



Overseas Press Club
of America

Weekly Bulletin: June 18, 2020

Greetings!

We hope you enjoy this week's digital newsletter, which includes:

- A look ahead at tomorrow's Zoom discussion [on June 19 with winners of this year's Lowell Thomas Award](#).
- A call for signups for the June 23 [Workshop on Covering Civil Unrest](#), which is free to members.
- A statement about the [wrongful conviction of journalist Maria Ressa](#) in the Philippines.
- Updates on OPC member coverage of COVID-19.
- [Resources](#) and webinars for journalists covering COVID-19 and protests in the U.S.
- [People Column](#).
- [Press Freedom Update](#) for June 18.

Scroll down for more content, summaries and links to items online.



Upcoming Events

Friday, June 19: OPC Award Winners Share Their

Stories The Lowell Thomas Award



Time: 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 19

Place: Via Zoom

Join the OPC for an online discussion with winners of this year's Lowell Thomas Award for best radio, audio, or podcast coverage of international affairs.

Winners participating in the webinar will include:

Gregory Warner, Karen Duffin and **Sebastian Meyer** of NPR's Rough Translation podcast for "The Search: Parts 1 and 2."

Ann Cooper, Professor Emerita of the Columbia Journalism School who served as head judge of the Lowell Thomas Award, will be the interviewer.

Judges for the Lowell Thomas Award said:

"Through its intimate telling of the disappearance of Kurdish photojournalist Kamaran Najm, *The Search* reminds us that wars don't end when fighting stops. We hear audio of Najm's dramatic last moments of freedom, as well as a shocking phone call from his ISIS captors. Most powerful, though, are the voices of Kamaran Najm's family and friends, recorded throughout their years of searching to learn his fate. Their loss is just one in thousands among Kurdish communities occupied by ISIS, but in telling their story with such honesty and openness, *Rough Translation* has helped us grasp the very human long-term legacy of conflict."

RSVPs are required. A link to the Zoom webinar will be emailed to registrants two hours before the program begins.

[RSVP Now](#)

Check out the winning podcast episodes here:

[The Search: Part 1 >>](#)

The Search: Part 2 >>

Photo, left to right: Karen Duffin, Sebastian Meyer and Gregory Warner.



Tuesday, June 23: Free Workshop On Covering Civil Unrest (OPC Members Only)

Time: Noon Eastern Time

Place: Via Zoom

Please register now for next week's safety workshop, which is free to OPC members. The first of these two-hour programs, conducted by Global Journalist Security, will be held on Zoom at noon Eastern Time on Tuesday, June 23. Another will be held on July 14.



Each workshop will be limited to 30 people to allow ample time for questions. There is no charge: The OPC is footing the bill as a service to members during these trying times. As a result, only OPC members in good standing are eligible to participate. (Those whose dues are paid-up for 2019-20 and honorary members such as current award winners and this year's OPC Foundation scholars).

These live workshops cover best practices with a focus on journalists covering civil unrest and major political events, including upcoming Republican and Democratic National Conventions. The curriculum includes situational awareness, "tactical" breathing, crowd dynamics, police operations, line of sight, safe navigation and teamwork, riot dispersal equipment, personal protective gear, concealment versus cover, and active shooter response.

The Zoom link will be emailed to participants the morning of the event.

[RSVP for the Workshop on June 23](#)

[RSVP for the Workshop on July 14](#)

OPC Condemns Conviction of Journalist Maria Ressa

The Overseas Press Club of America denounces a Philippine court's wrongful conviction of journalist Maria Ressa and her former colleague at the news website Rappler, a verdict that underscores dire threats to press freedom under President Rodrigo Duterte.



“The court’s conviction of two journalists on bogus charges sends a threat to all journalists working in the Philippines,” said Pancho Bernasconi, president of the OPC. “This verdict is an example of how authoritarian governments silence critical voices and quash press freedom.”

[Read More](#)

Photo above: Maria Ressa prepares to speak to reporters after being convicted for cyber libel at a regional trial court on June 15 in Manila. Photo by Ezra Acayan/Getty Images

Welcome New Members

Mohamed Brahimi

Professor
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Franklin, MA
Associate Non-Resident

Brett Joseph Forrest

Columbia Journalism School
New York
Student

COVID-19 Coverage from OPC Members

OPC member **Martin Smith**, along with his reporting partner and wife **Marcela Gaviria**, produced a documentary for FRONTLINE PBS covering the shortcomings of the U.S. administration in preparing for and coping with COVID-19. The program, “[The Virus: What Went Wrong?](#)” aired on June 16 but is available to watch via the PBS website.

