

Cartoonists Rights Network

International's Mission is to

monitor and support the well-being of political cartoonists and their families who find themselves in danger due to the power and influence of their professional work.

CRNI achieves its mission by:

- Working directly with political cartoonists in danger to address their legal, familial and safety issues;
- Posting Alerts about cartoonists in danger;
- Launching letter writing campaigns on behalf of cartoonists in danger;
- Educating the general public about free speech and freedom of expression issues as they relate to political cartooning;
- Posting global updates on free speech and expression issues and cases via our website;
- Maintaining and displaying a global archive of cartoons that have triggered human rights abuses inflicted upon authoring cartoonists;
- Organizing and Facilitating Freedom of Expression workshops for Political Cartoonists, and;
- Honoring the courageousness of political cartoonists with the annual AWARD FOR COURAGE IN EDITORIAL CARTOONING.

CRNI promotes freedom of expression and freedom of speech as basic human rights following the principles of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) which states that:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless frontiers."

The UDHR established human rights standards and norms. As well, it constitutes a promise by signatory nations to adhere to the principles in the document and to honor its spirit, thus, creates a moral obligation in signatory countries to grant these rights to every person living in their nation. Unfortunately, this UN document is more often than not quoted in response to a breach of one or more of these protected rights.

CRNI does not support cartoonists who advocate hate, or promote crimes.

www.cartoonistrights.com

Front cover:

Cartoon by Matt Wuerker, CRNI Board member,
Staff cartoonist, *Politico.com*

Governance

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Cartoon Art Association

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Coup d' Crayon/Cameroon
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Seyran Caferli,
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Zhandos Aitymov
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CRNI/Nepal
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CRNI/Iran
Kianoosh Ramazani
CRNI/Canada

A Message From the Board President

Dear Friends,

Though this past year was extremely difficult for CRNI financially, it was also rewarding, challenging, and filled with change. Our 7th Annual CRNI Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning was, for the first time, awarded to a Latino cartoonist, Mario Robles from Oaxaca, Mexico. This was also the first time the award was given to a cartoonist from the Northern Hemisphere, and coverage of this story in Central and South American media outlets alerted other political cartoonists in these regions of CRNI resources and services, greatly expanding our reach.

With the continued opposition to the current leadership in Iran, leadership that curtails the freedom of speech and expression of journalists and protesters, CRNI has had to move quickly to respond to the illegal detention and imprisonment of political cartoonists, including Behzad Basho and Hadi Heidari.

CRNI preemptively addressed censorship issues in the North African region by delivering the keynote address at the State Department Luncheon for North African Political Cartoonists held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, this past June. There we introduced visiting cartoonists from Tunisia, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia to CRNI, its work and networks. We assured these cartoonists that any danger they might face they did not have to face alone. CRNI also conducted a private workshop and Q&A session with Kal Kallauger, award-winning political cartoonist for the Economist magazine.

Our report, herein, provides more detail and examples of this year of change. Looking forward, CRNI remains the only free speech organization working exclusively with political cartoonists and we are determined to continue our work to bring awareness and aid to this oft-neglected group. Those who have been punished, or are in danger can contact us. When alerted to a threatening situation, we reach out to offer assistance. CRNI fully vets each cartoonist's case to determine how to best assist.

We remain committed to maintaining high-quality services to our client cartoonists who face hostile political, military and terrorist action, and to spreading the word about the individual and collective threats to free speech and expression.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank each of you for your participation in 2009, and invite you to join us on this rewarding and important journey going forward. Those of you who have attended a CRNI awards dinner know that there is no better feeling than helping, in some small way, to stand up for the freedoms which we often take for granted, and which must ultimately be made available to all.

Sincerely,



Joel Pett
President
CRNI Board of Directors

Thank You

CRNI would like to take this opportunity to thank:

The Herb Block Foundation – financial sponsor and free speech/expression partner

The Open Society Institute – London – financial sponsor

The Express Newspaper - who continues to be a major financial supporter of our annual Cartoon and Cocktails Auction.

