

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

No 20, Sept 2002

WANTED: Guest Editors for RAM Bulletin

Exiled journalists anywhere in the UK are invited to become guest editors of the RAM Bulletin over the next 10 months.

Each guest editor will contribute to two editions of the monthly Bulletin. They will work with the RAM team at the PressWise office in Bristol for up to a week each month, with accommodation supplied. Travel expenses will be met and they will receive a fee.

Applicants should write in with details of their journalistic and IT experience.

Contact ram@presswise.org.uk

New programme of RAM Communication Days

The RAM Project is to launch a new schedule of Communication Days around the country.

Over the last two years these information & training days have brought together organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers, and looked at new ways of countering negative coverage in the national and local media.

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the National Union of Journalists, the Refugee Council and other voluntary organisations have contributed to the success of past programmes.

In its Annual Report the PCC mentioned these events as evidence of its concern about the negative nature of much reporting.

If your organisation would like to help organise a RAM

Communication Day in your area, please contact
ram@presswise.org.uk

Free places at post-Sept 11 media event

The RAM project is offering to meet the costs of exiled journalists wishing to attend the *After September 11: TV News and*

Transnational Audiences Symposium, in London, 9-11 Sept.

The event will examine the political management of news agendas and multicultural audiences, and the techniques, ethics and aesthetics of representing conflict terror and war.

Journalist Robert Fisk is a keynote speaker. RAM Co-ordinator Terry Williams, will speak on examples of best practice in the UK media.

The event, aimed at academics, broadcasters, journalists, takes place at the Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy Research, formerly the Freedom Forum Europe Centre near Marble Arch.

The British Film Institute is charging £10 per day or £20 for all three days, to cover overheads.

Symposium details on
www.afterseptember11.tv To apply for RAM backing, email ram@presswise.org.uk

Freedom of expression for refugees

The freedom of expression group Article 19 is to monitor print and broadcast coverage of refugees and asylum seekers from September to December.

The results will be compared with findings from interviews with 45 refugees and asylum seekers in London, Kent, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Leeds and with 25 asylum seekers in UK detention centres.

The project intends to hold consultations about the results at a seminar for journalists, Home Office Officials, and refugee organisations early in 2003.

For more information contact Sara Buchanan on sara@article19.org

'Acceptable racism' - UK press coverage of the Yarl's Wood fire.

Andrew Clarke, MA student at the London Metropolitan University has analysed press coverage of the Yarl's Wood fire in February 2002.

His dissertation, 'Acceptable Racism: Representations of Refugees UK National Press', examines reports of the fire and follow-up stories in four UK papers, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*.

He found *The Guardian* offered a liberal interpretation of events seeking out alternative views to those offered by police, government and Group 4, while *The Times* provided fairly neutral coverage with little commentary.

The Sun, initially muted in its coverage, soon focused on the expense to taxpayers and the lack of gratitude from the detainees.

Meanwhile 'The Mail seems to be the only paper with a well-defined and continuous agenda in terms of race and immigration, with 50% more coverage in this area than the other papers. On top of overt attacks on the 'luxuries' afforded inmates, there was a focus on their violent conduct and direct links made to the continuing 'threat' of refugees coming through the channel tunnel.'

His dissertation begins with a quote from *The Mail* on February 3, 1900, referring to Jewish refugees: 'There landed at Southampton yesterday from the transport Cheshire over 600 so-called refugees...When the relief committee passed by they hid their gold and fawned and whined, and in broken English, asked for money for their train fare'

If nothing else, *The Mail* is consistent.

For a full copy of the dissertation contact andrew.clarke@unl.ac.uk

Mail and Express attack those seeking fair treatment for refugees

The Daily Mail has targeted John O'Reilly (John O of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns) for his efforts to obtain justice for those seeking asylum in Britain – or a fair trail.

Two days of critical coverage followed the news that the Lottery Community Fund had been forced to think twice about funding the NCADC after intervention from the Home Office.

Both *The Mail* and *The Express* turned their guns on the RAM Project after a Home Office announcement on 20 August that it is to fund the continuation of the Project which started in 1999, as part of a £1million commitment to assisting integration efforts.

