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Working with Turkish journalists on reporting

Syrian Refugees
the PEACE JOURNALIST

April 2015

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What is Peace Journalism?

PeaLive Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. (Adapted from Lynch/McGoldrick, Peace Journalism). Peace Journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable.

A number of valuable peace journalism resources, including resource packets and online links, can be found at http://www.park.edu/center-for-peace-journalism/resources.html

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Turkish journalists improve refugee reporting

By Nilüfer Pembeçıoğlu

In the last three years, nearly 1.8 million refugees from Syria’s war have been maligned and scorned by many in the region, leading to sporadic acts of violence against refugee camps and setting up the potential for retributive violence against refugees. There are 1,718,000 UNHCR registered refugees in Turkey according to March, 2015 UN reports.

Their situation is very critical even if most of them are provided large campsites, food, education, health and opportunities for the government, yet, for those who are not in the campsites life is much more difficult.

Even if the two communities have a shared, long and deep past and have mutual positive feelings towards each other, in terms of media reporting of the crisis in Turkey, newspapers and media seem to be often superficial and characterized by misinformation, stereotyping, scapegoating and xenophobia. This coverage mostly blames the refugees for creating a strain on resources and sparking economic problems, especially inflation in food and housing costs, causing social disorders, etc. The newspapers covering the Syrian refugee’s stories seem to be a bit one-sided and even negative, targeting the refugees even if the headlines try to be somehow transparent. It seems that recognizing the uneasiness in society, media adds more fuel to the fire reporting extensively on this tension and consciously or not, through the news, the general audience is activated against the refugees.

Also, the government’s attitude was criticized due to their ‘politeness’. Without regard to the situation the refugees are in, the governmental bodies have been accused in the news of providing the refugees free health care, free high education, free residential permissions and job opportunities, etc. However, this kind of reporting serves the interests of neither refugees nor host communities.

All these coming together, neither the individual refugee stories nor their life conditions were questioned but the more ‘able’ situation they were put is characterized. Yet, any kind of illegal action, any fight or disagreement situation is also associated with the refugees being ‘there’ in the country and in general all these reflections were shown to be the refugees’ fault as if it were their own choice. That’s why individual or group narrative stories of the refugees’ positioning them into the front layer would help them to mean themselves in general public. These rather ‘direct’ stories would also help the general audience understand the situation without mingling it with the stereotypes, hatred or governmental issues and put issues in a rather

“Media adds more fuel to the fire, reporting extensively on the tensions.”
transparent and objective position. This would also help the refugees to see their past and present situation and project their hopes for the future. Putting all these together, there seemed to be a need for a media project using peace journalism to help the host communities better understand the situation, and to reduce the tensions that naturally occur between refugees and host communities.

The Project

The Project titled “Reporting Syrian Refugees: Building Communities Of Understanding In Turkey” is a collaborative project between Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri USA and Istanbul University Faculty of Communication, Istanbul, Turkey. The Project is funded by the US State Department and US Embassy in Ankara, Turkey.

Starting in August 2014, the project partners, Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Pembecioğlu and Center for Global Peace Journalism’s Director Prof. Steven Youngblood, collaborated actively to work on it. The key concepts addressed by the project include improving the living conditions of refugees by giving their concerns deeper and greater media attention; encouraging and nurturing a more stable peace between host communities and refugees; and empowering local journalists to employ peace journalism tools that foster reconciliation and discourage division and violence. The project suggests that the press, employing peace journalism, can help bridge this gap, and open essential dialogues, and aid refugees.

Two Seminars

The Project first aimed to feature two seminars in Southern Turkey, Adana, specifically for local journalists and Syrian refugees. The Key concepts addressed by the project include improving the living conditions of refugees by giving their concerns deeper and greater media attention; encouraging and nurturing a more stable peace between host communities and refugees; and empowering local journalists to employ peace journalism tools that foster reconciliation and discourage division and violence. Two Seminars on Peace Journalism and applications aiming to find out the myths and stereotypes about refugees perpetuated by the media. During the seminars, the collaboration and mutual understanding between the local journalists as field workers and training students as future journalists yielded many interesting aspects to be discussed and shared. The team including the coordinators of the project, journalism department and political sciences professors. Participants were also invited to take part in a live television program questioning the situation. http://m.tvarsivi.com/trtturk-21-01-2015-651526y.html; http://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/Nilis-Elbeyli-konteyner-kentinde-neler-oluyor.

The Field Work

The most important part of the project was not only the two days seminar part of the program but the hands-on it. The key concepts addressed by the project include improving the living conditions of refugees by giving their concerns deeper and greater media attention; encouraging and nurturing a more stable peace between host communities and refugees; and empowering local journalists to employ peace journalism tools that foster reconciliation and discourage division and violence. The project suggests that the press, employing peace journalism, can help bridge this gap, and open essential dialogues, and aid refugees.

The seminars and the follow up field study, including visits to the refugee camps and tent cities, concentrated on the objectives to be accomplished by defining the do’s and don’ts of PJ (Peace Journalism), critiquing the published material in newspapers, and telling the stories of refugees in a way that helps host communities understand the scope of the crisis.

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on reporting trips to Syrian refugee camps (one formal, the other a so-called “tent City”) in Adana. For both the practicing and future journalists, it was interesting to feel the camp life, observe the facilities and daily life experiencing the hopes and fears of the real refugees. The field seminars included camp visits for observations of these new cities established to keep refugees safe and healthy. The participants found out the impact of displacement on social and economic lives of the refugees. The visits to the tent cities of about 650 refugees living under difficult and limited conditions, using only their own sources and public facilities to make a life without any expectations or future, was also touching, the participants said.

