

CJFE

reporter

2001 – Issue 1

Jailed Iranian wins CJFE award

By Kristina Stockwood

Iranian journalist Akbar Ganji is considered to be the most courageous journalist in Iran today. For this, CJFE has awarded him one of the 2000 CJFE International Press Freedom Awards. And for this, he has been jailed, kept in solitary confinement, and tortured.

Ganji has gone on a hunger strike to protest his incarceration

and the conditions in which he is being held. They include, he said at a November 9 court appearance, being hung upside down and beaten.

CJFE joined PEN Canada and Amnesty International on December 13, when five Canadian authors – Margaret Atwood, Andrew Pyper, Catherine Bush, Ken Wiwa and André Alexis – expressed their support for Ganji and four other Iranian writers on trial. At the



Akbar Ganji prior to his first court appearance in Iran. He was jailed in April 2000, and was unable to accept his CJFE award in person.



CJFE press freedom award winners 2000

Jineth Bedoya, Akbar Ganji and Michel Auger won Press Freedom Awards at CJFE's annual banquet (see pages 4 and 5).

event, renowned Iranian author and scholar Reza Baraheni, who was himself imprisoned, called for Canadians to support Iran's beleaguered writers.

In 2000, more than 20 Iranian journalists and writers were jailed, summoned or charged with various "offences" for expressing themselves freely and peacefully. As of December, at least nine journalists remained in jail. Around 30 newspapers were shut down or banned.

Ganji and the others were arrested after attending a conference in Germany last April where political and social reform in Iran were discussed. On trial are Meh-

rangiz Kar, writer, editor and women's rights advocate; Shahla Lahiji, publisher of women's books and director of a women's studies centre; translator and journalist Khalil Rostamkhani; and independent cleric and scholar Hojjatoleslam Hassan Eshkevari. Editor Ezatollah Sahabi was also among those arrested upon returning from Germany.

In the past few years, a number of journalists, writers and pro-democracy politicians have been murdered for speaking out. This is thought to be the real reason that Ganji is being targeted. Through his work published in

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JOURNALISTS: Spies are us?

Investigative reporters accused of espionage

By Emily Pohl-Weary

It seems improbable in this day and age, but across the world, pro-government factions have been accusing investigative reporters of espionage.

"It is easy to accuse journalists of spying," says Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists. "They ask difficult questions, they gather a great deal of information – much of it about the state – and they have to maintain confidentiality."

Such charges have been used

by the authorities in a number of recent cases to silence political dissent.

"Journalism becomes impossible if every time we touch delicate subjects reporters end up in jail with a spying charge hanging over them," says White.

The list of journalists facing stiff punishment for the arcane charge is mushrooming. Twelve Zambian journalists from the independent newspaper *Post*, including editor-in-chief Fred M'membe, several reporters and the rest of his editorial staff, were charged with espionage.

The charge against the journalists followed a lead article on March 9, 2000 that questioned Zambia's military capacity to withstand an incursion from Angola. The state claims that the article could have been useful information for Angola or any foreign country wanting to undermine Zambia's security. On August 18, M'membe was told by Judge Elizabeth Muyovwe that he still had a case to answer to, while his colleagues were acquitted.

In July, a pro-government Sri Lankan newspaper pressed charges

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Graphics from a Web site campaigning for Serbian journalist Miroslav Filipovic, accused of spying.



CJFE launches media rebuilding program in Sierra Leone p 2

Canada's ethnic journalists provide multicultural perspective p 3

Nelson Mandela dénonce l'absence de liberté de presse au Burundi p 7

Battle of Seattle – implications for media coverage of protests p 8

CJFE announces Sierra Leone media rebuilding program

By Lisa Roberts

CJFE is embarking on a major new project to help rebuild key parts of the media in the West African country of Sierra Leone.

"Our main focus for this project will be the rebuilding of Sierra Leone's newspapers," says Sharmini Peries, executive director of CJFE. "It is almost impossible to comprehend how severely the country's papers have been devastated in an atmosphere created by years of war and economic decline."

The Peacebuilding Fund of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will contribute \$288,000 towards the project. "CIDA's support will have a major impact on improving the ability of the Sierra Leone media to both provide basic news information and advance the cause of peace," said Peries. "This help will allow the media to play an important role in the reestablishment of democracy in the country."



QUICK MAPS

Both Sierra Leone's newspaper and radio sectors were all but destroyed during the years of brutal war.

Most newspapers were bombed and remain in a state of crisis, unable to provide adequate day-to-day news coverage. Independent radio exists only in the capital city of Freetown. Eight journalists were murdered in January

1999 during the three-week occupation of Freetown by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Another journalist was killed by ECOMOG peacekeeping forces, and yet another died in prison in 1999 after he was denied medical treatment.

CJFE will open an office in Freetown for the duration of the 18-month project. Elements in-

clude the purchase and installation of a printing press, establishment of a local cooperative to operate the press, training for print and radio journalists, and support to help rebuild the capacity of the country's media organizations.

The project is a continuation of CJFE's commitment to working with Sierra Leonian journalists. Along with Mohamed Bangura and Lansana Gberie, two Sierra Leonian journalists living in exile, CJFE approached Human Rights Watch and European PEN for emergency assistance for the many journalists who lost almost everything in January 1999. \$21,000 was eventually distributed to 113 journalists, or their families, in and around Freetown.

