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MEDIA

conflict prevention and reconstruction



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Editor: Barry James

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MEDIA

**conflict prevention
and reconstruction**

PART 4 – BUILDING CAPACITY AND JOURNALISTIC CULTURE	63
Chapter 10: In Cenral Asia and Southern Caucasus: Journalists Unite in Face of Media Repression <i>Azer Hasret, Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network</i>	65
Chapter 11: Building up the Media in Indonesia and East Timor: the Challenges of Freedom in Southeast Asia <i>Kavi Chongkittavorn, Chairperson, Southeast Asian Press Alliance</i>	69
Chapter 12: Catastrophe for Media in Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rapid Response aid to West African Media <i>Edetan Ojo, West Africa Media Foundation</i>	71
Chapter 13: Why Donors Need to Coordinate: Media Development Programmes Lack Vision <i>Lena Johansson, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</i>	73
PART 5 – A TOUGH ENVIRONMENT FOR INDEPENDENT MEDIA	75
Chapter 14: The Barons are Back in Charge: Media Power Grab in the Balkans <i>Nebojsa Spaic, Belgrade Media Centre</i>	77
Chapter 15: Quantity Rather than Quality, a Balkan Dillema: Too Many Media Chase Tiny Albanian Audience <i>Remzi Lani, Director, Albanian Media Institute</i>	79
Chapter 16: New Communications and Media Commission: A Parting Gift or Poisoned Chalice in Iraq? <i>Rohan Jayasekera, Index on Censorship</i>	83
PART 6 – THREE EPISODES ON THE FRONT LINE	87
Chapter 17: In Sarajevo, a Newspaper that Struggles against the Odds: Requiem for a Newspaper that Refuses to Die <i>Gojko Beric, Columnist, Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo</i>	89
Chapter 18: Finding a Market in Sierre Leone: Newspaper Struggles on a Road Full of Obstacles <i>Kajsa Tornroth, World Association of Newspapers</i>	95
Chapter 19: Newspaper’s Answer to State Pressure: Keeping Lean, Mean and Close to Readers <i>Gwen Lister, Editor, The Namibian</i>	97
APPENDICES	105
Belgrade Declaration	105
Selected Speeches:	108
Elisabeth Rehn, Chairperson of Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe	108
Abdul Waheed Khan Assistant Director General for Communication and Information of UNESCO	110
Oliver Clarke, President of the Jury, UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize	112
Miguel Sanchez, upon Receiving the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize on Behalf of Raul Rivera	113



Preface

Abdul Waheed Khan
Assistant Director General for
Communication and Information,
UNESCO

In a policy supported by the General Assembly, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has pledged to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to one of prevention. Time and again, he has said, differences are allowed to develop into disputes and disputes allowed to develop into deadly conflicts, resulting in poverty, human suffering and environmental degradation wherever they occur. Heeding the warning signs and preventing conflicts that have erupted since the early 1990s could have saved millions of lives and countless billions of dollars.

Effective and democratic media are an essential part of any culture of prevention, as well as being indispensable in societies in transition towards peace and democracy. At any stage of a conflict, lack of information can make people restless, desperate, and easy to manipulate.

Access to information fosters economic growth as well as democracy. Societies are strengthened by the ability to make informed decisions about their future and their welfare. This is why the United Nations Millennium Declaration stresses the need “To ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.”

As the lead specialised agency for communication, UNESCO has an important mission to perform in the anti-poverty commitment of the UN family, and is increasingly focused on the question of encouraging independent media as major contributing agents to peace and prosperity.

This is why World Press Freedom Day in 2004 was dedicated to the theme “Support to media in violent conflict and countries in transition.” This book explores various responses to this theme, which were presented at the UNESCO-sponsored conference in Belgrade marking Press Freedom Day. They give a broad overview of the dangers and challenges faced by the independent news media, as well as the attempts to build up the capacity of the various sources of news and information to enable them to fulfil their potential contribution to peaceful and stable societies.



The Crucial Role of Free and Independent Media

Message by In observing World Press Freedom Day, we draw attention to the crucial role that free, independent and pluralistic media play in the democratic process.

Koïchiro Matsuura,

Director-General of UNESCO,

on the occasion of

World Press Freedom Day,

3 May 2004

Recognising the fundamental right of press freedom, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential for transparency and the rule of law. This principle are equally important in rich and poor countries alike, in times of peace and in times of war.

The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day is the media in conflict and post-conflict zones and in countries in transition. In such situations, the media's work to provide independent and trustworthy information can contribute significantly to processes of reconstruction and reconciliation. In times of upheaval, disorder and uncertainty, people's need for reliable information is especially great – their ability to access provisions, and sometimes their personal safety and very survival, may depend on it. However, they tend to regard much of the information available to them through the media as propaganda. For these reasons, independent and pluralistic media are particularly important in times of war and they remain at least as crucial in the post-conflict phase.

This year's chosen theme is tragically fitting in view of the fatalities and injuries suffered by media professionals reporting on armed conflicts. Sadly, each year a number of journalists lose their lives in the course of pursuing their profession. It is the duty of authorities everywhere to respect the media's right to work in conditions of reasonable safety.

All too often, wars are self-perpetuating: conflicts generate more conflict and inevitably bring death, impoverishment and destruction in their wake. Independent and pluralistic media can make a significant contribution to breaking this vicious circle by enabling dialogue to replace armed conflict. Even when it is heated, dialogue is crucial for laying the ground for reconciliation and reconstruction. The media can provide a vital space in which different views are aired and information from different sources is openly available for public scrutiny.

Furthermore, the correlation between press freedom and economic development has been demonstrated. This relation must be born in mind as the international community seeks to achieve the ambitious agenda of goals and targets promulgated in the Millennium Declaration. A free press is not a luxury that can wait until better times; rather, it is part of the very process through which those better times are achieved. Media freedom is important for building inclusive societies, securing respect for human rights, empowering civil society and promoting development.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Independence does not hinge only on the capacity of private individuals to operate media outlets; it also requires a commitment to professional standards of reporting. The training of journalists is essential in post-conflict situations, which tend to affect countries with limited experience of press freedom. Such training not only can assist the new independent media but also may help to transform state-owned media into valuable public service media.

As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day, we must reflect on ways to prevail upon governments and authorities everywhere to respect the media's vital contribution to building sustainable peace, democracy and development. We must do all in our power to provide journalists with as much safety as possible in the exercise of their profession. On World Press Freedom Day, let us celebrate the importance of media freedom for all societies, but especially for those whose journey towards recovery, stability and peace is ongoing and beset by uncertainty.

Above all, let us applaud the brave men and women who bring us the news in defiance of the risks and dangers. Their freedom to do their work is inextricably linked to the wider enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

Introduction

A Free Press is Not a Luxury

Barry James
is a Paris-based journalist
who has worked for several
major newspapers and
international wire services,
including
the Buenos Aires Herald,
the New York Herald Tribune,
The Times of London,
United Press International,
the International Herald Tribune
and Agence France-press.
He is a graduate of
the Open University in the
United Kingdom and has taught

Lack of freedom of expression and political participation is a significant cause of conflict in the world. Experience shows that pluralistic and independent media, by providing a non-violent forum for debate, not only contribute to peaceful and democratic societies but are an essential factor in achieving durable economic development.

On the other hand, when they are misused to amplify rumours, pump out propaganda and incite to hatred, they can have an extraordinary ability to stir up tension and create conflict.

The articles in this book, adapted from interventions at the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day in Belgrade in May, 2004, examine the question of violent conflict and the news media, and their role in re-establishing peace and democracy in countries that are in transition to stability or democracy.

In a conflict, truth is always the first casualty, and the news media invariably are drawn in to act as cheerleaders for the warring parties, while in a post-conflict situation, the winning side is so likely to be convinced of the justice of its cause that it is not prepared to allow opposing views.

Yet, as several of the authors in this report point out, accurate and untainted news from a variety of sources is as important in a conflict or post-conflict society as the provision of material assistance. Indeed, in the 1990s, a large number of societies recognised this by introducing freedom of information laws.

Regrettably, that door has slammed shut, and transparency and freedom of expression are widely under attack and on the retreat. For this, partly blame the so-called war against terrorism, which governments interpret broadly to limit access to all kinds of information not remotely connected with national security – even if it can be argued that a free press helps remove the poverty, biased information and lack of public debate on which terrorism feeds.

The latest Freedom House report on press freedom shows that the number of people living in countries with an untrammelled media has declined by five percent over the past two years – and some of this deterioration is taking place in democracies where a free press is a necessary component of vibrant democratic life.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

According to the executive director of Freedom House, Jennifer Windsor, “Fewer and fewer people throughout the world have uncensored and unfettered access to information about their own countries.” A similar survey by Reporters sans Frontières a couple of years ago came up with the similar conclusion that “freedom is under threat everywhere.”

This does not apply only to developing countries, where media with meager resources struggle to keep governments from suppressing the kind of information that people in the West take for granted. In the industrialised countries, the media are preoccupied with their role as profitable businesses and their need to attract a mass audience, and this too has had a negative effect. Reporters sans Frontières said that in the post 9/11 atmosphere, the United States ranks below Costa Rica as a protector of press freedom; and that Italy, because of the massive control of the media by a single politician, scores lower than Benin.

While reporters in some countries have paid the ultimate price for revealing the truth, a small number of journalists in the United States have betrayed the profession, and even the venerable New York Times was obliged to apologise for its rather uncritical reporting of the stated causes for going to war in Iraq. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a poll by the First Amendment Centre and the American Journalism Review found that the US public takes a jaundiced view of the media, with more than sixty percent believing that stories are simply invented.

People see the media as too powerful on the one hand and not trustworthy on the other, and how to restore the public’s confidence has become an urgent priority. On the other hand, expecting reporters to be perfect would be illusory. As Samuel Johnson said, “The journalist will frequently deceive because he will frequently be deceived himself. All that he can do is to consider attentively, and determine impartially, to admit no falsehoods by design, and to retract those which he shall have adopted by mistake.”

For the record, the top-ranking countries, according to Reporters sans Frontières, are Finland, Iceland, Norway and the the Netherlands closely followed by Canada, all of which scrupulously care not only for press freedom in their own societies but also fight for it elsewhere.

One of the biggest obstacles to freedom of expression is the appalling climate of threat and fear that surrounds journalists, threatened as they are by a heterogeneous assortment of armed groups, mafias, jihadists, paranoid rulers, sham democrats, military dictators and political dinosaurs clinging on to power. Journalists are more than ever in the front line of the battle for democracy and transparency, and increasing numbers are paying for it with their lives. During the past decade, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, almost 350 reporters have been killed while carrying out their work. Paul Klebnikov, the editor-in-chief of Forbes Russia magazine, who had written about the connections of politics, business and crime in Russia, who was murdered in Moscow recently, was one of the many who have been slain merely for carrying out their duties professionally.

Like him, more than more than three-quarters of the journalists killed for doing their jobs were slain, not accidentally in cross-fire, but “hunted down and murdered, often in direct reprisal for their reporting,” says the Committee to Protect Journalists. The four most dangerous countries for journalists are Algeria, Russia, Colombia and Iraq.

Attacks on journalists are seldom investigated and even more rarely punished. The committee found only 26 cases in which the person or persons who ordered or carried out a journalist’s killing have been arrested and prosecuted. The Inter-American Press Association said authorities have ordered investigations into only 15 of the 51 cases in journalists have been killed in Colombia in the past 10 years. Such impunity is one of the single greatest threats to the physical survival of a free press where it is most needed.

Another serious threat to freedom of expression in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, are laws that make it a criminal offence to “insult” a public official, thus preventing any criticism of megalomaniac and corrupt rulers, and making it impossible for journalists to carry out the task of holding up the government to criticism, which is an essential part of democracy.

Even countries that like to call themselves democracies have brought in laws that prohibit reporting on a whole array of subjects ranging from the operations of government to the private lives of leaders.

I N T R O D U C T I O N: A Free Press is Not a Luxury

As the British jurist Lord Denning said, “There is one great lesson to be learnt from the nineteenth century. It is the freedom of the press: and in particular its freedom to criticise the government of the day. In those times any criticism of the king or his ministers was considered to be seditious libel.”

That lesson still has to be learned in many countries today.

Even in the United States, with its Bill of Rights and First Amendment, it was not until comparatively recently that the Supreme Court adopted the view advocated in 1776 by Jeremy Bentham, that a free government must permit “malcontents” to “communicate their sentiments, concert their plans, and practice every mode of opposition short of actual revolt, before the executive power can be legally justified in disturbing them.” Whether such liberty of expression survives the future versions of the post 9/11 Patriot Act remains to be seen.

Indeed, it should be remembered that free speech consists of at least listening to the views of your enemies as well as your friends. As Mike Godwin of the Electronic Frontier Foundation said, the First Amendment “was designed to protect offensive speech, because nobody ever tries to ban the other kind.”

Even when attacks on the free media are not direct, there are many more subtle, and sometimes well-meaning ways of censoring the free flow of information. “Peace journalism” or “development journalism,” for example, may be worthy in themselves, but such efforts to impose an outside vision on the facts run the risk of detracting from objectivity. Good journalism is strong enough to stand on its own.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is succinct and clear: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to see, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” There is not the slightest excuse or apology in this lapidary statement of hy-phenated journalism or censorship of any kind.

A free press is not comfortable for rulers and governments, nor should it be. In an interview with the

World Association of Newspapers, Brazilian president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva said freedom of information “is indispensable for the defence of public interests and for the strengthening and consolidation of democracy.” Transparency of information, he said, assists in the struggle against corruption “but also in the construction of an entirely new way of governing, with greater efficiency, ethics and public responsibility.”

Governments that ignore the need for press freedom are actually doing themselves a great disservice. As Alvin Toffler said, “like adequate education, freedom of expression is no longer a political nicety, but a precondition for economic competitiveness.”

James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank Group, says the media plays an essential part in advancing economic progress, fighting corruption, addressing the imbalance between rich and poor and ultimately reducing world-wide poverty. The whole point of freedom of expression, according to US Justice William Douglas, is not to provide comfort to governments and elites but “to invite dispute. It may indeed best serve its high purpose when it invites a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger.”

One can only speculate, for example, whether certain countries – including, notably China – would now be grappling with such a serious epidemic of HIV/AIDS if they had had a press at liberty to bring the problem to the public’s attention at an early stage. Or whether the Arab world would not have a higher standard of democracy and economic development if it more readily accepted the free flow of information. In fact, according to the UN Development Program, five times more books are translated into Greek, spoken by 11 million people, than into Arabic, spoken by more than 280 million.

A World Bank report, *The right to tell - the role of the mass media in economic development*, counters the idea that press freedom is a luxury that can be postponed until a economic development has been achieved.

“A free press is not a luxury,” Wolfensohn says in the introduction to the report. “It is at the core of equitable development. The media can expose corruption. They can keep a check on public policy by throwing a spotlight on government action. They let people voice diverse

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

opinions on governance and reform, and help build public consensus to bring about change. Such media help markets work better – from small-scale vegetable trading in Indonesia to global foreign currency and capital markets in London and New York. They can facilitate trade, transmitting ideas and innovation across boundaries.”

The economic benefits of a free and pluralistic media are explicitly recognised at the highest international level, even if many of the countries that have signed up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights never dream of putting Article 19 into practical effect.

“Helping all of the world’s people to communicate is an integral part of the Millennium Development Goals, agreed upon by heads of state and government at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000,” UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said. “Free and informative media are also the cornerstone of the information society and essential to helping all all of the world’s people to communicate.”

Yet isn’t there a contradiction between this affirmation and the decision to hold the next session of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia, a country that permits only sycophantic media, censors independent newspapers and web sites, and throws dissenting journalists in jail? The country comes 127 out of 149 on the Freedom House press freedom list

and 128 out of 179 on the Reporters sans Frontières list, and the world’s leading press freedom organisations have appealed in a letter to the secretary-general for a change of venue unless the government makes a genuine commitment to Article 19.

In *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel describe the news business as a form of modern cartography that “creates a map for citizens to navigate society. That is its utility and its economic reason for being.” In any society, access to independent and multiple sources of information provides a reality check. Barry James is a Paris-based journalist who has worked for several major newspapers and international wire services, including the Buenos Aires Herald, the New York Herald Tribune, The Times of London, United Press International, the International Herald Tribune and Agence France-press. He is a graduate of the Open University in the United Kingdom and has taught journalism. Without freely available and objective information, lies and rumours flourish like mushrooms in the darkness. Propaganda or frivolity are set loose to create an unreal image of the world. Even in societies satiated with information, there is a desperate need to distinguish sense from nonsense, the important from the trivial and the truth from the mendacious.

The media fulfil their mission not only when they achieve commercial success but when they contribute to a vibrant – and tolerant – civil society that invites dispute rather than quashing dissent. The function of the media is to inform, not conform – to create, in the words of Adlai Stevenson, “a society where it is safe to be unpopular.”



Introduction to Part 1

In Conflicts, What Kind of Journalism?

Before, during and after a conflict, the news media have enormous potential for good or evil. They can be used to stir up hatred (Rwanda was an extreme example of this), but they also provide the news and information that a democracy needs in order to work.

So should it be a journalist's mission to promote peace, democracy and development? Ronald Koven of the World Press Freedom Committee argues against burdening the media with responsibilities above and beyond their primary task of informing. Freedom of the press, he says, means freedom for the media to set their own agenda. They best perform their task when they are left at liberty to air the debates, tensions and contradictions in society.

Andrew Pudephatt of Article 19 agrees that journalists should stick to their role of informing impartially, since identifying themselves too closely with any one side, even the victims, can put them at risk. Their task is not to take sides, but to explain. A healthy media environment is plural and diverse and able to carry the widest range of views, information and opinion that exists in society. Therefore a law guaranteeing freedom of expression is the essential starting point of any strategy to achieve structural stability.

But after a conflict, in a society that lacks basic institutions, simply liberalising the media environment is unlikely to prove sufficient, and a profusion of media with the absence of an overall national voice can exacerbate divisions. In such circumstances, Pudephatt says, it may be necessary to turn the existing state broadcaster into a genuine public service that provides balanced and authoritative news coverage aimed at everyone in the society.

Whether or not journalists have a specific mission in promoting peace, Ylva Blondel of Uppsala University argues that local media are critical in promoting reconciliation and long-term sustainable conflict management.

The spectacular role that have sometimes played in escalating conflicts, she says, also demonstrates their enormous potential for more constructive and peaceful purposes.

An Antidote to Hate Speech:

Journalism, Pure and Simple

CHAPTER 1 The practice of journalism needs no justification. As a service to society, journalism is its own justification. It doesn't need to dress itself up with adjectives.

*By Ronald Koven,
European Representative,
World Press Freedom Committee*

One of the first lessons in journalism is that normative or judgmental adjectives should be avoided, that the facts should be allowed to describe reality without embellishment. One would think that the same principle would apply to attempts to create new forms of adjectival journalism – “peace journalism,” “development journalism,” “civic journalism,” etc.

What's wrong with just plain journalism, pure and simple?

During the contentious debate over the New World Information and Communication Order that nearly destroyed UNESCO, we were told that we should be practising “development journalism.” That turned out to be a way of describing journalism supportive and uncritical of Third World governments. It was a perfect illustration of how fine-sounding phrases could be used as code words for more or less sophisticated forms of censorship.

We have recently had a similar debate in America over something called “civic journalism.” It was based on the premise that publics are disaffected with the press because it concentrates on bad news and is thus seen to be too negative. That may in practice simply be another way of saying that news media are doing their job as critics of local and national governments. In the democratic context of US society, the intent of the new “civic journalism” approach was undoubtedly well-meaning and the practical effect perhaps negligible on the watchdog function of the press. But the major quality press outlets in mainstream American journalism rejected the idea.

Despite the reservations at home, “civic journalism” was presented in the mid-1990s at a major conference in Prague sponsored by the US Information Agency. After the first presentation of this supposedly innovative approach, an experienced Romanian journalist friend sitting behind me, leaned over and asked, “Who are these people? Are they Communists?” No, they weren't Communists, but they hadn't bothered to ask themselves how the message that the press should work more at promoting the goals and projects of local and national governments might be perceived by journalists from ex-Communist countries.

The problem for those journalists was distancing themselves from the sources of power from which they had just been freed – not learning how to share goals with the authorities. So, when I hear talk of “peace journalism” or the “conflict resolution” and “conflict management” roles of the press, I can't help but think that that was exactly how Soviet bloc press controllers liked to describe their way of restricting the press.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

They issued numerous legal and treaty proposals to drum the so-called “war-mongers” out of the press corps internationally. The phrase “peace journalism” would certainly have been eagerly accepted as a code word to cover the Soviet campaign for international censorship.

When we start positing that the press has roles or obligations in promoting social cohesion, social solidarity, reducing poverty and so forth, where does it stop? Should we require journalists to get degrees in social work?

Society needs news and information if democracy is to work properly. Society needs public spaces for analysis, discussion and debate of the issues of the day. Society needs practical information like the news of weather, markets and public services. Society also needs the opportunities for distraction provided even by the serious news media. Such traditional functions of the press are more than enough to occupy journalists usefully, without adding in the obligation to pursue good causes that are in fact the realm of politicians, ministers of religion and morality and others for whom advocacy is a way of life – those who want to be able to use the news media as tools.

The media must be free to decide for themselves what roles they choose to play. Some outlets may legitimately decide to embrace and advance good causes. Many do so in practice. But that must be of their own volition – not as an assignment of roles by extra-journalistic forces. Obliging the media to work for particular goals is an usurpation of their free choice – that is to say, a negation of freedom of the press.

It should be unnecessary to say such banal, self-evident things, but well-meaning efforts to assign positive roles to the media are replete with ideas for forcing the media to do various things not of their own choosing. There is nothing new or unusual in that. It is a constant temptation of those who struggle for causes that they are genuinely persuaded are for the good of humanity.

Thus, in the world of humanitarian non-government organisations, there is a standing resentment against the press because it does not automatically offer up its space and time to further such NGO goals as human rights, good health, and social harmony. And when the press turns an analytical or critical spotlight on those who do pursue such goals, then the temptation in the NGO world to cry “treason!” is often not resisted.

When it comes to war or conflict, few even try to resist the temptation to throw a monolithic entity known as “The Media” all into the same sack – calling for controls and censorship over a generalised category labelled as “hate media.”

Few bother to make the necessary distinctions between independent media properly so-called and the propaganda organs of parties to conflicts. One who has generally made that distinction is Mark Thompson in his now classic study of Yugoslavia, *Forging War*. Of course, truly independent media have occasional lapses. But systematic, sustained campaigns calling for ethnic or racial discrimination or violence are the work of propaganda organs controlled openly or covertly by political forces.

When you keep that distinction firmly in mind, you do not risk confusing news media and their alleged effects with those of political decision-makers who use pro-propaganda outlets to further their policies. Nobody ever thought to allege that the Holocaust happened in World War II because of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels or Julius Rosenberg and his hate sheet *Der Stuermer*. We know very well that they were nothing but political instruments of Hitler and Himmler. So, why do we not apply the analogy today? Why do we persist in trying to blame the press for what happens? Could it be that there are conscious or unconscious press-haters amongst us?

In this field, as in so many others, the Anglo-Saxon legal dictum that “hard cases make bad law” also applies. We are constantly reminded of the precisely targeted calls for massacres by Radio des Mille Collines in Rwanda. We now know that RMC was in fact a weapon of war wielded by the Hutu president against the Tutsis. The fact that it was a private station employing professional journalists does not change that.

To want to make general international press law on the basis of that uniquely horrifying example is beyond comprehension. Obviously, the very specific calls for massacres broadcast over RMC are crimes against humanity and should be prosecuted as such. It is not because some of the perpetrators happened to be journalists that they should be prosecuted in their quality as journalists. They should be prosecuted as criminals. No special laws on journalism are needed for that.

There have been well-intentioned assertions of the need to act against “vigilante journalism.” The leading

CHAPTER 1: An Antidote to Hate Speech: Journalism, Pure and Simple

example that is usually given of such journalism is generally what happened in Kosovo after the Serbian authorities were dislodged from the province. The first instance involved the accusation by the Kosovar newspaper Bota Sot that the new international regime was employing Serbs guilty of exactions against the Albanian population. The paper singled out a chauffeur hired by the new international authorities. Two weeks later he was killed. The international regime accused the newspaper of having fingered the dead man and of being responsible for his death.

I know the argument that printing the man's picture and address was tantamount to calling for his assassination. But that was an accusation well after the fact. When the allegations about the chauffeur's war record were published, the new authorities did nothing – neither to protect the man in question nor to investigate the charges that had been made against him. They obviously did not perceive a danger, nor that the allegations might be serious. The international regime was unable or unwilling to assume its responsibilities, and it preferred to accuse a newspaper of irresponsibility.

Yet, I find it hard to accept the notion that it was not newsworthy that a new international regime designed to correct the excesses of the past might be hiring persons involved in those very exactions. Should the newspaper have ignored its information?

Well-meaning, would be press controllers tell us that news outlets that air grievances are “hate media” that should be squelched. We have international press regimes still sitting on psychologically battered societies telling them that the press must not discuss horrors of the past. In Bosnia, editors of major press outlets still feel they are being subjected to international censorship.

A certain amount of tolerance for excess may indeed be healthy. Take what happened in Romania, where after the Ceaucescu regime, secret police funds were used to start up a weekly hate sheet called Romania Mare – Great Romania. It vented hatred against the country's Hungarian, German, Jewish and Roma minorities. It had a circulation of 500,000, the largest in the country. But soon the novelty and shock values wore off, and its circulation dropped to 50,000. It is the same principle that applied to the freeing of pornographic publications in Denmark and in Spain.

They started out with huge circulations and eventually fell back to relatively modest ones. Despite being a cliché, the attractiveness of forbidden fruit is no less a reality.

If we call for “peace journalism,” what principle would forbid “war journalism?” When journalists are left free to report and to air the debates, tensions and contradictions that swirl through any free society, that is when they make their best contribution to social health. Hatreds and frustrations must not be allowed to fester in the dark. Venting them in the open is the best strategy for getting rid of them. That is what plain, simple journalism allows – unlike adjectival journalism, prescribed by quack doctors.

In the Aftermath of Conflict:

Turning Public Broadcasters into a Genuine Public Service

CHAPTER 2 Every time we pick up a newspaper or watch a TV bulletin, one of the most intractable problems of the modern world faces us: the persistence of long term internal conflict.

