



Moving Stories

International Review of How Media Cover Migration



Ethical
Journalism
Network

EDITED BY AIDAN WHITE

Moving Stories

Published in London by the Ethical Journalism Network
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11 Vicarage Road, London, E15 4HD United Kingdom

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Designed by Mary Schrider (mary.schrider@gmail.com)

This report is published as part of a programme of assistance to the work of the EJN provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all of the authors for their contributions and to Douglas Morrision for his skilful editing of the report. We also appreciate the help of EJN Board members and others who have helped shape the final text. In particular, we thank Kieran Cooke and his colleagues at Climate News Network and Tony Bunyan at Statewatch who assisted in the selection of contributors. The quote from H.G. Wells on the back cover comes from Ali Smith in *The Guardian* on November 20th 2015.

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FOREWORD

Beyond the headlines

» JAN EGELAND



For years, the Norwegian Refugee Council and other humanitarian actors have called out – too often in vain – to the international community, to the media, the decision makers and the public opinion about the sufferings of millions of civilians fleeing war in Syria.

As the conflict escalated, and the humanitarian disaster with it, creating the biggest refugee crisis in our generation, our appeals for wider media attention, with some notable exceptions, fell on deaf ears with an apparent lack of interest on the part of the vast majority of television and radio companies and major newspapers.

It was arguably only with the tragic death of Aylan Kurdi and the publication of pictures of his body on a beach in Turkey that Western public opinion and global media finally woke up. Immediately, media lenses focused sharply on the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean and both politicians and ordinary people had to respond.

What about the many other humanitarian crises beyond the media's radar? Every two minutes another South Sudanese child becomes severely malnourished. But these stories are seldom told.

But this incident only raised another question. What about the many other humanitarian crises beyond the media's radar? In war-torn South Sudan, for example. This country is rarely in the limelight. In 2011, it gained independence from Sudan ending a generation of war. Two years later, the civil war broke out resulting in massive forced displacement and today the country is one of the world's impoverished places. Every two minutes another South Sudanese child becomes severely malnourished. But these stories are seldom told.

A South Sudanese colleague told me it was strange to see how things can change from one day to the other only because of international media attention.

“In Europe, it was that boy on the beach. Maybe we need a picture of a boy like that in South Sudan,” she said while preparing to go on a new mission to one of the world's hardest-to-reach areas where dropping food from World Food Programme airplanes is the only way to provide hungry people with something to eat.

Too often not even stories about children dying of starvation are enough to make headlines on the nine o'clock news. Humanitarian disasters that deserve our attention often go uncovered because there is no photographer or journalist on the ground to tell the story. Only a couple of conflicts receive our attention at any given time, while most dramas get none at all. Why is that?

The reasons are complex. It is not just a lack of humanity on the news agenda or a matter of luck or a matter of caring more about some people at the expense of others. We need a broader lens to see what really is going on.

In the Norwegian Refugee Council we annually publish a list of the world's 10 most neglected displacement crises. This year the Rohingyas have topped the list. This minority Muslim community under pressure in Myanmar is also found in neighbouring Bangladesh where hundreds of thousands have sought protection.

One criterion to be on the neglected crises list is a lack of media attention. Other factors include lack of funding, little humanitarian presence and difficult access to the victims of the conflict. Often, there is a strong correlation between the different factors: access problems can lead to lack of media attention, which again can lead to lack of donor concern, which again leads to even bigger access issues. This completes a vicious circle that is not easily broken.

But there is an important truth in all of this – decision makers pay attention to the media, and independent journalists reporting with care, humanity and professionalism have enormous power to tell stories that create a new path.

But, as this report reveals, mainstream media is currently under pressure with news companies struggling to adapt to a new reality with plummeting revenues and competition from new media. Often media will simply say they cannot afford to cover these stories.

But this should not be an excuse for adopting a herd mentality – where media follow each other to cover a small cluster of the most obvious stories. Media around the world are now reporting on the disastrous humanitarian consequences of the civil war in Syria and the exodus to Europe and they are going beyond the numbers story which has dominated news coverage so far.