Bangura and Gberie are now members of a special advisory group set up to monitor implementation of the media rebuilding project. It will be managed by Dale Ratcliffe, a Canadian journalist/media trainer with experience in Africa.

CJFE/ARTICLE 19 seminar engages key freedom of expression players

By Chantal Sundaram

On November 29 and 30, CJFE and London-based ARTICLE 19 held a highly successful seminar on international promotion of freedom of expression. The event, chaired by CJFE president Arnold Amber and ARTICLE 19 executive director Andrew Puddephatt, brought together key players and experts in the community.

Participants included the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Abid Hussain, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, and the Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Santiago Canton, as well as non-governmental organizations, journalists' associations and human rights experts from around the world. CJFE was represented

both by Amber and executive director Sharmini Peries.

Topics included the significance of defamation laws, contempt of court rulings and hate speech. Peries introduced the discussion on hate speech, which launched roundtable talks. Current debates on "speech that kills" and "speech that incites violence" were discussed in great detail.

During the seminar, a Joint Declaration on International Mechanisms for Promoting Freedom of Expression was produced and signed by all three rapporteurs. It targets two issues identified as having reached crisis points in many parts of the world: defamation laws and censorship by killing. The declaration was created as a legal resource and as a source of internationally agreed-upon standards for governments.

The declaration acknowledges the importance of adopting a joint statement on racism and the media "as part of the process of



Participants at an ARTICLE 19/CJFE seminar included (at left) Santiago Cantón and Abid Hussain, and (right) Martine Anstett.

preparation for the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance," to be held in September in South Africa. It also recognizes the "enormous value in promoting the right to freedom of expression and the free flow of information and ideas" represented by new communications technologies, which will be discussed at the rapporteurs' next joint meeting this fall.

Through support from CJFE and

the CIDA Peacebuilding Fund, international participants Luckson Chipare from the Media Institute of Southern Africa, Mabel Moralejo from Periodistas in Argentina, Gasser Abel-Razek from Egypt and Branoslav Zivovic from Serbia's Association of Independent Electronic Media were able to attend. Beth Richardson from the Canadian High Commission in London also attended, which added to Canada's high profile at the seminar.

CJFE reporter

2001, Issue #1 (19)

Newsletter of
Canadian Journalists
for Free Expression

489 College St. #403
Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A5

tel: +1 416 515 9622
fax: +1 416 515 7879

e-mail: cjfe@cjfe.org
<http://www.cjfe.org>

Executive Director

Sharmini Peries

CJFE Program Manager

David Cozac

IFEX Alerts Coordinators

Michael Elbaz, Marianna Tzabiras

IFEX Development / Outreach Coordinator

Rebecca Nelems

IFEX Communique Editor

Anders Hayden

Communications Coordinator

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Design / Production

Eric Mills

Map courtesy of Quick Maps
(www.theodora.com/maps)

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression

(formerly the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists) is an independent, non-profit association of journalists, writers, producers, editors and publishers promoting freedom of expression.

CJFE membership costs \$25. For a tax-creditable donation of \$50 or more, the membership fee is waived.

CJFE administers a Clearing House for the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), which operates an Action Alert Network and globally disseminates information to organisations and individuals.

Canada's ethnic newspapers provide crucial multicultural perspective

By Kokila Jacob

If you are an immigrant journalist in Canada, chances are that the Canadian media have not exactly welcomed you with open arms. You soon realize that the freedom of expression you so hoped to savour is denied to you by the lack of opportunities to practise it.

The urge to write will, at some point in time, lead you either to write for multicultural publications or maybe even to launch your own community newspaper. Multicultural or ethnic publications, call them what you will, play a dual role: they serve the community and they are often the only avenue for immigrant journalists to practise their trade.

Thomas Saras is editor-in-chief of *Patrides*, a bilingual newspaper serving Greeks in North America. *Patrides* was launched 30 years ago and currently has a circulation of 160,000. Saras took over as editor/owner in 1974.

According to Saras, mainstream media have a 'when in Rome do as the Romans do' mentality, and therefore often miss stories in immigrant communities. "Mainstream publications don't know or don't want to know the specific problems of the Italian, Indian, Chinese or Greek communities, though they are big communities," he says.

"In this country, nobody wants a cultural ghetto. It is much better to have cultural integration, but still a community's cultural presence through the media is valuable. The only way to have it is for every community to have its own publication in its own language. This is the only avenue," he adds.

Shagorika Easwer edits *Desi News*, an English-language monthly magazine serving the South Asian and Caribbean communities. She finds that the mainstream papers have a different understanding of issues that matter to the ethnic communities.

"They don't cover issues that matter the way we do. Issues

which are crucial for a particular community often, are non-issues for mainstream media," she notes.

