

## EDITORIAL



Research for peace and conflict resolution and transformation studies have long insisted on the importance of communication in the dynamics of conflicts and their resolution, in both their violent phase and at the point when the emphasis is placed on negotiations to obtain a ceasefire or the implementation of agreements and the construction of peace in the medium and long term. In addition, the crucial role of the new information and communication technologies in conflict resolution, and that of the global network of electronic communications and social networks in particular in the era of globalisation and cybertechnology, has also recently been stressed. Hence the importance of devoting the central topic of this issue to an in-depth review of the subject - the relationship between war, peace and communication. And hence some of the thoughts below.

It must be stressed, first, that although technology is not neutral, it has no implicit values: it all depends on who uses it and how. In the world of mass communication, technology is a double-edged sword. For example, the radio was used to announce a genocide (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, Rwanda, 1994), but it is also now being used as a tool in the Congo for bringing together women who have suffered from sexual violence to talk about their problems, and in Burundi to create an openly multi-ethnic radio station (the Ijambo project). There are other examples: the same mobile phones that need coltan to work and which have fuelled some wars are used to sell minerals and buy weapons on the international markets every day, and in

a pioneering experiment in Burundi, are used to train 8,000 local leaders in conflict resolution and are used by them to work with their communities. In other words, the media, including social networks, can be used to inform, educate, empower and therefore as connecting or binding factors, and to create stereotypes, stir up violence, create division and to legitimise violent solutions and fractures of the social fabric by means of cultural violence. As a result, despite the highly encouraging role of social networks in the Arab uprisings or in the creation of the movement for the regeneration of democracy called "15 May" in Spain which camped in squares in the country's major cities, they can also be used for completely antagonistic purposes. To paraphrase McLuhan, the medium is indeed the message, as shown by the limitations on the number of characters in Twitter, but the message can be very varied.

Second, it should be remembered that the journalists who cover armed conflicts or peace-building processes do so in the face of strong contextual constraints, restrictions on access to information under difficult conditions, with collective mental frameworks and perceptions from which they cannot entirely detach themselves. And we know that in conflicts, perceptions, stereotypes and mental images of the other, about the identity of the enemy, are crucial. In any event, the major new development since the Cold War has been the discovery that journalists and the media can also play a dual double-edged role, often unconsciously, in encouraging the legitimisation of violence (as is often said, they have a "warmaking" role) but can also be a factor in the construction of peace. In this regard, we reproduce the simple and easy to apply proposals by Lynch and Galtung 1.

They offer some practical principles for engaging in responsible journalism in terms of building peace, based around 6 recommendations:

1. Avoid the simplifications that arise when presenting conflicts as two opposing positions about a single subject, when many causes are usually involved and various actors are engaged.
2. Avoid presenting the conflicting parties as a confrontation between good and evil.
3. Cover peace initiatives from the elites and the grassroots, and explore everyday ways of coping with the conflict.
4. Use precise language, avoiding words that are too emotive or dehumanising labels.
5. Pay attention to the shared goals and common foundations between the parties.
6. Strive to avoid perceptive dysfunctions, using the most accurate information possible.

In other words, the two observations can be summarised with the help of short phrases from two classics of synthetic thought. Be aware of the difficulty in communicating, because as George Bernard Shaw said, "the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." And remember that as the Stoic Epictetus said, before talking you should understand the meaning and implications of what you are about to say. Taking both of the above into account, the opportunities in an almost permanently connected world are enormous.

Rafael Grasa.

1. J Lynch/J Galtung., Reporting conflict: New Directions in Peace Research Journalism, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2010.

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## IN DEPTH

### INTRODUCTION

#### Communication and armed conflicts

**Pablo Aguiar** ICIP expert

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In the modern world, the media play a vital role. So much so, that it seems that what does not appear in the media does not exist, and that our world-view is highly conditioned by what the media shows us. They are often our only source of information. In the area of armed conflicts, this is most apparent ... and most unfair. It is for this reason that we decided that the relationship between the media and armed conflicts required an *in-depth* analysis.

Why do some conflicts never appear in the media? Why do some appear in the headlines for a while, before languishing on the inside pages and eventually disappearing? Recently, we witnessed the approval of the use of force by the United Nations in two very different situations almost simultaneously (Libya and the Ivory Coast), which have received very different media coverage. What are the criteria that the media use when covering some conflicts while “forgetting” others? What are the factors that determine whether a conflict is news? Those are some of the questions that Professor Xavier Giro attempts to answer in his article *Strategic interests, journalistic battles and skirmishes*.

Another aspect that we felt was important to cover first person narratives of journalism in armed conflicts. The difficult task of explaining the situation is even more complicated in a context of war, and even more so when the recession and restructuring of companies requires many professional journalists to work on a freelance basis. The political scientist and journalist Alberto Arce tells us from Misrata in Libya about the problems inherent in journalism arising in (and as a result of) the conflict in his article *Journalism in conflict. Time, place and circumstances*. It looks at the traditional role of the war correspondent from a twenty-first century perspective.

As mentioned above, the media shape reality, and portray it for us. It now seems clear that they are biased towards sensationalism and warmongering. However, would it be possible to produce another kind of journalism - A journalism that was

based on the positive impact on the situation in terms of peace? That is the cornerstone of *Corresponsales de Paz*. One of its founders, Cristina Àvila, sets out a vision far removed from the status quo and is at the same time committed to her profession in her article *Is it possible to shape a different world through journalism?*.

The last two articles in the special feature cover issues relating to communication apart from journalism. First, focusing directly on the NGO sector, Montse Santolino looks at the relationship between the organised movement and communication of peace in her article *What communication for peace do Catalan NGOs engage in?*. This is the cornerstone of the pioneering study by a group of researchers at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* which we present here.

Second, we felt that a special feature on communication and conflict needed to make an effort to analyse the new forms of communication and their impact on the classic role of activist. Indeed, this was one of the areas that the ICIP wishes to use as a distinguishing feature and it was therefore essential to allocate an article to it. The journalist and cyberactivism expert Jodri de Miguel assesses the use and potential of social networks for social transformation, which recommending a search for balance between immediacy and reflection, in his article *Cyberactivism for peace: between urgency and reflection*.

Finally, if there was a worldwide survey about which journalists are the most committed to revealing the horrors of war, there is no doubt that Gervasio Sanchez would be included in many of the answers. The internationally renowned photo-journalist has just presented his *Desapareguts* [Missing] exhibition in Barcelona and is the subject of this issue's interview feature.

The magazine also contains opinion pieces by Marina Caireta on education for peace and listening, a reflection on the assassination of Osama Bin Laden by Pablo Aguiar, and the regular sections *Finding out more*, *Recommended reading*, *ICIP news* and *international news*.

Happy reading!

## CENTRAL ARTICLES

### Strategic interests, journalistic battles and skirmishes

Xavier Giró i Martí

Lecturer in journalism at the UAB and member of the Conflicts News Coverage Observatory



#### A combination of factors determining which conflicts are in the news

A series of vectors operate in the mass media, in terms of both the decision about whether to cover conflicts, and how it should be covered. The international hierarchy of countries and global information flows is intertwined with the economic and political nature of the media and the culture of news journalism.

First, there is a vast amount of information that reaches the media from the major news agencies, which are all Western, without exception. As a result, the material they provide prioritises the tactical and strategic interests of the colonial powers and their former colonies, with which they almost always have some kind of relationship. International or internal conflicts in other countries with implications for great powers are also included.

The fact that their news focuses on their economic, political and cultural environments is explained by the fact that the American, British, French, Spanish and agencies primarily provide news to the media in their own countries, and stories about areas that are relatively familiar to them are obviously more attractive to their audiences.

Some media have no foreign correspondents; as a result, their choice is limited to the range of agencies. The ones they do have are in undoubtedly important locations such as Jerusalem or Washington, and in the areas of interest to the country where the medium is broadcast. For example, the Spanish media prioritise Latin America and the French media do the same for the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa.

In fact, the network of correspondents gives a medium prestige and character, because they provide different approaches to the same conflict - both professionally and ideologically - from the media with which they are competing. However, correspondents are not only for decorative purposes, and if they are on the payroll, their must earn their salary; so they are asked for regular contributions that will inevitably be about the area where they are located. This is a vector that reinforces the priority that comes from the metropolis.

