



CCPJ reporter

Newsletter of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists

1995 – Issue 2

AWAITING TRIAL OVER REPORTS IN CAMBODIA

Cambodian journalists reporting on high-level corruption run the risk of imprisonment or death, while low journalistic standards put press credibility in question. At right, Nguon Noun, editor of Damnoeng Pil Prock, waits to go before a judge to defend his report on the involvement of government officials in a coup attempt last year. See pages 4-5.



DARREN WHITESIDE

CCPJ organizing conference

The CCPJ, in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists and with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency, is organizing an international conference to address the dangerous tensions between the Cambodian government and the media.

At the end of July, journalists, human rights and freedom of expression advocates, and government officials were to spend five days in Phnom Penh discussing the role of the media in a democracy.

Delegates – from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand – will explain how the media operates in their countries and how conflicts between the government and media are resolved.

High-ranking Cambodian government officials as well as national media, both rural and urban, will participate in the debate on journalistic practices and address the government's repressive response to unfavorable coverage

(see pages 4 and 5).

Ingrid Walter, a Toronto-based freelance journalist who was recently elected to CCPJ's Board of Director's, travelled to Cambodia in early June to act as CCPJ's Phnom Penh conference organizer.

Frank Koller, a producer with CBC radio, will also travel to Cambodia on behalf of CCPJ to take part in the conference and assess the training needs of Cambodian journalists. Koller's report will also suggest how CCPJ can respond to these needs.

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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 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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Executive Director's Corner

Fighting the information drought

These are challenging times for journalists around the world, and for the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists.

In May, the CCPJ attended the International Freedom of Expression eXchange's fourth annual meeting. The CCPJ manages the IFEX Clearing House in co-operation with major international freedom of expression groups. One Clearing House activity is to operate an Action Alert network defending the rights of journalists and other writers.

Unfortunately, we were busier than ever last year. In 1994 more journalists were killed for their profession than ever before. 1994 was also a record year for violations of freedom of expression. The IFEX Clearing House circulated more than 1,400 cases covering 123 countries.

1995 is not looking any better. In the first quarter of this year, the Clearing House circulated reports of 21 journalists killed or kidnapped and 57 arrests or detentions. Algeria led the kills list with 13 murdered.

At the annual meeting the IFEX membership agreed to continue to document and protest such violations, and several measures were adopted to improve IFEX services. New governance, editorial and subscription policies were penned, and a new Southern group, the Pakistan Press Foundation, was elected to IFEX membership.

I was pleased to see the IFEX Council renew its commitment to increase developing countries' participation in IFEX activities. Much has been written about the "information drought" in the developing world. In the United States, more than 46 per cent of GNP is related to knowledge, communication, and information work. By the year 2000, the information sector is expected to grow to 60 per cent of the European Community GDP. Information is also critical for the developing world, but it is lagging far behind.

Information technology delivers tremendous capability at comparatively low and steadily declining costs. As a result, developing countries can now afford computer power.

But on its own, information technology achieves nothing. Developing countries need a free flow of information in order to take full advantage of the technology that

years to come.

The CCPJ itself is experiencing growing pains typical of an emerging non-governmental organization (NGO). With the establishment of the IFEX Clearing House four years ago, the CCPJ grew in size at a time when available funding sources diminished. With a loyal Canadian membership and a team of dedicated volunteers, the Committee is on strong footing, but we must seek new funding sources to ensure the organization's long-range survival.

I come to the CCPJ after serving four years as manager of the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, an NGO that provides radio programming about sustainable agriculture to developing world broadcasters. Through this work I got a first-hand look at the media explosion happening throughout the South, and I met with journalists working under restrictions we would find unacceptable in Canada. I have also worked for CBC Radio and freelanced for the BBC World Service in Africa.

As the new Executive Director, I succeed the co-founder of the CCPJ, Nick Fillmore. Nick helped create the organization, and with the help of committed staff and volunteers made it a going concern in the international freedom of expression community. It is a privilege for me to carry on where he left off, and to build on the many accomplishments of the last 14 years.

Wayne Sharpe joined the CCPJ in April of this year.



JOHN DONOGHUE FOR THE CCPJ

by Wayne Sharpe

they now find within their reach. IFEX should take an active role in alleviating information poverty in the area of freedom of expression. After all, 82 per cent of the press freedom violations we reported last year occurred in the South. In the coming year we will actively recruit Southern members, and build their capacity to connect to the Clearing House.

