



# July 2024 Branch

*June has been a super-busy month for the NUJ, hosting a conference of international journalist union leaders, holding strike action at Springer Nature and dealing with more bad news of job cuts, but also good news of the release of Julian Assange.*

**T**here are times, however, when you know all the hard work and anxiety has been worth it. After a four-year struggle we won recognition at the Press Association. The Central Arbitration Committee, which oversees union recognition bids, ruled that we had proved our case and there was no need to force the ballot the management wanted. Mingled among the tears of joy were those of sheer relief.

It has been a huge slog against a management which has fought us at every step, but whose heavy-handed approach – including sending letters to the homes of staff telling them to resist recognition – played into our hands. It's a huge tribute to the tenacity of our reps and officials during this drawn-out and roller-coaster ride, the grinding bureaucracy and endless hoop-jumping involved in the process. Looking forward, the chapel said: "We now want to work with the company to improve things within our workplace to make PA the best it can be."

We also hosted the International Federation of Journalists' executive committee and its annual general meeting late last month. In my speech I emphasised the importance of trust – research shows it is becoming eroded as social media influences vie for eyeball time with the regulated press and recent studies reveal the underfunding and undermining of public service broadcasting around the world. I gave a sneak preview of our updated News Recovery Plan, ahead of its unveiling and endorsement at our NEC last

weekend. It takes in new threats to the industry, such as the development of generative AI – which alongside its opportunities presents threats to public trust, journalists' rights and jobs – and proposes a set of practical measures to

## 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](mailto:jackiec@nuj.org) to transfer from their management allowances.

**DONATE NOW**

shore up public interest journalism. I hope branches take up the revised News Recovery Plan as enthusiastically as they did when it was first published. You can read our AI expert panel's thoughts on page six.

During our international colleagues' time in London, they visited Belmarsh prison to protest against the incarceration of Julian Assange – a solidarity visit just days before his release after a deal between the US and Australian government. Whilst his release is clearly welcome, the laws that allowed this still exist, and still pose a threat to journalists and journalism. IFJ members also extended solidarity and support to our members at Springer Nature, visiting the picket line on day one



of their strike action – a busy day that ended with a reception in the House of Lords hosted by the NUJ's Parliamentary Group vice-chair Baroness Bonham Carter.

Can I alert you to the election of the next editor of the Journalist magazine. You can find out about the candidates and election details on [the NUJ website](#).

Last but not least – all branch colleagues will have received my email to members on Friday, after I informed the NEC that I would be stepping down as the NUJ's general secretary and facilitating the election of my successor. It has been and continues to be a privilege to lead the NUJ and to ensure the union has remained an independent campaigning trade union that punches above its weight as the voice for journalists and journalism across the UK and Ireland. It will be some months yet before I leave, but I want to pay tribute to the vital role that branches – and the activists that form their beating heart – play in our democracy and look forward to seeing as many colleagues from branches up and down the union as possible before I hand over the general secretarial baton.

**Michelle Stanistreet**

# STRIKE



02

## Springer Nature

*Members at the academic publishers won a double-digit 2 year pay award with their innovative campaign and super-cool picket line, Frances Rafferty reports*

With a score and more of Nobel prize winners, 800 top scientists, actor Stephen Fry and a peer of the realm and his dog named Bob on your side, plus a huge swell of solidarity from NUJ branches, members and chapels, the Springer Nature strikers were up for the fight.

They had rejected a 5.8 per cent offer because wage stagnation and the current costs of living meant they were earning hardly enough to pay their bills, contemplate getting a mortgage and as one member said: "To make ends meet I've sold my car and am forgoing many 'luxuries' — like fun mostly."

Their point was that the company could afford it, having made more than \$500m in operating profit in 2022, a 27 per cent margin, and was advertising for two vice-presidents at \$250,000 apiece. Two strike days down the line, and a letter of support from the Who's Who of the science world urging them to end the nine-month dispute, negotiations were resumed between Springer Nature management and the NUJ, brokered by ACAS, and a deal was agreed.

