Women Relegated in Nigerian Media

Women continue to have a raw deal in the media as they trail their male counterparts who dominate the journalism profession in their sheer number and in the key decision making positions they occupy in media establishments. The domination of the news media by men has resulted in an inadequacy of female voices in the media and scant attention to women issues.

Although no law or policy in Nigeria or within the various media establishments preclude women from joining the profession of journalism or relegates women to certain levels of achievement within the profession, the reality, however, has been that few women have risen to key positions or managerial decision-making levels in media organizations in Nigeria.

It is estimated that the percentage of media professionals who are women is 20, while those who hold decision-making or senior editorial positions are even fewer. For instance, of all the national newspapers in the country at the moment, only one is edited by a woman, although some women serve as line editors in newspapers.

Yet, the total number of women in the country is almost at par with the number of men. According to the final figures of the 1991 census, the population of Nigeria was 88.92 million. This was made up of 44,529,608 males as against 44,462,612 females. This represented 50.08 percent males and 49.92 percent females.

In a recent study by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) in Lagos, carried out in conjunction with the Panos Institute of Washington DC and the Center for War, Peace and the
News Media of the New York University, respondents noted that by and large, the Nigerian media do not reflect the gender demographics of the country.

The report formed the subject of a recent workshop organized by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) on the theme: Media In Diverse Societies: Roles, Responsibilities and Opportunities. Participants at the workshop included representatives of relevant organisations and various interests groups, including the media comprising media owners, media managers/editors, media workers, human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the legal profession, international organisations and agencies, academic institutions and government institutions and agencies.

The study, IJC said, was designed to establish the facts concerning diversity in an African newsroom with Nigeria being the focus of the present survey. According to IJC, the study's immediate goal was to show in clear and graphic terms, the structure of newsroom diversity on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion. Following from this is also the expectation that it will form the basis of a dialogue amongst media owners, media managers/editors, media workers and the public to which it is presented. This will help to gain greater support to make the Nigerian media the centrepiece of a comprehensive framework to intervene in support of national identity formation, tolerance of diversity, and conflict management.

The survey, which saw a total of 768 questionnaires being distributed among media practitioners across the various parts of Nigeria, polled a total of 667 respondents with 99 blanks indicating a percentage of 87.1 return and 12.9 mortality rate respectively. Despite the relatively high population of women to men in Nigeria, put at 49.92 per cent for women as against 50.08 per cent for men by the 1991 population census, the study found that there is a large representation of men than women in most media organisations with men assuming majority roles as journalists, media managers and owners.

Specifically, out of the 667 respondents, 157 were women made up in the ratio of 138 newsroom journalists, 17 media managers and two media owners. On the other hand, the 512 men who responded to the survey show a ratio of 387 newsroom journalists, 104 media managers and 21 media owners. Taken on its face value, the survey indicates that there is an average of one female among four Nigerian journalists.

With the emergence of the vernacular newspaper, Iwe Irohin, as the first Nigerian newspaper in 1859, the Nigerian media now has a history of over 140 years. The industry has blossomed with over 100 newspapers and news magazines now currently being published across the country. There are also 127 radio and television stations in the country. However, the years have witnessed a pattern of media control, management and operation, which views journalism almost as an exclusive preserve of men.

Women generally lack the financial muscle to establish media organizations, such that ownership is almost entirely male. Besides this skewed pattern of ownership, the journalism profession is dominated by men. This is evident from the phrase "Gentlemen of the Press", which is used to address journalists, with the underlying assumption that there are no women in the media. The result has been that men dominate the entire news media both in their sheer number and in the key positions they occupy within the media establishment.

The domination of the news media by men and the predominance of the male perspective in the reporting of news have also brought about a situation where there is little focus on the participation of women in the political and economic spheres in the country. Women issues are also not given adequate coverage in the media. Where they are covered, they are usually treated from a male perspective.

Given the skewed demographics in the ratio of women to men in the Nigerian media, the IJC survey sought to establish what ought to constitute a referential benchmark for diversity in a work and political office environment by using the Beijing benchmark. Observing the absence of an official national benchmark, the Beijing Conference had attempted to set such a
benchmark which advocates that organisations should have at least 30% female working membership to be regarded as having met a standard.

In the light of this reference, the percentages from respondents of the survey, which revealed a picture that had 76.5% rate for male media players and 23.5% for women, clearly did not offer a consolation.

These facts were further re-affirmed even when the data was broken down into state and into the nature of ownership, using public or private proprietorship as yardstick. But on the whole, the survey showed that the public media are proportionately more gender balanced than the private owned media organisations.

For instance, in relation to private media where the survey showed an average of 56 women to 132 men, the survey showed that there is an average of 89 women to 189 men in the public media.

Bearing in mind that there are professions which are more gender sensitive than others, where for instance, there are probably more male Doctors than female Doctors and more female nurses than male nurses in Nigeria, the survey also sought to answer the question whether this could have given rise to the gender imbalance in the Nigerian media. In other words, is the fact that there are more male journalists than female journalists a natural order for the journalism profession? Do the leaders of the journalism profession argue that by the nature of their trade, this eventuality is inevitable?

The study revealed that media owners do not in any way give considerations to gender in their employment policies. Specifically, the result of the survey shows that besides one respondent who answered "Strong" indicating the extent to which gender consideration influence his/her decision to hire a journalist, five respondents answered "Average", eight "Low", eleven "None at all" and none answered "Very strongly".

This response was corroborated by the response of newsroom journalists in their answer to a question which asked respondents to affirm media employers' claim that their decision to employ a journalist is not informed by gender consideration. A total of 492 respondents answered "No" while 21 respondents answered "Yes". This represents a percentage of 74.9 to 25.1.

This picture was further reinforced by the responses of respondents newsroom journalists to a question which sought to establish whether they have ever left a job due to gender discrimination. The response pattern showed that 21 journalists answered "Yes" indicating that they have had to resign an appointment on account of discrimination arising from their gender, 492 respondents on the other hand answered "No", indicating that they have never had to resign from a job on account of discrimination arising from their gender. The other 97 respondents did not offer an answer.

The survey also showed that Nigerian media owners would even approve of policies to encourage gender parity. To a question which asked media managers to rate their commitment to having a gender balanced newsroom, the pattern of responses was as follows: Very high (4), High (9), Average (6), Low (3) and Non-issue (3).

This same enthusiasm was shared by respondent newsroom journalists who responded to a similar question as follows: Excellent (57), Good (171), Average (120), Poor (39) and Blank (71).

But respondents sounded a caveat that a dogmatic insistence on gender balance in the media industry would sound the death knell on competence and professionalism in the industry.

Similarly, the survey showed that there is a clear media owners-consensus on the matter of promoting a gender-balanced reporting in the media. This position was also reinforced by journalists in their responses to a question asking them to rate their organization's reporting of gender issues. The result showed respondents' responses as follows: Excellent (106), Good (229), Average (105), Fair (50), Poor (14) and Blank (106).

The survey also showed that despite the extra-ordinary enthusiasm to promote gender parity in the media, the problem persists because of the fewness of qualified females, the social
responsibilities of women in respect of marital obligations and the fact that women are generally more in informal rather than formal job engagements.

The media, however, got the thumbs down from respondents who say media organisations do not make special arrangements for women journalists in recognition of different gender needs. Specifically, the responses by newsroom journalists rating the extent to which media organisations make specific arrangement for journalists in recognition of the different gender needs were as follows: Yes (149), No (357) and Blank (104).

Newsroom journalists also said they do not discern an inappropriate emphasis of the views and interests of a particular gender perpetrated by their news organisations. The view was expressed as follows: Yes (43), No (460) and Blank (107).

Another area of interest to the study team was whether gender influences affect a journalist's choice to cover an assignment. The responses of journalists to this enquiry show that 62.6% of them believe that gender consideration does not influence who covers an assignment. Indeed 48% of the same respondents think it will not be professionally acceptable for gender to be a consideration in choosing who covers an assignment.

The questionnaire sought to know if women are placed on a different pay scale from men. All the respondents answered NO. As to whether journalists suffer economic discrimination due to gender i.e. are there journalists who are paid less as a result of their gender? About 71.6 responded with a NO. The questionnaire did not define discrimination outside wage system.

Although the findings of the survey were not subjected to empirical statistical test to determine their level of significance, they reflect in large measure the situation which obtains in numerous media organizations in Nigeria.

ANNUAL REPORTS ON THE STATE OF THE MEDIA IN 2000
Cheerless Respite In Year 2000

The first year of the new millennium ended with a bag of mixed blessings for the media world. Death, stalked the media world in the year 2000 leaving, as usual, a trail of sad memories. More saddening is the fact that scores of incidents of death that befell numerous media workers last year were caused by people who hate the truth and were determined to stop or distort it by any means, including even taking the lives of innocent journalists just plying their trade.

Although with slight differences, three leading press freedom organisations have issued annual reports indicating a decline in the number of journalists killed during the year 2000 while practicing their profession or for expressing their opinion.

Similarly, the reports indicate that the year witnessed a marked fall in the number of cases of censorship commonly adopted by governments and its agencies including security, groups and individuals to obstruct a free media practice and freedom of expression.

The press freedom organisations are the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), (Reporters Without Borders).

According to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), series of assassinations and targeted murders of journalists that highlight the dangers facing reporters around the world marked the year 2000.

The organisation reported that the media lost 62 persons in the year 2000, many of them suffered the fate in the course of exposing corruption or expressing political dissent. This figure shows a decrease over its 1999 report released in conjunction with the International Press Institute (IPJ) which indicated that over 86 journalists and media workers may have been killed in the course of their work or as a result of it. The organisations said it was “an infamous year, the second worse years on record, in a century of unrelenting slaughter”.

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The IFJ's year 2000 report lists 37 journalists as having been killed as a result of their work, and details 20 cases as under investigation. The deaths of five media staff are also listed.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), reported that 24 journalists were killed for their work in 2000. According to CPJ, out of these 24 journalists that were killed during the course of the year 2000, at least 16 were murdered, most of these in countries where assassins have learned they can kill journalists with impunity.

The figure by CPJ shows that the number of journalists killed in year 2000 is less than that of 1999, when CPJ found that 34 journalists were killed for their work, 10 of them in war-torn Sierra Leone.

The CPJ said journalists recorded its highest tolls in 2000 in Colombia, Russia, and Sierra Leone.

According to Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), in its report, the year 2000 recorded a marginal fall in the number of journalists killed in the course of performing their work or as a direct consequence of it, although the year still left sad memories for many journalists and media practitioners.

The report said during the course of the year, 26 journalists were killed while practising their profession or for their opinions. RSF also reported that 329 journalists were arrested, 510 houses were attacked or threatened and 295 media were victims of censorship during the course of the year.

IFJ ANNUAL REPORT 2000

Sixty-Two Murdered As Assassins Target Journalists In 2000

A series of assassinations and targeted murders of journalists that highlight the dangers facing reporters around the world marked the year 2000, according to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in a statement recently.

According to the IFJ, 62 killings took place, many of them directed against media exposing corruption or expressing political dissent.