This experience is expected to provide the participants an insight for their future reporting on how to cover refugee stories using a more humanistic approach regarding story selection, language, tone, possible consequences of the publication. In the context of this project, reporters were expected to improve their knowledge and skills about how to most effectively give voice to refugees and the issues that confront them, and how their reporting can help build bridges of understanding and tolerance.

The project’s proposed outputs were the media and multimedia about Syrian refugees and their relationship to the larger community in Turkey. The participants of the project are expected to share their stories during the International Peace Journalism Summit by 24-25-26 May 2015 in Istanbul. The summit will also welcome international specialists from other countries to analyze refugee coverage.

The Syrian refugee camp near Adana, Turkey holds about 10,000 residents, many of whom have satellite TV.
Mass media have a deeply important role in conflict situations or their resolution; they can determine the rise or fall of violent episodes and on distrust, or on the contrary, portray the different aspects and actors involved in conflicts in a positively complex manner, as opposed to the usual oversimplification. They are also fundamental in determining people’s reactions, or their engagement and confidence in a peace process.

The media coverage of conflicts and the discourse promoted by political actors when addressing the public are extensively analyzed by various authors, such as Johan Galtung, who advocates for the journalists’ engagement in a ‘peace discourse.’

Examples of key arguments are centered on the dichotomies ‘legitimate’ and ‘criminal’, ‘nationals’ and ‘terrorists’, ‘peace’ and ‘security’. In Israel, these arguments are employed through deeply nationalistic discourses dedicated to forging an identity in a context of constant violence. The media use these arguments to narrate their stories on events such as the Gaza Strip being devastated again in 2014, when over 2,150 Palestinians were killed.

The traditional Israeli media covered both Gaza conflicts that the two sides do not share communication vehicles. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a constant, in a superficial or simplistic form, both in the international media and in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly meetings. Although international attention is certainly an important factor maintaining some form of compromise by the parties to the negotiations, in this case the perpetuation of a peace process is frustrating not only for the victims and the actors directly involved, but also for the audience. The mass media, the frustratingly small coverage of the 2008-09 Israeli military operation ‘Cast Lead’ against the Gaza Strip, but the results were again found in the analysis of the last operation’s coverage, ‘Protective Edge’, between July and August 2014.

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During the research, correspondences with the work of the Israeli media observer Keshev were relevant, with a positive methodological contribution, as well as professors Gadi Wolfsfeld’s, Galtung’s and Xavier Giró’s, from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. This paper’s analyses focused on two important Israeli newspapers’ electronic version: Yedioot Ahronot’s Ynet News and Ha’aretz. These newspapers were chosen for their influence, but also for the different approach each have towards the conflict – from critical perspectives to the defence of stances linked to the justification of the war. They represent the media that one part, the Israelis, directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, read. However, the fact that the opposing parties to the violence read different, antagonistic and nationalist narratives is also important, as argued by Professor Wolfsfeld. Comparing the Israeli-Palestinian case to the Northern Ireland case, the fertile ground for nationalist ‘us against them’ narratives results from the fact that the two sides do not share communication vehicles.

The traditional Israeli media covered both Gaza conflicts in a poor way in terms of complexity. In an interview over the telephone, Israeli newspaper Haaretz’s columnist Gideon Levy pointed out how the press in his country has been traditionally covering in ‘war mode’, thus failing to raise political and/or nationalist sentiments against the other, who was in turn dehumanized. In this case, it is worth emphasizing that critical discourse analysis should complement peace journalism perspectives when searching for a balance in such asymmetrical power relations.

The questions supposed to be raised by the media regarding the supposedly inevitability of violence, as promoted by the official discourse, were responsibilities that journalists were not committed to throughout the whole coverage. The national media chose to hop on the nationalist, sensationalist and propagandistic role they often take on when covering in ‘war mode’, thus failing to raise or promote the peace option.


2. Ibid.


6. Johan Galtung, ‘High road, Low road: Charting the course for humanize and even demonize Palestinians while emphasizing Israeli victimhood, and through the manipulation of International Humanitarian Law principles to frame and account for the Israeli Army’s, the Palestinian armed groups’ actions and even the death of many Palestinian civilians.

The exact same effort was made during last year’s ‘Operation Protective Edge’, in a strategy that others already classified as a sort of ‘lawfare’ – a development of a peace process trajectory to the terms by US General Charles Dunlap – indicating the use of International Humanitarian Law to stir the offensive, mindful of future accusations or condemnation.

Media coverage of peace efforts or of the escalation of violence, either generally or in isolated events, directly influence conflict resolution and negotiation processes. This is why media dignitaries and the object of study for a number of experts in peace and conflict research, as well as in ‘peace journalism’ research. The analysis showed that mass or conventional media in Israel have not only distorted facts and manipulated concepts, but it has also simplified the causes of the conflict and fuelled nationalist sentiments against the other, who was in turn dehumanized.

The 26th biennial conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) is billed to take place in Freetown, Sierra Leone in November 2016, marking the second time Africa has hosted the conference since the founding of IPRA in 1964. The 26th biennial conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) is billed to take place in Freetown, Sierra Leone in November 2016, marking the second time Africa has hosted the conference since the founding of IPRA in 1964.

This was announced following the re-election of the two IPRA Secretaries-general, Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw and Dr Nesrin Kenar, who co-ordinated the 25th IPRA conference in Turkey, at the organisation’s administrative meeting in August.

