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RAM Report wins praise

Home Office Minister Tony McNulty has welcomed publication of *The RAM Report*. "Accurate and appropriate reporting of issues around asylum is central to ensuring that debate can take place," he said, backing "the important work that the Project has taken forward to help achieve these aims, and to encourage journalists to produce more balanced articles that contribute to a better understanding of the refugee experience."

Peter Kessler, UK spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees called the Report, which tells the story of the RAM Project, 'important' and 'very well written'. There were compliments too from NUJ President Tim Lezard who spoke at its London launch.

Copies were distributed at events in Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Oxford, and at the Glastonbury Festival. RAM staff also spoke at launch events in Brussels and Amsterdam.

For copies visit www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=857

RAM in Brussels

The RAM Project was centre stage at the 'Aliens in the Media' press briefing organised for by the Jesuit Refugee Service in Brussels on Wed 15 June. It was attended by about 50 of the European Union press corps, but British journalists were noticeably absent.

The RAM video *On The Receiving End* was screened, and MediaWise Director Mike Jempson made a powerful presentation featuring shocking front pages from the UK press.

Former BBC political correspondent Nick Jones, now a MediaWise Trustee, introduced a panel of exiled journalists including RAM Communications Officer Forward Maisokwadzo and Ibrahim Seaga Shaw from the Exiled Journalists Network. Jones told the meeting that the experience of exiled journalists in Europe is a valuable resource that the media could make much more use of.

The *RAM Report* also received its European launch, at an event attended by more than 50 journalists.

Award for asylum coverage

Yorkshire Evening Post reporter Pete Lazenby has won a major award for his reporting on refugees and asylum-seekers.

Lazenby was honoured at the Commission for Racial Equality's Race in the Media Awards for his coverage of Kosovan refugees and asylum-seekers in Leeds. Presenting the Regional/Local News award, TV newsreader Moira Stewart said he had "taken a local issue and turned it into a local and regional issue of tremendous importance."

www.cre.gov.uk/media/rima.html

Europe slams UK's 'racist and inflammatory' coverage

The media are encouraging hostility towards minority groups, including asylum-seekers and refugees, a new report from The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has found.

ECRI, an independent panel of experts set up by the Council of Europe to monitor racism and intolerance in the council's 46 member states, is 'concerned about the tone of the debate in the national media, especially that surrounding asylum-seekers, immigrants, refugees, Roma/Gypsies, Travellers and Muslims'.

www.coe.int/t/E/human_rights/ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/United_Kingdom/United_Kingdom_CBC_3.asp#TopOfPage

Mail backs Zimbabwean failed asylum-seekers...

The *Daily Mail* has mounted a spirited campaign against the deportation of Zimbabwean failed asylum-seekers. Under the front page headline 'For pity's sake, let them stay', the paper argued that the deportations should stop. Columnist Melanie Phillips described Zimbabwe as 'a country that has descended into one of the most terrifying and brutal tyrannies on the planet', and launched a broadside on the government policy.

...but breaks PCC rules

It was a shame that the paper used the term 'illegal asylum seeker' as part of its campaign. Twenty months after the

EDITORIAL

Exiled journalists, the G8 and make poverty history

This month's G8 summit at Gleneagles aims to write off the largest ever amount of African debt. In return, the most powerful countries in the world will demand good governance in Africa.

So-called experts are already drawing up plans to encourage more democratic and accountable decision-making by Africa's political elites. But many ordinary Africans know all too well that previous, similar plans have failed to ensure accountability and transparency. In fact, Western governments, their consultants and many African leaders continue to be partners in the perennial political, social and economic strangulation of Africa.

Journalists are one of the only dependable comrades-at-arms to champion the plight of poverty-stricken people.

It is therefore unfortunate that no attempts have been made to engage exiled African journalists in the UK to inform the make poverty history debate. After all, their exile is a testimony to their commitment to expose anti-democratic practices in Africa. They have a thorough grasp of the root causes and effects of poverty in their countries. They have struggled against political ineptitude. They continue to share and represent their aspirations on how to alleviate grassroots misery.

Exiled journalists, from Africa and elsewhere, are an invaluable asset that politicians, campaigners and the UK media should tap into. Why don't they engage the Exiled Journalist Network in their efforts to make poverty history in Africa?

Amadu Khan

email: amadu@mail.wh1.org.uk

PCC published guidance explaining why the term is nonsense, a *Mail* editorial (28 June) wrongly claimed the Prime Minister said that halting deportations 'would compromise the Government's crackdown on illegal asylum seekers.'

