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1. Introduction

1.1. The Association for International Broadcasting [AIB] is the trade association for international, national and regional broadcasters. Founded in 1993, it supports its Members that are located in countries throughout the world, from New Zealand through to the USA. It is estimated that the audience reach of AIB Members is around one billion\(^1\).

1.2. The AIB Secretariat is located in the UK, with additional part-time staff based in Geneva and New Delhi.

1.3. The AIB provides support in a number of ways including, but not limited to:
- intelligence briefings that examine threats and opportunities that exist in media markets globally;
- specialised Working Groups that bring AIB Members together to share knowledge and exchange best practice in cyber security, sustainability, and regulatory affairs;
- advocacy on key issues of interest to Members;
- promotional work;
- conferences and events on specific subjects.

1.4. In addition, for the past 15 years, the AIB has run an international competition for factual productions across television, radio and online platforms. This annual contest has a global panel of judges and attracts entries from more than 40 countries. The competition enables the AIB to share best practice in factual programme-making amongst broadcasters and production companies globally, helping to increase capacity particularly in least developed countries.

2. AIB and the FCO Global Campaign to Defend Media Freedom

2.1. The AIB has been actively engaged with officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] in a series of consultative group meetings and individual meetings to provide insight into how the broadcasting industry can most effectively be engaged in the UK Foreign Secretary’s Media Freedom campaign.

2.2. The AIB welcomes this opportunity to draw upon its considerable knowledge of the broadcasting environment internationally to provide additional assistance and intelligence for the FCO as it prepares the July 2019 Global Conference, and the work programme that will be undertaken throughout 2019 and beyond.

2.3. The AIB has undertaken a range of work to promote the Global Conference and the Global Campaign both amongst its Members and the wider media community. For example, we have spoken about the Conference and Campaign at key media events, including the Al Jazeera Forum in Doha in April 2019, and the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum in Bonn in May 2019. We have promoted the Conference and Campaign in the entry book for this year’s AIB media awards. Printed entry books have been sent to over 3,500 people in over 150 countries, while the online edition has been made available via e-mail to over 27,000 people in media companies globally\(^2\).

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\(^1\) Combined audience figures for all AIB Members, including estimates where specific measurement is not undertaken

2.4. This submission aims to reiterate and reinforce suggestions that the AIB has made to the FCO over the past five months in a spirit of collegiate collaboration.

3. Changing the mood music

3.1. The AIB was pleased that its leading role in the area of media freedom has been acknowledged by the FCO through its invitation to join the group of organisations actively involved in developing the July Global Conference. We acknowledge the work of Alastair King-Smith, Deputy Director at the FCO, in leading the work on the Global Conference and the Defend Media Freedom campaign as a whole. However, it is our impression that FCO processes do seem to be creating some difficulties for him. These are particularly acute considering the short time available to curate a complex international conference.

3.2. From our discussions with the FCO, it seems that there will be a wide range of conversations taking place at the July conference. It is essential that the conference is just the starting point for a concerted global campaign that involves, on a continuing basis, all key stakeholders. Members of the AIB, and other broadcasters, comprise one such constituency.

3.3. The AIB believes that it is vital that the conference hears from practitioners [by which we mean those involved in day-to-day frontline work such as journalists, heads of news and CEOs at broadcasting companies] about the ever-increasing range of challenges that exist. The CEOs and Directors-General of broadcasters can contribute eloquently to the conversation and help to frame and inform the debate. They are responsible for dealing with the political issues around increasing restrictions on their organisations – whether from nation states, terrorist groups or others – and it is they who are ultimately responsible for decisions on deploying journalists and crews to areas where lives may be endangered.

3.4. As we have observed in this submission, it is important to remember that not every broadcaster facing these challenges is rooted in public service; commercial channels also face difficulties (particularly at local and national level) and one cannot ignore the fact that outside Europe, public service media is in the minority. The AIB recognises that it is important for public service media values to be showcased at the Global Conference since the UK has, arguably, the most advanced public service broadcasting system and market in the world. However, there is an equally pressing need for discussion of the very real day-to-day pressures faced by all broadcasters in the area of media freedom as they try to serve their audiences that the examples in this document allude to.

3.5. It is important that the conference, and the subsequent campaign structure, balances the needs of all stakeholders. It must not skew in favour of, for example, grant-giving and -seeking organisations, as this has the danger of deterring from the campaign’s key role of engaging ministers, the judiciary and public figures in multiple territories in the definition, promotion, and enabling of media freedom.