IPRA celebrated its 50th anniversary and the First World War Centenary in style as part of its 25th biennial General Conference on “Uniting For Peace: Building Sustainable Peace Through Universal Values” hosted by Sakarya University at the prestigious Bosphort Hilton Hotel in Istanbul, Turkey, between August 11-15 2014.

The Istanbul conference brought together about 550 peace researchers and few others interested in peace research from 94 countries across all the continents with about 600 papers presented in 146 sessions.

For more information about IPRA 2016 in Sierra Leone, please contact Dr. Ibrahim Shaw at: ibrahim.shaw@northumbria.ac.uk.
PJ offers new options for Afghani journalists

By Jake Lynch

Peace activists in Herat have vowed to redouble their efforts for dialogue following several bomb explosions that killed 11 people in the province, blamed by a senior police chief on Taliban commanders finding shelter across the border in neighbouring Iran.

The paragraph above is a typical introduction to a story from my recent Peace Journalism training in Kabul. Organised by Mediothek Afghanistan with support from the German Institute for Cooperation, the workshop was attended by editors and reporters from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

A glance at any Afghan media reveals the primacy of an old news maxim: if it bleeds, it leads. Publics understandably want to know any information that affects their own security, which ensures continuing attention on bombs, battles and bullets.

But experience of conflicts all over the world shows there are invariably people at the same time working the world shows there are invariably people at the same time working to redouble their efforts for dialogue. In doing so, it attempts to understand what drives the perpetrators: “The Taliban are portrayed as the enemy, but we should remember that they are people, men with families, who have needs and concerns that lead them to take the actions they do”.

She had come to know wives of some local Taliban fighters through her peace work, and used the relationship to negotiate the release of an 18-year-old boy who had been held hostage for 13 days – the son of one of her distant relatives. It proves that talking to the Taliban can work, she said.

Amina is a real person, as were others whose stories and angles featured in the workshop exercises, since they were to make it as realistic as possible. She took part in training provided by the Afghan Women’s Network and the Institute for Inclusive Security, aimed at empowering women to take part in peace processes and negotiations at all levels in their own community.

She joined a group of 21 women from all over the country who attended a four-day workshop in New Delhi, India, to strengthen their advocacy and conflict resolution skills. The workshop, held in June 2013, was part of a two-year initiative by both groups, with international funding, to advance female participation in Afghan peace processes.

Amina returned to Herat from New Delhi determined to share what she had learned. She organized workshops on women’s role in the community, one of which was attended by wives of Taliban insurgents. Amina forged relationships with these women, visiting their homes and listening as they shared their concerns. She is a typical grassroots peace worker, who speaks with the authority of having actually done something for peace, not just talked about it. That makes her a good source. My own research shows that, when engaged through the story of an individual protagonist, readers and audiences sit up and take notice of arguments for peace.

If talking to the Taliban became a more widespread practice, what would there be to talk about? A valuable insight comes from Hazrat Sharif Modjadeddi, chairman of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission in Herat Province, who has overseen the surrender of dozens of Taliban members from the western provinces who have already joined the process. If the former are necessary to contact and convince the insurgents, the latter play an important role in reassuring the men that they will be neither arrested nor prosecuted for their past activities.

Mr Modjadeddi says: “Some insurgents were civilians whose homes were destroyed by the International Forces, so they joined the Taliban”. They want development in their districts, he says: “clinics, schools and security” – especially protection against their former allies, now they have left the insurgency and joined the reconciliation process. This should include setting up army checkpoints for protection.

His remarks also indicate the need for some form of justice in respect of the wrongs suffered by many Afghan communities during years of war, including at the hands of international forces. One of the most shocking recent incidents of violence, which took place in Pakta province on the day before I arrived in the country, saw a suicide bomb attack kill or injure...
Afghan journalists discuss peace reporting techniques and challenges at a recent workshop in Kabul.

The present dominant form of War Journalism portrays conflict as a series of big bangs, with little in between. By filling in those gaps, and drawing attention to the peace work that is already going on, Peace Journalism is giving peace a chance.

The trainees from the Kabul workshops went back to their newsrooms, determined to try their best to work these angles in to their own reporting and their own media. That means ensuring that, when violent incidents are reported, readers and audiences receive adequate backgrounds and contexts, which enable them to appreciate the potential and the arguments for nonviolent responses.

The more journalists who join them in Afghanistan, the more of a contribution they will be able to make to the prospects and resources for a more peaceful future.

In both cases, the statement was therefore an example of propaganda. The only way for journalists to avoid reproducing the propaganda would be to ask: “If you take revenge on them, what do you expect them to do to you?”

The words and deeds of Amina and Mr Modjadeddi show what would be needed in order to divert the cycle of violence to a more productive path. Peace is not going to come in Afghanistan – any more than it has anywhere else – by expecting everyone on one side to throw up their hands, say “OK – we were wrong, you were right all the time,” and join the other side. It will require justice, and that means listening to the reasons why people join the conflict in the first place.

Afghanistan’s new president, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, has called for a National Road Map for peace, to provide a sense of coordination for all peace efforts and a central reference point for dialogue. That is a welcome initiative, and, to give it meaning, it will require the free circulation of information as a key resource to make things happen. That confers both responsibility and opportunity on journalists, who bring that information to the public.

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By Rachel Villari

A University of British Columbia professor hopes his research will promote peace journalism in the world of sports writing.

