

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Informed

issue 24 August 2018

Recruitment drive is key to NUJ's future

The national executive council has thrown down a challenge to all members to help boost the union by supporting a major recruitment drive.

A massive campaign is required if the union is to provide the services its members have come to expect following the Delegate Meeting's decision to vote against a subscriptions increase.

Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary, told the NEC the union would need 2,000 new members above its normal recruitment levels to offset the subscription-fee shortfall. "Recruitment must be a priority of all councils and committees if the union is to sustain its level of services - which set the NUJ apart - and preserve its democratic structures plus maintain staffing levels, including filling vacancies," she said.

"This must be driven and led by the lay structures of the union and prioritised in

the coming months if we are to avoid making cuts and taking difficult decisions in a year's time. Many activists at DM called for the union to use recruitment to boost income, rather than raise subscriptions for existing members, and we need to work together to see that commitment crystalised."

Expenditure in the coming cycle includes updating the union's website and database and funding the full programme of campaigns and events agreed at DM, which included a regular contribution to the International Federation of Journalists' safety fund (see page 8).

The NEC voted for a motion which noted that there would have been no subscription increase for six years by the next DM. The UK Consumer Price Index had increased 9 per cent during the past

four years and was likely to rise. This has resulted in a £400,000 shortfall in income for the coming two-year cycle.

The motion said maximum growth was needed in the next financial year to avoid cuts in 2019-20 and instructed the general secretary to produce a recruitment pack, create targets for every chapel, branch, sector, region and nation and present a progress report to the first NEC meeting in 2019.

This session was the newly-elected NEC's first full meeting since DM, with president Sian Jones in the chair. Members were told recruitment was already being boosted by equal pay and gender pay gap campaigns in broadcasting and publishing.

The union had a number of successes to celebrate, including Al-Jazeera's threat of strike action which led to a 9 per cent pay increase over 2 years, and a back-down by STV on cuts following robust action by the chapel. The union is winning compensation for women with equal pay claims at the BBC and other members' claims on a number of industrial issues.

#longest lunch

Chapels were encouraged to organise lunch breaks outside their offices on Thursday 21 June, the longest day of the year, to remind members of their legal right to breaks and the health benefits of having a proper meal rather than eating sandwiches or snacks at the desk. It created a great buzz, said Guardian rep Kathryn Whitfield, while the Leeds branch and Yorkshire Post journalists (pictured) enjoyed a picnic and the NUJ chapel shared cake and fruit.



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Michelle's Message



“As general secretary it is my job to prioritise resources on the things that make a difference to the support, representation and services our members need and deserve”

With the temperature cranking up on a daily basis, you'd hope that employers would give themselves and their staff a bit of a break from the industrial cut and thrust - but it's as busy as ever at the NUJ at the moment. As can be seen from reports to the recent NEC, there are pay negotiations, disputes being mounted and resolved, deals being clinched, submissions being made, and daily interventions aplenty - all testament to the breadth and depth of the union's work on behalf of its members. The need for a robust and principled voice standing up for journalists and journalism is arguably

Why more members are needed to stay a strong, fighting union

greater today than at any time in our history.

That's reason enough for us to be constantly seeking out ways to grow our numbers and boost our collective strength. More members translates as stronger workplaces and stronger voices to deploy on our collective behalf. Despite the challenges of a contracting industry in some sectors, increasing casualisation and wave after wave of job cuts, we've managed to sustain membership levels at around 30,000 in recent years - no mean feat. That we've managed to remain an independent union since our inception in 1907 is an even greater achievement - against a backdrop of trade union consolidation that in some way reflects that in our own industry, with periodic mergers scooping up other craft unions whilst the NUJ battles on.

As general secretary I have been motivated by a “long may this continue” approach to our political and therefore financial independence. That's how we got through the challenges of tackling our financial problems, putting a Recovery plan in place and delivering its commitments, renovating our head office and sole asset Headland House, a move solidified in its enhanced value and ability to earn income through the letting of floors and meeting room space. Our subscription income, however, is what allows us to function, what drives our core expenditure - the largest chunks of which are legal services, our offices and of course our staff. A basic responsibility as general secretary is to ensure we can wash our own face - prioritising resources on the things that make a difference to the support, representation

and services our members need and deserve.

