



**JOURNALISM, MEDIA
AND THE CHALLENGE OF
HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING**

SUMMARY

THE ISSUES

How well do the media report human rights issues? How should journalists and editors themselves judge the quality of their reporting in this area? What pressures and constraints do they face and how might they be managed better?

These are the starting points of a report by the International Council, summarised here. It discusses the difficulties of reporting human rights issues, and also looks at the effects of changes in the reporting process, and in technology, and at how the values of journalists and editors influence their priorities. Though it considers the roles that other actors play in the generation of news, including human rights organisations, the report focuses primarily on the perspectives of professional journalists and editors.

Human rights have become increasingly prominent in recent years. Governments and political leaders refer to international human rights standards more frequently, both in formal definitions of policy and in public speeches. Public awareness has similarly evolved. Human rights are understood to be near the heart of many international news issues, from Afghanistan to Palestine, Colombia to Sierra Leone — and increasingly linked to discussions of international debt and trade, education and health. Coverage of human rights in the media is therefore likely to continue to grow — and it is appropriate increasingly to expect journalists and broadcasters to report them accurately.

The report does not argue that human rights are more important than other forms of information or that journalists should give them privileged attention. They do have specific characteristics, including legal definition and application. In various ways, they influence public policy directly and, wherever rights are violated, the attribution of responsibility. Like the media themselves, they stand at the centre of a highly political process. The report argues that international (and also regional and local) journalists and editors are under a *professional* (rather than moral) duty to report and explain human rights issues as precisely as they report in other domains — give the facts, avoid bias, provide context. At present this is not done well enough and, as a result, audiences that rely on the media to inform them are not in a position to understand or judge properly the actions and policies of governments and other authorities.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The report summarised here is the result of a research project that began in July 2000. Initial consultations and feasibility surveys took place in 1999. Between July and October 2000, the principal researcher conducted interviews with some seventy journalists, editors and producers of influential print and broadcast media in New York, Washington, London, Paris and Geneva, as well as with human rights experts who work with the media.

In parallel, four researchers based in Bosnia, Burundi, Chile and Palestine prepared short case studies reports on coverage of the 1999 war in Kosovo, the 1995 crisis in Burundi, the detention of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and international economic sanctions on Iraq. The researchers — all of whom were working journalists — described and analysed how human rights aspects of these issues were reported internationally and nationally (or regionally), and the influence of various local and international actors on the content of coverage.

The research was reviewed at a seminar organised on November 27-28, 2000 in Geneva. The twenty-five participants included senior editors and journalists from international media organisations, experts on the media and human rights activists.

Following the seminar, a draft report was sent out for comment internationally to some five hundred organisations and individuals. As part of that consultation, on March 13, 2001 a meeting was held in Jakarta in co-operation with the Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information to discuss the issues with a group of working journalists. The comments received during the consultation phase were woven into the final report, which was edited substantially between August 2001 and January 2002.

On September 5, 2001, during the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, in Durban, the International Council co-sponsored a panel discussion on the media and racism in co-operation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists. Riz Khan chaired the roundtable.

A five-member Advisory Group provided guidance and direction to the research. The group held several meetings and telephone conferences to review progress of the research and advise on its direction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Roger Kaplan, a freelance journalist in New York, undertook the main research and original preparation of the report. Additional writing and editing was done by Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, Research Director at the International Council on Human Rights Policy, and Richard Carver, independent human rights consultant based in Oxford.

An advisory group guided the research. Its members were:

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|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Margaret Cook | Director of Public Affairs at the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and Senior Political Consultant to the National Nine Television Network in Australia |
| Roy Gutman | Pulitzer Prize winner for international journalism, Director of the Crimes of War Project at the American University in Washington |
| Kwame Karikari | Director of the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, and Executive Director of the Media Foundation for West Africa in Accra |
| Jean-Paul Marthoz | Director of European Communications for Human Rights Watch, and former Deputy-Editor of <i>Le Soir</i> (Brussels) |
| Aidan White | General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, and previously journalist in the United Kingdom |

Four researchers prepared case studies: Nabil Khatib (on regional coverage of international sanctions on Iraq), Mirko Macari (on coverage in the Chilean media of Augusto Pinochet's arrest), Yamila Milovic (on coverage of the Kosovo war) and Adrien Sindayigaya (on coverage of the Burundi crisis).

