

# Journos in peril

ERNEST Sagaga, head of Human Rights and Safety at the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, of which the NUJ is an affiliate) came all the way from Brussels to tell London Freelance Branch's September meeting about the work of the IFJ's Safety Fund to support journalists in danger worldwide. We also heard from LFB's own Safiullah Tazib on the conditions faced by journalists in Afghanistan (see page 4).

With the recent trend towards the "kidnap of journalists in countries like Syria" motivated by desire for ransom, political leverage or just media attention, "you freelancers are in particular danger", explained Ernest. Such countries are now so dangerous that media outlets "tend to send freelancers, or locals, especially young ones who take on huge risks without any support at all".

Since the IFJ started compiling annual reports on journalists killed in "work-related" incidents in 1990, there have been over 3000 journalists killed. Ernest noted: "apart from the army I don't know any profession where so many are killed."

The IFJ's Safety Fund was started "by journalists for journalists". It covers medicines and legal defence. In the past it was for journalists in developing countries but now requests are coming from Europe and America because of the "precarity of our members". It has disbursed



Ernest Sagaga: Photo © Pierre Alozie

over £3 million: "it's your money with your name on it." The IFJ organises safety training, which is "very expensive... we invite journalists to attend these trainings... to prevent them being killed." A lot of the IFJ's Hostile Environment Courses are "training for trainers" to create a "pool of trained people who will train people in that country: we ask unions to recommend people to come to get training... freelancers have got priority, we know that no one is going to get training" otherwise.

The Safety Fund Board is made up of IFJ officials, who "decide where to spend money and how". Ernest is coordinator: his job is to "ensure the spending is admissible and make

recommendations to the Board," who are "very careful on donations from external funds – they are really vetted." In 2010 Romanian media company owner Sorin Ovidiu Vintu "proposed a big sum for children of a killed journalist, €60,000". This was donated, but Ernest received an "instruction to pay it back with no discussion." (Vintu has since received prison sentences for embezzlement and money-laundering.) Money from external sources must be "to use as we see fit" with no strings.

The IFJ also tries to ensure that local journalists working for the global media companies "are trained and have social cover." The Frontline Club also has a fund for fixers.

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## Congress and a lifetime of harassment

**OUR BRANCH Chair Pennie Quinton was an NUJ delegate to Trades Union Congress 2018 – the annual meeting of the UK union movement. She reports on the motions the NUJ backed – and reflects on life-long sexual harassment in the workplace.**

At TUC it soon becomes obvious that in the great scheme of trade unions the NUJ is tiny in comparison to the biggest unions affiliated to TUC, such as GMB or Unite – but being a journalists' union is highly visible and punches above its weight. At TUC 2018 every member of the NUJ delegation addressed Congress, each composing their own speeches – in many other trade unions it is the norm for campaigns departments to compose the speeches.

At the bi-annual NUJ Delegate Meeting three delegates are elected following their being nominated by their branch to attend TUC, with the General Secretary and President attending de- facto. The elected del-

egates for 2018/2019 were: myself (LFB); Steve Bird (FT); and Chris Frost of the Union's Ethics Council. The NUJ put forward three motions, including one emergency motion. The first, moved by General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet, called on TUC to urgently address the gender pay gap following Carrie Gracie's bold stance at the BBC.

NUJ president Sian Jones moved the NUJ motion on limiting the exploitation of night working in the media industries. The emergency motion, calling for the protection of journalists' data, was moved by Chris Frost – after two film-makers in Northern Ireland had their computers seized by the police. All three motions passed unanimously.

Steve Bird spoke in support of the TUC motion calling for the protection of imprisoned workers in Turkey – many of whom are journalists.

Harassment is everywhere

Arriving at Congress on Sunday night I am told I will be speaking in support of a composite of motions

on sexual harassment from Equity the Actors Union, the Musicians' Union and UCU, the university and college lecturers' union, on sexual harassment – which is "er... up next". TUC had conducted a survey on sexual harassment and something like 95 per cent of female responders had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace – but only 5 per cent of women said they had thought of going to their trade union to address the issue.

Listening to the impassioned speeches – all by women – I was disappointed to see not one union brother in the huge queue of would-be speakers from the biggest unions wanting to speak on how he would support his sisters in the work place. That would have been particularly welcome from the majority-male membership of unions such as RMT or ASLEF.

As I waited to speak I reflected how much damage – not just sexual harassment – I had suffered in my

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FREELANCE

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