

# RIP Lyra McKee

MEMBERS of London Freelance Branch attended a vigil for freelance journalist Lyra McKee at Saint Bride's Church on 24 April, coinciding with her funeral in Belfast. Lyra was shot on the night of 18 April while covering rioting in Derry, Northern Ireland. She died of her injuries.

The National Union of Journalists issued a statement in which General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet said: "A young, vibrant life has been destroyed in a senseless act of violence. Our thoughts are with her partner, family and many friends and colleagues. A bright light has been quenched and that plunges all of us in to darkness."

International Federation of Journalists President Philippe Leruth said: "We express our deep condolences to Lyra McKee's family and relatives. Lyra's death is a real loss for press freedom in Europe and for the young generation of journalists."

European Federation of Journalists President Mogens Blicher Bjerregård added: "Lyra McKee was a very dedicated journalist. She has extensively covered the Northern Irish conflict, focusing on the victims of violence. She was killed on duty, while informing the public about last night's police operations. We call on the authorities to shed light on this crime. Her case cannot become a new case of impunity [for those who attack journalists]."

The leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Alliance Party and Green Party issued a rare joint statement condemning the "heinous crime".

Lyra had worked for the *Belfast Telegraph* and was also known for her *Letter to My 14-Year-Old Self*, written in 2014 about what it would be like to come out to her mother as a lesbian.

"There is no comfort for us in knowing that her killing, unlike that



of Martin O'Hagan or Veronica Guerin, was not targeted," Ciarán Ó Maoláin, Secretary of Belfast and District Branch to which Lyra belonged, said. "It would be wrong to say that she was fearless – she was too intelligent for that," he added.

"She was, however, brave enough to take calculated risks in pursuit of a story and before the shot was fired she may have felt safest in the lee of an armoured police vehicle." RIP Lyra McKee.

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• See [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1905lyra.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1905lyra.html) for details of a memorial fund.



Above: the photo that Lyra McKee supplied to *Forbes* magazine when it declared her one of its 30 under 30 in media in 2016; © The estate of Lyra McKee. Below: a candle for each of Lyra's 29 years in St Bride's Church; © Pennie Quinton

LFB meetings  
**10 June at 6.45pm**  
 The ethics of using fixers  
**8 July at 6.45pm**  
 A side-gig writing fiction on purpose?

See back page & @NUJ\_LFB

## Covering complex chaos

HOW best to cover sensitive and complex protests? The April meeting of London Freelance Branch discussed with a panel of photographers: Natasha Hirst, chair of the NUJ's Photographers' Council; Nigel Dickinson, who has been photographing the "gilets jaunes" events in France; Guy Smallman, who has covered conflicts including that in Afghanistan – and our Branch Chair,

Pennie Quinton, who has covered conflict in Palestine, Mexico, Egypt and elsewhere.

Natasha herself doesn't do protest: "I'm profoundly deaf and that would be a safety risk". In her union role, she has been talking to the London's Metropolitan Police – "the Met" – about intimidation on far right demos. The police tell Natasha the dynamics have changed in the

last couple of years. They say they have a hard time telling who is a genuine photojournalist. Officers on the street continue to feel that production of a Press Card isn't enough.

The Met have said they would produce a new briefing for their officers, including visuals to show what a real press card looks like. They are still using the NUJ's police training

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