However, it must be added that sometimes, within their area, they also report on conflicts there are little known, albeit in a highly restricted manner because news space is finite, limited and defined by the issues that are considered topical within the current media system.

So what determines what news is? In general terms, there are two opposing mechanisms. The first is to toe the line of the "flagship" media: CNN, the *New York Times*, etc. So much so, that there are plenty of stories about news editors who ask correspondents or special correspondents to produce stories based on what they have just seen or heard on CNN.

The other approach, which is only apparently paradoxical, is to look at what the competition has done. If they have all done more or less the same thing, they confirm the correctness of each other's approach; if one disagrees, they worry because they are off-message and thus the circle closes.

This selective practice is also combined with journalistic and ideological criteria. In quantitative terms, a conflict warrants becoming news if it affects a lot of people or leads to a great deal of material destruction. And in qualitative terms, it is news if the events affect people with power - albeit just a few of them - or involve a violation of human rights that public opinion deems outrageous, even if a small number of individuals are affected, such as cases of torture.

With criteria like these, sometimes there are conflicts that are not even within the interests of the powers but take up news space because someone in the newsroom, in a type of internal battle, has managed to smuggle them in under the radar. For example, the criterion of solidarity is the exception rather than the rule, however much it happens.

The vectors therefore explain why a lot of conflicts are not media-friendly. However, what happens to those that appear in the news and then disappear, even though they continue?

The battle for audience is fought around a key question: what's new? A conflict that does not evolve provides nothing new, and so is no longer news. And even if there has been some development, if the reporter does not see the changes or is unable to explain them, it ceases to be news.

The media cover these conflicts, but another fresher one appears, which has just broken out, and inevitably the newer one is more interesting and it is therefore likely to fully or partially displace the previous one, because news space, as already noted, is limited. If in addition the medium was not particularly interested in the old one, for whatever reason, it will soon vanish.

It goes without saying that if it is a conflict that is already involved in a peace process, interest drops, precisely because peace processes are slow, and require calm and consideration. This is almost a catalogue of what is not as intensively newsworthy as what the media need to obtain audiences easily. Hence the strong tendency to leave the area when the violence has stopped, even though the resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation phase is just starting.

All this can be qualified in each medium depending on the ideological bias it applies. The particular business interests in a country or the political alliances of the media may explain their shifts in approaches to news. However, the general trends in the presence of conflicts in the news are determined by the factors outlined above.

## Conflict journalism. Time, place and circumstances

**Alberto Arce**

Political scientist and journalist



The city of Misrata in Libya has been besieged and isolated from the rest of the country for the last two months. The only feasible entrance is by sea, through the port. Since the siege began in late February, four ships have maintained the supplies of arms and food that the rebels and the population need to maintain their military positions and keep the population alive.

So if a foreign journalist wants to enter the city to report on the situation, they must first take into account the fact that access is relatively complex, calculate the time they can spend on the story and the media space they will obtain in exchange for deciding whether it is feasible, first, and profitable, later. They must also take into account the independent variable. Two photographers have been killed and a French blogger seriously wounded since the battle in the city began.

The first variable is contact: meeting and convincing the people who hire the ships; telephone numbers, e-mails and letters of introduction; identifying oneself and convincing people who have other priorities of the importance of allowing reporters access to the area.

The second variable is patience. How much time is necessary? How long is a reasonable stay? Each passing day increases one's confidence that is based on knowledge of the place and people, including the situations of cases in which risks are taken.

The story takes shape. The place, the people, the story and its possibilities. Joining a rebel unit and going to the combat zones. Access to the front line, with total freedom, side by side with the combatants is one of the major distinguishing features of this conflict, and one of the features that makes it different from other modern conflicts.

A journalist can choose a unit of rebels and spend as much time with them as he wants, accompanying them into combat, and sleeping in their positions. He can spend as much time with them as he can afford. He can also change position every day, deciding what he wants to report.

The number of scenes that can be photographed in Misrata is enormous. We witness scenes of house to house urban combat with small arms, and the use of individual machine guns and antiaircraft guns, and attacks with RPGs. Attacks by mortar bombs and tanks and the launches of Grad rocket attacks from both sides of the battlefield. And of course the ever-present threat posed by snipers.

And of course there is what is happening in the hospitals, the situation of thousands of families taking refuge in schools or the hundreds of African workers who mill around the port waiting for a ship to flee the city. Misrata is a city under siege, with one outlet to the world, the sea, which is only accessible for few hours a week.

From a strictly professional point of view, Misrata is a challenge for any journalist who bases their working methodology on proximity. It is a unique and extraordinary experience due to the variety of aspects of armed conflict that are concentrated in a very limited area. It is a place where a war is taking place, while a revolution is being created. In an Arab country where religion is not the source of conflict and where although it may sound surprising, oil is not the only reason why they are fighting.

Misrata is a catalogue of scenarios for conflict journalism. Providing that we do not forget that it is also a place where hundreds of thousands of people are suffering and waiting for someone to give them an explanation. Because an explanation may give them some comfort.

## Is it possible to shape a different world through journalism?

Cristina Ávila-Zesatti

General Editor of Corresponsal de Paz



### Shaping reality: the business of the mediatised war

A broadly accepted cliché in newsrooms is the one that says *good news is bad news*. Based on my experience of more than fifteen years in various international media, “good news” does not in reality even become news. The media present us with a series of images and texts showing a world that has collapsed, is in conflict, bloodstained, with constant uprisings that appear to emerge in the blink of an eye and vanish from the headlines only to make way for “another new and inexplicable conflict,” nearby or far away.

But do we really live in the furious world that the media present to us today? The answer is no. But it is an answer that needs qualification. We undoubtedly live in a complex world. However, the media (especially the mainstream media) have an interest in failing to qualify their message and presenting us with this fragmentation of reality, in which hatred seems to be our constant defining feature. In order

to understand this “mediatised discourse of war,” we first need to know who the “mainstream media” are that bring us this arsenal of words and images.

Five news agencies are currently responsible for distributing 96 percent of the world’s news: Reuters (UK), the Associated Press (USA), France Press (France), EFE (Spain) and DPA (Germany) and to an increasing extent, the Chinese news agency Xinhua. Curiously, of these six states that control our information, four are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

In the private sector, the situation is not very different: the major news monopolies - print, electronic and cybernetic - are in the hands of no more than ten private investors, whose power is even greater than that exercised by the states. A very good example of the relationship between the interests of states and the mainstream news media is the American company General Electric, a major arms producer and exporter, which also owns the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), one of the most important North American television channels, which has a global influence. Its corporate website contains sections such as “Supporting our troops”, “Partnering governments” and even a special policy for Iran.

This is not an isolated case. The “CNN model,” which since its partial - and successful - coverage of the first Gulf War (1991) has made war into entertainment, has been imitated endlessly, not only by the television channels, but also by “short and decontextualized” formats in newspapers and websites worldwide.

This network of “dangerous liaisons” between the media and governments means that it is not surprising that the image of the South - and sometimes even of the North- is still a black and white photograph: violence, disasters, poverty, hunger, war and ignorance. “Interesting” wars are magnified, while other conflicts - armed or otherwise - are completely ignored.

### War journalism vs. peace journalism

Johan Galtung said: “There is a type of journalism that emphasises possibilities instead of violence.” For him, and for other theorists of this vision of journalism, the issue is concerned with the ethics of reporting the facts. It is not a question of avoiding violence, but rather of relating it from another perspective, based on solutions, which are inevitably always present from the very start of any conflict, armed or otherwise.

Choosing this journalistic option of peace need not be so difficult. However, behind the current news model is the neoliberal economic model, which needless to say is based on a “war economy.” But undoubtedly, the establishment of a new economic model - no more and no less - would be necessary to achieve truly different media content.

This outcry is not new. Between 1970 and 1980, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) produced the document *Many Voices, One World*, better known as the McBride Report, the goal of which was to create a “new communication order” to promote peace and human development.

The text identified the communication problems which we face today: the concentration of media ownership, the commercialisation of information, asymmetrical access to information, the imbalance of news flows (north-south), and the economic dependence of the media and the sources for covering the news,

But not only economic reasons are important in the language used by the media to convey this violent image of reality. It is also a systemic and cultural issue, motivated by the (false) idea that violence sells, or in another words, that violence is what media consumers want and expect from the news.