Yet as the poignant human tragedies from Syria takes centre stage, where is the coverage of the second largest humanitarian crisis and war on our watch: in Yemen? Here, around 21 million people are in urgent need of emergency relief. They suffer from external and internal bombardment, blockade and totally inadequate assistance and protection.

Also the journalists themselves need to be protected to be able to report on the atrocities. For journalists reporting from conflict and war 2015 is another deadly year. Like humanitarian workers, journalists are not only at risk of becoming so-called collateral damage during military operations, they are also increasingly targeted.

It is therefore essential that the international community focus on the protection of journalists in armed conflicts to allow for less casualties in the imminent future.

In Europe we talk about a sharing of responsibility in terms of coping with the growing influx of migration. Maybe it is time to talk about a media “burden sharing” where media institutions, rather than chasing the same stories, divide the coverage of the human suffering so that children in grave risk in South Sudan or Gaza do not continue to stay in life-threatening situations without the world knowing.

This EJN report *Moving Stories* is a welcome step to allow journalists get an overview of the problem areas as well as promoting best practices when it comes to reporting on the wider migration story.

Without media attention, humanitarian crises, with their horrifying impacts, will continue to be learned by the outside world way too late.

Jan Egeland is the Secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council



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INTRODUCTION

Moving stories

» KIERAN COOKE AND AIDAN WHITE

Migration is part of the human condition. Ever since humankind emerged out of East Africa it has been on the move – searching for a better climate, looking for supplies of food and water, finding security and safety.

Migration has suddenly jumped to the top of the news agenda. During 2015 journalists reported the biggest mass movement of people around the world in recent history.

Television screens and newspapers have been filled with stories about the appalling loss of life and suffering of thousands of people escaping war in the Middle East or oppression and poverty in Africa and elsewhere.

Every day in 2015 seemed to bring a new migration tragedy: Syrian child refugees perish in the Mediterranean; groups of Rohingyas escaping persecution in Myanmar suffocate on boats in the South China Sea; children fleeing from gang warfare in Central America die of thirst in the desert as they try to enter the US.

In response to this crisis the Ethical Journalism Network commissioned *Moving Stories* – a review of how media in selected countries have reported on refugees and migrants in a tumultuous year. We asked writers and researchers to examine the quality of coverage and to highlight reporting problems as well as good work.



The conclusions from many different parts of the world are remarkably similar: journalism under pressure from a weakening media economy; political bias and opportunism that drives the news agenda; the dangers of hate-speech, stereotyping and social exclusion of refugees and migrants. But at the same time there have been inspiring examples of careful, sensitive and ethical journalism that have shown empathy for the victims.

In most countries the story has been dominated by two themes – numbers and emotions. Most of the time coverage is politically led with media often following an agenda dominated by loose language and talk of invasion and swarms. At other moments the story has been laced with humanity, empathy and a focus on the suffering of those involved.

What is unquestionable is that media everywhere play a vital role in bringing the world's attention to these events. This report, written by journalists from or in the countries concerned, relates how their media cover migration.

They tell very different stories. **Nepal** and the **Gambia** are exporters of labour. Thousands of migrants, mostly young men, flock from the mountain villages of Nepal to work in the heat of the Gulf and Malaysia: often the consequences are disastrous. People from the Gambia make the treacherous trip across the Sahara to Libya and then by boat to Europe: many have perished on the way – either in the desert or drowned in the Mediterranean.

In these countries reporting of the migration of large numbers of the young – in many ways the lifeblood of their nations – is limited and stories about the hardship migrants endure are rare. Censorship or a lack of resources – or a combination of both – are mainly to blame for the inadequacies of coverage. Self-censorship, where reporters do not want to offend either their media employer or the government, is also an issue.

The reports on migration in **China**, **India** and **Brazil** tell another story. Though large numbers of people migrate from each of these countries, the main focus is on internal migration, a global phenomenon often ignored by mainstream media that involves millions and dwarfs the international movement of people.

What's considered to be the biggest movement of people in history has taken place in China over the last 35 years. Cities are undergoing explosive growth, with several approaching 20 million inhabitants. Similar movements are happening in India and, to a lesser extent, in Brazil.

In Africa the headlines focus on people striving to leave the continent and heading north, but there is also migration between countries, with many people from the impoverished central regions heading for **South Africa** – a country where media also deal with problems of xenophobia and governmental pressure.

