



Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

December 2023

President's Report

CJA President Chris Cobb writes from Ottawa:

Some Good News for Canadian News Outlets

Canadian legislation mandating tech giants to pay news outlets for their content came into effect this month weeks after Google reached an agreement with the federal government to pay news publishers an estimated \$100 million in annual payments.

Facebook and Instagram owner Meta responded to the legislation by halting the distribution of Canadian news content. While unhappy with the legislation, Google allowed news content to flow during negotiations.

Canada's Online News Act applies to social media platforms or search engine websites that have a total global revenue of more than \$1-billion Canadian a year. To fall under the act, platforms must have 20 million Canadian visitors or active users a month.

The act captures only Google and Meta.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the agreement is a win for local journalism and said the door remains open for talks with Meta. As the end of the year approaches, Meta has shown no obvious interest in walking through it.

Meta's position is [here](#). Google's is [here](#).

Australia had been at the forefront of global efforts to establish a regulatory framework to bring news publishers fair compensation for their work.

In early 2021, Australia passed a groundbreaking law known as the News Media Bargaining Code.

The aim was the same: To get tech giants to pay for news content produced by news outlets. The [News Media Bargaining Code](#) established a mechanism for negotiations between tech companies and news publishers. If agreements couldn't be reached voluntarily, an independent arbitrator could step in to determine a fair price for the use of news content. As in Canada, Google initially responded negatively to the legislation but after extracting concessions from the government, started striking individual deals with Australian news media outlets to pay for content. Meta did the same.

As part of the Canadian deal, the Trudeau government agreed to Google's request to create a 'one-stop-shop' panel representing the news industry. Google will only be required to deal with this panel.

Canada and Australia are just two of many countries seeking similar agreements against a backdrop of ailing news media industries that have experienced dramatic plunges in advertising revenue.

Now for the bad news

According to [UNESCO](#), 2023 has been another deadly year for journalists, especially those working in conflict zones. The last three months have been particularly deadly with 27 deaths. Middle East hostilities are the main reason.

More broadly, at least 38 journalists and media workers were killed this year while covering conflicts, compared to 28 in 2022 and 20 in 2021.

Elsewhere, journalists have seen their offices and equipment destroyed, have suffered from threats of violence, detention, and denial of access. As a result, many have simply decided the risk isn't worth the reward and fled or stopped working.

UNESCO also reported in November that attacks against journalists increase dramatically during election periods. It documented 759 attacks in 70 countries between January 2019 and June 2022, including 5 killings.

This trend is particularly worrying, says UNESCO, because 2.6 billion people in 60 countries—many of them Commonwealth countries—go to the polls in 2024.

And finally, for those looking forward to celebrating Christmas, best wishes on behalf of the Commonwealth Journalists Association family, and a safe, happy, and prosperous 2024 to all who read this newsletter.



Uganda

Alice Drito writes from Uganda:

Media freedom space in Uganda continued to shrink in 2023. The worst pain-points have been the additional anti-media laws coming into force, and other schemes crafted to restrict press freedom have further pulled down the Constitutional guarantee.

For instance, The Computer Misuse Act (Amendment) 2022 criminalizes misuse of computer and abuse of social media platforms, disinformation, cyber-bulling, punishable by heavy fine or jail term of seven years and The Anti-Homosexuality Act (Amendment) 2022, criminalises the promotion of homosexuality which the authorities can use to harass, arrest, detain and silence journalists, bloggers and media establishments critical of the state. It is punishable by death for aggravated homosexuality or a jail term of 20 years. In addition to anti-media laws including, Public Order Management Act 2001, Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) 2002, Uganda Communications Act 2013, to mention a few.

Despite the struggling media, journalists have been resilient to fight to end anti-media laws and other schemes in the courts of law. One case was The Computer Misuse Act 2021, Section 25, nullified in a Constitutional Court ruling in January of this year. The latest is The Constitutional Court hearing of Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 which was challenged and is due to commence soon. At the same time, media rights activists have dragged to Court perpetrators of violence against journalists.

