



International Federation of Journalists



*solidarity*



*representation*

*disputes*



# Let's Organise

*objectives*



*representation*



A union  
handbook  
for journalists



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# LET'S ORGANISE

A union handbook for journalists



International Federation of Journalists

# CONTENTS

## Introduction

4

## The basics: how unions work

7



- IFJ and journalists' unions in the 21st Century
- Why trade unions are necessary
- Trade union objectives
- The impact of globalisation
- Trade union structures
- Regional differences and professional associations
- Checklist 1

## The basics: getting down to business

18



- Recruitment
- The next generation of journalists
- Developing union officers
- Union meetings
- Checklist 2

## Journalists' rights

27



- The first target – minimum rights
- Collective bargaining
- The ILO and the OECD
- Agreements – wages and conditions
- Negotiations – bargaining strategies
- Negotiating techniques
- Gender equality
- Authors' rights
- Freelance issues
- Checklist 3
- Checklist 4

## Handling disputes

46



- Disputes – members' problems
- Disputes – disciplinary procedures
- Industrial disputes procedures
- Industrial action: going on strike
- Checklist 5

## Freedom, editorial standards & safety

54



- Code of ethics
- Editorial standards
- Self-regulation
- Safety
- Checklist 6

## Other issues

63



- Solidarity with other workers
- Training
- E-Organising
- Checklist 7

# INTRODUCTION

**Let's Organise - A union handbook for journalists** has been produced as a handbook to assist journalists' unions around the world. It is a basic text that can be used as an introduction to trade union organisation for journalists. Its target audience includes:

- members and potential members
- union leaders
- trade union educators.

This handbook contends that the quality of working conditions enjoyed by journalists is a key factor in creating a democratic media culture. Without social justice and fairness at work, it is impossible to talk of editorial independence or press freedom.

The information set out here fills a specific gap in basic training tools for new unions and aspiring union leaders struggling to establish themselves as a genuine force for improving the working conditions of journalists.

## MODELS OF UNION ORGANISATION

The material in this handbook is based largely on the traditions of union organisation found in Europe and North America, but it does not advocate any particular model.

In most countries, the rights of workers and the activities of trade unions are defined in law. Some states grant to recognised groups the right to negotiate and to bargain. In others, the process of industrial relations is left to management and workers' groups to organise themselves without state interference. In most countries, industrial conflicts are subject to forms of arbitration or there are legal restrictions on the right to strike.

In some countries, journalists are forced, because of local rules, to organise themselves into two parallel organisations with the same people in the membership: a professional association to deal with ethical matters and a syndicate to deal with trade union issues. In others, the journalists' union is able to both negotiate wages and fight for ethical rights. This unified approach is desirable, but is often not practical because of local conditions.

Many, but not all, of the examples in this text are European, where trade union organisation has its roots, but regional conditions are important and in each country journalists have to ensure that their unions are organised in line with local traditions and regulations. Trade union educators or leaders outside of Europe may build on the text with their own regional and national examples. Participants should not be expected to import, wholesale, these models and tools of union organisation. Instead they should explore how this form of organisation can be adapted to their circumstances.

**Let's Organise - A union handbook for journalists** can be used in conjunction with a series of other International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) handbooks developed in recent years that focus on issues of particular importance to trade unions. These include: the Freelance handbook, the Authors' Rights handbook, the Collective Bargaining handbook and the Best Practice and Working Time handbooks produced by the working groups of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). To access these handbooks and additional material see the online version of **Let's Organise - A union handbook for journalists** at [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

## A TEACHING AID

Seminars can be built around the handbook using each section as a separate topic. Trainers can select the relevant sections according to the needs of the group, use the content as an introduction to each topic and supplement the information with their own examples from, and relevant to, the participant's country or region.

- This training is not a substitute for first-hand knowledge and experience. A checklist of questions or talking points is found at the end of each section. These are designed to draw on experience already existing in the groups and to provide practical tasks for participants, making the information relevant to their national condition.

### OVERALL HANDBOOK OBJECTIVES

- **To provide confidence** to union leaders and organisers about their roles and responsibilities within the union
- **To provide direction and clear information** to aspiring union leaders, enabling them to recruit and organise new union structures
- **To reinforce** the continuing importance and relevance of independent, democratic and sound union organisation to journalists (both members and potential members).



# THE BASICS: HOW UNIONS WORK

## IFJ AND JOURNALISTS' UNIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

### AN EXPANDED ROLE

The end of the Cold War brought many changes and opportunities for the journalists' union movement. For the IFJ, there was the chance to engage actively with a whole new audience of journalists' organisations and to restore its links with its founding principles – set out in 1926. The IFJ sought to unify the differing cultures of journalists' organisations and to implement a global programme on the role of unions in defending the professional status of journalists. In particular it developed programmes on: press freedom, ethics, advocacy for media law reforms, the transformation of public broadcasters and reporting on human rights-based, all designed to reinforce the journalists' role in society, their independence and their commitment to serving the public.

### The IFJ – in a nutshell

- Over 160 national unions
- Representing 120 countries
- Over 500,000 members
- Offers the Journalists@Your Service help desk (open to all)

### THE NEED FOR PRESS FREEDOM AND DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS

At the same time, the IFJ embraced the new journalists' unions into membership, significantly broadening the range and diversity of IFJ affiliates. Today, the IFJ represents over 160 national unions in around 120 countries. The core group are traditional journalist trade unions, but many are professional associations whose task is predominantly to deal with matters such as quality and press freedom.

*“(we will) campaign against so-called anti-terror legislation which directly targets press freedom, freedom of expression, civil and political rights”*

*NUJ UK @ the IFJ Congress 2004*



### Challenges for journalists in the 21st century

- the growth of the Internet and its implications
- the continuous introduction of new e-communications tools
- the growth of different electronic media and the corresponding fall in newspaper sales
- the management demands for increased flexibility in employment arrangements
- the stunning growth of the freelance sector
- the reduction in quality
- the interference in editorial decisions by advertisers

### Speaking out

In the countries of former Yugoslavia, on May 3, the journalists' unions organise 'Five Minutes of Roaring Silence'. Started by the Trade Union of Croatian Journalists and now supported throughout the region, once a year at 11.55 all journalists stop working for five minutes. A statement is read out by the branch official and journalists stand in silence contemplating sacrifices made in the name of free speech over the years.

While these groups have often played, and many continue to play, crucial roles in their nations' democratic struggle, it has become increasingly obvious to them that real journalistic quality and real journalistic freedom can only be ensured through the securing of decent working conditions for journalists.

Not only do journalists need to win their freedom from governments, local mafia or, in many cases, heavily armed paramilitaries, they also need to win their independence from the media owners, the corporate media and their imposing regional and global structures.

### CAMPAIGNS ON MANY FRONTS

- The IFJ is promoting solidarity in developed countries to deal with the attack on wages and conditions and the gradual de-regularisation of labour. This is being conducted through working groups at the European level, such as the Freelance Expert Group, the Labour Rights Expert Group and the Authors' Rights Expert Group.
- As part of the IFJ's global 'Save Public Broadcasting for All' campaign, started in 2001, a European Public Broadcasting Expert Group was established in 2005. Its objective is to address the threat to the survival of the European model of public broadcasting posed by the commercial broadcast lobby that views publicly funded media as an unfair state subsidy in breach of competition law.
- The IFJ's Gender Council was established during the 2001 Congress in Seoul. It oversees IFJ's equality campaigns and project activities.
- The IFJ Safety and Human Rights department leads campaigns on individual cases of breaches of journalists' rights, issuing press releases and organising lobbying and global letter-writing campaigns. It also administers the IFJ's Safety Fund, provided to journalists who have been injured as a result of their work.
- IFJ regional offices in Latin America (Venezuela), Africa (Senegal), Asia (Australia) and Europe (Belgium) are responsible for organising regional solidarity and regional project activities.

### READY TO FIGHT THE BIG FIGHT

Today, the IFJ is bigger and more influential than ever. Moreover, this has been achieved in an environment, which is increasingly hostile to trade unions and traditional forms of collective bargaining. Journalists' unions have survived better than most, but even in the most organised countries of Northern Europe, media unions are coming under heavy pressure from employers eager to back out of national collective agreements. In Germany, the two journalists' unions

organised their first national strike in over 40 years in January 2004. The turnout was disappointing and the unions were forced to concede a partial deterioration in conditions.

The 21st Century brings many challenges. The IFJ seeks to restore the balance in favour of journalists, to improve their conditions and to ensure that the union is at the heart of the battle for quality journalism.

*“globalisation has a detrimental effect on traditional values of journalism as the work of news and media staff becomes more intensive and subject to intolerable stress because of increasing competition”*

*Executive Committee, IFJ Congress 2004*

## WHY TRADE UNIONS ARE NECESSARY?

**Collective bargaining.** Unions are democratic organisations that elect leaders to represent them in discussions with employers. Most employers are primarily interested in maximising profits; a union wants the best possible pay and conditions for its members.

**Protection for workers and unions.** A union can provide members with unemployment or hardship benefits – but above all, it provides solidarity. When everyone is a member of the union, individuals have collective power. This protects members from unfair employment practices – such as low pay, wrongful dismissal and unsocial hours.

**A better way of life for all.** A union exists to improve the conditions of workers' lives and to allow members to express their views on the ever-changing problems of society. A union will join with other unions to exert influence on political institutions. People do not work 24/7 – the majority have families and all have social interests. These aspects of their lives should be protected and improved via better childcare, schools and education and social and health services.

**Conflict resolution.** The contradictions between management's objectives and a trade union's interests mean that there will be potential conflict. The role of a union is to resolve such conflicts and to make and sustain compromises.

**The workers' interests.** Industrial relations – management and workers co-existing – are essentially the responsibility of employers. A trade union exists

### Creating a union in Dneprodzerzhinsk

- In 2001, wages were paid late or not at all
- Eight journalists (on the Sobytie newspaper) stopped work and enlisted the support of other office workers
- They formed a strike committee and issued demands (to be paid in full, no unpaid shifts, improved health & safety conditions)
- Management agreed to meet the majority of these demands
- Wage debt was paid and a 10% pay increase awarded
- No one was sacked and relationships between the employees and management improved



to ensure that the workers' interests are not forgotten and that their needs are satisfied. Without a union, everyone is at risk. Everyone in an editorial department – from young trainees to executive staff – should be a union member.

*“in most countries emerging from the former Soviet Union, journalists are still unable to exercise their profession in a climate of independence”*

*National Union of Journalists of the Ukraine  
@ the IFJ Congress 2004*

### PRINCIPLES OF TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP

1. Encourage involvement in union affairs
2. Pay attention to members' problems
3. Build an organisation for the future
4. Respect equality and oppose discrimination
5. Constantly improve the “public” relationship
6. Develop a relationship with management

### SOME SPECIFIC NEEDS OF JOURNALISTS

- **Protection for staffers and freelances.** Journalists need unions. They are all workers and need the protection that a union provides.
- **Global problems.** The industrial problems facing journalists are the same across the world: poor rates of pay, long hours of work, insecurity, poor retirement benefits, lack of insurance and health benefits, workplace discrimination, etc. Through solidarity comes strength.
- **Ethics and press freedom.** Journalists have a wider responsibility both to their profession and to public interest. Journalists also need to be able to defend their professional rights in their negotiations with management and they need to represent themselves in ethical and press freedom matters.
- **Equality for all.** In journalism, as elsewhere, men and women should enjoy equality of opportunity and reward. Results rarely reflect that goal. That's why gender equality should always be at the heart of unions' organising strategies.

## TRADE UNION OBJECTIVES

The arguments for trade unions and why journalists should join them are easily understood, but it is harder to actually organise the members of a union. The remainder of this handbook looks at various aspects of the work of a union. However, it is useful to begin by examining the main aims and objectives of a union and the structures needed for success.

A union has the long-term objectives of getting the best deal possible for its members and creating the conditions for them to enjoy a better quality of life. But how will it achieve this?

## BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS

- Members' confidence in the union will depend upon the union's ability to perform in the one area that touches every single journalist – **wages and conditions**. Workers expect that action be taken to make working conditions better. The question of salaries, hours and other day-to-day problems are of prime concern to the staff and consequently to the union.
- **The basis for all union work** The prime objectives of any union organisation are: a) identifying problems of working conditions, and b) finding ways to resolve them.

## ACTING DEMOCRATICALLY

- Once a union has shown that it can negotiate better conditions for its members, it can begin to increase its influence. Its objectives will include organising an organisation's entire editorial department – i.e. **to recruit all of the working journalists**.
- **Consulting the members** In order to succeed, a union has to effectively represent all of its members. It must aim to be a democratic organisation. Members will only have confidence if they can see that their union consults them, takes notice of what they say and allows them control over what is done on their behalf.

## SOLIDARITY

- **Strength in depth** With their union fully organised, journalists will want to ensure that they have industrial strength. Having all of the journalists as union members is a good start, but it may not be enough to prevent publication in the event of a dispute. Another objective, therefore, will be to build solidarity with other groups of workers.
- **Arm in arm** Journalists do not work alone in the media. Essentially, they work in an integrated and co-operative relationship with other groups of workers – printers, clerical staff, broadcasting technicians, camera staff and electricians. A good union will recognise this and want to establish close links with other unions representing these workers.

## THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is having a profound impact on the media and the public. The Internet allows the public to access news from around the world and from a huge range of sources. Global broadcast news transmits live images from almost every corner of the planet, bringing instant images of conflicts, natural disasters and democratic revolutions. Digitalisation enables the public to select the news they want to receive and to access it in ever-increasing depth and



detail. And global electronic media has been a powerful force in undermining authoritarian regimes around the world.

### SO WHY SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?

**Ratings!** Media concentration and commercialisation are leading to a general collapse in serious news values. News is selected, produced and packaged according to which story will sell better, win the highest ratings and keep the corporate sponsors happiest. Serious news produced for the public interest is hard to find.

- **Dumbing down:** today, the US public (and it is not alone) is fed on a diet of violent crime, celebrity gossip and weather forecasts.

**Global power.** The power of a handful of global conglomerates, of which there are four or five major players, is being used to introduce flexible and irregular conditions, to reduce the professional status of journalists and to squeeze unions out of the workplace. Clearly the balance of power has shifted dramatically towards employers in global media, where industrial action organised at the local or national level can be relatively easily absorbed by the parent company.

- **The growth of freelance journalism** is driven by necessity, as employers refuse to offer full-time contracts to aspiring and experienced journalists alike.

**Market domination.** Transnational media and excessive media concentration are forcing out competition and alternative sources of information. Increasingly, one or two companies that abuse their market position dominate media ownership in order to squeeze out competition. In such circumstances, it is imperative that pluralism of information is ensured within the newsrooms by strengthening the journalists' control over their own work. This can only be done if journalists are **effectively organised.**

**The transnational effect.** Meanwhile, conditions for journalists in different subsidiaries of the same transnational company can vary enormously, usually according to the strength of the local union organisation. While core union work is organised nationally, unions increasingly have to look to colleagues in neighbouring countries for support. If journalists are to respond to this challenge and to maintain their conditions, they need to learn to organise globally.



