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IFEX Campaigns To Repeal Insult Law and Criminal Defamation In Sub-Saharan Africa

Members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) have resolved to pursue a campaign that seeks to repeal “insult laws” and Criminal Defamation in Sub-Saharan Africa. To this end, IFEX appointed two project coordinators, Mr. Raymond Louw of the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), IPI and SANEF, and Ms. Jeanette Minnie, an International Freedom of Expression consultant and former Regional Director of MISA, towards the end of last year to undertake a pilot project to establish a coordinated campaign - primarily among African-based freedom of expression organizations and to formulate a central programme of activities.

IFEX members took this decision at its annual meeting held in September 2002 in Dakar, Senegal.

In late 2002 and the first half of 2003 several international organizations including the “World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), Freedom House, the International Press Institute (IPI), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and Article XIX – the global Campaign for Free Expression independently pursued the campaign against “insult laws”. There was however no established concerted coalition of organizations to act in unison in line with a centrally agreed programme.

Though a core group of organizations have been established in the countries of Southern Africa, other regions of Africa, Central, West and East Africa had no such coalition and IFEX deems it necessary to involve organizations from these regions as well in the campaign.

The core group currently consists of: The World Press Freedom Committee – through its South African representative; The Africa Programme of Article XIX – the Global Campaign for Free Expression; The International Press Institute –through its South African representative; and The Media Institute of Southern Africa – a sub-regional grouping with offices and national chapters in 11 countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Other organizations in the core group are The Southern African Journalists Association – the counterpart of the International Federation of Journalists (FJ) in the sub-region with member unions in South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Zambia and Zimbabwe; The Freedom of Expression Institute (in South Africa); and The South African National Editors Forum (SANEF).
The South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) is currently facilitating the establishment of an All Africa Editors Forum. The process is well advanced and the All Africa Editors Forum is to be established at a meeting in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the near future. It is envisaged that the continental editors’ forum will support the campaign as well.

IFEX said it intends to use the focus of the campaign to conduct advocacy for the repeal of laws that criminalize content in the media or in other forms of public expression. Taking cognizance of the fact that there are many such laws in Africa, it has decided to adopt a useful guideline in determining which laws would be selected for repeal in various countries. To this end it would focus on laws that clearly obstruct the public accountability of state and government institutions and individuals within them, and parastatals and private institutions that deliver public services.

In order to popularise the campaign, IFEX has sent e-mail invitations to other organizations in West, Central and East Africa to join the campaign.

As part of activities for the campaign, the two project coordinators in consultation with the IFEX Clearing House in Toronto have developed a programme comprising a dual level approach. A strategy and theme that is central to both levels of activities is the leveraging of the African Peer Review Mechanism (PRM) in terms of NEPAD.

The first level of activities is the ‘grassroots’ civic level approach of the campaign. This will involve the organisation of a series of sub-regional advocacy workshops on “insult laws” in the five designated sub-regions of Africa to create awareness of the campaign, transmit knowledge of the relevant laws applicable in the countries that attend the workshops, and discussions of campaigning strategies to be adopted in the countries and sub-regions for the repeal of such laws. These strategies will particularly focus on using the PRM as the rationale for the repeal of these laws.

The second level of activities is the high-level missions to be undertaken by an IFEX delegation to Heads of State or other senior government representatives in African countries to draw their attention directly to the problems emanating from “insult laws” in respect of good governance and democracy, and the NEPAD peer review process.

Two such meetings have already been held: one with President Festus Mogae of Botswana on November 20, 2003; and the other with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in South Africa, Mr. Aziz Pahad, on January 27, 2004.

The delegation is currently attempting to meet with Pres. Jaoquim Chissano of Mozambique who is the current chairperson of the African Union.

IFEX disclosed that the campaign has decided on three sub-regional workshops thus far, but would ideally like to hold five in each of the following sub-regions: Southern Africa, central Africa, Anglophone West Africa, Francophone West Africa and the Horn of Africa (East Africa), but for lack of funds.

While funding has been secured for one sub-regional workshop in Southern Africa from the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NIZA) that for two more workshops is under discussion with the African Fund of CIDA. If funds are approved for the two other workshops, one will take place in Nigeria and the third in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The location and country composition of these workshops are based on research and consultation with Article 19 and other members that already support this campaign.

The campaign will seek to raise funds for workshops for the two sub-regions not included above if it is able to secure funding for the 2nd and 3rd workshops planned for Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In order to get a sound basis for the formation of a national campaign in each country that attends a workshop, about five delegates will be drawn from each country concerned to each workshop. Participants will include as many relevant media civic organizations as possible and at least one government representative per country. This representation will in addition provide combined sub-regional campaigns in their cluster of countries. Government representation, IFEX said, is required to provide a “NEPAD” and communications link between governments and civil societies in this regard.

Because of the strategic importance of NEPAD, both the sub-regional workshops and the high-level meetings will address a central issue: NEPAD and the (African) Peer Review Mechanism. NEPAD is a strategy of the African Union for the economic recovery of Africa. It links international development aid to the performance of African governments in respect of various good governance and democracy indicators, including human rights. The performance of African governments is to be
assessed through an African Peer Review Mechanism (PRM) in which both state institutions and civil society will play a role.

The Chairman of NEPAD, Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu, addressing the role of civil society in this regard stated that when the peer review of a country is set in motion there will be an investigation by the NEPAD Secretariat, the findings of which will be referred to an Eminent Persons Group of seven members from various African countries. The findings of the Eminent Persons Group will then be referred to the African Union for assessment.

Some reference to media freedom is also made in NEPAD documents, but it is not one of the main indicators and is conspicuous by its omission from the criteria relating to the assessment of good governance (though other elements such as an independent judiciary and efficient administration are included in the relevant section). There is a reference to “responsible journalism”, a phrase IFEX considers objectionable, and “media freedom” under the human rights criteria.

The IFEX campaign will seek to use these references to upgrade the importance of media freedom as a good governance indicator, and to rally civil society in various African countries to emphasize media freedom as an indicator. In terms of doing so, they will call for the repeal of “insult laws”. It is for this reason that meetings with G8 governments are also required – they need to be appraised of the importance of the repeal of such laws in Africa in terms of promoting and rewarding good governance and democracy.

IFEX envisages that the impact of the campaign will be felt nationally in a number of countries, within a number of sub-regions of Africa, and continentally in sub-Saharan Africa – all within a relatively short space of time. The recipe, according to the group, is to raise awareness of the issues quickly in a concentrated way by blitzing various parts of the continent – jointly on the level of civil society, at governmental and continental African Union level and at the G8 level. To be able to achieve this IFEX said it is vital that all the activities take place more or less concurrently so that the pressures and synergies work in a combined way. There should be recognition that media freedom and particularly the removal of “insult Laws” will play an important role in the PRM, says IFEX.

Insult laws are enacted to protect presidents and in varying degrees other state officials from scrutiny of their conduct in office and which in many countries are used ruthlessly against journalists. Many African countries invoke “Insult laws” against the media when personal references to heads of state or officials are deemed insulting or when journalists allege official or other misconduct especially when related to the police or military, publish politically embarrassing material or even make critical references to state symbols or institutions. Cases of editors and journalists being charged or even imprisoned for such reports in many countries of Africa abound.

**FOI Coalition Lobbies Presidential Aides, Legislators On Freedom of Information Bill**

The Freedom of Information Coalition (FOIC) has begun another round of lobbying aimed at securing the understanding and support of members of the Federal Executive and Legislature to ensure the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill, which is presently before the National Assembly.

Members of the Coalition, including the coordinator, Mr. Osaro Odemwingie, and representatives of some of the member-organizations, have met with some presidential and ministerial aides to engage them on issues raised by opponents of the bill and to ensure better understanding of the issues and the Bill.

Following the introduction of the Freedom of Information Bill at National Assembly immediately after the inauguration of the last Assembly in 1999, some presidency officials, including President Olusegun Obasanjo, had expressed reservations about the Bill on the ground that it seeks to grant unfettered access to all government records regardless of the national security implications. In addition, opponents have frowned at the provisions in the bill which seek to grant everyone resident in Nigeria access to official information without distinguishing between Nigerians and non-Nigerians. Some opponents of the Bill have also expressed the view that it is a media bill and will give too much power to journalists.

However, proponents of the bill, which is being coordinated by the Freedom of Information Coalition, have sought in their advocacy activities to clarify these issues.
Under the renewed advocacy efforts, a two-member team representing the Freedom of Information Coalition undertook the first in a series of lobbying visits to some ministers, presidential aides, and influential members of the National Assembly. The team comprising Mr. Odemwingie and Mr. Lanre Arogundade, the Coordinator of the International Press Centre (IPC), one of the member-organizations of the coalition met with some presidential aides, assistants of some presidential aides and ministers, some influential members of the National Assembly and caucuses.

Specifically, the team met with Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Special Assistant to the President and Head of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit; Professor Julius Ihonvbere, Senior Special Assistant to the President; Mr. Tunde Martins, special assistant to Dr. Aliyu Modibbo, who is himself a Senior Special Assistant to the President on Research and Liaison; and Mr. Bolaji Afolabi, special assistant to Mr. Tunde Olusunle, who is the President’s Special Assistant on Special Duties.

The FOI delegation also met with Mr. Kola Idoniji, the Deputy Chief Press Secretary to Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu, Minister of Information and National Orientation; and Mrs. Boade Akinola, the Chief Press Secretary to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister for Justice, Chief Akinlolu Olujimi (SAN).

