

Commonwealth Journalists Association

NEWSLETTER

March 2026

President's Report

CJA statement on Bangladesh

Statement from the Commonwealth Journalists Association.

To Prime Minister Rahman, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party leadership and Commonwealth News Media.



The Commonwealth Journalists Association welcomes the elections held in Bangladesh on 12 February and the commitment made by incoming Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to return Bangladesh to the rule of law.

We call on Prime Minister Rahman and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government to immediately free dozens of journalists who have been held in jail for over a year on spurious charges, including of murder, in violation of their fundamental rights.

In 2025 the interim government headed by Professor Yunus announced it had begun the process of withdrawing 16,429 groundless cases as a step towards restoring faith in the Bangladeshi justice system and acknowledging the suffering of those falsely accused.

Among those still unjustly detained is CJA Vice-President Shyamal Dutta, the long-serving Editor of *Bhorer Kagoj*, who was arrested in September 2024 in connection with a baseless murder charge. Since then, Shyamal, like many others, has been held in extremely harsh conditions and denied proper legal representation and bail.

Since July 2024 hundreds of journalists and media workers have also been physically attacked, and several were killed, with complete impunity. Many more were arbitrarily dismissed from their jobs and deprived of their press cards only because of their perceived political affiliations. Those injustices must be redressed.

In October 2024 the 56 Commonwealth Heads of Government recognised their governments' particular duty to protect members of the media as a public good when they adopted the [Commonwealth Principles on Freedom of Expression and the Role of the Media in Good Governance](#) at their meeting in Samoa.

Those Principles state that Member states “should act decisively to end impunity through impartial, prompt and effective investigations into all alleged cases of killings, attacks and ill-treatment of journalists and media workers”, by bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice and providing effective redress for victims.

We call on the new Bangladesh government to free the jailed journalists, take decisive action to end impunity for crimes against media workers, and ensure that media workers will in future be enabled to do their work with the full protection of the law.

As Irene Khan, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, [has said](#), how Bangladesh courts deal with cases of detained journalists will be “a test of the pledges made by the new government”.

Chris Cobb, CJA President and William Horsley, CJA Executive Committee




Tributes to Mark Tully

Mark Tully, known as the BBC's voice in South Asia, died on 25 January, age 90.

Here are some of the tributes to Mark shared by the CJA's Rita Payne:

 [A personal profile](#)

 [Mark Tully's coverage of momentous developments in South Asia](#)

 From [John Elliott, former foreign correspondent in South Asia for the Financial Times and the Economist](#)



The Economist writes: How democracies are using autocratic tools to muzzle journalism

As scrutiny of government withers, corruption thrives. A special briefing report from the Economist available at [How democracies are using autocratic tools to muzzle journalism](#)



United Kingdom

Raymond Whitaker, President of CJA-UK writes:

Following the election in Bangladesh, where many journalists remain in detention on groundless charges, CJA-UK initiated a call from CJA International to the new government to honour its pledge to restore the rule of law and release the journalists, including the organisation's Vice-President, Shyamal Dutta.

The statement was signed by CJA President Chris Cobb and William Horsley, a member of both the international and UK executive committees. In the latter capacity he is working to bring other Commonwealth organisations behind the campaign to secure implementation of the Media Freedom Principles adopted at the latest CHOGM in Samoa.

Two mid-career journalists from the Commonwealth have been selected to spend 10 weeks at Wolfson College, Cambridge from April, researching a topic of relevance to the aims of the CJA. This year's successful candidates for the Derek Ingram Fellowship, established in memory of the co-founder of the CJA, come from Indian-administered Kashmir and, for the first time, from Sierra Leone. More details in the next newsletter.



Uganda



Alice Drito writes:

Shrunken digital media space during Uganda's controversial 2026 elections put to the test the country's media freedom status, protection and safety of journalists and democracy.