3.6. The AIB has provided the FCO with a list of key opinion-leaders drawn from a selection of the world’s broadcasting companies. Each of the names proposed can speak knowledgeably about the issue of media freedom and contribute to the conversations that will be started at the event. The AIB has also put forward a list of potential session moderators drawn from TV anchors and presenters worldwide who will ensure that the discussions at the conference flow, similar to a high-level TV debate. This is, after all, a
media conference and it is our view that it needs to reach the highest levels of TV production. It is concerning that accreditation seems to be slowing down the process of inviting key media players who have very busy schedules.

3.7. The Global Conference and the continuing Campaign have the opportunity to change the international mood music on media freedom. The AIB renews its offer to lend its expertise to the Conference and to the Campaign and to assist in any way that it can.

3.8. The AIB believes that it is important that the key global journalistic organisations view the Global Conference as having been worthwhile and that it has created an impetus for change through what follows. Credibility is key and thus the conference needs to be practical. It should not be simply a political platform but involve day-to-day practitioners who work in or manage media companies, including broadcasters.

4. AIB media freedom initiative
4.1. Over the past three years, and in response to specific requests from a number of its Members, the AIB has been increasing the work that it undertakes in the area of media freedom. In November 2018, the AIB convened a meeting of its Members and selected NGOs for a round-table to discuss the ways in which the AIB can best serve the needs of the Membership and the wider media industry in media freedom.

4.2. The meeting agreed that the AIB should continue to develop its media freedom initiative on behalf of its Members to:
- Gather and share intelligence on threats to media freedom in territories globally;
- Establish a Steering Group co-ordinated by the AIB Secretariat to collate information and to enable the AIB to respond when challenges to media freedom occur;
- Empower the AIB Secretariat to issue statements and lodge protests when infringements of media freedom occur;
- Develop collaborative public-facing campaigns to raise awareness, and demonstrate the relevance, of media freedom.

4.3. The initiative’s focus will be supporting Member organisations that face attacks at a corporate level, or whose employees are attacked or intimidated. This will assist Members in responding to cases with the help of the international support and collective power of the AIB and its Members.

4.4. The November 2018 meeting’s outcomes were put to the AIB Executive Committee at its board in January 2019, which agreed to implement the initiative.

4.5. There are five principal outward-facing aims of the AIB’s work in media freedom:
- Influencing governments to adopt and endorse media freedom;
- Influencing governments to put in place robust mechanisms to protect media freedoms;
- Influencing opinion leaders to promote media freedom;
- Influencing fellow broadcasters to join the global initiative;
- Influencing public opinion in territories worldwide through collaborative creative on-air campaigns.
4.6. The AIB work programme has been endorsed by its Members, including at the highest level in the BBC for whom – as noted in its written submission to the FAC³ – media freedom is a critical issue.

5. The global context

5.1. Many of the AIB’s Members face deliberate attempts to restrict or to disrupt their operations. A range of mechanisms is deployed by nation states, political actors and terrorist organisations to reduce the impact and the reach of broadcasters, both public and commercial; local, national and international.

5.2. In some cases, tax authorities claim that local offices of major international broadcasters are in breach of tax regulations and seek payments of “back taxes” of hundreds of thousands of dollars. In many cases, the tax regulation that is cited is found not to be on the statute books.

5.3. There are direct threats made to journalists – both locally engaged and those sent to cover news from abroad – that are designed to intimidate and to restrict journalists’ activities on the ground.

5.4. There are cases of a “jurisprudence dragnet” being deployed by governments to stifle the work of entire organisations, such as the continuing case of the harassment of BBC journalists and their families. This is covered in the submission to the FAC by the BBC⁴. The AIB has been supporting, and continues to assist, the work of the BBC and its legal team from Doughty Street Chambers in an effort to raise awareness of this case and to add international context to it to ensure an end to the unprecedented harassment.

5.5. We have appended to this document a list of challenges faced by one of the AIB’s Members, a significant European international broadcaster⁵. The range of incidents is extensive, and the geographic spread is wide. Similar challenges face all major international broadcasters, irrespective of the region in which they are based.

5.6. In addition to this, we draw the Committee’s attention to just a selection of issues facing domestic and international broadcasters in a range of territories:

5.7. In the Philippines, an award-winning commercial broadcaster with more than 60 years history is being threatened by the Duterte administration with not having its licence renewed. A number of politicians have taken exception to the broadcaster’s news and current affairs output which is perceived to be critical of the government.

