

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



No 22, Nov 2002

Wanted: Exiled journalist...

.. to assist in the development of the RAM Project on a six month contract starting early January 2003. Based in Bristol and for a salary of £20k pro rata, this is an opportunity for an experienced journalist, preferably with experience of the UK voluntary sector, to assist colleagues in gaining experience of the UK media scene through the PressWise RAM Project.

The post would suit someone with refugee status who has a journalistic background, organisational skills, and some experience in the UK media and/or voluntary sector. S/he will need to be computer literate, have good English and be a self-starter with personal knowledge of the refugee system in the UK/Europe.

Responsibilities will include: Assisting Guest Editors in the production and development of the RAM Bulletin;

Contacting exiled journalists and assisting in assessing their training/reskilling needs survey among exiled journalists; Helping to produce and promote a directory of exiled journalists; Helping to organise a training weekend in Bristol for exiled journalists;

Liaison with the NUJ, refugee community organisations and other NGOs;

Supporting the work of the RAM Co-ordinator in organising 'Communication days' and Media Fora around the UK (and taking a lead in the Bristol event);

Assisting the Project Co-ordinator and the Administrator;

Representing the RAM Project at events in the UK;

Writing up the work as it progresses for a Project Report.

The salary will be paid monthly in arrears, plus all reasonable out of pocket expenses.

To apply, please send CV and covering letter to

anna@presswise.org.uk

or Anna Kelson, RAM Project, The PressWise Trust, 38 EBC Felix Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 0HE

NCADC Grant confirmed

A Community Fund grant to the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), originally approved in August this year was subsequently frozen following intervention by the Home Secretary David Blunkett and Culture Minister Tessa Jowell.

Finally, on 22 October, the grant was approved subject to conditions. The NCADC issued the following statement:

"It is to be regretted that the hate campaign 'encouraged' by some sections of the press, together with the unwarranted intervention by the Home Office, caused the grant to be delayed by more than two months." And the 'sections of the press' responsible?

Our old friends at the *Daily Mail*. Ten days of continuous coverage, including three articles in one day, and a personal attack on NCADC National Co-ordinator John O, with headlines "Asylum Campaigner Backs Murderers Too" and "Mr O, the ex-trucker who stands up for the terrorists".

Gerald Oppenheim, Director of Policy and Communications at the Community Fund, found himself in the firing line. During the allegations, people rang the Community Fund office to complain that the grant was 'illegal'. Oppenheim commented:

"Most of them said this because of what they had read in the Mail. A colleague was told by a radio interviewer that our grant had been illegal. This is palpably not true."

Diana Britton, Chair of the Community Fund, stated in their Press Release: "We have no evidence that the NCADC has

either broken the law or encouraged others to do so."

Obviously the journalists camping outside the NCADC office and intimidating their employees chose to ignore this detail.

For more information from NCADC, contact Pete Widlinski on 01642 217447 or 07932 384 249.

The Community Fund Press Release can be read at

http://www.community-fund.org.uk/english/news/press_releases/2002/oct/22102002.strat

Revived RAM

Since funding from the Home Office secured the RAM Project's future into 2003, the team have been working harder than ever to turn the tide of negative media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers. Here's the latest news..

Coventry seeks union support

Trade unionists in Coventry are to be asked if they will help refugees get work.

This was agreed by the city's activists working for refugees and asylum seekers after a visit from the RAM Project.

They heard RAM national co-ordinator Terry Williams talk about the support given by the National Union of Journalists.

Says Terry: "The NUJ has offered to provide some training in working as a freelance journalists and web journalism. The union has also offered refugees and asylum seeking media workers a cheap deal on membership while they seek work in this country."

"The NUJ is encouraging refugees and asylum seekers to become union members so that they can make use of the support services of the union."

"Coventry activists were impressed with this support from the NUJ and plan to approach other trade unions

in the city with requests for similar help.

You can contact Terry Williams on williams.t@blueyonder.co.uk or 0121 588 6341

Affordable training

The RAM Project is stepping up the amount of media training it delivers - and at a heavily subsidised price.

Explains RAM's national co-ordinator Terry Williams:

"Equipping people with work with the media is an important part of our work.

"In order to make sure that we reach the maximum number of people, we provide top quality training at rates well below that of other organisations. We will even try to accommodate groups which do not have access to funds."

The training covers such subjects as media awareness, handling interviews, putting together a press release and how to deal with bad or inaccurate media treatment.

If you would like details of courses or do discuss details of your groups particular needs, please contact Anna Kelson at 0117 941 5889 or anna@presswise.org.uk

Hold the front page!

Refugees in Leicester want to start their own newsletter in order to exchange news and provide an alternative to negative UK media coverage.

RAM's national co-ordinator Terry Williams has been asked to meet with the group and help them get the newsletter off the ground.

