

# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE Informed

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## Journalists acclaimed for courage and defence of freedom

**Maria Ressa, chief executive of Philippine digital media company Rappler, and Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-chief of the Russian Novaya Gazeta, have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their "courageous fight" for freedom of expression.**

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said: "The committee is convinced that freedom of expression and freedom of information help to ensure an informed public. These rights are crucial prerequisites for democracy and protect against war and conflict. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov is intended to underscore the importance of protecting and defending these fundamental rights."

While the award was in recognition of the vital role of journalism, it also championed the unquestioned bravery of these journalists working in countries where a free press is suppressed and

those who try to hold the actions of despots and dictators to account can pay with their lives.

Maria Ressa's website Rappler has exposed the murderous regime of Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines and the extra judicial deaths linked to his anti-drugs campaign. Those who oppose him risk imprisonment and worse, and Ressa faces a possible six years in jail after being found guilty of "cyberlibel" charges.

Dmitry Muratov is a co-founder of Novaya Gazeta, one of the few newspapers in Russia which is critical of the country's president, Vladimir Putin. It runs investigations into government corruption, the war in Chechnya and defends free speech, despite six of its journalists being killed, including Anna Politkovskaya who was shot dead in the lobby of her Moscow apartment.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said she was proud that

Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov had been recognised for championing freedom and exposing corruption and crime, often at danger to themselves. She said: "This is why people should support journalism and the journalists who make personal sacrifices to hold power to account."

The link between democracy and a free press made by Nobel committee is echoed in the NUJ's News Recovery Plan. The union finds itself having to increasingly support members who are being attacked by far-right and sectarian groups and made the target of anti-vaxxer groups. This month, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson) was given a five-year stalking ban following his intimidation of The Independent's home affairs correspondent Lizzie Dearden.

The Nobel committee said it was convinced that freedom of expression and freedom of information helped to ensure an informed public, crucial prerequisites for democracy. The News Recovery Plan calls for a plural media and protection against the tech giants which have undermined local and national journalism.

A Scottish government working party on public interest journalism is about to publish its recommendations. The union's Edinburgh Freelance Branch can take credit for the establishment of the group, made up of NUJ members, industry bodies and community journalists, which is expected to call for a foundation to protect and foster the growth of public interest journalism and a programme of media literacy. It also proposes a range of tax incentives to encourage recruitment, training and technology investments, as called for in the NUJ's News Recovery Plan.

The union is now in discussion with the Welsh government to launch a similar initiative.

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**NUJ**  
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OF  
JOURNALISTS

# Michelle's Message



**That back to school, new term feeling is alive and kicking in the NUJ, with a packed schedule of work and events ahead this autumn as the union entered its new financial year this month.**

**Lots of work is taking place as part of our commitments within the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists' action plan. This includes engagement and liaison with the National Police Chiefs Council, and we're hoping to organise some public order training sessions for NUJ members. The incidents of abuse and intimidation against journalists we're seeing is a real cause for concern**

**and something the union responds swiftly to – we want journalists to be as protected and equipped as they possibly can be in going about their work, and for the police to act swiftly and robustly to defend them when issues arise.**

It's ironic that many of the recent cases of anti-vaccine protestors, or self-style anarchists, targeting journalists to highlight perceived attacks on freedoms and acts of oppressions, are through their actions undermining media freedom and its underpinning role in a democratic society. Trumpian depictions of journalists as enemies of the people and tools of the state are dangerous rhetoric that is being actively fanned and whipped up.

No doubt covering Cop26 next month will prove a challenge to the many hundreds of reporters, photographers and media crews who will be descending on Glasgow from around the globe. To that end, we've ensured that legal representation and industrial assistance will be on hand to NUJ members that need it, with a special advice line manned by our retained solicitors, Thompsons. A special briefing with Police Scotland has also been organised, involving many NUJ members who will be in attendance reporting on the UN Climate Change Conference.

Work is underway too on our safety toolkit, which will be launched later this year, bringing together advice and support for journalists and helping our network of reps ensure that employers are doing all they can to protect their editorial teams. Key to that is changing the culture. For too long, abuse and harassment has been dismissed and viewed as part of the job. We want journalists to take a step back from that, and collectively end this normalisation of abuse, and ensure that the days of being harassed, intimidated and threatened simply for doing your job, are consigned to history. It's also behaviour that has gone un-logged and monitored, so following on from our own

safety survey a year ago, we'll be part of an industry-wide one that will come out in the new year from the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists. It's important to be able to track prevalence rates and assess the impact of this kind of behaviour on journalists and also the chilling effect it is having on journalism.

