



MUMBAI

# American Center

## Bulletin

MAY  
2008

### THE FOURTH ESTATE

#### World Press Freedom Day

In honor of World Press Freedom Day which falls on May 3 this year, we are dedicating this month's American Center Bulletin to the topic of freedom in the international press. The United Nations created World Press Freedom Day in 1993 in order to raise awareness of the importance of a free press around the globe. It sought to draw attention not only to the critical role that the media plays in democracies, but also to emphasize the fundamental importance that it plays in every country. The day also reminds governments to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression that is outlined in the 19th Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reads, "*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.*"

The United Nations chose May for World Press Freedom Day because it corresponds with the Declaration of Windhoek, which is a statement of free press principles drafted by a consortium of African newspaper journalists in 1991.

Each year on World Press Freedom Day, the United Nations encourages discussion of free press-related issues by hosting a conference on the subject. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) additionally awards a World Press Freedom prize to a deserving individual, organization or institution which has notably defended the right of free journalism throughout the world.

The World Press Freedom prize is named after Guillermo Cano, the Colombian journalist who was assassinated in 1986. An international group of 14 professional journalists and editors select the prize winner each year. Last year, for the first time, they awarded it posthumously. The winner was Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian reporter who, despite threats to her life, continued to report on the conflict in Chechnya, until she was shot dead in October 2006.

#### The Right to Publish Ideas Freely

Despite the tacit worldwide acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ability for individuals to publish their ideas and report freely is not omnipresent. Journalists around the world are

unable to publish accurate and thought-provoking reportage on events because they are censored, banned from locations or events, or face severe danger when pursuing their stories.

Governments are the primary means through which a journalist's ability to report is quelled. The extent of censorship ranges on a wide spectrum from countries with autocratic central governments who continue to allow only state-run newspapers and media stations, to countries where multiple newspapers are allowed to exist, but any misstep or incorrect word could bring on dire consequences. Many countries have explicit or unspoken rules that prevent any criticism of the government, the country, or the country's primary religious or political tenets. Those who offend are arrested, detained, and occasionally, even sentenced to death for a variety of charges ranging from "making antistate statements," and defamation, to publishing "religious or ethnic insults." Additionally, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a New York City-based NGO dedicated to protecting journalists, many countries also hold journalists indefinitely without actually charging them with any crime. Of the 127 journalists detained in 2007, 17 percent of them were not officially charged with any crime.

Recently, the number of journalists in prison around the world has actually grown due to the growth of the Internet. In the old days, central governments could generally censor known publications through a variety of regulations. Yet, the Internet is an almost ungovernable terrain as it allows for unprecedented proliferation of sites where controversial perspectives can be presented. Some governments attempt to block large portions of the World Wide Web from view in their countries (or even occasionally turn off national access to the entire Internet). However, forward-thinking computer programmers frequently overcome these governmental barriers within just a short time: allowing audiences hungry for uncensored information to find it; and allowing journalists to publish their uncensored work online. Unfortunately, despite the use of aliases and anonymous postings, the authors of controversial statements, once discovered, are often still arrested.

Censorship and imprisonment are not the only threats for journalists. It is a dangerous time for journalists in general. In 2007, according to CPJ, 95 journalists and media staff were killed around the world either while reporting directly on stories or specifically in reprisal

(Continued on page 2)

**The American Center**  
4 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020  
Tel: 2262-4590; Fax: 2262-4595  
E-mail: [MumbaiPublicAffairs@state.gov](mailto:MumbaiPublicAffairs@state.gov)  
Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>  
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
(Monday through Friday)

#### HOLIDAYS

May 1: Maharashtra Day  
May 26: Memorial Day

## A WORD FROM THE CENTER

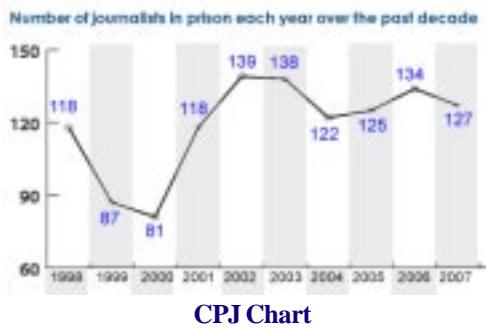
One of the most potent tools to keep checks and balances in a democracy is the media, which is the torchbearer of civil society actions. But the ability of the media to promote and strengthen democracy largely depends upon how free it is, and, more importantly, how responsible it is in discharging its duty as “The Fourth Estate.”