The outcome was constructive and a new revised package was

emphatically accepted by the vast majority of the NUJ chapel. Just as important, the talks recognised the need to improve the quality and nature of the relationship between the two sides, with a commitment to improved communication and further discussions on workload.

This successful result is a huge credit to the reps, the union's officials and the general secretary. It has also inspired other organisations and publications, such as the Lancet, to boost their chapels and organise. It also showed the value of getting people on the members' side to further validate their claim. The picket line on day one received a visit by the executive committee of the International Federation of Journalists, who were blown away by the carnival atmosphere, with a strikers' soundtrack (check it out on Spotify) blaring out songs and anthems, and home-baked NUJ cookies.

The success came hard on the heels of another notable victory — union recognition at the Press Association, after a four-year long battle. The reps wanted it to be a positive campaign. It had been a tough and frustrating process, and a huge amount of tenacity was required. PA chapel co-chair Emily said: "Be creative, don't

give up, and stay positive! What you want is achievable — even if you're starting from a small base. And, try and have fun along the way."

Jonathan Brady said they were proud that they were able to run such a positive campaign: "We want the company to do well — and for young journalists to see that they have a future and a career path here."

### Play your part

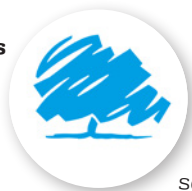
Having the backing from the whole union provides a huge morale boost to members taking industrial action. Whether it is joining strike committees and chapel meetings to offering advice and sharing tactics and insights, to signing petitions, to visiting the local picket line, to tweeting a message of solidarity on social media, it all puts pressure on the management and provides a boost for the members. If these victories have inspired you to take action or boost recruitment contact [campaigns@nuj.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nuj.org.uk) if you need help.

## What the main parties are promising

Frances Rafferty reviews what the party manifestos say about the media



**T**he **Conservative's** manifesto has a pop at the BBC, saying it "should represent the perspectives of the entire nation with diversity of thought, accuracy and impartiality as its guiding principles". It promises it will review the BBC licence and funding and introduce a new complaints process, "so the BBC does not mark its own homework". It will oppose any attempts to re-open the Leveson Inquiry or the royal charter on press regulation. It claims it will support the World Service but does not promise extra funding.



commissioning distinctively British content." Although not in the manifesto, David Lammy, shadow foreign secretary, has said Labour would take action on SLAPPs.

any media market, push through all the reforms proposed in the second part of the 2012 Leveson Report and provide "grants to encourage the growth of a wider range of civic minded local news publishers".

The **Labour Party's** manifesto says very little about the media industry and journalism. It describes the Conservative government's attacks on the BBC as "undermining" and says: "We will work constructively with the BBC and our other public service broadcasters so they continue to inform, educate and entertain people, and support the creative economy by



The **LibDems** support a Leveson-compliant regulation "to ensure privacy, quality, diversity and choice in both print and online media" and proceed with Part Two of the Leveson Inquiry to investigate relations between journalists and the police, in particular what happened at News International. They promise to properly fund the BBC World Service from the Foreign Office budget, support public service broadcasting and increase the Digital Services Tax on social media firms and other tech giants from 2 per cent to 6 per cent. They intend to bring in an anti-SLAPPs law and "support modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules".

**Plaid Cymru** supports the devolution of broadcasting powers to Wales, and the establishment of a Welsh independent Broadcasting Authority. They would instigate a Welsh Freelancers Fund to support the creative sector and push for Wales to be represented at Eurovision.



Under the **SNP**, Gaelic broadcasting would be given a statutory parity of esteem with Welsh-language newscasting and ensure proportional funding for BBC Alba. All major Scottish national team sports would be available on free-to-air channels.



Nigel Farage's **Reform UK** would scrap BBC TV and pass a Free Speech Bill to "legislate to stop left-wing bias and politically correct ideology that threatens personal freedom and democracy".



If elected, the **Greens** would change the law so no single individual or company could own more than 20 per cent of



# #IFJLondon

*The NUJ hosted the International Federation of Journalists' annual general meeting in London*

The loss of trust in journalism, the increase in attacks on media freedom, the threat of AI and the situation in Gaza where 128 journalists have been killed were major themes of the week as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) held its AGM in London.

