

the PEACE JOURNALIST

IN THIS ISSUE

- Covering Covid-19 in N. Macedonia
- PJ seminars on Zoom educate Sudanese, Yemeni journalists
- Words Heal the World project



New platform provided voice to the voiceless in

Uganda



Cover photo--In an example of 'voice of the voiceless' reporting, Ugandan journalists interviewed hairstylist Adelaine Kakule and her two children Tumba (r) and Busa about the Covid-19 lockdown. (Photo by Mosos Mbulula).

The Peace Journalist is a semi-annual publication of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. The Peace Journalist is dedicated to disseminating news and information for teachers, students, and practitioners of PJ.

Submissions are welcome from all. We are seeking shorter submissions (300-500 words) detailing peace journalism projects, classes, proposals, etc. We also welcome longer submissions (800-1200 words) about peace or conflict sensitive journalism projects or programs, as well as academic works from the field. We do NOT seek general submissions about peace projects, but are instead focused only on articles with a strong media angle.

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Editor: Steven Youngblood, Director, Center for Global Peace Journalism, Park University

Proofreading: Carol Getty, Ann Schultis, Park U. emeritae faculty


Contact/Social Media: steve.youngblood@park.edu Twitter-@Peace Journ



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What is Peace Journalism?

Peace 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 curriculum packets, online links, as well as back issues of The Peace Journalist can be found at www.park.edu/peacecenter.

Center for Global Peace Journalism

The Center for Global Peace Journalism works with journalists, academics, and students worldwide to improve reporting about conflicts, societal unrest, reconciliation, solutions, and peace. Through its courses, workshops, lectures, this magazine, blog, and other resources, the Center encourages media to reject sensational and inflammatory reporting, and produce counter-narratives that offer a more nuanced view of those who are marginalized—ethnic/racial/religious minorities, women, youth, and migrants.

Refugee media network launches in Uganda

October 2020

By Judith Atim and Cindy Kalita

In this special report, Judith Atim and Cindy Ayebare Kalita look into the journey, trials, hope and goals that led to the establishment of Uganda Refugee and Migration Media Network-Refugee Online News (RM-RON), a network for refugee journalists living in Uganda.

Uganda is home to thousands of refugees from countries like South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea and Somalia.

By virtue of Uganda's favorable refugee policy and the generally acclaimed hospitality, a number of refugees are running successful businesses and some are even employing Ugandans. Despite their immeasurable contribution to the economy, there are still skills among refugees which are yet to be tapped.

Refugee journalists for example have lived in Uganda for many years without finding media outlets to practice their profession. "We were forced out of our home because of wars and violence, it is disheartening to realize that you cannot easily practice your profession in another country," Dicken Ojo, a South Sudanese journalist, said.

Judith Atim is an Advisory Consultant with Uganda Refugee and Migration Media Network.



She is an experienced Ugandan Award winning journalist, and an advisory consultant ant with Uganda Refugee and Migration Media Network.



Cindy Ayebare Kalita is a youth journalist based in Kampala, Uganda



Willy Chowo is a journalist with the Refugee and Media Migration Network in Uganda.

Refugee Journalists attribute economic hardships for their inability to acquire reporting gadgets or get further training. With no media organization to support them, it has been hard for refugee journalists to carry on with their media profession.

Exiled and Jobless

"We have spent between 5 to 15 years in Uganda but have not been able to get any jobs here as refugee Journalists," says Moses Mbulula from DR Congo.

"For many years of living in Uganda, no media house can either hire or give us jobs," Zabel Bridget who fled from North Sudan to Uganda shares her plight of joblessness as a journalist. She is corroborated by Muhammad Ali from Somaliland who concurs that there's no platform to articulate the refugee voice or highlight their plight as refugee journalists.

From their own testimonies, it became evident that the passion of refugee journalists in Uganda to practice their trade is largely constricted by lack of a platform.

Political Persecution and Exiling of Journalists

Due to reporting that is construed as politically subversive, a number of

refugee journalists were forced into exile because of their passion to give coverage of human rights abuse and champion the cause for justice for citizens who were being ill-treated by state agencies turned them into 'state enemies.'

Having been labeled political dissidents and state adversaries, many journalists sought refuge in Uganda.

On the other hand, other refugee journalists fled their native countries in the face of chronic violence-just like other refugees-while a few of them had to run for safety for being implicated in involvement with rebel commanders or opposition leaders.

Prior to the establishment of RM-RON no one brought out the predicament of these 'exiled souls.' The amazing skills and talents of these 'colleagues in the profession' were not being tapped into for their own transformation and contribution to their host societies.

It is against this multiple background that RM-RON was established to bring a ray of relief to refugee journalists.

The founders believed that through RM-RON, they will be able to give

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insightful coverage of the refugee situation and bring out the much-needed reforms.

Modeling a Platform on the Concept of Peace Journalism

According to Gloria Laker, the Uganda Refugee and Migration Media Network (RM-RON) is conceived on a model of peace journalism that envisions creating a peaceful society through the media.

This multimedia Community-Based Organization (CBO) is registered in Uganda as a non-profit and non-partisan entity that focuses on highlighting the plight of refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups in Uganda using peace journalism. RM-RON's style of reporting incorporates development, innovation, solutions journalism approaches and capacity building of both refugees and host Journalists.

The establishment of RM-RON was the brain work of award-winning journalist Gloria Laker.

Testimony of the Founder

"In August 2018, I spent a couple of weeks in Johannesburg and Cape Town in South Africa for a peace

journalism program with International Youth Peace Group (IYPG) and in most of their presentations my colleagues extolled Uganda's outstanding hospitality towards refugees. In my presentation about the role of the media in building peace in northern Uganda, I realized that the plight of refugees could be reported much better by refugee Journalists themselves."

The childhood and journalistic background of Laker has significantly shaped her passion for refugee and peace reporting. "In further thought, I also mirrored on the fact that today I am standing here because of my background in covering the LRA war from conflict to peace reporting. Thus I felt that bringing refugee Journalists together would improve the coverage of refugees in Uganda while lifting unemployed refugee Journalists." Laker highlights that her venture into the media space as a refugee reporter gives her a conviction that refugees can fare well in the newsroom and media profession in general.

"Reflecting on my journey to the newsroom which also begun as a young displaced girl covering the

LRA war, it became clear that bringing refugees and native Journalists together would contribute to laying a foundation for peace, reconciliation and unity among refugees here in Uganda. Besides, it would go a long way in the pursuit of peace back in their countries of origin," concludes Gloria Laker.

Initial Mentorship of Refugee Journalists

A year before the establishment of the refugee media body, Laker had met a group of Somali reporters who approached her for training in peace reporting. "Together with top broadcast journalists David Rupiny and Judith Atim, we met the first group but not much could be done in terms of training due to lack of funding until 2018 when the organization was officially established," Laker said.

Through a Congolese refugee, salonist Adeline Kakulu, Laker got to know Moise Mbulula, a refugee in Uganda who was a powerful broadcast journalist in Congo.

Thereafter the two begun hunting for

Continued on next page

Reporter's Showcase: Stories from Refugee Online News in Uganda



Children at play in the Bibi Bidi resettlement camp in north-western Uganda.

Refugee children hold on to hope

By Ruth Atim

"Trauma in children is horrible especially if you were like me who witnessed her parents being hacked to death and had to run into the bush with my 4 year old brother, but am happy that I have overcome it and moved on," commented Abdoir Choul.

Abdoir Chuol is a 15 year old girl who has gone through harsh episodes of trauma and depression, after fleeing from the south Sudan war across to Uganda and got resettled in a refugee camp in Uganda. Without parental love and protection, Adior was exposed to stress coupled with severe depression and does not remember ever being safe as she kept replaying in her mind how her parents were

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Poor Ugandans struggle with Covid lockdown and food insecurity

By Gloria Laker

Rachel Namaganda is an unemployed mother of five. Her children are four to 13 years old. The family lives in Wakiso District, which surrounds the capital city, Kampala. Rachel says she is finding it hard to feed her kids: "Every sunrise, I am not sure what my children will eat." They currently eat two meals per day – and both consist of porridge. Many people share that fate.

Soldiers delivering maize flour to needy people in a Kampala suburb.

According to Hillary Onek, Uganda's minister for relief and refugees, 30 % of the urban population currently needs humanitarian aid. The background is the lockdown. President Yoweri Museveni first ordered schools and places of worship to close. Social gatherings have been forbidden. Later, public transport was stopped and non-essential workers told to stay at home. Moreover, a night curfew is in force. The lockdown went on through 5 May. Uganda's food prices are rising fast. In some places, a kilogramme of beans now costs 6000 Ugandan shillings. That is twice the price of February. The government has warned against hiking prices, and some traders have been arrested. Need and desperation are driving prices nonetheless. Not getting enough to eat is especially tough for sick people. It reduces their recovery chances.

On the upside, Uganda's government began to distribute food items like maize flour, beans, and salt to vulnerable people in Kampala and its suburban areas. Sick people receive extra food including sugar and powdered milk. The

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Peace journalist and RM-RON founder Gloria Laker explains the founding of the network in Uganda.



