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IFEX Advocacy Action News

A bi-monthly bulletin for IFEX members to promote campaigns and share advocacy information

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IFEX CAMPAIGNS and ADVOCACY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Message from the Editor

It has been a busy few months for the IFEX Campaigns and Advocacy Programme. We supported various campaigns through numerous internal appeals and joint actions, raised awareness and promoted member efforts through the IFEX Campaigns website and *IFEX Communiqué* and directly supported initiatives for press freedom in China ahead of the Olympic Games. We extend thanks to all IFEX members who answered the call for appeals and supported fellow members in these important joint actions.

This issue of *IFEX Advocacy Action News* puts the spotlight on IFEX members' campaigning efforts for free expression and other human rights in China ahead of the Beijing Olympics this August. In the next issue (Issue 13: May-June), we'd like to include analysis from IFEX members on the successes and lessons learned from their various campaigning and advocacy initiatives.

This issue also focuses on the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal, which visited the country ahead of elections on 10 April. Note that this "Focus on Member Advocacy" section is a space for members to highlight their campaigns, share experiences, and solicit information and support from across the IFEX membership. Please [get in touch](#) if you'd like to write an article or see your organisation's campaign featured.

Special thanks to IFEX intern, Sam Burton, for her contributions to this issue. We would also like to take this opportunity to extend thanks and well wishes to outgoing Campaigns and Advocacy Programme Coordinator, Sheila Gruner, who has left the IFEX Clearing House to complete a PhD. We will miss you, Sheila!

- *Katie Meyer, IFEX Campaigns and Outreach Coordinator*

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Campaigns and Advocacy Highlights:

IFJ and Local Groups Launch Campaign to "Stop the War on Journalists" in Sri Lanka: Set to culminate on World Press Freedom Day on 3 May with the release of its annual South Asia Press Freedom Report, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and more than 45 journalists' associations and press freedom and human rights organisations worldwide launched a campaign to support endangered journalists in Sri Lanka. In the lead up to a Global Day of Action on 10 April, the IFEX Clearing House supported IFJ's coordinated efforts for joint letter-writing, direct action and website campaigning. To join the campaign, see: <http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?index=5997&Language=EN>

IFEX-TMG and OLPEC Campaign to Free Tunisian Journalist and Comedian: Quick advocacy action by the IFEX Tunisia Monitoring Group (TMG) contributed to the release of comedian Hédi Ouled Baballah on 20 March, says the Observatory for the Freedom of the Press, Publishing and Creation (OLPEC). The TMG released a joint action and lobbied comedians in other countries to campaign for his freedom.

On 8 April in Geneva, the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Tunisia reviewed submissions sent on behalf of the TMG by International PEN, the International Publisher's Association (IPA), and the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC). Since NGOs were not allowed to take the floor during the UPR, Swiss-based Tunisian NGOs organised a meeting against torture in Geneva on 7 April, co-sponsored by the IFEX-TMG. At the event attended by approximately 100 people, Alexis Krikorian of IPA alerted attention to the case of Slim Boukhdar, whose one-year prison sentence was upheld on 3 April. Two films on torture were screened. Tunisian human rights activists, including Sihem Bensedrine of OLPEC, also made presentations, which "underlined the wide recourse to torture used by security forces and police in Tunisia, and the total impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators," reported Krikorian. See the UPR submissions on Tunisia at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/TNSession1.aspx>.

Joint mission finds Kenyan national media failed in "watchdog" role during 2007 election: Following a joint fact-finding mission to Kenya, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), ARTICLE 19 and International Media Support released a report in March declaring that the country's media failed in its duty to provide full, investigative coverage of the political crisis and violence that erupted in the wake of the December 2007 presidential election. David Makali, director of the Kenya-based Media Institute, testified that one of the media's biggest mistakes was not defying the government-imposed live broadcasting ban, which threatened freedom of expression. The mission found that instead of providing critical coverage, journalists submitted to scare tactics, resulting in self-censorship and encouragement of reconciliation rather than debate. See: <http://www.campaigns.ifex.org/fr8/content/view/full/91585/>

ARTICLE 19 and ABRAJI challenge Brazilian laws suppressing freedom of expression: IFEX members ARTICLE 19 and the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI) as well as the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) jointly testified on 10 March to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights at the Organization of American States against laws and judicial practices in Brazil that are institutionalising freedom of expression violations. The organisations expressed concern over the excessive and coordinated use of civil defamation lawsuits and provisional injunctions to prevent the publication of information. The groups urged the commission to review the Brazilian government's current practices in view of international human rights principles, and to take prompt action if their concerns are substantiated. See: <http://www.campaigns.ifex.org/fr8/content/view/full/91572/>

CHINA OLYMPIC CAMPAIGNS:

Hong Kong Countdown - 100 Days to Olympic Games: Eight freedom of expression groups are launching a campaign in Hong Kong to mark the 100-day countdown to this August's Olympics in Beijing. Events are planned to take place from 30 April to World Press Freedom Day (3 May) to reaffirm the human rights situation in Hong Kong and to raise awareness of the chilling effect that suppression of free expression in mainland China is having on this region, says one of the leading organisers, the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA). HKJA is organising the events with other groups in Hong Kong and internationally, including PEN, RSF and the World Association of Newspapers (WAN). More international human rights groups will also join an exhibition on 3 May to show solidarity for Chinese freedom of expression. For details contact Mak Yin-ting, HKJA general secretary (email: hkja@hkja.org.hk, tel: +852 2591 0692.)