Other cases of media freedom crisis include journalists harassed, arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, loss of equipment and attacks on journalists in the line of duty. Journalists continue to operate under fear and the resulting self-censorship has been criticised by media freedom bodies and rights activists.

With digital transformation, the authorities have found it easier to disrupt communication systems and to mount surveillance of journalists' communication networks and social media platforms.

UPDATES FROM CJA BRANCHES

Taxes have also been imposed on social media accounts and there is increased pressure from the authorities to frustrate placement of advertisements with media houses which are critical of the state.

The media space remains liberalised and Uganda has over 200 radio stations, about 30 television stations, online news websites, blogging and a large print media presence in comparison to previous regimes when there was one state owned radio station, one national television station and state-owned newspaper with a few privately owned newspapers. With the Uganda's 2026 presidential and parliamentary elections around the corner, some in the media fraternity are counting on state actors to show more generously, help media freedom principles and show political accountability.

World press freedom index ranks Uganda at 133 a step on the ladder out of 180 countries, according to Reporters Without Borders in 2023 compared to 132 in 2022. ■



United
Kingdom

CJA-UK Chair Raymond Whitaker writes:

Two important events in CJA-UK's calendar took place in the final weeks of 2023: the first of what will be an annual series of lectures on media topics, and the launch of an expanded mentorship scheme for young entrants into journalism.

[The opening CJA-UK lecture](#) was given at the House of Lords by Professor John Naughton of Wolfson College, Cambridge, also the technology columnist of The Observer newspaper. He predicted that the effect of artificial intelligence (AI) on the media landscape would be dramatic, both for good and bad. While it could significantly enhance human capabilities in the media, as in many other fields, it would also “turbocharge” misinformation and deepfakes. More jobs, and categories of jobs, extending ever further into white-collar sectors, would be under threat.



UPDATES FROM CJA BRANCHES

Naughton warned: “Machine learning has the potential to cause a massive increase in existing levels of inequality, where productivity increases but the gains are not shared. This is a greater danger than some super-intelligence wiping us all out.” We needed an intelligent response to AI, he concluded, rather than “just cringing in fear”.

After a successful pilot during 2023, the CJA-UK executive decided [to expand the mentorship scheme for those taking their first steps into journalism](#). The number of mentors has doubled for 2024, with distinguished recruits from print, broadcast and digital media, covering specialisms from economics to lifestyle journalism, politics to foreign reporting.

At the launch event at the University of Westminster, within sight of the BBC’s headquarters, a former editor of The Independent, Chris Blackhurst, told students of his path into journalism. It developed with a share-tipping column which no-one else wanted to do, but which he made his own – an important lesson, he said, for those seeking to climb the ladder. *“You’ve got to be inquisitive, to want to know how things work and what matters,”* said Blackhurst. He warned the students that journalism was “incredibly competitive”, but if you are successful, few fields can be more exciting or satisfying.



Taking your first steps into journalism, and want to apply for mentoring? Link to application form:

<https://forms.gle/iuhZxKn9VwUtWRMh7>



Derek Ingram fellowship offers an exciting opportunity



Derek Ingram and colleagues - Photo courtesy of Nick Hall

Wolfson College, Cambridge, in conjunction with the [Commonwealth Journalists Association](http://commonwealthjournalists.org) has invited applications for a Derek Ingram Press Fellow to join the Wolfson Press Fellowship Programme. This is a residential programme held at Wolfson College for three months during the Easter Term, 2024. The Programme has been running since 1982 and to date has welcomed over 350 journalists from 47 countries. Find out more at [Derek Ingram fellowship offers exciting opportunity – C J A \(commonwealthjournalists.org\)](http://commonwealthjournalists.org).



The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) issued the following advice in October on **Physical Safety: War Reporting** - [Physical Safety: War Reporting - Committee to Protect Journalists \(cpj.org\)](http://cpj.org). The advice is

available in a range of languages.