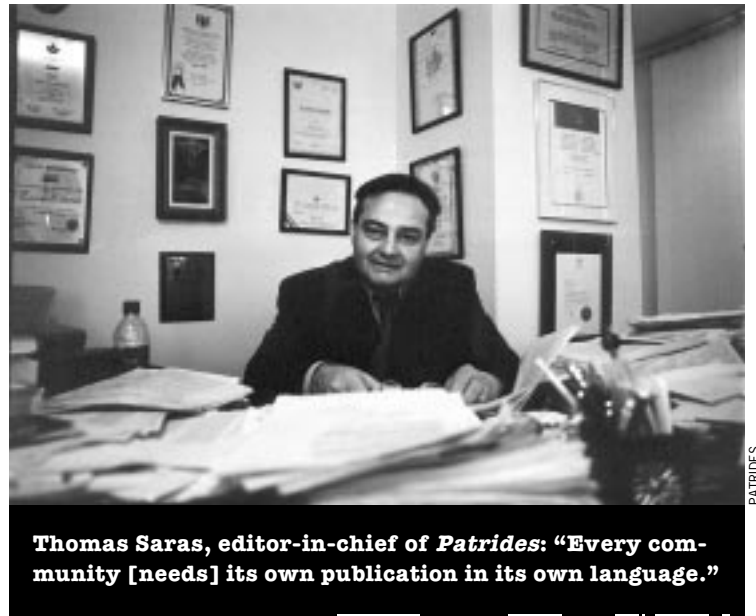
Lack of focus on South Asians in Canada by the prevailing media drove this Indian journalist to launch *Desi News* in 1997, a year after she landed in Toronto. She enjoys the freedom of publishing her own monthly community magazine.

"As a writer and as one who commissions articles, I have the freedom to focus on issues that matter to the community here in Canada," she says.

Catering to the Iranian communities are three newspapers – *Shahrvand*, *Sepidar* and *Iran Star*. They carry news from Iran as well as about the community here in Canada.

Hassan Zerehi, a writer living in exile, started a monthly literary publication in 1988 to cater to other writers and journalists in exile. Four years later, with the Iranian community growing in Canada, he met the need for general community news by launching *Shahrvand*, a twice-weekly publication in Farsi with a circulation of about 30,000 and contributions from journalists living in Canada and in Iran.

Mimum is an occasional pub-



Thomas Saras, editor-in-chief of *Patrides*: "Every community [needs] its own publication in its own language."

PATRIDES

lication in Pashtu and Dari languages brought out by the Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration – Community Support Organization.

"It is not that regular because of lack of financial resources, but we try our best, because Afghan women don't get to read anything in our language otherwise," said a spokeswoman. *Mimum* focuses on educational information, resources available to Afghan women in Canada, and settlement

issues. It also carries stories and poems by local Afghan writers.

Saras observes that not many multicultural/ethnic publications make money.

"We see so many publications appear and disappear. For ethnic publications to publish against all odds is a matter of love – for the community, for their issues, heritage and culture."

Kokila Jacob wrote for media in the Middle East and India before moving to Canada in 1999.

Staff changing season at CJFE



Lisa Roberts

It's a season of change at CJFE. Program manager **Lisa Roberts** resigned in December after more than a year of working with international training programs, the Journalists in Distress Fund, and the annual International Press Freedom Awards. She plans to do some freelance journalism work before returning to university for an MA in September 2001.

David Cozac, a former IFEX Action Alerts Coordinator, returns from working in Guatemala to join CJFE as program manager.

CJFE's longest-serving staffer, IFEX outreach coordinator **Kristina Stockwood**, begins a one-

year leave in January 2001. CJFE wishes her well with the arrival of her first child. *Communiqué* editor **Rebecca Nelems** is stepping into Stockwood's position for the next year.

Administrative coordinator **Kristin Downey** joined CJFE in December. Downey brings extensive experience living in Central and Southern Africa, and is fluent in French.

Other new staff are joining CJFE early in 2001. **Anders Hayden** will take over as *Communiqué* editor, and **Emil Pohl-Wearly** joins us as communications coordinator.

Journalists accused of espionage

— continued from page 1
of treason and espionage against two journalists, accusing them of "betraying the country to the [Tamil] Tigers." The Patriotic Journalists' Front says the journalists "gave military information to the Tigers movement" and are "spies based in Colombo."

Both state and pro-governmental media widely distributed the previously unknown organization's declaration. In response, the government has censored all "military news." At least five me-

dia outlets have been closed or sanctioned by the authorities.

In Liberia in August, a four-man television news crew from Britain's Channel Four was indicted on espionage charges. Liberian authorities claim the journalists entered the country to produce a "damaging and injurious" documentary about President Charles Taylor. The president is widely suspected of supplying rebel forces in neighbouring Sierra Leone with weapons and logistical support in exchange for

diamonds. The IFJ is concerned that the decision to charge the television team with spying carried "sinister implications for democracy and press freedom." The IFJ says it is the latest in a series of such cases in which governments crack down on legitimate journalism by spurious allegations of espionage.

Serbian journalist Miroslav Filipovic, a reporter with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Reuters and other agencies was charged with "espionage" and

"spreading false information" and held in prison from May until the fall of the Milosevic regime in October. He is slated to face the charges in 2001 in front of a new trial.

"All of these cases are about nervous governments blaming journalists for their problems and then using absurd legal devices to stifle debate and to intimidate other journalists," said White. "It is a trend that is sinister and dangerous for democracy and press freedom."