Andrew Puddephatt,
executive director,
ARTICLE 19 This 21st century challenge is produced by a wide range of forces: global pressures, the ruthless exploitation of easily extracted resources, weak or collapsing states, poverty, ethnic rivalry and the legacy of imperial and cold war politics.

While some conflict ridden states are established democracies, many are characterised by an absence of deep-rooted democracy, a shortage of effective governing institutions, few signs of a healthy and vibrant civil society, and no balanced and independent print or broadcast outlets.

The single most immediate way of ending any violent conflict is to provide security and the rule of law – in the very broadest sense of the word – to ensure enough stability to convince people their lives are no longer at risk of arbitrary violence.

Fear drives violence and overcoming the fear that drives people to violence must be the prime objective of any international intervention. The creation of stable institutions is critical. This means tackling the causes of the conflict – particularly where the conflict is driven by the exclusion or subordination of different social groups.

In all of these tasks – establishing security, building institutions and tackling inequalities, the media have an important role. By defining their role more clearly, principles for useful long-term intervention that can be made in support of the media will become clear.

Conflict itself is an essential part of any society and cannot be avoided. It is through conflict that the different interests of a society are reconciled. In a democratic, stable society these conflicts take non-destructive forms – competition between political parties and interests, public debate and discussion, and the day-to-day scrutiny and criticism of government. Such conflicts do not undermine the basic structures of the state – the public administration, the legal system or electoral politics. Rather, conflicts infuse them with life.

But destructive, violent conflicts are quite different. They undermine the very fabric of a society, eliminate the rule of law and basic security and create a vicious spiral that sucks in more and more combatants to fuel the crisis.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The media provide a safe battleground on which non-destructive conflicts can be fought, which is why independent media have long been seen as an essential element in the forging of a democratic society.

Key roles for independent media must be to provide information, act as a government watchdog, scrutinise others who wield power and provide a forum for public debate about the choices facing a society.

In post conflict societies, independent media can play an important role in helping to transform destructive conflicts into non-destructive debates. Their analysis of the interests that lie behind the positions taken by the combatants can lay the groundwork for a resolution of the conflict by identifying common ground – or at least it can provide the information that enables others to do so.

By giving a voice to minorities or to the vulnerable, they can ensure that those who have been overwhelmed by destructive conflict are heard. Women's voices may be particularly important since they often provide the key early warning signs that violent conflict is about to break out – and are usually builders of peace in the aftermath.

And just as the media can demonise people and contribute to violence, so can they humanise opponents after a conflict. Their words and pictures can graphically illustrate how much people have in common.

Finally, the media have an important role to play in monitoring any peace agreements. They can ensure that there is proper public debate about the nature of any settlement, rather than leaving it as the property of political elites or “big men.” Such scrutiny helps demonstrate that a peace process need not engender further suspicion, fear and instability but that it is truly legitimate. It builds confidence in readers and listeners that change is really possible, that things are happening differently, out in the sunshine, rather than behind closed doors.

Of course there are occasions when this goes wrong, situations where the media abuse their role and become partisan to the conflict, exacerbating the tensions that already exist. The obvious problem is to try to ensure that the media are not simply the mouthpieces of political factions (as they so often were in the violent break up of Yugoslavia).

Many have argued that journalism should actively

promote peace, but taking sides in a conflict raises dangers for journalists. They must be wary of identifying themselves too closely with any side – even with the apparent victims.

Modern paramilitary groups have an immense level of media sophistication and will use anything to further their interests. Even peace journalism begs the question of whose peace and in whose interest? The independence of the media – from any political interest – including the international community – is a vital element of its ability to contribute to the stability of a post conflict society.

The starting point of any long-term strategy to achieve structural stability for the media is a law guaranteeing freedom of expression. Any such law should be based upon the relevant international standards, the most important of which is article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression in the following terms:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Other important guarantees of freedom of expression are found in all three major regional human rights systems, including article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights and article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The European Court of Human Rights has stated:

Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of [a democratic] society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for the development of every man ... it is applicable not only to ‘information’ or ‘ideas’ that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population. Such are the demands of pluralism, tolerance and broad-mindedness without which there is no “democratic society.”

These international standards provide the basis upon which laws guaranteeing freedom of expression can be drafted. By making it clear to people what their rights are, they also clarify the obligations of public administrators. Such clarity immensely helps the watchdog

CHAPTER 2 : IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONFLICT: TURNING PUBLIC BROADCASTER INTO A PUBLIC SERVICE

function of the media and of civil society by providing benchmarks to measure progress.

In situations where there is no hope of providing a functioning legal system or where the government's remit may not extend throughout the country (Afghanistan is an obvious example), freedom of expression is even more vital, even though it may not be based upon a viable legal basis.

In such circumstances, the very minimum that should be insisted upon is that the government (and any international agencies exerting political authority) should have a clear public policy on the media that complies with the international standards.

Any public administration should state that it will respect the right to freedom of expression of the people as a whole and will recognise the unique role the media play in making that right a reality. Such a statement should make it clear that relations with the media will not be subject to political discretion, but will be guaranteed, preferably in law, or through clear public policy statements. This creates transparency, which is itself an important first step in establishing the rule of law. It shows respect, for the ideal that no-one, no matter what his power and authority, is above the law and it demonstrates that there are certain principles that every-one has to respect.

Of course there are some specific issues that may require further legal consideration. The most obvious is the question of hate speech and incitement to violence. This is a difficult problem. In volatile, post conflict societies, such incitement carries great potential dangers by threatening to inflame the conflict again. At the same time, heavy-handed attempts at censorship – particularly by international organisations or national bodies whose authority may be disputed – can drive hatred into even more virulent forms.

Sometimes the governing authority believes that it is necessary to make provision to deal with hate speech. If this is the case then it should do so by drafting a law that serves the legitimate aim of restricting hate. The law should be clearly and narrowly defined, and be administered by a body independent of government control. Such a body should not act in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner, and its actions should be subject to adequate safeguards against abuse, including the right of access to an independent court or tribunal, if one is functioning. Tackling hate speech without this principled

approach leads to a risk that hate-speech restrictions can be abused and even used against those they should protect.

In principal, according to the special rapporteurs for the World Conference Against Racism in 2000, true statements should not be penalised, and no one should be penalised for the dissemination of hate speech unless it has been shown that they did so with the intention of inciting discrimination, hostility or violence.

The right of journalists to decide how best to communicate information and ideas to the public should be respected, particularly when they are reporting on racism and intolerance, the rapporteurs said. There should be no prior censorship. Any court-imposed sanctions should conform strictly with the principle of proportionality.

A healthy media environment is plural and diverse and able to carry the widest range of views, information and opinion that exists in society. Since suppressing strongly held views or interests is one of the major reasons why conflicts become destructive, paying close attention to the general media environment of a post-conflict situation is instructive. No two situations will be the same.

The history of each conflict will shape the environment in which post-conflict media have to develop. For example it may be that the media environment is fragmented and politically partisan – an extension of the conflict itself. Alternatively the conflict may have destroyed a hegemonic political power which monopolised information and the means of expression so that there is little tradition of independent professional journalism.

Different circumstances require different approaches, but there are some general points that will apply after any conflict. Specifically there is a need to develop public service broadcasting alongside a healthy and vibrant private sector. Simple liberalisation of the media environment is unlikely to prove sufficient.

The first, most basic task for any administration in a post-conflict area is to ensure that people can receive broadcast signals or, technology permitting, the Internet. Broadcasting is vital because it is the medium through which most people will get news and other forms of public communication.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The print media can be left alone to develop in so far as the market permits, but to get the balance right between public service broadcasting and straightforward commercial interests requires state intervention.

The starting point of public policy should be the existing state broadcaster. Most societies have some kind of state broadcaster, however discredited. As resources from the international community and private investors flow into a country, helping to stimulate the private media, it is important not to neglect the state broadcaster but instead to begin the process of transforming it into a genuine public service.

Often in a post conflict society the policy objective is simply to allow the maximum private ownership of the media, on the grounds that this will produce the widest and most diverse range of voices. Many international policy makers regard the state broadcaster as simply a problem to be removed. Nevertheless the task of building up a public-service broadcaster is one of the most important in a post-conflict society, where a profusion of media and an absence of an overall national voice can exacerbate divisions.

Experience shows that programming that is informative, educative or that demonstrates distinct cultural or linguistic strands, (all of which are crucial to the development of national identity) is best achieved by the creation of an effective public-service broadcaster with a clearly articulated vision, national consensus about its objectives, complete freedom from political interference and a strategy to engage viewers and listeners.

Its goals should be defined in law, and these should include the provision of comprehensive and balanced news coverage and a commitment to serve all regions, cultures and linguistic groups. The development of such a service requires long-term support, which often seems to challenge the attention span of the international community.

An independent regulator, established by law and independent of government interference, should allocate wavelengths among public and private broadcasters and ensure that the needs of minorities are met. Its members should be chosen openly and it should be accountable to the wider public through the legislative arm of the state.

A public-service broadcaster should come under a governing body, the autonomy and independence of

which is guaranteed by law, and which is accountable to a multi-party body or the legislative assembly if one exists. The governing body should not interfere in the day to day running of the broadcaster, but appoint station managers through an open and transparent selection, and ensure that the public-service mandate is being fulfilled.

The German Grundgesetz or Basic Law, which gives all broadcasters a public-service function, is another possible model that might be appropriate in a very divided society where all the media have been poisoned by conflict, or in circumstances where state revenues are so scarce that there is no realistic possibility of providing any state funding for a public-service broadcaster.

In a post-conflict society establishing the legitimacy of a national voice is vital. There need to be news bulletins and programmes that everyone in the society can watch, regardless of their position on the conflict, confident that they are receiving balanced and authoritative coverage. This is why it is important to consult media watchdogs, civil society organisations or political parties that can provide feedback to the broadcasters.

The regulator should also ensure fair competition between the public broadcaster and private radios. The tax system should not favour one broadcaster over another and the allocation of government advertising must be strictly monitored to ensure fair access by all media. License fees should never be set so high as to favour the wealthiest and most powerful corporations, and any economic measures that impinge upon the media should be fair, transparent and nondiscriminatory.

Newspapers are frequently supported by powerful groups – parties, factions, businesses that may be those that fostered conflict in the first place. A good public-service broadcaster is part of the antidote to such groups, and so is the creation of a private media market, for which international help with start-up costs, professional expertise, and even equipment and materials can be invaluable. But what the international community should not do is treat its funding as a substitute for the development of a domestic market – particularly since media funded by international donors may well lack the legitimacy to be genuinely competitive.

One model is a media development fund administered by respected local media professionals to provide low-cost loans. Financial support should not be made conditional upon a particular editorial approach, but it

CHAPTER 2: IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONFLICT: TURNING PUBLIC BROADCASTER INTO A PUBLIC SERVICE

would be reasonable to impose conditions to encourage professional balanced journalism, such as requiring that jobs are not the exclusive preserve of one ethnic or factional group.

Another approach could be the establishment of a not-for-profit holding company to channel donations and take a stake in media companies, to provide finance and to guarantee editorial independence. Any profits could be used to promote the objectives of free expression through grants and activities. A good model would be the Dutch-based Stichting Democratie en Media, which grew out of the underground paper that opposed the Nazis during the Second World War occupation.

Laws lay the foundations of a democratic society. Economic reality determines the broad shape of the media, with some help from the regulatory regime. Neither however is any guarantee of independent, balanced, professional journalism.

Much international effort has gone into trying to build a culture of professional journalism in former conflict areas. There are a number of international organisations, including the International Federation of Journalists and the Open Society Institute, that support this activity and the programmes they run are familiar to many.

In many conflict zones media centres have been set up to train and support journalists. The experience of many non-government organisations suggests that such training should build a general awareness of democracy and human rights, encourage independent analysis and thought, teach impartial interviewing to humanise all sides of a conflict, and impart the techniques of investigative reporting.

Some organisations say journalists should actively promote peace, yet desirable as this might sound in a general sense, it assumes an underlying political position. The role of the journalist is not to take sides, but to explain. Journalism can also act as a neutral ground through which groups can communicate with one another, and the media can act as watchdog over any peace agreement, particularly one that has been secretly negotiated.

Conflict zones are very dangerous environments for news staff. Safety training should be a priority for any journalist working in such areas. International journalists are often heavily equipped and protected. Their local colleagues are more vulnerable, and particular

attention should be given to guaranteeing their safety.

Combatants seek to obtain favourable media coverage at all costs. Journalists will find all kinds of events arranged or staged for them, which is why they need investigative skills. They will be wooed and pampered, which is why they need a keen awareness of ethics. If all else fails, they will be threatened and even killed. Training is an important means of equipping journalists to deal with this complex and fraught environment while adding to the overall culture of the profession.

An independent journalists' association linked to a respected international group like the International Federation of Journalists can provide direct advocacy on behalf of the profession, particularly on questions of pay and conditions of work. In parallel, steps should be taken to foster the development of employers' associations, linked to the World Association of Newspapers or the International Press Institute, which are better placed than governments to get their members to behave responsibly.

Such associations can create a climate of self-regulation, which is always better than imposed regulation because it is likely to be more effective (since people are more committed to freely chosen values than to those forced upon them) and because it respects editorial independence. Professional associations help disseminate good practice, and exert peer pressure to respect editorial independence, human rights norms and democratic values.

Trade unions and employers associations are two manifestations of civil society but there are many others. For example, women are likely to play a key role in rebuilding a society that has been ravaged by war. Yet too often, their voices are unheard and their experiences are ignored. Armed men dominate the peace in the same way that they prosecuted the war.

This means involving and training women at all levels of the media – not just as secretaries, researchers or even presenters, but by providing them with technical, production and editorial skills.

In many of the societies where conflict has taken place women will have lower literacy levels than men. In these circumstances, support for women in the radio must be made a priority, and programmes must be made that offer real benefits to women.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Creating a society in which women play a more equal role is one of the key ways in which future conflict can be avoided. Providing access to the media for women and women's voices is an essential part of achieving that objective.

The elements I have sketched out – legal and policy guarantees, the creation of an independent regulator and a public-service broadcaster – should be tackled as a part of peace talks themselves. These are not optional add-ons, but essential building blocs of a new society.

The bureaucratic arrangements for managing post-conflict intervention must be overhauled. International agencies often aren't able to react rapidly. Long delays in appointing staff, giving major roles to inexperienced staff and national rivalries compound the bureaucratic confusion. There is little scope for independent action, and the confusion can be exploited ruthlessly by unscrupulous local forces, threatening to bring the entire intervention into disrepute.

At the heart of the problem is the politicising of the structures and appointments system in international institutions, which often appoint people to key positions on grounds other than merit. In post-conflict nations this can be disastrous. Inexperienced, overbearing international staff are posted to these countries with salaries beyond the imagination of local communities. Young people with no experience of building institutions, lecture communities in which elders are respected and wisdom valued.

There must be a more systematic international approach to building or rebuilding the media environment in post-conflict societies. It is no use promising vast sums of money for reconstruction and then moving on to a different conflict zone six months later. Building institutions is a long term commitment and must be approached in an atmosphere of cold-headed realism.

Non-government and media organisations are not exempt from criticism. Far too often there is an unseemly, competitive scramble for funds that ends with the international community looking like a permanent occupying power, presiding over demoralised communities and institutionalised crime and corruption.

An organisation such as UNESCO has a crucial role to play in developing the right planning mechanism for post conflict intervention. Many governments will prefer to disburse funds bilaterally rather than hand them to agencies they don't trust. But there is a growing willingness to think hard and deep about how best to intervene and use resources in the most productive way. UNESCO must lead this debate and treat it as an opportunity to learn from past mistakes.

International Media Get the Most Attention, but...

Don't Ignore Local Media in Defusing Conflicts

CHAPTER 3 Accelerated technological developments and the communications revolution has made the mass media a pervasive part of daily life in industrialised societies. Some argue that the revolution in information technology during the 1980's and 1990's requires a redefinition of what we think of as war.

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Neither globalisation nor the euphoria and optimism following the fall of the Berlin Wall led to the elimination of armed conflict. Indeed, new conflict trends have emerged or intensified since the end of the Cold War.

Yet conventional perceptions of armed conflicts often still predominate in decision-making circles and are encoded in international law, while the complex role played by the media in violent conflict is often taken for granted or ignored by politicians, the military and scholars.

As violent political transitions persist and media interventions continue to increase in number and scope, so too does the need for a more comprehensive and global understanding of the news media's role in conflicts and in their management.

Most conflicts since the end of World War II have been fought within state borders for control of the government rather than territory. Such civil wars are usually between the state and any one of a wide array of groups, ranging from "freedom fighters" with significant public support to a disparate range of paramilitary forces, war-lords, criminal gangs and mercenaries.

These conflicts are predominantly asymmetric, not only in terms of material and military capabilities, but also in regard to non-tangible resources or "soft power," such as credibility and legitimacy.

Winning the "hearts and minds" of the population is more important than winning territory. Because a state is almost always militarily superior, non-state forces are more dependent on psychological warfare, which entails influencing attitudes and perceptions.

A common assumption is that models of successful democratic transition, in which the media played a key and positive role, as in Eastern and Central Europe during the Cold War, can apply to other regions.

However, one important difference that characterises countries in conflict is that they are weak, with low literacy rates and few sources of credible information, and do not have unified, self-conscious civil societies.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Much of the research on the role of media in conflicts has focused on the international or Western news organisations. Relatively little research has been carried out on the conflict-management role of the local media.

There are a multitude of case studies and analyses on the effect of international media on policy-making and intervention. One prominent example is the so-called “CNN-effect,” which is the belief that extensive international media attention forces states to intervene in violent conflicts.

But the number of conflicts that get such attention is very small. It usually occurs when the conflict has escalated to critical levels of violence, making the validity of international media in preventing conflict highly questionable.

Peace processes are usually characterised by long, drawn-out successions of tedious meetings and, furthermore, secrecy is often a prerequisite for success. This does not make good material for international television, which tends to magnify the failures.

Budgets for long term projects dealing with “forgotten” conflicts are re-routed to those on which the international media focuses. It is in these situations, when donors rush to the same conflict, that the most acute problems of coordination arise.

Political conflict is a natural part of all societies, but open confrontational violent conflict is not – just as poverty and ethnicity, alone, are not sufficient causes for the outbreak of armed conflict, as is often assumed.

All armed conflicts have one thing in common: violence that destroys people, crops, infrastructures and other material resources, and destroys political will, hope, and trust. These elements are the root cause of poverty, suffering, and stunted economic and social development.

Escalation to violence is the product of an interactive dynamic process. This process is not linear, but oscillates between situations of submerged and rising tensions to open violent confrontation and post violent confrontational situations.

Each phase in the process is characterised by different levels of political tension, insecurity and threats of violence. Therefore, conflict-management needs vary

greatly from conflict to conflict and also according to the different phases of a conflict.

Sustainable conflict management has to come from within a society itself. In an open confrontation it is often exceedingly difficult for media to play a role in managing conflict. When there is a threat of violence, it is often very difficult to be completely impartial. It is also difficult for journalists to remain independent when their security is threatened. Initiatives to enhance the media’s role in managing conflict are, therefore, usually relegated to the phases before and after actual violence.

Because they involve whole societies and entail deep-rooted psychological effects, internal conflicts are more difficult to solve than conflicts between states, which is why it is so important that the part played by the media in influencing events is both recognised and properly addressed.

Although media coverage can often give an impression to the contrary, violent conflicts very rarely erupt unannounced or irrationally. Thus, having a deep understanding of political structure, participants and changes in a society riddled by tensions is essential for managing conflict.

Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia are examples of how media can be used to create perceptions of threat and insecurity. People’s vulnerability in insecure situations makes the media’s ability to accelerate and magnify fears particularly important. In insecure situations the media can seriously exacerbate fears.

National media operating within a country have greater potential to manage conflicts than international news organisations because they form part of society and have the means to play a part in it.

The fact that democracies do not go to war against each other, and that a democratic state system has the capacity to regulate shifts in power without resorting to violence leads to the conclusion that promoting democracy is the best way to prevent armed conflict.

In a democratic system, the media is expected to play an essential part in promoting and ensuring that government is accountable and transparent. It provides society with credible and relevant information, enabling people to make well-informed decisions. There is evidence from some of the poorest parts of the world, that

C H A P T E R 3 : D O N ' T I G N O R E L O C A L M E D I A I N D E F U S I N G C O N F L I T S

the media do have a positive and constructive role in democratisation.

The spectacular role the media have played in escalating conflicts also demonstrates their enormous potential for more constructive and peaceful purposes. There are few cases in which countries with a free press are afflicted by violent conflict and political stagnation.

But independent media are viewed as a security risk by authoritarian states that feel threatened by credible information, and where the elite find it difficult to conceive of letting go of part of their power. In such circumstances, media usually reflect the power structure, meaning that the authorities have important and significant advantages that civil society and grassroots organisations do not.

For long-term prevention of violence, the news media as credible sources of information and as integral self-regulating components of a democratic system are essential. Two specific functions of the news media are essential factors in preventing conflict and promoting democracy. One is their function of acting as a means of communication between elected governments and their constituents. The other is their function of acting as guardians of transparent and accountable politics.

The media can promote reconciliation and long-term sustainable conflict management and societal development. They have the potential to play a constructive role in preventing and managing conflicts because they are able to reach large audiences and because they encourage democratic principles by supplying credible information.

It is important that national media should encourage tolerance and a willingness to solve conflicts at all levels without resorting to violence. Such coverage can complement reporting by the international media that concentrates on dramatic and negative events while ignoring background history and news of constructive behaviour.



Introduction to Part 2

Informing the Population in Times of Crisis

Reliable information is every bit as important as material aid in a violent conflict and its aftermath. It is important because typically in war zones, conspiracy theories, rumours and propaganda abound and have to be counteracted. Straightforward and neutral information is also essential if relief organisations are to win necessary support and trust of the local population. Such information may not be news in the strict sense of the term, but it should be objective and credible.

Giving out the right information at the right time may be just as important as handing out relief goods, says Florian Westphal of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

But in a shattered society, local media may simply not be up to the task. They may be in chaos, or their infrastructure may be destroyed, or they may themselves may have become discredited by being party to the conflict.

In such circumstances, says Susan Manuel, the United Nations finds it necessary to set up its own means of communication when it embarks upon a peacekeeping operation.

Radio, she says, has been the most prevalent, effective and affordable medium in suiting local conditions and reaching a variety of audiences. Having good music is part of the secret in attracting a large listenership. But the main purpose of the UN-run radio stations is to provide professional and credible information based on the organisation's values of transparency and fairness.

Marco Domeniconi of the Hirondelle Foundation explains how a UN broadcasting operation functions in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Radio Okapi broadcasts in five languages and reaches the entire territory of a vast country that is emerging from conflict, and where the essential task is to persuade ex-combatants to lay down their arms. Providing accurate and responsible news is an absolutely essential part of the peace process.

As Humanitarian Organizations Swing Into Action, They Need To Give...

The Right Information At The Right Time

CHAPTER 4 I sometimes try to imagine what kind of first impression people in conflict areas have when they see humanitarian organisations swing into action. For many, there has to be a feeling of relief that additional help has arrived.

*By Florian Westphal,
International Committee
of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

But I am sure our presence also causes confusion. After living through violence, stress, fear, hate, danger, chaos and poverty people suddenly find themselves face to face with the most visible side of our work – fleets of trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles, planes, warehouses, offices, radio handsets and satellite dishes – and with the people who come with it, including expatriate staff visibly and culturally different from those they have come to help.

In addition, we come as representatives of numerous different organisations with confusing names, usually combinations of letters (ICRC, IRC, MSF, WFP, UNHCR, etc.) and an array of different logos, emblems and signs. I think that, as humanitarian organisations, we actually owe it to populations in war zones to put an end to the confusion and to explain just who we are, what we set out to do and how we do it. I also strongly believe it's in our interest to do so.

The ICRC works mainly in zones of armed conflict, but not always – I acquired my field experience mainly in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. We are a clearly non-political and non-partisan organisation. Our primary aim is to provide protection and assistance to people suffering because of war. We are certainly in favour of attempts to achieve political and peaceful solutions to conflict. However, there must be space for humanitarian relief in war zones even where there are no credible efforts to resolve the conflict.

While the ICRC does not have programmes actively to support media in conflict areas, we do have close and regular contacts with local media and journalists in the countries we work in.

There are three main reasons why the ICRC tries to inform local populations in war zones about its aims, its identity and its way of working. We want to make them aware of the help we can provide. We want to win their trust, acceptance and support which, in turn, enhances the security of our staff and the chances of success for our work. And we want to raise public awareness of international humanitarian law, the body of international law that protects victims of conflict and imposes limits on the way wars are conducted.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

When confronted with relief organisations, the first questions for many people in war zones are: can you help me? Can you show me where I can find some water or health care, food and shelter? Can you help me track down my lost child or contact my relatives to tell them I am still OK?

Humanitarian organisations need to use all means of communication available to provide answers to these questions. The media play a crucial role in this respect. Local radio stations, newspapers and TV can inform about food distribution sites or safe water points; they can publish lists or photographs of unaccompanied children trying to reunite with their families; they can give advice on how to prevent disease by taking basic hygiene and sanitation precautions. In Liberia, for example, we have been using posters in public places as well as local radio and TV to help trace the families of unaccompanied children. The local media can also make people aware of the danger posed by mines and other explosive remnants of war.

However, informing local people about how we can help is not enough. We also need to win their trust and support. A question that may well be on people's minds is extremely important, yet often overlooked: just who are you people from the Red Cross, the United Nations and the non-government organisations? What are you doing here and what gives you the right to be here? Whose side are you on in this war? What is your political agenda?

That we, as humanitarian organisations, are convinced we work in war zones for all the right reasons does not automatically imply that the people we have come to help see it the same way. And, to be honest, why should they? Can we really expect them to accept without question that humanitarian organisations are not pursuing economic or political interests? In many war zones people are absolutely convinced that foreign powers are actively involved in the conflict and in fact in some conflicts – Afghanistan and the Congo, to name but two – this has been the case.

To confuse matters further, foreign armies are increasingly involved in relief work. The affected populations have a right to know what kind of relationship humanitarian organisations have with foreign armies present in their countries. Are we working with them or independently of them? It is certainly in the ICRC's interest to clearly explain the relationship. Otherwise we risk being considered as part of the enemy by those

who oppose a foreign military presence. Typically in war zones, conspiracy theories, rumours and propaganda abound. Since people have few means of checking whether or not they are true, rumours are easily believed. Even if allegations against humanitarian organisations have no basis in fact this does not imply that we can afford to ignore them.