- **The IFJ** is increasingly involved in **establishing networks** and union structures through multinational media. Exchanging information on changing employment practices in different subsidiaries of the same media company can be essential for developing strategies to counter management measures.
- Meanwhile, in a number of countries the close relationship between media **magnates and government** is increasingly uncomfortable and leads to a concerted campaign to destroy public broadcasting.

## TRADE UNION STRUCTURES

In order to fulfil the objectives set out so far in this handbook, a journalists' union must have an efficient structure. This must allow direct contact with members. The basic form of trade union organisation should be at the workplace level. This can be a local branch, defined geographically or according to the workplace. This is the beginning of the trade union structure. A network of local branches provides the basis for regional and national co-ordination through a national trade union.

**Types of structure.** Traditionally journalists have been organised either in industrial unions or in journalists-only groups. These days most journalists' unions organise across all sectors – newspapers and publishing, broadcasting, online, freelance, etc.

An industrial union normally organises all the relevant workers in the media sector. The principle followed here is that unity of all the workers in the sector provides the maximum amount of industrial power in negotiations with management.

Many other journalists' unions, though, believe that the key to strong and effective organisation of journalists lies in the capacity to represent and protect the identity of journalists as a specific professional community. The IFJ has member unions who come from both traditions and they are not contradictory. Indeed, most independent journalists' unions understand the need for effective and good co-operation with other groups of workers in the media and within industrial unions. In all cases, journalists tend to protect their professional identity through internal structures that maintain the professional identity of journalists within the wider union.

**Geographic structures.** Unions are either heavily centralised or decentralised, granting exceptional powers to regional groups. More often than not this is determined by national political traditions. In Germany, Italy and Brazil, for

### Great Britain & Northern Ireland

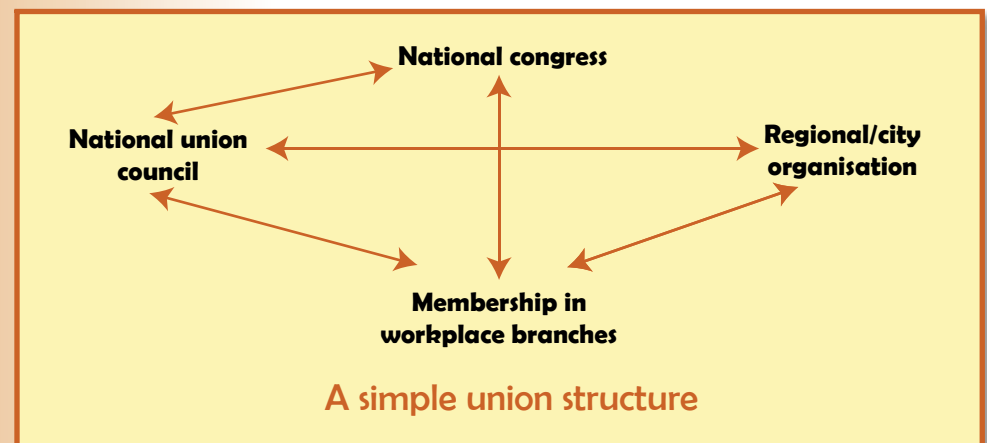
- The NUJ (National Union of Journalists) national congress is the Annual Delegates' Meeting
- This elects the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Committee for a one-year term
- The National Executive Committee (NEC) consists of the three senior officers together with the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary and representatives of all sections of the membership
- The main unit of the NUJ structure is the geographical branch – they send delegates to the ADM and also manage chapels in the workplace.



instance, where political power is expressed through a dynamic regional process, journalists' unions are decentralised with much of the day-to-day union work being conducted at regional level and national activity being co-ordinated through a federal headquarters. In these cases, the latter relies heavily on the confidence and goodwill of the union's strong regional groups.

In other countries, such as the UK, there is some devolved power, but essentially the regional branches rely heavily on the central union for direction and support.

**Decision-making bodies.** Every union should have a democratic structure and an elected leadership, at every level. At the national level there is an elected national council or executive. This council is responsible for organising the union between congresses or national delegate meetings, which in most unions are the main decision-making bodies.



This sort of structure allows for the membership to have direct access to all levels of decision-making in the union – **at local, regional and national level.**

**A national union congress** (delegates' meeting) determines policy for the membership to follow, according to the aims and objectives of the union. It usually meets annually.

**A national union council** – with members elected either by all of the union members or sections of the union or at the national congress – is responsible for the work of the union as laid down by the national congress. Usually any full-time workers in the union report to the national council, which might meet once a month or once every two months.

If a **regional or city structure** exists, it reports to the national council between meetings of the union congress and is elected by the local members in the area that it covers.



## Denmark

- The Union's Annual Congress meets every second year
- 300-400 delegates elect the leadership of the Union (President, Vice-President and an Executive Committee of 13 members).
- All members, including student members, can elect delegates for Congress.
- A local workplace has the right to elect a delegate for each 20 members
- Students from journalist's schools and similar schools within the media sector are accepted as union members (graduating to full membership).

The general membership of the union in workplace branches should have direct access to all parts of the structure. All structures vary according to local conditions and very often laws determine how trade unions must function. But the **democratic principles of participation by the members** in the work of the trade union are the essential qualities that determine the effectiveness of any trade union organisation.

## Germany - two models at work

In Germany there are about 100,000 journalists. Most of them, around 60,000, are organised into one of two national unions.

### VER.DI – THE INDUSTRIAL UNION

In 2001, the Journalists' union IG Medien merged with the Ver.di (a services union with 3 million members – the biggest independent union in the world). The journalists (from print and broadcasting) have an independent section (the former German Journalists' Union - DJU) within Ver.di

The journalists' section tries to use the expertise of the bigger organisation and economies of scale to provide more services and to give more industrial muscle than the journalists alone would be able to exercise. As a result journalists have access to over 100 regional ver.di offices and a network of lawyers. The DJU also has independent boards at the local and national level to focus on professional issues.

### DEUTSCHER JOURNALISTEN VERBAND (DJV) – THE JOURNALISTS' UNION

The DJV is both a professional organisation and trade union and maintains good relations with the DJU in Ver.di. It represents journalists in all sectors and has a decentralised structure with regional groups exercising considerable control and influence over the union's development. The members of DJV believe strongly in the defence of the professional identity of the work of journalists.

The union does not think that organising independently of other media workers undermines its militancy or effectiveness, but instead strengthens solidarity among journalists themselves and reinforces the principle of editorial and political independence in journalism. It works closely with Ver.di on industrial issues and they sometimes organise joint strikes. Like Ver.di, DJV provides a range of services for members.



## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

### IFJ breakdown - 2005

- 130 affiliates with full membership status
- 32 with associate membership status

### Hong Kong Journalists' Association

- Executive Committee elected annually by secret ballot
- The ballot is held prior to the Annual General Meeting, where the result is declared
- The Executive Committee appoints a Treasurer and a Secretary from within their ranks
- Category "A" members earn the majority of their income from journalism, category "B" members include PR staff and category "C" members earn less than 50% from journalism

### The Bahrain Journalists Association (BJA)

- Past: Founded in 2000 for all journalists regardless of gender, creed and nationality
- Present: A request to convert to trade union status has been approved by relevant authorities; first journalists' union in the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the UAE and Kuwait)
- Future: Rights reinforced, interests defended and greater freedom of expression.

### ELIGIBILITY FOR THE IFJ

IFJ-affiliated unions come from a range of cultures and traditions, each with their own variations on the structures, roles and responsibilities of the organisation. Full membership in the IFJ is reserved for trade unions only, while organisations that do not have a trade union function, such as professional associations, are admitted as 'associate members'.

In practice, full membership has been made open to organisations that do not comply with the traditional definition of a trade union – a body with the legal right to negotiate conditions on behalf of its members – so long as they are supportive of trade union work, and play a trade union function in their country. This approach acknowledges the differences between traditions in the organisation of journalists, whilst also reinforcing the central importance of union organisation.

### A COLD WAR LEGACY

For example, unions from former communist states tend to have a strong professional tradition while leaving labour issues to the sectoral trade unions. They often played and continue to play pivotal roles in the democratisation struggle. However, the impact of economic transition and in particular the collapse in conditions following the introduction of the free market has persuaded many unions to combine their professional role with increasing action on labour issues.

### TAKING A BALANCED VIEW

The best unions combine the defence of both social and professional rights. Professional issues – such as quality, independence, censorship, equality, ethics and press freedom – can be great recruiting agents, especially when fighting for a platform for greater democracy. However, in the long run, unions derive their strength and their meaning to members by being able to affect and improve their lives at work.

## CHECKLIST 1

### TRADE UNIONS' STRUCTURES, OBJECTIVES AND THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION

#### YOUR UNION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- What is the history of trade unions in your country?
- How effective have they been and could they be stronger?
- What are the main issues facing trade unions today in your area?

#### DO YOUR JOURNALISTS NEED A UNION?

- How well are journalists organised in your country?
- What are the main issues they are concerned about?
- Write down some of the issues a union could take up in your workplace.
- What general social issues should the union take up?
- Should journalists' unions discuss issues their members are reporting on?
- Is the principle of collective bargaining accepted in your region?
- Do you feel your country has a free press?

#### TRADE UNION OBJECTIVES

- What do you think are the main objectives of trade union activity?
- Write down the three main problems facing your journalists. How can they be resolved?
- Do you regularly meet with representatives of other groups of workers?
- How can solidarity with other workers be achieved?

#### THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION

- What has been the main impact of globalisation in your region?
- Do you have journalists forced to work as freelancers, due to a lack of full-time jobs?
- In your region, do you think the reduction of journalists' jobs has been caused by globalisation?
- Are you in contact with journalists working for the same media outlet in other parts of the world?
- Has globalisation brought benefits?

#### TRADE UNION STRUCTURES

- What is the structure of your union?
- Could it be improved? Did you get any ideas from this handbook?
- Do you know the rules of your union?
- Do you hold an annual congress? Is it well-attended?
- Do members feel they have sufficient say in the running of the union?
- Do you attract members by the services that you offer, by the strength and reputation of your union, by its achievements for members or by the existing feeling of solidarity?



# THE BASICS: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

## Selected eligibility rules

**Denmark:** members must have completed their vocational training, have journalism as their main profession, be permanently employed by media or freelance (three years employment); student members have reduced fees

**Hong Kong:** full members: those who earn the majority of their income from journalism; PR members and associate members: do not earn the majority of their income from journalism; junior members: under 21 trainees

**Malaysia:** members must be wholly dependent on journalism for work; associate membership possible for those with power of employment and for journalists working for the government.

## Reasons for paying the union's fees

1. Improved wages and conditions
2. Protection in the workplace
3. Legal assistance in the event of professional problems
4. Defence of the journalists' code of conduct
5. A healthier and a safer environment
6. Fees guides for freelancers
7. Advice on authors' rights
8. Equal rights and action against all kinds of discrimination
9. A(n) (inter) nationally recognised press card
10. Sickness benefits

## RECRUITMENT

The lifeblood of a trade union is the active participation of its members. The power of a trade union grows from how representative it is. The first task for union members is to organise a **recruitment campaign** that targets every single journalist who is eligible to join.

A distinctive feature about a trade union is that **people join as individuals**. Every journalist who becomes a member associates themselves with the union in a personal way. Unlike 'company unions', where the employer forces individuals to join, a genuine trade union wants its members to join voluntarily. However, by becoming a member, a journalist agrees to accept certain responsibilities and to share certain privileges with other members.

**How to recruit new members.** Think about the questions that non-members will ask:

- Why do we need a trade union?
- What services will the union provide for me?
- How much will it cost?
- What do I have to do?
- Will it damage my career?

All of these questions can be answered simply and with confidence, providing there is some basic preparation. So you must:



- **Learn the rules** of your union and understand its structure. Make sure you know all about the cost of joining the union – so that you can't be caught out by awkward questions.
- **Find out** why some potential members have not joined. Have they never been asked? Have they had a previous bad experience in your (or another) union?
- **Explain** how the union can help new members using specific examples.

### A NEED FOR A MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Every union should have material available to explain the benefits of union membership. Such material should be straightforward and direct. It should simply spell out the benefits.

**Target the campaign to meet your local circumstances.** Prepare your material to suit the circumstances of the members you hope to recruit and make sure that you are well briefed. Once recruited, new members will always remember what they were told. It is important not to overstate what can be achieved. Be realistic while stressing the benefits of journalists standing together in face of adversity.

- **Extras.** You can sell the union in terms of 'extra' benefits that the union provides, thanks to its ability to negotiate attractive deals on products and services.
- **There is a place for everyone.** A trade union is a democratic organisation. Once they are members, anyone and everyone can exert influence over the union's work and participate in its activities. Remember, recruitment is a way of spreading the workload – new members should be encouraged to play an active role.

### Remember the basic principles of union democracy

**Be free – join the union.** Stress that joining a union is an expression of personal freedom. Individuals at work do not have much freedom on their own: it's only by joining with other journalists that they can get editors and employers to listen to them and respect the basic union freedoms to organise, represent and protect their members. Professionally, too, a journalist's freedom depends on the support of his or her colleagues.

**With that freedom comes responsibility.** As with most freedoms, individuals must accept responsibilities. In the same way that paying tax gives you the right to education and healthcare, union subscriptions ensure your right to union protection. Members have to accept the rules of a union. They also accept the need to abide by majority decisions when they are taken in a fair and just manner.

**The union – open to all.** Many of these points may seem obvious, but they will be new to trainees who are just starting out, to freelancers and part-timers who can

#### Typical "extras" for union members

- Regular newsletters
- Reduced price insurance policies
- Cheap deals on computer packages
- Training courses at discount prices

#### All members have an equal right to:

- Participate in union affairs
- Vote
- Stand for office in the union
- Express their views on union affairs
- Be consulted on union business

#### Denmark – reasons to join the union

- Members can seek advice from union experts
- Members receive the union's magazine, twice a month
- The Union offers members' insurance at discount rates.
- The Union organises a trade festival for members
- Collective agreements entitle members to mid-career training breaks paid by the employer





### Press Freedom – another reason to join the union

It should not be forgotten that press freedom plays a role in fostering healthy democracies and free societies. In conflict and post conflict zones especially, journalists brave death or imprisonment to bring the news to the people. A free press is part of a true democratic society – if you believe in a “free press”, join the Union! You will immediately have thousands of workers on your side.

### Comments from young French journalists

- Our applications for vacancies are often ignored!
- Young journalists are seen as a qualified but cheap workforce.
- The unions should help us when we finish our studies and make sure our social rights are respected.
- Some media outlets give summer jobs to qualified young journalists as unpaid “work experience”.
- We need a minimum wage for freelance work, indexed to the cost of living and respected by media employers!

often feel isolated (especially if working at home), and to those journalists who have ignored these issues in the past. There is a place for everyone in the union.

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF JOURNALISTS

### THE UNION SHOULD BE OPEN TO ALL – INCLUDING THOSE STARTING OUT

In past decades, there has occasionally been animosity between staff journalists (with full-time positions) and freelances. The fear, on behalf of the staff journalists, was that freelances were a threat because they would work longer hours for lower wages. There is a possibility, in some countries, of a similar situation existing today, as the younger generation can be seen as a threat to older journalists. Newcomers might be willing to accept lower wages (to enter the profession), are familiar with the latest technologies and are therefore able (and willing) to multitask.

