

CJFE

reporter

2001 – Issue 3

La presse algérienne est menacée par une révision du code pénal

Par Khaled Mahrez

En dix ans d'existence, le droit au libre exercice de la profession de journaliste a été soumis aux pressions les plus terribles, allant jusqu'à l'assassinat de journalistes, mais jamais la fin de la liberté de la presse n'a été planifiée comme elle l'a été avec l'amendement des dispositions du code pénal relatives à la diffamation.

Pour répondre à ceux qui s'inquiètent de ses mauvaises relations avec la presse, le président Abdelaziz Boureflika s'est toujours targué de n'avoir suspendu aucun journal ou emprisonné aucun journaliste, ce qui est totalement vrai. Mais, en amendant le code pénal dans le sens de l'alourdissement des peines de prison et des amendes liées à la diffamation, le président a envisagé la solution finale, celle qui lui permettrait de museler définitivement la presse par des moyens légaux.

Avant d'en arriver là, le président n'a raté aucune occasion
— suite à la page 6



En mai, plusieurs journalistes algériens ont organisé une marche silencieuse à Alger pour protester contre le durcissement des lois sur la presse. L'assemblée nationale algérienne a adopté des amendements au code pénal prévoyant de lourdes sanctions en cas d'atteinte par la presse au chef de l'état et aux corps constitués.

Sierra Leone journal: Evolution of a media rebuilding project

In January, CJFE launched an ambitious project to help rebuild key parts of the media in Sierra Leone. Many years of brutal civil war devastated the West African country's infrastructure and institutions; the media were no exception. CJFE's efforts focus on improving the operation of Sierra Leone's print media. Journalist and trainer Dale Ratcliffe, who is managing the project, reports on developments.

CJFE logo and some posters. CJFE Director of Development Nick Fillmore and I are in Sierra Leone to begin the organization's media development project. We're at a lunch hosted by the Sierra Leone Guild of Newspaper Editors. We arrived just two days ago.

pers) and giving papers some badly needed equipment.

It's our turn to speak. We say we're delighted to be in Freetown to begin the project. We warn them it's not to going to happen quickly though, that we'll be doing things in stages. We want to get it right – to make sure the most people benefit and that the project will be sustainable.

The process that finds us before a group of journalists in Freetown began several years ago. CJFE's interest in Sierra Leone

— continues on page 7



By Dale Ratcliffe

MARCH

We sit in an airless Freetown restaurant on a steamy Saturday afternoon joking that all we have are a few dozen pens with the

Promoting peace journalism to cover conflicts

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Thailand hosts IFEX members at annual meeting

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Un nouvel organisme africain défend la liberté de presse

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Advocacy ads struggle to obtain media access

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Coalition challenges secrecy of NAFTA tribunals

A Canadian coalition has recently launched a legal challenge against the North American Free Trade Agreement, claiming that its tribunal rules violate the rights of freedom of expression and press freedom. The coalition, comprised of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Democracy Watch, and represented by the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, argues that restrictions in NAFTA's Chapter 11 tribunal process denies Canadians these rights.

"The secrecy of the [NAFTA] tribunals flies in the face of long-established principles that the judicial system must operate under the penetrating light of public scrutiny. We believe Canada's agreement to NAFTA is unconstitutional," said Raymond MacCallum, a staff lawyer with the Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

The coalition maintains that public institutions should be held

accountable through Canadians' access to information and the decision-making processes. However, when claims are made, Tribunal rules bar citizens and the press from attending the hearings unless all parties involved agree. The closed tribunal process means that matters of public concern, such as environmental law and delivery of public services, are debated in private, with limited input from the people most affected by the issues.

Judy Darcy, national president of CUPE, commented, "These tribunals should be as open and accountable as any court, so that citizens and the media can observe, criticize, comment and take action."

The Supreme Court of Canada has condemned restrictions on public and media access to domestic courts and tribunals. Justices have criticized the negative impact of secrecy on press free-

dom and freedom of expression.

The coalition's challenge argues that the Canadian government is also bound to guarantee these rights when signing international agreements, including NAFTA. The trade agreement's tribunal process, the coalition argues, restricts the gathering and sharing of information, which can lead the public to question the legitimacy of both the Canadian judicial system and the international agreements to which Canada belongs.

The coalition continues to gather evidence in pursuit of its case, despite a recent promise by NAFTA trade ministers of increased transparency in the tribunal process, including the release of decisions and records – but only after the hearings have taken place.

No hearing date has yet been set for the coalition's legal challenge. – Kristen Downey



Governor General
Adrienne Clarkson

Clarkson keynote speaker at Nov. 8 awards banquet

Governor General Adrienne Clarkson will be the featured speaker at this year's CJFE International Press Freedom Awards dinner. The gala event, which draws well-known journalists, corporate and political figures, has become the organization's signature fundraising event in benefit of its press freedom activities.

Awards bestowed at the banquet honour journalists from Canada and around the world who have overcome obstacles to practise their profession or who have been persecuted solely because of their work.

