



# October 2024 Branch

*Following the election campaign and a ballot of all eligible members, the NUJ's Executive Council has endorsed the outcome of that ballot and welcomed Laura Davison as the union's General Secretary Elect.*

I'm proud to be handing over the baton to Laura and I have no doubt her extensive experience and commitment will make her an excellent leader of our union. I paid tribute to both candidates' campaigning efforts and engagement with members during this important election.

It was great to see so many hustings organised by branches across the union's nations and regions, providing members with the chance to hear firsthand from both candidates. Over the coming weeks Laura and I will be working closely together on the handover of work ahead of my stepping down as General Secretary.

Across the pond, another election is well underway and in just a few weeks, Trump or Harris will be announced as the next United States president. With a campaign increasingly demonstrating the sway exerted by disinformation and outlandish rhetoric, the role trusted news plays in democracies couldn't be more topical. Whether you're one to stay up tracking results or otherwise, it is likely we will all pay close attention to the impact on press freedom in the country.

Talking of freedoms, at the beginning of October, LexisNexis and LexisNexis Risk Solutions (formerly RBI) told our two chapels of its intention to terminate long-standing recognition agreements with the union.

To derecognise the NUJ and scrap two longstanding collective bargaining agreements without any discussion or engagement is a contemptuous and arrogant move on the part of the company.

The NUJ strongly condemns the

decision and is urging a reversal of this ill-judged attempt to remove collective bargaining rights from journalists and editorial workers. I have no doubt that this move – ironically shared just days before the UK government announced its raft of plans to upgrade workers' rights including making recognition easier and delivering access to workplaces for unions – will backfire and we are working on our campaign to see off this derecognition as we speak.

## 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**

I'll be pleased and proud to oversee the launch of our new online Journalists' Safety Tracker next month, allowing journalists to easily report both historic and more recent incidents of abuse encountered during the course of their work. It can be difficult reliving abuse experienced whether targeted at you, colleagues or family, but I hope submissions to the tracker will support our engagement including with government, to stamp out violence and stress the need for adequate investment in tackling the issue. Bea



Bennett reports on the tracker on page four.

Since Martin O'Hagan's death in September 2001, along with Séamus Dooley, I have called for a proper and independent investigation into his killing and for those responsible to face justice. Read about the letter sent to political leaders urging action on page five. You will have seen reports on the escalation of war between Israel and Hezbollah resulting in a rising journalists' death toll, donations to the IFJ Safety fund are a practical and useful way in which we can show solidarity with colleagues.

This month, I'll brief parliamentarians on the union's calls to governments and employers on necessary journalistic safeguards needed in the use of artificial intelligence. It's a timely opportunity given Google's calls last month for text and data mining exceptions to be granted for commercial use. Such carte blanche access to our members' copyright works would prove damaging to the livelihoods of journalists and those of our sister unions in the wider creative industries, our opposition to these lobbying efforts will therefore remain.

**Michelle Stanistreet**

## Ethical Journalism

*The NUJ's Ethics Council considers responsible journalism when reporting on issues impacting vulnerable individuals and groups*

**T**ragedy makes news but dealing sympathetically with the victims or their families, all vulnerable in different ways, is a tough job and was the main discussion point at a recent NUJ ethics online seminar.

The seminar heard from several expert speakers on issues concerning vulnerable people in the news such as survivors of domestic abuse, those affected by suicide, the families of prisoners and the families of murdered children.

Ethics Council chair Chris Frost introduced the seminar, reminding members of the union's code of conduct and its requirement to produce accurate copy without intruding into people's private lives unless justified by overriding considerations of the public interest.

Scottish organiser Nick McGowan-Lowe updated members on proposals at the Scottish Parliament to bring

in automatic anonymity for child victims of homicide in Scotland. This is an issue that would affect all UK media and make the reporting of many recent atrocities, such as the death of three young children in Southport, very difficult.

Former Ethics Council vice chair and ex-director of Media Wise Mike Jempson discussed issues surrounding the reporting of suicides - explaining suicide is never a simple story with one obvious trigger point - and some of the research about copycat suicides.

Liverpool John Moores University head of journalism Fran Yeoman (a former assistant editor at the i.) talked about her research on court reporting and its impact on prisoners' families, including children. She said many children face bullying at school when a parent is jailed for

criminal offences and outlined difficulties faced by court reporters trying to report accurately whilst trying to be fair to all involved. Domestic abuse campaigner and

survivor David Challen explained the difficulties faced by survivors when their abuser reaches trial. The defence tries to find all the evidence they can that the abuser is a "good guy", relying on a public persona that belies the private hell faced by survivors. This gives court reporters the problem of ensuring a balanced report, but one that often leaves those who were victims of the abuser with a real feeling of anger.

Members then discussed the issues, making it clear that suggestions that journalists don't care about the feelings of those they are reporting about are very wide of the mark. Several pointed to the problem of fewer staff journalists under more pressure to get more exciting stories. Others expressed concern about the influence of social media - with its range of misinformation, assumptions and ill-researched stories.

The next webinar, held jointly with the Equality Council, is on December 9 and concerns reporting disability.



Dates for future webinars in the New Year will be announced soon. Monitor the NUJ's events page for details [www.nuj.org.uk/events](http://www.nuj.org.uk/events)

## General Secretary-elect

Mark Thomas

**L**aura Davison has been elected as the next General Secretary of the NUJ. Her election means the post will be held for a second time by a woman, following Michelle Stanistreet's historic election in 2011 as the first since the union's founding over 100 years ago. The outcome was ratified at a meeting of the National Executive Council on 10 October.

Davison said: "I'm delighted to be elected as the new General Secretary of our incredible union. I take heart every day from the crucial

collective work we do to stand up for journalism, show solidarity and win improvements for our members.

"At a critical time for the organised voice of working journalists to be heard, I want us to grow and strengthen our union, maximising new opportunities created by legislative change and our legal, policy and industrial work.

"I'm looking forward to getting stuck in, working with everyone who contributes to the success of the NUJ and meeting more of our brilliant reps, members and activists over the coming months.



Thank you to everyone who has worked on this election process and supported me during the campaign, and particularly to my fellow candidate Natasha Hirst.

"A special thanks to Michelle Stanistreet whose outstanding leadership has steered the NUJ over the past 13 years."

## Other updates

### Delegate Meeting 2025

#NUJDM2025 takes place in Blackpool from 25 April-27 April.

Reminder that the closing date for motions and nominations to NUJ councils and committees is 1pm Monday, 25 November. Only branch officials can submit them, via SurveyMonkey.

### NUJ joint vice president Gerry Curran on the review of delegate meetings and industrial council structures.

Your branch officers will have received a draft review of the industrial councils structures and ideas regarding organising delegate meetings.

Approximately 35 submissions were received and discussions held with branches, the development committee and the NEC.

Many inputs were positive and outlined the great work of various councils. This is a starting point and branches can comment and come back through NEC reps with proposals to discuss at the NEC's next meeting on 15 November.

### New course intakes - student press card image

Journalism students have begun their courses at universities; now's the time to recruit as it's not always clear to them they can join the NUJ.

Using our campaign materials, including the FAQ student membership poster, can help.

On 7 November, a stellar panel in Galway will share tips on starting out in journalism, followed by a Q&A and networking drinks.

### Networking

#### **Making The Headlines: Pursuing A Career In Journalism**

### Age discrimination

The 60+ council is seeking examples of age discrimination in the workplace. In preparation for Delegate Meeting 2025, please send examples of poor practices to [derekcforrest@gmail.com](mailto:derekcforrest@gmail.com).

Anonymous submissions welcome.

## Journalists' safety

*Bea Bennett, NUJ senior campaigns and communications officer, updates on the union's journalists' safety tracker launching this autumn.*

Journalists' safety remains a year-round priority for the NUJ and in coming weeks, the union will launch a reporting tool capturing incidents of violence and harassment against journalists.

The first of its kind in the UK and Ireland, the initiative has been developed over several months and presents an opportunity to capture crucial data into the types of attacks experienced by journalists both in-person and online.

The union is encouraging all members to engage with the project upon its launch, sharing experiences and urging colleagues to do so too,

to help inform how best the NUJ can provide support and encourage action from other bodies.

Our membership survey findings have shown women journalists, those from LGBT+ communities and minority ethnic groups often face disproportionate and targeted attacks, so building on this evidence base as well as others more widely, is an important part of the NUJ's work.

With the rise of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) - deliberate and targeted lawfare against journalists - the NUJ has included a reporting section in the tracker on legal proceedings;

seeking insight into journalists' experiences receiving pre-action legal threats and emails and whether these were issued under the suspected direction of a politician, oligarch or other individual.

We know from engagement with members that the harm caused by SLAPPs often occurs before any legal proceedings are brought, as the threat of financial ruin can cause an intended chilling effect.

However, seeing an end to the attacks against our members requires far more than evidence from journalists themselves and Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ General Secretary, has continued her calls to government for strengthened backing on the issue.

Last month, at a meeting with Stephanie Peacock, Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth, Stanistreet updated on the work of the union including the unacceptable harassment reported by journalists covering far-right riots in the summer. She also stressed that more action was required from government in urging tech giants to ensure processes on platforms are robust enough to protect journalists online.

Also remember the NUJ's **Journalists' Safety Toolkit** launched in 2022 and is accessible on-the-go, including on offline mobile devices, and has a wealth of information on cyber security, workplace safety and more.

Matt Kenyon



## International

*The union continues to call for an end to the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of crimes against journalists*

### Fight for justice

Twenty-three years on from the murder of NUJ member and Sunday World journalist Martin O'Hagan, those suspected of ordering and carrying out his murder have not been brought to justice for their actions. For over two decades, the NUJ has led calls for an independent inquiry into O'Hagan's killing, a murder witnessed by his wife Marie in a callous act of violence.

Committed to seeking justice, last month Michelle Stanistreet and Séamus Dooley wrote once again to political leaders including Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to Keir

Starmer, calling for an independent investigation led by an international figure into both O'Hagan's murder and the subsequent investigation that took place. Dooley said, "The failure to properly investigate has cast a long shadow and continues to embolden those who seek to silence journalists."

### Afghanistan

The three years following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan have resulted in a shattering impact on media. Restrictions on reporting and the erosion of rights have worsened in recent months, with new rules

including those focused on silencing women's voices in public spaces described by some as contributing to a 'gender apartheid'.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has noted: "The Taliban's unremitting censorship, harassment, discrimination and draconian restrictions have decimated the media landscape." The NUJ will continue to call for improved protections for journalists under a regime that has proved stifling to press freedom and journalism.

## Israel-Gaza war

7 October marked a year since Hamas' terrorist attack and according to records compiled by the IFJ, at least 136 journalists have been killed since the start of war. Four Israeli and five Lebanese journalists are among the casualties, with the overwhelming majority of deaths Palestinian journalists killed by Israeli air strikes whilst reporting from Gaza.

NUJ members have been generous with donations, helping provide essential equipment to journalists on the ground. The NUJ's National Executive Council has voiced its horror at realities facing journalists on the ground, calling for a cessation of hostilities, and an end to the impunity enjoyed by Israel in its targeting of journalists.

Martin O'Hagan



# Surveillance

*NUJ sets record straight as landmark hearing into No Stone Unturned journalists draws to a close*

**W**ith the latest Investigatory Powers Tribunal hearing over allegations journalists Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney were unlawfully monitored by the Police Service of Northern Ireland using covert surveillance coming to an end, the NUJ refuted claims made by former Durham Constabulary police officer Mr Ellis against the union.

The hearing began in February into the case taken by McCaffrey and Birney arising from their 2018 arrest relating to their documentary *No Stone Unturned*.

The film told the story of the 1994 loyalist killing of six men in a bar in Loughinisland, Co Down while watching the World Cup.

The IPT is being asked to rule that the PSNI acted unlawfully by obtaining communications data held by McCaffrey and Birney, which it is alleged was done to identify their confidential journalistic sources.

During the hearing, claims arose of inappropriate behaviour by Grahame Morris MP and the NUJ, related to alleged payments made by the union, these allegations were entirely refuted by the union.

In the affidavit, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, set the record straight in relation to

Mr Morris, who has never received payment for his solidarity support of the NUJ parliamentary group. As an independent trade union, the NUJ does not make political donations.

Stanistreet's affidavit, together with publicly available parliamentary records, make clear that the claims were completely ill-founded.

The hearing also heard closing submissions from counsel for both journalists and for the PSNI.

In July the NUJ was granted permission to intervene in the case, enabling the union to make a detailed written submission and submit supporting statements from Professor Emeritus Chris Frost, Chair of the NUJ Ethics Council, NEC member, journalist and

author Kathryn Johnson, former Sunday World editor Jim McDowell, journalist and author Alex Thomson and investigative journalist Ed Moloney.

Campbell is instructed by Olivia O'Kane solicitor DWF Northern Ireland and Natasha Morris, NUJ Legal and Equality Officer. Séamus Dooley, Assistant General Secretary, had represented the NUJ at the hearing.

Dooley has described the hearing as having, "huge significance to journalists and other groups possibly targeted by the PSNI in covert surveillance. Journalists must be able to carry out their work confident in the protections afforded them when communicating with sources."

*Kevin-Cooper*



## 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**.

# 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](http://nuj.org.uk/join)

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