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CJFE

CJFE's International Press Freedom Awards honour journalists

By Lisa Roberts

More than 600 journalists, public figures and other supporters of free expression rose to their feet to salute **Michel Auger** at CJFE's third annual International Press Freedom Awards on November 23, 2000.

Auger, who specializes in covering biker gangs for *Le Journal de Montréal*, attended the event just two months after he was shot five times in the daily newspaper's parking lot. A criminal investigation into the Sept. 13 attack is ongoing, and biker gangs are the main suspects.

"I accept this award also in the name of all the other reporters doing the same job that I am doing. I know now that it is a risky business," said Auger as he accepted the award.

"I never thought as a young reporter that 37 years later I'd be accepting an award for freedom of expression for covering the crime scene in Quebec."

Auger was shot the day after a two-page spread in *Le Journal* profiled the most recent victims in the ongoing turf war between the Hell's Angels and Rock Machine.



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CJFE

CJFE's third annual Press Freedom Awards banquet attracted a large and enthusiastic audience last November 23. **TOP:** executive director Sharmini Peries with Dave Hayer (son of Tara Singh Hayer), Michel Auger, Knowlton Nash, Jineth Bedoya, CJFE president Arnold Amber and PEN-Canada president Sandra Martin. **ABOVE:** Toronto journalists celebrate with award winners Michel Auger (third from left) and Jineth Bedoya (far right). **RIGHT:** Banquet host Knowlton Nash talks to CJFE president Arnold Amber. **BELOW RIGHT:** Members of Journalists in Exile: Isaac Ampadu, Mori Abdolailan, Zdenka Acin, Pedro Váldez and DBS Jeyaraj. **BOTTOM:** CJFE board member Richard Gwyn of the *Toronto Star* chats with award winner Michel Auger.



ANDREW STRAUSS / CJFE



Ignatieff: serve fellow citizens

Michael Ignatieff made a return trip to Toronto to speak at CJFE's International Press Freedom Awards just weeks after de-

living the 2000 Massey Lecture, "The Rights Revolution." Nonetheless, the historian and writer was up to the challenge of engaging an audience with his ideas about free expression.

"While I was thinking about talking to you, some Spanish colleagues in Madrid emailed me with a request to add my signature to a protest against intimidation and death threats that had been made to Spanish journalists working for the great Spanish newspaper *El País* who were working in the Basque country. . . .

"I sent my email back immediately, and then discovered that I was part of a chain of signatures that went around the globe – people instantly responding to this threat to one of our number. So that terrorists, counter-terrorists, insurgents and government know that if they come after us, there are a lot of people who are going to know about it instantly, and are going to want to do something about it, and that's what Canadian Journalists for Free Expression stands for.

"And what we stand for is not a narrow defence of the prerogatives of a particular profession. There's not much that's important about journalism, except that we're here to serve citizens.

"We're in the entertainment business, and we should have as much fun serving citizens as we possibly can.

"But the reason that our right to express ourselves matters is so that we can communicate to our fellow citizens. Attacking a journalist is not just attacking a profession: it's attacking everyone in this room who's not a journalist." – L.R.



Keynote speaker Michael Ignatieff

Press Freedom Awards

Journalists from Quebec, Iran and Guatemala

"I hope no one else will have trouble like I did with the Angels, for exposing them as devils," said Auger.

Auger is the first recipient of the Tara Singh Hayer Award. CJFE inaugurated the award in 1999 to honour the editor of the *Indo-Canadian Times*, killed in Vancouver in 1998.

Journalist Joe Schlesinger, who along with Jan Wong and Ann Rauhala made up the awards jury, said Auger's coverage of organized crime "is in the spirit of the work that was done by Tara Singh Hayer and the spirit of the award."

Jineth Bedoya Lima of the Bogotá daily *El Espectador* also got a standing ovation from her Canadian colleagues.

In May, she was kidnapped in front of a Bogotá jail as she arrived for a pre-arranged interview related to an ongoing dispute involving the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, a right-wing paramilitary group. Instead of being allowed into the jail to speak with a paramilitary leader, she was forced by gunpoint into a truck. Ten hours later, a taxi driver found her on the outskirts of town, her hands tied. She had been beaten and sexually assaulted.

Despite the ordeal, Bedoya was back at work within months. Just 27-years-old, Bedoya now

reports from the rural battleground of the long civil war in Colombia. While many of her colleagues have gone into exile, she is determined to continue working as a journalist. Just two days after returning to Colombia following the awards ceremony, she climbed into a military helicopter heading to a conflict zone.

Bedoya gave countless interviews while in Canada about her personal story and the generally perilous situation for journalists in Colombia. At least 44 journalists have been killed and another 33 kidnapped in the past decade. Killers contracted by drug lord Pablo Escobar murdered Guillermo Cano, publisher of *El Espectador*, in 1986, and three years later the newsroom was bombed by members of the Medellín drug cartel. Two editors at the paper were forced into exile in 2000.

Akbar Ganji is behind bars in Evin Prison in Tehran, Iran, and so was not able to accept his award in person. Ganji, one of Iran's most prominent reformist journalists, was arrested in April when he returned to Iran from Berlin, having attended a conference on "Iran after the Elections" (see Iran story, page 1). Ganji's reporting exposed government authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran who were responsible for killing Iranian intellectuals, poets, writers and academics.

