl crying” because she never got her name. “I can still feel her pain. Her eyes tell me stories of injustice...Her face is driving me to do this advocacy work,” Alvi said. She urged the audience to pressure the Myanmar government to end the genocide.

The conference featured dozens of examples of Rotarians working for peace. Rotarian Hardeep Girin from Australia discussed his initiative, “World Made Good,” that produces free videos for NGO’s that tell stories to benefit both the NGO and its clientele. An effervescent Barbara Muller discussed her initiative called peace-podcast.org, and urged her audience to launch their own peace podcasts. She also encouraged her audiences to get involved in the Rotary



E-Club for Peace—www.rotaryclubofworldpeace.org. The E-Club seeks to bring together experts and peacebuilders to discuss problems and solutions facing the world, and encourages its members to create peace at home and in schools; become peace advocates at work and in the world; and create understanding and collaboration among religions, among other things.

A large exhibition hall featured dozens of Rotarians and others eagerly passing out brochures about their outstanding projects, including a Russia-U.S. Friendship initiative; a variety of clean water projects; the Open World exchange program, the Rotary Malaria Symposium; Project Peanut Butter to battle malnutrition; Kherut, an anti-trafficking NGO; the Rotarian Action Group for Family Safety; Creating Friendships for Peace; Hands of Peace, an initiative uniting Israeli and Palestinian youth; the Free Wheelchair Mission, and the Rotarian Action Group for Peace (<https://www.rotarianactiongroupforpeace.org/>).

While the conference underscored the great deal of work ahead for peacebuilders, it was a valuable reminder that those working for a peaceful world are not alone.

Media network launches nationwide in Cameroon

By Tarhyang Enowbikah Tabe

The Cameroon Community Media Network, CCMN, has officially gone national with the appointment of a National Coordinator.

Rose Obah Akah was appointed as the pioneer National Coordinator of the Cameroon Community Media Network in Buea at the end of a crucial and very decisive workshop for the growth of the network.

The CCMN has now gone nationwide with 8 branches in 8 regions. The regional coordinators were also appointed. The Cameroon Community Media Network has trained a battery of journalists in peace journalism and conflict resolution/ transformation.

According to reports from Buea, she is tasked to coordinate the Network and organize National Elections in 2 years.

Her appointment has been received with a lot of joy and enthusiasm given the wealth of experience she possesses in the field of community communication and peace building.

Until her appointment, she was coordinator of the Network for the Northwest and West regions, while Rev. Geraldine Fobah coordinated affairs

Tarhyang Enowbikah Tabe is a trained Journalist and Development Communicator with over 20 years of practical experience. He is Publisher and Chief Executive Officer of The Advocate Newspaper, Cameroons Pioneer Media Organ for the Civil Society and For the Civil Society with focus on the Sustainable Development Goals and Resident Consultant with the UNCHRD Central Africa.



Rose Obah Akah meets with CCMN members at a recent workshop.

of the Southwest and Littoral regions. Those were the only four regions that had activities of the network before it went national under the coordination of Rose Obah Akah.

Who is Rose Obah Akah?

Rosaline Obah Akah is a graduate from the University of Buea in Cameroon in 2005 with a degree in Journalism and Mass Communication/Women and Gender Studies. She is a professional communicator and peace builder.

Her passion and go-getting spirit led to her appointment as Regional Communication Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) in the Northwest region. Her commitment to work and outstanding output compelled the PCC to appoint her the first Station Manager of the Christian Broadcasting Service (CBS) Radio Bamenda in 2016. She held the position of President of the Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists NW for two successive mandates up to October 2018. She now serves as an adviser to this vibrant journalism association NW.

In 2018, she was elected as the President of the Cameroon Community Media Network Northwest and

West chapter and a few months later the PCC appointed her as manager of the Peace Journalism Project which currently has over 60 journalists committed to enhancing peace in their communities through their reporting. She is a media consultant; a peace journalism, conflict transformation, “Do No Harm” and election reporting trainer; and a promoter and advocate for equal gender and human rights.