OPC member **Sudarsan Raghavan** reported from Cairo for The Washington Post [on June 17](#) about a sudden rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt in recent weeks after it seemed the country had staved off widespread infection.

Raghavan wrote that the country's medical union has now warned that Egypt's health system is overwhelmed and faced possible collapse, as doctors and journalists have been arrested on charges of "false news" about the pandemic.

OPC member **Judith Matloff**, a Logan Nonfiction Fellow at the Carey Institute for Greater Good in February-March, has garnered extensive media interest for her new book, [How to Drag a Body and Other Safety Tips You Hope to Never Need](#), in part due to advice relevant to reporting during the pandemic. Matloff published an article in [The New York Times](#) about the anxiety of easing lockdown, and an OpEd in the [Daily Beast](#) about emergency planning for natural disasters during a pandemic. The [BBC World Service](#), [The New York Times](#), [Harper's Bazaar](#), the [Weather Channel](#), and the [Octavian Report](#) podcast have interviewed her about emotional resilience during lockdown, protest safety and natural disaster prep.

Please send us your personal anecdotes, photos, and links to published pieces related to COVID-19 to info@opcofamerica.org, and we will publish them on our website and share with members. You can also share those stories directly with members on our [OPC Connect](#) group on Facebook, or tweet us [@opcofamerica](#).

New Resources for Covering COVID-19 and Protests

OPC MEMBER RESOURCE

The **OPC** has invited freelance members to send a short pitch document, detailing their locations, specialty areas, and contact information. They have been collected in a Dropbox folder. We hope that editors will find this a useful tool when they need to find a journalist quickly in an overseas or U.S. locale. If you would like to gain access to this folder, please email patricia@opcofamerica.org. Read more about this networking tool on the [OPC website here](#).

TRAINING AND GUIDELINES

The **Foreign Press Association** (FPA) will [host a discussion](#) tonight (June 18) at 5:00 p.m. ET about the impact of COVID-19 on Latin America and the Caribbean. Jeff Oppenheim of the FPA will moderate a discussion with Katie Taylor, Elizabeth Fox, and Roberto Obando of the Pan American Development Foundation. [RSVP here](#).

A reminder that the **A Culture of Safety Alliance** (ACOS) is offering [50 slots for free safety training](#) for freelance journalists currently covering civil rights demonstrations in the U.S., a course produced by Silk Road Training.

The **National Press Foundation** is [offering](#) a free online training program for 25 journalists to help them track how U.S. pandemic assistance funds are being used. The training will be held for two hours per day from July 13 to July 17, running a total of 10 hours. The course will feature experts in corporate

accountability as well as tools and data techniques. Some slots are reserved for reporters from underfunded or local newsrooms tracking taxpayer funds to smaller, rural, or underserved communities.

The **Education Writers Association** (EWA) is [holding a webinar](#) on Thursday, June 25, at 2:00 p.m. ET. to help journalists find investigative angles on education stories in the COVID-19 era. EWA has also [posted a tip sheet](#) on how to win fellowships and grants, with a link to a list of resources. The article includes insight from Detroit Free Press reporter David Jesse and Joseph Lichterman, the manager of editorial and digital strategy at the Lenfest Institute for Journalism.

First Draft News has been posting [a series of webinars](#) for journalists covering coronavirus. Upcoming programs [in English](#) include one on Thursday, July 2 at 11:30 a.m. ET with a focus on how to use WhatsApp to find communities and stories about the pandemic. There will be a program [in Spanish](#) on June 25 at 11:00 a.m. ET., the first of three panels with a focus on reporting on coronavirus in Latin America. First Draft is a project aimed at fighting misinformation online, founded in 2015 by nine organizations brought together by the Google News Lab.

The **National Press Club** is hosting a free program about journalists covering physical and mental health crises who might also be struggling to cope themselves. “ [Working through: Revising Your Emotional Story](#) ” will examine how to work through the strain by looking at “stories we’re telling ourselves about it, how these stories affect our emotional lives, and consequently, the stories we are reporting and writing.” The program features writers Elizabeth Flock and Lori Gottlieb, and gets underway on June 24 from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET via Zoom. [Register here](#) .

