



# Ethics in the News

EJN Report on Challenges for Journalism in the Post-truth Era



Ethical  
Journalism  
Network

EDITED BY AIDAN WHITE

## Ethics in the News

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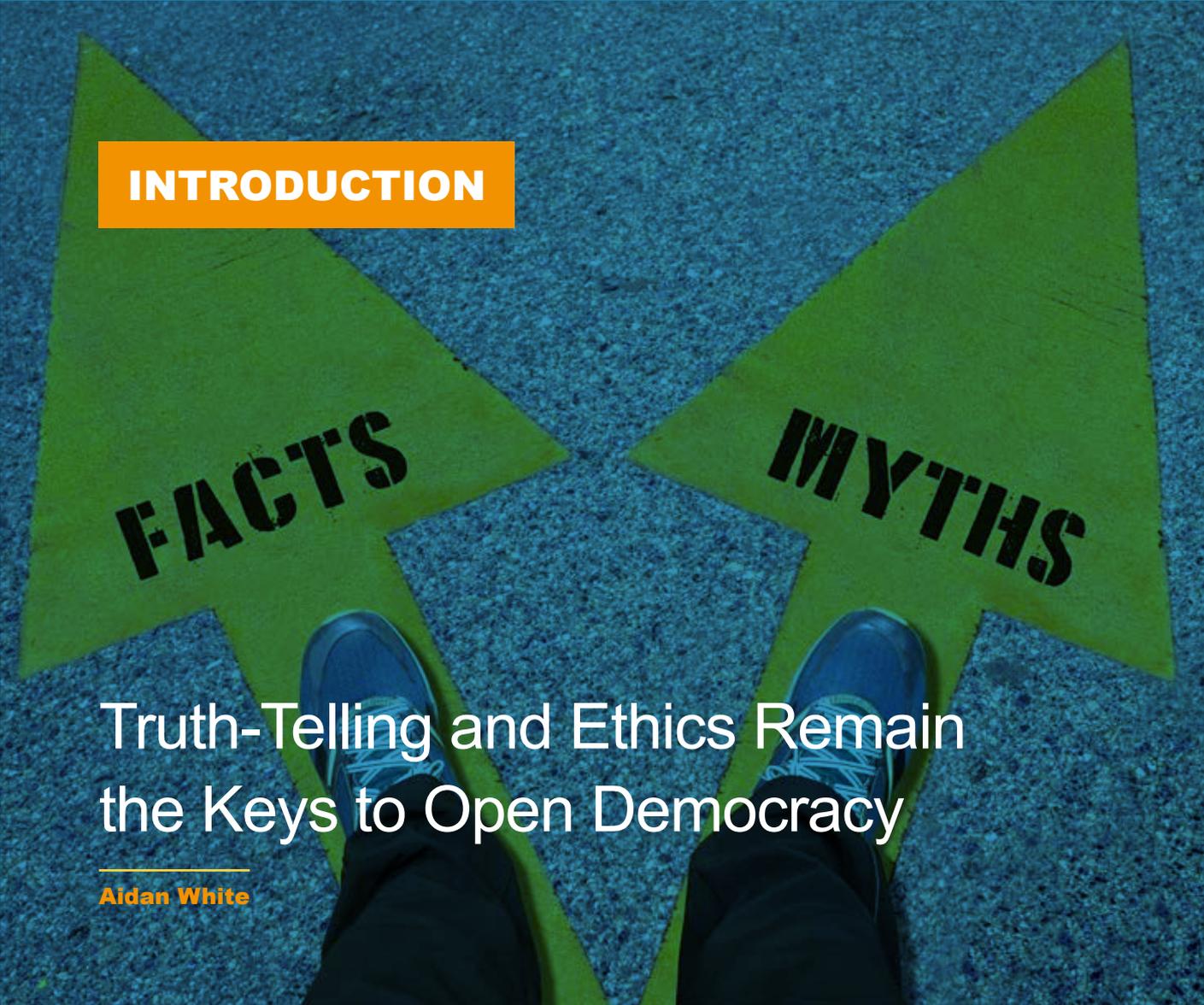
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## INTRODUCTION

# Truth-Telling and Ethics Remain the Keys to Open Democracy

Aidan White

**The war in Syria and the humanitarian ordeal of Aleppo brought 2016 to a sombre close and remind us that the ethics of humanity and truth-telling remain the twin pillars of ethical journalism.**

But after a year of unprecedented news-making it might be worth stepping back to ask a pertinent question – what is the future of ethical journalism in an age when it appears that the public around the world are falling out with facts, humanity and accountable truth-telling?

While it is too early to answer the question, this special edition of Ethics in the News throws some light on professional challenges facing media in 2016. Our writers make a contribution to the debate about media futures and we give journalists some key tips on ethical survival techniques..

In Europe we look at how media reported on the **UK vote** to leave the European Union, which intensified concerns about the revival of racism,

extremism and political propaganda across the continent. Inevitably, the media challenges around the **Trump election** in the United States are also centre stage amidst a new wave of bigotry, sexism and polarising rhetoric that has shaken people at home and abroad.

We also analyse how journalism with a public purpose is being overwhelmed in a do-it-yourself world of communications that has led to a so-called **post-truth** movement in which facts and expert opinion are sidelined in public discourse.

But this is no “western media” crisis. Elsewhere, the question is equally relevant.

In **Turkey**, for instance, we report from the frontline of a catastrophic and on-going assault on free expression and journalism as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, one of a new breed of authoritarian leaders, purges the media landscape of critical journalists in the aftermath of a failed *coup d'état*.

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The world's changing culture of communications, driven by the imperial power of internet companies and social networks, not only encourages users to create personal echo-chambers at the expense of information pluralism, it has also shredded the market models that used to nourish ethical journalism.

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We also look at the role of **war-mongering** media in **India** where the year ended with a full-scale information war between India and Pakistan and with bellicose journalists stoking up the prospects of a new conflict between these nuclear states.

We also examine the continuing global rise of **hate speech**, particularly in Asia, where there are increasing regional tensions around China and Japan, not least because of territorial disputes and increasing nationalism. And we look at how a glossary for **hate in Hong Kong** might help take the sting out of some of the media's bad language.

In **Africa**, media struggle to rise above conflicts in central and eastern regions covering Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Kenya and South Sudan. We highlight the efforts of journalists to cool things down through the EJN's *Turning the Page of Hate* campaign.

Beyond politics we also look at how media add to the ordeal of women who are victimised by repressive social and cultural attitudes which continue to dominate media coverage of the shockingly mis-named "**honour killings**" in Pakistan.

But it has not all been bad news for journalism in 2016. In fact, perhaps the biggest single, corruption-busting story of the decade came from an unprecedented piece of investigative journalism carried out by 400 journalists in 80 countries – the **Panama Papers**.

And we highlight two areas of particular ethical practice that make journalism a cornerstone of reliability and trust: firstly, a tribute to all the whistle-blowers and sources who make public interest journalism possible through the eyes of the reporter who helped **Edward Snowden** reveal the secrets of United States' global surveillance and snooping; and, second, a thoughtful examination of how we use **images to tell stories**, focused on migration.

We also provide tips for journalists on how to stick to the facts, protect sources, report fairly on migration, identify hate speech, block fake news and guard against war-mongering and propaganda. In all, our report reveals that ethical journalism has rarely been under such sustained pressure, both political and commercial.

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information pluralism, it has also shredded the market models that used to nourish ethical journalism.

Many observers inside media are not overly optimistic about the future, but although there may be more rumour, speculation, fake-news and misinformation as the information market moves online, there is a growing movement to strengthen the craft of journalism.

Indeed, in every part of the world, even where megaphone politics is in power, journalists committed to the values of accuracy, humanity and transparency are doing good work, connecting with audiences and sometimes putting themselves at risk in the process.

Public trust will only return when people have confidence that powerful institutions – government, the state, corporate power – are accountable and listening to their concerns. Journalism at its best can do this job, but not without fresh support.

The crisis outlined here is not just one of professionalism, it is a watershed moment for democracy and requires political will to invest in open, connected and pluralist systems of communication. What is needed are new directions in public policy:

- To develop practical and sustainable solutions to the funding crisis facing independent journalism.
- To support the public purpose of journalism through more investment in public service media.
- To launch campaigns to combat hatred, racism and intolerance.
- To provide more resources for investigative reporting and ways of promoting minority voices.
- To encourage attachment to ethical values in the management and governance of journalism.
- To put pressure on social networks and Internet companies to accept responsibility that as publishers they must monitor their news services.

And, not least:

- To support expanded media and information literacy programmes to make people – including politicians and others in public life – more aware of the need for responsible, tolerant and other-regarding communications.

*For more information on the EJN and its work and how you can provide support see:*

<http://www.ethicaljournalismnetwork.org>



# TRUMPED

## How US Media Played the Wrong Hand on Right-Wing Success

**Bill Orme**

**H**ate speech had never been considered good strategy in the presidential politics of the United States. But the world woke up on 9 November 2016 to learn that this was no longer the case. For the first time in modern history the US had a president-elect whose victory was applauded publicly by the Ku Klux Klan while the American Nazi Party was equally exultant.

In Donald Trump's campaigning Mexicans were called rapists and murderers; African-American communities were "crime-infested hellholes"; 'total and complete shutdown' of Muslim immigration was proposed. Trump accused his opponent, Hillary Clinton, of conspiring with shadowy "international bankers" to steal the election, in language echoing the anti-Semitic tract "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion".

Ethical and factual considerations aside, few in the US media saw these slurs as a winning script for a presidential race. On the contrary, they were widely considered so crudely and self-evidently objectionable as to be almost automatically disqualifying.

Trump's victory marked the first time a US presidential candidate was elected despite the editorial-page opposition of almost every major state and national newspaper, including several which had always endorsed Republican nominees.

Many of them cited his comments about immigrants and women as a central reason for their editorial stance. Yet until late in the campaign, few US news organisations devoted much coverage to the even darker substratum of Trump's most bigoted supporters, who had cheered his electoral success as a vindication of their contempt for blacks, Latinos, Muslims, Jews, gays and others they consider inferior to white Christian "European-Americans".

Immediately after the election, however, many more journalists began to pay heed. It became clear that the most destructive consequence of Donald Trump's successful presidential race could be its mainstreaming of racist political rhetoric and, with his victory, the implicit legitimisation of once-marginal voices on the "white nationalist" right who endorsed his candidacy.

One of Trump's first moves as president-elect was to name a champion of these white supremacist groups as his administration's Chief Strategist. Stephen Bannon, publisher of *Breitbart News*, described by the Anti-Defamation League as the "premier website of the 'alt-right' – a loose-knit group of white nationalists, unabashed anti-Semites and racists". The KKK, the American Nazi Party and other like-minded groups praised Bannon's selection. The outraged president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) tweeted his



Few US news organisations devoted much coverage to the even darker substratum of Trump's most bigoted supporters, who had cheered his electoral success as a vindication of their contempt for blacks, Latinos, Muslims, Jews, gays and others they consider inferior to white Christian "European-Americans".

reaction: "*Racism has been routinised; anti-Semitism normalised; xenophobia deexceptionalised; and misogyny mainstreamed.*"

Within days, as Bannon's and *Breitbart News*'s long history of race-baiting, misogynistic and anti-Semitic commentary was spotlighted in leading media, a viral "stop Bannon" movement became the first broad-based challenge to the incoming administration.

But it was not as if Bannon had been a political unknown, or his publication's racist-right views a secret: he was, after all, Trump's general-election campaign manager, and *Breitbart News* had been an early and influential Trump supporter in the Republican primaries. *Breitbart* was already infamous for denigrating African-American "Black Lives Matter" activists and Muslim-American civil-rights defenders among its many other ethnic and political targets.

Yet too few in the media took Bannon seriously as a political force and potential powerbroker. Those who did focused less on his publication's role as a platform for white racists and more

on its jeremiads against the Clintons and leading Republicans as corrupt "insiders" (*Bloomberg News* ran a prescient profile of Bannon in October 2015, calling him "the most dangerous political operative in America").

Even after his elevation in the new Trump administration, Bannon was often euphemistically labelled in news accounts as a "provocateur" or "firebrand" without specific reference to his disparagement of blacks, Jews, Muslims, gays and "liberal feminists".

This record notwithstanding, is it fair to attribute these views to the president-elect and the 60million-plus Americans who voted for him?

There is little evidence that racial prejudice was a prime motivator for most blue-collar Trump supporters, many of whom felt threatened by globalisation and wage stagnation and were angered by what they saw as a betrayal of the working class by Washington elites.

Unquestionably, though, Trump's serial bigotry was central to his appeal for many, as was made clear afterward to those he had targeted.



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In an unprecedented wave of post-election attacks, supporters across the country hurled threats and insults at blacks, Latinos, Muslims, gays and other minorities.

Swastikas and KKK insignias were spray-painted on mosques, synagogues and student centres. Hate crimes reported to police rose to record levels. Fears of suddenly legitimised discrimination prompted post-election protest marches in most major cities.

Why didn't more in the media see this coming?

From the beginning of the campaign, coverage of openly bigoted pro-Trump groups presented an ethical dilemma for news organisations. No longer could they be dismissed as “fringe” extremists when their views were being openly championed and their support seemingly welcomed by a major-party presidential nominee.

Yet there was still little evidence that they represented an election-swaying voting bloc. And it could be argued that giving front-page prominence to their racial prejudices would only give them the publicity they craved and an undeserved political legitimacy.

Moreover, major US news organisations shared a belief that a

Trump victory was highly unlikely and that after his seemingly inevitable defeat these groups would either retreat or be pushed back into obscurity.

The candidate himself, meanwhile, was inflammatory enough. Journalists who considered Trump's persona and discourse more outlandish than dangerous were lulled into further complacency by their own polls which gave Clinton a seemingly insurmountable lead.

Now news organisations are taking this far-right political-media ecosystem seriously. Liberal commentators are belatedly warning against the post-election “normalising” of the racial biases and misogyny of leading Trump advisors and backers, as well as of those voiced by the man himself.

Is this “new normal” of campaign hate-speech really new? American political discourse has never been free of racism, misogyny, xenophobia or other prejudice. The First Amendment to the Constitution protects even the vilest verbal attacks on other people's ethnicity and religious beliefs and many bigots have taken up these legal protections.

Appeals to racial prejudice led to the mass imprisonment of Japanese-Americans in the second world

war and drastic restrictions on all Asian immigration decades before. The Klu Klux Klan itself also held election-period protests in northern states against the hiring of Catholic immigrants by big-city governments and police forces. (As a young man, Donald Trump's German-American father was arrested by New York City police at an anti-Irish KKK march.)

Yet more recently, most “hate speech” was considered beyond the pale in political campaigns. This was not primarily for ideological or ethical reasons but because it was simply seen as bad form, bad politics and guaranteeing press condemnation. Even an avowed segregationist like George Wallace, the Alabama governor who ran for the presidency in the 1960s, was careful to avoid overtly racist language.

Political endorsements from groups like the KKK were considered politically toxic and quickly disavowed by most right-wing politicians. The rare media portrayals of smaller hate groups and publications typically focused on their influence on white domestic terrorists, like Timothy McVeigh, whose 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City claimed 168 lives.

These groups and their lone-wolf acolytes were seen as comprising a tiny if virulent minority on the far right. What was missed was how widespread anger at the election of the first African-American president and resentment against Latino immigration had fused into broader right-wing dissidence that embraced the racially charged rhetoric of these groups and sometimes these groups and their leaders themselves.