A Home Office press release on the same day (20 Aug) announced a repatriation package for Afghan asylum seekers.

'Asylum seekers will be bribed to go home' screamed *The Mail* headline next day over a picture of a hooded man scaling a security fence in France, 'And they'll get £80,000 worth of spin-doctoring.'

The Express, like *The Mail*, accused David Blunkett of double standards in supporting the work of RAM as its website contains notices of demonstrations that protest against government policies. Unlike *The Mail*, it did not bother to speak to PressWise or the RAM Project.

To their credit the Home Office told *The Express*: 'They [RAM] are an independent organisation and we are not responsible for what they put on their website'.

RAM will continue to provide information about events which might attract media coverage of refugees and government policies. See our regular features **COMMUNICATOR** and **PEG BOARD**.

Mugged by *The Mail*

Gerald Oppenheim. Policy and Communications Director at the Lottery Community Fund, was given a column in the *Media Guardian* to describe what it felt like to be in the middle of press hysteria and hype over the 'frozen' grant to NCADC.

His biggest complaint was about the way the story was presented and followed up over a period of 10 days.

'The original concern got lost in a welter of complaint about how mad and bad the fund must be... What is not fair is when, through innuendo

and subtle linking of the grant to wider concerns, the allegations start to be quoted as fact elsewhere.'

He described the descent of the media scrum on NCADC as 'intimidating', and ended 'It is a pity there isn't more honesty around in the way important matters of public concern are presented.'

And so say all of us.

The PressWise Trust
exists to assist those who are having difficulties with the media. Do not hesitate to contact us on
0117 941 5889

Media workshop success

The Senses of the City (SOC) media workshop run by London Arts in the run up to Refugee Week was a big success thanks to the RAM Bulletin, writes **SARA WAJID** who helped to organize last year's RAM Forum in London.

SOC is a strand of the London Arts Development Fund that supports the development of new arts projects by refugee-led groups from different cultural communities in Greater London.

We downloaded all the back issues of RAM Bulletin and discussed various strategies for building audiences and getting favourable coverage.

Getting lost in sea of Refugee Week activities was a major concern, as was being ghettoised in the refugee arts sector and ignored by 'mainstream arts' journalists.

We took inspiration from Bob Marley and the Wailers. Their manager, Chris Blackwell used the small but strategically important local fan base in Jamaica as a springboard to reach the rest of the world, so don't overlook your friends!

The deadline for the next round of SOC funding is September 16th – see www.arts.org.uk/directory/regions/london/about_us/arts_work/access_refugeeweek.htm

inexile features asylum in the media

The July/August issue of the Refugee Council's magazine

'*inexile*' concentrated on representations of refugees and asylum seekers in the media and contained some excellent articles from a wide variety of contributors – several of which made mention of the work of the RAM project.

Research Professor and Director of the Tom Hopkinson Centre for Media Research, Terry Threadgold, provided an explanation of just how the stereotypes and myths that dominate the media discourse on asylum are created.

'It's a managerial discourse, not a human one. There is never an attempt to unpack the story. Most stories about Sangatte, for example, show refugees hiding under trucks, but journalists rarely ever speak to the refugees themselves.'

Terry cites work by Tammy Speers of Cardiff University which showed that if you have one-to-one contact with journalists, they will eventually start publishing the slant you give them.

This was proved to great effect by Catherine Green of Wrexham Council who orchestrated eight or nine stories in the local media (see issue 18 of the RAM bulletin) and ultimately helped the 53 asylum seekers dispersed to Wrexham to settle in without any trouble.

To subscribe to *inexile*, visit <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/pub003.htm>

Media skills workshops offered

Skillset, which provides training for the Broadcast, Film, Video and Multimedia industry, is offering grants and free courses for individuals from the UK's black and ethnic communities.

Under the third round of Skillset Millennium Awards the development of websites, producing an item for local radio or writing a newsletter are among projects which might be considered.

Successful applicants receive up to £8,000 worth of professional training with the BBC, ongoing support and advice, and a grant of up to £500 to use their new skills to undertake a community project.