Politico.com - who continues their in-kind support of our annual Cartoon and Cocktails Auction.

Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) – whose members we join in the defense of journalist and human rights workers in danger around the world.

Mr. Carl Nelson, CRNI Treasurer who regularly supports the annual CRNI Award winner.

Young DC, and Cartoons and Cocktails Charity Auction for another year of support.

And, most importantly ...

Our Clients – who never give in to oppression and face daunting adversity, pen and paper in hand.

Overview

CRNI is the only organization that works exclusively to protect political cartoonists. Though political and editorial cartooning fall under the general umbrella of journalism, cartooning requires special attention as many of the cartoonists are self-taught gifted artists who work in isolation. Cartoonists are often called on to say and express what others are afraid to, and they speak to a vastly wider audience than print journalists reach. For many of the cartoonists we help, CRNI is the only support they know or expect.

As most of our clients lack the means and resources to expose unjust denials of speech and expression, we intervene on their behalf. CRNI writes letters to the appropriate actors, detailing why a certain policy or punishment is unjust. Depending on the gravity of the situation and/or if no positive response is forthcoming, we engage the involvement of our partners, allies and the media; thus, promote accountability through public exposure of abuses. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said, “[s]unlight is the best disinfectant.”

Monitoring, Aiding and Protecting Cartoonists

NOTE: Active Case Files (ACF) where reporting could potentially endanger a client, affiliate, partner or place have been omitted from this report. Addendums containing these ACF resolutions will only be distributed when it has been determined that the level of the threat has significantly abated and/or the threat is no longer viable.

Middle East



Hadi Heidari, Iran

Status: Released - November 8, 2009

Renowned cartoonist Hadi Heidari who contributes to several reformist newspapers and heads the website Persian cartoon (www.haditoons.com) was arrested in Tehran, the capital, on the evening of October 22, 2009. He was among several people arrested while taking part in a religious ceremony in honor of political prisoners, held at the home of Shehaboldin Tabatabai, one of the prisoners close to the reformist party, "Participation." Some were released the following day, however, approximately a dozen others, including Heidari, were moved to Evin prison.

Though Heidari was not arrested in relation to a specific cartoon, his activities with the opposition political party, challenging the status quo by freely speaking out, has resulted in his name being added to the authorities "list."

CRNI's utilized the social networking technology of Facebook to mobilize cartoonists and everyday people all over the world to assist in attracting attention to this matter to free Hadi. CRNI US West Coast representative, Tamer Youssef, quickly constructed the "Free Hadi Heidari" Facebook site which, in a two week period has over 155 people sign up in support of Heidari, 55 of whom drew cartoons in support of him.

Heidari was cultural editor of the banned daily "Etemad-e Melli". The editor of this newspaper, Mohammad Ghochani, a member of its editorial staff, Fayaz Zahed, and the website editor, Mohammad Davari, were also sent to prison but are now reported as released

Behzad Basho, Iran

Status: Monitoring

On June 7, 2009, Behzad Bashu was arrested and kept incommunicado for four (4) days. Basho had been caught in the general round up of as many as sixty (60) journalists associated with the opposition/reformists during the protests of the recent presidential election. During this time the regime paid no attention to their legal protocol for arresting and charging suspects. CRNI utilized numerous sources within and without the region in an attempt to locate where Basho was being held and the exact nature of the charges against him. Basho was and still is not charged with any crime, however, Basho was later released, conditioned upon a reported \$200,000 bail bond; an amount specifically issued to subdue his activities as such a burdensome bond necessitates the sale and/or mortgage of personal assets. As a protest to the suspension of the democratic process in the contested elections and the treatment of demonstrators after the elections, Basho had previously joined over one hundred and fifty (150) cartoonists who signed a petition to boycott the annual state run cartoon competition in Tehran. Due to the continued mass demonstrations,

jailing of reformists, and the severe crackdown of freedom of speech and expression for journalists and protesters alike, we continue to monitor this situation closely.

North Africa



Khalid Gueddar, Morocco.