People affected by war often doubt that foreign organisations such as the Red Cross can actually be neutral. In Sierra Leone, it was extremely difficult for people to accept claims of neutrality in view of the atrocities committed by both sides in the conflict. Humanitarian organisations need to confront these doubts openly and discuss them. We need to explain that neutrality does not mean indifference in the face of suffering but rather is a means to an end, a way of being able to help those who suffer the atrocities of war.

The Red Cross also tries to be transparent towards local people in order to enhance its own security. As an organisation generally working without armed protection we can only be safe in conflict areas if our identity and our activities are accepted. This is especially true for the conflict parties themselves, the soldiers or rebel fighters and their political leadership. This becomes particularly problematic in situations where one side to the conflict is largely unknown or where it has simply not been possible to communicate with them.

Informing people in conflict zones can help us to be accepted, trusted, and safe, and therefore makes it possible for us to do our job. However, simply informing people is not enough because that is essentially a one-way process. Instead as humanitarian organisations we should be ready to actually communicate, to listen, to be open to all those who have suggestions, questions, doubts or criticisms. This implies trying to be a learning organisation that constantly strives to better understand the environment in which it works. The ICRC and others still have a lot of work to do in this respect.

We also need to make people aware of international humanitarian law. Ideally we would like to have an impact on the behaviour of combatants, to try to ensure that they know that there is a body of law that dictates that they have to respect civilians and treat wounded or detained enemies with dignity. Fighters can only act in accordance with the law if they know what it is. Many combatants are remarkably ignorant as far as their obligations are concerned. Civilians, in turn, can only insist on their rights if they are aware of them.

CHAPTER 4 : THE RIGHT INFORMATION AT THE RIGHT TIME

These legal issues are often directly linked to the reality on the ground. In Haiti, for example, combatants regularly attacked hospitals flying the Red Cross flag – a clear violation of the law, of course, but also a major humanitarian concern. One of the methods we used to tackle this problem was a radio spot informing local people about the importance of letting the wounded have access to care, and about the Red Cross emblem as a visible sign of protection for medical facilities.

Local media have an important part to play in getting these kinds of messages across. In many countries we try to encourage locals to see whether the rather dry language of international law can be better adapted to their environment. In most cultures, the essential principles – do not deliberately attack civilians, for example, or do not target religious sites – have been known for centuries and may simply need to be brought to the surface again. In Somalia, the ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent explain the law by drawing parallels with age-old local rules of warfare or by using traditional stories around well-known characters. One of the ICRC's most effective means of raising public awareness of international humanitarian law is to enhance the capacity of the communication services of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in conflict areas.

Obviously, we know that simply informing combatants of how they ought to behave does not automatically imply that they will follow the rules. The relationship between information, knowledge and changes in behaviour is a lot more complex. However, once combatants have been told about the law, they can no longer plead the excuse of ignorance, and can be held accountable for their actions.

Through local media we can tell people in conflict zones, not only what we do and how we do it, but also hear their concerns and deal with their doubts. Wherever possible, debates, discussion programmes or phone-ins should be part of the strategy because they actually give people the chance to voice their opinions and ask questions directly. In this respect, some non-government organisations have made an extremely important contribution by launching media projects in war zones – as has been done in Sierra Leone, Liberia or the Democratic Republic of Congo – that provide balanced information while giving those most affected by war the chance to make their voices heard.

In many parts of the world there are few telephones or Internet connections and therefore few possibilities for the public to comment on what they have heard or seen in the media. Therefore humanitarian organisations also need to find other means of entering into dialogue with people in a conflict region. To this end, the ICRC, often working with national Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, tries to increase direct contacts with those who represent and shape public opinion such as community representatives, parliamentarians, traditional or religious leaders, local non-government organisations and, of course, journalists.

A relatively free media environment is of key importance when it comes to informing local people about humanitarian issues and organisations. In many conflict situations, the media are regularly misused to spread hatred or reinforce the logic of war. In these cases, there is little space for information essentially aimed at helping people on all sides of the divide to deal with their problems.

Finally, it has to be stressed that for the ICRC, public information is primarily a means to an end, a tool to enable us to help those we have come to assist and protect. The ICRC will not communicate publicly if this risks compromising its ability to reach people suffering because of armed conflict. I think other humanitarian organisations may well find themselves in a similar position at times. There are limits to what the ICRC can say in public for the simple reason that the purpose of our organisation is not to make tomorrow's front-page headline but to try to help where help is needed most.

Communication with local people must be a key element of the work of any humanitarian organisation in conflict zones. Giving out the right information at the right time may be just as important as handing out relief goods. Furthermore, communication with, and transparency towards those suffering because of war can prepare the ground and create the necessary conditions to allow humanitarian organisations to do their job. Nearly every ICRC delegation now employs specialised communications staff to do this. Nevertheless there is a lot of work left to be done.

Reviving War's First Casualty:

How the UN Communicates in Post-Conflict Turmoil

CHAPTER 5 There is an old saying that truth is one of the first casualties of war: it has been the experience of UN peacekeepers in post-conflict situations that reviving the victim called truth is one of the most crucial tasks for establishing sustainable peace.

*By Susan Manuel,
United Nations Department
of Public Information*

When peacekeepers deploy to a post-conflict situation, the local media often is in chaos. Infrastructure may be destroyed; more importantly perhaps, the rule of law has been weakened, and those media operations that survive have generally been under the sway of the various parties to the conflict. Or they have become actors themselves. The need for a neutral environment in which media can rebuild into independent and objective sources of information is fundamental, but it is not created overnight.

In addition, few people in typical post-conflict situations may understand the often complex or vague Security Council mandate that has sent Blue Helmets into their midst. One of the first tasks of the UN mission is to ensure that its presence and mandate are understood, as well as to engage the local population in the peace process.

From assessment missions before the peacekeeping operation is actually deployed, the UN must identify the most effective means of communication to suit local circumstances and to reach a variety of audiences. These may include far-flung rural populations, refugees and displaced persons, ex-combatants, media and leaders, as well as external audiences including donor states, neighbours and other interested state capitals.

The approach to disseminating accurate information quickly to those affected by conflict and who must implement the peace has evolved considerably over UN peacekeeping's 56-year history. Currently there is a surge of demands for UN peacekeeping missions, with 15 ongoing and new operations recently started or about to start in Haiti, Sudan, Burundi and possibly Iraq.

All have vastly different needs in terms of information and communication.

Since its late 1980s mission in Namibia, the UN has used civic education and its own forms of media to promote awareness among the general public about its mandate and the peace process.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

UN missions try to get the word out by submitting programming to TV and radio stations; deploying theatre troupes; printing billboards, posters, comic books and leaflets; setting up web sites and town hall meetings. On several occasions, the UN has created its own radio stations.

Radio has been the most prevalent, effective and affordable means of communication in peacekeeping. The UN currently operates radio stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and plans others in the Ivory Coast and Sudan.

However, the decision on whether to establish a broadcast station can be controversial. Should the UN, sometimes resembling or functioning as a government, run its own media? UN peacekeeping initiatives are always made with a strong claim to transparency and fairness, with messages based upon UN values and the mandate of the mission. But outsiders, competitors and some governments may not always see things that way. The peacekeeping mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea, for example, has found it almost impossible to get government approval for any UN radio programming in Ethiopia, and is allowed only one hour a month to broadcast on Eritrean radio.

Cambodia's Radio UNTAC is still considered one of the major successes of UN information operations. It was extremely popular, partly because of its collection of Cambodian music, and it was the only source of balanced news on the political developments leading up to the elections of May 1993. It also exposed human rights abuses, particularly against the Vietnamese minority, which other Cambodian media would not dare touch.

The peacekeeping operation in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993, was to monitor the administration of the country, whose leadership was contested by four major factions, including the Government of Cambodia, until UN-administered elections.

The UN was given direct control over four administrative areas including information. For the most part, the 'control' was light: UN staff maintained regular contact with media, government and political parties on creating a neutral political atmosphere and encouraging freedom of the press. A flourishing and free-wheeling press emerged, along with some reduction of hate language. However, state and political party media continued their biased coverage, ignoring voices of opposition and turning a blind eye to political or ethnic violence.

Although installation and technical problems delayed complete, nation-wide coverage until just days before the election, Radio UNTAC had a profound impression on the political mood of the country and is credited with helping the high voter turn out (over 90 percent) with its constant refrain of the mission's mantra "your vote is secret." The radio offered free, equal access and equal time to all 20 political parties.

The election results indicated the rule of PM Hun Sen was over, and that Prince Norodom Sihanouk's son Ranariddh had won. Hun Sen then waged a vicious campaign against the radio, alleging that its programming threatened Cambodian family values by allowing lovers to dedicate songs to one another. The radio received up to 1,300 letters a day from listeners. Hun Sen threatened that the station would "melt," and Ghanaian troops had to be deployed to defend it.

The station survived, but when the mission closed down later in 1993, the studio was disassembled and shipped out in boxes. The UN decided that it needed the multi-million dollar equipment for other missions, particularly in the former Yugoslavia. The Cambodians were not sufficiently skilled to continue running it, and there were no hand-over plans.

So-called asset stripping when missions pull out, has been criticised with regard to other peacekeeping operations deployed to technically challenged countries. However, UN radio stations are transitory by definition: peacekeeping should give local media time and space to recover.

At any rate, to soften the transition after independence was declared in East Timor, in 2003, the UN turned over its popular Radio UNTAET (which had broadcast in four languages since 2000) to the new government, and it became the national radio of Timor-Leste. Likewise, the UN planned to turn over the popular Radio UNAMSIL on its departure from Sierra Leone.

After Cambodia, the successful strategies, along with some of the fancy equipment of Radio UNTAC, were reassembled in Zagreb, Croatia, in early 1994, where the UN produced dozens of radio programmes that few listeners ever heard.

Unlike in Cambodia where the UN had a mandate to control information (and where the State granted permission for a UN station), Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

CHAPTER 5 : HOW UN COMMUNICATES IN POST-CONFLICT TURMOIL

were fully sovereign countries with scant interest in authorising frequencies for a UN radio station.

Cassette tapes of UN radio programmes were dutifully dispatched to a multitude of stations around the former Yugoslavia, which were under no compunction to use them. However, in Sarajevo UN staff did convince several stations to carry UN broadcasts, risking sniper fire as they hand-delivered the daily cassettes, and UNPROFOR supported a Bosnian student radio. Only when the UN had administrative authority over Eastern Slavonia, Croatia, in 1997 did it manage to fully broadcast its own programming.

The peacekeeping force in Kosovo known as UNMIK arrived in June 1999 armed with plans for its own radio station. UN radio producers immediately began programming on Radio Pristina (Albanian) and Radio Korona (Serb), appealing for tolerance, restraint and cooperation with the UN mission.

The mission took control of a small TV station being run in June-July 1999 by one lonely Serb at the top of the 17-floor Panorama building, which had no functioning lifts. The media scene was totally disrupted, and a scramble ensued as to who would inherit the Serbian state assets. The Kosovo Liberation Army briefly seized Radio/TV Pristina (RTP), only to be evicted by NATO-led KFOR troops.

The UN mission, KFOR and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe then oversaw a more orderly resurrection of Radio-TV Kosovo (RTK) with the objective of “independent public service broadcasting,” initially under the direction of the European Broadcasting Union with funding from several European donors. With the TV transmission towers in Kosovo destroyed by NATO bombing, the EBU broadcast by satellite, while UNMIK TV contributed weekly programming.

The new peacekeeping mission faced the dual challenge of how to communicate directly with the population on the authority of its transitional administration while at the same time fostering the development of independent and responsible media.

The UN mission’s plans for its own radio station were opposed by the OSCE and USAID, among others. A UN radio, they argued, would run counter to the goals of developing a local media in a commercial marketplace, as well as to OSCE’s plans for a public service broad-

caster. A UN radio would seduce journalists to its staff with UN salaries (gauged to local standards but usually far higher than the pay of local journalists) and it would disseminate propaganda, ran the arguments. The US was also supporting several private media in Kosovo (The American vs. European debate over public vs. private media continued for several years over whether RTK, as a “public broadcaster”, should support itself with commercial advertising or a tax on viewers).

The compromise was Blue Sky Radio, set up in July 1999 by the Hironnelle Foundation, an organization of journalists which sets up and operates media services in crisis areas, and the UN mission. The radio broadcast news and other programmes in Albanian, Serbo-Croat and Turkish languages.

Hironnelle hired and trained a team of young journalists who broke ground in terms of objective reporting in a post-conflict environment that remained ethnically divided, especially among local and regional media. Blue Sky Radio was integrated into RTK three months later. “UN Radio” had its own service which ran on Blue Sky as a programme identified as “UN,” since Hironnelle insisted on an independent editorial policy.

Hironnelle is also the UN’s partner with Radio Okapi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The contract between Hironnelle and the UN gives editorial control to the UN observer mission known as MONUC. But the mission’s director of information Patricia Tome scoffs at concerns over editorial policy at the station. “The word ‘independence’ is irrelevant and inappropriate. The key words are ‘professional’ and ‘credible’,” she says.

United Nations peacekeepers arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1999 to monitor a shaky ceasefire that had ended 10 years of war and was to precede unification of a vast and fragmented territory the size of Western Europe, with 45 million inhabitants but with little infrastructure. The mission faced the daunting challenge of assisting the consolidation of the new nation that had been chewed up by seven neighbouring countries. The conflict had left millions dead and displaced, without national roads, mail or phone services. The media had been used to divide and inflame instead of unite and inform. Radio Okapi (named after a Congolese mammal) began broadcasting in February 2002 and in ways both symbolic and real, it has reunified the country via the air waves.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Again, having good music was a key to drawing an audience, which now numbers some 20 million Congolese. But, in partnership with the Hironnelle Foundation, the station increased the availability of and access to balanced information across a huge territory that in any other sense of the word was not united.

The station hired more than 100 Congolese journalists, helped them assemble music, introduced new technology and defined editorial policy. Broadcasting in five languages over 14 FM frequencies, Radio Okapi broadcasts information about humanitarian assistance, the peace process and other issues, and it engages Congolese in daily dialogues over the air. Okapi's national programme is based on news gathered from around the country and produced in Kinsasha, then broadcast by satellite to local stations and its regional studios (soon to number 13), which also produce their own programmes.

Throughout the late 1990s the UN ran other radio stations—one in the Central African Republic; another in Rwanda after the genocide. Radio UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, has been particularly long-lived and popular.

Peacekeepers in the force known as UNAMSIL, which arrived in Sierra Leone in 1999, had to determine how to communicate with a population of whom 70-80 percent were illiterate and easily susceptible to misinformation, where the local media was weak, polarised, and almost entirely capital-city based, and where conventional means of communication were nearly non-existent in most of the country.

UNAMSIL's leadership realized that a nation-wide radio would be critically important as an, impartial source of news and as a means of making the public aware about the peace process; about disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; about reconciliation and justice; and about elections.

In the course of two years, the UN made Radio UNAMSIL the most popular 24-hour radio FM and short-wave radio station in the country, with the most listened to morning news and all-night programme. It broadcasts in five languages, and reaches about 90 percent of the population.

Radio UNAMSIL was the only station to provide real-time reporting on the elections from reporters pre-positioned all over the country, despite severe logistical problems. The UN learned that investments

in equipment and pre-positioning of transmitters must be done as early and as quickly as possible. UNAMSIL was also the first peacekeeping mission to launch a radio programme designed, produced and broadcast by children and teenagers aged 5 to 18 to assist their post-war rehabilitation and provide education and entertainment. The radio trained dozens of youngsters as producers and reporters.

On rare occasions, disturbing incidents have also revealed the reach and influence of a UN radio: in August 1993, a soft-voiced Cambodian radio reporter quietly read out a list of organisations and politicians whom a letter writer had accused of various vile deeds – nearly destroying in five minutes the station's reputation for fairness and high standards (the station quickly retracted). Once over Radio UNAMSIL, a UN spokesman mistakenly stated that rebels were marching on Freetown, causing nation-wide panic.

By the time that the UN took over in a chaotic Liberia in October 2003, the importance of immediate communication with the population via radio to explain the arrival of a peacekeeping operation had become foremost in the thinking of UN public information planners.

An emergency studio-in-a-box was shipped in from a logistics base in Brindisi, Italy, and personnel on the ground undertook an intensive few days of testing equipment and scouting sites for optimal signal relay.

On day one of the mandate, UN radio provided a live signal for rebroadcast by all Monrovia radio stations, with the result that the population in the greater Monrovia area – comprising about one third of Liberia's total population – had access to live coverage of the arrival of the UN special representative, his address to the people of Liberia and the ceremonies dedicating troops from the Economic Community of West African States as UN peace keepers.

The radio went on to provide live coverage of the installation of the transitional government and other key events. By the end of the month and with the arrival of more equipment, Radio UNMIL began its own regular broadcasts and expanded programmes from two hours to 24 hours a day while steadily enlarging the area of coverage.

Deciding whether to establish an independent radio depends on many factors, including the mandate and

C H A P T E R 5 : H O W U N C O M M U N I C A T E S I N P O S T - C O N F L I C T T U R M O I L

scope of the peacekeeping operation, the existence or not of a free, independent and non-partisan media and the literacy rate of the host country.

Another factor is the availability of radios among the population. Riots broke out outside rural Cambodian warehouses holding used radios from Japan before they could be distributed. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, staff going into the countryside to give away radios were attacked and the efforts had to be abandoned. Other reports indicate that wind-up radios tend to be easily broken or cannibalised for parts.

How a Radio Station Keeps Population Informed:

Complex Return to Normality in DR Congo

CHAPTER 6 Radio Okapi, the only radio station in the Democratic Republic of the Congo covering all regions of the country, broadcasts every day on the process of the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration or resettlement (DDRRR) of foreign combatants and rebel groups.

*Marco Domeniconi,
Fondation Hironnelle*

The role of the media in this process, a key part of the mandate of the United Nations observer mission (MONUC) in the country, is very important, even crucial.

“Several former combatants have said that they had decided to return to Rwanda with their dependants or their family after hearing a radio report on the successful return of a close family member or an acquaintance,” said MONUC information officer Sébastien Lapierre, head of the Radio Okapi station in Bukavu, in South Kivu province.

MONUC’s mandate, which began in 1999 with an agreement concluded in Lusaka among the belligerent forces, was at first intended to monitor the ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign armies from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Having accomplished this, the mission has been playing a leading role for the last two years in the far more complex task of disarming and repatriating some 15,000 foreign former combatants, who had rebelled against their respective governments in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. It is difficult to determine their exact number of because figures differ from one source to another. The Rwandan authorities have estimated that there are at least 30,000 rebels.

The governments have established reintegration and resettlement programmes. MONUC’s role is to make the rebels, mostly Rwandan and Burundian Hutus, aware of opportunities to return home and to put the necessary logistics in place.

“If they continue to return at the same pace as in recent months, by the end of 2004, these groups will no longer pose a threat for the peace process,” says Mamadou Bah, coordinator of the MONUC task force in Kinshasa.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Nearly 10,000 soldiers, child soldiers and their families have now returned to their homes, mainly in Rwanda. The success of the operation certainly owes much to political changes in the various countries and to the establishment of new relations in the Great Lakes Region. It is also the outcome of work by a UN awareness-raising unit that uses all available media – radio broadcasts, mobile transmitters, video shows, leaflets, posters, stickers, a web site and, if necessary, satellite telephones – to reach its audience. The material tells about MONUC’s activities in the region, and often a simple message: “call home.”

These activities could not be modelled on operations carried out successfully by the United Nations in Mozambique, Sierra Leone or Guatemala. They had to take into account the particular features of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is a vast country with practically no roads or communications media, and with insecurity prevailing over large regions.

To raise awareness among rebel groups, the information must reach them where they are – in the bush or the equatorial forest. The information must relate to the agreements reached by the various governments on the rights and duties of former combatants with respect to disarmament and repatriation. And it must give information about the opportunities available to those who agree to lay down their arms under the DDRRR process, the aim being to encourage voluntary decision-making.

This task is highly complex. It is difficult to locate combatants and to gain access to them. Their nomadic way of life, predatory behaviour and movements depending on the local people’s ability to feed them complicate matters. The soldiers are often in very remote areas, inaccessible by road. There are therefore very few opportunities to inform them individually.

Moreover, the rebels are often under strict control by their military superiors, who bring pressure and propaganda to bear. Some of the superiors are accused of crimes against humanity and are therefore not eager to return home. Others find serving as underground officers preferable to life as anonymous civilians in Rwanda. Ordinary soldiers are therefore still on a war footing and are terrified at the thought of returning home, where the “enemy” reigns.

To promote voluntary repatriation among Rwandan rebels, MONUC produces a daily radio programme

called “Gutahuka”, which means returning home. The programme is broadcast twice a day and aimed at the eastern part of the country where the rebels are concentrated.

This programme consists of true stories, accounts by returned former combatants who are followed all the way to their village of origin, and messages from families that stayed in the home country urging the rebels to overcome their fear of returning. The programme also explains the practical details of the disarmament and repatriation process.

A MONUC radio and video production team, assigned to “Gutahuka” travels regularly to Rwanda to meet returned former rebels in transit or reintegration camps. But it is often difficult to show these reports in the quarters of soldiers held hostage by extremist commanders.

The awareness-raising programme has been provided to all the Congolese media, with mixed results. The country’s press is in dire financial straits and the area covered by the local radio stations is very small. Furthermore, as Immaculée Birhaheka, a human rights activist in Goma, explains, “the country’s media have little concern for an operation that, in their view, is a matter for the international community.” Nevertheless, she adds, “the problem is indeed one that primarily concerns the Congolese people, who are victims of insecurity and continue to bear the cost of the various wars and invasions by foreign combatants.”

The one station that broadcasts the “Gutahuka” programme regularly is Radio Okapi. According to Richard Wyatt, Great Lakes coordinator for the European Union, Radio Okapi has played a positive role because it uses the various languages understood by the target audience. He believes that the information broadcast is of good quality and that the message gets across.

Radio Okapi is a joint project between MONUC and the Hirondelle Foundation, a Swiss non-government organisation that sets up media in crisis or conflict areas (www.hirondelle.org). Launched in February 2002, after the political discussions on inter-Congolese dialogue in Sun City, Radio Okapi has ten regional studios and broadcasts in Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo, Chiluba and French covering the entire Congolese territory. Britain, the United States, Switzerland and the Netherlands provide funding to the Hirondelle Foundation for this project.

CHAPTER 6: COMPLEX RETURN TO NORMALITY IN DR CONGO

“Radio can reach soldiers in the most remote areas and easily evades censorship by superiors”, says. Yvan Asselin, the Canadian director of Radio Okapi. He aims to produce programmes that deal with the specific needs of the audience, broadcasting them via mobile FM transmitters.

To broaden the coverage, MONUC offered the “Gutahuka” programmes to two international broadcasting corporations, the BBC and The Voice of America, which cover Africa on short-wave. The BBC did not wish to take responsibility for broadcasting a message over which it had no control. The VOA reserved the possibility of broadcasting excerpts from interviews but not the programmes in their entirety.

Jean-Marie Etter, president of the Hironnelle Foundation says “Gutahuka” is aimed at raising awareness and providing service information and popularisation programmes to explain the activities behind the acronym DDRRR. This does not preclude providing accurate news, but the intention is different from that of a straight news programme that aims to reflect the true facts without seeking to elicit a specific form of behaviour.

“I believe that in the long run, in areas of violent conflict, an ‘informative’ approach – which may have fewer results in the short term, but will be more solid and will build confidence in the long term – will eventually be preferred,” Etter says.

Nevertheless Radio Okapi presents information in a factual manner like any other news radio station. Its journalists report what they have seen in the east of the country where the armed bands operate and carry out interviews with people concerned at all levels. Such journalistic handling of information, whether it be positive or negative, has been an editorial priority from the outset.

Radio Okapi fills in the gaps in the incomplete information about the repatriation process that is provided in the Democratic Republic of Congo and neighbouring countries, or by the international media, which generally confine themselves to reporting MONUC press conferences and press releases.

It must be said that the United Nations information policy on the subject is rather restrictive. To avoid information leaks that, if exploited by partisan interests, might threaten the smooth conduct of operations, MONUC

usually releases information to the media only when negotiations have been completed or when repatriations have been confirmed. Visits are then organised and the international press is invited to Kigali airport when large numbers are being repatriated.

This information policy is not always well understood by the Congolese people who want their country to be free of foreign soldiers so that peaceful reconstruction can begin. As a result, MONUC is often blamed in the Congolese media for DDRRR delays.

As Mamadou Bah, the Senegalese Coordinator of the DDRRR campaign points out, however, “there are probably 5,000 foreign combatants left today. Many of them will leave by the end of the year, some by their own means. The remainder will no longer be a threat and will not prevent free and transparent elections from being held.”

Long years of warfare and the collapse of the State have ravaged the Congo, where pillaging and the law of the strongest prevailed. The repatriation of foreign rebels is only part of the problem. There is also the explosive question of the national militias and armed groups that have taken possession, economically and militarily, of entire zones of the country.

The Congolese Government has announced the formation of a new unified army. Hoping to be enlisted, many combatants now prefer to wait without laying down their arms. A national demobilisation and disarmament programme, which will be funded by the World Bank, will be aimed at reintegration not only of former combatants, but of the elderly and disabled, war widows and thousands of child soldiers. Assistance, education, training programmes and job opportunities must be provided for them.

Reporting this process is a challenge both to MONUC’s information campaign and to the country’s media, which must all contribute, by providing accurately and responsible news, to the success of a process that is imperative for a genuine return to peace.



Introduction to Part 3

Journalists Under The Gun

Violence against journalists is a major threat to world press freedom, yet the number of reporters who are shot, bombed, rocketed, kidnapped and stalked to their death is constantly on the increase, says Rodney Pinder of the International News Safety Institute (INSI). It belies the image common in many developed countries of a frivolous gutter press. Instead, he says, thousands of brave journalists put their lives on the line to shine light on nasty places.

The war in Iraq only emphasises the dangers that journalists run. An army that can spot car license plates from space cannot seem to recognise a big building used as a headquarters by journalists. While INSI seeks to engage in a dialogue with defence ministries to avoid media casualties like those seen in Iraq, Pinder stresses that journalists themselves need to think carefully about their own safety. This theme is continued by Juliana Cano, who urges journalists to reconsider how they go about their jobs and interact with their sources in order to minimise their exposure to danger.

