

CCPJ reporter

Newsletter of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists

1996 – Issue 2

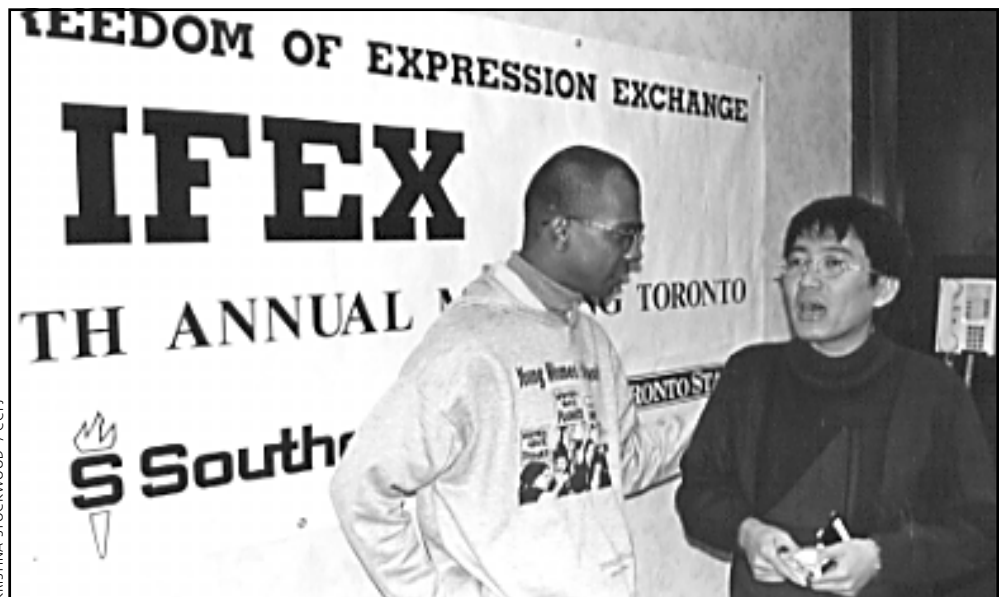
IFEX members embark on joint actions as CCPJ hosts annual meeting

by Kristina Stockwood

Negative press legislation, homophobic attacks on free expression, censorship on the Internet and freedom of expression, and protecting cultural diversity were some of the issues discussed at the fifth annual meeting of the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX), held May 10-12 in Toronto.

The 1996 IFEX Meeting, hosted by the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists (CCPJ), was attended by nearly 40 representatives of press freedom and writers' organizations, including previous and new IFEX members.

Just prior to the meeting, the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) in South Africa became an IFEX member. At the meeting, the Network for the Defence of Independent Media in Africa (NDIMA) and the Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI) in Indonesia were approved as new members. NDIMA's Sam Mbure and ISAI general secretary Andreas



Raashied Galant of FXI talks with Andreas Harsono of ISAI at the Toronto meeting.

Harsono attended, the latter assisted by a grant from the Southam Newspaper Group.

Members discussed proposed joint actions for the coming year. Case studies on Nigeria and China, particularly Hong Kong's becom-

ing part of the People's Republic of China, were examined. The general consensus was that China is deaf to foreign appeals regarding abuses of press freedom on the mainland, but press freedom in Hong Kong could be maintained after the July 1997 takeover due to strong business links with the West.

Business also will play a key factor in IFEX member groups' approach to Nigeria, where the government has repeatedly ignored condemnation of violations of press freedom. Members will approach businesses, and will continue to pressure Shell Oil, as Nigerian leader Sani Abacha is susceptible to business pressure, if nothing else. A joint action on Ni-

Organismes internationaux se mettent à l'oeuvre

par Isabelle Patenaude

Il y a cinq ans déjà que l'Échange international de la liberté d'expression (IFEX) fut fondé à Montréal. Avec une dizaine de membres, ce réseau avait pour but premier de réunir les groupes qui oeuvrent à la défense de la liberté d'expression et de la liberté de la

presse partout dans le monde, en leur offrant une tribune où ils pourraient se consulter et collaborer à des projets communs. La cinquième Assemblée annuelle de l'IFEX a prouvé que ces objectifs ont été dépassés.