The International Press Freedom Awards dinner is set for November 8, at the Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto. Journalist Ann Medina will serve as host.

For more information, please contact CJFE.

CJFE's Journalists in Distress Fund renders aid in Africa and Asia

Established in 1999, CJFE's Journalists in Distress Fund supports journalists working to defend democracy, human rights, justice and freedom of expression around the world. The fund encourages freedom of expression and the practice of independent journalism, and provides humanitarian aid for journalists whose lives and well-being are threatened.

So far this year, several journalists have benefited from CJFE's financial assistance.

Vincent Azumah of Ghana and **Joseph Wandetto** of Kenya, reporters who have both faced multiple lawsuits because of their investigative reporting, received assistance to help cover legal costs.

Seven staff from the independent Liberian newspaper *The New Democrat*, who are exiled in Ghana after fleeing from mounting state persecution, each received small grants to help with living and medical expenses.

Also in Africa, journalist **Godefroid Lumisa** of the Democratic

Republic of Congo received support while exiled in the neighbouring Congo. Another DRC journalist, **Jules-César Mayimbi**, received money from the fund to help cover medical expenses, as he is suffering from typhoid while in prison.

In Asia, CJFE provided money to crusading journalist **Annat**

Jongyotyng, who was shot last year because of investigations into government corruption in northern Thailand. Jongyotyng will use the funds to help maintain his newspaper, which faces dire financial obstacles.

CJFE's Journalists in Distress Fund relies in part on member donations.

CJFE annual meeting Sept. 25 to hear Sierra Leone report

CJFE members and supporters should mark Tuesday, September 25, on their calendar. Starting at 6.30 p.m. at Oakham House at Ryerson University, CJFE's Annual General Meeting will take place.

Several important matters requiring the presence of members will be addressed: approval of governance by-laws and financial statements plus filling several vacancies on the Board of Directors through nomination and election of candidates.

The meeting will conclude with a talk on CJFE's major development initiative: a media rebuilding project in the West African country of Sierra Leone. Project manager Dale Ratcliffe and trainer/consultant Roger Holmes will lead the discussion.

For more information, contact the CJFE office.

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

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

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

Executive Director

Sharmini Peries

Founding Director

Nick Fillmore

CJFE Program Manager

David Cozac

IFEX Alerts Coordinators

Michael Elbaz, Marianna Tzabiras,
Rachel Morton-Gittens

IFEX Development/ Outreach Coordinator

Rebecca Nelems

IFEX Communiqué Editor

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Petty Bozonelos, Kristen Downey, Michael Elbaz, Anders Hayden, Jessica Kosmack, Khaled Mahrez, Audace Manirakiza, Jane McElhone, Eric Mills, Rebecca Nelems, Sharmini Peries, Emily Pohl-Weary, Abigail Pugh, Dale Ratcliffe, Marianna Tzabiras

Design / Production

Eric Mills

Map by National Geographic



Covering conflict areas through peace journalism

By Petty Bozonelos

Changing the coverage of conflicts to focus on peace-oriented journalism was the focus of a two-day workshop held in Toronto this June.

The event, facilitated by Johan Galtung, professor of peace studies and consultant for several United Nations agencies, brought together journalists, students and professors to discuss news reporting in conflict areas and the search for fair and accurate ways to frame coverage.

Galtung contrasted what he called "war/violence journalism" with "peace/conflict journalism," saying the former has become the standard style. War journalism reinforces the mainstream belief that conflict can be resolved only through enforcement, in which the end result consists of winners and losers, he said.

"These are two different ways of thinking about, looking at, describing and ultimately writing up the same set of events," Galtung said. "Peace journalism is about alternatives. With war journalism the violent act is de-

tached from alternatives. No alternatives to violence are presented. What is the alternative to bombing?"

Galtung commented that war journalism effectively dichotomizes a conflict by placing the "good" party on one ("our") side and the "bad" party on the other side. The former is given a personal voice while the latter is divested of one. Citing news coverage of such conflict areas as Kosovo, he noted, "There has been a failure in giving transparency to the goals held by all sides."

Globe and Mail international affairs reporter and CJFE board member Paul Knox agreed during a panel discussion that conflicts are more complex than a simple two-party involvement, and that journalists must refrain from reducing them to good-versus-bad hostilities. But while noting that



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journalists need training in order to cover the processes of conflict resolution and peace mediation, Knox emphasized the inevitable conflict between Galtung's entreaties for journalists to take on a role as peace facilitators as well as their traditional role as fact finders.

"It is naïve to think that there is no tension between journalists as fact diggers or information organizers, and as pursuers of the over-arching goal of higher harmony," Knox said.

Galtung said that he highly respected the profession of journalism and insisted that journalists could play a significant role as facilitators of peace and reconciliation in war-ridden areas by including a moral basis to their reporting.