Ganji was brought to Revolutionary Court in Tehran on November 9. He reportedly told the judge that he had been hung upside down in his cell while prison guards kicked him in the head and stomach. He has been denied access to his family and his lawyer.

While CJFE has been unable to communicate directly with Ganji, news of the award has been carried on numerous short-wave services and in exiled newspapers. The day after a report aired on Voice of Iran, the CJFE



ANDREW STRAUSS / CJFE

Jineth Bedoya (right) of *El Espectador* in Bogota, Colombia, accepts the International Press Freedom Award. CJFE program manager Lisa Roberts translates her remarks.

was deluged with calls from the U.S., Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The awards recognize journalists who demonstrate a commitment to freedom of expression and who overcome enormous odds simply to produce the news.

Sponsorships from more than

50 companies, including all of Canada's major media outlets, make the banquet an important fundraiser for CJFE. A large part of the evening's proceeds go to the Journalists in Distress Fund, which helped 23 journalists in 2000 with grants totaling over \$35,000.



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CJFE



ANDREW STRAUSS / CJFE

CJFE award recognizes student



Away from the glitz of the International Press Freedom Awards banquet, CJFE also recognized a student journalist who is set to make a contribution to the cause of free expression.

Bruce Gillespie, a graduate in journalism at Ryerson Polytechnic University, received the CJFE Student Press Freedom Award at the CJFE AGM on Sept. 12, in recognition of his article "Killer Assignment" published in the

Ryerson Review of Journalism. Gillespie detailed the threats against Kim Bolan, *Vancouver Sun* journalist and CJFE board member, arising from her investigative stories on the Air India bombing.

The call for submissions for this annual award will be posted at www.cjfe.org in spring 2001.



FPJQ

Hélène Pichette, présidente de la FPJQ (à gauche), Jorge Luis Arce Cabrera, un journaliste cubain qui réside en France, et Jean-Michel Leprince de Radio-Canada. Cette photo date du 3 mai 2000, Journée mondiale de la liberté de la presse

Le Québec à l'heure de la liberté de presse

Par Marc Cassivi

Huit heures trente-sept le matin, à Montréal. Autour d'une table garnie de muffins et de pain aux noix, des journalistes québécois de tous les horizons rencontrent Cosette Ibrahim. La jeune reporter libanaise, les traits tirés, raconte en détail son séjour à Khiam, au Sud-Liban, où elle a été emprisonnée sans raison de septembre 1999 à la fin de mai 2000.

Plus de trois mois se sont écoulés et Cosette Ibrahim, régulièrement battue et interrogée au cours de sa détention, répond de

bonne grâce aux questions des journalistes venus recueillir son témoignage. Le «déjeuner-cause-rie», tenu le 7 septembre, est le dernier en date d'une série de rencontres organisées par le Comité québécois pour la liberté de presse, organisme mis sur pied par la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec en mai 1999 à l'occasion de la Journée mondiale de la liberté de la presse

Un an plus tard à New York, la FPJQ devenait membre du réseau IFEX, marquant sa toute première adhésion à une organisation internationale. Par ce geste, explique Hélène Pichette, présidente

de la FPJQ, la Fédération veut démontrer que les journalistes du Québec comptent faire davantage leur part pour défendre la liberté de presse dans le monde, aux côtés d'organismes réputés comme Reporters sans frontières, Committee to Protect Journalists, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression et Human Rights Watch.

«La participation de la FPJQ à IFEX servira les journalistes brimés ailleurs dans le monde, tout comme elle pourra servir aux journalistes du Québec», croit Jane McElhone, réalisatrice au réseau national CBC et responsable du Comité québécois pour la liberté

de presse, dont le mandat est de défendre la liberté des journalistes et d'informer les Québécois sur les questions de liberté de la presse à travers le monde.

«Il y a aussi une question de solidarité entre confrères, estime McElhone. Nous avons reçu beaucoup de journalistes étrangers depuis un an, du Congo, du Sierra Leone, du Vietnam, de Cuba : des endroits où des questions relatives à la liberté de presse se posent tous les jours. On parvient à faire connaître leur situation ici grâce à la couverture médiatique assurée par le rayonnement de notre comité.»

Fondée en 1969, la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec compte aujourd'hui près de 1500 membres dans les médias écrits et électroniques. C'est la plus importante association de journalistes au Québec.

Elle réunit, sur une base entièrement volontaire, tous ceux et celles qui ont le journalisme comme occupation principale, qu'ils soient cadres, salariés, pigistes, surnuméraires ou contractuels. La Fédération veille avant tout à la défense de la liberté de presse et du droit du public à l'information.

Son plus récent congrès annuel, qui a eu lieu les 17, 18 et 19 novembre à Québec, a porté justement sur les libertés d'expression et de presse.

«Cela fait trente ans que la FPJQ défend la liberté de la presse au Québec, précise Hélène Pichette. En l'an 2000, c'est vrai qu'on a une presse libre, mais rien n'est gagné. La liberté de presse, c'est toujours fragile.»

Marc Cassivi est un journaliste à La Presse.

