

# the PEACE JOURNALIST

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Climate reporting challenges, ideas
- Dispatches from Cameroon, Pakistan, Myanmar
- Journalists ponder “Remembering the Past” at event in Kosovo



## Special Report: Climate Change and Peace Journalism





# the PEACE JOURNALIST

Cover--Top row: From the 2021 fire that destroyed Lytton, B.C, Canada in 2021. (Climate Disaster Project Photo/Phil McLachlan) Bottom: 2022's devastating flooding in Pakistan. (APP news agency)

**The Peace Journalist** is a semi-annual publication of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. The Peace Journalist is dedicated to disseminating news and information for teachers, students, and practitioners of PJ.

**Submissions** are welcome from all. We are seeking shorter submissions (500 words) detailing peace journalism projects, classes, proposals, etc. We also welcome longer submissions (1000-1200 words) about peace or conflict sensitive journalism projects or programs, as well as academic works from the field. We do NOT seek general submissions about peace projects, but are instead focused only on articles with a strong media angle.

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## What is Peace Journalism?

Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. (Adapted from Lynch/McGoldrick, *Peace Journalism*). Peace Journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable.

A number of valuable peace journalism resources, including back issues of *The Peace Journalist* can be found at [www.park.edu/peacecenter](http://www.park.edu/peacecenter).

## Center for Global Peace Journalism

The Center for Global Peace Journalism works with journalists, academics, and students worldwide to improve reporting about conflicts, societal unrest, reconciliation, solutions, and peace. Through its courses, workshops, lectures, this magazine, blog, and other resources, the Center encourages media to reject sensational and inflammatory reporting, and produce counter-narratives that offer a more nuanced view of those who are marginalized—ethnic/racial/religious minorities, women, youth, LGBTQ individuals, and migrants.

## the PEACE JOURNALIST

To use a non-peace metaphor, the fuse for this special climate change edition of *The Peace Journalist* was lit during my many interactions with Indian and Pakistani journalists during the last three years.

I worked with these journalists as part of a cross-border reporting project sponsored by the East West Center. In my ongoing discussions with the reporters, seemingly all roads led to the climate disaster that has descended upon South Asia. This is reflected in the stories jointly-produced by Pakistani and Indian journalists on their website [journalistsforchange.org](http://journalistsforchange.org). These stories include ones about toxic air pollution, sustainable energy, plastic waste, extreme weather (including floods,

heat and lightning strikes), and world water day.

Not only are these climate plagues directly threatening lives and livelihoods in South Asia, their ripple effects could destabilize the entire region, according to journalists from the region. Among the concerns are increased competition for and conflict over scarce resources and mass migration brought upon by extreme heat.

As the contributors in the following pages suggest, responsible journalists must act by collaborating across borders, sharing stories of those who have been climate-impacted, educating but not alarming the public about the immediacy of the crisis, and leading constructive debates about what must be done. There is no time to waste.

--Steven Youngblood

## Contributors

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UN Secretary-General António Guterres and journalists listen to women affected by floods in the Larkana district in Sindh province. (APP news agency)



# PJ, climate crisis journalism share goals

## Both challenge traditions, seek ethical solutions

There are many affinities between Peace Journalism (PJ) and the kind of climate crisis journalism (CCJ) that our troubled global civilization urgently requires.

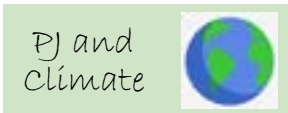
In this magazine (October 2021), Jake Lynch defined the core orientations of PJ as peace and conflict (rather war and victory), truth (exposing misinformation and propaganda), people (more than officials and elites), and potential solutions (not just failures and disasters). One might add underlying processes and structures (rather than isolated events).

All of those characteristics could describe CCJ as well, if we add the goal of ecological sustainability into the mix.

Both have a similar ethical horizon, and aim for positive impacts on society. But both approaches respect journalistic autonomy and professionalism, and seek to improve journalism as journalism, not to turn it into propaganda.

At the same time, both PJ and CCJ challenge traditional interpretations of objectivity, detachment, balance, and “episodic” focus on today’s events.

Both paradigms reject the idea that news simply holds up a mirror to society; rather, news reporting is neither ideologically neutral, nor separate and detached from the events it reports. The selection of sources and frames, in media that have significant audiences, unavoidably has social impacts. PJ researchers like Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have found that the traditional focus on negative news demoralizes audiences. (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461670X.2014.992621?journalCode=rjos20>)



Objectivity, as it is conventionally

practiced, is implicated in providing privileged access to political elites rather than people impacted by their policies. Lynch and McGoldrick (in Peace Journalism) hypothesize a “feedback loop” between journalism and political action, in which traditional conflict reporting creates incentives for conflict escalation and “security crackdowns.” Conventional reporting thus amounts to “War Journalism.”

Regarding environmental journal-

ism, scholars Maxwell and Jules Boykoff (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959378003000669>) argue that inappropriate “balance” between climate science and denialism confused American public opinion and delayed climate action during the crucial years of intensifying climate disruption. Had the dominant American news media instead followed the PJ precept of exposing propaganda, they might have done more to investigate the fossil fuel industry’s funding and promotion of climate denialism.

PJ and CJ also have in common anchorage in intellectual disciplines – peace and conflict studies, and environmental communication respectively. Both paradigms recognize limits to journalism’s power, given media organizations’ embeddedness in broader social relations and political institutions. Yet they also seek to recover a sense of agency for journalists; they are not mere ventriloquists for powerful elites.

They also aim to encourage a sense of both urgency and agency on the part of readers. McGoldrick’s research

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indicates that audiences respond to PJ framing with more empathy, hope, and consideration of alternatives to war, compared with War Journalism. While it remains to be demonstrated on a broader scale, PJ’s apparent impact is consistent with the public empowerment and larger-than-self values called for by environmental communicators.

PJ thus has a lot to offer climate journalism. Like gradual conflict escalation and peace-building, climate change is a long-term process, punctuated by periodic dramatic events, like extreme weather. So, whether consciously or not, climate journalists have adopted many of PJ’s reportorial and narrative methods. Conversely, new experiments in people- and crisis-oriented journalism could inform future PJ projects.

One example is the people-oriented Climate Disaster Project (<https://climatedisasterproject.com/who-we-are/>) headed by former journalist Sean Holman, now professor at University of Victoria in British Columbia. The project involves collecting and sharing the stories of people who have lived through climate change-related disasters, like the wildfires that famously incinerated the town of Lytton, and the devastating floods in B.C.’s Fraser Valley in 2021. Conducted by journalism students, the methodology is sensitive to survivors’ trauma, and collaborative, including co-creating interview questions. Stories are disseminated by media partners, and then added to a publicly available multimedia “memory vault” useful to climate journalists.

This project (which has been adopted at over a dozen other post-secondary institutions) has a “strong alignment” with PJ, Holman said by email. “The stories we share aren’t just about trauma,” but about “what can be done about climate change and the

Continued on next page

# Researchers analyze media and climate change

A review of wide-ranging, current research on media coverage of climate change reveals fascinating data about the amount and framing of climate coverage, as well as how this reporting impacts media consumers.

## How much coverage?

A study from the Media and Climate Change Observatory at the University of Colorado Boulder shows that, “News coverage of climate change in the United States reached an all-time high in October and November 2021.” Their data also maps changes in that the language media is using to describe climate change. “More intense words and phrases, such as ‘climate catastrophe’ and ‘climate emergency’ are being used to describe the phenomenon, according to data collected between 2006-2021,” the study said.

## Language and Framing

Media coverage of the climate crisis is often characterized by use of dire language, according to researchers Maxwell Boykoff and Olivia Pearman. In a study called, “[Now or Never](#),” they write, “News media throughout the world have consistently used dire language in coverage of the SR15 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—IPCC—report on 1.5 degrees centigrade, 2018). In prominent US and UK outlets, many news stories coinciding with the SR15 release emphasized a 12-year ‘deadline’ between 2018 and 2030 and the urgency of action needed.”



Boykoff and Pearman go on to discuss the drawbacks to catastrophic, doomsday media framing on climate change. “...Fear-inducing communications produce complex and even contradictory results regarding awareness raising and movements to action on climate change...Dramatic and fear-based images can raise awareness, but they can also lead people to disengage as a result of feeling helpless and overwhelmed, provoking unintended denial or apathy.”

Another potentially dangerous framing of climate change can be found in propagating a false equivalency, according to researchers Megan Imundo and David Rapp from Northwestern University. [Their paper](#) discusses false equivalency using the term “bothsidesism,” defined as when “journalists strive to present both sides of an issue, even in cases where most credible sources fall on one side... The argument that climate change is not man made has been incontrovertibly disproven by science again and again, yet many Americans believe that the global crisis is either not real, not of our making, or both, in part because the news media has given climate change deniers a platform in the name of balanced reporting, according to the researchers.”

In their study, Imundo and Rapp found that false-balance reporting can “make people doubt the scientific consensus on issues like climate change, sometimes making them wonder if an issue is even worth taking seriously.” Rapp said, “Climate change is a great case study of the false balance problem, because the scientific consensus is nearly unanimous. If 99 doctors said you needed surgery to save your life, but one disagreed, chances are you’d listen to the 99...But we often see one climate scientist pitted against one climate denier or down player, as if it’s a 50-50 split.”

