



Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

July 2025

President's Report

CJA President Chris Cobb writes:

As reported below, the Bangladeshi interim government issued a response on June 22 to an article written by CJA executive committee member William Horsley.

Horsley's column was titled 'The truth will out: How press freedom is suppressed in Bangladesh.'

It was published on the CJA website - one of many efforts by the CJA to focus attention on the interim government's arrest and detention of dozens of journalists, including our Bangladeshi vice-president Shyamal Dutta and other senior journalists.

Many, including Dutta, are charged with murder even though none have committed murder. Their 'crimes' appear related to support for the previous regime.

The response, from interim leader Professor Muhammad Yunus's press office, doesn't mention the rounding up and imprisonment of journalists.

But for those of us looking for a chink of optimism, and some indication that this terrible injustice will soon end, there are straws to clutch.

For example, this passage:

'Yes, there are numerous cases before the courts - many initiated by victims or families of those who suffered during the prior regime. Some of these cases are flawed or groundless.

The interim government has not ignored this reality. Unlike in the past, these prosecutions are not being directed or manipulated by the state. There is no political mandate to imprison opponents.

Instead, the interim government has instructed police and prosecutors to proceed with caution, evidence, and fairness. Judicial independence is being respected - and indeed, where it has previously been abused, the government is working to repair it.'

The statement also says the government is in the process of withdrawing 16,429 groundless cases but it isn't clear whether that refers to cases of the previous or current regime or both.

Yunus visited the Commonwealth Secretariat in June and while no details of discussions have emerged, it's unlikely he left without being reminded that Bangladesh is a Commonwealth country that needs to start acting like one.

Curiously, the Secretariat has said little publicly about the Bangladesh situation and the physical, emotional and financial abuse being suffered by the imprisoned journalists and their families.

In London, Yunus denied the interim government is suppressing press freedom and insisted it is committed to restoring democracy. If that commitment is real, they should show good faith and immediately release the imprisoned journalists and stop pretending that only the justice system has the power to do that. There is too much evidence to the contrary.

An independent justice system operating with integrity would not allow the imprisonment of people it knows to be innocent of the charges against them and apparent victims of a vendetta.

As a Commonwealth-wide journalists' organization, the CJA understands why the Hasina regime was ousted and that the democratic transition Yunus describes is complex and messy. We know it isn't easy.

But it's been a year this month since the student-led protests grew to the point where the previous government collapsed and Hasina was forced into Indian exile.

A year in which there has been no obvious progress towards free and fair elections and the restoration of civilian government.

And almost a year that innocent journalists have spent languishing in prison on trumped up charges that shame Bangladesh and make a mockery of Yunus's claim that 'people have never had so much freedom in their life.'

Chris Cobb is CJA President

Related: [Statement Condemning the Persecution of Journalists and Suppression of Free Speech in Bangladesh.docx](#)



AI

Inside the pilot BBC World Service website using AI translation

[The Press Gazette reports](#): The BBC World Service has launched a pilot website in Polish using AI translation in a “systemic” way for the first time.

[BBC News](#) deputy global director Fiona Crack told Press Gazette the use of AI in the launch of BBC News Polska was designed to help bring the BBC’s coverage of stories of global interest such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to new audiences in a “slimline and efficient” way.

Media Freedom

Press freedom criticism prompts Bangladesh government to acknowledge “serious concerns”

“People have never had so much freedom in their life ... the media can say whatever they like”. That sweeping claim was made by Bangladesh’s interim leader, Professor Muhammad Yunus, at a livestreamed meeting at Chatham House in London on June 11 when questioned about reports of a clampdown on the media in his country. Professor Yunus’ assertion was challenged in an article published by the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA). In it William Horsley cited the cases of four prominent Bangladeshi journalists detained since last summer’s violent unrest which forced the former prime minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India. All four journalists face serious charges including murder, which critics say are politically motivated. Among those in prison and awaiting trial are Shyamal Dutta, a vice-president of the CJA and former secretary-general of the Bangladesh National Press Club, and Mozammel Babu, the former chief editor of Ekattor TV. The article said a widespread retaliatory purge of media outlets sympathetic to the Hasina regime was taking place in Bangladesh.

The interim Bangladesh government posted a [rejoinder](#) on June 22, stating that widely publicised concerns about media suppression and arbitrary detentions in the country “must be taken seriously – and they have been”. But, it said, “the narrative that the interim government is replicating the autocratic practices of the past” was mistaken. “Unlike in the past, there is no political mandate to imprison opponents.” The statement acknowledged that many cases before the courts, including those initiated by victims or families of those who suffered during the prior regime, were “flawed or groundless”; the government, it declared, has begun the process of withdrawing 16,429 groundless cases, which the statement called “a major step towards restoring faith in the justice system and acknowledging the suffering of those falsely accused.”

