

RAM BULLETIN

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Mass Media Project

Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

24 May 2001

RAM offers election rebuttal service on hostile coverage

A national service to challenge biased or inaccurate media coverage has been launched by the RAM Project in the run up to the General Election. Email ram@presswise.org.uk (marking the message Media Complaint) or fax 017 941 5848 to get advice on how to challenge hostile media coverage in the run up to polling day on June 7.

Media experts will assess the complaints and advise individuals and organisations on the best way of dealing with the problem. RAM's part-time team have invited Press Office staff in UK refugee organisations to join the rebuttal service.

Says Mike Jempson, Director of PressWise, the media ethics Trust which runs RAM: "There is anger about negative and inaccurate coverage about asylum seekers and refugees in the UK media. "Our small team will offer as much help as we can to counter inaccurate or irresponsible coverage by the national and local media. We will be doing this on a very limited budget and will therefore rely on Email and Fax for communication.

"People sending details about a complaint will get general information about what action to take and, whenever possible, a media specialist will contact them with detailed advice and support.

"It is a modest but, we hope, a significant contribution to the campaign to change the climate of hostile coverage especially during an General Election campaign in which asylum seekers look likely to be the losers, whoever wins."

The PressWise Trust offers free, confidential, professional help and advice to people wishing to complain about any aspect of media coverage.

For details visit our website

www.presswise.org.uk

Hague outburst brings media to heel

The national press did not take kindly to William Hague's launch of his party's 'lock 'em up' policy on asylum seekers.

The opportunism of the Tory leader's effort to focus attention on asylum issues by launching the policy in Dover, seems to have prodded the press into recognising their own responsibility to be fair and accurate. Of course *The Mail* said he 'deserved praise for his courage in refusing to be blackmailed into silence', but *The Express* said 'Hague's flawed ideas offer asylum only to bigots'. *The Star* leader was headed 'Asylum idea is just loony' and even *The Sun* came out with 'Right end but wrong means' noting that 'Labour's rebuttal of the Tory policy of detaining every asylum seeker was strong and effective'.

For the most part, on Sat 19 May the press challenged Hague's speech and ridiculed his plans, supplying voting readers with facts and figures on which to form their own judgements, and place Jack Straw's later statement of Labour's plans in context.

Guardian tells asylum seekers' stories

The Guardian has run an excellent series of supplements (21-23 May) detailing the lives, hardships and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

The series analysed the asylum system here and included useful articles about media coverage (revisiting the *Daily Mail*'s 9 Mar 'Asylum-seeker or Gangster Quenn' story, see 21 Mar edition of *RAM Bulletin*) and the use of language, and well as maps, statistics and the results of an ICM poll about public attitudes in the UK.

The supplements were a welcome antidote to so much of the hostile and negative coverage of recent years, and is well worth catching up with, if you missed it on paper.

Among the links on

www.guardian.co.uk is access to secretly filmed footage as Maggie O'Kane followed the journey of one man from Afghanistan to England.

BBC launches Right to Refuge project

The BBC World Service has created a nine-language broadcast project on refugees to mark this year's 50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Over six months, from Friday 22 June, the Right to Refuge project, backed up with significant internet resources, will reach global audiences in English and focus on key geographical regions where refugees have become a priority issue. There will be programming in Russian, Albania, Serbian/ Croatian, Indonesian, French for Africa, Urdu, Persian and Spanish for the Americas. The series will give a voice to refugees themselves, especially women, children and the elderly

The English language series of six 30-minute programmes, *Essential Guide: The Road to Refuge*, examines the plight of refugees from camps in Tanzania and Iran to the jails, detention centres and dispersal programmes of the United States, Australia and the UK.

From July programmes will go out in each of the other languages, examining the situation of refugees in the broadcast areas. Twelve shorter educational programmes will go out from October.

The project will include web pages in English and other languages, carrying audio of the entire series, as well as analysis, first-person refugee testimonies, statistics, country and refugee agency guides, interactive maps, an historical slide show, and a photo-diary made by the inhabitants of a refugee camp.

