

Delegate Meeting 2025

As we approach next month's DM, a review of the agenda provides insight into the breadth of motions submitted by branches, councils and committees.

On issues related to safety, the NUJ's ***Journalists' Safety Tracker*** is referenced. If you have not taken a moment to review the resource, do so now ahead of DM so you're up to speed on its functionality.

In recent months, the union has published statements condemning the apparent misuse of terrorism legislation against journalists, highlighting implications for source protection when journalists' equipment is seized and passwords are sought. Within motions are calls on the issue and for continued campaigning too, on legal frameworks that ensure sufficient safeguards to protect journalists from the implications of those who wrongly abuse our courts to prevent public interest journalism.

As always, the agenda includes motions on Equality, this year with reference to union activity supporting disabled members. Whilst the NUJ's campaigning on health and safety continues year-round, delegates will hear debates on related issues including on health and safety reps training. The NUJ's calls on artificial intelligence has raised member concerns on copyright infringements and the need for government action. It is unsurprising considering the fast-paced and wide-ranging nature of developments, that motions on AI feature in the agenda.

The report to DM covering the period 2023-2025 **published** on the NUJ website, reminds us of the scale of work undertaken by the union on behalf of members. Publication of the News

ORGANISING DEFENDING WINNING

Recovery Plan last year has since been endorsed by the NUJ Parliamentary Group, recognising its calls as crucial to the sustainability of journalism. Industrially, the union has stood full square behind members heading to pickets including at the BBC, Springer Nature, STV and Guardian & Observer. As we look ahead, building an even stronger reps base within the union is important. On 30 April, Caroline Holmes, NUJ trainer, will host a two-hour workshop for all reps, whether new or established, to learn more about the NUJ's members, democracy, chapels and branches. ***Find out more*** about the event and join the session, created to encourage exploration of ideas in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Next year marks 100 years since the founding of the International Federation of Journalists and in May 2026, the centenary will be marked in Paris. As an affiliate to the IFJ, the NUJ's solidarity to sister unions globally on issues spanning safety to workplace policies continues. The imprisonment of journalists and

targeting of our colleagues is also raised in motions to next month's DM.

The theme for this year's conference is Organising, Defending, Winning. Since last DM, much has been achieved for our members including new recognition agreements in the face of opposition from employers, as was the case at PA Media. In December, following almost a year of discussion with the Health Service Journal, the NUJ achieved recognition at the company. David Ayrton, NUJ senior organiser, said he looked forward to "a meaningful and constructive relationship with the relative new owners of the HSJ."

Organising efforts continue across workplaces including at RELX, the Wall Street Journal, Cell Press and The Lancet.

On 28 April, a day after this year's DM draws to a close, Ireland's Union Week commences. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is urging all unions to campaign in advance of the week; the NUJ will raise awareness about the benefits journalists gain by being in our union.

**Also
in this
issue:**

Live from
Laura
Page 02

Journalism's
Outlook
Page 08

IFJ Killed
Report
Page 12

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

Live from Laura



My first Delegate Meeting as general secretary next month is one I'm looking forward to. The engagement from members and branches plays a crucial role in our democratic processes.

As we prepare to gather in Blackpool for our Delegate Meeting, now is a good opportunity to remind you all to send the names of members who have sadly died since last DM to allow us to pay tribute to them in our In Memoriam presentation. Send these details including the member's year of birth and year they died to our campaigns department with a photograph. Email campaigns@nuj.org.uk with the subject line In Memoriam. Each DM is full of lively debate and respect for varying viewpoints, and I have no doubt our advocacy for members and for

journalism more broadly will see a range of motions passed next month. As usual, work has been underway on the final report to DM, with Officials and councils drafting their submissions to ensure all delegates are abreast of significant work that has taken place.

It was great to see members online at our recent recruitment and organising webinar. My thanks to our reps and NUJ Officials who shared their top tips and reflections. I hope those of you who joined on the day found feedback on activity at the recent Ireland Student seminar, the historic union recognition achievement at PA Media, digital organising ideas and organising at NUJ workplaces all interesting and useful for conversations you may have with your chapel. We'll report on the session in next month's NUJ Branch with next steps. With many challenges facing our industry, it's more important than ever we adapt, thinking creatively about our approaches.

Last month, we submitted our response to the UK government's Copyright and Artificial Intelligence consultation. Government's preferred option seeking a broader text and data mining exception with rightsholders required to opt-out of use of their works, was met with staunch opposition from us and sister unions, all recognising the harm this posed. Through engagement with NUJ councils and committees, our response called for greater enforcement of copyright law; the need for greater transparency from tech giants over the data sources used to train and develop AI technologies; and for journalists to have control over their works through an opt-in process. As we await publication of government's response to the consultation, we continue to brief our Parliamentary Group members to ensure your concerns on the use of AI within journalism are relayed. My thanks to those of you who submitted individual responses, I hope you found key lines on the NUJ website helpful. With over

11,000 submissions received by government, it is clear there is a strong appetite for engagement on the subject. We must, however, be acutely aware of the lobbying by tech companies with deep pockets seeking to influence policymakers and gain access to our members' data through unfair practices. Our position as a union has been to recognise that AI when used within journalism must be as an assistive tool only, always overseen by human journalists.

