



Overseas Press Club  
*of America*

## Weekly Bulletin: May 14, 2020

### Greetings!

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

- A reminder about the OPC's online discussion tonight (May 14) with Krithika Varagur about "[Saudi Arabia's Global Religious Campaign](#)."
- Commentary from OPC Award winner Atish Saha about [enforced disappearances in Bangladesh](#).
- The OPC's call for [more support for press freedom advocates](#) around the world.
- Updates on OPC member coverage of COVID-19.
- [Resources](#) and webinars for journalists covering COVID-19.
- [People Column](#).
- [Press Freedom Updates](#).

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

May 14:  
Saudi Arabia's Global Religious Campaign  
A Book Night with Krithika Varagur

**Time:** 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

**Place:** Online via Zoom

***RSVP using the button below to receive a link via email to join this discussion.***

Everyone talks about “Saudi money,” but no one really knows what it means. Journalist Krithika Varagur, an OPC

member and 2019 Sally Jacobsen Fellowship winner, connected the dots on Saudi Arabia’s 20th century campaign to propagate its brand of ultraconservative Islam worldwide in her new book *The Call: Inside the Global Saudi Religious Project* .



On May 14, Varagur will share her insights about Saudi influence in the Muslim world as reported from Nigeria, Indonesia, and Kosovo. In *The Call* , she traces the campaign’s complex history and diverse effects, from a Riyadh university in Jakarta to a beleaguered Saudi movement in Nigeria.

OPC Second Vice President Christopher Dickey will moderate.

Varagur is an American journalist and National Geographic explorer who writes mainly about religion and politics in Southeast Asia. Her work has appeared in The Guardian, The Atlantic, The New York Times, The New York Review of Books, The Financial Times, and more.

[Click here to read more about Varagur’s book >>](#)

Dickey is the Paris-based world news editor for The Daily Beast. Previously he served as the Middle East bureau chief for Newsweek, and before that, for The Washington Post. His critique of “MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed Bin Salman,” was published recently on the cover of the New York Times Book Review.

[RSVP Now](#)

## Many Bangladeshis Fear Being Abducted During the Pandemic

by Atish Saha

Police in Bangladesh arrested photojournalist and editor

Shafiqul Islam Kajol on May 3 after he disappeared under suspicious circumstances for 53 days.

Kajol went missing on March 10 after a parliamentary member from the ruling Awami League, Saifuzzaman Shikhor, filed a case against him under the country's restrictive Digital Security Act (DSA), for sharing a story alleging abuses by himself and others linked to his party.



Video footage at the time of the incident showed people surrounding Kajol's motorbike as he was about to leave his office in the capital that evening. His family members, including his wife Julia Ferdous and two children, Monorom Polok and Poushi, left no stone unturned in their search to find the missing journalist over the next several weeks.

Kajol's ordeal began when the daily news organization Manab Zamin published a story investigating Jubo Mahila League leader Shamima Nur Papia's activities and links to the Awami League. Many people, including Kajol, shared this story on their Facebook feeds, inserting names into the story, including Saifuzzaman Shikhor, who filed DSA cases against the editor of Manab Zamin and 30 others, including Kajol. The next day, Kajol disappeared.

[Read More](#)

## OPC Calls for Support for Press Freedom Advocates

Though World Press Freedom Day is now behind us, the Overseas Press Club asks that people join us in supporting global advocates for press freedom, free speech, and human rights.

Those advocates continue the fight for the timeless principles of press freedom; underscore the urgent need for reporter's access to information during the coronavirus pandemic; push back against the constant attacks on the media, and sound the call for journalist safety, including the hundreds of imprisoned journalists worldwide.

"The pandemic has given rise to a second pandemic of misinformation, from harmful health advice to wild conspiracy theories" says Antonio Guterres,

secretary general, United Nations. “The press provides the antidote: verified, scientific-based news and analysis.”

[Read More](#)

## COVID-19 Coverage from OPC Members

OPC member **Shannon Sims**, economy and government editor for Latin America at Bloomberg News, has been covering [political fallout in Brazil](#) stemming from President Jair Bolsonaro’s response to the pandemic. She wrote on May 7 that Bolsonaro has “made a point of being as contrarian as possible during the pandemic, refusing public-health guidance even as Brazil’s hospitals are overwhelmed and gravediggers work as fast as they can to bury the dead.” Sims recounts the president’s ongoing political crisis that has split his base, thrown his cabinet into disarray, “stalled his political agenda, exacerbated his poor relationship with Congress, and left him in a battle with the Supreme Court and under federal criminal investigation.”

OPC member **Omnia Al Desoukie** is covering pandemic news and other stories within the GCC from her base in Dubai, recently filing a [piece for EFE](#) about the racing efforts by the UAE based airlines to find solutions to revive traveling. The Emirati airlines were among the first to announce screening efforts for coronavirus infections. Dubai-based Emirates conducted on-site tests in April on passengers bound for Tunisia with results returned in 10 minutes. The company said it was the first in the world to do on-site medical tests to satisfy countries that require COVID-19 testing before entry. The airline Etihad of Abu Dhabi also announced it would use equipment to detect symptoms at check-in counters. Al Desoukie also wrote for EFE about the pandemic’s impact on travel and tourism sectors, with estimated losses up to \$2.7 trillion and 100 million jobs.

