



International Federation of Journalists

Journalism, Civil Liberties And The War on Terrorism

Reflections of IFJ Unions On
The Aftermath of September 11
And the Implications for
Journalism and Civil Liberties

By Aidan White, General Secretary

Introduction

Journalists, their unions and the media staff they represent are in the centre of a fast-developing crisis in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11. The crisis challenges media efforts to be professional and the capacity of journalists to work safely in a deepening atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

The need for sensitive reporting has been heightened as a result of increased hostility to the Arab and Muslim communities of the United States and Europe. In a climate of cultural misunderstanding media struggle to maintain professional balance. Some early political blunders did not help – notably the announcement by US President George Bush of a US-led crusade against terrorism and the misplaced observation of Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi on the superiority of Western Christian values over Islamic culture.

The declaration of a war on terrorism by the US and its international coalition has created a dangerous situation in which journalists have become victims as well as key actors in reporting events. The campaign after September 11 is war of a very different kind with no clearly defined enemy, no hard-and-fast objective, and no obvious point of conclusion. Inevitably, it creates a pervasive atmosphere of paranoia in which the spirit of press freedom and pluralism is fragile and vulnerable.

Military action in the second week of October 2001 led to new pressure on media. Reporting from the front-line is always hazardous but in the first days of the attack on Afghanistan there were numerous acts of violence against journalists. New threats also emerged with a series of anthrax by post attacks targeting media staff and US politicians. One journalist in Florida died.

At the same time, a media war has ensued in which, from Washington to Gaza City, governments have set out to manipulate the work of journalists.

While all governments are keen to demonise the enemy, journalists need to balance the legitimate desire to win the propaganda as well as the physical battle, against their long-term interest in maintaining the freedom of the press to publish words and images – however unpalatable – that help people better understand the roots of conflict.

This brief report covers a review of developments by the IFJ at the end of September and the beginning of October 2001. We have drawn extensively upon information from IFJ member unions and from press freedom groups at regional and international level.

Australia

Media coverage of September 11 has been comprehensive and all pervading and, generally, professional. Journalists in the mainstream media at both the tabloid and broadsheet ends of the market have been mostly responsible in handling issues of tolerance.

However, among some non-journalists – such as radio commentators – there has been a serious increase in, at best, lack of care in handling issues of race and, at worst, open racism against people from Muslim backgrounds. This is partly because the attacks occurred against a pre-existing background of racial tension within Australia generated by the debate over asylum seekers, particularly asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Iraq. By world standards, only a small number of asylum seekers attempt to enter Australia, some 4,500 a year, arriving by boat, usually through Indonesia.

However, the conservative government of John Howard has sought to make its refusal to allow asylum seekers to enter Australian territorial waters or to land on Australian territory a major political issue and, in doing so, has fed uncertainty and fear within the population at large. Polls indicate that more than 70 per cent of people agree with the government's stance.

At the same time, the government has sought to deliberately link asylum seekers with terrorism, claiming that September 11 has justified their approach because there could be sleeper terrorists attempting to enter Australia by posing as asylum seekers.

This is causing tension between much of the media and the Australian community, with supporters of the government – and the government itself – criticising media for being out of touch with the majority views of Australia.¹

¹ Further information from Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. <http://www.alliance.org.au/>

Since the generation of the asylum seekers crisis and the September 11 attacks, the government has called a general election, seeking to be returned on the basis that it is providing leadership against asylum seekers and terrorist attacks. In addition, government has announced a package of anti-terrorist measures including efforts to more tightly restrict coverage of security operations. In practice these are unlikely to be more limiting than current law.

This may be perspective driven by local issues, but there is widespread concern among Australian journalists at the growth of intolerance against Muslims, including Muslim Australians. The IFJ has a strong recent record on this issue and should consider how we can revitalise the tolerance campaign at both a regional and international level. We should consider:

- Initiating discussions with the UNHCR over the link between tolerance and refugees
- Work with the Human Rights Commission over strengthening rights
- Discuss with UNESCO what work they could be undertaking

Journalists unions and associations should address this issue through articles and seminars of members. Australian journalists meet in the first week in November to discuss the role of the media in providing leadership, particular when governments fail to do so.

Canada

As in all western countries, Canadian coverage of the September 11 events was extensive and largely professional, but freedom of expression groups responded angrily when the federal government announced the preparation of a package of anti-terrorism legislation for introduction in Parliament. A leading Canadian journalists' organisation called on the government to reject curbs on free expression or proposals for increased surveillance that would trample basic citizens' rights and obstruct the work of reporters.

In a letter to Justice Minister Anne McLellan, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression says the organisation is alarmed at reports of proposals that would restrict media freedom through Internet surveillance and changes to the Official Secrets Act.

We believe an effective counter-terrorism campaign demands not only the preservation of fundamental liberties but also the vigorous assertion of their importance," CJFE president Arnold Amber says in the letter. Amber is also director of The Newspaper Guild Canada and a member of the IFJ Executive Committee.²

In responding to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, "the Government must bear in mind Canada's long and honourable tradition of respect for free expression, and avoid introducing any measures that would shackle it," says Amber.

News reports suggest the government may amend the Official Secrets Act to prohibit disclosure of information that might jeopardize "essential infrastructure" or information given to Canada in confidence by its allies. There are also proposals to increase surveillance of the Internet and restrict the circulation of information over it.

² Full details from <http://www.cjfe.org/>

Freedom of expression groups and journalists unions will oppose any attempt to introduce new powers to prohibit the publication of information. The vagueness of "essential infrastructure" could make it a crime to inform Canadians about matters of vital public concern, says Amber and attempts to ban the disclosure of information given in confidence "could expose journalists to prosecution for disseminating material that is offered, received and published in good faith, and clearly in the public interest."

Canadian journalists have called for a full consultation process with interested parties and the public for any legislation that may restrict freedom of expression, allowing ample time for discussion and reconsideration.

Cyprus

While media coverage has been generally extensive and well informed, there has been no problem of intolerance in reporting.

The Attorney General has announced the preparation of a new anti-terrorism bill that may create some dangers for free speech and civil liberties. The Union of Cyprus Journalists has warned against such an action saying that existing legislation is sufficient to cope with the needs of the authorities. The authorities say they will not impose anything that endangers press freedom, but the union will follow the situation closely.

Denmark

In almost all Danish media September 11 turned things upside down. Papers, which for centuries, no matter what had happened outside Denmark, had always published domestic news on the front pages, replaced these with international news for several weeks. The reporting in general was balanced.

Attempts to blame all Muslims for what happened have been few and Muslim representatives in Denmark have been asked their views frequently in the media. There have been, however, in the first days after September 11 episodes where people from different ethnic backgrounds were attacked or had their shops damaged.