Still, there were limits. Most American conservative leaders spurned the “identitarian” ideology of Europe’s anti-immigrant right as antithetical to US traditions of ethnic and religious pluralism, even while they were blocking efforts to legalise undocumented immigrants. Among GOP legislators and past presidential aspirants, few associated themselves with the world views of Nigel Farage, Geert Wilders or Le Pen *père*.

But Trump made common cause with Europe’s anti-immigrant right, attacking Angela Merkel for opening Germany’s doors to Syrian refugees, cheering on the Brexit movement and even appearing with Farage by his side. After the election, Farage volunteered to serve as a United Kingdom liaison with the US president-elect.

Hard-right groups were delighted, citing Trump’s popularity as proof that their views could no longer be considered extreme. “Our message is more visible than ever before,” wrote Brad Griffin, editor of the white nationalist website *Occidental Dissent*, in early 2016. “It’s also all due to Trump’s presidential run ... Can you imagine a world in which White Nationalists have come out of the closet, the charge of ‘racism’ elicits only a ‘meh’ and shrugged shoulders, and we have begun to openly organise?”

President Obama’s historic election in 2008 prompted an upsurge in openly racist anti-black rhetoric, the most common and deep-rooted form of US racial prejudice, but one rarely voiced aloud by politicians or media commentators.

In Obama’s case, this anti-black racism was intensified by xenophobic claims that the president was not really “American” but rather a Kenya-born Muslim, which received wide airing on right-wing radio and television, most prominently on *Fox News*, the country’s most-watched cable channel. The most prominent spokesman for this “birtherism” was Donald Trump, who used the issue to propel his rise as a GOP (Republican

Party) presidential contender.

What was radically different in 2016 is that for the first time in American political history the standard-bearer of one of the two major US political parties had not only personally engaged in overt bigotry but deliberately positioned these prejudices at the centre of a presidential campaign.

As a result, scores of once-marginal far-right groups that had never before backed a major-party candidate became active supporters of Donald Trump. And Trump, to the dismay of many Republican Party professionals, refused to denounce these groups even though the party’s long-term viability depends on significant support from “minority” voters, who in much of the country are collectively nearing majority status. But Trump campaigned with contempt for the Republican establishment and other proponents of “political correctness”.

Trump never disavowed the support of self-declared neo-Nazis, who praised him as a kindred spirit. The chairman of the American Nazi Party, Rocky J Suhayda, told his followers that Trump’s campaign statements, “if nothing else, have shown that ‘our views’ are not so ‘unpopular’ as the Political Correctness crowd have told everyone they are!”

The fascist-nativist *Vanguard News Network* declared that: “Only Trump can turn back the brown tide, and thinking Whites know this”. James Edwards, a white nationalist radio talk-show host, said with satisfaction: “Our people just needed a viable candidate and they’ve identified Trump as that man.”

In September, in an unusual campaign address, Hillary Clinton catalogued the many extremist groups backing the Trump campaign, most of them part of the self-proclaimed “alt-right”, the movement popularised by *Breitbart News*. Rather than take offence at Clinton’s speech, these groups welcomed her attacks and use of their preferred terminology as evidence of their growing influence.

“The term ‘alt-right’ is a rebranding of white supremacists for the digital age,” says Mark Potok, who monitors US “hate groups” for the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center.

After Trump’s victory, not only in the reliably Republican south but in such former Democratic strongholds as Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, are these hate groups now poised to expand their influence by placing

their own candidates in races across the country, running as pro-Trump Republicans?

As Potok’s research shows, some already have, with the blessing of local GOP leaders, despite their white supremacist antecedents. Others entered major-party politics for the first time as Trump delegates in the Republican primaries. Few received national media attention at the time.

A common denominator of many of these activists is their prominence on the right-wing websites and radio shows that have reshaped the US media and political landscape and for which there is no equivalent on the left side of the spectrum.

Some of the more prominent include:

- **William Johnson**, head of the avowedly white-nationalist American Freedom Party and a Trump delegate in the presidential primaries, who proclaimed in campaign calls on Trump’s behalf: “The white race is dying out in America and Europe because we are afraid to be called ‘racist.’”
- **Retired Lt Gen William G “Jerry” Boykin**, one of the few former senior military officers publicly endorsing and campaigning for Trump. Boykin was best known for being reprimanded by then-president George W Bush for portraying US deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan as “a holy war against Islam” and proposing a ban on the construction of mosques throughout the United States. Now leading a militant evangelical Christian group called the “Kingdom Warriors” Boykin appeared often on television news shows as a Trump supporter and surrogate before and after the election.
- **Frank Gaffney**, from the hard-right Islamophobic fringe of the national security commentariat, was named as a foreign policy advisor to Trump’s transition team. Gaffney, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan administration, runs the Center for Security Policy, a small, anodyne-sounding nonprofit organisation which the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated a “hate group” for its attacks on Muslim-Americans and accusations of “treason” against the non-Muslim American officials who defend them. He also hosts his own online radio show, with leading white supremacists as frequent guests.



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News organisations may have been reluctant to spotlight pro-Trump activists of the racist right, not wanting to make them appear more influential than they objectively were. But Trump has now brought these once-marginal forces into a governing national coalition, one which not only questions legal protections against racial and religious discrimination but actively condones hate speech.

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- **David Duke**, a former “grand wizard” of the Ku Klux Klan, who had been roundly condemned by national Republican leaders as he courted their voters in his previous campaigns for state and federal office. In 2016 he ran again, as an independent Louisiana candidate for the Senate and a vocal advocate for Trump.

Early in his campaign, Trump refused to disavow Duke’s support, disingenuously professing unfamiliarity with both Duke and the KKK. He later backtracked, claiming “microphone problems” and saying he did disapprove of the Klan. Duke campaigned for Trump for months afterward, without drawing any public rebuke from him. Not until late August did the Trump campaign publicly condemn and disavow him.

Trump complained that he and his voters were caricatured in the media as “sexist, as racists, as xenophobes”. Yet he never directly rebuked supporters who were vociferously anti-black,

anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and/or misogynist. This was no oversight: his success in securing the Republican nomination and then victory in the election showed that those views are shared or at least tolerated by large segments of the electorate.

Moreover, the “mainstream media” that Trump lambasted was largely responsible for that unexpected success. His crude daily attacks on women and minorities created a ratings bonanza for the cable news networks, which broadcast his unscripted speeches live and at length, over an entire year, a favour not given to other candidates. Outbreaks of violence and Trump’s threats against protestors perversely legitimised the disproportionate coverage of his rallies, which the networks could claim were breaking news events.

Trump boasted, correctly, that in contrast to his rivals, he did not have to pay for television advertising. The *New York Times* estimated in March

2016 that he had already received the equivalent of more than \$2 billion in free advertising from major media companies – about triple the broadcast and print coverage given to Hillary Clinton.

All that free publicity paid off. Trump ultimately collected more votes in the 2016 primaries than any Republican candidate before him. In the general election, he won northern states that hadn’t voted Republican in decades.

Throughout the campaign Trump consistently won majority support from white men, a demographic group accustomed to dominating US political life since the country’s founding. Many of them, as the election showed, remain deeply unsettled by the erosion of their long-unquestioned supremacy: exit polls showed white men favouring Trump over Clinton by two to one, a stunning margin, considering that Clinton actually carried the overall national popular vote.

That white male anger is not likely to dissipate, even with the victory of their chosen candidate. Activists on the bigoted right will continue to try to exploit these resentments and make further inroads into mainstream electoral politics.

Journalists have a responsibility to take this very seriously, to track and expose groups and “news sites” that promote and exacerbate prejudice and race-based grievances while professing allegiance to the next president, while also forcing Trump and his advisors to state on the record whether they accept such support.

News organisations may have been reluctant during the campaign to spotlight pro-Trump activists of the racist right, not wanting to make them appear more influential than they objectively were. But Trump has now brought these once-marginal forces into a governing national coalition, one which not only questions legal protections against racial and religious discrimination but actively condones hate speech.

This has all the makings of an unprecedented political and perhaps constitutional crisis. The ethical guideline for journalists in the months and years ahead is perhaps best summed up in the hashtag now frequently attached to news tweets about president-elect Trump: #NotNormal.

*Bill Orme / bill.orme@gmail.com*



## MEDIA LIES AND BREXIT

### A Double Hammer-Blow to Europe and Ethical Journalism

**Gareth Harding**

**E**ver since it joined the European Union in 1973 Britain has had the most eurosceptic press in the Brussels-based club. Its two top-selling papers, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, are rabidly anti-EU, reporting on its affairs with a mixture of hostility, mockery and contempt.

When former European Commission President Jacques Delors had the temerity to propose a single currency in 1990, *The Sun* screamed “Up Yours Delors” on its front page accompanied by a two-fingered salute to the “French fool”. In 2003 the *Daily Mail* described a draft EU constitution as a “blueprint for tyranny”. And in 2011 the same paper warned that Germany was turning Europe into a “Fourth Reich”.

The *Daily Telegraph*, the fourth best-selling paper in the UK, feeds its readers a daily diet of negative news about the European Union, while the sixth biggest – the *Daily Express* – has led a “crusade” against British membership. Typical headlines include “EU brainwash our children”, “Now EU Wants to Ban our Kettles” and “Get Britain out of the EU”.

Due to strict impartiality guidelines, British TV reporting is fairer. But even the BBC broadcasts more negatively than positively. An April 2016 report by Zurich-based analysts Media Tenor concluded that only 7% of BBC coverage of the EU was positive and 45% negative. It also found that the tone of coverage was more negative than that about Russian and Chinese strongmen Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. Even Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad received more positive mentions than the EU.

The study also looked at the quantity of coverage from 2001-16 and found the EU accounted for just 1.5% of stories on the flagship News at Ten in 12 of those 16 years. As the referendum approached, coverage became more intense and more positive. However, the study concluded that “reporting about the advantages of EU membership has come too late and will not convince a public that has been accustomed to EU bashing”.

It was indeed too late and on 23 June 2016 British voters opted to leave the EU by a slim majority after a referendum campaign that will be best remembered for the lies told by leading campaigners.

On 8 March, *The Sun* ran a front-page story with the headline “Queen Backs Brexit” based purely on anonymous sources. After Buckingham Palace lodged a complaint, Britain’s press watchdog IPSO judged the headline was “significantly misleading” and not backed up by the text. On 15 June, the *Daily Mail* published a front-page story showing migrants getting out of a lorry in Britain with the headline “We’re from Europe, let us in”. However, police footage clearly showed the migrants saying they were from Iraq and Kuwait. In both cases the newspapers published small corrections on inside pages. But by then the false stories had become ingrained in the collective consciousness of readers.

It is easier for the UK media to get away with publishing untruths and half-truths about the EU because the British public knows less about it than do citizens of any other country bar Latvia. Asked by pollsters whether three simple statements about the EU were true or false only 28% of Brits answered correctly. Indeed, one of the most revealing signs of British voters’ ignorance was the fact that the most-searched EU question on Google on 24

June was “What does it mean to leave the EU”, followed by “What is the EU?”

Many British journalists also display ignorance of the EU’s workings – either because they lack basic information about its decision-making procedures or because it serves their mission to discredit it by cutting corners on facts.

In October 2011 the *Daily Mail* published a story – repeated by the *Express* and the *Telegraph* – on how “EU bureaucrats have banned children under 8 from blowing up balloons because they might hurt themselves”.

The article is typical of lazy, error-strewn British reporting about the EU. For a start, it refers to a “new directive” when this was a draft text. Second, “bureaucrats” don’t make EU laws – the Commission proposes them and the European Parliament and Council of the EU pass them. So there was no “new directive” and certainly no “ban” – the Commission merely recommended children under eight be accompanied by an adult when blowing up balloons in case they choked.

A whole industry has sprouted to produce these largely fabricated stories about the EU’s bullying and nannying. In his submission to the Leveson enquiry on the British press in November 2011, Labour’s former UK government communications chief Alastair Campbell said: “At various times, readers of UK papers may have read that ‘Europe’ or ‘Brussels’ or the ‘EU superstate’ has banned, or is intending to ban kilts, curries, mushy peas, paper rounds, Caerphilly cheese, charity shops, bulldogs, bent sausages and cucumbers, the British Army, lollipop ladies, British loaves, British-made lavatories, the passport crest, lorry drivers who wear glasses and many more.”

The European Commission’s representation to the UK even has a separate section of its site dedicated to these euromyths. The problem is, these stories are sticky and rapidly become shorthand for Brussels bossiness. And, as many studies have shown, rebutting dubious claims or downright lies only serves to draw attention to the untruth rather than debunk it.

It is hard to disagree with Lord Justice Leveson’s claim that when it comes to the EU, “there is certainly clear evidence of misreporting”. However, most Brits get their news from the TV, internet and social media, not newspapers. Added to this, the British press tends to over-exaggerate its importance and



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The duty of journalists in this post-truth environment is the same as it has always been – to separate lies from facts, to inform readers as honestly as possible and to aim at the closest approximation of the truth.

influence. In 1992 *The Sun* had over 3.5 million readers. Now it has less than 1.8 million. British people also expect their newspapers to be unreliable. A 2015 Eurobarometer opinion poll found that 73% said they did not trust their newspapers – the highest percentage in the EU. Finally, the link between media ownership and political influence is often overblown. The *Mail on Sunday* came out in favour of Remain, despite its owner being ferociously anti-EU. Likewise, *The Times* backed Britain staying in despite having the same proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, as *The Sun*.

Coverage of the Brexit campaign was often shrill and shallow. But the referendum was not all grim news for quality journalism. Much of the reporting in the *Guardian*, *Times* and *Financial Times* was balanced and even the pro-Brexit *Telegraph* published commentaries by Remain backers. *Sky News* Political Editor Faisal Islam won plaudits from the media by putting Prime Minister David Cameron and leading Leave campaigner Michael Gove on the spot in a 20-minute primetime interview he spent a week researching and rehearsing.

The referendum was also notable for the proliferation of fact-checking sites analysing claims made by politicians. The BBC devoted a whole section of its site to a Reality Check aimed at getting to the “facts behind the claims in the EU referendum campaign and beyond”. For example, it looked into the Leave camp’s controversial claim – plastered

over buses and billboards – that “We send the EU £350 million a week”. “We don’t,” the BBC bluntly replied, pointing out that the money the UK gets back from Brussels is £161 million. Despite its close links to the Remain campaign, the pro-EU InFacts website also did valuable work in puncturing the myths propagated by both sides.

Fact-checking has become more difficult in a world in which politicians lie so brazenly. One of the Leave campaign’s whoppers was a billboard screaming “Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU” despite negotiations barely crawling along and no expert, whether in Turkey or the EU, expecting membership in the foreseeable future.

The duty of journalists in this post-truth environment is the same as it has always been – to separate lies from facts, to inform readers as honestly as possible and to aim at the closest approximation of the truth. Inventing or doctoring stories to fit the political lines of media outlets, as often happens with EU coverage, is an abdication of basic journalist ethics. It also blurs the line between public relations and journalism to the extent that the two become indistinguishable. If your primary role as a reporter is persuading readers or viewers to back a certain position, whether keeping migrants out of the UK or the UK out of the EU or both, you are no longer doing journalism; you are doing communication.