"The death toll speaks for itself - journalists risk their lives daily for expressing independent opinions and exposing wrongdoing," said Aidan White, General Secretary of the IFJ. "In every corner of the world, journalists have paid a terrible price in the struggle for democracy."

The IFJ welcomed a recent decision by a number of major media to adopt a Code of Conduct for Safety for their staff. "Media must do everything they can to create safe working conditions," said the IFJ, which has published its own Code of Practice for the Safe Conduct of Journalism.

The figure is, however, lower than that of journalists killed in similar circumstances during the course of 1999 when 86 journalists were killed making that year one of the worst on record.

The IFJ's year 2000 report lists 37 journalists as having been killed as a result of their work, and details 20 cases as under investigation. The deaths of five media staff are also listed.

The Report highlights a number of dramatic examples of assassination: In Colombia, 9 journalists have been targeted by paramilitary in the country's long-running civil conflict; in Spain, Jose Luis Lopez de la Calle, an outspoken critic of the terrorist group ETA, was shot outside his home; in Pakistan, Sufi Mohammed Khan, a reporter who exposed local mafia, was killed after death threats; in Mozambique, Carlos Cardozo, a campaigning editor, was gunned down in a military-style ambush; in Russia, Sergei Novikov, a radio station owner who made trenchant criticism of regional political leaders, was shot by a lone killer outside his home.

At the same time, journalists covering war zones have continued to be in the firing line. One Palestinian journalist was killed and about 30 injured in the Middle East conflict, and two veteran reporters, Miguel Gil Moreno of AP and Kurt Schork of Reuters, were shot dead in a horrifying ambush in war-torn Sierra Leone.
RSF ANNUAL REPORT 2000

Twenty-Six Journalists Killed In 2000

The year 2000 recorded a marginal fall in the number of journalists killed in the course of performing their work or as a direct consequence of it, although the year still left sad memories for many journalists and media practitioners. According to a report recently released by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF), during the course of the year 2000, 26 journalists were killed while practising their profession or for their opinions, 329 were arrested, 510 were attacked or threatened and 295 media were victims of censorship.

On 4 January 2001, 77 journalists were in jail for wanting to freely practise their profession, compared to 85 on January 1, 2000. Close to one third of the world's population is living in countries without any press freedom.

In comparison, the year 1999, recorded 36 journalists killed, 446 arrested, 653 threatened or harassed and 357 media censored.

Out of the 26 journalists killed during the year 2000, 22 of them were murdered because of their work. The remaining four died in attacks or bomb explosions while they were reporting. It was not clear whether they were direct targets.

Eleven journalists were murdered by rebel groups or independence movements. This was notably the case in Sierra Leone, where again, three journalists were killed by Revolutionary United Front rebels at war against the Freetown government.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka two reporters were killed during the year. While their murderers have not been identified, it seems that one of them, Anton Mariyadasan, was killed by the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam at war against the government. The other journalist, Myilvaganam Nimalrajan, who regularly works for the BBC, was investigating the activities of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, a Tamil movement fighting with government forces against the Tamil Tigers.

In Colombia two journalists - Juan Camilo Restrepo, director of the community radio station Galaxia Estereo, and Gustavo Ruiz Cantillo, journalist with Radio Galeó - were murdered by paramilitaries from extreme right-wing groups fighting against communist guerrilla movements.

In Spain, José Luis López de Lacalle, chronicler and member of the regional editorial committee of the daily El Mundo in Basque Country, was assassinated on 7 May 2000.

Four other journalists, all in Asia, were killed by mafia groups or drug traffickers. In Pakistan, for example, Soofi Muhammad Khan, from the daily Ummat, was shot dead in May 2000 in the south of the country. A few days later police stated that they had arrested the three murderers, which included Ayyaz Khattak, a notorious drug trafficker. The 38-year-old journalist was investigating the criminal activities of the local mafia implicated in the heroin trade.

RSF noted that in many countries impunity remains the rule in cases of murders of journalists. The report says 77 journalists in prison as at year-end. Over half the journalists imprisoned in the world are in only four countries. The largest jails for journalists are Burma (13 journalists in jail), China (12), Iran (9) and Ethiopia (9).

Conditions of detention of certain journalists remain deplorable in many of the countries which have journalists in prison. But Burma and Syria prison authorities were specifically fingered as the worse offenders.

Similarly, according to the report, about twenty media suffered censorship or were suspended every month bringing the total to about 300 during the course of the year 2000. The report fingered primarily Iran, Turkey and Morocco.

During the year several journalists were taken hostage by armed rebel groups. The report shows the worst offenders to include Colombia and Philippines.

While the Internet remains a formidable tool for getting round censorship, the report noted that more and more governments are trying to set up systems to control this means of
communication. The elimination of private access providers is one of the methods used. It cited Turkmenistan and China as worst offenders in this respect.

**CPJ ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

**Twenty-Four Journalists Killed In 2000 Because Of Their Work**

* Highest Tolls in Colombia, Russia, and Sierra Leone

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), reported that 24 journalists were killed for their work in 2000. According to CPJ, out of these 24 journalists that were killed during the course of the year 2000, at least 16 were murdered, most of those in countries where assassins have learned they can kill journalists with impunity. This figure is down from 1999, when CPJ found that 34 journalists were killed for their work, 10 of them in war-torn Sierra Leone.

In announcing the organization's annual accounting of journalists who lost their lives because of their work, CPJ executive director Ann Cooper noted that while most of the deaths occurred in countries experiencing war or civil strife, "The majority did not die in crossfire. They were very deliberately targeted for elimination because of their reporting." Others whose deaths were documented by CPJ appear to have been singled out while covering demonstrations, or were caught in military actions or ambushes while on assignment.

In Colombia, a country riven by civil war for nearly four decades, CPJ's research documented three journalists murdered for their work in 2000, all shot dead by assassins. CPJ continues to investigate the cases of another four journalists killed in Colombia, whose deaths last year may have been related to their professional work. No arrests have been made in any of the cases. In the past decade, 34 Colombian journalists have been killed as a result of their work.

In Russia, another country where assassins who murder journalists are rarely brought to justice, another three journalists were killed in 2000-one taken hostage and shot to death by Chechen rebels, another bludgeoned outside his Moscow apartment, apparently because of his paper's reporting, and the third killed in Chechnya while riding in a vehicle that was blown up.

The ongoing strife in Sierra Leone also claimed three journalists in 2000-a local reporter in Freetown, and two journalists for international wire services who were caught in a rebel ambush. A year earlier, Sierra Leone was infamous as the deadliest country in the world for journalists; 10 died there in 1999, most of them hunted down and murdered by rebel forces angered by their reporting on human rights abuses.

In addition to the 24 cases described in its report, CPJ continues to investigate the deaths of another 20 journalists, where circumstances indicate their killings may have been related to their professional work.

While wars and civil strife make journalism a dangerous profession, impunity compounds the risk, noted Cooper. "If people who want to silence the press know they will not be held accountable, they will commit-and get away with-murder," she said. In a few cases, such as those of Georgy Gongadze in Ukraine and Carlos Cardoso in Mozambique, social protests and public pressure for investigations mark an encouraging move towards accountability.

But even in such high-profile cases, said Cooper, "press freedom groups must maintain pressure for justice, so that all journalists can do their jobs free from the fear of violent reprisals."

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LETTERS

Remember Yesterday

I read with interest your story titled: FG Censors The Media Through Accreditation. The explanation given by the government that it decided to reduce the number of reporters in the State House for Security reason and lack of space is curious.
I wonder what risk journalists could possibly constitute to the President that they are being asked to go. I think it is simply another way of saying, given the opportunity, the present government would wish that the media should be shut out of Nigeria’s national life while it last.

It is sad that President Obasanjo, despite what the Nigerian media has done for him, still holds the media in contempt. I think the President and his men in Aso Rock should remember events of yesterday and realise that they will sooner than later leave office but the media will remain forever.

But no matter what they think and do, majority of us share in every way the famous words of Mr. Thomas Jefferson, 1787, that: “The basis of our government being the opinion of our people, the first object should be to keep that right; and were it left for me to decide whether we should have government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter”.

Matthew Ozah
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A Word Is Enough
I came across your journal and your interview with Mrs. Reslyn Hees, Executive Director of Transparency International makes quite an interesting reading (Media Rights Monitor Vol. 5. No. 11 for the month of November 2000). I am more pleased with the analogy she made of the importance of a Freedom of Information law to the realisation of transparency and accountability in government.

It is sad that the President Obasanjo’s government is pursuing its anti-corruption campaign and hoping to make a success of it without giving necessary support to the quest for a Freedom of Information law in Nigeria. One wonders how citizens and the media can help in monitoring the government if they have no legal right of access to public records.

If the government is truly serious about its anti-corruption campaign, it should heed, without delay, the advice of Mrs. Hees and align itself with efforts at securing a Freedom of Information law in Nigeria to strengthen his crusade.

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EXECUTIVE WATCH
This Samaritan Is A Suspect
Unclear about its agenda, many Lagosians express skepticism of the outcome of the Justice Chukwudike Oputa-led Human Rights Violation Commission (HRVIC), set up by the President Obasanjo government which recently wound up its sitting in Lagos, moving on to another part of Nigeria. Reconciliation, they say, is not enough.

By a slight majority, Lagosians have expressed lack of confidence in the on-going Justice Oputa Human Right Violation Commission (HRVIC), currently moving around and sitting in various parts of Nigeria. They doubt the ability of the commission to achieve meaningful reconciliation, and insist, in fact, that reconciliation is insufficient and ask for "justice" and "adequate" compensation for victims.
The Justice Oputa-led commission was set up by the Federal Government to inquire into cases of human rights abuses arising from 30 years of military rule.

At the opening session of the Commission's sitting in Lagos recently, Justice Oputa said the Commission is merely a fact-finding body charged with the responsibility of reconciling those who were injured and those who injured them, heal the wound of the past and make recommendations to the Federal Government. He said the commission is not empowered to pass final judgment, as the power of justice is the exclusive prerogative of the President.

According to Lagosians, genuine reconciliation cannot be possible in an atmosphere full of lies, unremorseful and unrepentant attitude by the witnesses, towards those who suffered rights abuses. They contend that people's rights have been that violently and blatantly violated and to achieve genuine reconciliation it must involve some form of restitution, "justice" and "adequate" compensation.

They, therefore, cautioned that for the commission to be relevant and not to lose its integrity, its terms of reference should be stretched to include justice and adequate compensation for victims of rights abuses. Lagosians also say that the government must also ensure that the commission’s findings and recommendations are not swept under the carpet, as common with the outcomes of similar investigation commissions in the past nor should the report of the commission be tampered with before being made public.

These views of Lagosians are the out-come of a survey carried out by Media Rights Agenda (MRA). The questionnaire-based survey polled 800 respondents, out of which 702 questionnaires were returned, representing 87.8%.

The survey was conducted between December 9 and 18, 2000. It involved the administration of questionnaires comprising seven questions. Two of the questions were open-ended requiring respondents to state in their own words their responses, while five were close-ended questions.

