

NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

February 2021 · Volume 53 · No. 2

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D O W N

**Yoshihide Suga
and the media**



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NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

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Published by the FCCJ All opinions contained within *Number 1 Shimbun* are those of the authors.

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In this issue

Yoshihide Suga faced an unenviable task when he became prime minister last autumn. After a summer reprieve, coronavirus cases began to surge towards the end of the year, as did criticism of his signature Go To Travel scheme. Ironically for a man who sparred with journalists for almost eight years as the government's top spokesman, Suga is struggling to communicate his message, as David McNeill reports.

This issue, my first as editor, also looks at plans for a new series of speaking events at the FCCJ and introduces the Club's new head chef and his team. Simon Denyer explains how the Freedom of the Press Committee is building ties with correspondents' clubs across the region in defence of journalists and a free media. Ilgin Yorulmaz examines male dominance of Japan's newsrooms through the eyes of female journalists who spoke at the Club in January.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Peter O'Connor, for mentoring me through this first issue with typical good humour, and Julio Shiiki, our brilliantly creative designer, for his help and patience.

I encourage you all to pitch stories - after all, this is your magazine. Please contact me at no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Cover: Yoshihide Suga, Japan's prime minister, speaks during a news conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021. Photographer: Kiyoshi Ota/ Bloomberg Credit: POOL/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News

THE FRONT PAGE

From the President

Dear Members,

I'm feeling somewhat encouraged as I write this, hours after the Tokyo Metropolitan Government announced a tally of 1,070 new coronavirus cases for the day, which is less than half the peak we saw two weeks ago. The lockdown-lite may be playing havoc with our social lives by closing most places down at 8 p.m., but it is clearly taking us in the right direction. Meanwhile, vaccinations are set to begin in Japan in roughly a month, which will be another milestone in the battle against the disease. Nonetheless, we still have a long way to go to get cases in the capital back under 500 a day, one of the criteria for the government to end the state of emergency.

Sadly, the restrictions imposed to contain the infection have affected business at our much-loved Masukomi Sushi bar, which will temporarily close its doors from February 1 until the emergency is lifted. It's disappointing that our members will be deprived of the delicious offerings from Masukomi for a while, and I know you will all join me in hoping that infections in Tokyo subside quickly enough to end the emergency sooner rather than later.

That means we all have to do our part, and not forget to wear masks in the Club, including in the Work Room, except when eating or drinking. Please also sign in and have your temperature taken when you enter the premises. We need cooperation from all our members as we try to offer the best service we can, while minimizing the risk of infection.

There's still plenty going on at the FCCJ to take your mind off the virus and the chilly winter weather, though, and much of it can be experienced either in person or online. In January, we had a fascinating press conference with dissident Chinese artist and filmmaker Ai Weiwei, who discussed everything from his early life as an exile in Xinjiang to Beijing censors' influence over the global film industry and the reasons why he doesn't expect anyone to poison his tea. Do catch up with that conversation on our YouTube channel if you missed it. One of the prime minister's foreign policy advisers, Kunihiko Miyake, also spoke to members, while our Diversity Committee staged an illuminating online discussion panel on women



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in the media with some of the country's most experienced female journalists earlier in the month. The audio from that event is available to members on our website.

In other good news, the outsourcer in our Main Bar, W&D, has got off to a good start, with many members praising both the food and wine. We look forward to a fuller service from Chef Shimizu next month, although some restrictions resulting from the virus emergency are likely to remain at least until February 7.

Finally, I wanted to mention that we will be working with a team of young businesspeople from the Japan Market Expansion Competition over the coming months. Their brief is to help the Club operate more efficiently and effectively, without of course losing its *raison d'être*. The members of the team will be gathering information at the Club in the near future, so if you happen to meet them, please make them feel welcome and let them know your opinions on any aspect of the FCCJ.

● Isabel Reynolds has been reporting for Bloomberg in Tokyo since 2012. She has lived in Japan for more than 20 years and been a Regular Member of the FCCJ for most of that time.