Also, framing of climate stories, like virtually every other story, often take on a polarized, political tint. In “[The News Media, Polarization on Climate Change](#),” researchers Toby Bolsen and Matthew Shapiro write, “These frames

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disasters it's causing." Just as PJ "makes non-violent solutions to conflict more visible and viable, we hope to create an atmosphere supportive to community-based climate adaptation and mitigation." Journalisms like PJ and CCJ could help to foster new collective identities – survivors of war or climate disasters – as a springboard to constructive action.

**Solutions Journalism**

PJ and CCJ also have in common an affinity with Solutions Journalism.

As defined by Kamyar Razavi, climate journalist at a major Canadian news network and doctoral candidate at Simon Fraser University, SJ is "a specialized method" emphasizing reporting "on complex issues not just through the lens of all that is wrong or prob-

lematic in the world, but also what is working, who is leading the way, or, conversely, who is being left behind."

"Visual stories of ordinary people working to mitigate the climate crisis," especially through collective or political action, "are among the most effective responses to climate change," Razavi emailed. SJ is "the perfect place to daylight who is doing that work and what it looks like."

One Canadian pioneer of this approach is David Beers, the founder and editor-in-chief of The Tyee online newspaper in Vancouver. He identifies three avenues for SJ to "catalyze concrete positive change" with respect to climate crisis: stories about individuals who have experimented with particular forms of social, political or cultural change, like a diet consisting only of locally sourced food; second, stories about little-known innovative local experiments that could be applied more broadly, like community gardens; third, analytical reports on what policies in other jurisdictions have worked well.

One could add some of the experiments in public (or civic) journalism in the 1990s. Given the opportunity to engage in deliberative dialog, what solutions do communities generate for social problems of local concern?

All these approaches involve reporting on potential solutions, not advocating for any particular one.

To be sure, PJ and CCJ don't always fit together hand in glove. There are some important disjunctures. Their definition of the core problem differs. In its dominant versions, PJ sees conflict itself, and the threat of conflict escalation to the point of physical violence, as the problem. CCJ focuses on global warming and impacts, and the (in)adequacy of society's responses. In order to challenge economic

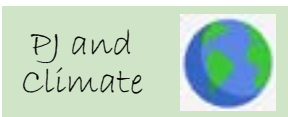
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and political elites who are blocking climate action, and to challenge a status quo tending towards human extermination, it may be necessary to actually broaden the scope of conflict. That strategy was used by the US civil rights movement – increase strength by bringing in allies, including sympathetic media.

**Liberal and Radical Variants**

However, those contrasts should not be exaggerated. Both PJ and CCJ have "liberal" and "radical" versions which respectively have much in common. Liberals seek reforms of practice within existing media institutions, presenting PJ as a "better," more truthful and complete version of existing journalism, rather than a fundamental challenge to its procedures and self-understandings. They define peace, and climate stability, as humanly shared concerns. Their motto might be, We're all in this together.

By contrast, "radical" versions of either paradigm might heed Richard Keeble's call (in Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution) to rethink



journalism as "an essentially political practice." He criticized PJ for focussing too narrowly on reforming professional routines, rather than pursuing campaigning/advocacy journalism, alternative media, and citizens' journalism through the Internet.

The contrast between liberal and radical climate journalism emerged in our interviews with Canadian alternative media, conducted for the co-authored book Journalism and Climate Crisis. What did they think of how to handle conflict, in the framing of climate stories? Some emphasized the search for common ground, like Geoff Dembicki's report on the Albertan oil industry's apparent acquiescence to carbon taxes as part of a broader settlement with environmental groups (in the



Climate Disaster Project student Paul Voll interviews Royal BC Museum curator of vertebrate zoology Gavin Hanke about his experiences during the 2021 Western North America extreme heat wave. (Climate Disaster Project Photo/Phil McLachlan)

Tyee, June 20, 2012). Political conflict over climate policy was seen as unnecessarily divisive, contributing to political gridlock.

Others, though, see value in some kinds of conflict frames. A "green populist" frame could replace cynicism with public engagement. Rather than reporting endlessly on politicians' mutual head-bashing, find stories of communities fighting for climate justice against vested interests – for example, Indigenous land defenders standing tall against pipelines and governments. Author Bill McKibben momentarily argued (in Rolling Stone, July 19 2012) that two decades of policy impotence by environmentalists could be addressed by recognizing and mobilizing against the fossil fuel industry as a permanent opponent of decarbonization.

That approach is not so different from interpretations of PJ that emphasize its commitment to exposing war propaganda, or challenging structural violence – the crushing of human development embedded in racism, manufactured poverty, or other repressive institutions. Taking PJ in that direction would require courageous, investigative, independent and status quo-challenging journalism. Interestingly, ten years after touting oil executives' agreement to carbon taxes, Geoff Dembicki has published a much more critical take. His 2022 book The Petroleum Papers: Inside the Far-Right Conspiracy to Cover Up Climate Change parallels PJ's precept

of exposing propaganda. The subtitle says it all.

**Limitations**

Unfortunately, PJ and CCJ have something else in common: a failure to transform journalism, let alone society.

Where is PJ in news about Putin's brutal intervention in Ukraine's civil war? In Russian state media, NATO is a demon fighting a proxy war to dismantle Russia. But Western media are also awash in War Journalism – from an emphasis on battles and an endless parade of military talking heads, to "Our Side" triumphalism, nuclear war minimalization, and lack of historical context, complexity, or opportunities for a diplomatic off-ramp. Even the internationally recognized Economist magazine – which to its credit takes climate change seriously, unlike many conservative outlets in the US – proffers War Journalism – like its September 17, 2022 front-cover headline: "Getting the Job Done: How Ukraine Can Win". Perhaps that's not surprising, given the Economist's historically close ideological alignment (<https://www.versobooks.com/books/3090-liberalism-at-large>) with anglo-American elites.

Similarly, while climate reportage in Canadian media has improved in recent years, many Canadians still don't get the link (<https://ecwpress.com/products/a->

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Research

from Pg 5

have contributed to polarization among segments of the public in the US and, in turn, increase challenges faced by communicators trying to raise the salience of climate change as a policy priority." For example, the researchers discuss differing political frames on the topic of scientific consensus. One frame shows that 97% of climate scientists believe in human-caused climate change, while an opposing frame indicates "disagreement and debate over the fundamental science among scientists."

**Recommendations for journalists**

Several climate reporting recommendations for journalists were suggested in a UN-published article titled, "[Five ways media and journalists can support climate action while tackling misinformation](#)." These suggestions include:

1. Stop being so overly dramatic. "According to UNESCO, and studies carried out by the Thomson Reuters Institute, the 'doom and gloom' narrative can also make some people simply turn off and lose interest."
2. A climate change story should go beyond the climate. Dr. Andrew Revkin from Columbia University's Earth Institute recommends "taking a more contextual approach can also create space for stories that might go unreported otherwise."
3. Get local and think more about climate justice. "By analysing local contexts and social factors, journalists can also create stories related to climate justice" the article states.
4. Build trust and engagement that can combat dis/misinformation. Revkin said, "There is a way in which you can actually not just tell people and policymakers how big the storm is, but tell them what the expanding bullseye is, and not just report on the climate part, but the losses driven by the [overall] landscape."
5. Be guided by science and embrace 'yes.' By this, the authors recommend stories that highlight activism and steps forward (yes stories), rather than just stories about what societies need to stop doing.

Also, a [media guide](#) by Psychologists for Future Germany lists recommendations for journalists covering climate change. These include:

1. Classify climate crisis as highly relevant, and constantly address it
2. Validate feelings, and their appropriateness
3. Highlight constructive coping strategies, both individual and communal

The International Journalists Network has also developed a useful [Environmental Reporting Toolkit](#) that is worth perusing.

--Steven Youngblood



# During Pakistani floods, media fail to educate

## PJ approach needed for climate reporting

The catastrophic floods in the summer of 2022 were unprecedented in many ways in Pakistan. Alongside the heavy death toll, almost one third of the country remained inundated for months that badly affected the livelihood of millions of people. While the exact estimates are still coming in, according to various reports, the country needs 20 billion dollars to rebuild homes, schools, hospitals, government offices, agricultural lands and



A national TV correspondent reporting from Karachi during the floods. (Dunya TV)

## Climate from Pg 7

good-war) between fossil fuel exports and climate crisis, the industry’s role in sowing climate denialism, or the severity of the unfolding crisis.

That doesn’t mean PJ or CCJ are completely without success. Their repertoire of methods and stories are both valuable springboards for broader interventions in political culture. So far, Jake Lynch suggested in a 2010 interview, PJ seems to have flourished under certain conditions, such as societies where media contributed to destructive internal conflict, or where societies are emerging from authoritarian rule, so that a spirit of reform and re-invention influences journalism as well as other institutions.

Similarly, research would probably indicate that pro-climate public opinion, and the kind of journalism that could sustain it, finds more fertile ground

the whole communication infrastructure. According to scientific studies, in future, such devastating floods and drought-like situations would frequently frequently visit Pakistan and other countries of South Asia.