At the National Assembly, the team met with Honourable Pascal Adigwe, Chairman of the sub-committee on the Federal Housing Authority and secretary of the South-South caucus of the House of Representatives; Honourable John Halims Agoda, the Chairman of the House Committee on Legislative, Budget and Research; Honourable Uche Maduako, a former chairman of the House Committee on Information but who is now the Chairman of the House Committee on Industries; Dr. Wale Okediran; Dr. Usman Bugaje, who is the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the leader of one of the largest caucuses in the House, the newly created Forum for Democracy and Good Governance; and Honourable Abdul Oroh, another leading member of the caucus and the Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on Human Rights.

Other persons met by the team were Mr. Henry Ugbolue, the Chief Press Secretary to Senate President, and his deputy, Mr. Waziri Adio, as well as other senior administrative staff in the Senate President’s office.

At the meeting with Dr. Ezekwesili, the team introduced the FOI Bill to her, and noted the apparent opposition to some sections of the bill by some top presidency officers. The team noted that advocates of a Freedom of Information Act believe that there cannot be a meaningful anti-corruption crusade when citizens do not have a right of access to publicly held information with which they could hold officers accountable. The team then requested the Special Assistant to the President to convene a meeting between representatives of the Coalition, herself and some other presidential aides. The team noted that such a meeting would provide members of the Coalition with opportunity to address some of the contentious areas of the bill, agree on the way forward and consider some specific collaborative activities that the Coalition could undertake with her office to further the push for the passage of the bill at the National Assembly and secure presidential assent.

Dr. Ezekwesili agreed to the suggestions and mandated her assistant to collaborate with representatives of the Coalition to arrange such a meeting. A tentative date was subsequently agreed upon for the meeting.

During the meeting with Prof. Ihonvbere, the team also formally introduced the FOI Bill to him and restated the advocates’ belief that a freedom of information regime would promote transparency and accountability in governance leading to reduction in corruption, efficient allocation and utilization of public resources and ultimately economic growth. The team also urged him to facilitate a meeting between members of the Coalition and some presidential aides as well as another meeting with President Obasanjo.

Prof. Ihonvbere agreed with the submission of the team and expressed the hope that the bill would be passed and receive presidential assent in the shortest possible time.

He told the Coalition delegation that he has had cause to discuss the FOI Bill with President Obasanjo and noted that the President’s opposition to the bill is borne out of genuine concerns over some aspects. He agreed to continue to find an appropriate opportunity for the team to interact with a number of other presidential aides and, where necessary, with the President.

He also applauded the Coalition for the style of advocacy adopted which he said is non-confrontational but intellectually engaging. He then encouraged the team to continue to make contact with him and other officials of the Presidency with whom they can easily establish some rapport.
Mr. Martins and Mr. Afolabi received the FOI Coalition team warmly and they expressed unequivocal support for the Coalition’s objective. They both promised to convene a meeting between their bosses and the team to provide an opportunity for interaction.

The delegation’s meetings with Mr. Idoniji, and Mrs. Akinola were intended to facilitate easy meeting with the ministers. The ministers were, however, not available at the time of the visits. After some discussions by the team with Mr. Idoniji, and Mrs. Akinola, they expressed support for the effort and promised to assist in their own ways to facilitate the meetings with the ministers.

All the members of the House of Representatives that the team met with expressed support for the Bill and pledged to vote for it when it is presented before the House for the Third Reading as well as lobby their colleagues to vote for the Bill.

Besides pledging their individual commitment to the passage of the Bill, Hon. Bugaje and Hon. Oroh accepted the FOI Coalition team’s request to address the members of the Forum for Democracy and Good Governance at their next scheduled meeting.

Similarly, besides also pledging his support for the Bill, Hon. Adigwe promised to table it at the meeting of the South-South caucus for discussion to canvass for block support in line with the request of the team. He advised the team to expand their lobbying contacts to other caucuses and regional groupings within the National Assembly so as to win them over with persuasive arguments.

The team met with Mr. Ugbolue, Chief Press Secretary to Senate President, and his deputy, Mr. Adio, on two occasions. At the first meeting, the team requested the officers to use their positions to reach out to members of the House of Representatives to pass the bill. Secondly, the team requested the officers to arrange a meeting between the Senate Committee on Information and the FOI Coalition representatives to brief them on the campaign objectives and seek the cooperation of the committee especially in forming the nucleus of the sponsors of the bill at the Senate after it might have been passed at the House of Representatives.

During the second meeting with Mr. Ugbolue, he reported that he has met with Senator Tawar Umbi Wada, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Information. He said Senator Wada is receptive to the idea of the Committee sponsoring the FOI Bill at the Senate and has, therefore, agreed to a meeting with the FOI Coalition team early in March.

Mr. Odewwingie, and Mr. Iyobosa Uwugiaren, the Secretary of the Nigeria Union of journalists, Abuja Council, which is a member-organization of the Freedom of Information Coalition, later conducted a second round of lobbying visits to members of the National Assembly. They met with members of the Forum for Democracy and Good Governance and made a presentation on the FOI Bill based on their earlier request which was accepted by the conveners of the Forum.

Making the presentation at the meeting attended by over 40 members of the Forum, Mr. Odemwingie thanked the conveners and members of the caucus for the opportunity offered the FOI Coalition to address the members on the rationale for the Freedom of Information Bill and the need for them to give it full support.

Mr. Odemwingie told the members that a veil of secrecy covers publicly held information in Nigeria irrespective of their status. This secrecy, he said, is entrenched by a plethora of administrative bottlenecks as well as legal huddles such as the Official Secrets Act, Section 97(1) of the Criminal Code, Section 168 of the Evidence Act; Section 2 of the Federal Commissions (Privileges and Immunities) Act; Section 10(2) of the Public Complaints Commission Act; Section 12(2) of the Architects (Registration, etc.) Act, and Section 13 of the Statistics Act, which forbid the disclosure of information, usually under very broad “public interest” claims.

He remarked that it is not uncommon to see files routinely labeled “Top Secret”, “Confidential” etc in government ministries and agencies even when they contain routine information. The situation, he said, insulates the activities of government officials from public scrutiny and the people from participating in the governance process thereby discouraging transparency and accountability in public life and an active culture of participatory democracy.

This regime of secrecy, he said, is clearly not in tandem with Section 36(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which gives everyone the right to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.

The above scenario, he said, justifies the need for the enactment of a legislation focused primarily on providing for the right of access to public records and information in Nigeria.
Mr. Odemwingie also noted that an FOI regime would serve as an impetus and a catalyst to revive Nigeria’s near comatose national economy because it would help to open to public scrutiny the way and manner in which all public sector related business transactions are made, which would lead to a more efficient allocation of resources. This, he said, would in turn help in instilling confidence in the economic system and contribute immensely to the realization of the government’s current economic objective of attracting increased inflow of direct foreign investments into the country.

He added that the Legislature could use the act to summon authentic information necessary to perform its law making functions and effectively exercise its oversight powers over the Executive arm of government in order to make good laws and ensure good governance.

Mr. Odemwingie gave an overview of the current effort to pass the bill and noted that it is currently awaiting scheduling for the Third Reading at the House of Representatives.

He noted that although the bill has received tremendous support from many members of the National Assembly, civil society groups and a cross section of Nigerians, there are also a number of persons both at the National Assembly and the presidency that are opposed to the bill for various reasons. Some of these reasons he said are: fears over the security implications of granting access to official records; fears that it will grant foreigners access to official information; fears that the bill is aimed at further granting the media more powers; and the fear that the bill is a wholesale importation of some foreign law that does not take into cognizance Nigeria’s “peculiar” situation.

Mr. Odemwingie explained that fears of security implication of granting access are unfounded because the Bill contains a range of exemptions from the general right of access to information, including in cases of information which may be injurious to the conduct of international affairs and defence; trade secret or financial, commercial, scientific or technical information which may prejudice the competitive position of a government or public institution; law enforcement investigation; personal information; third party information; legal practitioner/client privilege; and course or research materials.

On the fears that the act will grant foreigners access to sensitive information, he admitted that the Bill provides in section 3 that every person should have a legally enforceable right to request access to information. He explained that this provision accords with the principle of maximum disclosure which is similarly adopted by the 1999 Constitution in the application of the fundamental rights provisions in Chapter Four. The rights guaranteed in the Chapter apply to “every person”.

On fears that the bill is aimed at further granting the media more powers, Mr. Odemwingie explained that the bill is not a media bill. Rather, he said, the bill is intended for use by every person for the purpose of either holding government officials accountable or for Nigerians who care enough to contribute to government policy debate and decision-making to obtain authentic facts about an issue in order to make informed contributions.

He illustrated this by pointing out that lecturers could use an FOI law to know how research grants made available to their institutions are allocated; community members could use an FOI Act to monitor budgetary allocations to repair or provide facilities in their communities which are not executed and keep recurring in yearly budgets; market women could use such an Act to get local government authorities to account for the fees and levies they pay which are often never used to provide sanitary and other facilities in markets.

Besides, he said, contractors who bid for government contracts could use the Act to ensure that the eventual award of the contract followed laid down rules and to the most reasonable bid rather than being based on some other fraudulent criteria, while applicants who are adjudged to have failed tests for appointments into governments department and agencies could use the Act to summon the documents from the selection process if they feel they have been unfairly graded in the test.

Mr. Odemwingie, however, acknowledged that like every other person in Nigeria, journalists also stand to benefit from an FOI regime by having access to reliable information which will ensure that incidents of speculative reporting are eliminated and the media can therefore satisfactorily perform its constitutionally assigned duty of upholding “the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people” as well as improve the quality of public debate.