Loubna Freih and Susan D. Moeller prepared synthesis and feasibility studies used in the drafting of the report.

Meetings were organised in Geneva, London, Durban and Jakarta where the following people provided input and discussed the research: J. Lance Alloway, Ade Armando, Miguel Bayón, Kabral Blay-Amihere, Frank Ching, Stanley Cohen, Anna Husarska, Donny Iswandono, Kakuna Kerina, Riz Khan, Claude Moisy, Goenawan Mohamad, Colum Murphy, Ati Nurbaiti, Charles Onyongo-Obbo, Margo Picken, Tessa Piper, Deborah Potter, Wiratmo Probo, Susanto Pudjomartono, Ibn Abdur Rehman, Naomi Sakr, Roger Silverstone, Jhonny Sitorus, Jonathan Steele, Agus Sudibyo, Andrew Thompson and Wandy N. Tutupoong.

We thank all of them for their co-operation. We are also grateful for the expert input of several outside readers who commented on a draft report circulated internationally in the spring 2001.

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FINDINGS

Human rights as a news topic

During the 1990s, human rights issues became more prominent, both in public policy and public opinion. Many governments officially incorporated human rights principles in their policy frameworks, with legal implications. Many international institutions (notably the United Nations agencies) ‘mainstreamed’ human rights. The media reflected this upsurge of interest in its coverage of human rights stories. Today *the mass media make reference to human rights in their coverage more often and more systematically.*

As in all areas of reporting, influence of this process is disproportionately concentrated in Northern countries, where the most powerful governments and the most influential media organisations tend to be located. This has significant implications — on perceptions of human rights reporting, on what stories editors and journalists prioritise and how those stories are written. In general, human rights is perceived in Northern countries, and by international media, to be a ‘foreign’ matter that concerns principally less powerful countries. By contrast, for journalists in the latter type of countries, for whom human rights issues are less distant, international reporting of human rights is perceived often to be inadequate, superficial and subject to bias — precisely because Northern countries tend not to apply human rights principles to their own societies.

Though journalists have expanded coverage of human rights into new areas, *many human rights issues are underreported by the media.* Much reporting focuses on violations of rights during conflicts. Human rights issues that are less visible, or slow processes, are rarely covered. Human rights are still taken largely to mean political and civil rights, and the importance of economic, social and cultural rights is largely ignored by the media in their coverage of economic issues, including the international economy, poverty, inequity and social and economic discrimination.

The media do not explain and contextualise human rights information as well as they might. In general, data on human rights violations and on human rights standards are not lacking. However, the impact of this information on the public is not as great as might be expected. The media miss human rights stories because they *do not pay attention* to the specific legal and policy implications they have. Often, they do not have *adequate knowledge* of human rights and its relevance to the material they are covering. The media frequently also *miss the context* of human rights stories. These shortcomings diminish the professional quality of reporting, and hamper the communication of information that is sometimes essential for understanding. They indicate that the profession should identify or improve reporting and editorial standards in order to enhance the accuracy and consistency of human rights coverage.

The changing professional environment of journalists

In examining these questions, the research media professionals have different views about the state of media coverage of human rights. Interviews with editors, reporters, human rights professionals and other interested parties show there is little agreement on whether the media are doing a good job of covering this area. Part of the difficulty is that human rights involve questions of law, morality and political philosophy as well as practical problems of application and enforcement: journalism is focused more on facts-on-the-ground and what-happened-when.