We're also working on a short film which will feature NUJ members who will share first-hand the impact that threats and attacks have had on their work and on their lives.

*“We want journalists to take a step back and collectively end this normalisation of abuse so the days of being harassed, intimidated and threatened are consigned to history”*

One thing remains clear – that the tech companies are not doing enough to crack down on harassment and abuse emanating from their own platforms, and fail to robustly expedite cases when journalists report them. We'll be stepping up our efforts to change this.

Our work on mental health will be showcased at an online conference planned for December. Training webinars and courses continue apace. We'll also be looking at organising some special sessions for journalists arriving in the UK after fleeing Afghanistan. The situation there remains fraught, and to date there are still former BBC reporters who have been unable to leave, and who face particular risk because of their association with our public service broadcaster. The NUJ and IFJ are continuing to press for the UK government to do more to assist them and bring them to safety.

NUJ members responded

magnificently to our fundraising appeal to support the IFJ's Safety Fund - every single penny raised is going directly to support journalists in need in Afghanistan. Any fundraising efforts from branches and chapels, or individual donations, will continue to be gratefully received and put to vital use by the IFJ and its two Afghan affiliates.

We've also embarked on planning for some new and important campaigns for the months ahead. A major focus is going to be on pay, and developing with our reps and officials a collective strategy to deliver meaningful pay rises and improvements to terms and conditions. The stranglehold of the pandemic, the industrial impact of Covid-related cuts, restructures and furlough, have all created an inhibiting curb on pay in many parts of the industry, which the NUJ is intent on breaking free of. This will also involve improving coordination amongst freelancers and working with our sister unions to push for better employment rights.

Work is also in train to build on the many successful equal pay cases that over the past three years have secured payments in excess of £6m for NUJ members across the union. We'll continue to push for statutory reporting of pay gaps on race and disability, and to ensure employers meet their obligations for action plans to stamp out gender pay gaps.

The defence of public service broadcasting remains high on the agenda of our parliamentary group and campaigning in the coming weeks as we await the outcome of the mid-term BBC review and the fate of Channel 4. Given the Prime Minister's freewheeling commitments at the despatch box this week to expedite the delayed Online Harms Bill, the union and its Parliamentary Group will have important work to do to scrutinise and highlight necessary amendments, as well as tracking worrying changes proposed to the Official Secrets Act, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which



**REASONS TO JOIN**



**Be Part of a Collective Voice**

As a member of the NUJ you are part of a united force championing the rights of media workers and defending attacks on press freedom. Successful workplaces are those where the management and workers share the same aims and talk to each other. Being a member of the NUJ means giving yourself and colleagues a real voice at work.

**Are you keeping good company?**

Join the NUJ today at  
[nuj.org.uk/join](https://www.nuj.org.uk/join)

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[www.nuj.org.uk](https://www.nuj.org.uk)

could severely hamper protests and may have implications for the collection of journalistic materials. We will also continue to push for regulation of the tech giants and codes of conduct to block the way they exploit the media.

**NUJ advice for members covering COP26** <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/cop26-advice-for-nuj-members.html>

# News

## NUJ nets £5.5m for its members

**The NUJ's legal department has secured over £5.5 million for members this year to date.**

The awards for damages from unfair dismissal, wages and discrimination claims amounted to more than £1.4m with equal pay claims resulting in more than £2m-plus in pay-outs, and close to £2m in compensation under settlement agreements, trade union victimisation payouts of £30,000 and personal injuries more than £120,000.

The freelance office reported winning tens of thousands of pounds for members in various settlements during the past quarter, including £12,500 for a cancelled book deal, large sums for the infringement of photographers' copyright rights, plus the recouping of non-payments. Members also benefited from advice from the department on negotiating contracts.

The union is tenacious in protecting

its members and following the money.

It recently successfully recovered significant sums for members from the liquidators of the Jewish Chronicle, securing more than 43 per cent of sums due for employees and freelance members – reps and officials remain committed to securing the balance.

Members have used their collective might in winning pay rises in at least three companies following the threat of industrial action in the past six months together with a further fourth action planned for later this year.

The union's legal team, with support from solicitors' firms, Thompsons and Bindmans, also fight for journalists' rights, such as overturning the confiscation of reporters' and photographers' materials.

The NUJ is joining action by the charity Liberty in a challenge to the so-called Snoopers' Charter by arguing powers

given to the police and other authorities in the Investigatory Powers Act infringe journalists' rights.