This sensationalist misunderstanding has a historical basis. When the first “war correspondents” began to routinely trans-

mit their reports using the telegraph, they decided that it was much better to use a warlike discourse with heroic overtones. Naief Yehya said that “the myth of war exploded without the slightest shame, and the public developed an appetite for this kind of story, that has evolved and become modern ‘war entertainment’ [...] and has propagated the immoral perception of war as a videogame.”

This “myth of the heroic war” is also constantly linked to “patriotic issues.” During the First World War, for example, the mass media of the period censored news of a truce that occurred between German, British and French soldiers at Christmas 1914. This truce lasted for several days and took place in several places where fighting was taking place, and was soon put down by senior government authorities because “they had spent a lot on preparing the offensive.” Examples like this one, of “ordinary people” undertaking peaceful initiatives take place every day in all the conflicts (armed or otherwise) that we face in today’s complex world. By their nature, most of these efforts tend to be spontaneous, and are usually “silenced” by the status quo, including the mass media.

So do the media contribute to endorsing the idea of a world full of insecurity and violence? Or to put the question in a more propositive way: can journalism do anything to contribute to social peace, even within today’s economic and media framework? The answer is yes to both questions, and is called peace journalism.

“Peace journalism” does not mean writing about “good news” but instead monitoring what is happening from another perspective, with a different focus and for different reasons. For this type of journalism, in a world where the daily routine is “supposedly” war, the newsworthy event is in fact “peace.”

And the precepts of this vision of reality are closely related to ethical journalism: an in-depth understanding of the conflict (or war) before trying to tell the story of it, pursuit of the symmetrical truth with the involvement of all social strata, avoidance of confusion of the conflict with violence, and above all, presentation of a result focused on the opportunities that arise between the parties involved.

However, peace journalism requires more space and time, because this approach places a great deal of emphasis on the context. On the “before and after,” on causes and consequences, since violence is an event, after all; the conflict is an opportunity, and peace is a process. In short, peace journalists work at a different pace, and do not just report: they also suggest.

#### **A peace correspondent as the antithesis of a war correspondent**

Ryszard Kapuscinski said the first thing he looked for when he arrived in a country mired in violence was “the place where hope is reborn.”

The search for hope is what we proposed with the creation in 2009 of a digital medium called *Corresponsal de Paz* ([www.corresponsaldepaz.org](http://www.corresponsaldepaz.org)), a new journalistic approach geared entirely to this change of perspective.

We aim to bring to the “foreground” the initiatives that are created by individuals and organisations seeking to restore peace where war and violence have planted their seed. We have found time and again that there is a more caring, more humane and more purposeful world. This world is in stark contrast to the “distorted picture” given to us by the mass media.

This is obviously a medium run on a non-profit basis, outside the economic framework, as we are based on the premise that a new news model needs to be part of a new financial model.

Our work has been made possible by a grant from the Swiss-Catalan NGO I-with ([www.iwith.org](http://www.iwith.org)), an organization that has believed in and made a commitment to our journalism, and decided to restore our hope in humanity, in our creative potential, rather than our destructive side.

Our self-imposed task is now not only to improve the focus of this ‘world picture’ but also, and above all, to empower the peaceful initiatives that emerge in each conflict and each war, because at *Corresponsal de Paz* we are convinced that the absence of information on conflict resolution in turn leads to the absence of peace.

The Spanish author and educator Rogelio Blanco said that “the greatest crime against man is to kill hope”; that is the reason behind this idea for news of the ‘media vision of a positive world’.

## What communication for peace do Catalan NGOs engage in?

Montse Santolino

Member of the Communication, Education and Citizenship Forum (<http://cicomunica.blogspot.com/>)



The NGO La Bretxa recently published on its blog the results of a study it commissioned, entitled *Communication for Peace in the NGO sector in Catalonia*. An analysis of current approaches and practices in communication for peace. It is a comprehensive diagnosis of the communication undertaken in the past two years by 62 organizations in Catalonia, as part of their projects for the construction of peace in countries with armed conflict.

The study was written by a research team coordinated by Ana Fernández Viso of InCom-UAB, and with financial support from the Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights, and aims to foster informed debate on this issue which it shows is relatively unknown among the Catalan NGOs, despite their long-standing tradition of working for peace. In fact, none of the 62 NGOs analysed used the idea of communication for peace in their papers or on their websites, and the interviews with key individuals in the sector highlight the lack of clear theoretical benchmarks in this respect and a great deal of ignorance of international experiences. However,

this does not mean that NGOs do not communicate for peace - the study highlights some good practices - but instead that they do so under many names, such as alternative communication, journalism for peace, emotional communication, intercultural dialogue, social reconciliation processes, awareness-raising, participatory processes, etc.

In order to provide a broad, comprehensive and strategic perspective of communication that includes the actors, actions and the content of the information, as well as the communication processes, communication for peace is defined as "all initiatives aimed at correcting or reducing errors and shortcomings in social communication from the perspective of its contribution to the establishment of peaceful, respectful, balanced, constructive and cooperative relations between the vast amount of actors interacting in the conflict, which influence its dynamic and which are in turn affected by it." Various categories for the analysis that are associated with some typical activities are established based on this general definition. First, the initiatives and projects that aim to influence the media are analysed, including the mainstream media and community media in the country in conflict, and the Catalan and international media; and second, all the initiatives in the country in conflict which are aimed at the reconstruction of the social fabric, influencing the country's political actors or providing communications support for programmes for the construction of peace being carried out; and finally, the proposals that aim to integrate external actors, actors in the aid system, public opinion and the international political community are assessed.

When interpreting the results, it should be remembered that the sample includes two types of NGOs: peace NGOs, which have historically worked only in the North, and development NGOs, which do most of their work in the South but which also work in the North. One of the main conclusions is therefore that despite the existence of truly valuable and relevant initiatives in almost all the analysis categories covered, the vast majority of NGOs basically choose to inform and raise Catalan public awareness about some conflicts on a sporadic basis. Only half go further than this, with training and analysis, and only a dozen of the 62 engage in campaigns for mobilisation and political pressure. By contrast, very few projects focusing on communication or communicative vision are carried out in the countries in conflict, and almost no work is done on basic approaches to conflict resolution, such as the effect on political actors (only eight NGOs) on public or private media (only three NGOs) and on community media (only six NGOs).

While in communication in general, and in communication for peace in particular, effective work requires coordination at many levels and between many actors, the different working traditions of peace and development NGOs represent other significant overall weaknesses, such as the fact that not all the know-how acquired in Catalonia is part of the dialogue or matched by work on the ground; the low profile of the actors and ideas and approaches to constructing peace in the South, or the lack of discursive complementarity between the campaigns on specific conflicts and the more broad-based campaigns to promote the culture of peace. Despite the fact that membership of networks - an exercise in communication in itself - is much more nominal than real, concerted action for Colombia and Palestine has reinforced the social and political support given to those countries.



## Cyberactivism for peace: between urgency and reflection

Jordi de Miguel

Member of the Communication, Education and Citizenship Forum (<http://cicomunica.blogspot.com/>)



According to the analyst David Ugarte, the terrorist attacks of 11 March 2004 were Spain's "baptism of blood in the Internet Society." Not only did the attacks come about due to a networked organisation and hacking of the public transport and information system - "netwar in its purest form" - but the public also reacted with a new attitude in which confidence in the Internet, its speed and virality led to a social mobilisation which was capable of determining the social climate and election results. Cyberactivism took root among us based on the power of the SMS.

Although projects focusing on the use of new technologies and social networks are as yet scarce, since that time peace NGOs have taken full advantage of the new open forums to disseminate information, collect signatures or carry out mass mailings of complaints to policymakers. Cyberactivism has thus become an effective gateway linking generic emotional and ethical pacifism to a programme for action oriented at political impact, based around

various conflicts.

However, we must ask ourselves about the apparent difficulty of squaring the values on which cyberinitiatives are based with the need to understand conflicts and peace processes based on reflection and analysis, without any restrictions in terms of time or space. It is true that many cyberinitiatives fall comfortably within the parameters of "itinerant perception": everything happens quickly, it lacks context and we often leap into action without checking on the depth of the water. So much so, that the more skeptical among us have coined the terms *slacktivism* and *clickactivism* to denote this new form of action.