On fears that the bill is a wholesale importation of some foreign law that does not take into cognizance Nigeria’s peculiar situation, Mr. Odemwingie explained that the consultative process leading to the Bill was a local initiative undertaken by Nigerians drawing from the universally accepted principles. The principles, he said, are based on international and regional law and standards, evolving state practice and the general principles of law recognized by the comity of nations.
Enacting the Freedom of Information Bill into law, he said, will put Nigeria substantially in compliance with these principles. In this wise, the right of access to information, would provide everyone in Nigeria with the unique opportunity of adequately informing themselves about the workings of government and by so doing raise the level of enlightened public discourse on how public officials (whether elected or appointed) manage the nation’s affairs and resources on behalf of the people.

After the presentation, Dr. Bugaje, who chairs the Forum, thanked the FOI Coalition team for the efforts that it has put up so far in pushing for the passage of the bill. He remarked that the Forum has no doubt that an environment of Freedom of Information would provide a huge impetus for the entrenchment of democracy and development. These he said are the driving principles of the Forum.

He attributed the development experienced in Ghanaian and Mauritanian economy and politics to openness and accountability and then gave a commitment on behalf of members of the Forum that they would all vote in support of the bill whenever it is scheduled for the Third Reading.

He requested the Coalition to undertake a research on the manner FOI regimes have assisted development in African countries that have the Act and to make the result available to the Forum so as to enable its members prepare adequately for the Third Reading of the Bill.

*Media Rights Monitor* is published monthly by the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), an independent, non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting media freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

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Kofi Annan Appoints Canadian As High Commissioner For Human Rights

Following consultations with the Chairmen of the five regional groups of Member States, United Nations’ Secretary General, Kofi Annan has informed the General Assembly of his intention to appoint Justice Louise Arbour of Canada as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The General Assembly is expected to consider and approve the nomination in the near future. Once her nomination is approved by the Assembly, Justice Arbour will retire from the Supreme Court of Canada in late June 2004 to take up her new assignment in Geneva.

Louise Arbour has served on the Supreme Court of Canada since 1999 and was appointed Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, by the Security Council based in The Hague in 1996.

Admitted to the Quebec Bar in 1971 and the Bar of Ontario in 1977, Justice Arbour served for 13 years as Associate Professor of Law and later Associate Dean at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University (criminal law, criminal procedure, evidence, droit civil) and became a member of the bench in December 1987, first as a trial judge on the Supreme Court of Ontario and, in 1990, at the Ontario Court of Appeal.

In April 1995, she was chosen to lead an official investigation into the operation of the correctional service of Canada, based on allegations by female inmates at a women’s prison in Kingston, Ontario.

Until her appointment to the Tribunals, she served as vice-president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. She is also a life member of L’Association des Juristes d’Expression Francaise de l’Ontario.

Throughout her career, Louise Arbour has published extensively, in both English and French, in the fields of human rights, civil liberties, gender issues and criminal procedure. In addition, she has performed editorial work on behalf of the Criminal Reports, the Canadian Rights Reporter, the Osgoode Hall Law Journal and La Revue Générale de Droit, and has been a guest speaker at many conferences and presentations throughout the world.

She was inducted into the International Hall of Fame – International Women’s Forum in 2003; the same year in which she was awarded an Honorary Fellowship at the American College of Trial Lawyers, and won the Médaille de la Faculté de droit de l’Université de Montréal.

Louise Arbour was born in Montreal on 10 February 1947 and is fluent in French and English.

Journalist Sues Police For Illegal Arrest, Detention and Trial

Mr. Ben Adaji, the Taraba State Correspondent of TheNews magazine has instituted a N10 million suit against the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Nwachukwu Egbochukwu at the Federal High Court, Yola for unlawful arrest, wrongful detention and malicious prosecution. The Inspector General of police, the Police Public Relations Officer and the Assistant Inspector-General of Police Zone ‘B’ Yola were named as co-defendants in the suit.

In his statement of claim, Adaji prayed the court for an order of injunction restraining the defendants either by themselves or through their agents, servants, privies, whatsoever or whosoever from further arresting, molesting, detaining or prosecuting him or in any way tampering with his practice of his profession.
He averred that on July 4, 2003, Mr. Egbochukwu used his office, through his public relations officer, to wrongfully arrest and detain him for about five hours at the police headquarters “for no just cause” but for the alleged offence of fitting tinted glass on his private Mercedes Benz car.

Ben said he was subsequently arraigned before the Chief Magistrate Court 1, Jalingo, presided over by Mr Alfred Yakubu who later granted him bail. He said he went through court trial from then till October 10, 2003, when he was discharged.

Adayi said Egbochukwu, unhappy with the bail granted him by the Chief Magistrate later re-arrested and detained him on July 22, 2003 for alleged criminal defamation of character.

He claimed that he was again arraigned before another Magistrate, Mr Shuaibu Abubakar, who initially refused to grant him bail and was subsequently remanded in prison custody for two days before he was finally granted bail. After going through another trial he said he was later discharged.

**Article 19, UNESCO Publish New Freedom Of Information Materials**

Article 19, (the Global Campaign for Free Expression) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have published two new documents aimed at informing legal struggles for better public access to information.

Article 19 published the document Training Manual on Freedom of Information for Public Officials, which offers guidelines for national and local governments in the process of drafting new freedom of information laws. The manual is geared toward nations that have adopted some or all of the internationally accepted standards regarding freedom of information law. It therefore understands freedom of information to be, as stated by the United Nations in 1946, “a fundamental human right … the touchstone of all freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.”

Article 19 said, in the preface to the manual, that it may be used as a “teaching guide for trainers running courses for public officials responsible for handling information requests,” or as a learning and reference tool for those officials.

The manual outlines the basic principles of freedom of information laws, which should allow public access to government proceedings and require maximum disclosure of government information. The manual asserts that freedom of information laws should ideally promote open government by allowing individuals and media organizations access to government information, documents and meetings that are of interest to the public.

The manual also outlines a legal framework for freedom of information legislation, noting that multilateral treaties or resolutions by international governing bodies are often not enough to ensure that freedom of information will become a reality on the ground. It also contains a proposed agenda and guidelines for a two-day training workshop to introduce government officials, journalists and media organizations to the merits and challenges of the free flow of information.

The vast majority of the manual was drafted and edited by international information access expert Richard Carver.

Similarly, UNESCO has published a study on freedom of information laws that examines the practices of 10 countries: Bulgaria, India, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. The study also examines the policies of two international organizations: the UN Development Program and the World Bank.

The document, Freedom of Information: A Comparative Legal Survey begins by examining the right to information as it exists in international law and within international organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the Council of Europe and others. It also outlines the protections that freedom of information legislation should include, and compares freedom of information laws in various countries. The study concludes that access is generally broader in more stable regimes that are longer established.

While all the regimes studied met global freedom of information standards, they did so at varying degrees. The vast majority of these laws applied only to governments.

However, South Africa was an exception, as it extends its law to private bodies such as corporations when the protection of civil rights is at stake. Toby Mendel, law program director for Article 19, wrote the UNESCO study.

More information could be obtained from Article 19, Lancaster House, 33 Islington Street, London N1 9LH, UK, e-mail info@article19.org, telephone +44 20 7278 9292, or its website: www.article19.org.

Lagos NUJ Collaborates With JAAIDS to Fight HIV/AIDS

Following the collaboration between Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) and the three main media associations in Nigeria: the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), the Lagos State Council of the NUJ has inaugurated a three-member Action Committee on HIV/AIDS.

The committee, comprising of the state council chairperson, Mrs. Funke Fadugba, the secretary Mr. Adolphus Okonkwo, and assistant secretary, Mr. Deji Elumoye, is expected to design and implement HIV/AIDS capacity building and behaviour change interventions among journalists and within media organizations in Lagos State, which is estimated to have up to 70 percent of practicing journalists in Nigeria.

The committee was set up as one of the outcomes of a media advocacy project initiated by Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS) Nigeria in 2003. JAAIDS, under the initiative will proactively engage the NUJ, NAWOJ and NGE as partners in the anti-HIV/AIDS campaign in the country. Two training workshops were held in September and November 2003 for state and national leaders of the NUJ as part of the project. Both Mrs. Fadugba and Mr. Okonkwo, two members of the Action Committee newly set up by the Lagos NUJ, attended one of the workshops.

The committee was inaugurated at NUJ clubhouse in Somolu, Lagos during the union’s monthly congress, which was attended by about 90 journalists. Also present at the inauguration were a member of the governing board of JAAIDS, Mr. Lekan Otufodunrin and its media programmes officer, Mrs. Constance Ndubuisi-Enyali.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Otufodunrin encouraged journalists to take the HIV/AIDS campaign seriously and challenged them to take up ownership of the Action Committee and ensure that it worked not just to mobilize media activism on HIV/AIDS, but also to ensure that the media does not suffer personnel losses to AIDS. In her own contribution at the occasion, a senior reporter with TELL magazine, Mrs. Stella Sawyer, commended the state council on the setting-up of the action committee noting the significance of the event holding on Valentine’s Day, and urging journalists present to spread love and not HIV.

Mr. Adolphus Okonkwo, promised that the committee will dedicate itself to reducing the spread of HIV and ensure constant collaboration between it and JAAIDS, especially for more up-to-date information and training for members of the council.

The project, Mobilising Media for Prevention, Care and Support is a JAAIDS project that aims to mobilise the media as partner advocates in the anti-AIDS effort. It is intended also to motivate the media to recognize itself as an important stakeholder in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.