Reach must address pay disparity

Reach plc's annual report revealed that Jim Mullen, who stepped down as the company's chief executive officer on 31 March, received a £1.24m pay package in 2024. Comprising a bonus of over £600,000, journalists were shocked to see the astronomical figure, not least because a headline across the board offer of 2% has been made to journalists at the company this year.

The gulf between journalists' salaries and that of the leadership was noted in a statement by the NUJ's Reach Group Chapel upon publication of the report. They noted that the bonus received by Mullen was a thousand times more than the £600 received by employees. Gratitude for the work of journalists was reflected in the CEO's statement, acknowledging the "excellent and impactful journalism" but our members are seeking more than words. They are asking for fair remuneration, that rightly recognises their contribution to the financial success of the company. It is their journalism and dedication after all, that helped achieve operating profits of £102.3m last year. The NUJ says it's time for greater action to tackle the disparity in employee income.

Aid for Gaza

Journalists in Gaza need your help to do their job in desperate circumstances. The IFJ is supplying vital equipment and aid. Please donate to its safety fund. Branches can email jackiec@nuj.org to transfer funds from their management allowances.

DONATE NOW

In a surprising decision by the Labour government, the Home Office issued a Technical Capability Notice to technology company Apple, seeking access to its end-to-end encrypted data. Due to the nature of safeguards in place, the tech giant was unable to access data and could only have done so by creating a loophole of sorts, enabling it to bypass the security protections promised to its users. Following receipt of the notice, Apple announced it would no longer provide Advance Data Protection (ADP) for its UK users. We were vocal in our concerns over the impact the removal of ADP would have on journalists seeking to protect sources.

The knowledge that data from key applications including images and voice memos stored in the cloud had enhanced protection, was welcomed by journalists. How UK authorities could not have foreseen the move by Apple is difficult to imagine, when the tech giant's position on encryption has been so well recorded. As many of you know, I represent the NUJ on the UK government's National Committee for the Safety of Journalists where I call for improved funding including on action to improve journalists' safety. Government cannot give with one hand through engagement and indirectly take with another by issuing notices that could lead to increased risks to journalists, whilst emboldening criminals who seek to deploy spyware.



REASONS TO JOIN

Press Freedom

The NUJ lobbies for journalists' rights so you can protect your sources, have editorial independence and do your job safely and freely, without censorship from the state. As a member of the International Federation of Journalists we are part of a 600,000-strong community working to ensure the safety of media workers across the globe, fighting for freedom of information, open government and plurality of the media.

Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at
nuj.org.uk/join

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Following news the Investigatory Powers Tribunal was holding a closed hearing to discuss Apple, we hoped to join organisations in a collective submission seeking an open hearing.

On industrial matters, members at the BBC were very unhappy to hear of further cuts at the broadcaster, this time

at the World Service. Over 130 roles in the UK and overseas will be cut in the move to close the £6m shortfall caused by the freezing of the licence fee. The slicing of the BBC is unsustainable and poses long-term harm to its programmes trusted by audiences. Read more on page 6 over the top team quizzed.

Campaign

Championing women journalists

Tara Conlan reports on the importance of women journalists and their experiences within our industry.

Across the globe, courageous women journalists are telling stories that change lives and shine a light on injustice - despite facing sexism, violence and threats - online and in real life.

From the investigative work of journalists in the UK such as Carole Cadwalladr to frontline despatches from Christina Lamb or Lyse Doucet, there are many women journalists inspiring the next generation as they uncover truths in the face of danger.

Just over two years ago, the International Centre for Journalists published a ground-breaking report called *The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists*.

It documented alarming trends and offered solutions. But women still face risks and sexism on a daily basis.

The most recent Women in Journalism report into the issue found 75% of participants said they had "experienced a threat or challenge to their safety from a member of the public online, in person or online and in person during the course of their work" and a quarter of participants said they had "experienced some kind of sexual harassment or sexual violence in connection to their work."

In addition, a fifth said they had



considered leaving journalism due to online threats and almost half promoted their work online less for fear of online harm.

Male journalists also encounter intimidation and the greatest proportion of press killed last year were men: of the 122 who died last year 14 were women, according to the International Federation of Journalists' Killed List for 2024.

Those who died in Gaza include Wafa Aludaini, who was killed along with her husband and their two children, and journalist and photographer Ahlam Al Nafed.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism and Women Press Freedom monitors the plight of female journalists and notes that Russia's treatment of women media workers is worsening, along with strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) against women journalists, "covering gender issues...with cases spanning multiple continents and legal systems."