Casting a shadow on the Olympic flame, opening ceremonies: Following China's crackdown on press freedom in the face of rising civil unrest in Tibet, RSF activists - including general secretary Robert Ménard - staged a dramatic protest on 24 March at the Olympic flame-lighting ceremony in Olympia, Greece. "We cannot let the Chinese government seize the Olympic flame, a symbol of peace, without denouncing the dramatic situation of human rights in the country," RSF said in a statement. The organisation has also called for heads of state, government and members of royal families to boycott the opening ceremony of the Games.

Advocating against restrictions on athletes' free speech: IFEX members ARTICLE 19 and RSF have been lobbying national Olympic committees to commit to ensuring that restrictions are not imposed on their athletes' freedom of speech while they are in Beijing. The two organisations argue that preventing discussions about human rights abuses violates the fundamental principles at the heart of the Olympic Charter, contradicts the spirit of the Olympic Games and amounts to condoning the human rights abuses committed by too many countries around the world, including China.

Joint strategy-building an awareness-raising: WPFC, WAN, RSF, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and other rights groups are organising a conference on "Beijing Olympics 2008: Winning Press Freedom" in Paris on 18-19 April. As a forum for examining reporting conditions in China, Internet freedom and Chinese approaches to domestic and foreign media, this event will host speakers from the Associated Press, the BBC, HKJA, the International Olympic Committee and China's Olympic organisers. To register, see: <http://www.beijing2008conference.com/home.php>

Media campaigns for free expression: WAN has dedicated its World Press Freedom Day initiative to "[The Olympic Challenge: Free the Press in China!](#)" WAN is calling for newspapers across the globe to express concern about and support for press freedom in China by publishing editorials, advertisements, political cartoons and other materials that will be made available on its website on 3 May.

Information-sharing: IFJ Asia-Pacific's has launched a monthly Press Freedom in China Campaign e-bulletin. Contributions are most welcome. To send in your news, email: ifjchina@ifj-asia.org or visit the IFJ's China Campaign page at: <http://www.ifj.org>

Raising the call to free imprisoned journalists: Currently at least 38 writers and journalists and 50 cyber-dissidents are being held in Chinese prisons, making China the world's biggest jailer of journalists. In response, PEN American Center, PEN Canada, and the Independent Chinese PEN Center launched the [We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression](#) campaign, which challenges the Chinese government to release all imprisoned writers and journalists and end Internet censorship and other free expression restrictions before the opening of the Olympics.

RAPID AND ORGANISED ACTION RESPONSE (ROAR)

Rapid and Organised Action Response (ROAR) is part of the IFEX Campaigns Programme strategy to support fast, short-term follow-up actions on free expression violations. Write to: campaigns@ifex.org if your organisation would like more information, or see: <http://campaigns.ifex.org/en/about.html>

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY:

World Press Freedom Day (3 May) is quickly approaching and we want to hear from you! IFEX will be celebrating by highlighting your activities on our website and in the *IFEX Communiqué*, which goes out to more than 15,000 subscribers around the world.

The *Communiqué* will devote the 29 April issue to covering your World Press Freedom Day events. Your activities will also be featured prominently on the IFEX website in our special World Press Freedom Day section: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/242/>

Please forward your information, links and graphics by **25 April** to Natasha Grzincic, Online Editor, at: communiqué@ifex.org

INTERNAL APPEALS FOR JOINT ACTION:

SYRIA (Egyptian Organization for Human Rights): 35 members of IFEX and the Arab Working Group called for support for journalists and activists facing harassment and detention prior to the 15 April trial of human rights activist Mazen Darwish. See: <http://www.ifex.org/e/layout/set/print/content/view/full/92388/>

UNITED NATIONS (ARTICLE 19 and Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies): 40 civil society organisations called for the Human Rights Council to protect the particular mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Free Expression. See: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/petition-hrc.pdf>

Sri Lanka (International Federation of Journalists): 27 IFEX members and 20 other organisations appealed to President Rajapaksa to "Stop the War on Journalists". See: <http://www.ifj.org/pdfs/JointLettertoSriLankaPresident.pdf>

