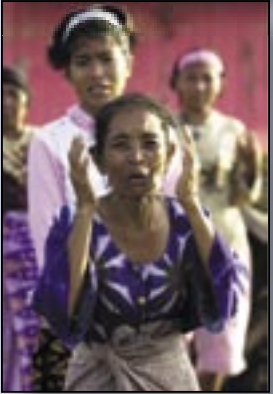


ASIA EARTHQUAKE DISASTER



International
Federation
of Journalists



GLOBAL SOLIDARITY...

...Journalists Provide Emergency Aid as Indian Ocean Tsunami Claims the Lives of Media Staff

The greatest tragedy of 2004, the tsunami that swept away tens of thousands around the Indian Ocean and devastated the lives of millions, also claimed more than 200 media workers who are either dead or missing, with one newspaper in Aceh, Indonesia losing over 100 staff.

The vast majority of deaths occurred at the daily Serambi Indonesia in Aceh, where it is feared over 100 staff died in the tidal wave that engulfed the region on December 26. More than half of the victims are journalists. Several other journalists are missing in Indonesia, while two journalists have been reported killed in Sri Lanka.

The IFJ affiliate in Indonesia the Aliansi Independen Jurnalis (AJI) reported that the force of the impact was such that its two printing presses were thrown into the car park. Nevertheless, the paper was back in circulation just six days after the disaster with a free slimmed down edition printed in the province's second city, Lhokseumawe.

"Our colleagues in Indonesia have suffered a shocking level of loss," said Aidan White, the General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, which launched a worldwide appeal for humanitarian assistance for the families of journalists and media staff caught up in the catastrophe. Unconfirmed reports from Sri Lanka are that more than 70 journalists have been displaced in the Eastern and Southern provinces.

Within days journalists' unions from more than a dozen countries had contributed thousands of Euros that were dispatched immediately to victims and their families. It was, said White, "a magnificent show of global solidarity."

A delegation led by the IFJ General Secretary Aidan White visited the devastated region of Banda Aceh in January and the IFJ was looking to establish a safety centre for media staff.

At the same time, the IFJ warned journalists traveling to Indonesia to take all possible precautions before arriving in the region. Information has also been produced by an affiliate of the International News Safety Institute, the Dart Centre, which gives advice on trauma reporting to media staff covering the tragedy.

"Thousands of journalists and media staff covering this story are witnesses to a tragedy and to disturbing scenes of unimaginable horror," said White. "It is important that they are aware of the personal consequences of this encounter with the consequences of death and destruction."

The IFJ has also written a letter to United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan calling on him to ensure that the reconstruction effort in the region also leads to media reform.

IFJ officials are travelling to the region in the coming days to support local affiliates in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia who have been hardest hit by the disaster and officials warned of serious problems with disease, lack of pure water and cholera and hepatitis.

"Any sort of medical facilities are going to be next to zero. There is definitely a big concern about how journalists are preparing themselves and understanding the context of what they are going into. This is not only a humanitarian disaster but it is a conflict zone as well," said the IFJ.

The loss of journalists and media staff in northern Sumatra was deeply felt by the local organisation of journalists, AJI, whose General Secretary, Nezar Patria, lost 20 members of his family.

The first edition of the Serambi Indonesia following the tsunami carried an urgent appeal to its staff, urging employees to contact editors to let them know they are alive. The front page headline read: "Cholera is threatening our refugees".

"We were badly hit, but the spirit of our journalists got this edition out," Ismail Syah, the paper's Lhokseumawe bureau chief, told the Reuters news agency. Along with the paper's two-story offices, a housing estate where many of its employees lived was also flattened.

With thousands of bodies washed out to sea, it may be weeks before the final death toll is known. Among those missing are Associated Press's longtime stringer in Aceh, Muharram Nur, who was also a Serambi journalist, and Mohammed Rokan, a 53-year-old political and security reporter for the paper.

Aceh province was among the areas first hit by the tsunami and the total confirmed dead in Sumatra is now around 100,000 with fears for the lives of tens of thousands more. Editors are hopeful that some of the paper's missing staff are still alive but have not been able to get in touch because phone lines are down.

The IFJ says the impact of the disaster will be felt for months to come. "Everyone should be making a contribution to the relief effort," said White. "We have established a special fund within our International Safety Fund to try to get assistance to our colleagues and their families as quickly as possible.

"Colleagues in Indonesia and elsewhere are in need. Any additional support to the international assistance effort that journalists and media workers can give will be greatly appreciated."

Further Information:

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Abdul Manan (62-818-948-316)
Lensi Mursida (62-815-943-5493)
Yulia Siswaningsih (62-815-1322-0269)
or (62-815-1127-9559)
Lina (62-812-839-0035)

2. The Banda Aceh Coordinating Post
Nani Afrida (62-812-696-0395)

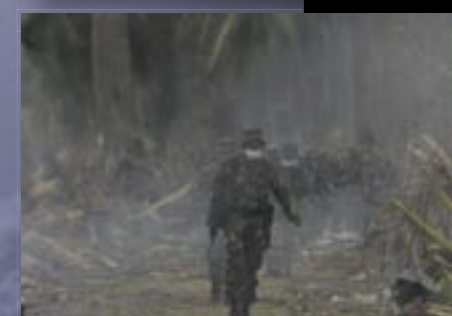
3. The Lhokseumawe Coordinating Post
Zaenal Bakri (62-811-671-971)
Ayi Jufridar (62-811-672-648)

4. The Medan Coordinating Post
Dedi Ardiansyah (62-815-3313-0251)

International News Safety Institute:
www.newssafety.com

Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma:
www.dartcenter.org/australasia/index.html

Fleet Street Clinic:
www.fleetstreetclinic.com



INTERNATIONAL
safety
FUND

It's the
 THOUGHT
 that
 COUNTS
 When

people think of the IFJ Safety Fund, they remember to raise money for it. Hats only go round at conferences where someone thought of the Fund. People only dig in their pockets because they know it exists. Someone has to start the ball rolling. Will you start it next time? Keep the IFJ Safety Fund in mind whenever union members get together.

How to Give

Please send donations to the IFJ member union in your country; the money will be forwarded in a lump sum and will cut the administrative costs of the Fund.

If there is no IFJ member, send the money to:

Asia Disaster Relief for Journalists and Media Staff

C/o IFJ Safety Fund

the IFJ Safety Fund

A/C BE64 2100 7857 0052

SWIFT Code: GEBABEBB

Fortis Bank, Rond Point Schuman 10, 1040 Brussels

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www.ifj.org