In the media the question of how to define a terrorist has been much discussed. This has also focused on local connections. For example, the current vice-chairman of the large Danish liberal party in the early 1980s volunteered to take part in the struggle in Afghanistan following the intervention by the Soviet Union, supporting Taliban. Photographs of him and three Taliban-supporters, all four in typical Afghani-clothes and with guns, have been printed over and over again as a constant reference point for this debate.

Although the government says it will "do what is needed" to stop terrorism, no legislative initiatives that could be seen to influence the working conditions of the press have so far been introduced.

European Union

In Europe, The European Council, representing 15 nations, has put forward controversial proposals for a package of measures to "improve the European Union's response to terrorism" in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

The proposals, considered on October 9, include amendments to outline measures drawn up after a special meeting of EU Ministers in Brussels on September 2000. Civil liberty groups are particularly concerned over the adoption of an EU-wide definition of "terrorism" which they say threatens to include people taking part in recent violent protest demonstrations over globalisation.

The changes proposed by the Council of Ministers broaden the scope of what constitutes a terrorist offence by including actions that seriously affect (rather than seriously alter) the political, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation. This brings in international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, or the World Bank, into the picture.³

The proposal on combating terrorism is either very badly drafted, or there is a deliberate attempt to broaden the concept of terrorism to cover protests such as those in Gothenburg and Genoa, says Tony Bunyan, the Editor of Statewatch, a civil liberties watchdog. If it is intended to slip in by the back door draconian measures to control political dissent it will only serve to undermine the very freedoms and democracies legislators say they are protecting"

In so far as they directly affect journalists, the new measures could spell trouble ahead for media reporting on the activities of groups thought to be involved with terrorism, however it is defined. One of the definitions of terrorist offences being considered by the EU includes promoting of, supporting of or participating in a terrorist group.

France

The tone of the French media coverage says the SNJ-CGT can be summed up by the September 12th editorial of *Le Monde*: We are all Americans Now. While one cannot talk of intolerance, much of the coverage was lacking in analysis of American policy. Unfortunately, many journalists committed errors of ignorance by confusing the terms, Arab, Muslim and Islamic and they strengthened the view of many in France that Muslim equals terrorist . The SNJ-CGT published a press release criticising this approach. It was not reported.

The union reports that many media organisations have taken advantage of the uncertain times to announce cutbacks (job losses, salary cuts) in the days immediately after the terror attacks.

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin has announced new anti-terrorist legislation, including surveillance and tracking of Internet messages. Many journalists fear that under the pretext of the urgency of the situation and the tracking of terrorist networks, the government is preparing to adopt, without much debate or dialogue, measures which could have serious implications for press freedom and civil liberties.⁴

³ Full details of the proposed new laws are available to <http://www.statewatch.org/news/index.html>

⁴ Details available from Reporters Sans Frontières at <http://www.rsf.fr/>

Unions and press freedom groups have condemned these moves and are demanding that there is full public debate and examination of proposed legislative measures that have been announced concerning Internet controls, encryption and the retention of data. But there are fears that, under the cover of the emergency of post-September 11, measures already included in the Information Society Bill (projet de loi sur la société de l'information, LSI) will be added to the "Daily Security Bill" (projet de "loi sur la sécurité quotidienne").

Examined at the beginning of the summer by the National Assembly, and currently being reviewed in the Senate, this text will therefore be amended to include the anti-terrorist measures presented by the Prime Minister in his October 3 speech to the Assembly. These measures may also be included in a distinct "post September 11" bill, but will in any event be adopted "in a form responding to the immediate urgency," according to Jospin's remarks.

The measures aimed at regulating the use of encryption technologies limit Internet users' ability to send their messages securely on the network. Despite the many promises to "completely liberalise" encryption technologies, the ownership and use of appropriate software will continue to be limited by the regulations included in the LSI Bill (Articles 41, 42 and following). In the context of legal proceedings, the text calls for recourse to the defence services in order to break encryption keys.

The measures that concern the retention of Internet users' data, that is to say, the traces of the use of different public networks (mobile, land, etc.), are aimed at introducing the principle of "preventive retention" of data into French law. A decree is likely to determine what types of data are targeted by this measure, which is scheduled to be applied for a twelve-month period. In the context of the LSI, these measures would probably not have been adopted until spring 2002, after being reviewed by the CNIL.

The LSI was, in fact, expected to serve as a legal framework for all Internet-based activities in France. Potentially repressive measures included in the first draft of the bill, such as the criminal responsibility of Internet service providers, or the CSA's control of Internet content, were dropped from the final version. However, the bill announced the creation of an Internet "co-regulatory" body, the "Forum of Internet Rights" ("Forum des droits de l'Internet"), which is to include private and public sector representatives, as well as regular Internet users. This new regulatory body's rights are poorly defined.

On 28 May, RSF, which campaigns for complete freedom regarding Internet controls and content, denounced the creation of such a surveillance body. In early April, the government submitted a nearly final draft version of the bill to four consultative groups representing citizens interests. However, these institutions were expected to submit comments prior to presentation before the Council of Ministers and the vote in the National Assembly. The last minute inclusion of the LSI Bill's controversial measures in the legislative plan on fighting terrorism renders the four independent authorities' exercise of their consultative role more difficult.

Journalists groups should a leading role in the campaign against manipulation of media and against use of media to promote intolerance and should encourage balance and more in depth coverage of the roots of the conflict.

Finland

Although it is difficult to be precise, coverage was extensive and detailed. The very first media assumptions were that the attack was linked directly to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. These were supported by pictures showing triumphant Palestinians on television. However, accusations against Palestinians ceased after the news about Osama bin Laden's role became clearer. Nevertheless, certain media still identify the root cause as the long-lasting conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the support given to Israel by the US.

The media follow-up has been to the point and professional with extensive media coverage of Islam and how widely it is spread around the world. There have been illuminating discussions on television and radio with Islamic people living in Finland, people representing other religions, as well as researchers and specialists in politics. The Finnish audience has been provided with a fairly comprehensive information package on Islam within a short period of time.

At the same time, coverage has been tempered with numerous newspaper articles and at least one television documentary about the distressing situation of the civil population of Afghanistan and the military situation there. There are no reports of limitations on the work of journalists.⁵

This is the moment to strengthen the work of the International Media Working Group Against Racism and Xenophobia (IMRAX) which was launched some years ago by the IFJ. The only way in which journalists can effectively influence matters is by raising awareness and reducing suspicion and racist attitudes. The IFJ could play a role by reaching out to journalists from all cultures and traditions to promote professional solidarity, perhaps through the organisation of an international conference or regional events.

Germany

The coverage in Germany of September 11 was uniform and, like most countries, provided continual repetition of the incidents with pictures from CNN used by German private channels. According to some newspapers, the incidents brought journalism and public closer because the very surprise and shock of the terror attacks did not require additional sensational reporting. It was one of those few events that speaks for itself. Pictures and information about the attacks have been distributed and exchanged between media without the usual fierce competition and dealing between news outlets.