While generally the Pakistani and international media reported these floods from a humanistic perspective, we also saw the media was more interested in finding the ‘best image.’ Why these devastating floods are occurring and what scientific solutions are available got the least coverage. Majority of Pakistanis still believe these floods were the heavenly wrath or the animosity of India that diverted more waters into the rivers entering Pakistan. The existing media practices of climate reporting in Pakistan are inadequate for both professional and responsible coverage. Despite the immense destruction, media has failed to educate people on this crisis and build a meaningful debate on it. It is in

in countries that have suffered from climate disasters, and that are net importers rather than producers of fossil fuels.

**Conclusion**  
The broader political context is threatening. The resurgence of ethno-nationalism and right-wing know-nothing populism, with their rejection of science, expertise, and international co-operation, are clearly obstacles to both PJ and CCJ.

Yet the structure of the dominant “legacy” media systems is often toxic. In authoritarian regimes, media are often subservient to ethno-nationalist and warmongering State elites. In the notionally democratic states of “the West,” journalism is distorted by commercial and corporate priorities.

The Internet, once seen as the sav-

this connection, that I believe that the peace journalism approach is better suited to address the issues relating to climate crisis reporting. Through the diagnostic and prognostic principles of peace journalism, we can identify the attitudes of journalists towards climate crisis, the professional challenges that determine media coverage and then identifying corrective strategies for a more constructive debate. This approach is useful to the analysis of climate journalism because it diagnoses the existing problems in the field by highlighting the deficiencies in the existing journalistic approaches and then suggest alternative vistas.

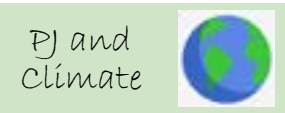
As compared to other approaches to study crisis reporting, the peace journalism approach is superior for its better explanation of structure-agency

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jour of democracy, is dominated by so-called “social” media that are really corporate digital platforms with more wealth and power than many countries. Their architecture incentivizes extremism, promotes anger and fear as weapons to attract users’ attention, unleashes a flood of anti-science conspiracy theories and disinformation, undermines democratic discourse by incentivizing people to cloister in their own opinion tribes, and enables misogynist bullying of women whose work is so important to peace and environmental movements.

One implication is that the drive for more accurate and human-friendly journalism should extend beyond the “liberal” focus on professional routines, to assist the more “radical” task of “remaking the media.”

--Robert Hackett



## Pakistan from Pg 8

debate. Though the structures are determining factors of media content but journalists can skillfully utilize their profession to provide opportunities to audiences to understand the climate crisis. They can negotiate their professional positions to bring the climate crisis agenda into public arena. By mixing scientific evidence with advocacy, they can press for solutions. Peace journalism scholars have skillfully combined critical and normative modes for constructive reporting of conflicts. The same can be applied in the context of climate disaster.

Climate journalists often find themselves in a fix when they have to sensationalize damages and ignore the complex scientific findings and invisible process that lead to crisis. These problems often result in bad reporting of the climate crisis that only serves the commercial interests of media. How can the peace journalism approach can help in this regard? First, as a golden principle, journalists should expand the range of news sources as they can get newsworthy information from common people, civil society, and the scientific com-

munity. Second, through a proactive approach, the politicians can be pressurized to include the climate crisis in their political agendas. This would also incentivize media to give due importance to the climate crisis in their political assignments. Third, through its people-centered approach, peace journalism narratives can initiate a more compelling public discourse on the climate issue. The more people talk about it, the more the media will be attracted towards such debates.

The peace journalism approach can also be feasible in offering practicable solutions for constructive reporting of climate crisis. To encourage mainstream media journalists to include climate news, they should be provided relevant and accurate information. This is possible when important stakeholders like the scientific community, government officials, and media play their due roles. Studies show media can play help reunite important actors when a society faces a crisis. The impending climate crisis threatens everyone, and media can create consensus on it. In this regard, the peace journalism approach is better

suited because it calls for highlighting the causes, consequences, history, and background information about an issue. Such an approach would create critical awareness among the audiences and help garner their support for corrective measures.

Studies have documented the limitations of traditional media in performing their normative roles due to commercial interests. On the other hand, social media, due to its absence of elitist controls and economic considerations, is well poised to highlight development agendas like the climate crisis. Peace journalism has long argued that social media can be utilized to promote peace during conflict. During the attack on a mosque in New Zealand, a global anger was expressed against rising Islamophobia. Climate activists can learn from such experiences and launch global online campaigns to press governments for corrective policies. In our study in Pakistan, we found that journalists and other stakeholders were aware of the potential role of social media to promote climate activism.

--Shabir Hussain



10-12% of Pakistan was flooded from June to August, 2022.



A boatman surveys the polluted Dal Lake in Kashmir while standing on his wooden boat. Photo by Priyadarshini Sen



## Reporting climate change in South Asia

### Journalists must show challenges, triumphs of marginalized

*Reporter's notebook: This story was produced as part of a cross border reporting project teaming Indian and Pakistani journalists, sponsored by the East West Center. -Ed*

Rapid economic growth and urbanization in South Asia are contributing to climate change, and diminishing the living conditions of over 800 million people—some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

While erratic monsoons, floods and rising temperatures have offset the lives of the poor in the Global South, as a journalist it's important to report the significant role being played by the marginalized sections of society in India and Pakistan to combat climate change.

A couple of years ago, I was talking to a grassroots climate action group in Gorakhpur city in North India about the role of women—particularly widows—in fighting environmental catastrophes. This non-profit group trains women in climate-resilient farming.

From our interactions, I gathered that rural women in the small village of Janakpur in Uttar Pradesh are playing a critical role in reshaping farming practices in their community.

They are regaining control over farmland and even altering gender relations in their village where patriarchy has held gendered roles in place for generations.

Through their 'mindful' farming practices, these women are training their husbands to deal with inclement weather, flash floods, and other climate-induced disasters. To add to these shifting patterns in society, widowed women are now part of the village council—something unheard of before—and are training other women to claim joint ownership of farmland.

This got me thinking about how the most marginalized sections of society in South Asia could become the most effective actors against oncoming environmental catastrophes. Despite being subjected to extreme social and economic distresses, these groups not only have the resilience to deal with adversity, but also have the acumen for positive climate action.

Across India, for instance, indigenous people are helping

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[www.park.edu/peacecenter](http://www.park.edu/peacecenter)

## Marginalized *from Pg 10*

preserve sacred groves that are noted for their ecological, religious and cultural value. Their close proximity to these primeval forests and an innate understanding of their spiritual value is critical in the face of land grabs, mega development projects, and institutional contestations.

Many indigenous people are reviving ancient traditions of nature conservation to combat climate change despite facing severe crackdowns, arrests, and backlashes from political and business leaders. In the north-east Indian state of Meghalaya, efforts to revive traditional practices have made way for a water reservoir in the largest sacred grove there.

Sometimes faith leaders have offered help in tribal-dominated areas. Recently, I worked on a story about how community leaders across faith groups are helping the indigenous people in the remote Himalayan desert of Ladakh to reassert their rights over their lands and ancient heritage against government pressures and business interests.

Even in the war-torn landscape of Kashmir where I had gone to report the role of imams in preserving the environment, I was taken in by the trust communities had in spiritual leaders to fight climate change and man-made disasters like unplanned urbanization, soil erosion, receding water levels in natural water bodies, and land encroachments.

PJ and  
Climate



But while reporting these stories about marginalized groups fighting climate change in South Asia, it is extremely important to keep in mind the pressures they work under—both at home and outside—and the threats they are exposed to at various levels. It's also critical as a journalist to deepen one's understanding of the beliefs and practices embedded in the communities that shape these individuals, power their work, and give them courage.

This is especially true when we look at powerful individuals among sexual minorities who are fighting climate change, and trying to shift perceptions about their role in society.

Take the transgender communities in India and Pakistan.

In Pakistan, when the floods ravaged one-third of the country last year and submerged swatches of farmland, there was no doubt that rescue and relief efforts were made on a war footing to reach more people. But the transgender community of Sindh—one of the worst-hit provinces—was left out of the relief efforts.

My colleague Lubna Jerar Naqvi gathered that many transgender people were excluded from rations that were distributed by voluntary organizations in the flood-affected

areas.

She saw that every story was one of tragedy, heartbreak and immense courage. Their efforts to give back to a society that had shunned them were met with force by those who wanted to disempower them even during an unprecedented national calamity. Earlier, when a climate march was organized in Karachi in 2021, trans people were not allowed to join the protest rally. Many members received threat calls, and at least one was kidnapped and raped for speaking up against climate change, which was not their 'domain.'

In India, too, tentative steps being taken by the transgender community to speak up against climate-induced disasters are not being taken seriously enough by mainstream society. Their social, economic, and psychological distresses are exacerbated when they are silenced, pushed to the margins, or stopped from speaking out. Yet, some outspoken trans people are mobilizing communities and exploring ways to make the planet a more habitable space.

At a workshop organized by the National Commission for Human Rights and United States Agency for International Development last January, problems faced by the transgender community were highlighted. It was stressed that trans activists be included in post-flood disaster management and relief programs. The panelists spoke about the need for the trans community to play an active role in the recovery process to help flood victims.