For more info and an information pack, contact Skillset Millennium Awards, 2nd Floor, 103 Dean Street

Cut-out-and keep COMMUNICATOR

These PressWise Guides are designed to assist people wishing to improve media coverage of refugee and asylum issues. See also:
<http://www.ramproject.org.uk/communicator.php>

Each RAM Bulletin lists events which may become the 'pegs' upon which the media 'hang' stories about refugees and asylum-seekers. Here RAM Co-ordinator TERRY WILLIAMS offers a 5-step guide on how to make the most of media opportunities around one such event.

Sat 21 Sept 2002: PEACE ONE DAY

FIRST: Make sure you now what the event is about

Peace One Day is the United Nations International Day of Peace - the first ever day of global ceasefire and non-violence. The vision of the day extends far beyond the cessation of violent conflict and represents an opportunity for the people of the world to create a moment of global unity.

Get more information from the organisers - tel: 020 7456 9180; fax: 020 7375 200; website

www.peaceoneday.org

Email: info@peaceoneday.org

SECOND: Decide what message you want communicate.

War is a major reason why refugees flee their homes and seek asylum. The Peace One Day event on September 21 provides an ideal opportunity to explain this to the British public.

THIRD: Have something that the media want

The print and broadcast media want news about events that are of interest to their readers. The local media are unlikely to cover international events unless there is a direct connection to their area.

- Link up with peace/religious groups who may be organising something locally, hold a vigil or set up a stall in a prominent place, or arrange a press conference to introduce journalists to refugees living locally who fled from war-torn countries.
- Local radio stations are always looking for subjects to discuss on 'phone-in' programmes. Organisations and individuals can contact the media and offer interviews about global conflict and how it is a major reason for the growing numbers of refugees.
- Journalists want to hear personal stories from refugees. Any one wishing to tell their

story should think about the implications of speaking out, and make clear to journalists in advance what elements of their story are best left unsaid - to protect their family, for instance. It is a good idea to have a friendly witness present during a face-to-face interview in order to provide support and make sure that the journalist does not stray into problematic areas.

FOURTH: Contact the media (in plenty of time)

- Put together a Press Release to send to the media. This helps clarify your thoughts and is helpful to the journalist. It is always a good idea to call the media outlet, make sure they have received it, and ask who is dealing with it. Journalists may follow it up with a request to interview and, perhaps, want a photograph. Think about whether you want to give your real identity. The media will protect you if you have good reason (personal or family safety, for instance) - and a little imagination can produce a photograph which does not reveal your identity.

If you need help in putting a Press Release together contact PressWise on 0117 941 5889 or ram@presswise.org.uk or look up the guide on <http://www.ramproject.org.uk/communicator.php?story=12>

- Write a letter to your local newspaper for publication. Outline your story and link it to Peace One Day. Before you start, take a look at the local papers to get an idea of the length they normally publish. Always supply your name and address (and a contact number if possible) but if, for safety reasons, you would prefer them not to appear in print mark them clearly 'not for publication' and the editor will respect your wishes.

For more help see:

www.ramproject.org.uk/communicator.php?story=11

FIFTH: Always follow up media interest

The media is only interested in an event such as Peace One Day before or on the day of the event. There is little point in try to get them interested AFTER the event. However, if there has been good media coverage of the event – compliment the journalist involved. If it has been entirely negative – complain. If people respond to your letter, keep the correspondence going in the letters' pages.

To discuss your ideas contact RAM Co-ordinator Terry Williams at williams.t@blueyonder.co.uk or on 07946 343055. If you need help with complaints contact PressWise on 0117 941 5889.

Let RAM know how you got on and your opinions about how the media covered your contribution to Peace One Day.

GOOD LUCK!

'PEG' BOARD

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.

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.

Monday 2 September
7.30pm

POETRY CAFE

Exiled Writers Ink! presents 'Generations of Newcomers' with Vida Kashizadeh, Parm Kaur and Judith Silver.

Admission £1 members, £3 others

Venue: 22 Betterton Street, London WC2. Nearest tube Covent Garden

For more info, contact Jennifer Langer on 020 8458 1910 or jennifer@exiledwriters.net

Thursday 12 September to Sunday 13 October

TERMINAL FRONTIERS

Exhibition by Virtual Migrants, digital-based art group exploring personal experiences of immigrant culture in UK. Admission free.