### CATCH THEM WHILE THEY'RE YOUNG

It is one of the union's primary tasks to ensure that there is no conflict between the different generations in the world of journalism. There is not a finite number of jobs – the profession is big enough and mature enough to accept journalists of all ages. And the union will be stronger if it accepts young blood into its ranks – this is the only way in which it can grow and develop. It has to target and recruit newcomers to the profession, as they are needed just as much as unions need the experienced hack. Remember, even the experienced hack cannot stand still – all journalists must adapt to the changing conditions and the new technologies. (See the sections on training.)

### WHY ARE YOUNGER JOURNALISTS NEEDED?

1. Students are the future – catch them at the doorway (of the union), and you get them for life. Joining the union must be seen as a first, and essential, step into the world of journalism.
2. Unions have a poor image among the younger generation. They are often seen as outdated and irrelevant. This is the union's fault, not theirs. The union needs to communicate its message and make itself relevant to the profession's young blood.
3. Members' fears must be: a) acknowledged, and b) responded to. With changing demographics, age is becoming less of a factor. The young are often exploited – they need a union and the union needs them!

## How to Attract Them?

- Go to universities and training schools, organise talks on the profession of journalism.
- Develop training programmes for young journalists that address their needs today.
- Ask them what sort of profession they want to join – one with no rights and no rewards, or one with real rights and real rewards.
- Organise a Students section and find a student organiser – do it now!

## DEVELOPING UNION OFFICERS

The officers are in the front-line of the union's forces facing the employers. In most European unions, the key players are the Union Rep, the Secretary and the Treasurer. All these officers should be able to organise, negotiate, be good administrators and above all be good representatives. But don't be apprehensive. In every workplace, there are union members who are of the calibre needed to provide union leadership.

### THE UNION REP

The Union Rep will be the union's senior spokesman (or woman) and is the key figure in the union organisation. The membership will take their lead from initiatives taken by the union rep.

Usually, the union rep will be a senior member of the office. They must be skilled in union affairs and respected by the management because of their principled and honest way of doing business. They must be well informed on all union business and they must understand the problems that the members will bring to them for resolution.

- **The job.** The union rep will lead local negotiations, organise the other officers and the workplace committee, and will be responsible for liaison with national union officers and representatives of other trade unions.
- **Is it a job for Superman (or woman)? It may sound like a fearsome job, but it isn't.** It merely requires someone of high integrity who realises that their role is to speak on behalf of the members. Good union reps take their lead from meetings of the membership. Sometimes they may not agree with everything that is decided. However, because of a union's principle of collective responsibility, the union rep will always present the members' views to management.

### The officers

**Union rep:** the most senior union officer, the leader.

**Secretary:** the person responsible for keeping records of meetings and distributing correspondence.

**Treasurer:** the person responsible for ensuring that union dues are paid and for creating a local fund for members.



### THE UNION SECRETARY

This is someone who is equally essential to the success of a local organisation. They are responsible for keeping full records of all union activities, for keeping minutes of union meetings and for preparing correspondence.

- If there is a hard (and important) job to be done in local organisation, then this is where it is done. A good secretary will keep all of the union's records up-to-date. The person in this position must be aware of everything that is happening (and everything that has happened) in the union.
- Although newcomers may be apprehensive about taking on this responsibility, this job can be simple in the hands of someone who is well-organised.

### THE UNION TREASURER

The Treasurer is the third, but by no means the least important, of the senior workplace positions. If there is one problem that every union suffers from, it is getting its members to pay their union dues (subscriptions). The treasurer is responsible for making sure they do.

- **Unpaid subscriptions.** Members are not deliberately bad payers, but unless they are encouraged by the introduction of a simplified system of payment – where union dues are deducted automatically out of salaries for example – they can soon 'forget' to pay union subscriptions. There can also be problems, for example, with members who fall into debt (to the union) and who are unable to afford to pay the amounts due.
- **Keeping it simple.** The only answer is to try to make the payment system as simple (and as painless) as possible. The collection of union dues should be the responsibility of someone who is well liked and 100% honest.
- **Maintaining the accounts.** A treasurer will keep the union's accounts in good shape, will liaise with the national union organisation and the bank, and will organise a local fund for union activity in the office. They will deal directly with members and will produce regular accounts for the membership – at least once a year.

### THE WORKPLACE COMMITTEE

Where the union is organised in big media operations (such as large newspapers or television and radio centres), it is often necessary to support the senior officers of the union by creating a full committee. Usually such committees are made up of the senior officers, together with representatives from each section of the editorial department – subeditors, reporters, etc.



- **The role of the committee** is to guide the senior officers between meetings of the full membership. The committee should always represent the membership's wishes. It should support the officers when it is not convenient to call meetings – for instance, during lengthy negotiations with management.
- **Possible members / tasks:** committees work well when their members take on specific duties to help the union's organisation – an equality officer, a pensions officer, a freelance adviser and a welfare officer are some of the extra positions which could be taken on by committee members.
- **The membership makes decisions.** A committee exists to spread the workload and not to replace the membership. All of the important definitive decisions, settlements of disputes, acceptance of agreements, preparation of claims, etc. – should be made at meetings of the general membership.

## ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS

Because a union is a democratic organisation, regular elections are the best way to keep the members in touch with their officers. All senior representatives and committee members should be elected on an annual basis. A union organisation that does not regularly elect its officers will soon start losing the control (and the respect) of its members. Well-meaning officers may think they know what is good for the members, but unless they have the confidence to put themselves forward for election they will only ever speak for themselves.

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## UNION MEETINGS

The most important contact that members have with each other is the union meeting. It is the focal point of the union in any office (or branch) and will reflect the strength (or weakness) of the organisation. A good guide to the activity of the union is the frequency of meetings.

Ensure the meeting is interesting! In today's world, there are many demands on people's time. No one has any 'spare time'. If you want to have well-attended meetings, you must attract members. The agenda must have plenty of appeal – so make it attractive and interesting and your members will be there. Meetings must also result in action. Remember: talking shops will attract a limited number of participants – usually just the talkers.



### TRY A NEUTRAL CHAIRPERSON

It is often useful for the chairperson of the meeting not to be one of the workplace union officers. The union rep and other officers will naturally speak at meetings and will move motions; a chairperson on the other hand does not (normally) move motions and is traditionally neutral.

In small workplaces, it may not matter, but in larger offices it may be necessary to elect someone (neutral) to chair meetings. Tip: try changing the chairperson for each meeting.

#### Rules for healthy meetings

1. The key to a successful meeting is **preparation**.
2. The union officers should prepare a **clear and simple agenda** – with not too many items.
3. Always have **topical and important issues** on the agenda for discussion. No one wants to waste time.
4. **Advertise** the meetings well in advance.
5. A meeting should be orderly - everyone should have **the right to speak**.
6. Union members should agree to a **set of "rules"**, which the chairperson can use to keep order.
7. *In the office:* Prepare and post notices about the meeting, or give one to each member.
  - Where appropriate, hold union meetings on company premises and in working time. This is common practice - union meetings are good for industrial relations.

### EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

The facility to hold meetings on the company's premises and in working hours is an important factor in assisting the union to represent its members. If the employers have not granted this facility, it is an issue that should be taken up.

### THE MEETING ITSELF

- The secretary should prepare the minutes of the previous meeting and have details of correspondence ready.
- The treasurer should prepare a financial report – for each meeting.
- Members and officers should prepare motions for the meeting. Orderly discussion can only take place when people have a focus for the debate – such as a motion, preferably circulated in writing to each member.
- The union officers should prepare information reports under each item to be discussed. Members should be invited to ask questions before the discussion of proposals, so that they fully understand the subject before them.

A typical agenda might look like this:

## AGENDA

.....Union of Journalists. Meeting of .....Branch to be held on.....  
at.....starting at.....prompt.

1. apologies for absence
2. minutes of the last meeting
3. correspondence
4. financial report
5. union rep's report
6. Main item -
7. pay talks/management response
8. Guest speaker at branch meeting – legislation on authors' rights
9. any other business
10. date, time and place of next meeting

## MAKING IT A REGULAR EVENT

- **Monthly and annual.** Meetings should be held regularly. Preferably once a month. There will always be issues to discuss. Each year the members should attend an annual meeting at which union policy, the election of officers and union rules are discussed.
- **Special themes.** It is often useful to organise discussions on special issues. These can be used to discuss subjects in depth and are useful for encouraging people to come along to meetings. Typical subjects might include:
  - Equality at work – what does this mean for journalists?
  - How can freelance journalists take action if invoices are paid late?
  - Bullying and harassment in the workplace
  - Useful software and technology tips for journalists
  - Authors' rights
  - Censorship.

In these cases, either a member can lead the debate or an external 'expert' can be invited to speak to the members.

- **A key point of contact for members.** The union meeting is an important way of building members' confidence. Remember that for 90% of union members, their only contact with the union is through the office meeting. The success of these meetings will be the key to achieving solidarity among young members and maintaining their respect for the union.



## CHECKLIST 2

### RECRUITMENT, THE NEXT GENERATION, UNION OFFICERS AND MEETINGS

#### 1. RECRUITMENT

- When you organise a campaign: who needs to be recruited – trainees, freelances, part-timers? Can you think of other groups?
- Does your union have recruitment material ready to be used? This could include: benefits of union membership, how much it costs, why unions are important, what membership involves, etc.
- What are the benefits of joining your union?
- What can you do to attract more members?
- Do you have members leaving? Why?

#### 2. THE NEXT GENERATION

- Have you been targeting young journalists at your union?
- What percentage of your members are under 25?
- Is there animosity between the generations at your union?
- Do your younger members feel they have a place in your union?
- Do you have a student organiser?
- What can you do to attract more student members?
- Are your young members active in the union?

#### 3. UNION OFFICERS

- The three key roles are: union rep, the secretary and the treasurer. Do you have many members who could take on these responsibilities?
- If not, what can you do to improve the situation?
- Do you have members responsible for Freelance? Training? Equality? Welfare? Your Website?
- Elections – do you hold annual elections?

#### 4. UNION MEETINGS

- How often do you hold meetings?
- Are they well-attended? If not, why do you think this is?
- Have you tried having special topics on the agenda or inviting well-known speakers (as suggested in the handbook)?
- Do you have a standard agenda and is this circulated ahead of the meetings?
- What are the main problems impacting union meetings in your region (geographic spread, lack of facilities for meetings, management opposition, apathy)?

# JOURNALISTS' RIGHTS

## THE FIRST TARGET — MINIMUM RIGHTS

### CONCENTRATE ON THE BASICS

As explained, recruitment is the first priority of any new union. To sustain and continue to expand membership, the union has to make a tangible difference ... quickly. Members may have parted with their money once; now they need to be persuaded to do that again. National collective agreements are usually unrealistic at this stage. They are only likely to be successful with further recruitment and once the union has been able to flex its muscles. So where to start?

- 1. Identify issues and grievances.** Unions need to know their members. Specifically they need to know what motivates members to join and what their issues and grievances are. This can only be done by asking the members. The IFJ recommends conducting a general survey and producing a 'national status of journalists' report' on which to base future demands for collective agreements.
- 2. Gain recognition.** Without recognition, the union cannot represent its members in order to resolve their issues and grievances. Go for it.
- 3. Establish a dialogue with management.** Resorting to the courts or taking strike action are the sign of failed negotiations. Due to the costs and risks involved, these actions should be used as second or last resorts. So an early priority of the union should be to get talking.

But recognition and effective dialogue do not come automatically. Many unions find they need to demonstrate their strength first. Below are a number of important issues that unions need to deal with from the very first day.

### Typical Problems of Ukrainian journalists

- Long working hours, significantly in excess of the 40 hours per week limit
- Pay divided into official and unofficial parts;
- Journalists being employed on an unlawful or semi-lawful basis;
- Arbitrary decisions on pay, and on fines and deductions being taken from it;
- Right to annual holiday ignored;
- Absence of collective agreements;
- Media outlets being politically engaged.

**ESTABLISH THE RIGHT TO ASSOCIATION**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organise, 1948) granted the right for workers to establish and join organisations of their own choosing. (See the ILO section for further details.) Should any member be intimidated or threatened as a result of union membership, then the union should consider the following options:

- Appeal directly to the employer (an example of dialogue)
- Consult a labour law lawyer
- Organise public campaigns / demonstrations / press conferences
- And ... if the employer is a transnational company, contact other unions for support.

**ESTABLISH RESPECT FOR THE CURRENT LABOUR LAW**

Employers around the world consistently breach national labour laws, often with relative impunity. Journalists are not provided with proper contracts, are not paid on time, are not paid at all or are not compensated for re-use of their material as required under authors' rights legislation. Journalists are also unfairly dismissed. The union, therefore, has to develop a strategy for addressing the most basic and fundamental labour conditions.

Clear breaches in law can be dealt with in court – but that can be expensive and the union needs resources. What are the other options?

1. Build up a legal fund from membership fees
2. Negotiate rates with sympathetic legal firms, such as human rights lawyers
3. Apply to the national trade union centre for access to their legal services
4. Prioritise cases for support according to likelihood of success
5. Establish a case history of winning judgements
6. Save legal costs by negotiating directly with the employer for changes in their employment practice.

Often the biggest obstacle is persuading an individual to take legal action. Journalists are often afraid that the readiness and reputation for taking legal action will make it harder to find work in future. The union needs to develop arguments to overcome this fear, for example:

- Employers will only respect you if you demand respect
- An employer who would be put off by a journalist who has sued a previous employer is unlikely to be offering the best conditions
- If all journalists are prepared to take action, individuals will not be targeted
- Do not forget all the journalists who have suffered similar mistreatment.

Where there are regular and consistent breaches in the laws, some unions have successfully called in government inspectors to monitor the employment conditions and issue warnings or fines against the proprietors. Is this an option for you?

### ARE SALARIES FULLY DECLARED?

In many countries, journalists receive a basic salary and extra payments according to productivity. The basic salary is declared and pension and insurance contributions are made based on this amount. Extra payments are undeclared. The union must develop a strategy to deal with this problem, as low basic salaries mean that journalists:

- rarely have enough to live on
- have inadequate pension contributions
- avoid taking holidays for fear of not receiving the extra salary
- are complicit in breaking the law
- are more malleable to the employer and more vulnerable to corruption.
- are being rewarded for quantity rather than quality.

**How can unions respond?** One of the biggest obstacles is that journalists are often complicit in this practice. Some are ready to accept this form of payment, since legalising it would result in a reduction in their take-home pay. The union should first try to establish the extent of the problem and consider ways to resolve it – both with members and employers.