World Press Freedom Day took place during our reporting period. This article written by Guardian journalist Oren Gruenbaum summed up how Commonwealth members are doing, according to the latest World Press Freedom Index.

[Concerns for press freedom across the Commonwealth](#)





United Kingdom

CJA-UK Chair Raymond Whitaker writes:

Members welcomed this year's two Derek Ingram fellows to London to hear the outcome of their research at Wolfson College, Cambridge, which runs the [fellowship scheme in conjunction with the CJA](#).

Msanii Kimani, of Kenya, and Kaiser Andrabi, from India, spent a term at Wolfson to deepen their knowledge of issues relevant to journalistic practice and freedom of expression, in accordance with the terms of the Ingram fellowship. Msanii, a veteran arts journalist in Kenya, researched the political impact of cartoons in his country and more widely in Africa. The younger Kaiser, whose work is mainly concerned with the explosive situation in Kashmir, detailed the growing suppression of media in India.

Despite their differing backgrounds, both journalists had a common interest in finding how writers and cartoonists in their countries steered their way through the restrictions the authorities sought to impose on them. Politicians in most of the world are sensitive to how they are depicted by cartoonists, but in Kenya the impact is magnified by the fact that even those who cannot read can understand the message.

One cartoonist came up with the idea of depicting a notoriously touchy politician as simply a silhouette. Everyone knew who was being satirised, but the politician could not react for fear of confirming that he was the subject of the cartoons.

Indian-controlled Kashmir is subject to the tightest media restrictions in a country where freedom of expression is widely under challenge. Kaiser explained that journalists were finding historical parallels or using folklore and popular culture to allude to topics that, if addressed directly, would have brought retribution from the authorities.

[The Ingram fellowship](#), named after the co-founder of the CJA, is open to mid-career journalists in the Commonwealth. All expenses are covered while in Cambridge, as well as travel to and from the UK. Applications for the 2026 scheme will be invited later this year.

Also available: <https://www.commonwealthjournalists.org/what-happens-to-truth-when-the-space-to-tell-it-disappears-cja-fellowship-winners-tell-how-they-make-their-voices-heard/>



Uganda

As Uganda's general elections are a stone's throw away (2026), media freedom bodies, journalists and civil society actors are raising red flags and predicting tough times ahead.

They're saying that the toxic media space will take its toll as pressures on media freedom are expected to bite deeper. They're pointing to trends in which the authorities have already started deliberate and systematic schemes to exclude or block media houses, especially those critical of state access, from state functions.

In addition, it is a violation of access to public information in the public interest, denies a level playing field and is aimed at muzzling the media from their right to equal access and fair coverage of the ongoing electoral process.

The latest turn of events was on 27 June when three media establishments, including the National Broadcasting Service Television (NBS TV), National Television Uganda (NTV-Uganda) and the Daily Monitor were reportedly told by the authorities to keep away from an event at which President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni was collecting his nomination form to kick off his presidential bid campaign to extend [his forty-year rule](#).

Media reports indicate that this is the third time in the space of one month at which the three media houses have been treated this way, having to turn to covering such events through live broadcasts from other media channels.

Earlier on, the three media houses had protested over the alleged assault of journalists by security operatives while covering events hosted by the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM). The alleged assault had taken place during a parliamentary by-election in March 2025 in the suburbs of the capital, Kampala.



Media groups are calling for training in life saving skills, protective wear to identify journalists, for re-orientation of security agents ahead of elections and for other safety networks to be put in place to level the playing field for media houses.

Media critics have said that this is an opportunity for the media to put their issues on the political agenda, including anti-media laws, safety of Journalists, censorship, restricted access to public information and other governance issues. They're calling for lasting solutions to comply with internationally accepted media freedom principles.

Uganda is a Commonwealth member state and should be at the forefront of denouncing media freedom violations.

Africa

Ghana

President Mahama intervenes as Communications Minister grants 30-day reprieve to shutdown radio stations

Modern Ghana writes: The Ministry of Communications has temporarily suspended enforcement actions against 64 radio stations ordered to cease operations, following a directive from President John Dramani. The intervention offers a lifeline to the affected broadcasters who faced sanctions over multiple regulatory breaches.