They are still not conscious, she says, that safety is an asset in their job and not a burden. At the same time, governments have an obligation to ensure that journalists can carry out their essential work for society without being threatened or attack. Impunity for those who attack journalists is unacceptable.

Aidan White, of the International Federation of Journalists, says that aid to the profession needs to be focused more on journalists and their needs and less on infrastructure. It is intolerable that they should be targeted and placed in harm's way. The lack of respect for the status of journalists worldwide, he says, is widespread and profound. But he says the establishment of INSI will contribute enormously to building confidence within the profession.

Shining Light on Our Dark and Nasty Places...

Journalists Pay a Heavy Price for Getting the Facts

CHAPTER 7 There is no greater threat to world press freedom than violence committed against journalists.

Rodney Pinder,
Director,
International News
Safety Institute

Violence or the threat of violence or the creation of a climate of violence around their work can cow or frighten off or, in extreme cases, silence reporters forever.

Conversely, anything that can be done to help safeguard reporters in danger zones eases the flow of free information.

The toll of brave journalists killed increased sharply in 2003, boosted by the Iraq War which has become the bloodiest for the news media in the modern era. It claimed 38 journalists and key staff dead, plus two missing, believed to be dead, in slightly more than a year.

Outside the Iraqi theatre, journalists and support staff were killed in 2003 in Ivory Coast, Somalia, Kashmir, Palestine, Indonesia, Philippines, India, Congo, Guatemala, Nepal, Colombia, Brazil and Russia.

They were shot, bombed, rocketed, kidnapped and murdered. Some died in road accidents, others in conflict from health-related causes.

In Iraq, where gutsy journalists and their helpers daily put themselves in harm's way in the most dangerous environment on earth, those who paid the ultimate price for press freedom came from Argentina, Australia, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Spain, Ukraine, UK and USA.

Seven are known to have been killed by US forces and four in cross-fire between American soldiers and Iraqi elements.

Four were killed by the Iraqi army in the invasion phase of the war. Ten died in suicide bombings, including nine Iraqis in one horrific blast on February 1.

Nine were killed by unidentified gunmen, four died in road or other accidents and two succumbed to medical conditions.

Of course, the death of newsmen and women is only part of the grim story. The Committee to Protect Journalists reports instances of media repression in 95 countries in 2003, including not only assassination but physical assault, imprisonment, censorship and legal harassment.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The toll belies an image, all too common in many developed countries, of a gutter press devoted only to raking through garbage cans for the tawdry secrets of so-called celebrities.

How easily we overlook the thousands of honest journalists around the globe who shine bright lights on our dark and nasty places, and too often pay the ultimate price for their devotion to the truth that sets us free.

The International Press Institute says the unacceptable level of bloodshed reinforces the media's need to confront safety issues. And the International Federation of Journalists adds that safety must be a top priority for the media in Iraq, raising the need for urgent and practical steps to improve working conditions for journalists there.

When he assumed office, Secretary-General Kofi Annan pledged to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to one of prevention. The news industry – media organisations, journalist support groups and humanitarian concerns – was on similar ground when it agreed to set up the International News Safety Institute (INSI) in 2003.

More than other journalist support groups, INSI aims to be proactive. Through training and other informed guidance, it means to help journalists avoid the kind of dreadful incidents that give rise to outraged reaction.

It acts as an information hub and point of liaison and as an exchange for safety-related data between organisations that hitherto had little or no contact.

Most importantly, INSI seeks to help journalists and news organisations with scant resources of their own.

It has already secured funding for a major global programme of safety training for journalists in deprived areas.

This aligns well with UNESCO's position that particular attention should be given to journalists' safety – with the creation of international standards for training and equipment as well as expanded access to risk-awareness training for journalists and media staff, particularly at the local level.

INSI is gearing up to provide what is required because we understand that while much attention may be focused on the big wars involving hundreds of international

journalists, thousands of news media staff and freelancers working in their own countries are equally at grave risk.

The Iraq war – unprecedented in terms of speed and concentrated power in the invasion phase followed by protracted and increasingly bloody insurgency in the second, where anyone and everyone is a target – has created its own awful watershed for journalists' safety.

Journalists have fallen victim out of all proportion to their numbers, first in the initial onslaught of "shock and awe", where the latest and most lethal technology was widely deployed, then in the second and current phase of low-tech but equally deadly insurgency and banditry.

There is little firm evidence of deliberate targeting of the news media by either the coalition or Iraqi regular forces, or by insurgents and bandits. Nevertheless, Iraqi and foreign journalists, by virtue of having to be out there to do their jobs, have been especially exposed.

There is considerable evidence of carelessness and trigger-happiness among young soldiers – shoot first and ask later, if at all bothered – and of surprisingly poor communications between base and front-line troops as well as between units in the field themselves.

I say surprising because to many of us it seems incredible that an army that can read a number plate from space cannot communicate from HQ to a spearhead formation that a big building has been a haven for hundreds of journalists for months, or that one unit shepherding journalists around a story cannot advise an approaching tank column to look out for cameramen at the scene and exercise care.

Journalists too have made mistakes. Dangerous assumptions have been made about the capabilities of soldiers, and risky acts have been undertaken to get a better story or picture.

Newsmen and women have gone to war unprepared physically or mentally, untrained and ill-equipped for the environment. With few exceptions, we remain the only professionals who venture onto a battlefield with no specialised training for what we will encounter and no proper safety equipment.

In my opinion, the Iraq war teaches that conflict reporters and armies must begin a more productive dialogue. The military, from the bottom up, has to better understand

CHAPTER 7 : SAFETY FOR REPORTERS IN CONFLICT ZONES

the imperatives that drive independent news coverage and the forces that drive good journalists. The media has to make more effort to understand the conditions under which the modern soldier operates, as well as his munitions and his capabilities – or lack of them.

We need more pragmatic and practical exchanges between soldiers and journalists if we are to save our lives in future and if they are to avoid shooting down the pillars of the free society the troops seek to serve.

INSI has begun such a dialogue with Britain's ministry of defence and seeks to widen the discussion with other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation powers.

A new word entered the journalistic war lexicon with this war – embedding. It was in fact a new word for an age-old practice; an army taking journalists along as camp followers.

However, this time it was done on an unprecedented scale and with the aid of astounding communications which permitted live video reporting of front-line action.

The pictures were truly amazing, and the news media and their audiences undoubtedly benefited from being in the thick of the action.

But by embedding reporters, did some in the military then believe their work was done as far as the news media was concerned? Did they think that their responsibility for the safety of journalists ended there and that any news people outside the “embedments” were no concern of theirs?

More than one military type asked why non-embeds, or unilaterals as they became known, had to be there at all, since the media is fully taken care of by this new system!

Clearer identification of journalists on the field of battle to avoid mistakes by soldiers who might, for example, confuse a man hoisting a camera to his shoulder with one preparing to fire a missile from the same position, has become another major issue.

What kind of identification would be appropriate? Some journalists in Iraq are going into danger without flak jackets because they fear the clothing makes them stand out. Some have suggested a form of electronic tagging like that used by coalition forces. But the military fears

specialised identity equipment or clothing for journalists could be stolen and used by insurgents or terrorists. Large TV letters on news vehicles did not save some journalists from being shot by soldiers who said they feared the markings had been adopted by the enemy as a disguise.

Such fears are justified. Assassins posing as a camera team murdered Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Masoud in 2001 and western government security agents themselves have posed as journalists when it suited them.

And, of course, some journalists resist visible labelling, for obvious reasons. Similarly, many reporters see more comprehensive accreditation procedures as smacking of “licensing”, that age-old journalistic taboo.

One of the most controversial issues to rise from this war is that of armed escorts for journalists. More journalists now work in Iraq under the protection of hired guns than in any previous war. The issue has polarised the international news community.

Some say guns have no place with any journalist under any circumstances. How can one be an impartial observer if the weaponry implies you are on one side and the objects of your reporting are on the other. And does the possession of weapons make journalists go more boldly into trouble?

Others insist, that armed guards are a regrettable necessity and that they have undoubtedly saved lives.

Is there a moral difference between reporting as an embed, protected by the most powerful military machine in the field, and driving around the same conflict as a unilateral guarded by armed security personnel?

After all, in Iraq there are plenty of ruthless bandits who could not care less if the other is a journalist, businessman or fellow gangster.

INSI holds the view that journalists themselves must not carry arms. One can imagine what might happen to a journalist seized as a suspected spy and found to be carrying a concealed weapon. Another significant issue to be exposed by this conflict is the effect of traumatic stress in journalists covering violent events.

With the help of Cable News Network and Independent Television News, a stress study was undertaken of 100

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

journalists who had covered the opening phases of the war. Roughly 20 per cent of the sample endorsed significant symptoms of depression (low mood, tearfulness, difficulties with sleep, appetite and sexual drive, a sense of failure and guilt).

A similar percentage were troubled by an array of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms – nightmares, recurrent unwanted thoughts of episodes in which they had come close to dying or seeing someone die, flashbacks, an emotional numbing, a hyper-vigilance even when away from danger, a prominent startle response and so on.

Each war and disaster provides more information about the mental impact on reporters of the dreadful things they witness and increases our understanding. More studies need to be done.

Regrettably for all of us, the old perceptions of journalists as independent, neutral observers, dispassionate and aloof from the trouble and strife, have changed.

Journalists are being targeted around the world as never before, whether by shadowy assassins acting as censors for police states or criminals, or merely by violent demonstrators at a G8 meeting who regard reporters as part of an arm of hated global capitalism.

Abdullahi Madkeer of DMC radio in Somalia was shot in the stomach by militia while covering the reopening of Baidoa Airport. Doctors refused to operate on him because he was HIV positive.

Separatists killed the editor in chief of a news agency in Kashmir; Israeli forces gunned down a Palestinian cameraman working for Associated Press Television News and a freelance British documentary cameraman; unknown men kidnapped and executed an Indonesian journalist in Aceh and an interpreter for Agence France-press in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and in Guatemala a hooded mob chased 100 journalists at a political rally and shot one of them dead.

Many journalists died in similar ways in different places at the hands of people who, simply, didn't like what they reported. The killers differ in their methods, but share a common idea: reporters are fair game. The absence of punishment for those who violate journalists' human rights undoubtedly encourages them.

Statistics from the Committee to Protect Journalists bear repeating here:

- Three-quarters of the journalists killed in the past decade were targeted in direct reprisal for their work, and in 94 per cent of these cases no one was brought to justice.

- Killing a reporter is only half as risky as burgling a house in London where 12 in a hundred thieves are caught and convicted.

In far too many countries authorities seem to be more interested in criminal investigations of journalists, for alleged libel, defamation, corruption, tax fraud and the like, than in bringing their killers to justice.

The UN Security Council in 2003 passed a resolution reinforcing the need to protect the rights of humanitarian workers in times of conflict. That is good. But we might note that three times more news media personnel than aid workers have been killed in conflict in the past 10 years.

The Geneva Conventions offer the news media no more safeguards than any other civilians. Whether this is right or not is the object of a serious division within the media itself. Personally, I believe a specific convention safeguard might be particularly effective for journalists persecuted in their own lands. The risk of being hauled off to trial as a war criminal might actually constrain some of the more ruthless rulers who hate the media for exposing their corruption.

What can we effectively do to make future years less lethal for journalists?

- **Understanding.** We can work to promote better understanding and communications between journalists and the military in conflict zones.
- **Transparency.** We need an open inquiry when reporters are killed, to find out what happened and to learn from it. It is surely not in the interests of the armies of democracies to be suspected of murdering journalists – which is what happens when they refuse to investigate incidents and report the findings in a timely fashion.
- **General training.** We can provide more and better safety training for journalists, especially

C H A P T E R 7 : S A F E T Y F O R R E P O R T E R S I N C O N F L I C T Z O N E S

for the many who have never received any. We must – and will – reach these neglected areas. We have to reach out to journalism schools to embed safety in their courses so that we nurture a more safety aware new generation.

- **Focused training.** We must tailor training to circumstances. Journalists in big wars have different needs from those under threat at home who may, for example, simply need to know how to recognise when they are under surveillance.
- **Stress.** The issue of traumatic stress and how to deal with it must be built into any hostile environment training, at practitioner and even journalism-student level. Employers should provide free counselling to staff who feel in need of it after experiencing shocking events.
- **Application.** More assiduous practice in the field of what was learned during safety training might have helped to save lives in Iraq.
- **Equipment.** We must strive to ensure journalists have suitable protection when bombs and bullets are flying.
- **Practice.** We need wider global acceptance of a safety code of conduct, like INSI's, that seeks to remove the competitive element when journalist's lives are at risk, and asks employers and staff and security forces to accept certain responsibilities.
- **Sharing.** Journalists must share safety information in a wider, more timely and effective way. Safety information cannot be proprietary.

Put at its simplest, employers and journalists should be encouraged to recognise that quality coverage of conflict is not jeopardised by safety; that employers have a duty to care for their staff and journalists have a duty of care for themselves, their families and their colleagues. It is the purpose and mission of the International News Safety Institute to pursue these issues.

We made a start in 2003 by arranging the first safety training for Iraqi journalists and by helping set up training, focused on local needs, for journalists in Colombia.

We have launched our website www.newssafety.com as a one-stop-shop for safety information and we are steadily building useful content.

We began a rolling series of safety debates with a forum in London entitled "Lessons Learned in Iraq," which drew a packed roomful of journalists and other concerned parties.

We have started discussions with armed forces which we hope will lead to the creation of better rules and practice for the battlefield, and, above all, greater understanding and communication.

We will be working with the Cardiff School of Journalism in Wales to produce a safety training module for journalism schools.

And, once funding is secured, we will begin our global training programme for the thousands of journalists in need of greater professional advice and protection.

With the help of the global news community, and those who appreciate the critical importance of press freedom worldwide, we just might in 2004 begin to apply the brakes to this accelerating cycle of bloodshed and violence.

Keeping Reporters Safe in the Danger Zone

CHAPTER 8 For more than 20 years Colombia has been a dangerous place for journalists. In the eighties and early nineties they were targeted by drug dealers who wanted to stop the government from approving extradition laws¹. They attacked anyone who exposed their cruelty and who warned society about how they were corrupting it. Many media directors, editors and reporters harshly criticised the mafia bosses and published editorials and stories in favour of their extradition to the United States, since sentences against them in Colombia were too lenient.

Juliana Cano,
Director of the
Colombian Foundation
for Freedom of the Press
(FLIP)

Thus narcotics dealers such as Pablo Escobar started to attack prestigious journalists and media². They killed Guillermo Cano, director of the newspaper *El Espectador*, they bombed the newspaper's building and assassinated others³, including Jorge Enrique Pulido⁴. Among those they abducted were Francisco Santos and Diana Turbay,⁵ who was killed in January, 1991 when police tried to rescue her. They also bombed the building of *Vanguardia Liberal* in the city of Bucaramanga.

Parallel to the anti-drug war, Colombia is immersed in a long-standing internal armed conflict that also hit journalists during the 1980's and early 1990's⁶. But it has been in the last decade that this conflict – increasingly tied to the drug-dealing business – has had the worst impact on the Colombian media.

Guerrillas belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) have threatened, abducted, and killed journalists in many parts of the country. Their enemies in the Peasant Self-Defence (AUC) force, have also killed, driven into exile, and harassed many journalists.

According to the 2003 annual report of the Colombian Foundation for the Freedom of the Press (FLIP), FARC was responsible for 23 attacks against the press (including threats, deaths, abductions, etc.), ELN was responsible for 4, and the AUC, for 17.

The latest statistics show a new and worrisome trend in the attacks against the free press. Many members of illegal armed groups have teamed up with corrupt local politicians, public officials, or local mobs⁷. This “cocktail” is proving lethal for brave reporters who expose public corruption or violence in their town. Three of the six journalists who were killed in 2003 because of their reporting were investigating corruption. Seven of the 55 reporters who were threatened last year left the country. The pressures on journalists become even more intense in the rural areas, where they have to deal directly with the illegal armed groups, local authorities, politicians, drug dealers, and even businessmen who try to influence news coverage in their favour.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Issues Journalists must consider

1. Journalists' relations with their sources

The government of President Andrés Pastrana set up a special demilitarised zone in the province of San Vicente del Caguán for peace talks to begin with FARC. Most of the journalists who were sent to cover the talks came from this province. Some became friends with members of the guerillas, their main sources. When Pastrana broke off the peace process, the journalists became suspect and were considered to be sympathisers of the FARC.

In the face of danger, some reporters fail to keep sufficiently far away from their sources, which increases the risk that they will fall foul of the sources' enemies. Many cases have been registered by our foundation in which a journalist was wrongfully considered to be supporting his source.

Instead of covering specific beats and getting too close to sources, journalists should cover broader topics (such as the displacement of peoples or the state of human rights) that put them in touch with a wider range of contacts. Some newspapers have begun doing this and have demonstrated that it minimises attacks against journalists. But no matter how the work is organised in a news-room, reporters ought to keep a professional distance from their sources. This means not making commitments to them, not doing favours for them, and not sharing social gatherings with them.

This will send the message that journalists are seeking the truth, that they will try to hear all parties and be fair in their stories without having a hidden agenda of helping a friend.

Keeping a prudent distance and talking to all of the sources involved also reduces the possibility of becoming a bearer and spreader of propaganda or of being used to pass information about strategic movements of the combatants that may serve as a military advantage for one side or the other.

2. Searching for breaking news – “Scoop Syndrome”

In a country at war, finding breaking news can get you killed. In 2002, two journalists were covering an army pursuit trying to get the scoop. They were both killed.⁸ On the other hand, it is usual for reporters to travel into dangerous places in search of news without even

telling their news desks where they are going. This sort of behaviour has led to abductions.

Journalists are starting to realize that their lives come before a scoop. They have begun to evaluate the risk of travelling to certain zones on their own. Local journalists have made agreements among themselves to travel in groups and to keep a responsible person fully informed of their movements⁹. They have also decided not to travel to dangerous areas and to avoid unnecessary risks even if they are going to miss the breaking news.

3. Many Jobs

Local reporters tend to combine their job with other occupations. The need to have several jobs is due to the fact that journalists have a base salary of between US\$ 250-400 per month¹⁰. They are also expected to find advertisements for their programmes (particularly in radio) in order to increase their income. At first glance it may seem that this does not affect the safety of journalists, but it does.

In extreme cases, some reporters have done freelance jobs for the armed groups. Two camera men, for example, were hired to make a home video for a local mafia boss who was also a paramilitary leader. The guerrillas then concluded that the journalists always worked for him and killed them¹¹.

Some journalists have combined their reporting job with political activities, such as being campaign directors for local politicians. But this means that an armed group that dislikes the politician's position may undertake actions against the reporter as well.

Since reporters are well known in their communities, they are asked to actively participate as intermediaries in abductions, or to approach an illegal armed group¹². This alone may be perceived as having chosen a side. In order to be safe journalists should avoid acting as intermediaries and should suggest that humanitarian organisations take over the role instead.

Many journalists that do not get properly paid by the owners of their media have to sell advertisements in order to make a living, which may result in abuse and place journalists at risk. In Colombia most local advertising comes from mayors or governors. The Foundation for Freedom of the Press knows of several situations in which public officials have threatened to stop placing ads in media that criticise them, and some

CHAPTER 8 : TALES FROM THE DRUG WARS: KEEPING REPORTERS SAFE IN THE DANGER ZONE

situations have led to life threats. A straightforward legislation establishing guidelines for the distribution of public advertising is urgently needed.

For their own safety, journalists need to be better paid.

4. Lack of a culture of protection

Although our foundation has undertaken the task of instilling a safety culture into the minds of Colombian journalists, many are still not conscious that safety is an asset in their job, not a burden. For years, countless Colombian journalists, particularly local ones, have acted according to the principle of “death or glory.” Others are used to being threatened and consider that receiving a death call or a pamphlet is part of the job. Most of them would not even think that going through a risk assessment is important in their line of work.

Until the publication of the protection manual written by the foundation and sponsored by UNESCO, Colombian journalists had never been made to think about the importance of their own safety. The manual has at least made journalists reflect about correct behavior when reporting in a dangerous area. It also lets them know that not only do they have the same rights as anyone else, but that they also have a responsibility towards society to produce reliable information.

The latter is particularly important. Creating a consciousness among journalists that their job is essential for the construction of democracy provides a strong argument towards convincing them that their safety is important. If they are killed, society suffers a great loss. It loses access to information about what is happening, and once again truth becomes the first casualty in an armed conflict.

However, it cannot be forgotten that this responsibility does not only belong to journalists. Combatants must not consider journalists part of the conflict and should not put them in the line of fire¹³. They must clearly know that journalists are an essential part of freedom of expression and the right to be informed¹⁴.

II. Government responsibilities

All governments have the responsibility of protecting their citizens, particularly those who have special roles in a democracy, such as journalists, human rights activists and union leaders. Some progress has been

made in this respect in Colombia. In 2000 the ministry of the interior created a special program to protect journalists and other vulnerable professionals who are at risk because of the armed conflict or because they cover information related to human rights. The program provides physical protection measures such as radios to enable immediate communication with authorities, bulletproof vests and even bodyguards¹⁵. The program provides temporary relocation expenses¹⁶ or air tickets broad in extreme cases in which the journalist has to leave the country.

Although these measures reduce the risk, they do not go far enough. They are often carried out inefficiently or too slowly, particularly in regions far from the capital. They are not combined with the preventative actions that are crucial in developing a strategy that will permanently reduce attacks against the press.

The programme does not provide protection for journalists threatened as a result of their work for reasons not directly linked with the armed conflict. Such was the case of a journalist who was threatened by a soccer player for publishing information the player did not like¹⁷.

Moreover, when a journalist is attacked by government officials, he may receive aid, but no further investigation is required¹⁸. It is paradoxical that a program run by government officials protects journalists who are threatened by other government officials.

The safety of journalists also depends on the government's political willingness to support their work, and investigate attacks against the press. Publicly backing journalists as fundamental participants in the creation of a democratic society and legitimising their task of informing within a civil war is essential. Such legitimisation has not always been carried out in Colombia¹⁹. The government could more openly support journalists' work, particularly in covering the internal conflict. This would send a message of zero tolerance toward public officials, corrupt politicians or members of the security forces that might make them think twice before threatening or harassing a journalist.

Enforcement of the law and punishment for attacks against the media is a way of elevating the political cost of such attacks. But many journalists do not report these attacks because they do not believe in the judicial system. With good reason – 95 per cent of the cases being investigated by the attorney general's

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

office never reach a final decision²⁰. Other cases are not investigated because complaints of threats are not accepted by public officials. A two-way strategy directed towards officials and journalists should be implemented – towards journalists so that they report attacks, and towards officials so that they thoroughly investigate these accusations. Impunity is unacceptable.

III. Society's Role

The support for the work and role of journalists is the best way in which society can help in making the press safe. Elevating the political cost of attacking reporters and letting the attackers know that their actions are condemned are among the ways in which this support can become effective. Society needs to be mobilized – there should be public demonstrations of protest every time a journalist is killed, attacked, or driven into exile.

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¹ “Informe a la SIP sobre dramática situación del periodismo en Colombia”, *El Espectador*, October 16, 1990.

² “El Peligro de cumplir con el deber en Colombia”, *La Opinión*, May 5, 1991, pg. 6; “Nuevas amenazas de los Extraditables”, *Diario del Otún*, March 19, 1991, pg. 3.

³ Guillermo Cano was killed on December 17, 1986 in front of the newspaper's offices.

⁴ Pulido was killed on November 8, 1989.

⁵ Diana Turbay was abducted on August 30, 1990 by a group of drug dealers in danger of being extradited to the United States. She was killed during a rescue attempt on January 25, 1991. The same group abducted Francisco Santos in September 20, 1990. The Medellín Cartel also abducted Azucena Liévano, Juan Vitta, Hero Buss, Richard Becerra, and Orlando Acevedo. “El Cartel de Medellín tiene a periodistas: Gobierno”, *La Patria*, October 4, 1990, pg. 6A; “Francisco Santos está Vivo”, *El País*, November 30, 1990, pág. 11; “Familia de Francisco Santos pide Pruebas de Supervivencia”, *El Colombiano*, March 20, 1991, pg. 1; “Piden Liberación de periodistas”, *El Tiempo*, March 20, 1991, pg. 3-A; “Familiares de Diana Turbay y Azucena Liévanos divulgaron cinta con sus voces”, *El País*, October 8, 1990, pg. 8; “Haremos Todo lo que nos permita la ley para lograr la libertad de periodistas”, *El Nuevo Siglo*, December 1, 1990, pg. 4; “El Periodismo sale hoy con

sus páginas enlutadas”, *El Espectador*, January 26, 1991, pg. 8-A.

⁶ Colombian Commission of Jurists (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas), “Colombia, Derechos Humanos y Derecho Humanitario: 1996”, Bogotá: 1997, pgs. 3-40.

⁷ Apart from FLIP, several freedom of expression organizations have publicly stated this hypothesis. In its last country report, the Interamerican Press Society (SIP) said, “It is noteworthy that reports on political and/or administrative corruption have become a growing factor in violence against journalists”. http://www.sipiapa.com/publications/report_colombia2004m.cfm.

⁸ On April 11, 2001, Héctor Sandoval and Walter López, journalists from RCN, were killed by a gunner board an army helicopter during the pursuit of guerrillas in Cali.

⁹ Journalists of newspaper *El Pílon* in Valledupar who decided to travel as a group whenever searching for news in the rural area.

¹⁰ This information was gathered by FLIP in a survey of 30 journalists who received threats in their line of duty and another 40 who had not been harassed. Other investigations related to this subject have been done by universities. The Universidad Javeriana, for example, presented the results of an investigation related to the working conditions of journalists in a seminar in October 2003.

¹¹ Luis Alberto Rincon, manager and owner of a radio station and Alberto Sánchez, a local TV reporter, were killed in El Playón (Santander) in November 28, 1999. Their murderers were sentenced to prison on July 26, 2002.

¹² One of the hypothesis considered during the trial against the murderers of Jaime Garzón, was that he could have been killed because of his participation as an intermediary in abductions.

¹³ This has been widely included in different international treaties and covenants. Most recently, the UN Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Ambeyi Ligabo, who visited Colombia in February, reiterated the principle.

¹⁴ This is a basic principle of international humanitarian law, conveyed in the Geneva Protocols I and II. It allows for governments and society to establish who directly or actively participates in the hostilities and who does not.