The range of tools and websites include some, like Twitter and Facebook, which can be useful in obtaining and distributing information quickly and massively, creating states of opinion that are more or less ephemeral. In recent weeks, we have witnessed a good example of how the Internet multiplies the culture of peace by disseminating campaigns like the Global Day of Action Against Military Spending (#Gdams) and information about some conflicts that came directly from inside the countries where they were taking place (Cote d'Ivoire). The influence of the Internet's agenda on the traditional media, which is very intense in the case of the use of cluster bombs manufactured in Spain in Libya, is also worth highlighting.

However, the potential of these tools is often reduced to a more or less superfluous exchange of views, between a group of individuals with similar interests that is slightly enlarged thanks to the battering ram of technology. After so much commotion, are we in essence the same people talking about the same thing? How many NGOs working for peace communicate on the Internet with individuals and organisations that do not share their views?

When we talk about tools for cyberaction we should perhaps also include others, such as wikis and blogs, which as well as distributing information, can help us generate collective content and build shared meanings that enable a robust culture of peace which is indeed moving within increasingly complex parameters. Perhaps we should expand the scope of the concept of cyberactivism to include any action with the help of new technologies taken with the aim of transformation, regardless of its speed, ease or eagerness. In any case, it will always be necessary to try and integrate everything within a communication strategy that is also complex which includes the traditional media, and combines various tools, purposes and audiences.

Social networks cannot be seen simply as a way of reaching more people: by using them, agents for peace approach the heart of the values associated with their work, such as horizontality, participation, transparency, democratic management and, above all, dialogue and negotiation. With these tools and others, the important thing is the desire to communicate, both with those sharing our opinions and others. The dialogical nature of social networks means that they require conversation and collaboration, and if we want to promote a culture of peace we cannot behave on the basis of communication models that consider the recipient to be a mere consumer of messages or a sparring partner. The challenge for the peace movement will therefore be to use tools and attitudes to combine the need to mobilise for specific initiatives for peace and the need to foster a complex analysis of conflicts, while being able to discuss and share problems and ideas with the real social base and with a virtual public opinion that is not necessarily in agreement, and which is also engaged in dialogue elsewhere.

## FINDING OUT MORE

### Fernando Javier Padilla Angulo

On this occasion, we will find out a little more about the relationship between the media and armed conflicts. With this in mind, we will begin with a brief historical outline of this long-standing relationship. We will then mention some tools that may be useful; in specific terms, extracts from documents related to journalistic ethics when covering bloody conflicts, audiovisual resources with some of the most striking images associated with war and peace in the twentieth century and the twenty-first century so far, as well as a map of the most dangerous countries to work as a journalist.

#### 1. Historical background

The birth of the media can be traced back to the ancient Chinese, Roman and Persian empires. In the first century B.C., Julius Caesar created the *Acta Diurna*, bronze tablets which were read in public and which contained the most important news that had occurred within the borders of the empire, such as battles, legislation passed by the Senate, etc. However, it was not until the seventeenth century that the earliest gazettes appeared in Western Europe, with content similar to that of our newspapers today.

The relationship between the media and armed conflict emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century with the appearance of the war correspondent, with a major role played by the leading British newspapers during Napoleon's campaigns in Spain and Germany (1805-1814) and during the Crimean War (1853-1856). The spread of the telegram during the late nineteenth century made the work of correspondents much easier, and they ceased to write in a style more appropriate to literary essays and concentrated on writing articles and columns in which they briefly described the events in the war.

Until well into the second half of the twentieth century, the media were used primarily as machinery for propaganda by states. It is symptomatic that a then young British army officer, Winston Churchill, covered wars in northern India, Sudan and South Africa for several London newspapers, reporting the military exploits of his comrades in arms with almost no criticism. Perhaps the most outstanding example of this type of press propaganda was the birth of the tabloid press in New York in the late nineteenth century, where during the Hispano-American War, the newspaper editors Joseph Pulitzer and William R. Hearst fought each other to publish the most sensationalist news, regardless of its truthfulness. The accidental explosion of the battleship *USS Maine* in the harbour of Havana in February 1898, which they falsely attributed to Spanish agents and which gave the White House a *casus belli* to enter the war, is paradigmatic.

The use of the media - which were joined in the 1920s by the radio - by states as propaganda tools continued without major changes throughout the twentieth century, as they were repeatedly used to raise the morale of the troops and the population during the two world wars. The Spanish Civil War was no exception, and featured the presence of Ernest Hemingway as a war correspondent for a news agency in the United States.

The Vietnam War (1964-1975) marked a turning point: it was the first televised war. For the first time in history, war correspondents and cameramen were embedded in United States military units, and were able to record and disseminate images of the harsh reality of a war that America was losing with remarkable freedom. These images, many of which were broadcast live, and watched by millions of people on their televisions, managed to change public opinion, which shifted to mostly opposing the conflict. It is therefore a commonplace that the Vietnam War began to be lost in the households of the U.S.

The attitude of governments was subsequently to select the journalists to be embedded in their military units, in order to encourage fraternisation between combatants and journalists. This had an adverse effect on the objectivity of the reports, which were also subject to censorship. This is the media pool model as used since the Falklands War (1982). In some cases, the presence of journalists has even been prevented, such as during the invasion of the island of Grenada by the United States (1983).<sup>1</sup> As a result, the television channels CBS and ABC took their government to court for having violated the First Amendment of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to information.

However, states' desire to control information has come into conflict with the tenacious work of many media that have continued to offer their own perspective on conflicts. After the limitations on freedom of information imposed during the invasions of Panama and Iraq, news coverage of the actions of the United Nations military contingent during the civil war in Somalia, which began in 1991, marked a turning point. The images of bodies of U.S. Marines being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu and mutilated, in a situation that was out of the Pentagon's control, led to rejection of intervention in the Horn of Africa among the population of the United States and the West in general.<sup>2</sup>

The struggle between freedom of information and its control by states has since continued to have a high profile.

A clear example is the U.S. government's unhappiness with the coverage by numerous international media during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The tank attack by the U.S. Army on the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, which housed many of the journalists covering the war,<sup>3</sup> was a tragic example of this. However, there are still some media that operate beyond the boundaries of the control of news, despite Iraq being the country where the most journalists have been killed in recent years.<sup>4</sup>

The case of Afghanistan is similar in some respects. However, the state of war in the country makes the free movement of journalists on the ground very difficult. In addition, the attitude towards the media from countries that are part of the international coalition under NATO command varies, ranging from the media pool used by the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy, which allow embedded journalists to travel with their combat units, to the more restrictive model of Spain, which limits the working area for journalists to military bases. Nonetheless, journalists working beyond the protection / control of international troops continue to operate.

Finally, the emergence of the new technologies, especially mobile telephones and social networks on the Internet such as Facebook and Twitter, has made an enormous contribution to democratising the ability to broadcast news. In the uprisings and revolutions that are taking place in the Arab-Muslim world, there is a constant trickle of images and stories broadcast by ordinary citizens, which cannot be censored by their governments. These new channels for news information are vital for learning what is happening in Western Sahara, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen from first hand witnesses. Although they are not reports produced by the media, they are gathered and used by them, as a tool to support and complement the "traditional" coverage of conflicts.

## 2. Documents and resources related to the ethics of journalism in armed conflicts

We list articles on the treatment of armed conflicts by some of the most important ethical codes in journalism below:

**UNESCO International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism, 1983** (The full version is available here: [http://www.ciberjure.com.pe/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2226&Itemid=9%29](http://www.ciberjure.com.pe/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2226&Itemid=9%29)).

**Principle IX:** Elimination of war and other great evils confronting humanity The ethical commitment to the universal values of humanism calls for the journalist to abstain from any justification for, or incitement to, wars of aggression, and the arms race, especially in nuclear weapons, and all other forms of violence, hatred or discrimination, especially racialism and apartheid, oppression by tyrannical regimes, colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as other great evils which afflict humanity, such as poverty, malnutrition and diseases. By so doing, the journalist can help eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding among peoples, make nationals of a country sensitive to the needs and desires of others, ensure the respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all individuals without distinction of race, sex, language, nationality, religion or philosophical conviction.