"Women journalists covering feminist events, women's marches or other events are frequently investigated for 'participating in unlawful assemblies', 'spreading misinformation', or "violating religious sentiments'."

The **NUJ has a Safety Tracker** to help and The Women In Journalism Institute recently issued its **Online Safety for Women and Non-Binary Journalists manual**, which gives practical advice - such as investigative journalist Rana Husseini from Jordan minimizing her digital footprint while covering sensitive women's rights issues.

In addition, as noted on International Women's Day, many female journalists - who are just trying to do their job - still face barriers mired in misogyny. The UK gender pay gap for 2024 was 14.3 per cent and at current rates will take at least another 20 years to close.

What impact the current global political climate has on that situation remains to be seen.

McCullough review continues

The independent review into conduct by the Police Service of Northern Ireland was established by the Chief Constable following revelations at the Investigatory Powers Tribunal relating to the surveillance of journalists.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general

secretary, represents the NUJ and continues to attend meetings of the group of experts and stakeholders set up to advise Angus McCullough KC in his review of the culture of the PSNI. Dooley highlighted the union's concerns on the surveillance of journalists at an evidence session with the Northern

Ireland Affairs Committee alongside journalists Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney of "No Stone Unturned."

He highlighted the scale of threats against journalists may be underreported as there is "a generation of journalists in Northern Ireland, following the death of Martin O'Hagan, who almost think that threats are part of their professional life."

Update

TUC Women's Conference

The aptly timed conference took place immediately before International Women's Day.

Standing ovations, impassioned speeches and solidarity with international women journalists all featured at this year's conference. An NUJ delegation represented the union last month, where motions on supporting journalists in Palestine, tackling misogyny, and women's health at work were passed.

The NUJ motion outlined desperate conditions that journalists are working under in Gaza – particularly women journalists who, along with facing assaults on their freedom to report, have been confronted with the most impossible living conditions and denied access to the basics of water, food and electricity with their homes and workplaces destroyed.

The motion called on “the TUC Women's Committee to send a message of solidarity to women journalists, condemn the atrocities breaching international law in Gaza and the Westbank and back the International Federation of Journalist's (IFJ's) calls for an independent investigation into all killings and attacks on journalists.” It was passed unanimously. The theme of this year's conference was ‘Resist, Persist, Deliver,’ and it took place against a backdrop of much recent right-wing

misogynist rhetoric. Kate Bell, TUC assistant general secretary, highlighted the global challenges facing women and said, “It's never been more important for women to be in a union, to stand up and tackle the far right and to win progress at work and in our communities, not just for women but for everyone who's been let down by years of austerity politics and unchecked inequality.”

A composite calling for strengthened employment rights for women was seconded by the NUJ and passed unanimously. It referred to the difficulties that freelance workers face with wage disparity, and inadequate sick pay and

maternity leave. We need improved methods of data collation by government on freelance work to ensure data on pay gaps and the working conditions of freelancers can be better addressed.

Commenting ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March, Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said she was “proud of the NUJ's campaigning on the gender pay gap and journalists' safety, and these will continue as priorities.” This year's theme focused on imagining a gender equal world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive.”

The NUJ's Equality council recognised the important role media professionals play in shaping public discourse and opinion.

NUJ



Lyra McKee symposium

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, joined panellists on 28 March from 7-9pm at an in-person Belfast event focused on AI and journalism.

Hosted by the union's Belfast and District Branch, the panel explored whether AI presents threats or opportunities and attendees are invited to ask questions on the night. Other speakers

included: Ciaran O'Connor, senior analyst at the Institute of Strategic Dialogue; Stiofan Bruce, a media student studying journalism at Belfast Metropolitan College; and Anne Hailes, writer, broadcaster and chair of the Belfast and District branch. The event formed part of the Imagine! Festival with workshops, poetry performances, art and films.



Update

BBC leaders quizzed in Westminster

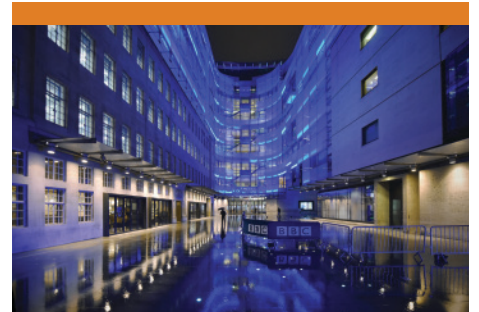
Last month, Tim Davie, BBC director general, and Samir Shah, BBC chairman, were questioned by the Culture Media and Sport Committee (CMS) on wide-ranging topics impacting the broadcaster's journalists and its journalism.