COVER STORY

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

**YOSHIHIDE SUGA'S TESTY RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE MEDIA LAID BARE DURING
THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**



PHOTOGRAPHER: KIVOSHI OTA/BLOOMBERG. CREDIT: POOL/ZUMA WIRE/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

Yoshihide Suga, Japan's prime minister, speaks during a news conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021.

DAVID McNEILL

Just before Christmas, the muckraking weekly magazine *Shukan Bunshun* speculated on the possible removal this April of Yoshio Arima from his role as anchor of NHK's flagship evening news program *News Watch 9*.

During a live interview last October, Arima had asked Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to elaborate on why he had blocked the appointment of six science council scholars as advisors on government policy, reportedly as payback for their criticism of his predecessor, Shinzo Abe.

"I think there are people who want an explanation about what is going on," prodded Arima.

Observers noted that the atmosphere in the studio cooled as Suga treated Arima to his trademark hooded glare. "There are things that can be explained and things that cannot," he said, cutting him off. Afterwards, Suga's handlers allegedly bore down on NHK for asking an unscripted question.

The interview, and its possible denouement (ironically, the *Bunshun* piece makes sacking Arima more difficult)

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

“It’s not a free press if it is all pre-arranged. But that’s how it works: the bureaucrats are in control of 99% of what happens in Japanese politics”

may sound familiar. In 2014, Hiroko Kuniya, who had anchored NHK’s investigative programme “Close-up Gendai” for two decades, was also removed following an uncomfortable encounter with Suga.

The weekly press then, too, blamed Kuniya’s downfall on an interview in which she asked the then chief cabinet secretary an impromptu question on the possibility that new security legislation might mean Japan becoming embroiled in other countries’ wars.

Arima’s predecessor, Kensuke Okoshi was also allegedly ousted after a clash with a member of the Abe government.

The near simultaneous departure of Kuniya and two other liberal TV anchors from the airwaves, Ichiro Furutachi of TV Asahi’s “Hodo Station”, Shigetada Kishii of TBS (all comparatively robust critics of the government) sparked a major political row and drew global attention to the Abe government’s attempts to cajole and coerce the media.

Thin-skinned

Expectations that Suga might improve relations with the press corps were low, therefore, when he succeeded Abe in September 2020. If anything, he has been worse than predicted, says Kaori Hayashi, a media scholar at the University of Tokyo. “I think the situation has exacerbated under Suga,” she says. “Abe was talkative but Suga just tries to avoid questions and manage what to say. He has no opinions at all.”

These qualities are laid bare during Suga’s press conferences on the coronavirus pandemic, which often seem closer to stenography than journalism. His non-answers and repeated use of the phrase “I would like to refrain from responding” has become a mocking internet meme. Observers note his apparent nervousness at the lectern, and how he clams up or lashes out – his stock phrase is “Your point is irrelevant” – when pressed to explain government policy.

“The prime minister seems to believe that the role of press conferences is to unilaterally convey the government’s oven-ready thoughts,” says Toshiaki Hibino, a *Kyoto Shimbun* reporter and member of the *Kantei* press club. “New facts are rarely unearthed at these press conferences.”

Suga’s new role has exposed his lack of political skills, says one senior NHK journalist. “He was always thin-skinned, but it is now

clear that he is a poor public speaker too.” To insulate himself from the growing flak about his pandemic response, he says, Suga sticks to prepared texts and carefully stage-manages his meetings with journalists.

Trusted reporters from the elite media are assigned in advance by *Kantei* bureaucrats. In most cases, says Teddy Jimbo, founder and CEO of Internet broadcaster *Video News Network*, Suga is literally reading his replies from a script.

Jimbo is one of the few reporters to ask a non-scripted question, at a live televised press conference in January. “I said, ‘All night you have you been asking us what we are prepared to sacrifice. My question is, what has the government been doing while asking for sacrifices. Japan has the largest number of hospital beds in the world, so why is our medical situation in an emergency?’”

The query, and the suggestion that the government was not doing enough to push the Japan Medical Association to convert more hospital beds to emergency use, seemed to throw Suga, recalls Jimbo. “He was looking at me very nervously and simply said, ‘I’ll look into it.’ I don’t think he understood the issue.”