The elections took place in a climate of total internet blackout, defying the global order of digitalized media space. There was a heavy military presence, excessive use of force by the police and security operatives against journalists and arrests of human rights defenders, political opposition leaders and their supporters.

Journalists on the campaign trail, especially those covering the opposition presidential candidates, were subjected to harassment, physical assaults by security operatives, seen helplessly struggling in self-defence, while protecting their cameras. Watch [here](#)

Such actions the public attention and that of Election Observers. One observer was prompted to ask whether cameras looked like guns in the eyes of the police or security agents if they could not differentiate between the two.

The memory of continued police brutality against journalists as depicted in media reports may take a long time to fade. Journalists will live to rewrite history of Uganda's election cycles, recounting their own experiences of the 2026 elections.

The authorities suspended some radio stations and banned media houses critical of the state from covering presidential events. Two media non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) and the Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ) Uganda were closed in a crackdown on civil society organizations by NGO regulatory body, the NGO Bureau.

By the time of filing this report the known telephone lines for the media organizations were off air.

Uganda's elections displayed new standards of democratic behaviour, media freedom and what can happen when the authorities do not invest in the protection and safety of journalists. In Africa region, election-related internet shutdowns by the authorities are becoming a new culture. Civil society groups raised alarm about the internet shut down during elections pointing out that it compromised internationally accepted elections standards and principles, threatened media freedom and violated human rights to access information.

Media experts say journalism is no longer doing the job as usual in the new normal of digital blackouts during chaotic elections. In its absence, there is a breeding space for rumour-mongering, misinformation and electoral malpractices.



Africa

Media freedom in Africa

The African Editors' Forum and the East African Editors' Forum presidents call for media freedom in Africa. They condemn attacks on the rights and freedoms of journalists across the continent.

More at [Editors decry shrinking media freedom on the continent | Daily Nation](#)



Internet shutdowns are increasing dramatically in Africa – a new book explains why

The Conversation writes: The report warns that internet shutdowns are being used to retain power through authoritarian controls. Across Africa, governments are normalising their use to suppress dissent, quell protests and manipulate electoral outcomes.

These blackouts are growing in scale and frequency from a total of 14 shutdowns in 2016 to 28 shutdowns in 2024. There have been devastating consequences in an ever-more digitally connected world.

Internet shutdowns have also increased in sophistication. Partial shutdowns can target specific provinces or websites, so that opposition areas can be cut off. In recent years foreign states, military regimes and warring parties have also resorted to the use of internet shutdown as a weapon of war. This was [done](#) by targeting and destroying telecommunications infrastructure.

More at [Internet shutdowns are increasing dramatically in Africa – a new book explains why](#)



Nearly three out of four women journalists face digital abuse globally: How digital violence threatens press freedom in Africa

UNWomen reports: Every day, women journalists around the world open their social media accounts knowing they may face a barrage of sexually explicit threats, body-shaming comments, and coordinated harassment campaigns designed to silence their reporting. According to UNESCO's landmark global study, [73 per cent of women journalists](#) (three out of four) have experienced online violence, with [one in four](#) receiving threats of physical harm including death threats. For women journalists in East and Southern Africa, these attacks are not just statistics – they are a daily reality that shapes how, when, and whether they can do their jobs.

More at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2025/12/how-digital-violence-threatens-press-freedom-in-africa>



Cameroon

Cameroon police probe journalists investigating secret US migrant deportations, seize equipment



The Committee to Protect Journalists calls on Cameroonian police to drop a criminal trespass investigation into four journalists who were [detained](#) for five hours and had their equipment seized last week, three of whom were reporting for the Associated Press (AP) on the secret [deportation](#) of African migrants from the United States.

“Cameroonian authorities must stop harassing journalists for doing their jobs and respect the public’s right to be informed,” said CPJ Africa Director Angela Quintal. “Judicial police must immediately return the journalists’ confiscated equipment and refrain from tampering with their devices, accessing confidential sources, or using private information to retaliate against them.”