Status: Active

September 2009. Khaled Gueddar and his editor, Toufik Bouachrine, face three to five (3-5) years in prison. Moulay Ismail, the royal Prince who was the subject of a mocking cartoon by Gueddar is claiming four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) in damages. In Gueddar's cartoon about a royal prince, the star of the Moroccan flag looks suspiciously like the

Star of David and the Prince's arm looks suspiciously like a Nazi salute. On December 29th the Court of Appeal of Casablanca confirmed a verdict of the first instance of 4 years in jail and heavy fines for both. CRNI is currently in communication with Gueddar to determine the best strategy to pursue to keep him out of prison. In breaking news at the time of publication of this report, the Prince pictured in the cartoon has dropped the most important charges against the editor and the cartoonist, and they seem to be out of danger. The Prince reported that both journalists had apologized to him.

East Africa



Alshabab Militant attacker trying to explode one of the Somali Army,

Abdul "Arts", Somalia,

Status: Monitoring

Last year's annual report recounted the story of Somali cartoonist, Abdul "Arts" who'd been harassed by angry terrorist groups for the cartoon he drew about them. The level of harassment was so intense Abdul was forced to flee Somalia. Dozens of journalists in Somalia have had to flee the country for safe havens all over the world.

Currently, Abdul reports threats to his life made in his country of exile by this same group of fundamentalists. As the police in that country

have a reputation of extreme corruption and collusion with the terrorists, he cannot report to a police station without risk of their tipping the terrorists to his whereabouts. CRNI has sent Abdul funds over a 2 year period to help support him and counseled him to contact the local human rights organization for local support. As well, Abdul has registered as a political refugee with the United Nations.

Central Africa

Andrew Mwenda, Uganda

Status: Monitoring

Andrew Mwenda is the Chief Editor of the Independent, contacted and no response. Asked CRNI rep in Uganda to monitor the legal charges. Mwenda attracted a small fine for insulting the head of state, a fairly common occurrence in Uganda and something most journalists don't take very

seriously as the fines are so small and used mostly as a warning. Few if any journalists have been actually jailed or charged with serious offenses. CRNI spoke with its local representative in Kampala about Mwenda's case. The fine was levied against the editor, not the cartoonist as is the practice in Uganda. Cartoonists are usually understood to draw their cartoons at the instructions of the editors.

Southern Africa



Jonathan Shapiro, South Africa

Status: Active

Jonathan Shapiro has been a thorn in the side of Jacob Zuma since 2006 when he was vice-president under Thabo Mbeki. Zuma sued Shapiro for almost \$1.5 million dollars for “hurting the vice-president’s reputation” with a series of cartoons about a rape case brought against Zuma. As Shapiro’s cartoons became more critical, his life was threatened by elements of the African National Congress’ (ANCs) youth wing. At that time, CRNI awarded Shapiro its annual award for Courage in Editorial

Cartooning, bringing global attention to his plight.

When Jacob Zuma won the presidency in 2009, CRNI went on alert to see if threats made against Shapiro and his family would be carried out. CRNI mounted a massive campaign to bring attention to Shapiro’s plight by asking cartoonists all over the world to send in cartoons depicting his situation. The cartoons were posted at a meeting at the National Press Club, and sent to Shapiro’s newspaper published in South Africa. Currently, it seems as if both Zuma and the press are being cautious of each other. CRNI is currently producing a video interview with Shapiro that will be posted on *You Tube* and other media outlets.

Censorship is already well advanced in South Africa under the new leadership of Jacob Zuma. Recently, the government was able to successfully drive away advertisers of a new televised puppet based political satire TV pilot, “Z-News.” This led to the program being forced off the air; it can now only be seen via the Internet.

Central America



Mario Robles, México

Status: Monitoring

In southern México in 2006, an unprecedented social movement had ordinary Mexicans taking to the streets, demanding social and economic justice for 6 months which led to their non-violent control of Oaxaca and demand for the resignation of the Oaxaca governor. During protests and marches, the people would chant the well-known slogan “Don’t forget October 2nd”, invoking the frustration and power of the memory of the events of that date. On June 14th, the Oaxaca government met these protests with the same brutal force as during the crack-down of October 2nd. Snr. Robles drafted the cartoon below that depicts the Oaxaca governor stating that he has not forgotten October 2nd and that perhaps this anesthetic (i.e. a thorough crushing of those who criticize him) will remind THEM of what happened on that date!