Award winner

Between January and March 2019, Akah has received two awards for her efforts in peace building and Community Development together with other recognitions received in the last few years. Her works in peace building and community development has equally been recognized and featured in local, national, and international media.

Akah has trained hundreds of youths, men and women, media houses and practitioners, CSOs, and religious leaders in the domains of peace and conflict transformation, human rights, digital rights, responsible use of social media, stress management, volunteerism, non-violent communication, mediation, humanitarian reporting, SDGs, and other peace and community development-related areas.

Comic books echo ‘Challenges of War’

By Larisa Epatko

A mother of five in Somalia finds herself in need of a job to support her family after her husband is injured and can no longer work. A boy in the Democratic Republic of Congo joins an armed group to avenge his father’s death and learns how hard it is to rejoin society after a life of violence.

Both are true stories featured in Peace Direct’s new comic book series, “The Challenges of War.” The common theme: how local peacebuilding organizations can help struggling people in their communities by providing job skills training and other means of support. In Somalia, Ayaan started a clothing business with the support of Peace Direct’s local partner, the Social Life and Agricultural Development Organization (SADO). In the DRC, Lembaka learned farming techniques and now has his own cocoa field, thanks to local organization, Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC).

Why not put their experiences in a report with facts and figures? Research is important and a large part of what Peace Direct does. However, as our CEO Dylan Mathews put it, “We’ve been looking over the years at how we can try to communicate our message and what peacebuilding looks like up close to different audiences.”

Peacebuilders often think of their work as difficult and complex, he continued. “I think that in doing that we are missing the opportunity to reach out to new audiences, because the minute you say something is complex, people switch off. And you then overcomplicate the story.”

Comic books offer a way to reduce the complexity and show how the effects of violent conflict -- and the promise of peacebuilding -- impact individual people, families and communities.

“Comics convey such incredible rich-

ness of the context without having to explain everything,” said Mathews. You can see it through the imagery -- the roads, the people, their shops -- in a way that makes it more digestible. “You can also do things in a comic that you can’t do, for example, through photos. You can show explosions or death, but in a way that is manageable for people to absorb.”

This was a new challenge for the Peace Direct team -- a different medium and, for us, an unusual way of communicating an important message. Peace Direct’s network of local peacebuilding experts in other countries lent a hand by helping to identify and interview the subjects. We also wanted to be sure to hire a local artist to draw the comics -- and found one in Pat Masioni, a talented Congolese illustrator.

The format provided an additional possible opportunity. How many lengthy and dry reports landing on the desks of policy makers remain unread? Maybe the comics stand a chance for a wider circulation.

Distributing the comic books in schools also might help students and teachers learn about what life is like in other countries and about the activities of local peacebuilding groups.



Peace Direct comic books from the DRC (above) and Somalia (left).

Larisa Epatko is a Senior Communications Officer at Peace Direct, an international nonprofit that supports grassroots peacebuild-



ers in conflict areas. Previously, she worked as a foreign affairs reporter and producer at the PBS NewsHour.

Because young people could be among the readers, it was important to strike a balance between portraying the realism of war with something visually creative: a comic book.

The audiences of the comic book might be diverse. But at the heart of the stories is something relatable to anyone trying to find work and improve their lives. No matter what their countries of origin, Ayaan and Lembaka’s stories show the resilience of human nature and the spirit of peacebuilding.

What’s coming next? Peace Direct is hoping to get a better understanding of how the comic books are resonating by distributing them to different groups, such as students, lawmakers, policy makers, donors and to the communities themselves affected by the violence the comics portray. You can find the comics on our website at www.peacedirect.org.

“Can we turn this very niche conversation about peacebuilding into a mainstream conversation so that people can say, ah, I understand why we need peacebuilding,” explained Mathews. “We don’t just need it in Somalia, we also need it in the U.S., we need it in the UK and we need it in every community.”

About Peace Direct: Peace Direct is a nonprofit based in London with a branch in Washington, D.C., that supports grassroots peacebuilders in conflict zones.



