

Minutes – CPG on France, 7th January 2016

MSP in attendance: Christian Allard MSP, Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop MSP, Richard Baker MSP, Cameron Buchanan MSP, Jamie McGrigor MSP, Other attendees : Terry Anderson (cartoonist), Anne Grévin, Vanessa Bismuth, David Lusseau, Adèle Mortier, Anne-Colette Lequet, Sarah Masson, Stéphanie Allard, Niall MacDonald, Antje Branding, Carole Teale, Tom Wight, Franck Arnold, Christian Albuissou, Lisa Gordon, Lindsay Combs

Meeting begins, 13:00

1. Welcome

The AGM was opened by Christian Allard MSP, Convener of the CPG on France, who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Malcolm Chisholm MSP

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4. Discussion led by Terry Anderson, Professional Cartoonist, board member of Cartoonists Rights Network International on Charlie Hebdo attacks in 7th January 2015, freedom of expression and where we are now.

Terry Anderson comments images and slides he prepared for the CPG meeting.

Charlie Hebdo attacks showed to the world that cartoonists are among the first people targeted by extremists and fundamentalists. The Cartoonists Rights Network International exists to answer the question whether or not there is a genuine threat. The answer is yes. The situation today is not good for cartoonists. They are still threatened and persecuted in several countries all around the world. In certain parts of the world, cartoonists are quite literally dying for their art, as well as being beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and impoverished. Cartoonists Rights Network International exists to champion their cause, leading the fight to protect the free speech and human rights of political cartoonists, and the people they give voice to, around the globe.

It should not be surprising that these cartoonists are frequently the first journalists targeted by extremists and tyrants. Cartoonists and their caricatures create a kind of visual shorthand that's easily understood and shared among people, and not so easily blocked or censored; even in places where press and personal freedom is tightly restricted. Cartoonists are still taken in prison today (Iran, Algeria, China...) Terry Anderson explained that all details on these cases are available on the CRNI website <http://cartoonistsrights.org/category/our-clients/under-threat/>

Terry Anderson focused his presentation on Atena Farghadani (Iran), the recipient of the CRNI Courage in Cartooning Award and whose release is a top priority for the network. <http://cartoonistsrights.org/crni-courage-in-cartooning-award-presented-to-imprisoned-artist-activist-aten-farghadani-before-audience-of-international-cartoonists/>

An Amnesty International campaign and a petition exist to defend Atena Farghadani <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/iran-atenafarghadani-prison-cartoon-womens-rights-activist>

Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop declared cartoons are about fundamental truth as culture is about fundamental truth. The assault on the Charlie Hebdo offices was an appalling act of terrorism and an attack on the freedom of expression, centrepiece of the European Convention of Human Rights. She says the Scottish government is using cartoonists for some work, to explain, capture moments.

Terry Anderson explains Scotland has a very strong cartoons' heritage. It is sometimes difficult for cartoonists to live from their work and to be used as press contributors as there is no money for it anymore.

Christian Allard MPS and members of the CPG discussed the opportunity, in the near future, to organise a "cartoons' festival" which would involve French and Scottish cartoonists. The CPG will think of a way to arrange such an event.

5. Any other business

No other business discussed.

6. Networking and Opportunity to look at articles, writings and cartoons from those who could not attend.

Christian Allard MSP, convener of the cross-party group on France, closed the meeting at 13:40.