Organisée par le Comité canadien pour la protection des journa

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CCPJ reporter

Newsletter of
the Canadian Committee
to Protect Journalists

1996, Issue #2 (8)

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

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

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

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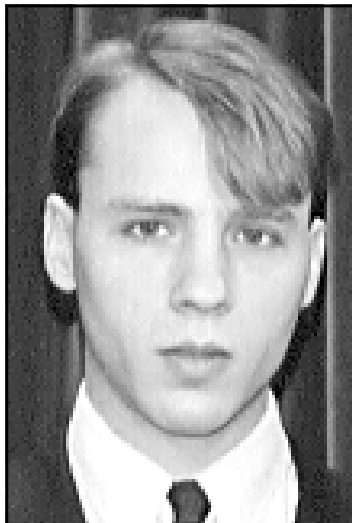
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KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CCPJ

HELLMAN / HAMMETT WINNERS: Martha Kumsa, Joseph Couture.

Human Rights Watch honours 3 journalists

by Kristina Stockwood

Two journalists nominated by the CCPJ and one nominated by PEN Canada were among the winners of this year's Hellman/Hammett grants, offered yearly to writers worldwide in financial need who have suffered persecution for their work, including being banned, censored, harassed or jailed.

The Hellman/Hammett awards are administered by Human Rights Watch Free Expression Project from the estates of the U.S. writers Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett.

Canadian harassed

Joseph Couture was harassed by police in London, Ont., for his investigation into Project Guardian, a so-called child pornography probe that turned out to have little to do even with sexual abuse. He is still harassed for his work.

"This is an award for everyone involved in exposing the lies of the London Police," says Couture. "I'm grateful to Human Rights Watch for taking a stand against authorities who abuse their power to promote their homophobic agenda."

In his letter of congratulations, Gara LaMarche, director of the

Free Expression Project, wrote, "How gratifying it is to make this small gesture to acknowledge your courage in the face of persecution."

Ethiopian imprisoned

Martha Kumsa was imprisoned in the early 1980s for 10 years by the Ethiopian military regime due to her writing, ethnic origin and political beliefs, according to PEN Canada, which nominated her for the award. PEN says Kumsa comes from a family of Oromo Presbyterians who were persecuted for their religion and ethnic origin. Her father spent half his life in prison.

Kumsa was released in late 1989 after a campaign launched by PEN Canada. She fled with her three children to Canada in 1991 and is now a Canadian citizen. She managed to smuggle 10 manuscripts with her that are as yet unpublished. She has published essays, articles, prose and poetry, and will study for a Master's degree in the fall at the University of Toronto.

Currently she is working on a novel about Oromo women, which she says she could not afford to continue without the grant.

"I didn't expect to get it because I'm not under immediate threat," Kumsa says, adding that making the transition to her new

life in Canada has been difficult. "Once you are uprooted and come to a different country and culture, you become very disoriented," she says, "and the nightmares don't leave you." She would like to publicize the perils suffered by Ethiopian journalists back home, more than 20 of whom are in jail.

Peruvian accused falsely

Jesus Alfonso Castiglione Mendoza is serving a 20-year sentence for being in the wrong place at the wrong time – not for committing a crime.

Last November, Castiglione, who founded Radio Amistad FM, was imprisoned for allegedly being a member of Sendero Lumino-so (Shining Path). The conviction was based on the rental of an apartment in which a couple linked to a Sendero bomb attack later lived. They used a letter of reference with his name on it to rent the apartment, but have since admitted that it was fabricated and that Castiglione had been used as a scapegoat.