Kinesiology Professor Brian Wilson is conducting his third major grant-funded research project, this time investigating ways that sports writing could be more helpful in promoting peace through positive representations of sport.

Wilson argues that, in changing the way stories are told about sports, the media can positively influence their readership.

“Our ultimate goal is to speak with journalists about how we, as sociologists of sport, might make a contribution to help foster the growth of peace-promoting journalism, what we’re calling sport journalism for peace, in up and coming sport journalists,” said Wilson.

Fair and unbiased

Wilson coined the term “sport journalism for peace” after learning about peace journalism during a research leave at the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica.

Peace journalism encourages fair and unbiased coverage, ethics most journalists strive for but can’t always achieve. However, not all coverage is equal. Because sports serves as a stage on which race, class, privilege and gender all play, such prejudiced undertones can sometimes be present in sports writing (most of the time subconsciously), and thus these polarizing concepts can sometimes become embedded in society.

“Sport is one cultural space where issues of race, gender, disability—among others—can be analyzed,” he said. “You can see what role it plays in reinforcing problems that may exist outside or the extent to which it might illuminate them or exaggerate them.”

At first, Wilson’s attempt to explore whether sport—based on the premise of challenge and triumphs and failures—creates an opportunity for peace journalism where it does not already exist may seem counterintuitive. But Wilson presses on.

Sociologists study sport to try to understand how it relates to issues in the broader society.

“Sport is a major part of culture, and whether people are interested in it or not they are most certainly impacted by it,” said Wilson.

As those responsible for relaying information from the world of sports to the public, the media play a big role in continuing this cycle. Wilson intends to collaborate with sports journalists to explore this influence further.

The language of sports

Media serve as the vehicle that links the public to the players. Kevin Campbell, a sports reporter of the Prince Rupert Northern Review, thinks that journalists are in a unique position with access to both the exclusive sporting culture and the broader social culture at large within society.

Professor investigates peaceful sports reporting

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At first, Wilson’s attempt to explore whether sport—based on the premise of challenge and triumphs and failures—creates an opportunity for peace journalism where it does not already exist may seem counterintuitive. But Wilson presses on.

Sociologists study sport to try to understand how it relates to issues in the broader society.

“Sport is a major part of culture, and whether people are interested in it or not they are most certainly impacted by it,” said Wilson.

As those responsible for relaying information from the world of sports to the public, the media play a big role in continuing this cycle. Wilson intends to collaborate with sports journalists to explore this influence further.

The language of sports

Media serve as the vehicle that links the public to the players. Kevin Campbell, a sports reporter of the Prince Rupert Northern Review, thinks that journalists are in a unique position with access to both the exclusive sporting culture and the broader social culture at large within society.
Rongo journalists avoid inflaming conflicts

By Fredrick Ogenga

In a recent Regional Peace and Reconciliation Journalism workshop held at Rongo University organized by the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, Rongo University, and the East African Foundation for Peace Journalism, a general theme that came up is how not to “put petrol on the fire” when reporting terrorism. This was emphasized by one of the facilitators, Prof. Steven Youngblood.

The same theme appeared in Arusha Tanzania at an African Peace-building Network Workshop (APN) organized by Social Science Research Council (SSRC), Africa Leadership Center (ACL) and International Law and Policy Institute (ILP), where delegates generally agreed “To Leave Peace Alone” in the words of one of the resource persons, Prof. Gilbert Khadiagala.

The Prof. argued that people have spent a lot of energy focusing on defining peace and how to make peace possible so much so that they have interfered with peace. Most studies on peace and conflicts have focused on the root causes of conflict which have acted as ideological traps that have prevented innovative approaches or solution oriented strategies in peacebuilding. The argument, which defined the discourse in the workshop, is that it does not take a rocket scientist to establish the root causes of conflict in Africa. The point is clear, people know them. So what should they be focusing on then?

Instead of dwelling on approaches that have failed just because they make it “in the knowledge reservoir” of mainstream western academic discourses of peace and conflict regarding Africa, people should think out of the box and try new innovative methodologies which speak to the contextual realities in Africa. Take the media for example and the reporting of terrorism, if journalists would understand that terrorism thrives due to publicity, they would not signify it sensationally through the scary images and emotional

Sports

thing, I think it’s just about how you can implement it... if you can make it applicable on a wider scale.”

Innovative methods

Professor Wilson is a realist. He understands that what he is curious about is an ideal. He understands that peace journalism is a complex and rigorous reform to expect journalists to sign on with, and therein lies the challenge: making peace journalism the norm so that reversing prejudiced undertones becomes common practice and not another obstacle for the writer’s game recap to clear.

“I’m not a journalist,” said Wilson. “So my first response is to ask more questions as to why peace journalism may be seen as a daunting practice and to find out more... There are still debates around it and we know not everybody thinks it’s practical,” he said. “We’re still exploring the extent to which it is even useful for people who do sport; we don’t actually know as of right now.”

Entering the second year of his research, Wilson intends to unite theory and practice, interviewing and collaborating with sports journalists to better understand what might constitute a better form of sports writing. Further, he hopes the two groups can work to develop innovative methods for teaching this new style that bring together sociologists of sport and journalists.

Rongo from Pg 14

language via the global mainstream media – if this fact is taken for granted then such reporting would only work to undermine strategies put in place to defeat it. This was a subject well covered in the regional peace and reconciliation journalism convention held in Rongo University.

This kind of reporting creates fear and anxiety in the minds of audiences. In Africa, we are increasingly witnessing a surge in asymmetric conflicts where terrorism creates ungovernable spaces in countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Somalia and so on.