BOOK REVIEW

Insult Laws: An Insult to Press Freedom

By Beth Asher

The Virginia-based World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) recently published a comprehensive review of so-called insult laws, which are largely used to repress and punish criticism of heads of state and government agencies.

Insult Laws: An Insult to Press Freedom, by Professor Ruth Walden, surveys the status of insult laws in more than 90 countries, including specific legal provisions and brief case descriptions. Individual country analyses are preceded by regional overviews, which provide a context in which to assess the development of insult laws.

One prevalent form of insult laws is criminal defamation, which criminalizes activity that, in most western countries, is litigated

only in the civil courts.

As the book demonstrates, insult laws are not limited to those countries from which we have come to expect diminished respect for free expression. Insult laws remain on the books in many western countries, although these are often remnants of earlier legal theories and are rarely enforced.

However, the fact that such laws still exist in democracies serves "as a sort of Damocles Sword to threaten speech and the press," according to Walden.

Walden gives the example of the French Press Law of 1881, which makes "public offence of foreign Heads of State" a crime punishable by imprisonment. Although the French law has been idle for decades, it remains part of the legislation, and as she points out, developing countries

(particularly those with colonial histories) can justify their own repressive insult legislation by pointing to the continued existence of such legislation.

Ronald Koven, the WPFC's European Representative, acknowledges in the book's conclusion that "individual citizens need the means to protect their reputations from misleading or unjustified public allegations."

Koven agrees that defamation laws are necessary, but argues they should fall under civil, not criminal, law, and that only injured parties – not public authorities – should be allowed to file suit. Where defamation is found, Koven favours reasonable ceilings on damage awards, so that a civil defamation law does not become a tool to render a media outlet insolvent.

This compilation of laws is an

achievement in and of itself, as legal research in many of the countries covered by the book can be extremely difficult in the face of linguistic, technological and political roadblocks. *Insult Laws* is an excellent tool for legal and human rights advocates trying to respond to violations of international freedom of expression norms within a given country's legal context.

Those contexts are ever changing, though. Much of the information presented was difficult to substantiate, particularly from those countries in which disseminating legal information can put someone at risk, and care must be taken to ensure that the law as represented in the book has not been amended or repealed.

Beth Asher is a lawyer and a volunteer with CJFE.

BURUNDI: Nelson Mandela dénonce l'absence de liberté de presse

par Audace Manirikazi

Nelson Mandela, médiateur dans les négociations de paix au Burundi, a pointé du doigt l'absence de liberté de presse dans ce pays lors des visites effectuées au mois d'août à Bujumbura, la capitale burundaise.

Pourtant objective, cette dénonciation peut sembler inhabituelle tant les journalistes burundais térorisés par la dictature en place via ses services de renseignements (Documentation Nationale) se sont pour la plupart retirés dans le silence, la résignation et l'auto-censure. Déjà aux prises avec la guerre civile où ils sont particulièrement ciblés par les rebelles, les journalistes se trouvent entre marteau et enclume lorsque le gouverne-

ment à son tour les passe au strict contrôle et à la répression.

En effet, depuis le début de la guerre en 1993, cinq journalistes ont été tués et plus d'une dizaine d'autres ont vu leurs maisons détruites et/ou leurs voitures brûlées. Les deuils réguliers, la perte de proches parents affectent dangereusement leur moral et leur travail.

Avec le retour du major Buyoya au pouvoir en juillet 1996, la machine de la répression a de façon particulière accéléré sa marche. Elle opère dans l'ombre et sévit cruellement contre les journalistes. Tout organe de presse, tout journaliste qui refuse de servir de caisse de résonance du gouvernement est persécuté.

Une douzaine de journaux ont dès lors été suspendus et rien n'a été fait pour relever ceux en

faillite. Il ne reste au Burundi que trois publications privées régulières. De nombreux journalistes ont subi de sérieuses intimidations et de graves menaces de la part des services de sécurité. Plus graves, des emprisonnements ont été enregistrés. Les directeurs des agences Net Press et Azania ont été arrêtés sans motifs judiciaires valables. Plus récent encore, le journal *L'aube de la démocratie* a été suspendu et son directeur arrêté simplement pour avoir diffusé le testament d'un opposant politique décédé en prison par négligence, selon certains témoignages.

Enfin, le ministre de la Défense Nationale, en fin de 1999, ordonné à ses hommes de prendre pour ennemi tout journaliste qui irait travailler sur l'horrible situation de misère qui prévalait

dans les camps de regroupés à Bujumbura rurale. Pareil ordre ne pouvait être qu'extrêmement dangereux dans un contexte de nervosité liée à cette guerre qui n'a fait que trop durer.

En somme, si rien n'est fait pour améliorer d'urgence l'état de la liberté de presse dans ce pays, il y a lieu d'entrevoir déjà l'incapacité des média burundais à jouer pleinement leur rôle dans une société démocratique en gestation et à s'adapter aux nouvelles valeurs sortant des accords de paix. Le risque serait grand que la presse constitue une nouvelle source de conflit. Le danger de développement des média de la haine ne tarderait pas à mettre en péril le fragile équilibre issu des négociations.