Some of the objectives and expected outcomes of the project are as follows:

Objectives
1. Build HIV/AIDS competence among the leadership of journalists in Nigeria.
2. Establish a corps of media trainers on HIV/AIDS in each of the six geopolitical regions in Nigeria, thus ensuring local availability of HIV/AIDS resource persons across the length and breadth of the country
3. Build the capacity of the three media unions in Nigeria – the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and the Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE) so they can serve as focal points for further training of their members on HIV/AIDS reporting
4. Develop an action plan for combating HIV/AIDS in the media workplace and for media responses to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and control by the above-listed leadership organizations

Expected Outcomes
1. Formation of a network of media trainers on HIV/AIDS across the country – at least four media trainers in each state
2. Wide, accurate and comprehensive coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in the Nigerian media
3. Reduction in the number of sensational stories and incidents of inaccurate reporting on HIV/AIDS in the press
4. Increased partnership between the media and policy makers in the fight against HIV/AIDS
5. Increased focus on the unreported stories of HIV/AIDS – access to care and treatment, orphans and vulnerable children, workplace-based rights violations etc
6. Increased media activism and demonstration of corporate social responsibility by media associations in their response to HIV/AIDS
7. Establishment of Action Committees on AIDS within the NUJ, NAWOJ and the NGE.

Seminar Calls On Government To Democratise Broadcasting

Participants at a community radio seminar held in Bauchi, the Bauchi State capital have called on the Federal government to democratise broadcasting in Nigeria by reviewing relevant sections of the nation’s laws to accommodate the globally accepted principles of broadcasting.

The seminar, with the theme Building Community Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria was organized by the Institute for Media and Society (IMS), in collaboration with Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA), and World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, Africa Region (AMARC, Africa) as part of activities designed towards realizing the emergence of community radio in Nigeria. Held at Zaranda Hotel, Bauchi, from 27-29 January 2004, it was aimed at sensitizing all stakeholders of community radio and to generate ideas that would help create an enabling environment for the emergence of Community radio in Nigeria.

The seminar had participants drawn from NGOs, CBOs, Development and Donor Organizations, the Mass Media, Academic, Local, State and Federal government agencies, among other constituencies. It also had in attendance Mr. George Christensen, Representative of World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, African Region (AMARC, Africa); Messrs. Johan Deflander and Alymana Bathily Representatives of Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA); Mallam Mujtaba Sada, Zonal Director of National Broadcasting Commission, Maiduguri; and Madam Hanatu Ibrahim, Coordinator, Guidance & Counselling Development Association, Gombe.

In his opening address, the Executive Director of the Institute for Media and Society, Mr. Akin Akingbulu stressed the necessity of holding the seminar. He said it was the need to “give attention to one of the most important issues of our time, the issue of community radio”. He said in spite of the fact that radio broadcasting was 70 years in Nigeria, government had monopolized it most of the time and when it would liberalise the airwaves in 1992, it went to the business sector. He therefore urged the government to complete the liberalization of the airwaves by allowing the emergence of community radio. He disclosed that the seminar was part of a programme strategy expected to lead to the emergence of community radio in Nigeria.

In his address, George Christensen, the representative of AMARC Africa, said AMARC is a member-based global NGO with over three hundred and fifty community radios as members in Africa and expressed the hope that there would be more members from Nigeria very soon because he believes the size of Nigeria is such that will accommodate a large number.

Several papers were presented followed by panel discussions on them as well as group workshop and presentations.

Mr. Akingbulu in his paper titled, Historical Development of Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria traced the history of broadcasting in the country to 1932 when the British colonialists redistributed BBC signals to Nigerian homes. This was followed by the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) which later metamorphosed into the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

His other paper on Framework for Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria: Policy, Legal and Regulatory, noted that existing policy, legal and regulatory framework for radio broadcasting was unfavourable to community radio in Nigeria.

Other papers delivered at the seminar include: The origin of Community Radio, Justification for Community Radio in Nigeria, Political Challenges of Community Radio in Nigeria, Religious Challenges of Community Radio in Nigeria, and Ethnic Challenges of Community Radio in Nigeria among others.
Leading presentations on the concept of community radio broadcasting, Deflander traced the origin of community radio to the end of the 19th century when radio signals were developed by sending signals from one point to another. He said that the initiative was well received by governments and they developed on it. He noted that frequencies were very few around that time and governments banked on this to monopolise the airwaves. He disclosed that a dramatic development took place in the 1950s in radio broadcasting with the emergence of different variety of radios that began to target specific communities.

He said that the concept of community radio slowly developed and that a turning point came in the 1970s when community radio network was formed, thereby leading to a significant development of this type of radio. Deflander noted that a common characteristic with the community radios was that most of them were initially built on illegality, but later legalized by legislation which followed.

He disclosed that community radio began to emerge on the African continent in the 1990s when many countries opened their airwaves and changed their legislations on broadcasting. He observed that it however witnessed slow pace of development in Africa because of some obstacles, among which are: Government’s reluctance to issue licences for community broadcasting, and the belief that it was dangerous to issue broadcasting licences to civil society organizations.

Bathily in his contribution traced the development of community radio in west Africa to the democratization, which started in the French-speaking parts of Africa when, in 1990, the President of France announced that he would not protect any African nation which would not abide by the rules of democracy.

He said civil society organizations, trade unions, the media and other organizations took advantage of the opportunity and opened discussions with government. Bathily said this culminated in Panos teaming up with media organizations, journalists, NGOs, etc., to advocate for community radio, stressing that the revolution that started in Mali soon spread to other places.

He however warned participants that community radio is never given on a platter of gold but achieved through a long process of advocacy and that access is won through advocacy that is strong, solid and consistent. He however expressed the belief that the present atmosphere in Nigeria is favourable for the struggle.

Christensen in his contribution noted that there is task on the technical side of community radio and advised that advocacy should be concentrated on two areas: namely legislation and frequency management.

Mr. Akingbulu in another presentation gave statistics to justify the need for community radio in Nigeria. The statistics show among other things that: Only 6% of all stories carried in the print and broadcast media in Nigeria is about rural areas; 70% of the nation’s population live in the rural areas and other marginalized areas of the country; The content of radio messages have remained pro-government and pro-business; Existing radio stations and their coverage have been confined to the urban areas; and that attempts by government-owned radio stations to set up booster stations that would broadcast to the rural areas have not been successful.

He also noted that it would do the people a lot of good if an alternative radio that would cater for their development needs is put in place. He stressed that community radios serve as alternative voice to the marginalized, underserved or excluded people, provide pluralism not only of number but also of content, a multiplicity of channels for a multiplicity of voices and constituencies, and support Peace building/conflict resolution etc.

Mr. George Christensen thereafter presented the four-state plan of action by the organizers towards the establishment of community radio in Nigeria following the presentation, discussion and adoption of a communiqué. The plan includes the inauguration of the Steering Committee (done in November 2003), organization of four regional Seminars by the partners in conjunction with the Steering Committee in the four geographical zones of the country, advocacy at the National, State and Local level to be carried out by the Institute for Media and Society, with the support of the steering committee while advocacy at the international level would be carried out by Panos and AMARC to mobilize support for community radio in Nigeria, and the establishment of the pilot community radio stations in six geopolitical zones of the country.

At the end of the seminar, participants came out with a communiqué which called on government to, among other things, “categorically and explicitly recognize the three distinct tiers of broadcasting, namely: public, private (commercial) and community”. It also recommended that the Nigeria Broadcasting Code and other related regulatory instruments should recognize the specific training needs of community radio operators, especially in the management, programming and technical
areas and that relevant legislations should be reviewed to empower the NBC as the sole collector of broadcast set (TV, Radio) taxes, and that 60% of the proceed be ploughed back into the industry for its sustenance while the remaining 40% be retained by the commission for its operations.

It also called on Civil Society Organizations to design and implement an aggressive advocacy campaign programme in their communities, at local government, state and national levels to generate widespread understanding and support for community broadcasting in Nigeria.

The seminar also called on community radio stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of community radio broadcasting, that its technology should be simple and affordable, its ownership communal, its personnel internally and externally generated and its financial resources supported by contributions from civil society organizations, governments, donor agencies, businesses, and individuals from within and outside the community.

**Liberian Government Endorses International Partnership’s Offer To Help Rebuild The Media**

Liberia’s Interim President, G Bryant, has welcomed an offer by a partnership of national, regional and international media organisations to help the country rebuild its media trying to rise up from the devastation it suffered following 14 years of conflict in the country.

A team of media and free expression experts from around the world on an assessment mission to Liberia met in Monrovia in January with the Interim President to assess the state of the media in that country. Mr. Bryant, the Chairman of the Transitional National Council, said the project had the government’s blessing and that it welcomed “all the help you can bring.”

The nine-member delegation met with Mr. Bryant at the Executive Mansion in Monrovia as part of proposed measures for redressing the inadequacies in the nation’s media.

The mission aims to establish the framework for media capacity building, interventions by way of legal reforms, infrastructure development, training programmes and logistics support for the media.

Members of the team were Professor Kwame Karikari, the Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in Accra, Ghana; Mr. Jesper Højberg, the Executive Director of the International Media Support (IMS) in Copenhagen; Mr. Gabriel Baglo, the Director of the Africa Regional Office of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Dakar, Senegal; and Miss Fatou Jagne, Africa Programme Officer at ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Other members are Mr. Edetaen Ojo, the Executive Director of Media Rights Agenda (MRA) in Lagos, Nigeria; Ms. Christina Dahlman of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Paris, France; Ms Dale Ratcliffe of the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) in Toronto, Canada; and Mr. Alymana Bathily of Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA) in Dakar.