Media professionals frequently ask themselves whether human rights issues are news in their own right, or news only when associated with other news. News organisations and the media as a whole can publish and broadcast a lot of information about human rights, but they have to be selective. They cannot put out everything; nor do they have a duty to privilege human rights in relation to other news. This argument about professional values ran through the research, and influences the profession's relations with human rights organisations. Put simply, most journalists believe that the function of news organisations is to obtain information, verify it and make it known. Their function is not to consider what ought to be done with the information they circulate — though many journalists do consider they have a particular responsibility to defend values, including the values of human rights.

In this respect, the key question is: when does failure to report or explain the human rights dimension of a complex story constitute a professional (rather than moral) failure to report the facts and make sense of events?

The media's ability to cover human rights (as well as other issues) in a consistent and accurate manner is limited by the proliferation of news outlets, changes in technology, the concentration of news ownership, and decline in the coverage of international affairs.

Concentration — The marked trend towards concentration of the media industry reflects a wider process of global concentration in the private sector. Significant mergers of newspapers and wire services have taken place internationally. Organisations from the traditional 'news' and business news sectors have combined in large multimedia groupings with organisations that specialise in entertainment.

This restructuring has significant implications for organisations that work in the field of human rights. Those who gain access to the main sources of broadcast news can, at a stroke, reach a much larger audience. At the same time, competition for time and access is fiercer, and specific professional skills are required to accommodate the institutional culture and technology of the dominant news distributors. Originators of news are less able to dictate the content of news reports they inspire. Similarly, corporate interests may influence policies regarding distribution of politically sensitive news such as information on human rights.

Downsizing, dumbing down and 'infotaining' — News flows extremely fast; no outlet can expect to control or monopolise a story for more than a few hours and the skills of production depend more on the capacity to process volumes of information efficiently and co-ordinate distribution, rather than essentially editorial skills. Under the pressure of these changes, new and competitive values influence the presentation and character of news.

In this context, many journalists and media observers express anxiety that the quality of media reporting has been falling. Journalists, like other media professionals, have to take their share of responsibility for this decline, but around the reporters' desk, many factors (both within and outside media) are weakening good journalism.

News is all-pervasive. The news output of the dominant providers is standardised. There is little difference in content between the information given by different providers. In practice, the large media corporations do not question one another's journalistic values or priorities — even though they are in fierce competition for audience. Newsgathering operations have reduced serious analysis. Programmers adapt programme content to appeal to the largest audiences.

In consequence, consumers of news have fewer opportunities to assess the information they consume. News outlets will replay immediate footage of an event ad nauseam but address rarely its complexity, origins or context. News producers say that it is simply too difficult and expensive and time-consuming to do so. For similar reasons, they tend to shy away from complex human rights stories that have no clear-cut sides or answers.

The trend to superficiality is reinforced wherever news is integrated into programming as one element of an entertainment package. Human rights issues become 'human interest stories', forced to adhere to certain emotional clichés. Since the content of news programmes is very similar, competition between providers leads them to focus on presentation more than content. Programmes are built around the presenter, or otherwise personalised, for example by focusing on antagonistic debate. These techniques tend to simplify the information imparted and fail to provide perspective. In this and other ways, the drive for efficiency is leading to loss of quality in the newsroom.

The editorial process

The agenda in a newsroom is determined essentially first by its reporting and editorial decision-making processes, and then by the organisation's editorial culture — which in turn is influenced by various external and internal factors. The editorial process being itself a form of filtering, the question becomes which filters operate.

Reporting is essentially reactive. Journalists' fundamental dilemma is that they must gather and produce news on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis, and at the same time must think about it. The breaking news culture undermines editorial and ethical reflection, which is crucial to human rights reporting.

The selection of news is event-driven. The duty of journalists is not to redress wrongs but report news: professionally, they feel no duty to pursue an issue in which public interest is waning. More generally, the news-driven information culture focuses on political and military events rather than social and economic processes, and as a result ignores or under-reports many human rights issues.