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more refugee journalists.

With the goal of 'preventing social media and traditional induced violence,' the group of volunteers launched its first project-the Refugee Online News (RON) as a platform for news about refugees, by refugees and for refugees in Uganda. This network could cover issues regarding refugees, asylum seekers, migration and other vulnerable groups in the broader

Great Lakes region in a fashion that is counter-narrative to the traditionally negative and skewed reporting usually seen.

With its mission of "promoting fair, equitable and balanced media coverage of refugees and migrants in Uganda from East Africa and the Great Lakes region by employing the principles of peace journalism in an innovative way," RM-RON established

itself as a one-stop center on refugee issues.

Notwithstanding the absence of funding, the volunteers and freelance reporters recently launched a news website which is attracting local and international readers alike.

For more information, see-- <https://refugeeandmigrationmedia.org/>

hacked to death as she watched helplessly in her hide-out with her sibling. As far as she remembers, she never experienced a childhood. Never sleeping a full night, and deeply depressed with severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress, and forcing her to attempt to kill herself several times.

This is one among the many stories that refugee children experience, let alone trekking for days on an empty stomach to reach their destination unaccompanied by any adult. Adior was lucky to be matched up with a foster family that took her in and now lives a normal life with her new found family.

To date Adior doesn't know why she had to leave her home. "I still don't understand why they had to make us children suffer because of their disagreements, one of my friends fell sick and disappeared in the bush while we were escaping, I don't know if she is alive or not, I may never see her again," Adior recalls with tears in her eyes.

Dralero Joseline, a community services officer working in the office of the Prime Minister for Adjumani refugee operations, says trauma in refugee children has affected how they live as children as most of them always have sleeplessness, regressive behavior, social withdrawal and violent or self-destructive outbursts. Many keep comparing the life in resettlement areas to the ones they had back home and this causes more stress, she said.

She adds that its worse with children who live with foster parents and those who are unaccompanied i.e. children who came to the resettlement camps without any parent or relative.

46 year old malik maliti is a foster parent to 3 children whom she met on her way to seek refugee in Uganda. She says her experience hasn't been easy as she lost 3 of her children to gunshot wounds sustained during a gunfire exchange.

"I have decided to take care of these children as my own because mine are all gone. It was difficult at the beginning because they are from different backgrounds and would experience nightmares that one almost stabbed me, yet he was the most quite one. I think it was trauma," Maliik narrates.

She adds that humanitarian organizations have helped her deal with the "weird" behavior of her new children. "Ever since we started attending Trauma treatment sessions together with my children, our relationship has improved, the nightmares have reduced and their energy levels have gone up because their interest in school and church has also improved," Maliik adds.



Ugandan soldiers deliver maize to the poor during the Covid pandemic.

Ugandans, Covid

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efforts are good, but do not reach everybody in need.

Apart from food scarcity, there are other worries. A Congolese refugee who rents a room in Wakisa District reports that she is sharing a washroom with 12 other neighbours. It is a "nightmare." She said, "Imagine the risk of touching a door handle infected with coronavirus; I am more scared of catching coronavirus than hunger."

People are tense, moreover, and domestic abuse is increasing. The Federation of Women Lawyers is registering more cases than it normally does. Lillian Adriko, the organisation's chief executive, says, it recently got 29 calls in a single week with women reporting domestic violence related to the economic situation. This is a high number, since this kind of violence, which is often linked to men's excessive alcohol consumption, is normally hushed up. Now, however, fighting often seems to erupt about who in the family gets how much to eat. The organisation is appealing to local leaders to try to resolve some of the cases at the community level.

As of August 27, there were 2,524 cases reported in Uganda, with 26 deaths. New reported cases were increasing daily in August, according to virusncov.com.

First published in *D + C (Development and Cooperation)*, a German based English news magazine.



Refugee housing in Western Uganda features small single family units.

Peace journalism platform introduced in Yemen

By Salem bin Sahel

The Peace Journalism Platform is an urgent initiative to stop the war that began plaguing Yemen five years ago.

Yemen is facing the worst era in its history. The lives of citizens are threatened from several directions, firstly the war, then poverty, and finally the Covid-19 pandemic.

In light of the spread of many epidemics and famines, hardly any media in the Yemeni media have any voice because of the parties' preoccupation with the conflict and their funding of the media that only transmits military victories.

The conflicting parties are numerous in Yemen and the people do not know who their government is in the presence of three heads of state created by war.

Therefore, it has become necessary for journalists in Yemen to know peace journalism, which was taught in a recent seminar (see story, next page). Peace journalism represents the voice of truth and gives peace initiatives the priority in issuing news and tries to bring the views of the warring parties closer to negotiations to get out of this crisis. PJ leads a trend towards development, reconstruction, and investment.

On World Press Freedom Day 2019, we young journalists managed to establish a group in the Hadramout Governorate, southeast of Yemen, a peace journalism platform with the aim of calling for an end to the fighting and unifying the media efforts to spread peace speech.

The Peace Journalism Platform in Al-Mukalla city launched its first work with the first peace press conference which witnessed the signing of 122 charter of Yemeni activists for of professional work.

It has been difficult to work in one of the most challenging environments to drive positive change, strengthen civil society, and secure human rights. However, the Peace Journalism Platform has managed to move forward for more than a year towards promoting peace initiatives and achieving the UN's sustainable development goals.

The founder of the Peace Journalism Platform Salem bin Sahel was able to represent Yemen in several international conferences and meetings with the United Nations Special



Salem bin Sahel is the director of the Peace Journalism Platform; and program director at Vision Radio for the past 3 years. He holds a BA in Journalism at the University of Hadramout.



(Top)-The symposium "Women in Humanitarian Action" was held at Mooj Hotel in Mukalla in August, 2019.33 prominent women in Hadhramaut working in the field of humanitarian relief were honored.

(Bottom) At a May, 2019 peace press conference in Mukalla, press spokesperson Ali Al-Yazidi presents at the session "Journalism Ethics: How do we deal with news material?"



Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and to build a network of relationships to expand the group's activities at the level of Yemen.

While we work in peace journalism with self and independent efforts, traditional war journalism gets funding and support from the parties to the conflict. But we will remain committed to our message despite all the difficulties and challenges. We seek to employ the Yemeni media to achieve a just peace that ends the tragedy of five years of the war.

The Peace Journalism Platform aims at specialized media looking for peace and sustainable development, empowering journalists, women and minorities in society, and promoting the values of democracy, justice, and human rights without compromising the basic principles of journalism.

The peace journalism stance stresses the cessation of the

Yemen journalists absorb 3-day online session

By Steven Youngblood

Imagine a highly polarized media environment where media focus exclusively on the alleged misdeeds and even atrocities committed by the other side. Media stoke hatred by dehumanizing the other side. In this environment, there is no middle ground, only biased reporting and propaganda, leaving the public with a distorted picture of the situation.

No, this is not the United States.

This is the media environment in Yemen, as described in an article by The Atlantic Council (<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-yemen-war-media-and-propaganda/>)

Yemen is saddled not only with this toxic media culture, but with an especially brutal war that has, according to Human Rights Watch, sparked the “world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with 14 million people at risk of starvation and repeated outbreaks of deadly diseases like cholera.”

Against this backdrop, I conducted a

Steven Youngblood, a 2020 Luxembourg Peace Prize laureate, is editor of The Peace Journalist magazine and director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, Parkville, MO USA.

peace journalism seminar July 23-24 for 13 journalists from Mukalla in Southern Yemen, an area which has not been spared the ravages of war. According to one of the seminar’s organizers, in Mukalla, “a half million people live in extreme poverty, and in the city streets beggars are searching for food in garbage, while sewage has floated in open drains, causing environmental pollution and spreading many diseases.”

In a normal year, due to the ongoing war, the seminar would have been conducted in person in a neighboring country like Oman. But we know 2020 is anything but normal, and thus, the seminar was held via Zoom.

I presented information about the fundamentals of peace journalism. The principles of giving voice to the

voiceless and rejecting ‘us vs. them’ narratives were especially salient for the participants. We discussed if peace journalism is widely practiced in Yemen. According to the journalist participants, it is not. We also reviewed the Atlantic Council’s assessment of Yemeni media, and they agreed with the journalist who told the Atlantic Council that “polarization in Yemeni media has never been this high. The problem is that there is no room for a middle ground. On one hand, Houthis (one of the warring parties) allow press only if it is biased in favor of them, as does the Yemeni exiled-government. All that you have in Yemen now is propaganda and each side can support you, only if you abide by their propaganda.”

Asked to present tips on how Yemeni media could practice peace journalism, the participants shared ideas like listening to all parties; double checking sources; including discussions of peace; interviewing “everyone”; concentrating on truth and not

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PJ platform

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violation of the rights of Yemeni journalists, many of whom face threats and torture in prisons.