In Europe migration and refugee issues have shaken the tree of European unity with hundreds of thousands trekking by land and sea to escape war and poverty. The reports here reveal how for almost a year media have missed opportunities to sound the alarm to an imminent migration refugee crisis.

Media struggle to provide balanced coverage when political leaders respond with a mix of bigotry and panic – some announcing they will only take in Christian migrants while others plan to establish walls and razor wire fences. Much of the focus has been on countries in South Eastern Europe which has provided a key route for migrants and refugees on the march. In **Bulgaria**, as in much of the region, media have failed to play a responsible role and sensationalism has dominated news coverage.

In **Italy**, a frontline state where the Mediterranean refugee tragedy first unfolded, the threat of hate-speech is always present, though this is often counterbalanced by an ethical attachment of many in journalism to a purpose-built charter against discrimination. In **Britain** the story has also often been politically-driven and focused, sometimes without a sense of scale or balance: this has been particularly evident in reportage of the plight of refugees in Calais.

In **Turkey**, seen by many European politicians as a key country in stemming the onward rush of migrants, most media are under the thumb of a government that punishes dissident journalists, so the public debate is limited.

Like their Turkish colleagues, journalists in **Lebanon** live with the reality of millions of refugees from war-torn Syria within their borders which makes telling the story more complex and it is not helped by confused mixing of fact and opinion by many media.

At the same time in the **United States** media have helped make the migrant and refugee issue an explosive topic in debates between Republican Party candidates for the presidency. Media time has focused on heated and often racist exchanges. This has obscured much of the good reporting in some media that provides much-needed context. South of the border, in **Mexico** media also suffer from undue political pressure and self-censorship.



“Open the world more equitably so we all may walk freely. Or close the borders and let each one return to his house and see how much poorer and drearier and darker the world is when we all stay at home.” – Chibundu Onuzo

In **Australia** the media in a country built by migrants struggles to apply well-meaning codes of journalistic practice within a toxic political climate that has seen a rise in racism directed at new arrivals.

These reports cover only a handful of countries, but they are significant. The problems of scant and prejudicial coverage of migration issues exist everywhere. Even reporting of migration in the international media – with a few notable exceptions – tends to be overly simplistic.

Migrants are described as a threat. There is a tendency, both among many politicians and in sections of the mainstream media, to lump migrants together and present them as a seemingly endless tide of people who will steal jobs, become a burden on the state and ultimately threaten the native way of life.

Such reporting is not only wrong; it is also dishonest. Migrants often bring enormous benefits to their adopted countries.

How would California’s agricultural industry or the Texan oil fields survive without the presence of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Central

American workers, often labouring on minimal wages? How could the health service in the UK continue without the thousands of migrant nurses and doctors from the developing world? How would cities like Dubai, Doha or Singapore have been built without labourers from Nepal or Bangladesh – or how would they function without the armies of maids and helpers from the Philippines and Indonesia?

These reports underscore why media need to explain and reinforce a wider understanding that migration is a natural process. No amount of razor wire or no matter how high walls are built, desperate migrants will find a way through. People will still flock to the cities, drawn by the hope of a better life.

The migrant crisis is not going to go away: the impact of widespread climate change and growing inequality is likely to exacerbate it in the years ahead.

The inescapable conclusion is that there has never been a greater need for useful and reliable intelligence on the complexities of migration and for media coverage to be informed, accurate and laced with humanity. But if that is to be achieved we must strengthen the craft of journalism.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND USEFUL LINKS

1. Ethical context

Migrants and refugees are a vulnerable minority who can quickly become scapegoats for the ills of society – social and economic decline, crime and unemployment, pressure on health and welfare services and lack of security.

Media can counter this threat and help people better understand the complex migration story by applying ethical principles, avoiding crude stereotypes, developing good newsroom practice and engaging with the audience. In particular, journalists should apply and respect the following five core principles of journalism in their work:

- ▷ Accuracy: fact-based reporting, analysis and commentary;
- ▷ Independence: journalism free from self-censorship and political pressure;
- ▷ Impartiality: fair reporting that tells all sides of the story;
- ▷ Humanity: sensitive and careful journalism that avoids doing undue harm;
- ▷ Accountability: media transparency and commitment to correct errors.