The kisha clubs are hardly a new topic in Japan. But their role in stage-managing news has become starker as the ranks of freelancers and internet journalists grow. The only reason Jimbo got to ask the question at all, he speculates, is because the new *Kantei* press manager may not have known who he was. Jimbo reckons he got to ask just two questions in the seven-and-a-half years of Abe’s tenure.

“It’s not a free press if it is all pre-arranged. But that’s how it works: the bureaucrats are in control of 99% of what happens in Japanese politics,” he says.

Shut down

Suga earned his political spurs as Prime Minister Abe’s loyal enforcer during his record stint as the government’s top spokesman. His tenure was marked by terse encounters with reporters, and a renewed government focus on bastions of perceived liberal journalism, particularly in *The Asahi Shimbun* and NHK.

One of Abe’s first moves was to appoint four conservative allies to NHK’s board. Momii Katsuto, the corporation’s new president, had no broadcasting experience and quickly asserted that NHK’s role was to reflect government pol-

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

“In a democracy you need some ability to explain and demonstrate policy. I don’t know if Suga can maintain his power while not explaining anything at all.”

icy in a now notorious formulation: “When the government is saying right, we cannot say left”.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) wrote to television bosses in 2014 demanding political impartiality. In 2016, the communications minister, Takaichi Sanae, threatened to close television stations that flouted rules on impartiality. There were skirmishes with reporters deemed “anti-government” and access granted to favored scribes.

Those who stepped out of line, such as Isoko Mochizuki, the spry *Tokyo Shimbun* reporter who became Suga’s nemesis during daily government briefings, were slapped down. In December 2018, for example, Mochizuki repeatedly questioned Suga on land-reclamation work in Henoko, Okinawa, where the government is building an offshore US airbase, mostly in defiance (as Mochizuki pointed out) of local wishes.

Mochizuki was harried throughout by the press club moderator to wind up her question. Suga grew increasingly irritated before shutting his briefing book, snapping back: “This is not the place for responding to your assumption,” and stalked out of the room. Suga then launched a campaign against Mochizuki for “spreading disinformation”.

The encounters between a dogged journalist determined to probe authority and a government accused of authoritarianism had a mythic quality that has appealed to some. Mochizuki was the subject of a 2019 documentary by acclaimed filmmaker Tatsuya Mori and is the fictional heroine of a drama called “The Journalist”, which won best picture at the Japan Academy Awards in 2019.

Grudge match

The LDP’s distrust of the media has deep roots. In 1993, amid economic stagnation and corruption scandals, the party was drummed out of office for the first time since 1955. Party strategists concluded that they had underestimated television and the influence of a new breed of unconventional anchors, particularly Hiroshi Kume of TV Asahi’s News Station.

TV Asahi’s director of news Tsubaki Sadayoshi seemed to confirm this when he rashly boasted (in a private meeting) of his network’s power to swing public opinion against the government. The consequences of the Tsubaki Incident, rippled far into the future and demonstrated the ability of LDP elders to learn politi-

cal lessons - and hold a grudge.

The FCCJ is part of LDP lore, too. In 1974, Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka was grilled at the club over a weekly magazine article that accused him of corruption. It had been a tradition to invite sitting prime ministers to polite luncheons at the club, but Tanaka’s public humiliation - and his resignation a few weeks later - ended that.

In 2014, Suga agreed to a press conference at the FCCJ (after over a year of badgering) but then tried to turn it into a kisha club event by requesting questions in advance. When it was pointed out that the FCCJ could not work that way, he demanded the first question be agreed beforehand, then attempted to fill a one-hour event with a 45-minute monolog.

Suga has brought those hard-shouldered tactics into the Prime Minister’s Office, says Jimbo. “He is strengthening media control, using the same tactics, more thoroughly and completely.” Jimbo recalls that when a reporter recently asked a question that was slightly rephrased, “someone rushed over to complain and said the prime minister was very angry because the question was not the same. That didn’t happen that much under Abe.”

These attempts to throw a cloak over the government’s actions may not be working. Public approval for Suga’s government plummeted to 40% in January, according to an NHK poll, the steepest fall since Naoto Kan’s tenure a decade earlier.