GRANTS

The **Amazon Rainforest Journalism Fund** (RJF) and the **Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting** have opened [a new call](#) for grant applications for reporting focused on the impact of COVID-19 on the Amazon region. Journalists, editors and independent media organizations are invited to submit a proposal for a digital, collaborative news project that will “shed light on the intersection of COVID19, deforestation, and other critical issues in the region.” The deadline to apply has been extended to June 23 at 11:59 p.m. ET. [Apply here](#) .

More Resources

- **ACOS** [assembled](#) a substantial list of COVID-19 resources for journalists, including links to practical safety advice, funding opportunities, hardship and emergency funds, and reporting resources such as guides for fact checking.
- **ICFJ** [launched](#) a page for COVID-19 resources for journalists.
- **Rory Peck Trust** has a [resource page](#) for pandemic coverage. It includes safety guidelines, funding sources, job opportunities and online training videos.
- The **Freelance Audio Fund** is [providing](#) emergency relief to the professional audio community impacted by COVID-19.

- A **retreat center in California** is providing artist residency for writers, photographers and artists needing some time without distractions to work on a project. [The Evered House](#) is located in Flamingo Heights, near the Joshua Tree National Park. The house and program were founded by writer and director Charles Evered, who served as a Lieutenant in the US Navy Reserve. Residents stay at no costs to themselves. The organization offers small honorariums to help cover travel and food expenses during their stay.

The OPC has added these links to a special COVID-19 section on the member-only [Resources](#) page available to members who have logged in. Watch that page as we share more. Click the button below to go directly, or find it in your Member Dashboard under "Resources."

If you have any issues accessing the resources page, please contact Chad Bouchard at chad@opcofamerica.org for credentials.

[OPC Resources Page](#)

People by Chad Bouchard

SCHOLARS

Sandali Handagama , winner of the 2020 Jerry Flint Fellowship for International Business Reporting, has landed an internship at CoinDesk. She will serve as reporter for the news site's global macro and policy coverage on blockchain-based digital assets.

Derek Kravitz , OPC board member and the OPC Foundation's 2014 winner of the Harper's Magazine Scholarship, has been awarded a 2020-21 Magic Grant from the Brown Institute for Media Innovation, a collaboration between Stanford University's School of Engineering and the Columbia Journalism School. His project, the COVID-19 FOIA Repository, began as a 2019-2020 Magic Grant that has now shifted its focus to reporting on how local governments were responding to the pandemic. The team will continue its work, issuing targeted Freedom of Information Act requests to build a nationwide repository of COVID-19 related emails between city, county, and state officials. So far, the project has requested records from more than 200 agencies in 44 states, and received 16 substantive responses from 10 states totaling more than 50,000 pages and hundreds of attachments, in data and PDF forms. The COVID-19 FOIA Repository will make the full document sets searchable and available to news organizations, academics and the public.

Marta Orosz , winner of the 2020 Reuters Fellowship, reported for the news service on an [epidemic simulation at the U.S. Naval War College](#) that predicted several trends in September 2019. Benjamin Davies, who creates war games for the institution, designed a simulated epidemic to help boost future crisis management. Orosz said that the simulation modeled an "infectious disease

spreading through a densely populated city with 21 million people and pockets of inequality that became a hotbed for contagion.”

Mehr Nadeem , the Irene Corbally Kuhn winner in 2019, has received a reporting fellowship from [Rest of the World](#) , an organization founded to tell technology stories, particularly from places that are overlooked. The OPC Foundation funded Mehr’s internship with Reuters in Pakistan. She has also reported for Bloomberg News and Lebanon’s Daily Star. Nadeem is proficient in Urdu, Hindi and Arabic.

AWARDS

Kashmiri photojournalist **Masrat Zahra** won the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF)’s [Anja Niedringhaus Courage in Photojournalism Award](#) on June 11. Zahra and colleague Peerzada Ashiq have been facing harassment and intimidation from local authorities for their reporting. Zahra’s work has appeared in The Caravan, The Washington Post, TRT World, Al Jazeera, The New Humanitarian, Religion Unplugged and several other media outlets. Zahra has previously exhibited at the annual Photoville festival in New York with her portfolio, “Journalists Under Fire.” The annual IWMF award is named for photojournalist Anja Niedringhaus, who was killed during an attack in April 2014 while reporting in Afghanistan with OPC member Kathy Gannon, who was injured critically in the attack.