Peace journalism has already been put into practice on several media fronts, perhaps most prominently through the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting, which supports independent media in regions of conflict and in transition. The institute carries reports on its Web site from journalists and analysts who



INTERDISCIPLINARY HUMANITIES CENTER

Johan Galtung argues that 'war/violence journalism' allows for only winners and losers.

provide insight into these war-torn and changing societies. Significantly, it includes perspectives from outside mainstream media outlets, allowing for voices from all sides of the conflict to be heard.

Petty Bozonelos is a journalism student at Ryerson University and a volunteer with CJFE.

Groups join forces to protect academic freedom worldwide

By Abigail Pugh

Threats to academic freedom exist today in more forms and contexts than ever before. Repressive regimes often attack the free expression of ideas at its roots – and educators and research institutions are likely targets.

Such repression, including slashed research funding and salaries, curtailment of career prospects and attacks on the physical and emotional well-being of scholars, has unique ramifications for democracy and human rights.

The Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) was launched in June 2001 to address this issue. Based in the United Kingdom, NEAR is an international collaboration of organizations active on academic freedom and education, and committed to promoting respect for the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founders include the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, Human Rights Watch, Scholars at Risk Network and Education International.

Through various techniques designed to transmit accurate information around the globe, NEAR will promote academic freedom and the freedoms of assembly, thought, opinion and expression.

Using Action Alerts (summaries of recent cases), the network will harness the Internet to marshal opinion and inform the international community of abuses, causes and solutions. Joint projects will include education and training conferences, reporting



and lobbying activities, and funding or exchange initiatives. NEAR will also, where needed, support repressed individuals and their families.

John Akker, executive director of NEAR, says: "Infringements on rights expression are on the increase. Where a government is sensitive to what people are studying, reading and printing, academics – like journalists – are on the front line."

Ethiopian scholars Mesfin Woldemarian and Berhanu Nega were recently in this dangerous position. In May, they were arrested, held and eventually charged with inciting Addis Ababa University students to riot. While in jail, Professor Woldemarian received an invitation to address the launch of NEAR from the British Ambassador to Ethiopia. On June 7, after nearly a month in

detention, the two were released.

In Beijing, several Chinese-born scholars with ties to western countries have been arbitrarily detained in recent months for "criminal" activities, including dubious charges of espionage. In July, two scholars who were arrested and held for several months were released. Another, Li Shaomin, had already been deported from China following international governmental and non-governmental pressure.

Meanwhile, Egyptian academic Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim has begun a seven-year jail sentence for allegedly harming the image of Egypt abroad. He and 27 co-defendants had uncovered alleged irregularities in the 1995 parlia-

mentary elections in Egypt.

His family has stated that "No matter whether one agrees or disagrees with Dr. Ibrahim's views, he should be able to voice them." They argue that, although accused of disloyalty, their husband and father is in fact a proud Egyptian who simply sought the right to conduct his research and share its results with his compatriots.

NEAR welcomes questions, information on violations, or inquiries about joining the network. Contact executive director John Akker at +44 20 7379 1666 or at near@jakker.fsnet.co.uk. Or visit NEAR's Web site at: www.nearinternational.org.

Abigail Pugh is a Toronto-based freelance writer and editor.

CJFE staff changes

CJFE is losing some valuable staff members. Office manager **Kristen Downey** left to accept a position with the United Nations mission in Kosovo. IFEX *Communiqué* editor **Anders Hayden** said goodbye to pursue a Ph.D. at Boston College. Long-time financial manager **Patricia Sibley** left to take on other responsibilities elsewhere.

We thank each of them for their work and wish them the best of luck in their respective endeavours.

The organization is also welcoming some new faces. **Rachel Morton-Gittens** joins the IFEX Clearing House as IFEX alerts coordinator. **Geoffrey Chan** will become *Communiqué* editor. **Christina Kruning** comes aboard as the new financial manager.

IFEX annual meeting held in Asia for first time



By Jessica Kosmack

The International Freedom of Expression eXchange held its annual general meeting and outreach workshops in Bangkok, Thailand on June 3 to 8, 2001. The event, co-hosted by South East Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) and the Thai Journalists Association (TJA), was the first annual meeting held in Asia.

IFEX members, other freedom of expression organizations and funders gathered to discuss a variety of press freedom issues. IFEX members also discussed the effectiveness of the international network and ways to improve upon it.

Pre-conference workshops, primarily designed for and by southern groups based in countries in transition, provided opportunities to share experiences and strategies for press freedom work. Fundraising, organizational management, using the Internet as an advocacy tool and member outreach were key issues addressed.

Information access

During the conference, several panels concerned issues of press freedom. The central discussion, "Bringing Down the Walls: Open Information for the New Millennium," focused on access to information and governments' accountability to the

public. Panellists recognized the public's "right to know" and discussed national and international strategies for ensuring open information in government practices.



Scotch Tagwireyi of the Freedom of Expression Institute in South Africa makes a point during the IFEX annual meeting. Nina Ratulele of the Pacific Islands News Association listens.