By Louisa Esther Mugabo

Daniel Shematsi takes a sip of his tea with milk he has just ordered in a well-situated hotel in Goma, the capital of the province North-Kivu in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Protected from the sun under the banana-leaf-roofed bar, he describes his life as a journalist in the war-torn region. He waits for the noise of the daily circulating UN-helicopter to pass, then looks up and determinedly says: "For the sake of peace, we are obliged to pass the message in the radio. Whatever it costs."

Daniel is the director of Radio Mashe-

ben FM, a communal radio station in the southern territory Masisi in North-Kivu. From its city Masisi it takes a three-hour motorcycle ride along muddy streets where cars and buses rarely pass to reach Goma. In the provincial capital Goma

-Patrick Sugira

now, Shematsi participates in a training on finances provided by GIZ, the German Society for International Cooperation. International organizations conduct many such seminars in the North-Kivu, often targeted at journalists. In such settings, local journalists are being educated and further expected to disseminate newly acquired knowledge through their radio programs.

International organizations now "dictate" the content of radio shows

While the added educational value might motivate journalists to participate in such workshops, it is not the only factor. Many see in the workshops a form of funding in a largely

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specializing in Conflict and War Reporting. Her work has focused on media development in Rwanda, the DR Congo and Burundi.

underfunded environment. A number of underlying reasons may illustrate this point.

Firstly, accommodation, food, and access to internet are provided. This is an advantage for the journalists who are mainly working without regular payment.

Secondly, in the North-Kivu the so-called 'frais de transport' have become a common practice. These 'transportation fees' are meant to cover the participants' expenses, yet, in practice, often exceed the actual expenses by far. Moreover, all participating journalists receive the same amount, whether they are local residents or have had a long journey.

Thirdly, such workshops often result in a diffusion of 'publi-reportages', which are partly journalistic pieces produced by the international organizations about their own activities in the troubled region. Local radio stations get paid to air this publicity without labelling it as such but by presenting it as informative journalism. Often, the content of such productions is in line with the aim of the journalists to engage in activism for peace and development. Still, Patrick Kiroha Sugira, a journalist from the territory Rutshuru in Southern North-Kivu, is critical: "It is now the international organizations that dictate us journalists. But it is where we get paid at least."

The interdependence between international organizations and local journalists in the East-Congolese province is hence complex – and often undermining journalistic standards.

What are these journalistic standards?

"What you have to know is that journalism in Masisi is not journalism in Goma. And it's not the same as in Rwanda, France or anywhere," Shematsi says. While staring with sad eyes into his cup he pours four spoons of sugar in, and adds: "In our zone, journalism is another reality. It's really another reality."

This other reality derives from constant danger. As a citizen in a war-torn area, you would be naturally fearful of nightly attacks from heavily-armed rebel groups. For journalists, the danger is even greater as they might be targeted by whomever they report on: politicians, the military, church members, citizens, or rebel groups.

The threat is very real. Daniel recalls armed men arriving at his house in Masisi, threatening to kill him in front of his wife and baby daughter. "I was told that if I continued reporting on a certain issue, they would kill me." Prioritizing survival over his work, Daniel left the area for a while before restarting his call for peace within his radio journalism. It was not the first time he had to temporarily quit his profession in order to calm the situation. Adhering to key pillars of journalism like 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' is hence even more important for journalists in the North-Kivu, Daniel argues. But often, these are wishful objectives.

If the threats to one's safety were not enough, there are practical complications to deal with as a journalist in the North-Kivu, too. Access to information – crucial for any journalist to produce objective reporting – is often

Continued on next page

lacking. So-called 'direct' information is only accessible in Goma where politicians meet, international organizations are based and press conferences take place. For journalists like Daniel, travelling there regularly is impossible and so he must rely on second-hand information that might have already been compromised. Even then, Daniel only has access to the internet on some lucky days in his studio in the center of Masisi.

Other basic tools that in other regions are often taken for granted such as computers, recorders or cameras are simply not available in the North-Kivu. Anderson Mbula, a journalist in western territory Walikale, summarizes: "Actually, for the whole aggregate of technology, we can't access it. We don't have the means to get any technical material or infrastructure that would enable us to do a good job. So, we just try like this."