Earlier this year, the PCC indicated that it would be likely to find against any paper using the term – but only if someone complains to them about it!

For advice on complaining to the PCC see www.mediawise.org.uk

Changes at the RAM Bulletin

Funding has been secured from the Open Society Foundation for what could be the last six issues of the *RAM Bulletin*.

Former *Big Issue South West* editor Rich Cookson, who has worked for RAM and MediaWise for the last two years, is co-ordinating production and commissioning material from exiled journalists. The aim is to focus more sharply on media coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees. Rich wants ideas, news articles, editorials and features from exiled journalists.

The *Bulletin* is currently distributed to 1,800 individuals, and the website receives more than 10,000 hits a month, so it's a great opportunity to get your work seen. (The pay's not bad, either!)

For further information and to pitch ideas, email Rich at rich.cookson@talk21.com

Sun: where's your evidence?

Britain's biggest-selling newspaper has found a brand new category of people to have a go at: people whose immigration status is 'uncertain'.

The Sun ran an 'exclusive' story on June 10 about a man who is fighting a successful legal battle with Coventry City Council over housing. He has been in hospital and needs dialysis three times a week for a kidney problem. Nevertheless, the paper still attacked him, labelling him a 'suspected illegal immigrant'. It quoted an unnamed source as saying 'His lawyers claim he is here legally, but his immigration status is, at best, uncertain. There are fears he may be here illegally.' Of course, there was no indication whatsoever who had voiced those fears, or what their evidence is...

Asylum-seekers face record levels of hatred says report

Attitudes towards asylum-seekers have reached new levels of hostility, according

to new research from left-wing think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research.

The report found people using the term 'asylum-seeker' interchangeably to refer to refugees, immigrants and people from ethnic minorities who have settled in Britain, and says this is contributing to 'extremely negative' attitudes to people seeking asylum and the system itself.

However, the research also found that the majority of British people believe the UK has a moral duty to protect refugees.

The report concludes that agencies working on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers should work harder at communicating with their local communities - through the local press. This has been at the heart of RAM's long-running work with Refugee Media Networks. After six years, our message is finally getting through to the great and good!
www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=294

Report exposes UK press intolerance and racism

Another IPPR report examines several fabricated media stories about asylum-seekers and refugees, and outlines the history of racism and intolerance in sections of the British press. *Seeking Scapegoats*, written by MediaWise Trustee Roy Greenslade, a *Guardian* columnist and Professor of Journalism at London's City University, recommends that campaigners should build relationships with local journalists, organise letter-writing campaigns to local media and put pressure on newspapers through the Press Complaints Commission - a strategy familiar to members of RAM's local media networks!
www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=288

Network Conference call

The RAM Project is planning a second national conference for the Refugee Media Networks this autumn – even though there is no money for the event yet!

Funding for the development and support of about 20 networks around the UK ends in December. Several networks are already planning ahead. Some are looking for local money to hire part-time co-ordinators; others are hoping for support from the Exiled Journalists Network.

"Last year's national conference in Birmingham was a great success in that people were able to share good experi-

ences and solve problems," says RAM Networks Co-ordinator Terry Williams. "I'm hoping we can do something similar before our funding ends. We'll hold an event one way or another – not least to ensure that all the Networks feel able to continue the excellent work they do."

Do you want to attend a National RAM Networks conference? Would you prefer it to be held in the week or at the weekend? Would you prefer a one-day event, so the majority of attendees would not have to stay overnight? Email your views to williams.t@blueyonder.co.uk.

Papers all at sea over their coverage of boat rescue

WHEN 27 people who had been adrift on a small rubber boat in the Mediterranean for more than a week were rescued by a passing ship and put ashore in the UK, the *Express* and *Mail* were outraged.

But they didn't quite know how to refer to the men: the *Mail* hazarded 'illegal migrants', 'would be immigrants', and 'illegal immigrants', while the *Express* opted for 'asylum-seekers', 'illegal immigrants', 'refugees' and 'immigrants'.

The men's story is extraordinary: their boat had been drifting in a busy shipping area for more than a week, but no-one had picked them up. On their eighth day at sea, the Danish registered container ship M.V. Clementine Maersk rescued the 24 Somalis, two Tunisians and a Palestinian. Maritime law dictated that the captain should drop them off at the next scheduled port of call, which was in Britain. But the papers said the ship's captain should have put the men ashore in Spain.