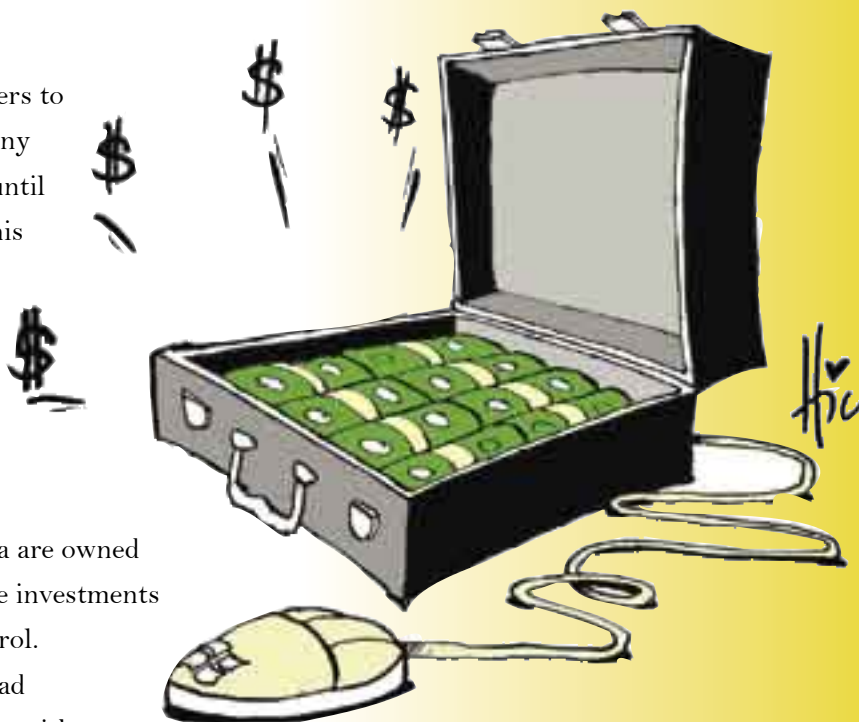
Remember, such practices also expose the employers to potential problems with the tax authorities. In many countries, the authorities ignore illegal practices until it becomes expedient to send in the inspectors. This is often done selectively and to target media whose coverage is not as 'sympathetic' of the authorities as they would like.

### TRANSNATIONALS AND REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

In today's globalised world, more and more media are owned by fewer groups. Often 'foreign-based' media make investments without taking over day-to-day management control. As a result they are happy to turn a blind eye to bad employment practices. Unions can force companies with an international reputation to take responsibility for conditions

### A Strasbourg historic ruling

- In 2002, The European Court of Human Rights ruled that union representation is a human right
- The Daily Mail had refused to give pay rises to journalists who would not give up representation
- The Court ruled unanimously in favour of UK journalist David Wilson







in their subsidiaries. Companies are sensitive to their image and internationally organised appeals can persuade them to improve their behaviour. The union should make use of journalists' unions in the other countries where the company has investments to organise a regional cross-border response. The union can and should contact the IFJ for assistance in this.

### Merry Christmas – Croatia style

In 2003, the management of the Croatian daily Vercenji List withheld Christmas bonuses entitled to staff under a collective agreement. When staff organised a petition for a joint legal action against the company, journalists were threatened and intimidated. The Trade Union of Croatian Journalists sought assistance from the Austrian Journalists Union since the Vercenji List was owned by the Austrian group Styria (part-owned by the Austrian Roman Catholic Church). When the church realised that the situation was to be made public, it issued instructions to settle the case with the union.

### FINALLY, BUILD A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND CLUB MENTALITY

Building a union and achieving better conditions can be a long and frustrating process. Morale must be maintained and members need to feel that they are part of a group.

Many unions organise annual journalism prizes, talks and debates. Some have their own training centres complete with access to computers, library and a café, thereby providing a social venue for journalists.

*“It is the role of the state to ensure that trade union members are not prevented or restrained from using their union to represent them in attempts to regulate their relationship with their employers”*

*European Court of Human Rights ruling, 2002*

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The power of the union is based on its ability to represent the workforce, via ‘collective bargaining’. A typical definition is given by Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/organisations>):

*Collective bargaining is the process of negotiation between trade unions and employers (represented by management) in respect of the terms and conditions of employment of employees, such as wages, hours of work, working conditions and grievance procedures, and about the rights and responsibilities of trade unions.*

Agreements between unions and employers set out two main things: **Conditions** – what pay, hours of work, holidays and other benefits will apply to journalists covered by the agreement, and **Procedures** – how management and union representatives will resolve their disagreements over disciplinary cases, health and safety, etc.



### Working conditions of journalists in West Africa

- o Collective agreements exist only in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, even there, their implementation is being resisted
- o In Guinea and Togo, journalists are regarded as civil servants – with allegiance to the government.
- o In Burkina Faso, Togo, Niger and Sierra Leone, press freedom is limited
- o In Burkina Faso, journalists who publish false information are liable to three years in jail
- o In Togo, some private newspapers do not pay salaries – a token payment is made to “encourage” journalists
- o Some journalists in West Africa earn less than 8 euros per week.
- o Men always earn more than women.

IFJ Africa Office

### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

Agreements tend to be a compromise between employers and unions. There are a number of potential areas of conflict and these must be resolved:

- **Financial:** employers will resist any increases in costs and decreases in profits, while unions will try to improve wage levels.
- **Roles and responsibilities:** within the workplace: the management will insist on ‘the right to manage’ while unions will demand the right to be involved in decisions that affect the working lives of union members.
- **Working conditions:** unions will always bargain with management for improvements in working conditions. Demands will vary and will reflect local conditions – in some places, a reduction in working hours is most important, in others the priority is for better pay.

When times are hard – for example, if unemployment is high – a union’s role may be defensive and the main aim may be to protect benefits that have been already won.

### THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Some trade unions argue that the less the law has to say about management/ union relations, the better. They say that management and unions should be allowed to practise free collective bargaining. In an ideal world, unions should be free from interference, they should be able to draft and adopt their own rulebooks, elect their own officers and decide their own policies. But the world is not ideal. In many countries there are laws covering labour relations.



Some of these laws are good, some not so good. Workers in all countries agree unanimously that their right to belong to a trade union should be guaranteed. The best way to do this is to adopt and enforce laws to this effect. There are already some important international agreements on such matters (see section on the International Labour Organisation – ILO, page 35):

- **Convention 87 of the ILO states:** “Workers shall have the right to establish and to join organisations of their own choosing.” Over 100 governments around the world have ratified this convention.
- **Convention 98 of the ILO says:** Workers shall enjoy protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in respect of their employment.” So far, over 120 governments have ratified this convention.

In many countries, the conventions have been translated into law. There is, of course, more to the law than the simple protections set out in these conventions. Some countries have a few simple pieces of legislation, while others have detailed and very complicated labour codes.

### KNOWING THE LOCAL LAWS

**Important:** union officers and representatives should know about the laws and regulations in their own country. The best way of determining local conditions and labour laws is to contact your affiliated body of **The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)**.

### Global Unions

At international level, there are two major union groups – the international federation of national trade union centres and industry-based international federations of workers from specific industries.

The **International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)**, was created in 1949 and has 233 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and all five continents, with a membership of 145 million (40% women).

- It has three major regional organisations, APRO (Asia and the Pacific), AFRO (Africa), and ORIT (the Americas). It also has close links with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (which includes all ICFTU European affiliates).

There are **10 Global Union Federations** representing workers in specific areas of work. The IFJ is the global union for journalists. During 2006/7 a new International Centre, bringing together the ICFTU, the World Confederation of Labour and the Global Unions Federation is being launched.

The law can affect collective bargaining in a number of ways. It can define a union's right to recognition and the subjects to be bargained, and it can limit the scope of agreements. To take advantage of the collective-bargaining process, trade unionists must make themselves familiar with such regulations. If they don't, they run the risk of breaking the law or they might not be able to take advantage of the protections that the law might provide.

## THE FIRST STEP - PREPARATION

This involves building a strong union organisation, knowing the needs of the members and proposing solutions to their problems. There are two forms of agreement covering journalists – national and company.

- **National agreements** define minimum standards for conditions of employment across a whole country. Such agreements can be important in guaranteeing standards for members who work in isolated offices or who work in areas where the union is not well-organised. A national agreement should agree a basic framework, but it should not prevent the union making further improvements at local level.
- **Company agreements:** before submitting a claim, a union must ensure that it has fully explored what members want. This process of consultation is part of the way a strong union organisation is built. Members must feel personally involved.

## RECOMMENDED CLAUSES TO BE INSERTED IN COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

The IFJ's 'Collective Bargaining Handbook' contains suggested clauses designed to secure editorial independence for journalists through collective agreements with publishers or broadcasters. The IFJ recommends that journalists' unions should make as a minimum claim the following:

*"In recognition of the special and particular work of journalists, the Employer undertakes to encourage journalists to join and remain members of the Union, and further undertakes to respect their right to participate in Union affairs. This undertaking is given in accordance with the following agreed principles:*

- 1) Journalists are free to act, write and speak in accordance with their conscience, without being inhibited by the threat of dismissal or disciplinary action of any kind;*
- 2) the Chief Editor is free to accept or reject any contribution of any journalists notwithstanding the views of the management, advertisers, or the Union/s; provided that if the Union/s believes that this freedom is or has been abused, it/ they may notify a grievance and invoke the dispute settlement procedure ...".*



The IFJ also suggests that journalists' trade unions seek to incorporate in collective agreements what is known as the '**Clause of Conscience**'.

Journalists have the right to refuse any assignment that breaches the union's code of ethics .

### Using the OECD to Monitor Multinationals

Trade Unions can appeal to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development against employment policies implemented by multinationals if they breach the OECD guidelines for multinationals.

These include right to trade union organisation, non discrimination, no child or forced labour, facilities for collective agreements, and standards of employment that are not less favourable than those observed by comparable employers in host countries.

Governments are obliged to establish national contact points for unions to approach in the event of a breach. For further information contact TUAC, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD. ([www.tuac.org](http://www.tuac.org))

## THE ILO AND THE OECD

### BACKGROUND

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established at the conclusion of the First World War with the goal of improving working conditions (by regulating the hours of work and the labour supply, by preventing unemployment and by protecting workers against sickness, disease and employment injuries).

Later, the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) recognised the "solemn obligation" of the ILO to promote, "among the nations of the world", programmes that would achieve full employment and raise living standards, protect the life and health of workers in all occupations, provide for child welfare and maternity protection and assure equality of education.

### WORKING METHODS

To achieve these objectives, the ILO adopts regulations or standards (in the form of conventions and recommendations) that nations are expected to implement.

- **Conventions:** are designed to be ratified like an international treaty. There is regular supervision of the way in which these "legal obligations" are observed and implemented.
- **Recommendations:** do not lead to binding obligations but provide guidelines for national policies and action. These are useful in cases where it is difficult to establish universal rules due to the diversity of national conditions. However, recommendations represent international consensus on a subject and are sometimes included in national labour laws.

### SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL CONVENTIONS

1. The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (Convention 87/1948)
2. The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (98/1949)

3. The Forced Labour Convention (29/1930)
4. The Abolition of the Forced Labour Convention (105/1957)
5. The Discrimination Convention (111/1958)
6. The Equal Remuneration Convention (100/1951)
7. The Minimum Age Convention (Elimination of Child Labour, 138/1973).

Some 12 conventions set out standards for working conditions including minimum wages, rest periods and holidays. These include minimum wage fixing (131/1973), wage protection (95/1949), protection of workers' claims (173/1992), weekly rest (106/1957), paid holidays (132/1970), night work (171/1990) and part-time work (175/1994).

## AGREEMENTS — WAGES AND CONDITIONS

The wages and conditions agreement is the bedrock of relations between the union and management. It may just cover wages and working hours, or it may embrace subjects such as disciplinary procedures, authors' rights, time off, etc.

The starting point: choose issues that are well supported by the membership, e.g. wages, a reduction in unsocial hours, etc. This can be the basis of the claim. Then matters such as staffing levels, redundancy and consultation rights, equality in the workplace, and protection for younger journalists are all-important protective elements, which should be included in later claims ... their time will come.

### HOW TO DRAW UP A CLAIM

1. **Elect a committee** to prepare an initial draft claim. The members of the committee should be instructed to use the experience gained by other unions, to follow the advice of the IFJ and then to suggest clauses to be included in the agreement.
2. **Be precise:** do not say "journalists shall work a 40-hour week with an hour of lunch each day", when you really mean "the working week shall be 40 hours, during which journalists are entitled to one hour for lunch each day without any loss of pay".
3. **Take care:** a claim that has been carefully and unambiguously written will reduce the number of arguments about its different possible interpretations.



### GETTING EVERYTHING OUT INTO THE OPEN

In many offices, written agreements on some issues do not exist. Journalists work according to local customs and practices, i.e. an 'understanding' exists between the union and management. Often this will cover such matters as the rights of union officers to take time off with pay to attend training courses, etc.

It is important that the union clearly identifies where such 'understandings' exist, as they constitute an important part of the relationship between union and management. In order to discover the full range of written and 'custom' agreements, union officers have to ensure the fullest consultation with the entire membership when preparing a claim.

#### Bringing union reps together

The UK & Ireland union, the NUJ, has an innovative method of preparing for collective agreements. Each year, a "pay in the media" summit brings together union reps from regional newspapers. It's an opportunity for members in different newspapers (but working for the same employer) to exchange information: on the state of negotiations, inflation rates, housing costs and other data.

- National claims are planned
- Model clauses for agreements are discussed
- An online pay database is used to agree bargaining strategies
- National strategies are agreed

### CONSULTATION WITH THE MEMBERSHIP

A draft of a proposed claim must be circulated to all members for discussion.

It is important to listen to all suggestions seriously and to accept changes – if that is the consensus of the meeting. Try to ensure that the claim contains something for everyone. The greater participation the members have, the more they will be prepared to defend the claim if the management takes a hard line in resisting their demands.

Remember also that a claim is a **statement of your ambitions** and that an agreement is the compromise that you reach with management. It is most important, therefore, to gain an indication from the membership as to their priorities in the claim. In the process of negotiations, the claim is likely to be changed and it is important that the union officers clearly understand which issues are **sticking points** for the members.

### PREPARING THE CASE

In order to succeed, a demand for a collective agreement must be well argued. It is not just a matter of convincing the management. Journalists are intelligent people and they will want, rightly, to be convinced that the union's claim is one that is backed up with evidence. So, union officers will have to:

- **FIND OUT** about company profits, its prospects for the coming years. Check rates of pay elsewhere in the company and the fringe benefits paid to senior management
- **FIND OUT** about the industry – what are the wages and conditions of journalists elsewhere? What agreements exist for workers in comparable professions?



- **FIND OUT** about the national economy and wage levels in other industries. What are the likely changes in the cost of living in future?
- **FIND OUT** about union policy – what are the union's objectives? Does the union want to reduce overtime? Is there a policy to have wage increases that match inflation?

### USE ALL MEANS OF FINDING INFORMATION

In the 21st Century, it is easier to search for information about companies, organisations, conditions in other countries, national rates of pay and unemployment. Globalisation may have made it is less easy to control the impact of decisions taken on the other side of the world, but the world is much smaller: people can request information by e-mail and receive an answer within hours. A search on 'salaries for journalists in Western Europe' can immediately produce masses of information. But beware of 'information overload'! **Tip:** see the section on e\_Organising.

*The wages and conditions agreement establishes the basis for the management / union relationship on all other issues.*

Information about these matters is also available from other unions, from contacts inside the company, from government departments. It is the job of the union officers to assemble all the data they need. Facts themselves may not impress the employer, but they will certainly gain you more support from the members who will be more determined to fight for their cause if they clearly understand the injustice of their case.