UPDATES

Terrence McCoy , recipient of a Citation for Excellence in the OPC’s Kim Wall Award category this year, landed a front page story for The Washington Post about the [soaring number of COVID-19 cases in Brazil](#) , which is set to surpass the number of cases and deaths in the U.S. even as world leaders brace for a second wave. McCoy shared the OPC citation with Courtney Kan for their project, “ [More Tigers Now Live in Cages than in the Wild](#) ,” which follows Swiss counter-trafficking conservationist Karl Ammann in his mission to break tiger poaching networks in Southeast Asia.

MEDIA NEWS

Two veteran journalists in charge of Voice of America, Amanda Bennett and Sandra Sugawara, [resigned](#) on June 15 following the congressional confirmation of a conservative activist and filmmaker, Michael Pack, to be the head of the agency that oversees the government broadcast organization.

Press Freedom Update

by Bill Collins

In this week’s OPC Press Freedom Update, we look at the libel conviction of Philippine journalist Maria Ressa and update the Covid-19 outbreak stats:

Philippine journalist Maria Ressa was [convicted of libel on June 15](#) and faces up

to six years in jail in a court ruling that is widely viewed as another blow to freedom of the press.

Ressa was charged with “cyber libel” under a 2012 law. Rappler, the news website she founded, connected a prominent businessman to murder and drug trafficking by citing a confidential intelligence report.

Ressa vowed that she would continue to speak out against the verdict and accused the country’s judicial arm of being complicit in the government’s relentless campaign against press freedom.

Press Freedom Crackdown Part of President Rodrigo Duterte’s Campaign to Squelch Dissent.

The guilty verdict against Ressa is part of a coordinated campaign to stifle opposing voices to President Duterte and his administration.

- Duterte is expected to sign a new anti-terrorism law, which proposes to fight “extremist” elements in the country, though media fear it will give the government even broader powers to target Philippine journalists
- Ressa and her colleague, Reynaldo Santos, Jr., were convicted retroactively by a law originally created to combat hacking and cybersex attacks. The scope of the law was widened to include different forms of speech that could be considered libelous, including those by private citizens on social media.
- Rappler is not the only media outlet caught up in the government crackdown. The country’s largest TV network, ABC-CBN, was shut down by the telecommunications regulator when its license expired in May 2020.
- The Philippines currently ranks 134th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index, which reflects the dangerous environment for the country’s journalists since the 2012 law was passed.

U.S. Measured in its Response to the Ressa Verdict.

“The United States is concerned by the trial court’s verdict against journalists Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos and calls for resolution of the case in a way that reinforces the U.S. and Philippines’ long shared commitment to freedom of expression, including for members of the press,” said U.S. State Department spokesperson [Morgan Ortagus in a statement](#) .

International groups, including press freedom and human rights advocates, weighed in with much stronger condemnations.

- “This conviction is an affront to the rule of law, a stark warning to the press and a blow to democracy in the Philippines,” said human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, who represents Ressa.
- “We expect the Philippines like all other countries to uphold its international rights obligations and protect and promote fundamental freedoms,” said a statement from the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), the EU’s diplomatic arm.
- The UN called on the Philippines courts to reverse the decisions. “...the law

used to convict Ressa, and the journalists who authored the article which led to their prosecution, is plainly inconsistent with Philippines' obligations under international law," said David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur.

Covid-19 Update: 342 press freedom violations, including 135 arrests, related to media coverage of the global pandemic. Governments around the world are leveraging Covid-19 to restrict the free flow of information among democratic and autocratic states. The global health crisis has enabled governments "to exercise control over the media on the pretext of preventing the spread of disinformation," said a report by the International Press Institute in Vienna. The IPI has logged 342 press freedom violations since mid-February. The violations, which include 135 arrests, include arrests/charges, censorship, restricting access to information, verbal/physical attacks and excessive "fake news" regulation.

[Read More](#)

[Read More Press Freedom News](#)