2. Newsroom practice

Media companies and journalists' unions and associations should prepare concise guides to best practices for the reporting on refugees and migrants. In addition, all media should examine their internal structures to make sure they are telling the story in the most effective way.

News organisations can:

- ▷ Appoint specialist reporters with good knowledge of the subject to the migration and refugee beat.
- ▷ Provide detailed information on the background of migrants and refugees and the consequences of migration. It is especially important to note that some major studies reveal how migration can strengthen national economies in the longer term, even where there are short-term challenges.
- ▷ Avoid political bias and challenge deceptive handling of the facts and incitement to hatred particularly by political, religious or other community leaders and public figures.
- ▷ Respect sources of information and grant anonymity to those who require it most, particularly

those who are vulnerable and most at risk.

- ▷ Establish transparent and accessible internal systems for dealing with complaints from the audience over coverage of migrant and refugee issues.
- ▷ Review employment policies to ensure newsroom diversity with reporters and editors from minority communities.
- ▷ Provide training for journalists and editors covering everything from international conventions and law to refugee rights and what terms to use while covering refugee stories.
- ▷ Monitor coverage regularly. Organise internal discussions on how to develop and improve the scope of migration coverage.
- ▷ Manage online comments and engage with the audience to ensure that migration stories are not used as a platform for abuse or intolerance.

Media associations and journalists' unions can also support national structures for independent regulation or self-regulation of journalism, such as press councils. Where there are industry-wide codes of conduct and guidelines dealing with non-discrimination these should cover reporting migration.

3. Engage with the media audience and connect with migrants

Refugee groups, activists and NGOs, many of which provide vital information for media, can be briefed on how best to communicate with journalists and media can explain to the audience their policies and editorial approach which may encourage readers, viewers and listeners to contribute useful additional information.

4. Challenge hate-speech

Hate-speech is widespread in the media. Often it can't be prevented when it comes out of the mouths of prominent public figures, but journalists should always remember that just because someone says something outrageous doesn't make it newsworthy. The Ethical Journalism Network has developed a 5-point text for hate-speech as a useful tool for newsrooms. (See below).

5. Demand access to information

Media cannot report without access to reliable information and facts. When access to information is restricted, such as not being allowed to enter

refugee camps, media and civil society groups should press the government both nationally and internationally to be more transparent. Media and journalists' unions should meet regularly with police and state authorities and agencies to ensure journalists have safe conditions in which to work and access to the information they need.

Some Useful Links

Glossaries

International Organization for Migration (IOM Key migration terms)

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Media Friendly Glossary for Migration

Statistics

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Statistics and Operational Data

International Organization for Migration (IOM) World Migration Report

Internal Displacement Monitoring Center Global Estimates 2015

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Resources Publications

Sources

International Refugee Law – Everything you need to know from the UNHCR

Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM)

Refugee Studies Centre (RSC)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Council of Europe (COE)

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

Forced Migration Online

The Journal of International Migration and Integration (JIMI)

The Global Migration Centre (GMC)

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Red Cross Global Campaign on Migration

Middle East Migration Issues (Migration Policy Institute)

Resources for journalists

Accountable Journalism Database

Africa's Media Silence over Migration Crisis

BBC: Migration in Figures

Climate News Network

Dart Centre Covering Migration Tips for Journalists

Ethical Journalism Network: Migrants or Refugees?

Ethical Journalism Network Five-Point Test for Hate-speech

Europe: The Migrant Files

Jean Paul Marthoz: "How to cover migration"

Getting the Facts Right: Ethnicity and Religion (ARTICLE 19)

Media Diversity Institute

Statewatch

UK NUJ Migration Reporting Guide for Journalists

Data-Based Study into Characteristics of Migration Coverage in Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States – Summary report and Full presentation

Why Al Jazeera will not say Mediterranean Migrants

David Cameron: "Swarm" of Migrants crossing Mediterranean

Ten myths about migration

Guardian Special Report:

Hardline Australia, confused Scandinavia and tense Russia: The global immigration picture

Generation E – Data Driven Project Report on Youth Migration from Southern Europe

The Med: One final danger in a migrant's odyssey

The Arduous Journey of Colombian Migrants Headed for Chile

What crime have I committed to be held like this? Inside Yarl's Wood

Risking their lives to cross the border: Europe or Die

Jimmy Breslin: "The Short Sweet Dream of Eduardo Gutierrez"

Giovanna dell'Orto/Vicki Birchfield: "Reporting at the Southern Borders Journalism and Public Debates on Immigration in the U.S. and the E.U."