**Council of Europe Resolution 1003 (1993) on the ethics of journalism** (The full version is available here: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta93/ERES1003.htm>)

### Situations of conflict and cases of special protection

33. In society, situations of tension and conflict sometimes arise under the pressure of factors such as terrorism, discrimination against minorities, xenophobia or war. In such circumstances the media have a moral obligation to defend democratic values: respect for human dignity, solving problems by peaceful, tolerant means, and consequently to oppose violence and the language of hatred and confrontation and to reject all discrimination based on culture, sex or religion.

34. No-one should remain neutral vis-à-vis the defence of democratic values. To that end the media must play a major role in preventing tension and must encourage mutual understanding, tolerance and trust between the various communities in regions where conflict prevails, as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has set out to do with her confidence-building measures in the former Yugoslavia.

35. Having regard to the very specific influence of the media, notably television, on the attitudes of children and young people, care must be taken not to broadcast programmes, messages or images glorifying violence, exploiting sex and consumerism or using deliberately unsuitable language.

**The Code of Ethics of the College of Journalists of Catalonia, 1996** (The full version is available here: [http://www.periodistes.org/documents\\_codi\\_deontologic](http://www.periodistes.org/documents_codi_deontologic)):

### Appendix 5. Recommendations for the coverage of armed conflicts or wars

1. Give a voice to all the actors and promote understanding between the parties involved. Encourage dialogue.
2. Do not dehumanise any party; mention the victims and the victimisers.
3. Avoid the language of the combatant parties and their allies. Expose the deceptions of any of these.
4. Show all grassroots groups working for peace, not just the leaders. In particular, show the efforts of civil society to help victims physically, emotionally and materially.
5. Examine the conflicts in terms of their complexity and cover violence and its visible and invisible effects, but also

cover the various causes that have generated it.

6. The media should avoid sensationalism and should also prevent the uncontrolled broadcast of online messages that are warmongering, xenophobic, racist and sexist.

7. Reporting on conflicts even when there is no violence can help to prevent it.

8. Do not stop the coverage after the ceasefire and cover the resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation.

9. Use the similarities between conflicts so that constructive experiences help those who have yet to find the way towards resolution.

10. Always acknowledge sources of information, particularly when they represent opposing parties, and bear in mind that third-party sources enhance the perspective of the conflict. If news is produced under conditions of censorship or restrictions, those receiving it should be informed of this.

**EthicNet. Journalism Ethics** (<http://ethicnet.uta.fi/>): A website including the ethical codes of journalism in most European countries, plus some outside Europe, such as the United States, making a total of forty-six.

### 3. Audiovisual resources

The following is a series of audiovisual materials related to war and peace, solidarity and violence, from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We have selected the photographs and radio and television clips presented here without using a strict criterion, but instead according to their media impact, dissemination, historical relevance or relevance to our society.

\* A widow mourns the death of her husband ([http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_jACZiY2oK9w/SL8TnzBukXI/AAAAAAAAAUI/CyMSL0Fhos/s400/Bombardeo%2Ben%2BL%C3%A9rida%2B2.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_jACZiY2oK9w/SL8TnzBukXI/AAAAAAAAAUI/CyMSL0Fhos/s400/Bombardeo%2Ben%2BL%C3%A9rida%2B2.jpg)), after the bombing of Lleida by Francoist air forces in November 1937.

\* BBC broadcast of the surrender of Germany on May 7, 1945 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/7/newsid\\_3578000/3578325.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/7/newsid_3578000/3578325.stm)).

\* *Flower power* image ([http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_26gKH8pQnYE/S7Yw3Y-xrnI/AAAAAAAAAGOA/ZQLRgASUV28/s1600/Flower\\_Power.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_26gKH8pQnYE/S7Yw3Y-xrnI/AAAAAAAAAGOA/ZQLRgASUV28/s1600/Flower_Power.jpg)), taken during a demonstration against the Vietnam War in Washington DC in 1967.

\* March for Peace in Washington, DC (1971) against the Vietnam War (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8U6Oh9uSY8>). These images are from the numerous mass demonstrations that took place in the capital of the United States to show the government the majority of the population's opposition to a war considered unjust and pointless

\* "The napalm girl" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev2dEqrN4i0>). Images taken in 1972 on the outskirts of Saigon after a napalm bombing of a defenceless town by the Air Force in South Vietnam, an ally of the United States. WARNING: these images may offend your sensibilities.

\* The fall of Saigon to the army of North Vietnam (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldR2lktffaw>) an ally of the Soviet Union, in 1975. This recording was a public humiliation for the powerful armed forces of the United States, which had to hastily evacuate the city before the advancing Communist troops. The world saw how the United States had lost the war live on television.

\* Tank Man (<http://latrola.net/blok/wp-content/gallery/varios/tianan.jpg>). That was the name given to this anonymous Chinese citizen who faced down a column of tanks during the Tiananmen Square protests in April 1989.

\* Hammer blows against the Berlin Wall (<http://blogs.rtve.es/blogfiles/elpostre/Caidadelmurob.jpg>) (1989), by a citizen of East Germany before the passiveness of the GDR police forces.

\* The cellist of Sarajevo (<http://www.lancetteer.com/images/CellistSarajevo/Evstafiev-bosnia-cello.jpg>) (1992), the nickname for Vedran Smajlović, the cellist in the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra who performed pieces of classical music every day in tribute to the victims of the long siege of the city, in the ruins of the destroyed National Library and University of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

\* No to war in Barcelona ([http://free-news.org/lmatges/barcelona\\_guerra\\_no.jpg](http://free-news.org/lmatges/barcelona_guerra_no.jpg)), a mass demonstration held in February 2003 against the invasion of Iraq by the United States and some of its allies.

\* Entry into Baghdad by U.S. troops in April 2003 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AGQzQo1HY4>). The U.S. Army entered the Iraqi capital after a month of fighting. Two symbolic events took place there would mark the extension of the war in the country: the demolition of the statue of Saddam Hussein, cheered by the crowd gathered around it, and the placing of the American flag in its place, despite the outcry by Iraqis, who saw this act as a symbol of invasion and colonialism.

\* Map of journalists murdered since 1992 (<http://cpj.org/killed>). The Committee to Protect Journalists website provides a useful tool for finding out the number of journalists murdered since 1992 by country and year.

1 Martin, S. E. (2006). "US Media Pools and Military Interventions in the 1980s and 1990s". *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(5), 601-616.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 Two journalists were killed as a result, including the Spaniard José Couso.

4 According to data provided by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists. Its website can be viewed at [www.cpj.org](http://www.cpj.org)

## INTERVIEW

### Interview with Gervasio Sánchez

Cèlia Cernadas

Journalist, Catalunya Ràdio



*GERVASIO SÁNCHEZ, photographer and journalist, and the man behind the projects "Vidas minadas" [Mined Lives] and "Desaparecidos" [Missing]*

The victims of landmines were the subject of his first major project. People missing in conflicts and the suffering of their families has been the second, in a project that took him to Latin America, Asia and Europe. "Missing" is being exhibited in three different venues in Spain: there are 250 photographs, many of which are large format, showing torture chambers, prisons, and above all, people; people who in many cases have spent decades looking for their relatives. But Gervasio Sanchez (born Córdoba, 1959), a journalist with the Heraldo de Aragón newspaper, also works on everyday news, and writes down his impressions in his blog "Los desastres de la guerra" [The Disasters of War] (<http://blogs.heraldo.es/gervasiosanchez/>)

**You say that a war journalist cannot be considered as such until they have been doing it for forty years...**

So-called war journalism is just another speciality within journalism, with its own rules. I think there are people in the world of journalism who love to take centre stage, when the stories should be the main feature. I am very surprised when I meet journalists that have not even visited the outskirts of war and describe themselves as war journalists. Now imagine a young man who goes to Libya, writes a few reports, and considers himself one. I have been working in this field for 25 years, and I neither call myself a war journalist nor do I want to. Whoever wants to be a journalist and war photographer must live with the consequences, and work on it for their entire life.

**How has the depiction of war in the media changed?**

Conflict journalism has always been closely related to entertainment. Not just today, although now it's outrageous; it's been going on for decades. It was apparent in the Spanish Civil War, where photographers with a high media profile were very important, and some of them were very good, like Robert Capa. Within the profession itself, war journalism has always been considered as something legendary, something that makes you afraid, that makes you go through hard times, make you a hero, when in fact what it is is a job. The changes in recent decades have mainly been negative due to influence of television,

which requires things to be done very quickly, very competitively, without time to think.