The problem is that the media in Africa have followed a Western trend employing a journalism of bandwagonism and mimicry. Take Kenya’s Operations against insecurity and terrorism code named Operation Linda Nchi or Operation Protect the Nation and Operation Usalama Watch or Operation Security Watch for example, the media have been accused of putting petrol on the fire and worsening the state’s effort to defeat terror. Media is one of the most crucial institutions in democracy (the fourth estate) designed to play a watchdog function and be a custodian of national interest – security.

The media is therefore obliged to play its watchdog function in matters security to ensure it shines the light of publicity, according to Youngblood, by clamping down the heat a little bit for peace-building. However, this will be impossible until African journalists and journalists in Africa find their own philosophy of news coverage premised on African gnosiss to report in a manner that considers the contextual realities in the continent which calls for a radical departure from Western sensationalism.

The African solution to this would be to agree on the universalism of good journalism in Peace Journalism and proceed to argue that Peace Journalism premised on good journalism can be the ideological seedbed of conceptualizing an African journalistic philosophy and ideology (Hybrid Peace Journalism or HJP) that infuse African wisdom in the minds of audiences. In Africa, we are increasingly witnessing a surge in asymmetric conflicts where terrorism creates ungovernable spaces in countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Somalia and so on.

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Negative narratives common in Comoros media

By Daniel Brown

Since independence from France forty years ago, the Union of the Comoros is an archipelago nation constituted of three volcanic islands in the Indian Ocean. A fourth, Mayotte, voted in 1975 to break off from its ancestral homeland and stay under French jurisdiction. This was a controversial referendum denounced by the United Nations as illegal as accusations flew of gerrymandering and deportations of opponents to the separation.

Since then, UN resolutions have repeatedly called on Paris to re-integrate Mayotte into the Comoros, which are located between Mozambique and Madagascar. Both entities are beset with problems of identity, clandestine emigration, urban unrest and diplomatic crises. Mayotte is one of France’s most violent and poorest départements. The Comoros, meanwhile, has been infamously unstable with 20 coups or attempted coups in 40 years. Alarmingly, since 1995 an estimated 200,000 Comorans have drowned in their quests to cross the Mozambique strait and penetrate illegally Mayotte, a land mass just 70 kilometres away.

Daniel Brown has been reporting on Africa for over 20 years, notably for Radio France International. He has led several workshops promoting accurate and unbiased news reporting (http://www.park.edu/peacecenter). The practice of peace journalism in the region and a better understanding of the realities in the region. These reporters could thus lay the foundations for inter-island cooperation and a better understanding of the realities in the region.

Greek media contribute to immigrant stereotypes

By Naya Kalfeli

Hate speech and racist crime, largely attributed to the rise of the neo-Nazi Syriza government, have increased in Greece since 2009. Hit by an unprecedented financial crisis, the Greek society has been, at the same time, swept away by an acute political crisis, rising political polarization and the sway of a rampant populism; the latter feeding on fear but also cultivating fear: fear for the future, for social security, for unemployment, for the deterioration of living conditions, for loss of national identity and sovereignty, fear of the ‘Other’.

This fear, reinforced by the rise of the immigration influx towards Greece (over the last decade, Greece has become the major gateway into the European Union), is on the rise. The general strike was repeated on February 9, when 90% of the businesses closed. The ongoing economic slump has pushed more people to risk their lives on the kwaassa-kwassa with catastrophic consequences.

The festival is one of several reunions both inside and between the islands. Negatives narratives about populations on each side of the Mozambique strain are widespread on the airwaves and in print media. In Mayotte, delinquency figures are linked to clandestine immigration from the Comoros. In Moroni, newspapers inflate the numbers and publish articles rife with negative stereotypes against these refugees (see, for example http://www.mayotte-observer.com/actual- its/la-colonisation-de-mayotte-par-les-comoriens- 3433.html). French authorities further fuel anger in the Comoros by expelling on a massive scale: almost 16,000 were recorded in 2013 (out of a total of 27,000 people expelled by the French nation). This represents 1.2% of the entire Comoran population of under 800,000 (if one were to transpose this to mainland France it would be the equivalent of 1.32 million people!).

In 2012, 6,000 of those returned to the Comoros were children while thousands of Comoran adults are forced to leave their children behind to fend for themselves (see http://www.la-croix.com/Famille/Parents-Enfants/Dossiers/Mayotte-l-ile-aux-enfants-perdus-2014-11-19-1266502 )

There are also inner tensions between the Comoros’ three islands Njazidja, Anjouan and Mohéli. Coexistence and communication are handicapped by a monolithic and sparse media scene a nation which only saw the birth of a national television station in 2006 (the last African state to build one). There are only two daily newspapers based in the capital Moroni and a recent study showed that under 20% of the adult population read a newspaper per week. The government has tight control of the print press, radio and television and independent journalists are often harassed when reporting. As a result self-censorship is widespread and the subsequent loss of credibility has seen growing numbers turn to social media for information. Stereotypes and communal suspicion, linked to political manoeuvring and a complex history between the islands, is also on the rise.

The practice of peace journalism in the archipelago would therefore allow journalists and the organizations they represent to disseminate fairer, more accurate news. With a more professional and passionate approach these reporters could thus lay the foundations for inter-island cooperation and a better understanding of the realities in the region.
By Amie Ferris-Rotman

April 2015

By Burhan Farah Hassan

April 2015

Hebdo: Explain violence without excusing it

By Steven Youngblood

In the months that have followed the Charlie Hebdo murders, media worldwide have offered up a mixed bag of sensationalism and occasionally insightful coverage.