Unless his fortunes dramatically improve, Suga may return Japan to the tradition of revolving-door leaders that prevailed before Abe took office in 2012.

If that turns out to be the case, Suga’s poor communication skills and testy relationship with the media will be partly to blame, says Jimbo. “In a democracy you need some ability to explain and demonstrate policy. I don’t know if Suga can maintain his power while not explaining anything at all.”

● David McNeill is co-chair of the FCCJ’s Professional Activities Committee and a professor at the Department of English Language, Communication and Cultures at Sacred Heart University in Tokyo. He was previously a correspondent for *The Independent* and *The Economist* newspapers and for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

PAC EVENT REPORT

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

**THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN THE NEWSROOM
IS A REFLECTION OF JAPAN'S WIDER GENDER PROBLEM**



Panelists take part in a women in Japanese media event held at the FCCJ in January

ILGIN YORULMAZ

One of Japan's first notable female journalists was Motoko Hani, the co-founder of the country's oldest women's magazine, *Fujin no Tomo* (Women's Friend), 118 years ago. The publication was launched at a time when women's lives were dictated by customs and traditions, and very few had connections outside their homes.

The monthly magazine is still going strong, and is now edited by Hani's grandniece, Yoko Hani, who told a recent FCCJ event that, despite the passage of time, gender roles in Japan remain largely unchanged - including in the media.

Hani, one of five female journalists working on the frontline of the media who appeared at the Club in January, warned that a lack of diversity in media not only adversely affects the content, distribution and perception of news, it also makes it harder for women to break through into managerial ranks and effect much-needed change in both the local and national media.

The statistics support their concerns. Japan came 121st out of 153 nations in in the World Economic Forum's 2020 gender gap index - its lowest ranking ever.

Few sectors reflect that male dominance of the economy and society more than Japan's

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



▲
 Top: Ilgin Yorulmaz emcees a women in Japanese media event at the FCCJ in January
 Right: Yoko Hani, editor-in-chief of *Fujin no Tomo* (Women's Friend) magazine

media. According to Japan Media Culture Information Group's 2020 survey, women fill less than 10% of management roles in Japanese print and broadcast companies. And of 10 markets recently analyzed by the Reuters Institute, Japan stood alone in having no female senior news editors, despite a steady increase in the number of women working in journalism.

Hani, who has years of experience as a reporter and editor, acknowledged that Japan had made progress since the days when her great-aunt ran stories on managing household finances and heavy-drinking husbands, but added that gender roles inside the home had not fundamentally changed.

"Many [Japanese] women think political news belongs to men," said Hani, a former political reporter, adding that many women struggled to make the link between their everyday lives and the decisions made in the lower house of the Diet, where just 9.9% of lawmakers are women, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Hiroko Aihara, a former reporter for *Fukushima Minyu Shimbun* and now a freelance journalist, recalls learning an early lesson about society's expectations for girls and women when she was growing up in Fukushima in the late 1960s.

"Girls from my junior high school and I were trying to negotiate with our male teachers on everything from wearing white socks to playing in the school boys-only soccer team," she said.

"This was my first battle with gender issues," she added, noting that one of those girls was Asako Takakura, who went on to play for the Japan national team and is now its manager.

Without a clear program to help women gain a footing in journalism and rise through the ranks, female journalists find it hard to obtain the experience they need to compete for edito-

rial and managerial roles, she said.

Aihara recalled her male editors' attitude when she told them she was interested in becoming a Fulbright fellow. None of them appeared to grasp how important it would be for her career, she said.

"I had to plead with my editor to allow me to do the fellowship," she said. "He kept asking 'What is Fulbright? What kind of change will it make in your life anyway?'" After getting a job at a local newspaper, she and other female writers discovered they were paid less than male journalists doing equivalent jobs.

Magdalena Osumi, a Polish journalist who has worked for the *Japan Times* for seven years, considers herself "a minority within a minority" as a foreign female journalist.

"Women are not taken seriously," said Osumi, who writes about social and legal issues. "And that includes female journalists."

When writing articles, Osumi finds that she invariably ends up having to talk to male experts due to the dearth of women commentators, a common problem that inevitably skews reporting towards a male outlook.

