

weltzeit

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SPECIAL
EDITION

DEUTSCHE WELLE
GLOBAL MEDIA
FORUM

FIGHTING WAR 2.0

WITH

SMART MOBS

AND

TWITTER



Tanks and Twitters

Digitization, on-demand, Web 2.0: the media world has changed dramatically over the past few years. The DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM from 3 to 5 June in Bonn will examine this rapid technological advance and discuss the challenges it poses for “Conflict Prevention in the Multimedia Age”. Around 900 participants from 100 countries are expected to attend the second edition of the conference. Michael Münz takes a look at the forum.

28 March. In Frankfurt and Berlin, altogether 55,000 people protest against the forthcoming G20 summit: “We won’t pay for your crisis!” One of the challenges for the organizers was to keep its contacts informed about what was happening at the other demonstration venue. How many people are taking part? Could there be any problems in the making? Frauke Distelrath from the attac network, one of the organising bodies, sat in her Frankfurt office and kept tabs on the situation in both cities using various media. With an SMS distribution list, she passed on information from TV newscasts, online media and reports she received by e-mail or telephone. “We have been coordinating actions like this by SMS for some time now,” the attac press spokeswoman says. “These days, everyone has a mobile phone

with them; that makes communicating between locations easier.” Alexis Passadakis was at the demonstration in Berlin as a contact person for the press. Distelrath’s messages equipped him to answer journalists’ questions. He sees even more potential for using new media at such events. “We are currently thinking about whether to set up a Twitter account for reports. Such methods are bound to become more and more important for attac’s work in future,” Passadakis says. “But it would only be one of many methods.”

Howard Rheingold already highlighted the importance of new forms of communication for every kind of joint venture several years ago. Rheingold, a professor at Stanford University in California, USA, is one of the leading experts worldwide in the discussion about the future

»The new media environment is bringing about a revolution.«



01 Bizarre contrasts: young Lebanese amid the destruction in Beirut – the World Press Photo 2006 by Spencer Platt

of Web 2.0. In different locations around the world, he was constantly struck by the way young people in particular used mobile telephones to communicate as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Since then, he has examined how these forms of communication can be used for political actions. He coined the term “smart mobs” to describe how mobile media and the Internet enable people “to organize joint actions in a new way – with people with whom they previously couldn’t

have organized such activities, and on a scale, in places and at a speed that would not have been possible before.” As an example, Rheingold cites the protests that led to the downfall of Filipino President Joseph Estrada in early 2001: the demonstrations were organized by means of SMS messages only minutes after it was announced that Estrada might not have to answer to accusations of corruption. Such examples increase Rheingold’s certainty that the potential of wireless communication for bringing about social

The experts



Howard Rheingold
Professor at Stanford University in California, USA. One of the leading experts worldwide in the discussion about the Web 2.0. Guru for trends in user behaviour. Pioneer of social Internet usage.



Brian Storm
Figurehead of Internet journalism. Media entrepreneur, author and journalist. Founder of the company Mediastorm. Emmy Award for multimedia reports from crisis regions.

transformations is immense. On the opening day of the **DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM**, he will talk about how this potential can also be used for conflict prevention.

For the second time, Deutsche Welle will bring media representatives from all over the world together with protagonists from the fields of politics, culture, business, development aid and science. Many prominent people have said they will take part. Among the expected guests are the EU foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, and the media entrepreneur Nick Brambring, managing director of Zattoo, the portal for free Internet television. Other guests who will come to Bonn are Cristiane Falcone, multimedia head of the World Economic Forum, USA, Professor Noel Sharkey, University of Sheffield, one of the leading international researchers in the border area between artificial intelligence, robotics and war technology, and Salim Amin, founder of the first pan-African news agency, A-24 Media, in Kenya.