One prominent activity by the Peace Journalism Platform was the “Women in Humanitarian Work” seminar, in which 33 women leaders and workers in the field of humanitarian relief for the displaced and refugees were honored and the



The first peace press conference was held in May 2019 in Mukalla. This session is titled, “Empowering Women: Where is the Place for Women in Peace Journalism?”

celebration of “Our Life is Peace” on the occasion of World Peace Day 2019. This event included a panel discussion on “Challenges of Peace Journalism and Its Impact on Reality” and the launching of a competition for Yemeni journalists to depict pictures with connotations expressing peace.

On the commemoration of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Security and Peace on October 30, 2019, the Peace Journalism Platform held a workshop on “Ensuring the Participation of Women in Bringing Peace.” On International Women’s Day 2020, the platform held a workshop entitled, “Implementing Women’s Rights in the Local Media” with the aim of enhancing women’s capabilities. Women Journalists can lead the media towards peace, in addition to focusing media on the issues of violence faced by women in society and supporting the efforts of women activists.

Since its inception, the Peace Journalism Platform has recorded a record of field activities and press demonstra-

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Yemen

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rumors; and developing more training in peace journalism techniques. The participants also agreed that they have a vital role to play when it comes to curating social media for their audiences--to “check sources, look for the truth, and listen to all parties,” in the words of one participant.

The seminar closed with break-out session conversations about Peace Radio, a new community radio station dedicated to peace and peace programming that will begin broadcasting later this year in Southern Yemen. The journalists were excited about the potential of Peace Radio, believing can change perceptions about the conflict. The participants said Peace Radio will be an especially useful platform for giving voice to all parties in the conflict, especially women.

Attendees liked the interactivity of the Zoom training. Saleh Alhamd,

photographer and news editor for PJ, said, “I expected that the training would be a training lecture, but I was surprised by the interactive programs and discussions through which the trainer was able to make sure that the trainees understand the content that he provided.” Journalist and radio presenter Yusra Alnihari added, “I liked the use of the Zoom app because it gives a close-up of reality and gives us harmony and knowledge.”

Participants said they appreciated the overview of peace journalism. Journalist Najah Abdeen said, “The most important thing I have learned is to know the ethics and characteristics of peace journalism and the difference between peace and traditional journalism.” Saleh Alhamd, photographer and news editor, added, “The most important thing I learned in the course is that the peace journalist

must carry out proactive analyzes and studies to spare the country misleading propaganda that leads to ruin.”

Near the end of the seminar, we discussed if peace journalism is possible in a war torn, restrictive media environment like Yemen. Most of the participants were optimistic, if realistic. Alhamd observed, “It is possible to practice peace journalism in Yemen, but there are great difficulties due to the massive propaganda campaigns carried out by war journalism.” Alnihari, a presenter for Peace Radio, added, “We can apply peace journalism, which is the only solution we have in light of conflict, but I think we should not call ourselves peace journalists because of the dangers we may be exposed to.”

I closed the seminar by pledging my support and advice as Peace Radio moves forward.



Yemeni journalists learn PJ via Zoom in July.

PJ platform

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tions that call for peace. Peace Journalism Platform accounts are published on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp. These social media platforms also shed media coverage on United Nations initiatives to stop the war and on Yemeni youth peace initiatives.

In May 2020, the platform launched a virtual free space on Facebook called Peace Journalism Society with the aim of enabling journalists in Arab countries to share their experiences covering conflict and human rights issues. The “Peace Journalism Society” aims to interact with member journalists and share their interests about peace media and reward them by publishing press grant updates.

With the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Yemen, the Peace Journalism Society has also contributed to educating people about the risk of contracting the virus and publishing updates on the pandemic from reliable sources. In addition, the Peace Journalism Society held a cultural Vol 9, No. 2

competition on its pages for the purpose of investing in the domestic stone of citizens in promoting cultural, historical and national identity and embodying people’s love and their attachment to the necessity of peace in the country. Also, it has also given the displaced people and refugees in the camps special coverage based on its goals to convey the voice of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The Peace Journalism Platform continually strives to establish programs that give those who have no voice a representation in the community media through its meetings with community radio stations in Yemen and their call to convey the aspirations and concerns of people.

The peace journalism platform remains a glimmer of hope for all citizens in Yemen to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that ends the aspirations of warring people and turns them from tools of conflict to tools of building, development, and reconstruction for Yemen.

Civil society platform raises voices during Covid

By Charlotte de Harder

When the world slowly seemed to freeze over at the beginning of 2020, with COVID-19 paralysing one nation after another, governments all over the globe shifted their glances inwards, at their own economies and their own populations. While a global crisis like climate change still struggles to get the response it requires, a pandemic managed to instantaneously shift priorities worldwide, and not necessarily for the better.

This crisis highlighted that, once again, the world's most vulnerable and marginalised people, especially those in fragile and conflict-affected settings, would be hit hardest. The last thing that needed to happen was for their voices to be drowned out and for this pandemic to spark new violence and fuel existing conflict, while the rest of the world tended to their own needs first. Because of its experience in dealing with a similar crisis, the 2014-2016 Ebola crisis in West Africa, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) rapidly recognised the immediate and urgent need for action.

During the Ebola outbreak, CSPPS witnessed first-hand the importance of community engagement and locally led solutions in combatting the health crisis. However, the Platform also learned that these approaches instilled a sense of ownership among societal groups, in turn leading to increased resilience. Peter van Sluijs, CSPPS Coordinator, who was interviewed for this article, said, "What we see during this pandemic is that the lockdown and other response measures are rolled out in a unilateral manner. Important segments of society are prevented from joining hands whilst being excluded from the response to this crisis, leading to increased mistrust, misinformation and instability. We therefore contribute to peace and peacebuilding in advocacy

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A Portrait of Nepalese Muslim child in a new dress plays on Eid al-Fitr during a national Covid-19 lockdown in Kathmandu, Nepal on May 25, 2020. (Photo by Narayan Maharjan/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

efforts through, for example, our support for the call for a global ceasefire and otherwise getting recognition for the role of civil society in an inclusive and conflict-sensitive response. Moreover, we support the implementation of projects on-the-ground that are both COVID-19 as well as conflict-sensitive, by the very local civil society organisations that try to contribute to the response measures to this crisis."

CSPPS is a global network of civil society organisations which operates in two distinct ways, while functioning as a bridge between all parties involved. Firstly, the Platform supports local civil society organisations in their peacebuilding efforts on the ground, for example by assisting them in the roll-out of workshops and trainings, or by increasing collaboration between relevant state and non-state stakeholders. Secondly, CSPPS elevates civil

Charlotte de Harder works as a Programme Officer for the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), a global network of civil society organisations supporting peacebuilding efforts in fragile & conflict affected settings.



society's predicament to the international level through concerted lobbying and advocacy efforts, pushing for policy changes and global support for the achievement of sustainable peace and development worldwide. We follow frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda (with a particular focus on SDG16+) and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, while serving as the civil society arm within the tripartite structure of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

But raising the voices of those in need when the entire world is in lockdown had to take on an entirely new dimension. During this pandemic, CSPPS is in constant contact with its member organisations in the 29 countries that the Platform is active in. The Platform had many conversations and meetings that were aimed at defining the needs of the members, resulting in the publication of a series of articles that zoomed in on the effects of the pandemic in different countries - Yemen, Libya, Cameroon, Liberia, Somalia and Sierra Leone. CSPPS also published several (joint) statements, calling the global community to action. Eventually, all these contributions culminated in a more elaborate report which highlighted the wider implications of COVID-19 on FCAS.

van Sluijs stated, "As we were unable to travel to increase collaboration, provide support and to maintain dialogue in-person, peace journalism turned out to be one of the additional, virtual ways our efforts in lobbying and advocacy could be continued."

He further added, "Through these many conversations, we were able to highlight other issues that only intensified during this pandemic: gender (in)equality, mistrust towards the government and lack of social cohesion, climate change and civil wars, just to

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mention a few. All of these factors already amplify or embody conflict, and COVID-19 increasingly destabilised the pre-existing situation."

CSPPS interviewed Maged Sultan from member organisation Youth Without Borders Organization for Development (YWBOD) for its article on Yemen. The war, which has been ravaging Yemen since 2015, has led the country's situation to be declared as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

In his interview, Sultan expressed his fear for the side effects a potential lockdown would have on the situation. Sultan said, "The majority of the population (more than 70%) depends on daily earnings, aside from the exorbitantly high percentages of poverty and unemployment across the country. A curfew [or lockdown] will take away those daily earnings, and there are no alternatives provided, not by the government, nor by other actors. What will such people do? Robberies and other crimes are the expected consequences, which poses a real threat to national cohesion and peace."

Sultan urged the warring parties, and the international community, to uphold UN Secretary-General António Guterres' appeal for a global ceasefire, as the war-torn country is not in any state to take on another devastating crisis. He was not very optimistic regarding the probability of this ceasefire: "As the world is busy with the coronavirus, the conflicting parties of Yemen abuse the situation in their favour, rather than taking actions which can bring solutions to the virus."