The public service broadcaster ARD had the largest audience followed by private RTL network and then ZDF, the second public broadcaster, although there was little between them all in terms of content. As in many other countries, advertisements were taboo in the first hours.

In the immediate aftermath the power of images was felt in the sudden gulf of understanding that appeared between Western perspectives and those of the Arab world as media showed people celebrating the attacks: as one commentator put it, years of efforts toward mutual comprehension have been destroyed in one day.

⁵ Further information from the Finnish Union of Journalists <http://www.journalistiliitto.fi/en/english/>

So far there have been no official anti-terrorist measures that affect media. Laws are very general safety laws : fingerprints for foreigners, analysis of bank-accounts, restriction on freedom of association for religious beliefs, more possibilities for German justice to investigate in foreign countries.

The President of the IFJ affiliate the DJV⁶ said that there was not enough background information and analysis in the media (about fundamentalism and terrorism *before* the attacks). He also criticised the use of pictures from Palestine of celebration, this was emotional and very local, and did not reflect at the entire Arab world in general. He said the fact that some channels had *exactly* the same programme shows how the private sector is concentrated.

Great Britain

Like in many other countries the coverage of the September 11 events was saturation and, after a while, horribly repetitive says the National Union of Journalists, with the same facts and opinions regurgitated over and again. There was a shortage of information, and surplus of commentary.

In terms of intolerance covering ethnic/religious differences, the UK press has not performed badly. There have been riots in some British cities this summer between white racist youth and particularly Asian Muslim youth, and there is a real fear of ethnic conflict that has forced government and press to pull back from racist coverage.

The NUJ reports that the UK media follow the government slavishly in such times. Television, especially the BBC, is even more loyal than the papers. The BBC goes straight into "Ministry of Information" mode , says the NUJ, imagining at some level of its collective consciousness that it is holding the nation together in the face of a Nazi invasion.⁷

The government has been assiduous in cultivating ethnic and religious minorities, especially Muslims. The Prime Minister has held meetings with Muslim leaders and the message we are at war with terrorism not Islam - has been widely covered. There have not, says the NUJ, been anything like the level of assaults and harassment of Asians in the UK that there has been in the USA - but perhaps it is just not being reported.

Another problem with the huge space given to this repetitive story is the exclusion of other news. There have been hints of serious matters but no coverage of regular civil matters.

One scandal that did emerge concerned an internal message sent by a government "special adviser" - a press officer - in one ministry on the afternoon of September 11 itself saying this would be a good time to put out unpopular news because it won't get covered. The story is wholly believable because the government has done just that. The media have abandoned their role of checking up on other things the government is doing.

But there is another kind of intolerance that of dissent. The media hardly cover the anti-war movement (which might be small but is at least of interest) and are full of unpleasant comment articles attacking anyone who questions the US, often in violently abusive terms. The underlying

⁶ Siegfried Weischenberg, contact through Deutscher Journalisten Verband at <http://www.djv.de/home.html> see

⁷ Further information from Tim Gopsill at <http://www.gn.apc.org/media/nuj.html>

reason is the British government's support for US policy, so one cannot blame only editors, but the intolerance displayed is distasteful and goes against the traditional grain of the British press.

The NUJ reports a general clampdown on civil liberties, though not specifically targeted at freedom of expression. Measures introduced by the government include speeding up extradition, tightening restrictions on granting asylum, removing the right to jury trial in some cases (though this was being done anyway), steps against money-laundering the clandestine movement of money by people suspected of "terrorism" and acceptance of the Euro-warrant. (This is a major step for the UK). A new crime of incitement to religious hatred is to be introduced.

Though no-one questions steps to prevent terrorism, there is concern about the application of anti-terrorist laws, which do affect journalists. It is an offence already for a journalist (like anyone else) to fail to tell police of any activity by organisations deemed to be terrorist. There is a list of such organisations, although some are not terrorist groups (for instance, liberation organisations of Kurds, Tamils etc).

There have not yet been investigations or proceedings against journalists under this law, which came into effect last year, but there could be in the current climate. More likely also are such measures against journalists to compel them to reveal sources or hand over information, for which the laws already exist.

Greece

The Journalists Union of Athens Daily Newspapers, the largest journalists group in Greece, reports that some media have tried to cash in on the heightened atmosphere of uncertainty and deep public concern. When the military campaign started and reports of fear and panic came from the United States some newspapers and television channels attempted to increase their audience share and advertising profits at the expense of professional standards, according to a statement from the Union's executive board.⁸

An extreme example of this was the action of the television channel *Tempo*, which has been investigated by the board for allegedly fabricating a report said to have come directly from Afghanistan and which the channel claimed as a world exclusive. The board also condemned the bias of the reporting.

Although there have been concerns over self-censorship and the counter-terrorism campaign that may lead to measures limiting individual freedom, not precise proposals have yet been made. The union has issued a strong appeal to journalists to ensure their reporting is professional and has encouraged the IFJ to lead an international campaign for tolerance and quality in journalism.

India

The National Union of Journalists (India) and the Indian Journalists Union report that by and large, media coverage of attacks on New York and Washington was professional and unbiased although a section of the media did try to focus attention on Islamic fundamentalism presumably

⁸ Press release October 12, Athens. See <http://www.esiea.gr/>

with a view to equate the terrorist attacks on the US with terrorism in India. Since India has had a rather long history of facing terrorist threats and acts, as they are perceived, in Kashmir and other parts of the country, there is a general climate of understanding over the need for counter terrorism in the country.

There is widespread sympathy for the victims of the September 11 and also an undercurrent of sympathy for the hapless Afghan people caught in the crossfire. The tension between India and Pakistan, which led to an exchange of fire on October 15 in Kashmir, has been heightened.

Left-oriented media and commentators have made oblique reference to American "sins" committed in Palestine and Iraq. It appeared to be an ideological obsession as an attempt was made to justify the criminal attacks on civilians by terrorists by blaming the US Government for behaving like a global policeman.

There has been no direct interference from the Government at the national or state level to restrict freedom of the press. In fact, Indian media has been reporting terrorism for more than two decades. Pressures have been there both from terrorist groups and the Government. But media freedom has not been restricted because of recent attacks on US.

Although there have been no adverse consequences for civil liberties and the work of journalists so far, the Indian Journalists Union says the government of India in planning a new anti-terrorism law, which could be quite draconian. Journalists will resist any restrictions on the freedom of the Press, as and when they are introduced, and are confident of getting wide support from the democratic forces in the country against any such measures.

However, to many the "global campaign" has begun to appear as a selective and brutal military campaign to secure the global strategic interests of the West, particularly the US and Britain. Media can play a major role in trying to ensure that the focus of the campaign remains on terrorism and diplomatic ways to resolve the problems responsible for the growth of terrorism.