More at [Cameroon police probe journalists investigating secret US migrant deportations, seize equipment - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has warned the government that the proposed cybercrime bill has major human rights implications.

The Namibian writes: This includes infringing on privacy, freedom of expression, and increasing surveillance. The cybercrime bill, tabled by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, is currently undergoing stakeholder consultation.

🔗 More at [Cybercrime bill could violate human rights, IPPR warns - More Top Stories - The Namibian](#)

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

An excerpt from the Human Rights Watch submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review in January 2026

Freedom of Association and Expression

During the 2021 UPR, Rwandan authorities supported 13 recommendations on freedom of expression and access to information, including on the need to create an enabling and safe environment for journalists and activists, and on repealing provisions restricting free speech. It noted another 13, including some explicitly calling for the protection of journalists and activists. The government failed to implement the accepted recommendations.

After years of threats, intimidation, suspicious deaths or disappearances, and high-profile prosecutions, few independent opposition parties or journalists remain active in Rwanda. During the reporting period, the authorities have misused the judiciary to silence critics, abusively bringing charges of “spreading false information or harmful propaganda with intent to cause a hostile international opinion against [the] Rwandan Government” against the political opposition or independent media challenging official narratives. This criminal offense is incompatible with Rwanda’s regional and international human rights obligations.

🔗 More at hrw.org

Also, the Committee to Protect Journalist reported in its submission to the UN Periodic Review: CPJ highlighted Rwanda’s pattern of prolonged pre-trial detention of journalists, mostly YouTube-based commentators, on vague charges that fail to meet international standards for freedom of expression. CPJ also raised concern over Rwanda’s failure to credibly investigate the 2023 death of investigative journalist [John Williams Ntwali](#).

🔗 Read the full submission [here](#).

Asia

Bangladesh


In Bangladesh, the BNP government will have its plate full

CJA's Syed Badrul Ahsan writes: The landslide victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has given citizens the satisfaction of knowing that the danger of a Jamaat-e-Islami takeover of the country has been averted.

Bangladesh needs an atmosphere of peace and stability, which the BNP, having won by a landslide, should be able to ensure.

The incoming BNP government will have its plate full where governance is concerned. Tareque Rahman, the party leader, has not had any governmental experience before.

A mere handful of party leaders served in the last government headed by his mother, Khaleda Zia, which is a broad hint that the current leadership, having led the party to electoral triumph, is in need of learning the ropes fast.

 More at nnews.in



India

Jammu and Kashmir

The CPJ writes: The Committee to Protect Journalists called for authorities in the Indian-administered territory of Jammu and Kashmir to immediately end the harassment and intimidation of journalists, after at least two Kashmir-based correspondents for national media outlets were [summoned](#) by police in connection with their reporting.

“Using police powers to summon journalists over their legitimate reporting is part of a pattern of intimidation against the media in Jammu and Kashmir,” said CPJ Asia-Pacific Program Coordinator Kunal Majumder. “Authorities must cease their harassment and ensure that journalists are not subjected to arbitrary police action for doing their jobs.”


 More at [Indian police summon journalists in Kashmir over routine reporting - Committee to Protect Journalists](#)




Indian journalist Ravi Nair sentenced to one year in Adani defamation case

The CPJ writes: The Committee to Protect Journalists is deeply concerned about the [sentencing](#) of investigative journalist Ravi Nair to one year's imprisonment over social media posts critical of the Adani Group and calls on the Indian government to establish safeguards to protect journalists from being jailed for defamation.

“The conviction of journalist Ravi Nair for criminal defamation sets a dangerous precedent for press freedom and free speech in India,” said CPJ Asia Program Coordinator Kunal Majumder. “Laws that allow imprisonment for defamation stifle public interest reporting and deter scrutiny of powerful actors. The Indian government must ensure these provisions are not used to prevent legitimate journalism.”