The media determine what is newsworthy where press freedom exists. It is a fundamental principle of a free society, and the essence of press freedom, that news organisations determine their agenda. It follows, inconveniently, that their news agendas often differ from the priorities of human rights activists.

The editorial environment is information-loaded. Human rights news competes for the attention of journalists and editors with vast amounts of other information. In most cases, the human rights angle is only one of several possible angles on a complex story. Journalists do not have a duty to privilege human rights information.

Angling constrains coverage. Why one angle should be favoured rather than another is a matter of the news editor's judgement in relation to three questions: what is the most important feature of the story? What else has been reported recently on the same subject? What is of interest to the organisation's audience? The response to these questions determines usually the choice of angle and it is one reason why human rights angles are rarely the lead. If a story is important enough to get into the news, it is usually (not always) for other reasons.

The relationship between reporter and editor is crucial. Reporters and editors are both involved in deciding what stories are identified and selected, and how they are covered. For various reasons, the relationship between reporters and editors has been changing. International news organisations now employ more stringers, and fewer foreign correspondents, while editors have more editorial power but also less time to monitor events. On the whole, journalists and editors were concerned about some of these trends: at the same time, they said that experienced reporters still influence the selection of stories and the quality of reporting.

Impediments to good human rights reporting

Changes in technology and the modern editorial culture are two factors that influence coverage of human rights. Other factors also tend to cause the media to misrepresent or marginalise human rights issues that (by professional criteria) ought to be reported more fully or accurately.

Bias. Independence is central to the values of journalism. The struggle with bias is unending. Political, organisational, cultural and linguistic biases all have an impact on what is selected for coverage and on how stories are written. Issues of bias also arise in that news organisations reflect the interests and perceptions of their audiences and of the countries in which they are based.

Instrumentalisation. Frequently, human rights are used for manipulation purposes or propaganda. Many governments abuse human rights and seek to hide the fact. Others have integrated human rights in their foreign policies. This is a positive development but as a result it is harder for observers to distinguish principle from national interest. The fact that human rights is both an international code of law, entailing specific legal obligations, and a discourse that appeals powerfully to the emotions further complicates reporting. In such politicised and ambiguous terrain, journalists should avoid being manipulated by governments or other authorities.

Use of biased language. Precise and careful use of terms is particularly important. Journalists should not adopt unquestioningly language that has a bias. They should be critical of official use of terms ('war against terrorism') and be discriminate in the use of human rights terms that have specific legal significance ('genocide', 'war crime', 'proportionate force'). When the media are accused of being partisan, careless use of language is frequently a factor.

Selectivity. The media must select. A news outlet only has so many pages, so much broadcasting time. Though the media should not be expected to adopt the same news agenda as human rights organisations, they have a duty to report important news from around the world and explain its significance. They are open to the criticism that some news stories are given less time than they deserve or are not explained, while others are over-reported from laziness, habit or because images from Europe or the United States are easier to obtain.

Pollution. Information is shaped, massaged, received and interpreted many times over before it is delivered. 'Pure' news is a chimera. Nevertheless, it is particularly damaging when reports referring to human rights are too cryptic to make sense, are ambiguous, use terms with precise meanings imprecisely, draw false 'human rights' conclusions from the evidence, or introduce inappropriate moral or ethical assumptions. Many stories that refer to human rights are guilty of such distortions, often quite unintentionally.

Reductionism. Human rights coverage tends to be too simple, omitting the variety and complexity of human rights standards, and to be confined geographically to certain areas of the world. The media also tend to report the same stories in a uniform manner ('herd mentality'), which also reduces critical thinking.

Sensationalism and negativity. Human rights stories that make the newsroom cut tend to be grim and graphic. Failure (of states, of individuals, of societies) and despair are emphasised, often out of context or to the exclusion of more positive processes. Legitimate reports of bad news fail to explain causes; reports often stigmatise or stereotype local actors and societies as a result.

