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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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FOCUS ON MEMBER ADVOCACY

Hong Kong and beyond: Committee to Protect Journalists' blogging makes an impact

By Andrew Levinson, Communications Assistant, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

CPJ's Bob Dietz was on the ground in Hong Kong when John Ray, a reporter for ITV in England was [hauled off by Chinese police](#) while covering a peaceful protest in Beijing. He [posted](#) on the CPJ Blog about China's "tough talk" the next day, as officials denounced the arrest of Ray and admitted he was working within the rules afforded him as a journalist. Though positive, Dietz wrote that it was "too little too late" and kept the pressure on Chinese and Olympic officials to respect media freedom.

The introduction of our blog in August was a natural extension of CPJ's desire to remain current with the global move toward digital journalism. As an organisation of journalists who work on behalf of journalists, we must continually evolve in order to accommodate the shifting media landscape. Our blog is quickly becoming one of the most effective ways to spread information for CPJ, and has become the second most popular page on our site outside of the main homepage.

Beyond our usual means of distributing information - alerts that go out to media, letters to governments, short statements made to respond to breaking news - the blog gives us a method to share personal stories of journalists who have been [jailed](#), [censored](#), or [attacked](#); post news roundups on press freedom issues; and issue reports instantaneously from staffers and journalists in the field. The blog allows staff to expand their work to cover cases closely and quickly alert our readers to unfolding events. It permits us as an organisation to have dynamic visuals such as embedded video to enhance our message.

The decision to send CPJ staff to blog from Hong Kong during the [Olympics](#) was part of our adaptation to the way journalism works now. Having staff on the ground meant that we were able to react in a timely matter to any media issues that would arise, but it also allowed CPJ to pick up on stories that might have passed us by otherwise. Blogging allowed us the flexibility to be in the middle of the action and also report in nearly real time as events unfolded.

While the impact is difficult to measure, especially in a media-repressed country such as China, the mere fact that CPJ was able stay on top of the story and call out the government on abuses is a victory. China had hoped to shape their own story of the Olympics by quieting dissenting voices, but the work of CPJ staffers like Bob Dietz and Kristin Jones ensured that others had a chance to speak out about the 2008 Olympic Games.

We have recently used the blog as a forum for spreading information about the arrest of American filmmaker Andrew Berends, who was detained in Nigeria for 10 days. We posted updates on the situation and letters urging his release from New York Senators [Hilary Clinton](#) and [Charles Schumer](#). We've written about the case of Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian dissident journalist killed 30 years ago in London with a poison-tipped umbrella and how the case relates to the current-day persecution of journalists in Eastern Europe, as well as how the DRC has spent more time considering the plight of goats in its jails than that of imprisoned journalists.

The [blog](#) has become a forum for our readers around the world to discuss press freedom and open a dialogue with our staff. The more voices we can encourage to speak about freedom of expression issues, the more awareness we can generate—and that is a significant key to our advocacy's success.

Visit the blog at www.cpj.org/blog.

CAMPAIGNS and ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

[Morocco – Global Campaign frees newspaper editor](#)

The release of Mustafa Hormatallah, a Moroccan editor at the independent weekly "Al-Watan Al An", prompted a memorable scene on July 25 as he exited Akacha Prison in Casablanca, Morocco. He expressed gratitude to 130 lawyers and press freedom advocates worldwide who had volunteered to defend him. He told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "It never occurred to me that my detention would provoke such a huge campaign of solidarity in Morocco and other parts of the world. You have no idea how your solidarity and action helped make my detention bearable and strengthened my commitment to independent journalism."

[Morocco – Blogger's two year prison sentence overturned](#)

The Court of Appeal overruled the High Court's two year prison sentence for blogger Mohammed Erraji, for his implication in an online publication that the Moroccan King's custom of granting favours to a select few elite in the country worsens poverty. A colleague emphasised the value of international support in advocating for Erraji's release, saying, "I cannot overstate the importance of the support by organisations like IFEX and International PEN. I would like to thank you for unconditionally standing by your principles and would like to state that your moral authority is an inspiration to all of us."

[Tunisia \(IFEX-TMG\) – International pressure helps lift travel ban on human rights advocate](#)

International pressure contributed to the Tunisian government's decision to allow world-renowned journalist and human rights advocate Sihem Bensedrine to fly to Vienna on 2 September, after a violent attempt to ban her from leaving the country. Bensedrine is head of OLPEC and a member of the IFEX Council. The Tunisia Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of 18 IFEX members, expressed anger at the treatment of Bensedrine by police and immigration officials at the airport in Tunis, who prohibited her from flying to Austria, where she has a residency permit. The TMG gathered support to demand that Bensedrine be allowed to cross freely into and out of Tunisia, according to her legal right as a Tunisian citizen.