¹⁵ These extent to which this protection is made available depend on a study, carried out by members of the security forces, that determines the journalist's exposure to risk.

¹⁶ Relocation expenses are given for up until three months. After that, the journalist has to find a different way of providing for himself and his family.

Too Much Emphasis on Technology:

Help for Media Often Overlooks Journalists

CHAPTER 9 Over the past year or so, UNESCO, national development agencies and some major independent donors have been rethinking their strategies for supporting independent media, particularly in transitional states and in regions of conflict.

*Aidan White,
International
Federation of Journalists*

This is long overdue. In the past ten years, global political conditions have turned full circle – from an atmosphere of liberation and ever-expanding freedoms, to uncertainty, intolerance and confrontation. At the same time, the media landscape has changed equally dramatically in the face of technological convergence, and a rapidly-expanding information and communications marketplace that has created new and dynamic forces.

A review of strategies to build capacity and assist the the media is timely; and this may be a good moment to reconsider how we target resources to support independent media systems nourished by well-trained and professional journalists.

Assistance to the media, worth many millions of dollars each year, has over the last decade covered training, network-building, media-law reform, legal advocacy, support for professional associations and the prevention of conflict.

From the IFJ's standpoint, the results of this investment, much of it in the Balkans, have been mixed. Undoubtedly, there has been much good work: Independent media did survive during the worst days of conflict in Bosnia, Kosovo and in Serbia during the last days of the Milosevic regime; the same is true for Afghanistan, central Africa and elsewhere.

Independent journalists have been protected through alerts and press-freedom networks such as the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX).

Media law has been reformed and management of media improved.

But there have also been failures – to establish national training infrastructures; to create effective and independent professional organisations, and, most glaringly of all, to bring about efficient transition to genuinely public-service systems of broadcasting.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Assistance to the media can and has been very effective in crises, but the lack of long-term strategies and commitment often leaves regions with much unfinished business.

In particular, any evaluation of the value of assistance to the media, from a journalist's perspective, must answer some critical questions:

- Are the majority of journalists safer, more secure and more confident in their work?
- Do they have better working conditions?
- Is their professional independence improved and their status more widely recognised?

The answer to these from colleagues coming from many of the most difficult parts of the world is emphatically "no".

Too much of the capacity-building of the past has been focused on short-term objectives and limited programmes of professional support.

Not enough has been devoted to creating national infrastructures for professionalism. This includes strong and unified journalists' groups that can be a counterweight to the recalcitrant governments that wilfully ignore the spirit of the laws they adopt and resolutely keep their hands on the controls of mass media, particularly broadcasting, whenever they can.

All around the world, journalists struggle with the daily reality of poverty, corruption and intimidation. Their crisis is particularly felt in regions of conflict – West and Central Africa, Indonesia, Palestine and Iraq, Colombia and the length and breadth of that vast region of Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union. Their aspirations are essentially the same, whether they work in public, private or independent media, in transition states or in regions afflicted by poverty and social dislocation.

They want to work in security, to enjoy decent working conditions and professional respect for their work. They want to have the professional space to work without interference. In short, they want a culture of journalism.

Any debate about capacity building should start by identifying the steps needed to reach these benchmarks

for press freedom. In our experience over the past 15 years, the question of capacity-building in journalism has been hampered by three recurring problems:

- The failure of donor countries to allocate sufficient resources.
- A lack of coordination of support, largely the result of competing political interests among donor governments, which has created an unbalanced and often arbitrary approach to assistance.
- Poorly-thought out strategies for implementation, which has led to wasteful competition among beneficiaries for scarce resources.

I could add a fourth problem – the failure to recognise the value of human resources in the process of media development. Too much time has been spent on technical capacity and the process of media engagement in society. Too little consideration has been given to creating media systems that set social standards as well as aspiring to professional excellence.

Too often, journalists' associations and unions have not been properly involved or even considered worthy of inclusion in the process of developing the media.

Journalists' groups are often terribly divided and their weakness makes them vulnerable to political influence. But it is simply untenable to discuss the crisis facing media in areas of conflict and transition without bringing to the table those groups who form the body of journalism. If these groups are not representative or if they are politically compromised; that requires action too. It is not a problem that goes away if it is ignored.

In many of the areas of greatest need journalists are woefully ill-equipped to confront their problems. Journalists working in developing countries and in poor economic conditions have no leverage over bad working conditions; their unions are poorly organised and very often they face hostility from owners, whether private or public.

These circumstances undermine the impact of media assistance and reinforce the ability of governments and to interfere with journalism. This is a crisis of capacity that needs to be addressed.

My central theme today is not to undermine what has been done and what should continue to be done, but to say that we should refocus on the needs of people

CHAPTER 9 : TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON TECHNOLOGY : HELP FOR MEDIA OFTEN OVERLOOKS JOURNALISTS

who are in the front-line of the struggle for change in transition and conflict areas. We need a new approach to building capacity; one that is human-scale and centred on the social as well as the professional aspirations of people in media.

We live in increasingly uncertain times in which intolerance, threats of terrorism, and regional conflict have opened new fronts against the exercise of journalism; in which media people have been prominent among the victims; and which require new and vigorous efforts to enhance respect for the status of journalists and the work they do.

Attacks on the free press are made in new and innovative ways. Since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, a civil liberties crisis has enveloped both journalism and the broader civil society through the “war on terror.” This is a “war” of a very different kind that has created pervasive atmosphere of paranoia in which journalists have been particularly targeted.

The war in Iraq has reinforced an uncertain new international media climate, in which the status of journalists is being downgraded. Journalists, particularly Iraqi and Arab colleagues, are under pressure to report according to standards of bias that suit the interim government authorities. Where is the contribution to the culture of journalism in such a threatening environment?

Even worse, the grotesque term “friendly fire” cannot hide the reality that media staff have been cut down, in most cases by US forces, without credible, independent inquiries and explanation. It is an affront to democracy. We all should insist that these cases are properly investigated and that international law is changed to provide for impartial verification of such instances in future.

It is not enough for governments to wage war in the name of democracy and human rights; they have to measure up themselves to the standards they set for others. But this is not a problem about the actions of one country in one war. The lack of respect for the status of journalists worldwide is widespread and profound.

In July last year, the UN Security Council passed an important resolution enhancing the rights of humanitarian workers in conflict zones. That was laudable, but it is unconscionable that the other significant group of civilians who have a legitimate right to be present in conflict zones, journalists and media staff, was not

even mentioned in the context of this resolution. Do our people not die? Are they not in harm’s way? The problem is that even in the settled democracies, the love-hate relationship between politicians and the press leads to the needs of journalists and media people being ignored and rendered invisible.

In this gloomy atmosphere there is not much light. But one bright moment was the launch last year of the International News Safety Institute (INSI). The Institute – set up by the IFJ, the International Press Institute, and a number of leading journalists, along with major media organisations, press freedom groups and journalists’ associations – is committed to the creation of a global “culture of safety” within the media.

This is capacity-building at its most effective – creating the conditions for journalists and media to take sensible and useful steps to reduce the risks they face. The work of INSI, translated into practical packages of training, assistance and awareness-raising in every region of the world, will contribute enormously to building confidence within journalism.

This is one area where media organisations and journalists’ groups can work well together. Another is developing co-operation on the defence of press freedom and working together to face down governments that violate journalists’ and media rights. Building capacity should be about building solidarity within the industry to confront common problems.

But sometimes that is not so easy. Modern journalism has changed beyond all recognition. Journalists are expected to work longer hours, assume new tasks and apply a range of new skills. This brings added pressure to the normal framework of meeting deadlines.

At the same time, many media owners seem to have lost sight of the mission of journalism, consumed as they are with the imperatives of the marketplace. They provide a poor example to media in post-conflict societies, faced with problems of pluralism and independence. Indeed, the struggle for media professionalism in the heavily-concentrated and commercially driven modern media environment is these days one of the greatest challenges for journalists everywhere in the world.

In the converged communications and information environment, many journalists – often freelance without basic social protection – work for online, broadcast and print media in an intolerable climate of competition

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

that takes its toll on their health. Even if we cannot agree about the need for minimum social standards in journalism, there should be respect for freedom of association and the right of journalists to organise themselves freely. We should strive to find a common ground for solidarity on such issues as plurality, editorial independence, limitation of global media concentration, respect for public service values and observance of international core labour standards.

The fact is that if we do not protect national resources – such as public broadcasting – we undermine the ability of communities to defend their linguistic and cultural traditions. Lobbying against media concentration is essential to stop the attempts by global media companies to standardise, manipulate or control information. Anti-trust rules need to be updated and further developed.

In many regions journalists' groups are unable to play an effective role in the process of social dialogue because they do not have the capacity, financial or technical. In some countries journalists' unions at national level are hardly viable at all.

Regional networks of journalists' organisations, monitoring and campaigning for rights, can be a solution to the problem of a lack of capacity at national level. Such networks in Africa and the Middle East already exist and should be strengthened.

Action is also needed to support training and information-sharing on issues such as union development, collective bargaining, social rights, cultural diversity and authors' rights in a global context.

Solidarity among journalists is vital not only to improve the prospects for media at large, but also to challenge those who violate the ethics of our profession. The last decade has seen some of the worst examples of hate-speech and warmongering by media under the direction of political tyrants.

The legacy of this remains and it will take some time to rebuild confidence. But the prize of unity among journalists is a confident workforce that can face new challenges while making sure that the editorial atrocities of the past are not repeated.



Introduction to Part 4

Building Capacity and Journalistic Culture

Across central Asia and the Caucasus, lack of rights and freedom of express is a serious cause of concern. Attacks and threats against media workers are widespread throughout the region.

Azer Hasret explains how journalists are creating their own associations for self-protection and to defend the values of the profession. They have banded together in a regional network that is fighting against censorship and the violent intimidation of journalists while opposing state or political interference in the activity of the mass media.

In Indonesia and East Timor, also, journalists have begun to associate to increase professional standards and fight for freedom of expression. Kavi Chongkittavorn of the Southeast Asian Press Alliance stresses the importance of using local and regional resources to fight against abuses and improve conditions for the media.

At the same time, help given by donors is vitally important. In West Africa, Edetan Ojo explains, the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention aims to provide rapid support to the media in times of conflict. Although the partnership has only been in existence for a short time, it is hoped that it will avoid the duplication and waste of resources resulting from the lack of coordination among national, regional and international organisations.

Lena Johansson, of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, also says donors need to coordinate their efforts, since efforts and funds are wasted when they do not work with similar strategies.

She stresses that these strategies should include sustainable, long-term support for the media, including building structures, credibility and professionalism.

In Central Asia and Southern Caucasus:

Journalists Unite in Face of Media Repression

CHAPTER 10 The Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network (CASCFEN) covers eight independent countries of the former Soviet Union.

*By Azer H. Hasret,
Chairman,
Central Asian and Southern
Caucasian Freedom of Expression
Network*

Five of them – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – speak Turkic languages, while Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan are linguistically distinct. But the eight nations all share a great deal of culture, music and art. About 80 million people live in the region, about half of them in rural areas. More than 98 percent of them are literate, a very high rate.

Freedom House in the United States last year said only Armenia and Georgia enjoyed a degree of freedom, while the central Asians suffer under tight dictatorships. Since then, Georgia has moved toward greater democracy following the elections of January, 2004, while Azerbaijan has fallen into a virtually medieval dictatorship as a result of the fraudulent election of October, 2003 that brought to power Ilham Aliyev, the son of acting President Heydar Aliyev.

The Caucasus has been an area of conflict since the breakup of the Soviet Union. War broke out over the demand of Armenians living in the Nagorno Karabakh enclave within Azerbaijan to join Armenia. The war resulted in the exile or displacement of more than 1.2 million people on both sides in the conflict, which is stalemated with the enclave now in Armenian hands. Neighbouring Georgia faced breakaway demands from the Abkhazia and South Ossetia autonomous regions.

The entire zone is of great concern to human rights and press freedom organisations. Although there is no official state censorship in these region – except in Turkmenistan, where all media are controlled by President Saparmurat Turkmenbashi – there is generally little freedom of expression.

If you to try to buy an opposition newspaper in Almaty the news-stand operators will tell you that they are not allowed to sell you one. Or if you ask news sellers in Turkmenistan about independent newspapers, they will tell you that all newspapers are independent of the outside world's "hostile influence." You will not find any signs of opposition and independent mass media in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan either. The situation is a bit better in Kyrgyzstan, where opposition or independent newspapers do exist.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

As members of the Council of Europe, the three southern Caucasus countries enjoy some political rights and freedoms, including media freedom. Thus there are a lot of independent and opposition newspapers in all three nations, such as the daily *Yeni Musavat* in Azerbaijan, which has a respectable daily circulation of 25,000.

The independent press plays an important role in these countries because of the control or subservience of the electronic media; television in Azerbaijan or Armenia is as tightly state-controlled as it is in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan. During the October, 2003 presidential election in Azerbaijan, all TV stations backed the ruling party candidate, providing little or no access for opposition candidates

In Georgia, by contrast, TV channels provided balanced coverage during the November 2003 parliamentary elections. The election result in Azerbaijan was totally falsified, while in Georgia the election was annulled because of public resistance that was broadcast live on independent TV channels.

Attacks and threats against media workers are widespread throughout the region. At least 100 or more cases of violation of journalists' rights are recorded each year for each country.

A lot of journalist organisations exist in the CASCEN countries – both older groups that declared independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and dozens of new organisations that appeared later as countries claimed that they were moving towards open society and democracy. For example Azerbaijan has more than 60 different journalist associations, and the same is true for Armenia and Georgia – but this does not mean that they are all operative and effective.

In Azerbaijan, only about half a dozen journalists' associations are individually active, including the Committee to Protect Journalists and the JuHI Journalists' Trade Union, the first really independent union in Azerbaijan, which has been quick to react against infringements of journalists' rights.

A number of journalists' organisations have pooled efforts to create the Azerbaijan Journalists Confederation, which is open to all unbiased and independent media groups and which aims to obtain more effective protection of the rights of media workers.

Journalists in Azerbaijan have also created an autonomous press council, the first in the Confederation of Independent States. In March 2003 more than 400 media representatives convened the first congress of Azerbaijani journalists. The congress elected the 15-member press council, including six representatives of the public, and adopted a code of conduct. The government sought to preempt the idea by creating an official press council of its own, but was thwarted by the high level of solidarity among the nation's journalists.

Attempts also were made in to create a media council in Kyrgyzstan, but this was opposed by several influential organisations, including the main journalists' association. A similar situation prevails in Georgia, where journalists and publishers are not satisfied with the Liberty Institute's plans for a media council. The head of the Independent Association of Georgian Journalists, Zviad Pochkhua, says the Institute is affiliated with the government and should not be involved with the media council, which is supported by the Council of Europe.

But there are other efforts to build self-regulatory bodies for media and journalists, including the Independent Association of Georgian Journalists (IAGJ), which aims to protect and promote solidarity among media workers as well as to promote freedom of press and expression. This organisation, one of the most active journalists' associations in the country, is an associate member of the International Federation of Journalists and a full member of CASCEN. It is independent of all ideological, governmental, political and religious bodies, and its activities and rules are in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Georgian constitution.

In addition to the IAGJ, there is the old Georgian Federation of Journalists, which is a member of the International Federation of Journalists; and the Tbilisi-based Black Sea Press Association.

In Armenia, the non-profit and non-governmental Yerevan Press Club, founded in 1995, claims to be "the first professional association of journalists in Armenia established during the post-communist period." It aims to defend journalists' rights to freedom of expression and free access to information, to assist in improving the legislative and the economic base of the media and to promote professional contacts between Armenian and foreign media and individual journalists;

C H A P T E R 10: THE CENTRAL ASIA AND SOUTHERN CAUCASUS: JOURNALISTS UNITE IN FACE OF MEDIA REPRESSION

The Yerevan Press Club has partnership arrangements with the press club in Baku, Azerbaijan, the Journalists Union in Georgia and the Georgian Black Sea Press Association. Both the Yerevan and Baku press club collaborate with Turkish journalists' groups. Also active in Armenia are the Investigative Journalists' Association and the Union of Armenian Journalists, which is the successor to the old Soviet association founded in 1959.

The Union of Armenian Journalists also encourages freedom of speech and the press, provides its more than 1,500 members with legal assistance and protection and is engaged in programmes to train journalists. It has developed contacts with the journalist unions of Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, is affiliated with the International Federation of Journalists and closely cooperates with the Yerevan Press Club.

In Kazakhstan, a fund called "Journalists in Danger" gives legal, material and moral assistance to journalists who suffer pressures in their professional activity. The organisation keeps journalists in touch with the outside world, provides training and facilitates the investigation of attacks on journalists.

In Krygyzstan, "Journalists", a group founded in 1998, which has some 170 members, defends journalists' civic rights, and freedom of the press, and provides legal support to journalists in conflict situations.

The National Association of Independent Mass Media of Tajikistan, founded in 1999, has the aim of developing democratic institutions through the creation of independent media.

In Uzbekistan, two organisations, Ozod Ovoz and the Committee of Freedom of Speech and Expression work independently under very difficult conditions. They get no support from international donor agencies, and the government refuses to register them and blocks the web site of Ozod Ovoz within the country.

In 1996 the Uzbek government launched the Fund of Democratisation and Support to Mass Media, but it does nothing for media independence and journalists often are unaware of its existence. Collaboration between journalists and journalist associations in the region started non-systematically in the early 1990s. Such meetings as have taken place have been useful, and practice shows that understanding among journalists helps achieve understanding among nations.

CASCFEN was born in 2001 as a result of long discussions and now has seven members. They are the IPI Azerbaijan National Committee, JuHi, Ozod Ovoz of Uzbekistan, the Independent Association of Georgian Journalists, the "Journalists" Public Association in Kyrgyzstan, the National Association of Independent Mass Media of Tajikistan and the Union of Independent Journalists of Uzbekistan. The Kazakh group Journalists in Danger is a candidate member. All these organisations agreed to promote international standards of press freedom within the region and to share their experiences. The headquarters are in the regional cross-roads of Baku.

At the organisation's first congress in March, 2003, it adopted the Baku Declaration condemning censorship, state or political interference in the activity of the mass media and the intimidation of journalists by violence. It also called on all eight states in the region to allow journalists to move around without a visa. CASCFEN's web site contains daily press freedom news from the region including Turkey and Iran.

Suggested web sites:

<http://www.cascfen.or> – Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network

<http://www.ajkib.or> – Azerbaijan Journalists Confederation

<http://www.juhiaz.or> – Journalists' Trade Union

<http://www.ruh-az.co> – Committee to Protect Journalists

<http://www.ypc.a> – Yerevan Press Club

<http://home.media.am/sj> – Union of Armenian Journalists

<http://www.iagj.gol.g> – Independent Association of Georgian Journalists

<http://www.adilsoz.k> – Independent Fund "Adil Soz"

<http://www.monitoring.k> – Public Association "Journalists"

<http://www.nansmit.or> – National Association of Independent Mass Media of Tajikistan

<http://www.ozodovoz.or> – Organization "Ozod Ovoz"

<http://www.freeuz.or> – Committee of Freedom of Speech and Expression

The Challenges of Freedom in Southeast Asia

CHAPTER 11 The downfall of the 32-year-long military dictatorship of President Suharto in 1998 has allowed the Indonesian media to grow exponentially.

By Kavi Chongkittavorn,
Chairman of
Southeast Asian
A publishing license is not required, and it is estimated that 1,200 new printed newspapers and 900 new radio stations have emerged since 1998, along with 10 commercial TV stations. Together, they employ a total of about 22,000 journalists.

Press Alliance,
Bangkok
The media are free to produce almost any kind of political information, and this has increased public awareness of the political and economic conditions in the country, including the policies of the 24 parties in parliamentary elections in April and of the candidates in the presidential elections in July.

There had been fears that fundamental Islamic political groups would gain heavily in the elections because of disillusion with politics and economic hardship. That was not the case, and again the media should be given credit because of their extensive reports on policy similarities and differences.

As a new democracy, Indonesia looks to its democratic neighbours in the region for know-how and advice. The experience of the Philippines and Thailand was useful in drafting a freedom of information law in 2001.

For the past three years, the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalists and the Thai Journalists Association have jointly been teaching Indonesian journalists how to conduct corruption probes.

Both Thai and Filipino media have made use of access to information laws to get hold of government-held information that has enabled them to uncover several corruption scandals. This has been of particular interest to the Indonesian journalists.

Five months after the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) was founded in November 1998, a SEAPA branch in Jakarta was opened in cooperation with the the Alliance of Indonesian Independent Journalists.

Within months, an alert system was established to report on abuses of journalists and media conditions throughout the nation. SEAPA in Jakarta has become active in using the International Exchange of Freedom of Expression, the world's largest network of free media advocacy groups, to alert the world about abuses.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

This promotes solidarity among journalists, who for the first time feel that an attack on any journalist in the region is an attack on them all.

When Indonesian journalist Ersu Siregar, was killed by Indonesian military in Aceh last December during a clash with rebels, SEAPA immediately protested to the government and expressed the wish to send a fact-finding team to Aceh. But the Indonesian Ministry of Security refused the request.

After the breakdown in the ceasefire agreement in May last year, restrictions on coverage of the conflict in Aceh have been imposed, and the media have not been able to report freely on the growing violence in the province.

Using the American model, the Indonesian military seeks to control access to information by embedding local journalists and screening all information.

Now some lawmakers are floating the idea of reviving the defunct ministry of information, which served as the military dictatorship's main propaganda tool. The legislators say Indonesian journalists are too free and too westernised.

Building up from scratch in East Timor

Following the national referendum in August 1999, East Timor moved quickly towards independence.

Before Indonesian troops left East Timor following massive carnage, they destroyed all existing media structures and facilities. It was therefore urgently necessary to establish media institutions as soon as possible to make it possible for journalists to report on the upcoming election.

Of about 50 journalists in East Timor, some were Indonesians working there as correspondents for the mainstream newspapers with their head offices in Jakarta. Some were East Timorese returning from Indonesia, who were eager to contribute to nation-building. Others were young and inexperienced journalists from East Timor who thought their main duty was to report about their country to the outside. These three groups went their own ways without cooperating with one another.

The Southeast Asian Press Alliance took the initiative in late 1999 to facilitate dialogue among the groups and stressed the need to work and cooperate with one another.

As a Bangkok-based media advocacy group, SEAPA was seen as a neutral small regional body by the East Timorese journalists. After a series of meetings spanning five weeks, a consensus was reached to establish a journalists' association. UNESCO stood ready to help, along with other donors.

On 22 December 1999, the Timor Lorosae Journalists Association (TLJA) was established in Dili with 60 members, some of whom had been journalists only for a few months.

The association was considered a protective shield to ensure that freedom of expression was respected by the incoming government.

SEAPA has established a mentoring programme to guide the association, but this has not worked out because the Timorese are too busy coping with day-to-day tasks and because of a lack of economic incentives and seed funds. Nevertheless, SEAPA last year admitted the Timorese group as an associate member.

Some valuable lessons can be drawn from this regional framework. First, the use of local and regional resources must be utilised and encouraged. Second, donor countries need to spread out assistance, over a period of time rather than for a specific term that may not be sustainable. Third, it has to be remembered that pluralism does not develop by itself. It has to be nurtured through building supportive institutions – above all professional media to serve as watchdogs.

Catastrophe for Media in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Rapid Response Aid to West African Media

CHAPTER 12 The media in a number of West African countries, most notably Sierra Leone and Liberia, have been victims of conflicts for over a decade. Sometimes, as in the Ivory Coast, they are both victims of conflicts and major contributors to them.

*Edetaen Ojo,
Vice Chairman,
Media Foundation
for West Africa*

The most challenging conflicts have emerged in the Mano River region made up of Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Guinea. But the region also presents the greatest opportunities for a comprehensive rebuilding of the media to enable them to meet the challenges of peace-building, national reconstruction, and democratisation.

The impact of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts on the media was particularly catastrophic. In Sierra Leone, journalists' lives were threatened both by rebel and government forces. In all the violent conflicts and wars in Africa, no warlord has killed as many journalists as Foday Sankoh, the late rebel butcher of Sierra Leone.

Negative reporting in the media – often caused by the absence of basic professional standards, or by the lack of training opportunities for journalists – can aggravate tensions and conflicts by emphasising ethnic, political or religious biases.

Conversely, professional and balanced reporting can reduce tensions and help to resolve conflict situations.

This is the idea behind the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa, which began with discussions at a seminar hosted by UNESCO and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The partnership's aim is to facilitate the provision of rapid and collaborative support to the media to preempt and mitigate the effects of conflict.

The partnership holds that there is a need to build upon existing forms of collaboration and avoid unnecessary duplication. It also agrees to facilitate the exchange and pooling of knowledge and resources.

Although the field of media development in areas of conflict is relatively new, members of the partnership have learnt significant lessons through the activities of the international community in areas such as Kosovo and Afghanistan.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

This leads to the conclusion that coordinated and collaborative action by the international, regional and national media is essential.

Two of the activities recommended in the report are at the initial stages of implementation. These are the development of a press resource centre at the Press Union of Liberia, and a comprehensive review of the legal, institutional, regulatory and policy framework for the media in Liberia.

The partnership will provide, among other things, financial support and equipment to the Press Union, train its staff, help it to develop a business plan and assist the centre in developing institutional structures that will make it an independent asset for the media, free from political influence or internal dispute.

It is too early to assess the success or otherwise of the partnership approach in providing assistance to the media in transitional periods. This is because it has only been in existence for a very short time and is only really just beginning its engagement in Liberia.

But although many of its structures and operational principles are still being developed, the theoretical underpinnings of the partnership make it a model worth trying and supporting.

Its aim of facilitating rapid, collaborative support to the media to preempt and mitigate the causes and effects of conflict and their humanitarian consequences is founded on good reasoning.

It is a contrast with the experiences in countries where there has been poor coordination and competition for funding among national, regional and international organisations. This has resulted in the execution of ill-conceived and overlapping activities, with the result that many activities have been duplicated and resources wasted. In most cases, the results have ranged from the mediocre to the disastrous.

Why Donors Need to Coordinate:

Media Development Programmes

Lack Vision

CHAPTER 13

In the past two years, conflict in the world has worsened and the implementation of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become increasingly problematic. The 42 journalists killed on duty in 2003 was the highest toll since 1995, and the killing continues.