So it is frustrating to come away from our delegate meeting in April with that ability impaired, after not securing the two-thirds majority vote needed to agree a subscription increase. It was a modest rise, but collectively would have amounted to almost £400,000 over the next two years until the next delegate meeting. Without it, come DM in 2020 we'll have had no increase to subs for 6 years, during which time even if membership levels remain static our income will have effectively been cut year on year. Failing to secure that means no prospect of an increase in subs until late in 2020 - if such an increase is agreed by delegates to that conference.

It also means once again having to sit with the three staff unions the NUJ negotiates, having discussions on the potential impact on current resources, pay and future staffing. My starting point is that we're not in a crisis, it'll be a challenging year ahead but we'll get through it. Our main priority is to follow through on the various commitments made by delegates at DM in April - notably the need to recruit new members and raise our income levels through that effort. To get through the next financial year and face the one ahead without seeing any further impact on our staffing levels and quality of our services means we have a sizeable job on our hands - collectively we need to recruit 2,000 new members on top of normal recruitment in that period.

To achieve that we need all parts of the union to rise to that challenge. All councils and committees will be expected to prioritise recruitment in

their work over the coming cycle, and we will be setting goals for all parts of the union. The financial imperative will hopefully provide a strategic focus and momentum to work that will pay off with greater industrial strength and reach.

There is no shortage of places to focus recruitment efforts. One example is a campaign we'll be launching next month, when we'll be working with our sister union BECTU on a recruitment initiative at Sky's Osterley base in west London. With a change of ownership is an opportunity to dismantle the anti-union culture Murdoch has presided over throughout his dominance in journalism. If anyone who wants to help out with this campaign, please get in touch. Colleagues on the Freelance Industrial Council have already come up with ideas to attract new freelances into the NUJ and boost retention amongst existing members.

In Ireland, the victory over collective bargaining rights for freelances is also going to be developed into a campaign to recruit and organise freelance members. And some branches - including London Freelance Branch - are stepping up their work on recruiting student members, planning a presence in freshers' events at the start of the new autumn terms and organising social evenings to encourage new aspiring journalists to find about the NUJ and get engaged in the union's activities.

We'll also be publishing soon a list of meetings and skills-based events taking place at Headland House. These include workshops on Using your writing skills to create radio and TV drama; Using social media to generate freelance work; Self-publishing with e-books; and Podcasting. We're hoping to follow up on the huge success of the Audience with Harold Evans with more "evening with" events.

So what can members do to help with this recruitment push? This is definitely an example of how you can help your union help you. Our national officers and committee officers have already begun the task of engaging members in this initiative - so expect more contact from them soon. For starters - who around

you can you recruit? Every member recruiting another would obviously have a transformative effect on the NUJ. What can you do in your workplace? If you have recognition, how about setting up a 100 per cent campaign, trying to raise density to its maximum potential? If you're somewhere that has no formal recognition agreement, get together with some NUJ colleagues and work up a plan to organise for a better voice at work. If you're working as a freelance, are there other networks you engage in

that could prove fertile ground to attract new members to the union? If there are universities and colleges in your area, how about working with branch colleagues to host an event for student journalists? Student members of today have the potential to be the NUJ activists of the future.

Let us know what you are doing, so your efforts can inspire other NUJ colleagues to get active. If you need help or have other recruitment ideas email us at campaigns@nuj.org.uk.

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News Update

Major cuts loom across the BBC as political coverage slashed

Major cuts at the BBC were looming, Michelle Stanistreet told the NEC, and a number of redundancy consultations were already in train in TV current affairs, Panorama, BBC Mobile and Online, Radio division, Monitoring and the Nepali, Indonesian and Urdu services.

BBC parliamentary staff told the union drastic cuts to political coverage would be a disservice to viewers and listeners. The Daily Politics is to be axed and the Sunday Politics replaced by a shorter programme. This represents a reduction of about two hours of network politics coverage on BBC1 and BBC2 a week and the loss of eight journalism jobs.

The Day in Parliament and the Week in Parliament, roundups and explanations of the day's/week's events across



Andrew Neil: his coverage will be cut

the Palace of Westminster will also go.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said: "The suggestion that political coverage should be undermined at this time suggests the BBC senior decision-makers lack an appreciation of the vital role the corporation plays."

BBC

The union will monitor the BBC's redeployment process and oppose any compulsory redundancies.