Ireland

The national mood of sympathy and support for the victims of the September 11 attacks reflects the strong ties between the United States and the Republic of Ireland. One incident that underlined this relationship and led to a media controversy was the decision of the Irish Government to declare a National Day of Mourning.

The Irish Times, one of the country's leading newspapers, decided not to publish on the National Day of Mourning, describing non-publication as being in keeping with the national mourning. However, this caused outrage within the paper's Editorial committee and was opposed by the National Union of Journalists office branch. Journalists complained that the decision was taken only for commercial and operational reasons – few newspaper shops were open. Journalists (including senior editorial personnel) felt it would have been better to give the paper out free.

In the context of this national mood there has been little room for dissenting voices, Irish media have been generally balanced. There has been saturation coverage, much of it repetitive, with a strong reliance on Sky News and CNN, especially in the early stages. Outstanding coverage was provided by Conor O Clery, *The Irish Times*, who provided on-site commentary from the Twin

Towers in New York. Many sections of media gave coverage to the reaction of the Muslim community, and to explaining Islamic culture.

It must be said that *The Irish Times* and the State broadcasting service, *RTE*, along with independent commercial station Today FM have provided a platform for some critical voices, notably Robert Fisk, (*The Irish Independent/RTE*).

Independent News and Media Group's *Sunday Independent* stands out as the only newspaper which has been intolerant not of ethnic or religious minorities but of media commentators who have challenges or questioned the American response or, indeed, Irish government policy.

Outside commentators included former US Diplomat George Dempsey who claimed that the Irish media's anti American stance meant that Irish media should share blame for the events of September 11th. He was especially critical of Fintan O Toole, who was targeted by the *Sunday Independent* as a hate figure alongside Fisk.

An issue of concern is the decision of Independent News and Media, the largest media group in the country, not to send journalists abroad, relying instead on UK and US media outlets. The anti-union station, TV3 also decided not to send reporters abroad. No specific national measures have been considered which would limit media freedom arising from this attack.

The issue of terrorism and media was brought home to all journalists in Ireland with the assassination of investigative journalist Martin O Hagan on September 28 by Protestant terrorists. His killing was the first targeted death of a journalist in 30 years of conflict in the region. Media outlets need to be specific in informing readers/viewers of limitations placed on coverage. Journalists need to be warned against reliance on Government agencies and vested interests.

Japan

In Japan, the September 11 events led to co-ordinated and extensive coverage by all networks with all stations broadcasting special programmes all night from 10 pm, the time of the terrorist attack, Japan local time. The only previous occasion that all television stations broadcast special programs 24 hours a day instead of regular programs was in 1995 when the Great Hanshin (Kobe) Earthquake occurred, in which 6,000 people died.

NHK, the public broadcaster, got the highest audience rating. News at 10 p.m. achieving 20.4% - more than twice as usual. Even after midnight, ratings stayed between 10 to 23%. The reporting was understandably very sympathetic to the victims of the atrocities in America, but provided little background on the historical circumstances or provided any serious exploration of the reasons why the US had become a target of terrorism.

As a result, public opinion in Japan was managed to support American military plans for retaliation. The Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi declared immediately that Japan would uphold America's decision. There was little public debate about the consequences of military retaliation. Opposing views were difficult to express.

A Japanese Diet member who belonged to an Opposition party stated on her website that she thought America's mistaken foreign policies were to blame for the assault, which would explain why some countries would welcome the news. Her pronouncement caused a controversy and she had to apologise.

Because the Constitution of Japan, framed after World War Two, prohibits sending the army abroad, temporary legislation is necessary to cooperate with America's military action. However, in the atmosphere of unconditional support for the US, opinions of those opposing the Self-Defense Force abroad were criticised or ridiculed by right leaning press.

Journalists had to be very courageous to write reports that questioned America's retaliation by armed forces. There was no backlash against Islamic civilians. Some editors and journalists say it was not easy to express their opinions, particularly those who do not agree with sending the Japanese Self-Defense Force abroad and America's retaliatory measures. Gathering information about US military bases was strictly restricted and it was almost two weeks after the initial attack before Japanese television and press began covering objections to America's military actions.⁹

The IFJ could support efforts to protect refugees in cooperation with the United Nations or the international trade union movement. The IFJ should challenge information control and should promote freedom of movement for journalists reporting from Afghanistan or neighbouring countries. Unless this is given priority, pluralism will suffer.

Jordan

Although in recent years Jordan has been considered to be one of the Arab countries with the most press freedom there is evidence that the Jordanian government is taking advantage of the instability and anti terrorism campaign to adopt restrictive measures against the press.

According to information collected by press freedom groups¹⁰ restrictive measures were adopted against the press, "as part of the anti-terrorist campaign," on 9 October 2001. "Our penal code does not cover all the current needs and amendments will be introduced in order to deal with these issues, meaning how to deal with terrorist acts and punish them," said Prime Minister Ali Abou Ragheb.

The measures provide for the "temporary or permanent" closure of newspapers in case they publish news that is "defamatory, false, harmful to national unity or the state's reputation, or incitement to strike, hold illegal public meetings or disturb public order." At the same time, sentences for "insulting the royal couple" and "the crown prince" are being reinforced.

These offences are now punishable by sentences ranging from one to three years in jail. Previously, the penalty was limited to a fine. The 1999 amendments to the penal code put an end to the penalty of closing newspapers in Jordan.

⁹ Further information from IFJ Tokyo Office. E-mail: ifj-okuda@nifty.com

¹⁰ See International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) at [Http://www.ifex.org](http://www.ifex.org)

Mexico

The Mexican Press depends increasingly on information supplied by North American media, especially when speaking of international events, so the coverage of the events of September 11 was dominated by reports from Mexican correspondents in the US and the news received from the international, and mainly North American, networks. The information was uniform, impartial and straightforward with little analysis.

It is useful to note that the main national television networks did not broadcast neither the images of the impacts of the planes against the towers nor Bin Laden's famous videotaped press statement.

However, some intolerance vis-à-vis Muslim people was evident and the authorities took action to protect their interests.

At least 18 Mexican citizens died during the attacks and the Mexican government hasn't reacted with any new laws to counter terrorism.

However, in the coming months, President Fox will send to the Congress a proposal on the right to information, which doesn't exist for the moment in Mexico. It is not yet clear whether this new law will contain elements that may curtail the freedom of journalists.

The IFJ must highlight some specific themes in its follow-up programme after September 11 including safety of journalists at work; human rights; and building coalitions with other organisations on these issues.