The article in this issue has been contributed by Foreign Service Officer Amanda Zafian who works at the American Consulate in Mumbai. She is originally from New York City, where she worked for the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board, but has also studied elsewhere in the United States. She holds Masters’ degrees in English Literature, Journalism and International Affairs.

As promised last month, please read about our bimonthly magazine SPAN. We encourage all our readers to sign up for an e-edition or hard copy of SPAN to learn more about American and Indian communities, and their shared values.

We look forward to meeting you during one of the events listed on the last page. Happy reading!

**Sanjay Mehta  
Editor**



(Continued from page 1)

for their reportage. Iraq and Afghanistan were the primary locations for most of these deaths, although they also took place around the globe including in countries with no civil conflict. The majority of the journalists killed in each country, such as in Iraq, were natives who were reporting for their own newspapers and Internet sites – not foreign journalists who were just temporarily in country.

Specific details about journalists who have been arrested, detained, have disappeared or been killed, are collated by several nonprofit organizations such as CPJ (discussed above), Reporters Without Borders, and Freedom House. See the following page for further details about these organizations, including their web addresses.

## A Free Press Promotes Democracy

Overall, scholars all agree that a free and open media helps to promote democratic values within a country and is important to improving governance in all countries. The media is referred to as the “Fourth Estate” or the “Fourth Branch” of government, because it is essentially as important as the three other branches of government: Congress/Parliament, the Supreme Court, and the President/Prime Minister. While not a governmental entity, the media’s importance comes from its ability to guarantee checks and balances and keep the government on its toes

since it provides a clear conduit of information to the public overall.

It is also important to observe that the core concept of a “free press” can be a complex yet subtle issue. While extreme examples of censorship and mistreatment of journalists are easy to pinpoint, it is more difficult to always see the multiple ways in which a country’s legal or social system may limit the ability of journalists to report freely. Every country in the world, even those considered to have the most free media, grapples with the issue of what their citizens should be allowed to say and print, since there are some boundaries that even journalists shouldn’t cross. Dangerous statements may be prohibited, such as shouting “fire” in a crowded theater. Additionally, libel laws protect individuals from malicious incorrect reports that may irreparably damage their reputations. Every country – regardless of type of government, religion, and culture – has struggled to determine at what point freedom of press/speech becomes excessive.

## History of Freedom of the Press

A brief review of the history of the Freedom of the Press and of Speech helps to provide a stronger context to understand the current situation around the world and the rationale for why it has evolved this way.

The Freedom of the Press is inexorably tied to the basic idea of the Freedom of Speech. Examples of suppression of speech go back to ancient times, such as in the case of Socrates who was sentenced to death for “corrupting” the youth of Athens through his ideas.

The notion that one should be allowed to speak one’s mind and even to publish freely, arose primarily during the Enlightenment Period in Europe, starting in 1516 when Erasmus first argued that “in a free state, tongues too should be free.”

The English author, John Milton, further developed the idea of freedom of speech/press, proposing that such freedoms were not just necessities, but were actually beneficial to societies. In his influential 1644 pamphlet, “Areopagitica,” John Milton fought against the English system of “licensing” in which only publications approved by the government could be printed. Milton argued that in order to exercise a human being’s natural right of reason, one must have unlimited access to the ideas of one’s fellowmen in a “free and open encounter.” In this “marketplace of ideas,” he proposed, “good arguments will prevail when people debate against each other openly.” As Milton wrote, “he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself.”