But there was also optimism that, by working together and providing a collective voice for journalism, the trade unions that make up the IFJ could play a major role in holding power to account, fight for policies that protect journalists' rights and argue for a media rooted in the public good.

It wasn't just words. Fresh from their arrivals in airports and stations across London the IFJ's executive committee members made the trip to Belmarsh prison on the eve of their

conference, where they protested against the incarceration of the WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, in what turned out to be the last few days of his imprisonment. Two days later they had an early breakfast and headed to King's Cross where they offered solidarity to the Springer Nature strikers by joining the lively and jolly picket line.

In her speech to the IFJ conference, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, emphasised the need for the media to regain the trust of its public and she previewed the union's latest version of its News Recovery Plan which provides practical proposals to reset the UK's media and ways to invest in quality journalism. She talked about the NUJ's extensive work on journalists' protection, including its safety toolkit and the planned launch of a tracker in autumn which

will record incidents of threats and abuse. "More importantly," she said, "we've worked to change the culture among journalists - to make people take a step back and realise that harassment and abuse should not - and must not - be seen as part of the job."

Tim Davie, BBC director general, was also a keynote speaker. He outlined the attacks on journalists, with journalism now either completely or partly blocked in about 75 per cent of the world and only one-fifth of the globe living in what are considered to be free countries. A question from Zuliana Lainez, IFJ vice-president and president of the National Association of Journalists in Peru, led to a discussion on how to protect public service broadcasting. The director general said the unions must bring together public institutions and journalists to appeal to the public to support a media which reflects their culture and stories, not one dominated by US and China interests.

The conference scene was set by Dominique Pradalié, IFJ president, who reflected on the 128 media



Michelle Stanistreet



Tim Dawson, Dominique Pradalié & Anthony Bellanger,

Mark Thomas

worker killings this year, more than 100 of them who have perished in the Gaza war, and the 427 journalists in prison. Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, described work the IFJ had done to provide journalists with safety measures in conflict zones, including a media solidarity centre in Khan Younis. A second centre is planned in the North-West of Rafah, based on seven centres already functioning in Ukraine.

The IFJ members heard from Nasser Abu Baker, president of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, at a House of Lords reception. He described the terrible conditions and hardships his members endure to get news reports out of Gaza while being targeted by the Israeli Defence Force. The reception was hosted by Baroness Bonham-Carter, co-chair of the NUJ's Parliamentary Group, who spoke of her friendship with Marie Colvin, the Sunday Times journalist killed while covering the 2012 siege of Homs in Syria. It was also a chance for delegates to network and sample the House of Lords' famous fish and

chips canapés.

Motions passed included one of solidarity with Sudanese journalists and another on the impending trial for those charged with the assassination of the Greek crime reporter, Giorgos Karaivaz, who was gunned down by two men outside his home in Athens on 9 April 2021.

The IFJ's executive committee also endorsed a **call of action on AI**, proposed by Tim Dawson, its deputy general secretary.

**Conference reports**



Nasser Abu Baker



Tim Dawson



Visit to Houses of Parliament



# Artificial intelligence

*Bea Bennett reflects on a stellar IFJ panel considering AI's role in journalism at home and abroad*