The mission members were selected according to the required expertise in the areas that needed to be addressed. These include media and conflict (including safety and humanitarian information); media associations and self-regulation; legal reform and regulatory bodies; the broadcast media; the print media, including distribution; and professional training.

Members of the team of experts will meet with media owners and managers; journalists and other media practitioners; regulatory bodies and professional associations; government/public service officials and opposition/rebel representatives, where possible; media-related NGOs and other civil society organisations; as well as journalism scholars, teachers, training institutions and libraries.

The rationale for the mission is that based upon an expert assessment of the options for media development and conflict resolution in Liberia, rapid and collaborative activities addressing a broad range of issues with long-term perspective will be agreed upon under the auspices of the partnership.

Following a regional “Partnership initiative on media and peace in West Africa” planning meeting was held in Accra from July 8 to 10, 2003, the participants came together to form the “Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa”.

The strategy document for the partnership was completed at a meeting of the regional and international partners held in Copenhagen on October 7 and 8, this year.
The objective of the partnership is to facilitate the provision of rapid and collaborative support to the media to pre-empt and mitigate conflicts and their humanitarian consequences. The partnership utilises the diverse expertise and resources available amongst national, regional and international stakeholders, to offer a unique approach for the provision of assistance.

The rationale for this is that through such holistic interventions, programmes relevant to local needs and reflecting the objectives of international institutions can be designed and implemented to cover the broad spectrum of media related concerns that may arise as a result of conflict.

Besides, the variety of stakeholders involved in the partnership provides a wide spectrum of potential approaches, from UN agencies to regional media associations and local civil society actors. The collaborative process is therefore intended to enhance the potential impact and create stronger sustainability options for activities, through ensuring long-term perspectives based on strong local ownership and the division of tasks between long and short term international actors.

The mission to Liberia will:

♦ Conduct a review of the media situation in Liberia and the effects of the conflict on the media;
♦ Compile a list of the main national, regional and international stakeholders in Liberia, including a comprehensive overview of their previous, current and planned activities in the area of the media;
♦ Produce a list of priority areas clearly outlining both immediate and development related recommendations for support to the media and humanitarian information needs, including proposed activities and funding requirements; and
♦ Access and document existing media laws, regulatory provisions and policy frameworks in order to promote legislative reform and the development of a new and comprehensive communications policy for Liberia.

The expected output of the mission will be a comprehensive report that establishes the needs of the media in Liberia during the transition. The document will provide recommended paths for assisting in the rehabilitation and development of the media in Liberia.

The first phase of the assessment was carried out as a desk study undertaken by the Media Foundation for West Africa. The desk study is based available existing documentation about the structure and state of the media in Liberia.

Following the conclusion of the desk study, mission is being undertaken as part of a field study which will be based upon individual interviews and observations and during which members of the team of experts will meet with media owners and managers; journalists and other media practitioners; regulatory bodies and professional associations; government/public service officials and opposition/rebel representatives, where possible; media-related NGOs and other civil society organisations; as well as journalism scholars, teachers, training institutions and libraries.

At the end of the mission, the team will produce a joint report based on the desk study and field trip to Liberia.

Over the past 14 years, Liberia had been plagued by a civil conflict, which has severely damaged the infrastructure base and undermined the social fabric of its three million citizens. The mass media institutions and practitioners have been among the worst victims of the campaign of terror, plunder and arbitrariness that have defined the political order in Liberia, particularly since 1997.

The protracted civil conflict that beleaguered former President Charles Taylor’s seven-year rule was frequently used as a pretext to arrest independent journalists, shut down radio stations, and censor programmes and publications on grounds of “national security”. In particular, critical journalists, independent media proprietors and vocal freedom of expression advocates were repeatedly incarcerated, tortured and forced into exile. Private newspapers and radio stations were routinely seized, vandalised and closed down or forced by stringent financial requirements to liquidate.

There is almost no independent media institution or journalist in Liberia that was not attacked while Taylor was in power. This led to a massive displacement and flight into exile, of most of the country’s trained journalists. The few that dared to remain in the country were either forced to practice self-censorship, or else they suffered relentless intimidation and torture.

The years of economic mismanagement, looting and destruction of media infrastructure have also taken their toll on the financial viability of the Liberian media. With very low readerships and a virtually non-existent advertisement base, most of the independent newspapers and radio stations have either had to operate on shoestring budgets, or pander to the dictates of politicians and the patronage of unscrupulous business executives. Invariably, the poor salaries of most editors and reporters have also
constrained them to compromise on their ethical and professional obligations for independent and objective reporting.

Laws or regulations were also passed to obstruct newspapers and radio stations critical of the government. The use of restraining press laws and controls to censor or close down media houses remains a looming threat to the media, if they are not abolished or reviewed.

The situation has resulted in an urgent need for media capacity building interventions by way of legal reforms, infrastructure development, training programmes and logistics support.

This is particularly urgent given that a functional and professionally oriented media system will be a central factor in any programme of peace building, social reconstruction and national reconciliation in Liberia. The media would be necessary for the cultivation of the culture of public accountability, rule of law and democracy. Available and universally accessible media institutions can also broker the processes of social re-negotiation across ethnic divisions in the country.

However, a disabled media cannot be expected to effectively support any institution-building, governance and development programmes.

Although over the years, a number of media support and advocacy organisations have organised or collaborated in advocacy programmes and provided backstopping support to sustain a media presence in the country, because of the retributive nature of the Taylor regime, and because Liberia had effectively become an international pariah, most of these interventions ceased or were made at arm’s length.

Few organisations could hope to venture into Liberia or conduct any empirical assessment and determination of the problems and needs of the media industry and institution. The exit of the Charles Taylor regime has now raised new hopes for peace and the survival, rehabilitation and development of the country’s media.

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**Panos’ Workshop Designs “Sounds Of The Suburbs”**

A training workshop in Ghana organized by the Radio Department of the Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA), with support of UNESCO, for its Anglophone radio correspondents ended with the design of an Oral Testimony production support project called “Sounds of the Suburbs”.

The project aims to focus on the life of youngsters in a complex multicultural surrounding especially cities and capitals which tend to expand into an environment characterized by different ethnic, religious, linguistic and social groups. These urban societies, according to PIWA, often, without any adequate and strong integration-oriented factors, develop into ‘melting pots’, encouraging the creation of a sense of unity.

Youth tend to hold a very specific position in these urban areas. As ‘sons and daughters there of’, they relay directly to one or more reference groups. As youngsters and participants in the day to day street life, they tend to better integrate into mixed societies.

Through the radio production project, Panos West Africa endeavors to get the views of the youngsters themselves who are often ignored by traditional urban media, especially if such youngsters come from socially marginalized areas as suburbs and ghettos and do not seem to represent any commercial, political or social value for the powers that be. On the contrary, they are often seen as marginal, delinquent and troublesome lot. Their integration into normal economic society poses most often a problem. However, sociological observations often conclude that youth are better adapted to integrate in multicultural societies. Therefore, Panos through the project intends to focus on their vision, their methods of integration, their vision on tolerance towards one another, their hopes for the future.

Panos will produce 16 documentaries targeted at teenagers and young adults, aimed at increasing intercultural awareness and sensitizing young generations on humanity’s need for tolerance, dialogue and peace. Each testimony provides a reflection on the conflict-generating issues between communities and the solutions that can be found both individually or at community level.

Five case studies from five countries were used as models. These are: “Can any good ever come out of Saigon” - New Kru Town / Monrovia (Liberia); “An intriguing Lagos suburb, Ajegunle” - Lagos (Nigeria); “Nima, a slum in Accra” - Accra (Ghana); “The Greenland area in Banjul” - Banjul (The Gambia); and “The King Jimmy suburb in the centre of Freetown” - Freetown (Sierra Leone).

Panos West Africa has promised to make all the audio documentaries available on line on www.panosaudio.org. Limited copies of all the documentaries on CD are also available for African
PEN Canada Launches Anti-Impunity Handbook

PEN Canada has published a handbook for those who want to take action. The handbook, Freedom of Expression and Impunity provides background information on the impact of impunity on free speech, case studies of unsolved murders of journalists and writers, and ideas for campaigning.

Written in English, French and Spanish, the handbook also includes a sample protest letter and a list of website resources. One of the reasons for the publication of the handbook is the common trend: a writer or journalist is gunned down for investigating corruption or human rights abuses. Investigations are held, the killers evade eviction and the case fades from public memory. Impunity, or censorship by killing, remains one of the most serious threats to freedom of expression in countless countries, says PEN Canada.

The organisation says the failure to investigate and punish those responsible for murdering writers and journalists contributes to an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship. “When journalists and writers can be shot, harassed, beaten, imprisoned or simply made to disappear with impunity, then important voices fall silent, curtains are drawn, corruption deepens and the ability of societies to deal openly with their problems is “diminished.” The guide is available online in PDF format at: http://www.pencanada.ca/publications/Impunity_manual.pdf.

PEN Canada is the Canadian chapter of International PEN, founded in England in 1921 to represent “Poets, Essayists and Novelists”. PEN Canada works on behalf of writers, at home and abroad, who have been forced into silence for writing the truth as they see it. It has between 25-30 Honorary Members in many countries around the world on whose behalf it works so that their voices can be heard once again.

JAFE launches Web Site To Assist Persecuted African Journalists

Journalistes Africains en Exilé, JAFE (African Journalists in Exile) has launched a specialist Internet training and advocacy portal to help persecuted African journalists work even after they might have been forced into exile, or muzzled by oppressive regimes.

The Web site, http://www.jafe.org seeks to provide persecuted African journalists with a global networking forum by linking them to online resources, media freedom advocacy organizations, sympathetic media and self-help groups.