The Netherlands

Dutch media maintained a central focus on the attack for days with news about the attack, extra bulletins and specials on radio and TV. The work of print media, radio, and television was complementary. Moreover, both Internet sites of the NVJ, have since the attack been visited daily in abnormally high numbers.¹¹ Villamedia had on September 11, within two hours, a separate page and links with information for journalists on the attack.

There have been a high number of attacks on Muslims, reports the Dutch Journalists Association, which has provoked a great deal of open debate. The NVJ itself has organised with the assistance of some of the ministries some very well attended debates through its working group on Migrants and the Media. The core discussion concerns the attitude of the media on the September 11 attacks and the relationship with migrant communities.

Journalists have stressed the need to maintain professionalism and have warned that journalism dedicated to only good intentions can result in bad practice. NVJ representatives, editors-in-chief and editors maintain the line that all news needs to be reported even when difficult for minority groups or ethnic groups. Each newspaper or broadcaster adopts a degree of extra carefulness or sensitivity according to their perspective, but everyone maintains the view that news is the priority and sensitivity concerning conflicting emotions in society comes second.

¹¹ <http://www.villamedia.nl/> and <http://www.Intemetjournalist.nl>

The NVJ notes that the presence of the working group on Migrants and the Media (established in 1984 following the example of the NUJ, UK & Ireland) now fulfils a special role. The working group, with an annual turnover in projects of 120,000 Euro, is also recognised by the authorities as an independent organisation dealing with the problems associated with the media and the changing multi-cultural society.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, the NVJ organised an extra information/training day for journalists going to Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The NVJ together with the Dutch public broadcaster NOS, has a good risk insurance for journalists going on dangerous missions.

In addition, the NVJ is very concerned about the control of information at official level that makes journalists work difficult. The importance of access to information in times of uncertainty is critically important. The actions of the European Union to restrict free access to information, highlighted by the intervention of the Council of Ministers last year the infamous Solana summertime coup when rules on access to official information were virtually changed overnight on security grounds and were later endorsed by the Parliament, indicate just how important this matter is at times of heightened international tension.

Nigeria

The events of September 11 and the subsequent military action have heightened on-going tensions between Muslim and Christian communities and precipitated an urgent response on the part of journalists and media people.

The country is already grappling with a wave of ethnic and religious bloodshed in which well over 2,000 people have died following the introduction of strict Islamic sharia law in parts of predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria, despite opposition from non-Muslims. This crisis appears to have only compounded the historic ethnic and regional rivalries, which are blamed for the devastating civil war in the late 1960s in which more than a million died.

Major confrontations have centred on Kano, the biggest city in northern Nigeria where, according to community leaders, more than 200 died after a weekend of violence on October 13 and 14 during Muslim protests against US air strikes on Afghanistan.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 events a major meeting was held between journalists, editors and media experts on *Media and Terrorism Lessons of the American Attack*, organised by the International Press Center (IPC), Lagos, on September 25, 2001. The meeting, supported by the International Federation of Journalists analysed media coverage of the recent terrorist attack in the United States in Nigeria and world-wide.

The meeting considered that media had been fair, balanced and objective in its post-attack reports. However, there is widespread concern over reports tainted with religious and race bias thus violating the principles of ethics and professionalism. There was a strong feeling that Nigerian media had devoted too much attention to the American incident to the detriment of conflicts at home, for example the Jos, Plateau State killings, a major national incident that was equally deserving of attention.

At the end of the exhaustive presentations and discussions it was agreed that:

The media in its further reports must be sensitive to the diversity – social, religious, political, cultural, language – of different peoples in different parts of the world;

The media should condemn terrorism but must refrain from portraying or labelling any particular religion as terrorist. It should also highlight identified likely causes of terrorism with a view to removing them;

The meeting also agreed that in reporting the attack or any other major crisis, journalists should abide with their ethics and code of conduct by:

- Eschewing propaganda
- Not embellishing facts
- Presenting different sides to the issues to enable the reader or audience to arrive at a balanced conclusion
- Avoid being manipulated by politicians and policy-makers

These principles can only be meaningful if journalists continuously remind themselves of the fundamentals of the profession – facts are sacred, comments are free and, therefore, reporters had to avoid presenting what is not established or proven as fact, i.e. a suspect must not be called a culprit or convict. The media should continue to exercise necessary restraint because what people see and hear go a long way to influence their thinking and editors as news gate-keepers have a role to play in guiding journalists during crisis periods.

As a result of this meeting it was agreed that in Nigeria there should be follow up to the September 11 incidents through the organisation of an editors' forum to further assess media performance in reporting the attacks. This sort of initiative on a regional and national level should be sponsored by the IFJ.

Norway

Media coverage of September 11 attacks was extensive, and although no specific problems of intolerant journalism are reported a debate has taken place among authors, politicians, journalists and intellectuals on the use of symbols and words like 'Christian world', 'Muslim world', 'Islamic' and other terms in media coverage and political debates.

Some politicians now say that there should be more flexibility and tolerance over when and where the police may tap phones and tape conversations.

There is also a debate in Norway taking place in the context of an old system of a network between government authorities and military leadership and centrally placed editors and journalists in Norwegian media. This network of contacts, which has existed since the Cold War, is now being openly questioned.

The Norwegian Union has asked the Press's own press ethics Complaints committee to give a statement on whether or not such a network is acceptable as part of the conditions for an independent and free press. There have been complaints by military authorities on lack of competence and quality in the media coverage of issues related to defence, the army and strategic policy. In this way they want to continue the sort of network described above.

The IFJ should vigorously protest all actions taken to control and curtail information. Ask NATO and the political leadership in NATO countries to fulfil their duties towards the peoples and citizens upon which NATO depends. This means transparency, access to reliable information and respect for the independent role of media in civil societies. The IFJ must promote the independent role of journalism even when governments declare themselves to be at war.

Palestine

The difficulties facing journalists in the Middle East intensified in the period after September 11. On October 8, in Gaza, police prevented journalists from covering an anti-American demonstration.¹² This was the latest in a number of press freedom violations in the Territories under Palestinian authority since the beginning of the international crisis caused by the terrorist attacks on the United States.

There is a fear that the Palestinian authority is taking advantage of the international media's focus on the American response to increasingly repress the right to information. Local and international media have been prevented from covering the reactions of the Palestinian people. That same day, a cameraman with the French television channel TF1 was arrested for three hours and at least four journalists were beaten. During this demonstration, which was declared illegal by the police, two Palestinians were killed.

Also that day, the Palestinian Authority decided to ban, in the territories under its control, interviews of Palestinians on the subject of the attack launched by the United States in Afghanistan. Since October 9, access to Gaza is forbidden to foreigners, including foreign journalists. The Palestinian Authority justified this measure by explaining that it was not able to secure the safety of foreigners against possible attacks.