Additional sessions focused on the ethical challenges facing media in newly democratic states, media ownership concentration and duplication in freedom of expression efforts.

The Bangkok meeting was a learning experience for everyone. Its location helped groups from Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to attend and provide informative accounts of

their press freedom issues. IFEX members issued joint protest letters concerning Nepal and the Southern African region.

In a moving presentation, special guest Tipu Sultan, a 27-

in those regions.

Five new members were accepted into the IFEX community: the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt; the Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies, Nepal; le Centre algérien de défense de la liberté de la presse, Algeria; the Foundation for the Freedom of Press, Colombia; and the Independent Journalism Centre, Moldova.

Next year in Ghana

Concluding the meeting, IFEX members elected TJA president Kavi Chongkittavorn as IFEX convenor for 2001/02, replacing outgoing convenor Hisham Kassem of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. IFEX's annual meeting in 2002 is to be held in Accra, Ghana, and in 2003, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Jessica Kosmack worked as a student intern for CJFE this summer.

year-old correspondent for the independent wire service United News for Bangladesh, described the startling realities facing journalists in South Asia and the importance of IFEX's advocacy work.

Sultan is recovering from reconstructive surgery on his hands and arms and is confined to a wheelchair after government-ordered attacks that he said were intended to leave him crippled for life, if not dead. The journalist spoke of the immense support he has received from local journalists as well as Bangladeshis abroad.

Another invited guest, Amnat Jongyotying, owner and editor of *Phak Nua Raiwan* in Chiang Mai, Thailand, spoke of the assassination attempt against him in April 2000. After nearly losing his life to a gunshot wound in his stomach, and despite extremely dangerous conditions, he continues to work on his newspaper thanks to the help of SEAPA, TJA and others.

Regional networks

The IFEX meeting also featured extensive discussions regarding emerging regional networks. Two of these – the Latin American network IFEX Olé, and a South Asian network hosted by the Free Media Movement in Sri Lanka – will help IFEX grow and disseminate information



IFEX executive director Sharmine Peries presents a gift to Chavarong Limpit of the Thai Journalists Association. Limpit is outgoing IFEX convenor Hisham Kassem of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights.



IFEX alerts coordinator Michael Mwamba of the Democratic Republic of Congo about the danger of the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Bangladeshi journalist Tipu Sultan, who was brutally attacked earlier this year, was a guest speaker at the IFEX annual meeting.

Southeast Asian access to information

a pressing concern

By Petty Bozonelos

A recent study identified the principal barriers that hinder access to information in Southeast Asia as the lack of democratic participation, inquisitive and assertive civil society, plurality of media ownership and transparency of government institutions.

The study compared and contrasted the state of information access in eight countries: Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

It cites media laws that control the dissemination of information, such as draconian laws in Malaysia and Singapore that date back to the colonial era. Malaysia's Official Secrets Act grants authorities far-ranging powers that allow them to classify and restrict access to information.

"In the case of Singapore and Malaysia, the repeal of repressive media laws is needed," said report coordinator Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ). The report was drawn up by the PCIJ in coordination with the South-

east Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA).

Coronel defined access to information as the "ability to get documents and any other information from the state. This means the availability of public records, including the disclosure statements of officials and financial

secrecy. This hampers the work of journalists, since there is no recourse, such as an administrative right to appeal for access to information.

Great disparities exist both between and within countries with respect to media access, infor-

guidelines and procedures for the release of information. In Cambodia, more developed information storage and retrieval systems that make full use of information technology would improve information access as long as there is a commitment from the state."

Substantial improvements can be made through clear laws and procedures, improved information infrastructure and an end to bureaucracies' culture of secrecy, the report states. These steps necessitate active citizens and assertive journalists, it adds.

Coronel says momentum toward greater access to information in the region is growing, in part because "Journalism in most countries is seen as an honest profession. In Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, journalists played a key role in democracy struggles, and have earned prestige and respect from the public for their role in the fight against authoritarianism."

Petty Bozonelos is a journalism student at Ryerson University and a volunteer with CJFE.

Great disparities exist between countries with respect to media access, information dissemination and modern technology.

statements of corporations."

"More economically advanced countries like Singapore and Malaysia do not provide their citizens more access to information compared to poorer countries like Cambodia and the Philippines," Coronel said. "In other words, prosperity doesn't necessarily bring about more access."

In most of the region, the report says, sources of information are rarely made available to the public. If they are revealed, it is exclusively to government researchers, who may be sworn to

mation dissemination and modern technology, according to the study.

Coronel stressed that while many international press freedom organizations are dedicated to establishing greater transparency and access guarantees in the region, their support is not enough.

"International organizations help, but the struggle is within. In Burma, more access will be possible only if the junta is toppled. In other countries, like Indonesia, an access to information law would help provide clear

New Thai broadcast group

protects journalists' rights

By Jane McElhone

When a Thai radio journalist was removed from her program earlier this year, she had no recourse. In a country where all of the radio stations are owned by government agencies, this young journalist has been labelled pro-opposition.