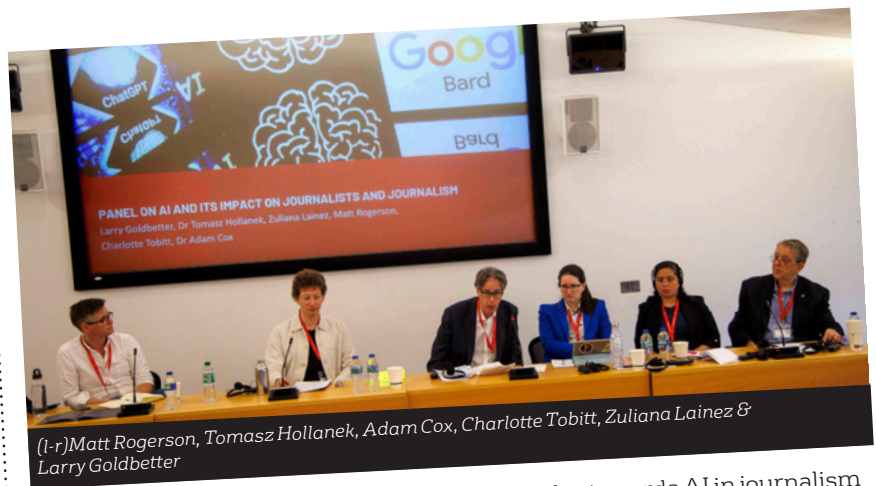
One of the essential aspects of journalism is truth," said International Federation of Journalists' vice-president, Zuliana Lainez, as she reflected on what had become a central theme in the panel discussion on artificial intelligence and its impact on journalists and journalism.

The session, organised by the NUJ as part of the IFJ's annual general meeting in London, saw lively discussion among global representatives keen to explore what action could be taken to protect the work carried out by journalists worldwide.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, addressing the audience in an earlier speech, stressed the need for global solutions to tackle issues stemming from generative AI. The audience indicated their agreement with applause, a timely reminder for all that it is our solidarity, and our collective strength in advocating for members, that ensures the protection of journalists' rights.

The NUJ's AI campaign, which calls for transparency by tech giants and an end to the hoovering up of journalists' content, aligns with IFJ demands that journalists have a seat at the negotiating table if and when licensing decisions are agreed by media companies and developers.

Matt Rogerson, former acting chief



(l-r) Matt Rogerson, Tomasz Hollanek, Adam Cox, Charlotte Tobitt, Zuliana Lainez & Larry Goldbetter

communications and live officer at the Guardian Media Group, offered food for thought when questioning what journalism would mean for the public if the only way to protect it from unlawful use by tech companies was to place it behind a paywall. How would access to information on local communities and scrutiny of our leaders be provided?

The Guardian has been lobbying government on copyright to ensure the protection of its content and stresses the need for urgent regulatory reform. But what does the public think of AI-generated news? The Reuters Institute's 2024 **Digital News Report** reveals that of 2,000 people sampled in the UK, 63 per cent are uncomfortable using news produced mostly by AI, with only 10 per cent comfortable with this approach. As publishers find ways to adopt AI into workflows, public

attitudes towards AI in journalism should be at the forefront of minds, with consideration given to the impact on our news ecosystem if there is an erosion of trust among audiences.

Charlotte Tobitt, UK editor at trade title Press Gazette, highlighted examples of how AI might be positively used by publishers, for example transcription. But it was her words "for all the things that it may attempt to replace, there's lots undertaken by journalists that AI cannot replace" that rang true for many in the audience.

The use of generative AI also raises questions on media literacy, as noted by panel members, academics Dr Adam Cox and Dr Tomasz Hollanek; the NUJ has called for a nationwide media literacy initiative to help tackle mis- and disinformation in its revamped News Recovery Plan.

# Global unions meet in Ramallah

*Tim Dawson, IFJ deputy general secretary, joins a solidarity mission to the West Bank*

**H**istory crowds in as you approach the Allenby crossing. It spans the Jordan river, linking the Kingdom of Jordan with the occupied West Bank. The Dead Sea is close by and Jericho is the nearest settlement.

The crossing serves as the West Bank's only point of exit to a country other than Israel. It is not in Palestinian control, however. Immediately over the bridge, Israel operates a check point, charging for entry and often detaining people before letting them through.

The road from the border traverses dramatic sandy mountains. Israeli settlements line many of their ridges. When we arrive in Ramallah the evening coffee shops aren't empty but usual street life bustle has been subdued since 7 October. Modern cars fill the streets while donkey wagons are also a common sight.

Our first engagement was with Shafer Saed, general secretary of the Palestinian General Federation of Trades Unions. He greets us with bleak news. Since the war, 200,000 workers from the West Bank who were employed in Israel are barred from their jobs. The West Bank's population is slightly less than three million, so unemployment of such a large portion of the workforce has dealt a huge blow to a fragile economy.