One can only imagine how good they would be with all the trappings of modern newsgathering. Nonetheless, Daniel and his colleagues aim to adhere international journalistic standards alongside the watchwords of 'objectivity', and 'professionalism.' The reality though means that sometimes he has to do things differently. "We need to adapt to the environment we live in", he explains and adds starkly, "And we also have to survive."

Why don't you give up on journalism?

There does not seem to be a quick fix to the major obstacles to a proper functioning of journalism in the North-Kivu. Besides constant repression, the threat of imminent death, injury or unjustified imprisonment, financial issues deriving from the absence of any formal financing for journalists in the North-Kivu even make economic survival a challenge. Also, there is a problematic legal basis for journalists and the media in the



Democratic Republic of Congo with outdated laws from 1981. Additionally, in many media independence gets lost as young people affiliated with some politician become "journalists by accident", instrumentalized to diffuse propaganda.

The appalling lack of equipment and access to infrastructure, technology and information sum up to problems that affect the journalistic profession in the North-Kivu. Despite all this, Daniel has never thought about giving up on journalism. "I can't just stop helping my community." He sees himself as a sensitizer, active on ground for the sake of peace, which needs verified information and education to which he contributes through his radio shows.

Journalistically active for peace

The theoretical differentiation between journalism and activism as concepts, in the North-Kivu, becomes difficult. On the one hand, the dissemination of verified information and educating the public are journalistic characteristics which not forcibly need to be interpreted as political instruments to answer to grievances or to express a will of change, which is at the core of activism. On the other hand, taking into account the local context of constant danger and lack of protection from the government, Daniel's belief of contributing to a peaceful development in Masisi and beyond through speaking on the radio can be seen as a counterpart to passive acceptance of the situation – which is indeed a defining aspect of activism.

But after all, taking one step back is crucial. Perhaps a clear distinction between journalism, activism and development aid is not the most important finding when researching in and reporting on the North-Kivu.

A couple of days after our conversation, Daniel sent me a picture of himself, surrounded by children, sitting on a wooden bench on a hill overlooking Masisi. Their smiling faces seemed to indicate a world at peace. But we know that there are stories behind every such picture. Striving for peace and using all the makeshift journalistic tools he can get hold of, Daniel walked two days through the bush to reach these children to tell the story of how they were being denied access to school.

Not too long after we met, Daniel was forced to flee his territory Masisi, in fear of his life related to his journalistic practice. He is now based in Goma where he still tries to produce journalistic work as this is not only his profession, but his mission. His story is an important reminder that context is everything, and that there is no 'one size fits all' model for being a journalist. For Daniel and others like him, reporting the things happening around them might literally be a case of life and death.

Just as he was sending me the picture of the children, he eventually concluded: "The question of the media in North-Kivu has been abandoned a long time ago. Let's not abandon the people, please."



Nigerian media stoke religious animosity

by Innocent Iroaganachi

There is no doubt that Nigeria has long remained a country divided along lines of religion and ethnicity. In as much steps are been taken to minimize the polarizing impact of religion and ethnicity, Nigerian media cannot afford to place itself on the path where it will be seen as threatening the fragile coexistence through sensational publications.

On February 4, 2020, I read through the front pages of some Nigerian national newspapers and Nigerian online news platforms. It was so worrisome to see headlines such as the following:

1. "Arrest of 'Christian bomber', mockery of CAN rally – MURIC," by *Daily Trust* newspaper.
2. "MURIC commends police for arrest of 'Christian bomber', blasts CAN over rally," by *The Independent* newspaper.
3. "The arrest of suspected suicide bomber, Nathaniel Samuel, shows there is a Christian version of Boko Haram – MURIC," by *The Nation* newspaper.
4. Living Faith Church Bomber: Nathaniel Samuel not first Christian terrorist in Nigeria – Buhari's aide, Onochie," by *Daily Post*.
5. "Kaduna bombing suspect told us his name was Mohammed, not Samuel – CAN," by *Punch* newspaper.
6. "Kaduna bomber arrest: There's a version of Boko Haram – MURIC," by *Legit*.