Her case was discussed at a recent board meeting of the new Thai Broadcast Journalists' Association. Held in a shiny, elephant-shaped office tower in Bangkok's busy downtown, the meeting brought together a diverse group of broadcast journalists. Some were well-known television personalities; others were starting out in radio. All are committed to improving broadcast standards across Thailand.

The radio journalist was invited to the meeting to tell her side of the story. Fearing repercussions, she asked the board to meet with her privately. It is difficult to say if anything can be done, but at least she now has a forum to express her views.

The association plans to set up a team of journalists to investigate similar cases around the country.

Chavarong Limpattamane, secretary-general of the Thai Journalists' Association, helped found the new broadcast association last March. "Journalists from print and broadcast media used to work together in one group. Now it's time for broadcasters to get together and

fight for their own rights, to show they are brave enough to work together. We will continue to help out, but only in a supervisory role."

The secretary-general of the new association is a young, dynamic broadcaster. Sophit Wangvivatana, or Nune, works at the Pacific News Center in Bangkok. Moving about the small, busy offices, she seems to know everyone and to be involved in every part of the operation. In radio, she works as assistant manager, editor and announcer. In television, she makes documentaries.

Nune's cell-phone rings constantly as she plans an upcoming training course for radio journalists.

"I took the radio training offered by CJFE last year and learned how to be a trainer," she says. "So now I want to help broadcasters who are getting started in the field. It's volunteer work but I love doing it."

Nune will work with three other women broadcasters trained by CJFE last year. "This is just one of the things we can do now that we have formed a broadcast association. And as well, of course, we will focus on media re-

form. Having a united voice will make us stronger."

The Thai government is currently formulating a new broadcast bill, so creation of this new association is timely. A controversial issue is the transition of ownership of broadcast frequencies. Nune and her fellow board members are travelling around the country to talk to broadcasters about the new bill and create a strong national media reform network.

Two young broadcasters sat in on the board meeting. Both had been fired from their jobs after publicly stating that a company belonging to the Thai Prime Minister tried to interfere with their work. Now they are spearheading the cross-country media reform project.

Nune says the two women were paid for their first three months of work, but now they are being asked to continue as volunteers.

"That is the spirit that has got this new broadcast association off the ground," she says. "We believe if we give our time, it will make a difference."

Jane McElhone is a Montreal-based journalist and trainer.



JANE MCELHONE

ini Peries pre-attamapane
ation for his
meeting. At left
am Kassem of
Human Rights.



JANE MCELHONE

Elbaz and
ournalistes en
ublic of Congo.

Un nouveau centre de liberté de la presse est né en Afrique



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Par Audace Manirakiza

C'est un nouveau-né mais qui suscite déjà plein d'espoirs et d'enthousiasme dans les organisations professionnelles de presse en Afrique. Le Centre pour la Promotion de la Liberté

d'expression et de la Tolérance dans la région des Grands Lacs (CPLTGL) réunit notamment les journalistes du Rwanda, du Burundi et de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC). Créé en septembre 1999, ce cadre sous-régional vise avant tout à canaliser les énergies pour mener à bien le combat.

Ainsi, un système d'alerte contre les restrictions des droits de l'Homme et de la liberté d'expression en particulier sera mis en place. Un réseau de collecte et d'échange d'informations cadrant avec la promotion de la liberté d'expression et l'écllosion des vertus de tolérance sera établi entre les pays membres. Une action commune sera évidemment plus efficace que les révoltes isolées des associations nationales qui n'ont souvent pas d'effets sur la fréquence des exactions commises par les dictatures confortablement installées dans ces pays.

Les initiateurs de ce projet sont conscients qu'une lutte du genre ne peut aboutir que si elle se base sur un travail journalistique professionnel sans reproche. Or, dans la plupart des pays de cette région, le problème de formation technique des journalis-

tes se pose avec acuité. Certains comme le Burundi ne possèdent aucune institution académique de formation des journalistes. Il est bien entendu que la qualité en souffre. Souvent les détracteurs de la liberté de la presse profitent de ces brèches pour réprimer et continuer sans gêne leurs activités anti-démocratiques.

Le CPLTGL a donc placé sur son agenda des défis à relever le renforcement ou la promotion des compétences professionnelles, des capacités d'analyse des journalistes et le niveau technique de leurs organisations de presse. Des séminaires de formation ont déjà commencé à être organisés et bien d'autres activités du genre sont envisagées. Mais l'initiative nécessite beaucoup de soutien pour être pleinement réalisée.

En effet, la région des Grands Lacs est depuis quelques années un espace d'instabilité politique, de tensions sociales et d'indicibles violations des droits de l'homme qui en résultent. Le Burundi, le Rwanda, la RDC, l'Ouganda, le Kenya et la Tanzanie sont à des degrés divers ravagés par des guerres les plus meurtrières de la sous-région.