The CCPJ has just embarked on two new projects in Cambodia and Malawi (see the cover and centrespread). These are examples of the kind of assistance the Canadian journalism community can offer to colleagues in less-developed countries who need training in basic skills and responsible journalism, and the right to free expression. We intend to take on more projects like these in the



Thanks

The Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists wishes to acknowledge the support of our renewing members and donors. Without this ongoing assistance and interest, we would not be able to carry on.

Heading back to Nigerian uncertainty

by *Patience Akpan*

I have mixed feelings whenever I'm asked to speak or write on the political situation in my country, Nigeria.

I want to write a true story, but not a sob story. I want to see my country come out looking like the "giant of Africa" that we like to think we are. I want to separate my country, its strength, potentials and people from the military dictators that have crushed Nigeria for 25 of its 35 years as a sovereign nation.

Until 11 years ago, the Nigerian press was considered the most free in Africa. The tide turned for the worse in 1984 when a new military dictatorship promulgated Decree Number Four. This basically forbade journalists from publishing anything that could embarrass a public officer.

Truth was not a defence, and a public officer only had to complain that a story embarrassed him (hardly her) for the journalist to be liable. Two journalists from the Guardian Press were sentenced to four-year jail terms for violating this decree.

We had a breather when another military dictator came in and abrogated the decree, merely to score political points off his predecessor. It didn't last. During the eight years that General Ibrahim Babangida ran Nigeria aground, newspaper houses were routinely banned from publication for two weeks to six months. Journalists were also detained at the least provocation.

In four years, I went through two shutdowns. The Punch Newspapers, where I worked between 1987 and 1990, was sealed off by the police for a month in 1990. Our deputy editor, Chris Mamah, was detained for 81 days.

In 1992, the *African Concord* magazine, where I had moved in 1991, was shut down for two weeks because our cover story on the government's economic program did not paint a rosy enough

picture. We had said that living standards had deteriorated under the regime's economic policies.

The next year, we were shut down for four months because we called for the release of the results of the 1993 presidential elections, which were widely considered free and fair and which had produced a clear winner, Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola.

Journalists in the Concord Press (which publishes four newsmagazines and seven newspapers) were in an awkward position because Abiola owns the organization. We constantly questioned our motives to ensure we were acting in the interest of the Nigerian people.

Still, the government accused Abiola of using us to fight his political battles, even when he didn't interfere in the editorial policies of the Concord publications. This argument was seriously weakened by the closure of other newspapers for unexplained offences.

Another dictator, General Sanni Abacha, came aboard in November, 1993 and unlocked the shut media houses. Since he had nothing to offer, he hoped to get the press on his side by that action. When this didn't happen, he re-banned the media houses.

Non-existent jobs

It's been 11 months since then and the 30 newspapers in the Concord group, Guardian Press and Punch Newspapers are still not allowed to publish.

Affected journalists roam the streets of Lagos in search of non-existent jobs. The few independent media left face prohibitive newsprint costs, as well as undergoing constant harassment and imprisonment (at least four journalists are currently in police detention). They can offer no employment. The only viable media in Nigeria are those owned by the government. They are strictly government propaganda outlets that would never hire unemployed journalists from the banned publications.

The Nigerian press has been ef-



JOHN DONOGHUE FOR THE CCPJ

Nigerian journalist Patience Akpan

fectively muzzled. For balanced stories about their country, Nigerians have since turned to external media like the BBC (radio) and Voice Of America African service news programs.

It's difficult to be in a profession where there are no guarantees or security. Journalists in the independent press live with the constant fear that they might be out of a job the next day, courtesy of a government action. Long-term plans can't be made and one is forced to take life one day at a time. But then, one grows old and wants a more secure job, to be able to meet one's obligations, and to have the peace that comes from knowing that one has control over one's life. Journalism is then abandoned for something else.

I "escaped" the nightmare by coming to Canada last year on the Gordon N. Fisher Fellowship, the Commonwealth equivalent of the Southam Fellowship. A great opportunity at the right time, it granted me some reprieve. I spent a wonderful year at the University of Toronto taking courses as varied as Politics and Feminist Theory and French language. It's been an intellectually enriching experience. The year has ended and I must now pack my bags and head back to the political and economic uncertainty that is home.