Sultan also called for the Riyadh Agreement – last year's peace agreement between the internationally recognised, Yemeni government and the southern separatists - to be enforced, and for the international community to put further pressure on all the warring parties. Unfortunately, in the

months following this interview, the southern separatist movement, supported by the United Arab Emirates – the Southern Transitional Council – seized control of Aden, and declared self-rule in April, de facto breaking the Riyadh Agreement. Yemen's precarity has since surged and is in dire need of action, collaboration, and support.

For the CSPPS' article on Libya, Zorgh Madi from the Tamazight Women's Movement, a CSPPS member organisation, was interviewed. Libya has been plagued by war since the 2011 overthrow of Gaddafi's 42-year-long dictatorship and the Libyan population is largely left to its own devices. However, Zorgh described how Libya's civil society organisations are persisting in supporting the transition of their nation towards a unified and resilient society.

Madi said, "Seeing how other nations with functioning health systems, such as Italy and Tunisia, were flooded by COVID-19, sparked a lot of fear amongst our people. They started to take preventative measures themselves, attempting to wash their hands more, socially distancing themselves and trying to remain at home. But when there is shelling going on and staying at home is often not the safest option (thus) self-imposing a lockdown becomes increasingly difficult."

Despite the opposing parties' attempts at taking on the governing lead of the country, a coalition of Libyan civil society organisations - including Madi's organisation - pursued their mission by contributing to the first Voluntary National Review of the country this year, which is part of the follow-up and review of the progress of the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madi explains, "As our national institutions and government are weak themselves, we are forced to take on this task. We need to ensure that

the peacebuilding and statebuilding process of Libya, and the road towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda continues. It is the only way forward." CSPPS supported their work, as the Platform firmly believes that working towards more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, as stipulated by SDG16, is at the very core of this effort, and that these efforts are needed especially when two governments, fighting over power, see civil society as a threat to their own legitimacy.

Both Libya and Yemen, as well as many other countries in the world, struggle with economic, political, social and environmental fragility. The added-on threat of COVID-19 only destabilises the situations

in fragile and conflict-affected settings further. CSPPS sees it as a part of its mission to make the voices of the people on the frontlines heard, so the international community does not forget that our interlinked way of existence is indeed the reason why COVID-19 could so easily spread, but also why we cannot turn our focus inwards alone. The coverage of local perspectives in peace journalism works as a reminder of our interconnectivity: we live through the same ordeals, although on different levels. Our (in)actions resonate not only with those closest to us, but also the most marginalised in situations of fragility and conflict. CSPPS raises the voices of the often unheard, so truly no one is left behind by the time we jointly reach 2030.

“
The raising of voices of those in need when the entire world is in lockdown had to take on an entirely new dimension”
”

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S. Sudanese youth battle Covid misinfo, hate speech

By Gale Julius Dada

Despite the world's current focus on healthcare workers battling the COVID-19 pandemic, South Sudan's youth are fighting a different battle — one against misinformation and online hate speech sparked by the virus.

South Sudan's Ministry of Health confirmed the first case of COVID-19 on April 5, identifying a United Nations (UN) aid worker who arrived to the country on February 28. The announcement was followed by social media attacks against foreigners and aid workers, sparking xenophobic messages alleging that the UN imported the virus into the country.

Now, in a bid to counter the growing hate speech, youth advocacy groups have formed a consortium called Access to Information and Rumor Verification in South Sudan (AIRSS) to raise awareness and dispel fake news about COVID-19. In a nation where six out of ten COVID-19 rumors are untrue, according to UNICEF, the stakes are high.

The collaboration initiated an online and mobile-based campaign dubbed Hagiga Wahid (which translates to "one truth"), enabling the public to verify suspicious information by either texting or calling 228 to receive accurate information.

Emmanuel Lobijo, executive director youth-led peacebuilding organization Junub Open Space, said young people

play crucial role in the battle against the Coronavirus.

"We verified more than 100 Facebook posts carrying hate speeches on the first day the Coronavirus was confirmed in South Sudan. Most of them were incitement against foreigners," Lobijo said. "We reported them to Facebook and most of those posts were brought down by Facebook."

The youth group are also using bicycles fitted with megaphones to convey messages about COVID-19 throughout their communities.

"The fight towards ensuring our community is COVID-19-free needs a lot of efforts from all corners and as of now a lot of hate speech misinformation and fake news have taken over, but our fight is hate-free South Sudan," Lobijo (pictured above in red) said.

Reech Malual, Executive Director of Screen of Rights, a Juba-based human rights and peacebuilding organization started an online peace campaign after seeing overwhelming cases of hate speech and xenophobic messages shared on social media.

"Spreading hatred and inciting against a group based on belonging will only frustrate our efforts in the fight against the deadly virus," Malual said.

"This is a critical time for all the inhabitants," he said. "Including foreign nationals with permanent residence

Gale Julius Dada Gale is multimedia journalist from South Sudan. Since 2014, Gale has worked as a reporter, radio producer, and photojournalist. He is currently the producer and presenter of Peace Forum program on Bakhita Radio 91.0 Fm in Juba



status or working within our country. The virus doesn't segregate."

"We need to embrace all the UN agencies and NGOs in a collective effort against COVID-19."

Chuol Rambang Chol, chairperson of the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission has made a call for action.

"Fellow South Sudanese, Coronavirus is a global pandemic, it does not discriminate whether you are a man or woman, white or black, Christian or Muslim, young or old," Chol said. "It is threatening our health and peace. We therefore, must come together to protect ourselves, families, our communities and the peace that we have just secured by forming the revitalized government of national unity."

During his April 9 national address, President Salva Kiir urged the people of South Sudan to exercise restraint and shun hate speech and xenophobic utterances against the humanitarian community in South Sudan.

"I call upon you to exercise restraint and avoid hate speeches and xenophobic utterances against our guests and those who have come to provide services to us from different countries and organizations," he added.

This story originally appeared at peacenews.com.



Rosemary Wilfred interviews Angelina Teny, a Minister in The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs in South Sudan's new transitional government.

Wilfred named South Sudan's top peace journalist

By Siyabulela Mandela

South Sudan Background

After decades of prolonged civil war between the North and the South in Sudan, constant political struggle by the South with the central government in Khartoum, and the transitional period between 2005 and 2010 the government of South Sudan (GOSS) held a referendum and declared its independence from the North. In July 2011, the Republic of South Sudan was declared as an independent country under the leadership of President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Vice President Riek Machar Teny.

However, in 2013, hardly two years after its independence, South Sudan was engulfed in the civil war following the disbandment of the cabinet by President Kiir on the accusation of a planned Coup against his government by his deputy Riek Machar. The deputy president led a rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) which waged a violent struggle against the govern-

ment forces SPLM, and the civil war lasted for five years killing almost 2.2 million South Sudanese and displacing millions. In August 2018, in an attempt to end the violent conflict, President Kiir signed a power-sharing agreement with rebel leader Machar and other opposition groups.

Journalist profile: Rosemary Wilfred Against this backdrop, an organization called Journalists for Human Rights

Siyabulela Mandela is the Team Leader for Journalists for Human Rights in South Sudan and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in International Relations and Conflict resolution in the Department of Politics and Conflict Studies at Nelson Mandela University, South Africa.



(JHR) strives to inform and empower the South Sudanese public, and to recognize outstanding peace and human rights journalists.

One leading human rights journalist is Ochinyi Rosemary Wilfred Peter. She is a broadcast journalist, editor, and media trainer. She obtained her first degree in Education at Ndejje University and later pursued a diploma in Journalism from UMCAT School of Journalism and Mass Communication in Kampala, Uganda. After a successful two years in public relations, she joined mainstream media as a reporter in 2014, at Eye Radio, one of South Sudan's leading media outlets. Her ingenuous thirst for experience and objective reporting earned her an editor position at Eye Radio's program department. Since 2019, Rosemary has also been working for JHR as a media trainer and has conducted trainings for Journalists in various fields and civil society organizations on media engagement and relations.

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In Juba, bicyclists spread Covid info using a megaphone. (Photo by Gale Dada)

Words Heal the World empowers global youth

By Beatriz Buarque

Since the emergence of digital media, many scholars and journalists have written about the impacts of this new medium on journalism. Besides setting the agenda of main newspapers and newscasts, digital media platforms also empowered people in a way that, with their thumbs, they became capable of bringing down authoritarian regimes (i.e. Arab Spring) and legitimising hate speech through successive sharings. Information became the main weapon in networked societies, but, interestingly, this weapon has the power to hurt and heal. It is important, then, to question ourselves: how am I using digital media: to hurt or to heal?

This question came to my mind in 2017 when I realized how extremist groups were using digital media to radicalize young people from all over the world. They were using formats recognized as legitimate vehicles of truth (pieces of newscasts, online magazine, documentary's language) merged with videogame techniques to affect individuals who were looking for a cause to dedicate their lives.

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Wilfred is also a news writer, news anchor, and program producer. She has reported extensively on the South Sudan peace talks that was held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia between 2015-2016 and the Revitalization Forum in 2018 that concluded with the current Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Wilfred's extensive coverage of the South Sudan Peace talks earned her an invitation to the US State Department in Washington in June -2018 to share her experience, and most recently the Peace Journalism Award 2020.