**And what about your profession?**

In war there are good journalists and terrible journalists who lie continually. The fact that the media, and especially television, only want entertainment, also has an effect. A few years ago they wanted a report lasting 3 minutes, which is now 50 seconds, so many end up producing sensationalism and creating the report based on what is most obvious and most striking. It also happens in the press. Twenty or thirty years ago, in Bosnia, or South America, it was very difficult to file your report. Sometimes the phone didn't work, it was very expensive, sometimes you found a fax ... And today, when it's so easy to broadcast, it turns out that journalists are increasingly further away from the places where things are happening and cover conflicts from thousands of kilometres away, simply by filtering what is happening on the Internet. There is a serious corruption of journalism.

**By contrast, "Missing" is the result of many years of painstaking work. What motivates you to devote so many years to a single cause and how do you make your work visible, bearing in mind what you have just said?**

Well, as I spend so much time on it, I am in no hurry to see the result. When it's published, it has to be published very well. The "Missing" project began in 1998 and it took 13 years to complete it. As I am in no hurry, I can afford to organise things well. In the world of journalism, you can only do that if you believe in it. Meanwhile, I do news journalism. Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, Bosnia ... that is where I have been working in recent years, and that is what led to "Mined Lives" and "Missing". I used the trips to look for long-term stories. I finance myself with my day job, and with these projects I obtain prestige, quality and impact for the stories. The only secret is to work harder than others do.

**In both "Mined Lives" and "Missing" there is obviously a close relationship with the victims, you know those people...**

A journalist's obligation is to convey what you see with dignity. I always tell young journalists that if you're not willing to experience the pain of war, of its victims, you can't convey it with dignity.

**So what responsibilities does a journalist working in a conflict zone and with human suffering have?**

Very heavy ones. You cannot do more harm to the person who is suffering: sometimes it is braver to stop taking pictures than to take them, to stop asking questions than to ask them, because journalists can cause armed incidents. You must act under based on unarguable moral and ethical parameters. Your behaviour must be mature enough not to fall into the trap of looking for a free, fast and media-friendly story. We have given up on good journalism, there is too much collusion with the politicians ... We have given up on investigative journalism. What is WikiLeaks? They're only leaks that show that journalists have not done their job properly. And that giving up makes society easier to manipulate. A journalist has obligations. I am not a committed journalist, as they say; I am simply a journalist, because journalism is a commitment.

**Are there worse forms of violence than open armed conflict?**

The long-term consequences of war are very tough, the forgotten victims of those conflicts, the missing, people searching for their loved ones for decades without the help of the State, which is obliged to protect its citizens. The victims of Franco, for example, are victims of Spain, and it is the State that must answer to them. When? Now? Or 25 years ago, 35 years ago ... All we have done now is made complete fools of ourselves with all the shameful behaviour of the political class.

**And that is where the journalist comes in...**

Yes, what I mean by all this is that we must always be there to show that wars are lethal, that they have long-term consequences, that the only undeniable truth of war is the victims, and that a war is only over when the consequences of the war have been overcome. It doesn't matter how many years have passed. As long as there are still people disappeared from the Spanish Civil War, the war will not be over. While there are victims of disappearance in the Balkans, the war will not be over, whether the cynical and hypocritical diplomats and politicians we have like it or not.

**After so many years looking at conflicts and poverty, what have you learned about mankind?**

That he is unable to live without killing, but that's not me saying that, that's history. Man has always sought war. Why? Because war is big business. I have seen people killed, but for me the biggest murderers are not the people who killed on the ground, they are the ones doing business behind the scenes during wars, with arms sales, getting hold of oil, diamonds or coltan to fund an armed group, as occurs in Africa, obtaining oil contracts with Gadhafi who we all did business with until very recently and who we are now attacking. Mankind does business with death, with war and negotiate profits from it, and as long as it is a business, war cannot be abolished.

**Indeed, the figures on the international arms trade are constantly increasing...**

The case of Spain is a scandal of such proportions that I find it difficult to understand. How is it possible that a government like this one has quadrupled arms sales in just seven years? The same government that has exploited, trampled on and used the word peace, the government that won the elections based on its opposition to the Iraq war ... That is the government that has quadrupled Spanish arms sales, and public opinion couldn't care less.

## PLATFORM

### Education for peace and listening

Marina Caireta i Sampere

Educator and coordinator of the Education for Peace programme at the Peace Culture School



Six wise Indian scholars wanted to know what an elephant was. Because they were blind, they decided to find out by touch. The first went up to the elephant, stroked his wide, hard back and said: "I see, it's like a wall." The second, touching the tusk, cried: "This is so sharp, round and smooth that the elephant is like a spear." The third touched the twisted trunk and cried: "God save us! The elephant is like a snake." The fourth extended his hand as far as the knee, hugged the leg and said: "The elephant is clearly like a tree." The fifth, who by chance touched an ear, exclaimed: "Even the blindest of men would realise that the elephant is like a fan." The sixth, who touched the wagging tail, said: "The elephant feels like a rope." And so the wise men argued at length. Who was right?

People become involved in conflicts, and we fight to meet our needs; that is legitimate. The challenge lies in doing so non-violently and cooperatively, and seeking an answer to the question "How can the two of us together solve the problem we share?", and overcoming the competitive approach of "How can I solve my problem, despite having to ignore the interests of the other?" That requires a lot of listening.

Like the six blind wise men, when fighting for our needs we often confuse the conflict (the entire elephant) with our perception (a part of the elephant), which is based on our needs, skills and personal experience. Without the ability to listen, we will never recognise the whole elephant.

Those of us involved in peace education (PE) understand that to meet this challenge we must strive to equip ourselves with the resources and skills that make this possible; that is called prevention. This process involves several steps: knowledge of ourselves and each other, mutual esteem, trust, communication and cooperation. Communication is the work involved in being able to explain to myself and listen to others, at times of both calm and of tension. Being able to listen actively, i.e. to listen until I understand what the other person means, and especially to make them feel that they have been heard.

But like the six blind men, having an ear to listen is not enough. First, we have internal factors that help or prevent us from hearing: the feeling of a threat or the questioning of the person we often experience in the conflict; the anger that makes us more entrenched in our closed attitude; a culture that focuses us towards a specific vision of the world; a more or less rigid education, and so on. We are possibly unaware of these factors, and we must recognise, accept and change them.

Second, we often talk about listening as something related to our ears. The six wise men argued with their ears but investigated in many other ways. In the field of PE we understand that listening goes far beyond that. Obviously, understanding the words that the other person is saying to us is important, but is not enough. We are in the world to the extent that we have a physical body that gives us a presence and enables us to receive stimuli, to which we respond by expressing ourselves. This continuous process of reception-expression is what we call communication, but this can be verbal or nonverbal, using sight, touch, gesture, smell, etc. It is said that nonverbal communication accounts for 70 percent of the message, compared to 30 percent of the verbal.

And apart from the body, we must be able to listen from our heart. We know the importance of listening to words, but we have been taught little about listening to emotions, and without being able to interpret them it is difficult to transform conflict.

In conclusion, in EP we understand that education for skills in listening requires:

- \* Education for prevention, as skills for peaceful coexistence.
- \* Working on techniques and resources for communication and active listening: techniques like knowing how to paraphrase, recap, ask appropriately, show attention, etc.
- \* Develop the various expressive languages to expand communication skills of receptiveness using all the senses and expression using all languages (working using the plastic arts, music, theatre, etc.).
- \* Education about the emotions, recognising their importance in conflicts and the importance of being able to identify and express them

## Agreeing with Osama

Pablo Aguiar  
ICIP expert



In these days of widespread indignation, having to write about the death of Osama Bin Laden is disappointing. However, most of the opinions I hear oblige me to do so. We are nearing the tenth anniversary of the fateful attack on the twin towers and the subsequent beginning of the "War on Terror". However, despite some important progress such as the ICC, very few gains have ultimately been made, and today advocating human rights and justice without any exceptions is a minority opinion and often considered the result of a kind of naive and outdated progressiveness.