A deal on full-scale changes to terms and conditions at the corporation in the past two years were accepted by more than 58 per cent of members balloted, including a three-year pay deal of 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 2.5 per cent (or licence fee, whichever is higher). The next stage of the process is the implementation of the proposals, including setting up a number of task groups to evaluate such issues as night and weekend working.

The union is also taking part in the on-air talent review which will include new contracts for freelancers, a different freelance fee framework and revised staff contracts for a number of members.

Broadcasting News

Threats of strike action by the union resulted in a back-down on job cuts at **STV** plus a nine-per cent pay rise over 2 years at **Al Jazeera English** – and the company has since improved its consideration of other outstanding issues... At **RTÉ**, staff welcomed the outcome of a legal review of work contracts and called for rapid implementation of the changes... **ITN** settled its pay claim at 3.5 per cent on the first £50,000

of salary, a much better deal than the 2 per cent for the non-union production unit, which includes Channel 5 news... **ITV** will start pay talks in September and expectations will be high, given the company's strong business performance... The NEC gave approval if the union needed to take industrial action at **Red Bee Media** over pay... The union has had several meetings at **Al Araby** on the long-standing issue of the channel's failure to recognise the NUJ and the next steps

will include the IFJ in negotiations... Jeremy Wright, the new culture secretary, gave Rupert Murdoch the go-ahead to buy the 61 per cent of **Sky** he does not already own. The battle for Sky took a new turn when Comcast, the US media and cable company, said it was dropping its pursuit of 21st Century Fox to concentrate instead on a take-over of the broadcaster. Murdoch has until 8 August to submit a new bid for Sky. A recruitment drive with Bectu will start at Sky's site in west London.

ITN's BAME pay targets

Data published by ITN, which provides news to ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, showed staff from black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds were typically paid a fifth less than white colleagues. The median hourly pay for a BAME employee was 20.8 per cent lower; the median bonus gap was 50 per cent. ITN now has targets, including halving the BAME pay gap within five years; 20 per cent of BAME employees to be in the top 20 earners; and having at least one BAME candidate for every role. The broadcaster said it was one of the first media organisations to choose to make its BAME pay gap public.

NUJ gets red-carpet treatment

Freelance organiser Pamela Morton reported a constructive and helpful meeting at Freuds, organiser of celebrity premieres and award ceremonies, to discuss the system of press accreditation for red-carpet events.

The union took the opportunity to discuss how the system, due to be reviewed in October, could be improved to benefit photographer members.

The behaviour of certain celebrity photographers came under fire in a Private Member's Bill which would have made "upskirting", taking a photo up a woman's dress or skirt without her knowledge or consent, a specific offence. The bill was blocked by Tory MP, Sir Christopher Chope, but the government



Helpful talks on press accreditation

said it would bring forward its own bill and Theresa May said she would ensure that the most serious offenders would be added to the sex offenders register.

Fair terms not their terms: payments plea

The British government's small business commissioner has called for a round-table meeting of publishers to discuss the union's call for action to stop payment by publication and derisory kill fees.

Paul Uppal responded to a representation from the union by Pamela Morton, freelance organiser, and Tim Dawson, past president, to discuss the NUJ's Fair Terms not Their Terms

: campaign against late payments and poor freelance rates and contracts.

Pamela Morton said: "The small business commissioner was very attentive; he had a clear grasp of the issues and seemed determined to take our demands to the publishers."

A meeting of members at Headland House, the union's London HQ, in April agreed to launch a strategy to insist on the basic entitlements

: that sole traders in virtually every other sector take for granted: payment of fees as agreed, remuneration within 30 days of invoice and respect for authors' rights. The meeting heard from members who had suffered hardship while waiting to be paid for commissioned work.

If you have had a bad experience with late payment or other issues, email us at freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk

Celebrating Connolly with a view to freelance rights

The 150th anniversary of the birth of James Connolly, trade unionist, journalist and executed leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, was celebrated by a joint NUJ/Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) seminar, Fighting for Freelances, in the magnificent setting of Dublin's Mansion House.

The seminar marked the first anniversary of the legislation restoring trade union rights to workers. Supported by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the unions had led a 20-year campaign for the law and the event discussed the best ways to use the newly-restored right to be represented by a trade union.