Peace Journalism Award

Yearly, the Community Media Network South Sudan (CoMNeTSS) in partnership with the UNDP and UNESCO, invites journalists to pitch a project on an underreported non-violent response or peace effort in conflict area. The Peace Journalism Award is designed to encourage journalists to go beyond traditional conflict reporting and to consider telling the stories of conflict in ways that speak to peace. Thus, stories must present alternatives to war and help



Beatriz Buarque is the founder of the NGO Words Heal the World and she is currently a PhD student at the University of Manchester (UK). Her areas of specialization are alt-right, conspiracy theories, networked multitudes, multi-level critical affect-discourse analysis.

As a journalist with over ten years of experience in the newsroom, I could identify their cognitive and affective strategies and that is the reason why I decided to start empowering young people to produce information to heal our world.

Words Heal the World was born as a project to be developed in partnership with universities and it was registered as an NGO in 2018 due to the uniqueness of its methodology called Educ-(ac)tion. If in our society everyone seems

Continued on next page

policymakers think about responses to conflict anchored on prevention of war. The stories must also spark a debate on the hidden costs of conflict and reflect the voice or perspectives that are missing from the way the conflict is framed.

Journalists for Human Rights media trainer in South Sudan, Rosemary Wilfred conducted the extensive coverage of the South Sudan Peace Talks since 2015 leading up to the 2018 Revitalization Forum, doing ethical reporting on deadlocks and point of disagreements, details of documents endorsed and significant



Rosemary Wilfred accepts the 2020 South Sudan peace journalism award.

breakthroughs. Through broadcasting in radio shows, interviews, and public debates, the JHR consultant reported on grass-root efforts to bring about peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing so as to inspire other communities and individuals to do the same mainly in the displaced peoples camps, refugee camps, and reintegration centres.

Following the Peace Conference held on 12th February 2020 as organized by UNESCO, UNDP, Community Media Network South Sudan, and the Korea International Cooperation Agency, where Wilfred made a presentation with three other journalists on her two years' work of covering the peace talks, she was announced as the winner of the prestigious Peace Journalism Award by the country representative of UNDP, during the World Radio Day celebrations held in Juba on 13th February 2020. Media is a force for change and objective reporting as evident in the work of Wilfred becomes an important ingredient for the consolidation of peace and development, especially for conflict-affected countries like South Sudan.

Words Heal

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to have become capable of producing information as truth (a place that used to be occupied solely by journalists) and if information has been used to incite hate – especially among youngsters, then young people must be empowered to use information to promote peace. The logic behind Words Heal seems easy to understand but young people rarely are given the opportunity to take the front seat in peacebuilding strategies – especially in underdeveloped countries.

This fact has driven me to start working with Brazilian undergraduate students enrolled at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Drawing upon the work of the American philosopher John Dewey, who stated that students communicate what they experience, Words Heal employs the methodology Educ-(ac)tion. This cultivates multidisciplinary critical thinking and it also provides undergraduate students with the opportunity to take action, to implement their own ideas, and to challenge hate speech in digital spaces. Since 2017, over 110 Brazilian students have transformed academic articles into written pieces accessible to everyone, developed social media campaigns, produced videos, organised events, and launched the groundbreaking report The Hate Map Of Brazil.

The work expanded to the UK and Argentina, and students from different nationalities started producing content in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, reaching an online community of more than 6,280 people in different platforms. Even though students are expected to volunteer at Words Heal for one year, the experience of producing content to challenge hate speech is so enriching that some of them decide to stay longer. This was the case of Camelia Abdelhamid from the University of Westminster (UK). After directing the movie "Who you fear, you should hear," she realized she could do more to challenge hate speech, and hence, she became Words Heal's social media coordinator. She said, "Being part of the short documentary was a pleasant experience as I got to hear what different students from diverse nationalities had to say. When I first saw them blindfolded and how easily they would talk to each other, I started to think more about how people judge each other based solely on the appearance, gestures and how they react when someone is talking."

Laura Rocha produced a powerful video for the campaign against femicide and decided to stay longer than one year to coordinate the project Hope News (a project launched during the COVID19 pandemic to promote news that give a sense of hope to the public during a moment in which the world seems to have been drowned in uncertainty). She said that Words Heal is special because it brings together young people from different nationalities and backgrounds with the common goal of challenging hate. Rocha said, "It



Beatriz Buarque and the UK team of Words Heal the World enjoy the premiere of the movie "Behind the Scarf."

makes me believe that I have this power. The power to reach whatever I desire and also help people around me. We work as a team but we are bonded as a family."

Overall, the work developed by Words Heal the World has brought positive impacts to students, universities, and civil society organizations. Students from different backgrounds learn how to use digital media to promote peace and share this knowledge within their communities. Universities have a partner that gives students the opportunity to use their skills to promote peace, contributing to a diverse and equal environment. Civil society organizations that work with Words Heal have their work promoted by students, filling the gap of lack of media professionals faced by many NGOs.

Learning about digital media and hate speech has made hundreds of young people aware of their power in a society ruled by information. They are producing words to heal our world and also inspiring people to take action to shape a peaceful society. They became so powerful that, in three years of existence, Words Heal has already won two international prizes: the Transcendence Award granted by Michigan State University (US), and the Luxembourg Peace Prize. Peacebuilding is no longer solely on the hands of big organizations. Each of us has responsibility in shaping a peaceful society and every message we share on digital media counts.

Today, much more than in the last decades, young people can play a crucial role in peacebuilding but to use words to heal, they must be trained. They must learn the characteristics of networked societies to use regimes of popularity in favor of messages that promote peace. They must learn how to use silence and words in an effective way. This knowledge combined with the freshness of young people can become our main weapon against polarization and extremist acts. After all, if people learned to hate, they can learn to love and respect. It is a matter of education.

Israeli PJ course shifts to Zoom during pandemic

By Ruth Ebenstein

Peace journalism is now being taught in Israel in the virtual classroom.

Since early July 2020, some seventy people—Jewish and Arab Israelis, women and men from across the country, ranging in age from 20-something to 70-something—have gathered on Zoom to learn the principles and practices of Peace Journalism. It’s an engaging assembly, with chitchat in Hebrew and Arabic before the lectures begin, and a flurry of conversation in the chat boxes throughout, swapping opinions and sharing perspectives. With many participants dialing in from home, one is privy to the little touches of abode: a colorful collection of magnets covering every corner of a family-size refrigerator, a dainty collection of tea cups tucked behind a glass china cabinet, and the accidental shout of a family member when the mute button slips off, or a cat slinking by.

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, participants studied Peace Journalism by going away for the weekend. This very same course was taught over three intensive face-to-face weekends at hotels and guest houses where participants congregated to study, socialize, debate and connect. They also learned hands-on journalistic skills of interviewing, how to structure a

journalistic story, how to edit. I know this because I took this very course in 2019, and got to partake in that no-longer-safe physical togetherness that we took for granted in the Pre-Corona Era when it was as plentiful as oxygen.

But shifting the course to Zoom has been surprisingly smooth and successful. It’s involved quite a bit of learning as well as its own kind of magic.

Complex is the program’s official name: “Media Impacting Conflict Transformation: From Local Action to Cross-border and Global Outreach.” It is the brainchild of The Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace, an educational NGO that promotes peace, human/civil rights, tolerance and coexistence across religious, ethnic and national groups in Israel and the region. The Adam Institute has partnered with Israel Social Television, an independent media NGO promoting social change via video content, dissemination and media training for social activists. Support for this program comes from the European Union. It draws an admixture of participants, including journalists from mainstream and independent media, social activists, communication students, spokespeople, artists, and other media-related professions.

Ruth Ebenstein is an award-winning American-Israeli writer, historian, public speaker and peace/health activist who loves to laugh a lot and heartily. She is the author of the forthcoming memoir, *Bosom Buddies: How Breast Cancer Fostered an Unexpected Friendship Across the Israeli-Palestinian Divide*. Find her online at RuthEbenstein.com, on Facebook at [Laugh Through Breast Cancer](https://www.facebook.com/LaughThroughBreastCancer) – Ruth Ebenstein, and on twitter @ [ruthebenstein](https://twitter.com/ruthebenstein).



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The curriculum comprises lectures as well as theoretical and practical workshops. The larger group is divided into three smaller groups, with each section learning under the guidance of two facilitators: one Jewish, one Arab. In the smaller workshops, Jewish and Arab participants can process the lectures, voice their perspective, deepen their knowledge and engage in a group discussion. Group facilitators use the unique, award-winning “Betzavta” – Adam Institute’s group facilitation method”, which transforms conflicts into dilemmas. (Betzavta means “Together” in Hebrew). This method allows for greater depth to the discussion.

The course kicked off on July 1 with a lecture by Eetta Prince-Gibson, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Jerusalem Report* and Deputy Bureau Chief for *The Washington Post*, presenting on the topic, “What is Peace Journalism?” The award-winning journalist and editor introduced participants to Johan Galtung, the Norwegian sociologist who founded the discipline of peace and conflict studies and peace journalism. Prince-Gibson also explained its connection to Solutions Journalism, which is rigorous reporting about

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Saber Rabi, Educational Director of the Adam Institute’s Peace journalism program, welcoming the 70 Jewish and Arab participants on Zoom.