The English Revolution took place soon after Milton’s publication and hastened the notion that freedom of speech and publications should prevail. With the removal of the English King, James II, additionally removed was the idea that a monarch was above reproach and critique. The English Bill of Rights established in 1689 after the Revolution, was the first to grant “freedom of speech in Parliament.”

## Freedom of Press and Speech in the United States

The idea of freedom of publication and speech became further codified when the United States was founded in 1776. The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution granted both the right of speech and press to the new citizens of America. As the American Founding Fathers came from England, and as many belonged to contrary religious or political groups, they believed strongly that the freedom of speech and press were “essential to the security of freedom in a state” and “one

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

of the greatest bulwarks of liberty,” to take phrases from the Constitutions of Massachusetts and Virginia, drafted in 1780 and 1776, respectively.

Although these rights were entrenched in the founding documents of the United States, the country struggled, as have many others, with the actual realization of these liberties. Just a few years after the Revolution in 1798, the Sedition Act was passed, which made it a crime to criticize either the President or Congress during wartime. This law was immediately condemned by the public and expired three years later in 1802. This question arose again, however, just over a hundred years later when, during another war, the Sedition Act of 1918 was passed. It threatened punishments for individuals publishing “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the United States Government or its military. Again, this law was later repealed. Nevertheless, during times of crisis, the debate over limits to free speech continues to rise in the United States, as well as in many other countries.

Generally speaking, in all countries of the world, laws related to the freedom of press and speech continue to evolve and be reformed over time. Occasions such as World Press Freedom Day continue to bring the issue to the forefront of our minds.

### Organizations That Seek to Protect Press Freedom

**Committee to Protect Journalists:** <http://www.cpj.org>

The Committee to Protect Journalists is a nonprofit organization based in New York City that monitors the treatment of journalists worldwide. CPJ particularly collates incidents where journalists are murdered, injured, or imprisoned. In the case of imprisonment, CPJ keeps close tabs on the condition of the imprisoned journalist and attempts to lobby for that individual’s release.

**Reporters sans frontières:** <http://www.rsf.org>

Reporters sans frontières or Reporters Without Borders is a French organization that seeks to protect the ability of journalists to report freely throughout the world without fear of reprisal. Reporters Without Borders is best known for its annual Press Freedom Report which provides a global ranking of each country according to its level of press freedom. Scandinavian countries typically top the list.

**Freedom House:** <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Freedom House was founded in 1941 by several Americans, including Eleanor Roosevelt, concerned about the mounting threats to peace and democracy. Freedom House has been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and consistently works for freedom of the press worldwide.



**U.S. Postage Stamp**

### NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

#### A Select List of Books by Travel Writer Paul Theroux

**Paul Theroux** was recently programmed by our four American Centers in Chennai, Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai. He recently retraced his *Great Railway Bazaar* journey, so look out for another new addition to the American Library in late Fall.

*Blinding Light*  
Viking, 2006 (THE)

*Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town*  
Penguin, 2007 (916.04 THE)

*The Elephanta Suite*  
Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 2007 (THE)

*Fresh-Air Fiend: Travel Writings, 1985-2000*  
Mariner Books, 2001 (818.514 THE)

*The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia*  
Penguin, 1995 (915 THE)

*The Kingdom by the Sea: A Journey Around the Coast of Great Britain*  
Penguin, 1984 (914 THE)

*The Mosquito Coast*  
Penguin, 1981 (THE)

*The Old Patagonian Express: By Train Through the Americas*  
Penguin, 1980 (917.0453 THE)

*The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean*  
Penguin, 1996 (910.91 THE)

*Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China*  
Penguin, 1989 (915.1 THE)

*The Stranger at the Palazzo d’Oro*  
Penguin, 2004 (THE)

*Millroy The Magician*  
Cape Cod Scriveners Company, 1994 (THE)

*Hotel Honolulu: A Novel*  
Mariner Books, 2002 (THE)



**Paul Theroux in Mumbai**

Note: Internet sites included in this listing, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.