In examining newspaper coverage from the days following the attacks, the language of sensationalism predominated in headlines that screamed “Bloody Climax” (Times of London), “Massacred in Minutes” (Daily Express), “Barbaric” (Daily Mirror), “War in Paris” (NY Post), “la libertine assassine” (Paris Normandie), “Morder” (Bild-Germany), “Liberte 0, Barbarie 12” (L’Equipe-France), “They wanted to die martyrs... instead they died as vile, pathetic, murderous scum” (Daily Mirror). Several newspaper covers showed a graphic that extends the middle finger in defiance of the attackers.

What’s wrong with these headlines? They certainly capture the anger associated with the attack. However, they do not reflect the array of other emotions ranging from grief to regret to empathy present in the days after the attacks. These sensational headlines (often accompanied by bloody images or inflammatory artwork) do nothing but fuel the fires of anger, and practically beg for emotional, violent outburst in response to the attacks.

A peace journalism approach, in contrast, would not sugarcoat what happened, but would also seek to exacerbate an already anger-filled, tense situation.


As for the front page images, an unscientific survey of front page images in the days following the attacks shows the dominance of three photos or illustrations. One is the aforementioned cartoon middle finger extended, the second is a photo of a police officer on the ground moments before he was shot, and the third is a surveillance picture of the gunmen leaving their car on the way into the Hebdo building.

These images, while not ideal from a peace journalism standpoint, could be much worse. The middle finger is inflammatory, to be sure. However, the front page pictures could have been so much worse. Imagine the bloody possibilities, including detailed images of the dead and injured. One responsible front page, The Daily Telegraph, showed the picture of the gunmen with their car, but also had five large photos of some of the victims.

A peace journalist, when considering which images to use, might consider several guidelines that I wrote about several years ago in response to images published in the New York Times of a shooting at the Empire State Building (Peace Journalism Insights, Aug. 24, 2012):

1. Are these images sensational, or are they necessary for a complete understanding of the story?
2. Will these images needlessly inflame passions against a suspect, scuttling his right to a fair trial?
3. What about the families of the victims? Should we consider their feelings before we publish?
4. Do the pictures in any way glorify the crime, making it (in a sick way) attractive to copycats?

In terms of the content of the coverage, one key tenet of peace journalism is rejecting the traditional media narrative of “us vs. them,” which is an oversimplified, inaccurate reporting construct. In the aftermath of the attack, reporters, commentators, and bloggers all too often seized the opportunity to promulgate their stale, East vs. West or Muslim vs. Christian narratives. These traditional narratives are deliberately polarizing, and do nothing but fuel more animosity.

Peace journalists would explore the legitimate grievances behind those who opposed Charlie Hebdo, without giving justification to the violence perpetrated against the newspaper. Responsible journalists should explain the violence and its context without excusing it. There was one encouraging sign in the coverage: The most important underlying issue explaining the attacks, the nature of blasphemy, was explored in depth by a number of responsible media outlets like New York magazine (Jan. 7), the Huffington Post (Jan. 26), and the Washington Post (Jan. 19). Traditional media have, unfortunately, successfully created an inaccurate, one-dimensional, superficial narrative that depicts the world’s 1.6-billion Muslims as a single-minded, monolithic entity. Peace journalism should present Islam in a more accurate, multi-faceted manner that reflects its diversity.

The Charlie Hebdo incident, tragic though it may be, can continue to offer Western media an opportunity to broaden and enhance the media portrayal of Islam while leading a discussion about the chilling effect the murders have had on legitimate public discourse about religion.
The past few years have seen significant conceptualisation of peace journalism by scholars but there is still much left to explore in its practical application in journalism practice and journalism education.

The role of media in conflict: Integrating peace journalism in the journalism curriculum (http://aut.researchgate.net/publication/32297908) is a step in that direction. It is a four-year doctoral study that suggests possible models for ‘what’ and ‘how’ to teach peace journalism. It argues in favour of peace journalism as an alternate professional paradigm for journalists to help educate and inform the audiences, correct misperceptions, build confidences and voice options for peaceful resolution of conflict in society. Drawing on some of the principles of conflict resolution and conflict transformation, journalists can view, interpret, source and narrate conflicts in ways that ultimately help transform conflict and lead it towards resolution. They can thus play a more constructive role in conflict.

The study examines peace journalism from three perspectives: how the journalists regard conflict reporting and what they think is lacking in the contemporary peace journalism curriculum; what the conflict resolution workers and educators see as relevant to the journalism profession; and the view of the peace journalism academics about how peace journalism can complement over all journalism education and training.

Participatory Action Research (PAR), with three cycles of planning, action and reflection, was chosen as the appropriate methodology because of the interactive role that the various actors, such as the journalists, the peace workers and the academics, play in developing the perception and understanding of the general audience. The approach was also useful in allowing the researcher to be an active participant thus helping her to utilise her own experience as a journalist and an academic.

A context analysis of what was available in terms of peace journalism education in the universities was conducted, along with interviews with twelve international journalists, conflict resolution workers and academics. These helped to find out about the on-ground journalism practices and coverage of the conflicts; what was lacking in it from the perspective of peace workers and academics; and how could these be improved and included into the journalism curriculum.