On April 19, 2008, Robles, who works for the newspaper “el Noticias”, the most important newspaper to the people of southern México, was assaulted by local agents of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). He was kicked and beaten. Their accompanying message was that he should stop drawing such critical cartoons or they would kill him and his family. This assault demonstrates the power of Snr. Robles’ cartoon as he drafted the cartoon that sparked this human rights abuse in 2006!



CRNI awarded Snr. Robles CRNI’s 2009 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartoonists. Robles continues to voice the concerns of the people regarding the Oaxaca governor and his government, depicting the governor as a common thief who seized his position, thus, cares nothing for the people of the state. Because of this and because México has one of the world’s highest rates of violence against journalists, we continue to monitor the situation.



Allan McDonald, Nicaragua
 Status: Monitoring/Active

Allan McDonald was arrested June 30, 2009, with his 17 month old daughter, Abril. At the time of his arrest, his home was ransacked and his drawings destroyed. He was released the next day. McDonald attributed his rapid release to the action of local human rights organizations who immediately protested his arrest. CRNI contacted McDonald to establish that he and his daughter were safe and unharmed which he confirmed. McDonald had temporarily fled to Costa Rica but has now returned to his homeland. CRNI is currently working with other cartoonists and human rights organizations in the region to build a regional cartooning organization that will regularly monitor and support the well-being of cartoonists in Central America.



Western Europe

Denis Leroy, France

Status: Monitoring/Active

French cartoonist Denis Leroy published a cartoon in a Basque paper Ekaizta on September 11, 2001. The cartoon, in immediate response to the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City, it was especially controversial as public opinion was so stridently in support of the victims on that day. The cartoon was interpreted by French judicial authorities as being sympathetic with the terrorists. That apparently is against the law in France. It is also against CRNI’s policy to support cartoonists who advocate violence or any illegal acts that fall outside of the articles of the UN Declaration for Human Rights. The exact charge was “complicity in defense or apology of terrorism. Many human rights organizations took the European Court’s decision not to hear the appeal as a defeat of free speech rights. As a result of 9/11 and later the 12 Danish cartoons controversy many free speech organizations note an erosion of European commitment to free speech protections.



Kurt Westergaard, Denmark

Status: Monitoring

On September 30th, 2005, twelve (12) Danish editorial cartoons, most of which depicted the Islamic prophet Muhammad, were published in the Danish newspaper “Jyllands-Posten”. The paper announced this exercise as an attempt to contribute to the debate regarding Euro-Islam and it’s relationship to growing Anglo-European self-censorship. The Islamic religion does not believe that the face of the prophet Muhammad should ever be depicted. It should be noted however that hundreds of illustrations of Muhammad have appeared in books by and for Muslims.

After the cartoons were published, the Islamic world erupted in violent and sustained demonstrations against the cartoons and anything Danish. Over 100 demonstrators all over the Islamic world were killed in the ensuing demonstrations. As well, fires were set in the Danish Embassies in Syria, Lebanon and Iran, European buildings were stormed, and Danish, Dutch, Norwegian and German flags were desecrated in Gaza City.

While a number of moderate Muslim leaders called for protesters to remain peaceful, other hard line Muslim leaders across the globe issued death threats. Meanwhile, various groups, primarily in the Western world, responded by supporting the cartoonists and the publication as a legitimate exercise of the right of free speech.

The 12 Danish cartoonists (along with an Algerian cartoonist, Ali Dilem) have been the only group of cartoonists to receive CRNI’s Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning. They were awarded in 2007. One of the 12 Danish cartoonists, Kurt Westergaard, drew the most offending cartoon, the one of the Prophet Mohammad with a bomb in his head dress. In 2008, Danish police intercepted three (3) men allegedly sent on an assassination mission to kill Westergaard and his wife with Al Qaeda the source of the “hit”. In November, 2009, police in Chicago, USA reported arresting two (2) men, suspected terrorists who were planning another attempt on Westergaard and the “Jyllands-Posten” editor, Flemming Rose. CRNI has been in constant correspondence with Westergaard who’s assured us that he and his wife are being protected by Danish police.