Publicity in Peru surrounding the Hellman/Hammett grant seems to be helping his case, reports Kela Leon, executive director of the Institute for Press and Society (IPYS). IPYS, with which the CCPJ nominated Castiglione for the grant, used the award announcement to mount a publicity campaign. Reports have been published in numerous publications and newspapers in Peru, and several judges are interested in opening a review of his case.

Court records have been requested by several key people associated with Castiglione's case. IPYS says this includes the president and other judges of the Supreme Court. The president of the Lima Superior Court is also reportedly interested, as well as the president of the Congressional Commission on Human Rights.

Last year's winners included Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, hanged in November; imprisoned U.S. writer and radio journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, who remains on death row; and Aysenur Zarakolu, a Turk imprisoned for publishing Kurdish books.

Castiglione received US \$3,000, Kumsa \$2,000 and Couture \$1,000.

Colombian reporter fighting business, political interference

by Marlene Benmergui

When investigative reporter Ignacio (Nacho) Gómez got a fax at *El Espectador* newspaper in Bogotá complaining about a Japanese development deal, he began following a trail of missing boats, stashed drugs and swindling. That led him right up to the president of the Colombian Senate, Julio Cesar Guerra, and his powerful landowning family.

Guerra's brother José was implicated in the deal gone sour. That made the investigation intriguing but delicate for Gómez.

The story was based in the Golfo de Morrosquillo, off Colombia's Atlantic coast, where fishermen still cast their nets by hand and life is full of hardship and poverty. So when the Colombian government received an offer from the Japan Institute for International Cooperation in 1979 to donate 19 fishing boats fitted with high-tech equipment, the offer was readily accepted.

But for the next ten years, instead of helping impoverished fishermen and their families, the company formed to manage the donation was mired in mismanagement and waste. The fishermen were shut out completely. Critics insisted that if government ownership wasn't working, the company



TENACITY: Ignacio (Nacho) Gómez continues to work at *El Espectador*.

should be privatized.

That led to control passing into the influential hands of the Senator's brother, José Guerra, and his partners. Soon the company was a commercial fishing venture without apparent regard for the future livelihood of the area's people. Using driftnets legally banned from use in the gulf, the vessels would put out to sea at night with lights out, their drift nets skimming the still waters to scoop up enormous catches.

While investigating complaints about their activity, the Colombian navy found two of the donated boats stripped of all equipment and with traces of cocaine. That fueled suspicions that the partners' fishing venture was fronting for drug-running.

Added to the political intrigue, Gómez found that piecing the story together in the gulf area had posed its own dangers: of coming between ancient adversaries with scores to settle. Land claims by the Guerra family in the gulf region, many dating back to the reign of Phillip II of Spain, are said to have made the family many enemies. Opponents have threatened to burn Guerra family members alive to keep them from declaring un-

disputed ownership.

When Gómez finally broke the story, Guerra and his partners sued the reporter and *El Espectador*. Gómez then found himself caught in a legal system he distrusted; a system in which judges defer to the power of business and politics.

Then there was the nagging worry that in Colombian society, connections can easily come before justice. The Guerra family had a friendly relationship with the Cano family, which owns *El Espectador*. But despite the friendship, the newspaper forged ahead with the story and provided their lawyer when the court case began. But Gómez, playing it safe, brought along his own.

The scandal triggered harsh words from the Japanese and harsher words from the Colombian Senate. So far the court case initiated by Guerra and his partners seems to be following due process, but justice is slow and the case continues to languish in the courts.

Marlene Benmergui is a CCPJ board member. In Colombia earlier this year on a media fellowship, she was stationed at the country's oldest daily newspaper, El Espectador.

IN A BIND:
Nacho Gómez found himself caught in a legal system he distrusted; a system in which judges defer to the power of business and politics.



World Wide Wire

The CCPJ's new World Wide Web site is online at <http://www.web.apc.org/ccpj/>

See page 8 for other Web sites on freedom of expression.