Absence of context. Human rights issues are rarely put in proper context. Key historical, social or economic background is often omitted. At a certain point, the failure to explain undermines the ability of reports to communicate information that is essential if audiences are to understand events. This can be particularly important in stories that have a human rights dimension.

Human rights organisations and the media

Human rights organisations have become increasingly active players in relation to the media. They have always been a key source of information. In recent years, the larger agencies have responded to the new media environment by developing their media operations. Most have press offices, staffed by professionals. They compete with governments and other institutions for the media's attention, and also distribute information directly themselves. Several issues emerged concerning relations between human rights NGOs and the media.

Human rights and media organisations have limited interests in common. Unlike human rights organisations, news organisations do not consider human rights stories to be intrinsically more important. The dilemma and challenge for NGOs is how to keep media interest high without trivialising or sensationalising the issues they want to see aired.

Non-governmental organisations do influence media coverage. Many NGOs are influential sources of information for the media, for governments and other institutions. They can play a key role in attracting media attention to new problems, less visible violations and slow crises. Their work has often led to more accurate, more complete and more consistent coverage. NGOs with research and media capacity must decide whether to stay out of the information market, at the risk of playing a marginal role in the news process, or try to influence it, knowing that this will require compromise.

To be effective, NGOs need to know how news is produced, selected and structured. The media demand simplicity, directness, narrative, simple structure and personalisation. Standard human rights reports are not tailored to meet these needs. As a result, professional journalists often feel the information that NGOs provide is inappropriate, mistimed or simply unreliable. This raises issues of training and capacity building in the effective use of media.

Media-focused campaigning has consequences. Professional NGO press offices are effective, but competitive. Attempts to collaborate are frequent but only partially successful. Information from NGOs is subject to the same forces that select out other information. The drive to be heard encourages NGOs to identify with trends in the mainstream media, creating the risk that their specific values and agendas may be overwhelmed by them. This situation is an invitation to certain kinds of distortion, and these need not be dishonest.

National and international media perspectives

The vastly different political, economic and cultural conditions under which the media of different countries operate have an impact on coverage of human rights. Working conditions determine in significant ways how and whether the media can address issues of public interest, including human rights. Different historical experiences and circumstances also influence journalists' values and their priorities.

A two-way avenue. In countries where press freedom is limited or absent, international or regional coverage of local issues can create more space. In many cases, however, local media and NGOs need international media coverage in order to legitimise their own work; they do not depend on outside sources for information.

Sourcing. International media often pick up a story only after a Northern human rights organisation has raised it; they seldom go with a story initiated by local NGOs or the local media. When such stories are published, international media rarely credit local NGOs or local media and thereby deprive them of recognition, and sometimes protection.

Stringers. The squeeze on resources for international affairs has led international media to hire more stringers, many of whom are local journalists. These journalists benefit from better material conditions and the experience they gather is valuable for the local media. At the same time, local correspondents can be marginalised in relation to editorial decisions, and are more exposed to risk when they cover sensitive human rights issues.

Different professional environments. Most Northern journalists work in better material conditions than their Southern colleagues, many of whom also operate in a much less friendly political and legal environments. For such journalists, many of whom have personal experience of repression, the reporting of human rights issues is both more dangerous and a higher priority.

Differing commitments and priorities. In general, journalists in non-Western media are more likely to link their work with a struggle for human rights than their Northern counterparts. Several Western journalists interviewed for the report argued that the job of the media is to communicate information objectively and accurately, and that identification with human rights issues is dangerous to the degree that it undermines the fundamental role of media organisations. By contrast, Southern journalists often address human rights very consciously as part of their commitment to more freedom in their societies. They have the same ethical commitment to telling the truth, but tend to regard as unrealistic or ideological the notion that journalists can be impartial observers. They also warn that foreign journalists who apply simple 'news' criteria to complex local issues can misinform in ways that put local reporters at risk and reduce the limited room they have to report locally.

CONCLUSIONS

Most news professionals and human rights activists agree that *the media are more receptive to human rights issues today* — though the consensus does not extend to saying that the media cover the subject well.