Revival plan for Birmingham

Moves are underway to revive the Refugee Media Forum in Birmingham - Britain's second city and home to many refugee families. The subject will be part of a meeting being addressed by RAM's Terry Williams on November 25th. Says Terry: "We used to have a Media Forum in Birmingham and I believe as a result we have, in general, reasonable media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers and the issues impacting on their lives. "However we cannot rest on our laurels and Birmingham has many important positive stories to tell in

the media about its refugee communities. I am sure that this group will soon be back in action."

If you are interested in joining the group in Birmingham please contact Terry Williams on williams.t@blueyonder.co.uk or 0121 588 6341.

Refugee ambassadors!

Refugees in Liverpool may become ambassadors for their own community groups!

Activists who are part of the Merseyside Refugee Media Forum would like to see refugees trained to speak at community and public meetings in order to change negative views about them. The Forum has asked RAM to consider providing training for refugees who are willing to talk about the many positive contributions refugees can and have brought to Merseyside.

Asylum group invite to Home Secretary

Home Secretary David Blunkett is to get an invitation to talk to an asylum media group in Sheffield. Mr Blunkett is also one of the city's MPs and recent media coverage of his statements as Home Secretary have concerned the Sheffield group. Now Sheffield Refugee Media Forum co-ordinator Diane Gascoyne intends to write inviting him to speak at a future meeting. Diane believes that the Home Secretary may be equally concerned about the ways the media portrays his views on asylum and such a meeting would offer the opportunity to set the record straight.

She says: "David Blunkett is an excellent and responsive MP and it is time we met him to discuss the many concerns we have about media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers."

You can contact Diane Gascoyne of the *Sheffield Asylum Media Group* on 0114 275 3114

Prince's Trust plea for understanding

A major event to promote better understanding of refugees and asylum seekers is to be held in

Liverpool Cathedral on January 30.

The event is being organised by the Princes Trust and will include a conference to involve 150 people from all over North West England. Stalls and information stands are also planned for the day which may be followed by other similar regional events throughout the UK. Anyone wanting information can contact Mike Taylor at The Prince's Trust, Bedford House, Oxford Road, Liverpool or ring 0151 794 3197.

Tamil Community Radio Launched

UBC Radio is an internationally recognised broadcasting station serving the Tamil community. Located in London, its main aim is to proclaim the news freely, faithfully and efficiently. Broadcast through Digital Hot bird Satellite on D/L12, 597 MHz S/R 27,500(V) to Europe, the programmes are also streamed live on the Internet at www.ubcradio.com

UBC is very popular in Europe as it takes a neutral stand on issues such as culture, religion and current politics, and support not only the Tamil but all refugees worldwide.

Refugee journalists are invited to contribute by contacting UBC Radio,

UBC Tamil Vanolli, P.O.Box 63 Harrow, HA2 7XN

Tel: 0208 728 8082

E-mail info@ubcradio.com

Guest editors back in December

Congratulations to the RAM bulletin's guest editor Max Jimmy who did an excellent job last month and expanded the bulletin to 6 pages for the first time since its launch in October 2000!

Congratulations are also in order as he has since found full-time work in London - less fortunate for us however, as he was unable to edit this issue. We wish him all the best in his new job and every success in the future.

Next month sees the arrival of guest editor Zafir Behlic - publication date Monday 2 December.

Cut-out-and keep COMMUNICATOR

These PressWise Guides are designed to assist people wishing to play a more active role in improving media coverage of refugee and asylum issues. Fuller versions can be viewed in more detail on the RAM website:
<http://www.ramproject.org.uk/>

LETTER CAMPAIGNS

National letter campaigns are a quick and easy way for local groups to make their views known. They can also be used to promote local media coverage.

A case in point is a Refugee Council briefing distributed around the UK on the subject of concerns about the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill. A copy of this was received by the Sheffield Asylum Media Forum which discussed the contents at its recent meeting.

The group had previously been active in responding to negative letters in the local newspapers. Some members volunteered to use information in the Refugee Council handout as the basis for letters which would be sent to local MPs.

The Refugee Council asked that people include their names and address on the letters and ask MPs whether they agree with the contents. The letters should also ask that MPs raise concerns with the Home Office.

Of course Sheffield members have the Home Secretary as a local MP so RAM National Co-ordinator Terry Williams, who attended the meeting, suggested they should write to him.

He also encouraged the group to make this the basis of a Press Release. All the information needed was contained in the

Refugee Council hand out and more was available on the web site www.refugeecouncil.org.uk This would help spread the key messages of the campaign. David Blunkett's response would also provide material for a further Press Release.

The key messages of the campaign are:

- No asylum seekers should be removed from the UK before appeal.
- Accommodation centres should be smaller and sited in suitable locations.
- All children of asylum seekers should have access to local schools.
- Decisions to detain should always have to be justified to an independent court.

There is a great deal of campaigning information around. Don't waste the opportunity - whether it be a letter to your MP and/or using the contents to take the campaign to the media.