On September 14, the Palestinian police detained five journalists. They were covering a demonstration in the Nusseirat refugee camp in memory of the perpetrator of the September 9 suicide-bomb attack in Nahariya, Israel. A photographer and an editor from Reuters, an Associated Press TV cameraman, the correspondent for the Abu Dhabi satellite television channel and an Agence France-Presse photographer were released one and a half hours after the police had seized their tapes and films.

On September 18, in Bethlehem, Palestinian police announced the implementation of new regulations concerning Palestinian television and radio stations. They were instructed not to broadcast news items concerning calls for a general strike, nationalist activities, demonstrations or security news without permission from the police or national security services.

¹² See International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) at [Http://www.ifex.org](http://www.ifex.org)

Poland

Media coverage was generally fair, quick and accurate. There were a few incidents of anti-Muslim behaviour and physical attacks were widely reported and condemned. The general tone of media coverage focused on the war on terrorism not against the Muslim or Arab world. The President visited a mosque in Gdansk to apologise to the Muslim community.

The voices of journalists were heard effectively during the weeks after September 11. Ryszard Kapuscinski, the distinguished reporter and author, launched a debate on the implications for globalisation, North-south relations and appealed for solutions to third world underdevelopment and the need to confront widespread problems of social exclusion, fear and poor health care. On another level Oriana Fallaci's controversial essay on Christian and Muslim values published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* caused a stir. Some described her remarks about Islam as racist and hysterical while others said she was right to point out the problem of discrimination against Christians in the Muslim world.

The Media Ethics Council of journalists, established with the support of the Polish Journalists Association, criticised her views as well as some racist and xenophobic opinion from a minority of Polish media.

Apart from some anti-war protests there have been no other significant events nor any attempts to draft new counter terrorism laws that might compromise civil liberties or press freedom.

Qatar

A factor for change in Arab media has been the establishment of Qatar's al-Jazeera Satellite Channel, which has been putting across the views of Osama Bin Laden and his al Qaeda network. As the only broadcaster permitted by the Taliban to operate in Kabul, al-Jazeera has captured worldwide fame with exclusive pictures of bombing raids and air defences, as well as more controversially its transmission of taped messages from the leaders of al Qaeda.

Born five years ago out of the ruins of a failed co-venture between the BBC and Saudi investors, al-Jazeera inherited many BBC-trained journalists left jobless when repeated Saudi attempts to inhibit reporting of regional issues forced the BBC to withdraw. The Emir of Qatar has invested \$150 million in re-starting the project.

The station has earned a steady flow of protests from fellow heads of state who are unused to seeing Arab stations interviewing Israeli cabinet ministers, and treating openly issues not normally exposed to the viewing masses. It has also become Bin Laden's favourite way of getting his point of view across to the Arab and Muslim people, over the heads of the sheikhs and presidents whose rule he detests.

Al-Jazeera has also been used by Western leaders, notably by British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to put their point of view. However, the channel, which carried a pre-recorded video of Bin Laden and associates giving a response to the opening of the military action against Afghanistan, has also come under pressure, from outside the region particularly in the United States.

Press freedom groups report that Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamid bin Khalifa al-Thani, said he was asked by the US State Department, during a recent visit to Washington, to use his government's influence to soften the reporting stance of al-Jazeera, which, said the State Department, has provided air time for experts hostile to the US.¹³

Denying the criticism, al-Jazeera stated it gave both the US and Afghanistan positions equal air time. "We give equal coverage to both sides and that is our role. We present both sides", said, Mohammed Jassem al-Ali, director general of the television station.

The channel's unique access to Bin Laden has, according to media commentators, exposed a paradoxical aspect of the cultural divide, converted by September 11 into a chasm.¹⁴ It is now Western broadcasters who are under pressure from their governments to restrict access to their airwaves for people deemed enemies of the state. The Bush administration and the Blair government have pressed their national networks to exercise caution over use of al-Jazeera material, claiming pictures may contain coded messages.

Russia

The Russian mass media as a whole has covered widely and objectively the events in New York and Washington, reports the Russian Union of Journalists, as well as the Russian and international reaction to them. The basic theme has been the hostile methods of terrorism and an understanding for the need of an international response.

However, the Union also reports a danger from some irresponsible journalism, which, they say, contributes to interethnic and religious tensions.

The Union says that a campaign against terrorism can be used as an excuse for inappropriate restrictions on civil liberties and human rights particularly in the Northern Caucasus where such infringements are taking place on a daily basis. However, media are covering these issues far less often than before.

Although there is no direct increase in violations to press freedom or civil rights, statements made by a growing number of officials in the government as well as in the parliament show that attempts are underway to take advantage of the situation in order to toughen controls over the media.¹⁵

The IFJ should closely monitor events and should promote internal discussions within media including the urgent drafting of international recommendations/guidelines for journalists writing on problems of terrorism and the fight against it are absolutely necessary. These recommendations/guidelines should strike a balance between the need to inform the public and to deal with the issues of how to exclude terrorists from advertising their actions, and how to avoid creating panic amongst the population, as well as eliminating suspicion and hatred towards citizens of different national and religious belongings.

¹³ Further details at <http://www.free.media.at/>

¹⁴ See comment in [Opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net) by David Elstein and James Curran, October 15 2001.

¹⁵ Details can be obtained from the Moscow-based Glasnost Defence Foundation at <http://www.gdf.ru/>

Saudi Arabia

A Reuters report from Riyadh on October 10 points out that while tradition still rules in Saudi Arabia, birthplace of Islam, in the month since September 11 its newspapers have shown just how far press freedom has advanced since the last big crisis 11 years ago. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, it took several days before some of the kingdom's dailies mentioned the event. By contrast, US attacks on Afghanistan a sensitive subject made instant front-page news.

Newspaper editors say the government's handling of the media began to alter in the mid-1990s, and they now have an unprecedented degree of freedom. "We are enjoying a sort of freedom that we didn't have before," Mohammed al-Tunisi, editor of the Arabic business daily *al-Eqtisadiyah*, told *Reuters*. "Nobody tells us anymore 'don't publish this'. They feel we are responsible for reflecting the interests of our country." Saudi newspapers are printing stories about previously taboo issues like child abuse, mistreatment of domestic servants, and rising unemployment.

"Things have really opened up here -- nowadays you can't hide anything," *Arab News* editor-in-chief Khaled Al-Maena told Reuters. "As a journalist I feel much more comfortable." There has been extensive coverage of the September 11 attacks and of military strikes against Afghanistan.

At the same time, journalists had become more responsible and the authorities would tolerate criticism provided it was accurate. "There is an acceptance of criticism by government bodies on lots of issues -- they might get angry but they take it seriously," al-Tunisi said.