"For safety reasons you can't just turn around a vessel like that," a Maersk spokeswoman pointed out. "Felixstowe was our next port of call."

EJN member takes on the Ugandan government

Ugandan journalist and EJN member Robert Egwea was invited by the Royal African Society to take part in a televised debate at the School of Oriental and African Studies with the Ugandan Defence Minister, Cultural Minister and deputy leader of an Ugandan opposition party, on whether President Museveni should be allowed a third term.

Egwea opposed the motion.
http://royalafricansociety.org/what_we_do/ras-meetings/uganda_debate

EXILED JOURNALISTS SPEAK OUT

Make poverty history by fighting for press freedom

Journalists have been beaten up, imprisoned and killed for exposing poverty, misrule and corruption in the developing world. As the RAM Project prepares a report on Exiled Journalists in Europe, AMADU KHAN explains why anti-poverty campaigners need to back the fight for press freedom.

What do anti-poverty campaigners and exiled journalists have in common? Both are deeply committed to the same cause: ending debt, corruption and mass poverty in the developing world. This month, make poverty history campaigners will travel to Scotland to demand radical change, just as exiled journalists have done for decades through their home countries' media.

The difference between the two? Save for a few skirmishes with the Scottish police and a handful of arrests, the campaigners will go home to get on with their everyday lives. But the same isn't true for journalists who have dared to raise these issues.

A worldwide survey by the International Press Federation (IPF), published in 2005, reveals the kinds of treatment meted out against independent journalists: murder, imprisonment, physical attacks, torture, intimidation, draconian press censorship laws, and vandalism or closure of media organisations' offices.

IPF's World Press Federation Index 2005, an inventory of media persecution around the world, makes for depressing reading. It lists Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nepal, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam as the top ten persecutors. Besides the differences in scope and degree of mass poverty in these countries, they are all fraught with corrupt and puerile democracies – an important fact for anti-poverty campaigners, who link poverty eradication with good governance.

A Reporters San Frontier (RSF) report, also published this year, states that 53 journalists were murdered around the world in 2004. All of them were either expressing their opinion or exposing corrupt activities of politicians and organised crime. Most of these countries have similar credentials to the IPF's top ten: their rulers are anti-democratic and the peo-

ple live in mass poverty. The main offenders here include Bangladesh, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Mexico and Nicaragua.

Even more disturbingly, in totalitarian North Korea and the small African kingdom of Swaziland, journalists are persecuted for the slightest lack of pro-regime zeal. According to RSF and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, reporters are punished for mis-spelling politicians' names or failing to sufficiently eulogise their leaders. They are put in 're-education camps' and taught to toe the line.

In Turkmenistan and Zimbabwe, rulers perceive journalists working for foreign media as spies – which is a licence for torture and death threats. While in war-torn countries such as Burma, Eritrea and Nepal, journalists have to walk a tight rope between ruthless governments and rebel forces fighting for power. As I found out during the civil war in Sierra Leone, reporters in these countries are in a no-win situation. Both factions perceive them as hostile. Journalists' relatives, friends and support staff are often caught up in this war on the media. Seen as fair game, these innocents are the thousands of unsung victims of press repression.

The Fourth Estate is undoubtedly the most repressed of all civil institutions in the developing world. Its life blood - independent journalists - are now endangered species in many countries.

There are, of course, agencies working throughout the world to protect press freedom, but it is an uphill struggle. According to RSF, 907 media personnel were arrested and 1,146 were attacked or threatened in 2004. Some 107 journalists were being held in prison around the world in January this year. In the face of such persecution, the only option for many journalists is to flee their home country, swelling the global number of asylum-seekers. In the UK, the RAM Project currently supports over 150 exiled journalists, whilst RSF says it is in touch with 73 currently seeking asylum in France. But these figures are likely to be the tip of the iceberg – human rights agencies agree that there are no precise figures for the number of exiled journalists around the world.

The links between poverty and media censorship are clear. Anti-poverty campaigners in the UK would do well to back the fight for press freedom around the world, and support those of us who have been forced into exile here.

Cut out and keep COMMUNICATOR

Twelve steps to success for local media networks

In six months' time, funding for RAM's local media networks will come to an end. So now is an ideal time to carry out a health check on your group, says TERRY WILLIAMS.

Funding from Comic Relief to set up and run Refugee Media Networks around the UK finishes at the end of this year. In the remaining months, RAM National Co-ordinator Terry Williams will be helping Networks to carry out a 'health check' on the work they do.