When you campaign in this way, make sure that you ask your MP to send you a reply and copy this to the organisation co-ordinating the campaign. This helps to analyse the effectiveness of the campaign.

Information about you local MP can be obtained from the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA, by ringing 020 7219 4272 or through the website <http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/>

Details of this Refugee Council campaign on the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill can be obtained from Imran Hussain, Parliamentary Officer, Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ or from the web site www.refugeecouncil.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.

Monday 4 November
7.30pm

POETRY CAFE

Exiled Writers Ink! present their regular monthly evening of poetry.

Reesom Haile, poet and scholar, returned to Eritrea after a twenty year exile which included teaching at the New School for Research, New York. He is widely recognised for his revolutionary modernisation of the traditional art of poetry in Tigriniya. He has had three collections published, the first of which won the 1998 Raimok Prize, Eritrea's highest award for literature. He currently lives in Brussels.

Venue: Venue: 22 Betterton Street, London WC2

For more info, contact jennifer@exiledwriters.fsn.et.co.uk or visit www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Tuesday 12 November
9.30 - 3.00pm

AN AUDIENCE WITH JANE ELLIOTT

Jane Elliott, a retired schoolteacher, developed the Brown Eyed, Blue Eyed exercise in the 1960's when she was working as a schoolteacher in a small town in America. Through

this exercise she demonstrated how harmful the introduction of racism into the class environment could be. This exercise literally encourages an environment, which forces participants to 'walk in others moccasins' and feel the affects of discrimination created artificially.

Hosted by Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).
Venue: The Mansfield Traquair Centre, Edinburgh
For more info or an application form, contact Alex Thomson, Conference Organiser, SCVO, The Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh EH3 6BB Tel 0131 556 3882, Fax 0131 556 0279, Direct Dial 0131 474 6152

Friday 15 November
10.00am to Saturday 16 November 5.00pm

CROSSING BORDERS: THE LEGACY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Organised by the London European City of Immigration Group with financial support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, a two day conference examining the legacy of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act and its relevance today to refugees and asylum seekers.

Confirmed speakers include Yasmin Alibhai Brown (The Independent), Tony Bunyan (Editor, Statewatch), Prof. Teun A. van Dijk (University of Amsterdam), Faisal Islam (The Observer), Lee Jasper (Advisor to the London Mayor), and many more.

Venue: London Metropolitan University, 166 - 220 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DB
For more info, including draft programme and online booking form, visit www.blink.org.uk/borders/. Alternatively call Sarah Isal on 020 7377 9222

Wednesday 20 November

WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM FOLLOW UP

Organisations and individuals who have been involved or have an interest in the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) results are invited to attend this conference in order to discuss the government's proposed National Action Plan Against Racism. This draft is intended to implement the provisions of the WCAR.

Keynote address by Lord Filkin, Minister for Race Equality, Community Policy, and European and International Policy. There will also be workshops on many themes including immigration and asylum; slavery and exploitation; and religious discrimination.

Venue: Manchester New Century House, Manchester

For more info, and to register, contact: Sarah Isal, Research & Policy Analyst (Europe), The Runnymede Trust, Suite 106, The London Fruit & Wool Exchange, Brushfield Street, London E1 6EP Tel: +44 (0)20 7377 9222 Fax: +44 (0)20 7377 6622 E-mail: s.isal@runnymedetrust.org

Thursday 28 November
3.00pm

GLASGOW BLACK VOLUNTARY SECTOR AGM

A network of primarily black and ethnic minority-led voluntary organisations with the aim of supporting, developing, sharing information and acting together in strength for the purpose of alleviating the discrimination and poverty experienced by black communities in the greater Glasgow area. New members are invited to join and attend the AGM.

Venue: Govanhill Housing Association, Forsyth House, 151 Coplaw Street, Glasgow G42 7DE.

For more info, contact Maureen O'Rourke,

GCVS, 11 Queens Crescent, Glasgow G4 9AS. Tel: 0141 332 2444 before 22nd October 02

Saturday 30 November 12 noon

MARCH FOR CHILDREN

Organised by Bristol Defend Asylum Seekers Campaign to highlight the inhumane treatment of asylum seeker and refugee children.

Assemble: Castle Green, Bristol and march to College Green.

For more info, contact hughesbob@compuserve.com or caro.vino@blueyonder.co.uk

Thursday 5 to Sunday 8 December

CITIZENSHIP AND DISCRIMINATION IN EUROPE

An International Conference to explore the paradox of multiculturalism within citizenship while EU Member States stress national identity against diversity and use citizenship as an issue of national cohesion. How far can discrimination be addressed from a citizenship perspective? Venue: Cable & Wireless College, 320 Westwood Heath Road, Coventry CV4 8GP

For more info, and to register, contact Dr. Christophe Bertossi on Christophe.Bertossi@warwick.ac.uk or 024 7652 3970 or visit www.warwick.ac.uk/crer

Visit the RAM Project website for information, contacts, news and views www.ramproject.org.uk

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