Cyber-terrorism and military blogs

Like last year, Deutsch Welle is again expecting around 900 participants from over 100 countries. In the World Conference Center in Bonn, they will try to come up with interdisciplinary solutions to challenges of globalization in which media are centrally involved. As in 2008, the focus is on conflict prevention. Numerous journalists will report worldwide from Bonn – and take part in the workshops and discussions. From Germany, they include: Mercedes Bunz, editor in chief of Tagesspiegel Online, Roland

Tichy, editor in chief of Wirtschaftswoche, Peter Sturm, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Konstantin Neven DuMont, managing partner of M. DuMont Schauberg.

The rising importance of new media in political conflicts became apparent recently during the war in Gaza earlier this year. For example, Israelis and Palestinians used video portals to draw attention to their perspective. Using the Internet for information and misinformation, cyber-terrorism, hacker activities and military blogs – those are just a few of the phenomena and concepts that are coming increasingly to affect military conflicts in the multimedia era. “These developments have drastically changed not only military strategies and intelligence activities, but also the way armed conflicts are reported on,” says Thomas Rid, US expert for security policy, conflict reporting and media. “In the 1990s, journalists practically had a monopoly on war reporting,” Rid notes. Today, he says, there are almost 2,000 weblogs by soldiers alone, and many civilians in war regions also keep an online diary.

Revolution of conflict prevention

Rid is a security expert at the Center for Transatlantic Relations in the School for Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. At the **DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM**, he will present his theories in the workshop “War 2.0” – the role of the media in asymmetric conflicts. Rid: “The new media environment is bringing about a veritable revolution.” The political and social consequences, he says, could be serious and confront the military, politicians and civilians with several challenges.



Thomas Rid
US expert for security policy, conflict reporting and media. Center for Transatlantic Relations at the John Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C.



Noel Sharkey
Professor at the University of Sheffield. One of the leading researchers worldwide in the border area between artificial intelligence, robotics and war technology.



01 Absurd normality: Middle East panorama with Hezbollah leader on the screen and Israeli bombs in the background

Rid observes that, while during the first US-led Iraq war image material was under the control of the big international news broadcasters, these days it is the war participants – whether regular soldiers or rebels and militant groups – who post their own videos on the Web. “In this way,” Rid says, “executions, explosives attacks and ambushes are directly accessible for everyone in the world.”

Re-defining journalism?

If anyone can make a news report with his or her mobile phone at any time and location, what makes journalists different from the new protagonists on the media markets? How can journalists use new services like Twitter, wikis and podcasts for their work? “Whether one just has the possibility of reporting or whether one uses this possibility in a meaningful way is and remains a big difference. Precisely for this reason, conventional media providers and media workers should and must engage actively with the new circumstances,” Marcus Bösch says. The Cologne journalist produces DW’s weekly program *Blogschau*, a radio series about the development of weblogs and other Web 2.0 services.

There is any number of tips and assessments of online services to be found on the Internet. How is it possible to tell whether something is a professional journalistic service? “I am convinced that topics are dealt with differently if someone has had good training. I may not have to be a baker to be able to bake bread. But to produce and sell the entire range of goods provided by a bakery every day, on time and professionally, I do.” At the forum, Bösch will talk about his experiences: “Re-inventing journalism” is the title of the whole-day workshop run by DW-AKADEMIE.

Brian Storm used the new technical possibilities for developing journalistic formats very early on. The head of the New York agency Mediastorm, who will talk about his work at the conference in Bonn, is considered a pioneer of multimedia photo journalism with his documentations on political and social topics. Video, photography, animations, audio – the multi-award-winning productions by Mediastorm combine different media to create a new form of presentation – one that did not exist until a few years ago and only became possible when the necessary technology, both for production and for reception, was available on every computer – stationary and mobile – worldwide.



