

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

No.15, Dec 2001

£1million boost for refugee integration

Community groups working to support refugees have been invited to bid for a share of a new £1 million Home Office fund.

The UK Refugee Media Agency, backed by the RAM project, was one of the first groups to benefit from the original fund set up by Home Secretary David Blunkett.

RMA was given a start-up grant of £10,900, administered by the PressWise Trust which helped the group get off the ground.

Now the Refugee Community Development Fund is inviting UK organisations to apply for a share of £350,000 each year for the next three years.

Says Home Office Minister Angela Eagle: "Where there are plans, people and enthusiasm but no infrastructure, the fund means a pool of money that could make all the difference in communities up and down the country."

Details and application forms from 0870 241 0645.

Refugee Media Agency members meet in London

Members of the UK Refugee Media Agency are to meet in London on 15 December to decide on the way forward for the organisation.

The meeting, which will elect a new executive committee, will be addressed by Tim Gopsill, editor of *The Journalist*. Travel expenses of those attending will be met from RMA funds.

Some 50 media workers have joined the RMA, which plans to provide training and help with work opportunities for exiled journalists. RMA members who have not yet received details of the meeting and how to claim expenses should contact Anna Kelson on 0117 941 5889 or email rma@presswise.org

RMA office staff needed

The Refugee Media Agency is looking for part-time admin staff to

keep its new London office open in the new year.

The office, in Churchfield Road, Acton, West London, will be equipped to provide admin support for the organisation and training opportunities for members.

Says RAM co-ordinator Terry Williams: "Now the RMA has a base from which the members can organise meetings, develop training and provide some basic services.

"Membership has grown rapidly in a matter of months and now we can begin to meet needs identified by the members themselves."

To contact RMA call 0208 992 5776 or email rma@presswise.org.uk.

Those interested in the part-time admin job should email: williams.t@blueyonder.com

Newsroom experience with the Creative Collective

A ground-breaking scheme modelled on the Chips Quinn Scholarship which provided young Black journalists in the US with internships in newspapers and magazines, has just completed its first successful year in the UK.

The Creative Collective negotiated internships for six young journalists to spend three months working on *The Big Issue*, *The Times*, *Nottingham Evening Post*, the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* and the *Manchester Evening News*.

Now the Creative Collective, formed by journalists Joy Francis, Henry Bonsu, Paul Macey and Veena Josh, are considering options for the future.

PressWise Director Mike Jempson has urged them to consider working with the UKRMA to help set up a similar scheme for exiled journalist wishing to gain newsroom experience in the UK media.

Website: www.thecreativecollective.com
Tel 020 8683 0147

Email: info@thecreativecollective.com

Afghan writer wanted

AfghanMagazine.Com is looking for a writer to research the future of Afghan women in the country's society, politics, government and economy.

Please contact the Editor, Farhad Azad, on farhad@afghanistan.com

Research jobs for refugees

The freedom of expression organisation ARTICLE 19 is looking for 8 researchers from refugee communities to assist in a one year project.

Each researcher will carry out 5 to 10 interviews over a 3 month period (£110-£160 per interview).

One day training session in London (week of 10 Dec 2001); debriefing meetings in February/March. Accommodation and travel will be paid.

Write with one-page CV to:

Bethan Grillo, Article 19
Lancaster Hse, 33 Islington High St,
London N1 9LH Email: Refmedia@article19.org
Tel: (020) 7278 9292

Calling refugees from Middle East

The World University Service is offering training in human rights advocacy, for refugees, asylum-seekers, and other exiles from the Middle East.

The course aims to help refugees engage effectively in public education in Britain concerning human rights in the Middle East.

It will include an opportunity to plan and implement a human rights advocacy project; practical training in working with the media, and a chance to develop contacts with parliamentarians, civil servants, journalists, and others concerned with human rights

Applicants should be nominated by a refugee or community organisation or have strong links with their community.

Help with childcare is available. Applications from women particularly welcome.

Send for details by 24 Dec.; return application forms by 2 Jan 2002.

Contact Richard Germond

Tel: 020 7426 5825

email: hratp@wusuk.org

Human Rights Advocacy Training Programme, International Division WUS (UK), 14 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8PD

Tel: 020 7426 5825

Email: hratp@wusuk.org

www.wusuk.org/hratp

Media training showcase event

The Media Cafe is hosting a one day awareness event in London on Dec 15 to showcase its training programme.

The event is open to community workers and volunteers in the London borough's of Ealing, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham.

UK-RMA has been offered places at the event which starts at 10.45am.

It includes workshops on Web design and developing writing skills, and a presentation for people wanting a career in the media.

To book a place contact Media Cafe, The Bryony Centre, 61 Bryony Road, London W12. Tel 0208 740 5848, Email info@mediacafe.co.uk

US shuts down Somali internet

Somalia's only internet company and a key telecoms business have been forced to close because the United States suspects them of terrorist links.