Minorities tend to inhabit spaces that are worst hit by climate change and their poverty increases their vulnerability. Not only do big businesses exploit them for cheap labor, but also push them into those very areas where industrial pollution impairs their lives.

In India's energy capital, Sonbhadra—where there are multiple power plants—I reported about 10 years ago the effects of mercury pollution on the health of indigenous people. The pollutants discharged by big power plants into the air and water had not only led to various physical deformities in the people, but also made them recede further into the shadows due to the lack of psycho-social support. Climate change disasters magnified their problems.

Climate change is a global emergency that disproportionately affects those who suffer from socio-economic inequalities. As journalists, not only should we verbalize more the sufferings of the most marginalized, but also celebrate their roles in environment preservation.

**--Priyadarshini Sen, with Lubna Jerar Naqvi**





## IMS creates collaborative climate journalism

By now, it is certainly uncontroversial to claim that climate change and the environmental crisis are the biggest challenges of our century. To me, it seems clear that collaborative, creative, and ambitious journalism on these topics has never been more needed. So how do we help media from different nations and regions join forces in a quintessential competitive environment? How do we ensure that there is both the will and the capabilities in newsrooms to take on this massive task?

IMS (International Media Support) is a Danish media development organisation that has worked with media and journalists around the globe for the last 20 years, particularly in areas that are – and will continue to be – deeply affected by the consequences of global warming and environmental harm caused by global and local companies.

Our extensive networks in regions ravaged by environmental destruction – as well as our experience in developing good journalism and fostering a diverse and critical media landscape – place us and our partners in a unique position to tackle some of these fore-mentioned questions. Further, we see it as an imperative.

### Local coverage, global audience

We believe that good climate journal-

ism is made possible, accessible and impactful through global collaborations. One of the ways we facilitate media collaborations is through our initiative [MediaBridge](https://mediabridge.org) ([mediabridge.org](https://mediabridge.org)), which helps media outlets bring compelling stories and essential documentation from conflict countries to the attention of the global audience. MediaBridge can help media outlets gain access to quality content from regions that they are not able to report from due to difficulties of entering and working in these countries. This includes local specialised reporting from areas hit by floods, drought, failed harvests and other tragedies caused by global warming.

We see that our partners are very eager to do stories on climate change and on negative impacts on local nature. This is because it's affecting the lives of their audiences every single day. Their challenge is to bring these stories to audiences in areas which are not experiencing such serious consequences or seeing the foundations of fishing, farming, and normal life dramatically changing.

### Emissions in the North and destruction in the South

Collaborative journalism across borders is incredibly useful when trying to ensure that the localised consequences of climate change are

*Photo: IMS supports documentary films on environmental issues like the Danish-Lebanese co-production "Litani River," about the deadly pollution of Lebanon's most important river.*

covered globally. This is important not least due to a paradox that is becoming increasingly clear: even though the industrial and post-industrial countries in the so-called Global North have a political responsibility to mitigate the climate crisis due to their massive historic (and current) emissions of greenhouse gases, the countries in the Global South generally have much lower emissions but are nonetheless hit disproportionately hard by the consequences of global warming.

Our aim is to strengthen the local-global connection and to make sure that the voices and experiences of those most affected by the crisis reach a global audience. It is crucial if we want to have just and responsible coverage of the crisis.

### Funding investigative environmental journalism

The disproportionate emission of greenhouse gases is one way the people of the Global North have a greater responsibility for climate change than people in the Global South. A lot of

Continued on next page

companies and investors from the Global North have factories and production placed in the South and play a significant role in the many environmental violations that take place.

IMS is working with Journalismfund.eu to help cultivate and fund cross-border and cross-continental journalistic investigations that expose the ways global corporations are causing harm to nature and people, as well as supporting stories that look critically at how aid given to countries hit by climate catastrophes is spent.

We have received dozens of well-researched ideas and documentation from Indonesia to Colombia, where journalists on the ground want to investigate European companies and the impact their businesses have on the local environment.

Environmental investigations from Lebanon, Philippines, Columbia, Albania, Tunisia, Jordan, and Zambia are all in the making. To try and ensure that these stories will have maximum impact, IMS is helping local journalists link up with relevant media organisations in Europe. This is crucial to put public and political pressure on the European corporations or officials involved in environmental damage.

### Journalists need to focus on solutions

This spring, we are developing and conducting a training course specifically on critical climate journalism.

With funds from UNESCO, we will train journalists from different countries in Southeast Asia, one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. Later, we hope to make this training available to more journalists.

Specifically, we will provide comprehensive training to media on the use of intelligence tools to monitor the climate change situation at national or local levels. It will help media use technology to gather news, sort and analyse data from public sources, such as geo-localisations, mapping tools, satellite imagery, databases on wind, weather and vessel movements, topographic data, 3-D modelling, etc. It will also show media how to research public records, such as climate change decisions, official declarations, parliamentary votings, etc.

The aim is to strengthen the capacities of media organizations to go a step further than allowing experts to voice their opinions and instead hold the powerful to account through investigating and providing the facts. It will also promote solutions journalism, which focuses on contextual responses to climate change issues, showing the audience both useful evidence and limitations.

Once training is completed, the media will be able to hold central environmental degradation actors to account

for profiting in political or commercial ways of unsustainable practices and, if need be, report disparities between real against communicated climate change situation, affirmative action against empty posturing, policy-making records against campaign promises, etc. The media will also be capable of placing climate change solutions in context and reveal both effective measures and shortcomings. We believe that media must not only point to the problems, but also make sure to convey innovative and constructive solutions to serve as inspiration both on a local and a global level.

PJ and Climate



If going forward, we fail in tackling the climate crisis or do not prioritise the creation of solid set-ups and institutions

to responsibly help communities and societies deal with the radical destruction of and changes to their environments, homes and possibilities of sustaining themselves, we will likely see a level of conflict that is hard to even fathom.

Media outlets and journalists must step up their efforts and collaborate on creating impactful and ambitious climate stories and to make sure that the local consequences of the global crisis reach audiences and decision makers around the world.

--Henrik Grunnet



## Election guide informs Zimbabwean journalists

A new electoral reporting and peace journalism manual has been published in Zimbabwe by the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

According to the International Journalist's Network, the manual, which will be published soon online, contains information about Zimbabwe's electoral systems, including how the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) functions, voter registration, and the pre-election environment. Godwin Phiri, ZMC's executive secretary, told [ijnet.org](https://ijnet.org), "The purpose is to ensure that we can create a conducive peaceful environment that guarantees the safety of journalists and access to information. We want journalists to speak and write from the position of knowledge and not speculation."



# Transboundary climate issues challenge PJ

## Media can assist stakeholder interactions

Climate change, population growth, socioeconomic development, and mismanagement of water supplies is putting a lot of stress on water resources across the globe . The situation is worse in countries sharing water resources. Transboundary river basins have been cited as sources of conflict among riparian states by many scholars. Resolving these conflicts over transboundary waters to reach a mutually agreed solution has always been difficult .

One such example is of the Brahmaputra River. The Brahmaputra River originates in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, and flows through India and Bangladesh before meeting the Ganges on way to the Bay of Bengal. It offers huge potential for hydropower development, fertile agricultural lands, and substantial aquatic resources that support millions of people and their livelihoods in the four riparian countries, i.e., China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.



The Brahmaputra River starts in Tibet, then runs through India (top, center) and then south through Bangladesh. (Univ. of Texas maps)

In addition, the rivers of the Brahmaputra basin are vital in supporting navigation and trade within and between the riparian countries. However, the river has been cited as one of those most at risk for transboundary water conflict due to historical border issues (China and India), unilateral decision-making (China and India), and varying development agendas (China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh), influenced by a multitude of state and non-state actors, some more powerful than others. Less powerful stakeholders like local communities, small boat owners, small fishermen etc. do not have decision making powers and most of the time their interest gets compromised due to top-down decision-making processes. This in turn makes them put less trust in the government, which impacts future development. Also these non-state actors are the first affected in case of emergencies like floods, and are also the ones who are scarcely compensated when water infrastructure development projects are being constructed.

Additionally, a handful of bilateral agreements that do exist between the riparian states for cooperative engagement face major challenges in terms of interpretation and implementation. Therefore, providing equitable access to water resources to all the riparian countries through participatory and transparent governance is challenging because water is perceived as a finite resource with competing demands.

In such a situation the merit of multitrack diplomacy is recognized for acknowledging plurality associated with the transboundary waters of the Brahmaputra. It is because a deliberative process involving heads of state, policymakers, civil society organizations, and communities. More opportunities for informal interactions among riparian actors helps in im-

proving participation and build trust among state and non-state actors.

Media can aid in formulating these interactions between stakeholders and bringing out the voices of dormant stakeholders. Strategic use of the media is an essential part of getting the message across to local stakeholders and shaping the relationships,



especially in times of crisis and for peace-building. However , it has been noted the reporting style of any event by the media plays a critical role in shaping the narrative of any water resources.

Scholars state that the norms of conventional, objective journalism are the same during conflict and peacetime: the journalist is an impartial observer, detached from the conflict, and has the role to inform the public through reporting the facts in an objective manner. However, it has also been argued that journalism is constructing reality and not merely reflecting it, as selective choices are made on which facts are being reported and how they are framed. Thus, journalists become actors within the conflicts they cover as their decisions on what receives media focus and what is excluded affect the development of a narrative.