Connolly was a freelance journalist so it was fitting that the theme of the day was organising and recruiting workers in the media, arts and culture sectors.

Broadcaster, Bernie Ni Fhlatharta, and distinguished author, playwright and columnist, Colin Murphy, outlined the plight of freelance journalists. Members added their testimonies about the difficulties of working in the gig economy and Maynooth University law lecturer, Michael Doherty, gave an overview of the significance of the legislation.

Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary, said the unions were committed to joint co-operation in the area of organising and recruiting freelance workers across the sectors.



Colin Murphy: speaking for freelances

News Update

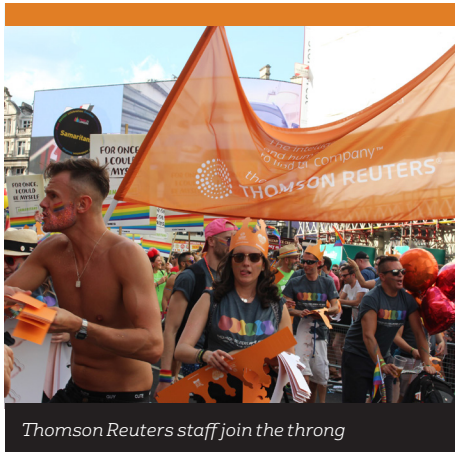
Parading with Pride

LGBT+ workers were to the fore as media companies, including Thomson Reuters, Random Penguin, the Financial Times and the BBC, took part in a hot Saturday's London Pride.

The NUJ, together with the Federation of Entertainment Unions, provided wristbands so its members could join the hundreds of thousands on the parade opened by the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the women and equalities minister, Penny Mordaunt.

The celebration came one day after the TUC's LGBT+ conference in London where the NUJ flagged up positive press coverage of LGBT matters by promoting the work of two of its members, Emilia Bona and Josh Parry of the Liverpool Echo, for their weekly Queer Liverpool podcast which "covers queer culture with a distinctly Scouse voice".

Séamus Dooley, assistant general



Thomson Reuters staff join the throng

secretary, urged unions to recognise that not all media organisations gave a negative press to LGBT issues and journalists often had no influence on editorial policy. The conference backed sending a motion supporting gender self-declaration to go to TUC Congress.

Project Diamond

Project Diamond, the broadcasting industry's diversity project, was criticised by a motion supported by the NUJ's delegates to the TUC's Black Workers' Conference, who argued that a more accurate, comprehensive picture of diversity, both in front of the camera and behind it, was needed. The data needed to be collected on a programme by programme basis, not by genre, they said, if it was to be useful. The motion called on the Federation of Entertainment Unions to lobby Ofcom to set equality employment and commissioning targets for broadcasters, including independent production companies, and introduce penalties if they failed.

Progress on parity

A list of top BBC earners, published as part of the corporation's annual report this month, showed most were white men and demonstrated there is more work to be done, said the general secretary. The stats of the previous year failed, however, to reflect the significant changes pushed by the unions and implemented over the last six months, progress reported to the NEC. The union is beginning to settle a number of its 180 equal pay cases, including presenter Carrie Gracie's, with some women receiving substantial increases and compensation. The BBC is also in the process of

publishing the results of its five diversity work-streams – focused on disability, BAME, women, LGBT, and socio-economic diversity and progression. The Guardian published its 2018 gender pay figures showing a median gender gap of 6.1 per cent among editorial staff, much lower than between non-editorial, and a range of measures introduced to end the discrepancy. The Financial Times has reduced its pay gap, with the median falling slightly from 19.4 per cent last year to 18.4 per cent.

Scrap universal credit

The NUJ's Disability Members' Council described the government's roll-out

of universal credit as a shambles, saying it had caused hardship and made it more difficult for disabled workers to find employment. Its remarks followed a highly critical report of the policy by the National Audit Office. Delegates at the TUC's Disabled Workers' conference agreed a motion calling for universal credit to be scrapped should go to Congress.

PR's pay shame

The gender pay gap in the PR and comms industry is 21 per cent, an increase from 2016, according to a census produced by industry body, Public Relations and Communications Association. The gap has

grown from 17.8 per cent and is the equivalent of £11,364 (£2,253 more than two years ago).