 More at cpj.org

 Also at rsf.org




Pakistan

After silencing civilian government and judiciary, General Munir is now after journalists

FirstPost writes: The real contest in Pakistan continues to be between Gen Asim Munir and Imran Khan. For the time being Munir holds all the cards, but Khan has shown spirit and resilience. Pakistan's media is the latest casualty of this ongoing battle.

Field Marshal Asim Munir is unrelenting in his animus towards former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his supporters. The latest demonstration of his sentiment is the Anti-Terrorism Court's decision against seven Pakistanis - journalists, YouTubers who are former army officers, and a well-known analyst - for fanning anti-army sentiment in the May 9, 2023 protests.

Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra sentenced all seven to life imprisonment on January 2 this year for engaging in digital terrorism. All seven are abroad. The trial was conducted in absentia. The judge ordered that they be taken into custody should they return to Pakistan.

 More at [How Asim Munir's insecurity over Imran Khan will destroy even the last pillar of Pakistan's fragile democracy – Firstpost](#)

Harassed at home, convicted abroad: Pakistan steps up prosecution of overseas journalists

The Committee to Protect Journalists writes: Pakistan’s government has stepped up the use of in absentia convictions and arrest warrants against Pakistani journalists living overseas since late 2023, highlighting an escalating crackdown by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s government on critical reporting and commentary that extends beyond domestic borders.

In early January, four foreign-based Pakistani journalists and commentators were convicted on the same day in connection with coverage of violent protests that roiled Pakistan in May 2023, following the [arrest](#) of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in a corruption case. The government accuses Khan — who is in prison on several charges that he says are politically motivated — and his allies of inciting the protests, during which demonstrators attacked military and government buildings.

Authorities also issued an arrest warrant for an exiled journalist in early December, alleging he had spread propaganda about Pakistan’s army.

On December 1, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi pledged a massive crackdown on social media users, YouTubers, and journalists spreading “fake news,” and [warned](#) those living overseas that, “We will soon bring you back, and you will be answerable.”

[More at cpj.org](#)

Americas

Caribbean newspaper closures expose mounting pressure on legacy media

The People’s Tribune writes: A fresh round of closures and wind-downs across the Caribbean is sharpening concern about the region’s traditional news business, as rising production costs, weakening print advertising, and fast-moving digital competition squeeze even long-established outlets.


In Trinidad and Tobago, one of the country’s three daily newspapers, Newsday, moved through a formal wind-up process and ultimately ceased operations after more than three decades, according to reporting in the Trinidad and Tobago Guardian and

Newsday's own court coverage. Public reporting also quoted managing director Grant Taylor describing a "perfect storm of challenges" leading to the closure.

In Guyana, Stabroek News also announced that it would cease publication, citing financial and operational pressures, with regional reporting pointing to declining circulation and a wider squeeze on legacy revenue models.

In the Cayman Islands, iEyeNews announced it would close, pointing to compounding operational challenges that made continuation unsustainable.

Across the region, legacy news outlets have been absorbing the same overlapping shocks, audience behaviour has migrated to mobile and social platforms, advertisers have redirected spending toward targeted digital campaigns and influencers, and the economics of printing and distribution have become harder to justify as scale declines. Even when readership remains loyal, the cost base of a daily operation, staffing, presses, paper, fuel, delivery, and newsroom overhead, often requires advertising volume that is increasingly difficult to sustain.

 More at [Tribune Site](#)



Europe

Malta

Press Mute pulls back the curtain on power, media and manipulation

Malta Today writes: Press Mute will run for six nights at Spazju Kreattiv, St James Cavalier, from 20 February.

Based on the concept of 'live journalism', Press Mute pulls the curtain back on political corruption, the buying of media influence, and the erosion of public accountability. With direct audience interaction, the play blurs the line between observer and participant, echoing a world where we're all part of the story, whether we like it or not.

The play blends live action, multimedia and audience interaction to ask: when outrage becomes entertainment, who controls the narrative?



