



Moving Stories

International Review of How Media Cover Migration



Ethical
Journalism
Network

EDITED BY AIDAN WHITE

Moving Stories

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PHOTO CREDITS

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Page 10: The Italian Harbourmaster Corps rescues migrants bound to the coasts of Italy. © Francesco Malavolta/IOM

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A photograph of a group of children, likely in a refugee camp, looking towards the camera. The children are of various ages and are wearing simple clothing. The background is a clear blue sky. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing the text 'FOREWORD', 'Beyond the headlines', and '» JAN EGELAND'.

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 plans to establish walls and razor wire fences. Much of the focus has been on countries in South Eastern Europe which has provide 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"



ITALY

A charter for tolerant journalism: Media take centre stage in the mediterranean drama

» YASHA MACANNICO

The first wave of global media coverage of the tragedy of migrants and refugees risking their lives to escape war and poverty in the Middle East and elsewhere was played out in Italy where in the year to August 2015, several shipwrecks led to more than 5,200 deaths.

During the year several Mediterranean island destinations well-known to European holidaymakers, particularly Lesbos in Greece and Lampedusa in Italy, took centre stage as media rushed to cover the tragedy of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Italy has been at the heart of the story. The reality of covering migration in Italy's mainstream media has seen a range of approaches reflecting a complex political context amidst a cascade of events and circumstances which has produced markedly different editorial biases in newspapers. As the crisis developed it became clear that while the government puts its focus on rescue efforts, for the media it was the human side of the story that attracted greater attention.

At the same time there was no lack of alarmist discourse about immigration, with the number of arrivals described as an "invasion" and the use of the language of war, typified by the front page of the Milan newspaper *Il Giornale* on 24 August, 2015:

"Immigration chaos. Invasion by land. The landings continue but the alarm is now mainly on the Macedonian front: thousands of refugees push to enter Europe. It is an endless emergency."

But media were quick to respond to the developing story. This showed clearly in September 2015 following Chancellor Angela Merkel's announcement that Germany was willing to receive an unspecified number of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. There was a sudden shift in newspapers reporting acts of kindness and solidarity, with Austrians and Germans welcoming them as they arrived from Hungary.

This contrasted with previous coverage where acts of solidarity with the migrants and refugees had been overshadowed by protests, and more space given to politicians whipping up tensions and the concerns of people fearing for their neighbourhoods due to the presence of migrants.





Some negative reporting can be understood – and criticised – when it is motivated by commercial considerations in newspapers, but uncritical reporting without context of racist speech by leading political figures is inexcusable.

Some negative reporting can be understood – and criticised – when it is motivated by commercial considerations in newspapers, but uncritical reporting without context of racist speech by leading political figures is inexcusable.

The threat of hate-speech increases at election time, particularly when the centre-left is in power. And media coverage of Matteo Salvini of the Lega Nord (the right-wing Northern League) who is supported by the extremist group Casa Pound has inflamed matters. Salvini has stood out for his frequent public appearances and the violence of his messages, which appear tailored to the sensationalism that ensures media exposure, even if it is to criticise him.

The daily *Il Giornale* regularly carries articles that undermine the position of migrants and call for tough policies. It targets Roma people, Muslims and the arriving migrants and refugees as threats. Such an approach mirrors that of politicians like Salvini, who insisted on calling migrants and asylum seekers “clandestines”, that is, “illegals”, and has called for Roma camps to be razed to the ground.

In its coverage *Il Giornale* has presented him as a victim, because of the hostility he has drawn from sections of the public, while providing an optimistic reading of his prospects. On 12 May, 2015 it proclaimed: “Eggs and teargas at Salvini’s public meetings. In the meantime, the Lega’s support grows.”

The Lega Nord’s MEP, Gianluca Buonanno, has also distinguished himself with some outrageous comments: on 29 August, 2015, he spoke of using electrified barbed wire “if and when illegals come around these parts” to stop them, “like you do with boars”.

Other media and politicians have been more tolerant. Figures such as Italy’s president Sergio Mattarella provided a contrast. As *La Repubblica*, reported on 10 June: “Migrants: Mattarella tells the EU, ‘more solidarity’”

A test for the Rome Charter

The migration and refugee story has proved to be a testing ground for Italian media and for the Carta di Roma, a code of conduct on reporting of asylum and immigration issues drafted by media owners and journalists, the Ordine dei Giornalisti (OdG) and the Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana (FNSI) in collaboration with the UN’s refugee agency, the UNHCR and which was adopted on 12 June, 2008 (see Annexe 1).