### The contents of a typical claim

- **Recognition:** Covering the rights of journalists to join the union, the right of the union to represent journalists; the right of the union to hold meetings during working hours/on company premises; the right of officers to have time off for union duties and possibly something on the deduction of union dues from wages.
- **Equality:** A clause ensuring no discrimination in any way in the workplace due to gender, race, colour, religion, political allegiance, union activity or membership.
- **Working conditions:** covering hours of work, holiday and other leave (compassionate, maternity, etc), expenses, overtime, redundancy payments etc.
- **Salaries:** Grades of pay classified according to status or seniority, bonus payments - according to length of service, etc.
- **Disciplinary Procedures:** A framework for establishing investigations into - and final settlements of - management's complaints against members.
- **Grievance procedures:** A framework for resolving disputes between management and union (individual matters or those covered by a collective agreement).
- **Consultation rights:** Establishing the principle of union participation in the company's business or any process of change within the editorial departments.
- **Renewal of the agreement:** Outlining the duration of the agreement and a timescale for renegotiations.



## NEGOTIATIONS – BARGAINING STRATEGIES

### PREPARATION

The secret of successful union organisation lies in knowing how to use the union's knowledge, skill, strength and fighting spirit in the most efficient manner. Much of the time a union has to deal with emergency issues. There is little time for planning at such times. However, on other matters – such as the negotiation of collective agreements – the initiative lies with the union itself.

The union must develop a strategy designed to make sure that it bargains with the employer under the best possible conditions.

### MAKE THE UNION STRONG

During negotiations for a collective agreement, make sure the members are fully informed at all stages of the discussions. A union should create enthusiasm for its claim, both before and during the period of negotiations. There is no better way of convincing a reluctant employer to reach a reasonable settlement than the knowledge that your members are in the mood for a fight.

### THE TIMING IS IMPORTANT

Make sure you bargain with an employer at the time when a dispute or strike would hurt most. Periods of high advertising content, for instance or to coincide with a news event of national or international importance. Also take account of the company's business performance – if profits are low and business is poor, management may use industrial action as an excuse for dismissing people.

### MAKE YOUR CLAIM A REASONABLE ONE

Be moderate in the claim for a first collective agreement. Seek to concentrate on the key issues – recognition, salaries, and grievance procedure. Use it as a platform to build for the future.

Decide in advance what will be an acceptable settlement. Remember that bargaining is about compromise, so ensure that you have room to manoeuvre in the negotiations so that an acceptable agreement can be reached.

Prepare the claim – and supporting documentation – for presentation to management in good time. Send it to management and give them time to study it and seek a date for a first meeting to explain the claim. Then agree a timetable for further meetings in order to argue the claim through.



## CHOOSE YOUR NEGOTIATORS CAREFULLY

The team who will argue your case must be carefully selected. It will be probably be led by the union rep, but it should also contain a) someone who will make a record of the negotiations, for reporting back to the membership, and b) others who may have special expertise, e.g. a thorough knowledge of company accounts.

### The principles of negotiation

- **Never negotiate alone:** This might be obvious in set-piece negotiations for something like a new collective agreement. But the temptation to be drawn into one-to-one discussions should be avoided at all costs.
- **Stay calm:** Do not lose your temper. Sometimes it is difficult when management is provocative. If they say something rash, make a note of it for future reference.
- **Avoid making threats:** A standard management tactic is to threaten job losses or similar disasters if the union's demands are met. Listen patiently to their arguments and be ready to report them back to the membership.
  - The union's argument should be rational and reasonable. If action is needed you will be forced into it by the management. Your preparation should have made it clear that you are ready for a fight. But ... never make threats.
- **Avoid substituting emotion for sound argument:** Stick to the facts and the substance of your argument. Do not be afraid to repeat yourself. You are asking for a reasonable settlement. Let them hear what you have to say, it should be enough.
- **Do not make promises:** Do not give management any undertakings. Everything should be reported back to the membership. You are not in a position to say, "the members will accept that" until they have actually done so.
- **Use adjournments:** Asking for a brief pause so that the negotiators can consult between themselves is vital. Do not make any concessions until there had been an adjournment. Use adjournments to discuss tactics.
- **Stay on the record:** Sometimes management will ask for some matters to "be kept confidential". This should never be necessary. Go back to your members with a full report on what has been said. Keep nothing back. Anything that will heighten the membership's understanding of the employer is a good thing.
- **Know when to compromise:** This is an art, which cannot be taught. It comes with experience. Remember that you have decided on what you will settle for. Never declare this position early in the talks. Wait until the arguments have been fully explored. Make no concessions unless they have been reciprocated.
  - A major point to consider: can more be obtained by the use of industrial action? If not, settle for what you can get (after an adjournment).
  - When you have reached the point where you are not ready to concede further, be firm in pointing it out.

## NEGOTIATING TECHNIQUES

Two requirements for a good negotiator: the **determination** not to concede defeat and the **understanding** that words are only as powerful as the deeds that can support them. Be well prepared, have answers to every possible question that management is likely to deliver, and have some surprises of your own in reserve when the time comes to make a **compromise**.



Always leave the door open for further meetings, even when it is clear that you will have to take industrial action. The union should always be ready to meet anyone at any time in order to achieve its objective – **your case is a good one, your demands are reasonable, you have nothing to fear from talking about it.**

## GENDER EQUALITY

### WOMEN IN JOURNALISM

Although women journalists tend to represent half – or even more – of the press room (80% in Russia, for instance), gender equality remains a main concern in journalism. Problems faced by women journalists include:

- lack of equal pay for equal work
- difficulties to combine work and family life
- poor access to training and leadership positions
- harassment and intimidation in the workplace.

The impact of globalisation on media should not be underestimated. It threatens freedom of information, worsens working conditions for journalists and freelance writers and consequently affects the struggle to obtain equality between male and female journalists.

Fair gender portrayal in the media is essential. As long as media portray women in traditional, or stereotyped, roles they will be responsible for giving a distorted and inaccurate picture of peoples' lives.

### THE SOLUTION

Enforcement of solid collective agreements, which strengthen gender equality in the media, is essential. Collective agreements should include provisions on parental leave, social protection, flexible working hours, equal pay, models for reconciling work and family responsibilities, promotion, access to training, and should address the issue of portrayal in pursuit of fair and balanced reporting.

### WOMEN IN THE UNIONS

Raising the awareness of gender-equality issues within unions requires the collection of accurate data. Statistics on wages and recruitment, actual working hours, etc. are essential in order to raise awareness of the **existing gap(s)**.

Unions have a role to play in providing more training on gender equality and leadership in the media, having proportional representation of women on all

decision-making bodies, and ensuring that meetings and seminars are gender-balanced. Until the gap is closed, gender should be incorporated in the agenda within every topic covered by journalists' unions and associations. Decisions on meetings should also be based on making time for family life. Exchange of best practices between unions have often provided a solid basis for reinforcing gender equality in journalism.

More union leadership by women is a must. Here again, facts and figures are essential. Proportional representation of women in leadership positions is needed. Figures will help in making a proper analysis of the situation and in setting gender equality as a priority within the union or association. Once figures have been accurately identified, the next step would be to take stock of the position and then to encourage women to take more responsibilities within unions. Women journalists must be fully aware of the union's rules and be ready to exploit them to their advantage.

*“(there must be) equal representation of women in all areas of the work of the IFJ and its member unions”*

*Executive Committee, IFJ Congress 2004*

## AUTHORS' RIGHTS

This subject intimidates many journalists, as it is often discussed in legalistic and complex terms. As a result, the important principles at stake are ignored and journalists suffer serious financial loss. This is an issue about the rights of journalists – freelance or employed – to get proper rewards when their work is resold to other publications or databases.

In today's 'networked world', when information can be sent around the globe in seconds, the issue of authors' rights is one that must be at the top of a union's agenda. The issue of authors' rights concerns journalists receiving the correct reward for work completed AND is also about journalists or photographers maintaining control over their work. Hence there is a need to receive strong moral rights protection (the right to be named the author, the right to protect journalistic material from being used in a detrimental way or context). It is the benchmark for maintaining ethical standards, which define and guarantee quality journalism. The issue must receive the attention it deserves.

**Tip:** the IFJ has a handbook on Authors' Rights, and is available online. It provides a simple introduction to the subject and gives insights into how unions should raise the issue.

### Tips for contracts (extracts from the AR handbook):

- Contracts should specify that a journalist's approval is required before their works are duplicated and reproduced publicly, i.e. usage rights cannot be transferred wholesale
- Every contract should contain a provision covering the author's moral rights (referring to article 6 bis of the Berne Convention). Contracts under the laws of countries where moral rights do not apply to the work can specify that the client will respect the spirit of this article.
- When a contract gives permission for "syndication" - re-selling of usage rights to third parties -- it should qualify this, for example, with a list of parties to whom the rights may not be re-sold.



*“Authors’ rights must remain a priority for the IFJ and a new world campaign must be launched on this issue”*

*Syndicat national des journalistes (France,  
@ the IFJ Congress 2004*

### Get your Mojo working! (freelancers in action)

1. In the 90s, freelance journalists (members of the NUJ although the union was not recognised) on the “Q” and “Mojo” magazines were asked to surrender their “authors’ rights to their articles by signing new contracts with a special clause to this effect

2. Journalists sent a collective “letter of protest” to management; management agreed that these disputed contracts were voluntary

3. Journalists later demanded that no contract should contain this “disputed clause”, they therefore reclaimed their rights and achieved the principle of collective bargaining

4. About 200 freelancers achieved minimum pay rates (substantially higher than those paid on average by magazines) and special rates agreed for some feature articles (+/- 20% higher than usual rates).

### EXTRACTS FROM THE ‘AUTHORS’ RIGHTS FOR JOURNALISTS’ MANUAL

- The ‘digital economy’ means that online publications are available globally
- This increases the importance of cross-border rules governing authors’ rights
- The universal principles of authors’ rights are enshrined in international treaties, administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)
- International treaties (such as the Berne Convention and the Rome Convention) establish the basic principle of internationally applicable authors’ rights
- Authors’ rights legislation, however, varies widely from country to country.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COPYRIGHT AND AUTHORS’ RIGHTS

- UK copyright law allows corporations to be recognised as authors
- In continental Europe, rights can only be held by real people (authors never lose their position as the legally recognised creator).

## FREELANCE ISSUES

Every region, and most media offices, have freelance journalists. Some of them work in the office as subeditors, reporters or photographers, filling-in during the holidays or at times of crisis. Others work externally, filing their copy from all points of the globe. With the onset of globalisation, the pressure of competition and the wish of many media organisations to reduce costs, there are more and more journalists (and photographers and graphic artists) who are working as freelances – not all by choice. How should they be treated?

When such workers earn most of their income from journalism, they should be recruited into the union. When they are in the union they deserve and need union representation. There must be no difference in the way in which staff members and freelance journalists are treated.

## FREELANCE AGREEMENTS

An agreement covering fees and the conditions under which freelance journalists are employed is an essential way of protecting the interest of freelances.

Sometimes it is necessary to stress to staff members why they have an interest in improving conditions for freelances.

- **Staff-pay rates may suffer** if freelances are exploited. A management which can use freelances at poor rates of pay will be encouraged to impose similar regimes on staff members. The strength of staff-pay levels should be reflected in the generous rates which publications pay their freelances.
- **Staff jobs are at risk** when freelances can be used without any regard for their working conditions. A management will be encouraged to use a pool of cheap freelances to work in uncontrolled conditions rather than employ more staff journalists.
- **Freelances who are used by management to break strikes can undermine staff when they take industrial action.** Unless there is a relationship between freelances and staff members that can prevent strikebreaking during disputes, the freelances will always be useful in getting a management out of its industrial troubles.

For all of these reasons, it is important to organise freelances by recruiting them into the union and by making sure their working conditions and rates of pay are subject to agreement with the union.

*“Freelance writers in the US have been denied the right to collectively bargain without risking violating antitrust laws”*

*IFJ Congress 2004*

**CHECKLIST 3****JOURNALISTS' RIGHTS 1****MINIMUM RIGHTS**

- Is ILO Convention 87 respected in your area?
- Are you willing and ready to defend members in court?
- Are salary structures a problem in your country/region?
- Are you in contact with unions in other countries, especially where transnationals are operating in your country?
- How do you normally celebrate Press Freedom Day in your region?

**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

- The role of collective bargaining in industrial relations – is it recognised in your area?
  - If not, what are the next steps to be taken?
- Have you identified the main areas of grievances for which you would want to initiate talks with management?
- If you are involved in collective bargaining, what are the conditions and procedures involved in your area?
  - The role of compromise in labour relations – what do you think about that?
  - Are you fully aware of the legal situation in your region?
  - Have you contacted your local branch of the ICFTU?
- Have you inserted the IFJ recommended clauses on editorial independence and “conscience clauses” in your collective agreement?

**THE ILO AND OECD**

- Is the ILO helping you in your region?
- Is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) helping you in your region?
- Have you asked for help from either the ILO or the OECD? What response did you get?
- Which other international organisations are helping you in your union work?
- Could these international groups be doing more to help you? What (in detail)?

**WAGES AND AGREEMENTS**

- National and local deals. Drawing up a claim:
  - Which issues are most important in your region? (union recognition, equality, working conditions, salaries, disciplinary procedures, consultation rights, renewal of agreements, etc.)
  - Do some local practices make it more difficult to negotiate a claim?
- Did you consult the membership in your previous claim?
- How would you prepare the claim?
- Do you know everything you need to know about the company, the industry and union policy? How did you find this information?



## CHECKLIST 4

### DEFENDING JOURNALISTS' RIGHTS 2

#### 1. BARGAINING STRATEGIES

- What would be the essential elements of your claim?
- When would you choose to negotiate with employers?
- Do you have good negotiators in your union?
- Do you need training on negotiating techniques?

#### 2. NEGOTIATING TECHNIQUES

- Be reasonable – don't lose your cool, don't make threats, take your time.
- Keep records – record everything for reporting back to the membership.
- Know when to compromise – settle on what you know will be acceptable, but be ready for action if it will achieve more.
- Ending negotiations – do it on your terms and offer further talks.
- Do you agree with the techniques explained in this handbook?
- Have you been involved in negotiations? What techniques did you employ?
- Do you know other techniques that are more likely to work in your area?

#### 3. EQUALITY

- Are women journalists treated equally with men in your country?
- Do women have equal opportunities and do they receive the same rates of pay?
- Do you have any ongoing campaigns to improve women's rights in journalism?
- Are women portrayed fairly in your media?
- Is there a good representation of women in your union? In leadership positions?
- Childcare, flexible working, maternity and paternity leave – are these issues being addressed for your members?
- Are there other equality issues in your union? (based on sexual orientation, religion, political views, race, etc.)

#### 4. AUTHORS' RIGHTS

- Are you aware of your members having problems in regard to authors' rights?
- Do you plan to campaign on this issue?
- Are you aware of international conventions that help you and international organisations that can support you?
- Are you aware of the IFJ handbook on this subject?

#### 5. FREELANCES

- Is there any animosity between freelance and staff journalists in your union?
- Is the number of freelance journalists increasing? Why?
- Is there a problem with freelance journalists accepting low rates of pay and therefore putting staff jobs at risk?
- Does your union spend the majority of time representing staff journalists, such that freelances are either ignored or not prepared to join the union?
- What are the main problems faced by freelance journalists in your region?