Southern groups recount freedom o

By David Cozac

As part of the IFEX Developing Countries Outreach Program, five press freedom and freedom of expression organizations from the South were invited to

media outlets to obtain insurance against fines resulting from defamation lawsuits.

After Verbitsky met with the editorial board of *The New York Times*, an editorial denounced the proposed legislation. Within 24 hours, Menem withdrew



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CCPJ

At a reception sponsored by *The Globe and Mail*, (from left) the CCPJ's Bob Carty and *Globe* managing editor Colin MacKenzie welcomed IFEX guests.

((I F E X))

attend the 1996 IFEX annual meeting and participate in several subsequent workshops.

ARGENTINA: defamation case

The fight for press freedom became a personal battle for Horacio Verbitsky, a founder of *Periodistas*, when in 1988 he was charged with defaming a Supreme Court judge. The judge who heard the case converted a private lawsuit into the criminal action of *desacato* (intentional defamation of a government official) and found Verbitsky guilty. That surprised nobody, as President Carlos Menem had tampered with the judiciary to make it conform to his own anti-press leanings.

With domestic judicial remedies exhausted, Verbitsky appealed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS), alleging that *desacato* was an obstacle to free speech. In 1993, Verbitsky achieved a stunning victory: the Argentine government agreed not only to revoke his guilty verdict but also to repeal the law of *desacato*. This was a major blow to Menem's campaign against the press.

Undeterred, Menem introduced a replacement bill that would severely punish a person who defamed a government official. Although the president denied that the bill targeted the media, he introduced another bill that would have forced

the insurance bill. "Ours is a government very sensitive to foreign investors" and criticism, says Verbitsky, which should give hope to press freedom advocates internationally.

INDONESIA: independent media banned

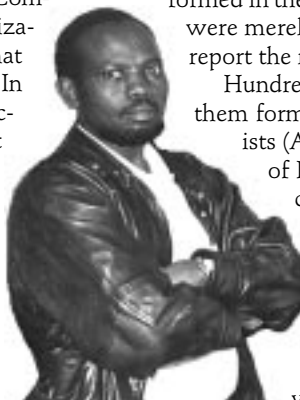
Similarly, independent media in Indonesia must contend with a hostile president: General T.N.I. Suharto. In 1994, for example, the government ordered closures of three important weekly publications: *Tempo*, *Editor* and *DeTik*.

The government's explanation was that the weeklies had gone beyond "authorized limits." But according to Andreas Harsono, general secretary of the Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI), formed in the wake of the 1994 closures, the weeklies were merely carrying out their professional duty to report the news.

Hundreds of journalists protested, and many of them formed the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) after the state-sponsored Association of Independent Journalists (PWI) refused to condemn the closures. The PWI responded by pressuring media heads to dismiss journalists who were AJI members. Harsono himself was victimized when *The Jakarta Post* refused to renew his contract.

Indonesia also stifles independent voices through its restrictive publishing licence, the SIUPP. This stipulates the ex-

NOT SO OBVIOUS: Restrictions on freedom of expression are often more subtle than direct censorship.



Sam Mbure of Kenya

f expression struggles

act format of and the number of pages in any publication and can be withdrawn at any time. Since 1994, only official propaganda organs or those with government ties have obtained licences.

The only option for independent newspapers, says Harsono, is to publish without a licence, even if it means getting arrested. In late 1994, several AJI members launched the magazine *Independen*. The government soon ordered it closed and sentenced three of its staff to prison.

GHANA: government restrictions

Media in Ghana must also contend with restrictive government licences, says Free Expression Ghana director Joe Baidoe-Ansah.

The government enforces its broadcasting monopoly through the Ghana Frequency Registration and Control Board. In 1994, the board announced that more than 30 radio and television broadcasting licences would be issued; however, each prospective broadcaster would have to pay a non-refundable "commitment fee" of US\$ 20,000 to \$40,000. As Baidoe-Ansah asks, "Who is capable of paying that?"