Topics

- » Partnership for peace: cooperation between media and civil society institutions
- » Security leaks in cross-border data flows
- » Constructive innovation journalism
- » The media and human rights
- » The young generation: is anyone watching, anyone listening?
- » Mediators under sustained fire from television images
- » Media, power politics and post-electoral disputes.
- » More channels, more news: no more room for profound reporting?
- » The impact of new media on political transparency in turbulent times
- » Multimedia storytelling meets crisis prevention
- » From representation to simulation: serious games and new approaches to crisis media
- » Citizen journalism and freedom of speech
- » War 2.0
- » Peaceful messages and war of frequencies
- » Twitter as a power tool for journalists and the media
- » Money and media - How the financial crisis hits journalism
- » Re-inventing journalism? - Journalistic training in the social media age

Howard Rheingold feels that the end of this development is still a long way off. “We know that the devices used by people today will be even cheaper, even more widely distributed and even more important in ten or 20 years’ time.” What this means for the future role of media will be the subject of discussion by participants at the conference. —

twitter.com/DW_GMF



Nick Brambring
Media entrepreneur. Managing director of the portal for free Internet television, Zattoo.



Salim Amin
Founder of the first pan-African news agency, A24 Media, in Kenya. The “YouTube of Africa”.



Cristiana Falcone
Multimedia head of the World Economic Forum, USA.



Jean Réveillon
Secretary General European Broadcasting Union (EBU).



01 “Users are looking more and more for quality and reliability. We are going to take on this discussion”: Erik Bettermann

»We need controversial, internationally-renown protagonists for contentious issues.«

Creating Awareness in the Frenzy of New Media

With the upcoming second DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM in focus, DW’s Director General Erik Bettermann discusses the refined concept and goals of the international conference.

? What changes have been made since the first conference last year?

For 2009, we have further developed the concept for the **DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM** – with regards to both content and structure. In doing so, we have taken into account suggestions from our partners, participants and journalists. That has led to changes like having smaller panels, more workshops, more translation and more opportunities for interaction. With regards to content in 2009, there will be a focus on conflict prevention and multimedia and delving into technological media developments and the changing forms of media usage. That was suggested by many participants as well. It won’t, however, be a technology forum. The overriding theme of the conference includes topics like civil society and conveyance of values, good governance and human rights, education and development. The fact that so many renowned institutions have shown interest in becoming partners just proves that the concept is on the mark. Unfortunately, we won’t be able to accommodate all of them this year. When construction on the World Conference Center Bonn is finished, we will most likely be able to offer new opportunities.

? What are the concrete goals of the conference?

The media industry has a huge responsibility and can especially play an important role when it comes to conflict prevention. All of those involved in the media business have to realize this

responsibility – including the latest participants from the most varying platforms. High-speed journalism in the new media frenzy won’t cut it. The growing number of producers in Web 2.0 keeps fragmenting the media landscape more and more. After beginning with a phase of euphoria surrounding the many new possibilities being offered, media makers and users are becoming disillusioned. Users are more and more searching for quality and reliability. We will take on this discussion at the **DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM** and will offer orientation.

? In Germany, the industry refers to the crisis facing traditional media and the triumph of new media...

It’s not about what’s “old” or “new”, it’s about the quality and relevance of the content. People in Germany think far too often in media boxes – public broadcasters and newspapers in one and Twitter and Co. in the other. Instead of pitting them against each other, we need to combine them and make use of their strengths. Deutsche Welle has been successful with its multiplatform strategy. Reaching clearly-defined target audiences by providing them with the right technology to meet their needs. Content is put together accordingly. We have therefore joined the radio and online teams to create multimedia – while including our television content. You have to view media as a system that is connected internationally. Example: If Deutsche Welle, as an international broadcaster, produces a piece of information that

can't be found in the target region or is kept from the people there, then you can be sure that it will be picked up by oppositional blogs and passed along. We have witnessed that in Iran, China and Cuba. That is why we address the blogging debate and therefore give freedom of choice and freedom of opinion a chance.

? How will that affect the success of "conflict prevention in the multimedia age"?