The project is supported by the UN High Commission for Refugees through the BBC World Service Trust, and on 29 July, listeners will be able

to email or phone in questions to the new UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, on the BBC World Service multimedia programme Talking Point, which will be broadcast and webcast live simultaneously.

For more information try <http://www.bbc.co.uk/refugees/> from 20 June onwards.

RAM co-hosts media training seminar

RAM is celebrating Refugee Week by organising a media training seminar in collaboration with Women's Radio Group & Refugees Online.

Your voice in the media is a free one-day seminar and workshop for refugees and refugee community organisations on how to put refugee views across to the UK media - in the press, on radio and online. It will be held on Tuesday 26 June, 10am-5pm, at SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. The seminar will be followed by a reception, 5.30-7.30pm. For details and booking form, visit the Refugee Online website: <http://www.refugeesonline.org.uk>

RAM briefs asylum boss

A hectic year of RAM Project activity was outlined to NASS Director Bob Eagles by Project Co-ordinator Terry Williams.

Bob Eagles received the face-to-face briefing in Birmingham during his final tour of the UK before retirement at the end of this month.

He was handed a dossier on the work of RAM and promised to pass it on to his successor at NASS.

He was particularly interested that refugee journalists have set up their own website to counter negative coverage and support campaign work, with RAM's backing.

Says Terry: "I described the problems caused by misrepresentation of asylum by politicians and the media. Our dossier highlights what we have managed to achieve with very limited human and financial resources."

Nazand goes on maternity leave

Bulletin editor Nazand Beghikani bows out this month to have her first baby. She has been an invaluable

asset to the project, and we wish her a safe and successful (voluntary) 'confinement'!

Slimmer RAM targets the media

Communications are the key for the next phase of the RAM Project's work. Following an internal appraisal of the work done since 1999, RAM will now focus on sharpening its communications work by expanding the distribution of the RAM Bulletin, revamping the RAM website to make it more interactive, and concentrating on complaints work and links with exiled journalists.

Use-of-the-media training will be provided where funds allow, and the new website will contain a 'distance learning kit' which anyone can access. Funding for the development of media networks in dispersal areas has run out, but support and encouragement will be provided where possible. The slimmed down RAM project team, all working part-time, includes Anna Kelson, Mike Jempson and Terry Williams with support from Nick Cater and Hildegard Dumper.

Telling young people's stories

Save the Children is raising the profile of the problems faced by young separated refugees in England - something which rarely features in the media.

The charity has interviewed 120 young people about their experiences since arriving in England as part of a six-month survey of their thoughts and experiences. The findings will be published this autumn.

Campaigners may want to get hold of a 20 minute video called *Looking Forward: The Story of Young Refugees in Oxfordshire*, in which young people talk about the ups and downs of life in Oxford since their arrival.

Professionals also appear talking about their concerns about the care provided for young refugees.

For information contact Lucy Sweetman on 01865 792662 or Email l.sweetman@scfuk.org.uk

NUJ backing for asylum seekers

The National Union of Journalists is continuing its campaign against hostility directed at asylum seekers

and the voucher system.

Speaking at its annual conference NUJ Executive Council member and veteran broadcaster Alex Pascall told delegates: "We have a government that is hypocritical about human rights and is whipping up this hostility. And we have colleagues in the media who don't seem to understand."

For information about the NUJ Asylum Seekers Support Campaign, contact John Toner on 020 7278 7916 or Email johnt@nuj.org.uk

Shining STAR

Student Action for Refugees (STAR) is offering help to people wanting to set up media groups.

STAR, the co-ordinating body for a unique network of university-based students working on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees, is already active in many of the existing RAM Asylum Media Forums.

To get a local STAR group in your area involved in media and campaign work, contact the National Co-ordinator Ruth Price.

