



February 2025 Branch

I'm pleased the first edition of this year's NUJ Branch falls in HeartUnions Week, a chance to voice the work of our union with pride, recognising the contribution you all make in bringing new joiners into our collective work.

Artificial Intelligence has dominated headlines in recent weeks and the NUJ will make a submission to the UK government's Copyright and Artificial Intelligence consultation. Since its launch, we have outlined our concerns with government's preferred option of an opt-out approach that risks the weakening of rights afforded journalists and creators. Many of you will have read reporting on Apple Intelligence, Apple's AI feature that attributed inaccurate stories to credible news outlets including the BBC. We were vocal in our condemnation of risks posed by the tool to public trust and confidence in journalism, achieving victory when the tech giant ceased its news and entertainment summaries using the feature.

As members, you will be impacted by the deployment of AI in varying ways, whether as a photojournalist, editor, as freelance, directly employed or in one of the many sectors of the union. I encourage you to review the NUJ's AI campaign and make your own submission to the consultation to ensure the views of journalists are properly considered. Our model letter enables you to share concerns with your MP in a matter of seconds. <https://aicampaign.good.do/artificialintelligence/NUJArtificial-intelligence/>

Proposed cuts at the BBC World Service, DC Thomson and the Daily Mail Group mean Officials have had a busy start to the year seeking urgent information and assurances in efforts to save jobs. The forthcoming BBC charter review process provides an opportunity to stress the importance of sustainable

funding of the corporation that ensures its journalism is one audiences can continue to trust and engage with. I met Tim Davie, BBC Director-General, alongside a delegation of the NUJ Parliamentary group in December to discuss key areas including how the broadcaster can better serve local communities.

This month, Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, gave evidence at the Northern Ireland

Aid for Gaza

Journalists in Gaza need your help to do their job in desperate circumstances.

The IFJ is supplying vital equipment and aid. Please donate to its safety fund.

Branches can email jackiec@nuj.org to transfer from their management allowances.

DONATE NOW

Affairs Committee on the surveillance of journalists and press freedoms in Northern Ireland. Speaking alongside 'No Stone Unturned' journalists Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney, he highlighted the ongoing threats against journalists, urging the committee to recognise the likely under reporting of incidents. Revelations of covert surveillance by the PSNI on journalists is a shameful stain we continue to campaign against to ensure its end, and for any other instances to be brought to light.

On page 4 Tara Conlan shares insight



into the union's long-standing calls for an end to Iran's systematic targeting of journalists. The unimaginable impact of threats and violence wielded at journalists and their family requires concerted international pressure and the NUJ continues its dedicated campaigning.

My thanks to those of you who have used our Journalists' Safety Tracker to report incidents of violence and abuse encountered through your work. A strong evidence base supports our calls for increased funding so do take the time to access the tracker, report an incident and return to it in future. <https://journalistsafetytracker.org.uk/>

I know the historic achievement of winning union recognition at PA Media last year has encouraged many of you to consider how this can be replicated within your workplace. On 22 March, I hope you will join me with enthusiasm at our recruitment and organising webinar (more on page 5) online to discuss opportunities on recruiting new members whilst considering our wins to date. All members are welcome.

I look forward to updating you on the union's successes this year.

Laura Davison

KEY DATES

02



Branch action

Banches play an important role in getting behind the union's campaigns and involving local politicians and communities in the causes we are fighting for. This includes calls on local news provision, press freedom, as well as promoting our work in the news, publishing and communications sectors.

They are the bedrock of our recruitment, particularly with local journalism students. Having a speaker is always useful to help make a branch meeting interesting - use these dates as inspiration for events.

February

It's currently #HeartUnions Week. Share a message using the hashtag on social media and tag the NUJ's accounts. We'd love to amplify reasons you're sharing with others to encourage them to join the union. This year's focus highlights the role unions have in ensuring work pays, especially as the Employment Rights Bill makes its way through the UK parliament. Unionised workers receive on average five per cent more than other similar workers, share this detail alongside the NUJ's events, training and campaigns in conversations. Remember, we have

NUJ recruitment materials on the website including posters and social media graphics you can use. Contact campaigns@nuj.org.uk if you'd like merchandise as part of campaigning efforts for the year ahead.

LGBT History Month is a time to recognise the contributions and struggles of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and promote equality for the LGBTQ+ community. If you want to receive news about the NUJ's LGBTQ+ network events this year, update your profile details by logging in to the website. Check out the LGBT History Month website and 2025 Pride calendar.

March

World Book and Copyright Day on 6 March is a celebration of books and reading and an opportunity to recognise the rights of authors and creators. Invite a local writer or publisher or run a workshop on protecting copyright. The NUJ's AI campaign is calling for regulatory measures to protect creators' copyright.

International Women's Day is Saturday 8 March. According to the World Economic Forum it will take

until 2158 to reach full gender parity at the current rate of progress so this year's theme is #AccelerateAction The website has lots of information, event packs and resources that can be used to take part in the campaign and organise a themed branch meeting. International Transgender Day of Visibility takes place on 31 March.