Des guerres qui emportent des

dizaines de milliers de vies humaines. Les journalistes ne sont pas épargnés, et sont parfois les plus ciblés. Témoins oculaires des horreurs commises par les différents groupes armés, les journalistes deviennent de facto considérés comme des ennemis.

Un organe comme le CPLTGL a donc du pain sur la planche. C'est une initiative sous-régionale formée de professionnels du métier et proche de réalités quotidiennes, capable de suivre de très près la situation de la liberté d'expression dans cette région.

Toute organisation, toute personne soucieuse de promouvoir la liberté d'expression en Afrique et dans le monde devrait trouver en CPLTGL un canal et lui assurer tout le soutien matériel et technique dont il aura besoin dans la réalisation de l'objectif commun. D'autres ensembles plus grands comme l'Organisation des Médias d'Afrique Centrale, continuent à voir le jour avec un seul et même objectif: la promotion d'une presse plus libre et plus indépendante dans ces pays où être journaliste équivaut encore parfois à être en danger.

Audace Manirakiza est journaliste burundais exilé au Canada.

Le code pénal menace la presse algérienne

— suite de la page 1

pour exprimer le peu d'estime qu'il avait pour les journalistes. Lors de la campagne électorale pour la présidentielle au début de l'année 1999, il avait traité les journalistes de "pipelettes". Une fois élu, il a, à plusieurs reprises, accusé les journalistes d'être "à l'origine de tous les maux du pays".

On peut se demander pourquoi un président soucieux de son image irait s'attaquer de front à la liberté de la presse sachant que cela provoquera immédiatement de vives réactions à l'étranger. La réponse est à chercher du côté des projets politiques du président qui a engagé dans une vaste opération de "restructuration" des institutions dans le but d'asseoir et de renforcer son pouvoir. Cette opération exige que soit neutralisée toute opposition sérieuse. Le président a commencé par constituer autour de lui une large coalition qui regroupe autant les islamistes que les démocrates laïcs. Cette coalition commence à se fissurer mais elle permet quand même au chef de l'État de disposer d'une majorité confortable au parlement qui lui permet de faire passer toutes les lois.

Reste alors la presse qui, malgré ses faiblesses, son manque de professionnalisme parfois et

ses partis pris, impose quand même toujours le respect aussi bien en Algérie qu'à l'étranger.

Cette presse, qui commence à aborder des sujets encore tabous il y a peu comme les droits de l'homme, la corruption, le rôle et la place de l'armée, dérange. La révision du code pénal a été conçue pour la neutraliser car il est clair que le "reformatage" du champs politique algérien doit

se faire à huis clos.

Le code pénal est dangereux pour la liberté de la presse aussi bien par ses aspects strictement juridiques que par les implications politiques qu'il ne manquera pas de susciter. Outre les peines de prison et les fortes amendes qu'il prévoit – de 3 mois à 12 mois de prison et d'une amende de 50 000 à 250 000 dinars algériens (environ 1 000 à 4 500

dollars canadiens) pour offenser au président par une expression outrageante, injurieuse ou diffamatoire; de 3 à 5 ans de prison et d'une amende de 50 000 à 100 000 dinars pour offenser le prophète et les envoyés de Dieu ou dénigrer le dogme ou les préceptes de l'Islam – le code pénal reste flou dans la définition de l'offense.

Il donne au juge le droit arbitraire de décider de ce qui peut constituer une offense et ce qui ne le peut pas. La qualification d'une critique très dure ne dépend que de la "sensibilité" du magistrat qui instruit l'affaire puisque la loi reste vague dans la définition de l'offense. L'autre danger est qu'en matière d'offense, la procédure est déclenchée "automatiquement" par le ministère public sans qu'il y ait de partie plaignante.

En outre, les fortes amendes prévues en cas d'offense sont de nature à déstabiliser sérieusement la viabilité des entreprises de presse. Le code pénal réussira-t-il là où dix années de harcèlements judiciaires, de pressions économiques, de censure et d'assassinats ont échoué ?

Khaled Mahrez est directeur du Centre algérien de défense de la liberté de la presse.



Lors d'une manifestation en mai à la place de la liberté de la presse à Alger, un journaliste algérien proteste contre le durcissement des lois sur la presse.



Sierra Leonians stand under a sign in front of CJFE's media rebuilding project office in Freetown.

Sierra Leone journal: Evolution of a media rebuilding project

— continued from page 1

goes back in large part to the efforts of Mohammed Bangura and Lansana Gberie, two Sierra Leonean journalists who have lived in Toronto for a few years. Turning that interest into a project was a long process of consultation and negotiation.

The first week is an endless round of meetings with journalists, organizations, officials and other NGOs, and visits to newspaper offices. We expected to find the papers in bad shape, but it's much worse than we envisioned.