We have around 50 individual events scheduled for this year's DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM. The depth of topics shows that the general theme is considerably relevant internationally and that participants feel that it is necessary to exchange thoughts and ideas. In many ways, the media is required for conflict avoidance. And conflict prevention begins at home – when people play virtual war games, there is a relevant connection to social conditioning. The fact that video games have become the most useful form of recruitment for the US military only underlines the social connotations. And when games blur the lines between interactive entertainment and interactive

journalism by illustrating recent historical events, as experts have said, then that is another point for discussion. We also have to realize that in addition to the conflicts themselves, the reporting can change considerably as well – like when soldiers write blogs or upload videos of their deployment to YouTube. That means we have to find out which possibilities are available to the media to prevent conflicts in the multimedia age.

? Are you advocating for the media to have a larger role? Instead of just reporting on conflicts, media representatives should also be designing solutions based on their role as watchdogs?

Of course it's about how the media can present conflicts as objectively as possible – and that across the entire bandwidth of social, national and international areas of conflict, whether they are dealing with political, environmental or economical issues. But it will be increasingly important for the media to advocate an awareness of how to solve conflicts with well-researched stories. Media representatives need to offer a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions, which they can later use and develop. That requires journalists that are professional and responsibility-minded.

? The DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM – a meeting of media do-gooders?

Someone like the Chaos Computer Club would probably protest that. We need argumentative, sometimes controversial, and definitely internationally-renown protagonists for contentious issues. The conference lives from the commitment of its participants – which was tellingly shown at the event last year. In 2009, we are bringing together Internet trailblazers, media professionals, journalists, experts for international data communication and data security and high-ranking military officials. The range of topics as well as the participants involved in the DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM reflect our self-image worldwide as the German voice for human rights. —

02 Under construction: the Ameron World Conference Hotel is part of the World Conference Center Bonn and will be finished by the end of 2009



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“I’m a cyber citizen”

Havana – Cuban Yoani Sánchez will be awarded with the international weblog award called “The BOBs” at the DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM on June 3. The literary scholar is the latest winner of the competition. Franz Smets, dpa correspondent for Central America and the Caribbean spoke with the spirited blogger.

»Blogs can have a great influence because they are contagious.«

? Ms. Sánchez, you have already received a few awards for your blog and it created a whole blogger community in Cuba. How did you get started?

The Cuban blogosphere started tentatively. I suppose I was one of the pioneers. There has been a very interesting development in the last year. Compared to countries like China, Iran, USA and Spain that have a huge blogosphere, there still aren't many here. But I believe that this phenomenon will slowly but surely gain importance in Cuba as well – especially among young people and those that have Internet access every now

and again. The phenomenon is still in the embryo phase – but it is very healthy.

? Hardly anyone in Cuba has Internet access – you don't either. How do you manage to get your entries online?

Creating a blog from inside Cuba is an adventure – a science-fiction adventure. We live in one of the countries with the fewest Internet connections. For me, that means writing all of my blog entries without actually being connected to the Internet. I then go to a public place to upload those entries. Unfortunately, Cubans aren't



01 The government's mouthpiece: “Granma”, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party

Offline and uniform: Media in Cuba

The Cuban Constitution of 1976 decrees: Cuban mass media are state property (Chap. VI, Art. 52). The objective of the media industry is first and foremost state propaganda. The Press is controlled by the Communist Party and its organizations. Mirjam Gehrke gives an overview of Cuba's media landscape.

Press

The newspapers are in each case tailored to an exactly defined target group within the “revolutionary society”. For instance, Juventud Rebelde (Rebellious Youth) is published by the Young Communist League and is aimed at youth groups. In Tabajadores (Workers), the newspaper of the Cuban trade union federation CTC (Cuban Workers Central), the main area of discussion covers questions that affect working people. And then there's Granma, the official newspaper of the Communist

Party, which has a daily circulation of 500,000. It sees itself as the regime's mouthpiece and regularly publishes the official announcements of the Cuban government. In addition, there are 14 regional magazines that come under the local Communist Party committees, and the news agencies Prensa Latina and Agencia de Información Nacional.

allowed to buy or rent an Internet connection and enjoy it at home. We rely on the limited number of Internet cafés in hotels – and they ask for a lot of money.