Venue: Castlefield Gallery, 2 Hewitt Street, Manchester M15 4GB

For more info, contact Yuen Fong Ling at Castlefield Gallery on 0161 832 8034 or info@castlefieldgallery.co.uk

Saturday 14 September
2.00pm

SHAPING OF IMMIGRATION CONTROL

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) AGM includes this Seminar on the topic of immigration control in the UK.

Venue: Skeel Lecture Theatre, Peoples Palace Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4S. Nearest tube Mile End or Stepney Green

For more info, or to confirm attendance, contact JCWI on tel 020 7251 8708, fax 020 7251 8707 or e-mail info@jcw.org

Thursday 19 September
6.30 - 9.00pm

ARBITRARY DETENTION IN THE UK

Launch of the report to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention prepared by Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID).

Venue: Room G79, Kings College London, The Franklin-Wilkins Building, Waterloo Road, London SE1

For more info, see www.biduk.org, please RSVP to bailforimmigrationdetainees@yahoo.co.uk or 020 7247 3590

Friday 20 September
9.15am - 4.15pm

BEING BRITISH - INTEGRATION OR ASSIMILATION?

The AGM of the Central Scotland Racial Equality Council Ltd (CSRECL) will explore what 'being British' means in a Scottish context.

Venue: MacDonald Inchyra Hotel, Grange Road, Polmont, Falkirk
For more info, contact CSRECL, Community Education Centre, Park Street, Falkirk, FK1 1RE. Tel 01324 610 950, fax 01324 610 955, e-mail csrecl@aol.com

Saturday 21 September

GERMANY: CARAVAN FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

This tour will stop at over 25 cities, towns and refugee camps, during the general election campaign in Germany, ending in Berlin on the day of the election.

For more info, contact Karawane Bremen on mail@humanrights.de or free2move@nadir.org

Saturday 21 September
7.30pm

PEACE ONE DAY - THE CELEBRATION

An evening of live music, multimedia and speech to mark the first ever day of global ceasefire and non-violence on the UN International Day of Peace.

Tickets £15 advance from 0870 771 2000. Venue: Brixton Academy
For more info, contact 020 7456 9180 or info@peaceoneday.org

Saturday 28 September
1.00pm

DON'T ATTACK IRAQ DEMONSTRATION

An attack on Iraq will kill thousands of innocent people, devastate a country already reeling from sanctions and bombing, further destabilise the Middle East, and force more people to become refugees.

Organised by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain, supported by CND.

Assemble Embankment, march to Hyde Park.
For more info, see www.stopwar.org.uk or call 07951 235 915

Thursday 1 October
9.30am - 3.30pm

REFUGEEACCESS WEBSITE LAUNCH

Leeds Launch conference for www.refugeeaccess.info
Confirmed speakers include Nick Hardwick (Refugee Council), Ruth

Wilson (Tandem Communications).
Venue: Thackray Museum, Beckett Street, Leeds

For more info and to book, contact 0113 247 5363

Friday 4 October 9.30am - 4.30pm

BUILDING BRIDGES - ACROSS THE EQUALITY SPECTRUM

One-day conference to identify common issues and current equality policy, and to explore the future.

Venue: Royal Concert Hall, 2 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow

For more info, contact Alex Thomson on 0131 474 6152 or alex.thomson@scvo.org.uk

Thursday 31 October
9.00am - 4.00pm

VOLUNTEERING AND ASYLUM CONFERENCE

For people managing volunteers who are refugees or working with refugees, and for groups and organisations that want to develop this area of work.

Organised by Tandem Communications and Research.

Venue: Thackray Museum, Beckett Street, Leeds

For more info, contact Kate or Nasim on 01924 302269

http://www.tandem-uk.com/vol_asylum.htm#conf

Visit the RAM Project website for information, contacts, news and views

www.ramproject.org.uk

COPY FOR NEXT BULLETIN SHOULD REACH ram@presswise.org.uk BY 27 SEPT 2002