OPC member **Ceylan Yeginsu**, a London-based reporter for The New York Times, is covering the pandemic’s impact on the U.K. She filed a [piece on May 10](#) about how the coronavirus is disproportionately affecting minority communities, including the emerging hot spot of Birmingham where a study by the National Health Service found that 16 percent of coronavirus victims who died up to the week of April 17 came from ethnic minority backgrounds, and out of more than 100 health workers in the city who died from the virus, 63 percent have been identified as from those backgrounds. On May 11, Yeginsu wrote about the prospect of [U.K schools reopening in June](#) and whether parents will send their children back despite lingering risks.

OPC member **Amy Mackinnon** has been co-hosting [Don’t Touch Your Face](#), a podcast about the COVID-19 pandemic produced by Foreign Policy magazine. On the most recent episode, she and co-host James Palmer talked to Nir Eyal, the director of Rutgers University’s Center for Population-Level Bioethics, and Josh Morrison, a co-founder of vaccine trial advocacy group 1 Day Sooner.

OPC member **Darren McDermott** of Brunswick Group posted a piece on Facebook about life in a New York suburb during the pandemic, titled “Why the Firetrucks Made Me Cry.” He wrote about a new tradition in which firetrucks and police cars festooned with balloons on Saturday drive by the houses of kids celebrating birthdays that week. He recalled hearing the sirens and feeling overcome with emotion, writing “I realized the depth of unrecognized grief I am feeling – and how hard it is to do on our own. Not for many specific friends or loved ones – part of the tragedy of this pandemic is the disparity of its impact.” “We will do it on our own, and find ways to do it together,” he added. “The NYC 7:00 p.m. clap will continue, and the fire trucks in Hastings on Hudson and other towns will parade through. For us as New Yorkers, family members, colleagues... I guess what I think is that we must remember to be kind and patient with each other. Many of us are hurt in ways we may not even realize.”

***Please send us your personal anecdotes, photos, and links to published pieces related to COVID-19 to [info@opcofamerica.org](mailto: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

The **International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF)** has [launched a survey](#) aimed at understanding how the COVID-19 crisis is impacting journalists’ online experiences, with a focus on how to better understand online harassment trends and changes. The organization wants help to spread the word and get as many individual journalists as possible to complete this anonymous survey. The survey will be open online from **May 11 to May 25**, and is a collaboration between the IWMF’s Online Harassment Advisory Board, in partnership with OnlineSOS, the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality, Code for Africa, the Committee to Protect Journalists, fraycollege (an African journalism and media research organization), Indira Cornelio from #SeguDigital, PEN America, and WanaData.

**Photographers Without Borders** has compiled [two key resources](#) for COVID-19, one for [storytellers](#), and another for [activists](#) responding at the frontlines all around the world. The storyteller resource includes resources for mental health, emergency relief grants, and resources for freelance photographers.

There is one more day left to apply for assistance from the [ACOS Alliance](#) for 16 freelance journalists to access an online safety training course produced by [Silk Road](#). **The deadline to apply is Friday, May 15.** Starting on June 1, selected participants will have free access for 30 days to five online course modules covering different work in hostile environments: Travel and Personal Safety, Terrorism and Public Disorder, Frontline Conflict Survival, Disaster and Extreme Environments, and First Aid.

Apply

The **Investigative Reporters and Editors** (IRE) has posted new [webinars and tipsheets](#) for journalists covering the pandemic, including:

- [Kat McGrory of the Tampa Bay Times on how politics can influence COVID-19 data](#)
- [Tracking COVID-19 in nursing homes](#)
- [Government Accountability](#)

## More Resources

- The group A Culture of Safety (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.

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](mailto:chad@opcofamerica.org) for credentials.**

[OPC Resources Page](#)

## People by Emily Brown and Chad Bouchard

### SCHOLARS

**Serginho Roosblad**, winner of the 2017 Harper's Magazine Scholarship in memory of I.F. Stone, was director and director of photography for "Jonathan Calm Revisits 'Green Book' Locations in Search of America's Past and Present," for PBS affiliate KQED. The film was just nominated for an Emmy in the Historic/Cultural-Feature/Segment category of the 49th Annual Northern California Area Emmy Awards. San Francisco/ Northern California is one of the nineteen chapters awarding regional Emmy statuettes. The video told the story of photographer and Stanford professor Jonathan Calm who documented all so-



called ‘Green Book’ sites in the U.S., as part of a growing archive, and exploring the myth of the road trip as a “quintessential American freedom.”

An article written by **Amelia Nierenberg**, the 2018 Flora Lewis Fellowship winner, in *The New York Times* on the effect of the climate crisis on New Mexico’s Hatch chile crop will be included in *Best American Food Writing 2020*, edited by J. Kenji López-Alt and Silvia Killingsworth.