[NUSOJ/ Media Institute - Regional conference on challenges of journalism in Eastern Africa](#)

Delegates at a regional conference to address the challenges and obstacles of practicing journalism in the Eastern Africa signed a Declaration to promote the right to freedom of association. Commitments include working collectively to bargain for better wages, appropriate working conditions and improved safety of journalists and other media workers. The Conference took place in Djibouti from 12-16 August 2008. Representatives from international NGOs and 21 regional journalists' unions and associations and editors' organisations participated in the event, which was organised by the East African Journalists' Association.

Sri Lanka (IFJ) – Journalist unjustly accused of terrorism

Popular Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam ("Tissa") is the first Sri Lankan journalist to be charged as a terrorist for doing his job. After being detained for five months without explanation, he was charged with promoting terrorism through a magazine he published two years ago. Six months into his detention, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and press groups in Sri Lanka started a viral campaign demanding his release; the goal is 100,000 hits on YouTube. Watch the video here: <http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/free-tissainayagam>. Also, join the Release Tissa Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=23763104109>

Indonesia/Malaysia (ISAI/AJI) – Demonstrating solidarity through transnational activism

The Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI) and the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia mobilised 50 activists to protest outside the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia for the release from detention of a Malaysian blogger and a political opposition member. The protest received vast coverage from various media. The protesters were granted audience with Embassy officials to whom they presented a petition decrying the citation of the colonial and repressive Internal Security Act to silence the press and to oppress pro-democratic politicians and social activists. For more information contact ISAI at office@isai.or.id

Daniel Pearl Foundation's – Call to journalists to support 'Music Days'

World Music Days, an international network of concerts, was created in response to the 2002 kidnapping and murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. The Daniel Pearl Foundation is hosting a month-long awareness-raising event which uses music to spread friendship and reaffirm the commitment to tolerance and humanity. Last year, the event produced over 500 concerts in 42 countries. As a journalist, you can help this initiative by contacting musicians and music venues in your country and asking them to support the event. Learn more at <http://www.danielpearlmusicdays.org>

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.

Organise an "internal appeal" to fellow IFEX members calling for solidarity and joint action in support of your campaign by writing to: campaigns@ifex.org.

For more information of how the IFEX Clearing House can support your campaigning efforts, see: <http://campaigns.ifex.org/en/about.html>

INTERNAL APPEALS

Your signature is needed – look out for Internal Appeals from fellow IFEX members and sign on!

JOINT ACTIONS

Mexico (AMARC/ARTICLE 19/ CPJ/FLIP/IFJ/IPI/RSF): An international coalition made up of 13 international press freedom and free expression organisations undertook a mission to Mexico, on 20-25 April 2008. Their report, "Press Freedom: Shadow of Impunity and Violence" tells of a "shocking culture of impunity" surrounding violence against journalists. The mission will return to the country early in 2009 as part of the mandate which it has developed for future action.

[Burma \(Burma Action Group\)](#): The Burma Action Group, comprising 22 IFEX members and partners, called for swift international action to pressure for the immediate release of Zaw Thet Htwe and the influential comedian-activist Zarganar, convicted for being involved in relief efforts for victims of Cyclone Nargis, alongside seven other activists and dissidents who are being held on trumped up charges.

[Yemen \(ARTICLE 19\)](#): On 7 August 2008, 27 IFEX members sent a letter to the President of Yemen condemning the deteriorating state of freedom of expression in the country. Recent violations include imprisonment of journalists for reporting on human rights or criticising the current regime. The letter called for the government to take "decisive and immediate measures in accordance with international human rights law to uphold freedom of expression." The action focused on the plight of Abdelkarim Al-Khaiwani, who is back in court on 12 October fighting a six-year prison sentence. A mission is planned to support his case.

[Tunisia \(IFEX-TMG\)](#): The Tunisia Monitoring Group advocated for human rights defender Sihem Bensedrine to cross freely into and out of Tunisia. See Campaigns and Advocacy Highlights above.