The two firms, Somalia Internet and al-Barakaat, both appear on a US list of organisations accused of funnelling money to the al-Qaeda network.

Correspondents say the closure of the companies will have a devastating effect on the country, reports the BBC.

Both companies say they have no links with terrorists.

Free computer/internet use

Index on Censorship will be offering free use of computers and the Internet for exiled journalists.

Although the RMA planned to offer a similar service following the closure of the Freedom Forum facilities this autumn, the Index

office has the advantage of being in central London.

Contact Rohan Jayasakera on 0207 278 2313

Asylum news link

A new website has been set up at www.asylumsupport.info to provide the latest information about UK asylum and immigration.

The site carries all the National Asylum Support Service policy bulletins and provides access to the world's latest immigration stories.

Welsh ports target asylum seekers

Asylum seekers have been targeting ferry ports in Wales, according to the *Western Mail*.

The newspaper claims that tougher checks at UK ports such as Dover mean that asylum seekers may be looking to Welsh ports for an easier way in.

Special Branch officers who police the Welsh ports are said to be tightening security. Police say Holyhead, Wales' busiest port, has seen an increase in asylum seekers travelling from Ireland hidden in vans.

Asylum-seekers report increase in racist attacks

Asylum seekers reported 112 incidents of racial harassment by local communities in October - nearly twice as many as in the previous month, according to Home Office Minister Angela Eagle.

Just over 860 were reported to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) during the period May 2000 to October 2001.

Has anyone noticed an increase in media coverage of such attacks?

Mayor Ken calls for re-think on deportation

London's Mayor Ken Livingstone has called for a rethink of plans for mass deportation of failed asylum applicants after the death of a man in South London.

The man fell from a third floor window while apparently trying to escape police and immigration officers.

Newspapers reported the Mayor's concern about the Home Secretary's

plans to deport 30,000 people whose applications are turned down deportations by 2002 - 10 times the current rate.

Express complaint rejected by PCC

A complaint against the *Daily Express* appalling coverage of asylum seekers during August has been thrown out - because it was not submitted by an individual!

The National Union of Journalists and its members on the Express were so angry at the series of front page stories run by the newspaper that they took the complaint to the Press Complaints Commission.

Says RAM co-ordinator and NUJ Ethics Council Vice Chair Terry Williams: "*The Express* headlines were a disgrace. However we are not surprised by the PCC decision as it usually finds a way to wriggle out of taking action - even in the face of an overwhelmingly strong case against the newspaper."

Winter clothing appeal

An appeal for warm clothing for refugee arrivals in the UK has been launched.

The Refugee Arrivals project (RAP) says hundred of asylum seekers taken into RAP's temporary accommodation for about two weeks each month cannot afford items such as winter coats, jackets, boots, gloves and hats.

If you can help call Ainez on 020 8572 5391.

Searchlight seminar

The new date of Searchlight's Birmingham seminar on combating racism is February 28 at the Drum Arts Centre. RAM project co-ordinator Terry Williams will run a session on working with media. Register on community@searchlight.demon.co.uk

Asylum-seekers join Holocaust event

Asylum seekers are set to discuss their experiences with residents of Sandwell, West Midlands, as part of Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2002.

CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP COMMUNICATOR

A PressWise Guide to assist those wishing to improve media coverage of refugee and asylum issues.

Handling hostile questions

The thing that worries as people most about being interviewed on radio or TV is the risk that that might be given a hard time by the interviewer. You must be ready for anything, but you do not have to put up with rudeness or abuse.

Here are some tips to calm your nerves.

- Many radio presenters have little expert knowledge on specific subjects, their job is to pick up a 'brief' quickly and extemporise – they may not have had time to do their own research and will have been given notes to work from. If you send information about your organization/event in advances, that may be all they have to work from...
- Don't assume that all questions are hostile, and don't expect questions to be asked in the way you would have phrased them.
- Interviewers rarely express personal venom. Their task is to be interrogators on behalf of the public, asking questions that 'ordinary people' want answers to.
- The skill lies not in avoiding questions (a politicians' trick which has become intensely annoying to all concerned), but in turning the question to your advantage.
- Try to reverse an evidently hostile question:
EG. "Why are you planning to break the law?"

That is a scandalous suggestion. We have no intention of acting unlawfully. Our demonstration will be peaceful."