Peter Andreas/Kelly Greenhill: "Sex, Drugs and Body Counts"

Fabrizio Gatti: "Bilal"





TURKEY

Media under the government's thumb and migrants in a legislative limbo

» ELIF INCE

The current state of mainstream media and the obstacles against a free press in Turkey have been subject to various critical studies and reports. The main problems can be summarised as: government pressure; downsizing and loss of journalistic expertise; competition for website hits killing serious reporting; and cross-ownership structures in which media owners try to keep good relations with the government and to land public tenders.

Ceren Sözeri argues in the Ethical Journalism Network report *Untold Stories: How Corruption and Conflicts of Interest Stalk the Newsroom* that this is leading to a media landscape dominated by self-censorship and four major corporations. She states that: “The media has become just another way to demonstrate faithfulness to the ruling party in order to survive and grow in all sectors of the economy.”

Aside from business-related pressure from owners, direct government pressure on journalists has been intensifying. Hundreds have been fired in recent “downsizing/cost-cutting” operations.

Yavuz Baydar, in the Shorenstein Centre report *The Newsroom as an Open Air Prison: Corruption and Self-Censorship in Turkish Journalism*, paints a stark picture: “Investigative reporting, more crucial than ever, is on the verge of extinction. Journalists found themselves again in the courts and jails for professional conduct and the opinions they expressed.”

Turkey is now home to the largest community of Syrians displaced by the ongoing conflict: in August 2015 the Ministry of Interior Affairs stated that 1,905,000 have arrived.

In October 2014 a new law on Foreigners and International Protection was issued that granted “temporary protection” status to Syrians and grants the right to be admitted to Turkey and not be sent back against their will. However, the government is facing criticism for leaving Syrians with a legally ambiguous status. Last year 14 NGOs protested the failure to produce a follow-up statute. They explained that refugees didn’t know how long the “temporary protection” would last, what kind of status they would be given once it was over and whether they would be allowed to apply for asylum. The NGOs asked for new laws.

Before the war in Syria erupted, most refugees in Turkey were from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Somalia, with many from the Middle East and the Caucasus as well. They also face serious problems regarding their status, for Turkey has not lifted the geographic restriction of its 1951 Geneva Convention obligations which limits asylum rights to Europeans. These legal ambiguities mean refugees have difficulty accessing basic human rights such as housing, education, healthcare and employment.

Two critical analyses discuss how refugees have been covered in the Turkish media. The first, titled *Discrimination in Newspapers* and published by the Hrant Dink Foundation in June 2015, offers a thorough account of how Syrian refugees' issues have been dealt with in the press. Hakan Ataman reviewed 177 news articles and 33 opinion columns in five newspapers during two weeks of local protests, including lynching attempts, against Syrians in Gaziantep in the south of the country. The second, by Nevin Yıldız Tahincioğlu, an academic from Hacettepe University's communications department, is titled *Syrian Refugee Children in Mainstream Media and Racism*.

The first examined two mainstream papers (*Hürriyet* and *Sabah*) and three local papers in Gaziantep (*Olay*, *Gaziantep Güneş* and *Gaziantep*) in the two weeks when violence erupted (12-24 August, 2014) followed by a Syrian refugee killing the owner of the house he was renting.

The report found that rights-based reporting was limited to 11 of the 177 news articles, half of which were press releases from NGOs and included no original reporting. *Sabah*, a newspaper owned at the time by Çalık Group which has close ties to the government – the chairman of the board is the son-in-law of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (now President) and through winning major public tenders – published no articles on the events.

As for the 33 opinion columns analysed, all but three were biased against refugees. Hate-speech was widespread and some columnists went as far as asking refugees to leave the city (*Olay*, August 13, 2014, Tayfun Katırcı).