Watch your language

Too often in the media disabled people are named as either "tragic, scroungers or superhuman" and this allowed the government to put in place policies making their lives considerably worse, Natasha Hirst, NUJ delegate, told the TUC's Disabled Workers' Conference. She criticised Project Diamond, saying it counted non-disabled actors playing disabled in its figures and called on Ofcom to introduce penalties to broadcasters which fail to represent disabled people.

Spotlight

Journalists called on to give evidence

Ana Jaks



The Cairncross Review into the UK's press is the union's chance to have its say

The meeting, which took place in an airless eyrie at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in Whitehall, was possibly one of the most important in the union's recent history.

The Cairncross inquiry is a government-commissioned independent review into the future and sustainability of high-quality journalism in the UK. The union has long called for such a review and, while welcoming its announcement earlier this year, was critical that the inquiry's advisory panel did not include the voice of the grassroots journalist.

Now we had our chance.

Michelle Stanistreet had been called in by Frances Cairncross and her team for a face-to-face meeting. The NUJ's general secretary said there was a case for state funding of public-interest journalism.

It could be used to rescue titles that were under threat from closure, for start-ups and for collaborative ventures and projects producing innovative and investigative reporting.

But, she warned Dame Frances, it must not be used to prop up the broken model of the "big three" newspaper groups – Reach (formerly Trinity Mirror), Newsquest and Johnston Press – which over the decades had bled their titles dry to pay out excessive profits to executives and shareholders and had not invested in journalism.

A report by the Mediatique consultancy, commissioned by the DCMS, revealed newspaper revenues from circulation and print advertising had plunged by more than half during the past decade, from almost £7bn to just over £3bn, and journalist numbers fell by 26 per cent,

down from 23,000 to 17,000. Michelle said the union's experience, particularly in local newspapers, was that the staff levels in many newsrooms had been cut by more like half.

Dame Frances said she wanted to hear how the union had reacted to the cuts in the industry and the support and training it had provided for members and the inquiry's team asked to meet reps and members working in the industry.

The union will be emphasising the levels of stress journalists suffer, plus their poor pay, and the effect that has on their well-being and ability to do their job.

The NUJ will work with organisations, such as the Media Reform Coalition, Media Standards Trust, The Bureau, The Media Fund and hyperlocals to examine media plurality, new business models of paying for journalism, such as crowd sourcing, subscriptions and pay-walls and call for a levy on Facebook, Google and the other digital giants to pay for public-interest journalism. The internet organisations have been using newspapers' content while taking away their advertising revenue and it was time they paid up, Michelle told Dame Frances.

Get in touch

We need to provide the Review with case studies and figures demonstrating the level of cuts in newsrooms and how they have affected quality journalism and community news. How the government can help revive the industry? What can we learn from new enterprises in journalism? Send your contributions to campaigns@nuj.org.uk by Monday 3 September.

NUJ's two-year plan

While recruitment will be the priority, DM has set out a huge programme including a review of the union's structures and campaigns for better wages, gender parity and equal pay, more equality reps and a boost in training

Union modernisation

The NUJ will review ways to modernise the union's democracy and structures and consult on how DM can be made more effective; delegates from the past three DMs will be surveyed. With almost a third of the membership now freelance, a significant proportion of the membership is no longer based in the workplace. The union has been given a "clean sheet" to put forward a blueprint to take account of the situation and change the way it is organised.

Future of the media

The union's frequent calls for an inquiry into the UK press have been realised by the Cairncross Review (see page 7). It will showcase members' good work and liaise with organisations promoting new journalism models. The Irish Executive Council will lobby for a Commission on the Future of Media in Ireland.

There will be another Local News Matters Week, ensuring that "the issue of media ownership and control is highlighted". Chapels will promote the value of local newspapers in their communities. A Reps' Summit will bring together staff workers and freelancers to "encourage better exchange of good practice in industrial activity", including a session on equality reps' training.

The union will campaign against

work-related stress with local activities, promote health and safety training and call on employers to introduce training for managers on mental health and workplace pressures.

A wages campaign will lobby for a pay rise for media workers, action on gender pay gaps and unequal pay, a minimum payment of the Living Wage and professional fees for professional work, including images.