It can be difficult to report these successes as the pay-outs often come with confidentiality clauses. But this response from this member who won a settlement thanks to the NUJ is typical: "I cannot repay the union for all it has done for me. It encouraged me to stay positive and helped me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The NUJ helped me understand that seeking support was not a weakness and when I landed on my feet with a new job for the direct competitor of my old company, the first person I told was my union official."

### Carry on Zooming

Online union meetings have saved the union significant sums, members' time in travelling, and enabled more frequent and responsive meetings of reps to take place. The NEC endorsed the continued use of virtual meetings for the next financial year for councils and committees, while ensuring that face-to-face opportunities are also built into the meeting schedules of the NEC, industrial councils and committees. Branches would continue to operate meetings according to their own needs and preferences.

### Martin O'Hagan

The NUJ's branches in Northern Ireland organised vigils to remember Sunday World journalist Martin O'Hagan on the 20th year anniversary of his death at the hands of the Loyalist Volunteer Force.

Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary, said the failure to secure a conviction of his killers remained a stain on the history of policing in Northern Ireland. The NUJ has written to the British Prime Minister and to An Taoiseach calling for an official inquiry into the shooting.

### Tech giants

The NUJ's submission to a government consultation on competition in digital markets has called for greater media plurality and for the Digital Marketing Unit to have sufficient powers and sanctions to challenge the "winner takes all" model of the tech giants, address concerns over algorithms, access to user data and restrictions on publishers' ability to monetise their content. The union said the tech giants' overdominance in the news and information market was endangering the democratic process.

### "Woeful" TV

The increase in women leaving broadcasting and the dearth of diversity in senior jobs is woeful, according to the UK watchdog Ofcom. Its five-year review said while there were twice as many people working in radio from minority-ethnic backgrounds than three years ago, present trends meant the proportion of disabled TV employees would fall in the next five years and so would female radio employees. Only 16 per cent of women in the TV workforce are aged 50-plus (compared with 22 per cent of men).



# Update

## Reps gain secondee roles at Reach

**The NUJ has finally got a pay deal with Reach over the line but, more significantly, has won an in-principle agreement with the company that union reps will have greater involvement in its plans.**

In his report to the NEC, Chris Morley, Northern & Midlands senior organiser, said the face-to-face meeting at arbitrator, ACAS, proved critical in securing movement.

The NUJ delegation, led by the general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet, secured improvements to the underpin, previously negotiated by the union, to a minimum rise of £350, on the across-the-board 1 per cent deal, bringing an additional benefit to 1,350 journalists. The company conceded the principle of some members being paid up to £26

a month free of tax for working from home. The deal fixed the pay progression of 130 editorial staff who had been left behind, bringing average rises of £1,700.

In a significant move, the company said it would allow the union to discuss pay for next year with its remuneration committee, which reports to the board and makes recommendations on employees' pay.

Agreement was reached in principle for a secondee scheme, similar to that operating in the BBC, in order ensure the

union has adequate capability to progress the work necessary in the coming months, including on changes to the bargaining units.

The deal was the result of numerous chapel meetings during a period when the introduction of the Home and Hub

scheme – where some staff work at home full-time, others in the office full-time and the rest in a hybrid role where they also work from their nearest “hub” – was being rolled out. The union has been instrumental in ensuring proper risk assessments have been conducted before staff return to the office or hub.

New hubs are operational in Newcastle, Liverpool, Cardiff and Plymouth, while those in Hull, Leeds, Nottingham and Birmingham are not yet up to the same specs. Reach expects to save £8m per year from office closures.

Chris Morley reported: “While members were clearly underwhelmed with the headline rate itself remaining at 1 per cent, there has been widespread recognition that the determination of the union to stick to the collective bargaining process and eventually to win important group-wide concessions through negotiation was important progress. Members particularly noted the significance of boosting our ability to influence matters in the coming year as inflation is clearly a worry for all.”



## Guardian staff agree two-year 5 per cent deal

**Following a protracted dispute, Guardian journalists have accepted a pay deal worth a minimum of 5 per cent on staff salaries and a 5 per cent increase in lineage rates.**

The journalists had threatened industrial action over the company’s refusal to incorporate the pay award that was agreed in 2020 then withdrawn by the company. This had included a sum to improve pay for the lowest paid journalists.

Discussions on this were overtaken by the announcement in October

2020 of plans to make staff cuts of 12 per cent, including up to 70 editorial job losses. Consultation to reduce the numbers going took a huge amount of work from chapel members in all the affected departments.

