

CCPJ reporter

Newsletter of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists

Number 3 — 1994

Troops shoot at journalist as Mexican officials 'inform' about uprising

by Marlene Benmergui

The shots that rang out in Mexico's impoverished Chiapas province on January 1 were no great surprise to anyone familiar with the deep-seated social neglect of Mexico. The first day of NAFTA's inception provided an irresistible chance to defrock the myth of Mexico's 'economic miracle.'

But if the rebel attack was predictable, the reaction of Mexican officials was also true to form.

Bob Carty, producer for CBC Radio's Sunday Morning and a CCPJ Board member, was in Chiapas the fourth day of the uprising.

"One of the press cars went into the town. There was no sign of the guerrillas. It was very quiet — there were hardly any people and suddenly we saw these planes bomb



TRACEY EATON / DALLAS MORNING NEWS / ASSOCIATED PRESS


MUTE PROTEST: Mexican journalists use government-issued press armbands to object to prohibitions on travel into territory held by the Zapatista National Liberation Front.

the hillside as if they were trying to flush out guerrillas.

"Down the road was Bruno Lopez (from Univision) coming up from behind in a big red van with 'PRENSA' marked on the side and 'T.V.' on the roof. The helicopter flies over the van, banks again and fires a rocket right at it, and misses it by 10 feet."

The government said the incident was a case of pilot error — and besides, journalists shouldn't have been in the area. Lopez himself had little to say. Univision is not known to be very critical of the Mexican government. In another unrelated incident, Ismael Romero, a journalist for *La Jornada* newspaper, was wounded by an apparently ricocheting bullet.

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Bosnia's dangerous story



Ana Maria Tremonte

Ana Maria Tremonte, CBC-TV's Berlin-based correspondent, tells how she managed to survive while reporting on the war in ex-Yugoslavia. See pages 4 and 5.



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the Canadian Committee
to Protect Journalists

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The Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, non-profit association of more than 300 journalists, writers, producers, editors and publishers promoting freedom of expression.

CCPJ membership costs \$60 (Sustaining) or \$25 (Regular). Donations and volunteers are welcome.

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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Letters to the Executive Director

Dear Nick,

I wish to thank you and the committee for your immediate support when the Canadian National Railway was seeking a court order to seize my film footage of the Gitw'angak band Council blockade of CN's tracks. I have enclosed a piece I wrote for POV magazine which gives you the full story, including an accounting of who came to my rescue. The Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists is at the top of my list.

I know from your newsletter that my case with CN was a small and relatively peaceful footnote compared to the appalling situations that our colleagues in other countries face. I was so impressed that amidst this ongoing and ever-increasing work, you took the time to work so quickly in response to my problem.

Thanks to your lobbying and networking I received support from as far away as Europe. Together with widespread response in the

national media, your actions helped us to get CN to back down and defeat what could have been a very unhealthy legal precedent.

The footage in question is now snugly edited into *Blockade*, our 90-minute documentary which went to air nationally on CBC. It is doing the rounds of logging communities in Canada and film festivals, markets etc, out there in the world.

Again, thank you for all your support when I really needed it.

Nettie Wild, director

Dear Nick,

Many thanks for the prompt response by you and your Committee regarding the "gag edict" issued against me by the Vancouver Stock Exchange on Sep. 21. Your action, combined with the actions of other media and members of the public, forced the VSE to reverse itself on September 30.

This is the second time you have personally assisted me. The first



ROBIN BRUNET

David Baines

was in October 1992, when Vancouver police advised me that somebody might be trying to take a contract out on my life. In that instance, your response, plus that of other media and the public, generated so much publicity that it became inconceivable that anybody would continue to contemplate such action against me.

David Baines, Vancouver Sun

Danger in the field faced by foreign and local media

"Reporting from the Danger Zones" was the subject at a panel of foreign correspondents cosponsored by the Ryerson School of Journalism School and the CCPJ last fall. Ann Medina was moderator; panelists were former Ethiopian journalist Martha Kumsa; Arthur Kent, who covered the war in Bosnia for the CBC; and Bob Carty, who has covered Latin America extensively for CBC Radio.