Let's consider the facts. Osama Bin Laden was not a person for whom I had any particular liking. Neither his religious fanaticism, nor his use of violence, on a massive and indiscriminate basis and against civilian populations could be further from my convictions. But he enjoyed a certain degree of prestige among some people, especially because of their supposed anti-Americanism, but an analysis of the sympathies that the murderer generated is beyond the scope of this article. The fact of the matter is that in our media-based society, which needs heroes and to personify our enemies, we made Osama bin Laden into public enemy number one, the personification of international terrorism.

So on May 2, we were surprised to read that the U.S. army had killed the leader of Al Qaeda. Some details gradually came to light, but such was the level of confusion that for a few hours, we saw the emergence of a heavily doctored photo and the story given by some media that the U.S. soldiers had taken away Bin Laden's hens and cows in their helicopters.

Carrying out a military operation in another country's territory, without its knowledge, is in breach of several international treaties. It is important to note that it is not clear whether the operation was carried out without Pakistan's knowledge; that is only what the two countries have said, but WikiLeaks proved what we have long suspected: in international politics, statements and facts are often diametrically opposed.

It is by no means impossible for a military intervention against a suspected terrorist to lead to deaths. The truth is that very quickly (September 17, 2001) George Bush Jr. declared that Osama was a target wanted "Dead or Alive," as if he was a wild west character (a parody would probably not have done it any better). It is also revealing that the more we know about the operation, the more it seems that the main priority and objective was to kill Bin Laden. First they said he was armed, then he appeared to be, and then they explained that he was about to be. All in all, as Iker Jimenez would say, "it raises some doubts that are at least disturbing ...." But having said that, despite being very serious, his death is not what most concerns me, but rather the consequences.

First, we should remember the words of the United Nations Secretary General, among others, who said he was "relieved that justice has been done," and while accepting the death of Bin Laden as an inevitable consequence of the military operation, what is clear is that what happened is very far removed from any of our modern conceptions of justice. Killing someone is never justice, but if we do it without a trial, it is even less so. That used to be a given, but various reactions have forced me to write a truism in response.

Second, there are those who while they recognise that it may not be the best alternative in ethical terms, have no doubts about the benefits of the action in terms of effectiveness. These include Catherine Ashton, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, and the president of the Spanish government, one of the quickest off the mark in congratulating Obama, who said in Parliament that "Practically the entire international community has decided that the death of the terrorist Bin Laden is positive news for security and the fight against international terrorism." Does anyone really believe that the GAL death squads, to give an example closer to home, had a positive impact on terrorism? Have we not learned the lesson that it expanded the social foundations on which it was built? When fighting terrorism, the only effective tool, and not even the ethical alternative, is the use of law; there are no shortcuts. And those who think otherwise should listen to the wise words of Gandhi: "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind".

In conclusion, I am convinced that Bin Laden would have completely agreed with approving an operation like the one that ended his life. If he had been leading an army and an intelligence service and had wanted to kill a terrorist, I have no doubt that he would have approved an action like this one. And he would have called it justice as well. That is something that should give some people pause for thought. There are some similarities that are frightening.



## RECOMMENDATIONS



### **Amnesty International Report 2011: The state of human rights in the world**

<http://www.amnesty.org/es/annual-report/2011>

Amnesty International has published its annual report on the situation of human rights worldwide, the result of research in 157 countries and territories in 2010.

First, the report presents a general overview of the regional conclusions. This year, the key issues are: freedom of expression, international justice, accountability of companies, the death penalty, reproductive rights and the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. In the second part, a section is devoted to each country, with a description of the state of human rights in that particular place and particular noteworthy cases. Finally, it presents the situation of some international and regional treaties in various countries.

The title of the prologue, “Activists use new tools to challenge repression,” clearly reflects the trend in the struggle for human rights over the last year. The new means available to citizens in general and activists in particular to confront human rights violations have been a milestone in the cause. WikiLeaks (and the revelations about human rights violations accepted or not punished by states), Internet social networking and the mobile telephone have been at the centre of unique moments in the struggle for human rights. They were present, for example, in the demands for freedom, dignity and justice in the Middle East and North Africa, and in the displays of support by anonymous Chinese Internet users for the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo.

However, the new technologies are only tools for channelling demands and are only still a possibility for real change. This real change should end the cases of human rights violations that Amnesty International has identified, like the restrictions on freedom of expression in at least 89 countries; the vulnerability of journalists and women around the world; the precarious situation of minorities, refugees and migrants; and the denial of the right to truth and justice in post-conflict areas.

M.A.T.



### **United States Peace Index**

<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/>

The United States Peace Index (USPI), created by the Institute for Economics and Peace is an innovative tool that shows the level of peace in each of the 50 states of the USA, based on five key indicators: the number of homicides, the number of violent crimes, the number of police officers, the number of convicts, and the ease access to small arms and light weapons.

Although by definition these indicators provide a negative description of peace, i.e. one that is understood to mean the absence of violence, the index goes further, correlating the reduction in violence with other socio-economic variables, grouped in the following areas: education, health, the economy, politics and demography. It shows how the most favourable environments for peace are those where people have easier access to education, health services, and have more economic opportunities.

Moreover, despite the limitations regarding the data that measure the impact of peace on the economy, the USIP shows the positive impact it would have on the U.S. economy, if it achieves the same levels of peace as Canada.

H.A.



### Documentary: “Arms Dealers”

2009–France-57'  
Directed by: Stéphane Malterre  
Production: Tac Presse.

This thorough investigation of the cogs that move the great gearbox of the arms trade, takes as its starting point the Belgian arms company *FN Herstal* that sells its products in over 100 countries and employs more than 3,000 employees in branches distributed

all over the world.

The documentary provides a clear and detailed look at the various levels and individuals involved in this market: from the expertise of senior seals staff selling their products at the “international defence exhibition” - where the latest ideas in arms are grotesquely displayed; to the implication and skill of European politicians in encouraging substantial purchases by demanding customers from the Middle East; to the manual dexterity of the veteran machine-gun fitter at the Herstal factory and the demonstration organised by the company’s employees against the Belgian government to obtain authorisation for the sale of a shipment of weapons - worth 12 million euros - to the Libyan government of Colonel Gaddafi.

Finally, and without ignoring the dire consequences that this trade has on the civilian population, the film follows the footsteps of the world’s biggest illegal arms dealer, Viktor Bout, known as the “merchant of death”, highlighting the extraordinary profits generated by the black market, due to the arms embargoes on various countries around the world.

H.A.



### Documentary: “Uranium Smuggling”

2009-France-52  
Directed by: Patrick Forestier  
Production: Tac Presse, Special Investigation i Canal +

Katanga province, in the south of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is known as the “geological scandal,” due to the vast amount of minerals in its subsoil, including cobalt and copper, but above all uranium. The use and sale of the precious mineral, which is essential in generating nuclear power, is completely banned except with the appropriate permits and under the strict control of government.

This region is the beginning of the investigation that looks at the murky relationships based on the illegal uranium trade within the country and beyond its borders, in which in the Congo’s political authorities, army and intelligence services are involved, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is complicit in this illegal trade by its silence.

With a slight twist in the line of investigation, we are shown the other side of the coin, and how one of the world’s most important nuclear power companies, France’s *AREVA*, signs a multimillion dollar contract in what is apparently an official and transparent process, for the operation of a uranium mine in Niger. In addition, this reveals the company’s total immunity, as despite having been accused of failing to respect environmental regulations regarding air and water pollution, it continues to expand its business not only in the region but worldwide.

In short, the documentary draws our attention to the high levels of corruption that make uranium smuggling possible in the world, and calls into question the coercive power of international organisations to stop it; and it tries to offer some ideas, albeit insufficient ones, that reveal the opacity of this trade which unfortunately has very serious consequences for the planet.

H.A.



### The violation of the embargo

2010–France – 52'  
Directed by: Vanina Kanban  
Production: TV Presse

Arms dealers, senior figures in politics, the armed forces and secret services of France and Croatia, unsuspecting Croatian patriots, the involvement of third countries and some international bodies are interwoven in this French-produced documentary investigation. It looks at how the arms embargo imposed on the former Yugoslavia during

the Serbo-Croatian war (1991-1995) by the United Nations Security Council in September 1991 was systematically violated in favour of the Croatian cause, with the consent and in some cases even the participation, presumably, of France, which had voted for the ban, and NATO, responsible for enforcing it in the Adriatic Sea.