Because Ghana's large radio audience will be an important constituency in elections this year, the government is keen on maintaining its monopoly.

As for print media, there are only two national dailies, both state-owned. But Baidoe-Ansah says there are several independent papers. Unfortunately, they are either weekly or bi-weekly, and "circulation is limited because of capital and distribution." Worse still, there have been government crackdowns, in which "some of the vendors were beaten up."

The independent media have recourse to the constitution, which, Baidoe-Ansah points out, allows for freedom of expression.

The constitution also provides for a Media Commission "to facilitate free expression" and – in place of the courts – resolve disputes between the media and the public. The Commission should be "a stop-valve" against infringements of freedom of expression, says Baidoe-Ansah, but has not acted as such.

SOUTH AFRICA: democratic transition

Raashied Galant of the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) underscores South Africa's "tremendous" transition to life under democratic principles.

The FXI campaigned to have three freedom of expression clauses written into the country's constitution. Clauses on freedom of expression and illegality of hate speech were easily accepted, but access to information was contentious.

Two options were tabled. One stated simply that the public has a right to know; the other said the public has a need to know and must prove this need. FXI lobbied intensively – and successfully – for the first option.



Raashied Galant of FXI, South Africa

Galant says there is still "lots of legislation that's media unfriendly" and that stipulates what the media can and cannot report. As well, current defamation laws limit press freedom. Consequently, FXI administers a Media Defence Fund to financially support media outlets facing legal prosecution. A judge in an FXI-funded libel case involving a government minister recently decided in favour of the newspaper, Galant says, "in the interests of open and accountable government." However, the defamation legislation stands.

Currently, FXI is constructing its own omnibus bill that would amend all media-unfriendly legislation, but this is "a very long-term thing." More immediate is an 'Open Democracy' bill with a legislatively binding access-to-information clause. Galant says the clause would protect civil servants who "blow the whistle" about government irregularities or improprieties, and would make all government meetings except Cabinet meetings open to the public.

But even though FXI gets a sympathetic hearing from the ruling African National Congress (ANC), Galant says power has changed the ANC. "They're no longer human rights activists; they're politicians ... It's our job to act as watchdogs."

KENYA: silencing the critics

Free expression is imperilled in Kenya. President Daniel arap Moi has managed to manipulate the multiparty system through harassment of critics, especially the media, in order to stay in power.

Sam Mbure, program coordinator for the Network for the Defence of Independent Media in Africa (NDIMA), says that of special concern is the broadcast media where, as in Ghana, the Kenyan government has a virtual monopoly. According to Mbure, "scores of individuals and companies" have been denied licences. This control, coupled with government ownership of two of the three national dailies and of a "host" of pro-government weeklies, has enabled arap Moi to further erode independent expression.

In 1995, the government tabled two press bills that would "have sounded the death knell of press freedom in Kenya," says Mbure. The bills would have allowed a state-run press council to license journalists, administer a statutory code of conduct, and generally regulate the media. Foreign journalists working in Kenya would also have been required to comply with the regulations. However, the state-owned media would have been excluded.

Moi later directed that the bills be withdrawn. Nevertheless, says Mbure, "The bills were not killed. They were only withdrawn."

Newspapers and printing presses are closed arbitrarily by the government, sedition laws are used extensively against journalists, and Moi himself has decreed that insulting him be made a criminal offence.



Joe Baidoe-Ansah of Free Expression Ghana



Horacio Verbitsky of Periodistas, Argentina

Threats to journalists surge

IFEX helps Pakistan raise its voice

by Olena Wawryshyn



OWAIS ASLAM ALI, while focusing on Pakistan, takes time to make appeals on international issues, including in Canada.

KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CCPJ

When Owais Aslam Ali, secretary-general of the Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF), visited the IFEX Clearing House in Toronto two years ago, he received information on how to promote press freedom by writing action alerts. This information has become increasingly important to journalists in Pakistan, where threats to press freedom have recently surged.