Kumsa recounted the terrifying moments during her 10 years of imprisonment, the torture suffered as a result of her opposition to the Ethiopian government, and the wrenching separation from her children. She credits her eventual release to a persistent letter-writing campaign coordinated by PEN and Amnesty International. She has since been re-united with her children in Canada.

Arthur Kent's award-winning short film, *A View from Bosnia*, an independent production in association with the BBC and CBC, was screened. "Society has a responsi-

bility to protect journalists because what happens to journalists really has to do with societal change and the future," said Kent. (Kent's lawsuit against NBC is expected to go to trial April 12. Both the U.S. Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists are supporting his widely publicized legal claim against NBC News over its treatment of journalists.)

Bob Carty spoke of the perils facing local journalists covering government corruption and human rights violations in Central and

South America. Freedom of expression is a "luxury" in many of these countries, he noted. Sometimes that luxury comes at a tremendous cost.

"I've been in situations where a person I have interviewed has been killed and I worry deeply my interview was the main cause of that murder," said Carty.

Ann Medina added that for all the danger faced by foreign correspondents in the field, one fact is undeniable: they have a plane ticket out, while local journalists sometimes have no way out at all.

CCPJ loses, gains two staff members

Two valued staff members recently left the CCPJ to pursue careers elsewhere. Research director **Kela Leon** returned to her native Peru, where she will work with the Institute for Press and Society, a press freedom group and partner of the CCPJ. IFEX Clearing House manager **Gabrielle Iribarne** left to work on human rights projects elsewhere.

Joining the Committee are **Monica Buza** as CCPJ Program Co-ordinator and **Jinan Kubursi** as Clearing House Co-ordinator. Monica has held positions with Presbyterian World Service and Development, Pueblito Canada and CUSO. Jinan has worked with the Canadian Centre of PEN, Education for Democracy in Prague, the The Canadian Press.



OFF LIMITS – Journalists and human rights observers trying to report on the Zapatista rebellion in early January ran up against army check points. Witnesses later cited extensive rights violations as the government of Salinas de Cortari tried to suppress the native uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.

Cover Story

Media gagged in Chiapas

— continued from page one

Carty describes the behaviour of Mexican officials towards the press as a mix of Third World and First World. The rocket attack on the Univision van stands in sharp contrast to the arrangements made for the pool of foreign journalists that quickly descended on the area. But these ‘arrangements’ were hobbled by lack of access. The government supplied free phone lines, and held press conferences twice a day, complete with a podium displaying the presidential seal. But at the same time, roads were closed off and it was difficult to get the real story.

On the first couple of days, journalists already based in Mexico seemed to have fairly good access to the towns around Chiapas, particularly around San Cristobal de las Casas. The rebels treated people fairly well and moved on to other towns including Ocosingo and Altamirano, but killed police who resisted the takeover of municipal buildings. Reporters were able to talk to guerrillas on the highways and some of the towns. The fighting began when the troops moved in on Monday and Tuesday following the initial attack to reclaim those towns, says Carty.

When the fighting between the rebels and the government troops broke out, journalists drew back. On Wednesday morning, the jour-

nalists were allowed back in to see the bodies of the rebels. By noon that day, the army had closed off the roads. As a result, journalists were unable to get into the area where the government was moving its troops in and doing a mop up operation. No one was allowed in the area – not even journalists.

“Journalists complained that this was denying them access – which it was. They (the government) were obviously trying to control things. They sent down a team of spin doctors to San Cristobal, set up a press office. They flew in officials so there would be daily quotes,” says Carty.

Reporters sent in to cover the story found themselves shut out. Around them were the sounds of military activity in the hills surrounding San Cristobal. Bombings were going on and they could see government planes and helicopters flying overhead. But they were forbidden to venture past the roadblock – not even for food. Restrictions on press freedom made it difficult to determine if officials claiming to be strafing villages, ostensibly to get guerrillas, were instead, firing at civilians.

Also there were accusations of apprehensions, detentions and torture occurring in addition to summary executions. Keeping the jour-



PHOTOS BY DAVID KENDALL / TORONTO SUN

nalists out gave government forces the opportunity to cover up any atrocities that had happened, says Carty. Journalists were allowed back in the area only after things had been cleaned up. A mass grave on the outskirts of town had to be uncovered as well.