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7. "Kaduna bomb scare: Nathaniel Samuel is a Christian, not Muslim – Suspect's father," by *Daily Trust* newspaper.
8. "MURIC, CAN tango over attempted bombing of Kaduna church," by *Vanguard* newspaper.

The media through these publications succeeded in making the debate among their audience, about the religion of the suspect and less about the alleged terror offence of the suspect. Jessa Crispin sums the faults associated with the above journalistic approach, in an opinion published by the *The Guardian*. She asserts that, "Journalism was supposed to save us... it hasn't really worked out that way, and the increasingly unhinged rhetoric of the opinion – havers and the public faces of news networks does little to restore our faith." That the news should be factual do not include giving publicity to views that are divisive and capable of causing harm and hate.

With just a glance at the headlines, it is clear to see the intended divisive impact such framings will have on the readers, along lines of either Christian or Islamic religion. For how long will the Nigerian media, continue to spin conflicts along lines of religion? Are we going to prefer these news frames at the expense of peace? The media, especially the print and online platforms, seem to lose track of their role in unifying and directing the public towards a sustainable common cause, especially in times of conflict. Instead, what we see is sensationalism.

In the effort to propose a peace based style of journalism to some media associates of mine, I get the argument that peace journalism (PJ) is not a kind of journalistic practice Nigeria is prepared to experience. The popular notion they have about PJ is that it will not give publicity to the ills that are happening. This is a very wrong notion. Moreover, every media profes-



sional and practitioner cannot deny the fact, that there is always a conscious effort made by the editors to select events that will stand as news as determined by newsworthiness, in-house rules, and ethical standards.

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) asserted in their definition of PJ that it is "when editors and reporters make choices - of what to report, and how to report it - that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict." This kind of journalistic practice is the most suitable because it checks the wrong manipulations done by media professionals and practitioners in their reporting of conflicts. Nigerian news publishers need to understand that twisting conflicts to spur sentiments is contributing to disunity.

The media is not called the fourth estate of the realm, after the executive, legislature, and judiciary, because they make a conscious effort to overheat an already tense situation. Rather, in addition to exposing ills taking place in society, they (media) consolidate and sustain efforts that are made to avoid a repeat of ills hindering integral coexistence in the society. With regard to drawing from PJ practice, the Nigerian media in their reporting of conflicts need to focus on making a conscious effort to let Nigerians know what binds them together rather than what divides them.

Spanish initiative gives voice to Venezuelans

by Mayra Ambrosio Laredo

A peace journalism project in Spain is giving voice to young exiled Venezuelans who have found a new home in Europe. 62 young Venezuelans are studying this year at the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria (UFV) in Madrid, Spain.

A new web documentary (<http://bit.ly/VenezuelaenlaUFV>) and video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiLrI4k1T8>) that highlight the plight of these exiles has been produced by Corresponsales de Paz, the society of alumni of the UFV, and the university's journalism students. In the documentary, Corresponsales de Paz travels through the UFV campus to give voice to six of the 62 Venezuelan students studying there.

Through the eyes of the students, viewers experience the situation in Venezuela that drove the six students into exile, and hear the students' expectations for the future.

"Sometimes I think that one day I will wake up and they will tell me that they have killed someone of my family, or that my grandmother died because she does not have medicine for her illness," said Valentina Calle (law/criminology major), Venezuelan UFV student, who, at only 21 years old, has already faced concerns very different from her classmates.

Along with Valentina, five other

Mayra Ambrosio Laredo is a journalist and coordinator of Corresponsales de Paz, a Peace Journalism project linked to the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria in Madrid, Spain.



(Left)-Enjoying life in Spain are Venezuelans Luis Eduardo López and Valentina Calle. (Below left)-Screenshot from the webdoc, *Venezuela en la UFV: Historia de un exilio*.



Venezuelan students explain in this digital documentary the real situation in Venezuela and how they live during their exile while the crisis continues at home for relatives and their nation. The students are Andreina Hernández (journalism major), Bettina Fisman (psychology), César Quiaro (architecture), Andrés Ayala (communication) and Luis Eduardo López (gastronomy).