The critique of conventional war reporting led to the theoretical framing of Peace Journalism. The model is defined in direct opposition to the oversimplification of War Journalism. Peace Journalism seeks and explores complexity: it portrays the conflict formation (numerous parties and goals) and focusses on the invisible effects of violence such as psychological or sociocultural harm. Peace Journalism aims at providing a platform to all parties and creates space for empathy and understanding. Peace Journalism aims at transparency, considers

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# Transboundary

from Pg 14

similarities, and is people-orientated, meaning that grassroots sources are seen as equally important as official sources. This principle of inclusivity is also key to governance of water resources.

For instance, despite the controversies surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (*below*), the media's portrayal of the project, highlighting the attributes of national image and mutual benefits among the riparian



countries, strongly influenced the Ethiopian people in seeing its potential for contributing to prosperity of the region . Similarly, in the Rhine basin pollution case, media attention not only accelerated the negotiations between the Dutch and the French, but also convinced the Dutch citizens that their concerns are heard and that the matter is taken seriously by the two countries.

The Lancang–Mekong River basin, with the surge of proposals for dam development in the late 1990s and its subsequent concerns witnessed downturn in the cooperation trend among the riparian countries. However, media's unbiased reporting of the events, demonstrating the opportunities and challenges involved, aided in connecting leaders and project developers between riparian countries, including meetings, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and development projects that led to cooperation between the countries .

When focusing on environmental issues particularly related to water, experts argue that reporting can be more nuanced, more focused on science as well as the socioeconomic aspect of water management. It has been reported that due to a sensational reporting style, academics, state actors and other policy actors are sceptical of including media in diplomacy and sharing objective messaging with the public.

To engage the media effectively, it is important to build the media's capacity to develop trust with scientists, policymakers, and donor organizations, which would result in higher integration of scientifically authentic narratives, and to bring the voices of the water communities to the fore. Journalists and scientists should create an alliance to build a community of practice. Platforms like Nile Media Network and The Open Water Diplomacy Lab are good examples of a space where water diplomats, water journalists, and water scientists from different Nile basin countries have been engaged in a process of common learning.

Training of journalists for covering the plurality of interests is essential to make a good case and is also the basis of peace journalism. Building capacities of journalists is essential for them to understand the complexity of issues related to management of water resources. The Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, in collaboration with cross-country partners, started an initiative in the Brahmaputra River basin (2020–2022), to strengthen science-media communication by bringing in media personalities and scientists under one roof for a series of discussions. Multimedia grants were provided to highlight the varied narratives surrounding transboundary waters. While it was an endeavour to build the media's capacity through heightened engagement with the scientific community, the scien-

tists were also trained to communicate knowledge in an easily accessible and understandable manner. Similarly, a platform such as the Indus Basin Knowledge Platform, developed by the International Water Management Institute serves as a repository of the knowledge obtained from scientific research in the basin. Such platforms also help journalists acquire scientific knowledge which they can use for wider dissemination.

In the Brahmaputra River Basin, media reporting sometimes influences the public agenda and shapes public debates. It has been noted that annual floods and water infrastructure development are the two issues that hamper constructive engagement between the countries in the Brahmaputra basin. Climate change has been attributed as one of the causes of the annual floods apart from the geographic positioning of the region. Reporting can lead to myths and controversies, resulting in accusations between states and exhibiting prejudices while protecting territorial sovereignty and water rights.

Understanding what media reports in the basin and the emerging trends and narratives that influence public debates is essential for stakeholder engagement. Today, a systematic understanding of the role of media in shaping the narrative around the Brahmaputra River basin is missing. Media can shape adaptive governance in the basin, especially, by promoting informal diplomacy initiatives that will enable state and non-state policy actors to trust media to as an essential actor in water diplomacy thus rebranding the media's image to promote cooperation. Informed media is one of the critical assets for changing the narrative from conflict to cooperation for peace building among states in the Brahmaputra River basin.

--Pritha Chakraborty, Natasha Hazarika, Joydeep Gupta, Anamika Barua



# Study uses Twitter to analyze Myanmar coup

## Tweets support pro-democracy protesters

On February 1, 2021, Myanmar’s military put an end to the country’s experience with democracy by detaining democratically elected national leader Aung San Suu Kyi along with other key members of National League Of Democracy (NLD), and declaring a one year state of emergency. The NLD came to power in 2015. The citizens of Myanmar responded to the military coup by holding mass protests against the military regime. To curb the anti-coup protests, the regime blocked the Internet including sites such as Facebook and Twitter which have been used to generate support for anti-coup protests in the country.

The Internet has created a platform that allows individuals living under authoritarian rule to send information to the outside world, something that was much more challenging in the pre-Internet era. Advances in information technology have altered the path of conflict by changing the way leaders communicate to their armed forces, and interested audiences monitor events. Moreover, social media allows citizens to share their opinions and engage directly with the local and national leaders. World leaders use social media to communicate with domestic audiences, to provide infor-

mation about the government’s daily agenda, to advertise new legislative proposals and executive decisions, and to influence public opinion. The role of social media varies over time and circumstances.

The goal of this brief is to analyse the perception of the military coup among Myanmar citizens through the use of Twitter. It is important to note that the article exclusively focuses on the online use of Twitter and its offline effects are not analysed. Moreover, the political crisis is still going on and is highly volatile in nature and its further events are uncertain. Therefore, an ‘on ground’ approach will have certain limitations. However, in future an ‘on ground’ approach should be conducted to give valuable insights beyond the information available online.

### Methodology

The data was obtained by identifying 50 Twitter accounts of the citizens of Myanmar through the hashtags #Respectourvotes, #hearthevoiceof-myanmar and #savemyanmar. These hashtags were identified through a hashtag tracker called Brandmentions. I chose a limited time period between 1 February 2021 to 15 April 2021. The historical timeline in Google Trends for the web search of ‘Myanmar coup’ shows that search activity increased sharply in the days after 1 February when the coup took place and dropped significantly in April.

### Perception of the military among the citizens

A large proportion of the tweets by the people expressed dissatisfaction with the military officials. Negative words like “terrorists,” “evil,” “inhuman,” and “goons” were used to describe the doings of the military force. For example: “Day 45 Myanmar Military Coup. This Morning Scene in #MingalarTaungNyunt where the mili-

tary terrorists destroyed convenience stores and public properties. Terrorist Junta attacked the civilians day and night.”

The tweets framed the protests as a way for individuals to exercise their right to assemble to demonstrate resistance to the coup. The military officers were framed as dispassionate beings who were merely obeying their superiors’ orders and were responsible for the forceful suppression of people’s will. Yaminsymo on 21 February, 2021 tweeted this along with a video, “See how brutal the military and police are. They have shields and all kinds of weapons. The innocent civilians have nothing but courage. STOP TERRORISM.” The tweets were successful in questioning the government’s highly militarised response. A large number of citizens reported that the military force used rubber bullets and live ammunition in crowds. For example, @nyi\_hunger tweeted “Terrorists and snipers shot with both real and rubber bullets and beating up the female is believed to have been shot in the head and at least 3 were shot & injured.”

Many users also shared a video in which they claimed that the military soldiers had joined a pro-democracy protest as civilians. They accused the military officers of disrupting the protest by opening fire and held them responsible for vandalism as well. It is interesting to note that a large number of tweets have either not mentioned any names of the military officers or have mentioned only two names: Min Aung Hlaing who is the Commander-in-Chief of the military and Myanmar’s de facto leader since the coup, and Zaw Min Htun who is the Deputy Minister of Information and also the official spokesperson of the Junta government. This shows that the people perceive them as the face of the coup and consider the mili-

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# Myanmar from Pg 16

tary government as illegitimate.

This is illustrated by a photo that was included in one of the tweets (Eaindra Kyaa Zin, February 12, 2021). It is a photo of Myint Thau who is the permanent representative of Myanmar to the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG), when he attended the 29th Special Session of Human Rights Council on 12th February 2021. There is a red cross on his face and the user tweeted, “He does not represent us, Myanmar People. He is one of the state rebels under Min Aung Hlaing (the military coup)!!!! The world must know. He is lying and covering what’s really happening in Myanmar to the whole world!!!!!!”

The attempt to build a democratic federal union, through inclusion of minorities could also be observed. For example, this tweet shows the broadening sociopolitical scope of the anti-coup resistance by expressing concern for the safety of the minority ethnic groups. “While we are focusing on major cities, our minor ethnic groups are suffering their violence too. Policies/Soldiers are raiding on the streets in Myitkyinar, Kachin State. People are also arrested. HARMING is their new duty instead of HELPING. #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar #Feb18Coup.”

Some tweets have accused the military force of not abiding to international humanitarian agreements, for example the fourth Geneva Convention which is related to the protection of civilians in an armed conflict. A large proportion of tweets condemned the stand taken by the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic Of China in the 29th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the “human rights implications of the crisis in Myanmar” as the two member states emphasised that ‘settlement of differences between Myanmar’s political forces is strictly an internal matter of that sovereign state.’ For example, “This is not inter-



A symbol against the dictatorship at a protest in Yangon in 2021. (Myanmar Now)

nal affair. This is not Civil War. This is just a part of the injustice act of the Myanmar Military on the peaceful unarmed protestors.” a tweet by Bob-o25ster on February 20, 2021.