*Lena Johansson,
head of division for culture
and media,
Swedish International Development
Cooperation Agency*

For me, representing the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, the questions are these: What is our task as a donor? How can we assist those who are at this very moment under threat?

Furthermore, how can media structures be supported and strengthened without weakening local market initiatives? What can donors do to ease the transition from humanitarian information needs into a long-term media support, based on the work of local participants, freedom of expression and access to information? How can we assure a pluralistic media, an arena for many voices including those of women?

In the new Swedish policy on global development, management of conflict is seen as an essential area of work in order to reach the goal of poverty reduction. Violent conflicts always lead to poverty. Short-term conflicts can reduce a region or a country to long-term poverty.

However, not all conflicts are negative. Non-violent conflicts are a natural part of human interaction, a necessity for bringing about changes in society. The risk of violent conflict is significantly smaller in democratic societies where there is a pluralistic and professional media and space to participate and debate.

So what have we learned from history? Will we look back in five years wishing we had analysed and acted differently on the actual conflicts of today such as those in Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Liberia, and Iraq? Have we today become more alert, acting in a more adequate and timely way with the lessons learned from Rwanda, the Balkans and other conflict ridden areas? In some ways we have; in others we have not.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Media assistance is a complex materia with many challenges, there are three main areas of concern for donors:

- The need to establish strategies to move from initial humanitarian assistance – when the most important thing is to deliver aid and information – to more sustainable long-term media support, including building local structures, credibility and professionalism.
- The fact that development support is concentrated on only a few geographical areas, and seems to be more based on political grounds than need or impact. It is a great challenge for donors to increase and support the media and freedom of expression in countries that do not have immediate high political interests and international media attention, but are nonetheless plagued by conflict, disease and poverty. What does not attract international attention today might become the centre of world conflict tomorrow.
- The need for coordination. Effort and funds often wasted when donors do not work with similar strategies. Media-development programs often lack an overall long-term vision that coordinates with other development programmes.

UNESCO should continue to take a normative role in this work, in close consultation with other UN agencies. Harmonisation is the watchword, and coordination among donors is vital. At the same time, donors need to devote more attention to the media, both in areas of tension and in countries in transition.



Introduction to Part 5

A Tough Environment for Independent Media

Although all the countries in the Balkans have passed laws to limit the concentration of ownership of the media, they have generally failed, according to Nebojsa Spaic of the Belgrade Media Centre.

The same people who used to run the media under the old Communist regime are back on top, he says. Their power is hidden but by no means less, and they dominate printing, broadcasting and the Internet. Meanwhile, he says, the independent media are struggling to survive, even though freedoms were written into various laws and charters.

But it is not unusual, says Remzi Lami, director of the Albanian Media Institute, for laws in the Balkans to be written according to European standards and applied according to Balkan standards.

In Albania, there has been an explosion of newspapers, magazines and broadcasting outlets – all of which are competing for a limited market while plagued by a malfunctioning distribution system and lack of infrastructure.

Today, Lami said, the media is more representative of business interests than of public opinion, and journalists feel more threatened by their bosses than by the government.

In Iraq, the interim government has inherited a press system, that was intended to diversify the media market and set up an independent public broadcaster.

Nevertheless, Rohan Jayasekera of Index on Censorship, finds that this attempt to create a pluralistic media structure may not survive if people decide that it is merely a creation of the former occupying power.

He says its best chance for survival is to defend the profession and lead the opposition to any repressive press laws.

The Barons are Back in Charge

Media Power Grab in the Balkans

CHAPTER 14 All the countries in the Balkan region have amended their legislation to limit ownership concentration of the media.

Nebojsa Spaic, And they have all failed.

*Director of
Belgrade Media Centre* To find out why, listen to the protests of media and human rights groups as well as files from the trials of journalists.

Oh yes, and listen to the stories about journalists whose murders remain unsolved.

All the media in the post-conflict situation in the Balkans have one thing in common – the fact that power is executed through them. It is through them that the elites rule, divide, reconcile, and bribe. The more stable and sophisticated the system, the less obvious is the execution and its agents, and the more elusive and anonymous the power holders. Eventually, too, the media adopt the same goals as the political or financial powers that control them.

In non-democratic societies (which ours in the Balkans are slowly ceasing to be) it is obvious who abuses power through the media – the ruling structure, or even the dictator or the autocrat himself.

As we abandon these models of government and embark upon what we call transition, this abuse goes on through unspoken or secret agreements among the political and financial elites. Power is now hidden, but it is by no means smaller.

We are slowly embracing the model of the developed world in which life is generally better, but still far from wonderful. Even the most regulated markets and the best laws are not enough to limit the powerful.

In Serbia, leading tycoon Bogoljub Karic, and influential banker Ljubomir Mihajlovic have several key media under their direct or indirect control. Karic owns a TV station whose managing board is chaired by Mihajlovic. Mihajlovic virtually controls the domestic package of shares in the country's biggest, oldest, the most influential and prosperous media company Politika, which publishes a number of daily and weekly newspapers and owns a radio, television station and a distribution network.

Mihajlovic's foreign partner is Essen-based West-deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, whose oversized influence and rather controversial appearance in the media landscape of the Balkans threatens to create a new suffocating monopoly.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Karic also owns one of the country's two mobile-phone companies, and the leading Internet provider. And he has announced the launch of a new Balkan television station following discussions earlier this year with Croatian President Stipe Mesic.

Zeljko Mitrovic is the owner of Serbia's Pink TV, which broadcasts to many other countries in the region, including Bosnia where Pink bought several small TV stations and has been using their licenses to broadcast.

The allocation of frequencies in Serbia was to have been made by a neutral broadcasting council. To the dismay of the independent media, the broadcasting council was constituted last year in a way that breached the government's own guidelines for transparency in the process of nominating council members.

The head of the media programme of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Giovanni Porta, was intensely involved in the preparations for setting up this council, then resigned and accepted a senior managerial job with Pink TV in Bosnia.

Pink TV is still broadcasting nationally in Serbia without a license, while the broadcasting council remains in idle mode. As Pink accumulates financial and political power, the organisational and financial transformation of the national broadcaster into a public service has not even started, and it is steadily going under.

The media tycoons whose closeness to the new democratic government has helped boost their growth, were just as close to the previous regime. Mitrovic was a member of an extremist pro-regime party, Karic ensured his continual rise through bargains with the regime, and Mihajlovic was the old regime's trusted banker. Power may be redefined by state and market laws, but let us not think that it can ever be restrained.

Karic and Mitrovic more than once have used their TV interests to settle private political or financial scores. They say that ownership gives them the right to do what they want, neglecting the fact that the frequencies they use to convey their message of private power are a public good.

These media barons have never had any respect for ethical principles. For a decade, they were part of Milosevic's apparatus of power, and now they are parts of another apparatus of power.

They were always part of the system. Media such as theirs never stop getting richer and bigger.

The media that we used to call independent – the professional media – are struggling to survive.

We insisted that our freedoms should be incorporated in laws, declarations and charters. But this has not been enough to prevent the abuse of power, especially in post-conflict and transitional societies.

The media also have a responsibility. Research conducted by the Belgrade Media Centre shows that journalists commit grave breaches of ethical principles either because they are not aware that what they do is wrong, or because they think that this is just the way things are.

If we want to see our freedoms protected, we must struggle within the profession against the trends that jeopardise freedom. We must observe basic ethical norms.

A skilled media "craftsman" may know how to write a news story, but unless the facts are respected, it is a lie. It is ethics and dedication to truth that make the distinction between journalism as a craft and journalism as a profession.

It is quite clear. To improve the quality of the profession we need to observe the principles of the profession.

Quantity Rather than Quality, a Balkan Dilemma:

Too Many Media Chase Tiny Albanian Audience

CHAPTER 15 For the first time in history, there are democratically elected governments in all the Balkan countries.

Remzi Lani,
Director,

These new democracies are coping with three interlinked challenges – the consequences of communism, the after-effects of conflicts and the impact of globalisation.

Albanian Media Institute

A decade after the collapse of communism, the mass media have become decentralised, liberalised, pluralised and deregulated in accordance with European standards. The readership is choosier and fragmented and the media has adopted new formats and styles along with liberal codes of journalism ethics. From the bloody revolution in Bucharest in 1989 to the velvet revolution of Belgrade in 2000, it has all been on television.

The vertical party-nation system imposed by the Communist Party exists no more. Opinions, whatever they happen to be, are freely expressed. People in south-eastern Europe are not longer afraid to speak out.

A free press constitutes one of the main achievements of the new Balkan democracies, but its role has been contradictory. The media been a driving force for democratisation, but they have also been an instrument in the hands of the nationalist forces which brought hatred and bloodshed to the region at the end of the 20th century.

While it cannot be considered as a post-conflict country, Albania certainly constitutes a special case of complex and overly prolonged transition that has had an impact on the development of the media.

With a total of 255 publications, 46 licensed radio stations and 64 licensed television stations, the Albanian media has come a long way since the end of the Communist era.

The media covers the political spectrum from left to right, but few of these papers and broadcasters are strong or reach a significant audience. The largest selling daily, for instance, has an estimated circulation of less than 20,000 in a country of almost three million.

Although the number of dailies has grown from two in 1991 to 19 in 2003, their total circulation of about 60,000 does not exceed that of the first opposition paper 13 years ago, a situation that is simply beyond reason in a genuine market economy.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Of course, after surviving almost 50 years of darkness, people are no longer deprived of information, but this comes mostly from the broadcast media, which indisputably has the upper hand over a press that is plagued by a malfunctioning distribution system and lack of infrastructure.

Papers are distributed only in cities, while approximately 60 percent of the population lives in the countryside. Subscriptions are expensive and not much in demand. A teacher earning around 10,000 lek (approximately 75 euros) would have to allocate 13 percent of his salary to buy a daily newspaper.

Not a single daily is published outside the capital, and all but three magazines are published in Tirana, where 18 TV stations also compete for an audience.

Albanian journalists tend to be young, with a large proportion belonging to the 18-24 age-group, including many students hired before graduation, which affects the quality of reporting and professionalism. The ratio between men and women is fairly balanced; in fact women are in the majority in some of the electronic media.

Most journalists work without a proper contract or collective labour agreement, and there is no effective trade union or national self-regulatory body. The four media organisations that do exist are chaired by owners or shareholders, making them inadequate advocates for journalists' rights.

The owners run the labor market as they wish, to the detriment of the quality of reporting and the professional conduct of the journalists, who enjoy no safeguards for editorial independence.

A few years ago there were various cases of direct pressure on the media, including violence, from the political establishment. Now, facing capitalistic trends, financial pressures and corruption, journalists are more threatened by their bosses and editors than by the government.

Today pressure is applied indirectly, for instance financially. The media is more an extension of politics and a vehicle for certain businesses than a representative of public opinion.

The lack of transparency in media ownership and the total absence of market analysis are also of great con-

cern. The political connection of the owners and the politically motivated allocation of state advertising demonstrate that the Albanian media still has a long way to go before reaching true independence.

Albania has decent media legislation, but does not enforce it. However, it is not infrequent in the Balkans for laws to be written according to European standards and applied according to Balkan standards.

Obviously, the state's direct control over the press has been reduced, and censorship has disappeared. No longer are we scared that police officers will come and knock on the doors of our media offices, but we are afraid that tax officials will come in their place.

Although they are not the authoritarians of the past, today's Balkan leaders are not prepared to expect a high degree of questioning. More often than not they react violently to criticism, and are keener on controlling than being controlled.

There is also another tendency, which may seem as the opposite of the former, but which in fact boils down to the same thing.

There are times when you can write what you want, and you can criticise as much as you like, but nobody reacts. This state of affairs has been observed in Albania, where the nervous reaction to criticism during the period of the Democratic Party is being replaced with total indifference to criticism during the rule of the Socialist Party.

Indifference to criticism leads to the devaluation of the free word. Journalists should have the right not only to speak out, but to be heard.

Since the fall of communism, the media have modelled and influenced politics to a considerably lesser degree than politics has modelled and influenced the media.

While demand for media products is steeply rising, the image of the media with the public is declining. According to a survey carried out by the Albanian Media Institute only 23 percent of respondents said that the media make a positive contribution, and only 12.5 percent said they were happy with the newspapers.

What a paradox this is. While a free press is one of the most important achievements of emerging democracies, its image with the public is generally negative. In our

C H A P T E R 15 : T O O M A N Y M E D I A C H A S E T I N Y A L B A N I A N A U D I E N C E

opinion, this does not mean that the public is tired of free speech, but it is a clear signal that people demand a more responsible press.

Widespread scepticism about journalists' ethics and the growing power of the media is not totally unfounded. In most countries in the region codes of ethics have been drafted and approved, but in general they exist only on paper. Mechanisms or the bodies to implement these codes – press councils, press complaints commissions, ombudsmen, and others – are missing. Creation of these mechanisms is a priority.

And so is the training of journalists in Albania and in the whole Balkan region. This has been much discussed and addressed, but reading the newspapers and watching the TV stations in Albania gives the impression that these discussions have not gone far enough.

New Communications and Media Commission:

A Parting Gift or a Poisoned Chalice in Iraq?

CHAPTER 16 After 12 months of hapless mismanagement of media policy in Iraq, the US-led occupation's ironic parting gift to the country's media on June 28 was a media regulator that could yet be the envy of Arab journalists everywhere. But whether it survives the reaction against all things connected to the occupation, including the Iraqi interim government, is another question.

*Rohan Jayasekera,
Associate Editor,
Index on Censorship*

The new Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (ICMC) is an extraordinary body, responsible for mobile phone licences, frequency spectrum management and broadcast licensing, and financing itself with the proceeds. It will allow the print media to operate without a licence, but work with it to develop a self-regulated code of ethics.

Paired with a separate project to turn Iraq's Pentagon-funded national radio & TV network into a BBC-style public service broadcaster, it's a plan that would be advanced in liberal free market Britain or the US. In the Arab context it is unique.

Its powers even include a role in the enforcement of Order 14, the much-reviled power to ban newspapers judged to be inciting violence against the US-led coalition forces.

The former US civilian chief in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, used the order relatively sparingly, but not effectively or fairly. It was his decision to use Order 14 on March 28 to shut down al-Hawza al-Natiqa, a cheerleader weekly for insurgent Shi'a cleric Moqata al-Sadr, that effectively marked the start of the current uprising in Iraq.

Usually the coalition forces rarely bothered to detail charges against banned newspapers and their editors, let alone deliver the accused before some kind of tribunal. One editor was dumped in jail for two weeks until Iraqi police simply freed him for want of a better idea of what to do with him. The lack of due process was insult piled on injury to Iraqi journalists, especially coming from the nation that authored the First Amendment.

A final list of amendments issued as Bremer left handed the powers to jail, fine or ban offending newspapers to the country's new interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. It also gave Allawi the option to refer the case to the ICMC, "for consideration of other appropriate sanction," and clarified the right to appeal to a court of law that would test whether the sanction complied with the law, "including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

The ICMC is already prepared for an adjudication panel to deal with disputes in the broadcast sector, with appeals heard by a semi-external panel under the Iraqi justice ministry.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

But local suspicion is that Bremer's successors will not happily give up the powers of Order 14, which made him prosecutor, judge and appeals tribunal in one. When he closed al-Hawza al-Natiqa, Bremer claimed that its "false reports" were making the situation unstable and were "encouraging violence against the Coalition Forces." But in targeting a paper supporting Muqtada al-Sadr, Bremer's true motives were thinly disguised.

As Basim al-Sheikh, editor of the Baghdad daily al-Dustour points out, inflammatory stuff like this is not unusual on the fringes of the Baghdad press, and mild compared to what can be heard in the mosques. "Other papers published what might be called stronger editorials than al-Hawza did," he said, noting that the Coalition Provisional Authority did not issue a warning to the paper before closing it down. It gave him the feeling that the authority could "close a specific paper for secret reasons while giving false reasons to the public."

Bremer was not a natural censor. One of his very first acts as the senior US civilian figure in Iraq was to suspend the old Iraqi law making the "insult" of officials a criminal offence. One of his last public acts was to address some very blunt Iraqi critics on a televised town meeting, all of whom raised much tougher criticisms than al-Hawza's cited pages.

But Order 14 was only one of Washington's misfiring media initiatives in Iraq. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent, pledged or blown on terrestrial and satellite TV and radio networks. Pentagon defence contractors bungled jobs that should have gone to qualified media companies. Programming was either culturally inappropriate, patronising, plain rubbish or all three at once.

Bremer told the inexperienced and under-trained Iraqi press to get the Coalition Provisional Authority's side of the story from his public affairs officers. But the Iraqis either found their way blocked by the tanks that protect his headquarters or they were foxed by the kind of Washington media management circus that even US reporters take years to master.

The occupation's careless media strategy and its two-faced habit of preaching freedom of speech while selectively silencing political opponents will leave a legacy that may fatally burden the new ICMC.

The ICMC is the careful creation of Simon Haselock, former director of media development and regulation for

the Coalition Provisional Authority, who was previously a British Royal Marine and Kosovo war media-regulation expert.

For as long as it exists, it will remain an institution created in the name of the occupation. Al-Hawza was closed under Order 14; the new commission was created under Order 65; the public service broadcaster under Order 66. The new Iraqi government's right to apply them is granted under Order 100. All were signed into life by Bremer, as Washington's proconsul in Baghdad.

Iraqis like to describe the current uprising across Iraq as an intifada, the vivid Arabic word that means more than revolt, more a kind of 'shaking off' of an unwanted presence. Many expect the US will find a way to pull strings behind the scenes. Even those who oppose the violence want to shake off the trappings of US rule and take control of their own lives. The commission could be one of those trappings.

The commission's primacy could be open to a court challenge. Bremer legally operated as an occupying power under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which allows change in the law only as necessary to preserve public order. Creating a media commission and a BBC-style public service broadcaster might not qualify.

And there already is a body set up to do some of the commission's work. The right of the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate to establish codes of conduct, adjudicate, and offer right of appeal in case of dispute is already enshrined by pre-war law.

A future Iraqi government might turn against the commission. When it had its chance, the current government's predecessor – the US appointed Iraqi Governing Council – quickly showed a taste for censorship: it arbitrarily banned Gulf satellite TV station al-Arabiya last year.

A lot depends on Siyamend Othman, the ICMC's appointed chief executive, an Iraqi Kurd with a Ph.D. in social sciences from a Paris university. He is a former Amnesty International researcher and media executive with United Press International, which is owned by Reverend Sun Myung Moon's News World Communications.

Haselock has tried to build in some protection for the commission. His theory is that the country's interim

C H A P T E R 16 : A PARTING GIFT OR A POISONED CHALICE IN IRAQ?

constitution would make it hard for any future government to tamper with the commission or its powers. The commission's direct access to license funds gives it financial independence.

Big business should welcome the kind of secure license and spectrum management needed to secure major investments in new mobile phone networks, regional radio and two national commercial TV networks that will set up alongside the public service broadcaster by the end of 2004.

And while the commission is required to come up with new draft media laws for the future, it must present them direct to parliament, not to a future government.

The commission's best hope is that by voicing opposition to new repressive press laws or over-regulation it will win it support from the Iraqi media community. For should anti-coalition reaction sweep away the commission in the months to come, Iraqi journalists will probably have to spend the next few years campaigning for a independent self-regulatory body that will look very much like the commission does now.

A version of this article was first published in Arabic in "The View from Baghdad", the magazine's anthology of 12 months of work supporting the revival of the independent Iraqi media and freedom of expression since the fall of Saddam Hussein.



Introduction to Part 6

Three Episodes on the Front Line

Although the words “mass media” sum up for many the idea of a powerful monolith, the reality for many in the profession is a far more prosaic struggle against the odds.

The editors and staff of the three newspapers whose stories appear here are courageous but poor. What they all share is a passion to inform, despite the pressures and forces ranged against them.

For Gojko Beric, a columnist for the the Sarajevo daily *Oslobođenje*, the stubborn independence that made it famous around the world in a time of war has become an impediment in a time of internationally-imposed peace. *Oslobođenje* still stands passionately for a genuinely multi-ethnic society, but times have changed and there is little space for its views amid the new realities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The newspaper survives, barely, but needs a helping hand.

In Sierra Leone, the *Standard Times* managed to publish through most of the civil war there, but is struggling to keep its head above water in the post-conflict situation, according to Kajsa Tornroth of the World Association of Newspapers. It needs an advertising market and adequate infrastructure, but its fate is linked to the economic conditions in the rest of society.

However, an African Press Network helps newspapers like the *Standard Times* share their experiences in developing successful management strategies to deal with the extreme difficulties of surviving in a post-conflict society.

Gwen Lister, the editor of *The Namibian* says that independent media that emerge during a conflict, as did her newspaper during the independence struggle against South Africa, have no guarantee of survival once the conflict is over and international donors start to lose interest.

The ruling party in Namibia has yet to make the transition from autocratic independence movement to a properly democratic organization, and has no patience with a newspaper that continues to point out cases of bad governance and corruption, and act as torch-bearer for human rights.

The *Namibian* survives despite government antagonism and pressure thanks to its loyal readership and committed staff.

Nobody owes the independent media a living, Lister says. They have to learn to survive on their own. Nevertheless, they are the backbone of emerging economies and it is important that they receive encouragement and support.

In Sarajevo, a Newspaper that Struggles against the Odds

Requiem for a Newspaper that Refuses to Die

CHAPTER 17 I have come to tell an extraordinary tale; indeed, I may be so bold as to say it is unique in the history of journalism – the story of Sarajevo’s daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*, for which I have worked for more than forty years.

Gojko Beric,
columnist,
Oslobođenje I am five years older than the paper, which first came out at the height of World War II, on 30 August 1943, in a small village in liberated territory in north-eastern Bosnia. Last year, *Oslobođenje* celebrated its sixtieth birthday. For the Balkans, that is a pretty long life.

In the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina was seen as the ideological bastion of the regime of the day. The media were all advocates of the regime, some better, some worse – and *Oslobođenje* was among the better ones.

And then a miracle occurred. A year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Oslobođenje* acquired its own little island of freedom. For the first time in the paper’s history, its journalists themselves elected the editor-in-chief. Until then, the editor had invariably been appointed by Party committees.

Overnight, *Oslobođenje* was transformed from an obscure party bulletin to a modern, reader-friendly paper with some of the most prominent journalists of the former Yugoslavia as its contributors.

It included editorials and other features new to the Yugoslav print media and it took up the cause of the federal government’s reformist policies. A mere ten months or so later, *Oslobođenje* was selected as Yugoslavia’s newspaper of the year for 1989 in a survey conducted by the Split-based *Slobodna Dalmacija*, which polled professional journalists country-wide.

This hard-won freedom was short-lived, however. In November 1990, the first multi-party elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina; such was the impact of nationalist euphoria in Serbia and Croatia that the nationalists won a convincing victory.

The Serbs voted en masse for the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), the Muslims for the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), and the Croats for the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

The result was a power-sharing government, with the victorious parties determined to apply the same principle to the leading print and air media, *Oslobođenje* and RTV Sarajevo Broadcasting. Everything was subject to this concocted division of power, from the minutest detail to the editorial positions which, of course, were allotted to the party faithful.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Oslobođenje, however, managed to resist this nationalist onslaught.

All this took place at a time when the leading press in Serbia and Croatia, despite their long tradition and fine journalists, plunged into moral decline, turning into the mouthpieces respectively of Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman. Oslobođenje, however, held true to its democratic stance of opposing nationalism and supporting religious and cultural tolerance among the Muslims, Serbs and Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among the most outstanding journalists and editors of its multi-ethnic team were several Serbs.

In early April 1992, war erupted beneath our windows. Sarajevo was under siege, surrounded by Karadžić's troops. Death was a daily feature of the city's streets, where people were killed by shells or snipers' bullets. The Oslobođenje building, one of Sarajevo's finest, was barely 200 metres from the Serb front lines. In the evening of 20 June 1992, it was struck by incendiary shells and burst into flames. Six storeys on one side of the ten-storey building and four on the other were burned-out. While firemen and journalists fought side by side to quench the blaze, the newspaper's duty team was in the nuclear shelter, putting together the next issue. The leading article was headlined Oslobođenje keeps going.

But it became harder and harder to keep going. Sarajevo was under total siege, without food, water, gas, electricity or telephone lines. We used radio receivers, gathering reports from a network of industrious radio hams. To produce a print run of at least four thousand copies, even reduced to the bare minimum of pages, we had to find a hundred litres of fuel a day to keep our generators working for four hours. We did everything else in the semi-darkness of the shelter, with candles as our only source of light.

In the mornings, our journalists would risk their lives to distribute the newspaper before spending the rest of the day as reporters. Oslobođenje's appearance on the streets of Sarajevo every morning was one of the highlights of the day for the city's long-suffering inhabitants. Even those who were in the trenches defending the city, read the paper. We managed to produce the issue marking the fiftieth anniversary of Oslobođenje in the original, pre-war format. That day I saw Sarajevans weeping on the streets as they read the paper, reminded as they were of the days of peace.

At the end of the novel *Banket u Blitvi* by the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, Nils Nielsen, the hero, a rebellious liberal intellectual, wonders what opportunities are left to humanity after so much slaughter and social breakdown. The answer he comes up with is: "A case of lead typesetters' letters, which isn't much, but it's the only thing humanity has come up with so far as a weapon to defend our human pride."

At the end of 1993, we were faced with much the same questions as Krleža's hero. We realized that our ideals had met with defeat, and that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be divided along ethnic lines. The editorial team spent two whole days hotly debating what we should do. Finally, we agreed unanimously to keep going as before. We too were left with only one weapon to defend our human pride – that typesetters' case known as Oslobođenje.

For most of the war, Sarajevo and Oslobođenje were the two words from Bosnia that reverberated around the world. If there remained just one proof of genuine multi-ethnic coexistence in Sarajevo under siege, it was the war-time editorial team of our newspaper. Our ruined building, still subject daily to shelling and sniper fire from Serb positions, was a place of pilgrimage for foreign journalists, writers, philosophers, artists, diplomats, international military officers and humanitarian workers from all over the world. Every one of them was proud to add their visit to Oslobođenje to their curriculum vitae.

I cannot deny that the world was generous to us, in its own way. In line with the "humanitarian ideology" advanced by French President François Mitterrand, Europe did provide the people of Sarajevo with some crumbs of food, even as it looked on indifferently as the barbarians on the surrounding hills killed them day by day.

It was much the same with Oslobođenje. Europe provided us with mere dribs and drabs of aid, mainly in the shape of newsprint, but was generous with awards, medallions and other accolades.

