

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



No 10, July 2001

Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

Media and politicians at fault over racist attacks - UN told

Politicians and the media must share responsibility for public hostility towards asylum-seekers, the UN Human Rights Committee has been told.

It comes in a report from the civil rights group Liberty. In a statement supported by Amnesty International, the Bar Human Rights Committee, the Law Society, and eight other groups, Liberty said: "Negative representation of asylum-seekers has not only led to direct attacks on asylum seekers but also (to) an underlying greater hostility towards all those from ethnic minority communities, and heightened racial tensions," the report says. It sees the recent riots in Oldham and Bradford as an indirect consequence.

Similar warnings were given in reports produced by the European Council against Racism and Intolerance the European Monitoring Group against Racism and Xenophobia last year. Contact info@liberty-human-rights.org tel 020 74075354

Refugee Week feedback and dates for next year

If you have any comments about the content and effectiveness of this year's Refugee Week organiser, Joanna Harvey, would like to hear from you, as soon as possible.

Don't forget to include any points about raising its media profile and using the event to reach a broader range of media outlets. Refugee Week 2001 runs from 17-23 June. Email comments to: joanna.harvey@refugeecouncil.org.uk

RAM Project says: Let's focus on media in 2002

RAM Co-ordinator Terry Williams offers the following thoughts: *Congratulations to everyone*

involved in all of this year's activities. RAM looks forward to playing a full part again next year. We must all beef up our media work for Refugee Week 2002.

Money was made available for arts activities this year - all good positive stuff - but Refugee Week is a BIG opportunity to get positive headlines and interviews, and I don't think it got enough.

Activities tended to be centred on a few of the larger cities. With 12 months to plan we should be able to do much, much more next year. Anyone for an early workshop on how we might achieve it?

HOW TO HANDLE THE MEDIA

Worried about how to get your message across, what to do when the media contact you, or how to complain about unfair coverage?

Call PressWise
0117 941 5889

We can offer advice over the phone or arrange use-of-the-media training.

Labour of love

Refugee Week saw the birth of a first child for Nazand Begikhani, former RAM Bulletin Editor. Nawzad was born at birth at 10.08 on Wed 27 June in Bristol, weighing 3.75 kilos, after a 27 hour labour. He shares his name ('New born') with Nazand's youngest brother who was executed in an Iraqi jail aged 30, in 1989.

Mother, baby and father John are all doing well!

Asylum accommodation an 'official secret'

Home Office contracts with private landlords housing asylum seekers are subject to the Official Secrets Act, according to a report from the Rowntree Trust.

This is hampering multi-agency co-operation and restricting the flow of information needed by support groups, including the police. Have journalists in your area thought of taking up this 'freedom of information' angle?

The report details other problems caused by dispersal, and makes a series of recommendations.

'Dispersed: A study of services for asylum seekers in West Yorkshire', researched by Ruth Wilson, was launched during Refugee Week.

Copies of the summary findings can be downloaded from

www.jrct.org.uk

Ruth Wilson writes about her experience of the press launch in this month's COMMUNICATOR column (see p.4).

Sign up for asylum debate

A petition calling on the Government to lead a balanced public debate about refugees and asylum seekers has been launched.

You can sign up at any of the 60 UK branches of Anita Roddick's Body Shop, where you can also find facts about asylum seekers and refugees.

Ten Oxfam stores have linked up with the Body Shop's National Refugee Campaign, which also calls for an end to the widely criticised voucher scheme.

If there is an Oxfam of Body Shop store near you, make sure the local media are covering the story.

Remember the regional Press

Include the regional and local media in your communication strategy when organising a national event.

That was the message from RAM co-ordinator Terry Williams, guest speaker at the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) London conference to launch its report calling for the reform of UK

immigration policy - which attracted very little national coverage.

"You stand a better chance of getting coverage in the regional media by putting out Press Releases and making sure that local spokespeople are briefed and available for interview," said Terry.

"Think about the *Birmingham Evening Mail* rather than the *Daily Mail*!"

For details of the JCWI report visit www.jcwi.org.uk

To find media contacts consult the *Guardian Media Guide* - available from most big bookshops.

Email views on 'racist' tenants

Email your support if you think Glasgow City Council should evict council tenants who attack asylum seekers.

The Council's decision to take eviction proceedings against tenants found to be carrying out racist attacks against refugees has attracted media attention.

Some argue that the council should not carry out such evictions, and blame such anti-social behaviour on poverty.

Glasgow-based Positive Action in Housing wants people to email their views on the issue and plans to publish the results on their web site www.paih.org

Send your comments to home@paih.org.uk

Dispersal clusters 'fuelling racism'

The Royal Institute for International Affairs says the government's dispersal policy is contributing to racial tensions.