Video journalist Grace Lee, who covers Asia for a diverse, international audience, agrees that the sense among women journalists that they are not as trusted as their male counterparts can affect their self-confidence.

"A lot of young women start off with a imposter syndrome, thinking that maybe they're not the right person to tell this story, or they don't have enough authority to do this," said Lee, a Korean-Canadian who reports on Japan for outlets such as CBS in Canada and NPR in the US. By contrast, she said, many of their less qualified male counterparts did not seem to have any self-confidence issues. "Just

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

► Yoshiko Hayashi, freelance journalist and co-founder of Women in Media Network Japan, during a visit to Kusatsu, a hot spring resort whose mayor has been accused of sexually assaulting a female assembly member.



keep your head up,” she said.

Although relatively new to Japan, Lee said most of the people put forward for her to interview are men, even when she is covering gender-related issues, even for a report on non-regular workers hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, most of whom are women.

“Having grown up in South Korea, I recognize and sympathize with the kind of environment that girls here grow up with from a young age,” she said.

While female journalists are overlooked in one sense, in another they receive more scrutiny than men, according to Osumi, “especially when we cover issues that are more controversial and don’t please a large audience.”

Her encounter with Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi last September, when he appeared to question her Japanese-language ability in response to a question about immigration policy, invited accusations of sexism. “We are attacked more on social media because we are women, and I think that happens quite often to many women managers,” Osumi said.

The discussion inevitably turned to sexual harassment in the workplace.

A 2018 survey by Prof. Mayumi Taniguchi, a gender studies expert at Osaka International University, found that women working for Japanese newspapers and TV networks had been sexually harassed – many repeatedly – with government officials, police officers and MPs cited as the perpetrators in about a third of the cases.

The poll, which uncovered 150 cases of alleged sexual harassment targeting 35 women,

was carried out soon after Junichi Fukuda, then the most senior bureaucrat in the finance ministry, resigned over claims that he had made sexually inappropriate comments towards a female journalist. Fukuda’s then boss, the finance minister, Taro Aso, later blamed the victim, earning him an award for the year’s most sexist remark.

“Aso made very hostile remarks about Japanese reporters, and we couldn’t let this incident go,” said Yoshiko Hayashi – co-founder in 2018 of Women in Media Network (WiMN Japan), a diversity and safety advocacy group for female journalists in the Japanese media that now has 100 members.

Hayashi, who spent 30 years at the *Asahi Shimbun* before resigning in 2016, said she was inspired to help launch the group by the Fukuda case and the lack of remorse shown by Aso and other men in positions of power.

After the Fukuda incident, WiMN Japan published a white paper, *Mass Communication and Sexual Harassment in Japanese Media*, which documented episodes of systemic harassment against female reporters.

“I don’t think the current Japanese government is enthusiastic when talking about gender equality,” Hayashi said. “They just want women to contribute to the economy because the population is declining.”

Despite the many challenges, women in the media are beginning to make their presence felt. Miwa Higashimuki of Reporters Without Borders said the organisation had recently joined hands with a group of concerned journalists to create the first Charter for Gender Equality in Japan’s Media Industry.

And in April last year, the *Asahi Shimbun* became the first Japanese media organisation to announce a Gender Equality Declaration.

The *Asahi* said it would “seek to at least double the number of women in managerial positions, who currently hold about 12 percent of such posts. We will also seek to improve the ratio of male employees who take paternity leave. We will also review the work style of all employees and make efforts to foster personnel so that everyone, regardless of gender, can be active workers while also caring for their children and aged relatives”.