In April 2021 Guardian Media Group repaid the £16m furlough cash it had been given by the government because of its “substantially improved financial position”, and in July reported that revenues increased by 0.9 per cent to £225.5 million, with record growth in digital reader

revenues offsetting declines in advertising revenues and newsstand sales.

Meanwhile pay talks continued to stall over the principle that the company had no power to withdraw a deal that had already been agreed. Staff balloted for strike action in September 2021 and talks at ACAS initially failed to resolve the matter. Agreement was ultimately reached between the Guardian/Observer NUJ chapel and management at the end of September 2021, before the ballot was closed.

Andy Smith, NUJ national organiser, said: “It has taken a lot of work by chapel negotiators to get this agreement. We now have a deal that covers last year’s increase, a 3 per cent increase for this year, a payment to cover backpay and an increase in freelance rates. By the end of the process management understood the importance of all these elements of our claim and I’m confident we can use this as a basis to work together to address other issues the chapel has raised.”

# COP26

## Unions respond to climate emergency

**From October 31 to November 12, Glasgow will host COP26, the United Nations climate change conference which will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree co-ordinated action to tackle the climate emergency.**

A key motion at April's DM declared trade unionists "need to be at the forefront" of a just transition to a greener economy - and that journalists have "a vital role to play" in communicating why it is needed.

The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly visible: devastating flooding in Europe, record-breaking temperatures and deadly wildfires in the US, Canada and Greece. July was the earth's hottest month ever recorded, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report this August provides the starkest evidence that human activity has changed the earth's

climate in unprecedented ways and that within the next two decades temperatures are likely to rise by more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, thwarting the ambition of the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Environmental policy journalist, Gareth Simkins, who moved the motion at DM, told NUJ Informed: "How can we as trade unionists play a role in our chapels and branches to help address the crisis?"

"Make sure that stories provide critical climate context. If a government policy will make hitting the legal deadline of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 harder, say so. If writing about natural disasters, say extreme weather events such as heatwaves are becoming more frequent due to climate change. As the conference motion - which was carried overwhelmingly said, 'Both the way we report these issues, and the way our employers and organisations behave, have an important impact on public perceptions of the crisis, and the contribution that we make to the situation'.

"Local news stories can be given a climate twist. Many local authorities have declared climate emergencies, though few have followed through with appropriate policies. Plans to build housing in flood plains should be called out as putting people at risk."

He urged branches and chapels to elect a climate officer to co-ordinate local campaigning on the climate emergency and to hold employers to account for how their businesses could affect the climate. Should they be accepting advertising from carbon-intensive businesses? Start the debate.

Branches should be linking up with local environmental groups to put on events promoting action against climate change. The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, think tanks Green Alliance and E3G, the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit and the Aldersgate Group all provide useful briefings on environmental issues.

The international trade union movement has called for a just transition strategy to reach net zero emissions so that, as polluting sectors are phased out, new jobs and industries are created to protect the livelihoods and rights of the poor, disadvantaged and people now working in high-carbon sectors.

[www.ukcop26.org/](http://www.ukcop26.org/)

### Reporting COP26

Environmental groups are planning to stage demonstrations as the world's leaders meet in Glasgow at COP26. The union has published advice for photographers and reporters covering the event on the NUJ website: [www.nuj.org.uk/resource/cop26-advice-for-nuj-members.html](http://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/cop26-advice-for-nuj-members.html)

There will be a NUJ briefing with Police Scotland on Tuesday 26 October at 15.00. If you will be covering COP26 and wish to participate contact [davida@nuj.org.uk](mailto:davida@nuj.org.uk)



# Get Carbon literate

**Our code of conduct asks journalists to “differentiate between fact and opinion” and, since this August’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, man-made global heating can be firmly filed under “fact”.**

Scientist turned film-maker, Susi Arnott, said: “We can’t leave it to specialist correspondents any more; life on earth is running out of time. As individuals and as professionals, NUJ members should be equipped to understand, assess and respond – this year’s Delegate Meeting formally instructed the NEC to “educate members about the climate emergency”.

Susi, a former research biologist, has worked with albert – the TV and film industry’s body which trains everyone from lighting professionals to van drivers to understand climate change and their carbon footprint and helps companies work towards environmental sustainability.

She said: “But journalism had nothing similar. An NUJ 2018 Christmas party, when no one seemed aware of the IPCC Special Report on the significance of the globe staying below an increase of 1.5°C, stuck in my mind. So, I worked directly with the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) in Manchester – an initiative recognised at COP21 in Paris – to develop an accredited course.