A sign welcomes PJ workshop participants (left); A group photos of Arab and Jewish peace journalism course participants.



Israel

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responses to social problems that explains and investigates how people work toward solutions. Prince-Gibson opened the door to exploring the very meaning of the field, and the goals of the course.

Teaching the practical application was Ehud Shem Tov, co-CEO of SOCIAL TV, who shared shared SOCIAL TV’s version of peace journalism. He screened a series of clips, including some created by alumni of previous cohorts of the Peace Journalism program. Chen Peter, co-CEO, shared particulars of the program and gave examples of how to conduct an interview on Zoom.

Other critical learning blocks included fleshing out the narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Enthralling and engaging were the presentations in late July: the Zionist Israeli narrative and the Palestinian narrative. Yisraela Oron, one of the founders of the Geneva Initiative and deputy head of the National Security Council, presented the former. Dr. Yousef Asfour, historian, lecturer and researcher in the field of the philosophy of education, presented the latter.

In mid-September the topic centered on the exclusion of women from the peace discourse, with compelling presentations by Dr. Sarai Aharoni of Ben-Gurion University, who specializes in feminist security studies, women and peace processes. Also presenting on the role of women in peacemaking was Nabila Espanioly, a psychologist, politician and activist.

On the roster of upcoming topics: Mizrahi Jews and their role in promoting peace in the past and present; the double exclusion of Bedouins and Palestinian citizens of Israel from the peace process; ultra-Orthodox and their stance on the peace process; and citizens from the Former Soviet Union, their narrative on the peace process and stance on possible solutions. The lectures are slated to wrap up in November. Corona-permitting, the course will culminate with a three-day workshop that will allow for considerable hands-on learning, meeting of professional journalists, discussion of ethics, and getting-to-know-you.

During these trying times, when people are locked down at home and physically going out less, let alone

crossing borders less, it is affirming to know that there are programs exploring ways to use technology to reach across the divide. To continue to create artistic work together, to dismantle stereotypes.

Some serious questions arise in the group discussions. Can Peace Journalism ever match the ratings of War Journalism? If not, what can we do about it? What is the significance of granting legitimacy to these voices that are left out of the conversation, and how can we change that? Also compelling is the array of definitions given to Peace Journalism, what it means and what it can do.

There seems to be consensus around this: war journalism reports on differences rather than similarities whereas peace journalism layers the “us” and “them” with additional elements. Rather than focusing on what we have, peace journalism focuses on what we need to have, what ought to be. This new online course in Peace Journalism is a much-needed step as Israelis and Palestinians, and all people all over, must find a way forward together.

Harvard event explores bias, BLM reporting

By Godha Bapuji

Bias, as defined by the Oxford English dictionary is “a strong feeling in favour of or against one group of people, or one side in an argument, often not based on fair judgement.” As humans, we have to empathise with the fact that our cognitive abilities determine how we act or react to a particular sociocultural situation when faced with one.

An evolutionary psychological perspective predicts that the mind is equipped with function-specific mechanisms adapted for special purposes—mechanisms with special design for solving problems such as mating, which are separate, at least in part, from those involved in solving problems of food choice, predator avoidance, and social exchange (e.g., Kenrick, Neuberg, Griskevicius, Becker, & Schaller, 2010). With this being said, is it fair to be to be critical about every word we utter or every action we perform?

Many cultures do famously teach their young ones that lying is a cardi-

nal sin. Then why does it not continue into adulthood? What predisposes adult to lie in myriad ways? While lying is by no means limited to person-person, news media is often blamed for misstating, or lying in print media whether on paper or in the contemporary context, online on the internet. Disinformation is considered one of the most serious by-products of the internet world. For those like me who come from the technology and cybersecurity background, you may be familiar with the term fear, uncertainty, and doubt or simply FUD. Haselton, Martie G et al.’s understanding of cognitive biases helps us understand why FUD is used as a survival mechanism by many individuals across cultures.

So, what can be done about this? One way to tackle disinformation or misinformation is to understand the source from which we get our information and understanding the underlying survival mechanism these sources deploy to of course, survive and propagate their version of the “truth.” But to objectively assess the truth we must first realise that there could be subalterns

Godha Bapuji is a seasoned Information Technology and Security professional. In 2017, she took a sabbatical to study Social Sciences at Harvard University. She founded “Women in Crisis Response,” a social enterprise with its core foundation based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.



to any group or individuals within our sociocultural fabric.

A small group of Harvard students and alumnae tried to do exactly that earlier this year in June, after the horrific murders of individuals from our black communities in the U.S., more specifically as a homage to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, through our collaborative effort between the Harvard Kennedy School’s Women in Power Conference sponsored by Student vs Pandemics, a student-run volunteer organisation along with Women in Crisis Response’s unit within this pandemic taskforce at the time, and the United Nations Association-USA.

Our idea was to create space for the community to heal from the traumas of the murders but also to critically reflect on the news and media coverage of the protests that ensued in the midst of a global pandemic. Our esteemed panel included guests from multi-disciplinary fields such as Rachel Bowen-Pitman, the Executive Director of UNA-USA, Vincent Bish, Michael Patrick MacDonald, and Center for Global Peace Journalism’s director, Steven Youngblood. He started off by emphasizing the varying characteristics of media depiction of the George Floyd murders by media outlets and how partisanship is reflected in those

Continued on next page

The Harvard event asked participants to critically reflect on news coverage of the protests.



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coverages. He shared his observations about violence framing and word choice. Youngblood stated “Words matter. They carry meanings beyond their dictionary definitions and helps news consumers to contextualise the news.”

Youngblood rightly asks, “What can be done to improve the coverage?” He believes that peace journalism can be used to improve the partisan coverage. He explains that when stories are framed, who are we talking to and how are we telling the story matters and that Peace journalism is very cognizant of word choice therefore very firmly rejecting the Us vs them narratives commonly seen in news media outlets in the US.

He further clarifies that peace journalism is not just good news reporting. But there is a simple demand and supply mechanism that perpetuates bias and FUD in news media outlets that further leads to the spread of disinformation and misinformation. As he concludes Steven hopes that “someday, soon, media consumers will demand more from their media outlets, including abandoning those reflexively partisan narratives of everything from Covid-19 to Civil rights protests. ‘...when this happens, media outlets consider the suggestions from peace journalism that can improve their recording and their service to their public.’”

How does our discussion of bias and FUD tie into all of this? In line with Steven’s remark that “words matter” as noted in the earlier paragraphs, the bias we see in the news media today reflects our mental equipment to deal with unfamiliar or unknown situations. Fear, uncertainty, and doubt plays a dominant role in explaining why certain groups are predisposed to get deflected along a certain angle of thought or action.

By playing on the genuine cognitive



The Harvard conference was held via Zoom on June 28.

limitations of our mind, certain groups tend to find a survival mechanism that advances their agenda and “truth.” But by understanding the principles of peace journalism and as Steven hopes, news and media outlets will be better able to assess all sides of the narrative to become more objective in their reporting to public.

Furthermore using the same principles of peace journalism, we as consumers can better empathise with the groups that want to tell us their version of “truth”, thereby nudging ourselves to critically reflect on what we hear and see and consequently demand better from our public services as journalism. There are a few tools available today to help us ascertain media outlet bias although it is important to note that everything we do is inherently laced with bias and there are several such bias that we are not aware of.

The Cognitive Bias Codex is one such great tool to help us become aware of cognitive biases and fallacies. At the same time, other bias marking tools such as Ad Fontes’s Media Bias Chart or media bias or fact check websites provide efficient means to verify information that we consume.

The bottom line is that humans are inherently biased, it is our natural survival mechanism based on several biological and sociocultural factors that have shaped our thinking and cognitive faculties. By being aware of these limitations and by applying the principles of peace journalism we can prevent the negative feedback loop

of disinformation and misinformation that further shape our mindset and consequently our oblique actions towards less understood or less known people, places, cultures, and situations.

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Sudanese journalists gather at universities (primarily) to tap into the virtual peace journalism seminar held in August.

255 Sudanese journalists gather on Zoom

By Steven Youngblood

I've given perhaps a hundred peace journalism seminars and workshops in 27 countries around the world. The seminar I presented for Sudanese journalists in August, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and U.S. State Dept., was perhaps the most interesting, and definitely the most unique.

First, the three day workshop was presented entirely via Zoom. Secondly, the seminar set a record for



the largest single peace journalism seminar with 255 participants from 15 of the 18 regions of Sudan. The participant-journalists were mostly gathered at universities. And third, despite the size and virtual nature of the seminar, the participants were unusually eager to share their viewpoints and experiences.