April

NUJ Delegates Meeting 2025 is 25-27 April in Blackpool. International Workers' Memorial Day is on 28 April. More people are killed at work

than in wars. Join the NUJ's Health and Safety Council and the TUC in promoting the union's health and safety campaigns. The NUJ website has lots of information on health and safety. Encourage branch members to become health and safety reps to play a powerful role in workplaces.

May

Local elections on 1 May include ballots for local government elections in England, local and combined authority mayoral elections and parish council elections. The UN's World Press Freedom Day on 3 May highlights

Recruitment webinar

Inspiring and bringing new members into our incredible union is a crucial part of our work.

The NUJ is keen to share some great examples of work that's been taking place and hear from members on engaging and practical ways to boost recruitment and organising across the union. Laura Davison, NUJ General Secretary, and members from the NUJ's Development Committee - a sub-committee of the union's National Executive Council that focusses on recruitment and organising work - invite you to share your thoughts and hear from speakers including reps on Saturday 22 March.

With each workplace facing its own challenges, the recruitment and organising webinar aims to relay initiatives that have worked successfully, whilst hearing from NUJ members on new ideas to support work already underway.

All members including those with no experience in the union's activism are encouraged to join online. Help spread word of the session and ask others to attend. <https://bit.ly/NUJ22MarchWebinar>

There'll be an opportunity to break into smaller groups to discuss ideas and priorities and reps will join on the day to relay how they embarked on successful recruitment and organising efforts. A report of the session will be shared following the webinar and we hope this will help inform plans of action by your chapels and branches across 2025 and beyond.

the fundamental principles of press freedom around the world. Support the union's work with the International Federation of Journalists and invite a speaker to your branch. May Day, also known as International Workers Day, is on 5 May. The Eurovision final is on 17 May. Mental Health Awareness Week will take place 12 to 18 May. Invite a mental health first aider to talk to your branch. See the NUJ website for info. The Hay Festival is 22 May-1 June.

June

The UN's World Environment Day on 5 June is a good event to use as a branch meeting theme. Glastonbury Festival, 25-29 June.

July

London Pride, 5 July. 17 July is International Justice Day, which highlights the most crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes and reaffirms the global commitment to justice, law and human rights.

August

The Edinburgh Fringe starts on 1 August. Notting Hill Carnival kicks off on 23 August.

September

TUC Congress is in Brighton from 7-10 September. The party conference season opens with the Liberal Democrats from 20 September, followed by Labour from 28 September.

October

Start of Black History Month and the NUJ's Claudia Jones Memorial

Lecture - speaker and date tbc. Conservative party conference from 5 October. World Mental Health Day is on 10 October.

November

TUC Young Workers' Month: organise an event or speaker that will be of interest to young members or plan a recruitment event. Support International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, on November 2. The IFJ has more

information and resources. International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women falls on 25 November. Support and promote the NUJ's Equality Council's work



on this day.

December

Human Rights Day is observed on 10 December.

Merchandise requests

Email campaigns@nuj.org.uk with your branch requests for campaigning materials. Our posters, branded pens and badges are all popular and can be posted to help support recruitment efforts, as you plan the year ahead.

The chilling effect

Tara Conlan reports on the NUJ campaign focused on an end to Iran's targeting of journalists.

For several years, the NUJ has highlighted the ongoing targeting of Iranian journalists, particularly those working in the UK, by the Iranian state. In January, concerns over the safety of these journalists were thrust into the spotlight once more, when a third suspect was arrested by the Metropolitan Police following the stabbing of Iran International journalist Pouria Zeraati last year. Zeraati was attacked in March 2024 in south west London, suffering stab wounds in the deplorable attack condemned by the NUJ. In December two Romanians were arrested in Romania and charged with wounding and wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. They were extradited and on 17 January, appeared by video link at the Old Bailey from Belmarsh prison where they were remanded in custody with a trial provisionally set for May 2026. A third man, who was arrested in January has been bailed until April. The NUJ says it welcomes the prosecution of criminals seeking to harm journalists in such shocking attacks.

The union's concerns are longstanding, and back in 2012 the then BBC director-general Mark Thompson wrote that BBC Persian staff were subjected to "interference

and harassment from the Iranian authorities" with "increased levels of intimidation alongside disturbing new tactics" such as targeting family members in Iran.

But a significant increase has occurred since the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. A UN human rights expert said she died "as a result of beatings" after allegedly violating rules requiring women to wear the headscarf.

Her death led to protests and a crackdown across the country. After that BBC News Persian and Germany's publicly-owned broadcaster Deutsche Welle reported a rise in threats towards staff.

Serious concerns were raised in March 2023 at the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council in Geneva, with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Professor Javaid Rehman, saying the threats had a "chilling effect that is produced on the work of other journalists in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and indeed elsewhere, who are reporting on the country, and may deter them from reporting on issues of public interest and of public importance."

Sanctions were imposed on Iranian officials by the UK and US in January 2024 after threats towards Iranian journalists in London.