Until last year, Patience Akpan was assistant political editor of the *African Concord* newsmagazine.

BRIEF RELIEF:
Another military dictator came in and abrogated the decree to score points off his predecessor. The freedom didn't last.

Ethical lapses complicate government relations

Cambodia coming to grips with

by Emilia Cosella

For the better part of 18 years, Cambodians kept their mouths shut.

But since a 1993 United Nations-sponsored election brought democracy back to the small Southeast Asian nation, they are hardly taking time to catch their breath. More than 40 newspapers and magazines have sprouted in what is being called Cambodia's 'spring' of press freedom.

According to a recent survey, more than 300,000 people – most of them in the capital of Phnom Penh (population 1 million) – read newspapers regularly. But their daily news fix has come at considerable cost. Three journalists have been murdered since June 1994, while numerous others have been jailed and fined, and several newspapers have been forced to close by the Information Ministry.

Now, Cambodia's coalition government is considering a tough new press law that would impose stiff fines, and possibly jail terms, for the vague charge of "humiliating" the government.

Without waiting for the new law to be passed, the government laid "disinformation" charges in February against editor Chan Ratana of the popular *Samieng Yuva-chon Khmer* (Voice of Khmer Youth) newspaper for publishing an opinion piece headlined: "Ranariddh is More Stupid Than Hun Sen Three Times a Day."

Ratana was sentenced to one year in jail and fined US\$2,000 for the column, which claimed to compare the intelligence of First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh of the royalist Funcinpec party with that of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, of the communist Cambodian Peoples' Party.

By mid-May Ratana was out on bail, pending an appeal (for which no date had been set). He was also facing constant death threats.



TENSE TRIAL: Nguon Noun, editor of *The Morning News*, in a court hearing (above) that resulted in a month in jail. At right, he smiles in fear upon being arrested for accusing top Interior Ministry officials of involvement in an abortive coup.

Photos by Darren Whiteside

"In the past two weeks he has been chased by a motor-bike and he is afraid somebody is trying to kill him," said his lawyer, Kong Sam Onn, in an early May interview.

Later in May, Nguon Noun, editor of *Damnoeng Pil Proek* (*The Morning News*), publicly appealed to the Interior Ministry for protection after receiving more than 30 death threats in the three weeks following his publication of an article criticizing the power of Hun Sen's family.

Noun has been jailed twice for criticizing government figures. In July 1994 he spent a month in jail after his paper accused top Interior Ministry officials of complicity in



an attempted coup. The previous March he had spent two days in Phnom Penh's notorious T-3 jail for exposing alleged corruption by a powerful provincial governor.

The cases of Ratana and Noun highlight the difficult relationship between the government and the country's fledgling press, neither of

DIFFICULT DEFENCE: Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1993, Cambodians have had a profusion of newspapers to choose from. But many mix reporting with pornographic fiction and rumours – complicating the task of defending freedom of expression.

press freedom ideas

which is used to giving or receiving criticism.

Observers widely note that many Cambodian newspapers meet few standards of accuracy or balance. Front pages boast a mixture of pornographic fiction stories, photos of headless corpses and their alleged murderers, and outrageous articles that boldly pass off rumour and opinion as fact.

Information Minister Ieng Mouly says he supports freedom of the press, a concept written into the country's constitution. "But the people who are being written about have rights also," says Mouly. "They have a right to respond.



They have the right to be free from vilification ... and the right that reports about them be accurate and free from bias."

Advocates of press freedom – and those journalists who are attempting to ethically practise their trade – are having a tough time defending some of their colleagues.

"Traditionally, our writing is sometimes without responsibility," admits Pin Samkhon, president of the 480-member Khmer Journalists' Association (KJA). "Our job is not only to provide freedom of expression, but also to provide a responsible press for the development of our country."

The KJA has begun training courses for its members, in an attempt to raise the level of reporting.

Cambodian reporters, still comparatively free from government control and under the continued watchful eye of the UN and international human rights groups, so far are the envy of their counterparts in neighbouring Vietnam and Laos, and nearby China and Myanmar, where domestic press freedom simply doesn't exist.

Most Cambodian journalists are loathe to see new controls after living through Vietnam-backed Communist rule from 1979 until 1993 and after watching most of their predecessors killed during the 1975-1979 genocidal rule of the Khmer Rouge, when about one million Cambodians – most of them educated and urban – were killed.