South Asia



Arifur Rahman, Bangladesh

Status: Active

On September 17, 2007 Arifur Rahman published what is now called the “Muhammad’s cat” cartoon in a local youth journal “Prothom-Alo”, a part of the weekly supplement “Alp” in Bangladesh. The cartoon depicts a child naming his cat “Muhammad”, the name of the prophet of Islam. Islam is the official state religion. With the insults of the 12 Danish cartoons fresh in people’s minds, the Muslim religious leaders in Dhaka took offense as the religion contends that this name should not be given to animals. The riots in Dhaka protesting this cartoon resulted in Arifur being arrested, charged under state terrorism laws and held pending a trial for disturbing public safety and insulting Islam.

CRNI wrote to the Bangladesh Ambassador to the US asking that charges against Airfur be dropped and coordinated with Arifur’s lawyers to develop a common strategy in his defense. CRNI also sent modest funds to his family to help support them while he was incarcerated.

Arifur spent four months in jail and was released in late March 2008 when charges against him could not be upheld as his accusers were absent in court. As a result in actions taken by CRNI and other free speech organizations, the pendulum of public opinion had swung back in Arifur's favor. The religious leaders who were originally so angry saw that further harassment of Arifur had become counter productive.

Suddenly, and most unexpectedly, in February, 2009, Rahman found himself under renewed legal attack. In November, 2009, a judge in a small provincial town not only renewed charges against him, Rahman was convicted in absentia as he nor his attorneys were ever informed of the new charges thus, had no opportunity to respond prior to a conviction and sentencing.

CRNI has again written to the Bangladesh Ambassador to the US in Washington and to the Foreign Minister and the Foreign Ministry Secretary in Bangladesh detailing the deficient nature of the legal proceedings. In early December, Rahman surrendered himself to the court in Jessore and gained bail. Court appearances are currently being scheduled. CRNI continues to arrange for Rahman to receive financial support and continues to work closely with the Reporters sans Frontieres representative in Bangladesh and Rahman's attorneys on this case.

Conferences, Events and Activities

CRNI Annual Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning

The CRNI Annual Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning was awarded on July 3, 2009 to Snr. Mario Robles of Oaxaca, México. CRNI hosted Snr. Robles in Seattle, Washington where the award ceremony took place during the *Association of American Editorial Cartoonists* (AAEC) convention. CRNI Board of Advisors member Joan Mower arranged for Director Robert Russell and Snr. Robles to be interviewed on “Radio Marti”, Voice of America’s (VOA) Spanish language service.

México is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists in 2009. A spin off of the never ending drug cartel wars is an indiscriminate war on journalists trying to expose both the sadistic methods of the cartels and the underlying corruption of the police in failing to stop the drug trade. Snr. Robles’ cartoon about an arrogant and out of control state governor drew serious and credible threats against his life. CRNI does not award a cartoon, we award a cartoonist in peril. We use the award to bring international attention to the plight of a cartoonist in danger, prospecting the notoriety will bring a degree of insulation and safety.

Annual State Department/CRNI Luncheon

This June, Dr. Robert Russell, Founder and Executive Director of CRNI was again invited by long-time partner, the U.S. State Department, to deliver the keynote address at the annual Visitors Program. This year, the visiting cartoonists were selected from North Africa/the Middle East. Six (6) Arab cartoonists from Tunisia, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia attended and were informed of CRNI programs and services. A CRNI advisor, Carol Knopes, the Director of Education Projects, *Radio and Television News Directors Foundation* and her husband Tom Dolan of *Barrons Magazine* also partner with CRNI in this annual event. As members of the National Press Club, the location of the luncheon, they served as official hosts. Ms. Knopes is also the President of the Board of Directors of *Young DC* and *Cartoons and Cocktails*.