In November, The Conversation issued these guidelines on [Social media content in times of war: an expert guide on how to keep violence off your feeds](#). The university-backed online website said: ‘Social media platforms are a great source of information and entertainment. They also help us to maintain contact with friends and family. But social media can also – [and has, often](#) – become a toxic environment for spreading disinformation, hatred and conflict.’

How to grow subscriptions from Bloomberg media

The Press Gazette has been looking into Bloomberg's technique. IN an article entitled [How Bloomberg Media got to 500,000 subscribers – and how it plans to reach a million](#), Press Gazette talked to Bloomberg Media chief digital officer Julia Beizer in New York.

Its current milestone makes it one of 16 English-language news publishers in the world to reach the 500,000 digital subscriber mark.

Interested in Bloomberg's tactics? Find out more at [Bloomberg Media subscriptions growth: how it got to 500,000 \(pressgazette.co.uk\)](#)



Africa

African Investigative Journalist 2023

BBC Africa Eye reporter Ton Odula has been awarded the African Investigative Journalist of the Year Award at the 2023 inaugural African Investigative Journalist of the Year Award. It's organised by the Journalism Programme of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Tom won the award for his report exposing rampant sexual abuse of female tea pickers in Kenya. You can view his report here: [Sex for Work: The True Cost of Our Tea - BBC Africa Eye documentary - YouTube](#)



Gambia

Gambian journalist's death squad conviction

[The Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ) welcomed the 30th November [conviction in Germany](#) of a member of former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh's death squad for the 2004 murder of Gambian editor [Deyda Hydara](#).

The CPJ said: "The German court's conviction and sentencing to life imprisonment of death squad driver Bai Lowe is an important first step for the family of Deyda Hydara and all those seeking justice and accountability for the crimes against humanity [perpetrated](#) by then Gambian president Jahya Jammeh and his murderous 'junglers'," said Angela Quintal, CPJ's Africa program coordinator.

"But Jammeh, not only his foot soldiers, must stand trial for his reign of terror. Justice will only prevail when Jammeh is extradited from his exile in Equatorial Guinea and faces charges in Gambia's [special criminal court](#)."



Ghana

CPJ: Authorities in Ghana must be held accountable

The Committee to Protect Journalist writes: Ghanaian authorities must swiftly complete their investigation into the soldiers who attacked and detained journalist Nicholas Morkah and hold the perpetrators to account, the Committee to Protect Journalists. On October 19, six soldiers attacked and beat Morkah, a morning show host with the privately owned Akyemansa FM broadcaster, after Morkah began filming the soldiers attacking a man in the Birim Central Municipal District of Ghana's Eastern Region, according to a report by the privately owned [Modern Ghana](#) news website and Morkah, who spoke by phone with CPJ. After noticing Morkah was filming, a soldier approached the journalist, grabbed his shirt by the neck and began to hit him, demanding to know why Morkah was filming. Morkah said five other soldiers then joined in hitting and kicking him all over his body, even as he told them he was a journalist.

“Authorities in Ghana must ensure that those responsible for beating journalist Nicholas Morkah are held accountable,” said Angela Quintal, CPJ’s Africa program coordinator, in New York. “Ghana’s leadership have so far failed to take the necessary actions to ensure security forces do not perpetrate violence against journalists.”



Americas

Canada

The Press Gazette reported that Google had agreed a CA\$100m deal with Canadian publishers ahead of the Online News Act. The deal follows a long battle over payments for content from Canadian publishers in Google searches.

[Press Gazette said](#) that [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) owner Meta is resisting demands that also pay publishers for content, having [removed all news content from its platforms](#) in Canada in August. The Canadian Online News Act forces platforms to pay publishers for news content and comes into effect in December. It follows the introduction of Australia's News Media Bargaining Code which created a bargaining framework to make sure that large tech platforms compensate news businesses for their content. (See President Chris Cobb's report for more details).