## MUMBAI MONDAYS

### A Discussion on America: The Melting Pot led by Beth Brownson

Monday, May 19

American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

The program will cover the multicultural aspects of the United States with particular attention to the history and role of immigrants in the U.S. today.

**Beth Brownson** is newly arrived at the U.S. Consulate in Mumbai. Her previous posting was in Mexico, and prior to this, she was a litigator living and working in upstate New York. She and her husband Max have two dogs.

## ABOUT SPAN

SPAN is a bimonthly general interest magazine about India and America, which has been published in English, Hindi and Urdu by the Embassy of the United States in New Delhi since November 1960. In addition to original articles on topics such as climate change, U.S. higher education, and the American Cowboy, SPAN reprints articles from well-known American magazines like *National Geographic*, *The New Yorker*, *Smithsonian*, and *Wired*, to name a few. In March 2003, SPAN also began publishing in Hindi and Urdu in order to reach a wider audience. Currently, circulation is over 62,000 in all three languages with an estimated readership of 500,000.

As the American Center Mumbai bulletin will start to exclusively feature information about our American Center events, we encourage all our members and partner institutions to subscribe to SPAN, either online or for a hard copy subscription. It is filled with articles relevant to all of us interested in the relationship between the world's largest democracy and the world's youngest democracy. In this month's edition, you can learn about the role of the U.S. media in the presidential elections, international students in American business schools, and the relevance of Rumi in the modern world.

The editorial team is always looking for readers to contribute either photos or written pieces for the magazine. To submit a photo or a written article to SPAN, please contact the Editor at [editorspan@state.gov](mailto:editorspan@state.gov). If you are interested in renewing your subscription, or starting a new one, please contact [subscriptionspan@state.gov](mailto:subscriptionspan@state.gov). It makes an excellent gift as well! Finally, SPAN seeks readers' suggestions on a theme for our 2009 calendar. If your idea is chosen, you'll be featured in the calendar as well as the magazine, and will receive SPAN-related prizes. The last date for entries is May 12, 2008.

Please e-mail your suggestions to [editorspan@state.gov](mailto:editorspan@state.gov).

Edited and designed by Sanjay Mehta and Rizwana Sayed

Copy edited by Eva Doctor

Printed by Colorpoint, S. J. Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013

## FILMS THIS MONTH

Friday, May 16

*A Mighty Heart* (2007, color, 108 mins)

Friday, May 23

*Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005, color, 93 mins)

American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m.



Based on the book by journalist Mariane Pearl, this harrowing, true-life drama chronicles the desperate search for her husband, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped while the couple were working in Pakistan in 2002. Angelina Jolie delivers a powerful performance as Mariane. Dan Futterman, Will Patton and Archie Panjabi also star.



George Clooney cowrote, directed and costarred in this gripping true-life drama about veteran CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow's highly publicized feud with Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. Driven by a commitment to deliver the truth, Murrow (David Strathairn) and his producer Fred Friendly (Clooney) found themselves leading a charge against McCarthy's fear-mongering communist witch hunts. Patricia Clarkson, Robert Downey, Jr., Jeff Daniels and Frank Langella costar.

## VIDEO SCREENING

Friday, May 9

*Mazi Goshta* (114 mins)

American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

*Mazi Goshta* (My Story), written and directed by Dr. Vidyadhar Bapat, is the dramatized story of a schizophrenic patient who has been gifted with a sense of music creation and composition and who, on the way back to mainstream life, accepts the challenge to perform publicly along with other sufferers. The film addresses the distress he goes through and how he is able to deal with the disorder through the help of his family, doctors, self-help group and music.

The screening, with English subtitles, will be followed by a discussion led by eminent psychiatrist and renowned actor, Dr. Mohan Agashe, and psychiatrist, Dr. Vidyadhar Watve.

**Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.**