● Ilgin Yorulmaz is a reporter for BBC World Turkish. She is secretary of the current FCCJ Board and co-chairs the Diversity Committee.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS COMMITTEES IN ASIA

TOGETHER WE STAND

**WITH PRESS FREEDOM UNDER ATTACK
ACROSS ASIA, CORRESPONDENTS' CLUBS
THROUGHOUT THE REGION JOIN FORCES**

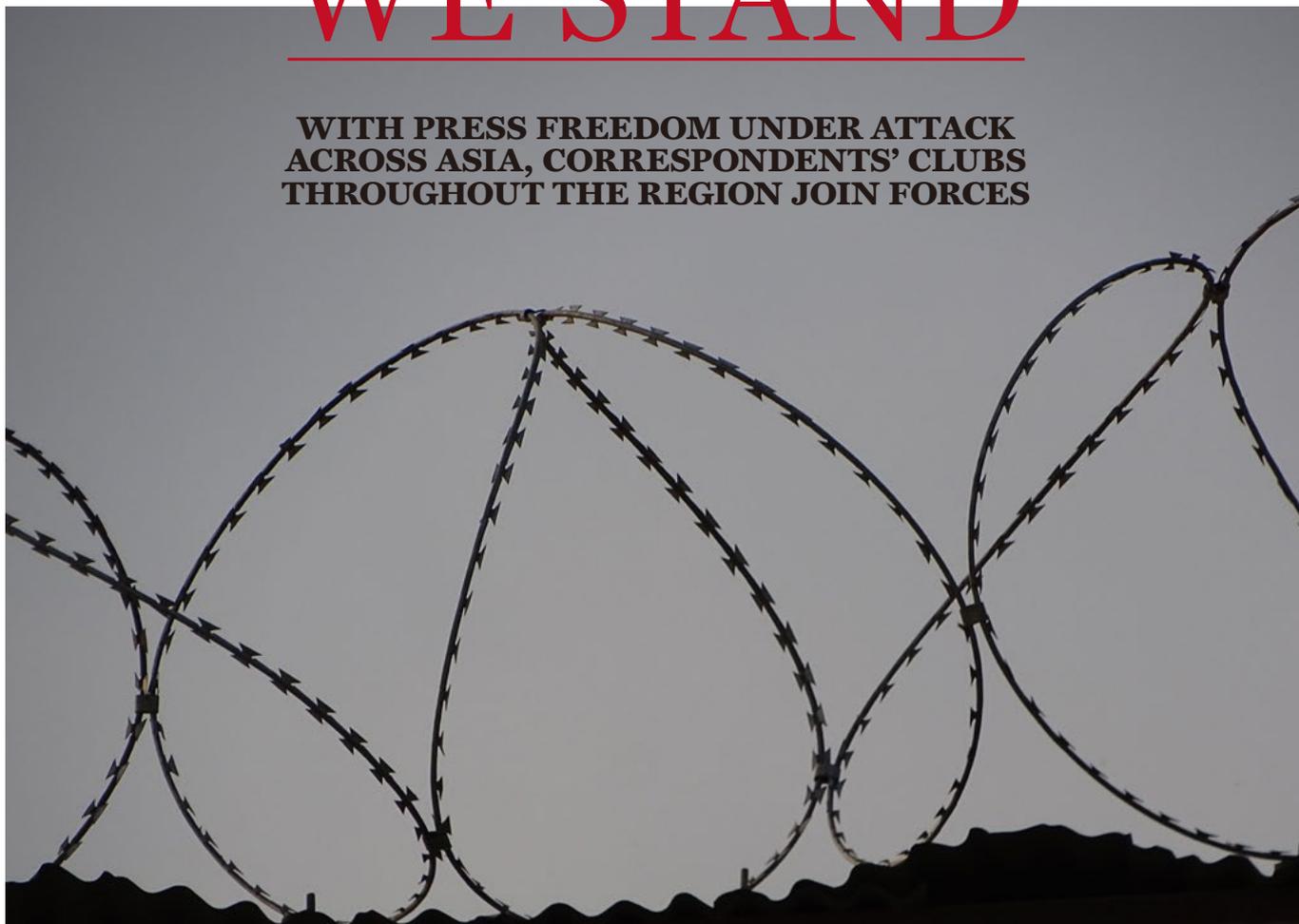


PHOTO BY IZHAR KHAN FROM PEXELS

SIMON DENYER

With press freedom in Asia under intensifying attack, the region's foreign correspondents' clubs are forging a united front.

In a very rare move, seven clubs and associations for the foreign press came together to issue a joint statement in December expressing concern about the detention of Bloomberg journalist Haze Fan by the Chinese authorities.