Two hundred and thirty-seven respondents representing 33.7% said they have confidence that the Commission would achieve genuine reconciliation, while 294 respondents representing 41.8% said they lack confidence in the Commission. One hundred and seventy-one others representing 24.5%, however, said they do not know.

For respondents who say they lack confidence in the Commission, they contend that people's rights have been so violently violated that to achieve just and meaningful reconciliation, a sense of justice must be brought to bear and there must be adequate compensation for victims.

Casting a retrospective look into history, some respondents say their fear is equally borne out of the fact that similar investigations in the past did not achieve any tangible results because the outcome were not made public.

Other reasons include what some respondents termed "lack of remorse" in the attitude of numerous witnesses towards the victims and the commission itself, coupled with the perceived lies told by them and refusal of some Nigerians to obey summons by the commission.

Asked whether respondents think reconciliation of victims and their tormentors is sufficient, 80 respondents representing 11.3% said 'Yes', while 622 respondents representing 88.7% said 'No'.

All the 622 respondents who answered that reconciliation is not sufficient for victims of rights abuses, recommended "justice" and "adequate" compensations for victims.

Asked whether respondents think the outcome of the panel would be made public, four hundred and fifty one respondents, representing 64.22%, answered 'Yes' while 251 respondents, representing 35.8%, said 'No'.

On whether respondents have reasons fear that the report will be tampered with, 291 respondents, representing 41.4%, said 'Yes' while 411 respondents, representing 58.6%, said 'No'.

On the assessment of the Commission, respondents generally said its creation was a great idea particularly with the caliber of its composition. While some respondents say the commission has its limitations, they contend, however, the future of Nigeria lies in what
becomes of its findings. They also see the setting up of the commission as a commitment by the Obasanjo's administration to protect and promote human rights.

President Obasanjo Gambles With The Nigerian Press Law Again

President Olusegun Obasanjo says his government has put in motion necessary machinery aimed at reviewing the controversial Nigerian Press Law. The press law which purports to aim to curb the excesses of some unprofessional journalists and sanitise the Nigerian media, contains numerous obnoxious provisions and has been a cause of constant friction between the government and media practitioners who have refused to support its implementation.

President Obasanjo who revealed government's review of the press law on December 3 at the Nigerian Media Merit Award (NMMA) ceremony in Lagos at which he was decorated the Grand Patron of the body, said the exercise was being carried out in full collaboration with the media professional bodies.

President Obasanjo, who was represented by the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Professor Jerry Gana, said the review committee comprising major players in the industry, with the Director General of Voice of Nigeria (VON), Chief Taiwo Alimi, as chairman has almost concluded its assignment.

"I am sure that the committee will come out with a draft law that is acceptable to all practitioners in the country," the President said.

President Obasanjo also said “genuine” efforts are on to strengthen the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), saying the need to strengthen the body had become imperative in view of the various excesses of some broadcasting houses, which had capitalized on the liberal policies of the democratic government.

He expressed appreciation to the Nigerian media and noted the importance as well as potentials of a fully professionalised media with patriotic and objective practitioners. He added that the Nigerian media had a cherished tradition of vibrancy and had contributed immensely to the advent of democracy in which he is a key player now.

However, he said some section of the media had continued to demonstrate lack of control and responsibility in some of their reports, saying that there is need for restraint as there is no freedom without limitations.

Cheering as the news of government review of the press law is, it is inconceivable that the government is undertaking such a contentious exercise without the input of the core relevant groups such as the Nigeria Union of Journalists, the NPAN, Guilds of Editors, IBAN, Non-Governmental organisations, etc. as well as the general public in an open manner.

Equal Opportunities Advocated For Women Journalists

A case has been made for women empowerment particularly those in the journalism profession through skill enhancement, knowledge acquisition and accessibility to information technology. Such an approach would not only raise the stature of women, but enable the women journalists to fill an appreciable quota in the profession, excel and contribute to national development.

The call was made at a workshop on December 11 on the "Freedom and Duties of Women Journalists," organised by NAWOJ in conjunction with the international Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to seek better deal for women in the profession.

Among the speakers at the forum were Doris Stoisser of Austrian Broadcasting Corporaton, Mrs. Eniola Fadayomi, Lagos State commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Lanre Arogundade, Co-ordinator of International Press Centre (IPC) and Victoria Ibanga, Co-ordinator, Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) in Lagos.
Speaking at the event, Women's Leadership Group (WLG) Executive Secretary Mrs. Nkechi Nwankwo, said women are the nation's greatest assets and asked owners and managements of media organisations to always consult them when taking decisions that affect their lot.

She decried the second fiddle role being assigned to women journalists particularly in elective offices, saying that the maltreatment and injustice meted on them was harmful to their bid to seek improved welfare.

In calling for a level playing ground, she sought for an enabling environment to assist them secure employment opportunities, education and training, participation in decision making and condition of service.

Mr. Lanre Arogundade in his comment called for collaboration with NAWOJ to publish a comprehensive handbook on the state of women journalists, which would incorporate their demands for better treatment, and equal opportunities on the job.

**Don Advocates Multi-Media Approach to Freedom of Information Law Campaign**

As part of renewed efforts to ensure the enactment of a Freedom of Information law in Nigeria, a case has been made for a multi-media approach to create a ground swell of public support to keep the process on track and see to its eventual enactment. The recommendation was made by Professor Ralph Akinfeleye, former Head of Mass Communications department of the University of Lagos.

Making the recommendation in an interview with *Media Rights Monitor*, Professor Akinfeleye said a multi-media approach would involve the use of both traditional means of communication as well as a modern means.

According to him, the traditional means of communication would include the use of peer groups, community leaders, town criers, informal unions, politicians and special people who could sway public opinions, while modern means of communication would include the print and electronic media as well as the Internet.

Such a combination, the Professor, said, "would allow the campaign to permeate the nooks and crannies of even rural areas and as well enlighten so many people and interest groups who have hitherto not grasped the inherent advantages of a regime of access to government records."

He added that: "This would then galvanise Nigerians into taking action in whatever way to bring pressure to bear on their representatives and others involved in the enactment problem to speed up action."

Professor Akinfeleye lamented that some supposedly enlightened people in the society still seem to hold the view that a freedom of information law is meant for only journalists. Debunking this view, he explained that while journalists stand to benefit from a regime of access to public records, it is for the ultimate benefit of the Nigerian people.

According to him, "although the journalist stands to benefit from a situation of legal access to public record by having access to information which they presently do not have access to, and are sometimes compelled to obtain illegally, the ultimate beneficiary would be the public who would in the end get better and more accurate information".

Besides, Professor Akinfeleye pointed out that even citizens can directly benefit from the passage of the bill into law by accessing information for various purposes including research, planning, and for the purpose of seeking to inject accountability into the governance process or just simply for the need to know.

He noted that it is in the interest of the National Assembly and overall interest of Nigerians to pass the freedom of information bill. According to him, "it is in their own interest, for probity and for accountability, to help them articulate better and make better informed decision for the overall interest of Nigerians, to enact the freedom of information law soonerest possible."

He pointed out that this is what obtains in other parts of the world.
He advised also that all those involved in the advocacy efforts should always endeavour to highlight not only how the bill stand to benefit every Nigerian, but also that a freedom of information law is not synonymous with press freedom or freedom of expression, although it indeed, strengthens these freedoms.

**Governor Kalu Orders Retrenchment Of Journalists**

The year 2001 looks set to start on a sour note for more than 90 member of staff of Abia Newspaper Publishing Corporation, the publishers of the state-owned newspaper, National Ambassador. There were indications that they would lose their jobs following a directive by Governor Orji Kalu to the information commissioner to trim down the company's work force.

Kalu, who paid an unscheduled inspection visit to the corporation, said he was alarmed by the 157-staff strength which he said was too large for a newspaper of that size. He, therefore, directed the information commissioner, Chief Eze Chikamnayo, to reduce the staff strength to only 60.

Kalu, erroneously, said the number of staff was too large when compared with what obtains in other publishing houses like The Guardian and The Post Express, adding that it was out of fashion to have such “outrageous” number of staff in a single newspaper house in this age.

**December 3 Declared Media Day**

The Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE) has declared December 3 of every year national media day in Nigeria. This was revealed though a communiqué issued at the end of its Standing Committee meeting held in Owerri, the Imo State capital. The NGE said it chose the date because it is the day the first Nigeria newspaper was published.

The communiqué stated that the observance of the day by media workers would give them a chance to reflect on issues affecting their profession.

The editors expressed their displeasure that despite its contributions to the nation's development and the enthronement of democracy, enough recognition was not given to journalists in the recent award of national honours.

It also noted the progress so far made in amending the existing Nigerian Press Council laws to reflect stakeholders' wishes and hoped that the eventual outcome would be satisfactory to all parties and be in the best interest of the public.

It condemned in the strongest terms the practice of press associations, which confer awards on sources they are supposed to cover. This, it noted, was not in the interest of the profession.

**DAAR: Back From The Brink**

The sun looks set to shine once again for Daar Communications Limited (DCL), owners of Ray Power I and II FM and African Independent Television (AIT). And for numerous Nigerians that still are able to find the time to sit in front of a television set or tune on to the radio when the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) permits, this would surely be good news.

They have had to cope with the absence of the stations since August 31 when the stations were forced to go off air as a result of a disagreement between DCL and its creditors over its inability to settle a loan facility extended to it in 1996.

Daar Communications had faced obvious liquidation since October 1999 when the consortium of banks under the aegis of Union Trustees Limited that loaned it N457 million in November 1996, for expansion of its services to include a Global Satellite TV, got a court injunction to put it into receivership. As a first step toward executing the court injunction, Union
Trustees on March 2, 2000, with the assistance of a combined team of police and private security men sealed up and took possession of DCL’s offices at Alagbado in Lagos. By March 10, it started to advertise the stations’ property for sale to interested buyers.


Although the stations were soon re-opened for business, they later went off air in late August to "enable a complete overhaul" of all the equipment and facilities. It was not until early December that one of the radio stations, Paypower FM2 came back on air. Raypower FM1 also came on air just as the year was tickling away.

While the station was off air and the management was apparently trying frantically to source for money to liquidate the debt, which had climbed up to about N800 million, it also had to contend with agitation of its staff for the payment of their arrears of salaries running into several months. Several of its workers left for greener pastures.

Quite surprisingly, help came only in trickles. A committee of friends led by Ambassador Segun Olusola, launched a "Dream Alive Project" hoping to raise money to help defray the debt.

Although they loved and missed the stations' absence from the airwaves, Lagosians were too weighed down by the numerous other needs that make demand on their meager resources and so the project could only raise N1.6 million.

DCL could not approach the Capital Market either for funds being unable to satisfy all the requirement, one of which was being less than the minimum number of years a business concern should exist before going to the Exchange.

Through intense negotiations, Dr. Dokpesi, DCL management and financial consultants, Messrs BGL Limited, eventually on June 21 hammered out an agreement of N500 million as full and final payment from the consortium of Banks and receivers/managers, and he set about sourcing for the money. After more hard work, Dr. Dokpesi, on December 8, finally presented a cheque for the sum to the creditors at a ceremony at Union Bank Headquarters in Marina Lagos.