Journalists in this position should ask themselves “am I enlightening my audience or obfuscating the truth, allowing them to make a free choice or pumping propaganda down their throats, and working in the interests of the readers and viewers who ultimately pay my wages or for owners whose primary loyalty is to shareholders?”

So how can journalists improve reporting of the EU to make it fairer, more honest and more accurate?

First, understand how it works. If you don’t know the difference between the European Council, Council of Europe and Council of the EU, it’s time to start studying.

Second, don’t be lazy. If one MEP opines about an issue, that does not mean it is the position of the European Parliament. And if the Commission drafts a proposal, that doesn’t mean the EU has decided anything.

Third, blurring opinion and commentary rarely enlightens readers and viewers. So avoid pejorative descriptions of EU officials as “barmy Brussels bureaucrats” and shrill headlines that are better suited to political pamphlets than newspaper articles.

Finally, don’t lie or feel the need to repeat the lies of lying politicians.

A journalist’s job is to hold power to account, not flatter those who wield it. It is to question untruths rather than parade them as facts. And it is to report as honestly as humanly possible rather than indulge in political grandstanding or public relations.



## FAKE NEWS

# FACEBOOK AND MATTERS OF FACT IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA

Aidan White

**In 2016 media learned the hard way that journalism is in danger of being overwhelmed by rogue politics and a communications revolution that accelerates the spread of lies, misinformation and dubious claims.**

According to many observers two major stories – Brexit and the election of Donald Trump – signal a moment of peril for the press, and media around the world are deeply alarmed.

The free circulation of malicious lies, the ineffectiveness of fact-checking, the resilience of populist propaganda, racism and sexism and the emergence of the so-called post-truth era appear to challenge a fundamental cornerstone of ethical journalism – that facts matter for democracy and that people want to be well-informed when called upon to make potentially life-changing decisions.

In the last months of 2016 media executives and leading journalists, policy-makers and media academics have been scratching their heads to explain what has gone wrong.

Some have rushed to blame technology and the bottom-line priorities of internet and social media giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter for the crisis. Others point to the media's own failures – a deeply-flawed and politicised press and broadcast system stuck in a metropolitan bubble, itself part

of the Establishment elite, and unable to properly connect with the frustration and anger of people and communities.

But singling out convenient scapegoats does little to explain why, in the face of evidence to the contrary, a major section of the public, both in the United Kingdom and the United States, appeared not to care about the deceit, bigotry and shameless bias of their political leaders.

They didn't take much notice of what mainstream media had to say. In the US, according to Harvard University's Nieman Lab, some 360 newspapers urged their readers to vote for Hillary Clinton with only 11 supporting Trump. Nor did they appear to worry about the facts. According to Daniel Dale, a meticulous reporter from the *Toronto Star*, Donald Trump told an average 20 lies a day between 15 September and election day.

If the public did really care about the spread of falsehoods, they could have used the internet to check quickly the claims of politicians and expose their lies. In the months after the British referendum and during the brutal months of the US presidential election scores of fact-checking sites became available online. But even this flowering of truth-telling machines had little impact, according to a detailed review of media performance during the Trump election carried out by the *Guardian* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

What is clear is that the news earthquake of 2016 provides much to discuss for people concerned about the future of democracy and the future of journalism.

The warning signs of a communication crisis have been flashing for some time. In September 2016 there was fierce criticism of Facebook by a Norwegian editor over its censorship of one of the most famous images of the Vietnam war that led to a rare moment of global solidarity among outraged writers, journalists, media experts and free-speech campaigners.

Espen Egil Hansen used the front page of the Norwegian daily newspaper *Aftenposten* to publish an open letter to Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's founder and chief executive, accusing his company of an abuse of power for removing the Pulitzer prize-winning photograph showing children fleeing a napalm attack in Vietnam.

Within a day Facebook backed down, reinstated the photo and promised to discuss the matter with publishers. On the face of it this was an isolated storm over the use of just one picture, but it touched a raw nerve in journalism worldwide. It highlights the increasing controversy over the imperial power of internet companies and the threat they pose to the future of the news industry.

The row underscores growing concern over how internet giants like Google and Facebook have grown rich by using technology to impoverish traditional publishing and news media. Critics say they have become powerful by exploiting news through use of stealth technology, but they have little if any understanding or regard for the public purpose of journalism.

This may explain why in the aftermath of the US presidential election the issue of fake news on the internet created a firestorm in media circles. For months before Donald Trump's election critics accused Facebook of allowing false and hoax news stories to spread freely across their news feeds.

It even led to an internal rebellion. A group of Facebook staff, according to *The Guardian*, created an unofficial task force to question the role of the company amid a larger, national debate over the rise of fake and misleading news articles on a platform.

Facebook is used by more than 150 million Americans and the unofficial task force challenged a statement made by Mark Zuckerberg at a conference immediately after the election in which he said that the argument that fake news on Facebook affected the election was "a pretty crazy idea".

One employee told the news website BuzzFeed: "It's not a crazy idea. What's crazy is for him to come out and dismiss it like that, when he knows, and those of us at the company know, that fake news ran wild on our platform during the entire campaign season."

Although the notion that hyper-partisan websites spreading false and misleading information tilted the election towards Trump may be fanciful, companies like Facebook have the tools to shut down fake news.

If they were ready to invest in technology and people to moderate their feeds they could have avoided "news stories" such as "FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide" or "Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President".

The problem for Facebook is two-fold: first, it refuses to recognise that the use of algorithms to monitor and edit material is no substitute for employing people to edit and prepare news for publication and, secondly, it refuses to acknowledge that it is a publisher.

The row over the Vietnam war photo reveals how sentient human beings are still needed to analyse, to apply context and to make nuanced judgments over what gets published. In journalism not all nudity is indecent, not all images of violence are damaging and not all hateful words unacceptable. It all depends upon the context. Editorial decisions need to be made by people who understand notions of public interest and who have an understanding of the framework of values in which journalism works.

As the EJV wrote at the time, this framework of core ethics – accuracy, impartiality, humanity, transparency and accountability – contributes to the fine tuning of editorial choice. Machines can do much but they can't be encoded with the ethical expertise of journalists.

Zuckerberg argues his social network is "a tech company" and "a platform" but not a publisher. However, many media experts strongly disagree.

They say he has become the "world's most powerful editor", and with good reason. He leads a business worth around \$325bn – the world's sixth largest company. It is a Goliath in the world of news in social media. Studies show that these days more than 50% of people get their news from social media and in the United States it is more than 60% according to the Pew Research Center.

Facebook would do well to stop denying it is a publisher and face up to its responsibility as a news provider. It needs to recognise and apply the principles and core standards of journalism and free expression that have guided the work of journalists, editors and publishers for generations.

It can best do that, say media experts, by giving editors of news media a voice in making the decisions about how they use the platform and by employing its own team of editors to work with professional media to resolve disputes when they arise.

The lack of transparency in the way Facebook and other social networks and internet companies work makes it hard for them to be held accountable. Only the leaking of documents by former employees has cast some light on the inside workings of the company – as highlighted by the EJV earlier this year.

This raises a question over who is held accountable for the company's treatment of news. All that is certain is that Facebook is creating,



The problem for Facebook is two-fold: first, it refuses to recognise that the use of algorithms to monitor and edit material is no substitute for employing people to edit and prepare news for publication and, secondly, it refuses to acknowledge that it is a publisher.

above all, a platform that will attract advertisers. It appears to have no interest in building a reputation in the news business.

It's a point also made by Norwegian prime minister, Erna Solberg, herself censored by Facebook for circulating the napalm photo. Writing in *The Guardian* she said the company's action was not transparent and responsible behaviour. Facebook had ended up "altering history, and altering the truth". And she warned of the threat to democracy and free flow of information.

"Already, Facebook and other media outlets' algorithms narrow the range of content one sees based on past preferences and interests. This limits the kind of stories one sees," she warned. "We run the risk of creating parallel societies in which some people are not aware of the real issues facing the world, and this is only exacerbated by such editorial oversight. As we move towards a more automated world this is not a responsibility that should be surrendered to machines only."

Change, albeit at a glacial pace, is on the way. Both Google and Facebook have promised action to limit the spread of false news, but other issues remain and there is increased scrutiny of their treatment of

editorial content, reflecting their unrivalled power and influence in distributing news.

A major concern remains that fake or misleading news can spread like wildfire on social networks because of confirmation bias, the use of "likes" and sharing with our friends. This exploits an element of human psychology that makes us more likely to accept information that conforms to our existing world views. An analysis by *BuzzFeed News* found that 38% of posts shared on Facebook by three right-wing politics sites included "false or misleading information".

This process is encouraged by the financial model used by Facebook and others. A United States Facebook user is worth four times a user outside the US and the tiny fraction of cash income per-click of US display advertising — a sharply declining market for American publishers — can mean riches for impoverished people elsewhere. In the Western Balkans, for instance, according to *BuzzFeed News*, some young men found that the best way to generate traffic to their politics stories is to use Facebook to target Trump supporters — and the best way to generate shares on Facebook is to publish sensationalist and false content.

But the problem for journalists is not just the rise of the internet behemoths and the impact of technology. The crisis they face is that news in its traditional formats has become unfashionable, and that the media business no longer makes money out of news.

The communications revolution provides people with different ways to access information and they create their own filters for information they like or don't like. For around 150 years newspapers controlled news and advertising markets, but digital technology has changed everything. Display and classified advertising have moved online and so far no convincing solution has been found to the problem of filling the ever-widening gaps in editorial budgets.

In the face of this crisis media have made lacerating cuts in their editorial coverage. News gathering has become a desk-bound process. There is less money spent on investigative journalism and investment in human resources – decent jobs and training – is falling.

As a result, media increasingly follow the agenda of political and corporate elites and there is a dearth of journalism that holds power to account. This may explain in part why some mainstream media have become disconnected from their audience.

How media rebuilds public trust in quality journalism will be a major question in the coming years, and not just for academics and students of mass communication. The information crisis is one that touches on the prospects for democracy. The rise of propaganda, hate-speech and self-regarding politics with an extremist edge threatens stability and peace both within countries and abroad.

People have not given up on fact-based communications but they are sceptical about how

media – online and offline – are delivering their messages. In times of crisis and uncertainty they turn to voices that echo their concerns and fears, even if they are strident and divisive. Media have lessons to learn from the bruising experience of 2016, not least that they must be honest, fair and aggressive in their coverage of politics, but never lose sight of their audience.

The challenge of the coming years will be to reinvigorate the public purpose of journalism and to assist media to reconnect with citizens more effectively. This existential crisis requires, above all, for journalists to recommit to their craft with

reporting that reaches out to their audience and listens to what is being said and reports it in context.

Solutions have to be found to the crisis of funding for public interest journalism. It requires political will to invest in open, connected and pluralist systems of communication. There needs to be more investment in quality information and actions to combat hatred, racism and intolerance; more resources for investigative reporting; more attachment to ethical values in the management and governance of media; and, not least, more training in the value of other-regarding communications within the population at large.

## TIPS FOR EXPOSING FAKE NEWS

Since the American election two of the world's biggest internet companies have decided to crack down on fake news. Google says it will ban from its online advertising service websites that peddle it and Facebook says it has added fake news to its policy regarding advertising on sites that show misleading or illegal content. Taken together, these decisions are a clear signal that internet publishers are waking up to the dangers of misinformation online.

Journalists know that there's nothing new about the problem of fake news. Deceptive, unverified, and error-filled reporting has always been with us, but the scourge has grown in the wake of technology that has helped shape a new world of clickbait, viral communications and confirmation bias.

Journalists should follow some simple ground rules to make sure they don't become victims of slippery stories published online. Here are some starter tips:

- **Use fact-checking web sites.** Most reputable media already double-check everything that arrives in their inboxes but now freelance journalists and small-scale media can get help from a rapidly-expanding community of online fact-checkers. Sites such as [factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org) in the United States or the UK's [fullfact.org](http://fullfact.org), for instance.
- **Watch out for websites with odd names.** Strange domain names or sites that end in ".com.co" for instance are often fake versions of real news sources.
- **Check the "About Us" box on the website.** Worry if there isn't one and check the provider with Wikipedia.
- **Beware of stories not being reported elsewhere.** A shocking, outrageous or surprising event will have another source. If it doesn't, be suspicious.
- **Be wary if there is no attribution for an author or source.** That's sometimes justified, but should be explained and, if not, don't trust it.
- **Check the date.** One favourite trick of news fakers is to repackage old stories. They may have been accurate but used out of time and out of context they may become malicious falsehoods.
- Finally, **remember that there's such a thing as satire.** Not all fakery is malicious. It can even be entertaining and may come from reputable sources of journalism. Private Eye, Britain's leading satirical news magazine, for instance, has done some great fact-based investigative journalism alongside occasionally amusing spoof editorial content, but found itself on a list of "fake-news" sites circulated when the misinformation panic set in after the Trump election.



# REFUGEE IMAGES

## Ethics in the Picture

Misja Pekel and Maud van de Reijt

**W**hat decisions are made before photographs of refugees and war victims appear in our newspapers, or as video and stills on our computers, mobiles and television screens? Should journalists be more critical when publishing and interpreting such pictures? These were among the questions we explored in our documentary “Sea of Images”.

Specifically, we looked at the editorial process for publishing the image of Aylan Kurdi, the toddler whose body was found on the shores of Bodrum in Turkey. This and other pictures used in telling the refugee and migration story have stirred up discussion in editorial offices everywhere, but what have been the dilemmas faced by photo-editors and other journalists and what lessons have we learnt?

The first and trickiest question is, to publish or not to publish? Within 12 hours the image of Aylan Kurdi taken on 2 September 2015 reached 20 billion screens via social media.

The next day it was on front pages worldwide. The refugee crisis, which until that moment had mainly been expressed in numbers and figures, suddenly had a human face people could relate to. Politicians referred to the picture in national parliaments. Advocates and opponents of a more generous asylum policy tried to embrace it as a symbol. Nevertheless, the publication was controversial: readers immediately questioned whether or not it was appropriate to publish images of such a young, dead victim.

Media felt they needed to justify their choice. Editorial comments on the process were legion. Journalists interviewed colleagues about their concerns. Although the photo was widely shared online, publishing in traditional media stirred up emotions. Was it permissible to print photos of such a young child who had just died? Wasn't that bad taste, from the viewpoint of the boy's family and the readers who saw their newspaper at breakfast? Refugees die at sea every day, so why publish this particular photo? Here's what some editorial offices said about their considerations.

## The Beauty of Horror

A day after the photo went viral, Serge Ricco, art director of French magazine *L'Obs*, decided he would not publish it. Surprisingly, *L'Obs* did publish it – on their website. “Not my decision,” Ricco said to Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. “I'm thinking of the dignity of the child. Moreover, this photo will not change the course of history in any way.” However, many editors used this same argument to justify publication.

*L'Obs* had a point. Less than a week before, the inboxes of photo editors worldwide were bombarded with pictures of seven young drowned children on the Libyan coast. Most newspapers did not publish them. Facebook even censored a photo album created by Syrian artist Khaled Barakeh. Why was the response to Aylan's photo, three days later, so completely different?

The answer has to do with aesthetics. The pictures of the Libyan children are horrific. Their clothes have shifted. Their bodies are evidently lifeless. There is no doubt about the state these victims are in. Apparently, to show horrific events, we need a touch of beauty. Ironic? According to Aidan White, Director of the Ethical Journalism Network, it's clear as daylight: “We need aesthetic in pictures as much as we need good language in use of words.”