More at <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1408202/president-mahama-intervenes-as-communications-mini.html>



Kenya

Kenya's Deputy police chief Eliud Lagat has stepped aside to allow investigations into the death of blogger Albert Ojwang, who died in police custody under controversial circumstances. Mr Ojwang had been detained over a post on X that was allegedly critical of Mr Lagat.

More at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx24ggj6e8eo>
<https://t.co/eGELdREv3q>

<https://x.com/BBCAfrica/status/1934653512505258189?t=bU1W0SSy0GMulysy2RwaxA&s=03>

Also: Kenya's brutal police have been exposed again – why the system fails people

<https://theconversation.com/kenyas-police-still-kill-with-impunity-what-needs-to-be-done-to-stop-them-259326>



Nigeria

The Guardian Nigeria writes: The heads of missions of the United States, United Kingdom, Finland, Norway, and Canada have called for a review of Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act, warning that its current use threatens free speech and economic progress.

More at <https://t.co/Vo0S7SHkie>



Togo

The Committee to Protect Journalists writes: Togolese authorities forced Journalist Flore Monteau to delete footage she'd taken of anti-government protests.

The Committee to Protect Journalists calls on Togolese authorities to investigate and hold accountable the gendarmes who detained journalist Flore Monteau and forced her to delete footage she took of anti-government protests on June 6. Monteau was released the same day.

“The arrest of Flore Monteau continues a pattern of censorship through detention by Togolese law enforcement,” said Moussa Ngom, CPJ's Francophone Africa representative. “Togolese authorities must put an end to such abuses and ensure safe reporting conditions for journalists during public events.”

More at <https://cpj.org/2025/06/togo-detains-tv5-monde-journalist-forces-deletion-of-protest-videos/>



Asia

India

Mahendra Ved writes:

July 1 marked the 204th anniversary of The Mumbai Samachar, Asia's oldest continuously published newspaper.

At its celebrations in 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a postage stamp to commemorate the occasion.

Published without a break from Mumbai, it has retained the dual title of also being The Bombay Samachar, through the long years of British rule. In 1995, Bombay officially became Mumbai, the original name of the deity of the local fisherfolk. In April this year, it announced plans to go digital.

The Mumbai Samachar was first published on July 1, 1822, and comprised three small quarto sheets, 10 inches by 8 inches, and a half-sheet supplement in all containing 14 pages of printed matter.

A brief description of the contents of this first issue will give an idea of what an Indian journal was in those days. The first sheet consisted of advertisements, two of them being about things lost and found, and one about the sale of some property, all about the Parsi community of fire-worshipping Zoroastrians, whose contribution to Mumbai's development has been tremendous. Then follows what may be called an article on "Ourselves". Then there are four columns of short paragraphs about Government and Court appointments and changes, and powers of attorney taken from the court; about the arrival and departure of ships and of Europeans from Mumbai; and a list of European deaths, as well as of ships loading in the harbour. Six columns are given to Calcutta (now Kolkata) news taken from the Indian Gazette and the Calcutta Chronicle; one column to Madras (now Chennai) news from the Government Gazette of that city; two columns to London news, whilst a short paragraph of ten lines was devoted to news from Canton in China, given the prices of opium (the Parsis were major opium traders). Of local Mumbai news, there was very little, except the short paragraph about appointments.

A weekly till 1832, a bi-weekly till 1855 and a daily since then, it continues to grow and has gone on to become one of Western India's premier newspapers. It is well read by a large segment of Gujarati-speaking people both in India and abroad.

The founder, a Parsi scholar and priest by the name of Fardoonji Murazban, was a pioneer not only of journalism in Western India but of all Gujarati printed literature. He founded the first native press in 1812 and in 1814, brought out a Gujarati Calendar, full 6 years before the first Bengali calendar was printed and published in Calcutta. He then went on to bring out the newspaper in 1822. The red brick building on the road named after it is a landmark of Mumbai.

From its inception, the editorial policy was to objectively report events in a fair and honest manner and not to sensationalise news, sobriety and independence of views being a characteristic which still stands.

Another notable feature of this paper, which holds good to this day, is the policy to allow numerous small advertisers to advertise their products on the front page rather than allow only one advertiser to occupy what is commonly referred to as a solus position.

One of the reasons for its popularity is announcements of death, in India and wherever Gujarati-speaking people live. It is extended to all faiths – Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Christians and Jains – even catering to their sub-sections to make it easy for readers.