In a report published by PPF, a non-profit media research and documentation and training centre, Ali blames "deteriorating relations between the government and the opposition parties."

Pressures on the Pakistani press in 1995 included harassment by law enforcement agencies, violent attacks on journalists and the offices of news organizations, and increased use of the courts to restrict press coverage. The press in Sindh province, the centre of the anti-government campaign led by the Mohajir Qaumi Movement

(MWM), and the rural press have been hardest hit.

Rural journalists work under difficult conditions, says Ali. They face threats from feudal lords as well from local politicians, and are often harassed by local police.

Ali believes that national and international pressure can help. "In most cases, the attacks on rural journalists are not as a matter of policy by high authorities, but by petty officials and feudal landlords," he says. "If the higher officials or the political leadership feel that their democratic credentials are being tarnished because of some local official, they are likely to come down hard on them."

In urban centres, press freedom is threatened because "the press finds itself in the middle of really deeply divided political forces," says Ali, "where it is becoming increasingly dangerous to maintain journalistic objectivity."

Despite recent setbacks, the trend in Pakistan since the mid-1980s has been towards a freer

press. In 1988, a law giving the government tight control over the media was repealed and replaced by a liberal law, which has led to the number of newspapers increasing.

PPF's membership in IFEX has also helped protect press freedom. Protest letters sent in response to action alerts have publicized abuses that may have formerly gone unnoticed.

In addition, PPF's involvement in IFEX has led to a greater awareness by Pakistani journalists of international press freedom issues. The organization recently sent a letter to Canada's prime minister expressing concerns about attacks on journalists and threats to access to information in Canada.

By encouraging organizations such as PPF to become involved internationally, "IFEX allows southern groups to have full voice and to have an equal voice in issues concerning press freedom," says Ali. "I think it helps in making these values more universal."

CCPJ hosts annual meeting

— continued from page one

Nigeria was proposed for June 12 to mark the anniversary of cancelled elections.

Indonesia continues to be another area of concern. Just prior to the meeting, the Indonesian government banned the book *Bayang Bayang PKI* published by the ISAI. The book is about the political violence in Indonesia in 1965-66, which led to the current president, General Suharto, taking power.

A new IFEX project to create an Internet presence will be led by IFEX member Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression (NFFE). The project will feature IFEX action alerts and *Communiqués*.

Philip Spender of Index on Censorship was elected to replace Gara LaMarche of Human Rights Watch as IFEX Convenor. Kela Leon of the Instituto Prensa y Sociedad

(IPYS) will host next year's IFEX annual meeting in Lima, Peru.

A reception at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's broadcast centre in Toronto allowed

meeting participants to meet Canadian media and human rights groups. *The Globe and Mail* sponsored the reception, which several CCPJ members attended.

JOINT ACTIONS:
IFEX members meeting in Toronto in May considered strategies concerning Nigeria and China/Hong Kong.



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CCPJ

NOT ALL BUSINESS: Gara LaMarche of Human Rights Watch (1995 IFEX Convenor), Mette Newth of Norway and Isabelle Patenaude of the IFEX Clearing House socialize at a conference reception.

Access and safety challenges in Mexico

by Kristina Stockwood

Mexico is a sometimes dangerous, but always exciting place to work as a journalist. Some journalists are just trying to do their jobs, while others are engaged in improving access to the media. Among the latter are journalists working with the International Agency of the Indigenous Press (Agencia Internacional de la Prensa Indígena).

Genaro Bautista, the head of AIPIN, and other members and agency founders at the television station of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM) are focusing on indigenous peoples. Bautista, editor of "Etnias," says the indigenous press holds the key to advancing the rights of indigenous peoples.

Although TV UNAM produces documentaries for national television, "government censorship keeps most of these documentaries off the air," according to Pilar Lopez, an AIPIN founder working at TV UNAM.