The photo editor of the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* put it this way: “Before, we only saw pictures of decayed bodies. These you simply do not show. Aylan's photo was the first one that made you wonder: is he asleep or is he dead? That is why we thought it was reasonable to print this picture.” A bold decision, for this newspaper is usually very reluctant to show death on its front page. In 2002, it was the only Dutch newspaper that, for ethical reasons, did not print the photo of a dead Pim Fortuyn, the murdered Dutch populist politician. Apparently, there must have been special circumstances indeed to publish Aylan's photo.

## Social Media and the Rush to Publish

Social media played an important role. Their omnipresence online influenced decision-making in traditional editorial offices. The question can even be raised whether journalists published the pictures because they wanted to do so themselves, or because they felt under pressure. For *Le Monde* the photos of Aylan came in too late for that day's paper. They were published

a day later. Nicolas Jimenez, photo editor-in-chief stated: “During the evening the photos became major news. I received them ... during the whole day via social media. Also from friends and family to such a point you can't ignore it anymore.”

Social media were also a crucial factor at *Trouw*. Its photo editors had spotted the images at an early stage but had put them aside. When colleagues pointed out that they were circulating continuously on Twitter, the photo editors started to be convinced they could not ignore them. After a discussion with the editor-in-chief, Aylan was put on the front page – accompanied by background information on his journey and referring to the fact the photos went viral. For the editor-in-chief, the text was an essential condition for publication. It served to give the reader some indispensable context.

For the Dutch newspaper *Het Algemeen Dagblad*, the lack of context and background information was a reason not to publish the day after they appeared online. According to editor-in-chief Christiaan Ruesink: “Paper is different from online. More contemplative, it needs more context.” However, when the images became so widespread, Ruesink felt he needed to apologise to his readers. And the newspaper felt the need to print the pictures after all.

In hindsight, for some editorial offices the fact the images were shared so much online legitimised publishing them. Not just the photos themselves, but the collective urge to share them became news, resulting in some editors diverging from their own ethical views.

## Balancing Interests

The fact a photo goes viral does not release journalists from making ethical choices. But to what extent do journalistic imperatives weigh against interests such as privacy of the subject or respect for family members? Amol Rajan, Editor-at-large of London's *The Independent*, wrote that different aspects had been thoroughly discussed in his editorial room. However, journalistic interests prevailed: “It was to shock the world into action, to improve refugee policy and to put pressure on a prime minister whose behaviour in this crisis has been embarrassing.”

Shocking the audience could be considered one task of journalism, but there are limits, as could be concluded from a ruling by the Presserat, an Austrian independent organisation set up by print media to investigate journalistic issues. On 27 August 2015, five days before Aylan was found, 71 people were found dead in a lorry. The incident was major news. But there was one problem: there were no images that told the story very well – only pictures of policemen. “Words had to do the talking,” as Fiona Shields, photo-editor at the *Guardian*, put it. That is, until *Die Neue Kronen Zeitung*, the largest Austrian newspaper, published an uncensored photo of the dead bodies. The Presserat ruled that the photo conflicted with ethical codes. The bodies were shown in such positions that the newspaper did not respect the human dignity of the deceased.

Publishing comes with responsibilities. This became painfully clear when the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* published an article about terrorism. On its front page the newspaper carried a photo of a man of middle-eastern appearance driving a car being stopped by military policemen at Schiphol Airport. The accompanying text read, “Is Schiphol still safe?” After seeing this, the subject claimed he was being associated unfairly with Muslim terrorism. He complained to the editorial office and started a lawsuit.



MURAL OF SYRIAN TODDLER AYLAN KURDI BY JUSTUS BECKER AND OGUZ SEN IN FRANKFURT. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK C. MÜLLER LICENSED UNDER CC BY 4.0

According to *De Volkskrant* Editor-in-chief Philippe Remarque, the picture merely illustrated tougher security controls, which meant people of possible Muslim appearance were likely to be checked. He argued that the man in the picture represented a random traveller, not a suspect. Nevertheless, a judge ruled that the combination of the photo and text was a violation of privacy. It gave the impression that the man pictured was somehow related to Schiphol's safety. Financial compensation was justified.

This case shows journalists have to think about the implications of what they publish. In the case of photos, it also means thinking about consequences for the people portrayed.

## The Importance of Context

According to Vaughn Wallace, former photo editor at *Al Jazeera*, it is important to look past the image when refugees are involved. "Their stories don't end just where the photograph is taken. So it is important to me to look for images that help promote the dignity of the subjects beyond even the photograph." However, it is questionable whether it is possible to take all consequences of publication into account.

Aylan, for example, became a symbol used by politicians, artists and activists alike. His image was used to support a variety of different opinions and views. "Everybody fights over iconic images. And in the end they perhaps lose their original meaning. It is the same with people running around with Che Guevara T-shirts as a symbol, rather than understanding who Che Guevara was," says Peter Bouckaert, Emergencies Director at Human Rights Watch and one of the first people to share Aylan's image on social media.

Aylan's family were victims of a fight over an iconic image, as Bouckaert describes. The father, Abdullah Kurdi, found out first-hand how powerful a symbol his son became. He became a political pawn and was invited to visit by Turkey's President Erdoğan, as well as by the Iraqi Kurds and rebels in Syria fighting ISIS. Abdullah even saw his dead son portrayed on banners and posters. Could journalists have foreseen this?

Should they have been more aware of the consequences of using Aylan's image? Would it have helped if from the start more background information on Aylan's journey and family had been given?

The photo of the traumatised and dust-covered five-year-old Omran Daqneesh, taken in an ambulance after a bombardment in Aleppo, raises similar questions. Just like Aylan's, this image went viral, after which many newspapers decided to publish it. And just as in Aylan's case, different meanings and views were ascribed to the photo. Chinese state television suspected it was fake. The Russian government talked of propaganda. It was even rumoured that Mahmoud Raslan, who took the photo, supported suicide bombers.

What might be important here is that the photo was not published by an independent press agency, like the photo of Aylan, but by the Aleppo Media Centre: a group of activists who report on the atrocities of the Syrian government. Even though it is almost impossible for western journalists to report from the ground in Aleppo, and using such material is the only way to show what's going on there, that the photo was taken by activists weakens its authority. By questioning the authority of the photographer, the photo itself is also questioned.

Again, context determines how to value a photo, context that, in a digital age, needs to be examined again and again. The work of a journalist does not stop when the photo is taken and published. Providing context is equally important. Editorial offices need to ask themselves whether or not there is enough information to interpret what they see in the image.

To what extent do journalistic interests weigh against other interests, such as privacy and dignity of the portrayed persons and their families?

Is it justified to publish a sensitive photo just because it is aesthetically attractive? In cases like those above, it is of utter importance that journalists stick to the facts and give background information,

Furthermore, journalists should ask themselves why they publish certain photographs. An image going viral does not release any of us from ethical choices.

# FIVE POINT GUIDE FOR MIGRATION REPORTING



## 1 FACTS NOT BIAS

Are we **accurate** and have we been **impartial, inclusive** and **fact-based** in our reporting?

Are we **acting independently** from narratives that stem from politics and emotion rather than facts?

Are we **fairly** and **transparently** reporting the impact of migration on communities?



## 2 KNOW THE LAW

Asylum seeker? Refugee? Victim of trafficking? Migrant worker? Do we use **irregular migrant**? Do we understand and use migrant definitions correctly and do we articulate to our audience the rights migrants are due under **international, regional** and **national law**?



## 3 SHOW HUMANITY

Humanity is at **the essence of ethical journalism**. But we must **keep our emotions in check**, avoid victimisation, over-simplification and the framing of coverage in a narrow humanitarian context that takes no account of the bigger picture.



## 4 SPEAK FOR ALL

Do we have **migrant voices**? Are we **listening to the communities** they are passing through or joining? Question how representative self-appointed community and migrant spokespeople really are.



## 5 CHALLENGE HATE

Have we **avoided extremism**? Have we taken the time to judge whether **inflammatory content** about migrants or those who seek to limit migration can lead to hatred? Words like “swarms”, “floods” and “waves” should be treated with caution, as should indiscriminate use of “racism” and “xenophobia”.





## THE PERFECT SOURCE

Edward Snowden, a Role Model for Whistleblowers and Journalists Everywhere

**Ewen MacAskill**

**H**e was sitting in a cramped hotel room in Hong Kong. It was early morning, his bed ruffled, the remains of dinner congealing on a side table. He was Edward Snowden and he turned out to be the perfect source.

Top secret documents leaked by the former US intelligence officer became one of the biggest stories of the decade. It was clearly in the public interest, starting a world-wide debate about the scale of US and British government surveillance. And it led to legislative change in the US, the 2015 Freedom Act that curtailed, albeit in a modest way, the bulk collection of phone data in America.

The story won lots of journalistic awards, including a Pulitzer prize. A story for the digital age, it inspired several plays in London and New York, an Oscar-winning documentary and a Hollywood film released last year.

What helped make Snowden a perfect source is that he is self-effacing, motivated neither by money nor fame. It made it difficult for the US and British governments to demonise him. Sources that are shifty, politically motivated, looking for money or disgruntled at being passed over for promotion are easier to discredit.

What rounded out the perfect source scenario is that the outcome for him turned out to be a lot happier than he had anticipated in Hong Kong. He enjoys relative freedom in exile in Moscow; not a perfect existence but preferable to idling away the decades in a US supermax prison.

So all good? Not quite. He did not feel like a perfect source at the time. Crammed into his room in the Mira Hotel with him were filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras, then *Guardian* columnist Glenn Greenwald and myself, a *Guardian* reporter. There were a lot of uncertainties. There is no template for dealing with sources. Each one is different. And Snowden was very different, the story outside anything I had experienced before. There are some things that with hindsight I did not handle well.

Read any textbook on journalism or guidelines about the relationship between journalists and their sources and two key points are always made. The first is that journalists have an obligation to protect source anonymity. The second is that they also have to protect confidential information or data provided by a source. But the reality, as we found in the Mira Hotel, is often much more complex, throwing up many more issues than just these two.

On first meeting Snowden, the priority was to establish that he was who he said he was. Normally, a few discreet inquiries should help establish an identity. But we could not do that. We had to rely on interviewing him. He sounded plausible, trustworthy and the documents looked real. A lot of it came down to instinct. In the end though, I only knew for sure when the White House, just hours before publication, effectively confirmed the first of the documents was real.

The biggest and most awkward issue when dealing with sources is usually anonymity. A source might be a friendly press officer offering up more information than they are authorised to do, or an employee deep within an organisation who has spotted wrongdoing. In both cases, they could lose their jobs if identified. There are other stories that are riskier for the source, with the prospect of jail or even loss of life.

There are other, less principled motives for leaking; perhaps a personal grudge or for political advantage, and that can be awkward. I was offered a negative story about an opposing candidate by one of the campaign teams during the 2008 Obama-Clinton fight for the Democrat presidential nomination. Anonymity was demanded. I turned it down, partly because the story did not feel that strong and partly because I felt queasy being used in this way.

I did a similar story about a decade earlier as part of a *Guardian* team that brought down a UK Cabinet minister. That too was politically motivated. The difference is that the UK story seemed definitely to be in the public interest. It is a fine distinction.

The question of anonymity with Snowden barely arose. We discussed it with him but he said from the outset that he would identify himself at some point. Even if he had wanted to remain anonymous, it would not have been practically possible. He had left a clear trail to Hong Kong that would not have taken long to find when the first stories appeared.

What we needed in the first week was security. And that meant an instant immersion for me into the world of digital security and encryption. If Snowden has a lasting legacy beyond the surveillance v privacy debate, it is that there is much more awareness now among the public, but especially among journalists, about security of communications. More and more journalists are shifting to encrypted communication.

I did a story last year about a suspected case of Chinese industrial espionage in the UK. I communicated with the source through encrypted chat from beginning to end, with only one face-to-face meeting. There were no phone calls and no emails. The source remains anonymous.



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Top secret documents leaked by the former US intelligence officer became one of the biggest stories of the decade... What helped make Snowden perfect is that he is self-effacing, motivated neither by money nor fame.

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Image right: "Snowden Eyes" by Thierry Ehrmann licensed under CC BY 2.0

Once a source hands over documents, who has ownership – the journalist or the source? It can be tricky. With Snowden it was easy. He says he handed over all the documents he had to the journalists in Hong Kong and no longer has any access to them. It was for the journalists to decide what was the story, he said. We will not hand them back to the US or British governments, not least because if Snowden was ever to come to trial in the US, the documents might be used against him.

The regret I have about Snowden was what happened after he disappeared from the Mira and went into hiding. I have always believed that journalists' obligations to a source go well beyond just providing anonymity and protection of documents. There is a duty of care.

A few days after I had met Snowden, Laura Poitras asked me what plans, if any, the *Guardian* had for helping him once his name became public. I had not given it much thought and had no idea how to handle it. The *Guardian* does not pay for stories because of the risk that information handed over to journalists will be tainted if money, no matter how innocently, as in the case of hotel bills or legal costs, is involved. If money was handed over, we could also be open to

accusations of aiding a wanted man.

I do not fancy going to jail but I have always accepted it as an occupational hazard. The *Guardian* in the end said it would help if needed with hotel bills and legal fees. At that time, the assumption was that he would remain in Hong Kong and fight extradition.

At that point WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who had not been involved in the story, intervened. He sent a WikiLeaks colleague Sarah Harrison to Hong Kong and she helped organise the flight that ended prematurely in Russia. It turned out for the best: there is nowhere else in the world where Snowden would be safe from the US, at least for now.

There is a risk of journalists becoming too close to sources, losing objectivity and becoming advocates. When writing for the *Guardian* about Snowden I have tried to retain objectivity, which to me means being as fair to all sides of an argument as possible. But I have been persuaded from the first days I met him that the balance between surveillance and privacy has tilted too far in favour of surveillance. As long as Snowden is in Russia and as long as I am functioning as a journalist, I will press for him to be allowed to move to western Europe,

a safer option than a return to the US, albeit probably just as unlikely.

I have always tried to treat sources as decently as I can. I have been as honest with them as I can be, keeping them informed each step of the way towards publication.

Some of the stories I am proudest of are ones I have not published. I repeatedly warned a couple in Syria working for an illegal underground opposition group, long before the present civil war, that they were endangering their lives and that of their daughter if their story was published. On the eve of publication, with the story edited and ready to run, they phoned to say they had changed their minds and asked me not to use it. I killed it.

I always hope that a source will feel at the end that he or she was fairly treated and does not come away thinking it was a mistake to involve the media. I have interviewed Snowden several times since Hong Kong, including twice in Moscow, and have asked him if he felt the *Guardian* treated him well. He always hesitates, reflecting perhaps a sense that we could have done more to support him after he went public, but in the end says he feels the *Guardian* did well by him. I will settle for that.

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There is a risk of journalists becoming too close to sources, losing objectivity and becoming advocates.

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# ETHICAL GROUND RULES FOR HANDLING SOURCES

**Aidan White**

**Good journalism is only ever as good as our sources of information. Most of those sources are personal, many are official, and some will be anonymous whistle-blowers. Together they provide reporters with the lifeblood of their trade – reliable, accurate and truthful information.**

Journalists need to be as transparent as possible in their relations with sources. The news media have great power and people can be flattered when they are approached by reporters without understanding fully the risks to themselves and to others when they come into the public eye. This is particularly true of people caught up in humanitarian disasters, war or other traumatic events.