In the light of the data collected, answers to three questions were sought: (i) Can peace journalism be a means of integrating conflict resolution into the journalism curriculum? (ii) Can the ideas of peace journalism be translated into professional practices? And (iii) can the principles of conflict analysis, conflict resolution and conflict transformation be integrated into journalism curriculum using the journalistic tools and practices?

The author presents three original models in her argument: The inverted trident of peace journalism conceptualisation. The models aim to integrate peace journalism into the journalism curriculum without imposing national or regional boundaries on it. The study is conducted in the broader canvas of media and conflict but the

Can PJ be a means of integrating conflict resolution into journalism curriculum? Dr. Rukhsana Aslam is a journalist and media educator from Pakistan living in New Zealand. Attached to the Pacific Media Centre in Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand, she graduated with a doctorate in Peace and Conflict Resolution at Otago University, New Zealand. Can be mutually beneficial. Together, these models signify the conceptual understanding of peace journalism; how to translate its values and ideologies into tangible; and how to implement them in a practical manner.

The conclusions drawn and the recommendations made by the researcher point towards further action and research in this area. She concludes that a synergised media strategy needs to be established between the journalists, educators, peace workers and researchers to use the mainstream media space by employing the journalistic creativity that peace journalism offers. The recommendations are not region or country specific; rather they can be applied to region’s specific needs, concerns and resources. Indeed the study argues in favour of having generic models for not only understanding peace journalism approaches but also implementing it within the journalism curriculum without imposing national or regional boundaries on it.

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Media’s role in peace examined in Lebanon

By Vanessa Bassil

The Media Association for Peace (MAP) and the MasterPeace club of Lebanon held their Annual Peace Journalism 2014 workshop entitled “The Role of Media in Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Lebanon”, from Dec. 11-13 2014 at AlCity, Hamra, Beirut, for the fourth year in a row.

Activists in the communication field and media students from different Lebanese universities and various religious and political backgrounds took part in this workshop.

The first day, introduced by the Founder and Director of MAP and Country Coordinator of MasterPeace-Lebanon, Vanessa Bassil, tackled the role of media in divided societies and the actual situation of the Lebanese media outlets. Participants also defined the responsibility of media in understanding conflicts and using the appropriate tools to analyze it and reveal its background and frame in understanding conflicts and using peace journalism as a reference. The workshop also stressed the idea that Peace journalism aims at explaining not justifying violence in all its forms.

The second day revolved around analyzing the headlines of the 7th of May 2008 incidents in both Lebanese newspapers: Al Akhbâr and Al Mostaqbal, using the criteria of Peace and War journalism as a reference. (May 7th is a political conflict that happened in Beirut in 2008 between two sectarian groups and led to the death of dozens of people). Participants then devised an action plan with the trainer Hussein Itani, an expert in the field of corporate communication, about how to cover events in times of conflict.

After that, the two journalists, Safaa Ayad from NBN TV and Faten Jebai from Al Iman TV, shared their personal experiences as Peace Journalists in religious and political media outlets and the possibility of implementing Peace Journalism in Lebanon, especially after their participation in MAP Peace Journalism workshops in the previous years.

During the last day, Mohammad Mohsen, reporter in Russia Today TV, talked about the gap between professional journalistic standards, personal beliefs and institutional policies, taking his field experience as a real-life example. In addition, workshop participants discussed the relationship between peace-oriented media and human rights, particularly women’s rights, and undertook training with the journalist Elias Bassil, MAP member and participant in previous Peace Journalism workshops, about covering gender-based violence and the role of media in implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 about Women Peace and Security. Moreover, Sandra Merhi, MAP team member, about Media Literacy and its importance in complementing and putting peace journalism into action.

The workshop was characterized by interaction between participants and covered both the theoretical and practical side of peace journalism. It ended with attendees devising a future action plan to develop this concept through their activities. MAP’s team distributed certificates for participants after an evaluative session of the workshop.

Feedback from some participants: “As a journalist-to-be I have attended many workshops. MAP’s workshop was the best experience on the personal level. It has highlighted the gaps in the Lebanese media, how they report conflicts, and how would peace journalism report it. Moreover, the activities we did during the workshop were also effective since we were working every time with a new group. Creating new interactions to build connections with future journalists was a major asset in this workshop. All the speakers were influential, especially MAP Founder, Ms Vanessa Bassil, who has given us hope for building peace by explaining the meaning and application of peace journalism, not only theoretically, but also through life experience examples. Thank you MAP for that amazing opportunity!”

–Ihram Fanouz, Journalism student, Notre Dame University, Lebanon

Peace and Security. Moreover, Sandra

MAP is the Media Association for Peace, the first non-governmental organization in Lebanon, the Middle East and North Africa region dedicated to work on the role of Media in Peace, Conflict and Social Change through the concept of Peace Journalism. It is a non-partisan, non-governmental, youth-led organization, founded in 2013 by the Lebanese Young Peace Journalists group, created by the journalist and peace activist Vanessa Bassil (bassil.vanessa@gmail.com).

MAP’s peace journalism seminar in Beirut, Lebanon featured both group work and discussion (top) and individual projects (below).

Whitehead, lecturer at Rafik Hariri University, talked about the role of storytelling as a tool for peace. Finally, participants learned with Zeina Merhi, MAP team member, about Media Literacy and its importance in complementing and putting peace journalism into action.