“This course provides basic understanding of the science behind



global heating and the impact of the climate emergency on the sector you work in. It puts climate change into a global and social context. It shows how to interpret extreme weather, a UN report, government statement or fossil-fuel industry press release. It can be used to become certified as carbon literate by the CLP.”

NUJ Training Scotland is working with Keep Scotland Beautiful to provide climate emergency training also accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project. Its course cuts through the jargon and explores the science and impact of climate change. It highlights practical actions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change, plus tips on how to successfully communicate the facts about global warming.

Practical tips include: taking fewer flights; reducing single-occupancy car travel; choosing a locally sourced plant-based diet; buying less new stuff; supporting companies with sound climate policies.

## Climate courses

- Register for Susi’s Tuesday sessions on October 19 and 26: <https://bit.ly/3AC8Yd1>
- Schedule an in-house course for your branch by emailing [carbonelephant2020@gmail.com](mailto:carbonelephant2020@gmail.com)
- Contact [joanm@nuj.org.uk](mailto:joanm@nuj.org.uk) for dates for Keeping Scotland Beautiful’s climate emergency training.
- For bespoke Keeping Scotland Training <https://www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/climate-emergency-training>

## Get climate smart

• **The TUC** has produced a short online guide on climate change-proofing your workplace: <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/60ce1cbc2fcec->

[60ce2b81a3d01](https://learning.elucidat.com/course/60ce2b81a3d01)

• **The ICTU’s** Delivering a Genuine Just Transition looks at how the Irish government can protect jobs while moving to a low/zero

carbon economy: [www.ictu.ie/](http://www.ictu.ie/)

• **The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism** has launched the Oxford Climate Journalism Network to help journalists transform the way they cover the climate crisis: <https://bit.ly/3aAr3fY>

[ly/3aAr3fY](https://bit.ly/3aAr3fY)

• **Unionlearn’s** practical guide: Cutting carbon, growing skills – green skills for a just transition: <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/cutting-carbon-growing-skills-green-skills-just-transition>

# Spotlight



## Fleeing from the Taliban

### Tim Dawson explains how the union movement worked to get Afghan journalists to safety

**The speed at which the Taliban captured successive Afghan provinces during the summer following the withdrawal of foreign troops took the world by surprise.**

By the time they had secured the capital Kabul, large numbers of the population were heading to the airport to escape the threat to them and their families.

Journalists became obvious targets. The daily Afghan message tally received by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) from media workers fearing for their lives grew quickly. "There was a steady stream in early August," remembers IFJ deputy general secretary, Jeremy Dear. "By the middle of that month, we received nearly 2,000 messages a day."

He continues to receive frequent communications from journalists saying they would rather kill themselves and their families than be captured by the

Taliban. Others move house every day, or are stuck at the border, living on the streets for days, or have fled but left behind family and loved ones for whose lives they now fear.

Whether the response of western journalists to the fate of our Afghan counterparts has been sufficient is a judgment for the future. Beyond doubt, however, is that the crisis inspired the greatest outpouring ever seen of support for fellow journalists in a distant part of the globe.

The NUJ and the Canadian journalists' union seconded staff members to assist the IFJ verify and catalogue those seeking help. Donations flooded in from individuals and unions to help fund the IFJ's work in Afghanistan - more than £80,000 to date, far the largest portion from NUJ members and branches. Affiliate unions set aside their industrial work to persuade governments and news platforms to step up to the mark, as well

as providing a huge variety of direct aid.

In the UK, the first priority was to pressure the BBC to properly support its staff in Afghanistan. "The BBC's original plan had been to make a sizeable number of staff members effectively redundant and offer them poor financial settlements," says NUJ general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet. "There were approximately 150 staff, 70 of them editorial. The corporation was planning pay offs that, in one member's words, 'would scarcely pay for my funeral'."

Against a backdrop of intense union pressure, and the imminent fall of Kabul, the BBC set up a crisis team to co-ordinate the return of at-risk staff. It made a significant difference, but valuable time was lost and the closure of the airport brought a halt to evacuations. "Some BBC staff are still waiting to get out of the country, and the NUJ is also pushing to bring former BBC journalists to safety who are at significant risk. Big questions also remain over what jobs can be found for Afghan refugees and their families," Michelle said.

The NUJ has also processed hundreds of pleas for help from journalists who are stuck in Afghanistan. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's "high risk unit" has taken in these requests, although it is unclear whether this scheme is effective. In the Republic of Ireland, the union put pressure on the government to include journalists among those offered humanitarian visas.