Training and skills

The union provides a full programme for reps, including its three-stage reps' course, plus training on health and safety, dealing with bullying, equality, developing confidence and a new workshop on pensions. The union will boost its training of equality reps and support the journalists dealing with equality issues in their work. The

Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) runs England-wide, free, professional development workshops and NUJ Scotland and NUJ Wales offer government-funded courses for journalists. More online training will be available for members and the

NUJ will work with education providers, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) to ensure disabled students and journalists do not face barriers to the profession.

Journalists' safety

The union's health and safety (H&S) committee will collaborate with organisations such as the Rory Peck Trust, an international NGO that supports freelance journalists in crisis, and Dart Centre Europe, which campaigns for effective reporting on violence and trauma, to provide written

guidance for journalists on how avoid the effects of trauma and will lobby employers who send staff and freelancers to hazardous environments to provide training in minimising risks. The H&S committee will lead work to prevent workplace harassment and establish suitable policies as part of house agreements, including raising

awareness of cyberbullying, how to deal with it and how to report it.

See you in court?

A survey to establish the extent of court reporting in the UK and Ireland, what barriers it faces and journalists' lack of access to special courts will be set up and the results will be disseminated via the NUJ's Parliamentary Group to relevant departments of the UK and Irish governments. A skills-based event will be organised and the union will liaise with the NCTJ and BJTC. The health and safety council will also highlight incidences of reporters being attacked while using mobile phones to take pictures outside courts.

Improving equality

The union will launch "a union-wide campaign to end discrimination in pay



and opportunities for women journalists, mobilising organisation and recruitment around this vital issue among chapels and greenfield sites”, starting with setting up an NUJ Women network, and arranging events and virtual webinars to raise awareness of ways to eradicate gender pay gap. Reps will be provided with training and support to negotiate action plans with employers and share best-practice models, based on transparency of pay and family-friendly policies, to combat discrimination in NUJ workplaces.

The union will support the #Metoo and other online campaigns to expose “endemic sexual abuse” and will build on the work of the Stronger Voice for Women in Scotland project to create a climate conducive to eradicating sexual harassment, including an online awareness campaign on cyberbullying. The FEU will hold an event for members in the autumn on sexual harassment in the workplace and canvas unions’ responses.



Parliamentary programme

The union will continue to work in parliament with its cross-party group of MPs and peers to address issues including: campaigning for public-sector intervention in Britain and Ireland to create more jobs in journalism; a Private Member’s Bill to protect copyright and authors’ rights; the protection of whistleblowers; reform of TUPE rules on safeguarding employees’ terms



and conditions to ensure they prevent union derecognition following company take-overs; the scrapping of universal credit; establishing a National Care Service; the repeal of the Trade Union Act; improved employment legislation and protection of workers’ rights and freedom of movement after Brexit; a crackdown of non-payment of taxes by multinational enterprises such as Google, Facebook and Amazon; imposing a nuclear ban treaty; ending “if and when” payment contracts in Ireland; continuing to lobby for Leveson 2; and effective press regulation.

International

The union will fight for press freedom and journalists’ safety across the globe. It will make a regular contribution to the IFJ’s safety fund and branches will be encouraged to mark International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on Friday 2 November. The union continues to support colleagues in the BBC Persian Service who are being intimidated by the Iranian government.



FIGHTING FOR EQUAL PAY NUJ

address the gender imbalance in the sector – women comprise only 17 percent of its members – and investigate

ways the union can support and encourage women photographers and videographers. **The NEC will investigate**

more ways to encourage young journalists to become members, launch a young members’ network and develop a strategic plan for recruitment and retention of younger journalists. The New Media Industrial Council will commission **a report into the impact of automation on the profession**, examining the advantages and threats technology poses to journalists’ jobs.

Surveillance: work will continue with the UK Parliamentary Group, Irish Parliament and civil liberty groups to counter attacks on journalists’ rights; attempts to increase mass surveillance powers and meta-data gathering; and will create materials to help members safeguard their sources. The NUJ will monitor the **Local Democracy Reporters’ scheme** and recruit the reporters. The union will help **hyperlocals** gain access to journalist and commercial training. Support will continue for the **Women Against State Pension Inequality’s** campaign and **fair state pensions** in the UK and Ireland.

Other actions... The Photographers’ Council will

International

Shot, attacked, arrested, and dehumanised...

Mussa Qawasma



Photographer Musa Al-Shaer is helped by medics after being shot in the back

Yet as the violence escalates, there is no shortage of Palestinian journalists willing to put their lives on the line

Three months ago Musa Al-Shaer was shot in the back. Six years ago he had felt a pain in his chest and right hand; he had been struck by the same-style rubber-coated metal bullets.