Journalists have to assess the vulnerability of sources as well as their value as providers of information. They have to explain the process of their journalism and why they are covering the story.

They should not, except in the most extraordinary circumstances, use subterfuge or deception in their dealings with sources.

Some questions that the ethical journalist will ask in establishing good relations with a source include:

- Have I clarified with my source the basis of our relations and have I been fully transparent about my intentions?
- Have I taken care to protect the source – for

instance if they are a young person or someone in vulnerable circumstances – to ensure they are aware of the potential consequences of publication of the information they give?

- Am I confident the source fully understands the conditions of our interview and what I mean by off-the-record, on background, not-for-attribution, or other labels?
- If a source asks for conditions before agreeing to an interview, what are my limits?
- Would I pay for a source's expenses related to an interview? What legitimate costs could be paid?
- Would I agree to provide legal representation?

Of paramount importance is the need for journalists to reassure sources that their identity will be protected. But often this is easier said than done.

Protection of sources is well recognised in international law as a key principle underpinning press freedom. It has been specifically recognised by the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Journalists and news media should establish guidelines and internal rules that help protect sources. Reporters may benefit from a clause in their contracts or agreements that clearly states their duties and obligations. National Public Radio in the United States has a clause in its guidelines that spells it out:

“Journalists must not turn over any notes, audio or working materials from their stories or productions, nor provide information they have observed in the course of their production activities to government officials or parties involved in or considering litigation. If such materials or information are requested in the context of any governmental, administrative or other legal process this must be reported to the company.”

**When faced with the decision to tell or not to tell in these circumstances, journalists must consider the impact of their actions and ask themselves some sharp questions:**

- Who will benefit if this source is revealed?
- Who will suffer and who will lose?
- Will a criminal or powerful figure guilty of malpractice escape justice?
- Is this a case where the police and other investigating authorities are genuinely unable to provide the required information?
- Will the work of other journalists and the mission of media be compromised by revealing information?
- Will the public interest be served or not be served by cooperation?

In the end, journalists have to make their own decisions, based upon conscience and their own responsibility, but revealing a source of information is never to be taken lightly.

## **Don't Get too Close to the Source**

Sometimes journalists make the mistake of getting too close to their source. They sometimes create cosy relations that are ambiguous and can easily undermine the ethical base of their work. Powerful sources have their own agenda and accepting what they say without question crosses an ethical line and compromises newsroom independence.

The New York Times and other major news media in the United States, for instance, were heavily criticised before the invasion of Iraq in 2003 for relying too heavily on anonymous sources of information inside the government. Media coverage was highly deferential despite abundant evidence of the government's flagrant misuse of intelligence information.

A chief offender was New York Times reporter Judith Miller, who produced stories in 2001 and 2002 about the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq based on false information supplied by unnamed sources. She appeared to accept without question dubious information about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq from anonymous sources, including some at the Bush White House prior to the United States invasion in 2003.

## **Source Review of Content**

The issue of who controls the story – the source or the reporter – comes up whenever copy approval is demanded, whether by high-profile and powerful figures or by sources themselves. It was a row at the heart of the falling out between WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and some major media over the handling of leaked official documents.

In many countries leading politicians and their spin doctors simply refuse exclusive interviews unless they can sign off on the final article. In Germany, it is accepted practice, even within the elite press, for journalists to submit the quotes they plan to use to politicians and other public figures, although most journalists claim they go along with this only for fact-checking and points of accuracy.

**Given these conditions, journalists should ask themselves:**

- Are there potential benefits to the accuracy of the story in allowing a source to review portions or all of it in advance of publication? In particular, are there technical aspects that might be clarified if incorrect?
- Are there potential pitfalls in doing so? Might the source respond in a manner harmful to the story or to others involved?
- If the source wants to change something in the story, such as a quote, how will I respond?

## **Anonymous Sources**

Anonymity is a right which should be enjoyed by those who need it and should never be granted routinely to anyone who asks for it. People who may lose their job for whistleblowing; or young children; or women who are the victims of violence and abuse and others who are vulnerable and at risk from exposure are obviously entitled to it, but anonymity is not a privilege to be enjoyed by people who are self-seeking and who benefit by personal gain through keeping their identity secret.

**Journalists should ask themselves:**

- What is the likely motivation for demanding anonymity? Does that motivation potentially compromise me and my publication?
- Are there other methods I can employ to increase credibility while granting anonymity?
- Is there no other way to get and publish this information? Have I exhausted all other methods and potential sources?
- Do I or my colleagues have history with this source that speaks to his/her credibility?
- Have I maximised the level of identification that can be published without revealing the source's personal identity?

## Social Media and User-Generated Content

In today's digital environment, rumour and speculation circulate freely and knowing what is real and how to verify news and information is essential. Reporters must be alert to the danger of falling for bad information from online sources whether it is user-generated content or social media.

Digital-age sourcing is a major challenge, particularly in emergency coverage where rumour and falsehood can quickly add to the tension and uncertainty surrounding traumatic events.

### Some questions a reporter might ask, in the case of social media, include:

- Have I corroborated the origin including location, date and time of images and content that I am using from social media?
- Have I confirmed that this material is the original piece of content?
- Have I verified the social media profiles of accounts I am using to avoid use of fake information?
- Is the account holder known to me and has it been a reliable source in the past?
- Have I asked direct questions of the content provider to verify the provenance of the information?
- Are any websites linked from the content?
- Have we looked for and found the same or similar posts/content elsewhere online?
- Have I obtained permission from the author or originator to use the material whether pictures, videos or audio content?

- Have I collaborated with others to verify and confirm the authenticity of content?

### In the case of user-generated content:

- What do I know about the actual origin of this content? Can I verify the source?
- Are there copyright or legal issues around using the content?
- Have I ensured that all the information can be used and that the conditions for use are clear, for instance through Creative Commons Licence?
- Am I confident that there have been no reality-offering alterations (eg Photoshop) used?

### In the case of sourcing breaking news:

- Before I report or retweet a development reported elsewhere, how confident am I in its accuracy?
- Would I potentially cause harm if I reported something before it is established at 100% certainty? Is there potential harm in not reporting it?
- Have I been careful to question first-hand accounts that can be inaccurate and manipulative, emotional or shaped by faulty memory and limited perspective?
- Have I triangulated the information with other credible sources?
- Have I acknowledged that the material I am using can be copied, distributed, and displayed, including derivative works based on it, and have I given credit to the original author and source?

**Find out More:** Craig Silverman, Editor of *Regret the Error* at the Poynter Institute, and Media Editor at BuzzFeed, has collaborated with the European Journalism Centre to produce a useful Verification Handbook.

## WHEN HUMAN RIGHTS TRUMP PROTECTION OF SOURCES

Over the years there have been hundreds of cases when courts and public authorities ordered journalists to hand over material or information that would reveal a source of information. In most cases the ethical reporter will instinctively demur. Some will go to jail rather than betray a confidence.

Sometimes there are hard choices to be made. War correspondent Jonathan Randal of the *Washington Post*, for instance, famously refused to answer a subpoena in 2002 ordering him to appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia which was prosecuting war crimes. Randal fought the subpoena with the backing of his paper and won. This action, which was supported by press freedom groups around the world, established some limited legal protection for war correspondents against being forced to give testimony.

But when conscience calls others have been willing to cooperate. Another journalist who reported on the Bosnian war in the 1990s, Ed Vulliamy of the *Guardian*, was happy to testify before the Tribunal. His evidence helped convict and send to jail some of those responsible for war crimes. He argued that bringing to justice war criminals is a cause in which journalists, like other citizens, have a duty to join.

# FACTS MATTER: The Panama Papers Make the Case for Quality Journalism

**It was not all bad news for ethical journalism in 2016. Far from it. One of the most stunning examples of why the world needs quality and fact-based journalism was the leak and publication of the Panama Papers in April.**

This was one of the biggest acts of journalism in recent history involving more than 370 journalists from 80 countries and covering 100 leading news media organisations.

The papers revealed corruption, secrecy and double-dealing in public life and exposed how political leaders and corporate bosses from across the world were involved in secret offshore business deals – some of them financing war and terrorism.

Investigative journalists worked together to analyse secret documents from 11.5 million files held by the global offshore law firm, Mossack Fonseca. The records were obtained from an anonymous source by the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung which shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICJ) in the United States.

They co-ordinated the analysis and distillation of the material with its large network of international partners, including Le Monde, the Guardian and the BBC and leading news outlets on five continents.

It was an enormous task which no single media organisation could have handled alone, and it was paid for largely by philanthropic and charitable foundations, including Adessium Foundation, Open Society Foundations, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the Fritt Ord Foundation, the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the Ford Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts and Waterloo Foundation.

This is the reality of modern journalism: an increasing dependence on donor funding and public support for public interest journalism.





# HATE SPEECH

## A Dilemma for Journalists the World Over

**Cherian George**

**H**ate speech presents a major challenge to today's journalism. Socially conscious journalists have been rightly alarmed at how rapidly hate-filled messages seep into, and often overwhelm, comment on the internet. Less talked about is how journalists' own professional procedures — including how news is defined — may amplify the voices of hate propagandists. Then there are the media outlets that purvey intolerance, serving as ideological spokesmen and cheerleaders for forces of hate, from xenophobics to religious extremists.

Hate speech is any expression that vilifies an identifiable group — a race, religious community, or sexual minority, for example — and thus prompts harm to members. Even free speech advocates agree that hate speech requires special handling, especially when levelled against minorities too weak to counter it in the marketplace of ideas. However, discussions on this subject often lose focus: definitions get fuzzy and we find legitimate concerns being translated into unwarranted censorship.

There are vital distinctions to be made among the following examples.

- Incitement to cause harm such as negative discrimination and violence;
- Expressions that hurt a community's feelings, including by insulting beliefs;
- Criticism of politicians and other powerful interests, exposing them to contempt.

The first is the only category that is properly labeled “hate speech”; it is what human rights standards say warrants legal intervention. The second raises ethical issues, but generally should not be subject to legal restriction, since freedom of speech must include the right to challenge religious orthodoxy or other deeply held beliefs. The third may be felt as hatred by its elite targets, and is often what officials, military and police are thinking of when they cite hate speech as a justification for clamping down on media.

To label something otherwise inoffensive as “hate speech” and use it as an excuse for silencing criticism of dominant values and institutions has understandably bred cynicism among many journalists. As a defensive reaction, they retreat behind their legal right to freedom of expression.

Yet, legal limits should not determine the boundaries of professional conduct. Many principles that journalists live by, such as protecting confidentiality, are not imposed by law, and indeed, may be in conflict with the law, but are nonetheless voluntarily adopted as a matter of ethics.

Similarly, journalists need to develop their ethical capacities to respond to the real risk of serious harm being promoted. Ethical standards pertaining to hate speech remain a work in progress. There are a number of worrisome trends that deserve closer scrutiny and deliberation.

## User-Generated Contempt

The invasion of the trolls – internet users who publish offensive comments and pick fights on social media and other platforms: they often indulge in hate speech. Many news organisations respond to this problem through post-moderation, deleting or relegating posts flagged as hate speech. Rather than viewing this as censorship, such practices can be seen as helpful to open discussion, ensuring, for instance, that women can speak up without enduring a barrage of misogynistic abuse intended to intimidate and silence them.

Most media organisations claim that thorough housekeeping of their internet platforms requires more man-hours than they can afford. This begs the question of why they should host an activity that outstrips their ability to

controversy. Donald Trump evidently knew this when he used hate speech against Mexicans and Muslims. “Trump exploited the lust for riveting stories,” said “Politics and Public Policy”, a report on the media's coverage of the presidential pre-primary season by the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, “Trump is arguably the first bona fide media-created presidential nominee,” it added.

Some aspects of mainstream US coverage of Trump's campaign were more salutary. Baseless claims about minorities were torn apart. Made-up statistics he cited were fact-checked and debunked in almost real time. In this way, the media played a central role in the pushback against his us-versus-them politics of fear. Such critical scrutiny, unfortunately, may be limited to the high-profile race for the presidency; it is less evident in local politics, where the media's capacity for public-interest

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**Most media organisations claim that thorough housekeeping of their internet platforms requires more man-hours than they can afford. This begs the question of why they should host an activity that outstrips their ability to manage it responsibly.**

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manage it responsibly (event organisers, for example, are expected to ensure safety, comfort and convenience by limiting numbers to what staff can handle). News organisations that understand this duty close comments for stories that generate more vitriol than they can manage.

## The Newsiness of Hate

Media are less conscious or perhaps more confused about their responsibilities in covering newsmakers who advocate intolerance. This is partly because the issues are genuinely complex and not amenable to simple ethical formulas. Best practice entails alerting society to agents of hate, but without giving them a free ride that exaggerates their importance and amplifies their views uncritically. It can be hard to strike the right balance.

Unfortunately, what often sways the decision is the media's appetite for

reporting has been severely depleted. Furthermore, fact-checking probably made no impact on Trump's hardcore supporters or the result of the election.

Trump is not the only politician who understands that coverage is often dictated by “news values rather than political values”, as the Shorenstein report put it. Pauline Hanson of Australia's One Nation party is equally adept at earning free media coverage. “The new populists understand the media and how to command its attention,” says Brian McNair, Queensland University of Technology journalism professor. “News editors and journalists shouldn't let themselves be played like fools. Hanson is a freak on the fringe. Don't elevate her to the status of a major player.” McNair points out that One Nation claimed less than 4% of the Queensland electorate in 2016. This should not be treated as “a political earthquake deserving headline coverage”, he says.

In India, extreme statements from or about any religious group are lapped up by television news channels, says Sevanti Ninan, founder-editor of the South Asian media watch website, *The Hoot*. Journalists report oddball views in order to generate a debate that is good for ratings, she says. “They can barely mask their joy ... when one more person pipes up and says something stupid. ‘Gotcha! You actually said that? Now watch me flog it.’”

## Electoral Legitimacy

The Trump phenomenon illustrates another problem: democratic politics confers legitimacy on election contenders that many mainstream media outlets think they are not entitled to override. Whatever their misgivings about Trump, many journalists felt they had to respect Republicans’ choice of nominee.

This has also been observed in Europe. “When radical populist parties reach a certain threshold of popular vote, some media outlets are inclined to adopt policies of accommodation under the mantra of journalistic impartiality and fairness,” says Jean-Paul Marthoz, professor of international journalism at the Université de Louvain. “Others drop adversarial journalism to avoid upsetting an electorate that is part of their audience.”

The problem is compounded by the almost universal tendency to cover elections like horse races between personalities rather than contests of policy positions the media should help assess. This was noted in the coverage of the UK’s referendum on European Union membership. Even though the BBC’s public service mandate obliged it to provide balanced coverage, Labour’s position was barely covered, a Loughborough University study found. Media focused on the more exciting contest within the Conservative Party as well as from the anti-immigration UKIP.

The run-up to the Brexit referendum also showcased media’s more active and deliberate role in purveying hate. According to a Cardiff University study, Britain’s right-wing press stood out in Europe for the “consistent, hard campaigning edge” of its anti-immigrant coverage, an example of how hate speech can proliferate in highly charged and polarised political debates.