The scale of the issues facing those who remain in Afghanistan is revealed by a survey of 1,400 journalists undertaken by the Afghan National Journalists Union. It found that two-thirds were not currently "active", that 70 per cent of them had faced threats in the past six weeks, 62 per cent of which came from members of the Taliban.

Nafisa's\* experience is typical. She worked as a reporter for a local TV station in an area that always had a strong Taliban presence. The station's focus was on human rights, and women's

rights in particular. Warnings and death threats by phone and letter from local Taliban officials had been a feature of her life since she started work as a journalist.

The Taliban take-over intensified the threats. "They warned me by phone about the kidnapping of not only me, but also my family. Several times my children were not allowed to go to school. They persecuted them and gave them warnings, saying, 'If we catch your mum and dad, we will kill them.' Because of all these warnings, my children really got scared, cried, worried, and said that they would no longer go to school."

Nafisa is now in hiding. She regularly has to move and is not able to work. "My family and I are in danger. The Taliban's

words are completely opposite to their actions. They tell the media one thing, but in reality they do something else."

Help from the IFJ is making a significant difference, says Jeremy Dear. "A fortnight ago two dozen journalists and their families received emergency assistance packages to help pay their rent and provide food and medicines or to provide phone cards. Journalists, especially women, have been helped to find safe shelter. We have been able to help people leave an area where they are in danger."

The IFJ awarded both the Afghan affiliate unions sizeable grants. There has also been help for some of those already in exile. "Some face very difficult

situations, for example in Pakistan where our affiliate the PFUJ is helping to co-ordinate support for them, especially safe places to stay, or in other countries such as Turkey or Iran where they receive no state support," says Jeremy.

Taken as a whole, it is hard not to be awed by the scale of the response from journalists and the unions that support them – although none of those involved would pretend that it was more than a drop in the ocean compared to the actual level of need.

*\*Name changed at the person's request.*

Donate to the IFJ's Afghan Fund:  
<https://www.ifj.org/safety-fund.html>

## Remember they are human beings

**The terror of being a part of the desperate crush at Kabul airport, among those fleeing in danger of their lives, and the anguish of leaving family and loved ones behind were movingly described by award-winning BBC news producer, Farhad Mohammadi.**

He was speaking from safety in the UK at an NUJ Ethics Council webinar on the ethical reporting of the Afghan crisis, asylum and refugees, chaired by Professor Christ Frost.

Farhad described how the Taliban takeover immediately put him in danger and that he had left behind his parents and sister "in tears, in fear, but in hope". He gave huge thanks to the union's general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet, who had worked so hard to

get journalists and media colleagues out of the country.

Michelle told the meeting how frustrating the situation remained – with the UK government winding down its rescue mission as Taliban commanders were openly menacing those who had worked for western broadcasters. She praised the work of the IFJ, which has had the unenviable task of triaging those in danger and getting the paperwork sorted. "This has all come at a cost," she said and commended the NUJ branches which have so far contributed more than £30,000 to the IFJ's emergency Afghan safety fund.

Jeremy Dear, deputy general secretary of the IFJ, said the money was also being used to support the 67 per cent of the country's journalists who had lost their

jobs as media organisations collapsed because of the economic situation. He said: "Our focus is on the evacuation of journalists, but if they all leave who will shine a light on what the Taliban are doing? So, we are also working with our affiliates in the country to support the industry."

Daniel Trilling, the author of several books on refugees in Europe, said journalists needed to employ ethical principles when reporting on migration, refugees and the situation in Afghanistan and referred to the NUJ's reporting guidelines [[www.nuj.org.uk/learn/reporting-guidance.html](http://www.nuj.org.uk/learn/reporting-guidance.html)] which helped him.

He said incidents, such as migrants' boats arriving in Sicily, often led to a feeding frenzy from reporters and photographers who in their

rush to get the story forgot these were dehydrated, distressed and deeply disorientated human beings.

He warned against making a distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" refugees. In recent years Syrians were portrayed in the press as "deserving" whereas others fleeing conflict, persecution and poverty were not. While certain voices were heard, the plight of people caught up in the civil war in Ethiopia, for example, were not being reported on.

Journalists needed to improve their knowledge so they could call out the Home Secretary when she said the asylum system was collapsing because of people arriving in boats from France – because it wasn't true.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX\\_OXfdcvgo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX_OXfdcvgo)

# Spotlight

Matt Kenyon



## I'm the Culture Secretary... get me out of here

**Frances Rafferty profiles the new Culture Secretary, Nadine Dorries, and examines her to-do list.**

**In the past decade there have been 10 secretaries of state at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, but only one of them has eaten an ostrich's anus on live TV.**

The promotion of Nadine Dorries, the Mid Bedfordshire MP and former *I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here* contestant, to the head the department (which now includes Digital in its moniker) has caused eyebrows to rise. Caroline Lucas, former leader of the Green Party, tweeted: "Satire is dead."