The first day of the seminar featured an introduction to peace journalism. I led a discussion about what responsible journalism should do, and should look like, in Sudan. Several participants discussed the importance of freedom of the press as a prerequisite to improving journalism, and hoped that the 2019 revolution will pave the way for expanded press freedoms. There is still substantial improvement needed in this area, however. Human Rights Watch and others have reported on recent efforts by the army to threaten and muzzle critical journalists using the same anti-freedom laws wielded by the previous autocratic Sudanese regime. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/24/sudans-army-threatens-activists-journalists-lawsuits>

Several other journalists mentioned the important role journalism should play in "celebrating diversity" and rejecting traditional "us vs. them" narratives, one of the cornerstones of peace journalism. Others still emphasized the importance of being unbiased, and that this is especially important in reporting about other ethnic groups.

The most interesting question of the day was whether it is okay for journal-

ists to exaggerate a story if this exaggeration would create greater awareness of a vitally important issue. My response invoked "the boy who cried wolf." What happens, I asked, when there is a story of great importance? Will the public think we're exaggerating it? Every time we exaggerate and sensationalize, we lose our credibility.

On day two, we discussed social media and its central role in the revolution. One participant said that by using social media, "People promoting the revolution were guiding the narrative...They were aware of what was happening in real spaces. They conveyed the information. Traditional journalism was limited by the security apparatus and couldn't participate as fully as they would have liked."

We also discussed the central role of media in reconciliation processes. Journalists from Gedarif University said in the chat room, "The media has a vanguard role in resolving conflicts and ethnic and racial differences by proposing continuous awareness programs to leave differences and look to the future of the specific region to achieve security and peace through

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Sudan

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coexistence and acceptance of the other, as well as producing interactive programs for the local community on conflicts and disagreements that divide society."

There were also many interesting interactions as well during the third and final day of the seminar.

We discussed coverage of the conflict in Darfur. One participant said that the coverage was completely biased, and framed by multiple obstacles. "Journalists tried to highlight events, but were coerced (by authorities) to highlight alternative narratives and forced to show a state narrative," she said.

"We couldn't maintain neutrality," said another journalist. There were ethnic cleavages, but we were "not able to cover them adequately."

In terms of covering the civic unrest that led to the overthrow of the Bashir regime in 2019, journalists noted that "official media was very limited and

diminished in its capacity...to convey demands of the people." Others agreed, noting that the State acted "with a fist of iron." Those who spoke agreed that social media was best able to present the news and the "peaceful nature of the revolution."

The seminar was made possible by the civilian-led transitional government (CLTG) and the United States Embassy, which share a "number one priority to establish peace" in Sudan, according to Public Affairs Officer Keith Hughes. Since Covid-19 made my travel impossible, the decision was made to hold the seminars virtually. Further, holding the seminar required the State Dept. and CLTG to convince Zoom executives to lift the block on Sudanese IP addresses using Zoom.

It is my plan and hope to make a face to face visit to Sudan to continue the discussions about peace journalism sometime in 2021—inshallah, as they say in Arabic.



Sudanese journalists gather at universities (top) and at the US Embassy in Khartoum (bottom) for the peace journalism seminar in August.

How the Sudan PJ seminar became reality

By Keith Hughes, Public Affairs Officer, US Embassy-Khartoum

The civilian-led transitional government (CLTG) has stated its number one priority is to establish peace within its borders, and the U.S. Embassy has made that same goal one of its top priorities for years. The Ministry of Culture and Information approached the Embassy with a request to undertake peace journalism training in the conflict areas.

To meet the urgent needs of the CLTG to increase balanced reporting on conflict in Sudan, PAS Khartoum had to partner with several entities inside and outside of Sudan. A reliable, video conference platform that allowed simultaneous translation required PAS Khartoum to work with AF/SSS to convince Zoom, the preferred platform for the workshops that it was in overcompliance regarding economic restrictions in Sudan. Zoom executives agreed and lifted its block on Sudanese IP addresses. PAS Khartoum then needed to find reliable internet in the conflict areas. Working with contacts in the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to convince them to collaborate on the project. Universities throughout Sudan have an excellent fiber optic network, that had been jealously guarded by the MoHESR, but was persuaded to allow the Ministry of Culture and Information to invite journalists to the universities to participate in the workshops.

The result was fifteen Sudanese universities, mostly in conflict areas, hosted 255 journalists. The event was held with a minimum of technical issues and a maximum of interaction.

Profile: Alfred Fried, PJ pioneer

by Peter van den Dungen

The existence of centers, courses, conferences as well as journals, manuals, and other publications dedicated to peace journalism would have been greatly welcomed by Alfred Hermann Fried (1864-1921). He would certainly have recognized the urgent need for this kind of journalism today. The Austrian was the first journalist to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1911). Today, many journalists have been persecuted for their pursuit of peace, truth, and justice.

Born in Vienna, Fried started out as a bookseller and publisher in Berlin before he became an active and leading member of the organized international peace movement that emerged following the publication of Bertha von Suttner's bestselling anti-war novel, *Lay Down Your Arms!* (1889). During the last decade of the 19th century, Fried published a small but important peace monthly that von Suttner edited. In 1899 it was replaced by *Die Friedens-Warte* (The Peace Watch) which Fried edited until his death. The chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee called it 'the best journal in the peace movement, with excellent leading articles and news of topical international problems.' Among its many distinguished contributors were academics from a wide range of disciplines (especially scholars of international law), activists, and politicians.

In all of his many writings, Fried

Peter van den Dungen was a lecturer/visiting lecturer in peace studies at the University of Bradford, UK (1976-2015). A peace historian, he is honorary general coordinator of the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP).



always reported and analysed the political issues of the day in a way which focussed on the need and possibility for calming inflamed sentiments and preventing violent conflict (as did von Suttner, the first female political journalist in the German language). They consistently and practically promoted an enlightened, cooperative and constructive approach.

Fried was a most gifted and prolific author who was equally active as a journalist, editor, and author of books, both popular and scholarly, on such related subjects as the peace movement, international organization, and international law. His proficiency as a journalist is shown by a volume that he published in 1908 with details of 1,000 of his newspaper articles on the peace movement. He clearly set himself apart from the mainstream journalism of his day – with its nefarious stoking of fear, hatred, and suspicion among countries – by referring to himself as a peace journalist. 'Under the White Flag!', a book that he published in Berlin in 1901, consisted of a selection of his articles and essays and was sub-titled 'From the files of a peace journalist' (*Friedensjournalist*).

In an introductory essay on the press and the peace movement, he criticised how the latter was neglected or ridiculed. But its steady growth and influence, including the gradual adoption of the movement's agenda (notably the use of arbitration) by states to settle their conflicts, made him believe that a major change in public opinion was imminent. Other factors contributing to this historic shift were the growing realization of the burden and dangers of an armed peace, and the costly and devastating wars in Cuba, South Africa and China. Fried correctly argued that wars were made possible, indeed inevitable, because of the anarchy that characterized international relations. His motto – 'Organize the World!' – was a



Alfred Fried

precondition before disarmament (as expressed in Bertha von Suttner's 'Lay Down Your Arms!') would become a realistic possibility.

Although he devoted much time and energy editing several peace movement journals, Fried realised that they reached only a relatively small audience and that 'preaching to the converted' was ineffective. The real campaign had to be waged in and through the mainstream press.

The need for peace journalism is greater than ever, also because the consequences of violent conflict and war are so much more catastrophic than a century ago. The organization and institutionalization of peace journalism at the start of the 21st century is therefore greatly to be welcomed. Fried had attempted something similar at the start of the 20th century when he took the initiative for the creation of an International Union of the Peace Press. Despite his best efforts, it remained embryonic and when peace journalism was revived in the aftermath of two world wars, his pioneering efforts had largely been forgotten.

Even in his native Austria, the Nobel Peace Laureate had been 'suppressed and forgotten' – the title of the first biography of Fried, published in 2006.

Covid poses challenges for PJ in Cameroon

by Rosaline Akah Obah

The coronavirus that has now taken the entire world hostage has changed daily routines and has made normal things now look unusual. While it continues to spread with many getting hospitalized, the death toll rising by the day, Cameroon journalism core's has been hit hard by the virus. Reporting about the virus and at the same time keeping safe from the virus has become a daily dilemma for many journalists in Cameroon. Cameroon's journalists now battle credibility checks and deal with drying up of news sources and ICT use at work.

Peace journalists especially within the Cameroon Community Media Network (CCMN) have complained that the rapid spread of Covid 19 in Cameroon has affected their daily work of building peace in the country. The pandemic that comes at the heart of the Anglophone crisis has made things worst at the time their work as peace journalists is needed most.

Cameroonians, especially English speaking Cameroonians, have lost trust in the government in the close to four years crisis. The government's response to the pandemic has been met with mistrust, and efforts by peace journalists in helping to educate the people on the pandemic come with a gamut of challenges. Lockdowns, social distancing, restricted movements, and the self fear of exposure have made work difficult for peace journalists. Ndefru Melanie, peace journalist in Bamenda, observed, "My work entails me giving a voice to the community as well as societal actors. This is done via interviews and panel discussions. Covid 19 has come with lots of myths and conflicts. Many people in Bamenda still believe that the government is telling lies about Covid 19. Some say its not real working. As a peace journalist, one needs to talk to or invite medical doctors, government officials and the local people via vox pops to talk to the people on the radio. Because of the fear of exposure and the need for physical distancing, I'm helpless. It's difficult to get resource persons," she said.