Editor and journalist Herman Grech's recent works include *Determinated* and *They Blew Her Up*. This play blends his journalistic experience and immediacy in a production that speaks directly to our times.

[More at Press Mute pulls back the curtain on power, media and manipulation](#)

UK

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor and the press

[From AI tools to Prince Andrew's arrest: How newsrooms are digging into the Jeffrey Epstein files](#)

[Captured off guard: The art of the snatched backseat car photo](#)

[Prince Andrew arrest: How story broke and why he was named by media](#)



The UK's National Union of Journalists calls for an independent inquiry and stricter legislation on journalist surveillance

The NUJ has called for stricter legislation to prevent corporate surveillance of journalists and for an independent inquiry into allegations surrounding the hiring of a public relations agency to investigate numerous reporters and their sources.

The union's parliamentary group is tabling an Early Day Motion outlining concerns that Labour Together commissioned APCO Worldwide in order to gain "leverage" over journalists from The Sunday Times, The Guardian and others who were examining the organisation's funding.

The motion expresses worry at "the apparent ability of commercial organisations marketing and selling services aimed at the surveillance of journalists for the purposes of intimidation" and calls for "stricter legislation to prohibit private entities from gathering or purchasing data on journalists for the purpose of identifying sources."

Keir Starmer has confirmed that the Cabinet Office will look into the allegations. The prime minister said: "I didn't know anything about this investigation, and it absolutely needs to be looked into, so the Cabinet Office will be establishing the facts."

[More at inpublishing](#)

[Also: PM orders ethics investigation into minister over Labour Together claims](#)

UK police and media relations

Press Gazette writes: Post Leveson chill in police-press relations thaws after 15 years with new rulebook.

All officers encouraged to interact with media, plus right to cover public incidents protected. Crime reporters have welcomed updated police media guidelines for England and Wales which could draw to a close 15 years of frosty relations between officers and journalists.

Since the Leveson Inquiry in 2011 police have tended to see journalists as a corruption risk. For three years to 2025 the College of Policing [bracketed journalists with criminals](#) as individuals with whom staff had to disclose any association.

[More at Press Gazette](#)

Pacific

[Journalists flag Samoa's draft media protocol](#)

Global Voices writes: The bill would require background checks on journalists and mandatory approval of questions during press briefings.

A draft government protocol for journalists covering press conferences has raised concerns that it could restrict the work of media in the Pacific island nation of Samoa.

The 19-page draft guidelines titled “Government Media Protocol” would [require](#) background checks on the political affiliations of journalists and the approval of questions to be raised during press briefings. The questions must be submitted at least 24 hours before the event. The document leaked in early December also states that the “government reserves the right to keep a copy of the interview for release should any inaccuracies arise.”

Samoa Observer, the country's only daily newspaper, said in an [editorial](#) that the new rules would undermine media freedom and democracy.

[More at Journalists flag Samoa's draft media protocol · Global Voices](#)

AND FINALLY...

The future of the data centre

The Press Gazette writes: The technology news website hiring not firing with £11m turnover.

B2B brand Data Center Dynamics is free to air making money from sponsorship and events.

B2B media brand [Data Center Dynamics](#) has seen its turnover increase by 175% to more than £11m a year since 2020 helped by the [AI](#) boom.

DCD was founded in 2001 as an industry directory and events business covering the “digital infrastructure of the internet”.

The site now reports on the funding, designing, building and operating of data infrastructure “from chip level up”, said editor-in-chief Sebastian Moss.

While the site has always covered data centres, the scale and definition of these has drastically changed.

Content is less about the “model side” of AI, with “a jillion publications on that”, but focuses more on how data centres are powered, operated and cooled.

[🔗](#) More at [The technology news website hiring not firing with £11m turnover - Press Gazette](#).

Also, the second **UK Media Freedom Forum** took place in London on 5 and 6 March. If you missed proceedings, check out [the Forum website for coverage](#).

[Find out about the 2019 Global Media Conference in London.](#)

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