Tragically, the Rohingya and some other Muslim groups are dehumanised to the extent that even horrific crimes against them fail to generate public or official sympathy

## Dehumanised Communities

In extreme cases, a culture may have so demeaned or dehumanised a particular community that hate speech against it sounds normal and unobjectionable to many people, including journalists. This is the situation in Myanmar, where many ethnic Burmans have deep prejudices against Muslims, especially the Rohingya. “Tragically, the Rohingya and some other Muslim groups are dehumanised to the extent that even horrific crimes against them fail to generate public or official sympathy,” says Nicholas Farrelly of the Australian National University’s Myanmar Research Centre.

This has parallels with homophobia and the extreme bias against transgender people in some parts of the world. That these attitudes can turn deadly was demonstrated in the shooting rampage in Florida at an Orlando gay nightclub in June 2016, which killed 49. That spawned further hate speech, with religious leaders and other commentators stating that the victims got what they deserved.

In the many countries where homosexuality is illegal, such as Indonesia, Iran and Uganda, media often prey on prejudice and ignorance by agitating against the LGBT community. In Uganda in 2014, the day after a harsh anti-gay law was enacted, one tabloid newspaper published a list of what it called the nation’s 200 top homosexuals. “Ugandan journalists say they are just reflecting the sentiment of the society they cover and the laws under which they work,” according to *Al Jazeera’s* media watch programme, *The Listening Post*.

## Religious Hate

Hate speech against religious groups is a particularly complex problem, because religious communities define themselves by a set of beliefs and beliefs are fair game for criticism and insult. There is therefore a tension — some would say a fatal contradiction — between the need to protect against incitement while allowing beliefs to be pilloried.

Some of the most fraught debates over offensive speech are due to this tension. When cartoons or videos depict Islam as a murderous religion, governments

and internet intermediaries declare that they cannot legitimately restrict such expression, because an attack on a belief system does not technically amount to a call to arms against its believers. Many at the receiving end, however, maintain that such denigration of their religion is part of a broad ideological assault that makes it harder for them to live as equals in their society.

In any case, a legal right to insult religions does not preclude journalists deciding, on ethical grounds, to refrain from wanton attacks on values and beliefs. Political cartoonist Garry Trudeau suggests media should take people's power into account when making such decisions. Reflecting on the controversy over satirical depictions of the Prophet Mohammed in Europe, Trudeau said in an essay in *The Atlantic*: "Traditionally, satire has comforted the afflicted while afflicting the comfortable. Satire punches up against authority of all kinds, the little guy against the powerful ... Ridiculing the non-privileged is almost never funny — it's just mean."

While journalists may agree in principle, however, there would still be disagreements over implementation. Muslim immigrants in Europe are a vulnerable minority when viewed at the national level, but they are simultaneously members of a world religion with tremendous power to shape world affairs. Media's ethical responses will differ depending on which of these two frames apply.

Extreme nationalism hatred is often overlooked in discussions of hate speech, perhaps because intense and exclusive loyalty to the nation — patriotism — tends to be seen as a virtue in a way that similar sentiments about race or religion are not. Yet, nationalistic hate speech in East Asia, for example, poses a threat to world peace. China's state-run media, aided by online media, regularly incite hatred against Japan with alarming headlines and half-truths. Right-wing media in Japan reciprocate with China-bashing, although their influence is diluted by Japan's more open media environment.

Also worth pondering is how to reflect the grievances of citizens who are drawn to hate campaigns. They may have legitimate concerns about the economic and cultural cost of immigration. Immigration policy deserves vigorous discussion, even as immigrants are shielded from bigotry. Similarly, protecting Muslim minorities from discrimination should not preclude debates over the real problem of intolerance and militancy gaining ground within many Muslim communities.

## Growing Complexities

Hate speech is a constantly evolving phenomenon, with new perpetrators, targets and tactics. One noteworthy development, particularly in the West, is the rise of left-wing intolerance among segments of the political spectrum previously thought of as open-minded

and progressive. Their attempts to censor offensive speech on campuses are ostensibly intended to create safe spaces for victimised and disadvantaged groups. But some of their campaigns also smack of political opportunism, milking indignation to advance more self-serving organisational objectives. The backlash from the right includes charges of "political correctness" run amok and perhaps greater resistance to discussing the harm of hate speech.

Another worrying trend is vilification of the media. Individual journalists have always faced personal attacks. In the US election campaign, however, Donald Trump whipped up a broader assault on the media in general. This trend had already been observed in Europe, where extreme right-wing groups have cultivated hatred towards the mainstream press, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

One of the most pernicious and under-discussed aspects of hate speech is that potent hate campaigns are not limited to racist rants or banners. They instead involve a sophisticated effort across a networked movement. Extreme expression is only part of its arsenal and not necessarily the most effective weapon. Psychologists and sociologists tell us that messages are more persuasive when they enter minds when their guard is down. Journalists need to be vigilant not only against obviously toxic speech, but also hate propaganda couched in pseudoscientific terms and reasonable discourse. In France, for example, National Front leader Marine Le Pen has assiduously sanitised her party's rhetoric to make her anti-immigrant positions sound more respectable.

If journalists are to help counter propaganda, therefore, bringing in policies to deal with flagrant hate speech is just the first step. The media also need to help uncover connections between elements that make up a modern hate campaign. Much of this needs traditional investigative journalism: tracing the flows of money and power, and figuring out who benefits by instigating hatred, discrimination and violence.

Reporting on extreme far-right groups can be as risky as covering the criminal underworld, notes a Committee to Protect Journalists report. Like covering crime, corruption and the abuse of political power, covering hate campaigns calls on journalism's highest principles and deepest skills.

## POLITICIANS BLAMED FOR RACE HATE RISE

Reports of race hate and religious abuse incidents in Britain leapt by 41% in the month after the UK voted to quit the European Union, leading to a call from the country's equality watchdog for an end to political incitement and intolerant political speech. In a letter to all political parties the Equality and Human Rights Commission said politicians had "polarised" the country and "legitimised hate".

The letter was sent after a wave of racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic attacks on the streets and two murders, including the killing of a Labour parliamentarian, Jo Cox, during the referendum campaign. Prosecutors said the attack by Thomas Mair was "nothing less than an act of terrorism" and the judge said it was carried out to advance a political cause of violent white supremacy.

And in late November, just three weeks after the United States presidential election a leading US human rights group, the Southern Poverty Law Centre, said there had been almost 900 incidents of hate crime, a post-election surge which they blamed on the rhetoric of the winning candidate, Donald Trump.



# WHEN MEDIA BECOME FOOT-SOLDIERS ON THE HIGHEST FRONT LINE

**A.S. Paneerselvan\***

**C**lashes and killings along the ceasefire line that separates Indian Administered Kashmir and Pakistan Administered Kashmir have become a daily affair with a huge human toll and the nationalistic shrillness of the media on both sides is now deafening.

\*A.S. Paneerselvan is the Readers' Editor of *The Hindu*. He was reappointed as the head of Panos South Asia in 2016. He also headed Panos South Asia from 2004 and 2014.



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One challenge in writing about the media and Indo-Pak relations is that it conflates all media — good, bad and indifferent — into a monolith.

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While the escalation of violence is presumably to defend the rights of the people of Kashmir, the underlying military purposes of the nuclear neighbours in this low-intensity war seem to be to distract from the failure of both governments to address domestic issues.

Though cross-border violence has been a phenomenon since 1947, the attack on an Indian army camp in Uri on 18 September 2016 in which 18 soldiers were killed, deeply divided the Indian media into those who report events and those who become mouthpieces for the warmongers

The Indian government is playing a dangerous game of supporting media organisations that whip up ultranationalist sentiments. Key ministers attack journalists and media that believe in speaking truth to power. Prime Minister Modi himself has called journalists “news traders”, one minister has called them “presstitutes” and another has said journalists should stop asking questions.

On 3 November 2016, the government ordered the respectable Hindi channel *NDTV India* to shut down for a day for allegedly revealing “strategically sensitive” details during its coverage of an attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot on 2 January 2016. “The decision ... is a direct violation of the freedom of the media ... and amounts to harsh censorship ... reminiscent of the Emergency,” said the Editors Guild of India who demanded the immediate rescinding of the order.

At the heart of the India-Pakistan conflict lies Kashmir. Neither country has come to terms with the profound changes resulting from Partition and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Both hold Kashmir as a prized possession to justify their own nation-building rationale. India needs Kashmir, the Muslim-majority state, to prove its secular credentials and to counter the idea that religion constitutes nationality. For Pakistan, Kashmir represents its unfinished agenda of

carving out a nation state that includes all Muslim-majority regions. The competitive reasoning, supported by the media, seems oblivious to the daily injuries both countries inflict on the people of Kashmir.

One challenge in writing about the media and Indo-Pak relations is that it conflates all media — good, bad and indifferent — into a monolith. Pakistan’s *Dawn* or India’s *The Hindu* are daily newspapers, not warmongers. However, many television channels in both countries are baying for blood.

For a decade Panos South Asia (the network of independent non-governmental institutes) has brought together Indian and Pakistan editors for open and frank discussions. The first, in Nagarkot, Nepal in 2002, occurred when Indian and Pakistani troops were engaged in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. The retreat was organised in collaboration with the Kathmandu-based journal *Himal Southasian* that has remained our partner.

“Indian soldiers, Kashmir” by flowcomm (previous page) and “Man reading Newspaper” by Mike Prince (image right) licensed under CC BY 2.0

We discussed the media's role in covering the situation. Star reporters in the war spoke about their experiences while the political personalities gave important behind-the-scenes details. Afterwards some journalists wrote for each other's publications and continue to do so on important events.

Subsequent retreats dealt with subjects including the nuclear issue and Kashmir. In the nuclear meeting, at Bellagio on Lake Como, Italy, the Pakistan representatives came up with the problem of lack of access to accurate and timely information. They were given material and sources by some of their Indian counterparts who had been covering the issue for a longer time. They continue to remain in touch. TV channels present discussed exchanging footage and joint coverage. One such alliance was made between Sun TV of India and Geo TV of Pakistan, an alliance that ended when I left Sun TV.

The meeting on Kashmir, in Istanbul, was among the most productive. Political leaders from Indian Kashmir and Pakistani Kashmir set off the discussions. The editors came up with some constructive suggestions that the two leaders then carried on world tours immediately after. There were many conciliatory noises later from both governments, suggesting out-of-the-box solutions. One, to permit cross-border trade between the two Kashmirs, has just been implemented.

Two former Indian foreign secretaries, Shyam Saran and Shivshankar Menon, acknowledge that this initiative helped to get domestic media support. Most importantly, some media decided they would stop using the terms India Occupied and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, opting instead for the more neutral terminology of Indian Administered and Pakistan Administered Kashmir.

The retreat in Barcelona, Spain, the seventh, came as the geo-political environment had changed dramatically within a year. Pakistan's role as a frontline state in the war on terror and its domestic turmoil placed a completely different spin on bilateral relations. India too was in a state of flux due to forthcoming elections. Two former foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan, Salman Haidar and Shamshad Ahmad, joined a very high-powered

team of editors and proprietors from both sides. Means of cooperation both through the media and elsewhere were discussed. While discussions tended to get heated, it all came together as an incisive analysis of current forces at play within the region.

Reports of every one of the 10 retreats between 2002 and 2010 have been published in *Himal Southasian*, the region's leading journal and a magazine widely picked up by academics, think tanks, policy makers, students and activists among others. The proceedings are on the webpage of the *Himal*.

One of the key truths to emerge from the retreats was the fact that domestic constituencies for peace need to be nourished, and without adequate home support no regime in Delhi or Islamabad can keep the peace process on track. The Establishments in both countries have openly acknowledged that the softening of "nationalist rhetoric" by influential sections of the media — a direct result of the retreats — has helped them to revive the peace process every time it gets stymied by some event like a bomb blast or an act of terror.

The success of these interactions is valued by major publications in India and Pakistan. A media conference, "Talking Peace", was convened in Karachi by Aman ki Asha, a joint initiative of the Jang Group of Pakistan and the Times of India Group, to present our experience of bringing senior media functionaries together and its impact on the quality of reports and analysis.

Participants agreed on the need to create more empathy for each country and the need for more cross-border information. Specific suggestions were made on improving mutual coverage and understanding. Some stemmed from the need to reinforce journalism's best practices, such as being careful about reports based on single sources and questioning stories stemming from government agencies.

We looked at visa restrictions that force media to draw on correspondents and reporters from each other's countries, which has led to points of view being broadcast or published across the border. Suggestions included allowing journalists easier access to each other's countries and ending

restrictions on cell-phone roaming between Pakistan and India.

We suggested broadening coverage beyond geopolitics, ensuring a more rigorous reportage of economic, infrastructure and cultural issues. Training workshops for reporters on specific issues like Kashmir, water, and terrorism, for example, would help raise the level of reporting in general.

We suggested the development of a mutually agreed code of ethics and guidelines on issues of mutual concern and the development of a website that would allow better cross-border engagement between journalists.

We wanted to compile a database of media commentators to provide a larger pool of analysts to draw from and allow for more circumspection at times of crisis. A related suggestion was to monitor television talk shows to analyse how often hawkish voices are invited on air compared to more nuanced views. Another suggestion was to promote more exchange and interaction among junior and mid-level reporters, editors and producers from the media in each country.

What is clear is that responsible media in India and Pakistan know how to report in times of crisis. But their idea of journalism to minimise harm is hardly heard in the din created by television channels. For instance, many senior editors in India agree with *The Economist's* story, "All Hail" (22 October 2016), which established that a vast section of India's press is more craven than Pakistan's.

It rightly pointed out that *Times Now* television channel eschews any space for dialogue, dissent and understanding of the other. "Arnab Goswami, the anchor of a particularly raucous talk show, has declared that critics of the government should be jailed," read the *Economist* report.

It is worth remembering the sane words of Raj Kamal Jha, editor of the *Indian Express*, when he spoke in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism on 2 November 2016: "Good journalism is not dying; it is getting better and bigger. It's just bad journalism makes a lot more noise than it used to do five years ago. And that is why I think the remote control should get the R&G award for excellence in journalism."



## Women in the Crosshairs as Hate Speech Puts African Media Under Pressure

Racheal Nakitare

**F**reedom of expression comes with great responsibility and media practitioners must draw the line on what can and cannot be said in public or printed. The lack of responsible journalism, especially when it fuels hate speech and propaganda, has been a major contributor to turmoil in Africa.

Though hate speech in the African media tends to take cultural, political, economic and social dimensions, it is the political that generates most heat. History has proved that elections across the continent are fertile ground for hate speech and conflict.

The Rwanda genocide in 1994, Kenya's post-election violence in 2008, Burundi's marred elections of 2015, South Sudan's unending conflict and the Arab spring are some instances of how media contributed to the escalation of violence.

In Kenya, politicians have sought to manipulate community grievances to whip up support in every contested election since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1992. In the post-election period of 2007–2008, when allegations of electoral fraud erupted in violence, more than 1,000 people were killed, 3,500 were injured and approximately 350,000 displaced.

The broadcaster Joshua Arap Sang was charged with using the Kalenjin-language radio station Kass FM to incite hatred of the Kikuyu and with incitement to violence. In 2011 he was charged by the International Criminal Court with crimes against humanity stemming from his actions at that time. However, in April 2016 the ICC terminated the case against him.