An elated Dr. Dokpesi at the presentation recalled the days of the syndicated loans and the company's experience. He recalled that the consortium of Banks granted DCL the loans after a careful appraisal of its business plans and potentials satisfying themselves about the credit-worthiness of the company and its owners.

He admitted that DCL grew rapidly by virtue of the loan but "the inconsistent government economic policies, uneven playing ground for private and public stations, harsh business environment and the economic sanctions during the Abacha regime" stagnated its growth. This state of affairs, according to Dr. Dokpesi, led to DCL's inability to meet its obligations in the contract and the ensuing face-off with the creditors.

He regretted that DCL did not operate in a conducive atmosphere and prayed that no media house would pass through a similar experience as it had passed through in the past 13 months.

He said raising the N500 million was a Herculean task with the company in receivership, with the result that some of their staff, friends and relations abandoned them. He, however, expressed his appreciation to the Banks, the receivers/managers, and DCL’s financial and management consultants and all those who sympathized with the company. He promised AIT would shortly begin operation with more efficient services than before. And viewers just can't wait.

But from all indications, although work is going on at a fast pace for necessary repairs to be affected on the various digital transmitting equipments that had gone bad due to long shut down and were vandalized when thieves broke into the offices during the period, viewers may have to tarry till March before having their darling station, AIT, back on air. This is when it would take some vital equipment ordered by DCL for some of the repair work to arrive the country and be installed.
NTA Plans 67 More Stations For The Nation

Mr. Ben Murray-Bruce, the Director General of the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), has disclosed that the authority plans to establish 67 more stations all over the country to "enable the authority cover adequately and accurately all the important activities of the three tiers of government."

The NTA presently has 26 stations located in 24 States of the federation. When this plan materializes, the new additions would bring to 93 the number of NTA stations in Nigeria.

Mr. Murray-Bruce appealed to benefiting state governments to donate land, buildings and other materials for the establishment of the stations.

All Hail The Leading Lights

After a 'hard day's job', Nigerian media practitioners gathered at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers on Sunday, 3rd of December 2000 to honour and give prizes/awards to those who had kept faith with the ideals of the noble profession and done it proud during the year. It was the 10th edition of the annual Nigerian Media Merit Award (NMMA). In attendance were prominent figures as President Olusegun Obasanjo, represented by the Minster of Information and National Orientation, Professor Jerry Gana; Elder Statesman, Chief Anthony Eahoro; Alhaji Babatunde Jose, Prince Tony Momoh, Prof. Ralph Akinfeleye, Ambasador Segun Olusola, Alhaji Lateef Jakande and Mr. Soni Irabor etc.

The Punch newspapers won the Newspaper of The Year for 1999/2000 award instituted by Dr. Babatunde Jose. It was declared the winner in this category for, among other reasons, “its consistency, wide readership and aesthetics”. The three nominees for the award were The Punch, The Guardian and ThisDay newspapers.

Receiving the award, Mr. Gbemiga Ogunleye, Editor of The Punch, said the paper had attained the enviable position due to hard work and for keeping faith with its readers. He dedicated the award to its readers.

Two The Punch newspaper editorial staff also won the Reporter and the Print Journalist of the Year awards.

Mr. Wale Adeoye, Deputy News Editor, Sunday Punch, came first as the Reporter of the year beating two other contenders from The Guardian and Nigerian Tribune with his work; Odi: After Battle published in the December 12, 1999 edition of Sunday Punch. Mr. Adeoye had earlier in the year won the CNN African Journalist of the Year award.

The Assistant News Editor, Saturday Punch, Seth Akintoye beat Olukayode Thomas of The Comet and Louisa Ayonote of TELL Magazine to win the Print Journalist of the Year award.

TheNews magazine won the News Magazine of the Year award. Olukayode Thomas of The Comet went home with awards in Travel and Tourism and Sports Reporter of the Year categories. Mondaga Ofioku of Newswatch magazine won the Investigative Reporter of the Year award. Also from the stable of Newswatch also came the Business Reporter of the Year, Maureen Chigbo, Associate Editor of the magazine.

Features Writer of the year award went to Ebere Wabara of Daily Times who beat Wale Fatade of The Guardian and Wale Adeoye of Sunday Punch to clinch it.

The Cartoonist of the Year award went to Chidozie Albert of Champion newspaper while the News Photographer of the Year went to Ademola Akinlabi of TELL magazine.

Olayiwola Adeni of The Comet was awarded the Political Reporter of the Year prize and Martins Azubike of Policy magazine took home the Energy Correspondent of the Year award.

In the broadcast category, Deji Olayinka of Africa Independent Television (AIT), Lagos won the Television Reporter of the Year award, while Television Production award went to Tajudeen Adepetu of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).
Prince Momoh, Chairman of the awards committee of the NMMA, in his speech, said 25 awards were available in the print and broadcast categories and that the 21-member team that screened the awardees did a thorough job in selecting the 17 winners in print and seven in broadcast categories having received a total of 246 nominations.

Chief Enahoro was at the occasion conferred with a distinguished Trustee Award. Alhaji Babatunde Jose OFR, the Chairman of NMMA Board of Trustees, also informed the gathering that the honour bestowed on Enahoro was actually meant to have been conferred on him in 1993, but was suspended due to the prevailing political situation in the country then.

Saturday Punch was also on December 17 named the Entertainment Journal of the Year at the annual Awards for Musical Excellence in Nigeria (AMEN) organised by National Encomium magazine. The prize was awarded to Saturday Punch according to the magazine, for “its consistent commitment and dedication to entertainment reporting in Nigeria”.

I Carry A Scar, Yet I Forgive - Anyanwu

At the height of the sheer madness of the late General Sani Abacha's tyrannical dictatorship, the Nigerian media stood stoic like the biblical David before the dreaded Goliath. To massage his ego and for daring to challenge his Imperial Lordship, General Abacha and his security goons embarked on a mindless escalation of the repression on the Nigerian media earlier started by his friend and benefactor, General Ibrahim Babangida.

General Abacha's acts of repression on the media was typified by the case of the "Innocent Four", Kunle Ajibade, then editor of TheNEWS magazine; Ben Charles Obi, former editor of the defunct Classique magazine, George Mba, a senior assistant editor of TELL magazine and Chris Anyanwu, former publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the defunct The Sunday Magazine (TSM).

The journalists were arrested by security operatives, tortured, detained and tried alongside alleged coup plotters, including former Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), now President, and his erstwhile deputy, retired General Musa Yar'Adua who later died in prison, on a nebulous charge of being "accessories after the fact of treason". The rest is history now.

But before the Justice Chukwudifu Oputa-led Human Right Violation Commission (HRVIC), which sat in Lagos recently, Chris Anyanwu, one of the Innocent Four, made an appearance. She is hurt, real hurt, she says, for the unprovoked and unwarranted infringement on her human rights that almost took her life, and even more so for the lack of concern being exhibited by the Nigerian government. Yet, in a show of a rare and confounding spirit of humanity, she embraced her tormentor and said unequivocally, "I forgive you".

"Your honour, I thank God for this day. So many times in those three years did I beg God for the day when I would get that opportunity to answer back and cancel out every lie fabricated against me. And today, I shall repudiate all the myths laced together by a thousand lies and you will see for yourselves that it was a stupendous foolery; banality in high places that simply spun out of control.

Your honour, I had initial reservations about testifying. But I was persuaded by two reasons. First, the fact that Mr. President himself has made two appearances before the panel, once in response to a summons, made a deep impression on me. That was an instance of leadership by good example and I appreciated that. Therefore I decided that I must come; I must tell my story to the Nigerian people.

Second and most importantly, I decided to join others in telling this story in other to awaken the nation to the full horror of what transpired.

If in hearing these horrid stories, the seemingly unshockable Nigerian is forced to summon the outrage to act in a way that will make it impossible for such evil to happen again in our country, then this testimony, this spectacle, this panel will have been worth it.

Your honour, I will now go into how I became part of the larger story.
What I did:
In 1995, I was a journalist of over 12 years experience. I was a hands-on publisher. I published an avant-garde newsmagazine called TSM. In late February, we got information of the arrest of many military officers. Once we got whiff of the news, our staff scattered all over the country to dig out more information.

We wanted to reach anyone who knew anything about or was related to the people arrested. We had to know as much as possible about their offence, their condition, their fate and we had also to reach the people keeping them for detailed explanation.

That is the way of news business. It did not matter who the characters were. Our role to society was to report events, to shed light on events and through analysis of information, make them understandable by the people. That was what we tried to do.

As I sped down the third Mainland bridge that first of news break - a Monday - a man called Mato called me on my cell phone. I didn't know who he was, hadn't heard the name before. He introduced himself as Gwadabe's relative and said he wanted to inform me that he was being held. I told him we had been trying to reach someone in the family and asked if he could visit us at our office and have a chat. In fact, we had dispatched a reporter, Bimbo, to Yola and another one to another state - I think it was Jigawa - on the assumption that he was a native of that place and we would be able to find people who knew his family and could tell us about his background. That's news. Journalists don't just sit on their rear and wait for someone to deliver news. They go out there digging.

When General Abacha took power, I sent Maik Nwosu to Kano to go digging. I told him: I want to know this man, his antecedents; I want his philosophy of life, his attitude and his beliefs; and I want to know what has shaped all this; his background. By the time I finish reading your story, I want to be able to predict this man's policy attitude by his past. That is magazine. It has to give more than who says what to whom and when. It has to be more rigorous.

News is pegged on known personalities. Colonel Gwadabe was the best known of the arrested men. Therefore, every newspaper, every magazine in this country was keen on his story. In fact, that first week, two of our major competitors, TELL and TheNews, carried his picture on their covers. TSM did not.

We had investigated this story four days before Mato finally got to our office. It was Thursday afternoon. Because TSM came out on Sunday, Thursday was the closing day for new information. I had invited Mato to the office with the hope that we could interview him for an exclusive on the Gwadabe story but by the time he came, the edition was already designed in the computer. Besides, he was inarticulate and no one around then understood enough Hausa to take him on in that language. Mato was shifty, terribly uneasy. I could not get enough from him that we didn't already know. I thanked him and asked him to link us up with Gwadabe's wife. Perhaps we might have better luck with an interview. I thought. The meeting lasted 15 minutes flat. I did not even have to call in my editorial staff. It was a busy production day. I moved on with other things.

The next day, Friday, as we put to bed that edition, I got a call from a man that claimed to be the head of the intelligence services at Bonny Camp. He said to me: "We hear you are about to publish something on the rumour of coup. If you love your children, don't publish anything." I told him that if there was government censorship on the story, it should be official and not selective, that it should be for everyone. I was aware they were not going around calling my male colleagues and intimidating them as they did me. In fact, at that time, they were putting a lot of indirect pressure on my acting editor, trying to cause rifts and dissension. I was compelled to warn them to stay out of my house. Government has no investment in TSM. Stop trying to influence the paper. You want anything talk to me.