The report noted that of the 177 news articles only three cited Syrian refugees' opinions. On the other hand, 70 articles quoted officials and business people. No news articles cited experts from NGOs when there was not a press release.

Of the news articles 55 connected Syrian refugees with complex problems such as rent increases and unemployment. Many of these articles were based on quotes from "concerned citizens" which implied

that Syrians were outsiders. *Hürriyet*, for example, published eight that linked refugees to social tension, rent increases and rising unemployment. The articles mostly addressed the refugee question as a security issue, talking about measures against public-order disruption. In most cases refugees were identified with crime, sex work and begging. The media, while seemingly asking citizens to "tolerate" these "visitors", failed to cover the issue from a rights-based perspective.

Syrian refugee children in mainstream media and racism

On August 18, 2014, Syrian refugees in İskenderun faced a lynching attempt, sparked by claims that a 15-year-old Syrian refugee had raped a 10-year-old boy from İskenderun. Medical reports showed the claims were false. Nevin Yıldız Tahincioğlu analysed articles on this incident published in three of Hatay and İskenderun's most-read newspapers (*Antakya*, *Söz*, *İskenderun*), two mainstream national papers (*Hürriyet*, *Radikal*) and one independent and left publication (*Evrensel*).

He found that except for *Evrensel*, none of the newspapers defined the events as lynching attempts. Some subheadings were "Syrian tension in İskenderun" and "We don't want to even see one (Syrian) here". Tahincioğlu explains that this normalises the attacks as the moral and just reaction of the public. The articles stated that some Syrian-owned stores were damaged, although the offenders were not named, just generalised as "angry citizens" or "the public". None of the articles quoted Syrians or their reactions to the events.

Also, the consequences weren't documented by any newspaper except for *Evrensel*, which reported that Syrians were beaten up after being forced to get off buses and that many were injured. Furthermore, no articles said where the Syrian child was taken into custody and under what conditions he was questioned even after he was acquitted of the false claims.

The case of Aylan Kurdi

The one moment that shaped so much of the global media coverage – and had an impact in many of the countries covered by this report – came on September 2, 2015, when the body of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Kurdish Syrian, was washed ashore in Bodrum. Kurdi had been trying to reach Greece with his family but drowned alongside his brother and mother. The striking photograph made headlines in Turkey and became the centrepiece of a global media focus on the migration story.



Since then 73 results show up with the keyword search “Aylan Kurdi” on *Hürriyet*’s website. About 70 stories can be found on *Sabah*, the same newspaper that, according to the Hrant Dink Report, published no stories on the Gaziantep lynching attempts. Both papers were filled with emotional headlines such as “little Aylan’s heartbreaking story” and “the child that shook the world”.

It can be asked what percentage of the articles were just on the family’s individual story, what percentage mentioned the everyday problems refugees face, their struggle for justice or their demands. And what percentage were rights-based, or quoted refugees as sources and so on. Whether or not the photograph should have been published was a matter of controversy. But the public’s reaction to it illustrates to media the importance of having reporters in the field, and active in cities where refugees live, work and try to cross borders. It also reinforces a simple and well known journalistic truth – that an iconic image can capture the essence of a story.

Some recommendations: how media can do better

Education for the media: Journalists interviewed for this report said they would like to participate in education sessions on subjects such as international conventions and refugee rights, and what terms to use while covering refugee stories, etc. One said she would benefit from a concise guide to best practices for reporting on refugees.

Education for activists and NGOs: Activists and NGOs could be briefed on how best to communicate with

the media (how to pitch a story, having good visuals etc.) as well as reporting on their own (how to blog and use social media effectively, as well as technical skills such as taking photographs, recording videos, preparing infographics, etc.). Alternative media organs such as *multeci.net* that publish refugees’ own writing could be encouraged and supported.

Making connections: Connections with refugee groups, activists and NGOs are important, especially when reporters are out reporting a story, and having trusted local sources is very helpful. So reporters need to make connections with translators and fixers. Similarly, Afghan activist Hekmat Ali said it would be very helpful for them to meet reporters/editors from various media organisations. This way they could directly pitch their stories to people they’ve already met.