Both Davie and Shah urged for funding of the BBC World Service to be provided once more by government, a call aligned with the NUJ's position for several years. Comments echoed those made in January by the chairs of the Culture, Media and Sport, Foreign Affairs and International Development Committees. In their letter to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, they wrote "We believe that the World Service benefits the whole of the UK, not just in terms of its journalism and public service programming, but also for its contribution to the UK's soft power and security, its humanitarian support, fighting misinformation and disinformation, and as a positive reflection of the UK's values to the world." They urged both departments

to make a case to the Treasury for a "rebalance of the relative contributions from the licence fee and FCDO, so that the World Service income becomes less reliant on the licence fee." The NUJ has repeatedly recognised the World Service as essential, providing unrivalled journalism which shines a light on all parts of the globe and attracts 320m of the BBC's 450m weekly listeners.

Commenting on the licence fee at the evidence session, Shah stressed the funding for over 75s made the responsibility of the broadcaster should be handed back to government, in turn freeing up significant costs in excess of £100m back to the corporation. With evasion of the licence fee at 11%, Davie called for effective enforcement to ensure revenue could be obtained.

Local journalism provision was also explored in last month's CMS session. The NUJ led a bold campaign in 2023 opposing cuts to local radio programmes, with UK parliamentary lobbies and walkouts by journalists across the country. Davie said to MPs in the session, he hoped there could be an increase in



local journalism provision and wanted to see this referenced in the upcoming Charter Review. The NUJ's key calls on the Review include for the broadcaster to participate in a roll-out of UK-wide media literacy initiatives equipping children and adults with the skills necessary in an era of misinformation, disinformation and deep fakes; improve levels of trust including by adopting a fully transparent and cautious approach with meaningful safeguards in the use and deployment of any generative AI and to protect public service broadcasting, ending the increasing move of content and programming into the commercially-run BBC Studios.

Scotland SLAPPs Submissions

Submissions are welcome to the Scottish government's long-awaited consultation on SLAPPs and the need for standalone legislation on the scourge of lawfare impacting wide-ranging groups including journalists. The union has been closely monitoring developments, previously highlighting the significant legal bills faced by those targeted by powerful individuals seeking to stymie

reporting. Engagement through our seat on the Scottish anti-SLAPP working group - a subgroup of the UK Anti-SLAPP coalition continues, and the NUJ will make a written submission to the consultation. The introduction of standalone legislation has seemingly been pushed back in England and Wales, with Keir Starmer's government confirming no standalone legislation is forthcoming this parliamentary session.

Find out more on the SLAPPs consultation on [government's consultation page](#).

Progress on workers' rights

The Employment Rights Bill was welcomed last year by the NUJ as a crucial piece of legislation with impacts focused on strengthened rights for workers. The Bill approved by MPs had over 200 amendments tabled, demonstrating the breadth of areas where parliamentarians felt it could be improved. The

NUJ would like to see greater protections for freelancers and has briefed members of the Parliamentary Group on the matter. The introduction of the Trade Union Act 2016 meant unions faced increased thresholds impacting successful recruitment, organising and balloting efforts. Whilst proposals in the Bill attempt to redress the balance by repealing provisions, the NUJ believes there is more to be done and our engagement continues.

Campaign

Stolen words: Meta's copyright infringements

Last month, an investigation by The Atlantic into Meta's use of the Library Genesis (Lib Gen) dataset revealed deliberate, unlawful scraping of copyright-protected works to train its artificial intelligence model Llama 3.

Condemnation from the NUJ and authors over the flagrant breach called for greater enforcement of copyright law to ensure developers of artificial intelligence technologies are held accountable for their infringements. Important to note, is that revelations that the LibGen dataset had been used by Meta, were only discovered following publication of court documents detailing comments made by the company's employees. "The problem is that people don't realize that if we license one single book, we won't be able to lean into fair use strategy" was reportedly said by a director of engineering at the company, to avoid pursuing the ethical route of seeking consent and remuneration for works used in the model.

Another Llama team senior manager's comments of licensing seeming

"unreasonably expensive" will surprise authors and rightsholders across the creative industries, who recognise the excessive profits tech giants amass, yet seemingly pick and choose what they are happy to pay for regarding the operation of their AI models. Creators have opposed the 'fair use' argument put forward repeatedly by AI developers, clearly an attempt to evade responsibility and avoid paying rightsholders fairly for their creative, informative and valuable work scraped to train and develop technologies. Last year, Meta's platforms generated in excess of \$160 billion, yet a lack of enforcement by policymakers and governments has meant its poor practices, alongside other tech giants have continued at the expense of creators.

Authors of books in the LibGen have brought a copyright-infringement lawsuit against Meta; as many monitor developments, there is frustration that insufficient action is being taken to support authors who face an uphill battle against developers over their intellectual property.