The failure of this prosecution may have sent the wrong kind of signals because Kenyan politicians have taken it as licence to continue hurling insults and even to call for the assassination of opposing leaders.

Tolerance and mutual respect should be the hallmark of mature democracy. In South Africa xenophobic violence against migrants may have been interpreted as defending economic interests, but recent calls for the murder of white people by Julius Malema, controversial leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters party, is a reminder that racism is alive there. Malema's hate speech extended to attacking a BBC journalist at a rally.

Hundreds have lost lives and millions have been displaced in the South Sudan conflict that has pitted supporters of President Salva Kiir (Dinka) against those loyal to former Vice-President Dr Riek Machar (Nuer) in what is often viewed as ethnic conflict. Much reporting has taken sides, making it difficult for people to trust and rely on media for objective information.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that a rise in hate speech and ethnic incitement is likely to spark mass atrocities in the country, which has been ravaged by war since 2013. In 2014, rebels used a radio station in Bentiu to call on men from one community to sexually attack women from another.

Hate speech has been repeatedly used as a weapon of gender-based violence meant to intimidate women into silence. Though Africa boasts a rich cultural heritage that has often evolved to embrace contemporary practice, gender biases persist. When culture is used as an argument, it is usually to maintain privilege.

Media have contributed to gender discrimination and hate speech that is characterised by stereotyping. The first yardstick for judging women seeking political office therefore becomes morality, regardless of how male counterparts may behave.

A recent television programme, hosted by an internationally acclaimed Kenyan journalist, saw the most embarrassing and humiliating debate in recent politics. A man seeking political office used vulgar language against his female opponent, hurling sexual insults over an hour-long interview. He referred to the female aspirant as a "socialite bimbo" who had planned "a 30-days sex holiday if her team wins".

Though the (male) moderator wanted the public to believe he was helpless, outraged observers argued that he appeared to enjoy the aggression and humiliation. This was blatant disrespect for women, as the attacks were intended to harm and dehumanise the female participant. The attacker, the medium, the audience reach, the content and the context meet the five-point test designed by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) as guidelines for journalists to identify hate speech and thus demonstrate responsibility in their work.

The public comments that followed the programme took on gender undertones as opposed to discussing substantive issues that matter to the electorate. The fear now is that similar scenarios will characterise the media in Kenya prior to the August 2017 general elections if no decisive action is taken against the media house responsible in this case.

But even as media are criticised over channeling hate speech it is important to understand that they are caught in a bind. Anyone can publish via social media and the rush to publish without checking the facts has often led to journalists being depicted as irresponsible and greedy. Attacks often follow women writers online, castigating them and tearing into their stories.

One female writer with the *Nation* in Nairobi shied away from following up a story on empowerment for women by the state-run Information and Communication Technology Authority (ICT) when an analysis she did on women's rights online was attacked by a reader who called it "another of the feminist-biased stories". The conversation that followed took a men-v-women argument as opposed to understanding the role that ICT plays. The situation can only get worse because most countries in Africa do not have cyber laws that deal with online offences.

The media in Africa are viewed almost entirely as commercial entities, as opposed to services that contribute to the public good. And financial objectives, regulation and professionalism are under threat. The increase in investors after the airwaves in Africa were opened up permitted politicians to control frequencies for political ends. Instead of introducing diverse and dynamic ideas that will grow the sector, the focus has been on safeguarding their space and ensuring their opponents do not get a look-in.

The dominance of male politicians in media ownership has pushed women to the periphery, and only left the very determined to navigate the murky political waters. Only one woman sits on the board of the Media Owners Association in Kenya. Until more women can determine the future of media in the country, gender inequality will continue.

While editorial and financial independence continue to determine good journalism, African media have lacked professionalism. The emergence of digital media has caused panic as media houses cut down on staff. The Kenyan mainstream media have laid off many staff in the past year, with women the first to go.

Training has also failed journalism, considering that there is no standard curriculum such as applies in other professions like law, medicine and architecture. Training institutions should understand the need to develop curricula specific to online or digital requirements. Infiltration by quacks has greatly compromised standards. Criteria for employing radio announcers depend on mastery of a language rather than professional training that includes ethics.

Regulation remains a major task in most countries, considering political interests and the pace of



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## Digital platforms have further complicated matters, adding spontaneity, ambiguity and an unchecked freedom of expression.

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standardisation. The Media Council in Kenya is tasked to regulate media but has no powers to prosecute cases of hate-mongering, for example.

Digital platforms have further complicated matters, adding spontaneity, ambiguity and an unchecked freedom of expression. Though web-based media have made government control more difficult, they have also opened the floodgates to falsehoods that spread much faster than on traditional media.

Research carried out by the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) in collaboration with the web foundation Women's Rights Online in 2016 established that women are 50% less likely to be internet connected than men with similar levels of education and income.

The EJN partnered with media organisations, journalists' unions – including Africa Media Initiative (AMI), the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT), the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), East African Journalists Association (EAJA), and others – to launch a campaign, *Turning the Page of Hate in Africa* in Kigali in April 2014, during the 20th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide.

Subsequent workshops and training have been carried out in Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. Much progress has been made, using the EJN five-point test, in aiding professionals across the continent to identify hate speech and in adhering to professional ethics in eliminating incitement to violence. But much more needs to be done to entrench ethics in training institutions and in media house practices, and particularly to confront the challenges that come with technological advances.

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"THE WORLD IS WATCHING" UMBRELLA ON DISPLAY DURING OCCUPY CENTRAL MOVEMENT IN HONG KONG

# LOCUSTS, HOTDOGS AND LEFTARDS

## A Hong Kong Glossary of Hate Speech

**Chan Chi Kit**

In June 2016 a group of journalists and academics from China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan met in Hong Kong at the invitation of the EJN and the Hong Kong Baptist University to establish an East Asia Media Forum to promote dialogue and media co-operation in a region where political tensions have been growing in recent years.

The Forum agreed that cross-border co-operation between journalists and academics will be essential to prevent media becoming instruments of propaganda. Part of avoiding the recruitment of journalists as foot-soldiers in information conflict is the need to confront hate-speech in the way we report on the affairs of others.

The Hong Kong meeting suggested developing a simple glossary of terms that journalists should avoid if they want to encourage civil public discourse. As an example, we have assembled a glossary from everyday usage in Hong Kong.

There are three main types of hate speech:

- a) dehumanisation by using insect and animal terminology.
- b) terms for attacking political or ideological opponents.
- c) political nicknames which mock particular targets.

The definition of hate speech is very controversial, in particular for b) and c) above, since metaphor and mockery (and satire) are often used in political and ideological debates.

Although this glossary is hardly exhaustive and should not be seen as a dictionary of banned words, as there must be debate about cultural significance, it nevertheless aims to alert people to the adoption of labels which ignite public hatred. Journalists and media have to be careful; rampant, casual and unthinking usage of such terms can do damage and may result in unintended victimisation.

## I: Dehumanisation

These terms are common enough to be termed hate speech in the context of Hong Kong.

**Locust (蝗蟲):** Denigrates Mainland Chinese and is widely applied to new immigrants from the mainland, Chinese visitors and people who cannot speak fluent Cantonese. It breeds labels with similar meanings, eg “country of locust” (referring to China), “eggs of locust” (children who obtained HK residence whose parents are Mainland Chinese but not HK citizens).

**Communist Dog (共狗):** An insult to the Chinese Communist Party and members. Now widely used by media and people who mock parties and individuals perceived as working for the interests of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government. Also widely seen in political spats where determination to protect Hong Kong’s interest from China’s interference is questioned.

**Hong Kong’s Pig (港豬):** Analogy attacking Hong Kong people regarded as “apathetic” or who avoid political and social controversies. They are seen as satisfied with the status quo, with basic needs fulfilled, but refuse to stand up for democracy and social change.

**Police Dog (警犬):** Insults the police by denigrating them as dogs, particularly those who blindly defend the status quo and the governing regimes.

**Teaching Beast (教畜):** An insult to “incompetent” teachers by denigrating them as animals.

**Yellow corpse (黃屍):** Insults those who supported the Occupy movement of HK in 2014, and later became a term for supporters of democracy and social activists. The Occupy movement once used yellow ribbons as their symbol of resistance. Chinese pronunciation of “ribbon” is similar to that for corpse.

**Hotdog (熱狗):** Specifically used for followers of Wong Yeung Tat and his allies. Wong heads a political group called Civic Passion, which is regarded as radical and rightist.

**Christian sucks (耶撚):** Depicts Christians as stubborn die-hards defying human rights and social equality. It stems from social controversies over gay and lesbian rights. Some supporters of this camp mock religious groups – often Christian – which oppose and criticise supporters of LGBT rights. The word ‘撚’ in Cantonese implies penis and humiliation.

**Bastard (雜種):** Insults Chinese President Xi Jinping, as the Chinese pronunciation of bastard is strikingly similar to his surname (Xi, 習) and his position as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhong, 總, the short form of General Secretary).

## II: Political and Ideological Name-Calling

This category covers name-calling during political or ideological conflict. Not yet clear whether this is hate speech or acceptable metaphor.

**Leftard (左膠):** Applied to those who possess “unrealistic” leftist ideology by sticking to the principles of social inclusiveness, peaceful and non-violent action while facing threats from China and HK Establishment. Also implies stupidity and stubbornness. Used by those who attack supporters of welfare for new immigrants and Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong and activists and politicians who insist on peaceful and non-violent means in the democracy movement.

**Leftard of Greater China (大中華膠):** Demeans HK-ers who adopt Chinese cultural identity in the course of the democratisation of Hong Kong. People who seek a reassessment of the Tiananmen Square massacre or the abolition of the one-party system in China are often labelled “leftards of Greater China”.

**Indigenous Communist (土共):** Used for pro-communists in Hong Kong. Originated in the pro-Taiwan press since the 1967 riot in HK initiated by Maoists to challenge colonial status. It implies blind loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and opposition to the democratisation of Hong Kong.

**Fifty Cent Party (五毛):** Comes from the allegation that people are paid 50 cents for publishing every online post in favour of the Chinese government. They are also said to block posts by flooding them with junk mail.

**Servility (奴性):** Derogatory depiction of the submissiveness of Chinese people to authority. Used for those perceived as unconditionally accepting the dominant ideology and who show ignorance of and apathy to social injustice.

**The Taliban of ethics (道德塔利班):** Applied to those who uphold moral absolutism and compel others to observe high moral standards, which is sometimes regarded as unrealistic.

**Peaceful, Rational, Non-violent and No-swearing (和理非非):** Political terminology for moderate resistance (using lawful means) by democrats. It differentiates moderate democrats from radical activists and is often adopted by media or radicals to satirise democrats from well-known parties and organisations.



**Banquets, Cakes and Dumplings (蛇齋餅粽):** Satirises the sweeteners offered by the pro-Establishment camp in exchange for votes. Demeans partisan voters for this camp.

**Fake Refugee (假難民):** Demeans those seeking asylum and residence in Hong Kong, particularly from South East Asia. “Fake” implies they are driven by socio-economic interests and not political repression. In some media coverage they are associated with crime and social problems.

### III: Political Nicknames

Common in media discourses and everyday conversation. They may not be regarded as hate speech by most Hong Kong people. However, their derogatory implication is well understood.

**Loving Mother (慈母):** Satire on police violence. The term came from a broadcast interview with former HK Police Commissioner Andy Tsang Wai Hung, when he described the protective role of police as of a “loving mother”.

**689:** Refers to the unrepresentative election system and HK’s Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying. Stems from the 689 out of 1200 votes won by Leung from an election committee in 2012, which made him the head of Hong Kong’s administration. It has become the most widely-used nickname for Leung.

**The Wolf (狼英):** Describes the unfaithful and repressive image of Leung Chun Ying.

**Lobster (龍蝦):** Metaphor for the bad fashion sense of Leung’s wife, Regina Leung Tong Chin Yee. Originated from a red gown she wore which made her look like a lobster.

In addition to these, here are some examples in use in China (provided by Yuan Zeng of the City University in Hong Kong):

剩女 **Leftover women:** Single women in China aged 27 and above

港灿 **Gang Can:** Hongkongers

小日本 **Xiao Riben:** Small Japanese

日本鬼子 **Riben Guizi :** Japanese ghost

洋鬼子 **Yang Guizi :** Foreign ghost

棒子 **Bangzi (stick):** Korean

阿三 **A San (three):** Indian

强国 **Qiangguo (strong nation):** Used by Apple Daily in HK to refer to China

大陆客 **Da Lu Ke (tourists from Mainland China):** Now derogatory after extensive use by some HK media

台巴子 **Tai Bazi:** Taiwanese

# TURNING THE PAGE OF HATE

A media campaign for tolerance in journalism



**DON'T SENSATIONALISE! AVOID THE RUSH TO PUBLISH TAKE A MOMENT OF REFLECTION**



## ATTENTION MEDIA

There is No 'HONOUR' in Killing!

**Tasneem Ahmar**

**D**espite efforts to sensitise the media in Pakistan to gender issues, especially violence against women, few news outlets in their efforts to win ratings appear to apply balance. Almost all television channels sensationalised the murder last July of Qandeel Baloch, a model turned celebrity, by showing explicit photo shoots and interviews. The horror of a young life taken in its prime became farce, and far from inviting sympathy many in the media depicted the murder as a matter of “honour”.

Qandeel Baloch had made headlines for openly expressing her sexuality by uploading photographs of herself in scanty clothing and defying patriarchal mindsets. She wasn't a criminal but due to her fame the media used even greater insensitivity and disrespect than usual in their portrayal of gender based violence and violence against women and so-called “honour killings”.

Exactly two weeks after Qandeel's murder, a British woman, Samia Shahid was lured to her ancestral home in Pakistan and killed, allegedly by her father and her first husband. She was said to have maligned the honour of her family by divorcing her allegedly abusive first husband and marrying another man of her choosing. Another Samia, married and the mother of two children, died in April 1999 when she was gunned down at her parent's behest in Lahore because she wished to free herself from an abusive marriage. The facts clearly pointed to the involvement of several family members, but only the main suspect was charged. Samia's blood relatives forgave him. The press termed the murder “an act of an individual” and no one was punished by the state.

Innumerable women in Pakistan are killed in the name of so-called “honour”, thus turning victims into criminals who are said to deserve punishment in terms of debatable values and traditions. “Honour killings” are based on the absurd notion that a perpetrator’s female blood relatives must uphold the “honour” of a man.

We hope things are changing regarding punishment for such murders. Due to the decades-long struggle of women activists, a new law dictates that a life sentence will be mandatory for “honour killing” convictions. A death sentence may be commuted to life imprisonment if the victim’s family forgives the killer. The judge will have the discretion to determine whether a murder qualifies as an “honour killing”.

Women are killed in the name of honour in many parts of the world. They are most often described as tribal, feudal, patriarchal acts of saving the honour of the family. In such cultures, women can be said to bring disgrace by simple acts such as applying make-up, talking to a male stranger, or wishing to choose their husband. Men also become victims of this practice on occasion (if named as the female’s partner) but the majority of those murdered in the name of honour are females aged 10 to 70. Human rights groups in Pakistan say 500-1,000 cases are reported yearly, but many are not.