## HANDLING DISPUTES

### DISPUTES — MEMBERS' PROBLEMS

Union representatives have to deal with a wide range of problems and grievances. In many cases, members will bring their problems directly to the officers. But there may be problems which members might not themselves be aware of – for instance, health and safety matters. And some members may not raise problems because they are not aware of their rights.

Day-to-day problems facing the union will cover these areas:

- **Discipline** – complaints about unfair treatment, inequality in the workplace.
- **Work changes** – problems caused by changes in working methods, shift disputes or other changes in editorial departments, exploitation of minorities.
- **Pay and hours** – for employees: low or incorrect pay, grading claims, bonus payments, and holiday disputes; for freelancers: late payment of invoices, poor rates of pay, issues concerning authors' rights.
- **Conditions** – health and safety, stress and the 'poor' working environment.

#### APPROACHES TO BE TAKEN

Some of these problems may seem trivial. They are not. If a member is concerned enough to bring it to the union, it is important enough for the union to listen. Sometimes the answer will be provided by a simple piece of information or a word of advice, in other cases it will need to be taken up through the dispute procedure.

Sometimes complaints will be about other union members and should not be taken up with management. A union representative needs to keep the peace between members. That can sometimes be difficult in a highly charged and busy editorial department. Very often, the union rep must bring people together to resolve these problems.

Sometimes complaints look like ‘personal problems’ – a journalist who can’t get time off to collect children from school, for instance. But that issue might be resolved by seeking more flexible hours. Very often, too, ‘personal problems’ are brought on by stress. A union representative has to get to the root of every problem.

### THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In order to work out the solution, union representatives must first think about the issue involved and ask themselves some questions:

- What are the facts?
- Is it a grievance against management?
- Is it an individual case and can it be settled locally?
- What agreements cover the problem and what is union policy?
- Do any legal rights apply?
- How should one involve the members and how should the issue be taken up?
- Should one seek the advice of other union reps?

By approaching problems in this methodical way, representatives will be able to establish what the union wants and the best way of achieving it. **Almost all complaints have two elements – the immediate cause and the underlying problem.** The union should deal with both elements. The first by seeking an immediate answer and the second by looking at ways of securing a long-term solution to the circumstances that led to the complaint.

## DISPUTES – DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

### DISCIPLINARY ISSUES – WHAT TO DO?

The most common crisis to hit a union in the editorial department is when a member is threatened with discipline or dismissal. The problem can be approached as set out in the previous section, by identifying the issues, by getting information and, finally, by planning a strategy to solve it. But there are other points to think about:

- Is the punishment too harsh?
- Has management investigated the case properly?
- Has the procedure for staff discipline been broken?
- Is the disciplinary procedure fair, and should it be changed?
- Is the management action an example of victimisation?





By checking the case through, it is possible to establish whether this is a one-off problem or whether it raises important issues. The key to dealing with problems of discipline lies in the context of agreements covering disciplinary procedures, normally agreed between the union and management. Check through the agreement thoroughly. Any failure to consult or to give proper warnings may provide a strong line of defence.

### A typical disciplinary procedure:

- **Warnings:** before a member is dismissed or subject to other disciplinary matters, they should receive warnings: first, verbal, then written, leading eventually to dismissal. **Formal warnings** are more serious and a union representative should speak for a member at any hearing to challenge the warning if it is unfair or is based on inaccurate facts.
- **A chance to improve:** a disciplinary procedure should provide for ways, other than punishment, of solving conduct problems. For example, journalists might need help with alcohol-related or addiction problems.
- **Wiping the record clean:** Verbal warnings might be written off after three months and written warnings after six months. Then a member can return to their normal status in the office without warnings hanging over their heads.
- **Offences:** managements will often try to use terms such as - "gross misconduct" or "minor offences". A union should resist this practice. Each case should be handled on its merits. Common sense and the circumstances of each case are the most useful guides to determining how serious an offence is.
- **Penalties:** management will sometimes insist on the right to impose certain penalties— instant dismissal, for instance, for "gross misconduct". This should not be allowed, for it denies a member the right of proper investigation and consideration of their case.
- **Representation:** a union member should be entitled to union representation at all stages in the procedure. Discourage members from thinking that matters of discipline are a "private" matter. They are not.
- **Appeals:** members should have the right to appeal against disciplinary decisions. This should be done via the disputes procedure (see next section).
- **Firing rights:** senior editorial staff should not be empowered to sack journalists. That right should lie with the editor or clearly-defined senior managers.

### THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE SHOULD PROVIDE:

- a fair and just system covering the steps a management must take when disciplining a worker. A good disciplinary procedure can guarantee natural justice and trade union involvement, with better protection for members.
- for ways of improving conduct, rather than be a way of imposing punishment.

### DISCIPLINE ACTION AGAINST UNION REPS:

- When management takes action against a union officer this may be interpreted – often correctly – as a direct attack on the union itself. Therefore, no action should be taken against an office representative without a senior union officer from outside being called in.
- Victimisation of trade union officials is to be expected from employers who want to undermine the authority of a union and its members. All union members should be made aware of this possibility whenever the union is undertaking any action. The best defence against victimisation is the active support of union members.

### OTHER FACTORS:

- A union should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary procedures in every office. These procedures should provide for a systematic and fair approach to questions of conduct. The checklist at the end of this section sets out the main questions that need to be answered in estimating the worth of any procedure.
- A good procedure should ensure that legal rights are protected. Therefore, unions should study carefully legislation as it affects workers' rights and make sure that legislative protections are built into the procedure.
- Where there are systems of appeals or arbitration which give staff the possibility of taking their cases before official tribunals or courts, these should also be recognised in procedures. The aim is that, at all times, a journalist has a clear understanding of his or her rights when and if the management starts to complain about their conduct.

## INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES PROCEDURES

These procedures aim to resolve disputes between an employer and a union. The procedure is a way to avoid the need for industrial action. Note: the right to take industrial action is not universally guaranteed. In many countries it is illegal to take official actions without going through appropriate procedures – holding secret ballots of the membership, securing a certain percentage vote in favour of action, giving lengthy periods of notice, etc.

*It is most important for unions to study their national laws and to make themselves aware of their rights and the restrictions on their members' freedom to take action.*

Often, members will be anxious to take industrial action without delay. Despite the frustration the procedures may cause, they cannot be ignored.



### LOCAL DISPUTES PROCEDURES

Local disputes procedures, not usually covered by the law, normally follow a set pattern:

- **FIRST STAGE:** discussion of the dispute between the local union rep and section head. Then, if the dispute is not resolved, a further meeting between the union rep and senior editorial management – usually the editor (normally lasting about one week).
- **SECOND STAGE:** if there is still no settlement, another meeting is called, between senior union reps (usually called within a further week).
- **THIRD STAGE:** if there is still no settlement, the dispute may be submitted to arbitration where it is considered by a third party (a tribunal or an independent management/union body) when 'outsiders' will try to resolve the dispute.

When all stages have been completed and there is still no settlement, either side may take action – subject to whatever other legal restrictions exist.

It is important to remember that while the process is ongoing, neither side should take any hostile action. A union should not take industrial action and management should hold back from any disputed activity – such as dismissals or changes of work practice. This is called **maintaining the status quo**. For small workplaces and areas where the union organisation is weak, it is a useful way of holding off hostile action by the company while the union argues its case.

### IMMEDIATE ACTION MAY BE NECESSARY

Sometimes, however, a disputes procedure will not be necessary. Some hostile actions by management require immediate action on the part of union members. For instance, the instant dismissal of a union rep for doing union work will usually lead to an immediate walkout by members, who will not wait for union endorsement. This is official industrial action.

In fact, most industrial action is unofficial and most of it is effective. A short, sharp dispute that clarifies everyone's minds is much preferred to drawn-out confrontations, which can follow from a prolonged disputes procedure. In such cases, they can soon become matters of pride for both sides and can lead to lengthy and bitter disputes.

Using a disputes procedure can be useful. It is, for instance, part of the process by which you can reinforce the reasonable nature of your collective agreement claim. A good disputes procedure will provide some order in relations with the management.



## INDUSTRIAL ACTION: GOING ON STRIKE

Going on strike is the most serious business of trade union activity. Strikes are won through tough, disciplined organisation. Never underestimate the task in hand – the jobs of your members may depend on how successful you are.

If a stoppage is the only answer, ask if it would be better to be inside the building (in occupation) or outside (on strike)?

Choose your strategy carefully and make sure that it suits your members.

If a strike is the only option, make sure you are ready. There are three main areas of organisation to prepare:

1. **Propaganda:** support from the public and other groups of workers will be crucial. The union should elect a publicity committee to take responsibility for the production of literature – leaflets to be handed out to members of the public, posters for picket lines, statements for the press, appeals for support from other trade unionists, etc. **Make yourselves heard!**
2. **Finance and welfare:** many unions can't afford strike pay. Elect a committee to be responsible for fund-raising, attending other union meetings and getting support.
  - Organise tours of other media outlets to spread the word. Send your best orators and negotiators. Do not let your pride get in the way of a heartfelt plea for money.
  - This committee should also be responsible for the distribution of cash to members, fairly and taking account of cases of personal hardship.
3. **Organisation:** the test of a strike is the efficiency and enthusiasm that a union puts into the battle. Poor leadership will demoralise the membership. Make sure that as many of the members as possible are **involved** – on the picket line or doing publicity/fund-raising work.

The dispute should be run by an **elected strike committee** who will organise picket rotas, liaise with the leaders of other groups of workers, be responsible for dealing with the police and other authorities. Aim for a high profile in the community – demonstrations in shopping centres, rallies and mass pickets. It should maintain control of the dispute. Discipline is important; it reveals the responsible approach that the union is taking.

### Explore all avenues before striking

1. Do you need to strike? Are there any other forms of industrial action that are more appropriate?
  - a. a withdrawal of cooperation?
  - b. a work-to-rule usually means that members do not lose pay (although as it becomes effective, management may respond with a lock-out)
  - c. an overtime ban, or a ban on night work and weekend work



### GOING BACK

As important as knowing when to come out, is recognising when it is time to go back. Complete victories are rare. Usually a negotiated settlement is needed to get the management – and sometimes the union – off the hook. The union organisers should always be clear about their demands and know what they will be prepared to accept as a settlement. They should also ensure that a return-to-work agreement contains the following elements to protect members:

- **No victimisation against any member for taking part in the action.**
- **Continuation of service:** ensure that pension and social security rights which may have been jeopardised by the strike are maintained and that members will be regarded as continuing in service for the period of the strike.

## CHECKLIST 5

## DISPUTES

**1. MEMBERS' PROBLEMS**

- **DEFINE the problem:** What are the facts? Can it be settled locally? Is it an individual case or does it represent a broader difficulty?
- **SEEK information:** What do agreements say on the issue? What does union policy say? What are the legal rights in the case? Who should be approached for advice?
- **DRAW UP a plan:** How should other members be involved? What is the best way to solve problems? What are the union's aims? What pressure and arguments can be used to win the case?
  - Does the above methodology work in your region?
  - What are the main problems faced by your members in the workplace?
  - Have you been successful in settling disputes?

**2. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

- Do you have a fair procedure for settling disputes – agreed by both parties?
- Are there enough warnings allowed for?
- Are union members given the chance to improve?
- Are offences removed (wiped off) after a certain time?
- Does the procedure define offences and punishments?
- Is the right to union representation clearly stated?
- Is there a right of appeal?
- Are there special procedures for the discipline of union reps?

**3. DISPUTES PROCEDURES**

- The purpose of the procedure is to resolve disputes. What are the advantages to the union?
- Legal status: What does the law (in your country) say about resolving disputes? Are there systems of compulsory arbitration? What rules does a union have to follow?
- Stages of procedure: first, local management; second, senior management; third, involvement of a third party for arbitration – binding or non-binding?
- Status quo: no hostile action while procedure is followed.
- Unofficial action: is it justified and does it work?

**4. GOING ON STRIKE AND GOING BACK**

- Options for strike action are: an all-out strike, a work-to-rule, occupation of the employer's office, an overtime ban. Are there any other options applicable in your region?
- Have you organised a strike in your region: can you share your experiences?
- If you must go on strike, there is work to be done:
  - Propaganda – what work needs to be done? Who would do it?
  - Finance and welfare – raising money and looking after disadvantaged members of the union, are you ready for that?
  - Strike committee (the role of leadership, involving the membership, liaison with other unions, picket rotas, rallies, demonstrations, keeping control) – do you have potential committee members?
  - Going back: you must negotiate 'no victimisation' and continuation-of-service agreements, so that no workers are ill-treated because of the strike; have you prepared for such discussions?



# PRESS FREEDOM, EDITORIAL STANDARDS & SAFETY

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## CODE OF ETHICS

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*May 3rd is World Press Freedom Day. It should be in every union's calendar so that events, demos or parties can be organised around it.*

In some countries, journalists have a reputation that is situated somewhere between that of an estate agent and a lawyer! So it's important that journalists' trade unions treat the question of professional ethics very seriously.

Journalistic standards cannot be left in the hands of editors, publishers or broadcasting companies. There are many examples of how the media can be manipulated to suit commercial or political interests. Journalists have a responsibility to respect their own code of ethics or code of conduct.

*The IFJ's Code of Ethics is attached as an appendix to this section. It is an example of how a code defines the standards which journalists should follow in their work.*

Your union should have its own code, which reflects local conditions. But the elements in the IFJ code will also apply. Make sure every member has a copy of the code of ethics, the moment they join the union.

## Good and bad management

**Good:** Norwegian publishing house “Orkla Media” (with a European works council in Poland) has strong principles:

- It is dedicated to **defending freedom** of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of information and the values of democracy.
- It respects the identity and local traditions of its publications and, regardless of ideology, defends and supports their **freedom and independence**.
- It respects the principles of journalism in the democratic world and ... defends the **independent position of the editor**.

No governments, owners, advertisers nor any other interest groups are entitled to interfere.

**Bad:** In the 80s, the Oxford Mail (UK) asked a union member to photograph a disabled boy on his first day at school. Previously, the newspaper had publicised an appeal to raise money for prosthetic limbs that he had needed, but the campaign was over, and his parents did not want the press to bother their son any further.

The paper’s editor insisted that the photographer should take the boy’s photo against his parents’ wishes. When the photographer refused, he was threatened with the sack. The NUJ members at the newspaper organised a one day strike. On the day of the strike they handed out leaflets in the town centre, explaining why there was no newspaper that day.

As a result, the editor backed down. The lessons learnt:

- First, it started with the individual photographer and his own conscience.
- Second, the membership solidly supported him.
- Finally, the union explained to the public what it was doing and why.

## MAINTAINING STANDARDS

It is easy to agree on what journalists should do, but how can journalists be encouraged to maintain the agreed standards?

- **Talk about the issues:** initiate discussions on professional matters. Hold a meeting to talk about the clauses in the code of ethics – what do they mean in practice? Look at your own publications critically – are they overtly sexist or discriminatory? Are they able to give varying political opinions?
- **Be patient:** by discussing these matters in detail, journalists can change their attitudes. However, you cannot change people’s views by passing a resolution. Do not worry if the union cannot get members to agree on ethical questions immediately.