Orchestration of press coverage extended well beyond the battlefield. Television reports were largely pro-government. The print press, however devoted about 30 pages a day of coverage at the height of the crisis. There were also reports that the Ministry of the Interior made phone calls to radio and television stations instructing them not to use the ‘Zapatista’ name for the guerrilla groups, referring to them instead as bandits or aggressors.

The government made no such demands on foreign press. Reports flowed freely across the phone lines, ‘courtesy’ of the government.

Government orchestration of media coverage extended well beyond the battlefield. “They set up a press office with a team of spin doctors.”

Covering Bosnia's

most riding in the back of the armoured car, so I don't hit my head against the metal beams as we bounce along.

There are those journalists who spend far more time in Bosnia than I who argue that you can't do much to avoid real trouble. After all, shelling is random, snipers are often sporadic. But, in fact, everyone has their personal safety check, and everyone draws the line somewhere.

Because I work in television I am never alone; there are usually four or five of us, with lots of gear. When we drive through central Bosnia, we bring a fixer/translator with us. It usually helps to have someone who speaks the language to talk to the soldiers, read the signs, get directions. Sometimes its best if they think none of us can speak their language – but having a fixer/translator who can get you out of a bind or misunderstanding is invaluable. The woman who usually works with us is a Canadian; her passport gives her the ability to travel anywhere the rest of us can travel.

In central Bosnia, we travel only in daylight, leaving early and stopping by dusk. Occasionally, we have been forced, because of bad weather, car breakdowns or delays at checkpoints – to travel at night. I don't recommend it. Soldiers on checkpoints have often had too much to drink by the end of the day – they can be very dangerous. You



SRDJAN ILIC / ASSOCIATED PRESS

RUN FOR LIFE: A Spanish photographer runs for cover during a sniper attack in Vukovar, Croatia.

CONCRETE HORRORS –
“I will not be afraid in the abstract: I’ll only let real fear in if there is something concrete to scare me.”

Ana Maria Tremonte is a correspondent with CBC Television News’ Berlin Bureau who has reported extensively on the war in the former Yugoslavia. The following is her personal account and her reflections on this most dangerous assignment.

by Ana Maria Tremonte

Whenever I return to Bosnia, I make a promise to myself. I will not be afraid in the abstract: I’ll only let real fear in if there is something concrete to scare me. It’s not a great way to think at the start of an assignment, but there it is – because, in truth, Bosnia scares the hell out of me.

I read the tiny blurbs on journalists hit, I listen to friends recount their experiences of covering in doorways while shells dropped nearby – their flak jackets left back in the car, or the hotel and I shudder. So I’m the one who always has her bullet-proof vest with her, even on the quietest of days. (Yes, sometimes I’ll leave it in the car too, but never back at the hotel.)

I’ve got the armoured car, which provides me with a sense of security, if not total protection. And the helmet is always nearby, though in truth I use it



s dangerous story

usually HAVE to stop for them – they are more likely to come toward you, not with their guns idly by their sides, but with them pointed at you, because in the dark, they don't know who you are. Their checkpoints often have mines nearby to stop their enemies from crashing through – they have to pick them up, or you have to drive around them to get through – and there's a great danger with those mines if you can't see the road.

I ask a lot of questions about the roads before we head out on any trip. The UN aid workers and other journalists can be helpful in determining which route you should take. People share information on tough checkpoints, bad roads, places to avoid and places to approach with extra caution.

Our not-always dependable vehicle recently broke down in a no-man's land in central Bosnia. We didn't realize where we were, and were outside without flaks poking around under the hood. A sniper shot above our heads, as a warning just as the UN vehicle prepared to tow us out. It woke us all up – it had been an uneventful day and we were obviously too lax. Even when it seems quiet, don't take anything for granted.

Another word on checkpoints – we are usually deferential and often downright friendly when soldiers stop us. We always have cigarettes – usually they ask for them before anyone can offer. They

sometimes want to examine everything piled into the back of the vehicle. We don't argue – they have the guns. We've had to surrender a couple of meters of ropes, and a few jerrycans of gas in the past. Other reporters have lost their vehicles, or tens of thousands of dollars. I've talked to several journalists who have had their bullet-proof vests taken at gunpoint, including one who tried to argue to keep it. They fired shots in the air; she gave up the vest.