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–Ihram Fanouz, Journalism student,

Notre Dame University, Lebanon

MAP Biography: Media Association for Peace- MAP (www.mapmena.org) is the first NGO in Lebanon and MENA region dedicated to work on Peace Journalism through training, advocacy, research and publications. It is an independent youth-led organization registered in Beirut in 2013. MAP’s vision is to get to a media that play an essential role in peacebuilding especially in conflict and post-conflict areas while enhancing Human Rights, Dialogue, Reconciliation, Development, Environmental awareness, Gender Equality and Social Justice in order to reach a more peaceful, less violent world.

You can contact MAP Founder, Ms Vanessa Bassil on: vanessa.bassil@maplebanon.org

Continued on next page
Nigerian trainings stress electoral reporting

By Joseph Olusegun Adebayo

Background
Nigeria’s media has the potential to be divided along ethnic and religious lines. Given that most Nigerians view political aspirants in terms of their ethnic and religious affiliation rather than political ideology, and since most Nigerians rely on the media for information, there is often the tendency to fall prey to biased and insensitive reportage capable of inciting violence. This is because majority of the populace are often vulnerable to prejudiced information often subtly presented as news, features, commentaries, documentaries etc.

This aforementioned problem formed the major motivation behind my embarking on the research which seeks to build the capacity of journalists in Nigeria to report elections in a conflict-sensitive manner.

The rising wave of violence in Nigeria as witnessed in the agitation for greater resource control by militants in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region and the acts of terrorism perpetrated by the militant Islamic group Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria have made Nigeria a violence-prone society. In her analysis of electoral violence in conflict societies, Hoglund (2006) identifies certain precipitants of violence with regards to elections, particularly in conflict-prone states like Nigeria. One of the precipitants is the design of electoral systems and administration and media reportage.

This training is very crucial considering that Nigeria is in transition towards a general election in 2015 that will probably determine her continual existence as a united country. This study is also important because it would provide Nigerian journalists with the necessary peace journalism skills that would foster peace building activities and nonviolent elections in Nigeria.

The training
The training which took place in Kwara State, North-Central Nigeria involved 40 journalists from all the major media outfits in the state. Training facilitators include Dr. Saulat Abdulbaqi of the department of mass communication at the University of Ilorin, Dr. Joseph Fayeye of the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies at the University of Ilorin, and Joseph Olusegun Adebayo, a doctorate research student in peace building at Durban University of Technology who was the convener and lead facilitator.

The modules
Participants were taught three modules, the first module, which was facilitated by Dr. Fayeye was titled understanding conflict. The first module sought to give participants a clear understanding of the term conflict, its causes, the relationship between journalists’ reportage and societal peace or conflict and the qualities of a journalist with respect to impartiality, accuracy and responsibility.

The second module, facilitated by Joseph Adebayo provided clear understanding of the term peace journalism, the difference between traditional (war) journalism and peace journalism and an exposition of Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick’s 17 point plan for peace journalism. The last module was facilitated by Dr. Saulat Abdulbaqi. She helped participants to clearly identify the important issues that need attention of the journalists to prepare a code of conduct for journalists.

NJ practised at Rwandan English newspaper

By Ashley Harbin

During the Fall 2014 semester, I took advantage of an opportunity to study abroad in Rwanda via the School of International Training’s Post-Genocide Restoration and Peacebuilding program. While in Rwanda, I studied the nation’s history and reconstruction process following the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis, as well as lived with a host family and conducted a month long independent research project. I decided to incorporate my peace journalism educational background into the independent research project, and the results were astounding.

The one-month project focused on various components of the primary English newspaper in Rwanda to explore the opportunities and challenges of English print media in Rwanda. Every article in one issue of the newspaper The New Times was assessed based on the peace journalism content analysis rubric (found at http://www.park.edu/center-for-peace-journalism/)

Interviews were conducted to assess how comfortable the journalists from the news house were with journalism ethics and their ability to produce articles that portrayed peace journalism.

After reviewing the research results, I concluded that the young media industry is the primary insinuator for a variety of opportunities while the country’s dark history is the root of the majority of challenges.

Following 1994, Rwanda essentially started back at square one and the nation was reformed. This provided a new beginning for many industries, including the media. The training for journalists continues to grow, but during conversations with the journalists it was apparent that they knew the essential ethics and practiced them (for example using... Continued on next page
The education for journalism in Rwanda is also developing, leading the belief that the practices and ethics of the journalists will only increase as a result of better training and skills development.

In addition, due to the negative media’s influence and impact during the genocide, the media has a self-regulating body, which has no tolerance for journalists who may jeopardize the country’s progress.

In October 2014, the BBC broadcast a documentary entitled “Rwanda: The Untold Story,” which showcased accusations and events that had the potential to regress the nation by provoking violence and riots. During my study I was able to observe the committee that was immediately put in place following the broadcast of the documentary. Essentially the committee was designed to evaluate the truth of the statements presented in the documentary and assess what the next step was as far as persecuting individuals who broke a variety of laws including one commonly known as the genocide ideology law. The presence of such a group of people committed to provided accurate information to the commonwealth in order to ensure Rwanda’s progress is seen as an opportunity for peace journalism in Rwanda.

The most astounding feature of the research results was the newspaper’s peace journalism scores. Approximately 81% of the articles analyzed fell into the category of peace journalism; the remaining portrayed qualities of both peace and traditional journalism. Without any article falling in the category of purely traditional journalism, the English print media’s presence in Rwanda is certainly having a positive impact on the community and assisting with keeping the peace.

It could be argued that many first world countries do not have media as unbiased as the findings from Rwanda’s English media indicate. The biggest contributor to articles that had lower peace journalism scores was that the articles only contained interviews from one source.

Due to the negative impact that the media had by encour-