To counter this, the members of AIPIN at TV UNAM are setting up video salons in indigenous communities country-wide. They are also working to improve radio connections between indigenous communities, many of which rely solely on radio as their means of communication.

Bautista attended the negotiations between the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) and the government, which led to the signing of the first joint agreement on 16 February. One of its resolutions was to improve indigenous access to the media; another was to address issues of concern to women in the media.

Impunity typical

Journalists in Mexico have always had a tough time publishing critical reporting. Many have been threatened and even killed. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported

that Radio Huayacocotla correspondent José Barreón Rosales was attacked for his reporting for the indigenous radio station. The station was previously banned last July by the authorities.

On January 28 this year, a neighbour threatened and shot at Barreón for allegedly spreading rumours and false information about land ownership. Four weeks later, no action against the attacker had been taken. Impunity in attacks against journalists is typical in Mexico; few if any perpetrators have been brought to justice.

Unsolved attacks

Some journalists do not escape with just threats to their lives. Last December, the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) discovered that Cuahtemoc Ornelas Campos, editor of the Torreón-based magazine *Alcance*, has been missing since early October. In February, the CPJ reported that Ruperto Armenta Gerrardo, editor of the Guasave-based weekly *El Regional* in Sinaloa state, was beaten

to death. The CPJ called his death particularly alarming given "the many unsolved attacks against journalists that have occurred in Sinaloa in recent years."

Flimsy evidence

The political dimensions of harassment against the media are typified by the case of Mexican television producer Jorge Javier Elorriaga Berdegue, who has now spent over a year in prison. The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN reported that Elorriaga, a producer for the Argos production company, was detained in February 1995 in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, and charged with "rebellion, incitement and subversion" for his dealings with the EZLN.

The evidence against Elorriaga is flimsy, and includes a "confession" made by his wife, Gloria Benavides, who said she was intimidated into signing a prepared statement. In March, the prosecution reportedly asked for a 40-year sentence.



AIPIN logo (above) and TV-UNAM: an indigenous broadcast voice.



Réunion internationale

— suite de la page un

listes (CCPJ), la réunion a rassemblé près de quarante représentants d'organismes de diverses régions du monde. Ces groupes se sont mis au travail à Toronto du 10 au 12 mai pour faire le point et développer des stratégies communes sur des thèmes tels que la législation contre la presse, les atteintes contre les journalistes homosexuels, la censure de l'Internet, et la liberté d'expression et la protection de la diversité culturelle.

Des discussions approfondies sur le Nigéria et la Chine – surtout avec le retour de Hong Kong dans le giron de la République populaire de Chine en 1997 – ont mené à la planification d'actions conjointes pour l'année à venir. Aussi, à l'initiative du Forum norvégien pour la liberté d'expression, l'IFEX aura son site Internet en 1997.

L'assemblée de cette année fut

d'autant plus marquante, que pour la première fois des groupes de presque tous les coins du monde étaient représentés. Parmi ces nouveaux participants se retrouvaient le Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) d'Afrique du Sud, le réseau kenyan Network for the Defence of Independent Media in Africa (NDIMA), l'Institut Studi Arus Informasi (ISAI, l'Institut pour l'étude de la libre circulation de l'information) d'Indonésie, l'organisme ghanéen Free Expression Ghana, et le réseau argentin de défense de liberté de la presse Periodistas (Journalistes).

Ils assistaient à l'assemblée dans le cadre d'un nouveau projet de l'IFEX, un Programme contact qui vise à développer des liens avec les groupes des pays en voie de développement.

Les retrouvailles se feront en 1997 à Lima, au Pérou.

ASSEMBLÉE MARQUANTE:
Réunion cette année rassemble groupes de presque tous les coins du monde.

Democracy on the Internet

by Ilona Biro

Pity the poor censors: the Internet must be making their lives hell. While governments try to come to grips with new technology, journalists around the world are getting on-line and side-stepping official efforts to silence them.