? So it hasn't gotten easier – despite the economical changes that were promised by the government?

In my case it has gotten even more complicated since last year. In March 2008, my blog was blocked and nobody in Cuba could read it. But thanks to the virtual community surrounding my blog, there are people who are helping me get my content out there. I am a blind blogger. And only with the cooperation of so many people around the globe am I able to keep my blog up to date.

? How many Internet cafés are there in Cuba?

Just a few. I only know about two in Havana that really have an Internet connection. There are other places that have access to e-mail. The hotels are for tourists – and the Cubans have now started smuggling themselves in there as well. The biggest problem is the excessive prices – between five and seven euros per hour. In rural areas it's practically impossible. In that respect, it's an advantage to live in the capital and at least have these rooms available. The people in the countryside don't have anything.

? Do you believe that the Internet and special blogs can change the situation in Cuba?

I like to define blogs in general as a gap that is opening. We are surrounded by a wall of control, a monopolistic wall, that the government has



“A provocation”

As her reports about everyday life in Cuba reached millions of people in the first months of 2008, she became a challenge to the governmental censors. And for the Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro as well, who had tried to influence the knowledge and thinking of the Cuban people whom he ruled for half a century with his “Reflections of Fidel”. He charged Sánchez for doing the work of the neocolonial press. At an official literature event at the beginning of April this year, she was accused of being a “provocation against the Cuban revolution” because she and a group of other like-minded people had called for “freedom and democracy”.

www.desdecuba.com/generaciony

**The BOBs award ceremony
Thursday, 4 June, 6:07 p.m.**

02 “In Cuba, we are like little children who need daddy’s approval before we can leave the house”: The BOBs winner Yoani Sánchez

Television

Almost all Cuban households have a TV set. Nationwide, programs are transmitted by four state stations: Cubavisión, Tele Rebelde and the two educational channels Canal Educativo 1 and 2. Cubavisión also transmits a 24-hour international program via satellite. Cuba has a 19 per cent stake in the Latin American satellite information station teleSUR. However, the possession of satellite dishes and the reception of satellite programs in Cuba itself are forbidden.

Radio

The radio landscape in Cuba stands out for its great variety: there are many stations with mixed talk-music programs as well as purely music stations. The news station Radio Reloj claims to be the oldest 24-hour news broadcaster with continual time checks. Since 1947, Radio Reloj has broadcast its program via medium wave and in the major conurbations also via FM. An Internet stream was added some years ago. Foreign radio stations can be received freely in Cuba via medium and short wave.

The exception is the Miami-based Radio Martí channel, which the Cuban side systematically jams.



placed around the information that is circulating in Cuba. And blogs are just a small gap that has opened up to give the citizens a voice, to hear what citizens are saying. I believe that blogs can have a great influence because they are contagious. For example, when young people see that there are other young people in Cuba who are

writing what they think and filling their blogs with life, they might be inspired to do so as well. I believe it is necessary for Cuban citizens to voice opinions that are different from the government without needing to have their articles placed in a foreign publication.

? Will you be able to travel to Germany to receive the award?

I really hope so, but I fear that they won't allow me to go. In Cuba, we are like little children who need daddy's approval before we can leave the house. In the last year, I tried to get permission to travel on three different occasions. I was declined every time. But I will keep trying. And I won't accept the authorities' "no". But the outlook is bleak. In a way, not being able to travel is my penalty for writing my blog. In any case, I am a citizen, a cyber citizen, and even though they won't let me travel, I do so every day in my blog. And I will be at the awards ceremony in Bonn – even if it is only virtually. —



01 “We live in one of the countries with the fewest Internet connections”: Internet café in Havana

Internet

Only just 120,000 of Cuba's total of 11 million inhabitants are online, all of 1.7 per cent of the population. On average, there are 4.5 computers to every 100 inhabitants – which is the lowest rate in Latin America. The possession of computers with Internet access is still forbidden for private people. True, the new government under Raúl Castro has in the meantime eased the purchase of computers and mobile phones for ordinary citizens. But the restrictions on Internet access still apply. Currently, a submarine cable

is being laid between Venezuela and Cuba which is to go into operation by 2010. That would expand Cuba's connection to the worldwide data network 3,000-fold.