It is unclear which parts of LibGen were used by the technology company to train Llama 3, but it is also believed Open AI has previously used the library. The company states "The models powering ChatGPT and our API today were not developed using these datasets. These datasets, created by former employees who are no longer with OpenAI, were last used in 2021." Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said: "Meta's copyright infringements are a blatant disregard for authors' rights and will continue at scale unless tech giants face consequences for their actions, through enforceable legislative and regulatory standards. We need greater enforcement of copyright law to ensure the works of authors, journalists and freelance creators are protected."

The NUJ has raised the issue with its Parliamentary Group and continues to campaign alongside stakeholders on AI more broadly, including through the Creative Rights In AI coalition. Following confirmation from Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer, that there are "ongoing talks" about amendments to the Digital Services Tax, the NUJ published a statement condemning any reduction in the 2 per cent levy tech giants must pay. No confirmation was announced in the Spring Statement.

Prince Harry victory over NGN

Prince Harry and Lord Watson won a landmark victory against News Group Newspapers over unlawful information gathering. An out of court settlement was agreed just before a trial was due to begin at the High Court in January. NGN issued a "full and unequivocal" apology to Prince Harry over "serious" intrusions into his private life for 15 years from 1996

and acknowledged unlawful activities had been carried out by private investigators working for The Sun. It did not extend the apology to the newspaper's journalists, but did admit News of the World journalists and private investigators were involved in unlawful phone hacking, surveillance and misusing private information. The apology included Princess Diana, recognising she had also been unlawfully targeted.

Persistence pays at Business Insider

Pay negotiations are due to begin at Business Insider, which signed a Statutory Recognition Agreement with the union last April after two years of recruitment and organising at the company's London bureau. The journey began in late 2021 when a couple of Insider staff contacted the NUJ. Reps did a fantastic job of growing awareness

within the company. The NUJ was unable to reach a voluntary agreement with the employer but persevered, with a statutory request to the Central Arbitration Committee. Recognition was formalised and in the first round of pay negotiations the NUJ struck an agreement for a 3.75% rise – showing the capacity and power of being part of a union. Members elsewhere will hope to replicate this success.

Spotlight

Matt Kenyon



Brighter days ahead?

Ian Burrell considers the outlook on journalism for this year.

It has been a difficult start to the year for traditional journalists. In January, 7,400 influencers applied for the precious passes to attend White House press briefings, just as venerable news organisations, including the Associated Press and CNN, were denied access.

"Whether you are a TikTok content creator, a blogger, a podcaster - if you are producing legitimate news content, no matter the medium - you will be allowed to apply for press credentials to this White House," declared Donald's Trump's press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

The morphing of media channels is undermining established structures for news-gathering - and it suits certain politicians to encourage that. This circumvention of traditional media is one of the reasons for a sharp fall in confidence within the news sector.

"People are thinking that journalism does not matter as much, partly because Donald Trump and others are bypassing mainstream journalism and going to sympathetic alternative media," says Nic Newman of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

The RISJ has surveyed the news industry's mood, asking executives if they were optimistic about the future. Only 41% were - a significant reduction from the 60% who felt upbeat three years ago.

Back in 2022, Informed also took the temperature of the industry and found reasons for positivity, despite a decade of predictions that text-led news outlets would not survive the commercial damage being inflicted on them by digital change. We found that lockdown reading habits had highlighted the value of trusted news, encouraging online subscriptions and helping publishers to profitability.

But doubts are creeping back in as digital growth stalls. "The finance is unpredictable," says Newman. "The decline of print revenues is faster than the growth of subscriptions which are pretty much flat."

He accepts, however, that several UK publishers are in a strong position. "There is definitely a class of upmarket newspapers who are doing pretty well." The FT Group made more than £500m in revenues last year, a new record. Telegraph Media Group reports increased turnover despite prolonged uncertainty over who will buy the business from the Barclay family. News UK's Times Media declared a small uptick in revenues, although its profits were slightly down.

At the other end of the scale, specialist journalists, including political commentator David Aaronovitch and sports writer Henry Winter, have embraced self-publishing. At minimal cost, they are building niche businesses on newsletter platforms, such as Substack.

The most vulnerable publishers in

2025, says Newman, are those who sit “in the middle”, with a product that readers will not pay for and a content diet that is short of trust with advertisers. Such outlets, are “really struggling”, says Newman. He warns of a gulf in society between a highly-engaged minority of readers who pay for news and a larger group who “don’t care very much about what is going on”. Around 10% of the British population actively avoids news, he says.

Significantly, the UK’s two biggest free-to-access online news titles (beyond the BBC) are encouraging loyal readers to pay. Mail Online has more than 100,000 subscribers for its premium Mail+ service. The Sun has launched Sun Club, a £2-a-month package that includes access to popular content including Jeremy Clarkson’s column and the Dear Deirdre agony aunt feature.