## AWARDS

OPC Governor **Azmat Khan** was [named](#) a winner of an Andrew Carnegie Fellowship. Khan, an Arizona State University Future of War Fellow with New America, will receive \$200,000 to fund up to two years for research and writing. She is one of 27 winners this year, selected from a competitive pool of 322 nominations. In an interview on the ASU website, Khan said she is working on a new book for Random House, titled *Precision Strike*, an “investigation into the true human costs and implications of America’s ‘precision’ air wars around the world.” She said she is studying ground-level data she has collected as well as civilian casualty data obtained from the U.S. military through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.


## Press Freedom Update

by Emily Brown and Chad Bouchard

The **Washington Post Press Freedom Partnership** on May 11 called for more protection for Asian and Asian American journalists from racially-motivated attacks. In a full-page ad in *The Washington Post*, the press freedom group said “the escalating violence and hateful rhetoric used against Asian and Asian American journalists is not only a violation of press freedom, it also prevents comprehensive and thoughtful journalism from reaching those who need it most.”

Police in Ahmedabad, in India’s western Gujarat state, on May 11 [detained](#) journalist **Dhaval Patel** and charged him the next day with sedition and spreading false news amid the COVID-19 pandemic, according to his lawyer Anand Yagnik. The charges are linked to an article Patel, editor of the news website *Face of Nation*, published on May 7 alleging that Gujarat’s chief minister may be replaced due to his handling of the pandemic. Police in India have arrested several journalists since the beginning of the pandemic, including Rahul Kulkarni in Mumbai on April 15, Andrew Sam Raja Pandian on Tamil Nadu on April 23, and Zubair Ahmed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

WE NEED A **DIVERSE NEWS MEDIA**  
TO **BRING US THE TRUTH.**



The escalating violence and hateful rhetoric used against Asian and Asian American journalists is not only a violation of press freedom, it also prevents comprehensive and thoughtful journalism from reaching those who need it most.

WE CALL FOR THE **FULL PROTECTION OF**  
**ASIAN AND ASIAN AMERICAN JOURNALISTS**  
FROM **RACIALLY-MOTIVATED ATTACKS.**

RFI THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB REPORTERS COMMITTEE INTERNATIONAL PRESS FEDERATION CPJ

 The Press Freedom Partnership is a public service initiative from *The Washington Post* to promote press freedom and raise awareness of the rights of journalists worldwide who are in pursuit of the truth.

[www.wapo.si/pressfreedom](http://www.wapo.si/pressfreedom)  
@wppressfreedom

on April 28.

The OPC on May 7 called on law enforcement authorities in Bangladesh to free jailed photojournalist **Shafiqul Islam Kajol** and dismiss the case against him, in addition to investigating the circumstances behind his disappearance. Kajol, 50, was arrested May 3 after disappearing for 53 days. News media reported that Kajol was arrested while attempting to cross the border from India. Kajol, the editor of Pakkhakal magazine, and 31 other journalists were charged with criminal defamation under the country's Digital Security Act on March 9, according to the Dhaka Tribune. According to journalist colleagues, Kajol shared a story from the daily Manab Zamin on his Facebook page and added the names of other government officials, which triggered the DSA filing. Human Rights Watch and the United Nations, which led a 2018 coalition of 56 organizations, have repeatedly spoken out against the enforced disappearances in Bangladesh believed to be led by government security forces.

Police in **Hong Kong** have been [attacking and detaining journalists](#) covering the country's pro-democracy protests. On May 10, police detained two student journalists, aged 13 and 16, from Student Depth Media, an online news outlet founded by secondary school students, and threatened to report their parents for criminal negligence. Police also pepper sprayed a photographer from newspaper Apple Daily. "Hong Kong police must allow journalists to do their jobs, and stop attacking and harassing them for covering protests," said Steven Butler, the Asia program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

The **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** is [restricting journalist visas](#) issued to Chinese citizens in retaliation against China's restrictions on U.S. journalists in March. The department announced on May 8 that Chinese nationals working for foreign news outlets would only be able to receive 90-day work visas. "This move by the United States only invites further harsh retaliation from China, where the expulsions of U.S. journalists have already devastated U.S.-owned news operations in the country, partly blinding the world to China's response to COVID-19," said Steven Butler of the CPJ. China revoked the press credentials of at least 13 U.S. journalists in March, after the U.S. designated five Chinese state media organizations as foreign missions and imposed a limit on the number of visas issued to Chinese citizens working for those outlets.

On May 5, the Philippines National Telecommunications Commission [shut down ABS-CBN](#), the country's largest news broadcaster. The move comes after President Duterte repeatedly threatened the station, saying in 2019 that "Your franchise will end next year. If you expect it to be renewed, I'm sorry. I will see to it that you're out." The Committee to Protect Journalists wrote an open letter to Duterte calling for the station to be reopened. "The closure order amounts to an attack on independent media and a clear and present danger to press freedom in the Philippines," wrote Joel Simon, CPJ's executive director.



Read more Press Freedom news coverage, including this week's Press Freedom Update, on the OPC website via the link below.



Press Freedom News