Tim Dawson

This situation is exacerbated by the extreme limitations on movement. And more than 500 people have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli soldiers or settlers since 7 October – twice the number during the previous year.

Luc Triangle, general secretary of the International Trades Union Confederation, spoke for us all when he told Palestinian government officials: "I can see the disregard and aggression that you feel daily and the anger that inevitably stokes. The lives of Palestinian workers are clearly intolerable."

The Ramallah mission coincided with the centenary of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate which represents media workers in Gaza and the West Bank. We joined its president, Nasser Abu Baker, as he unveiled a monument to the more than 100 journalists recently killed

while doing their jobs.

The trades unions also met Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority (pictured) since 2005, who said he was against the Hamas killings of October but added: "You can see for yourselves the injustices that Palestinians have to face due to the continued Israeli aggression against our land and people in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem."

He argues his government is the best-placed body to oversee the reconstruction of all Palestine and is heartened as more countries have recognised the state of Palestine. "Gaza is part of Palestine and should be run by the Palestinian government, as should East Jerusalem. We are moving towards real statehood," he said.

In policy and conviction the global unions broadly shared Abbas' aspirations. Mapping a clear route from the situation today to genuine statehood, however, is the challenge of the ages. If trades unions solidarity is able to contribute to its accomplishment, it will surely be a crowning achievement of our movement.



## Get Active

The NUJ's website has a wealth of information, advice, guidance and useful materials

### AI

Artificial Intelligence is a fast-moving technology which will affect all of us at work. Go to the **Journalism before Algorithms** website page for more information.

### Campaigns

The **NUJ's Pay Campaign** calls for fair pay and flexible working and provides practical support to chapels when dealing with employers and on the rights of freelancers.

**Let's Stop SLAPPs:** go to the **website page** to see the latest on our campaign to stop lawsuits brought by the powerful and rich against journalists to censor and stymie reporting.

**Recruiting students:** there's lots of info, FAQs and materials for branches and chapels to encourage local journalism, publishing and photography students to join the union **on the NUJ website**.

### Useful stuff

Freelance members can access help and useful information in the union's **freelance resources**, including **Protect your sources** and your rights as a journalist.

**Legal assistance:** one of the many benefits of NUJ membership is its legal advice.

**Health and safety:** advice, guidance and news.

The **safety toolkit** is a mobile-friendly resource to help media workers protect themselves and their journalism from harm.



**Photographers: the toolkit** has tips and a number for legal assistance when covering protests, and guidelines on taking photographs in public places.

**Storysmart:** is a set of online training modules to help journalists prepare to work in hostile environments and keep their data safe.

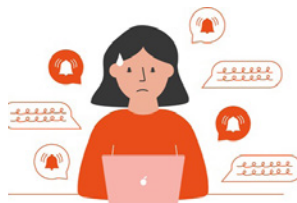
**TUC Organising at Work:** guide on building and maintaining strong workplace unions.

NUJ **recruitment materials**.

**Mental health:** find help for **post-traumatic stress disorder**.

The NUJ's guidance **Menopause is a workplace issue**

provides advice to reps and members on how to influence workplace policies and support women



during the menopause.

**Reporting on refugees:** inaccurate terminology and commentary can cause confusion and breed prejudice.

The **NUJ code of conduct** has set out the main principles of UK and Irish journalism since 1936.

### Donate

The **IFJ's safety fund** helps journalists across the globe, including in Ukraine and Afghanistan and those covering the Israeli-Hamas war.

The NUJ's **George Viner Memorial Award** provides bursaries for black and minority ethnic students.

**NUJ extra** helps members and their dependents who have fallen on hard times.

**NUJ extra**

### NUJ training

The union provides a free programme of **training for reps**. **NUJ Scotland Training** and **NUJ Training Wales** provide a huge range of professional skills courses.

**Social media:** Keep up with the latest breaking news, offers, campaigns, solidarity events and more on **Twitter**, **Instagram** and **Facebook**.