But unnamed Tories who sneered at the appointment of the working-class woman from Liverpool were chastised as sour and snobby. Her former boss, Sir Oliver Letwin, predicted fireworks, telling the BBC: "This is likely to be a spectacle worth watching."

We have observed over the years as a procession of ministers called in briefly on their way up (or down) the greasy pole. They were taken to the ballet, often for the first time, and the lucky ones were there long enough to get tickets to the FA Cup or Wimbledon: characters in the BBC's *W1A* always referred to it as the "Department for Culture, Media... and Sport".

Yet it is an important department. Figures from 2018 showed DCMS sectors (excluding tourism) contributed £224.1 billion to the UK, 11.7 per cent of the economy, with the creative industries making more than £111bn. It covers the arts, the BBC and public service broadcasting, media ownership, gambling, football and other sports, heritage, and the digital economy. Fast broadband is the lifeblood for virtually every job in the land.

This June the government announced a broadcasting White Paper due "in autumn" which would update the Communications Act 2003 by reviewing public service broadcasting, including the privatisation of Channel 4, and the regulation of video-on-demand services. The BBC's licence fee agreement is due for renewal, as is the appointment of the chair of the broadcasting watchdog, Ofcom. The Online Harms legislation, to set out a regulatory framework for online safety, and the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists come under her remit. She has blogged about receiving threats via Twitter and being stalked.

Her new ministerial team are Julia Lopez, Nigel Huddleston, Chris Philp and Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay.

Dorries, known as an ardent pro-Brexiteer, also faces furious arts organisations and musicians over visa requirements for European tours.

She was quick out of the ministerial trap, pictured pulling a pint at the Rovers Return on the Coronation Street set. She attended the Museum of the Year award and Fashion Week "wearing a silk mid-dress in Roksanda's signature retina-searing fuchsia hue", was spotted at the Bond premier and made a speech during London Tech Week.

But the fireworks started during the Conservative Party conference. One of her first acts was to allow the demolition of the Redcar steelworks' Dorman Long tower, reversing its emergency Grade II listing and showed she intended to wield her own wrecking ball across the bastions of the cultural woke and "left-wing snowflakes", including the BBC.

'Snobbish' BBC may not exist in a decade, Nadine Dorries predicts, ran The Times headline. In 2014 she had blogged about the licence fee, saying "a tax on the ownership of a television is a completely outdated concept". This time it was an assault on the BBC needing to be "more accessible to people from all backgrounds, not just people whose mum and dad work there, and how it can become, once again, that beacon for everybody". This argument was somewhat undermined by newspaper reports revealing the Culture Secretary's own act of nepotism by employing two of her daughters in her parliamentary office at a cost of up to £80,000.

She has already been in discussions with Tim Davie, the BBC director general, and Richard Sharp, head of the BBC board. She later told The Telegraph podcast, Chopper's Politics: "The perspective from the BBC is that they will get a settlement and then we'll talk about how they're going to change. But my perspective is, tell me how you're going to change and then you get a settlement." She had apparently joked: "I could almost hear the almond latte cups hitting the floor at the BBC when I got this job."

*"I could almost hear the almond latte cups hitting the floor at the BBC when I got this job."*

She also indicated her support for the sell-off of Channel 4, saying if it wanted to grow and be successful "one of the obvious ways of doing that is for Channel 4 to privatise".

She is no stranger to the books industry after publishing a successful series of "shawl and clogs" sagas which have made her more than £125,000. Her decision to go absent without leave from her constituents to appear in the Australian jungle for the ITV

celebrity show lost her the party whip, temporarily, and got her into hot water for failing to declare her fees. She later registered that her company Averbrook had an income of around £142,000, a profit of £82,000. Previously, she had to pay back £3,000 in expenses claimed that were not to do with her parliamentary duties.

Nadine Dorries, aged 64, was brought up in a Liverpool council house, became a nurse, set up a company providing childcare and later became a director at BUPA. She was first elected to the House of Commons at the 2005 general election and was made a junior health minister by Boris Johnson.