The event was an opportunity for CRNI to preemptively address some of the censorship issues of the North African region in the keynote address. We assured these cartoonists that they did not have to face the danger that their professional work may bring their way alone. Political cartoonists who have been punished or are in danger of being punished for their speech can contact us, or conversely, when we hear about the situation, we would contact them to offer our assistance. CRNI fully vets each case to determine how to best assist each individual.

. Additionally, this year, CRNI added a new programmatic element to this event. To further build our relationship with these cartoonists CRNI collaborated with the Geppi Entertainment Museum (GEM) to provide the cartoonists with a VIP tour of the GEM on the following Thursday, June 18. The GEM exhibits comic strips, books, radio and television shows, films, and cartoons. Mr. Steve Geppi, well-known Baltimore entrepreneur, GEM founder and owner addressed the cartoonists, and treated them to a rare behind the scenes look at several of his favorite pieces as the vast majority of GEM pieces come from Mr. Geppi’s private collection. The Cartoonists were also provided with the opportunity to attend a private workshop and Q&A session with Kal Kallaugher, award-winning political cartoonist for the *Economist Magazine*

Cartoons and Cocktails Charity Auction

This year’s Cartoons and Cocktails auction was held on Thursday, October 22nd at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The highlight of the evening was the auction of Mark Streeter’s

cartoon of Senator Edward Kennedy which went for one thousand seven hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$1725), the highest bid of the night.

Cartoons and Cocktails benefits both the Cartoonists Rights Network, International and Young DC, which offers DC youth training opportunities and hands-on experience with news media. The auction is held annually on the third Thursday of the month of October.

This year's host was Steve Breen, the 2009 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning. The night featured both a live and silent auction with thirty-six (36) cartoons donated by Pulitzer-Prize winning artists. Award winning cartoonists included Nick Anderson, Tony Auth, Clay Bennett, Steve Breen, Matt Davies, Herblock, Jack Higgins, Mike Luckovich, Jim Morin, Mike Peters, Dwane Powell, Ben Sargent, Paul Szep, Tom Toles and Signe Wilkinson and Ann Telnaes.

Celebrity auctioneers included Craig Engle, founder of *Arent Fox's Political Law Group*, Bob Edwards, veteran journalist and host of *National Public Radio* and *XM Radio Channel 133*, Gewn Ifill, Moderator, *PBS Washington Week* and *PBS News Hour*, Carol Knopes, Director, *Radio and Television News Directors Foundation*, Joe Madison, Host, "*The Power*", *WOL-AM radio*, Sarah Menke-Fish, Director, *American University Discover the World of Communications*, Carl Nelson, Executive Director, *Cartoon Art Association* (and CRNI Treasurer), Michael Phelps, Publisher, *The Washington Examiner*, David Sit, Vice President *MacNeil Lehrer Productions* and Chris Stewart, Political Editor, *the Washington Examiner*.

The event also featured an "Art in Action" installation, collaborative real-time cartooning by attendee cartoonists on current themes that were auctioned at the end of the evening. As well, caricature artist Rajan Sedalia, recognized by *Newsweek Who's Next Readers' Choice*, drew caricatures of auction attendees and donated 100% of the profits!

Conferencing and Consultation Highlights

Ford Foundation Consultation on Freedom of Expression in the World

New York City, NY, USA

September 10, 2008.

CRNI was invited to a media consultation about freedom of expression in the world. Participating free speech organizations assisted the Ford Foundation to formulate their new policy and priorities in funding free expression in the coming year.

The 3rd Annual Free Speech in Arab Journalism Convention

Beirut, Lebanon

December 13, 2008

CRNI was invited to exhibit its Art To Die For archive for the enjoyment and education of the participants of this three (3) day convention in Beirut. The goal of the Convention is to assess the free speech environment in the Arab world and to facilitate networking between Arab and other journalists. Three hundred (300) journalists from all over the Arab world, including one of CRNI earliest clients, Algerian cartoonist Chawki Amari, were in attendance. While at the convention, International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) members met to discuss priorities for the upcoming IFEX policy discussions.

