

TWO REPORTS ON THE PRESS

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS

The Committee to Protect Journalists released, in March, its annual review of press freedom violations worldwide. The review noted that 56 journalists had been killed in the line of duty in 1993 and that 126 journalists were jailed in 28 nations at the end of the year.

More than half those jailed has been there for more than two years and all were jailed because of their reporting.

The review, *Attacks on the Press in 1993*, lists over 700 violations of press freedom in 85 countries, as well as two extensive reports, one on Haiti and the other on the unsolved murders of immigrant journalists in the US.

The CPJ admits that, due to the difficulty of obtaining reliable information in many countries, the report greatly understates the frequency and severity of the problems.

The section of the report on Australia noted the jailing of a journalist and the threat to two others of jail in 1993. All resulted from attempts by the journalists to protect their confidential sources.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM

A report from Freedom House, sponsored by the Freedom Forum, listed the Australian press amongst the world's five most free press nations because of the vibrancy, diversity and lack of government encumbrance. The "top five" were, in order, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Norway and Denmark.

The survey, issued to mark the UN's International Press Freedom Day on 3 May, measured the print and electronic media of 186 countries in four broad areas:

- whether laws or administrative decisions influence the content of the news media;
- the degree of political influence or control over media;
- economic influences on the media by government or private entrepreneurs; and
- the degree of oppression ranging from killing journalists to censoring material.

Australia lost some points in the last category, presumably due to the contempt laws which saw journalists jailed or threatened with jail in 1993 and the "chilling effect" of defamation law.

ABOUT THE PRESS COUNCIL

The Australian Press Council was established in 1976 with the responsibility of preserving the freedom of the press within Australia and ensuring the maintenance of the highest journalistic standards, while at the same time serving as a forum to which anyone may take a complaint concerning the press.

It is funded by the newspaper industry, and its authority rests on the willingness of publishers and editors to respect the Council's views, to adhere voluntarily to ethical standards and to admit mistakes publicly.

The Council consists of 21 members. Apart from the chairman (who must have no association with the press), there are 10 publishers' nominees, seven public members, two journalist members and an editorial member. (None of the public members can have had any previous connection with the press.) The newspapers' representatives are drawn from the ranks of metropolitan, suburban and country publishers as well as from AAP. The public is represented by people from all walks of life.

The Press Council is able to amend its constitution with the approval of its constituent bodies. Significantly, great importance is placed on members acting as individuals rather than as the representatives of their appointing organisations.

Complaints Procedure

If you have a complaint against a newspaper or periodical, you should first take it up with the editor or other representative of the publication concerned.

If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may refer it to the Australian Press Council. A complaint must be specific, in writing, and accompanied by a cutting or clear photostat of the matter complained of, with supporting documents or evidence, if any. Complaints must be lodged within three months of publication.

The Council will not hear a complaint subject to legal action or, in the Council's view, possible legal action, unless the complainant is willing to sign a waiver of the right to such action.

Address complaints or inquiries to:

Executive Secretary
The Australian Press Council
Suite 303,
149 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000

For information or advice, telephone (02) 261 1930; callers from outside the Sydney Metropolitan area can ring on Free Call (1800) 02 5712.

A booklet setting out the aims, practices and procedures of the Council is available free from the above address.

MAILING LIST AND MAILING LABELS

From time to time, those on the mailing list move. If you would like to continue to receive the News, please let the Press Council know of any change in address.

Also, please check the label on the envelope of this issue to ensure that it is accurate. Any corrections to the labels should be forwarded to the Press Council office.

Managing Editor: David Flint; Editor: Jack R Herman

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