In cities where the danger is constant, such as Sarajevo or Mostar, we try to work with local translators/fixers. They know the sniper zones, the back roads, the places to avoid. There have been times when I chose not to go to a certain section of Sarajevo because the sniping or shelling is just too heavy – times when I've given up a story.

DISCRETION
– *“There have been times when I've given up a story – because the sniping or shelling is just too heavy.”*



PHOTOS BY NORM BETTS / TORONTO SUN



PUBLISH, NOT PERISH: *Oslobodenje*, an independent newspaper in Sarajevo, has continued to publish daily despite devastation by shelling of what used to be its 10-storey building (above) and front lobby (left). Nearly 40 journalists have been killed during the war in the former Yugoslavia, several of them deliberately targeted.

Guides and hotlines

Press safety courses established

by Moira MacDonald

When journalists go to a war zone, getting the story involves more than grabbing a notebook and pen and talking to some people. As CBC correspondent Ana Maria Tremonte writes on the preceding pages, it also means throwing your flak jacket on and hoping you come back with your life as well as a story worth telling.

Last year getting the story cost the lives of at least 78 journalists. If it was the worst toll in the last 10 years, the reason for the escalation may not be solely due to the growing intensity of the conflicts. The reason, say many experienced foreign correspondents and editors, is that journalists are no longer considered neutral parties. In fact, they are increasingly seen as prime targets in conflicts where controlling the media is yet another part of the battle plan.

With the increased risk level, several journalists' organizations are now tailoring their efforts towards providing preventative measures for journalists, photographers and camerapeople preparing to dodge the bullets. Advisory guides have been published by Reporters Sans Frontières, the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York and the International Federation of Journalists in Brussels.

Danger: Journalists at Work is a 30-page safety manual published by the IFJ in 1992 and available in six languages. The manual provides a checklist for journalists to follow before leaving home, including: in-

urance; first aid training and documentation; tips on behavior in the field ("carry a white flag"); travel information and the help available to a correspondent in trouble. The back cover includes a pop-out help card listing the telephone numbers of several human rights organizations, including a Red Cross hotline (41-22-734-6001), which can quickly come to a journalist's aid.

The RSF has its own helpline for journalists called "SOS Press." The number 33-1-47777414 can be called from anywhere and will immediately put the journalist in touch with an RSF staff member. The RSF has also supplied equipment for combat correspondents including bullet-proof cars and trucks.

Combat survival courses for journalists are also being offered in increasing numbers in several countries, usually with the help of the national military. In Holland, the Netherlands Union of Journalists (NVJ) offers a three-day course, given for the first time last July, which it developed in collaboration with the Royal Dutch Land Forces. Training includes how to patch up mortar and bullet wounds, how to get to a phone in a destroyed town without getting shot at, the prevention of trauma-induced stress, mine avoidance and recognition of commonly-used weapons by the sound of their bullets. Combat simulations are part of the package.

"It's not a training where you get a stamp on your forehead saying 'passed as war correspondent,' but you learn to recognize the possible dangers and to think about them," says Rob Bakker, coordinator of the NVJ and IFJ's safety policies.

Similar courses are offered or are being set up in Britain, France, Germany and Scandinavia. Journalists from the French chain Television Francaise who took a survival course in the south of France last summer, were featured on the Radio Canada television program *Le Point* last November. Most of the participants were experienced foreign correspondents. Nonetheless, they said the course prepared them

to be more level-headed in the event they were caught in the crossfire. They also said it helped them to better understand the strategies used by combatants.

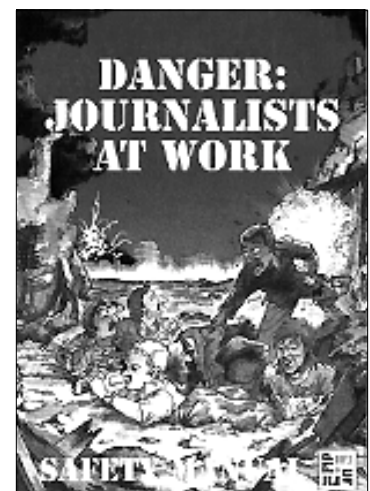
"I was really against the idea," said one participant about his feelings before the course. "Why should journalists be like soldiers? But these are things that we really need."