The main drivers of change in Saudi Arabia -- and elsewhere in the region -- have been the advent of satellite television and the Internet. In Saudi Arabia itself, editors believe Crown Prince Abdullah has been instrumental in easing pressure on the media since he took over the bulk of responsibility from an ailing King Fahd several years ago. Interior Minister Prince Naif, another key figure, heads an information council and holds regular off-the-record briefings with media editors. The doors are opening, but ministers and the country's ruling elite still guide cautious moves towards full press freedom.

South Africa

The South Africa Union of Journalists has criticised the "growing harassment of journalists covering the conflict in Afghanistan" and says scores of media workers from around the world had been arrested, physically attacked and sometimes barred from performing their professional duties in covering the war.¹⁶

SAUJ general secretary, Motsomi Mokhine, said the union was horrified by the implications of the US State Department's demand that the media exercise caution in using material from the al-Jazeera TV station, which has been airing the views of Osama bin Laden: "We believe this demand is an attack on freedom of expression and might lead to similar demands being made on journalists by other sides in the conflict for or against their own interests."

¹⁶ The SAUJ General Secretary can be contacted at mokhine@sauj.co.za

Mokhine said the SAUJ fully agreed with the International Federation of Journalists press statement that: "all governments must give the media the professional space to work without interference. Journalists in the US or the Arab world don't need the guidance of their governments to do their job. The antidote to propaganda is editorial freedom, not thinly veiled warnings that hint of censorship".

IFJ Action:

The SAUJ says all sides in the conflict should take all necessary steps to secure the safety of journalists and to allow them to work without fear or favour from any side. The IFJ should campaign for the Taliban and Pakistan regimes to allow freedom of movement to journalists.

Sweden

The Swedish Union of Journalists reports some examples of intolerance in reporting, but says this has been offset by many more examples of serious attempts to analyse the situation and present a balanced view of events. Swedish media in general seem to be very aware of the dangers and as a whole, the coverage can be said to be professional and objective. Part of the debate taking place also concerns the role of Swedish media and its quality given the importance of the events after September 11. There has been no open political discussion about measures that might compromise civil liberties or press freedom in any strategy to combat terrorism.

The IFJ's role to defend the freedom of the media at all levels, particularly when journalists are being summoned to become volunteers in support of the war now taking place, must be strengthened.

United States of America

The country's news media, battered for 25 years by declining credibility, appear to have regained respect among readers and viewers at least temporarily after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

But within days journalists came under pressure says The Newspaper Guild-CWA, the IFJ affiliate representing journalists and newspaper industry staff. Some found themselves expected to become patriots first, and journalists second.¹⁷

At the same time the Congress has moved rapidly to adopt repressive new immigration and wiretapping laws and other anti-terrorist measures raising serious concerns about civil liberties.

Linda Foley, President of The Newspaper Guild-CWA reports that journalists and media staff -- both at the top and bottom of the media -- have on the whole acted responsibly. The unprecedented atrocities of September 11 and the events in the following days, in which journalists themselves were the targeted victims of attacks, has tested the professionalism of media to the full she said. The response of media has been measured with widespread support for the tough measures enacted by the government, though the civil liberty implications of changes in law raise some understandable questions.

¹⁷ More information available from <http://www.newsguild.org/>

Despite some early backlash against Arab-Americans and Islam, much of it an emotional and fearful reflection of anxiety in the wake of September 11th, there has been a high level of professionalism and racist attitudes have been largely sidelined, says Linda Foley.

In the first week after the attacks, "an unprecedented 89%" of the public gave the media a positive rating, according to the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, a Washington-based independent polling firm. That is in contrast to a Gallup Poll taken last year that showed that the number of people who had little or no "trust and confidence" in the media to report the news fully, accurately and fairly had almost doubled since 1976.

This is a welcome change for many newspapers in particular, where a shift toward scandal, sensationalism and celebrity-oriented news, combined with reductions in staff and news space, had exacerbated reader dissatisfaction. "The media are talking about real news, real issues, real problems, instead of Gary Condit, shark attacks and roller-coaster accidents, and that's something that many people have been waiting for," says Barry Glassner, a sociology professor and the author of a 1999 book, *The Culture of Fear*, that contained considerable criticism of the media.

However, when military action began on October 7 and media sought more access and information than the Pentagon and the White House were willing to provide problems emerged. On October 10 the Bush administration called on all news networks to "exercise judgement" in broadcasting statements by Bin Laden and his associates, warning that they may include coded incitements to violence (See Qatar, above).

The Newspaper Guild-CWA established a web site to publicise attacks on the media.¹⁸ It has also issued numerous advice and guidance on dealing with the threat of anthrax following the targeting of media organisations and the death of a Florida-based journalist. A widespread debate on the role of media has emerged with numerous cases of individual journalists and news staff victimised for expressing views that don't agree with the conventional wisdom of the political and military administration.

Journalists have found themselves striving to maintain values of uncensored exchange of information in an atmosphere where popular opinion suggests that in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington people are all too willing to give up their essential liberty. A poll conducted by ABC News and the Washington Post on September 13, in which 92 percent of respondents said they would support "new laws that would make it easier for the FBI and other authorities to investigate people they suspect of involvement in terrorism." Support dropped only slightly, to 71 percent, when people were asked whether they were prepared to give up "some of Americans' personal liberties and privacy."

In this atmosphere of widespread public anxiety Arab-Americans have been harassed and attacked. Music has been censored. In Texas, the FBI shut down Arabic Web sites, prompting, according to Reuters, charges of conducting an "anti-Muslim witch hunt." In Baltimore, the Sun reported that anchors and even a weather forecaster at one TV station were required "to read messages conveying full support for the Bush administration's efforts against terrorism." When staffers objected, the message was changed to indicate that it came from "station management."

¹⁸ www.newsguild.org/2edged.php.

However, the rush to legislate against terrorism has raised the most serious concerns among those campaigning for civil liberties.

The American Civil Liberties Union on October 12th 2001 announced "bitter disappointment with the passage of anti-terrorism legislation, which mirrored closely highly controversial original legislative proposals the Bush Administration submitted to the House of Representatives and the Senate."¹⁹

"This bill has simply missed the mark of maximizing security and, at the same time, minimizing any adverse effects on America's freedoms," said Laura W. Murphy, Director of the ACLU Washington National Office. "Most Americans do not recognize that Congress has just passed a bill that would give the government expanded power to invade our privacy, imprison people without due process and punish dissent."

Congress has recent experience in how not to react to a terrorist attack. A year after the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, Congress passed the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, a piece of legislation that severely curtailed the writ of habeas corpus, making it far more difficult for convicted criminals -- even those awaiting the death penalty -- to present new evidence that they'd been wrongly convicted. It further allowed the use of secret evidence in deportation cases against immigrants. In recent years, a number of proposals to curtail fundamental freedoms in the name of security have lurked in back offices in Washington and elsewhere, waiting for the right time to be sprung upon an unsuspecting public.