The tone of the warning was sexist and I got the distinct impression that they were bulling me because of my gender. Maybe they thought I was the weak link in the media chain. Therefore, they felt it was just the right place to press hard.
Your honour, if I were to have succumb to such pressure, I would have no moral right to expect my staff to stand firm under pressure in the course of their duty. I decided that it was more important that the Nigerian people know what was happening than that I obeyed a telephone command by someone who may well be a freak. Those kinds of threatening calls are frequent in the business. I published.

In my column that week - volume II, edition 1, I alluded to this conversation. I quote: "In fact, TSM was sternly advised to steer off. But here again we find ourselves on that borderline where the fear for self must yield ground to our social responsibility."

TSM broke the story the next Sunday. The next day, newspapers reported that some retired military men and enemies of General Abacha fled through the border to Ghana.

In the second week, General Shehu Musa Ya'Adua and others were arrested and I got dependable information on the impending arrest of General Obasanjo and many more.

There was something very unusual about this coup. For the first time in the history of coups, government embarked on massive propaganda. The presidency gave specific instruction to military governors and the security services to go out and arrange public demonstrations, some asking for the execution of the arrested men even before they were tried.

There was division in the military. Many of the key figures of the government were themselves suspect. Virtually every factor about this coup was different. In the second edition on the coup, I prefaced the cover story with an opinion column titled: Leave Something for Tomorrow.

That was my crime. Patrick Aziza's tribunal said that by writing that column, I had attempted to cause the Nigerian people to rise against their government; that the cover story in the previous edition written by Comfort Obi was done on the specific instruction of Sanusi Mato; that TSM would not have written a story on the coup speculation if Mato did not instruct us to do so; that the story was written to raise public sympathy for Gwadabe so he could escape justice from his act of treason; that writing the story was an obligation we owned him for being a director of our company.

The story of coup, any coup, is a compelling "matter of urgent national interest." It does not matter if my father is involved. It must be done. That is the universal norm in media practice and that was precisely what we did. We were not alone. On Monday, after TSM broke the story, ThisDay newspaper carried the same cover headline as TSM: Coup Scare. The NEWS and TELL also carried with colour picture of Gwadabe on their covers. None of their publishers or editors-in-chief was queried for carrying the story or their motives in carrying the story. No one bothered who their sources were and what was their motives in running the story. No one bothered because they were assumed to be "self directed" professionals who didn't need any inducements, instructions or motive to delve into newsworthy events. But with TSM, it was different. Why? Because TSM was led by a woman who in their view was fickle-minded and "other-directed".

In all my nine years as a lead correspondent of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and my five years as a publisher and editor-in-chief of TSM, no one that I knew had any reason to see me in any way other than as a skilled, uncompromising journalist. The accusation by Abacha and his tribunal was, therefore, a gratuitous insult. I took solace in their ignorance of my antecedents and the quality of my character.

So this is the story. This is why I was imprisoned for life and later commuted to 15 years. It is bizarre, unreal and dumb. Till now, I still don't get this twisted logic that makes an observer of an event part of the event.

It amounted to the town crier, the bearer of bad news being clamped down and killed along with the actors because he brought unpalatable news.

What they did to me:

First, the SSS arrested me, took me to Shangisha, kept me sitting on chair with sinking bottom for five days without a bath, and denied toiletries. I asked for my lawyer and family. All requests were denied. On the fifth day, I was driven to the Ikoyi SSS headquarters. Before I
could catch my breath, I was dumped at Alagbon in a tiny cell containing 23 women, among them deportees from Rome's red-light district, a crazy child kidnapper, and several accused murderers. I ran out of the cell and lived in the corridors for the entire three days. On the third day, I was taken to an Igbosere magistrate court and granted bail. This was towards the end of March.

A few days after my release, on the day that CNN (Cable News Network) carried it first interview of General Abacha his son, Ibrahim, came to my house with a businessman who claimed to be brokering peace with the first family. However, it was not peace that emerged from the meeting. It was war.

I had never met him. In fact, would not say that I knew his father. I met General Abacha himself only twice: once in the corridors of Aso Rock on an occasion that newspaper journalists went to plead for the reopening of The Guardian and The Punch. I was introduced along with Doyin Abiola on that occasion. The second was during Mandela's inaugural in South Africa. Not knowing the family, I had no particular disposition towards the members. I welcomed Ibrahim and tried to make him feel at ease but he was out to make an impression. He talked tough and spewed all the venom he could summon in my face, insulting and accusing Nigerian journalists of writing under inducement. "We will not bribe you like the others," he shouted. "We will let you write what you want and then we will deal with you. I'm sure you do not survive on this thing you write, Madam. We will make it impossible for you to survive in the system." He was angry. He accused TSM of attacking his father, publishing abusive stories and headlines and persistently writing stories on June 12.

He said to me: "We know you are NADECO. Your paper is being used to destabilise the government. You are more Abiola than Abiola himself. What is your business with Abiola and June 12? After all, you are only a common Igbo girl."

Right in my own living room, with my son listening in the corner, I was being told by a young man the age of my first child that I am sub-human, that I had no right to comment on or write on affairs of my country because I am Igbo. I was shocked that a young man his age in this day had been brain-washed with such primitive notions and stuffed with such primitive hate. That's when I knew that we were in trouble in this country.

Barely two weeks after Ibrahim visited, the government began to make good his threat that they would make it impossible for me to survive in the system. A national security meeting was devoted solely to the subject of how to deal with TSM. The first measure decided was to ban the launching and circulation of a book published by TSM. The day before the launching, the DG SSS, Peter Nwaodua, called me to say: "We have decided that the launching will not hold." The event had been widely promoted. There was high public interest. On that day many people and dignitaries turned up but security men surrounded the venue and barred people from entry. We had invested so much; the cash investment was the least: N3.5 million. We expected to earn about N10 million from the launch.

We lost all. Long after, the government would send its operatives to the press to shred copies of the book along with our records and library.

After the book launch was cancelled, I tried to understand where our trouble was coming from. I went to see the DG SSS in Abuja. "Who is doing this to me." I asked him. He said: Talk to Gwarzo. You know Gwarzo, don't you? Try and talk to him." I called Gwarzo on his direct line. He answered and I introduced myself. He slammed the phone in my ear. I was never able to get through to him again.

General Abacha could not defend his cruelty to me. He did so much inside and outside the country to defame me. He sent his ministers of Information and External Affairs and ordinary citizens around the world to campaign against all of us and they were particularly virulent in the things they were known to have said about me since my case was always a matter of consternation as many of the places they went. People wondered what a woman like me, a professional doing her duty, could have to do with a coup. Hard put to explain, they lied that I was actually involved in planning the speculated coup.
General Abacha also recruited some international companies operating in Nigeria to go around the world and spread the story. Shell Petroleum was one of them. It sent out her top public relations team based in Europe to go round to meet with the media and human rights advocacy groups campaigning against Abacha's repression, using my case as the campaign pitch. Shell Petroleum tried to dissuade them from intensifying the pressure by telling them that I was actually involved in the planning of a coup. I was informed of this by one of the groups they went to in California. Kunle Ajibade, another incarcerated journalist, was with me on that occasion. I would be glad to pass on the contacts of this person to the panel for confirmation. One of the people sent by Shell was Achebe who was in their London office.

Your honour, I suggest that this panel invite Shell Petroleum to come here and tell the world how I participated in a coup. I would like them to educate me since obviously they know something that I do not know about myself.

The defamation at home and abroad has taken its toll. Today, my family and I encounter unseen walls of prejudice arising from the damage to my image.

I demand a public apology from Shell Petroleum for the unwarranted assault on my character.

Economic actions against me:

It was not just enough for General Abacha to imprison me. His government went further to: Strip me of my assets; Systematically kill my business; Detain my brother who had moved in to oversee things in my absence.

Conclusion:

The Federal Government of Nigeria damaged my health when it dumped me in unhealthy environment unjustly. Its police agent Zakari Biu hurt my eyes. The lack of early medical attention aggravated the problem.

The Federal Government of Nigerian, by the specific instruction of the head of state, General Abacha, his son Ibrahim Abacha, his agents including Patrick Aziza, his NSA (National Security Adviser), Alhaji Gwarzo, head of SSS, Peter Nwodua, head of military intelligence, Sabo and his agents: Colonels John Olu, Frank Omenka, Captain Bashir Mumuni brutalized me psychologically. I have spent the last one-year recovering the experience. There have been a lot of medical treatment including two major surgeries abroad all at my own expense.

By all these acts, my family was irrevocably set back and psychologically wounded.

Your honour, General Abacha is no more, but there are people, many accomplices alive today who know what happened to me, why it happened to me, what was my crime, how the plan for my torture came about, who did what and who helped them execute it.

All I ask this respected body is that these people be called in to explain to me and the world the innumerable questions that have rung in my head for five years now. What did I do to deserve all these and who did me in with Abacha?

I want an explanation for what my country did to my family and I. I need to understand it so my soul can rest easy; so I can exercise the residual feelings and move on with life.

I want my country to tell me that what happened to me will never happen to any Nigerian, any woman, any common Igbo girl in this country again.

I want to see my country shake off its determined collective amnesia, awake to the full horror of what happened and then shout: No! Never Again!

My requests:

That the federal government of Nigeria acknowledges to the world that I did not plan, execute a coup, condone a coup or commit a crime and therefore render a public apology to me and my family for the unjust punishment and the strain to my name and reputation.

That the federal government pays me adequate reparation for the brutalisation and abuses to my human rights.

That the federal government of Nigerian pays me for the losses incurred from its actions amounting to N200 million.
That the federal government of Nigeria instructs all its agencies to return my lands seized or re-allocated during this period.

That the federal government settles all interest accruing to our bankers due to the refusal of government officials to permit me to change signatories to our accounts after my arrest. NDIC (National Deposit Insurance Corporation) should be instructed to return my land immediately.

That the military intelligence agency be instructed to immediately return my eight Cheques seized by Frank Omenka and be made to pay a penalty to my family for their unwarranted cruelty.

That the federal government instructs its ministry of information and national financial intelligence agencies to immediately pay me the outstanding debt with interest.

That the federal government of Nigeria hereafter take on the responsibility of paying all medical bills for illnesses arising from the abuse.

SPECIAL REPORT

Guilty Conscience Haunts Campaore

The guilty are afraid. So are the Burkinabe authorities. And fear being a precursor of desperate action, the Burkinabe authorities last month used all the antics in the world to desperately block the International Festival for Freedom of Expression and of the Press scheduled to hold in Ouagadougou from December 12 to 16. The occasion was also to mark the second anniversary of the gruesome murder in December 13, 1998, of Norbert Zongo together with his companions-Ernest Zongo (his brother), Ablase Nikiema, and Blaise Iiboudo.

Zongo, a frontline journalist in Burkina Faso and his companions were murdered by suspected government agents over the journalist's investigations into the death of David Ouedraogo, the driver of Francoise Campaore, a presidential adviser.

Scores of human rights activists and journalists invited to participate at the festival went home disappointed, as the festival could not hold as scheduled. The government of President Blaise Campaore, blocked the events from holding through intimidation, harassment and threats of arrest. Authorities feared that the occasion would serve to remind the citizens and the international community of the gruesome murder which it has till date refused to investigate nor allowed independent bodies inquire into.