But Reach, the UK’s biggest national and regional publisher, remains committed to a strategy based on growing advertising revenue by increasing page views. Its journalists have been set individual page view targets of 250,000-a-month and upwards. In 2022, Reach had expanded across the UK, launching 26 new websites and hiring 400 journalists to fight an online turf war with regional publishing rivals. Then it cut more than 10% of the workforce. With a reduced cost base and a focus on meeting the demands of online readers, Reach last year increased page views and boosted profits by 6% to £102.3m.

Bea Bennett, NUJ senior campaigns and communications officer, says many journalists face unacceptable personal risk as they go about their daily work. “We are really concerned about the abuse that journalists get online and we don’t think the online platforms are going enough to address this,” she says, calling on Ofcom to use the Online Safety Act (OSA) to compel social media companies to combat the issue.

The NUJ is pressing the government for legislation to tackle SLAPP (strategic litigation against public participation)

abuses of the legal system, which are often used to obstruct investigative journalists. As talks begin on the renewal of the BBC’s charter in 2027, the union will argue for sustainable funding for the BBC, including protection of jobs at the World Service.

The biggest cloud looming over the sector in 2025 is artificial intelligence. Hundreds of national and regional news publishers came together on 25 February to swamp the news-stand with identical front pages that called on the government to “Make It Fair” and drop plans for a copyright exemption that would allow tech companies to scrape online content without paying for it. In a landmark case due in June, Getty Images is suing Stability AI, alleging that the AI firm illegally used its copyrighted images to train its generative AI models.

Owen Meredith, chief executive of the News Media Association, says the government’s idea that an AI copyright exemption would help grow the UK economy is “fundamentally-flawed”. He believes the OSA and the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act will help ensure that publishers are fairly compensated by big tech for use of their content.

Journalists need to stop seeing AI simply as a threat to their livelihoods, says Charlie Beckett, director of the Journalism AI project at the London School of Economics. “I want to get away from the idea of AI writing the stories or creating the videos,” he says. “It is much more of an office tool rather than a robot reporter.” Crime reporters will automate some daily tasks, while investigative journalists and science writers can sift vast data sets. “If you are in newsroom that is any good, AI will be increasingly be built into your CMS.”

At a recent London Press Club event, former Independent editor Chris Blackhurst suggested publishers would use productivity gains from AI to compel journalists to produce more “guff”. Beckett argues that, with Google Search already using AI to provide basic answers

to online queries, SEO clickbait has lost currency and publishers have to be “adding some kind of value” with their content.

Hannah Williams, managing director, digital content at Immediate Media, says the magazine publisher will incorporate AI tools for “shortcutting aspects of drudgery and admin within the editorial workflow”, including “unglamorous tasks like content tagging and creating metadata”. This will allow journalists to spend more time on “creative, collaborative, and experimental aspects of content creation”.

Immediate recently opened a test kitchen to produce video and photography content for its Good Food and olive brands. “We can invite our audience into the Good Food kitchen and let them get to know us as a group of people,” says Lily Barclay, content director for the brands. “That kitchen is equipped with cameras above each work station.” This social media-friendly strategy helps to up-skill magazine journalists in film techniques and drives interest in the print product. Good Food’s Christmas edition sold more than 500,000 copies from the news-stand.

But if journalism is to face its difficult future with confidence it will need a fluid recruiting pipeline that does not leak the best talent to public relations or other sectors. “Some potential journalism students will assume without knowing that everything is going to be done by AI and turn away from a career in journalism,” warns Terry Kirby, senior lecturer in journalism at Goldsmiths, University of London. The number of places available on the most prestigious journalism courses in the UK has significantly declined since 2020-2021, while traditional pathways into national media from the regional press have all but disappeared. “The knock-on effect for journalism is that all this is reducing the pool of students who might go on to work in newsrooms,” says Kirby. In every sense, journalism in 2025 needs to be telling better stories.

Update

No change to media reporting of child homicide victims

The NUJ's Scottish office has been lobbying for the past year against proposals to restrict reporting of the identities of children who die as a result of homicide in Scotland.

The highly sensitive topic had been the subject of a government consultation with evidence heard from people with lived experience about the impact of unwanted, intrusive and traumatising media coverage. Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, consulted the union's Ethics council relaying varying viewpoints and encouraging views from the council. A vigorous campaign to introduce anonymity for child victims of homicide was led by Victim Support Scotland

and other organisations. Amid this, McGowan-Lowe met with the cabinet secretary for justice, together with representatives from the Media Lawyers Association and Newsbrands Scotland who represent many Scottish titles. Last month, the union welcomed the announcement by the Scottish government that it does not intend to introduce any legal changes to restrict reporting of identities of children who die as a result of homicide.