They work out of cramped, airless spaces, often without electricity. We see reporters writing their stories by hand. We see the only printing press that is working. It looks like it hasn't been serviced in months. We're told people sleep on the floor of the press room waiting their turn to print. Sometimes the papers come out a day or more late.

Our progress will be limited until we hire a local coordinator. We're pleasantly surprised that one of the people we called on for help and advice prior to the trip is one of the applicants. There's no question once the interview is over: Foday Fofanah is the person we need. He's a newspaper journalist who's been in Sierra Leone through the worst of it. He's also worked in other West

African countries and strings for international publications.

Although we have a coordinator to go with our pens and posters, that still does not a project make. We must establish CJFE as an international NGO. That involves a government registration process, renting a building and establishing a bank account. That also involves wading through endless bureaucracy and paperwork.

APRIL

We leave Freetown in early April. We both have long to-do lists for the next two months. We've rented a building that needs work.

Back in Toronto I have to sew up a deal with a supplier of used press equipment and arrange to have it shipped to Freetown. At the beginning of May, I watch a printing press and other equipment being loaded into a 20-foot container. The next time I see that container, it will be under the blazing sun at the port in Freetown. It's expected to arrive around June 6. I arrange my return trip to coincide with that.

With the container on its way, we turn our attention to the next few months and the training part of the project. We're convinced that traditional workshop-based training is not the best use of

our money. We think that because of the rough conditions under which journalists in Freetown work, the most lasting impact will come through trainers working with people on the job. The trainers will need to be resilient, energetic people who are strong editorially, and ideally have skills in many phases of producing small newspapers.

Through the Canadian Community Newspaper Association, I receive an e-mail from Roger Holmes, publisher of the *Wainwright Star Chronicle* in Alberta. He has everything that we need, and more. He grew up in the business and never left it. He'll work as a coach and trainer at one of the newspapers for two weeks. Added to the bargain, he knows the nuts and bolts of all the equipment we've shipped.

JUNE

On June 1, while making lists for my departure four days later, I give Fofanah a quick call. He's in a slight panic: the container has arrived early and he has to kick-start what will turn out to be a book full of paperwork to clear the container out of the port. It's too late to change my departure. I feel helpless sitting in Toronto.

I finally arrive in Freetown. There's no time to drop my bags. We race to a government office to get yet another letter that'll be needed at the port. Another two full days of port negotiations follow, along with arranging for transport from the port and a forklift to unload it at our site. Finally, the container is inspected by various officials. After that,

more signatures must be collected.

Ten days later, the press equipment and office is almost set up. We meet with a local project advisory committee. We consult with the papers and select the one Roger Holmes will go to. We hire an office assistant and a press technician.

We battle with the electrical utility company to finish the upgrade work that should have been finished two weeks ago. We buy a diesel generator (the local power is intermittent and rationed). And, as the man we hire as an occasional driver observes, the money is flowing like water. It's the "UN/NGO" economy. Fine for big organizations with deep pockets. Our organization and budget don't fit into that category.

Holmes arrives a day late, thanks to Ghana Airways. He rolls up his sleeves the minute he gets to the CJFE office and starts looking over the equipment. I know I have nothing to worry about. We made a good choice.

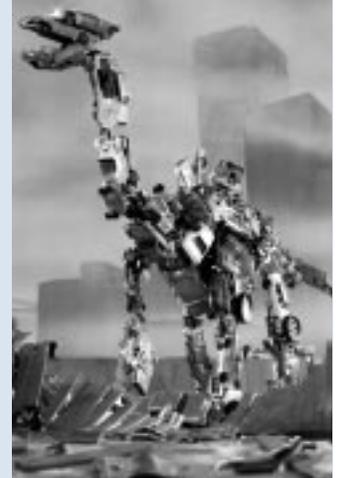
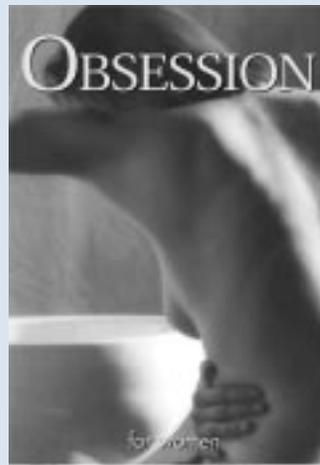
JULY

Fofanah is working out the details of supplies we need in order to start printing. We're aiming for the end of August. Fofanah, Fillmore and I are establishing the process by which papers will be invited to print on our press. We're developing plans for the next round of on-the-job newspaper training, as well as training in radio and for women. Most of the pens have been given away. The posters are stuck to the walls of our office. We have a lot more than the pens and posters we arrived with in March.

Sierra Leone's newspapers are much worse than we envisioned. Journalists work out of cramped, airless spaces, often without electricity. We see reporters writing their stories by hand.



Adbusters runs anti-consumer campaigns (left) and uncommercials. Subvertisements like its Autosaurus television ad (far right) have trouble getting on the air. Images courtesy www.adbusters.org



Media access: Next step in the fight for free expression?