Fan's detention strikes at an issue of central concern to all foreign correspondents - the safety of the national staff who work alongside us and may not enjoy the same protections as we do.

But it also reflects a significant deterioration in press freedom across Asia, led by an increas-

ingly authoritarian Chinese government, and fueled by the uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic, according to the industry watchdogs Reporters Without Borders.

The FCCs of Japan, Hong Kong, Jakarta, the Philippines, South Asia, Taiwan and Thailand joined hands to back a statement by the FCC in China seeking an explanation from the authorities for Fan's detention.

The statement was coordinated by the FCCJ's Freedom of the Press committee, which has set out to forge closer links between foreign correspondents' clubs across Asia as part of its mandate to "defend the freedom of the press and the free exchange of information," a key objective laid out in the club's Articles of Association.

TOGETHER WE STAND

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says Asia is home to the world's biggest prisons for journalists and bloggers – especially China and Vietnam – the deadliest countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh, and two of the most repressive, North Korea and Laos.

Six FCCs came together again in January to issue a strong protest against the convictions and harsh prison sentences of between 11 and 15 years handed down by a Vietnamese court to three Vietnamese journalists, Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan, for “spreading anti-state propaganda”.

Vietnam imprisoned 28 journalists in 2020, highlighting the growing contradiction between its efforts to portray itself as a modern state and friend of the West, and the reality of censorship and repression under one-party rule, as the joint statement noted.

There has never been a more important time for foreign correspondents' clubs to stand together, and to stand alongside national journalists across the region.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says Asia is home to the world's biggest prisons for journalists and bloggers – especially China and Vietnam – the deadliest countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh, and two of the most repressive, North Korea and Laos.

Cédric Alviani, the East Asia bureau head for RSF, said press freedom in Asia was continuing to deteriorate, due in part to “the very bad example set by the Chinese regime in the past six to seven years,” and its repression of both professional and citizen journalists.

In late December, citizen journalist Zhang Zhan was jailed for four years for her video and blog reports from the coronavirus lockdown in Wuhan.

Alviani said seven journalists remain behind bars in China due to their reporting of the pan-

dem, and pointed out that the Communist Party's censorship had a key role in allowing the virus to spread unchecked in the initial weeks of the outbreak.

In addition, democracies across the world have used the pandemic as an excuse to reduce the space for the transparent flow of information, he added.

The Trump administration has been “the worst possible exemplar” in its attitude towards the press over the past four years, according to Alviani, who said he was also “very disappointed” by the failure of Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to make any attempt at improving the situation for press freedom here.

“Because democracies are not able to be exemplars of press freedom, authoritarians feel entitled to extend their repressive apparatus,” he said. “Japan should be a better example. Considering its power, we cannot accept Japan would just be an average country (for press freedom).”

To further its mandate, the Freedom of the Press Committee is planning to revive the FCCJ Freedom of the Press Awards this year.

As well as an award for a Japanese individual or media organization whose coverage exemplifies the value of press freedom, we also plan to create another award that recognizes efforts to support press freedom and confront the powerful elsewhere in Asia.

● Simon Denyer is the Tokyo bureau chief of the *Washington Post*, covering Japan, North Korea and South Korea, and co-chair of the FCCJ Freedom of the Press Committee.

CLUB NEWS

BROADENING DEBATE AT THE FCCJ

TASK FORCE PLAN WILL ADD VALUE TO CLUB EVENTS



©FCCJ / JULIO SHIUKI

ANTHONY ROWLEY

The FCCJ likes to bill itself as a place “where the news is made”. True to its word, the club has a long history of hosting key speakers whose appearances have often made waves. Now is the time to broaden the club’s remit and strengthen its role as a place not only where the news is made, but also where discussion and debate flourish.

That is the main recommendation of an events task force that has been approved by FCCJ President Isabel Reynolds and the FCCJ board.

The task force’s remit was to examine how we can expand our menu of professional events to include activities that are informative and educational.

Launching this kind of forum is of more than just academic interest and importance. The FCCJ needs to make better and more intensive use of its spacious, modern premises to provide existing and potential members with a wider range of professional events that will in turn make membership of the club more attractive and give members better value for money.