"Faced with a difficult decision, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has reached the only reasonable conclusion, having weighed up the interests of open justice and the right to report responsibly about the most horrific of

crimes. No journalist can imagine the pain and anguish felt by the families and friends coming to terms with a child's death, nor do we pretend to. Through this process we have listened carefully to the views put forward by Victim Support Scotland and other organisations representing bereaved families. They have made a strong and emotive case. However, any restrictions would have fundamentally been to the detriment of press freedom, would have hindered the police's ability to hold public appeals and investigate murders, and would have obscured that a significant number of child homicides are carried out by a parent or relative." said McGowan-Lowe.

Apple at the IPT

The private nature of hearings held by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal received opposition once again last month, when calls for an open hearing between the UK government and Apple

over a recent Home Office order seeking access to data held by the technology company was not granted.

A public hearing on the matter the NUJ believes is in the public interest, would have allowed scrutiny of

issues regarding encryption and online safety impacting journalists to be heard by the union. It would also have allowed for technical specialists to explain how the order – a technical capability notice – issued by government could expose cyber security risks. Secure communications

lie at the heart of everyday journalistic activities and the NUJ's code of conduct states a journalist "protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work." The union continues to monitor developments.

STV pay agreement

After a good turnout that showed the strength of feeling, NUJ members at Scottish broadcaster STV voted to accept an improved offer of 3% for 2025 after three rounds of pay talks. Just over three-quarters of members at STV voted to accept, with a 73% turnout.

The negotiations were coordinated with fellow union Bectu members, who also voted to accept. NUJ members may recall last year's industrial action dispute in spring 2024 at the broadcaster, which led to Scottish news programmes being taken off air and almost all digital website news stopped.

Welsh working group concern

The NUJ has expressed its worry over the Wales Public Interest Journalism working group's function. Huda Elmi, NUJ Magazines, Books and Wales national organiser said: "The working group must not serve solely as a mouthpiece for the industry; we are deeply concerned

funding decisions are being made within the working group that directly benefit organisations on the group." The Union continues its engagement with the Welsh government to explore how money can be invested into public interest journalism via a strategic organisation instead: but urges a well-thought cohesive strategy.

Update

Labour's welfare cuts loom

Over the past fortnight, headlines have been dominated by news of the UK government's plans to reform health and disability benefits and employment support.

Liz Kendall, Secretary of State for work and pensions, is proposing cuts to the welfare package likely to impact thousands across the country in efforts to save a reported £5 billion by 2030. The proposals focus on disability or sick pay related benefits and a review of the eligibility criteria for Personal Independent Payments (PIP) will be conducted. Three million working-age people in the UK currently receive PIP, and there has been much opposition to proposals in government's Green Paper, including from disability charities and trade unions. Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, joined unions of the Trade Union Coordinating Group collectively representing over 1 million workers across the UK to voice opposition to plans, in a letter to Keir Starmer, UK prime minister.

The letter stressed the "approach is totally antithetical to the values of the labour movement and will rightly face enormous opposition from disabled peoples' organisations, charities, faith organisations and everyone concerned with living in a fairer society." The NUJ's Disabled Members' Council also expressed grave concern over plans stating, "the need for fair and accurate reporting on proposals, noting language that



stigmatises or devalues disabled people and their lives, undermines reporting and creates misinformation."

Natasha Hirst, NUJ president, said "As a disabled person who receives PIP, I understand how vital it is to workers within the NUJ and across the wider trade union movement. It helps to mitigate barriers faced in day-to-day life, including paying for assistive tech and extra costs incurred. It is crucial journalists take the time to scrutinise government's proposals and claims, ensuring that disabled people are informing reporting on these complex issues."

As organisations take time to understand the detail of cuts proposed, celebrity voices have added their views.

Sir Stephen Fry said it was not too late for a rethink from government, and that "Cuts should be for people who can best afford them, not for disabled people, who are amongst the most vulnerable and overlooked of all our population." Actor Brian Cox said "This government vowed to tackle the need for emergency food parcels in the UK, yet this decision risks even more people having to seek support. It makes no sense and will have a lasting impact on the lives of so many people already finding it difficult to afford life's essentials." NUJ members joined a protest organised by the Disabled People Against Cuts outside NO.10 Downing Street on 26 March, to express their staunch opposition to proposals. Those joining in solidarity heard from speakers on how proposals would remove vital financial support from disabled people.

MPs were among those in attendance at the rally joined by campaigners and welfare rights activists. The rally formed part of DPAC's National Day of Action that saw co-ordinated campaigning across the UK. The NUJ's Disabled Members' Council (DMC) has organised a meeting for members of the union to meet elected DMC reps and contribute to discussion on the Green Paper. The NUJ's Parliamentary Group will be briefed on concerns, with opportunities sought to engage with Ministers. The deadline for responses to government's consultation is 30 June 2025.

Poverty and the press

On 8 April the NUJ's Ethics and Disabled Members' councils held a discussion on how journalists should report on poverty.