The citizens’ tweeting framed the protestors as having to defend themselves from the harsh response of the military government. Moreover, they accused regime forces, including the police (which is under the military’s command now), of disrupting peaceful protests by using violence.

For example, on 28 February, 2021 mashweme tweeted, “State-sponsored Terrorism in Myanmar TW // blood Can the police beat a civilian like this? Civilians are not only beaten but also shot in the head and the eyes.” The tweet included a video of an unidentified civilian being beaten with sticks by four military uniformed officers.

### Perception of Protesters among the civilians

A large proportion of tweets expressed their support for the protesters in the pro-democracy movement. Words like “innocent,” “peaceful,” and “young” are used to describe the protestors. It is clear from the tweets that students are taking an active role in the pro-democracy movement example @GFatt09379362 tweeted, “322 students were arrested during a peaceful strike in Tamwe, Yangon, and are detained in the Insein prison. They are sued with Penal Code 505(A),

for so-called attempt of treason. They cannot be charged with a crime they never committed #FreeOurStudents #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar.”

The citizens have expressed sympathy for journalists and teachers who have been injured in the protests and gratitude to doctors and nurses for providing their services to the injured protesters.

It was interesting to note that the citizens were aware about the arrangement made by CNN with the military government to interview the military officials. Several tweets criticised this move and believed that it would undermine the real story. For example, @HtykeThan tweeted on 31st March, 2021 “It’d be a shame for @CNN if they can’t get on ground infos. There are many foreign based reporters who are working on ground here and they’ve also reported what’s really happening. You have to work freely by asking locals and not to be escorted by junta.”

Civilians through tweets also expressed their anguish with the imposition of Penal code 505(A). The penal code explains that “Whoever makes, publishes or circulates any statement, rumour or report with intent to-cause, or which is likely to cause, any officer, soldier, sailor or airman, in the Army, Navy or Air Force harm with the intent to incite the public shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.” (University of Minnesota, n.d.). For example, LayPhyuOfficial tweeted “Myanmar Military issued arrest warrant to 20 doctors who join #CivilDisobedienceMovement with penalty code 505(A), which is treason. We are just doing what is right for our country, we cannot be charged with a crime we did not commit.” Several people retweeted the arrest of Koi Wae Moe, a prominent anti-coup leader. Twitter user, @myatnoeaye

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UTexas maps



on April 15, 2021, like many others, attached a video in which civilians are participating in a motorcycle rally protest and a car comes from front and allegedly kidnaps the anti coup leader, “Footage video of Military Terrorists violently abducting Monywa Activist Ko Wai Moe Naing who has been leading the biggest strikes in Monywa since February.”

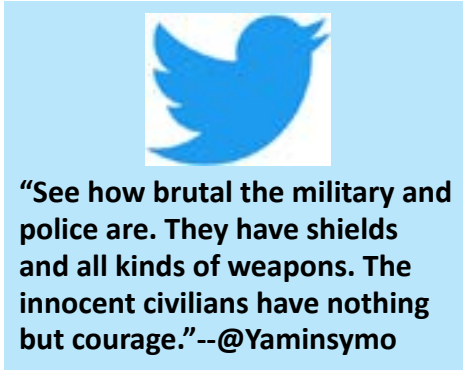
The protestors had also staged general strikes as part of the civil disobedience movement against the military coup. Several users had tweeted their photos with the three-finger salute, which originated in The Hunger Games movie series. For example, on April 11, 2021, Twitter user @Randallbreanna tweeted, “Knock, Knock! Who is there? Three Fingers. Three fingers, who? Three fingers, I want to have freedom! Convo between a 5 year old and a 3 year old who live with me.” The three-fingered salute became a pillar of the Milk Tea Alliance—to signal opposition to authoritarian rule became massively prevalent in Myanmar. The use of the gesture reveals the young activists’ desire to make the international audience aware about their struggle.

The citizens of Myanmar had expressed solidarity with the people of Thailand who have been demanding reforms in the country’s monarchy and release of detained activists.

**Immediate responses by the citizens to the latest developments**  
A large proportion of tweets reported and condemned the air strikes conducted by the military government. For example, @Ohnmar762842791 tweeted on 13 April, 2021, “AIRSTRIKES by terrorists Tatmadaw are massacring innocent civilians each day; many has injured & lost their homes. We would like to request to implement #NoFly-ZoneInMyanmar.”

There were several tweets which

urged the international community to take action against the airstrikes. For example, a Twitter user on 29 April, 2021 wrote, “Hundreds of villagers from Brigade No.5 fled from their homes due to airstrikes launched by the Burma Army on 27 March. Humanitarian assistance is urgently needed. Approximately 300+ people from Brigade 5 area fled to the border.” @LayPhyuOfficial shared a cartoon accompanied with this message on 14 March, 2021 “Illustration of a kid telling his mom that he didn’t want to have a flying experience anymore. He already got “plane trauma” cause Myanmar military air bombardment attack on their villages.”



Citizens on Twitter also accused the military government of causing an information blackout under the pretext of national security. The military government controlled media announced a ban on satellite TV citing outside broadcasts threatened outside security (Reuters, 2021). For example, twitter user, @kitkattheturtle on 11 April, 2021 retweeted the photos in which military officials are seen removing satellites, “Clear Evidence of Terrorists removing PSI Satellites from houses in #TachiLeik city today. At least 10 have been removed forcefully by them.

**Conclusion**  
Twitter and other social media platforms can be important instruments to understand different perspectives of the people involved in a conflict and young people’s expectations who rely on digital channels to express themselves, in particular. The very

fact that people are tweeting about the military coup in English shows that they attribute importance to the issue and rely on this platform to raise awareness amongst the international community as there are no geographical restrictions. Citizens’ longing to be part of the decision making process, mistrust between the people and the military government due to lack of accountability and post-coup instability appear to be the dominant issues in Burmese politics today.

This research shows that many citizens have used Twitter as an opportunity to address the wrongdoings of the military government which also highlights the scepticism of the people towards the Myanmar mainstream media. The protests have been the largest resistance after the Saffron Revolution in 2007. It could be observed that different members of the population such as lawyers, students, teachers, doctors, bank officers and government employees are taking part in the anti-coup resistance.

They also took on the task of reporting on various local, social and even international issues- like police brutality, R2P and violation of human rights. As protests continue and fatalities rise, effectiveness of the international community’s response to the humanitarian crisis has become a central concern. The coup has not just created a need for fresh international aid due to reduced functioning of the economy but has also created the possibility of mass outflow of refugees in the future. International sanctions should be imposed on military owned enterprises. However, to reach a long term solution for Myanmar’s security, there is an urgent need to create space for dialogue between various stakeholders such as the military government, ethnic minorities and armed militias.

--Navya Khanna

The Psychologists for Peace interest group of the Australian Psychological Society invited me to give a webinar, on March 9th, on ‘Peace Journalism in Times of Crisis’.

We met against a backdrop of outright warmongering by some of Australia’s best-known quality newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Melbourne Age*, whose campaign to ‘warn’ readers of impending war with China culminated in an editorial call for the return of military conscription, or for Australia to junk its longstanding commitment to non-proliferation by siting nuclear weapons on its soil, or both.

Exposure to negative or frightening news can be a stressor, familiar from the treatment room. There is an impact on the limbic system, based in the amygdala, a portion of the brain dating, in evolutionary terms, from the reptilian age – it triggers the ‘fight, flight or freeze’ syndrome. But it is usually followed by relief – the bad things are happening to someone else, far away.

Less so now, amid this fraught atmosphere. The coverage could be seen as classic propaganda – softening up public opinion in time for the subsequent announcement of an order for new naval submarines, under the so-called AU-KUS alliance with the UK and US, with a price tag running into the hundreds of billions.

In my talk, therefore, I introduced the main distinctions in the Peace Journalism model, and tried to indicate how their implementation would lead to differences of representation. There are plenty of voices calling for peace, reaching out to China and seeking to promote mutual understanding. They tend to be found in liminal spaces: independent media, such as the remarkable *Pearls and Irritations* site, which offers a daily digest of well-argued analysis. These perspectives will, no doubt, seep into the corporate press eventually, when people begin to realise no good is coming of the drumbeat to war.

One positive change in Australia since I emigrated here over 15 years ago has been the increased profile in public life (as well as educational and media settings) for First Nations peoples. My webinar, as with any significant gathering nowadays, began with an Acknowledgement of Country, offered by an Aboriginal APS member.

In it, she outlined some of the legacy Aboriginal communities are dealing with today – of dispossession, discrimination and disadvantage – which, I argued, should be rehearsed by journalists when reporting on today’s events,



as essential backgrounds and contexts.

Instead, I reflected in my talk, we had recently seen a rash of scare stories about a wave of youth crime in the Northern Territory, with calls for Australia’s signature punitive responses – lock ‘em up, take away their kids – to be repeated yet again. These have always been invoked as an alternative to the policy responses that would make a significant difference to the lives and prospects of the people concerned, which would require sustained, significant investment.

Of course, there is a link with the manner in which these incidents are habitually reported, which we can recognise as War Journalism – a form in which those backgrounds and contexts are routinely framed out.