Journalists

At present, 23 journalists are in jail in Cuba. Many of them are considered to be so-called Internet dissidents who have attempted to convey independent information on Cuba to the outside world. The Reporters Without Borders organization counts Cuba as one of the biggest prisons for journalists and has included the country in its list of “15 enemies of the Internet”.

The princess without a dream role

Teheran/Bonn – The Iranian actress Pegah Ahangarani will come to Bonn in June for the DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM. At the invitation of DW, the young actress, who is very popular in her homeland, followed the Berlin Film Festival (Berlinale) in a blog. DW editor Farhad Payar presents a princess – who is searching for a prince for her country.

At present, she's making the film "The Blue Silk Road". "I play an Iranian princess," she says. The film is directed by Mohammad Bozorgnia. Can a young, open-minded actress in Iran assert her ideas? To what extent an actress can contribute her own ideas depends on the film director, Ahangarani says. "I try to act in films whose directors take account of my ideas and more or less give me a free hand in the shaping of the roles."

She followed the latest Berlinale in a DW blog as a film critic. The German capital – "In my opinion the world's cultural capital" – and its film festival – "The biggest and most well-ordered festival that I know" – have obviously

to really deserve Chatami. Until then we still have to gain a lot of experience." On the way there the experience with Ahmadinejad as President is a good one, she believes.

She is expected in Germany again for the DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM – thus before the presidential elections in her homeland. The conference is about the possibilities of conflict prevention in the multimedia age: for example, can blogs advance freedom of opinion in Iran? "In our country, many newspapers are banned and others will be forbidden in future. Many books fail to clear the hurdles of the censorship, thinkers are not allowed to express their opinion



02 "We Iranians probably must still go a long way to really deserve Chatami": Pegah Ahangarani



03 "Many books fail to clear the hurdles of the censorship, thinkers are not allowed to express their opinion freely": students at the Ghom Koran school

deeply impressed her. Apart from that, she was struck in particular by the great number of galleries and exhibitions in Berlin.

The film princess is thoroughly political. Ahangarani supports Mohammed Chatami, who intended to stand as a candidate in the Iranian presidential elections on June 12 but in mid-March stepped back in favor of competitor and former prime minister Musavi. What does this withdrawal mean for her? The actress seeks to picture all what Chatami with his reform-oriented agenda could have achieved as President. "We Iranians probably must still go a long way

freely. In such a country, Weblogs and other forms of communication via the Internet are good ways to circumvent the censorship. That way we get directly and uncensored the works and opinions of everyone we like."

Pegah Ahangarani – as actress on the move on the The Blue Silk Road – isn't seeking Prince Charming in the grey political everyday life of her country. She also doesn't have a dream role that she would like to play at some time. "But there are directors with whom I would like to work," she says – without wanting to mention names. —



01 “Journalists who work as freelancers in Pakistan are being harassed and threatened by the intelligence agencies, the secret services”: Meera Jamal on the situation in her country

“Western media have to put pressure on Pakistan”

Bonn – She lives in Germany because she had to escape from her native country Pakistan. Journalist Meera Jamal was persecuted and threatened with death. Since April she has worked with Deutsche Welle’s Urdu department in Bonn. Nina Haase spoke with her.

? When was the moment when you first realized that you had to leave your home country?

In August 2008 I was stopped by four men on my way to work. They were a group of radical Islamists who thought that my write-ups were instigating women and that they were contradicting with Islam. They said that if I continued to write in such manner I would be killed. Earlier on I had been getting threats but I was it was letters or phone-calls – but never in person. And this really shook me. And even my family were really scared. That’s when I realized that I would have to leave and that I have no other option.