Fighting hate-speech in the news: Hate-speech is widespread in the media and can’t be prevented because the propagators face no major outcomes. It must be closely documented and reported regularly. Media that use this kind of language must be criticised. When the offence is repeated despite warnings, legal action must be taken. A committee of lawyers, journalists and activists solely working on hate-speech in the media would be useful.

Pressuring the government for a free, independent press and transparency: When access to information is restricted, such as not being allowed to enter refugee camps, the government should be internationally pressured for transparency. Most important of all, the obstacles to a free press need to be removed in order to improve the quality of reporting in all fields, including immigration.

Reporters discuss the challenge of covering migration

I asked reporters in various media outlets who cover the issues about the challenges in dealing with migration stories, their access to reliable data and statistics and for their recommendations on how to increase the quality and quantity of reporting on refugees.

Osman Kaytazoğlu, producer at Al Jazeera Turkey

How has your experience been with government transparency and access to information on refugees?

We weren't allowed into certain refugee camps. It was difficult to get permission and in those camps we could enter we faced restrictions on recording. However I have run into no problems getting statistics when working on stories for *AJEnglish* and *AJTürk*, in fact they usually answered fast.

How do you get readers interested in refugee issues?

The reader is interested in images, like in the case of Aylan Kurdi. There is first an explosion of interest but when the level of sensationalism in the media starts to decrease, readers also lose interest. In Turkey, because there is always an abundance of breaking news, the non-sensational stories don't get much attention. At *AJTürk* I have never faced a restriction while covering refugee stories and in fact all kinds of sacrifices were made by the news desk for me to cover these stories. I think the biggest challenge is writing without sensationalism and avoiding clichés.

Do you have any recommendations for media professionals working on refugees' issues?

More interactive features linking to international stories, for example.

Göksel Göksu, reporter at CNN Turk

Is your news desk interested in refugee stories? How has viewer attention been?

My news desk encourages these stories. I work on them at moments of crisis, such as when the Yazidis mobilised to reach the border, and I also prepare longer features. such as my documentary *Journey to Death: Yazidis*. This received much more attention than I expected. I had to answer many questions from viewers. Some wanted to know more, although mostly they were wondering how they could help.

What are some difficulties you've faced while reporting in the field?

In areas populated by refugees I see that people in control want to decide who I will speak with. This is a problem for objective reporting. I've also

experienced trouble finding trustworthy translators. Translations are usually done by groups protecting the refugees, so they sometimes tend to manipulate claims during translation and bring them in line with their own political ideology. So I usually get unbiased people to translate my video interviews. In the field what makes my job easier is having relationships with locals.

What are some recommendations to increase quality and quantity of rights-based journalism in Turkey?

Reaching out to sensitive reporters is important. Women and children, as in many other issues, are the most vulnerable and suffer special disadvantages. Thus I think that their stories can be highlighted. However I must point out that if I decide that a story might harm a refugee or their family, I will hold back on publishing.

Burcu Karakaş, reporter

(Recognised for her human rights reporting, Karakaş worked at *Milliyet* from 2010 until September 2015 when she was fired along with other acclaimed journalists. *Milliyet* is among the newspapers acquired by corporations that have close ties to the government and have investments in sectors like energy and mining.)

What are your sources of information? How has your experience been with government transparency and access to information on refugees?

It's always easier to report a story when you're out in the field and not working from your desk. I'm in communication with various NGOs as news sources. UN websites such as UNHCR's are a major resource. AFAD, the government office for Disaster and Emergency Management, has statistics on its website but the press office doesn't always respond to questions.

What are some recommendations to increase quality and quantity of rights-based journalism?

My newspaper neither discouraged nor encouraged stories on refugees. One challenge is the media's tendency for sensationalism – as a reporter you can't decide on the headlines. The readers also respond to sensationalism, for example whenever

there's sexual abuse involved, the news gets shared widely on social media. I think there needs to be less agitation and more articles offering solutions that need to quote expert views on rights and include their recommendations.

Ali Hekmat, spokesperson for Afgan Mülteciler Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (Afghan Refugees' Association)

What is your relationship with mainstream media?

Unfortunately mainstream media does not give Afghan refugees much attention. Especially after Syrian refugees arrived, Afghans in Turkey have been completely forgotten. The media does not follow our issues unless we reach out to them. Sometimes they don't even follow through when we ask for help publicising issues we've raised.