Published in English, French and Arabic, the site also seeks to help exiled journalists win asylum as political refugees in “safe” countries, while simultaneously campaigning for better protection for journalists working in conflict situations.

Recognizing that journalists can work wherever they find themselves, the Web site also attempts to link exiled writers with international correspondents covering Africa, to provide the foreign media with additional context, contacts and insight into events on the continent.

Africa Ratifies Human Rights Court

The fight against impunity in Africa took a significant step forward this week with the entry into force of a new human rights court in Africa.

The new court will hear cases on human rights violations brought forward by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, using the 1982 African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights as its legal reference. It will also hear cases submitted by individuals and non-governmental organisations if national courts are unable to resolve them and if the AU country in question approves them.

Several human rights groups have been appointed to a working group that will examine best practices in nominating judges and administering the court. They include the Open Society Institute’s Justice Initiative, the National Human Rights Commission of Uganda, the Human Rights Institute of South Africa and the Federation Internationale des droits de l’homme (FIDH).
The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights came into effect on 25 January 2004 after the nation of Comoros became the 15th African Union country to ratify the protocol governing its creation. Visit these links for more information:

WiPC Documents Worldwide Attacks On Free Expression

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN (WiPC) has released its latest case list of worldwide attacks on freedom of expression covering July to December 2003.

The list, available online and in print, provides brief summaries of 690 cases involving violations against writers, journalists, editors, publishers and other media workers. It records individuals who have been killed, imprisoned, arrested, threatened or legally harassed.

WiPC noted that 38 writers are currently being detained in Cuba and that almost all of them were arrested during a government crackdown in March 2003 which drew widespread condemnation from press-freedom groups. Another 40 writers are imprisoned in China, Vietnam and Burma.

The report is available online at: http://www.internationalpen.org.uk, click on the link “Writers in Prison.”

Freedom House Partners MRA To Train Nigerian Journalists

Freedom House, in conjunction with Media Rights Agenda (MRA), is organizing a series of two-day workshops focused on investigative reporting for junior-to mid-level print and broadcast journalists across Nigeria.

Journalists in Nigeria are expected to gain valuable skills in covering corruption, conflict and political reform through the workshops organised by Freedom House.

Freedom House, an IFEX member is coordinating the two workshops in March with MRA, a Nigerian press-freedom group, with the goal of preparing journalists to cover politically sensitive issues.

The workshops will include discussions, case studies, and practical fieldwork designed to strengthen journalists’ ability to produce quality investigative pieces. Nigerian journalists will also have an opportunity to meet with their American counterparts.

The workshops will run in Abuja from 22 to 23 March and in Lagos from 25 to 26 March. Funding is provided by the U.S. State Department Bureau for Educational and Cultural Exchange. Participants from outside Abuja or Lagos will be provided housing and travel funds.

Further information are available from Jennifer Whatley, Freedom House senior program officer: whatley@freedomhouse.org or Media Rights Agenda: ayode@mra.kabissa.org

World Bank Institute Holds Workshop on Access to Information

The World Bank Institute (WBI) is organizing a workshop on the “Role of Access to Information in Improving Governance and Financial Management in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, Phase Two.” in Freetown, Sierra Leone from March 30-April 1

The workshop is a follow-up activity to a previous one that was conducted last November that brought together participants from both Nigeria and Sierra Leone to discuss issues relating to effective information flows, enhanced participation, and improved governance.

The objectives of this follow-up workshop is to assess progress made in both countries on commitments made to take steps in enacting freedom of information laws. Participants will also examine the interaction between the flow of information on public financial management and the effectiveness of public spending. The discussions will also seek to highlight through various analytical and empirical data the critical role of access to information in improving governance and service delivery.

The workshop is one activity of a larger program dedicated to governance and access to information and is undertaken under the auspices of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management
Division at WBI. The workshop will be action-oriented and its results will be fed into ongoing reform efforts and will also help define future training/capacity building needs.

Further information about the workshop are available from Mr. Obadiah Tohomdet at fax: 09-314-52-67 (or 68) at the World Bank office in Abuja, tel: 09 314-5269-74 (ext 211), e-mail address is: Otohomdet@worldbank.org.

**CPJ Releases Attacks On The Press In 2003**

Annual survey documents changing press freedom landscape: 36 journalists killed; 136 jailed at year’s end; China world’s leading jailer of journalists for fifth year in a row.


At the launch of the book today, CPJ board member Gwen Ifill, who is the moderator and managing editor of “Washington Week” and a senior correspondent for the “Newshour with Jim Lehrer” said: “Sitting here in Washington, covering the world’s conflict from a safe distance, it can be too easy to lose sight of the fact that reporters are putting their lives on the line for every word they write, for every descriptive phrase they utter, and for every story they tell.”

Attacks on the Press in 2003 documents instances of media repression in 95 countries, including assassination, assault, imprisonment, censorship, and legal harassment. In documenting these attacks, CPJ notes the following facts:

The 2003 toll of 36 killed journalists is a sharp increase from 2002, when 19 journalists were killed because of their work. The war in Iraq was the primary reason for the increase, with 13 journalists, more than one-third of this year’s casualties, killed in hostile actions there.

For the second year in a row, 136 journalists were imprisoned worldwide for their work. China was the world’s leading jailer of journalists for the fifth year in a row, with a total of 39 journalists behind bars, followed by Cuba, where a massive crackdown on the independent press led to the arrest and imprisonment of 29 journalists.

**IFJ Suspends AJT For Presenting Press Freedom Award To President Ben Ali**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has suspended the Tunisian Journalists’ Association (AJT) from its membership and recommended its expulsion. IFJ’s Executive Committee had expressed dismay over the presentation of the Association’s “Plume d’Or” award for press freedom to President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali at a ceremony late last year. The decision, taken by the IFJ Executive Committee in Berlin on 7 March, is subject to confirmation by the IFJ World Congress, which meets in Athens in May.

The Committee’s action followed complaints over the failure of the AJT to adequately defend the rights of journalists in Tunisia. The Committee had written to the Association asking the reasons for its “lack of commitment in confronting press freedom problems.”

Following the AJT’s response, the IFJ Executive Committee decided that under its Constitution the Association had “acted in a manner contrary to the principles or objectives of the Federation” and in a manner likely to damage [its] interests.

The IFJ Executive Committee noted that independent journalists were making serious efforts to bring about change within the Association.

The Committee encouraged this process of change, holding out possible readmission to the IFJ “when conditions permit.”

The Tunisian Association has been invited to appeal the decision.
Ben Ali’s government has been accused by press freedom groups of putting pressure on independent media and violating the rights of journalists.

**ATTACKS ON THE PRESS IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004**

**SSS Compel Bureau Chief To Disclose Source**

Mr. Tony Eluemunor, the Abuja Bureau Chief of Daily Independent newspaper was on January 12 interrogated by a team of State Security Service (SSS) officials in Abuja who tried to force him to disclose the source of the story published in the January 8 edition of the tabloid. The said story titled How Ngige’s Arrest Was Hatched, Why It Failed, linked the Presidency to a plot to unseat the Anambra State Governor, Dr. Chris Ngige.

Mr. Eluemunor was interrogated for about one and half hours in connection with the said story. SSS officials had made repeated visits to the Abuja offices of Daily Independent from January 9 asking for Eluemunor who was then out of town. On each occasion, they left instructions that he should report to the director of special duties at SSS headquarters immediately he returned to Abuja.

When he got the message on his return, Eluemunor went to SSS headquarters on Aso Drive accompanied by Mr. Gerald Ogekeh, a legal counsel from Gani Fawehinmi Chambers.

At the SSS office, the officials, after the initial formalities, refused his lawyer entry into the interrogation room insisting that he would be interrogated alone. He was thereafter questioned by a team headed by the director of special duties about the source of his story and repeatedly asked to reveal his source but Eluemunor also consistently refused to disclose the source insisting that the ethics of his profession forbid him from revealing his sources.

Eluemunor disclosed that an unidentified officer alleged that the story had caused some confusion since its publication and wondered why it was not retracted in a subsequent edition of the newspaper to which Eluemunor answered that the Presidency’s reaction to the story was published the following day, in keeping with Daily Independent’s belief in publishing the other side of the story and in respect of the right to reply.

He was let go at 5.00pm and asked to report back to the SSS headquarters at 1.00pm on January 13.

**Two Journalists Arrested**

Two journalists with Mustardseed Communications, Publishers of two evening tabloids: *Midweek Scoop* and *Weekend News*, Timothy Okojie Ave and Emeka Osuagwu were arrested in the morning of January 14 by men believed to be from the State Security Service (SSS).

The News Editor of Mustardseed Communications, Mr Victor Iyalla, disclosed in statement that the two journalists were arrested by four plainclothes men and a woman who stormed the premises at Akowonjo Road, Egbeda Lagos, and thoroughly ransacked the place. They claimed they were searching for anti-government materials.

Mr. Iyalla revealed that the security men who identified themselves as SSS officials from Shangisha arrived its office at about 10.30am vandalized and confiscated several computers and computer accessories and went away with several copies of various editions of their publications.

**Securitymen Chase Out and Threaten to Shoot Journalists**

Journalists were on January 15 chased out of the Lokoja residence of the late Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police, Raphael Ige when they went there to seek for more information on his death.

Gun-totting police men stationed at the residence prevented journalists from entering into the building to obtain information. One of the police men went as far as threatening to shoot the journalists if they didn’t leave the premises. He said: “If in the next two seconds you people don’t disappear, I will just fire and kill you so that you can go and interview oga in heaven.”