Moma Sandrine, another peace journalist in Yaounde, is torn between staying safe and doing her work as a peace journalist. "It has not been easy as movements are restricted. Boarding a taxi from one locality to another is so risky because you can get exposed to the virus. To get information or statistics, I can only do phone calls which are not reliable. When you try at times to get to government offices, you are denied access because the number of person accepted per day has exceeded. In such a situation, balancing stories and getting rightful information is difficult," she intimated.

The measures enacted to combat Covid 19 are a hindrance to journalism work. According to Fongoh Primus Ayeh, Vol 9, No. 2

"Public events now accept only 50 persons. At times when I reach late, I'm not permitted or given access because the number of persons has reached 50. Even at that, taking pictures has become so difficult especially group photographs. The social distancing measure has made it difficult for pictures and interviews as nobody wants to come close to one another," Fongoh said.

Odette Nchanji Akebegho, journalist and instructor, is challenged by the fact that she can't easily get to her news sources. "There are certain news sources I can't reach out to because when I contact them, they will remind you of the physical/social distancing measure. Movement is difficult to and from the office. At times I work alone in the studio with no assistance from colleagues. Field work also comes with fear," she said.

Army Banda, journalist and radio with the state broadcaster, CRTV, says she now survives as a journalist thanks to her knowledge on the use of ICT. "Getting resource persons has become so difficult. I am now forced to use whatsapp voicenotes to be able to have resource persons on my programme. We do not have physical news conferences but virtual ones. My program action woman has been hit because I can't displace myself to go interview my resource persons as well as I can't invite them to the radio house because of the fear of contamination," Banda observed.

Public Transport and Face Mask

Gilbert Nyongamsen Ndasi, journalist, said getting to work via public transport puts him to be at risk of exposure. "Public transport does not favour us. It's always congested making it difficult to get to work. One has to wait for longer periods to find a less congested taxi to get to work."

Fonki Ndale Yanick, journalist and TV host, said it's difficult to book guests. "I now attend fewer public events and I have limited panelists on my shows. Some I invite to my TV show insist they must put on their mask and it always affects the sound quality," he said.

The pandemic has also come with a shift in paradigm. It has diverted attention from crisis and conflict, and peace journalists now focus predominantly on Covid 19.



Obah Rosaline Akah is a Trainer/Consultant in Peace Journalism and Conflict Transformation. She is currently serving as President of the Young African Women Congress Network YAWC Cameroon Chapter and the National Coordinator for Cameroon Community Media Network.

Seeking better Covid coverage in N. Macedonia

by Marina Tuneva

Reporting on COVID - 19 has created great challenges for journalism in North Macedonia. Journalists faced the complex task of reporting the truth, while avoiding to provoke unnecessary anxiety and concern among the public. Nonetheless, some of them have become a “vehicle” for spreading distorted truths, half-truths, lies and misinformation. As the virus spread, various misinformation and lies began to spread as well. “Bio-threats from China,” “secret labs,” “Government scenarios” “spread by those who ate bat soup,” “the vaccine already exists,” were among the phrases media coined.

Uncertainty leaves room for false claims, which in the wake of the pandemic could lead to behavior that accelerates the transmission of the virus, epidemiologist Adam Kucharski wrote for the *Guardian*. Given our natural inclination to seek information that underpins our pre-existing beliefs and fears, the likelihood of becoming infected with the “virus of lies” becomes even greater. Excessive exposure to coronavirus information increases anxiety and panic.

The public in North Macedonia has increasingly started to react to the media coverage of the pandemic. Of the total number of press complaints filed to the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia starting from February through August, 33% of the reactions about unethical media reporting were related to the coverage of the coronavirus crisis. Most of the complaints referred to the one-sided reporting, sensationalism, and biased reporting in favor of political actors. The Council warned the media that this kind of reporting can further increase anxiety and panic and encourage irrational behavior by citizens.

The Macedonian neurologist Arben Taravari claims that if news and information in the media coverage is ac-

curate, it can help people think rationally and feel safe. They will know how to defend themselves from the unknown enemy and be aware about the risks, he says. The things we need in moments like these is to regain our sense of control over our own fears, without overreacting and risking to contribute to the general panic. In that battle, careful selection, consumption and evaluation of the contents is crucial. Sensationalism and scaremongering in language and images that could heighten anxiety should be entirely avoided, the Ethical Journalism Network recommends.

Audiences exposed to peace journalism have been found to demonstrate increased levels of hope and empathy. Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – about what to report, and how to report it.

Journalists reporting on crisis are expected to look at the entire context and not just to the visible consequences. Therefore, media need to adopt a new spirit, giving particular emphasis to a more trustworthy information that help audiences understand the problem and behave rationally. Information is vital to encourage people to take the available preventive measures to protect and save lives. Therefore, media outlets are key public health players, shaping perceptions of risk and targeting communities to protect health.

In an effort to help media professionally report about the pandemic and apply the principles of peace journalism in their reporting, the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia and the Association of Journalists



of Macedonia produced “Guidelines for Safe and Professional Reporting on Coronavirus” written by Marina Tuneva and Ognen Janeski. (These can be accessed at- <https://tinyurl.com/yxg3gmye>). Calming tensions and offering solutions to the citizens is one of the principles included in the Guidelines. In conditions of great concern and anxiety about the spread of virus and its consequences, the media should help citizens with specific information regarding protection and measures that they should take. Recommendations should be based on relevant and official sources. Acknowledging fear and uncertainty can help in their overcoming.

Media coverage should reflect public concerns, but also be aimed at providing reliable information on how they can act. Media have a role in the way they report the news and how they report it. In this sense, they are not simple observers but actors because of the responsibility that they carry in their work, not out of engagement, but in the political sense of the word.

This is a valuable lesson not just for the media, but also for institutions and foreveryone affected. Otherwise, the price we would pay would be much higher than the threat posed by the virus itself.

Marina Tuneva is an Executive Director of the Council of Media Ethics in North Macedonia and an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Communication Studies. Her areas of expertise include strategic communication, public relations, diversity reporting, peace journalism and ethics in communication.



War Stories, Peace Stories looks ahead to Brussels

By Jamil Simon

April 10, 2018 was an exciting day for the 400 experienced journalists and peacebuilders who got together to take a deep dive into the issues surrounding the way peace and conflict are covered in the media. It was also the beginning of a series of events designed to bring peacebuilders and journalists from around the world together, meeting to exchange ideas, experiences, stories, and strategies.

The first “War Stories, Peace Stories: Peace Conflict & the Media” symposium was held at the New York Times Center. It featured journalists including Robert Rosenthal, Director of the Center for Investigative Reporting and Jon and Kem Sawyer from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, and peacebuilders such as Mike Jobbins from Search for Common Ground and Bridget Moix from Peace Direct.

The event was a wonderful success, provoking serious dialogue and tangible results in the form of many articles about international peace efforts in global media outlets. The creator of the program, Jamil Simon,

Jamil Simon is a peace activist, an award-winning documentary filmmaker, and a communications strategist. He created a symposium called *War Stories Peace Stories: Peace and Conflict and The Media*. Last June he was awarded the Luxembourg Peace Prize for his



work building global awareness of peaceful solutions to conflict.



Alexis Okeowo, staff writer at *The New Yorker*, makes a point at “War Stories, Peace Stories” in New York in 2018.

was awarded the Luxembourg Peace Prize in Peace Journalism for his work.

To implement the War Stories Peace Stories symposium series, Jamil and his partner Peter Agoos put together an extraordinary group of partner organizations, including Alliance for Peacebuilding, American Friends Service Committee, Brussels Press Club, Center for Global Peace Journalism, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Institute for Economics and Peace, International Federation of Journalists, Partners Global, Peace Direct, Search for Common Ground, and World Peace Forum.

Focused on increasing global media attention to peacemaking efforts, Jamil and Peter began organizing a series of WSPS symposia in regional media centers around the world. The second event was planned for Brussels, with support from the International Federation of Journalists, and a third was to be held in Bogota, with former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Prize winner Juan Carlos Santos supporting the event in order to reach Latin American journalists. The creators’ long-term plans were to follow Brussels and Bogota with

events in other major media centers: London, Nairobi, Mumbai, Sydney and Tokyo. Like the rest of the world, they had to press the pause button on their ambitious plans.

Jamil and Peter’s commitment to the power of this idea is unshakable, to bring journalists and peacebuilders together to explore new approaches to writing about peace and conflict. With the help of a small team of writers, designers and web developers, and with experienced journalists and peacebuilders to guide the development of the content and the design of the activities, they’ve currently turned toward rebuilding the War Stories Peace Stories website.

The WSPS web platform (<https://www.warstoriespeacestories.org/>) will become a dynamic global platform to build community around this idea and to lay the groundwork to support the in-person symposia when it becomes possible to continue them. Changing the way journalists report on peace and conflict is a powerful idea that will resonate on a virtual platform, designed to keep the idea alive and build community among journalists and peacebuilders.



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