At the moment no such courses are offered in Canada. However, Canadian journalists interested in enrolling in an overseas course can make arrangements through the CCPJ's Toronto office.

Stronger insurance coverage; regular check-ins to the foreign news desk; an emergency phone call procedure worked out in advance and provision for protective equipment are common aspects of safety plans used by many media groups.

But most news organizations will continue to rely on their correspondents' common sense, experience and ingenuity as their ultimate protectors while on assignment. Larry Orenstein, assistant foreign editor at *The Globe and Mail*, says his paper's correspondents who go into shooting situations "know when to duck" and are relied on to decide the risks they'll take.

"The bottom line is, it's always their call," he says. "It's ludicrous for some guy sitting in Toronto to say what they should do."



Safety manual of the International Federation of Journalists.



"It's not a training where you get a stamp on your forehead saying 'Passed as war correspondent,' but you learn to recognize the possible dangers and to think about them," says Rob Bakker.

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Please and Thank You

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A special thanks to Che Anne Loewen, the Montreal Newspaper Guild and the Ottawa Newspaper Guild, who contributed to our "Journalists in Distress Emergency Fund."

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Distress Fund helps journalists

Around the world, 1993 was one of the worst ever for attacks and injuries to journalists since the CCPJ began monitoring the press 12 years ago. Literally hundreds of our colleagues have been injured in civil and ethnic strife.

In past months, CCPJ's **Journalists in Distress Fund** has received a great number of appeals for assistance. These have come from individual journalists in need of immediate support. They usually seek small amounts of money, which in some cases, could save their lives.

For the past three months, the **Journalists in Distress Fund** has been used in these situations:

- In the former Yugoslavia, we provided \$700 to buy medicine for a newspaper reporter who had both his legs blown off by a hand grenade. He lacked proper medicine to prevent infections from spreading further into the stumps of his legs. Once his health has stabilized, we hope to assist him in leaving the country; possibly for Canada where he has relatives.

- In Moscow, CCPJ provided \$2,500 to help fly a badly wounded television reporter injured during the violent outbreak of October to a hospital in Denmark. It was feared that he would have died if he had stayed in Moscow. He's now recovering and was to return to work.

- Through the Distress Fund,

CCPJ joined organizations such as the International Federation of Journalists in providing \$700 towards living expenses for journalist Magno Sosa, after he fled Peru for Venezuela in fear of his life. Sosa was detained for six months this year and accused of being a member of the insurgent group Sendero Luminoso – a charge which was dropped due to lack of evidence. If he returns to Peru, Sosa would be in great danger. It is hoped he will be able to attend university in Mexico.

- The CCPJ also worked with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to raise funds across Canada to help rebuild media in ex-Yugoslavia, especially Sarajevo.

- As this issue of *CCPJ Reporter* went to press, a request was received to assist Nadia Kerboua, an Algerian journalist working for the independent daily *Le Matin*. Kerboua was in hiding and desperately needed to leave her country after receiving death threats. Unfortunately, no funds were left to help her, but we were able to arrange assistance from a U.S. group.

Unfortunately, the Distress Fund is unable to respond to all the urgent appeals. Canadian journalists can help. Together we can send a strong message of solidarity to our colleagues working under dangerous conditions in various parts of the world.

CCPJ members – individually or through organizations, Guilds and associations – can help with:

1. A donation. We appreciate any contribution. If you wish, CCPJ and your organization can work together on specific appeals.

2. A special appeal among your membership. Contributions to the CCPJ are tax-creditable for individuals, who also become members of our Committee.

3. A fundraising event. We can help put on fundraising evenings for people to make contributions.

We urge you to get involved. It is up to journalists living in Canada, where we are spared imminent danger, to help protect our colleagues working in dangerous situations world-wide.