[Thailand \(SEAPA/TJA\)](#): The Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) and the Thai Journalists Association (TJA) condemned a mob attack on a state-run television station in Bangkok. They said the forced closure of Thailand's National Broadcasting Television (NBT) on 26 August 2008, an attempt to obstruct the flow of information to the public, is unjustifiable and goes against the principles of democracy and the right to information.

[Syria \(World Association of Newspapers\)](#): 26 IFEX members appealed to the French President M. Nicolas Sarkozy (also the President of the European Council) during his visit to Syria, to address violations against journalists, cyber dissidents and human rights activists who challenge the policies of Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. They have been arrested, prosecuted, imprisoned and harassed. President Sarkozy was urged to appeal for the immediate release from prison of those who merely exercised their rights to freedom of expression and association.

[Click here for a complete list of IFEX joint actions](#)

TOPICS and TOOLS

ADVOCACY TOOLS

[International film profiles the work of a human rights journalist](#)

Audiovisuals are a powerful tool for human rights documentation, advocacy and education, and they can also make an important contribution to protecting human rights defenders. "Unwanted Witness" ("Sin Tregua"), is a film about the life of Hollman Morris, internationally acclaimed journalist (recipient of Human Rights Watch and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression awards) whose television show "Contravía" boldly confronts the violence that ravages Colombia. "Unwanted Witness" made its international debut at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2008. It uncovers the plight of hundreds of Colombian journalists struggling to bring about justice through their reporting. The story is told from the viewpoint of a Swiss-based director, with the intention that it will provide a perspective on human rights violations with which people outside of the human rights realm can empathise. Morris said, "International profiling of my work has helped to protect me and my family in Colombia." The film will travel to International Film Festivals in Cuba and Germany before being made available on DVD. See:

<http://www.intermezzofilms.ch>

Graffiti art: an innovative tool for protest

Laser art is one creative campaigning tactic that angered the Chinese authorities during the recent Olympic Games. James Powderly, a free expression activist and co-founder of the Graffiti Research Lab, was detained in Beijing for highlighting his pro-Tibet campaign using the new "L.A.S.E.R. Stencil". This form of art and technology protest uses a 400 milliwatt handheld green laser with micro-stencils to beam simple messages and images up to three stories high on surfaces such as billboards, buildings, and bridges. The Laser Stencil technology was developed in conjunction with Students for a Free Tibet. See: <http://www.graffitiresearchlab.com>

Tips on how to get started in local fundraising (Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook)

The Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook presents a range of options and steps for organisations to consider when fundraising. In the chapter "Tips on how to get started in local fundraising", the author highlights key aspects to consider for local fundraising. Topics covered include how to start the process and ways to raise money. See: <http://www.eldis.org/go/what-s-new&id=38756&type=Document>

Information source for Human Rights Defenders (International Service for Human Rights)

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) launched a website which facilitates access for human rights defenders to a vast array of continually updated information about human rights news and tools and the organisation's work. Available information includes: ISHR Publications (analytical reports with practical guides and insights into trends, discussions within the UN system and State positions); international and regional protection mechanisms for human rights defenders; global capacity building activities; and the latest news for NGOs. See: <http://www.ishr.ch>

ADVOCACY EVENTS

Info-Activism Camp (Tactical Tech)

Info-Activism recognises the use of information and communications as a primary tactic in successful campaigns. The Info-Activism Camp is organised by Tactical Tech and will be held in India, February 2009. The Camp will bring together 120 rights advocates from the global South with technologists, designers and activists for a week long hands-on workshop to share skills, tools and tactics in digital advocacy. The working language of the camp will be English. Details along with the application form will be available by end of September 2008. For more information visit <http://www.tacticaltech.org> or write to infoactivism@tacticaltech.org

Annual Global Learning and Linking Programme on Human Rights Based Development

Dignity International encourages development actors from grassroots, national and international development NGOs that are beginning to integrate human rights in development work, to apply for its 7th Annual Global Linking and Learning programme, taking place from 30 November to 11 December in Brazil. The Programme will equip the participants with knowledge of the key elements of human rights based development, and enhance skills for its practical application. The application form can be found at http://www.dignityinternational.org/dg/RC/Dignitydocs/2008/HRD_applicationform.doc and the brochure at http://www.dignityinternational.org/dg/RC/Dignitydocs/2008/HRD_leaflet.pdf

CALL TO IFEX MEMBERS

- **Want to start a campaign and need advice or support?**
- **Increase the international profile of your organisation's campaigning efforts**
- **Share articles, websites and campaigns and advocacy tools**

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