According to the report, dispersal is determined by availability of cheap accommodation rather than ensuring that asylum-seekers are housed in areas with an established ethnic minority communities.

Report author Dr Christina Boswell told the BBC: "The Government ... should make sure that asylum seekers do get sent to places where there is potential to develop support systems."

Health services for asylum-seekers

Have your local media investigated the quality of services for asylum-seekers, many of whom arrive with appalling medical conditions?

The Observer Magazine recently ran a feature about inadequate levels of NHS support for asylum seekers.

This follows other media reports about insufficient access for asylum-seekers to mental health services in the UK. It could be a rich seam for local features too.

Refugee women target the media

There was tough talking about the media at the Annual Meeting of the Refugee Women's Association.

There was anger that so many reporters are deskbound and rarely venture out to research stories and talk to people in person.

And why do we never see stories about British investors in overseas projects which have led to displacement and forced people to seek a new life elsewhere?

Minoo Jalali from Avon & Bristol Law Centre, PressWise Director Mike Jempson, Zina Rohan from the BBC World Service Right to Refuge project, and Refugee Council press officer Jean Candler were among the speakers.

To contact the RWA email: rwa@womensassociation.freeserve.co.uk Tel 020 7923 2412

UK asylum hope for victims of 'female circumcision'

Girls and women escaping from the "barbaric practice" of female circumcision may soon be able to claim asylum in the UK.

Home Office Minister of State Lord Rooker told the House of Lords: "The UK is quite ready to recognise as refugees those who have been persecuted by non-state agents, as well as those persecuted by the state."

However applicants would have to show that female genital mutilation was "knowingly tolerated by their government or that the authorities were unable to offer effective protection".

Lord Rooker added: "This is a barbaric practice which ought to be outlawed across the planet by every

country and we will do what we can, whenever there are women seeking refuge in this country, to assist in every way possible."

For full story see: http://www.ananova.com/News/story/sm_348490.html

Sad tribute to 58 dead

There was little media coverage of the anniversary vigil for the 58 Chinese people found dead in the back of a lorry at Dover last year.

About the same number of people as those who died took part in the vigil outside the Houses of Parliament on June 19. It was followed by a public meeting addressed by Liberal Democrat deputy leader Simon Hughes.

RAM co-ordinator Terry Williams told the meeting he was shocked by how easily this tragedy had slipped from people's minds.

He said the anniversary, coming so soon after the General Election, should mark the start of a new campaign to get a better deal in the UK for asylum seekers and economic migrants.

Sofa so good, in Hull

Panellists at a RAM asylum media forum in Hull were given the 'Richard and Judy' treatment! They ended up speaking from comfy chairs under spotlights on the stage of a lecture theatre.

Over 40 people turned up for the event, organised to explain how local people could work with the media to improve coverage of asylum seekers and refugees.

A local authority Press Officer pointed out those working for statutory authorities could always pass suggestions for positive stories and pictures to official media spokespeople if their jobs prevent direct involvement.

Regular RAM panellists Diane Gascoyne (Sheffield Refugee Centre), Sue Roberts (Press Complaints Commission), were joined by Neil Anthony from Hull Social Services.

Local journalists will be invited to the next meeting.

For information please Email Neil.Anthony@hullcc.gov.uk

Refugee integration and the media

The RAM Project's Nick Cater will lead the discussion on local media and communications strategies at the 'After the General Election ... Strategies for Asylum Support and Refugee Integration' conference in London on 18 July.

He will speak alongside Insp Graham Reynolds of Devon and Cornwall Constabulary who will outline the Devon Media Protocol.

Organised by InfoLog Training the conference includes sessions on dispersal, employment, partnerships and integration strategies.
<http://www.infolog.co.uk>
Contact: mailus@infolog.co.uk
tel: 020 7290 0851

Making space for the voiceless

PressWise Director Mike Jempson will speak on the right of refugees to be heard, at the Inaugural International Media Conference *Global village or global image?* in London later this month.

The 3-day event brings together media practitioners from around the world to discuss the reporting of diversity and difference.

Organised by the British Film Institute, the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission the event takes place at the Institute for Education in London from 24 -27 July.
For more information contact susan.mains@bfi.org.uk

Positive images

RAM has been invited to join a sub-group of the National Refugee Integration Forum to look at media coverage of asylum seekers.

Set up as part of a Home Office initiative, the Positive Images subgroup includes representatives from the Refugee Council and Body Shop and will be looking at ways to assist journalists to provide a more comprehensive picture of asylum issues.

Taking refugee issues to the world's broadcasters

The RAM Project is producing a session on refugees and news

television at the NewsWorld 2001 conference in Barcelona.