The charter was drawn up following a letter written by UNHCR to leading Italian editors in January 2008, in response to the media’s treatment of the gruesome murder of four people in the northern town of Erba a few weeks earlier. The murders were initially blamed on the victim’s Tunisian husband, Azouz Marzouk, whose two-year-old



son also died in the attack. Mazouz was widely depicted by media as a monster, with press and television interviews featuring aggressive criticism of the Tunisian immigrant community. It was then revealed that he was in Tunisia at the time of the attack. Subsequently, two neighbours confessed to the murders and were prosecuted.

The charter seeks to discourage discrimination, and calls for “maximum care when dealing with information concerning asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants”. It calls for appropriate legal terminology, for accurate verified information, and safeguards for those who speak to the media. It recommends media consult experts in order to provide information in context in their reporting.

The charter also led to the creation of an observatory to monitor media coverage and to provide analysis on these issues, as well as training programmes for journalists by the OdG and FNSI. The observatory has produced two in-depth reports on this issue in January and December 2014.

Significantly, the charter also produced a glossary to define “asylum seeker”, “refugee”, “beneficiary of humanitarian protection”, “trafficking victim”, “migrant/immigrant” and “irregular migrant”, to encourage their appropriate use.

The Observatory’s analysis and comment on the treatment of migration-related issues in the media, which includes fact-checking reports and highlighting cases of overt violation of the charter, is accompanied by regular engagement with news media over their coverage.

It has also faced down media critics. *il Giornale* journalist Magdi Allam, for instance, challenged the charter’s “prohibition” on mentioning the

nationality of perpetrators of crimes and use of the term “clandestino”.

Giovanni Maria Bellu, editor of Cagliari’s daily *Sardegna 24* and national president of the Carta di Roma association, says that mention of nationality is not prohibited, but it should only be used if it is relevant to a news story and for better understanding of a news item. As for the negative term “clandestino,” he said there were cases in which it is clearly inappropriate, especially when a news item concerns refugees or potential refugees.

In May 2015, television programmes were invited to refrain from engaging with those political parties’ attempting to whip up xenophobia during the campaign for regional elections. In April, there was a call to investigate a television interview on *Canale 5* in which a young Roma woman explained that crime paid better than work and exhibited disregard for victims before claiming, in another interview a fortnight later, that she had been paid to say what she said. In March, a letter was sent to Rome’s *Il Messaggero* newspaper about the inaccurate use of “clandestini” in a headline.

Hate-speech and violence

These incidents illustrate how journalists and media sometimes struggle to identify, isolate and eliminate information that is distorted and unreliable and this is a particular problem when it comes to hate-speech.

The situation of refugees, migrants and Roma people is often juxtaposed with the position of Italians. Too often media present the former as privileged or as undermining the latter’s living conditions and accepted standards of behaviour, for instance by washing in public fountains.

Italy's Roma ethnic minority have suffered frequent attacks in the media and from disproportionate coverage of crimes committed by Roma.

On 3 September, 2015, *Il Messaggero* carried an article headed: "Millions of pilgrims expected, less than one hundred days to the Jubilee and this is what Termini station looks like. The metro's ticket machines are controlled by Roma gangs." The article goes on to note that this situation happens "every day, in the midst of absolute indifference".

Earlier, on 21 August, *Il Giornale* published a catalogue of news items presenting Italians as victims, endangered by refugees and migrants.

The first article quoted a homeless Italian mother who said: "The refugees are spoiled, I'm in the street", and ending, "Obviously, being Italian at present is unfortunate." A second focused on a fight between migrants in Venice: "The residents: We are exasperated. We welcome them and they dare to do this." The fourth item was alarmed by arranged marriages between poor Italians and refugees: "there is a danger of terrorism". It went on: "Antiterrorist services investigate the arranged marriages racket, artfully organised to conceal foreign terrorists...." A final article on the same day simply records the "Muslim threats" against a young woman with Moroccan origins participating in the Miss Italy beauty pageant and insults she received on Facebook.

The past year was also marked by attacks on reception centres for migrants in Tor Sapienza on the outskirts of Rome in November 2014 by local residents alongside far right groups. The media (with exceptions) initially found it difficult to call things by their real name – racial prejudice. *Il Messaggero* showed no ambivalence in their message on 12 November: Hunt against migrants: "We'll set them alight." On 14 November, there was critical commentary on the

attacks and aftermath, including a noteworthy heading by *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, which commented on the decision to move the refugees from Tor Sapienza and linked the disturbances to right-wing agitators: "The State surrenders to the fascists." The right-leaning newspaper *Libero* welcomed the decision to move refugees from Tor Sapienza on 14 November, with an ironic use of inverted commas: Hurrah, Rome's "racists" have won. The immigrants will be moved from Tor Sapienza.