"Around 20 RAM Networks are based in cities and large towns around the UK. Everyone is different and has developed in different ways of working. I have been sitting down with groups to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their Network and agree what can be taken on board from others' successful experiences," says Terry. He is urging all groups to draw up an action plan for the next 12 months.

Here are some of the questions Terry has been putting to the Networks:

- Should you do more to network with local refugee and asylum support organisations? Organisations that are usually members of RAM Networks include Oxfam, Save the Children, Student Action for Refugees, Red Cross, Refugee Council or Refugee Action, trade unions – especially the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) – and faith groups.
- Do you have strong links with the local branch of the NUJ and have you taken up a standing invitation to speak at an NUJ branch meeting? Have you considered inviting NUJ members to help deliver media training for your Network?
- Do you keep a data base of refugees, asylum-seekers and other people who have spoken to the media or are willing to do so in order that you can respond quickly to media requests for interviews? Make sure all of these people have media training and are supported by your Network.
- Do you develop contacts with ALL sections of the media? Sometimes Networks are more proactive on work with newspapers and do not have such strong

contacts with radio and television. All media is important in the campaign to cut hostile coverage. Ask one person to take responsibility for collating a list of all local media contacts.

- Do you keep records of all media coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers – especially that generated by your Network? For obvious reasons, it is easier to check print coverage than radio and TV but it helps build up a pattern of coverage in your area and gives you an idea of where things are improving,
- Have you considered setting up a local award for the most improved media coverage in your area? This need not be expensive – how about presenting a certificate to the most improved newspaper, radio or TV programme? Journalists like this sort of thing – and it generates further positive coverage.
- Have you developed links with the Exiled Journalists Network set up by RAM? When RAM's work with Networks finishes in December, it may be that EJN members could offer you media training.
- Have you investigated the possibility of raising funds for your own part-time Network co-ordinator? There may be money available from the various bodies that fund refugee work locally. It might be that an umbrella refugee organisation could seek funding for media work to cover your costs. Consider applying to local charitable trusts.
- Make sure that your Network is reactive rather than proactive in media work. You should have built up relationships with journalists in your area to the extent that they come to you in order to get contacts for stories. If this is not happening you still have an important piece of work to do!
- Have you carried out a skills audit of members? It is time to make sure that all members – old and new – are able to play a part in your Network and that you make use of everyone's skills. A simple audit form circulated on email does the job – and you may well find a volunteer ready to take up the job of fundraising for your group or replacing the Secretary who is just about to move on... If you don't ask you'll never know!
- Do you arrange regular meetings of your Network to bring people together so you can share good news and solve problems? Why not arrange for a high-profile media figure to speak at, for example, a quarterly meeting of the Network?

If Terry has not yet visited your Network and you would like to discuss any of these ideas, contact him on 07946 343055 or williams.t@blueyonder.co.uk

PEG BOARD

Help set the media agenda by generating stories rather than being reactive. Keep your ears and eyes open for events that can provide you, and the media with a 'peg' on which to hang positive stories about refugees or asylum seekers. Inform your media contacts about what is happening and why it's relevant for them.

July - November
WOMEN'S RIGHTS TRAINING PROJECT

Training sessions about women's rights for refugee organisations.
Venue: Draper Hall, 1 Howel Walk, Newington Butts, London
Contact: Gona Saed or Nadia Mahmoud on 020 7639 1033, or email mecwr2003@yahoo.com.

Fri 1 July - Sun 21 August
CLOSING THE DOOR? IMMIGRANTS TO BRITAIN 1902-2005
An exhibition exploring how immigration has affected British life over the last century.
Venue: Jewish Museum, 129-131 Albert Street, London NW1 7NB
Contact: 020 7284 1997 or visit www.jewishmuseum.org.uk

Fri 1 July - Sat 16 July 2005
LEAVE TO REMAIN
Diana Matar's exhibition of photos and oral histories of politically displaced people living in Britain.
Venue: BCA Gallery, 33 Castle Road, Bedford, MK40 3XD
Contact: BCA on 01234 273580

Wed 6 July 6.30pm
WILD GEESE: SONGS OF EXILE AND SONGS OF MIGRATION
New play exploring the hopes, dreams and realities of migrants.
Venue: University of Huddersfield
Contact: www.bannertheatre.co.uk

Thurs 7 July 6.30pm - 7.30pm

FILMS - SAFE & WHO AM I?