The meeting concluded with questions, dominated by thinking aloud about what could be done to engender and enable more Peace Journalism in Australian media, as a therapeutic intervention in our representational resources.

--Jake Lynch



## the PEACE JOURNALIST Cameroon *from Pg 20*

foster the peace process in Cameroon, said Innocent Yuh, a Kumba based renowned Radio Journalist and South West Regional Coordinator of CAMP, managing the CAMP Peace Press Club project in Kumba.

Kumba residents are convinced that the media is a powerful tool for reaching and persuading large audiences especially when it comes to emergencies such as the outbreak of a crisis or conflict but are worried that its power to spread rumours and hates, which create unnecessary fear and hysteria amongst the people is overshadowing its responsibility as an impetus for peace.

“Unfortunately, we, journalists are not helping matters. Sad to read provocative and inflammatory reports in newspapers. Radio and Television presenters and hosts deliberately entertain insults and attacks from guests on their programmes. In the quarters, it is common to hear locals name call journalists as supporters of a party or group in the ongoing armed conflicts. This is dangerous to community peace and development,” Yuh said.

Statistics are unavailable but it’s been observed that most successful practicing journalists especially in the English-Speaking parts of Cameroon fell in love with the journalism profession while they were participating in



Kumba City Mayor, Greg Mewanu

Press or Journalism Clubs activities in secondary school.

“There is absolute need to inspire and grow a new breed of journalists and a press that will be passionate about Peace Journalism practice to shift the narratives positively. Hence, our Secondary Schools are fertile grounds to invest in the domain of Peace Journalism and Conflict Sensitive reporting, in order to silence wars and create peaceful societies for the future. Our generation of journalists is unfortunately soaked in ‘war journalism’ and that partly accounts for the situation we face today,” Yuh added.

At the launch of the project, school

authorities and students were unanimous in their support for the project after listening to a keynote presentation on ‘Peace Journalism: A Dire Need in Building a Hate and Violent Free Nation’ by Ndasi Gilbert Nyongamsen, a Peace Journalism Promoter and Facilitator. The authorities welcomed the project hoping that the minds of their students will be deradicalised with peace values. They look forward having safer schools conducive for learning.

In conflict times, reporters and editors should angle stories to tell similarities – exposing situations where conflict actors share same ideas, visions, speak the same language and not magnify differences.

“Differences and aspects that further worsen conflicts should be minimized, and in certain cases, never reported,” said Prof. Steven Youngblood, Director of Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, USA, a Peace Journalism Researcher and promoter.

If the Press Corps and local community take up the Peace Journalism practice, the media can positively influence the reversal of the current armed conflicts in Cameroon and create peaceful trajectories for the future, said Ndasi in his keynote presentation.

--Nyongamsen Ndasi



# Peace press clubs launch in Cameroon Clubs operate in secondary schools

At a launch of a Peace Press Club Project in Kumba, chief town of Meme Division in Cameroon’s war-torn South West region, students gathered in a hall for a rare lecture on Peace Journalism.

It was the crack of dawn and the sun shone from a cloudless sky as the students paid close attention to the keynote presentation.

A novelty in the region, 10 peace journalism clubs, known as Peace Press Clubs are now running in 10 secondary schools with the goal of nurturing new cream of press corps to engage in Peace and Conflict Sensitive reporting.

A brainchild of an association known as the Cameroon Association of Media Professionals (CAMP), the programme was introduced in schools in November last year

According to the project’s objective, CAMP wants to inspire a new generation of journalists whose work will ensure the safety of communities, stronger social cohesion and peace in

Cameroon in particular and Africa in general.

Local authorities including the City Mayor of the Kumba City Council (KCC), Greg Nkelle Mewanu have endorsed the project, which could curb media induced violence, political tensions, armed conflicts and hate speech.

“With all what is happening in Cameroon and the armed conflicts and killings in Kumba in particular, any peace-loving person will seek paths for peace. I saw this project by CAMP as needful to my people, and the country as a whole. I had to give my blessings, my commitment and the Council’s support for the realization. I am glad we are here today,” Mewanu said and stressed that an armed separatist conflict which erupted in Cameroon’s two Anglophone regions of South West and North West has taken a heavy toll on students in Kumba.

Since November 2016, children in some villages and communities in Meme Division have been denied their rights to education due to the conflict. School campuses here have remained unsafe since armed separatists imposed a boycott of school in the

Anglophone regions where they want to create an independent nation, they called ‘Ambazonia’.

In October, 2020 gunmen opened fire killing seven children who were studying in a classroom of a private school in Kumba. It was just one of the shootings notorious in the regions where students and teachers have been abducted, tortured and sometimes killed.

Kumba has endured the brunt and now wants to return to the life before November 2016 when the conflict began, said Mewanu.

“It is time we see some peace restored. We must not allow our children to perish in an unfortunate situation they know nothing about. We have to work towards ensuring peaceful schools and safe spaces of learning for children. With the CAMP peace press clubs project in schools, I strongly believe, will help build peaceful minds in our children who should understand nonviolence as a value,” Mewanu said.

Such a project could significantly

*Continued on next page*

## Film introduces a viable “Path Away from War”

Peace and Conflict Studies professors Geneviève Souillac and Douglas P. Fry from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro teamed up with Sustainable Human to produce a short film (8:25 mins) called [The Path Away from War: The Science of Peace Systems](#), which can be watched on YouTube. Global challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, pandemics, and nuclear proliferation endanger everyone on the planet and thus require cooperative solutions. The existence of peace systems demonstrates that at many times and in various places people have unified, stopped warring, and worked together for the greater good.

This film introduces several historical and cross-cultural peace systems from tribal peoples to nations, and even regions, to explore how peace systems can provide insights on how to end wars and promote intergroup cooperation.





# Journalists discuss reporting troubled pasts

## Seminar includes instruction on improving memorialization coverage

A three day peace journalism seminar held in October in Pristina, Kosovo had a unique and compelling theme: Dealing with the Past. Specifically, the event considered how peace journalists should carefully report about issues related to troubled pasts (and memorialization of this history) when these pasts are still contested, and the wounds still raw.

The seminar began with an overview of media in the region from Xhemajl Rexha, president of the Association of Journalists of Kosovo. In his opinion, journalists in the region don't practice peace journalism since they often use inflammatory language, engage in racial slurs, and offer competing narratives to incidents in the region. In an article Rexha co-wrote for the forumZFD website, he concluded, "Over the years little has been done to bring together Kosovo and Serbia journalists to talk to one another. Moreover, what is needed is an internal dialogue between local journalists from both communities in Kosovo. Facing each other and talking about the hurtful language to the other community would be a good start."

The seminar, sponsored by forumZFD and the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, included instruction in basic peace journalism. I led a discussion with the journalists about how media in the region can build bridges between "us and them" and contribute to reconciliation. These excellent ideas included:

- Report on things in common--impact of conflict on women; how rebuild lives; EU integration; economic cooperation; culture; politics; corruption;
- Journalist cooperation/joint trainings; media literacy--schools, etc.; learning languages; positive stories about 'them'--counternarratives
- Stories about how people in one city live--how people coexist



Xhemajl Rexha

- Report about Civil society--how they bring groups together; promoting cultural events
- Reach the unreachable--show different people with new stories--reach for the voice of the voiceless, interesting stories
- Establish new media outlets that are not ethnically based--mixed background reporters

The participants, 20 journalists from Kosovo and North Macedonia, also discussed their ideas for peace journalism-style stories they planned to produce related to dealing with the past.

- These topics included:
1. Former people involved in conflict...co-existence is possible
  2. How different generations deal with memories
  3. Women actively participate in conflict--not just as victims, but involved in protecting communities/peacebuilding and reconciliation process
  4. An analysis of articles about how North Macedonian and Kosovan media reported past violence
  5. State of minorities in post conflict societies in both places
  6. The interconnected lives of Macedonian and Kosovan youth--good cultural connections.



Janina Bankstahl and Afrodita Ramos listen to a presentatin from a Ukrainian journalist at the workshop in Pristina, Kosovo.

Another central topic of the event was memorialization. Memorialization is how societies preserve historical memories with things like events, exhibits, marches, rallies, speeches, monuments, and so on. So often, these items are reported in a sectarian, "us vs. them" fashion that reopens old wounds, and incites anger. I presented several examples from Northern Ireland, including seasonal marches and murals honoring so-called martyrs.

I also shared with the journalists ideas on how to more responsibly report on memorialization.

Continued on next page

# Kosovo from Pg 22

These are:

1. Examine role of memorialization event in terms of reconciliation, reconstruction, transitional justice
2. Report on memorialization event through inclusivity lens--are minority, marginalized groups involved, interviewed?
3. Report on artistic/cultural aspects of memorialization
4. Challenge majority narratives, and include minority and female perspectives
5. Report using competing and contested narratives--more than just balance
6. Use expert sources--historians, academics, museums
7. Treat all sides, sources equally
8. Recognize your own biases
9. Expose and report about decisions about and motivations for memorialization activities/events (forumZFD handbook).