Tunisia (IFEX Tunisia Monitoring Group): IFEX-TMG urged the Tunisian government to cease repeated attacks on activists following brutal violence against Sihem Bensedrine of Observatory for the Freedom of the Press, Publishing and Creation (OLPEC) and Omar Mestiri. See: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/91404/>

Bahrain (Bahrain Center for Human Rights): 21 IFEX members and 34 other groups called for an end to the jailing and torture of demonstrators and human rights activists in Bahrain. See: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/91068/>

Somalia (National Union of Somali Journalists): 27 IFEX members called for an end to the repression of journalists, and a revision of the media law. See: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/90971/>

Tunisia (IFEX Tunisia Monitoring Group): IFEX-TMG protested the imprisonment of comedian Hédi Ouled Baballah, jailed on presumably false charges related to insulting the President. See: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/91404/>

Your signature is needed - look out for internal appeals and sign on!

FOCUS ON MEMBER ADVOCACY

Nepal: International Mission and Local Members Fight Back in Face of Media Crackdown Surrounding Elections

By Kristina Stockwood and Natasha Grzincic, IFEX Clearing House

As Nepal headed into constituent assembly elections on 10 April, press freedom violations continued unabated across the country, despite a government promise earlier this year to "take seriously" the safety of media workers. In some districts, journalists were denied transportation permits. Others were threatened and assaulted, as well as denied access to information from local government authorities.

In coordination with monitoring units of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal, a collaboration of 12 organisations which includes nine IFEX members, has been back in Nepal to report on these incidents and others where journalist safety and press freedom are being compromised.

From 4 to 15 April, the mission, which includes representatives of the IFJ, the International News Safety Institute, the International Press Institute, Internews, the Open Society Institute and International Media Support, is providing support to the local partners during the crucial transition period - the elected assembly is to decide the fate of the monarchy and write a new constitution for the country.

The mission also helped FNJ deploy a media violations monitoring team in Nepal. Nearly 100 monitors were spread throughout the regions, helping to negotiate in conflicts regarding media rights, safety, transportation difficulties and access to information.

FNJ also established an emergency telephone line for its more than 8,000 members to facilitate rapid reactions to the cases of intimidation, attacks and abductions of its members. In less than two years, from April 2006 to December 2007, FNJ recorded 652 press freedom violations. So far in 2008, more than 30 alerts on Nepal have been issued on the IFEX Action Alert Network.

Meanwhile, the Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies (CEHURDES) was also actively monitoring the polls to ensure a free and fair election. Khadga Sen Oli of CEHURDES said, "We are witnessing the process of conflict transformation and peace building. Free expression is an essential component of a successful transition to democracy."

CEHURDES has been working on a project on mobilising the media in mid- and far-western Nepal to help promote people's participation in drafting a new constitution. "People living in these regions have had to confront tremendous problems and never received proper attention from the successive governments in the past," said Sen Oli.

Following the elections, CEHURDES will be campaigning to guarantee peoples' fundamental rights, including upgrading national practices on human rights to be consistent with international standards.

Visit these links:

- International Mission statement: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/89940/>

- FNJ: <http://www.fnjnepal.org/>

- CEHURDES: <http://www.cehurdes.org.np/>

- The International Mission visited Nepal this January and met with government ministers, political party leaders, community leaders, security forces, the election commission and a broad cross-section of the media during its pre-election visit. Read recommendations in the full mission report, now available by contacting Thomas Hughes of IMS at: th@i-m-s.dk

TOPICS and TOOLS

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Kiva: Here's a novel way to alleviate poverty: connect individuals through Kiva, the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website. "Entrepreneurs" - individuals in need of funding and seeking economic independence - publish information about their needs and projects for individual lenders to support. Throughout the course of the loan (usually six to 12 months), lenders can receive email journal updates and track repayments. Then, when they get loan money back, they are encouraged to relend to someone else in need. See: http://kiva.org/app.php?gclid=CNGGgc_0vJECFR0Esgod4BsQDg

The Communication Initiative Network: The Communication Initiative Network is an online space for sharing the experiences of, and building bridges between, the people and organisations engaged in or supporting communication as a fundamental strategy for economic and social development and change. Browse online research and resources or sign up to *Drum Beat Magazine*, an electronic publication that highlights campaigns and initiatives in media development, free expression, and communication for development. See: <http://www.comminet.com/>

ADVOCACY TOOLS

The Global Voices Guide of Blog Advocacy: Blog for a Cause! The Global Voices Guide explains how you can use blogging as a quick and inexpensive way to create a presence for your campaign on the Internet, to disseminate information about a cause, and to organise actions to lobby decision-makers. See: <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/tools/>

CALL TO IFEX MEMBERS

- **Want to start a campaign and need advice or support?**
- **Tell us about your organisation's campaigns and advocacy efforts**
- **Share articles, websites and campaigns tools**

Contact the IFEX campaigns programme at: campaigns@ifex.org or see: <http://campaigns.ifex.org/en/index.html>