In 1992, the BBC declared Oslobođenje the world's paper of the year; this was followed by the Scandinavian Award of Freedom, the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom, the World Association of Newspapers' Golden Pen of Freedom, and many others.

In fact, no other newspaper in the world has received

CHAPTER 17 : REQUIEM FOR A NEWSPAPER THAT REFUSES TO DIE

so many awards. *Oslobodenje* was always described as being dedicated to the truth, freedom and courage in the most difficult of circumstances. If there were a Nobel prize for journalism, I have no doubt we would have received that too.

These were the highlights of the first half of our historic match. The same rules no longer pertained in the second half, however. We continued to play by the very same rules that Europe had professed to admire. But times had changed, we were now seen as perverse, and our stubbornness had to be duly punished. The referees played their part in this, naturally.

The continuation of my story begins with the signing of the peace accord at the US military base in Dayton, Ohio in November, 1995. This brought to an end the bloodshed, the appalling human tragedy that had befallen Bosnia and Herzegovina. If I tell you that not a single bullet was fired to celebrate the accord, you will perhaps understand the mood that prevailed in my long-suffering city. After more than forty months of siege, the peace agreement was seen as hypocritical and unjust.

It was then, too, that the fame of war-time *Oslobodenje* became history, although we journalists and editors were reluctant to believe it. It did not mean that we were blind to what was happening around us. We could see all too clearly that our country had been partitioned, that the era of the romantic defenders of Sarajevo was now behind us, and that the highest offices of state were now occupied by the same national leaders who had only days before been the deadliest of enemies. The atmosphere was positively Orwellian, with mimicry and lies the common currency of political discourse. The nationalists could finally proclaim themselves victorious.

What this meant, in short, was that everything *Oslobodenje* had consistently fought against during the war had now, with the onset of peace, become the harsh reality. It was the defeat of a genuinely multi-ethnic society, the defeat of a civilisation that Europe had not even been aware of until then, and the defeat of my newspaper.

These things happen. After fascism triumphed in Spain, Albert Camus said he had discovered that force could subjugate spirit, and that there are times when courage does not meet its due reward.

Sixty thousand NATO troops came to Bosnia and

Herzegovina, and the country came de facto under international rule, embodied in the person of the High Representative. *Oslobodenje* refused to become the mouthpiece of either the Serbo-Croato-Bosniac nationalist authorities or the international community. It paid a high price for that refusal: nobody now needed the newspaper whose name had been known the world over – other than the few readers who constituted the surviving, impoverished remnants of the middle class whom the war had undermined.

The war changed everybody, even those who had left their place in the bread queues to buy a copy of *Oslobodenje* the moment it appeared on the streets. Even those of us who had made the newspaper what it was were no longer the same, though perhaps we didn't realize it. We were tired and depressed, penniless and impoverished, and what little remained of our former energy and creative passion was evaporating. For all that, *Oslobodenje* did not mean to sell its soul to the devil. Our moral capital was too great to be thrown into the river Miljacka, which runs through Sarajevo. That very capital, however, became a burden.

In the eyes of the Serbian Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union, *Oslobodenje* was despicable. These were parties that had come onto the political scene as militarised populist movements. During and after the war, they functioned in just the same way as the Communist Party. Both bore a heavy responsibility for the war and for crimes against civilians. We who were diluting their nationalist wine with water day after day and reminding them of their sins could hardly expect their applause.

Nor were we to the taste of Alija Izetbegović's Party of Democratic Action, which was indoctrinated with religious fanaticism and nationalist anti-communism. Well aware of *Oslobodenje*'s international reputation, Izetbegović himself refrained from expressing, in public at least, his hostile view of the newspaper. He left this to others, mainly intellectuals from the Islamic community. In mid 1994, when the end of the war was still a far distant dream, it was they who launched a campaign against mixed marriages, claiming that they were part of a Communist project designed to eradicate the Muslims. In the fierce debate that this provoked, Izetbegović's minister of culture published an article in the Muslim weekly *Ljiljan* in which he referred to *Oslobodenje* as a "Serbo-Chetnik Communist paper." What sort of a schizophrenic ideological construct is that?

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The Dayton Accord brought peace of a kind to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it was already a gravely sick society. Ethnic and religious divisions and exclusivity had become the prevailing ideology, fostered with Nazi-style consistency from kindergarten and primary school to the factory gates and hospital wards. When this became the dominant frame of mind, even the most morbid of lies, presented as media patriotism, found ready acceptance. In the midst of three rigidly ethnically divided media markets, *Oslobođenje* could count only on its readers in Sarajevo. To underline what that means, one of my valued colleagues recently, in a public speech, referred to the city as “the last free territory” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But does it not seem strange that *Oslobođenje* was not to the liking of the international community either? At first, we ourselves were puzzled by this, but we soon realized what the problem was.

After Dayton, the West had invested billions of dollars and vast quantities of energy in the reconstruction of my country. The strategy was to build a stable peace and the institutions of state – and nothing more. Realizing that using tanks to rebuild the war-torn multi-ethnic society would be a very expensive and perhaps impossible task, the West sought no more than to install a multi-ethnic government.

Anyone who questioned this strategy was seen as an impediment. The West had no desire to listen to the nostalgic reminiscences about life in Bosnia before the war, a lifestyle that reminded it too closely of the communist era. All it wanted was reconciliation – it certainly did not want to hear the truth about the war. The catchphrase, right from the start, was: “Forget the past and think about the future.”

The West was acutely sensitive to criticism of the Dayton accord. *Oslobođenje* said the accord incorporates several disastrous errors, and laid the groundwork for a state that is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. In short, we published everything the West didn’t want to hear. The paper was the mirror of the errors and failings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And as everyone knows, it is not the mirror that is at fault if the face it reflects is imperfect.

No sooner was the war over than the international community opted for the electronic media as its political partner, but the TV stations were factories churning out primitivism and pulp fiction, and at times even nationalist hatred.

By the end of 1993 it was already clear that the final outcome of the war would be the ethnic partition of the country. The army, of which Alija Izetbegović was commander in chief, was in no state, even if it had wanted, to prevent the partition. The coexistence of Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats was no longer the imperative of the Bosniac resistance.

At that time, Izetbegović still needed *Oslobođenje*, but was already thinking about a daily that would be exclusively Bosniac. This came to pass with the launching of *Dnevni Avaz*, or *Daily Voice*, now the largest-circulation newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For several years, *Avaz* faithfully served Izetbegović’s purposes, but when it judged that the leading Bosniac party was going to lose in the elections, it adopted the cause of the likely winner, the Social Democratic Party. Whichever side it has been on, the newspaper adeptly manipulated the religious and national sentiments of the population. In recent months, its pages have been full of articles detailing the many injustices and inequalities inflicted on the Bosnian Muslims and castigating those who claim otherwise.

Of course, every democratic European country has its own *Avaz*, a newspaper that creates an empire based on media populism. According to Gianni Vattimo, the Italian philosopher, media populism is dangerous because modern representative democracy relies largely on the political potential of the media, in which potential is equated with circulation.

Oslobođenje’s war-time editorial team made super-human efforts in impossible conditions. When the war ended, the newspaper shared the fate of its own country. Desperately short of funds and supplies, with no printing press of its own – for this had in effect been confiscated – it became a refugee in its own city. Its journalists worked in cramped, hired premises, moving from one place to another. The glass-fronted cases of the editorial offices were full of the international awards and accolades the paper had collected, reminding us of better days. But not one of these awards had any exchange value in the bank; and the dust of oblivion accumulated on their once shiny surfaces. *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

There can be no good newspaper without good journalists; and good journalists need to be well paid. No one wants to work for nothing. *Oslobođenje* lives from

CHAPTER 17 : REQUIEM FOR A NEWSPAPER THAT REFUSES TO DIE

hand to mouth, as if afflicted by a fatal illness. Salaries are paid later and later, and losses are mounting.

Attempts to rejuvenate the editorial team with young journalists have yielded only meagre results. The paper's former glory may attract them. But unlike the old guard, they have no sentimental attachment to the paper and are unwilling to work all day for little more than modest pocket money. They might hang on for a few months, but then they find jobs as translators or officials in one of the embassies or international organisations that abound in the country.

I cannot pass over in silence one of the saddest days in the history of Oslobođenje – 21 May 2001. That morning, for the first time in 58 years, Oslobođenje's readers had no paper to turn to. The journalists had gone on strike, demanding that the board of directors and the editor-in-chief be dismissed and calling for their overdue salaries to be paid. The first two demands have been met, but not the third.

I am sure that there is no one here who has not seen the famous photograph of the Oslobođenje high-rise building, burned out and fallen in on itself. It is a photograph that has done the rounds of the world.

But a year ago, the famous image vanished for good from Sarajevo's townscape. Two handsome skyscrapers have risen from the foundations of the old edifice. This is now the business and production centre of Dnevni Avaz, which bid for and won the tender to purchase the former printing press of Oslobođenje. We have become tenants in what was once was our building.

Two opposing dailies, one created with funds of dubious origin, the other as poor as a church mouse are under the same roof. There is a certain symbolism in this. For although they are diametrically opposed, Oslobođenje and Avaz, each in its own way, symbolise the breakdown of a civilisation, the disappearance of the middle class, the decline of morality and the establishment of a mafia state.

Oslobođenje should have died in 1990, when the nationalist parties came to power. It should have died when it was bombarded by tank shells in May 1992. And it should have died when the war came to an end. But it refused to die. Whether it will survive to see its sixty fifth birthday, I don't know. The little empire of freedom that we had begun to establish even before the fall of communism is now bounded by the barbed wire of transition and caught in the net of chronic poverty. And that is how freedom dies. The destiny of Oslobođenje depends on many factors, but most of all on whether it will find someone to help it back onto its feet, either in my country or in Europe, to reignite the values for which it was once so liberally praised.

Finding a Market in Sierra Leone

Newspaper Struggles on a Road Full of Obstacles

CHAPTER 18 I would like to tell you about a newspaper in Sierra Leone called the Standard Times.

Kajsa Tornroth, Privately owned, it was established in 1994, three years after the civil war had broken out, and was published under extreme conditions during most of the conflict.

*World Association
of Newspapers*

It continues to appear today, but continues to find itself on a road full of obstacles.

First of all, the power supply in Sierra Leone is erratic, and although the Standard Times has its own generator, it has already worn out two because of extended periods of use. This increases costs. Production is disrupted and the paper is regularly forced to skip a day or two of publication.

The Standard Times offices were burned down during the war, causing the loss of computers, printers and office furniture, which have not yet been replaced.

It had to reduce the number of employees from 20 to 15 during the conflict, and has not managed to hire new staff because of financial constraints.

Circulation of the Standard Times at its highest fluctuated between 10,000 and 15,000, but today it is around 2,000 and often dips lower. Managing Editor Ibrahim Karim-Sei says people simply cannot afford to buy the paper. Because of the dramatic decrease in its circulation, the newspaper has focused its marketing strategy on attracting advertisers to make up for this lost revenue source.

“Press freedom affords me the opportunity to express myself freely without the slightest fear of intimidation, harassment or physical attack”, Karim-Sei says. “However, as a journalist, my ability to express myself freely depends largely on the economic well-being of my newspaper.”

Today, 90 percent of the newspaper’s revenue comes from advertising, a substantial shift from its early days, when most of its revenue was from direct sales.

To attract advertisers, the the Standard Times runs stories on entertainment, sports, food and culture, as well as features to attract female readers, rather than focusing primarily on politics and business.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The newspaper seeks to convince advertisers that it can reach a large geographical market, and to do this, it has had to create a strong distribution network throughout the country.

Much of financial loss of the Standard Times is due to the fact that it was not able to distribute to other parts of the country during the war, particularly in rural or isolated areas. Even if the war is now over, this remains a problem due to the poor transportation system. The newspaper is in the process of negotiating a distribution deal with the national postal service to reach remote areas.

The Standard Times exemplifies the vital role that market and infrastructure play for newspapers in Africa. The same could be said about independent radio stations in Afghanistan or private television stations in Bosnia.

In prosperous democratic nations, almost without exception, private media get their money from advertisers. It might not always be ideal, but generally it works well. This is also the only model that can enable independent media to develop and survive in post-conflict situations.

The importance of advertising is reflected in the requests made by media in post-conflict situations around the world. Teach us how to build an advertising department, they say. Teach us how attract advertisers.

To allow independent media to develop and prosper, the necessary economic infrastructures have to be supported, such as the creation of private printing facilities, distribution networks and central news-print purchase agencies together with the establishment of advertising markets, standards and controls.

This shows the extent to which the development of independent media is linked to the economic development of the rest of the society.

The media need a legal framework to safeguard their ethical and juridical interests. This is of particular importance in post-conflict situations where the legislation is often outdated or simply not respected. It should be one of the first issues to be dealt with, since legislation is one of the fundamentals when constructing an environment in which media can work freely.

Also needed are shared values and a code of conduct, training and career opportunities for journalists and effective and non-partisan professional organisations as well as press monitoring groups and publications, and active civic groups serving as media watchdogs.

But how can we achieve such economic changes and rebuilding of infrastructure in practice? One example of how this might be done is RAP 21, the African Press Network for the twenty-first century, which was launched by the World Association of Newspapers in 2000.

RAP 21 is an electronic information network for the African press through which experiences in media management are exchanged among more than 400 newspapers. At the heart of the network is a weekly newsletter, through which newspapers share successful media management strategies in various fields, such as distribution and personnel management.

There are hundreds of very innovative newspaper projects in Africa – a lot of knowledge, a lot of know-how. People who want to learn about how to run a newspaper in Africa and the obstacles they are likely to encounter, will find answers to many of their questions on the RAP 21 website.

RAP 21 shows how it is possible to support media development with limited means. It also shows that a lot of information and knowledge already exists, that numerous initiatives have been launched, some more successful than others.

We should profit from the lessons already learnt by trial and error by people who actually live in post-conflict societies, who run a newspaper, a radio or TV station on daily basis in very difficult circumstances. We do not have to begin from zero – the knowledge is already there, and it is mainly a question of gathering it and distributing it to the right people.

Newspaper's Answer to State Pressure:

Keeping Lean, Mean and Close to Readers

CHAPTER 19 “In times of conflict, the media’s responsibility for independent and pluralistic reporting is more important than ever. It can help to prevent the worst atrocities. In the aftermath of conflict, a free and independent press offers a way out of mistrust and fear into an environment where true dialogue is possible because people can think for themselves and base their opinions on facts.” – UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in the foreword to the commemorative magazine marking the 15th anniversary of “The Namibian” in August 2000.

Gwen Lister,
Editor,
The Namibian Few would argue that it is the independent media which is most often targeted in situations of conflict the world over. Neither would many disagree that “the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development,” a phrase taken from the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic Press.

Ironically, much of the independent press has come into being largely as a result of conflict, which by its very nature, tends to give rise to the development of alternative media. The concept of independent media is defined in the Windhoek Declaration as being free from governmental, political or economic control.

Sadly though, survival of independent media, is another question altogether. The landscape of formerly non-democratic societies the world over is littered with the skeletons of once-brave media initiatives that were unable to withstand the might of state power during violent conflict or which failed to win the battle for sustainability once peaceful transition had begun.

The Namibian is one of the fortunate few to have successfully made the transition from being a donor-dependent newspaper started at the height of South African apartheid repression in 1985 to eventual self-sustainability after Namibian independence had been achieved in 1991.

Ours is not a new story, but it remains relevant today and while many valiant media in conflict zones throughout the world continue the fight for survival, it is useful perhaps, to draw some lessons from those of us who were fortunate enough to have not only survived the political struggle, but who managed to achieve self-reliance in the process. When The Namibian started in 1985, few people believed we would make it. Namibia, then South West Africa, was in the grip of apartheid occupation by the former white South African government.

It was intent on controlling the hearts and minds of Namibians, most of whom supported the armed struggle waged by the South West Africa

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

People's Organisation (SWAPO) for self-determination and independence in what was then Africa's last colony. The result was a clamp-down on SWAPO and anyone perceived to be supporting – or sympathetic to – the liberation movement.

The then South African government wielded its military might, and made use of a host of repressive measures, including draconian legislation, and a propaganda war on any adversaries.

Most of the media at the time was, if not under the direct control of the colonial power, then certainly passive in the face of South African domination. A virtual state of military rule was in place in the north of Namibia bordering on Angola, whence the armed struggle was waged. A dusk-to-dawn curfew was in place; SWAPO supporters were subject to arbitrary arrests and detention without trial. Torture was the order of the day.

It was in this climate that The Namibian started up. The core group of those who founded it were united in their belief that a newspaper with an independent editorial policy, honest and realistic reporting, and a strong set of guiding principles, would expose what was happening in the country under the heel of apartheid and contribute to the creation of a free and vigorous media in Namibia.

The newspaper also committed itself to working towards the implementation of the UN settlement plan for Namibia, providing for free and fair elections and independence from South African rule.

Like most other independent media in repressive circumstances, we had no illusions that it would be easy. In the founding editorial of the newspaper in 1985 we stated, "We have no doubt that there will be difficult times ahead, that it will not always be a smooth path which the newspaper has to tread, but we are optimistic that, in the long run, critics of the newspaper will see that we have the interests of Namibians at heart and that our goal is an independent, prosperous country which can take its rightful place among the nations of the world."

We accepted too, that the success of the newspaper would depend on its acceptance by the population as a whole, and looking back today, we believe that this support base counted very much in our favour in the years that followed.

There were obstacles to our existence from the very beginning, and these were to rise to a crescendo by the end of the Eighties. When the interim proxy government appointed by South Africa learned of our plan to start a newspaper, we faced our first and most immediate threat. They levied a deposit of more than 20,000 rand under the Newspaper Imprint and Registration Act, claiming that the newspaper and I personally constituted a threat to the security of the state.

As we set out to expose the injustices of apartheid rule, there was some relief for us in the fact that there was, even in such repressive times, a measure of independence in the Namibian judiciary. When we took the matter to court on the grounds that the deposit was unconstitutional, the judge ruled in our favour.

In the years that followed, we survived harassment, intimidation, direct attacks on our offices and our staff, including even planned assassination attempts. We were denied passports and travel documents. Detention without trial and arbitrary arrests were everyday occurrences.

At that time donor funding ensured our financial survival, for the business community withheld advertising under intimidation or direct threat by the authorities. Elections, and finally independence, came to Namibia in 1991, and with it, a democratic constitution with an enforceable bill of rights that guaranteed press freedom.

This was a watershed for us, as it is for many other independent media in war-torn and conflict situations when the funding begins to dry up and the race for sustainability begins. The odds were still against our survival. We had fought for self-determination and independence for Namibia, along with guarantees of human rights, including press freedom. Having won the political battle, we now had to fight for economic self-sufficiency.

Although the war had ended, and peace had come to our country, it was still true to say, as did Archbishop Desmond Tutu in a message on our fifteenth anniversary, that "those who come to power, especially in young democracies, easily become hyper-sensitive to dissent." For it is "often more convenient", as Tutu added, "to ride roughshod over opposition, to be impatient of questions, to seek to avoid scrutiny, to seek not to be accountable." This is not unique to Namibia, and our sub-continent of Southern Africa contains numerous examples of liberators who quickly become

CHAPTER 19 : KEEPING LEAN, MEAN AND CLOSE TO READERS

impatient with a free and democratic media when they themselves ascended to power.

In the period shortly after independence, the newspaper went through very hard times before financial sustainability was finally achieved. There were several occasions when we teetered on the brink of collapse. We were conscious of similar brave media initiatives in neighbouring South Africa that collapsed, such as *Vrye Weekblad* and *South*, often because of the sudden withdrawal of funding.

What made the difference for us, in my view, included a core of committed and dedicated staff members who were prepared to sacrifice, sometimes even their monthly salaries and other benefits, in order to survive the hard times; an independent editorial policy that remained true to its principles; a lean and mean approach to management; a creative approach to problem-solving; and the fact that the newspaper continued to be run and managed by journalists themselves.

The newspaper won the hearts and minds of the people as it endeavoured to be a voice for the voiceless under apartheid occupation, and it continues to enjoy this support base. We irritate the former liberators now ensconced in government with our watchdog approach to journalism, but the support of our readers has undoubtedly helped stave off government excesses against us. We are set up as a non-profit trust, and as our advertising revenue has picked up we have improved on working conditions and benefits for our own staff. We are also reaching out and putting back into the community that as supported us for so many years with various social responsibility projects.

This is because we do not have owners or shareholders who are trying to maximise profit or line their own pockets. We need to be driven by the business motive, but only to ensure our survival. If we can achieve this in Namibia, which has a relatively high rate of illiteracy, and a population of less than two million from which to draw readers and an even smaller base from which to draw revenue, it can surely be emulated by other media initiatives.

The latest challenge is the government's decision to put taxpayers' money into state-controlled media in order to combat our independent, and sometimes critical reporting.

This culminated, in December 2001 in a cabinet decision

to halt official advertising in *The Namibian* because of what were termed our "anti-government policies." This was followed by a presidential directive instructing that no copies of *The Namibian* should be purchased with government funds. These bans continue to date, and it is a measure of our self-sufficiency – rooted in the people – that we are not been vulnerable to this kind of attempted economic sabotage.

Although to date we have chosen not to do so, we may still decide in future to contest these bans in the courts. Only about six per cent of our advertising revenue was affected, and therefore the effect on our operations was minimal. What we were most afraid of, was a knock-on effect, with state-owned enterprises and private businesses following suit. But with some exceptions, such as the ruling party, others have not followed the government's lead.

Denial of advertising is a relatively new weapon in the arsenals of various governments, in Africa and elsewhere their attempts to silence critics in the independent press. After *The Namibian* ban, the Botswana government followed suit with a similar embargo on advertising on the *Botswana Guardian* and *MidWeek Sun* newspapers. The operations of the newspapers, which successfully challenged the embargo in court, were seriously jeopardised since they get about 60 cent of their total revenues from government advertising.

The Swaziland government also emulated this move, and the *Guardian* newspaper in that country remains closed.

The key question remains why some independent media manage to survive and others not? It would be perhaps important for relevant organisations and non-governmental organisations, to undertake a study of the matter.

In our own region, the closure of the *Daily News* in Zimbabwe in 2003 is an example. It is well known that the Mugabe Government has made a concerted campaign over many years, to crack down on the private independent media through various forms of harassment, censorship and restrictive legislation.

The closure of Zimbabwe's only independent daily, started in 1999, has unquestionably left an information vacuum in that country, with most Zimbabweans now forced to read the newspapers backing the government Zanu-PF party. There remain only a few independent

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

weeklies, and, of course, short-wave broadcasts from abroad, since private broadcasters are prevented from obtaining licences.

Even though there were court rulings in favour of the newspaper, police continued to raid its offices until it was forced to close. Questions still arise as to what led to the decision to close down, and who made it. Was it fear for the lives of the journalists or because commercial interests played a role and the newspaper's shareholders decided to throw in the towel? The fight against political pressure was long and hard, and I am not certain whether the journalists were consulted on the closure.

This is not to say that any and every independent publication that ever started up should feel entitled to survive. Neither should we encourage continual reliance on donors. Where professional standards are found wanting or there is a lack of commitment and adherence to strong editorial principles; where people embark on new publications as pure commercial money-making ventures (and this does happen in our part of the world where money is in short supply and donors are willing to support such projects), then failed publications are surely the authors of their own demise.

Our success in ensuring the survival of the newspaper has involved both managing in crisis and a great deal of crisis management. Highlighting some aspects of our survival may be helpful to others in situations similar to ours.

Having an independent editorial policy – being a newspaper not tied to any political party or commercial interest – has stood us in good stead. It is vital that we remain true to our principles of independent reporting. The Namibian has consistently had a commitment to a clear set of ideals that has helped us steer our course, often through very stormy waters. This founding ethos of being a newspaper committed to democracy and the maintenance of human rights remains strongly in place today.

A committed staff is not to be underestimated. It contributes to the ethos of a publication, which in turn earns the support of readers. It is these brave souls, who pioneered much of the “struggle” journalism in the fight against apartheid domination of our sub-continent, and regretfully, seem to be in shorter supply in our part of the world today. Perhaps this is no surprise, as no one likes to be always in the forefront of danger. Courage remains an important characteristic for journalists working in independent media.

Donor funding was certainly vital to The Namibian in its struggle phase and prior to independence. Donors should ensure funding is not summarily cut, but is reduced gradually to allow independent media to get to grips with sustainability, which is the path all should follow, and achieve, as soon as possible. Those in power in our part of the world, so often the recipients of vast tranches of donor funding themselves, tend to accuse media of being manipulated by foreign agendas if they are on the receiving end of assistance. Perhaps due to the circumstances of the day, and the end of the Cold War transition period, The Namibian, through funding by the international community succeeded in building up an international profile that was helped by the external political climate at the time. Perhaps it can be said that we started up in the right place at the right time.

The Namibian is a people's paper. It has always managed to stay in touch with its readers. In the struggle years we provided an outlet for the voice of the opposition against apartheid domination, and through this process we earned what have been called our “struggle credentials.” Our staff regularly travelled into military zones in remote rural areas of the country, and our base has therefore never been purely urban.

Even in our democracy today, unfortunately, deeply instilled fears of the former regime appear to persist in a country in which free speech is guaranteed. Namibia is dominated by one party, SWAPO, which has not yet managed to complete the transition from a autocratic liberation movement to democratic political party. The Namibian continues to speak out when many still fear to do so, particularly on issues pertaining to lack of good governance and corruption.

Ownership is key to survival. Newspapers run by journalists are becoming perhaps even more vital in today's world. In the so-called first world, the managers are taking over, with the result that profits often count more than principles and readership declines.

In our own case, we were largely self-taught. Having been with the newspaper since its inception, I believe it is possible to balance principle and profit. For example, The Namibian resists increases in its cover price, aware that information must be made accessible to the people especially in emergent democracies.

There needs to be a creative approach by management of any independent media institution in the face of adversity. It is important not to simply abandon a project

C H A P T E R 19 : KEEPING LEAN, MEAN AND CLOSE TO READERS

until all possible avenues of survival have been explored. In Zimbabwe, for example, Radio Dialogue and Voice of the People, denied licences to broadcast from within the country, started to broadcast via short wave from abroad, even though harassment continues.

Innovation can also apply to the struggle for financial survival. New technologies today make it possible for media battling for self-sufficiency to offer other services, such as layout and design, to put money into their coffers.