Many journalists interviewed argued that *the promotion of human rights, as such, is not necessarily the media's responsibility*. A significant number also said that human rights need to be promoted (if only by getting the facts out). A variety of attitudes exist among journalists. The vast majority agreed that better-informed and more astute reporting processes are necessary.

It emerged that human rights issues are reported more than they are covered. *Rights issues get into the coverage but do not lead the story*. Whether they do so, and how they do so, depends on how deeply editors want to go into the stories concerned. From the perspective of human rights advocates, there is a positive dimension to this: limited coverage in many stories can be better than narrow specialised coverage or none.

Journalists tend to agree that human rights should be included in any story where they are relevant, and that human rights should inform news analysis. The weakness is that *rights issues, although included, are not usually articulated as such*. The absence of explanatory analysis undermines the quality of coverage. When failure to inform prevents those who receive the information from understanding what it means, it represents a professional (not ethical) dereliction.

Some trends in human rights reporting infringe the tenets of responsible journalism. The evolution of international human rights law, its more explicit use as a point of reference by governments, and the growing complexity of many of the reporting issues that arise, suggest that *the media should review how they cover issues that have a human rights dimension and should take more seriously their responsibility to report them accurately*. This may require new forms of training for journalists to deal with:

Ignorance of what human rights are. Many journalists simply do not know enough about human rights and human rights law, and about the laws of war and humanitarian law. The media have a professional duty to understand what these rights are, in order to be able to describe events and explain them to their audiences.

Confusion about where human rights are. International media tend to presume that human rights violations occur 'abroad'. This assumption is false and distorts news coverage. Many violations occur, and are documented, in Europe and the United States for instance, whose governments have the same obligation to respect rights. Coverage of human rights should be properly international, and criteria for coverage similar from one country to another.

Unawareness of the scope of human rights. Human rights violations are associated often chiefly with conflicts and authoritarian regimes. As a result, a narrow spectrum of civil and political rights tends to be reported. Social, economic and cultural rights are almost entirely absent from human rights coverage in the international media.

The key challenge for media professionals is to cover human rights issues accurately and consistently, in ways that *give their audiences enough background and continuity of coverage to make sense of the events that are reported*. This objective is by no means achieved regularly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To journalists, editors and media organisations

- Journalists should be given opportunities to become better informed about international human rights instruments. This can best be done through a range of awareness raising activities including:
 - pre-entry courses on human rights issues for individuals attending journalism schools;
 - mid-career and in-house training on international human rights standards, including national perspectives on human rights law;
 - internal editorial programmes to review coverage of human rights issues;
 - actions to promote exchanges of views between journalists and human rights organisations at national, regional and international level.
- Media organisations and journalists' groups should promote higher standards of diversity within the newsroom while strengthening the capacity of journalists to work professionally and in secure conditions. Media should build public confidence in the quality of information they circulate. Practical steps could include:
 - the adoption of employment and recruitment policies that promote ethnic and gender balance in the newsroom;
 - actions by media organisations to improve the safety of media staff, including freelance employees, through appropriate forms of risk-awareness training and provision of appropriate technical equipment;
 - regular updating of editorial reporting, editing and style handbooks and materials to familiarise journalists and editing staff with human rights terminology and to reinforce ethical principles in reporting human rights issues. These should take account of guidelines from journalists' professional groups on rights issues.
 - encouragement of professional co-operation between reporters and correspondents working for different media in different regions to better understand local conditions and to develop a more informed, diverse and reliable network of information sources; and
 - forms of self-regulation strengthened to build public confidence and to help journalists to examine critically their practices and frameworks for covering human rights. Structures for self-regulation must be independent and must provide an accessible bridge between media, journalists and the people they serve.