The new law adopted by Congress follows closely the text submitted by Attorney General John Ashcroft as the so-called Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001, or ATA. The bill was the subject of wide-ranging opposition from a broad coalition of interest groups ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), and the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) to conservative groups such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and the Gun Owners of America.

Among the more controversial provisions of the Ashcroft legislation are those aimed at bringing wiretapping laws into the digital age. The legislation could give investigators a great deal more power. Under current law officials can obtain telephone numbers called by a suspect. Under ATA, investigators would be able to obtain e-mail addresses and even the Web locations a suspect has visited -- information that is considerably more revealing. The role of judges in approving such wiretaps would be diminished. "Roving" wiretaps, which follow a suspect from telephone to telephone rather than being placed on just one telephone, would be permitted -- probably a sensible move, but open to abuse.

The legislation could also make it easier for federal investigators to use a controversial piece of software known as "Carnivore," which allows them to intercept enormous quantities of e-mail and other information from Internet service providers, including from innocent customers not suspected of any wrongdoing

The new Senate legislation goes far beyond any powers conceivably necessary to fight terrorism in the United States, said Laura W. Murphy, The long-term impact on basic freedoms in this legislation cannot be justified. For immigrants, added Gregory T. Nojeim,

Associate Director of the ACLU's Washington Office, this bill is a dramatic setback. It is unconscionable to detain immigrants who prove in a court of law that they are not terrorists and who win their deportation cases.

Time magazine reports that the Bush administration "is considering the establishment of special military tribunals" so that suspected terrorists "could be tried without the ordinary legal constraints of American justice." This is in addition to a policy change Ashcroft has already announced that expands the government's power to detain immigrants suspected of crimes.

Other threats lurk. Certain elements in Washington have been trying for years to ban the use of encryption technology unless the government could be guaranteed a way to crack the code. There is no evidence the New York and Washington terrorists used encryption, but freedom fighters in other parts of the world have used it to safeguard their communications from tyrants such as Slobodan Milosevic. When encryption is outlawed, only outlaws will use encryption.

Many fear that in the desperate search for security the right to private speech, to engage in public discussion, and to do so anonymously will be drastically diminished and the Bill of Rights, substantially weakened.

The ACLU says many of the provisions enhance the power of the FBI to spy on Americans for "intelligence" as opposed to criminal purposes. Other "information sharing" provisions direct highly personal information about Americans into the hands of the CIA and the Department of Defense, without meaningful restrictions on how it is used or re-distributed.²⁰

The historical record makes clear that unchecked trust in the government to spy on its citizens responsibly is misplaced. The ACLU points to the introduction of the FBI's infamous and secret Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), created out of fear of growing social dissidence by Director J. Edgar Hoover, which harassed and spied on a vast number of peaceful social protest groups. The vast majority of the organizations and individuals targeted for surveillance were actually avowedly non-violent. One of the most prominent public figures investigated was the Rev. Martin Luther King

In light of the September 11th attacks, says Laura W. Murphy, the lessons of historical examples of inappropriate and unconstitutional domestic surveillance are all the more relevant. The current administration would do well to remember its predecessors' breaches of the public trust, she says, If Congress really wishes to earn America's trust, it should ensure that its anti-terrorism legislation contain all the essential checks and balances to prevent the political or ideological surveillance of law-abiding citizens.

The threat posed to civil liberties aside, fears over press freedom and the constitutional protection of the First Amendment do not so much concern official censorship -- that is, bans enacted by the government -- as self-censorship, a phenomenon that is far more dangerous in an age of media conglomerates than it would have been in an earlier time.

"We're in the very murky realm of self-censorship," says Marjorie Heins, director of the Free Expression Policy Project at the National Coalition Against Censorship. Institutions such as

²⁰ The full text of the legislation is available at <http://www.aclu.org/>

ABC and Clear Channel, which have imposed internal restrictions "have their own First Amendment rights to decide what to produce," she says. "This only gets worrisome if this gets pervasive and widespread and goes on for a long period of time. Hopefully they'll come to their senses."

The fact that American media and their staff are among those being directly targeted in the current wave of terrorist actions makes the challenge of objectivity even more demanding, says Linda Foley of the Newspaper Guild-CWA, but the evidence so far is that professionalism and responsible journalism prevail.

Responses received from IFJ affiliates in Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, United States and from sources in the European Union, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Palestine.

Conclusions and Recommendations

IFJ Executive Committee, meeting in Stockholm on October 21-22, 2001 considered this report and agreed the following statement and plan of action:

The September 11 events in the US have been a profound test of the professionalism of journalists worldwide and, apart from the inevitable banalities and some bizarre exceptions, coverage appears to have been restrained, intelligent and informed.

However, there have been numerous attempts to manipulate the media message by governments creating undue pressure on journalists that is potentially damaging to the quality of coverage of the conflict. Journalists must be free to work without being pressed into service in defence of governmental definitions of patriotism or national interest .

At the same time there has been an unprecedented debate about policing, security and civil liberties. In almost every country, governments and politicians have been developing anti-terrorist strategies, which include the possibility of damaging new laws that may threaten existing standards of personal freedom and press freedom.

The evidence of this report alone shows that, among others, in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, France, Russia and within the European Union, there is a worrying rush to legislate on new rules on phone-tapping, police surveillance, encryption technology, detention of migrants, control of the Internet and freedom of movement.

Many believe these new laws are being drafted and processed too quickly for effective scrutiny by the public at large or by legislators. The impact on journalists and their work could be far-reaching.

Journalists should be among the first to question politicians who make quick-fix promises in the name of security, particularly when our ability to collect and store information, to protect sources of information, to carry out legitimate inquiry, and to be independent of the policing and security services, are also at risk. The IFJ will engage fully in this debate.

Plan of Action

- The IFJ will launch an international campaign to publicise useful material and guidelines for journalists and media covering the current crisis in order to promote better understanding of the issues involved and the need for professionalism.
- The IFJ will continue to provide useful data on safety of journalists and health and safety matters and will promote risk awareness among media unions.
- The IFJ will promote the importance of tolerance and quality in journalism to counter prejudice and cultural misunderstanding through a range of initiatives during 2002 including the launch of five regional prizes for tolerance in journalism and by reinvigorating the International Media Working Group Against Racism and Xenophobia (IMRAX)

- The IFJ will promote international solidarity between journalists from all cultures and traditions in the current conflict, particularly by reaching out to colleagues from the Arab world and supporting their efforts to promote professionalism in journalism against the threat of fundamentalism and governmental interference.
- With this in mind, the IFJ will sponsor international and regional seminars and conferences on war, terrorism and the role of media with the support of appropriate international agencies and press freedom agencies.
- The IFJ Executive Committee, expressing its full solidarity with its affiliate organisations in the US and with the American labour movement and agrees to hold its next meeting in the United States.

Brussels

October 23rd 2001