The aborted festival was a result of a collaborative effort between the Human and Peoples Rights Movement of Burkina Faso (MBDHP), Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), and the Centre de Presse Norbert Zongo (CN/NZ). The festival was meant to gather about 160 journalists and members of Associations of Human Rights from within and outside West African countries. Among these countries are Belgium, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark, England, France, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Chad and United States of America.

According to the organisers, the festival was intended to serve as a commemoration of the courage and memory of the many West African journalists who have been killed, injured or maimed in the pursuit of their legitimate duties as journalists. The festival concept came out of the realization that everywhere in Africa, especially in West Africa, journalists are assaulted on a regular basis with vivid examples of murderous violent attacks occurring in Burkina Faso, as typified by the Zongo murder, Dele Giwa in Nigeria in 1996, and in Sierra Leone where a brutish, senseless war has claimed the lives of over 14 journalists.

The festival aimed to highlight and raise the awareness of the people to the importance of free expression, human rights and the plight of journalists in West Africa; organise a campaign for the defence of the rights of journalists; assess the situation of media rights and free
expression in West Africa; institute an annual international forum to commemorate, pay homage to and honour the memory of all those journalists who have suffered or lost their lives in defence of human rights.

In addition, the festival was to develop systematic programmes and strategies aimed at developing solidarity among journalists and to protect their interests in the region, promote existing networks or establish one to encourage the exchange of information as an important factor in consolidating solidarity, and create an annual meeting point where journalists will be able to pool their efforts together so as to prevent the various regimes from suppressing or stifling press freedom and free expression.

But beginning from December 12, when the festival was scheduled to start, the participants were subjected to a series of intimidation, harassment and threats of arrest. On this day, the participants had planned to visit, symbolically, the place where Norbert Zongo together with his companions were assassinated. The delegates, numbering almost 200 had left the Norbert Zongo Press Centre in Ouagadougou at about 7.55 a.m. for the long drive with no inkling of trouble, having been re-assured by the authorities at Sapouy.

In the delegation were some participants who had arrived for the workshop from other African and non-African countries and scores of local journalists and human rights workers. But on getting to Kasogo village, after more than 100 km drive and just about 5 km from the town of Sapouy which is another 5 km from the scene where the journalist was murdered, a team of local policemen halted the delegation. One of the policemen carried a machine gun. They claimed that they had instructions from Ouagadougou not to let the delegates enter Sapouy and ordered the delegates back.

On arrival at Kasogo, Mr. Halidou Ouedraogo, President of the Burkinabe Movement for Human and Peoples Rights, a local Non-Governmental Organisation, negotiated with the two policemen to allow him to go through to Sapouy with some members of the organising committee. The police turned down this request as the police pointedly insisted that: "In your own interest, turn back".

The delegate obeyed the instructions and returned to Kasogo where Ouedraogo, who is also a High Court Judge in Ouagadougou, spoke to journalists on the situation. He expressed the hope that the rest of the festival would continue in Ouagadougou despite the action of government, which he said not only infringed on the participants' freedom of movement, but tramples on the African tradition of hospitality and respect for the dead.

But as it turned out, Ouedraogo's hope that the celebrations would continue was mere wishful optimism. Later that same day, back at Ougadougou, information was received that a delegation of more than 60 persons led by Professor Kwame Karikari, of the Department of Journalism of the University of Legon, Ghana and the Executive Director of Media Foundation for West Africa were not allowed to cross over to Burkina Faso at the Ghana-Burkina Faso border. Members of the party except two, one American and one Swiss nationals, were from Ghana and other West Africa countries who, as members of ECOWAS and in line with the regional body protocol, needed no visa to access Burkina Faso.

The reason given by the Burkinabe immigration officers was that the authorities could not guarantee their security. This was in spite of the fact that Media Foundation, being a co-organiser of the Festival, already had some managerial staff in Ouagadougou since December 9.

The organisers sent a delegation to the General Director of the National Police to complain about the hostile treatment the participants had received on their way to Sapouy, and the information received regarding the delegates coming in by road from Ghana but had been stopped at the Burkina Faso end of the border. The General Director confirmed to have given the instructions for the delegation to Sapouy to be prevented from moving on and that the delegation from Ghana be halted at the border and prevented from getting into Burkina Faso territories.

While the organisers and participants were still meeting to decide how to make the most out of an otherwise bad situation, perhaps by reordering the events earlier slated to hold, more
bad news were pouring in. On December 13, very early in the morning, the Norbert Zongo National Press Centre, which served as the secretariat for the festival, was taken over by policemen who blocked participants from entering. The authorities also made it clear that it would not allow the organisers the use of the municipal stadium of Ouagadougou for a concert earlier scheduled to take place nor the National Arts and Audio-visual Centre for the theatre also earlier scheduled for the festival.

Not done yet with the acts of intimidation, on December 14, the conference hall of the Shippers Council where the colloquium had been scheduled was taken over by the police. They confiscated the keys and told the organisers that it was forbidden to hold the colloquium.

Without an operating secretariat, registration of participants was impossible and interaction was not effective. The security agencies deployed their operatives to survey and follow the movements of participants all the time. They stationed men in and in front of the hotels where participants stayed. Acting on security information which indicated that an arrest order had been issued on the President of the Burkina Faso Union of Journalists, the organisers had to advise him to go underground.

Faced with such hostile attitude from the Burkinabe authorities, which had stopped participants from carrying on with the planned activities, on December 14, participants agreed to a suggestion by the organisers to open the conference on a low key at an open-air restaurant. This was followed by working group discussions in the three hotels where participants were hosted. These were Hotel Amiso, Hotel Centrale and Hotel Pacific.

Participants were assigned in the order of their hotel accommodation, to hold working group discussions on the following themes.

* Press Freedom and the Protection of Journalists.
* Professional Responsibility and the Role of the Media
* Building Linkage Between Journalists and Human Rights Defenders

Although these sessions proceeded without interruption, but obviously without the level of debate and contributions that were envisaged if things had proceeded as planned. The conference became a gathering of participants holding informal discussions, while papers that had been commissioned and prepared were not formally presented because there was no scheduled venue or time for exhaustive discussions and debate.

On December 15, a plenary session was convened at the open-air restaurant to hear informal reports from the group discussions and also to identify a framework for the creation of a network to promote and protect more vigorously, the rights of journalists. This session also formally closed the festival. There were a number of recommendations including the designation of the Media Foundation for West Africa as the coordinating point for the activities of the Network.

Besides the inability of participants to engage in robust reviews of the themes for the groups discussions, the activities of the Burkinabe authorities effectively led to the cancellation of several scheduled activities. These include a musical concert, an exhibition of photos, drawings, paintings and art works related to violations of human rights and the rights of journalists; a theatrical performance depicting crucial aspects of free expression and press freedom; and the institution of a regional prize/award to reward excellence in investigative journalism.

Most of the participants departed on Saturday, December 16 as scheduled.
In this interview with Osaro Odemwingie for Media Rights Monitor, Professor Karikari expressed his disappointment at the action of the Burkinabe authorities and other issues related to the festival.

You were a co-organiser of the International Festival of Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom which was blocked by the Burkina Faso authorities. How would you react?

First of all, the government of Blaise Campaore is only proving to the larger world what the Burkinabe Human Rights community have been battling against almost in isolation all these years, and that is that he is one of the last bastion of by-gone dictatorship. And again, in a certain sense, I am not also surprised that it turned out this way, because Compaore is haunted by the ghost of Norbert Zongo and every mention of Norbert Zongo, every December that comes, makes him desperate.

But beyond that, we also have to put Compaore’s fidgeting, his desperation and over excitement in perspective. He is now being attacked left and right by the UN, Western powers even some African governments, perhaps quietly, about his government's alleged role in all the despicable wars that are going on in West and Central Africa. He is being accused of gun-running on behalf of Charles Taylor (Liberian President) and Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone, he is being accused of connection with Savimbi in Angola and so on and so forth.

So, every expression of democratic change frightens him. He is besieged, he lives in a state of siege mentality. So I am not surprised that he frets and perhaps gets over-excited when so many Africans and foreigners arrive in his capital to organise a festival for freedom of expression. What is surprising is that two months away, he is going to host another round of African Film Festival and he does not see the connection between what we were trying to do and the established institutionalization of film festival in the capital. He lives in a contradiction.

But for the larger world, and particularly for us in West Africa, this should remind us that even were we have made a small gain in terms of steps towards democracy, we should not be complacent. We are very far away from a level of democratic development where we can sit back and be happy. And governments like Campoare's, threaten any gain we make whether in Nigeria, Ghana or else where. Because they are in the ECOWAS government, they wield some influence and create conditions that can always undermine what gains that may have been made in these countries.

Did the organisers try to seek government's approval for the festival before now?

No. It is not necessary. You don't have to, because first of all, I do know that inside Burkina Faso it self, civil organisations get up and organise things. Our partners did not indicate to us that we needed permission from government to organise something like that. Honestly, if they had said that they needed something like that, we would not have decided to do it there because that would have been an aberration of the very basis of what the whole festival is about.

What we wanted to do is not an illegal or subversive activity. It is simply to celebrate and to take account of some of the gains we have made in terms of press freedom, which is manifest also in Burkina Faso. We have widespread independent press and radio and we thought that all of these things ought to be accessed and we keep fighting for more and more space. So there was no need to seek any government permission.

Perhaps for just a matter of courtesy, yes, certainly we told our partners to invite the minister for communications to be present at the opening and in fact make a statement on behalf of the government.

We understand that your party going into Burkina Faso by road from Ghana was halted at the border and denied entry. What really happened?

We got to the border between Ghana and Burkina Faso and we crossed the Ghana immigration and went to the immigration of Burkina Faso and they actually stamped our passports giving the pass to enter Burkina Faso. But they told us that they have security information that our lives and properties were in danger if we attempted to travel to
Ougadougou. Why, because, according to the immigration officers, they have been informed from Ougadougou that the government and its security agencies claimed that some people are coming in buses to cause confusion in Burkina Faso. We tried to find out if those people they meant were we and they told us yes, that I am part of that busload of people. That in particular, my name has been given that I am leading a busload of people from Ghana to come and cause confusion. So they have alerted the security and the population along the stretch from the border with Ghana to Ougadougou, which is about 160 kilometers. So, according to the immigration people, if we attempted to go our lives would be in danger so they would not let us cross.

That was the first evening on Tuesday (December 12, 2000). On Wednesday (December 13) morning we went back to find out if according to the government the security situation is good enough for us to pass. The situation was the same. So Wednesday afternoon, because they insisted that we couldn't pass, we returned to Accra.

**What is the next step being contemplated by the organisers?**

First of all, this was intended to be the first annual or bi-annual festival, because we think that the objective... even if the government had disrupted this festival, we would still have continued next year and subsequent years because the objective still stands. In fact, the government action in Burkina Faso makes it even more urgent that we should not relent. The next step, concretely, I cannot say, certainly we have to consult with the organisations that initiated this, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA); Press Union of Burkina Faso and Burkinabe Human Rights Movement. But now, not only that, we have to consult with all of the other organisations that came; Media Rights Agenda from Nigeria, RADDOH, the Human Rights Organisation from Senegal, the Journalists in Danger from the Congo, Human Rights Organisations from Cote d'Ivore, all organisations that came. We have now to consult because though the three organisations started it we are hoping all of the organisations and press unions that also were present would be interested in joining all of us in this coalition so that we see what next to do.