Positive developments – online and offline

But in spite of an often politicised and negative tone there have been positive developments involving journalists including, for instance, the "No Hate Speech Campaign" (<http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2015/09/07/nohatespeech-sign-our-petition-now/>) launched on 7 September, 2015 by the Associazione Carta di Roma, with support from the European Federation of Journalists, Articolo 21, the Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana, the Ordine dei Giornalisti and the USIGRAI public broadcasting company trade union.

The campaign's online petition calls on journalists not to be passive in cases of hate-speech, arguing that "Discrediting racist statements and clarifying why they are misleading constitutes a duty for journalists". Readers are invited to isolate promoters of hate-speech and not to engage in dialogue with them, while media, publishers and social network administrators are invited to remove messages of hate and ban their authors.

An example the campaign had in mind was the report on 9 August, 2015, in Turin's daily *La Stampa* which published a positive news article about Nicole, a young Roma girl who lived on a camp site in the United Kingdom and was found to have an extremely high IQ. Racist comments about the article posted on its Facebook page led the newspaper's social media team to intervene, warning that such comments would no longer be tolerated and that whoever insisted in posting them would be banned, inviting fellow readers to isolate them and report them privately to the team.

Significantly, the issue of under-representation of migrant voices in the higher echelons of newsrooms was highlighted on 7 August, 2015. When Domenica Canchano successfully challenged article 3 of law no. 47 of 1948, which states that the editor in charge of a newspaper or periodical must be an Italian citizen. Following the judgement in her favour, the Peruvian journalist has become



CHARTER OF ROME

CODE OF CONDUCT REGARDING ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES, VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANTS[1]

The National Council of the Journalists' Association (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Ordine dei Giornalisti, CNOG) and the Italian National Press Federation (Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana, FNSI) invite Italian journalists to:

exercise the highest care in dealing with information regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants living in Italy and elsewhere and, in particular, to:

- a. Adopt an appropriate terminology which reflects national and international law so as to provide readers and viewers with the greatest adherence to the truth as regards all events which are the subject of media coverage, avoiding the use of inappropriate terms.
- b. Avoid spreading inaccurate, simplified or distorted information as regards asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants. CNOG and FNSI call all their colleagues' – and those responsible for editorial content in particular – attention to the negative effects of superficial or unprofessional behaviour on those who are the object of news coverage, on readers/viewers and, as a consequence, on media professionals' credibility. Superficial behaviour may include associating different news items in an inappropriate manner and may engender unwarranted apprehension among the public.
- c. Safeguard those asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who choose to speak with the media by adopting solutions as regards their identity and image so as to ensure that they are not identifiable. Asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who are identifiable – as well as the latter's relatives – may face reprisals on the part of the authorities in their country of origin, of non-state entities or of criminal organisations. Moreover, individuals who belong to a different socio-cultural context, where the press plays a limited role, may not be aware of global media dynamics and may thus not be able to foresee all the consequences of their decision to appear in the media.
- d. Whenever possible, consult experts and organisations with a specific expertise on the subject so as to provide the public with information which is clear, comprehensive and also analyses the underlying roots of phenomena.

COMMITMENTS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY CNOG, FNSI AND UNHCR

- i. The National Council of the Journalists' Association (CNOG) and the Italian National Press Federation (FNSI), in collaboration with the Journalists' Association's Regional Councils, the Regional Press Associations and all the other organisations which have promoted this Charter, pledge to insert issues relating to asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants among the topics covered in training courses for journalists, ranging from those organised by journalism schools to seminars held for prospective reporters. CNOG and FNSI also pledge to hold regular study seminars on the way asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants are represented in the press by print, radio and TV media outlets.
- ii. CNOG and FNSI, in collaboration with UNHCR, support the establishment of an independent Monitoring Centre which – working with universities, research institutes and stakeholders – will monitor developments in media coverage of asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, migrants and members of minority groups so as to:
 - a) provide qualitative and quantitative analyses of asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants' image in the Italian media to Italian and European research institutes and universities as well as to relevant European Union and Council of Europe agencies dealing with discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance;
 - b) provide material on media coverage of these issues and on trends underway in this field to the Journalists' Association's Regional Councils, to editors and reporters and to media and communications specialists so as to stimulate debate and discussion.
- iii. The National Council of the Journalists' Association and the Italian National Press Federation will work towards the establishment of awards specifically dedicated to media coverage of asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants, drawing on similar initiatives at the European and international level which have proven to have positive effects.

The Charter has been drafted drawing on input from a Consultative Committee whose members include representatives of the Interior Ministry, the Social Solidarity Ministry, UNAR (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali – National Office Against Racial Discrimination)/Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Equal Opportunities, 'La Sapienza' University and Roma III University, Italian and foreign journalists.

the first third-country national to become the editor of an Italian publication, Carta di Roma's online newspaper.