- Go on the offensive if necessary: *"It is quite irresponsible to suggest that we intend to break the law. That sort of question is designed to cause alarm and put people off legitimately expressing their opinions. We are encouraging the public to make use of their legal right to protest peacefully about an important issue that many feel strongly about."*
- Don't lose your temper; it will convince the audience that you are not to be trusted.
- Object if you feel the interviewer is trying to wind you up; be forthright but reasonable — you want to convince an audience you have never met.
- Don't be afraid to express righteous indignation, if you are being given a hard time; it is likely that audiences will feel some sympathy with you, providing you do not display arrogance or contempt.
- Don't deny the blindingly obvious. A willingness to admit mistakes is more likely to win sympathy than stonewalling or blaming others.
- The best way to handle a hostile question is to be confident about your subject, and to draw upon your greater knowledge and experience of life.

Don't be bullied — demand respect, politely

Print off, photocopy and distribute this page to network members, and build up a do-it-yourself use-of-the-media training kit.

‘PEG’ BOARD

The media always likes to 'hang' stories on a 'peg' – so it helps to keep your ears and eyes open for national or local events which can provide the media, with a reason for running a positive story about refugees or asylum seekers.

See how you can use some of these forthcoming events to attract good coverage, instead of having to react to negative stories.

Remind your media contacts if it is happening near you. Let them know if any of the speakers has a local connection, or if anyone is going from your area. Suggest they arrange an interview.

Thursday 6 December 6.00 - 7.30pm

HANDS OFF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Candlelit vigil for a system which is fair, non-coercive and meets Britain's responsibilities under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Bring a toy for an asylum seeker child. Venue: On the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square
For more info, tel London Assembly Against Racism on 020 7247 9907 or email AA_R@compuserve.com

Monday 10 December 1.00 - 3.00pm

DISBAND 'IMMIGRATION SNATCH SQUADS' DEMO

Demonstration to mark Human Rights Day and protest against 'snatch squads', detentions and fast-track deportations. Venue: Home Office, Queen Annes Gate,

London, SW1H 9AT (nearest tube St James)
For more info, contact Grattan Puxon on 01206 523528 or ustiben.2@ntlworld.com

Monday 15 December 11.00 - 3.00pm

UK-RMA MEETING

The UK Refugee Media Agency meets to decide how to proceed and elect an Executive Committee. All refugee journalists and their supporters are welcome, lunch will be provided and expenses paid. RSVP if attending. Venue: Quaker International Centre, 1-3 Byng Place, London WC1
For more info and to RSVP, contact Anna Kelson on 0117 941 5889 or anna@presswise.org.uk

Saturday 15 December
PATHWAY PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT DAY

Run by The Employability Forum, this programme provides training for professionally qualified refugees and asylum seekers, with permission to work, who are looking to find appropriate employment in the UK. Venue: Elizabeth House, The Mezzanine Floor, 39 York Road, London SE1 7NQ
For more info and application forms, email b.randall@employabilityforum.co.uk or write to Beryl Randall at the address above.

Monday 17 December 7.00pm

FOOD FOR THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT

Exiled Writers Ink! presents an evening of food and poetry, featuring Elaine Feinstein, Michael Donaghy, Mimi Khalvati and Stephen Knight with international cuisine. Tickets £10
Venue: 37a Broadhurst Gardens, London NW6.

Nearest tube, Finchley Road.

For more info, contact Choman Hardi on 020 8845 6753 or choman@choman.fsnet.co.uk

Tuesday 18 December 10.45 - 3.30pm

MEDIA TRAINING SHOWCASE EVENT

Media Cafe is hosting this one day event to showcase its training programme. Open to all community workers and volunteers in the West London area. Venue: Media Cafe, The Bryony Centre, 61 Bryony Road, London W12
For more info, tel 020 8740 5848 or info@mediacafe.co.uk

Tuesday 22 January 6.30pm

CALLING THE GHOSTS

Award-winning documentary film, featuring two Bosnian women who were raped at the Omarska detention camp, who then courageously faced their attackers at the International War Crimes Tribunal. The film is followed by a panel-led discussion. The event is organised by the Bosnian Support Fund. Tickets: £5. Film screened at 6.30pm and 8.30pm, discussion 7.30pm. Venue: The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 28 St John's Wood Road, London NW8.
For more info, tel 020 7381 5391 or 0208347 6957.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Authoritative information is vital if you want to be taken seriously by the media. The RAM Bulletin and website will try to keep network members informed about useful sources of data and stories. Here are some websites you might like to check out

– they could provide you with helpful background material for when you are being interviewed, or when issuing press releases.

Journalists should always check their sources – and so should you.

When quoting facts and figures always indicate your source.

AfghanMagazine.com
www.afghanmagazine.com

Article 19
www.article19.org

Asylum Support
www.asylumsupport.info

The Creative Collective
www.creativecollective.com

World University Service
www.wusuk.org

PLEASE PRINT COPIES OF THIS BULLETIN AND DISTRIBUTE IT LOCALLY

Send information and stories to

bulletin@presswise.org.uk

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
Friday 21st December**

The RAM Project is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust.