

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Three to one concur - Journalism is Alive and Well World Press Freedom Day 2008

London, UK – 2 May 2008. An audience of senior media practitioners, commentators and press freedom experts voted this morning that journalism is alive and well. When presented with the motion “new media is killing journalism” at the annual World Press Freedom Day event, a vigorous debate ensued, cumulating in a powerful consensus (13 for the motion, 43 against, 4 abstaining). The event, hosted annually by the UK National Commission for UNESCO and Press Freedom Network, drew on arguments and expertise from across the world, including Iran, Mexico, Africa and the US.

In an Oxford Union style debate Andrew Keen (author of *The Cult of the Amateur*), Kim Fletcher (ex-Editor of the *Telegraph & Independent on Sunday*), Robin Lustig, (radio broadcaster for the BBC World Service and BBC Radio 4) and Nazenin Ansari, (Kayhan Publishing Iran/UK, President of the Foreign Press Association), passionately debated journalism’s future in the digital age. The volley of arguments was deftly moderated by the Chair, William Horsley (Chair of the Association of European Journalists, UK).

Some commentators such as Robin Lustig recognised that new media is a challenge to journalism but flatly denied that such a challenge was leading to the profession’s demise. Rather, the internet may be seen as the next step in a long history of evolving journalism tools.

Commentators from Iran and Mexico stressed the importance of new media to the profession in the many countries where journalists are threatened, censored and even killed. Rather than threatening journalism, in these cases new media allows the trade to exist and develop in a way never before possible. Many supporters of the motion pointed to the economic issues it raised, namely that the new media model was forcing journalists to produce masses of “content”, detracting from their ability to provide quality, accurate news.

The debate was attended by nearly 100 participants, and speakers including Jeremy Dear (NUJ), Nicholas Jones (previous BBC correspondent), Charlie Beckett (Director of POLIS), John Kelly (Reuters Institute Visiting Fellow, Washington Post) and Ashley Norris, (Co-founder and Director of Shiny Media), providing compelling statements drawn from a wealth and range of professional experience.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making it particularly fitting that we recall its 19th Article on this World Press Freedom Day. While our commitment to freedom of expression remains unchanged, the context of this right, particularly through advances in media and communication technologies, has changed drastically over the past six decades.

The event was opened with the presentation of this year’s World Press Freedom Day student journalism competition award to Stuart James Ross for his podcast entry arguing that “far from killing journalism, new media is helping it to flourish.” The winning piece explored the implications of changing technology through a series of interviews with a media professional, blogger and a

human rights campaigner. Mr Ross was presented with the John Ivinson Memorial Prize for Freedom of Expression and its £500 prize at the opening of the WPFDF event on 2 May.

This is the 8th year the UK National Commission and the Press Freedom Network hold events to mark World Press Freedom Day in the UK.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The event is open to the press however booking in advance is **essential**. Please visit www.frontlineclub.com or write iwhite@unesco.org to reserve a place.

For further information, please contact Ian White at the UK National Commission for UNESCO on +44 (0)20 7766 3492 or [iwhite@unesco.org.uk](mailto:iwhite@unesco.org).

- **The UK National Commission for UNESCO** is the focal point in the UK for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)-related policies and activities. As an independent body, the UK National Commission brings together a network of over 200 experts from across the UK in the fields of education, culture, sciences and communication. Working closely in partnership with HM Government and UK civil society, the UK National Commission aims to provide expert advice to the Government on UNESCO related matters, develop UK input into UNESCO policy-making, promote reforms within UNESCO, and encourage support in the UK for UNESCO's ideals and work.
- **The Press Freedom Network** is a loose grouping of organisations, publications and individuals who are sympathetic to or directly interested in the cause of media freedom. It contributes to the organisation of the annual World Press Freedom Day event (usually a debate) on May 3, in addition to discussing other topical and relevant issues. The network operates mainly via an effective e-group but with occasional meetings (in London); and acts primarily as an information and debating forum rather than seeking to make policy decisions binding to any member.
- **The Frontline Club** was established over three years ago and is aimed at supporting independent journalism. The Frontline Club now have over 1200 members - mainly journalists and photojournalists specialising in foreign news - from all major international news media including BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, Channel 4, CBC, all British quality dailies, The Economist, The New Yorker, Newsweek, The New York Times, and the Washington Post, to name but a few. In this time the Club became a true hub for everyone involved with foreign news, people who cover it, comment on it, write reviews, or interview political leaders. It is the place where people meet to discuss things that matter and to have fun along the way (the Club houses two bars and a restaurant).
- **World Press Freedom Day (3 May)** is a day to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. 3 May was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. It serves as an occasion to inform citizens of violations of press freedom - a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.