Two exceptions were the drowning of 37 Afghani refugees in Istanbul in 2014, and our hunger strike last year to get the attention of UNHCR. During the hunger strike in Ankara we got a lot of press and I believe we managed to get UNHCR's and the Turkish government's attention briefly. However, even after the second hunger strike, once our protests were over, media attention faded and nothing changed. The media didn't even show any interest during the first two weeks, they only starting writing once they thought it was "news-worthy". Even then, they were writing about the strike itself and not mentioning our demands for UNHCR to end discrimination against Afghans. Media organs with ties to the government have also asked us not to mention problems related to the government.

What are some of your recommendations for the media to increase the quality and quantity of rights-based reporting on refugees?

I believe that the media is crucial in our struggle for rights and needs to break stereotypes and highlight our problems. Reporters need to be educated on refugee rights, on the legal definitions of who is a refugee and who is an asylum seeker. A major and recurring problem is calling them illegal when, according to the Geneva Convention, they are either refugees or asylum seekers, not illegal.

As I said the media in general doesn't care about our issues but if we personally knew a reporter or editor at each major news organisation that would be very helpful.

Volkan Görendağ, Amnesty International Refugee Rights Coordinator

How is your relationship with the media? How important is it for you to reach mainstream media?

We try to get in touch with all media organs, we do care for our issues to be publicised in mainstream media but it's not crucial to appear in newspapers with the biggest circulations. We can get good feedback on a story that wasn't published in mainstream media but was in alternative media. Readers who are interested in these issues and help circulate the articles on social media are those who also follow alternative media closely.

Senar Ataman, activist, founder and editor of multeci.net

When, why and by whom was multeci.net founded?

We were founded in 2007 with the support of a few volunteers. The purpose of the site is to make refugees' voices heard. Other than me three volunteers write regular columns: Taner Kılıç, Zakira Frotan Hekmat and Orçun Ulusoy. I also do reporting for the website. We're familiar with refugees, activists and NGOs working in the field and all of them are sources for stories. Refugees also reach us through the website and ask us to help publicise their problems. It's very exciting to publish refugees' own writing, as we believe that the best way for them to be represented is through their own words.

Our website is the best resource on immigration issues. It is used widely as a source of academic research. We get between 10,000-50,000 hits for news stories and columns.

Do you believe that NGOs are doing a good job of communicating refugees' issues to the general public and media?

One of the biggest problems in Turkey is that NGOs have weak relationships with the media. The NGOs help individuals but don't create mechanisms to make their voices heard. This traps the issue, which is already not so mainstream, in an even narrower circle.

What are your recommendations for refugees' issues to be better publicised in the media?

There is a real need for a wide network of journalists and refugees. This network could provide cameras for refugees to document their own issues and produce written-visual content to put the struggle for rights on the public agenda. It could also encourage journalists to follow refugees' stories more closely. This wider project would need resources and funding that we don't have.



Migration: It's the same old story

'The enormous change in human conditions to which nearly all our present stresses are due, the abolition of distance and the stupendous increase in power, have flung together the population of the world so that a new way of living has become imperative ...

'The elaboration of methods and material has necessitated a vast development and refinement of espionage, and in addition the increasing difficulty of understanding what the warfare is really about has produced new submersive and demoralising activities of rumour-spreading, propaganda and the like, that complicate and lose contact at last with any rational objective ...

'The uprooting of millions of people who are driven into exile among strangers, who are forced to seek new homes, produces a peculiar exacerbation of the mental strain. Never have there been such crowds of migrating depressing people.

'They talk languages we do not understand ... they stimulate xenophobia without intention ... Their necessary discordance with the new populations they invade releases and intensifies the natural distrust and hostility of man for man – which it is the aim of all moral and social training to eliminate ...

'For the restoration and modernisation of human civilisation, this exaggerated outlawing of the fellow citizen who we see fit to suspect as a traitor or revolutionary and also of the stranger within our gates, has to be restrained and brought back within the scheme of human rights.

– H. G. Wells, *The Rights of Man* (1940)



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www.ethicaljournalismnetwork.org
twitter.com/EJNetwork
aidanpatrickwhite@gmail.com