By Anders Hayden

In a liberal democratic society, the media disseminate diverse viewpoints, foster open debate and help citizens make informed choices in a “free market in ideas.” Kalle Lasn, editor of the Vancouver-based magazine *Adbusters*, fervently believes in this vision. “It just doesn’t reflect current reality,” he says.

Want to sell a sport utility vehicle (SUV)? You’re free to make outrageous claims on the public airwaves, like stating that nature will applaud when your three-tonne smog-maker passes by.

Want to buy air time to say that SUVs are contributing to environmental destruction? Sorry, that’s advocacy – about as welcome on North American TV as statues of the Buddha in the Taliban’s Afghanistan.

Adbusters has produced several “uncommercials” to challenge the consumerist propaganda it says prevails on television. These “subvertisements” promote TV Turn-Off Week, and deal with issues such as the fashion industry’s promotion of unhealthy body images and whether “economic progress” is killing the planet.

For nine years *Adbusters* has tried to run spots on U.S. networks, but has encountered “absolute stonewalling” from ABC, CBS and NBC, says Lasn. It has had no better luck in Australia or the United Kingdom. In France, a “Buy Nothing Day” spot was refused air time, but did ironically

appear in a news segment about its rejection.

The only networks to grant access so far, in addition to public access and community stations, are CNN and the CBC. But obtaining access to Canada’s public network was a major struggle.

In 1995, *Adbusters* launched legal action against the CBC for refusing to run its *Autosaurus* ad (“Imagine a world with less cars”)

CBC Newsworld. Lasn agrees that advocacy ads don’t belong on news and current affairs programs, but points out that Newsworld has many non-news shows, like *Fashion File*.

Lasn says “it’s unconscionable in a democratic society” that BMW and Calvin Klein can promote their agendas on a public broadcaster like Newsworld, but groups like Greenpeace and *Adbusters* can-

Combatting the excesses of consumer culture is arguably a key challenge of our times. But it seems to cut too close to home for most media outlets dependent on commercial ad revenues. At first, TV stations generally say they reject *Adbusters*’ “uncommercials” because they violate some regulation, says Lasn. When pushed, however, some admit off the record, “Why should we take your lousy \$10,000 and risk losing our million-dollar sponsors?”

One way around this would simply be to oblige broadcasters to accept citizen-produced advocacy ads. *Adbusters* has launched a cyber-petition to get the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to require two minutes per hour to be made available for “advocacy messages that could come from anyone, on any topic.”

The “Two-Minute Media Revolution” could dramatically change the experience of watching television. “The airwaves would suddenly be politicized,” says Lasn. “Competing visions of the future would battle it out every night on prime time. It would energize our democracy.”

Adbusters’ next steps include court challenges in the U.S. under First Amendment free speech protections, and possibly taking a case to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. These efforts are part of *Adbusters*’ broader Media Carta campaign to enshrine “the right of meaningful access to the power to communicate” in the constitutions of free nations and an expanded Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Campaign concerns also include media concentration and the blurring of free speech and commercial speech.

“Media Carta is the great human rights battle of the information age,” says Lasn. “Control over the public discourse and our imaginations is the meta-issue above all others.”

Anders Hayden, former editor of the *International Freedom of Expression eXchange Communiqué*, is the author of *Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet: Work Time, Consumption, and Ecology*.



What was that bump?

on the program called *Driver’s Seat*. The case wound its way through the courts until 1998, when the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear it as a freedom of speech issue.

The CBC has since introduced new advertising standards and now accepts advocacy advertising, with certain restrictions. Nevertheless, when *Adbusters* tested the new policy, it found that social marketing was forbidden on

not. It’s even more unfair, he maintains, since advertisers are not just selling a product, but are also affecting public policy.

“What does it do to Canada’s transportation agenda when \$1 billion a year is spent on car ads?” asks Lasn, lamenting the lack of serious debate on alternatives to auto-centric transport. Generally, he believes product ads of all kinds are “a never-ending ‘issue’ ad for consumer culture.”

First Media Democracy Day planned for Oct. 19



Adbusters symbolizes its ‘Media Carta’ campaign.

An international day highlighting the media’s role in society will debut on Friday October 19. “In our era of rapid concentration and commercialization of the mass media, one major convergence remains: interest groups for media democracy,” its Web site proclaims.

Modeled on Earth Day, Media Democracy Day intends to protest against media concentration and cutbacks to public and not-for-profit media, promote alternatives to mainstream media, and put media reform on the political agenda.

In Vancouver, afternoon work-

shops at the main public library will be followed by a media fair and public forum at 6:30 p.m. with *rabble.ca* publisher Judy Rebick. Sponsors include media unions, Simon Fraser University’s communications school and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

A Toronto group is planning activities encompassing protest, education and change. It supports *Adbusters*’ Media Carta campaign and the national Campaign for Press and Broadcast Freedom.

For more information, visit: www.MediaDemocracyDay.org