The positive side of media coverage is reflected in the work of *La Stampa* and the weekly *L'Espresso* which were responsible for two positive examples of coverage of the migration story from perspectives which broke the media mould.

In the first case, as part of a cooperative effort involving *The Guardian*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *El País* and *La Stampa* and an investigative team, reports were produced which traced the journeys of several migrants along some important migration routes. They recounted the difficulties encountered, the prices they paid in different stages of the

journey and moments of hope and despair, including shipwrecks and friends lost at sea.

They also contextualised the situation in terms of deaths, arrivals and the nationalities of those who arrived, showing that there were considerable numbers of likely refugees, particularly from Eritrea and Syria. Most of all, they provided valuable details which helped clearer understanding of the journey.

La Stampa's editor, Mario Calabresi, had earlier broken with the herd mentality of Italian media reticent to cast a positive light on the Italian refugee crisis. In a comment piece four days before the European elections on 21 May, 2014, entitled "A bridge to be proud of" he spoke of the Italian Mare Nostrum operation involving the navy, reporting

CHARTER OF ROME GLOSSARY

An **asylum seeker** is a person who is outside the country of his/her nationality and submits an application to be granted refugee status, or other forms of international protection, in a different country on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. He/she is an asylum seeker and has the right to reside in the host country as a legal alien until a final decision has been reached by the competent authorities. Asylum seekers are thus not irregular migrants, though they may enter the host country without identity papers or in an irregular manner, e.g. through so-called 'mixed migration flows', which are made up of both irregular migrants and potential refugees.

A **refugee** is a person who has been granted refugee status on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, which Italy is a member to along with 143 other countries. Article 1 of the Convention defines a refugee as a person having a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, [who] is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'. A person is granted refugee status if he/she can demonstrate that he/she is the victim of an individual persecution.

A **beneficiary of humanitarian protection** is a person who cannot be strictly defined as a 'refugee' under the 1951 Convention because he/she is not persecuted as an individual, but who is nevertheless in need of protection as, were he/she to be repatriated to his/her home country, he/she would be in grave danger due to armed conflict, generalised violence and/or widespread violations of human rights. European directives define this form of protection as 'subsidiary' protection. Most

of the people who are recognised as being in need of protection in Italy are granted a residence permit for humanitarian reasons rather than refugee status.

A **victim of trafficking** is a person who – unlike irregular migrants, who decide to entrust their fate to people smugglers – has not given his/her consent to be transferred to another country or, if he/she has given his/her consent, the latter has been rendered void by the coercive and/or deceitful actions of the traffickers or by the abuse which he/she has been the victim of or has been threatened with. Traffickers aim to achieve control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. 'Exploitation' includes the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

A **migrant/immigrant** is a person who chooses of his/her own accord to leave his/her home country in search of work and of better economic conditions elsewhere. Unlike refugees, migrants may return home without prejudice to their safety.

An **irregular migrant**, often defined as a 'clandestine' migrant in Italy, is a person who: a) has entered a country avoiding detection at the border; b) has entered the country in a regular manner, e.g. on a tourist visa, and has not left after his/her entry visa has expired (thus becoming a so-called 'overstayer'); or c) has not left the territory of the destination country subsequent to receipt of an expulsion order.

This Charter is available online at: <http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CODE-AND-GLOSSARY-ENGLISH.pdf>



that it had rescued over 30,000 refugees attempting the Mediterranean crossing on makeshift boats, ending with the following: “I will attract a good dose of criticism, but I want to say that I am proud of belonging to a nation which sends its soldiers to save families rather than to shoot at them.”

This piece followed investigative work undertaken to track down the survivors of a shipwreck on 3 October, 2013, discovering that they were mainly refugees from Eritrea and that few had stayed in Italy. Further, the people rescued by the Italian navy were largely refugees escaping from civil wars and social conflicts in Syria, Libya and Mali.

A second example of positive journalism was a series of reports in *L'Espresso* magazine on the inhumane conditions in which female Romanian agricultural workers were made to work in Sicily. It uncovered a national shame, because while exploitation of migrants is notorious, the fact that young women were being raped in the fields was

shocking. The reports, during the late summer and early autumn of 2014, led to attempts to intervene by the authorities, although the victims' reluctance to press charges meant the intervention was more important in symbolic terms than for any charges being brought.

These media and editors demonstrated that media in the frontline countries of the European migration and refugee crisis could produce stylish and professional journalism to be proud of in a country where media, slowly but demonstrably, are learning from their mistakes.

Sources: Ethical Journalism Network (EJN); Carta di Roma association's website; Articolo 21, which promotes press freedom, and Cronache di ordinario razzismo, which monitors racist and/or discriminatory content in the Italian media.

Additional Research: Rebecca Braccialarghe.



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)



Ethical
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