But Samkhon said he supports the concept of a press law – as long as jail terms are removed – because he fears that without some type of guideline, the government will accelerate its campaign against reporters and editors, jailing them and closing their publications.

"Cambodia needs a law to protect us. Western countries have other laws to protect journalists and the judges don't want to do bad things to them. Here, if the government tells the judge to put someone in jail, he does."

However, as Ratana's lawyer points out, a press law isn't going to save journalists' lives. "Some people will always use their power to stop any journalist who is writing bad things about them," Kong Sam Onn said, referring to the Sep-



tember 1994 shooting death of Ratana's predecessor, editor Noun Chan and two other deaths.

In December 1994, Chan Dara, a reporter with *Koh Santepheap* (Island of Peace) newspaper, was shot and killed while on assignment in Konpong Cham province. In June 1994 Tou Chhom Mongkoi, editor of *Antarakhum* (Intervention) newspaper, died of head injuries – a death human rights groups called suspicious.

Said one Western observer: "It doesn't really matter what the law is. There are a lot of people out there with guns, who are willing to use them (threats and attacks on journalists) will continue to happen.

"Quite frankly, the government doesn't observe its own laws anyway."

Emilia Cosella will resume reporting on the Ontario government for the Hamilton Spectator this fall. Awarded a 1994/95 Gemini Internship, she chose to spend half of the eight-month program in Cambodia writing for Gemini News Service.

HIGH-RISK COMMENTS:
A negative evaluation of the intelligence of Cambodia's prime minister can lead to a jail term, fines or death threats.

Fund responds in Sierra Leone

by Olena Wawryshyn

CORRUPTION OR SEDITION: Acquittal is unlikely. At best, they are hoping that bail will be granted after the expected guilty verdict so the journalists will be free while an appeal is launched.

The CCPJ's Distress Fund recently responded to a plea from four journalists in Sierra Leone. Their lengthy legal battle against sedition charges demonstrates the basic lack of press freedom in this African nation.

The journalists' troubles started in October 1993. *The New Breed*, a weekly newspaper, published an editorial calling on Sierra Leone's military ruler, Captain Valentine Strasser, to answer allegations made in *Expressen*, a Swedish newspaper. *Expressen* claimed that Strasser had made huge profits selling diamonds abroad.

Strasser's response to *The New Breed's* editorial was to have several staff members, including managing editor Julius Spencer arrested, imprisoned and charged with sedition.

Although soon released on bail, nearly two years later they are still

fighting the charges. The journalists initially thought the case would be dismissed, but "we obviously misjudged the determination of the Strasser government to smother freedom of expression in the country," writes Spencer.

Six months earlier, Strasser had announced that he would liberalize Sierra Leone's press laws to celebrate the first anniversary of his coup. Instead, he re-enacted the press laws, which include harsh penalties for publishing opinions likely to cause "alarm or despondency."

Underdevelopment

Spencer writes, "what we are fighting for is not simply our individual freedom, but freedom of expression If we fail, our country is doomed to remain underdeveloped, because corruption will continue to thrive and good government will be an impossibility."

After publishing the editorial,

The New Breed ceased operating as a result of government reprisals. *New Breed* journalists have found it difficult to get work elsewhere, as employers are afraid to hire them or publish their articles.

At the end of 1994, their legal case took a turn for the worse, and the journalists spent over a month in jail. Bail was restored after lengthy legal manoeuvring.

An acquittal is unlikely. At best, they are hoping that bail will be granted after the expected guilty verdict so the journalists will be free while an appeal is launched.

Until now, the journalists have managed to stay out of prison only with the financial assistance of groups such as Reporters Sans Frontières and the World Press Freedom Committee.

After receiving a letter from Julius Spencer, the CCPJ's Journalists in Distress Fund also made a donation to assist in covering legal expenses.

CCPJ goes to Malawi newsroom

The CCPJ has embarked on its first project in Africa, a three-phase initiative to improve information programming at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and to support freedom of expression in the southern African nation. This work is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Malawi is experiencing democracy after 30 years of dictatorial rule by President Hastings Banda, who was crushed by voters last year in the country's first multi-party election. Under Banda's control, freedom of expression was severely limited and a large number of Malawian journalists and writers were imprisoned. The MBC, a crown-like corporation, was used as a propaganda tool.

