

# Of course it rains. It's a festival!

THE RAIN was pelting onto the flimsy roof of the tent as a bunch of bedraggled freelancers huddled together to talk about what the NUJ meant to them. Members are sometimes called on to make sacrifices for the NUJ and six LFB members joined other freelancers in braving the hazards of an English festival on the August bank holiday weekend.

The Byline Festival in Ashdown Forest in Sussex was organised by a radical crowd-funded publishing and campaigning group of London-based journalists. There were hundreds of journalists there and LFB had a stall and ran a union workshop. This took place in the torrential downpour but still 16 colleagues picked their way through the mud to get to the panel discussion conducted by branch officers and other union reps.

As at all festivals there was music and comedy, but in addition a dozen sessions a day with prominent jour-

nalists discussing current themes such as fake news, media regulation, data exploitation by the tech giants, Brexit and so on. Much discussion focused on journalists' responsibility to stick to the highest standards – which is where the NUJ comes in.

A highlight was the annual Bad Press Awards, at which ironic accolades were heaped mostly on the *Daily Mail*; but the *Mirror* and *The Times* featured as well.

Nicci Talbot, LFB's social media officer, was the initiator of enterprise, having established contact with Byline at LFB's last Freelance Salon. She had some NUJ T-shirts printed for the festival.

It has been confirmed that Byline will take place again on 23-26 August next year and preparations will be made for a deeper level of activity. The freelance team has submitted a report to the National Executive Council with recommendations for



a union presence at national level.

The London Freelance participants along with Nicci were vice-chair Pierre Alozie and secretary Tim Gopsill, with members Elizabeth Ingrams and Laura Laker. They were joined by freelance photographers Nick McGowan-Lowe, chair of the Freelance Industrial Council, and NEC member Natasha Hirst.

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The Branch workshop in a tent in the rain

Photo © Pierre Alozie

## Judicial Review granted on Leveson 2 inquiry

PERMISSION has been granted for a Judicial Review of whether the decision to cancel "Leveson 2", the planned follow-up inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press. (See the December 2016 *Freelance* for our most recent update on "Leveson 2".)

The Government announced in March that it was formally cancelling the inquiry, whose brief would have included "corporate governance and management failures" in Her Maj-

esty's Press, with a focus on specific claims about phone-hacking at the *News of the World* and what went wrong with the original police investigation into phone hacking.

Campaigners with the Hacked Off group, including the parents of the missing child Madeleine McCann and former Bristol schoolteacher Christopher Jeffries, convinced the High Court that the decision should be subject to a Judicial Review. The way in which the decision had been

made was "unlawful, irrational and unfair" and "contrary to a substantive legitimate expectation enjoyed by the claimants" and contrary to the commitment made by the then Prime Minister.

The Judicial Review will now come before the High Court, with the "substantive claim" heard sometime "not before October," with no firm date yet as we go to press in early October. Watch this space.

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## We hear of the plight of journalists in Afghanistan

BRANCH COMMITTEE member Safiullah Tazib told the September meeting something of the plight of journalists in Afghanistan, alongside the IFJ's Ernest Sagaga (see page 1). He opened by reminding us of the massacre of nine journalists, killed in deliberately-targeted attacks in Kabul on 30 April, along with a separate incident in which a BBC journalist in the country was killed on the same day. Another journalist had been shot dead a few days earlier on the way to work, with two more killed shortly before that in a double suicide bombing in Kabul.

The IFJ categorises Afghanistan as the "worst country for journalists", with 14 killed in 2018 alone. Safi described an incident in May last year in which six radio journalists were killed in the Afghan city of Jalalabad, and there have been many more such atrocities in the country recently – more than 47 local journalists and 16 foreign journalists have

been killed in the course of their work in Afghanistan since 2001.

It was, however, the mass killing on 30 April that "shocked the world" and prompted LFB, through Safi, to establish a link with Kabul journalist unions, in a letter of solidarity and condolence delivered by Safi in June (see the August *Freelance*).

Afghanistan's journalists have exposed corrupt MPs – one involved in drug running to Moscow and another who diverted a national airline plane to come and pick him up from Kabul – as a result, neither of them were able to stand for election again. Afghanistan's 220 media outlets are "restrained on a daily basis" as a result of their reporting on corruption.

The UK has a stake in Afghanistan. The UK has lost 457 soldiers in Afghanistan in the most recent bout of engagement. There are still 1120 British soldiers in Afghanistan, which Safi described as a "presence which helps the free press." Afghans "ap-

preciate our letters," said Safi. The "support they need is to help with protection on their work... to lobby the UK government to force the Afghan government to provide more protection." They also requested "training with investigative reporting, financial assistance to children of killed journalists and employment rights." Safi explained that most Afghan journalists are staff but have no holidays and no sick pay.

There are currently 17 different journalists' unions in Afghanistan, but these are "working to create one big federation that will represent them all as a united union".

How else can we practically help them? "Would it be possible to occasionally send experts to train them?" they asked Safi. Afghan journalists want us to persuade UK government to encourage the Afghan government to provide financial assistance to children of slain journalists.

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Festival Italiano di Letteratura a Londra

### It Lit in London

AS LONDON'S Italian community face the twin challenges of Brexit and the "illness of democracy" afflicting Italy, LFB members will receive a 25 per cent discount on tickets to events at the Festival of Italian Literature in London (FILL), which runs from **27-28 October** at the Coronet Theatre in Notting Hill.

Speakers include Igiaba Scego, Sharmaine (editor at Little, Brown), Walter Siti, Olivia Laing (*The Lonely City*), Ali Smith, historian Donald Sassoon, Lorenzo Marsili, poet George Szirtes, Veronica Raimo, Sophie Mackintosh, Paolo Berizzi (*La Repubblica*) and Forensic Architecture. It includes an event on "The politics of translation, London as a second language". There's a full programme at [www.fill.org.uk/events](http://www.fill.org.uk/events) and the discount code for NUJ members is FILL18PRESS

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