Newspapers subject to censorship have established web sites, electronic mailing lists and discussion groups, which have allowed a freer flow of information. E-mail in particular has been a godsend for those campaigning for freedom of expression.

However, many questions remain. At the recent International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) annual meeting in Toronto, discussion centred on how to fight increasing government attempts to stifle free expression on-line.

In China, for example, all Internet users are required to register with the police; while in India, government authorities limit access to the 'net by having the national telephone monopoly charge exorbitant fees. Other countries, like Vietnam and Saudi Arabia, permit

suitable for children, is being challenged in court by a coalition of groups including the American Civil Liberties Union and HRW.

In spite of a myriad of government attempts to seize control, the Internet by its very nature provides ways to jump over censors' hurdles. It is tempting to say that national boundaries and laws become irrelevant when a 'net user in Saudi Arabia can dial up an Internet service provider (ISP) in Egypt to access material banned in her own country. But governments continue to erect barriers.

Enter Daniel Weitzner of the Center for Democracy and Technology, who organized a meeting after the IFEX gathering to launch the World Internet Freedom project. Representatives from IFEX member groups joined representatives from Microsoft, America Online, the Soros Foundation and the Association for Progressive Communication (APC) to discuss how to mount an international effort to establish and protect freedom of expression on-line.

In a discussion ranging from encryption technology to the po-

post it on the Internet. When the government pressured the provider to remove the electronic edition, the ISP suggested the government put its own media on-line as well. Today, three on-line publications about Zambia can be read: *The Post*, the Zambian official news wire and the government paper.

Without IFEX members exerting pressure on the Zambian government, Lush said, the ISP may have buckled.

Lush also related the story of journalist Rabuka Chalitse, who was shot by soldiers during last year's coup in Lesotho. Within 12 hours of e-mailing the news, MISA had mobilized funds to pay for surgery to save Chalitse's leg.

"Prior to MISA going on-line, I had to spend two days faxing urgent alert messages to 40 countries. That single message would cost US \$150 to transmit," Lush says. "Today we just send a single e-mail message to IFEX which costs the equivalent of a 10-second phone call and gives us more time and money to research and campaign against media freedom violations."

LEGISLATIVE PRECEDENT:
With the Communications Decency Act, the United States paved the way for more than 20 countries that restricted on-line communication in the last six months.



PAGING FREEDOM:
Web pages for (from left) FXI of South Africa, Index on Censorship of London, the Committee to Protect Journalists of New York, and Reporters sans frontières of France. All are accessible through the CCPJ's Web page (see page 3).

only a single, government-controlled gateway for Internet service.

According to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report entitled *Silencing the 'Net*, more than 20 countries imposed restrictions on on-line communication in the last six months. While tactics vary by country, the United States Congress paved the way.

With the Communications Decency Act, passed in February, the U.S. Congress is attempting to control on-line communication deemed obscene or indecent if the recipient or initiator is under the age of 18. The law, which effectively reduces on-line communication between adults to what is

tential for an international body of law (similar to the Law of the Seas) to guarantee the free flow of information globally, participants agreed to coordinate efforts and enlist more allies. IFEX member groups agreed that, in addition to posting alerts on attacks on the media, the IFEX network will circulate news of attacks on the Internet itself.

An example of how IFEX has already helped was provided by David Lush, information coordinator for the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

After Zambia's government banned an edition of *The Post* newspaper, the local ISP agreed to

After joining IFEX, MISA created its own e-mail network to exchange news stories among its membership. MISA members now rely less on foreign news wires and more on news from indigenous sources, creating the plurality and diversity of voices that the Internet had always promised.

Eventually, Lush says, that should lead to a narrowing of the information gap between the developing and developed worlds. But serious obstacles remain. Poor support and training in the developing world can mean months of waiting for technicians – not to mention lack of access to telephones in many areas.