Asia

Bangladesh

CPJ: Investigate assaults on journalists in Bangladesh

[The Committee to Protect Journalists writes:](#) Bangladesh authorities must immediately and impartially investigate the assaults on at least 27 journalists covering recent political rallies and hold the perpetrators accountable. On Saturday, October 28, at least 27 journalists covering rallies in the capital of Dhaka were attacked by supporters of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the ruling Awami League party, as well as police, according to a [statement](#) by local press freedom group Bangladeshi Journalists in International Media and several journalists who spoke to the CPJ.



India

New BBC India structure

From [BBC News:](#) The BBC announced the restructuring of its operations in India to comply with the country's foreign investment rules. Under the new structure, four employees will leave the BBC to form a wholly Indian-owned company, Collective Newsroom, containing the BBC's six Indian language services. The BBC's English language newsgathering operation in India will remain with the BBC.

The changes follow an investigation in 2023 which saw the [BBC's India offices searched by tax authorities.](#)

Free speech in India

India's Caravan magazine issued a commentary called [Drowning Voices How legal frameworks are being used to throttle free speech and the media.](#) It said that 'on 10 November 2023, the ministry of information and broadcasting released the draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill. This was the fifth piece of legislation that the Narendra Modi government introduced over the past two years with the stated aim of creating a regulatory framework for a fast-changing media landscape. These bills equip the state with dangerous tools and provisions to control and clamp down on critical voices and free speech'.

Pakistan

[Ex-Dawn columnist's book launched in UK](#)

LONDON: Friends, family and well-wishers of the late Dawn columnist Irfan Husain gathered in Kensington, London, to celebrate his life and writing with the publication of a book titled, A Life Lived with Passion: Irfan Husain.

Edited by journalist Carmen Gonzalez and her husband, former Dawn editor Abbas Nasir, the book was commissioned by Husain's wife Charlotte and son Shakir. The book is a compilation of his columns spanning the period from 1992 to 2020, when he passed away, with the editors perusing some 2 million words written by him over nearly three decades.

Click here to read more - [Ex-Dawn columnist's book launched in UK - Newspaper - DAWN.COM](#)



Australia

The Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Advancing Journalism, the University of Melbourne Denis Muller has criticised Australian journalists who signed an [open letter](#) to Australian media organisations last week calling for ethical reporting on the war in Gaza. [His article in The Conversation](#) said that they'd 'succeeded in intensifying the dispute over whether the coverage has been fair. At the same time, they've called their own impartiality into question'. He added that, 'at last count, the letter had attracted 270 signatories from journalists at a range of institutions including the ABC, Guardian Australia, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Conversation and Schwartz Media'.



Europe

Malta

Highlighting corruption in Malta

The Economist has reviewed the book about murdered Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. In an article entitled [Daphne Caruana Galizia's son tries to make sense of her murder](#), the magazine said that ‘Malta’s courageous journalist, assassinated in 2017, has spotlighted the country’s corruption’.

United Kingdom

Cookies and ads in the British press

The Press Gazette said that the UK Guardian has launched a new product to allow advertisers to place ads they deem relevant in front of readers who have opted out of cookies. [The Gazette said](#) that the new “ad product with integrity”, dubbed Guardian Light, would mean that brands “can now reach [privacy](#)-aware users for the first time in years”. It said that the Guardian claims to be the first publisher in the UK to roll out such a capability.

AND FINALLY...

The Reuters Institute for the study of journalism and Oxford University have issued their research on [Changing Newsrooms 2023: Media leaders struggle to embrace diversity in full and remain cautious on AI disruption](#). The report, based on a survey of 135 senior industry leaders from 40 countries, looks at changes in remote and hybrid working since the Covid pandemic, the potential impact of AI and culture, diversity and inclusion in newsrooms.



If you'd like to contribute or make a suggestion to the CJA newsletter team, please email us. Debbie is available at debbieransome@gmail.com.

If you'd like to find out about CJA membership, please contact your local branch via the CJA website - [C J A – Commonwealth Journalists Association](#).

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and new year period.



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