The NUJ helped inform the creation of guidelines published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) on the

subject, and Naomi Southwell, a media officer at JRF joined the event as a speaker. The guidelines explore best practice approaches and ask journalists to consider their use of stock images: "Many people find them offensive and feel they contribute to shame and

stigma, reinforce fatalism, and fail to reflect the breadth of poverty in the UK." Chaired by Professor Chris Frost, NUJ Ethics council chair, the event also included speeches from Dr Rachel Broady, lecturer in Media, Culture, Communication at Liverpool John Moores University, and Megan Thomas, co-ordinator of the Coalition Against Benefit Cuts.

International

122 journalists killed in 2024

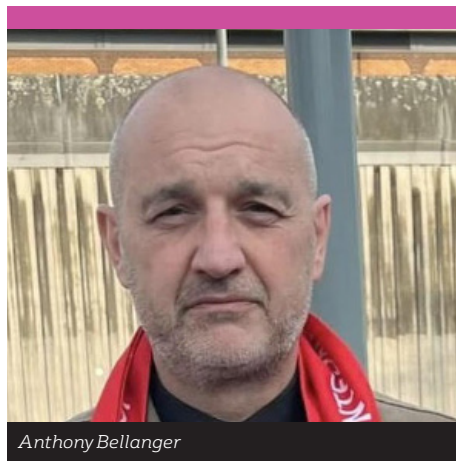
Bea Bennett, NUJ senior campaigns and communications officer reports on the shocking killings of journalists worldwide.

For over three decades the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has recorded its annual list of journalists killed globally.

In its publication last month, the Federation revealed detail about 122 colleagues from across continents including those reporting from war, killed in 2024. 64 journalists, almost half of all casualties, were murdered on the Gaza Strip last year and since 2023, a total of 152 journalists have been killed in Gaza. The Middle East and Arab World accounted for the highest number of killings in 2024 and Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, said for months, the organisation had “gathered evidence that the Israeli Army has deliberately targeted journalists.” The NUJ has repeatedly condemned the targeting of Palestinian journalists, including incidents pre-dating the Israel-Gaza war where attacks against the media including those in PRESS vests were recorded.

Whilst the IFJ Killed List report makes for sombre reading, the recording of deaths by the organisation is crucial, ensuring tributes are paid to colleagues and a spotlight is shone on the impunity enjoyed by leaders failing to protect journalists. In the Americas, journalists' murders occurred in countries including Mexico, one of the most dangerous for media workers. Haiti, Colombia and Venezuela were also listed by the IFJ as where attacks on journalists took place.

The situation in Ukraine following Russia's invasion over three years ago remains difficult for colleagues reporting from frontlines, with three journalists



Anthony Bellanger

killed by Russian bombings and another declared dead by Putin's authorities during a transfer from prison. The IFJ's Gender Council noted it was important to remember ongoing conflicts worldwide such as those in Ukraine, Sudan, Iraq, Philippines and Syria. On the risks to women journalists, the council said: “Women journalists are also more likely to be followed or monitored, notably in environments where press freedom is under threat. Moreover, in some regions journalists are considered vulnerable to being kidnapped or trafficked, especially when reporting in high-risk areas. We must remember all the international legislation that protects women against violence, but is not respected in many countries, including in those where there is no conflict.”

A total of 10 journalists were killed in Africa including in Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Two Russian journalists killed in missile strikes were among murders in Europe. In the

Asia Pacific region, killings occurred in countries including Indonesia, Cambodia and Bangladesh.

516 journalists remain imprisoned globally, although there is recognition this may be an underreported figure when we consider the attitudes and actions of governments hostile to journalists and the importance of a free press. Since publication of the list in December, the number of journalists imprisoned despite committing no crime continues to rise. On 27 February, Vietnamese journalist Huy Duc, was handed a 30-month prison term on anti-State charges.

As World Press Freedom Day (3 May) approaches, we must do all we can to decry the attacks on journalists whether at home or abroad. As wars ravage on, it is the journalism from colleagues that provides a window into truths on the ground, often combatting misinformation and propaganda that spreads like wildfire online.

The IFJ is calling for the adoption of a UN Convention to protect journalists. They have the full backing of the NUJ; Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, has written to David Lammy, foreign secretary, seeking a meeting with him or officials on the matter.

This year's World Press Freedom Day theme is 'Reporting in the Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media.' UNESCO notes, that AI “can be used to reproduce misinformation, spread disinformation, amplify online hate speech, and enable new forms of censorship.” The agency also recognises that “some actors use AI for mass surveillance of journalists and citizens, creating a chilling effect on freedom of expression.” Whilst it is unknown what developments we may witness on AI in the weeks preceding WPPFD, the theme allows us to consider our continued engagement with policy makers on the impact of technologies. The IFJ's **recommendations** on the use of AI within journalism emphasise the importance of journalists as defenders of journalism.