NewsWorld (Nov 13-16) annually attracts the world's greatest concentration of news decision-makers, with 800 leading TV news editors, producers, presenters, reporters and executives, representing stations in countries of both refugee origin and asylum.
Know a broadcaster from a refugee background? Contact ram@presswise.org.uk (0117 941 5889. Newsworld information: <http://www.newsworld.co.uk/>

Festival volunteers needed

The National Assembly Against Racism wants volunteers to help them at London's Respect Festival.

The event takes place in Finsbury Park on July 21 (12 - 18:30pm).
Email: NAAR - AA_R@compuserve.com

Youth asylum play

Asylum, a play specially written for young people is being presented by the Big Brum Theatre in Birmingham on July 13 and 14.

Focussing on the arrival in the UK of a woman seeking asylum, the play was written by Geoff Gillham, who died recently. This premiere will be performed in his memory. *Details from The Drum box office on 0121 333 244.*

Refugees on radio

Don't forget to tune into the UNHCR-backed *Right to Refuge* series now being broadcast by BBC World Service.

Over the next six months the 9-language series will reach global audiences. On 29 July, listeners will be able to put their questions - via phone or email - to the new UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, on the BBC World Service multimedia programme *Talking Point*, for live simultaneous broadcast and webcast.

For more information visit http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/talking_point/newsid_1369000/1369346.stm OR www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice

Refugees in Birmingham

Birmingham Race Action Partnership has produced a useful handbook about refugees in the city.

Packed with facts, contacts and commentaries *Shattered homeland: scattered dreams* is designed to improve and encourage debate.
Download the report from www.brap.org.uk Email: brap@hq.birmingham.wminds.nhs.uk

Researching detention of asylum seekers

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) has commissioned a research study about the conditions under which asylum seekers are detained in prisons and detention centres.

Researchers Ruth Wyner and Jane Shackman are especially keen to interview those who have been detained. Their work should be completed in August.

If you can help with information or contacts, please get in touch with Ruth Wyner, ruth@wynerat.freereserve.co.uk

Article 19 to research refugees and media

The RAM Project has offered its support to an Article 19 research proposal on refugees, asylum seekers and freedom of expression in the UK"

The freedom of expression organisation is seeking funding for a one-year project to test, among other things, whether the UK government is fulfilling its international obligations under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
For more information, contact Bethan Grillo at Bethan@article19.org
<http://www.article19.org>

Minorities and their media

A new project has begun mapping diasporic minorities and their media in Europe.

Dr. Myria Georgiou, Research Fellow in Media at the LSE Dept of Sociology, is investigating how media cultures relate to minorities' inclusion in and exclusion from European societies and culture(s). Researchers, media practitioners, minority and NGO activists are invited to contribute to the project <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/Media/EMTEL/Minorities/minorities.html>

The site will soon include a discussion area.

Cut-out-and keep COMMUNICATOR

HANDLING A PRESS LAUNCH

Ruth Wilson, of Tandem Communications & Research, shares her experience of dealing with media interest in 'Dispersed, a study of services for asylum seekers in West Yorkshire'¹ which she produced for The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). It was launched on 25 June in Leeds, during Refugee Week.

Our report has national implications but ran the risk of being pigeonholed as 'regional'.

Sarah Wildon, of Wildon Public Relations made first contact with the media, generating positive coverage in 17 local, regional, national and specialist media, including *The Yorkshire Post*, BBC Radio Scotland; local BBC TV news and *The Guardian*.

BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme was interested, but led that day on a different report (Riots in Lancashire may have deflected attention.)

An Afghan living in Bradford, who recently got leave to remain, agreed to speak not just at the launch but also to the media. This was a real help. The Rowntree Trust's Chairperson and Secretary also gave interviews.

My experience of being interviewed was good, on the whole. Some journalists were not very focussed. Others were quite challenging in their questions, and I found that I enjoyed this as it meant I could really talk about the issues. Some wanted to talk about things not in the report, and this was harder to manage.

Once I'd done a few interviews my fear subsided a bit, and my confidence grew. After the launch, I talked at length to the *Financial Times (FT)*, *Inside Housing* and Bradford Community Broadcasting. In the end, however, it was the *FT* that printed the least accurate account of our findings!

The following morning I got a difficult call from a local journalist who wanted to write a 'feature' story. Because I felt very uncomfortable about the approach he was taking, I called various contacts that he might go to and warned them.

I asked people at JRCT and Sarah Wildon to help me come up with a few pointers for anyone embarking on something similar for the first time.

Here they are:

- if you can, use a public relations (PR) or media professional to make initial contact with the media;
- agree in advance what your PR objective is and then manage, rather than try to avoid, the PR implications;
- only target those national and specialist media from whom you are likely to get the type of coverage you are seeking;
- it helps to know which (local) journalists may be hostile and decide how to handle this in advance;
- keep a note of tricky questions and discuss them with others involved;
- it is vital to have refugees/asylum seekers able to talk to the media, BUT you need to prepare and protect them (see the Refugee Council's guidelines on this - or contact PressWise)

Going for media profile has risks, but we raised the issues, communicated our recommendations and praised good practice in different media, and this was worthwhile.