A critical aspect of this crime is the manner in which it is reported. The style and terminology used by media, particularly social media, when writing and reporting on women’s issues, especially violence against women, is an essential tool in portraying these killings as murder. “We must differentiate between the imaginary, ‘reality-show’ world of Twitterati & Facebookers vs the mainstream print and electronic media although the lines are getting blurred by online bloggers and other armchair activists,” says Tahira Abdullah, an Islamabad-based women’s and human rights activist.

Perhaps a list of tips on how to cover “honour killings” would clarify issues. An analysis of the Pakistani media shows a clear dividing line between a relatively sensitised English-language media (with limited presence), and the vernacular and regional-language media that have a huge presence and great influence.

Regarding Qandeel’s murder, what message was conveyed through repeatedly screening a video clip of

her taking selfies with a cleric? To express sympathy with a woman who defied patriarchal norms? Few rational observers may agree. Further, the manner of reporting gave the impression that she deserved to die. Was this intentional?

A few voices did empathise with Qandeel, seeing a woman who simply wanted to get the most out of life and had the courage of her convictions. The media’s deliberate or unintended bias against women was apparent through lack of respect for the dead Qandeel, while the cleric received almost no attention even though he was a high public official before this story broke.

There were no investigative stories or talk-show discussions on the deeper issues of misogynist mindsets that were so apparent in most coverage. In some cases gender blindness rather than gender bias was the issue. Often the talk show host or the writer/reporter couldn’t see the difference that terminologies make or the impact of words and phrases and how one constructs a sentence suitably. How much weight is given to whom and why is also important. Finally, it is not the business of journalism to be judgmental.

An example of how style and terminology can change the complexion of a situation is when the word honour is written within inverted commas to denote its lack of authenticity when used as an excuse to kill. According to an article in the *Daily News* (Egypt) “terminology in the media matters”, and for murders as complex as these, it’s the media’s responsibility to find a name that better fits the crime. Only then will it become easier to work towards a solution.

*Al Jazeera* for one has decided which they won’t use: “We are always updating our style guidelines to convey a deeper and more authentic understanding of world affairs.” Recent events in Pakistan ignited a healthy debate in *Al Jazeera* on the term “honour killings” in particular. “Our editors are currently studying alternatives ... but ‘misogynistic murder’ is not one of them,” said a spokesperson.

Apart from words, phrases and nuances that alter the essence of a story the media must focus on the perpetrator of a crime, not on the victim. Further, the media must perform their most pertinent task; educating and informing the public that killing/murder in the name of so-called honour is not condoned by law or morality, and that such killers and murderers

deserve severe punishment under the law. Sympathy with victims of violence must be encouraged and perpetrators condemned loudly and clearly.

The media can also push governments to help prevent such crimes by offering effective protection to potential victims, to initiate campaigns that seek to change minds mired in ignorance and to encourage acceptance of women as equal members of society rather than as commodities and repositories of male honour and prestige. To fight misogyny, cultural misrepresentations and patriarchal stereotypes need to be altered, with the burden of transformation lying with the community as a whole.

For media in Pakistan the stakes are very high and they may be expected to take the lead in the struggle against misrepresentation of women’s issues and gender based violence, especially “honour killings”.

A review of foreign media coverage of such killings (for example in UK) reveals a lack of empathy and knowledge of the issues and explains the phenomenon as a “ghastly way of life”, [a matter of] “culture” and [ignorance of] “western ways”. These headlines, based on stereotypes, shape the way in which honour crimes are understood by many and have led to immigrant communities being seen as regressive and backward, and somehow morally inferior by mainstream public opinion.

A more dangerous conclusion often drawn is that “honour killings” are a part of Islamic society and thus sanctioned by Islam, as most such cases occur in Muslim societies. It is essential, therefore, for media in Pakistan and worldwide to disabuse the public of the notion that honour crimes are sanctioned by Islam. This is clearly possible through gender-balanced reporting containing facts, not assumptions, with the focus always on the perpetrators of crimes, not the victims.

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# TURKEY

## After an Attempted Coup the Journalists' Nightmare

Ceren Sözeri

**J**ournalists in Turkey are enduring the worst period of repression in living memory. According to Tutuklu Gazetecilerle Dayanışma Platformu (The Solidarity Platform with Detained/Imprisoned Journalists) on 23 October 2016 at least 116 were in prison. The Journalists Union of Turkey states that 10,000 (almost one-third) have lost their jobs since 2013; 3,000 after the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The day after the attempted coup more than a dozen news sites were blocked by the telecommunications regulator.



## Keeping the Ethical Flame Alive in Turkish Journalism

### Is ethical journalism possible in a country like Turkey where journalists are being targeted in a crackdown on press independence unprecedented in the country's democratic history?

The answer, regrettably, is almost certainly not. The self-censorship reported by the EJN and others in recent years has now completely overwhelmed newsrooms. Critical voices are silent. The pervasive atmosphere is of fear and intimidation.

During 2016 the EJN was among a group of media freedom support groups to receive a solidarity award from the Turkish Journalists' Association. We were honoured to receive it, but we don't fool ourselves into thinking that the perilous conditions for journalism will change anytime soon.

International protests play a key role in putting pressure on the government and must continue. But equally important will be to provide continuing support and to create new initiatives that will keep the ethical flame alive in the country's stricken media industry.

The EJN will engage with media leaders in Turkey in the coming months to promote internal systems of ethical management, transparency and self-regulation within a media industry that has suffered from a flawed system of politicised ownership that has weakened journalism for years and long before the current crisis.

We will also promote more effective media literacy and information programmes, particularly with young people and in co-operation with universities, to help develop a deeper understanding of the importance of pluralism and diversity in the public information sphere.

Such initiatives will not make headlines (and currently that is probably a good thing) but they will help Turkish editors and reporters keep in touch with the values of ethical journalism and, when conditions permit, to rebuild a culture of independent journalism that will put democracy back on track.

On 20 July, President Erdoğan declared a three-month state of emergency and partially suspended the European Convention on Human Rights. Since then, the Turkish government has been able to rule by decree and can pass bills that have the force of law: 16 television channels, 23 radio stations, three news agencies, 45 daily newspapers, 15 magazines and 29 publishing houses with links to the opposition Gülen movement have been ordered to shut down.

At the end of September, 12 television channels and 11 radio stations – most of them pro-Kurdish – were shut down by decree no.668, which allows for closure without a court order on the grounds of being related to terrorist organisations or being a threat to national security. Further, all their property can be confiscated by the state. Some newspapers are still surviving, however.

On 5 October 2016 an amendment came into force on the bylaw controlling the Press Advertisement Authority, which allocates official advertisements and announcements to print media. The amendment rules that newspapers which do not fire journalists tried under the Anti-Terror Law (TMK) within five days will not benefit from official advertisements. Just in the second quarter of 2016, 56 journalists have been tried in accordance with that law and six have been sentenced to 15 years in prison in total, according to a BIA Media Monitoring report.

At the beginning of November the purge continued when police detained and charged the editor and several writers of opposition newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, one of Turkey's oldest and most-respected newspapers. Editor Murat Sabuncu, a cartoonist and seven board members were sent to prison to await trial on terrorism-related charges. In August the paper's former editor Can Dündar fled the country into exile after being sentenced to five years in prison on spying charges.

### Accreditation Used for Censorship

The government is not only intervening in editorial policy but is also targeting journalists directly by, for example, excluding parliamentary reporters and the Ankara representatives of "dissident" media outlets.

A prominent journalist from *Cumhuriyet* said that "the bureaucracy in Ankara provides information only to journalists from pro-government media who already act like members of the ruling party. It is impossible to leak any criticism of the government.

"In press conferences there is a hierarchy that ranks media as pro-government, mainstream and opposition. Sometimes we are not invited to press conferences on critical issues. Opposition media can access insider information but only off the record."

Previously, he added, parliamentary reporters could get off-the-record briefings after Cabinet meetings but after 2002, when the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, that stopped.

Sultan Özer, the former Ankara representative of *Evrensel* daily, whose accreditation for the prime minister's office was cancelled in 2008, said it happened "because of a question I asked in written form. They claimed my lack of continuity of attendance as a reason. But journalists cannot be subject to compulsory attendance. I sued and won after two-and-a-half years. I should add that you cannot follow any meetings in AKP's head office without accreditation from the prime minister's office."

She also stated that "we cannot get an appointment for any minister or bureaucrat. They never allow us to ask a question. If a reporter asks any critical question – even from the mainstream media – their newsrooms are asked never to send them to further meetings."

It's alleged that the government has controlled questions in press conferences. In 2010, a reporter from TRT (Turkish Radio Television Corporation – the Public Service Broadcaster) asked about a price rise for natural gas in Turkey, but directed the question to the prime minister of Bulgaria instead of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at that time

Turkey's prime minister. Immediately Erdoğan intervened by saying he had asked the wrong man then answered the question.

Özer has complained not only about discrimination against media seen as “dissident” by the government but also about a lack of solidarity among journalists. She said: “When you asked a critical question about government policies some colleagues reacted before the spokesperson. Last year during the Minimum Wage Commission Board’s press meeting I asked if it was possible to survive on this minimum wage. The employers’ representative challenged me in a harsh tone.”

Recently, when 664 press cards were cancelled by the Directorate General of Press and Information of the Office of the Prime Ministry, the reaction of journalists and media organisations was weak. The selective dissemination of press cards and other accreditation, plus restricting access to official press meetings to select media organs should be considered state censorship and journalists should unite against them.

## Self-censorship is Alarming after the Coup Attempt

In addition to official censorship, self-censorship is widespread. Journalists and media do it out of fear of government reprisal. Many people, including *Cumhuriyet’s* Can Dündar have left the country. Dündar and the paper’s Ankara representative Erdem Gül were imprisoned for 92 days after their stories on Turkish intelligence trucks bound for Syria were published in early 2014.

Later, Dündar was attacked in an attempted shooting outside a courthouse in Istanbul on 6 May 2016. The gunman was released after five-and-a-half months in jail. Dündar said: “Nowadays being a journalist is much more dangerous than ever and needs courage and self-confidence.”

In these circumstances, self-censorship itself becomes a protective shield for journalists. The noxious climate created by government and state repression puts all dissident voices at risk of abuse and reprisals, both from state agencies and the government’s online supporters.

The International Press Institute’s Online project has since January 2016 monitored coordinated online campaigns by supporters of the ruling AKP Party and affiliated trolls to silence critical reporting in Turkey. Messages include labels such as “traitor”, “terrorist” or “terrorist supporter”, as well as “kafir” (infidel). Many threaten violence and death. Ashi Aydıntaşbaş, a prominent journalist, recently wrote a piece entitled “Turkey’s repression is destroying my courage – and my health” for the *Washington Post*. She is suffering from sub-acute thyroiditis due to stress after the coup attempt. She defined the post-coup period as a nightmare.

“Over the past year, I find myself intuitively developing a set of survival techniques to be able to continue writing in Turkey. For example, the Turkish president and his family are off limits – I never write directly about him. I may refer to a statement he made or criticise ‘Ankara’ or ‘a government decision’. But the subject is never you-know-who.

“I do not touch the topic of corruption. Ever. Where possible, I opt for a foreign policy subject, as opposed to the domestic situation. I do not mingle with Gulenists or appear on their television shows. This is easier since they are all shut

down. I tweet judiciously. I hardly go to demonstrations – even for free speech.”

A freelance journalist and fixer said he has rejected all requests from foreign journalists and media outlets after the coup attempt: “I worked with foreigners for years. But I gave up after this July. Why? Suggesting that we are going to make a vox pop or an interview with a person against the government, before, I knew that nothing would happen – at the worst we could be taken into custody for a short time. But now, I could foresee anything; the journalist I work with could be deported and I can be considered as a ‘terrorist’ and put in jail for weeks or maybe years.”

The crackdowns turned into a witch hunt. Nobody, especially journalists, feels safe, they just try to survive. A popular columnist from mainstream media explains: “Self-censorship is so ingrained in me I don’t know what I will write if tomorrow the repression disappears.”

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Today, we are facing the worst crackdown on press freedom. Almost every international organisation calls the government of Turkey to stop jailing journalists, shutting down radio and TV channels and censoring the internet in an attempt to silence criticism.

The alarming rise in state censorship is threatening the future of journalism, particularly political reporting. Before it is too late the government should heed these recommendations:

- The State Of Emergency which caused violations of fundamental rights after the 15 July coup attempt should be ended immediately.
- The government should stop journalism and release all jailed journalists.
- Radio and TV closures should be rescinded.
- Government officials should refrain from all discrimination, such as selective accreditation, which is considered to be censorship.
- Press cards must be issued and disseminated by an independent body of representatives of journalist unions and associations.
- The Press Advertisement Authority should be independent and transparent in its fair allocation of official advertisements and announcements to the print media.

## Finally

There is a need for stronger solidarity between journalists and media organisations in struggling with state censorship and to rebuild trust and credibility in journalism.

It may take some time for the poisoned atmosphere caused by a purge of dissenting voices to dissipate, but more support for journalism that respects core principles of independence, truth and humanity will ensure that when this moment of political crisis eases media will be ready to play their part in restoring democracy, pluralism and renewed respect for human rights.

***At their request some names have been withheld to protect individuals and their media outlets.***

## CONTRIBUTORS

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# About the Ethical Journalism Network

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## Our Mission

The Ethical Journalism Network aims to strengthen the craft of journalism and to promote for the public benefit high ethical standards in media through education, training and publication of useful research.

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The EJN Board: (from left) Zahera Harb, Thomas Spence, Ashok Gupta (Treasurer), Dorothy Byrne (Chair), Aidan White (Director), Randi Øgrey and Chris Elliott. Missing from the line-up is Bernt Olufsen.

## Who we are

- The EJN is an independent international network of media professionals created to advance education, particularly education in ethics and respect for human rights.
- As a registered charity in England and Wales the EJN is governed by a board of trustees which is chaired Dorothy Byrne the Head of News and Current Affairs at Channel 4 in the UK.
- The organisation was founded in the underlying belief that ethics and respect for human rights, particularly freedom of expression, is a core element of democracy. Intrinsic to this is an independent, pluralist media sector rooted in respect for human rights and where journalists work freely is essential for a democratic society.
- Find out more here: <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are>

## Our supporters

- The EJN is supported by over 60 international organisations including press councils, journalist associations, media development groups and members of the freedom of expression community.
- Find out more here: <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/supporters>

## The EJN's Aims and Objectives

- Promote respect for the status of journalism by enhancing levels of skill and knowledge of ethical principles within media, particularly through training and education of journalists, media managers and owners;
- Prepare reports on the current ethical challenges and governance issues affecting journalists and

their work, through information sharing; country missions; targeted research; and distribution of reports and materials on matters of contemporary concern to journalists and media professionals which will be freely available to all;

- Strengthen co-operation between media professional groups at national, regional and international level and to work, as appropriate, with other relevant governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations;
- Organise and encourage educational activities and knowledge exchanges between the media community and civil society.
- Find out more here: <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/aims-objectives-activities>

## How can I support the EJN?

- Donate to the EJN by going to: <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/donate>
- Encourage your institution to become a supporter of the EJN.
- Subscribe to EJN weekly newsletter and follow us on twitter @EJNetwork or like us on facebook and find us other social media platforms:



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## The Global Word of 2016

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### Post-truth

Definition: an adjective relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

*Adopted and included in Oxford dictionaries for the first time in 2016, the compilers report that the term has been most used in the context of the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States.*

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