Some of these young people have risked their lives to attend protests, often hiding it from their loved ones to avoid worrying them. The webdoc also gathers the opinions of experts such as the Venezuelan sociologist Fidel Rodríguez and the international journalist of Radio Nacional de España (RNE) Ángela Núñez, both teachers at the UFV.

The Venezuelan students say they have found a "home" at UFV because both teachers and classmates support them.

Although the situation they live in is

not exactly auspicious, the Venezuelan UFV students are able to see the positive side. "I think the generation of those who have had to migrate, leave family and friends, have had to change life radically and, at best, start from scratch in another place. It has favored us in some aspects. We are clearer about what we want in life," said Bettina Fisman.

Beyond seeing the positive side, they still have hope. Most say that they are going to return to Venezuela, perhaps to rebuild it. "I would like the world not to keep the image that all Venezuelans are thieves and as bad as the people who are there right now, damaging the country. We are really a country that has a lot to prove... and we will prove it!" said Luis López.



Venezuelan students Andrés Ayala and César Quiaro at UFV in Spain.

Cameroon digital project seeks to #DefyHateNow

By Pedmia Shatu Tita

The Global Initiative for Digital Inclusion and Communication (GIDICom) launched activities for a campaign called #acts4peace237 in Bamenda, Cameroon with a press briefing on Sunday 19th January 2020. In a one hour briefing with the press, the Executive Director for GIDICom Pedmia Shatu Tita presented the concept note of the campaign.

In her presentation, she indicated that the #acts4peace237 is a #defyhatenow aims at creating public awareness on the dangers of misinformation, fake news, violence against women and hate speech in Cameroon. She highlighted that the violators have resorted to the Photoshop of nude pictures and videos of women to the extent of asking them to give a ransom or the images will be leaked. This



We are going back to the natural setting to have these women talk from the heart.. and chart a way forward.

-Rosaline Obah Akah



is a great violation of human rights and it causes hate and disdain on the online economy.

Shatu urged journalists to encourage citizens to take small “hygienic” steps to mitigate hate speech and incitement to violence. Shatu said there is a need to have more conversations on these issues at home, schools and in the workplace. Each person has an obligation to use Social Media responsibly and utilize the online mechanisms for reporting hate speech and misinformation online.

#acts4peace237 is a wakeup call to all users of the online platform to change the narratives in the way things are perceived online. “Our “clicks” should

go a long way to build peace. Let us work to have a #HateFreeCameroon,” she said.

The activities for the campaign were announced at a press conference. The online campaign ran from January 20-30 . Also, a fireside chat session with women who surf the internet and are from conflict affected areas was also held as a way for the women to share their stories. The chat was also meant to serve as a healing therapy.

Journalists questioned the choice of the fireside chat. Reporters also asked what about women who do not surf the internet because they can’t afford the gadgets they need to access the internet? To this, GIDICom’s Communication and Public Relations expert Rosaline Obah Akah explained that “the fireside years past have always been used by our parents for storytelling, some of which are for fun, and others to heal trauma. So, we are going back the natural setting to have these women talk from the heart, share their pain with others and chart a way forward to see how we can assist these women to engage in small but significant steps to ensure a peaceful online and offline for themselves.”

Akah continued, “We are aware that due to the hardship some women cannot access the internet either because they cannot afford to purchase data bundle or they do not have digital gadgets, so we are doing it with just 15 women who surf the internet for the sake of impact. Once we are sure of having an impact, we will see how we can get other women involved.”

The initial chat session was held on January 25.

The effects of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon have created pain and hatred that has been manifested online and offline in hate speech and violent attacks. Women have been both the

Pedmia Shatu Tita is a Communication expert, Digital Rights activist with high interest on Gender



issues online. She holds a degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of Buea.

oppressor and the oppressed.

Against this backdrop, Global Initiative for Digital inclusion organized a fireside chat with women, particularly women with special abilities. Their stories have gone unreported and the organizers felt like including this group of women around the dialogue. Rosaline Obah Akah moderated the session.