Safe - a short about living in London, made by 5 refugee pupils from Mallory School, Lewisham.
Who am I? - made by young African women aged 13-16 from Sir Frank Markham Community School, Milton Keynes.
Venue: Tracks Dowlais, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil
Contact: Glamorgan Gates Project on 029 2043 2990

Fri 8 July 9.30pm - 10.30pm

OUR WORLD - OUR JOURNEYS

This video, made by pupils from Willows High School in Cardiff, aims to give an insight into the realities of displaced children.
Venue: Ynysowen Primary School, Aberfan, Merthyr Tydfil
Contact: Glamorgan Gates Project on 029 2043 2990

Mon 11 July 10am - 4pm

TRAINING, VOLUNTEERING AND MENTORING FAIR

An open day for asylum seekers, refugees and organisations across South Yorkshire who provide training, volunteering or mentoring opportunities.
Venue: Sheffield Hallam Univ.
Contact: 0113 214 3949

Tues 12 July 9am - 5.30pm

RECRUITING AND RETAINING REFUGEE JOBSEEKERS

Refugee Council course to help participants recruit and retain refugees and asylum seekers without fear of breaking immigration and asylum law.
Venue: TBC London
Contact: anna.lodge@refugeecouncil.org.uk or 020 7346 6730

Tues 12 July

BUILDING AN INTEGRATED SOCIETY: DELIVERING GOOD RACE RELATIONS

Conference to launch the CRE's Guidance on Good Race Relations and encourage integration.
Venue: One Birdcage Walk, IMECHE, London SW1
Contact: Gemma Suter on 020

7324 4363, e-mail gemma.suter@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

Tues 12 July, 7pm

IMMIGRANTS AND THE HEALTH SERVICE

Discussion on the role of refugee doctors, dentists and nurses in the development and maintenance of Britain's health services.
Venue: Jewish Museum, Camden
Contact: 020 7284 1997

Tues 12 July

WILD GEESE: SONGS OF EXILE AND SONGS OF MIGRATION

Venue: All Saints Centre, Lewes.

Thurs 14 July 9am - 5.30pm

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH NEEDS OF REFUGEE AND ASYLM SEEKERS

Refugee Council course to highlight entitlement to health care for asylum seekers and refugees and the difficulties they face in accessing healthcare.
Venue: TBC Leeds
Contact: anna.lodge@refugeecouncil.org.uk or 020 7346 6730

Thurs 14 July 6.30pm - 7.30pm

MRIKA

A short film about a student from Kosovo who saw friends and family killed in the war.

Venue: Troedyrhw Boys and Girls Club, Merthyr Tydfil

Contact: Glamorgan Gates Project on 029 2043 2990

Fri 15 July

SKILLS INTO JOBS

Training course for refugees and asylum seekers with permission to work.

Venue: St George's Crypt, Great George Street, Leeds (tbc)
Contact: 0113 307 6108

Fri 15 July

WILD GEESE: SONGS OF EXILE AND SONGS OF MIGRATION

Venue: Kirkby Unemployed Centre, Westhead Avenue, Merseyside

Wed 20 July

THE FIVE YEAR STRATEGY: WHERE WILL IT TAKE US?

Conference discussing the Home Office's Strategy for immigration, with guest speaker Tony McNulty, Minister for Immigration.
Venue: Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London
Contact: Immigration Advisory Service on 020 7967 6000

Wed 20 July 7pm

JOURNEY TO A NEW LAND

Historian Nick Evans describes the events that led to 4 million Eastern European Jews leaving their homes from 1881-1914, and the challenges that faced them on their journey across Europe.
Venue: Jewish Museum, Camden
Contact: 020 7284 1997

Weds 3 Aug - Weds 14 Sept

STUDY AND EMPLOYABILITY COURSE

Free seven week accredited training course designed to help Leeds based refugees understand more about learning and working in the UK.
Venue: Leeds Metropolitan University
Contact: 0113 283 1716 or leeds.met.training@leedsmet.ac.uk

Tues 6 Sept 9am - 5.30pm

INTRODUCTION TO WORKING WITH UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

Refugee Council course will explain what a young person experiences when they make an asylum claim and how best to respond to some of the difficulties they may be facing.
Venue: TBC London
Contact: 020 7346 6730 or anna.lodge@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Deadline for the August RAM Bulletin is Mon 1 August.

Please send stories, news items and ideas to either Forward on ram@mediawise.org.uk or Rich at rich.cookson@talk21.com