For many participants, the highlight of the seminar was a powerful presentation by Ukrainian journalist Daria Meshcheriakova, who was in Kosovo for five months on a program sponsored in part by the Association of Journalists of Kosovo. Her presentation focused on Russian war propaganda which actually began before the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. She said this propaganda has had a powerful effect in Russian-occupied areas of Eastern Ukraine as well as in Russia itself. In fact, Meshcheriakova was told by Russian relatives that there was no bombing in Kiev, even though she experienced it firsthand, and that Ukraine had committed genocide in the Donbas region, which is false. She talked about the horrors of living under Russian occupation, and zero tolerance in occupied Ukraine for even the mildest pro-Ukraine sentiment.

Meshcheriakova applauded Kosovo's approach to Russian propaganda, which was to block pro-Putin TV channels like Sputnik and Russia Today. "They (Kosovo) knew when they should stop trusting this information," she said. She gave several pieces of advice to the



Suada Qorraj, Blend Aliu, and Simona Mladenovska are engaged at the Remembering the Past seminar in Kosovo.

journalists on reporting the war, including always getting a Ukrainian viewpoint, and never "equalizing" (what we might call giving a false equivalency) to the actions of Russia and Ukraine. She observed, "You cannot be guilty for protecting your house (country)."

Her passionate presentation led to a fascinating discussion about journalists' proper role during conflict, and whether a journalists' first responsibility is to the public broadly or to wave the flag for a country, military, or ethnic group.

Reflecting on Meshcheriakova's presentation, seminar participant/journalist Tea Sokol said, "I think her presentation was very informative, but I would say that she was not talking...from a side that would show both of the (Ukrainian and Russian) politics, influences, etc. I noticed that she was very emotional, which is understandable regarding the current situation in Ukraine."

Overall, participants were pleased with the seminar. Sokol commented, "I must say that this seminar gave me a new perspective, in a way it was enlightening, knowing all the secret ingredients to practicing non-violent/peaceful journalism. For sure I will use those ingredients in my next articles/podcasts." Journalist Simona Srbinoska said, "For me, the seminar was an excellent opportunity as a young journalist who never reported from a conflict or war zone. I gained knowledge about sensitivity in reporting, carefulness in choosing phrases when reporting and how journalism can build peace."



Ukrainian journalist Daria Meshcheriakova discusses her experiences at the Remembering the Past seminar in Pristina, Kosovo.

Journalist Dafina Lata added, "The regional seminar on dealing with the past... was a good thing for me. Being a journalist for more than 10 years, participating in the seminar gives me the opportunity to learn more, but also to exchange experiences with...colleagues from my country and from North Macedonia."

--Steven Youngblood



## Article Review

# Researchers examine Afghan media, peace talks

The question about how media report peace initiatives is central to any discussion of traditional war journalism versus peace journalism. Do media impede peace by glorifying violent conflict responses, or do they instead cover peace talks and other initiatives in a way that provides depth and context while creating an atmosphere where the public can value non-violent responses to conflict?

These questions were tested in a recent study by Jake Lynch (University of Sydney) and Matt Freear (Royal United Services Institute, London), whose findings were published in the article, "Why intervention in Afghan media failed to provide support for peace talks" in the journal [Frontiers in Communication](#).

The research and article are definitely worth a read. The results, while not surprising, are noteworthy not only for what they say about Afghan media, but for their broad applicability to media everywhere.

The research was two pronged—a content analysis study, and interviews with Afghani journalists.

## Content analysis

News reports from the time of the intra-Afghan peace talks in September 2020 were analyzed using the Peace Journalism/War Journalism model. These Afghani news reports were found to be predominantly War Journalism, "leaving audiences cognitively primed for violent conflict responses and likely to overlook or fail to value peace initiatives," according to the authors. "It did little to prompt or enable readers, listeners or viewers to consider and value nonviolent conflict responses, as by then envisaged for the negotiation process."

Specifically, using a scale they devel-



oped, Lynch and Freear analyzed 132 articles, and found that these pieces had an overall "PJ quotient" of 25%. This demonstrates that during the study period, Afghan media "exhibited relatively little PJ content," according to the paper.

## Journalist interviews

Researchers Lynch and Freear also interviewed 16 Afghan journalists between the end of 2020 and May 2021. The journalists discussed their aspirations and the constraints that keep them from reporting in a way consistent with their aspirations.

In the section discussing the interviews, Lynch and Freear report "sins of omission" and "sins of commission" as articulated by the Afghani journalists. Sins of omission themes were:

- Achievements made in Afghanistan since western-backed governments first assumed office in 2001;
- Backgrounds and contexts of conflict;
- Potential for agreement in peace talks;
- Human interest stories, showing the reality of conflict as experienced in communities.

Sins of commission themes were:

- Acts of direct violence;
- Casualty figures and 'gory details' from the above;
- Overly politicized coverage, including official sources blaming everything on the Taliban.

Despite these "sins," the researchers report that the journalists believed it is their responsibility to "support nascent peace processes." However, this support was made difficult, they said, because of constraints on the news media, including financial constraints after international subsidy support for Afghani media was terminated.

A comprehensive section on Afghan media development continued in the article provides vital context, particularly regarding transient international support for Afghani media.

## Conclusion

Lynch and Freear conclude, "From the content analysis, it is clear that the mainstream of reporting by Afghan media was dominated by... War Journalism...Afghan journalists interviewed for this study wanted to do more PJ."

The research done by Lynch and Freear was exemplary, especially given the combined quantitative (content analysis) and qualitative (interview) approach, and the way the authors analyze the interplay between the content and interview findings. Lynch and Freear's paper is well researched and grounded in solid theory. The paper is a lively read that avoids the Sahara-like dryness plaguing most academic journal articles.

From a peace journalism standpoint, it's encouraging to see that the journalists recognized and embraced the concept of PJ, while reflecting an understanding of War Journalism's shortcomings.

Peace journalism is needed in Afghanistan and everywhere else because, in the words of the authors, it "makes a substantial contribution to a constituency for peace."

--Steven Youngblood

[www.park.edu/peacecenter](http://www.park.edu/peacecenter)

On Friday, February 3, six visitors from Indonesia came to Park University (Parkville, Missouri USA) as part of a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and Global Ties KC. They attended a seminar held by Professor Steven Youngblood as part of a program titled "Deactivating Disinformation by Strengthening Media Literacy."

The seminar covered a multitude of subjects were discussed such as expanding media literacy, the roles of cross-sector collaboration, and how to address building digital literacy.

The opening question given by Prof. Youngblood, director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, was one that is important to all of us in this digital age. Do we, as consumers, immediately trust the things we read? In our daily lives, we are faced with a constant barrage of information, disinformation, propaganda, and fake news everywhere we look. As we found out, this is even more of an issue in Indonesia than it is in the U.S., with more fake news and propaganda reaching the public in an unfiltered state. Thus, the challenge to those in attendance was how Indonesian journalists can help their readers and listeners to discern between what is real and what is not.

Prof. Youngblood continued the seminar with a discussion about peace journalism. He made the argument that peace journalism is not open advocacy for peace, nor is it ignoring the bad in the world and wishing for it to go away. Peace journalism is, at minimum, when journalists report in such a way that keeps the situation from becoming worse. It gives peace builders a voice and discusses the solutions to the problems faced. Peace journalism, Prof. Youngblood said, is

# PJ/Disinfo

## Indonesian journalists discuss deactivating disinfo at Park Univ.

when reporters "make choices that create an atmosphere that is conducive to peace."

One of the most robust discussions of the day centered on the use of language, particularly the word "terrorism." The participants debated about



*Indonesian journalists (from left) Kardono Setyorakhmadi, Zidni Fafi, and Rizky Adianhar absorb a presentation on PJ and disinformation at Park University in Parkville, MO in February.*

the meaning of the term, while the professor pointed out the difficulty in defining "terrorism" as well as the importance of using the term more cautiously and judiciously. The gathering also discussed Indonesian law, and

how it has been used to constrain the practice of good journalism.

The seminar concluded with an examination of social media and disinformation/misinformation. Prof. Youngblood said peace journalism should be used to offer counternarratives and bridge the gap between groups. Social media should be used to amplify the voices of those trying to work for peace, he noted. He said social media offers journalists a chance to "break out of our ideological bubbles" and engage those with different viewpoints.

Prof. Youngblood enjoyed working with the group. He said, "The Indonesian journalists were great--energetic, engaged, and both challenging and fun to work with."

The Indonesian journalists appreciated the presentation. Journalist Eddy Prastyo observed, "Peace journalism is a voice of moderation in the midst of a polarized world. The mindset of peace journalism needs to be implanted (into mainstream journalism) so that they have a value to be trusted, have an impact and influence. Journalism as it is now in my opinion cannot be detached from sensationalism because we are facing many contacts through the internet. So peace journalism (can) allow conversations to start."

The Indonesian visitors were Rizky Adianhar from Bogor; Tia Kibtiah from Jakarta; Zidni Fafi from Bogor; Eddy Prastyo from Surabaya; Hanieska Saragih from Anambas; and Kardono Setyorakhmadi from Surabaya.

The visitors were in Missouri as part of the State Department's International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), which is administered in the area by Global Ties KC.

--Danny Burger



the **PEACE JOURNALIST**

In the Oct. 2023 edition:  
-Special report-Moldova  
-Greece summer school



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