? Could you name some of the articles that might have spurred their anger?

One such example was the write-up on the madrasah. It was about the debate about whether or not the madrasah should exist and about whether parents should send their children to such institutions where children are limited to such small kind of exposure, where there’s no role for knowledge and where there’s only a limited curriculum. Apart from that I had been writing about women’s right to separation and divorce, which is quite debated. I went in detail and wrote all the laws that exist. I was also writing about the influence of the Taliban. These are the things that got me in trouble.

? On International Women’s Day the newspaper “Dawn” published an article about a prostitute that you had written.

It was a 56 year-old who had been in the business for long. She had two children and they had no clue what she really was. She was earning money

through whatever means to support them and to educate them. I thought that was the biggest sacrifice a woman can give, so I wrote about it. My editor was pretty scared about publishing it, but eventually he did – on the inside pages though, because he was afraid what the reactions would be.

? Where did you take the courage from to report about issues that were so much controversial?

It's the way you formulate a story that matters. It helps if you have an eye. I studied literature, so I like to study the social system a lot and how people behave. I suppose what is important is believing in yourself. You also need your family's support. My family is an atheist family, and I myself am too. All our lives we have been negating what the other people are around us. Living in Pakistan you had to say that you are a Muslim. I can't say that I'm an atheist in public, but at least I don't practice. People in my office knew, and that got me in trouble, but apart from that I just did what I believed in.

? What are the main problems that journalists working in Pakistan face?

There are a lot of restrictions and censorship on Pakistani media. There are certain things that you can't talk about in your live broadcast or your newspaper. Censorship is very effective there. The government has their own way of going about things. They'll have tax cases against you, they'll have reductions in the newsprint, they'll have your programs off air, they'll just plug it out. That has been done frequently by the Pakistani government, even the democratic government that we have now: It has plugged off a couple of news channels. Journalists who work as freelancers in Pakistan are being harassed and threatened by the intelligence agencies, the secret services. And if you write about Islamic subjects there are Islamist groups that threaten you.

? What is the role of the western media in this context?

I think what the foreign media needs to do is have a lot of its correspondents in Pakistan. It is very risky for the foreign correspondents,

though. Just take the case of Daniel Pearl (editor's note: US journalist, kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan in 2002). It will be a lot better if there are foreign correspondents and if the western media keeps a close eye on the issues happening in Pakistan. They should not just focus on the Taliban but on the reasons why they're there. There's a lot of poverty and a lot of other issues that create an atmosphere of frustration and anger. If these things are put in focus by the western media it creates pressure on the government to tackle them. And then they could be solved.

? How much of it can you influence now that you're working with foreign media, with Germany's international broadcaster?

In the Urdu service I have a platform where I can highlight issues which pertain common man in Pakistan. I want to show what Pakistan really is and how people there are suffering and how they're being weighed down by high inflation rates, electricity crises and a lot of other problems.

? Was there ever the option for you to do something other than journalism?

I don't think so. I'm so hooked on to this profession, so it would be very difficult to leave. When you write it's like giving words to your thoughts, your emotions, your feelings, your knowledge. Everything comes into one piece and that is very difficult to do in any other job. You feel like you're doing something creative, something constructive, and that feeling was missing. So I don't think I can do anything except journalism. —



Meera Jamal

26, reporter with a focus on social issues with the liberal daily newspaper Dawn in Pakistan, decided to leave Pakistan in October 2008 after receiving numerous death threats because of her articles and critical remarks on television shows and radio broadcasts. Reporters Without Borders helped Jamal to a resident permit in Germany for three years. Since April 2009 she has worked with the Urdu department of Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle. Jamal will be participating in the DEUTSCHE WELLE GLOBAL MEDIA FORUM in early June in Bonn. The workshop she'll be attending is "The role of media in peace building processes in Pakistan".

CONFLICT PREVENTION IN THE MULTIMEDIA AGE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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