Tel: 020 7920 3006 or Email info@star-network.org.uk

Refugee studies

The University of East London is launching full and part-time courses in Refugee Studies.

Details available from Yvette Fitzgerald on 020 8223 2743 or Email: y.fitzgerald@uel.ac.uk

Politics, press and public attitudes

Swansea university Postgraduate Nissa Finney is looking for ideas and information as part of her research on attitudes towards the dispersal of asylum seekers in the UK, and the role of the media in shaping those attitudes.

Contact 145183@swansea.ac.uk

COMMUNICATOR

The PressWise Trust (www.presswise.org.uk) provides inexpensive use-of-the-media training for the voluntary sector. These cut out and keep guides are designed as an introduction to those wishing to engage directly with the media. Back issues can be found on the RAM website: www.ramproject.org.uk

TEN STEPS TO SETTING UP A PROMOTIONAL WEBSITE

Nowadays a website should be an essential part of any organisation's promotional material, as important as the annual report and publicity leaflets. Cathy Aitchison, co-ordinator of Refugees Online, explains how, so long as you keep it simple, it is not difficult to achieve, even on a small budget.

1. Map out your structure

First, switch off the computer! To plan your site, you need some blank paper and copies of any existing printed publicity materials. Draw a 'tree' diagram to represent your website, eg. with the home page at the top and 4-5 sub pages coming from it. Give names to the sub pages, eg. about us, projects, services, campaigns, funders, links, contacts etc.

2. Organise your material

Prepare summaries on your organisation or cause - a paragraph for the top (home) page, a side of A4 for the About Us page. Make a list of all the projects, services, campaigns etc which you want to publicise - write a paragraph about each one.

3. Design the look of your website

On paper decide your layout and colour scheme - keep it simple and easy on the eye. Avoid dark coloured backgrounds. Co-ordinate the look with your printed publicity style, if you have one, but there's no need to follow it exactly. Avoid too many pictures or animated graphics.

4. Finalise your content

Prepare the content for your website as carefully as you would for a printed document.

- Check all content for accuracy, authenticity, permission to publish. Will any items (eg. photographs) need copyright clearance or fees to be paid?
- Check that nothing is libellous or falls foul of the law (eg. contempt of court). When the content is ready, create document files in plain text.

5. Think out your key words

Make a list of key words relevant to your site, eg. refugees, support, advice, interpretation etc. When entered as 'Meta tags' (hidden at the top of the webpage code), these can be helpful in getting your site to appear in directory searches.

Refugees Online: <http://www.refugeesonline.org.uk>
Email: info@refugeesonline.org.uk

6. Create the site

You can create your site yourself if you know how to use an html editor, for example Microsoft FrontPage or Netscape Composer. If you need to find someone to create the site for you, tell them that you want a small text-based site of x pages (as appropriate) with a few graphics.

7. Choose your name and find your webspace

Many internet service providers (ISPs) offer some webspace free along with your downloadable email account (eg. Freeserve, Virgin, Demon, Care4Free) usually 5-10MB (megabytes). This is plenty for this kind of website.

Refugees Online offers free webspace to refugee organisations (see below for email contact). Once you know where your site will be hosted (stored), you can buy a short internet name which will then 'point' to your site. It is not essential to do this, although it helps for directory listings. You can buy names from many sources online, eg. www.skymarket.co.uk

8. Get your site listed in directories and portal sites

- Go to the big online directories (Yahoo, Lycos, Alta Vista etc) and to the Open Directory Project. Look for the most appropriate category for your site and enter the details there. Be patient - it can take weeks for the site to appear and it doesn't help to re-enter your site several times.
- Send the address of your site to Refugees Online and the RAM Project and for our links page. Do the same for other relevant portal ('gateway') sites which you find.
- Add links on your site to other relevant sites, as you discover them, so the communication becomes two-way.

9. Publicise your site

- Include the address of your site in your printed material (on leaflets, annual reports, business cards etc)
- Add the address to your email signature
- Take part in email group discussions and include the site address
- Start your own email group - invite people who you meet to become members.