It is also important that independent media maintain highly professional standards, even in times where the practice of journalism is most difficult, and avenues of access to information are often cut off. It is harder for the authorities to clamp down on a publication or radio station that has an impeccable record. Although the government does not necessarily approve of what we write, The Namibian has become the newspaper of choice, and even our opponents in the state feel obliged to read us.

If we believe that self-sufficiency is essential for the political survival of media in conflict and post-conflict situations, then training in media management is necessary. In our case we learned by trial and error, and I personally was forced to develop business acumen in order to ensure the financial survival of the newspaper. Business skills, where possible, should not be left to chance.

It is important that media make use of the law courts and that they be assisted to do so. Many of the impediments to the survival of independent media are legislative in nature and need to be challenged legally. As we ourselves found, sometimes even the most draconian systems have loopholes. In such situations, the media should exploit weaknesses in the system to any extent they can in order to survive.

It is very important to manage independent media on modest, lean and mean budgets. It is the absolute key to survival. We can and do look after the basic needs of our journalists, but we avoid excessive salaries and lavish spending, especially for the senior echelons.

The Namibian has always been an advocacy newspaper. We consistently insisted on the need for a democratic constitution and bill of rights with enforceable freedoms. But we were so engaged in the battle for pure day-to-day survival, that we failed to examine how such rights could

be enabled. The lesson of this is that if guarantees for free expression, media freedom, access to information and media plurality are not advocated for and guaranteed during transitional peace talks and subsequent drafting of constitutions and legislation, then it is less likely they will be easily accommodated at a later stage. It is up to the media and civil society to make a concerted effort to achieve these guarantees. The media also need to draw up and implement effective codes of ethics and self-regulatory mechanisms.

A strong civil society is vital in providing an enabling environment for independent media to exist and flourish. In Namibia we have a weak civil society, and to a large extent, the newspaper continues to be the torch-bearer for human rights. This makes us vulnerable and sometimes isolated. Other countries have been more fortunate. South Africa, for example, has a strong civil society which is active in all areas of human rights advocacy.

We as journalists are all too well aware that in many parts of the world ours has become a dangerous profession, especially in situations of war and political conflict, and the annual reports of journalistic organisations the world over bear testimony to the many who have died and/or suffered in the exercise of their craft. Even in democracies such as ours, the situation remains fragile, and this is probably true of many countries newly emerged or in transition from repressive circumstances. Media, especially independent media, inevitably become the target when things go wrong.

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) portrays a slightly improved picture in its 2003 State of Media Freedom Report, but there remain the glaringly obvious exceptions, and Zimbabwe still tops the list as the most repressive country in the region.

While many independent media, be they print or radio, have not managed to survive crisis situations, others have flourished. Often I believe it is the relatively small size of the successful media – with dedicated staff who do what needs to be done to get the paper on the streets or voices on air despite the worst kind of provocation – that has been instrumental in these success stories.

There are times when the so-called mainstream, or commercial media, in many countries can learn some lessons from us. Force of circumstance and scarcity of financial resources has led us to be multi-skilled. In my case the title of editor is almost incidental. When I began

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

in 1985, I was a non-qualified journalist who learned the trade under fire. I have moved on to managing the entire publication, workforce, financial wellbeing and everything else that needs to be done. It is the same with many of our staff. It is a daunting task sometimes, I admit.

Being modest in terms of size has kept us in touch with our roots in the community, and this too, is undoubtedly a strong factor in our success. However, newspapers such as ours which have survived to a large extent due to our “struggle credentials” and strong roots among our readerships, cannot afford to be complacent.

Times change and the struggle is no longer the same. So we need to be innovative in bringing about change to give our readers more diversity and a fresher approach to content. One of our major projects is a weekly youth paper which reaches out to young people in an educational and informative capacity in a country where large scale unemployment and disillusionment about job prospects is a major problem for the next generation.

We have also developed our online edition at <http://www.namibian.com.na>, which is a popular site both at home and abroad.

Regional and international solidarity plays a major role in the chances of survival of newly emergent media. There is little doubt that in our region, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has provided both advocacy as well as entrepreneurial support to struggling initiatives.

The choice of the right medium in conflict and transition situations is key to survival. There are circumstances where print may not be the right choice, because newspapers are tangible products, and as the example of the Daily News shows in Zimbabwe, they provide an easy target for the authorities to confiscate. Radio remains the most important medium in Africa, and in Zimbabwe today, it can be said to be carrying the torch of media freedom following the demise of the Daily News.

The independent media in various countries, whether repressive or in states of transition, need to be transparent. Professional ethics are vital, and the media must be clear about their ownership. Too often the interests of owners or shareholders dilute journalism principles.

Independent media, whether print or electronic, are often the backbone of emerging democracies. It is therefore important that encouragement be given by independent media that have flourished, and which can share expertise with those just starting out.

In many parts of Africa there appears to be a concerted drive to set up alternative media, and this is a positive sign considering the extent to which governments dominated the media in many countries in the recent past. Great strides forward have been made, and will continue to be made in countries in transition, such as Angola and Mozambique. Such initiatives deserve support for they lay the the groundwork for democracy, good governance, press freedom and free speech.



Appendices

Belgrade Declaration

We the participants at the UNESCO conference on Support to Media in Violent Conflict and Countries in Transition meeting in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2004 –

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression: this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers”;

Noting that the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which set out international standards applicable to journalists on dangerous professional assignments in areas of armed conflict, classify those journalists as civilians, not as combatants, and that they should therefore benefit from all the protections afforded to civilians, including provisions against being deliberately targeted, detained or otherwise mistreated;

Aware that press freedom is a part of the new agenda for a human rights-based approach to development as elaborated in the Millennium Development Goals, the road map for the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration;

Recalling United Nations Resolution 1325 which urges the international community to include women’s groups and individual women in all post conflict reconstruction, development and peace processes;

Welcoming the Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas, adopted by concerned organisations in Paris on 8 March 2002, and the Safety Charter, adopted in Montreal in 1992;

Recalling Resolution 4.3 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-sixth session in 1991, which recognises that a free, pluralistic and independent press is an essential component of any democratic society and which endorses the Declaration adopted by the participants of the United Nations / UNESCO Seminar on “Promoting and Independent and Pluralistic African Press,” held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1991;

Condemning the killing of, attacks on, threats against and harassment of journalists reporting in conflicts;

Stressing the importance of access to a free flow of information from a range of sources about conflict situations to expose any abuses that may occur and to create a climate in which the conflicts may be resolved;

Emphasising the need to involve the local news media as a principal actor in the development of any media strategies in conflict and post conflict zones;

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Taking note of UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura's message for World Press Freedom Day 2004 that the "personal safety and very survival" of populations in conflict zones may depend upon receiving "independent and trustworthy information" and his view that dialogue, "even when it is heated...is crucial for laying the ground for reconciliation and reconstruction... A free press is not a luxury that can wait for better times; rather, it is part of the very process through which those better times are achieved."

Unanimously declare that:

1. Achieving democracy and enduring peace will depend upon respect for international human rights and, in particular, the right to freedom of expression as set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
2. Freedom of expression requires there to be independent and pluralistic media, able to report independently of governmental, political or economic control;
3. Assuring the safety of both local and international journalists should be given the highest priority. There should be an end to a culture of impunity over killings and other attacks on journalists and there should be independent investigations into such killings and attacks;
4. In conflict and post-conflict zones, it is necessary to ensure that credible and practical humanitarian information is made available both to the local population and to international assistance organisations. This may involve creating special information outlets for as long as they may be needed. It is also necessary to ensure that accurate information is provided about any peace negotiations or other reconciliation processes;
5. In violent conflicts public discourse is frequently dominated by armed parties to the conflict. The active participation of women's groups, civil society and marginalised and vulnerable groups should be ensured by assistance to help them gain access to media outlets and/or to create their own outlets that voice their concerns;
6. When administering conflict or post conflict zones, authorities mandated by the international community should promote and defend media freedom and other human rights – not restrict them;
7. While it may become necessary to deter direct and effective incitements to violence that may be disseminated, authorities should not confuse independent news and propaganda that calls for violence;
8. State or government broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters. A system for the allocation of broadcast licences and frequencies, insulated from political and commercial interference, should be established;
9. A pluralistic media requires the existence of a broad diversity of print, broadcast and other media, reflecting the widest range of opinion within the community. Measures should be taken to ensure fair competition and a level economic playing field;
10. Training efforts should develop and strengthen the capacity of local, national and regional training institutions, such as schools of journalism at university level, to promote training of journalists, the training of trainers, as well as development of research on media and communication. Training of journalists should include safety concerns and questions of economic sustainability of media. It should also include conflict management issues and peace processes, to meet the demand for informed reporting on reconciliation processes, while ensuring that journalists are not cast in the role of peace-makers.
11. It is equally essential to promote awareness of human rights, particularly freedom of expression, press freedom and international humanitarian law amongst public officials and civil society;
12. Steps should be taken to improve the professionalism of journalists, including support for independent associations, organisations and unions, and voluntary, self-regulatory codes and bodies where appropriate;
13. We strongly urge government and non-government donors to include media development as part of their strategy for reconstruction and development in conflict and post-conflict zones, and donors should co-ordinate their responses for greatest effect;

A P P E N D I C E S

14. We reaffirm UNESCO's status as lead agency for communication issues within the United Nations system. We call upon UNESCO to reinforce its coordinating role in supporting media initiatives in conflict and post-conflict zones;
15. We ask the Director General of UNESCO to bring this Declaration to the attention of member states with the objective of developing a strategy for a concrete plan of action amongst the different actors within the United Nations system, governmental and non-governmental donors and civil society partners, following the principles of this Declaration.

Address by Elisabeth Rehn, Chairperson, Working Table I of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express my sincere delight and pleasure to be back in Belgrade, in the Balkans region, or South Eastern Europe as it is now being called, which is so close to my heart. I am also very pleased to have been invited to speak at this international conference which will for two days discuss the role of media in times of conflict; but moreover and very importantly, the crucial role that media can have in times of peace building, in transition from dictatorship or oppression to democracy, and finally, in reconciliation and rehabilitation of the societies.

Tomorrow, we will celebrate World Press Freedom Day. On this day we can pay our respect to the brave women and men who choose to conduct their profession with truth as their guideline and who therefore risk their freedom, or sometimes their lives.

In 2003, 42 journalists were killed, because they practised their profession of journalism, and because of the way they did it were not liked by someone. Another 766 journalists were arrested last year, and at least 1,460 were physically attacked or threatened.

Journalists were murdered because they were a threat to the ruling regime, on the national or local level. They were maybe carrying out investigative journalism or writing or preparing to write about corruption involving politicians or authorities. They may have been threatening the profitable businesses of criminal gangs. They might have been writing about smuggling or trafficking of humans, organs, arms or drugs.

Threats, intimidation and violence against journalists is an efficient way to oppress the media. It serves as a warning to other journalists: if you dare to report unwanted facts, this can happen to you too.

We regularly also hear about other types of oppression of media through legislation and administrative practices and court cases, including cases of libel and defamation.

In some countries libel is still a criminal offence. Of course, the media should not be able to write lies about individuals without standing behind their words, but a certain level of criticism of personalities in public positions should be tolerated, since the role of a free press is to raise issues of public interest and help keep the authorities accountable.

We have seen cases where it has been very clear that libel decisions have clearly been used to force media out of business. Heavy fines have been imposed on some media outlets and it has been clear that as these fines would be impossible to pay, the media have to close down. There are also equally clear cases where administrative decisions are used to withdraw licenses from unwanted media.

A P P E N D I C E S

Even opening the market to business interests does not always guarantee freedom for the media. On the contrary, in some countries the ownership of all the media has ended up in the hands of one or two companies. The challenge is how to avoid letting the ownership influence the editorial independence of the outlet, be it a newspaper, television or radio.

It would be naive to believe that ownership has no influence whatsoever on the content of broadcasting or reporting; however, I believe that we have to keep as an overall goal editorial independence, and writing based on facts and neutral analysis.

All in all, an innovative regime can always invent numerous ways to oppress the media. This is something where we all, as citizens, should remain vigilant and not let the government get away with it.

But the media also have responsibilities. The power of media, in particular TV, can be huge, and it should not be misused. We know of cases where the media have not kept to their obligation to report the facts; but where instead they sought to display the facts in a certain light, or sometimes even distorted the facts. This can be dangerous, especially in a society that is recovering from a conflict, where for example ethnic relations are in an explosive state, or where information is scarce and there are few opportunities to hear different viewpoints.

In Rwanda the government media outrightly inciting killings, and radio reports called on Hutus to kill Tutsis. In other wars TV has been used as propaganda instrument by governments to depict the other side as monsters, encouraging attacks even against civilians.

We strongly condemn this. But it is also scary when the media, even without being ordered to do so by the regime, reports one-sidedly, with the purpose of angering the public and taking matters in its own hands. The reporting by media in the first days of the recent Kosovo unrest did nothing to calm moods – but rather the contrary.

I am aware that there are people who believe that freedom means the media are entitled to write whatever they want, whenever they want, and however they want. I personally believe that a cornerstone of free media is the right to report the facts. No freedom however comes without responsibility. This is linked to professionalism, which means that facts are checked, analysed, and presented in a format that is fair. And it is

encouraging that there are journalists who keep up the ethics of journalism and that in some places, such as, I believe, Serbia, journalists have formed their own ethics boards in which questions of freedom and responsibility are discussed.

I am often a little bit annoyed about the way women are depicted in the media, especially how they are shown in conflicts – only as victims. We see pictures of women with children in their laps, hiding in the doorways, sitting helplessly by the fire, maybe crying. This is very sad, and often true.

But women are also an active force we should not forget. Women have to be included in peace negotiations and peace processes, as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 demands. Women form more than 50% of the population; without their active input and participation no lasting peace can be created. This is why media should also portray the strong women who are ready to take their responsibility in building up their country peacefully after a conflict.

The power of the media in warfare is formidable. It can be a mediator, or an interpreter or even a facilitator of conflict, if only by editing away the facts that do not fit the demands of air time or print space.

All in all, the media have a crucial role, for better or for worse, in time of conflict, as well as in peace-making after a conflict. They can have an influence greater than any politician. We should therefore all encourage and support the media's positive role in peace-making and in reconciliation. I believe that the media can certainly never have too large a role in the efforts to build lasting peace. They should thus proudly assume and nourish their positive role.

Speech of the Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, Mr. Abdul Waheed Khan, UNESCO

Mr Chairperson of the National Commission,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to be here in Belgrade and to open jointly with Jovan Cirilov, President of the Serbian and Montenegrin Commission for UNESCO, our two-day conference on Support to Media in Violent Conflict and Countries in Transition.

I would immediately like to express my sincere thanks to you, Mr. Cirilov, and through you, the Republic of Serbia-Montenegro, for the hospitality they have offered to this conference and to the celebration of World Press Freedom Day 2004. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, who have come here to Belgrade from all over the world to discuss the highly relevant thematic issues that this conference will examine. We warmly welcome your active participation in this conference and your contribution to our discussions.

Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,

World Press Freedom Day 2004 has chosen to focus on "Support to media in violent conflict and in countries in transition." This is the result of many discussions among UNESCO partners and in particular during a seminar held in Stockholm, last year, organized with the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The seminar brought together a select number of NGOs, UN agencies and donors, to discuss their various experiences and perspectives on assistance to media in conflict situations and to highlight the key issues relevant to conflict management and media support.

The developments in many places of the world have made the theme of this year very timely – unfortunately! The world is witnessing yet another conflict in which media and journalists are affected in a number of ways. The media are confronted by various constraints, including impeded access to information and attack in military operations. Most sadly several journalists have been kidnapped, injured or killed. The death toll among journalists, in Iraq is tragically high and I pay tribute to those journalists who were killed in the course of their efforts to cover the war and bring us complete and impartial information.

Armed conflicts are always devastating. Military operations destroy infra-structure, material resources, institutions, political will, hope and trust. Armed conflicts cause poverty, suffering, stunted economic and social development. Conflict affects people's perceptions of threat and fear, in a spiral process that can lead to intensified conflict. In this spiral of fear and violence, certain media at times fan the flames of conflict. But the media can also make a positive contribution in providing relevant and accurate information which is vital for people to make

A P P E N D I C E S

well-informed choices and to participate constructively in the governance of their country. This is true in both peace and war. While types of media and of conflict situations inevitably vary, credible media are essential in all cases. And by credible media, I mean media that have the courage to demand high professional standards and to insist on fact and accurate reporting.

In times of war and violent conflict, the risks facing journalists are greater than usual but these are precisely the circumstances when independent, accurate and professional reporting is at a premium. We should all join efforts to ensure that journalists are allowed to do their work without fear or favour.

This is why media assistance should be recognized as an essential part of any humanitarian intervention. Within the UN family, UNESCO has a special responsibility as its mandate, as expressed in its constitution, links the free flow of ideas to the broader objective of preventing wars and constructing the defences of peace. Since the beginning of the 1990's, UNESCO has emphasized the necessity of including communication and information in the emergency assistance provided by the UN. As many of you may know, the objective of our programmes was to support independent media in conflict areas that were providing non-partisan information to the population.

In transition countries, independent and pluralist media and the development of community newspapers and radio stations, are crucial, both for building a democratic society re-establishing social bonds and for the difficult process of reconciliation.

I am proud to recall that it was during the period of war that UNESCO played an important role in helping Serbia-Montenegro and other countries in this region to develop and strengthen independent media, through material assistance and the training of professional journalists. It could be argued that these new media helped lay the ground for peace and it is a source of hope for the people in the region, and for the international community as a whole, to see that in just a few years many of these media have developed to become sustainable.

Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me come back to our conference: We have a lot of truly important issues that we want to treat in the following two days as well as in the regional conference

of Tuesday which I hope you will all take active part in. Let me just say a few words to introduce the main themes of our conference.

The first part will be dedicated to the question of how to inform the population during a violent conflict. In an open violent conflict, providing civilian populations with non-partisan information can be as vital as food, water and medical services. But a state weakened by conflict is sometimes incapable of delivering public services and it may be necessary to set up structures to provide credible and non-partisan information. Therefore, assistance to media should be recognized as an essential part of any humanitarian intervention.

However, sometimes there is an inbuilt incoherence between the humanitarian here-and-now imperative and long-term objectives of stability, democratisation and development. Clearly, if the challenges of reconstruction and democratic transition are to be effectively met, it is necessary to build a bridge between the immediate objectives of rapid response assistance and the longer-term goals of promoting freedom of expression and developing independent and pluralistic media.

The two following sessions will focus on creating an environment that is conducive to the full enjoyment of freedom of expression, through promoting press freedom, and adequate legislation. Likewise, training of media professionals in the full scale of qualifications from journalistic methods and tools to management skills and institution capacity-building is important. It is equally imperative to work on the interface between the media and the political authorities as well as the judiciary and civil society to make the point that freedom of expression is indeed vital to developing democracy and prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, we have a lot of brilliant conference participants coming from all parts of the world who will undoubtedly provide relevant and meaningful contributions to the discussions. I thank you for giving me the opportunity of passing on to you and the participants some of our reflections. I look forward to the outcomes and recommendations of our meeting and wish all of you a successful conference.

Thank you.

**Official Ceremony and Award of the UNESCO /
Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize,
Press Freedom Day May 3 2004, Belgrade.
Comments by Oliver Clarke, Jury Chairman.**

The UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize that will soon be presented is now the most prestigious press freedom award in the world.

The award is named after a wonderful and brave human being, Guillermo Cano, who gave his life in the fight against the drug cartels that have ravaged his homeland of Colombia and who bombed the offices of his newspaper, El Espectador.

It is tragic that last year – 2003 – almost 50 journalists were killed and almost 1,500 journalists attacked and threatened. Rodney Pinder, at this conference has highlighted the startling facts that in 94% of these murder cases no one is brought to justice and that a criminal is more likely to be brought to justice for robbing a home in London than for murdering a journalist.

The award is given by UNESCO, which, under the stewardship of Director-General Kochiro Matsuura, has grown to become a major institutional promoter of press freedoms. The award is made after the serious deliberations of a jury drawn from all over the world.

In spite of the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize having such international prestige, it is saddening that the winner, Raul Rivero Castaneda, is unable to be with us today.

He languishes in a Cuban jail. He was imprisoned for trying to develop a free press in a closed society. His wife was refused a visa to travel to this meeting.

The government of Fidel Castro has done much to create admirable educational and health systems in Cuba whilst facing an archaic economic blockade. But the revolution that started in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra will not be completed until Mr Castro opens Cuba to a free flow of information, so giving Cubans the opportunity of being exposed to a variety of views and information. That is when Cubans will be free. That is when the Cuban society will know of the great price paid by Raul Rivero Castaneda for their freedom.

Today's award should be seen as a message to governments everywhere that it is time to allow their citizens the opportunity to make up their minds based on full knowledge and not just on the filtered views of a government.

The members of the jury thank UNESCO for the opportunity given to serve in this influential capacity, and commend Mr Kochiro Matsuura for being prepared to face the intemperate criticisms of the Cuban government.

I know that you all join with me in hoping that Raul Rivero will have the opportunity to personally attend a future UNESCO Press Freedom ceremony.

Speech of Miguel Sanchez upon receiving the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize on behalf of Raul Rivero

His Excellency, Mr Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia and Montenegro
 His Excellency, Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 Mrs Ana María Bousquet Cano
 Distinguished guests.

The winner of the 2003 Cervantes Prize for literature, Chilean poet Gonzalo Rojas, has said that suppressing the word would be like seeking to eliminate silence. Poetry is an exercise in intimacy, yet is also one in freedom. Shutting away the word is, therefore, to eliminate poetry.

The poet and journalist Raúl Rivero is being held prisoner in a jail over 450 kilometres from the capital of Cuba for wanting to exercise the right to free speech under a regime where the word right, if not freedom, simply does not exist. The sentence of 20-years imprisonment handed down to Raúl and a further 24 independent Cuban journalists is one of the darkest moments in Cuban history.

My mother, Blanca Reyes, who is Raúl's wife, has been unable to attend today's event, having been denied the right to travel by a government which arrogates for itself the power to decide its citizens' free movements, thereby contravening one of the most fundamental and universally recognized human rights.

Those hopes vanished with the Cuban government's refusal to accept the good offices provided by Mr Matsuura, to whom we offer, on behalf of the Cuban people, our apologies, in the hope that amends can be made for what might have been done to you by officials of the Cuban regime.

It is in these circumstances that it has befallen me to represent Raúl today, and to receive in his name a prize that does him great honour.

I will allow myself, before going any further, one personal reflection. I grew up with Raúl, and from a tender age I admired his affability and sincerity. I could appreciate his creative talent, and I was an exceptional witness to the feelings of great tolerance and love of freedom that he harboured. He was a man who could share friendship and recognition with some of the most important figures of Cuban literature, namely - and despite their great political differences - José Lezama Lima and the Communist poet Nicolás Guillén.

Raúl Rivero was a teenager when the revolution triumphed in 1959 and opened up a better future for the people of Cuba. He believed in it with the fervour typical of his age, and gave it his energy and literary and journalistic talent. He occupied important posts in the national print media and has been a prize-winning poet - indeed he was honoured by the very government that now wishes to snuff out his passion, his vocation and his voice in a narrow cell.

MEDIA, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

His crime was that of being truly honest to his own thought. Now as before, he loved free thought and free expression. Using his mastery of the language, he defended the ideas of social equality and national redemption that were deployed as the revolutionary creed, until it gave way to the excesses of a power corrupted by age, whose acts betray the ideals it claims to uphold.

Raúl, with admirable courage in the context of Cuban repression, broke publicly with his long-standing political commitments; or perhaps it is fairer to say that he simply reaffirmed his commitment to his own thought, and has since been in the front-line of objective and free-thinking journalism, which is the only possible route to expressing the greatest aspirations of his people, and their tragic reality.

The charges on which he is today being punished with a long and unjust prison sentence would make even George Orwell's fateful portrait of Big Brother pale. There is really no need to cite these charges.

He and two dozen other independent journalists condemned in Cuba over the past year, along with economists, librarians, human rights activists, doctors and peaceful dissidents, have done no more than use their ideas as possible arms for an essential national change. Each and every one of them was driven by the hope and the determination to bring about by peaceful means a better and different future for all Cubans.

The history of my country, intense and unsettling as it has been, is full of similar examples. Many Cubans were, over the course of the last two centuries, in the vanguard of the aesthetic and political movements of their time, and assumed with integrity the hard personal sacrifice needed to bring about their goals.

I thank UNESCO for having represented through Raúl Rivero all those who today, either in Cuba or the wider world, defend the freedom of ideas and the freedom to express them. This prize, which symbolically recognizes those endeavours, must also contribute to shortening the time before the doors of Cuban jails open and the imprisonment of thought concludes.

It is a great honour for me to receive today the World Press Freedom Prize on behalf of Raúl.

Raúl has wished in his own voice to convey his thanks to Mr Matsuura, Mr Jovan Cirilov, and to the other ladies

and gentlemen who make up the jury, including Oliver Clarke, Kavi Chongkittavorn, Souleymane Diallo, Kunda Dixit, Yosri Fouda, Valérie Gatabazi, María Carmen Gurruchaga Basurto, Marvin Kalb, Guadalupe Mantilla de Acquaviva, Mohamed Larbi Messari, Arturas Racas, Veton Surroi and the representatives of Colombia's Guillermo Cano Foundation.

At this very moment Raúl is suffering from a disturbing bronchial pneumonia, which he contracted in prison. Before finishing, I would like to leave you with a plea not to abandon the quest for his freedom, or that of all the other independent journalists jailed in Cuba. These are the words that he dictated to my mother by telephone especially for this prize-giving day, and which are related to the way in which our parents teach us to say "thank you."

What do you say?

I remember that in the country of my childhood, each time that I received a fine gesture, either from my family or from a friend who took a liking to me, the voices of my mother and father repeating this artless rhetoric.

"What do you say?"

"Thanks," I replied.

Now in prison and hearing from Blanca the news of the UNESCO prize, the voice of my mother, now no longer, assails me permanently, along with the echo of the voice of my dead father – both of them coming back to ask me:

"What do you say?"

"Thank you. Thank you very much, I say."

The World Press Freedom Day Website <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/wpfd/2004> proved to be very useful for journalists and interested individuals prior and during the events in Belgrade.

BPI referred many local journalists to the link, who were able to access all relevant information including the speeches of most of the speakers. During the 3 day event a total of 3455 people accessed the website.



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