To governments and international organisations

- Governments should commit themselves to eliminating all forms of official interference in the work of journalists and should remove all obstacles to the exercise of free media.
- Where public funding of media exists, safeguards should be incorporated into regulations to ensure that there is no political interference or conflicts of interest and that the editorial independence of journalists is guaranteed.
- Governments should provide open access to official information and should train official spokespersons on the need to provide media with up-to-date and reliable information relating to human rights obligations.
- The right of journalists to act ethically should be protected and enhanced through, for instance, recognition of the right of journalists to protect their sources and protection from dismissal or disciplinary action for acting according to professional conscience.
- Intergovernmental organisations should develop more effective and more integrated programmes of assistance to encourage media excellence in the reporting of human rights issues, particularly through
 - co-ordinated assistance programmes to media in developing countries; and
 - confidence-building measures to promote high standards through, for example, the sponsorship of research activities, journalism prizes and liaison between international media and local media outlets.

To human rights organisations

To play their parts effectively, journalists groups, media and human rights organisations need to better understand their different roles and responsibilities. Human rights organisations can contribute to this process by:

- promoting internal discussion among human rights activists on the work of media and journalists;
- establishing direct contact with journalists' groups and media organisations to discuss media-related rights issues and ways in which both groups can co-operate to create better legal, political and social conditions for the exercise of journalism;
- organising joint meetings with media organisations and journalists to discuss concerns about human rights coverage and how to co-operate in providing accurate and reliable information on human rights questions; and
- suggesting confidence-building measures to promote better understanding of the human rights agenda through, for example, the sponsorship of national journalism prizes and research grants to journalists working on human rights stories.

ORDER INFORMATION

Main Report

Journalism, Media and the Challenge of Human Rights Reporting, 2002
ISBN 2-940259-23-2, 40 Swiss Francs plus postage. Available in English.

Summary

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- *Taking Duties Seriously: Individual Duties in International Human Rights Law — A Commentary*, 1999, ISBN 2-940259-00-3.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.journalism.org

The Committee of Concerned Journalists is a consortium of journalists working to clarify the principles of their profession.

www.cpj.org

The Committee to Protect Journalists is an organisation dedicated to the international defence of press freedom.

www.crimesofwar.org

The Crimes of War Project is a collaboration of journalists, lawyers and scholars who seek to raise awareness of the laws of war among the media, governments and the human rights and humanitarian communities.

www.gla.ac.uk/departments/sociology/media.html

A research based grouping of academics within the sociology department of Glasgow University working to promote the development of new methodologies and substantive research in the area of media and communications, including human rights.

www.iaj.org.za

The Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in South Africa. Training for better journalism.

www.ifj.org

Official site of the International Federation of Journalists.

www.presswise.org.uk

The PressWise Trust works to promote higher standards of human rights. It has collected and indexed journalist codes of conduct from over eighty countries.

www.rsf.fr

Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) defends press freedom around the world.

Do the international media report human rights well? If not, what would 'good' reporting of human rights issues imply?

These questions are examined in a report summarised here, *Journalism, Media and the Challenge of Human Rights Reporting*, which was based on interviews with editors, journalists and broadcasters working in major international media centres and consultation with national and local media professionals in many other countries.

The report describes how journalists select news, the impact of changes in the media industry, including new technology, and the constraints and obstacles to accurate reporting in the area of human rights. Calling for a fresh debate between journalists and human rights activists, it argues that, as human rights are integrated increasingly in policy frameworks, journalists have a professional duty to report on this subject precisely if their audiences are to make sense of the news.

“well-written and well informed”.

Stephen Ellis, African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands

“Finally, a thorough examination of how human rights issues and stories relate to media coverage. This should prompt all the players involved to rethink their goals and values, to work more comprehensively towards a positive result.”

Riz Khan, journalist, former host of CNN's "Q&A with Riz Khan"

“excellent...demonstrates with piercing analysis the need for the human rights movement to better inform and deploy the media in the human rights campaign. The report will for long remain the baseline on which the media and human rights movement judge their collaboration”.

Makau Mutua, Director of the Human Rights Centre, State University of New York

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