The documentary shows states and international organisations often ignore their own official positions when they collide with the interests of *realpolitik*, which are the real mechanism behind the gears of power. This study therefore suggests that violations of United Nations arms embargoes are common, with the Croatian case an obvious example.

F.J.P.



### Jonathan has no tattoos: stories of Central American youth at the crossroads

2010–France – 52'  
Direcció: Vanina Kanban  
Producció: TV Presse

*Jonathan no tiene tatuajes: crónicas de jóvenes centroamericanos en la encrucijada* is a book studying the dynamics of gangs in the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador).

Six journalists covering a project by the Central American Coalition for the Prevention of Juvenile Violence (CCPVJ) provide a very clear, realistic and eloquent reflection, based around five stories, of the situation experienced by a broad sector of the population. The central theme of the book is the violence associated with young people related to gangs in Central America that has caused a great deal of victims.

These stories reconstruct the lives of some young people and their families, in which difficulties and tragedy predominate. Jonathan has no tattoos... is an in-depth journalistic study of the areas where these youths live, featuring some images and eyewitness accounts. Many of their stories highlight their resignation to an early death, excessive violence and desperation.

The text leads the reader to reflect on their living conditions and how violence leads to more violence, and the sometimes crucial influence of a lack of opportunities, inequality, marginalisation, family disintegration, and a lack of education, which are all factors in underdevelopment and a reflection of governments with poorly consolidated institutions and very fragile democracies in Central America.

[http://ccpvj.com/documentos/biblioteca/Pub\\_CCPVJ/Jonathan%20no%20tiene%20tatuajes.%20Crnicas%20de%20jvenes%20centroameric.pdf](http://ccpvj.com/documentos/biblioteca/Pub_CCPVJ/Jonathan%20no%20tiene%20tatuajes.%20Crnicas%20de%20jvenes%20centroameric.pdf)

V.H.R.O.

## NEWS

### ICIP NEWS

#### **Debate on polarisation and conflict in Latin America**

The seminar *Polarisation and conflict in Latin America. Challenges for transformation and human security*, organised by the ICIP as part of its research programme 'Human security, conflict transformation and research for peace,' took place on May 5 and 6 in Barcelona.

There were a dozen speakers, mostly from Latin America, at the conference, which was chaired by the President of the ICIP, Rafael Grasa, and the University of Salamanca professor Salvador Martí i Puig. The central themes were the causes and consequences of social and political polarisation, the effervescence of new conflicts, some of which are closely linked to the environment, and new forms of social mobilisation. A report on the results of the seminar will be published soon.

#### **Côte d'Ivoire still a long way from stability**

The ongoing division in Côte d'Ivoire, the humanitarian crisis that has been unleashed after five months of post-election violence and the future challenges for the country were the focus of the roundtable discussion 'Where next for Côte d'Ivoire?' organised by the ICIP on Wednesday, 27 April at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània in Barcelona. In the debate, chaired by the COMRàdio journalist Siscu Baiges, the participants were Albert Caramés, ex-specialist in disarmament in the UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and a collaborator of the ICIP; Gemma Parellada, freelance journalist and correspondent in the area; Isabel Higuera, coordinator of international cooperation for the Akwaba Foundation; and Rafael Grasa, president of the ICIP. The speakers analysed the situation in Côte d'Ivoire after the fall of former President Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara's appointment as head of the Republic and emphasised that despite the outcome of the election, there is still a great deal of instability in the country, as a result of the episodes of violence and economic instability.

#### **The ICIP participates in an international conference on possible security and defence scenarios in 2030**

Within the framework of the ICIP's internationalisation activities and as part of the focus on debate on topics of interest to the Institute, on 10 May the expert and assistant to the president, Leonie van Tongeren, participated in the final conference on the SANDERA project *The Future Impact of Security and Defence Policies on the European Research Area (ERA)*, a long-term research project funded by the European Commission which aims to promote research on emerging issues affecting science and technology in Europe.

The conference took place at Castle of Val-Duchesse near Brussels (photo), and experts on defence policy, security and science and technology discussed the results of research programmes being carried out at a European level. The participants analysed the various scenarios for interaction between the ERA, security and defence research and innovation policies moving towards 2030.

#### **Collection of articles on peace and security**

In order to raise the profile of the ICIP's bibliographic archive, a dossier on some of the articles published recently on peace and security in more than 200 journals in the peace field has been compiled, and is available for consultation at the library. The articles are divided into eight categories related to the ICIP's main research topics (human security, conflict resolution and transformation, the construction of peace and peacekeeping operations, peace research, education for peace and peace culture, justice in transitions and criminal justice, human rights and private security). It also includes a collection of articles on Libya, coinciding with the military intervention in the country. This dossier is the first in a series that the ICIP has launched and is available for consultation on the Internet at [www.icip.cat](http://www.icip.cat)

#### **A new season of the programme 'Latituds' begins on Canal 33**

Sunday, May 1, saw the beginning of the second season of 'Latituds' on Canal 33, in which the ICIP is involved with the production of some documentaries. The programme looks at issues related to human rights, the construction of peace and development cooperation. It is broadcast on Sunday evenings (8.15pm).

In this new season, the ICIP has been involved in five documentaries, two of which have already been broadcast and can be viewed on the programme's website: 'Euskadi pacifista' [Pacifist Basque Country] and 'Frenant l'armementisme' [Stopping The Arms Build-up]. The other three will be broadcast on 12 and 26 June and 10 July, and will look at the arms trade, peace activism and Costa Rica's experience as a country without an army.

## New publications: books and reports

*Transforming societies after political violence. Truth, reconciliation and mental health*, by the clinical psychologist Brandon Hamber (co-published by the ICIP and Edicions Bellaterra) is the first book in the new 'Peace and security' collection, for experts in the field of peace, security and conflict transformation, and of particular interest to those working in Latin America. The book, with a prologue by the doctor Carlos Martín Berstain, looks at the role of mental health in justice during transitions and is based on the premise that the way to deal with political violence is inseparable from the social context.

The report on the seminar *Peace in movement. Political protests, impacts. The experiences of the peace movement in Italy and Spain*, which the ICIP organised in Barcelona last October, has also recently been published; as has the report on the seminar *Peace, conflict and security in Africa. New challenges and new perspectives*, which was held in November; and the report *Justice in times of transition. Concepts, models, debates and experiences*, written by Farid Samir Benavides Vanegas, a researcher at the National University of Colombia and the University of Massachusetts, and an ICIP collaborator.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### 24th meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC)

The annual meeting of the ICC was held in Geneva from 17 to 20 May, and institutions from the various parts of the world came together to coordinate their activities on a global scale, and to exchange best practices and update the strategies applied for the promotion and protection of human rights.

### The former general Ratko Mladic, the leading figure accused of genocide in Srebrenica, is arrested

On 26 May, the Serbian police arrested the head of the Bosnian Serb army during the Bosnian war, Ratko Mladic, who is accused of responsibility for the massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995. Mladic, who had been on the run from justice since that time, was the most wanted man in the former Yugoslavia and has been transferred to the headquarters of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

### The ICC calls for the arrest of Muammar Qaddafi for crimes against humanity

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, has asked the judges of the ICC to issue an international warrant for the arrest of the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, his son Saif al Islam Qaddafi and the head of Libya's intelligence and military security, Abdullah Senusi. According to the prosecutor, Muammar Qaddafi personally ordered attacks against unarmed Libyan civilians and planned them with his son and the head of the secret services.

### Obama tries to promote a new Middle East peace plan

The president of the United States, Barack Obama, believes that the situation in the Middle East conflict is unsustainable and in a public speech, called for peace to be based on the borders established in the Geneva agreement of 1967 (prior to the Six Day War, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). The Palestinian Authority praised Obama's speech but the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu rejected it immediately. Netanyahu said that the borders of 1967 are 'indefensible.'

### Campaign against arms smuggling between the United States and Mexico

Mexican and American activists have launched a campaign urging the U.S. president, Barack Obama, to halt the arms trade between the U.S. and Mexico. The promoters of the initiative warn that 84% of guns confiscated at crime scenes in Mexico come from the United States and in a letter to Obama, demand that the U.S. ban the import of assault weapons, to prevent them being used subsequently in smuggling. Further information at [www.alianzacivica.org](http://www.alianzacivica.org)

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