The Global Forum on Freedom of Expression

Oslo, Norway

June 6th, 2009

Graeme Mackay and Tony Namate, Canadian and Zimbabwean cartoonists, respectively, represented CRNI at this forum. The week long event brings free expression organizations and leaders together to strengthen global commitment to free expression. Speaking on one of the forum panel's, Namate gave a stirring presentation, addressing the value of criticism in a world growing more intolerant. Namate shared the platform with French cartoonist Plantu who is regarded as Europe's leading political cartoonists, and is the founder of Cartoonists for Peace.

Committee to Protect Journalist's (CPJ) Annual Award Ceremony

New York City, NY, USA

November 24, 2009

This year CRNI was invited to attend this event as a CPJ guest and partner free speech organization. CRNI used this opportunity to meet with two of the award winners as we are engaged in their defense strategies thru the IFEX network. During our meeting with one of the recipients, Tunisian journalist Naziha Réjiba, she confirmed an earlier statement by Sihem Bensedrine (one of Tunisia's most respected and harassed human rights workers) made to CRNI Director Russell that in Tunisia, it will be the political cartoonists who would be the key to opening freedom of expression in Tunisia. There is precedent for this claim: in Algeria CRNI Award winner Ali Dilem over a 10 year period accomplished fantastic changes in the atmosphere for free speech thru his steady stream of humorous yet hard hitting satirical cartoons.

The Future

CRNI continues to join with other International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) members in the defense of journalist and human rights workers in danger around the world. During this report period, CRNI and its IFEX allies have jointly produced over thirty (30) letters in defense of freedom of expression and signed onto approximately 30 letter writing campaigns, actions and alerts.

CRNI has monitored the situations of new cartoonist clients in México, Nicaragua and Morocco and continued to support and track past clients in South Africa, Bangladesh and Iran.

CRNI remains committed to maintaining high quality services to our client cartoonists who face hostile political, military and terrorist action.

The Art to Die For Program



Winter 2007, Gaza, Palestine - authorities charge 2008 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning winner, Baha Boukhari with insulting the Hamas Parliament and suspend publication of the newspaper that published this cartoon. Though fines and a prison sentence were suspended, an unprecedented series of demonstrations took place in Ramallah on February 27 in defense of Boukhari and for the right of Palestinians to express themselves freely without fear of intimidation or reprisal.

“The topic you discussed is greatly important in this time of political change and upheaval. Editorial cartoons are a significant part of the right to free speech which my generation especially may have to fight to protect in the future.Your presentation demonstrated for me how they may play a role in my everyday life. It was interesting to see the cartoons which caused such controversy in the Middle East a few years ago; while I had read about and discussed the conflict in school, I’d never actually seen the images themselves.”

“I was so inspired by your presentation that I have now begun work on a paper for another class examining the merit of these cartoons as journalistic work.”

- Sarah Parnass
Communications Major
The American University

Free speech and expression are under unprecedented attack throughout the world. CRNI has worked with, rescued and supported cartoonists by promoting accountability through direct intervention strategies, public exposure of free speech and expression abuses, and educational programming for the general public. CRNI continues this work and takes the initiative necessary to further the impact of our work and expand the information available about political cartoonists to a wider audience.

Establishment of Pilot ATDF University Chapters

CRNI’s Art To Die For (ATDF) Program is founded on a global archive of cartoons that triggered human rights abuses upon the authoring cartoonists. Originating from daily papers around the world, these cartoons have irritated some despot, cleric or terrorist to the point that they took illegal action against the cartoonist. Thus, these are the most powerful cartoons in the world.

CRNI utilizes the ATDF collection at universities to present interactive learning about freedom of speech and expression rights and responsibilities. We work with teachers and department heads

to coordinate our presentations to compliment their established curriculums. ATDF helps American students understand the role of these rights and the roles of political cartoonists in the democratic process. Student evaluations as well as personal handwritten student letters to CRNI have demonstrated the profound effect that the ATDF presentations have had. Students personalize and internalize their understanding of free speech issues.