We don't necessarily have to organise a festival to manifest the objectives that we are trying to promote, but we could pursue some of the objectives of the festival namely; undertake solidarity action to support each other which was one of the main objectives of the festival conference. For instance when things like this are happening in Burkina Faso what do Human Rights organisation in Ghana do? When things like these are happening in Cote d'Ivore, what must Human Rights organisation in Senegal, in Nigeria and so on, do?

This kind of thing has not been going on in Africa and that is what we really want to highlight and to try and coordinate; namely a solidarity action; whenever a journalist is touched in Nigeria all added together, the least we can do in our different countries is to send out press releases to condemn such act or at least wave some placards at the Embassies of the government. We must begin to make abusers and violators of human rights in our regions to know that if they do it in their little corners it could be protested against throughout the region.

**U.S. President Clinton Commends Principles Of WPFC's Charter For A Free Press**

Out-going U.S. President Bill Clinton has commended the principles of the World Press Freedom Committee's Charter for a Free Press, a non-binding statement of global free-press ideals, as "an important step for democracy."

The 10-point Charter incorporates provisions approved by journalists from 34 countries at a London conference called by the World Press Freedom Committee in 1987. Subsequently, it has been endorsed by scores of journalists and by world leaders, including United Nations Secretaries General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan and UNESCO Directors General Federico Mayor and Koichiro Matsuura.
President Clinton in a December 20, 2000, letter addressed to WPFC Chairman James H. Ottaway, Jr., noted the growing embrace of democracy worldwide, which he attributed to the press. According to him: "In every country, freedom of the press has proved indispensable to the growth of progress and liberty."

He recalled efforts by his government to promote freedom of the press, such as urging an end to terror against journalists, the release of journalists held as political prisoners and speech unrestrained by government interference as well as having advocated the creation of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression within the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States.

He then commended the World Press Freedom Committee for "its work to make freedom of the press a principle recognized by every nation."

Mr. Clinton is the first U.S. President to publicly recognize WPFC's efforts in promoting the Charter.

Ottaway, in his response, hailed Clinton's stand for press freedom. He said President Clinton "could leave no more honorable legacy than this strong support for the fundamental human rights guaranteed in the United States of America by the First Amendment and throughout the world by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' Article 19."

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . . ."

Article 19 of the UDHR states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and 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."

**Charter For A Free Press**

A free press means a free people. To this end, the following principles, basic to an unfettered flow of news and information both within and across national borders, deserve the support of all those pledged to advance and protect democratic institutions.

1. Censorship, direct or indirect, is unacceptable; thus laws and practices restricting the right of the news media freely to gather and distribute information must be abolished, and government authorities, national or local, must not interfere with the content of print or broadcast news, or restrict access to any news source.
2. Independent news media, both print and broadcast, must be allowed to emerge and operate freely in all countries.
3. There must be no discrimination by governments in their treatment, economic or otherwise, of the news media within a country. In those countries where government media also exist, the independent media must have the same free access as the official media have to all material and facilities necessary to their publishing or broadcasting operations.
4. States must not restrict access to newsprint, printing facilities and distribution systems, operation of news agencies, and availability of broadcast frequencies and facilities.
5. Legal, technical and tariff practices by communications authorities which inhibit the distribution of news and restrict the flow of information are condemned.
6. Government media must enjoy editorial independence and be open to a diversity of viewpoints. This should be affirmed in both law and practice.
7. There should be unrestricted access by the print and broadcast media within a country to outside news and information services, and the public should enjoy similar freedom to receive foreign publications and foreign broadcasts without interference.
8. National frontiers must be open to foreign journalists. Quotas must not apply, and applications for visas, press credentials and other documentation requisite for their work should be approved promptly. Foreign journalists should be allowed to travel freely within a country and have access to both official and unofficial news sources, and be allowed to import and export freely all necessary professional materials and equipment.
9. Restrictions on the free entry to the field of journalism or over its practice, through licensing or other certification procedures, must be eliminated.

10. Journalists, like all citizens, must be secure in their persons and be given full protection of law. Journalists working in war zones are recognized as civilians enjoying all rights and immunities accorded to other civilians.

International Human Rights Day Celebrated Worldwide

The world’s human rights community was abuzz on December 10, 2000, when various events held and reports were released to mark the 52nd anniversary of the International Human Rights Day. Various organisations released special reports and held other events on various aspects of human rights. They include ARTICLE 19, Journalists In Danger (JED), Association of Independent Media (AMEN) and Council of Europe.

To mark the day, ARTICLE 19 released a report of a study on the importance of access to information about past human rights violations as a basis for reconciliation and development, titled: Who Wants to Forget? Using Malawi, Zimbabwe and Namibia as case studies, but also drawing on examples from other parts of the world, the report emphasises that the right to information about past human rights violations remains fundamental.

It states that governments have an obligation to ensure that citizens have access to this information and surveys the wide range of means whereby this can be achieved. According to Andrew Puddephatt, Executive Director of ARTICLE 19, "all approaches to uncovering the facts about past human rights violations discussed are important because they are mechanisms of accountability. As such, they are not a luxury but a precondition for those who are trying to put a history of abuse behind them and construct new societies based upon dignity and respect for human rights."

Journalists In Danger (JED), marked the day by releasing its "Report on Press Freedom in the Democratic Republic of Congo". The report, in French, details violations of freedom of expression during the past year, including the murder of Crispin Kandolo, a freelance photojournalist who was killed in Kahuzi Biega Park while working for a group of UNESCO experts.

Other violations include the detention of at least 42 journalists, with four remaining in prison in Kinshasa; the public station RTNC (Radiotélévision nationale congolaise) broadcasting a call to murder journalists from two independent newspapers, Le Potentiel and Le Phare; the daily L'Avenir being shut down for three days, and the expropriation of the station RTKM for political reasons.

In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, an international conference entitled "Media for a Democratic Europe", jointly organised by the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) and the Council of Europe, began on the human rights day.

According to ANEM chairman Veran Matic, "We, from the independent media, want to draw on our established contacts and existing expertise to help our governments, ministries, and all those committed to the swift implementation of democracy in the country through reforms in the field of media." The Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer sent a message to the conference in which he emphasised that "there cannot be any genuine democracy without freedom of expression and information and the existence of a plurality of independent media".

The human rights NGO in Nepal, the Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies (CEHURDES), said it would devote the December edition of its regular publication, Free Expression ("Swatantra Abhibyakti" in Nepali), to the issue of human rights with the theme: The new millennium for human rights.

In Singapore, the Think Centre and Open Singapore Centre marked the day with an event which included an attempted marathon run and speeches at Hong Lim Park's Speaker's Corner.
ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN DECEMBER

Kano Bans Films
The Kano State government has come hard on freedom of expression and press freedom by banning film show. In a statement, the government directed the immediate withdrawal of all the licenses of film producers, distributors and video centres.

In the statement, government said it has banned "the shooting, production, distribution and showing of such films anywhere in the state." The government said in the statement that it was worried that film show constitutes an incalculable damage and nuisance on the sacred teachings of the Sharia legal system.

The decision was reached on December 14 at the State Executive Council meeting chaired by Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso.

Meanwhile, the council also instructed the State Ministry of Information to articulate modalities for "censorship of films in accordance with the socio-religious and cultural interest of the good people of the state", and further directed interested film producers/operators wishing to operate within the confines of the new guidelines to apply and obtain new licences.

Police Commissioner Insults Journalist
The Oyo State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mike Okuo on December 18 insulted a journalist for daring to ask him a question he considered unreasonable during a press briefing.

Mr. Okuo at his fortnightly press briefing at the headquarters of the State Police Command at Eleiyele in Ibadan had addressed the press about the command's plan to ensure a trouble-free yuletide.

When Mr. Bayo Sekoni representing the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) asked him a question on why arrest had not been made of the robbers who raided Gbagi market the previous week despite the police post there, the police commissioner lost his cool and started to insult the journalist. He said: "I believe you went to school. You should be intelligent enough to know the size of Gbagi market and how do you expect five policemen in the police post at the market to check the armed bandits.

"I think one should be reasonable enough in asking questions. How can five policemen handle such a situation."

Incensed by the abuse of their colleague, all the 30 journalists present at the press conference walked out enmasse from the venue. Attempts and pleas by the State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Benjamin Okwara to get the journalists to return were unheeded.

Zamfara Threatens Action Against Journalist
There is no respitr for journalists working in Nigerian northern state of Zamfara as the government has again threatened to deal with journalists who filed "biased" reports of the State or Sharia, the Islamic legal code.' This latest threat was issued by the State Governor's Special Adviser on Information, Alhaji Umar Jibo Bukkuyum, while addressing newsmen in Gusau, the state capital, early December 2000.

Alhaji Bukkuyum, without proof, accused journalists in the state of bias against the state government and of not being fair and objective in their coverage of the activities of the state. He declared that it would henceforth be "fire for fire" for any biased report or reporter.
He warned: "Government would no longer tolerate media organisations choosing to tarnish its image and by extension that of the state, all in the name of reporting."

Bukkuyum further accused journalists of unprofessional and unethical practices, alleging that they refuse to balance stories as stipulated by the dictates of the profession before going to press.

The government's anger was reportedly in response to alleged reports in some newspapers that the state government had established a fund to procure arms in aid of the Palestinians in their battle against Israel.

**Policemen Assault, Detain Journalists**

Policemen attached to the Ipaja Police Station in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State on December 31 2000 assaulted and subsequently detained two journalists and their friend. The journalists are Gbenga Agbana, a Finance Correspondent with The Guardian newspapers and Gboyega Adeoye, Aviation Correspondent with Concord newspapers. The third person name was given as Bisi, an official of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

According to the journalists, they were accosted by a patrol team of policemen of the Rapid Response Squad (RSS), the Lagos State anti-crime outfit at about 9.00pm at the Lagos State Low Cost Housing Estate in Abesan, Ipaja where they reside. The policemen, (all in mufti) were on patrol in a vehicle marked "Dragon Gulf 006" with registration number NPF 2341B. The policemen without giving any reason pounced on them and subjected them to severe beating without their committing any offence. They were subsequently thrown into the police van in which there were some teenage girls.

The journalists said while they were being beaten and eventually driven away, they identified themselves as journalists and pleaded their innocence of whatever offence the policemen may accuse them of, but the policemen paid no heed.

The policemen subsequently seized the journalists' wallets one of which contained four thousand six hundred and fifty naira (N4,650.00) in N200 and N50 notes denominations and the other contained one thousand two hundred and twenty naira (1,220.00) and a Casio Organiser containing vital addresses and phone numbers.

At the police station, the journalists said they were ordered to write down their names and were moved straight into a dingy cell of about 16 by 10ft size where they met about fifty other inmates, most of who claimed to have been arrested either in the same manner the journalists were arrested or for allegedly "throwing fireworks".