Despite the threat, the journalists were undaunted in their desire to get further information. The police man accused the journalists of causing so much problems for the late Ige while he was alive and now they did not want the man to rest even in death. He further threatened: “You better go away now before I lose my temper and shoot you.”
The policeman went ahead to cock his gun in preparation to shoot when a lady identified as the late Ige’s younger sister intervened. The unidentified lady later persuaded the journalists to leave the premises for their own safety.

The late Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police, Raphael Ige came into limelight in July 2003 when he led a team of policemen to abduct Governor Chris Ngige of Anambra State on the excuse that Ngige had resigned. The saga cost Ige his job before he eventually died on January 13.

_Theatre Artistes Batter Editor_

Mr. Lanre Dodo-Balogun, Editor of _Iriri-Aye Alaroye_, a Yoruba language weekly tabloid was attacked on January 25 by some Yoruba theatre practitioners over a lead story published by the magazine. Mr. Dodo-Balogun was at the Radio-Vision Complex, housing LTV8 and Radio Lagos/Eko FM in Agidingbi to promote the current edition of his magazine when the actors and actresses pounced on him.

The practitioners numbering about 30 led by Saheed Balogun and Mr. Mustapha Bakare, a.k.a. Otolo with Babatunde Omidina, Gbenga Adewusi, Ronke Ojo, Femi Adelakun, Kola Olatunde, and Fathia Balogun among others in their midst joined hands to beat him. One of the artistes, Gbenga Adewusi allegedly insisted that the editor be made a scapegoat for other journalists to learn from. Other artistes also praised them for teaching the editor the lesson of his life.

Mr. Dodo-Balogun who was badly beaten was taken to the General Hospital, Ikeja, Lagos State where he received treatment.

_OSRC Suspends Nine Journalists Indefinitely_

Media independence and editorial plurality suffered a serious setback in Nigeria in January with the indefinite suspension of nine senior journalists of the Ondo State Radiovision Corporation (OSRC) Akure.

Those suspended include the director of news, Seinde Omokoba; his deputy, Sanya Adeleye; Taiwo Fagbuyi, Akinwale Oshodi, Franklin Olaleye and Daisi Ajayi. Also affected were Remi Olagookun, Daisi Ifaleyimu and Bola Akinrunjomu.

The management, in letters signed by chairman of the board of directors of the corporation, Mr. Clement Adebambo, accused the journalist of dereliction of duty.

Investigations however revealed that the workers were suspended for prominently featuring pro-labour reports during the aborted January 21 strike ordered by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) to protest the imposition of fuel tax on petroleum products prices.

Mr. Akinwale Oshodi, one of those affected, in a telephone interview confirmed that they were suspended for giving prominence to the aborted strike which the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) planned for January 21.

Mr. Oshodi alleged in the interview that the incident was orchestrated by the press secretary to the state governor, Mr. Soji Ala, whom he accused of seeking to influence government to appoint him as the new head of the corporation when he would have ceased to be press secretary. He alleged that Mr. Ala had in November 2003 written to Mr. Adebambo urging him to dispense with the services of some of them whom he perceives as possible antagonists if he eventually become the head of the corporation. But Mr. Adebambo could not carry out Mr. Ala’s bidding in the absence of any credible reason for such an action.

Governor Olusegun Agagu was said to be furious about the reports on the aborted strike which made him to summon the Information Commissioner, Mrs. Tola Aworh, who in turn summoned the chairman of the corporation, Clement Adebambo to the meeting.

The commissioner thereafter proceeded to the Orita-Obele station of the corporation, where she ordered that all the editorial staff on duty be disciplined.

_Policemen Beat Up Journalist At Tribunal Premises_

Mr. Mustapha Mohammed, _ThisDay_ newspaper Correspondent for Borno State was in January denied access to the venue of the Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Maiduguri, the Borno State Capital where he had gone to cover the day’s proceedings. He was also beaten up by the policemen even while pleading with them to allow him into the venue. He sustained injuries for which received medical treatment.
The policemen claimed they were acting on the instructions of the state police commissioner, Bashir Azeez to deny journalists access to the Tribunal. Sequel to this treatment, the correspondents’ chapel of the NUJ in Borno State boycotted the activities of police in the State. The chapel’s decision was contained in a statement by its secretary, Fidelis Ma-Leva which condemned the police action, describing it as a negation of the new spirit of partnership between the police and civil societies being preached by the inspector general of police.

**Task Force Men Assault Journalists, Vendors**

Men of the Delta State Task Force on destruction of illegal structures made up of combined men and officers of the Army, Navy and Police on February 12 demolished a newspapers distribution outlet situated at Airport junction, along Airport Road, Warri Delta State.

Journalists and newspaper distributors who dared to ask why their depot was being destroyed were beaten up and injured by the men of the Task Force who were armed with automatic weapons and teargas canisters. They also went ahead to shoot teargas canisters on the journalists and vendors and nearly made one of the journalists go blind when one of the Task Force men released a teargas canister into his eyes and held it there for about two minutes.

Newspaper distributors at the depot threatened to stop all distributions for the day because of the unprompted attack. It took the pleas and assurances of the journalists that they were going to take up the matter with the state authorities to get the distributors shelve their protest.

**Federal Government Expels Foreign Correspondent**

Ms. Silvia Sansoni, accredited correspondent of Forbes magazine who had been based in and reporting Nigeria for the past 18 years was on February 19 deported from the country by the Federal government. Silvia who also reported on Nigeria for The Economist of London was accused of continuing to work without a valid visa, resident permit or press accreditation. She was taken to the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos under police escort and put on a Paris-bound flight.

The nation’s Ministry of Information accused Ms. Sansoni of failing to regularize her stay in Nigeria even after her one year accreditation to work as a journalist expired in July last year. The Ministry said in a statement that: “Contrary to the impression that she was deported for her stories on Nigeria, she was actually advised to leave the country because of her flagrant disregard of Nigeria’s immigration laws and a reckless abuse of the terms of her accreditation.”

She however denied the allegation of breaking Nigeria’s immigration rules but said she was expelled from the country for reporting that a civil servant had demanded US $800 bribe to regularise her residency status in Nigeria.

She claimed that following her reporting of the bribery incident to Prof. Jerry Gana who was then the Information Minister and a meeting with a US Embassy official on the matter, she was advised to apply for a multiple entry visa, that the immigration said there was no need for her to apply for residency. She said that she was thereafter however subsequently harassed by immigration officials claiming her documents were not in order. She added that all the efforts she made to meet Gana’s successor, Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu, to resolve the issue were unsuccessful.

The Information Ministry’s statement signed by its Director of External Publicity, Mr. Inyinga Dappa, added: “Miss Silvia Sansoni was issued a Subject To Regularization (STR) Visa by the Consulate of Nigeria in New York in year 2002 as the Nigeria Resident Correspondent for Forbes Magazine based on application to this Ministry on her behalf by the Magazine. She was duly accredited on arrival in Nigeria by this ministry to carry out her assignment as the Magazine’s Correspondent on July 2002 for a period of one year.”

It said the accreditation was subject to renewal on expiration based on usual conditions which include, among other things, the possession of a valid Visa to remain and work in Nigeria. The Ministry added that it also requested the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) to regularize the Visa and issue her with a combined Expatriate Resident Permit and Alien Card (CERPAC) for the period of validity of her accreditation.

The statement alleged that even when accreditation expired on July 21, 2003 neither Silvia nor her medium made any attempt to renew her accreditation, rather she “surreptitiously proceeded to obtain a Nigerian Tourist Visa which is neither subject to regularization (STR) nor appropriate for her work in Nigeria”.
The Ministry statement said further that when Ms. Sansoni eventually applied for renewal of her accreditation, it was carefully evaluated and subsequently denied. It said the decision to deny the application was communicated to her employers vide a letter dated January 12, 2004.

In October, CNN’s West African correspondent Jeff Koinange and his cameraman Simon Munene were detained for several hours at the Lagos Airport after they arrived to cover the All African Games (COJA 2003) that was held in Abuja. Customs officials told them that they would be deported following orders from above. Embarrassed by the incident, the government finally intervened to prevent the journalists from being expelled.

MEDIA / PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

REUTERS Invites Applications For Pan-African Conflict Reporting Course

Reuters Foundation is organizing a practical training course for African journalists who regularly work in conflict zones, to sharpen both their survival and writing skills at a fully sponsored course facilitated by it.

The course, planned to hold at the foundation’s high-tech training newsroom at South Africa’s Rhodes University journalism school, is designed to impart practical skills that can be used immediately to improve the credibility of reportage from hostile environments by ensuring objectivity and accuracy.

Though no dates have been set for the course, applications are however currently being accepted. The training is built around practical exercises, and includes sessions on basic first aid, ballistics, and combat zone awareness, including mines and booby traps.

Applicants for the training courses who must be currently working as journalists or regular contributors to print, broadcast or online media organizations must also be able to demonstrate a commitment to a career in journalism in their own country.

Applicants must also have at least two years’ professional experience, and must be nationals of an African country in economic or political transition.

Further information can be obtained from Belen Becerra, program administrator, at belen.becerra@reuters.com or telephone (+44-207) 542-6268. Send applications to foundation@reuters.com, or fax to (+44 207) 542-8599.

The Reuters Foundation website is http://www.foundation.reuters.com/Journalism/.

Jailed Cuban Journalist Wins UNESCO Press Freedom Prize

UNESCO has awarded the 2004 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to jailed Cuban journalist Raúl Rivero Castañeda in honour of his “brave and longstanding commitment to independent reporting.”