The paper passed through various hands before coming into the hands of the Cama Family, its present publishers in 1933, and Hormusji N Cama, the present director of the publication. It has since grown and expanded and today claims to have the most modern technology available in the publishing field. Its daily print run in four colour is carried out on full colour high-speed offset presses.

Being the “family paper” for generations, the newspaper has held out in the face of competition coming from richer publishing houses and dwindling demand for print in ‘virtual’ times.

The Conversation writes: How India and Pakistan’s Digital Authoritarianism Sows the Seeds of War.

In both countries, the goal is not just censorship; it’s shaping public opinion through information control.

More at <https://thediplomat.com/2025/06/how-india-and-pakistans-digital-authoritarianism-sows-the-seeds-of-war/>



The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Press freedom in India remains a significant concern following the re-election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a historic third term. Media ownership remains concentrated with a few wealthy tycoons that are largely supportive of the prime minister, while independent media and journalists critical of the government are often subjected to harassment or legal challenges. Against this background, innovative collaborations amongst digital news platforms have been offering a fresh alternative to mainstream media narratives.

India's fragmented yet diverse news space was dominated by extensive political coverage in an election year. Yet there was also space for a unique collaborative effort by prominent and like-minded digital news platforms.

Read more at:

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/india>

Reuters Institute report Digital News Report 2025. Key findings <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/dnr-executive-summary>



Pakistan

[Criminalized and silenced: The weaponization of Pakistan's PECA Act](#)

Global Voices writes: 'Fake news' is a Trumpian term, and defamation laws are often used as a ruse to silence independent voices.

Journalists in Pakistan have [faced](#) a sharp [increase](#) in threats, abductions, and arrests in the past three months. These incidents indicate an increasingly hostile environment for media professionals, where intimidation and violence are systematically employed to stifle independent journalism.

More at <https://globalvoices.org/2025/06/13/criminalized-and-silenced-the-weaponization-of-pakistans-peca-act/>



Australia

Australian writer questioned, deported from US after report on pro-Palestinian protests

The Committee to Protect Journalists is deeply alarmed by reports that Australian writer Alistair Kitchen was denied entry into the United States after border officials at the Los Angeles International Airport searched his phone and questioned him about his views on the Israel-Gaza war.

“Alistair Kitchen’s deportation is a clear case of retaliation in connection with his reporting, and such action sends a chilling message to journalists that they must support the administration’s narratives or face forms of retribution,” said CPJ U.S., Canada and Caribbean Program Coordinator Katherine Jacobsen.

More at <https://cpj.org/2025/06/australian-writer-questioned-deported-from-us-after-report-on-pro-palestinian-protests/>



Europe

Malta

Malta Today reported: Jurors took less than 24 hours to deliver guilty verdicts against four men involved in the murders of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia and lawyer Carmel Chircop. But as much as the guilty verdicts were clear and unambiguous, the nine-person jury also delivered an unequivocal message: ‘We believe Vince Muscat and Melvin Theuma.’

Details at

https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/court_and_police/135370/guilty_verdicts_a_star_witness_and_chapter_3_of_daphnes_murder

More on this story:

[Malta: after a new conviction for the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, RSF calls for full justice and strong measures to protect journalists](#)



[Two bombmakers jailed for life after murder of Maltese journalist](#)

<https://www.thetimes.com/world/europe/article/daphne-caruana-galizia-murder-malta-f6bm0gjwt>



Pacific

The Guardian writes: Some reporters in the region face jail for alleged defamation in countries where news outlets often lack resources to defend lawsuits.

More at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/17/pacific-faces-critical-moment-in-fight-for-press-freedom-media-watchdog-warns-ntwnfb>



AND FINALLY...

CJA founder member Derek Ingram would have been 100 on 20 June. Here's a link to [our special 2018 CJA newsletter edition](#) issued to mark Derek's contribution.

On 1st July, the Commonwealth Association and the Commonwealth Secretariat pooled resources to **pay tribute to Sir Shridath Ramphal**, the longest serving secretary-general. The annual Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture, in honour of the Jamaican journalist and Sonny Ramphal's Communications Officer, was delivered by Sir Shridath's son-in-law, the diplomat Sir Ronald Sanders. [You can read Sir Ronald's lecture](#) here.



Sir Ronald Sanders

From the Press Gazette: Walking the mobile notification tightrope: How to engage audiences while avoiding overload

Nic Newman examines latest data on use and audience response to push alerts. More at <https://pressgazette.co.uk/publishers/digital-journalism/mobile-news-alerts-push-notifications-digital-news-report-2025/>

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