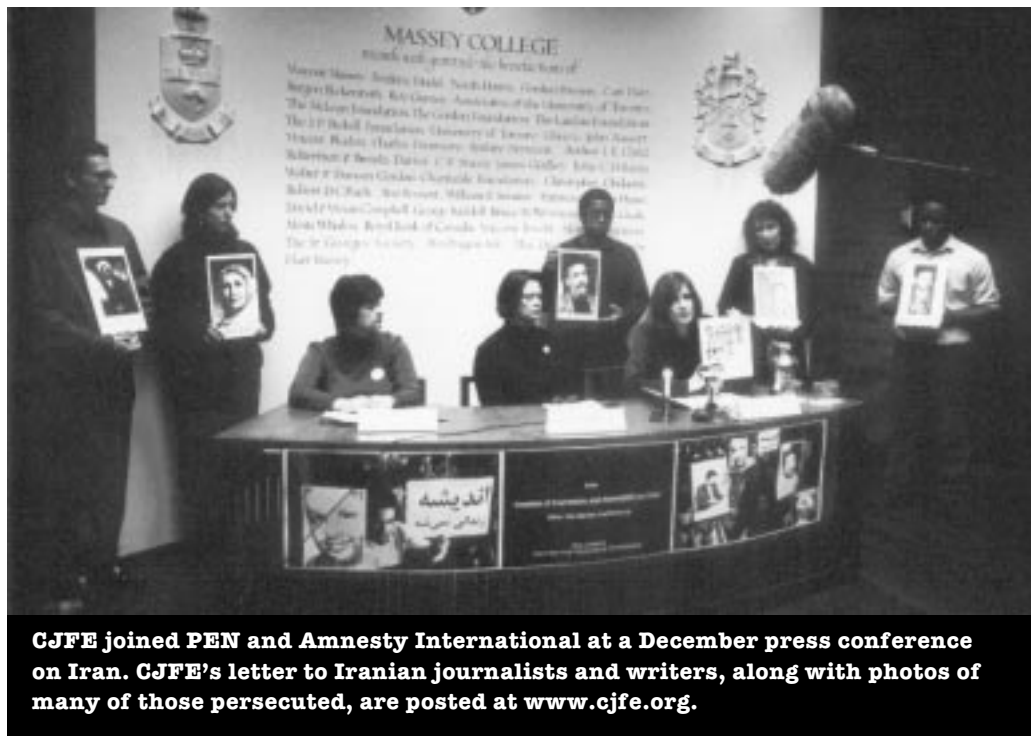
Audace Manirikazi est journaliste burundais exilé au Canada.

CJFE appeals for support for Iranian journalist

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Tehran newspapers *Sobhe Emrouz*, *Fath* and *AsreAzadegan* – which were all banned in 2000 – he exposed the death squads allegedly responsible for the murders of these reformists.

An open letter to the reformist journalists and writers of Iran, signed by hundreds of CJFE members and supporters, states, "In the past, we have issued many protest letters to the Iranian authorities, appealing to them to stop persecuting the independent media and to allow authors, poets, playwrights and singers to express themselves freely. But now we feel the time has come to address ourselves directly to you, to offer our support at a time when it seems that one blow after another is struck against the cause of free expression."



CJFE joined PEN and Amnesty International at a December press conference on Iran. CJFE's letter to Iranian journalists and writers, along with photos of many of those persecuted, are posted at www.cjfe.org.

SACHA GUINEY

Independent Liberian journalists face high risks

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The Heritage newspaper was a victim of an illegal closure in late 1997, when it paid homage to the West African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG. The government said the article incited ECOMOG to spill the blood of Liberians, and closed the paper for nearly a month.

In another incident in late 1998, ex-combatants dissatisfied with a *Heritage* article attacked the printing press in order to destroy copies of the paper. Although fortunately the paper was not publishing that day, the ex-combatants attacked and destroyed other papers and some equipment of the printing house. Other times, the government

simply trumps up bogus charges, arrests and detains journalists and releases them only after national and international groups exert pressure. In 1998, a local radio presenter, now exiled in the U.S., and the editor of *The National* newspaper were arrested, beaten and later released. The radio presenter was in rural Liberia to investigate the murder of a local politician and his family.

Star Radio, a foreign-sponsored station that was started in order to provide balanced coverage of the 1997 elections, was closed indefinitely. The government justifies the closure by saying that the electoral process is now over, and therefore Star Radio is no longer necessary. In

truth, Star Radio was providing factual, day-by-day accounts of happenings in the country. Its broadcast stories were placed on the Internet, and it challenged Taylor-owned Radio Liberia, which basically broadcasts government propaganda on short wave.

The government's intolerance toward privately owned media is a serious setback for democracy and press freedom in Liberia. When people lack the freedom to say and write what they think, they are also robbed of inalienable rights.

How can press freedom be maintained in Liberia given the political orientation of the present government? First, journalists will have persistently to show a high

degree of impartiality, responsibility, commitment and courage in their work at all times, regardless of the political or economic repercussions. Second, our international partners must continue to support the work of independent media. Providing printing equipment to help reduce production costs would help strengthen press freedom in Liberia.

Challenging twisted facts, lies and half-truths is in itself a courageous act, but that courage will have to be maintained in order to give meaning to the struggle for press freedom.

Momo Kanneh, a Liberian journalist and recipient of a grant from CJFE's Journalists in Distress Fund, is currently exiled in Ghana.