Rivero is serving a 20-year prison sentence for charges of “undermining the independence or territorial integrity of the [Cuban] State.” He was among 25 Cuban journalists sentenced in April 2003 following a government crackdown on the country’s independent press. The journalists were each sentenced to prison terms ranging from 14 to 27 years.

Rivero is reportedly detained in Camaletas prison in Ciego de Ávila, 460 kilometres east of Havana, and said to be suffering from circulatory problems. His wife, Blanca Reyes, has expressed serious concern about his health and has described the conditions of his detention as “harsh.” Ms Reyes says she is only allowed to visit her husband every three months.

The UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom, awarded annually by UNESCO since 1997 is named after the Colombian journalist who was murdered in 1987 for criticising his country’s powerful drug lords. The award carries a cash prize of US$25,000. It will be presented at a World Press Freedom Day ceremony in Belgrade on 3 May 2004, this year’s press freedom day.

Scholar Rescue Fund Invites Applications

The Institute of International Education is inviting applications for its Scholar Rescue Fund, which provides fellowships for scholars who are threatened in their home countries because of their work.
The fellowships allow scholars to find temporary refuge at universities and colleges anywhere in the world, and enable them to continue pursuing their academic work in a free and safe environment. Academics, researchers and independent scholars from any country, field or discipline may qualify. Preference is given to those who have earned either a Ph.D. or the highest degree in their field. Applications from female scholars and under-represented groups are strongly encouraged.

Fellowships are awarded each year in Spring, Fall and Winter. The next deadline for Spring fellowships is 1 April 2004. However, emergency applications are accepted at any time.

Full details are available at its website: http://www.iie.org/

Commonwealth Photographic Awards 2004

The Commonwealth Press Union (CPU) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) has announced that entries are now invited for the 2004 Commonwealth Photographic Awards.

This year’s theme is ‘Youth’ and entrants are invited to interpret it as freely as they like. The main winner will receive £2,000 and regional winners, other cash prizes. The competition is restricted to residents of Commonwealth countries although pictures may be taken anywhere in the world.

Only one print per person is permitted and photographs will be judged on both technical quality and interpretation of the theme. The final deadline for entries is Sunday, 30 May 2004.

CPU Training Director Jane Rangeley said, “The Awards offer a view of how people in the Commonwealth, with its mixture of races, creeds and ways of life, see themselves and others. Our roles at the CPU and the CBA are to improve communications in Commonwealth countries. We therefore endeavour, via these awards, to promote photography as an important form of media.”

For the first time, a special category entitled ‘Under 18s’ has been created for young photographers who will be aged between 12 and 18 on 1 September 2004. The prize for ‘Under 18s’ will be announced at a later date.

Most of the winning photographs will be featured in a television programme based on the Awards and made available for broadcast in more than 40 countries around the Commonwealth. There will also be several exhibitions taking place in Commonwealth cities featuring the winning images.

To see full details on the Awards please visit www.cpu.org.uk or e-mail cpu@cpu.org.uk.

Nominations Sought For 2004 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award

The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights is inviting nominations for the 2004 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

The RFK Human Rights Award, established in 1984 honors creative individuals who are engaged in strategic and nonviolent efforts to overcome serious human rights violations, often at great personal risk. The RFK Award and the Center for Human Rights have augmented change in South Africa, Poland, Malawi, El Salvador, and South Korea through the proactive support of courageous and visionary individuals.

RFK Laureates continue to struggle against great odds in Haiti, Brazil, India, Colombia, Vietnam, Kenya, Indonesia, and elsewhere. Since its inception, the award has been presented to 34 extraordinary individuals from 20 countries. Last year, three members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers became the first U.S-based human rights workers to receive the award.

Recently, the Center inaugurated a more integrated approach to its advocacy efforts. It seeks to broaden the general public’s understanding and perception of human rights as including economic, social, and cultural rights, rather than just political and civil rights. To this end, the center welcomes nominees who have committed themselves to ensuring that the right, for example, to basic health care and education are respected as part of the spectrum of universal human rights.

Award organizers advise nomination of individuals who embody the characteristics of a human rights hero, someone strategically struggling to improve human rights.

Submission of nominations for the 2004 RFK Human Rights Award ends April 15, 2004. There are no geographical or thematic restrictions and no limit to the number of nominations individuals or organisations may submit.

Nomination form, which should be filled and sent along with any supplementary documentation no later than April 15, 2004, is available at www.rfkmemorial.org. Nominations should
be addressed to the attention of “Award Nomination.” Award organizers accept nominations through email to be sent to hrcenter@rfkmemorial.org or fax (+1-202-463-6606).

UNCA Calls For Entries For Its Annual Awards

The UN Correspondents Association is calling for entries for its Ninth Annual UNCA Awards for best written and electronic media coverage of the United Nations, its agencies and field operations, and for the Fourth Annual UNCA/Ranan Lurie Award for Political Cartoons, to be given at the UNCA Awards Dinner at UN Headquarters in New York, in late October 2004.

The awards are open to all journalists anywhere in the world, in any media, for the best book, story, radio or TV program or series covering the UN and its agencies in the previous year. The judges will look for entries with impact, insight and originality, and will take into account the courage and assiduity of the journalist. Investigative work is welcome.

The judges will look for similar qualities in entries.
- Work in print, internet, radio or TV between 1st August 2003 and July 31st 2004 is eligible.
- Entries not in one of the official languages of the UN should have a translation into English or French, and video entries should be in VHS (preferably NTSC) format.
- A written transcript assists judging radio and TV entries.
- Multiple or joint entries will be accepted

Entrants should send two copies each of their entry or entries to UNCA- Elizabeth Neuffer Award, UNCA, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA (tel +1 917 907 2445)

For security reasons, Fedex, registered or couriered packages should be sent to: Ian Williams, Chairman, UNCA Awards Committee, 343 East 30th Street, #11K, New York, NY 10016, USA (tel +1 212 686 8884)

The UNCA Awards include the $10,000 Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize, sponsored by the UN Foundation, and other prizes together equal to the same amount. Secretary General Kofi Annan usually presents the prizes.

The UNCA/Ranan Lurie awards for political cartoons are $10,000 first prize, $5,000 second prize, $3,000 third prize and ten honourable mention plaques.

Elizabeth Neuffer, the Boston Globe bureau chief at the United Nations, died while on assignment in Baghdad in 2003. She was a model journalist who proved throughout her career that objectivity does not have to mean neutrality. She was passionate, courageous and compassionate, drawing attention to the forgotten places in the world and to the overlooked victims of war. She explored the forces that can ignite fratricidal and genocidal conflict and her work helped inspire the movement that led to the creation of the International Criminal Court.

Deadline for entries is 31 July 2004.

The UNCA/Ranan Lurie Political Cartoon awards are also open to political cartoons printed in any publication published anywhere, in any language from July 30 2003 to 31 July 2004. The entry must consist of a reproduction only of the cartoons, as published, with name of publication and date included, accompanied by a newspaper reprint, and translated into English. Exhibits are limited to two cartoons per individual. Reproductions must measure no more than 9 x 12 inches or 20 x 27 cm.

Successful entries will reflect the importance of human dignity, mutual respect and friendship between nations, as well as economic and environmental responsibilities towards each other. Winning cartoons will be chosen for their ability to enhance, explain and even help direct the spirit and principles of the U.N.

Full details, entry form and rules are available at the website, www.LurieUNaward.com.

Entries are to be submitted to The UNCA/Ranan Lurie Political Cartoon Award, 375 Park Avenue, Suite 1301, New York, NY 10152, USA. Telephone + 1 212 980 0855, by Fedex, Couriered or Registered Envelopes.

Deadline for submission of applications is 31 July 2004.

Reebok Human Rights Award Programme Seeks Nominations

The Reebok Human Rights Award Programme is seeking nomination of young men and women to honour for their courage and contributions to furthering the cause of human rights from members of the international community of human rights and non-governmental organisations.
The Award seeks to shine a positive, international light on the awardees and to support their human rights work. Each recipient will get a US$50,000 grant from the Reebok Human Rights Foundation for the human rights organisation of their choice.

Reebok encourages organisations to nominate human-rights activists who are 30 years old or younger who are not advocates of violence and do not belong to organizations that do so, and such nominees must be working on an issue that directly relates to the UN’s “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Past Reebok Award recipients have been recognised for their work on such issues as protesting human rights abuses in Tibet, battling racial bias in the application of the death penalty in the United States, protecting children in Zambia from physical and sexual abuse, combating sex trafficking in South Asia, and exposing so-called “honour killings” in Jordan.

The Reebok Human Rights Award was established in 1988, and since then has provided support and encouragement to 76 young activists from 35 countries at a critical time in their advocacy work.

All interested individuals are encouraged to make nominations no later than 31 May 2004. Recipients will be selected by 1 December 2004.

For more information, and for a nomination form, visit Reebok site: www.reebok.com/humanrights.

W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography

The International Center of Photography is calling for applications for the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund for Photography.

The award is presented annually to a photographer whose past work and proposed project, as judged by a panel of experts, following the tradition of W. Eugene Smith’s compassionate dedication exhibited during his 45-year career as a photographic essayist.

The grant program is independently administered by the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund and generously funded by Nikon Inc.

Applications can be downloaded at www.smithfund.org/apply.html or obtained by writing to the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund, c/o the International Center of Photography, 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, USA.

Deadline for submission of application is July 15.

“Implicit in freedom of expression is the public’s right to open access to information and to know what governments are doing on their behalf, without which truth would languish and people’s participation in government would remain fragmented.”

Joint Declaration of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representation on Freedom of the Media, and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.