Please contact us at the CCPJ office, 490 Adelaide St. W., #205, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1T2, phone 416-867-1638.

Together we can send a strong message of solidarity to our colleagues working under dangerous conditions in various parts of the world.

Annual Meeting Thursday May 26

The 1994 annual general meeting of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists will be held in Toronto on May 26, at a location and time to be announced.

For details of the event and the guest speaker, please call 416-867-1638.

IFEX Clearing House NEWS

The killings continue ...

by Clearing House Staff

At least 78 journalists and writers around the world were killed for their views or while on assignment in 1993. Another eight have been reported disappeared.

The number killed is an increase of at least 17 over the previous year, and represents the highest number killed in any one year in the 10 years during which records have been maintained.

In addition to the killings, the IFEX Clearing House estimates there were at least 2,000 serious human rights violations, including death threats, detention, torture and ill-treatment, forced exile, censorship and arbitrary legal actions against members of the media around the world.

Among journalists killed in 1993 were:

- four foreign and three **Russian** journalists covering that country's constitutional standoff in October;
- at least 10 journalists covering **Angola's** civil war;
- five foreign reporters in **Somalia**; and
- nine journalists killed in **former Yugoslavia**, bringing to 34 the total foreign and local journalists killed since civil war broke out there in 1991.
- at least six writers and journalists attending a cultural conference died in **Turkey** when religious fundamentalists set fire to a hotel, killing at least 36 people.

Fourteen journalists were killed in Latin America and the United States, many for their coverage of organized crime, drug trafficking and corrupt of-

ficials. Six of the 14 journalists killed were **Colombian**, bringing the death toll of Colombian journalists to 109 since 1977. Three of the four **Mexican** journalists killed in 1993 were executed with a single bullet to the back of the head shot at close range.

In **Peru**, journalist Maria Carlin Fernandez was shot last December while eating lunch with her nephew in a restaurant. She had been investigat-

tellectuals are the frequent targets of presumed Islamic fundamentalist assassins. Journalists have been dragged from their cars, shot in the street, or murdered in their homes.

In **Turkey**, nine journalists with the pro-Kurdish newspaper *Ozgür Gündem* have been killed in the 18 months since its inception. There have been no arrests in any of the cases, and the circumstances of the killings suggest they are the

pregnant. She was so badly treated that the police themselves took her to hospital for treatment at the end of interrogation; she was returned to jail before this care was complete.

Governments often take bold action to stifle criticism or dissent in the press. Former **Nigerian** ruler Ibrahim Babangida, who annulled elections in June which would have removed him from power, in July banned six newspapers that were critical of his dictatorship. Former **Guatemalan** president Jorge Serrano, who declared a "self-coup" in May, dissolving Congress, promptly dispatched censors to all the country's media. Some prominent newspapers and magazines defied the censors (see *CCPJ Reporter* #2). Despite the later election of former human rights activist Ramiro de Leon Carpio as president, the media crackdown continues. In the last seven months, three journalists have been killed, and a columnist's wife and step-daughter were found tortured and murdered.

The high number of attacks in 1993 show a great need for strong, co-ordinated campaigns by press freedom groups, media organizations, and government to bring pressure to bear on offenders. Immunity from prosecution for the perpetrators of the violations described above continues to be normal in many countries. The IFEX Clearing House monitors the situation of freedom of expression in the world, educating and raising awareness about the plight of journalists and writers and mobilizing letter-writing action to put an end to violations.



HAITI: "I'm a journalist!" – "I don't know how to read!"

ing possible military involvement in the murder of her brother earlier last year.

Journalists' coverage of controversial social issues also led to their assassination by armed groups and even governments. Ten journalists have been killed in **Algeria** since May 1993 as that country's crisis deepened. A December 1991 election that would have brought Islamic fundamentalists to power was annulled by the military, and today public officials and in-

work of death squads linked to the country's security forces. In December, the government raided the newspaper's offices in an attempt to close it down, arresting the 127 staff and visitors it found on the premises. Police in Turkey arbitrarily detain people, including many journalists, regularly. In July journalist Hazahat Ozen disappeared and was later discovered to have been tortured repeatedly while in police custody. She was seven months'

International Freedom of Expression eXchange