Ontario Coalition Against Poverty demonstration, Toronto, June 15, 2000: Journalists covering clashes between police and protestors hit roadblocks.

Since the Battle of Seattle: protests and the media

By Chantal Sundaram

The appearance of a new social movement against globalization since the protests at the World Trade Organization in Seattle at the end of 1999 has raised questions about the media's role in covering protests. Since Seattle, policing of protests in the U.S. and Canada has dramatically escalated.

While rows of Darth Vader-esque cops give journalists great visuals, the police presence has also impeded them. Police have harassed and arrested journalists, and tried to use media coverage as evidence against activists. Protestors, meanwhile, complain that the media are not providing critical coverage of police repression or the issues behind the protests.

Canadian police went to Seattle and follow-up protests in Washington, D.C., last April to observe new crowd-control tactics. These included use of a "no-

protest zone," pepper spray and tear gas, and surveillance of activists. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars were spent on riot gear, helicopter surveillance and an unprecedented peacetime mobilization of soliders and police.

Both protestors and the media saw an escalation in Canadian policing at the June meeting in Windsor of the Organization of American States. RCMP pepper-sprayed eight accredited photographers covering arrests.

This followed the arrest of four journalists covering a May Day march in Montreal. They were held overnight in police custody on charges of "illegal gathering," "damages" and "disturbing the public order" – charges that were later dropped against all but one.

Arrests and pepper spray can make it hard to get the story or the picture. In Toronto, however, media independence is threatened because journalists did get the best pictures of a June 15 anti-

poverty protest at Queen's Park. Toronto police seized film and videotape from 14 Canadian media outlets while investigating the protest. In November, the Ontario Superior Court ruled against eight media outlets that had challenged the search warrants. Despite the implications of media being used as agents of police, the court found "no negative effects on the ability of the media to fulfil their function as news gatherers and disseminators."

Some media critics have alleged a lack of critical coverage of this police escalation. *Extra!*, the magazine of U.S. media watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), charged the U.S. media with failing to ask tough questions about the "militarization" of Seattle in 1999 and of Washington in April. "The WTO protests in Seattle may be remembered as the time when the words 'pepper spray' first entered the vocabulary of the American

public"; yet few media reported on "the indiscriminate use of military weaponry on a peaceful population." (Neil deMause, "Pepper Spray Gets in Their Eyes")

"Pepper spray" had already entered the Canadian public's vocabulary. In fact, Canadian journalists helped expose the scandal surrounding police pepper-spraying of protestors at the 1995 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vancouver.

In July an article in the independent U.S. publication *The Nation* criticized mainstream U.S. media's coverage of the substance of the protests – the impacts of global trade policy.

It suggests that the ideal of media impartiality has been compromised by established presumptions: "In this complex new world of globalization, [old-fashioned, on-the-ground reporting] is never easy, especially when authoritative experts are assuring editors and reporters that they can ignore those voices in the streets." (William Greider, "Media and Trade: A Love Story")

Journalists who do investigate the issues behind the protests sometimes hit roadblocks. Community media and many independent media organizations were refused accreditation and denied access to IMF and World Bank meetings in April. Media Alliance, a San Francisco-based advocacy organization, said this was an attempt to prevent unfavourable coverage of IMF policies.

The next major anti-globalization protest in Canada is to be in Quebec City in April, at a meeting on the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Already there are disturbing signs: police confiscated film from a *Le Soleil* photographer present when the Green Party of Canada leader was arrested for photographing a Quebec City jail in November 2000. The jail was being emptied in preparation for the April protest, and Quebec police maintained it was against the law to take a picture of it.

Chantal Sundaram works with *CJFE*.

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OPINION: Political intolerance the real challenge to press freedom in Liberia

By Momo Kanneh

Political intolerance of free expression and the media is the biggest challenge facing Liberian journalists today.

The series of transitional governments in power from 1993 to 1997 saw the press as a dynamic force in nation building. Just before the induction of the Charles Taylor government in August 1997, the press enjoyed an unprecedented level of freedom.

In contrast, the Taylor government sees the press as an amphitheatre for fomenting insta-

bility and aiding political opponents who are working against the government's interests. Over the past three years, it has used intimidation, arbitrary arrest and closure of media entities to strangle press freedom.

Despite a public commitment to democracy, the government lacks the vision and the political will to embrace its political 'opponents' to assist with the Herculean task of reconstruction and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, the press reports on everything – from the national budget that is hardly representa-

tive of a country just out of war, to the buying of luxurious cars at the expense of education and health care. Divergent views of national concern are expressed in editorials, commentaries, features and news stories. The press analyzes events and sets the public agenda so that the people can think, act freely and make informed decisions.

The press plays this role at great risk. The Liberian government abhors anything that contradicts its line of thought, while at the same time reluctantly pretends to the outside world that it

accepts contrary views. The recent arrest and detention of four foreign journalists on charges of 'spying' clearly demonstrate this.

The local press and journalists also suffer a similar fate, and for them the situation is often violent. In addition to ordering the only Lebanese-owned printing house not to print a certain paper, government security and thugs, mostly ex-combatants, sometimes raid the offices of the media house involved, beat up workers and damage or loot equipment.

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