5.8. In Nigeria, a national commercial TV broadcaster has applied for a licence to allow it to add a national radio service to its portfolio. It has been told that the application fee for a national radio licence will cost in excess of US$1million. In comparison, the UK national commercial licence fee is £100,000, plus an annual revenue-based fee ranging from 0.163% to 0.367% of turnover. The Nigerian broadcaster tells the AIB that the reason for the high fee is to prevent it from offering a national radio service.


⁵ We have redacted the broadcaster’s name, but it is available on request by the FAC.
5.9. Another AIB Member – a major international broadcaster that operates multiple language services for audiences in every continent – tells us that they are sent demands for what are described as back taxes, some dating back to before a tax code and associated legislation existed in the country whose tax authorities are making the demands. The aim is to intimidate the organisation, and to apply pressure not to report certain stories. It is a form of blackmail.

5.10. In Sudan, the Transitional Military Council has in late May withdrawn the licence of another international broadcaster, and rescinded the work permits of correspondents and office staff working for the broadcaster. In January, before the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir, the authorities in Sudan revoked the work permits of a separate AIB Member, and of the Anadolu Agency of Turkey.

5.11. In some countries – particularly in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia – we have seen a resurgence in the jamming of broadcasting signals, both terrestrial and satellite, by governments who want to stop programming from abroad entering their countries.

5.12. As more broadcasters have turned to digital delivery methods, we have witnessed governments taking down content, or restricting access to certain online platforms.

5.13. These examples illustrate the range of measures that are used by countries to restrict media freedom. There are many more. There is a lack of political will to take action against the perpetrators who are able to act with impunity.

5.14. At the same time as these specific, targeted assaults on broadcasters occur at the corporate level, there is a steady drip of anti-broadcaster rhetoric from politicians and other opinion-leaders in certain countries. Politicians tell public gatherings that the output of broadcasters is biased, and stories are untrue. They create a sense of mistrust of broadcasters among the public which causes reputational damage. This in turn can, in the case of commercially-funded broadcasters, cause advertisers to reduce or to cancel advertising contracts. There is a downward spiral that can, over time, potentially cause a commercial broadcaster to fail.

May 2019
Appendix
Media freedom issues facing a major Europe-based international broadcaster.

[Organisation’s name has been redacted but is available to FAC members.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Some 20,000 websites were blocked recently, as part of an 'anti-pornography' campaign. Among them the largest Bengali-language community blog platform in the world, somewhereinblog.net, which is a [Broadcaster] partner. The move has been criticised by many internet users and experts as a step toward widespread censorship. The recent strengthening of defamation laws with a new Digital Security Act (DSA) has spread a climate of fear in the industry. Dozens of journalists have been arrested for defamation under the earlier law, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. Attacks on bloggers and journalists are not being prevented by the government.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PR China</td>
<td>[Broadcaster] is being blocked in China. Visa for reporters are very difficult to obtain.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>There is concern over the new Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE), which governs information on the internet. It contains vague language which has been misused by the government to criminalize freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion in Indonesia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>[Broadcaster’s] correspondent is on “black list”, which is being spread via social media. Practically a pillory with names and addresses of foreign correspondents whose reporting is critical of government.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>[Broadcaster’s] correspondent physically attacked by police while covering a demonstration in Bucharest. He was visibly wearing his credentials.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Oligarchs are taking control of media houses. Online news portal B92 has told [Broadcaster] they can no longer publish its content.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>After the crackdown on domestic media outlets, the focus seems to be shifting to foreign correspondents. Credentials for western reporters are not being re-issued and three [central European] reporters have already been forced to leave the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>[Broadcaster] is being blocked in Iran. Visa for reporters are difficult to obtain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>[Broadcaster] not allowed to work.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cameroon, Tanzania, Burundi, Chad, DR Congo, Gabon, Niger, CAR</td>
<td>Equipment confiscated, bureaux searched, reporters intimidated and harassed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DR Congo, Zambia, Tanzania</td>
<td>Local distribution partners of [Broadcaster] television service threatened by authorities; signal temporarily taken off air.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Close to impossible to get visa for reporters. Activities of [Broadcaster’s journalism and production training division] being hindered by</td>
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bureaucratic obstacles. Local distribution partners are being intimidated by authorities to drop [Broadcaster] content.

| Sudan          | [Broadcaster] effectively blacklisted. |