As the Program has been well received by educators and students alike, we will utilize this momentum to increase our efforts to educate next generations. CRNI will formalize the ATDF curriculum and training and launch a pilot program that will partner with universities to establish student run ATDF Chapters. We will identify students at ATDF presentations that have interest in becoming ATDF trainers and chapter heads at their universities and in their community. The ATDF Chapter Network will help American students understand the role of these rights and the roles of political cartoonists in the democratic process. As well, it will serve to build a network of young free speech and expression supporters who help to educate new populations about these issues and about the courage of political cartoonists around the world who invoke these rights at their peril.

Video Archiving for Education

As part of our expanding archiving for education initiative, in October CRNI interviewed South African cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro on location. This pilot video interview with one of our cartoonist clients will be shared with students and the general public through our educational programming as well as made available through partners and several media and web outlets. We are currently planning the second interview in this series which will also be shot on location, this time with Tony Namate of Zimbabwe.

Website Rebuild and Construction of Online Community

CRNI has recently received a grant from the Open Society Institute in London for the re-build of our website. You will begin to see changes to our website in February 2010. The site will be more attractive, user friendly, easier to search and donate through.

Building an Online Cartoonist and Free Speech/Expression Community

Cartoonists often work in isolation. An online community will connect them with peers and counterparts as well as provide them with opportunities to converse with individuals who support their efforts; from their peers simply helping them know that they are not alone, to sharing ideas, techniques and strategies on how to shield themselves from retribution for their work, getting out of trouble in substantially similar circumstances, to regional, cultural and global collaborations regarding freedom of expression, speech and human rights issues. Additionally, Cartoonists will interact with, inspire and encourage the next generation of free speech and expression supporters, cartoonists and journalists.

The CRNI online community will serve as a centralized system for communication, data collection, and network building for CRNI clients, ATDF participants, and CRNI staff. The community would provide a strong vehicle for CRNI Clients to learn, share and network with one another, as well as inspire new generations (ATDF University Chapters) and provide situational reports to CRNI staff. CRNI will steward conversations and exchanges towards building greater support amongst and for political cartoonist. Additionally, as the community would be accessible via a password protected portal from the CRNI website, it will host educational materials and resources that will be available for member download.

Arab Women Cartoonist Workshop

CRNI has run workshops for cartoonists in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, teaching about the free expression rights that all cartoonists share. Our 3 day workshops start by encouraging the cartoonists to define their most critical free speech problems. We then use these issues as talking points to train the cartoonist on reporting human rights abuses and training them on how to access and use human rights and free speech resources to protect themselves. We also train cartoonists how to deal with life threatening situations where some form of abuse has been focused on them. We adapt our curriculum from journalist survival guides produced by highly respected journalism training organizations and, as well, hire local journalist trainers as consultants to the workshops.

Empowerment for Women in the Mena Region

The lack of women's voices in political cartooning, specifically in the MENA (Middle East, North Africa) region, stifles these voices in the democratic process. This amounts to a serious human rights violation. CRNI spent 6 months slowly developing a network of women cartoonists, one often leading us to another, to conduct a survey of women cartoonist in the MENA region. Our report, which can be found in its entirety on our website, details how a profession involving controversy and criticism has long been perceived in the MENA region to be unsuitable for the delicate female character. Over the last three (3) years, CRNI has encouraged the State Department Visitors Bureau to recruit a group of women cartoonists for their annual bureau visit. During this year's luncheon, they confirmed that next year's bureau visit, 2010, will be held solely for Arab women cartoonists.

Therefore, in addition to CRNI's general workshops for cartoonists, CRNI is currently planning an Arab Women's Political Cartoonists Workshop in the MENA region. We have reached out to well known women's advocacy leaders in the region and are working to collaborate on this project.

In Closing

We hope you are inspired and motivated by what CRNI has accomplished this year. We invite you to join in supporting CRNI and its work.

Please visit our website to learn more about becoming involved by:

- donating;
- joining a letter writing campaign;
- hosting a local CRNI event;
- participating in a cartooning contest; and/or
- bringing the Art to Die For Program to your University.