Shatu explained #DefyHateNow and #Act4peace237 and urged the women to begin by advocating peace in their small spheres of influence. Women during the chat shared their pain including losing loved ones, teenage pregnancies, and the inability for persons living with disabilities to run when there is a shootout.

At the end of the chat session, Pedmia Shatu said that 15 women participants was a good start. “Their stories simply tell me and my team that we don’t need to sleep but work double to see that we impact lives,” she said. The participants promised to take small but significant moves to #DefyHateNow in their various communities.

The campaign closed by carrying out a 10 day social media campaign with the #Act4peace237, #DefyHateNow, #spreadlove, and #HateFreeCameroon. The campaign included flyers and informative sensitization messages shared on Facebook.



Journalists like Sami Jahesh operating in Afghanistan have frequently become victims themselves.

Afghani journalists under attack from all sides

By Zainab Farahmand

In May 2018, a group of Afghan security forces was travelling to Deh Yak. The captain stopped them in their tracks, ordering them to step out of their vehicles and continue the rest of their journey on foot. Sami was one of the first to step out the vehicle. As soon as he did, he heard a blisteringly loud noise and instantly fell to the ground. A gunshot sound. He had been shot in the head by Taliban militaries.

“The journalist has been killed!” belatedly a nearby Afghanistan National Army (ANA) soldier. Astonishingly, Sami survived the shooting, saved only by his helmet. Sami Jahesh was working with Ariana TV. He was embedded with the ANA to cover an army operation in the central province of Ghazni.

This isn’t the first time Jahesh’s life has been in grave danger. In his ten years as a cameraman for different TV stations, he’s experienced violence from all angles.

“We are not safe, not from the government and not from terrorists. We’re not even safe from the public. I’ve faced physical and verbal assault during public gatherings and demonstrations, like so many other journalists. And our work is doing nothing but providing information to the public,” he said.

Jahesh’s story is just one of many. Afghan journalists throughout the country have been victimized, but continue to work to uncover the truth.

The 2018 report by Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) reported 121 cases of violence against journalists, and 17 deaths. Of the 17 killings, 11 happened while journalists were gathered in groups, during the suicide attacks in the Shash Darak and Qala e Nazer-Barchi districts of Kabul.

In recent years, terrorist groups have become more violent towards the media – specifically journalists, who they have begun to target deliberately. In 2017, there was an attack

on staff at Tolo TV and Shamshad TV station, but these attacks were acts of revenge towards the station. But the 2018 attacks targeted journalists purely based on the media house they belonged to. An example of this is the 30th April attack in Shashdarak, Kabul that killed nine journalists and injured five others.

Although these cases of violence are

Continued on next page

Zainab Farahmand is an alumna of Sahar Speaks, which provides training and mentoring for Afghan female journalists, and an Afghani reporter.



hard to avoid, especially in the current political climate, Jahesh said there are ways to at least prevent fatalities. "In my opinion, any video-journalist, photographer or reporter should use the safety vests and helmets distributed by AJSC," he said.

But death isn't the only threat journalists face. NoorulAin is an investigative journalist who published many reports in Hasht-e-Subh Daily. After publishing a report about the son of a government official who illegally seized land, he faced countless threats, and was forced to move homes and remain in hiding for three months. "They found me at my old address and called me, saying it didn't matter if I hid from them – they'd find my son and my wife anyway."

According to Zaki Daryabee, head of *Etilaat-e-Rooz Daily*, one of their investigative journalists was forced to change his area of research due to severe threats. He then had to stop writing investigative reports altogether. Now he writes articles and prefers to remain anonymous to protect himself.

Investigative journalists in Afghanistan also have a particularly difficult time getting information from sources. The Afghan Access to Information Law specifically obliges all government institutions to provide information to whoever asks for it. However, AJSC's annual report discovered government

officials are selective with what they hand over. They found that many reporters have been given easy access to information from high-ranking governmental meetings. But when they want information for investigative reports, the government institutions immediately reject their requests.

"If the governmental organizations spot something that works against them in the report, they will threaten journalists and force them to write the report in a way that puts them in a favorable light," said Jahesh.