She has never shied away from outspoken views and famously called David Cameron and George Osborne "a pair of posh boys who don't know the price of a pint of milk". She also jumped into the fray when Boris Johnson wrote in his newspaper column that women wearing burqas looked like bank robbers by calling for a ban on full-face veils. Al Jazeera's headline on her promotion was UK culture secretary's 'medieval burqa' comments decried.

Nadine Dorries was the first to be voted out of the jungle by viewers; how long she lasts at the DCMS remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that she will relish her role in what was once known as the Ministry of Fun.

## Journalists' safety

**The NUJ will need to work with Nadine Dorries in making progress with the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists' action plan to ensure journalists can carry out their work free from harassment and attack.**

The aim is to ensure that journalists operating in the UK are as safe as possible, reducing the number of attacks on and threats to media workers and ensuring those who are responsible for such are brought to justice.

The NUJ is putting together a safety toolkit and video and is working with the Society of Authors as part of the

committee's action plan.

Meanwhile the union is supporting members who have found themselves the target of anti-vaxxer activists who have made attacks on media organisations and individual journalists, such as Jeremy Viner.

The union regularly reports attacks on members to the police, including abuse

via social media. Seamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, recently met the National Police Chief's Council, also committee members, and found they were keen to work collaboratively. Plans are afoot to update a training video the NUJ had commissioned for police training.

# Update

## Fight Secrecy!

### Maurice Frankel is director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information

**Our right to know is under constant attack from government. Among a stream of revelations which the authorities would prefer the public not to know about, Freedom of Information (FOI) disclosures have highlighted the UK's lack of preparedness for the Covid-19 pandemic, the dangers of "smart" motorways and guidance which could lead to people being tortured overseas.**

But ministers resist FOI by obstructing requests and trying to exclude new bodies from the FOI Act altogether. Presently, three new laws threaten to water down our power to hold public bodies to account.

The Health and Care Bill establishes a new organisation to investigate and help prevent serious patient safety incidents, but it will be banned from disclosing information under the FOI Act or passing it to a Parliamentary select committee. It will even be a criminal offence for a whistleblower to disclose information about the organisation's work. Even documents showing the new body was failing to follow its own investigation

procedures would be secret under the proposals.

The Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) Bill creates a new group to promote "high risk, high reward" research, with a budget of £800m over four years. It will be excluded from FOI altogether - supposedly to free it from 'bureaucracy'. But as the Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI) has pointed out, many much smaller bodies, including schools, individual GPs and parish councils, cope with requests falling under the Freedom of Information Act on a tiny fraction of ARIA'S budget.

Finally, the Home Office's proposals for reforming the Official Secrets Act will make it easier to convict those who disclose information without

permission and substantially increase sentences for convicted whistleblowers or journalists. Astonishingly, the Home Office says the maximum penalty for leaking information, currently two years imprisonment, should be the same as that for espionage - 14 years. Threatening people who reveal government misconduct with such oppressive penalties will help protect improper behaviour from exposure.

The CFOI was key to getting the FOI Act passed in 2000 and has helped thousands of campaigners, journalists and ordinary citizens make FOI requests and challenge unreasonable refusals to disclose. It has fought off repeated government attempts to sabotage the FOI Act, including the introduction of charges for making requests and moves to block access to MPs' expenses and Whitehall policy discussions.

Unfortunately, in the past few months the CFOI has lost a substantial proportion of its grant income and urgently needs your support. You can contribute to our crowd funder at:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fight-secrecy>

• *The NUJ has called on the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee to hold an inquiry into the Cabinet Office's use of a "clearing house" to monitor FOI requests, saying it was undemocratic for senior politicians to interfere in this way.*



Freedom of Information Act  
2000

#### Future of Media

Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish Secretary, has called on Catherine Martin TD, the culture minister, asking her when the Future of Media Commission's report will be published and consulted on. He said given the enormous challenges, the government must make it a priority. He also expressed concern that the Budget had no

practical, financial measures to assist in the recovery of the industry.

#### Goldsmith cuts

The NEC passed a motion expressing solidarity with staff and students at Goldsmiths, University of London, which is proposing 50 redundancies and putting under threat its pioneering BA History and Journalism

degree programme. The University and College Union has voted for strike action. The NUJ said Goldsmiths should be equipping aspiring young journalists with key skills to interpret the modern world, not engaging in academic vandalism.

#### Pegasus danger

An NUJ motion was passed urging the European

Federation of Journalists to campaign against the surveillance of journalists and the Pegasus spyware which infects iPhones and Android devices and harvests photos, emails and records calls. It has been used to snoop on world leaders, reporters working for CNN, the New York Times and Al Jazeera, lawyers and human rights activists.