In the early 1990s, when international pressure forced Banda to call real elections and set up democratic institutions, independent newspapers and magazines mush-

roomed overnight. It quickly became apparent that Malawian journalists — new and old — needed training. Some international organizations have run courses since then but not at the MBC.

In March, CCPJ president Arnold Amber, who has worked extensively in Africa, visited Malawi to design the project with the MBC and to meet local groups promoting freedom of expression.

The CCPJ training project will differ significantly from others held in Malawi. It will take place not only in the classroom but also in the newsroom. Amber suggested this approach after repeatedly hearing that once journalists returned to their familiar routines and work habits, they set aside their classroom learning.

"They were learning skills that the culture and control mechanism didn't allow them to use," says Amber. "Our approach will let us break through these barriers."

David Candow, former execu-

tive producer at CBC Radio Training, trained radio reporters, editors and producers at the MBC for three weeks in early June. A second training session is to take place later this fall. The third component will bring two MBC staffers to Canada for three-week placements with radio organizations here.

Amber met Edson Mpina, a veteran writer who was one of Banda's first freedom of expression prisoners. "He, and nearly everyone else I spoke to, is optimistic about freedom of expression. The government has changed many of the old censorship and restrictive laws. As well, the cabinet is stocked with people like the Minister of Information Brown James Mpinganjira, who served five years in prison under Banda on a freedom of expression issue.

"The belief is that a government with a number of former political prisoners is unlikely to repeat the totalitarian excesses of the past."



Media laws put under scrutiny

By Ingrid Walter

From Nigeria to New Zealand, journalists, lawyers and media educators are conducting one of the most extensive and comprehensive examinations ever made of the state of press freedom in the Commonwealth.

The two-year enterprise, launched this summer at a cost of \$109,000, is partially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and is headed by media law professor Robert Martin of the University of Western Ontario.

The project, which falls under the auspices of the Commonwealth Association for Education in Journalism and Communication, will survey freedom of expression in a representative sample of 15 Commonwealth countries.

"What we hope is that by the Commonwealth Law Ministers Conference in 1997, we will be able to say, 'Here are the results of this project; here is a detailed inventory; and most importantly, here is the draft model code of media law which we would urge you to give serious consideration to enacting as part of your national law,'" says Martin. But the task will not be easy.

The disparity between Commonwealth countries' regard for press freedom is great. Many still maintain oppressive laws that stifle media attempts to expose government corruption, express opposition views or reveal torture and murder committed by state police or military regimes.

In Zambia, journalists who challenge the government face a battery of coercive legislation. Its infamous Parliamentary and Ministerial Code of Ethics Act empowers aggrieved ministers and parliamentarians to summon journalists before a tribunal to testify about articles criticizing officials' conduct and to reveal their sources.

In India, the English press faces few government fetters. However, Hindi and other ethnic papers are

constantly under attack from state legislators. Despite mounting opposition, the Parliamentary Privilege Act continues to permit parliamentarians and state legislators to sue for virtually any critical report.

Preventive detention laws are even more coercive. Journalists can be jailed for months, sometimes years, without trial. "I hope the report will say," says Martin, "that if a country is going to use preven-



Law professor Robert Martin

tive detention laws ... they must never be used against a journalist who writes things that a government does not agree with."

To be persuasive, Martin says the report must illustrate the enormous economic and social benefits to be gained when a society allows freedom of the press to thrive.

State versus private ownership of media will be discussed within the context of economic development and freedom of expression. Coercive import licensing restrictions, for example, not only stifle freedom of the press, they also shut down businesses. These laws can be used by governments to eliminate critical newspapers by denying them access to foreign exchange and thus newsprint.

Martin hopes more Commonwealth countries will follow Trinidad and Tobago's lead, after a court

ruled that withholding foreign exchange from a newspaper solely to prevent it from publishing interferes with press freedom.

Another area the project will examine is the extent to which restrictions on expression are used to preserve the integrity of judicial proceedings. In Canada this has been a contentious issue. Since 1982, the CBC has tried to get the courts to open their doors to cameras. Some gains have been made, but the Bernardo/Homolka cases have brought the issue of freedom of media access to judicial proceedings back to the fore, as judges have repeatedly denied media requests for access to pre-trial motions, videotaped evidence and camera access to courts.