10. Keep your site up to date

- Set up a timetable for checking and refreshing the content of your site. Delete out of date pages and make sure news items are current.
- Respond promptly to messages received via the site.

And enjoy being part of the world-wide community.

'PEG' BOARD

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

Saturday 2 June 12.00-5.00 pm
Annual General Meeting of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns.

For details of central London venue contact Zrinka Bralo on 020 7701 5197, email: ncadc.london@appleonline.net.

Monday 4 June 7.30pm
General Election – public debate on the plight of asylum-seekers

Speakers from the political parties invited to put forward their policies on asylum seekers and related issues. Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (opposite Central Library) Email manchester@defend-asylum.org

Thursday 7 June 6pm
Refugees: Whose term is it anyway?

Speaker: Eftihia Voutira, Professor in the Anthropology of Forced Migration, University of Macedonia, Greece. Venue: University of East London, Room 0010, WestBuilding, Docklands Campus, 4-6 University Way, London E16 2RD (Cyprus Station, Docklands Light Railway). Admission free.

Friday 8 – Tues. 12 June,
The Power to Change: Action & Awareness-raising against Racism & Discrimination in Europe. Organised by UNITED for

(inter) national anti-racist & human rights organisations from all over Europe are invited – only 70 places.

Venue: Göteborg, Sweden.
Contact: +31 20 6834778, fax: +31 20 6834582

Saturday 23 – Friday 29 June
REFUGEE WEEK
Contact Refugee Week Information Line on 020 7820 3055, email: refugeeweek@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Wednesday 20 June
INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE DAY
For more information call Karen Jennings on 0292 066 6250

Saturday 24 June
Celebrating Sanctuary
A cultural festival in London. Is your community organisation interested in exhibiting at the event?
Contact Rita Ray on 020 7228 1161

Tuesday 26 June, 10am-5pm,
Your voice in the media
Organised by RAM, Women's Radio Group & Refugees Online.
Venue: SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. For details and booking form, visit the website www.refugeesonline.org.uk or email: seminar@refugeesonline.org.uk

Tel: 020 8685 9928.

Saturday 30 June, 10am-6.00pm
International Conference on the State, Civil Liberties & Secrecy.
Organised by Statewatch to celebrate its 10th anniversary. Speaker include: Prof Thomas Mathiesen (Oslo University), Heidi Hautala, MEP (co-president of the Green/EFA), Aidan White (European Federation of Journalists) Venue: University of London Students Union, Malet Street, London WC1.

For further information call: 020 8802 1882, email office@statewatch.org

USEFUL WEBSITES

Journalists should always check their sources – and so should you. When quoting facts and figures always indicate your source. Authoritative information is vital if you want to be taken seriously by the media. Here are some websites you might like to check out.

Visit the RAM Project website for information, contacts, news and views
www.ramproject.org.uk

Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service, part of World University Service UK:
www.wusuk.org

Black Information Link
Run by the 1990 Trust.
www.blink.org.uk

Chinese in Britain Forum
www.chinese-forum.co.uk

Commission for Racial Equality
www.cre.gov.uk

Ethnic Minority Foundation
European Council on Refugees & Exiles (ECRE)
Umbrella organisation of 70 refugee-assisting agencies in 25 countries.
www.ecre.org

European Parliament
The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is available at the web-site of the EP:
www.europarl.eu.int

Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe
www.icare.to

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

www.jcwi.org.uk

Newcastle West: Tackling Racism Initiative
www.tri-west.org

Racial Harassment Organisation
www.racialharrasment.org.uk

Refugee Womens Legal Group
www.rwlg.org.uk

Statewatch
www.statewatch.org

What is the use of the RAM bulletin?

Those who have not yet completed the survey form published in the last edition, can still help us to improve the RAM Bulletin. The questionnaire is included in the email digest sent out with this edition. Just answer the multiple choice questions and email it back. Many thanks.