As well as denying people access to information, the government has been the direct perpetrator of the majority of cases of violation against journalists, after the Taliban and ISIS, according to AJSC's annual report. These cases include whipping, unjustified detention, online abuse and unjustified summons to court.

Female journalists are even more vulnerable. Alongside threats to their lives, they also face sexual harassment. To help combat this, AJSC developed an anti-sexual harassment policy in March 2017, which they handed over to all media outlets to be thoroughly implemented. However, this only covers sexual harassment perpetrated in-house and not in the field.

"I went to investigate a case of embezzlement, and the ministry official I

spoke with only agreed to hand over the information in return for sex," said Nilaab (name changed), a freelance investigative journalist. After speaking with this ministry official, she had no choice but to end her report. But the harassment continued – this man didn't stop calling her, and she eventually had to block his number.



Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, media have played

a tremendous role in promoting accountability and transparency, human rights and reducing the gap between Kabul and the countryside by connecting the two via robust reporting. However, the recent peace talks with the Taliban have raised some concern about the future of press freedom in Afghanistan.

"We remain concerned about the future of press freedom here, because we don't know whether peace negotiators will compromise on the achievements in the realm of press freedom in Afghanistan or not. And if they do, what will be the extent of such a compromise? However, what is clear to us is that we will not give up on the fight to preserve the hard-won achievement in the realm of press and freedom of expression," said Najib Sharifi, AJSC's director.

ABOUT AJSC

Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (<http://ajsc.af/>) is Afghanistan's largest organization working to protect journalists' safety and press freedom in Afghanistan. They have distributed hundreds of armored vests and helmets to journalists and media houses as part of their attempts to reduce media workers' vulnerability. AJSC was formed based on the recommendation of Kabul Conference on Freedom of Expression, which was organized in March 2009 by International Media Support (IMS).



Conflict rages on in Afghanistan, putting journalists at risk.

By UNESCO

Zimbabwe joined the rest of the world in commemorating this year's World Radio Day with the Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Monica Mutsvangwa declaring that the government would fulfill its mandate of rolling out community radio stations across the country.

Speaking at the national commemorations in Gweru on 13 February 2020, Minister Mutsvangwa said community radios were key to development.

"There is no turning back in the rolling out of community radio stations," she said.

"We believe in the power of radios and recognize that for people to contribute to national development, their voices should be heard," she added.

Community radio is a service offering a third model of radio broadcasting



UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.



Zimbabwe minister Monica Mutsvangwa emphasizes the importance of radio on Feb. 13 in Gweru.

in addition to commercial and public broadcasting. Community stations serve geographic and communities of interest. They allow participation from community members, foster development at the most basic level and allow access of information to the people.

Speaking at the same occasion, UNESCO Regional Advisor for Communication and Information in Southern Africa, Al Amin Yusuph said radio is a powerful medium of communication and information adding that community radio stations allow people to take ownership of their own development.

He called upon all radio stations to uphold diversity, both in their newsroom and on the airwaves.

"Diversity must be seen in radio content, as well as among the creators of content – technicians, programmers, journalists, sound engineers, everyone has a role to play in this respect," he said.

"It is important that the radio industry itself be an industry of diversity, reflecting the complexity and richness of our societies. Diversity is also an

asset, as it is synonymous with more creativity and innovation in product content," he added quoting from the message of UNESCO Director General, Ms. Audrey Azoulay.

Proclaimed in 2011 by the Member States of UNESCO, and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 as an International Day, World Radio Day is celebrated globally on February 13.

Radio is a powerful medium for celebrating humanity in all its diversity and constitutes a platform for democratic discourse. At the global level, radio remains the most widely consumed medium. This unique ability to reach out the widest audience means radio can shape a society's experience of diversity, stand as an arena for all voices to speak out, be represented and heard. Radio stations should serve diverse communities, offering a wide variety of programs, viewpoints and content, and reflect the diversity of audiences in their organizations and operations.

For more, see: <https://en.unesco.org/news/zimbabwe-government-heightens-community-radio-development>