John Miller, chair of the School of Journalism at Toronto's Ryerson Polytechnic University, hopes for "a very strong and stirring statement about the importance to society of freedom of the press, instead of the importance of the press."

He cites a recent vote by the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association to dispense with its code of ethics and principles as cause for concern. The code defined the role of the press as watchdog, and detailed its commitment to accuracy and fair comment. Miller fears that without media codes the press may lose sight of its commitment to responsible journalism.

Whether the report and its recommendations will influence the justice ministers and attorneys general who will see it is anyone's guess.

The vast majority of the 50 Commonwealth states are autonomous nations with no obligation to adopt standard codes or legislation. Martin, however, says the report is meant also to educate. Its manual will be available at a subsidized cost to newspapers, broadcasters and journalism schools in the Commonwealth. Informed journalists and media owners may be better empowered to lobby for improved legislation.



COMMON UNHEALTH: *Many Commonwealth countries maintain laws that stifle media attempts to report on the opposition, or to expose government corruption and misdeeds.*

INFAMOUS ETHICS ACT: *Zambian law lets members of Parliament summon journalists to account for critical reports and reveal their sources.*

IFEX Community NEWS

Making a difference in southern Africa

Since its founding in 1992, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has made significant strides towards strengthening independent media and promoting media freedom and diversity in the region. MISA operates in the 11 countries making up the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with chapters served by a regional secretariat based in the Namibian capital, Windhoek.

MISA has more than 100 regional members, composed of journalists and media workers, journalists' associations, trade unions and independent media institutions.

In keeping with the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, adopted by southern African countries in 1991, MISA endeavours to raise the standards of journalism and to facilitate economic self-sufficiency for independent media.

"Unfortunately, media freedom remains low on the political agenda, and this fundamental human right continues to be abused in a region where democracy is generally considered to have taken root," says MISA in its recently published annual report, entitled *So This is Democracy? - A Review of Media*

Freedom in Southern Africa during 1994.

Despite their adoption of the Windhoek Declaration, MISA points out, most SADC member governments pay only "lip service" to their commitments. They use subtle,



Zimbabwean journalist Basildon Peta won MISA's 1994 Press Freedom Award for his refusal to reveal information sources despite harassment by the authorities.

but still oppressive means to silence and censure the media, MISA says. MISA hopes that the report title will fast become a statement rather than a rhetorical question.

MISA joined the IFEX network in 1993 to increase international awareness of media freedom violations in southern Africa. MISA says

IFEX membership has helped it to distribute as well as receive information on media freedom quickly and economically.

In 1994, MISA issued more than 70 "action alerts" on the IFEX network relating to media freedom violations in southern Africa. MISA's involvement in IFEX was instrumental in helping Lesotho journalist Rabuka Chalatse, shot in August 1994 by soldiers while covering a demonstration. An alert issued by MISA via IFEX elicited funds within 24 hours to pay for emergency treatment to save the young journalist's leg.

MISA says, "Letter-writing campaigns initiated via IFEX have also served to put pressure on governments in the region eager to suppress criticism while, at the same time, cultivating a democratic image in the international arena."

MISA is involved in many projects to promote democracy in media and has established a trust fund for projects. The group also publishes a newsletter, the *MISA Free Press*, sent via e-mail and the regular post.

The MISANET e-mail network has a news exchange with 10 to 20 stories daily, the mainstay being a special

feed from the Inter Press Service (IPS) features agency, and media freedom information put out by MISA. From MISA's inception, it became apparent that outdated and expensive means of communication left journalists and independent media institutions in the region out of touch, not only with their audiences, but with one another. Hence, 1994 saw the birth of the MISANET media networking initiative, which was lauded at April's Addis Ababa computer communications and development conference for its achievement of networking media workers and non-governmental organizations.

MISA can be reached at: MISA secretariat at Private Bag 13386, Windhoek, Namibia; tel: +264 61 232975; fax: +248016; e-mail: postmaster@ingrid.misa.org.na.

IFEX in London

IFEX's annual meeting, held May 19-21 in London, England, emphasized sharing experiences and planning common actions such as one in early June on Algeria. Participants addressed such topics as the role of hate media in incitement to racial violence, censorship and the Internet, and Cambodia's press law (assisted by CCPJ discussion of its recent initiatives there). Participants also attended a full-day workshop with Abid Hussein, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.

- by Isabelle Patenaude & Kristina Stockwood

International Freedom of Expression eXchange