**The important point is to raise the issues. The discussion will continue long after the meeting has ended and that in itself will have a positive effect.**





### Press freedom in Canada

In Montreal Canada the newspaper guild won a court case that lifted the gag on journalists protesting against interference in editorial independence of regional papers owned by CanWest. CanWest, which was imposing a centrally-written editorial on all its regional papers, had attempted to discipline journalists for withdrawing their by-lines in protest and talking to other media.

### Press freedom in Greece

Journalists at the Makedonia, went on strike after Charalambos Bikas was fired when he protested that internal censorship of his news from Baghdad breached his code of ethics. The publisher sued the union for loss of profit and lost. The court ruled that the right to freedom of the press and publication without censorship was more important than economic losses incurred by the strike. The journalist was subsequently reinstated.

### Press freedom in Russia

In the Russian federation of Komi, the editor of the newspaper Republica, Tatiana Borisevich, was threatened with dismissal for publishing articles by a political rival of the owner, Vladimir Torpolov, also president of the Komi Republic. The backing of editorial staff and the Russian Union of Journalists saved her position.

- **Defend the ethical viewpoint:** the union must react to pressure on professional standards. Undue influence of advertisers, suppression of stories, official interference either locally or nationally – these should always lead to action by the union.

## EDITORIAL STANDARDS

Journalists, through their unions, should be closely involved with the development of editorial policy and the editorial direction of the company they work for. This means that there should be some industrial democracy in which the journalists actively participate in the discussions about policy.

One important role journalists should play in the editorial life of the newspaper is to be involved in the selection of an editor. Editors are usually legally responsible for the contents of a newspaper or magazine, and they have to reflect the needs of the company. However, they have a first duty to the editorial independence of the publication.

Involving journalists in the process of choosing editors means that this aspect of an editor's duties becomes more important. Any editor worthy of the name will want to believe that their appointment was made with the support of staff.

The journalists should also expect the company itself to accept the demands of the professional code of ethics. Perhaps the company should be asked to make a declaration to that effect. It could be the basis for joint discussion between management representatives and journalists on ethical questions.

Most journalists want to enjoy professional independence. **It is up to the union to make sure they get it.**

- Journalists have many people who are ready to speak on their behalf. The employers will claim to be in favour of the **freedom of press**, but will very often subjugate ethical considerations to their commercial interests. Governments will claim to be in favour of the freedom of press, but will very often persecute journalists and use professional registers to exert undue influence on the media.
- Journalists must always respect their own culture, but they also need to respect the **code of ethics** of their profession. Working journalists must form strong trade unions to ensure that employers and politicians are prevented from trying to control the media.
- In a world where **censorship is increasingly prevalent** and where monopolisation of the airwaves and printed media is a growing problem,



journalists' unions should play a more influential role. They are an important bulwark against undue commercial or political pressure.

## SELF-REGULATION

Journalists do get things wrong! Self-regulation is one method of upholding media ethics, delivering accountability to the public and allowing freedom of expression.

Self-regulation differs in each country where it is practised. For an excellent review of the various types of self-regulation in Europe, see:  
[www.selfregulation.info/iapcoda/0405-press-report-dl.html](http://www.selfregulation.info/iapcoda/0405-press-report-dl.html)

The IFJ and 'Article 19' (the Global Campaign for Free Expression) recently concluded that "there is no one-size-fits-all model of media self-regulation that can be easily transferred from one country to another".

See their recommendations below:

### Self regulation – recommendations by the IFJ and "Article 19"

- o Media self regulation can only prosper alongside a legal framework guaranteeing freedom of expression and freedom of information
- o Defamation should be decriminalised and replaced where necessary by civil laws
- o A journalist's conduct in compliance with recognised professional standards (see code of ethics at end of section for the IFJ example) should preclude the liability in defamation cases in matters of public interest
- o A code of conduct / ethics is best developed via the representative journalists' body (union of professional association); when there is more than one body, a joint code should be developed
- o Sometimes, no self regulation structure is better than a bad structure.

### A SEAT AT THE TABLE ... IS HARD TO GET

Journalistic independence must be endorsed at the national level, where journalists and their representatives must be placed at the heart of the self-regulatory bodies. This is endorsed by the traditional press council model that usually includes representation from journalists, editors, publishers and public groups.

Unfortunately, in many countries this model is being eroded as publishers are increasingly reluctant to respect the rulings of the councils. Where publishers



### Fighting back: What the IFJ and journalists' organisations can do

In 2002, the IFJ and partners stepped up the programme of safety training with a series of courses in regional hotspots. Journalists lack physical protection and feel very isolated because of what they see as a lack of solidarity from journalists in other countries.

In January 2004, journalists at the Express Group (UK) protested at the "confrontational racist hatred" in the paper's coverage of asylum seekers. The journalists were all members of the NUJ (UK). The owner claimed that the circulation was rising by 20,000 and insisted the stories continue. The union complained to the Press Complaints Commission.

are engaged, it is invariably in models that minimise or exclude the participation of journalists.

In 2005, the UK's Press Complaints Commission (PCC) rejected a parliamentary commission recommendation to recognise the conscience clause and the rights of journalists to refuse assignments in breach of their code (see the section on collective bargaining).

This decision followed a long and public campaign by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), which does not have a seat on the PCC, for inclusion of the conscience clause following a series of protests at the Daily Express newspaper (see details in the Code of Ethics section). The conscience clause would have recognised their right to refuse such assignments and so improve the quality of their coverage. The PCC rejected the proposal, because it is heavily biased in favour of the publishers, who, despite the obvious arguments in favour, do not want to see similar protests in their own media.

## SAFETY

### A 20-YEAR BATTLE

The IFJ has been campaigning for 20 years for better safety standards. Simple acts of solidarity have often been one of the most effective antidotes to the persecution of reporters. In the past, the telegram was part of the routine campaigning practised by the IFJ and other press freedom groups.

Today, faxes, e-mails and letters are regularly sent to world leaders asking for assurances about the safety of detained journalists, demanding the release of those who have been imprisoned or asking for a high-level investigation into one of the numerous attacks on journalists. These acts of solidarity remind imprisoned journalists, or those who have been attacked, that they will not be forgotten.

Journalists' organisations around the world actively seek ways to protect journalists from intimidation and violence. Where a local union or association cannot make its voice heard on its own behalf, international organisations, such as the IFJ, must speak for them.

## INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The IFJ is part of the global International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) network, and can also take action at the United Nations level to remind governments of their duties to promote media freedom and protect journalists. In recognition of its expertise in representing journalists, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recently granted the IFJ 'Associate Relations' status, the highest level of accreditation for a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The IFJ has called on the UN not only to condemn murders of media workers but to insist that governments end impunity, by giving details of such events and taking steps to apprehend the killers. Unions can access these networks and use them to promote and develop their actions.

## SHARING KNOW-HOW AND EXPERIENCE

The IFJ advises its affiliates to adopt a standard approach to assist any journalist who gets into trouble. It recommends that each affiliate designates an officer to co-ordinate actions and to prepare for such eventualities in three important ways:

- By increasing members' awareness of the problems and dangers
- By making advance arrangements with relevant ministries on the procedures to be adopted in emergencies, and
- By making arrangements with employers so that responsibilities are agreed in the event of a crisis.

To support journalists in difficult situations, it is essential to obtain accurate information without minimising or exaggerating the problem. The first hours of a crisis are hectic and it is important to establish accurate facts to reduce the risks of misunderstandings. Once these are known, the board of the union, or its representative, can decide how to initiate practical support. Experience shows that governments are sensitive about incidents involving journalists, and want to avoid adverse media exposure. The media, therefore, can put pressure on those who are abusing press freedom and journalists.

However, there are risks if media protests are not carefully handled. Once international organisations become involved, governments may try to present the issue as an attack on the country by outsiders, so it is important to present facts accurately.

### The IFJ Action Plan

1. Non-public contact and pressure in the country concerned.
2. International non-public contact and pressure
3. Non-public protest
4. Public protest
5. Fact-finding mission
6. Diplomatic action



### THE IFJ ACTION PLAN

The IFJ Action Plan starts with behind-the-scenes contact within the country. This is initially carried out by a union or association within the country. This can be followed up by non-public contact and international pressure, for example by officially involving the IFJ. This can escalate into a formal protest, still behind the scenes. If that does not work or is not appropriate because of the seriousness of the situation, public protests are made by the IFJ and other press freedom groups.

Where there is a consistent disregard of press freedom or threats against journalists, the IFJ often carries out fact-finding missions and publishes a report. In serious cases, the IFJ tries to co-ordinate diplomatic action by, for example, the European Union, the Council of Europe or other bodies.

The IFJ provides member unions with the addresses of other affiliates and organisations which can help, and supplies examples of letters that can be sent.

The IFJ Safety Fund is available to provide assistance to journalists who are prevented, either technically or physically, from carrying out their normal professional work and who are threatened by, or suffer from, official action on account of their professional journalism.

*“The IFJ and INSI work together as a unique network of solidarity that will provide practical assistance to journalists and media staff most in need anywhere in the world.”*

*Aidan White, General Secretary of the IFJ*

### IFJ SUPPORT THROUGH PRACTICAL STRUCTURES

The IFJ has created four special safety offices in Colombia, Algeria and Palestine. These offices work not only to provide a physical presence but also as a base for developing projects and campaigns, disseminating information to journalists and their organisations.

Campaigning may be as spectacular as mass demonstrations organised in Macedonia, or strikes organised in Nepal, or it may be as unglamorous as writing a letter of protest or seeking a meeting with a parliamentarian. Whenever journalists get together and act collectively they make a difference. Even simple acts of collective solidarity, such as fund-raising for the families of journalists who have been injured or detained, brings people together and strengthens morale.

Organisations in many countries are working for the unity that makes this work possible. However, this understanding has not been reached everywhere. The ability of journalists to campaign is more difficult if their organisations are divided and do not work together. Journalists who campaign together, despite political or ethnic differences, can construct a shield of solidarity that will help to protect them all.

### **IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists**

This international declaration is proclaimed as a standard of professional conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.
2. In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism.
3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
4. The journalist shall only use fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.
5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.
6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
7. The journalist shall be alert to the danger of discrimination being furthered by media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discriminations based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national and social origins.
8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following: plagiarism; malicious misinterpretation; calumny; libel; slander; unfounded accusations; acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.
9. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of any kind of interference by governments or others.

**CHECKLIST 6****FREEDOM, EDITORIAL STANDARDS & SAFETY****1. CODE OF ETHICS AND EDITORIAL STANDARDS**

- Have you circulated the IFJ Code of Ethics to members?
  - Have you discussed its contents?
  - How do its clauses apply to your situation?
- The role of the union – to take action regarding professional pressure, to complain when pressure is applied.
  - Does pressure exist in your workplace?
  - Do you practise self-regulation? Does it work?
- Editorial democracy – consider involving journalists in discussion of policy with editors and management.
- Typically, can journalists choose the editor in your office?
- What influence do they have?

**CODE OF ETHICS**

- Do you have your own code of ethics?
- Have you distributed the IFJ code to all your members? Do you find it appropriate to your region?
- Does any or all of the media in your region respect the IFJ code (or a similar code)?
- Have you discussed ethics and the need to have a code accepted at one of your meetings?

**EDITORIAL STANDARDS**

- Have journalists in your region ever been involved in the selection of an editor for any of your local papers?
- In general, do papers in your region have editorial independence? Is this commonplace or rare?
- This section in the handbook describes cases of editorial independence and/or freedom in Canada, Greece and Russia. Do you know of similar cases in your region?
- What do you think you can practically do to improve editorial independence?

**SELF-REGULATION**

- Do you have examples of self-regulation in your area?
- Do you believe the conditions are right for self-regulation to prevail in your area? If not, why not?
- Do you think that self-regulation is the correct way to achieve freedom of expression and an ethical press?

**SAFETY**

- Were you aware of the IFEX Network? Have you made contact with them?
- Do you find their help practical?
- Have you appointed a safety officer as outlined in the handbook?
- Are your members sufficiently aware of the problems and dangers linked to working in certain areas?
- Do you have a plan of action to put into place if one of your members is in trouble?



## OTHER ISSUES

### SOLIDARITY — RELATIONS WITH OTHER WORKERS

#### THE PROBLEM — JOURNALIST' UNIONS CAN BECOME ISOLATED

Journalists often feel that close relations with 'non-professionals' may reduce the importance of journalism and, worse, might lead to a loss of their own democratic sovereignty. This is mostly shown by the fear that they may have to take industrial action on behalf of printers, technicians or clerical workers. This is not entirely an irrational fear.

Trade union solidarity does mean, sometimes, that groups of workers will need to support one another, often over issues that to some people do not seem particularly relevant. However, it is a two-way street. Journalists will get support when their time comes. That is the essence of trade unionism: **in the end, everyone benefits.**

Journalists gain from this process, not just on industrial matters (protecting jobs, health and safety, and, of course, better pay) where interests are clearly defined, but also on professional issues. Journalists who value their professionalism should encourage other media workers to come to their aid in defence of professional principles.

#### THE SOLUTION — ALL-UNION COMMITTEES

A journalists' union should not allow the professional status of its members to create a cultural divide with other media staff. A good union will want to keep in touch with other unions and the best structure is usually the creation of all-union committees.

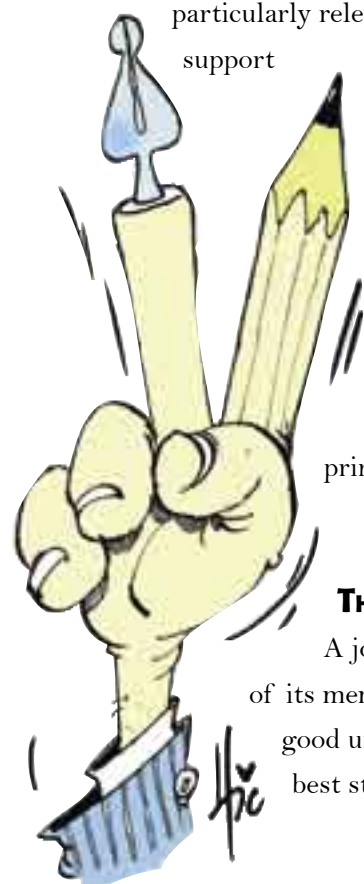
#### All-union committees

Allow you to:

- exchange information with other unions
- appreciate management's general union strategy
- organise joint activities & develop contacts
- ensure unions develop common demands when appropriate
- have joint negotiations with management

So you should:

- ensure officers from other unions are kept informed
- Give them copies of your union journal or newsletter.
- have regular meetings with other union representatives.
- Make sure your own members are aware of these contacts





### DEVELOP COALITIONS OUTSIDE OF THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

Although all-union committees have their place, they are just a first step. More and more, journalist unions are becoming involved in broad-based coalitions with NGOs, other campaigning bodies and even with political parties. Such actions can succeed in strengthening the case in question, whether it is in defence of social or professional rights.

## TRAINING

### THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Some journalists have been to a recognised school or college and gained a qualification in the profession. Many journalists learn their trade by experience, by on-the-job training within a media enterprise. If they are lucky, they benefit from the knowledge of older journalists. This is good, but it is not a total substitute for organised training courses where entrants are given systematic training in basic journalistic skills.