Ruth Wilson

Tandem communications and research
Tel: 0113 266 9123

To order a copy of the report, contact the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 01904 627810. The executive summary is available free on the Trust's website: www.jrct.org.uk

'PEG' BOARD

Keep your ears and eyes open for events, which can provide you, and the media with a 'peg' on which to hang positive stories about refugees or asylum seekers.

Help to set the media agenda by generating stories rather than having to react to theirs.

Keep your media contacts informed about what is happening and why it is relevant for them.

**Saturday 7 July 12.00
EMERGENCY
PROTEST**

Human Rights for Asylum-seekers!
Called by asylum seekers and their supporters and teachers of the College of North London, Haringey, where asylum-seekers are facing deportation.
Venue: Assemble 12am Finsbury Park (Manor House entrance)
March to Wood Green
For more info, contact Jenny Sutton on 0795 112 2104

**Saturday 7 July 2.00pm
Immigration Controls:
Do you know what you are talking about?**
Public discussion organised by concerned Bedford citizens.
Venue: 22 Chaucer Rd, Bedford, MK40 2AJ
*For more info, contact eginn@arrowuk.com <http://www.ncadc.org.uk/online/yarls.html>
Tel: 07767 414714*

**Tuesday 10 July, 7.30pm
Book launch of "Immigration Controls, and Family and the Welfare State" by Steve Cohen**

Speakers, discussion, food. Children welcome.
Caribbean Retreat, 6 Clifton Road, Prestwich, Manchester M25
For more info contact Fiona Anderson on 0161 277 9066 or Tony Openshaw on 0161 740 8206

**Tuesday 17 July 10.00am – 5.00pm
EUMC (European Monitoring on Racism and Xenophobia) Roundtable**
"Linking Communities Anti-Racist Actions Across Boundaries" hosted by the Lord Mayor at Cardiff City Hall.
For more info, contact Anja Rudiger on 020 7932 5272 or secretariat@cre.gov.uk

**Wednesday 18 July
After the General Election.. Strategies for Asylum Support and Refugee Integration**
The RAM project's Nick Cater will be of a dozen speakers at a one-day conference in London, organised by InfoLog Training.
*For more info, contact mailus@infolog.co.uk
Tel 020 7290 0851
www.infolog.co.uk*

**Tuesday 24 – Friday 27 July
Representing Diversity and Difference**
PressWise Director Mike Jempson will be among the many speakers at this Inaugural International Media Conference organised by the British Film Institute, Broadcasting Standards Council & Independent TV Commission
Venue: institute of education, London.
For more info, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/events/conferences/globalimage/index.html>
USEFUL WEBSITES

www.ramproject.org.uk

Visit the new RAM Project website for news, information, and contacts.

Journalists should always check their sources – and so should you. When quoting facts and figures always indicate your source. Authoritative information is vital if you want to be taken seriously by the media. Here are some websites you might like to check out.

Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service, part of World University Service UK
www.wusuk.org
Black Information Link Run by the 1990 Trust, a national Black organisation, this site includes sections on everything from art and culture, to the Stephen Lawrence campaign, and the environment.
www.blink.org.uk

Chinese in Britain Forum
www.chinese-forum.co.uk

Commission for Racial Equality
<http://www.cre.gov.uk>

Ethnic Minority Foundation
www.emf-cemvo.co.uk

European Council on refugees & Exiles (ECRE)
www.ecre.org

European Parliament
The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is available at the web site of the EP:
www.eparl.eu.int/

Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe
www.icare.to

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)
www.jcwi.org.uk

Newcastle West: Tackling Racism Initiative
www.tri-west.org

Racial Harassment Organisation
www.racialharassment.org.uk

Refugee Women's Legal Group
www.rwlq.org.uk

Statewatch
www.statewatch.org

Article 19
www.article19.org

BBC Right to Refuge
www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/index.html

Birmingham Race Action Partnership
www.brap.org.uk

European Roma Rights Centre
www.errc.org/

1st festival of photography in Asia
www.chobimela.org

Human Rights Portal for Bangladesh
www.banglariights.net

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
www.ilpa.org.uk

Migrant Media
www.homepages.poptel.org.uk/migrantmedia/docs/migantmedia.htm

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC)
www.ncadc.org.uk/

NewsWorld
www.newsworld.co.uk

Positive Action in Housing
www.paih.org

Relief Line
www.reliefline.co.uk

Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service (RETAS)
www.wusuk.org/

Please download the printed version of this Bulletin and distribute it locally. Send information and stories to bulletin@presswise.org.uk

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
Friday 20th July**