He describes himself as lucky. On Friday 6 April, his colleague, Yaser Murtaja, was shot with live ammunition by snipers and died the following day.

Neither Musa nor Yaser are soldiers or members of a militia. They were doing their jobs as journalists, clearly identified as press on their protective vests and helmets. Yaser was filming a series of protests in Gaza, known as the Great March of Return, commemorating the events of 1948 when Palestinians were expelled from their homes after the creation of Israel. He left behind him a wife

and child. He was one of nine Palestinian men killed in a space of a few hours.

A week later Ahmad Abu Hussein, Yaser's fellow journalist, was shot dead by an Israeli sniper; again he was clearly identified as press.

During his 35 years as a journalist Musa had been shot, attacked, arrested, verbally abused and dehumanised, he told an NUJ meeting in Parliament. His union, the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS), recorded more than 909 violations against Palestinian journalists in 2017.

Also on the platform with Musa were Nasser Abu Bakar, PJS president, and Moaid Allami, president of the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) and executive member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). They were in London as

guests of the NUJ and the IFJ to publicise the plight of journalists in Palestine and the Middle East.

Nasser Abu Baker told the Westminster meeting of MPs and journalists the tactics deployed to silence journalists were "many and varied — restrictions on movement, the refusal by the Israeli authorities to acknowledge press cards... the seizure and often destruction of equipment, detentions of journalists and the use of lethal and targeted force".

He told MPs they must use their influence to protest against proposed legislation which would make it an offence, with a prison sentence of up to 10 years, for taking a picture of an Israeli soldier. The bill was proposed by Robert Ilatov, a member of the Knesset and the chairman of the right-wing nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party. The ban would cover social networks as well as traditional media.

The meeting was told the number of violations against the press working in Gaza and the West Bank had escalated by more than a third (37 per cent) since the previous year, and the PSJ members said the situation had been exacerbated by Donald Trump's policies and his decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The FAJ's Moaid Allami said Iraq had had the highest number of journalists killed in the world following the American invasion of Iraq. Since 2003, 474 journalists had been executed and hundreds more had been injured, he said. "There have been two attempts to assassinate me, resulting in serious injuries. The head of the union in Iraq before me was murdered," he added.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, told the meeting: "Every ones of these violations represent a human

tragedy – journalists injured, journalists imprisoned, journalists beaten, journalists prevented from working and journalists fined.” She described how, in a visit to Ramallah a couple of years ago, she saw first-hand the pressures and dangers colleagues in the PSJ faced day in and day out just doing their job.

She said the recent killings described by the PSJ were war crimes under international law and there must be a transparent investigation: “We have seen blatant lies told by the Israeli government to justify these killings. The treatment of journalists and media workers as terrorists is an outrage that must stop.”

The meeting was chaired by Liz Saville Roberts, co-chair of the NUJ’s Parliamentary Group, and she and Graham Morris, Labour MP, and Brendan O’Hara, SNP, paid tribute to the journalists and said they would continue to press for a two-state solution and would publicise the abuse of journalists’ and human rights described.

Before the evening’s meeting, the delegation, led by Jim Boumelha, NUJ national executive member and IFJ treasurer, had held a series of meetings with Alastair Burt, foreign minister, Fabian Hamilton, shadow minister for peace and disarmament, and Richard Burgon, the shadow justice minister. That very day Alastair Burt and MPs had taken part in an emergency debate about the Israeli attempt to bulldoze the villages of Khan al-Ahmar and Abu Nuwar. Alastair Burt said he condemned the action which would “strike a major blow to prospects of a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital”.

The Palestinians’ busy schedule continued for the next two days, with interviews with the press and meetings at the TUC and with journalists from the BBC, Financial Times and The Guardian. At a meeting with staff from the BBC’s Persian service, they heard about incidences of intimidation and harassment of journalists and their families by the Iranian authorities and the NUJ’s campaign for action by the international community. The women

Just a typical day in the office

On Monday 14 May, journalists covering protests in Gaza were injured when Israeli military opened fire on Palestinian protesters along the Gaza border. The International Federation of Journalists, the Federation of Arab

Journalists and the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate strongly condemned the brutal and indiscriminate use of lethal force. The Israeli army fired live ammunition, tear gas and firebombs at protesters after thousands of Palestinians demonstrated to mark the 70th anniversary in commemoration of their

forced displacement from Israel and the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem. According to the Palestinian health ministry, at least 58 Palestinians were killed on Monday, including six children. The IJF identified nine journalists who were covering the events among the injured.

said sexist tactics to shame them, such as publishing their heads Photoshopped on to pornography and being accused of flirting with male colleagues, were being used.