**A union should put the need for professional training at, or close to, the top of its list of priorities.** Journalists can make good trade unionists, but they must be able to earn their living as a journalist first.

This is more important than ever in the 21st Century, as techniques and tools are changing rapidly and journalists (especially freelance) who do not adapt will soon find themselves with severe problems. This leads to the concept of **lifelong learning**, as journalists will have to learn new techniques as long as they continue to earn a living through writing (or related branches of journalism).

### SKILLS NEEDED

The problem of training for journalists is universal. When we talk of training we mean the provision of facilities to acquire the basic and specialist skills of the job: how to write a story, interviewing techniques, photography, TV and radio broadcasting, newspaper and print design and editing. But we have to recognise that software skills are also important, and journalists may want (or be obliged) to become expert in programmes such as Quark Express, Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Dreamweaver. The Internet also plays a fundamental role in today's journalistic profession. In fact the Web has changed it beyond recognition. Nowadays, journalists must know how to conduct accurate research via the Web, to be productive when surfing and to know where the important sources of information are located. If that means more training – so be it.

However, in many countries the training organisations that exist are under-resourced. The union should take advantage of available resources to improve training. There should be a training agreement with management. If possible, bring in a training adviser from outside – from a national school or from an internationally recognised training authority such as the Thompson Foundation.

Try to organise courses to suit your members' needs – one-day per week, evening courses or longer-term arrangements (two or three-month courses away from the office) are options to look at. If it's not possible to arrange such courses, you should review the options available online. Distance learning is feasible over the Internet and many courses are available – the **European Trade Union College** (ETUCO) is a good starting point (see <http://etuco.etuc.org>).

Other issues, which should be the subject of agreements with the management, cover people at both ends of the employment spectrum – the trainees and those coming up to retirement.

## CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

People are living longer and in many countries birth rates are falling. The end result is likely to be that journalists will have to work for longer before they reach a pensionable age. This leads to training requirements at both ends of the spectrum.

- **Trainees/young journalists:** there will be fewer young journalists joining the profession. Trainees should have the benefit of a good training programme, which gives them a sound professional grounding in journalism. Young people are often paid very little and work very hard with little or no real training at all. **The union should fight to change this.**
- **Lifelong learning:** with people living longer, pensionable ages are likely to rise. Journalists need a sound course of education designed to give them a rounded view of their profession and its ever-changing requirements. **It must prepare them for a longer lifetime in the trade.** Unions should make sure that training requirements are established and carefully monitored.
- **Pensions:** at the other end of the spectrum, journalists who are soon to receive a pension need union support. With the changing demographics, more people are likely to reach retirement age than ever before. The union should aim to negotiate **decent company pension schemes** for its members.

### South Africa's Anti-Terrorism Bill (2002)

- Coalition formed in protest at removal of rights and freedoms
- Including FXI (Freedom of Expression Institute), COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions)
- Awareness programme, seminars, workshops
- 50,000 leaflets, 100 posters, 1600 stickers
- Bill was shelved in February 2004

### NUJ Training (UK)

- Modern facility at the NUJ headquarters in London, equipped with Apple computers and industry standard software.
- Courses offered include: Quark Express, Writing for the Web, Adobe Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Feature Writing and Internet Research
- Courses are of one or two days duration
- In-house courses are mainly held in London
- Online courses are also available
- For advice about careers in journalism, costs of courses and to use the forum / chat facilities – see [www.nujtraining.organisations.uk](http://www.nujtraining.organisations.uk)



### SOCIETY IS GETTING 'WIRED' – USE IT

In the past decade, the world of information has changed dramatically.

In the eighties, e-mail was only available to employees of large corporate multinationals. The nineties saw the arrival of the Internet and the beginning of broadband communications. Now, many people feel that they need to be switched on to – and in contact with – 'the network' on a 24/7 basis.

More and more devices arrive each week – PDAs, communicating mobile phones, GPRS-compatible, smaller and smaller (yet more powerful) laptops. The list is never-ending. People can access information and communicate with others like never before. But with this opportunity, problems arrive.

### THE POTENTIAL DOWNSIDE

Internet access (and related applications) is becoming essential for anyone who wishes to be competitive in today's world. That includes journalists, who need to be able to submit stories electronically, adapt stories 'on the fly', search for information and contact colleagues on the other side of the globe. Although the Internet is becoming all-pervasive, it's not there yet. Not everyone has equal access. And for those with access, there is the problem of information overload.

- **The digital divide:** the world is being divided into the 'haves and the have-nots'. This is not only a divide between the developed world and developing world, but also between the poor and under-privileged minority groups (across the globe) and those who have sufficient resources to benefit from technology (wherever they may be, including the developing nations).
- **Journalists need to be aware of this divide and ensure that they try to bridge the gap in whatever way possible.**
- **Information overload:** it is not uncommon for people to receive hundreds of e-mails per day. It is now normal to do a Google search (on say 'journalists, low pay, bad conditions') and receive hundreds of thousands of answers. Journalists must be aware of the limitations of the technology as well as the opportunities it brings. It is essential to double-check sources before using them professionally.

## A GROUND-BREAKING IMPROVEMENT

Nevertheless, the arrival of the wired society has brought the most dramatic change in the way that journalists work since the profession began. That means that there is an equal opportunity for trade unions to change the way in which they work. How is it possible for trade unions to get e-organised? Let's have a look at some of the possibilities – of improving union communications, of assisting journalists in their work and even for saving money:

- **Basic e-mail:** broadband access to the Web has not reached all parts of the world, including the developed world. However, e-mail is accessible to the majority of people (trade associations, internet cafés, etc.) and it can be a useful method of asking for information and contacting colleagues. Note: even text messaging via a mobile phone can be a powerful way of communicating your message quickly and easily.
- **Internet research:** one of the starting points when a union is beginning to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement is to check out the company's situation (profits, clients, new deals on the table) and the local rates of pay. This is now much easier thanks to the Internet. If you do not have 'fast' Internet access, send an e-mail to a colleague who does and ask them to search for information. Prepare your case, use the tools available.
- **Virtual union meetings:** where union members are dispersed across a wide area, one option is to hold a virtual meeting using tools available on the Internet. Members can log in at a pre-arranged time, 'discuss' a pre-arranged agenda online, assign actions and distribute minutes. Unfortunately it is not possible (yet) to go to the virtual pub afterwards.
- **E-mail distribution lists (from one to many):** even a simple e-mail distribution list can be useful. Each branch simply needs to add all the members' e-mail addresses to a list and this can be used to circulate branch newsletters, job opportunities, union news, upcoming events, campaigns, appeals for help and advice, items for sale, etc.
- **E-groups (from many to many):** typically a fully fledged e-group is set up so that all members (in the group) have the facilities to post messages. It is similar to an e-mail distribution list, but experience shows that these are less likely to work as well as distribution lists, unless someone takes ownership and continually encourages others to join in (not easy).
- **Blogs:** 'Web logs', or blogs, as they are more commonly known, have entered the mainstream. Sometimes seen as an 'enemy' of journalists, blogs can be



written by anyone and (importantly) read by anyone – wherever they are in the world, assuming they are 'wired'. An excellent way of establishing 'freedom of expression', blogs work best when they are 'personal'. Could be useful if a trade union leader (or another member) has something to say via a 'blog'. Blogs are most useful in countries with repressive regimes.

- **RSS feeds:** RSS stands for 'Really Simple Syndication' and it's taking off. This is a way of defining the subjects that you are interested in and then waiting to receive the relevant information in your e-mail in-tray (e.g. low-pay, media, 'West Africa'), thereby avoiding surfing to your favourite sites. Many websites (BBC, CNN, etc.) now make RSS feeds available. Be careful though, as you may find yourself drowning in e-mails. This mechanism is set to improve international communication in the coming months.
- **Podcasting:** this could be seen as 'audio blogging'. If journalists want to get their message out to the public, this is one way to do it. With the right software and hardware, you can create a 'podcast' and broadcast it for downloading to PCs and MP3 players.
- **VOIP:** 'Voice Over Internet Protocol' is set to revolutionise communications. Using systems such as Skype, you can make calls over the Internet – to other Internet users, to mobile phones or to landlines. Everyone benefits from the cost savings, except the telecommunications operators.

## ORGANISING YOUR PROJECT WORK

Almost any human activity that involves carrying out a non-repetitive task can be seen as a project. So we are all project managers! However, managing a project within a complex environment (with various partners, stakeholders, objectives and timeframes) requires structure: what needs to be done, by whom, how, when, why and where?

In this section, we will take the organisation of a seminar (or a series of seminars) on the various topics in this handbook as an example. We'll call it: GETTING ORGANISED (or Everything you wanted to know about the union but were too afraid to ask).



## WHAT IS A PROJECT?

A project is a series of activities aimed at bringing about clearly specified objectives within defined timeframes and budgets. In journalists' union terms, this could include:

- Campaigning against low pay
- Campaigning to protect public service broadcasting
- Organising nationwide (or local) recruitment campaigns
- Organising a series of training courses or seminars
- Developing a computer system to improve the exchange of information between journalists in different regions and countries.

*These are just a few examples, there are hundreds more. The main message is that any activity – large or small – can be seen as a project and can benefit from the introduction of a structured approach.*

## KEY ELEMENTS OF A PROJECT ARE:

- Identifying stakeholders/sponsors, specific objectives and a target audience, i.e. someone to support you (preferably with finance) and a reason for doing the project
- Setting clearly defined responsibilities, i.e. who is performing the key activities
- Organising a monitoring and evaluation system at all points of the project (as the world never stands still)
- Performing a cost-benefit analysis – to show that the project is a good idea (to include quantifiable and unquantifiable benefits). Note: unfortunately in union business, benefits are not guaranteed, e.g. a campaign against low pay may not succeed.

## GETTING ORGANISED – THE SEMINAR (1)

- Sponsored by the IFJ
- Target audience – any union that wants to expand, attract new members or campaign for better pay and conditions
- Responsibilities: IFJ – to lead the seminar; local union – to organise seminars; joint responsibility – course development
- Ongoing evaluation: this should be done during each seminar to see if the objectives are being met
- Cost/Benefit analysis: A successful seminar could lead to new members (increased fees for the union), better pay and conditions for members, more effective campaigns (not quantifiable). Against this should be measured the cost of the seminars.



## DEFINING YOUR PROJECT

The definition of the scope and objectives of a project is the first key to success. Projects should have measurable objectives and goals wherever possible.

The **Logical Framework Approach** is an analytical and management tool which is now used (in one form or another) by most multi-lateral and bi-lateral aid agencies, international NGOs and by many partner governments. It is a core tool, which should be thought of as an '**aid to thinking**', allowing information to be analysed and organised in a structured way.

## WHEN THE PLANNING IS OVER

When the planning phase is over (and agreed), the 'doing' phase begins. Once a project has started, it can quickly gain its own momentum and the unpredictable often happens. To have any chance of success, you need to establish at the start (within the plan) the means to monitor and influence the project's progress. You need a project proposal to be widely circulated. It consists of:

**Project title and Organisational outline** (sponsors, goals, timing, responsibilities, etc.).

**Background:** a brief description of the background and any issues, as well as co-operation and co-ordination with other organisations.

**Strategic goal and tactical objectives:** these are the long-term goals and the short-term realistic targets (both should be measurable).

**Benefits:** as well as the benefits already identified, explain possible spill-over effects, e.g. how the experience gained can be translated to other journalists' groups in your country and in other countries in the region.

## GETTING ORGANISED – THE SEMINAR (2)

- **Objectives:** To reinforce the concepts introduced in this handbook and to introduce them to as wide an audience as possible
- **Activities to be performed:** Decide on the format of the seminars (weekly, to coincide with union meetings, 2-day course, etc; advertise the seminars, arrange and plan the location (rental, use facilities of another union, etc.), registration of attendees, etc.
- **Planning:** No matter how small the project, you should develop a timetable for actions to be completed. In this case, the key dates are: complete course content, arrange location and tutors, final date for registration, creation of course materials (if appropriate)
- **Next step:** Evaluate the seminar and decide if it will be repeated.

**Target groups:** describe the target groups.

**Activities/materials:** outline what you concretely want to do and what you need to achieve it. This is the most important part of your project proposal, so please provide detailed explanations!

**Timetable:** present a timetable for the implementation of the project, from the start to the achievement of the target. Include factors that may delay implementation and make an assessment of the consequences, with respect to scope and timetable.

**Evaluation:** explain how you will evaluate the outcomes of your project in relation to the set goal and objectives.

**Local take-over:** (if appropriate) outline the plan for how your organisation as well as your project will continue to survive when financial support ends.

### The Logical Framework Approach

#### Analysis Phase

- Identify stakeholders and sponsors
- Identify key problems, opportunities, requirements
- Develop solutions to above
- Identify different strategies for achieving solutions; choose appropriate one

#### Planning Phase

- Develop project structure, identify risks, identify measurable indicators of success
- Develop project schedule, with timing and responsibilities
- Ensure resources available, especially the budget

for further information on the LFA approach, see: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm\\_manual\\_2004\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf)

**CHECKLIST 7****TRAINING, E-ORGANISING AND SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER UNIONS****TRAINING**

- How important do you think training should be within a union's priorities?
- Does your union get involved in training? If so, how?
- Are you aware of training establishments that you can recommend to members?
- Do you feel that this is purely a management responsibility?
- Do you regard training as being necessary for journalists throughout their career? If yes, are you helping them to achieve this?

**RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEDIA WORKERS**

- Unity is strength. Why do journalists need to cooperate with other workers?
- Do you accept the benefits of solidarity?
- All-union committees – their role in promoting cooperation and exchanging information.
- o Do you think they have a place in your region?
- Issues for joint activity: in which areas do you think it would be useful to instigate an all-union committee in your region?
- Have you made contact with unions outside of the media industry, ahead of the possible need for joint campaigns?

**THE E-ORGANISING SECTION**

- a) Useful – yes / no?
  - o Do you agree that the tools mentioned in this section are useful?
  - o Do you already make use of many of these techniques? If so, have you met success or failure? Why?
  - o Does your union make sufficient use of 'new technology' to organise its members and bring them closer together?
  - o Can you think of an application where 'e-organising' would be useful?
- b) New media journalists, the digital divide and information overload
  - o Do you have 'new media' journalists in your union?
  - o Do you think there should be any differentiation between old-style journalism and 'web-based' new media journalists?
  - o Does a digital divide exist in your region?
  - o Do you receive too much information ('information overload') or too little?
  - o Is there sufficient infrastructure in your region to make this a suitable topic for discussion?

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For more information on any of the issues covered in this publication, see:

[www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

[www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org)

[www.ifex.org](http://www.ifex.org)

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

[www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)

[www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)

THE IFJ IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ORGANISATION OF JOURNALISTS WITH MEMBERS IN MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES. TODAY THE IFJ SPANS THE WORLD WITH A RANGE OF PROGRAMMES AND SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES THAT HELP TO STRENGTHEN JOURNALISTS' TRADE UNIONS. IFJ OFFICES AROUND THE WORLD HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS. THE FEDERATION HAS OPENED OFFICES IN ALGERIA, PALESTINE AND COLOMBIA TO PROVIDE LOCAL SUPPORT FOR JOURNALISTS MOST IN NEED.

FIND OUT MORE AND ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

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