The journalists said the policemen placed all the girls arrested that night behind the counter, where they said they were amazed that during the night, the policemen raped the arrested ladies in turns right there at the station in flagrant disregard of their protestations and the fact that pressmen were around. The policemen corked their guns and threatened to shoot the ladies should they resist them from having their ways.

Being held incommunicado, the journalists could not send messages to their families. The journalists said their wives and families, whom they left with a promise to return in a few minutes time so that they all could go for the new year service at their church, were left in emotional and psychological trauma as they did not know their where about.

It was only by sheer chance that the journalists families could locate them when one of the journalists' driver used his initiative to trace them to the police station the following day, having been told of the reckless manner the policemen at the Ipaja police station operated in the area the previous night.

The journalists said the policemen tried vainly during the night to force them to write statements to implicate themselves which they resisted. In the morning of the following day, January 1, 2001, the journalists said the policemen forced one of their neighbours, Mr. Ebhohon, who came to stand surety for their bail, to pay the sum of two thousand naira (N2,000.00) before they were released to him. No charges were proffered against them.
JOURNALISM / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

Call For Nominations For IWMF Courage In Journalism Award

Nominations are being sought worldwide for the International Women's Media Foundation's Courage in Journalism Award which honors women journalists for demonstrating extraordinary strength of character in pursuing their craft under difficult or dangerous circumstances - physical danger, official secrecy or oppression, political pressure, or any other professionally intimidating obstacles.

Founded in 1990, the International Women's Media Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization whose mission is to help protect freedom of the press and to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide.

This award carries a US$2,000 cash prize and a crystal sculpture symbolizing freedom and courage. Up to three recipients will be recognized in ceremonies in New York and Los Angeles in October 2001.

Among previous award winners is Chris Anyanwu in 1995 along with Horria Saihi, Algeria; Gao Yu, China. Lifetime Achievement: Helen Thomas (United Press International).

Nomination is open to full- or part-time journalists: reporters, writers, editors, photographers or producers.

Nominations must include: letter of nomination; brief biography highlighting the nominee's work history as it relates to the award; resume/CV of the nominee; sample of the nominee's work; and, current contact information of the nominee. Materials will not be returned.

Deadline for receipt of application is March 15, 2001

For more information Contact: Amy Johnson: e-mail: ajohnson@iwmf.org

Masters Degree In Human Rights Offered In London

The Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London has announced that it will offer an interdisciplinary Masters Degree in "Understanding and Securing Human Rights" in addition to PhDs in human rights, human rights fellowships and a human rights seminar series. Further information about all of these programs is available on their website: www.sas.ac.uk/commonwealthstudies/courses/humanrights.html/

Thomson Foundation Plans Broadcast Journalism Course For Summer 2001

The Thomson Foundation has announced that it will hold a course on international broadcast journalism in summer 2001

The course, set for June 25 to September 14, is open to 12 broadcast journalists from around the world who are at least 24 years old with at least 18 months' experience. Applications are due on March 31, 2001. Participants must speak and read English with ease.

The course will be divided into two groups - television and radio - which will work together at different times during the three months. The course outline includes news gathering, selection, research and writing, working with microphones and cameras, interview and presentation techniques, structuring items and programs, video and sound tape editing, the roles of the producer, editor and reporter, team management, issues of morality, conscience, law and responsibility facing the broadcaster.

The cost is 8,000 pounds, which covers tuition, accommodations and authorized travel in Britain. It does not cover airfare from participants' native countries. Some financial aid may be available, and applicants are encouraged to contact, as soon as possible, the British Council, the British Embassy or High Commission in their country.

The Thomson Foundation provides practical training for journalists from emerging countries of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the South Pacific, the Caribbean, South America, Central and Eastern Europe and the NIS.
Duke University Visiting Media Fellows Program
The DeWitt Wallace Center for Communications and Journalism at Duke University offers short- and long-term study opportunities to journalists from all over the world. Fellows may study from four weeks up to an academic year. They attend regular University classes, participate in special seminars on media policy issues, and visit media companies, government agencies, businesses and nonprofits.

Interested individuals are encouraged to visit the web site. Additional information on tuition costs and application deadlines is available. Contact: Laurie Bley, Media Fellows Coordinator, Duke University, E-mail: bley@pps.duke.edu,

Editing Program For Minority Journalists
Operated by the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education in cooperation with the University of Arizona's Department of Journalism the program is seeking journalists with at least one year of print media experience who want to excel as assignment or copy editors. Non-U.S. citizens must work for a U.S. or foreign daily newspaper. English fluency is required.

This six-week training program runs from May 23 to July 2 and emphasizes fundamental copy editing skills, working with new technology, as well as offering advanced seminars for mid-career journalists. Daily newspapers sponsoring a participant are expected to continue the candidate's salary while at the program and are also asked to pay a $3,000 training fee.

MIJE encourages applications from both nonwhite and white candidates. Contact: Director of Programs Barbara Jones, Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, 1211 Preservation Park Way, Oakland, CA 94612; Tel: (510) 891-9202; Fax: (510) 891-9565; E-mail: barbj@maynardije.org; Web: http://www.maynardije.org

DEADLINE: February 18, 2000

John S. Knight Fellowships For Professional Journalists
Applications are being accepted for the John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists. The fellowship is awarded annually to twelve U.S. and up to eight foreign editors, journalists, reporters, photographers, radio and television broadcasters. U.S. applicants must have seven years experience; foreign journalists must have five years experience. Fellowships include a $50,000 stipend plus a book allowance and tuition.

Program gives outstanding journalists an academic year at Stanford to broaden and deepen their understanding of economic, historical, philosophical, social issues and trends shaping the nation and world.

Contact: Director, Knight Fellowships, E-mail: knightfellow@forsythe.stanford.edu
DEADLINE for international applicants: March 1.

Knight Science Journalism Fellowships
Applications are being accepted for the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships. At least eight broadcast and print journalists are selected to study for one academic year at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Applicants must have at least three years experience, preferably in covering science, medicine, technology or the environment. Contact: Director of Knight Science Journalism Fellowships, E-mail: boyce@mit.edu; Web Site: http://web.mit.edu/knight-science/
DEADLINE: March 1.
Nieman Fellowships

Applications are being received for the Nieman Fellowships. The fellowships are awarded annually to approximately 24 mid-career journalists (12 from the United States and 10 to 12 from other countries) for an academic year of study at Harvard University. No course credits are given or degree awarded.

To qualify for consideration, applicants must be full-time staff or freelance journalists working for the news or editorial department of newspapers, news services, radio, television or magazines of general public interest; have at least three years of experience; obtain employer's consent; and agree to return to their job.

Tuition plus stipend of $40,000 for U.S. fellows; funding arrangements vary for international fellows.

Contact: Program Officer, Nieman Foundation, E-mail: nieman@harvard.edu; Web Site: www.nieman.harvard.edu

DEADLINE: March 1.

Science Writing Fellowships Program

Applications are being received for the Science Writing Fellowships Program. The fellowship in a one- four- and eight-week summer fellowships are available at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL). The program includes hands-on laboratory courses in both environmental science and cell and molecular biology, graduate-level courses and participation in a seminar series on science reporting.

Opportunities are also available with the MBL's Ecosystems Center, either in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, or in Alaska. Applicants must be professional science reporters or editors, with at least two years' experience.

Fellowship support covers the cost of tuition, housing and library use. Non-U.S. journalists must pay for their own international travel.

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DEADLINE: March 15

Nigerian Journalist Wins ICIJ Award

Mr. Tayo Odulami, a Nigerian journalist with The NEWS magazine has been honoured with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) award. Mr. Odunlami was among the five finalists for this year's selection.

The ICIJ Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting was set up to honour such efforts and it is funded through a grant from the John and Florence Newman Foundation of San Antonio, Texas.

Odunlami made the list of the five finalists for the award for his story, Face of A Liar, Crook In The House, published in TheNews of 19 July 1999. It was an expose that led to the removal from office and resignation from the House of Alhaji Salisu Buhari, former speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives.

Others are Raymond Bonner and the Foreign Desk of The New York Times for their stories exposing money laundering by Russian organized syndicates and the Bank of New York; Petra Prochazkaoya, Anna Starkova and Martin Mrnka of Czech Television (Czech Republic) for revealing a Czech company's smuggling of MIG fighter jets from Kazakhstan, allegedly bound for North Korea. Stephen smith and Michael Montgomery, American Radio Works, Minnesota Public Radio (United States) made the list for their investigation into a "civilian massacre in Cuska during the Kosovo crisis." Also, Guy Smith and Steve Bradshaw of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) correspondent programme (United Kingdom) won the award because of their exposure of allegations of money laundering and corruption in Pakistan.
There were 67 entries from 28 countries for the award. In the words of David Anable, an ICIJ award judge: "It is amazing, even inspiring. Despite huge odds in many countries, a wonderful bunch of determined individuals keep digging away out there, unearthing the notorious activities of the unscrupulous, the greedy, the power-hungry and just plain nasty. This prize gives at least a few of them some well-earned recognition. May their numbers never dwindle."

The Associated Press, (AP team which won the overall award for reporting on the Korean massacre, comprises Sang-Hun Choe, Charles J. Hanley, Martha Mendoza and Randy Herschaft.

They spent over a year working on their investigation, entitled: Bridge at No Gun Ri, which revealed the killings of the hundreds of Korean refugees by American forces during the Korean War. The story geared up the US Defence Department and South Korea to make full investigations.

**IFJ Awards Journalists From Thailand, Pakistan, Italy And Germany**

Journalists from Thailand, Pakistan and Italy have been recognised with the International Federation of Journalists' (IFJ) annual European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prizes for Journalism. Atiya Achakulwisut of Thailand, Fari ah Razak Haroon of Pakistan won the prize under the Developing Country category, while Marco Bello and Paolo Moiola of Italy won under the European Union category. IFJ said all the winners were selected on the basis of their work in "reporting on democracy and human rights as vital aspects of development."

The prize, which is named after the late Commissioner for development and campaigner of human rights causes, Lorenzo Natali, consists of two EURO10,000 (approximately US$8,800) prizes that will be shared between the winners. IFJ said in a statement that the works for which each journalist won "demonstrate that hard-edged and professional journalism plays a vital role in showing how the well-meaning aspirations of human rights declarations touch peoples' lives."

Achakulwisut of Thailand's The Nation and the Bangkok Post won for their coverage of an environmental disaster affecting citizens in a region where toxic pollution from a lead mine is destroying their fresh water supply.

A freelance journalist for Pakistani magazine Dawn, Haroon is being recognised for his article, Women are Falling Behind, which addresses violations of women's rights in his country.

Italian journalists Marco Bello and Paolo Moiola for Mondo e Missione won jointly for their "exceptional piece of honest development and human rights journalism," which assesses social and political conditions in Haiti.

Journalist Astrid Prange de Oliveira of Germany of Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt won for her work on a Guinean woman's refugee case in Germany.

"In every country, freedom of the press has proved indispensable to the growth of progress and liberty.”
US President Clinton in a December 20, 2000, letter addressed to WPFC Chairman James H. Ottaway, Jr.

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