The delegation also took a trip into deepest Islington, north London, to meet Jeremy Corbyn at a stuffy community centre where he does constituency work. The Labour leader listened keenly and asked many questions while pledging his support.

Despite the terrible danger faced by the press, Musa Al-Shaer said there was no shortage of Palestinian journalists prepared to put their lives on the line to record and report on the atrocities in the region.

“These attacks and violations of press freedoms from the Israelis push us to continue and make us more determined to continue. Lots of people are joining the profession because they need to tell our story under the occupation.”

NUJ



Michelle Stanistreet and the delegation meet Jeremy Corbyn

News Update

NUJ warns of danger of Richard verdict

The union has added to voices across the industry by saying that the verdict on the Cliff Richard case has serious implications for press freedom.

The pop singer will receive £850,000 to cover his legal costs from the BBC following its report that he was being investigated by police over claims of historic child abuse. No charges were brought against him. Justice Mann, who heard the case, said that a suspect had a reasonable right to privacy when being investigated by the police, fuelling fears

that the press will be blocked from pre-charge reporting.

Following the ruling, the Conservative MP Anna Soubry asked whether it was time for the government to consider introducing “Cliff’s Law” banning the naming of criminal suspects by the media until they were charged. The BBC’s appeal against the High Court ruling was rejected and it now must decide whether to go directly to the Court of Appeal.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: “The judgment has serious implications for media freedom in the UK and the coverage of criminal cases in future.

“Journalists should be free to report on ongoing police investigations as they do so on a daily basis without any threat to individual rights. Journalists must be careful in balancing rights when reporting matters under police investigation, but in stating that the very act of naming Sir Cliff Richard, a very well-known public figure, was unlawful

Landmark decision

The Irish Times Trust has acquired Landmark, the company which published the Irish Examiner and Echo Newspapers, along with regional newspaper titles and radio stations.

The company says it will honour all existing agreements and liaise with trade unions before implementing any changes. Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary, welcomed the commitment to maintaining the editorial independence of the newspapers, which include the Western People, Roscommon Herald and Leinster Leader titles.

• Staff at The Irish Times have voted by an overwhelming majority to accept an interim agreement on pay, which included a 1.5 per cent one-off pensionable payment of annual base salary, and a €1,600 payment from the company profit share scheme.

could establish a legal precedent which would impede journalism and put celebrities at risk of falsely inflated rumours circulating on the internet and elsewhere.”

ZUMA Press, Inc. / Alamy Stock Photo



Cliff Richard verdict 'a threat'

BuzzFeed vote

It was the relentless anti-union campaign led by the company which led to staff voting against being represented by the NUJ for collective bargaining. The work of NUJ activists at BuzzFeed was praised by national organiser, Laura Davison, who said: “We’ll continue to work with our members at the company and support them.” Jonah Peretti, BuzzFeed’s founder and chief executive had told

staff that he did not think “unionisation” was the right idea for the company. The NUJ BuzzFeed chapel said: “BuzzFeed poured considerable resources into challenging our bid for recognition and we have had to contend with a protracted legal process that has at times eclipsed the positive change we’ve been trying to achieve.”

Support Télam
More than 350 journalists,

40 per cent of the workforce, have been sacked by the Argentine news agency Télam. The dismissals are an attack on union organisation and put at risk the future of the whole agency. They represent a brutal attempt by the government to control the editorial content of the agency. The sackings have been ruled unlawful by the courts, but the government refused to reinstate the journalists.

The NUJ has joined the International Federation of Journalists #SomosTélam campaign to put pressure on the Argentinian government to stop its attack. Members of the Union of Press Workers of Buenos Aires have staged demonstrations and are considering a complaint to the International Labour Organisation. Go to the NUJ’s website to see how you can help: <https://bit.ly/2mDJc3J>