A month later documents emerged which appeared to show some current and former BBC News Persian journalists were convicted 'in absentia' by a court in Tehran in February 2022 for "propaganda against the Islamic Republic". The NUJ was again vocal in its condemnation and notes this as yet another intimidatory tactic against journalists.

Then in March 2024, the same month Zeraati was attacked, a report was published by the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran which said Iranian authorities "harassed, threatened and intimidated journalists and other media employees working outside the country", including at BBC News Persian. In addition a BBC survey revealed around 70% of BBC Persian staff had been unable to visit one or both of their parents in Iran to say goodbye before they died. That led to the BBC World service filing an update in April 2024 to the UN, complaining about the abuse of national security and counter-terrorism laws against its journalists.

The NUJ and the International Federation of Journalists have continued to urge international condemnation over concerning threats faced by UK-based Persian journalists, which include having bank accounts frozen or relatives in Iran punished. Those concerns continue. <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/iran-s-targeting-of-journalists.html>

CAMPAIGN



#HeartUnions week 2025

Unions are vital for everyone at work and this year's Trades Union Congress #HeartUnions week takes place from 10-16 February.

The week provides a platform to inform colleagues of the work of the union and why they should join.

The NUJ will showcase successes achieved for members in recent years and highlight our campaigns including on salary transparency and journalists' safety.

This year, #HeartUnions week is also raising awareness of the TUC's Unions Make Work Pay campaign. The UK government's plan to Make Work Pay is proceeding through parliament and could become law

considered as part of legislative change. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/make-work-pay>

We know first-hand the difference fair pay claims achieved through support from reps can have on members, and work is underway with employers on pay deals that ensure journalists feel valued and rewarded for their work. Read about how you can play your part in collating information to build successful pay campaigns. <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/pay-campaign.html>

Our focus on defending media freedom, campaigning for better terms and conditions, lobbying governments and

providing training will remain central to our aims this year. On artificial intelligence, we will continue to stress that journalists must retain control over works and that the unlawful access to material by tech giants who continue to lobby will be challenged every step of the way by the NUJ. The UK government has recognised the

creative industry as a major growth sector contributing £125bn to the UK economy. We cannot allow the exploitation of journalists including freelances, bereft of the many rights most employees take for granted.

Our #FairDeal4Freelances campaign is working for radical reform of rights to ensure job protection and benefits are not dependent on employment status. The Freelance Fact Pack available to NUJ members only, provides a wealth of information ranging from setting up as freelance to finding work.

♥ UNIONS

later this year. It has potential to be the biggest upgrade of workers' rights in a generation including provisions on strengthened trade union rights. The NUJ has made submissions to government's consultations and is engaging with MPs on further safeguards, including improved rights for freelances to ensure they too are

Action

Access the Freelance Fact pack
<https://www.nuj.org.uk/advice/freelance-resources/freelance-fact-pack.html>

Visit the NUJ's HeartUnions campaign page
<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/heartunions-week.html>

RECRUIT

06

#HeartUnions week 2025



"HeartUnions week is a chance to remind ourselves of the power of coming together collectively to make change. The organised voice of NUJ members speaks loudly on crucial issues of public good, democracy, equality, pay, media freedom, international solidarity and much more. No-one needs to feel alone in their work when they are part of their union and part of the wider trades union movement. Why not speak to a colleague today and ask them to join the NUJ this HeartUnions week and become a part of that change."

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary

"The NUJ is the independent voice of professional journalists. "Standing up for journalism means defending terms and conditions of employment, fighting for freelance rights, challenging inequality, delivery on equal pay, opposing censorship and campaigning for the rights of journalists to report without fear or favour across the world. It has never been more important for journalists to unite under the trade union banner, defending journalists against the sly and mighty for whom journalism is no more than a commercial commodity, with no regard for the ethical principles and values which are at the heart of the NUJ Code of Conduct."

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary



"The NUJ has protected and supported me through some very difficult points in my life. It's helped me keep my career going, I've met incredible people along the way and have a fantastic professional and social network around me. As an NUJ member I've been able to influence our campaigns and lobbying work, it's a space for my voice to make a difference. Things happen in our working lives that we can't address on our own, but collectively we can create significant change in our workplaces and for our industry. I'm really proud to be an NUJ member, come and be a part of a union that makes a real difference for journalists and communications professionals."

Natasha Hirst, NUJ president

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.

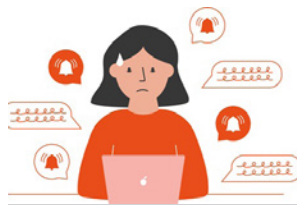
TUC Organising at Work: guide on building and maintaining strong workplace unions.

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 Israel-Gaza 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**.

**REASONS
TO JOIN**

SOS



We Offer Support and Help

The NUJ is your lifeline if you get arrested or the authorities try to confiscate your data or images. We chase non-payers, represent and support you during disciplinary or redundancy procedures or if you are being bullied or have other work-related problems. We offer professional help with reporting guides and advice on ethics, networking opportunities and training to help you develop your skills throughout your career.

Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at

nuj.org.uk/join

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