Critically, the club needs to generate new revenue and is ideally situated to tap into new income sources by virtue of its location in the heart of Tokyo’s Marunouchi business and financial district. By staging more frequent professional events, particularly those of a financial and economic nature, the club will be able

BROADENING DEBATE AT THE FCCJ



PHOTOS: ©FCCJ / JULIO SHIIKI

capitalize on its location and reputation.

These events should reflect the diverse nature and needs of FCCJ members who are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions that extend beyond journalism and writing in general.

The task force, which includes associate as well as regular members, is keenly aware of a desire among non-regular members to become more involved in suggesting events and speakers, and in helping organize professional events.

They would like to see the predominantly news-related press conferences and briefings organized by the Professional Activities Committee (PAC) supplemented by regular and in-depth events centered on a particular theme.

Those could include climate change and sustainable investment - with an emphasis on their ramifications for the business world - Japan's prospects as a technological superpower, or developments in medicine and pharmaceuticals. The potential list of subjects is long and eclectic, from the latest in crypto and digital currencies, to fintech and Tokyo's mission to become a global financial center.

All members of the club are invited to submit ideas for events that encompass a wide range of themes. Anthony Rowley (arowley@orion.ocn.ne.jp) will then present them for discussion by members of the task force.

We envisage the events taking the form of breakfast meetings, morning coffee briefings, lunch meetings and possibly afternoon or evening gatherings, depending on the level of interest in each topic.

Working journalists will be able to attend for

free, and details of fees for other attendees will follow soon. To begin with, the events will be held on a trial basis to give us the opportunity to evaluate them.

To avoid increasing the workload on FCCJ bodies such as the PAC and Special Events Committee, the task force, with help from club staff, will organize a number of trial events after consulting the relevant committees.

The plan is to hold one event a week to begin with, starting early this year. They will initially be held in English, but if there is demand for interpreting services - and if revenues allow - then English-Japanese interpretation could be provided later.

By putting on informal and specialised events, the task force hopes to foster greater interaction and dialog among all FCCJ members, to engender a community spirit by encouraging people to play an active part in the project's success.

Task force membership is as follows: FCCJ President Isabel Reynolds, Associate Member Kanji Vicki Beyer, Task Force Chair and FCCJ past President Anthony Rowley, FCCJ Honorary Member and Senior Advisor to Wisdom Tree Investments (Japan) Jesper Koll, Associate Member and head of Partners Group (Japan) Shunsuke Tanahashi and former FCCJ President Suvendri Kakuchi. Members interviewed for their views include current FCCJ Board member Mary Corbett and former co-chairs of the FCCJ Associate Members Liaison Committee Yusuke Wada and Keiko Packard.

● Anthony Rowley is the Tokyo correspondent for Singapore Business Times

CLUB NEWS

**ONE
TO
DINE
OUT
ON**

**NEW CHEF
TADAAKI
SHIMIZU
BRINGS
DECADES OF
EXPERIENCE
TO THE FCCJ
TABLE**



©FCCJ / JULIO SHIKI

SUVENDRINI KAKUCHI

We walked into the FCCJ kitchen to find Tadaaki Shimizu making bread: rows of unbaked buns - kneaded and neatly rounded - laid out on trays ready to be popped into the oven. Then he turned his attention to the soup of the day, simmering away in a pot and sending the sweet aroma of pumpkin and sage wafting through the kitchen. It was only when he was satisfied that his assistant could take over that he turned to me and the photographer and, with a broad smile, apologized for keeping us waiting.

Shimizu is the new head chef of FCCJ restaurant and bar service. He is the proud owner of a Michelin star, gained during the 12 years he spent at the opulent and historic French restaurant La Tour d'Argent. Shimizu served as the second chef at the restaurant in Paris before becoming Japanese chef at its branch at the Hotel New Otani in Tokyo, where his long list of notable diners includes the Showa emperor. The FCCJ restaurant staff include Shimizu's brother, Tadahisa, who has a long career as a wine sommelier and manager, and Champika Bandara, a professional chef who has worked

ONE TO DINE OUT ON



PHOTOS: ©FCCJ / JULIO SHIKI

at the Club before and won fans for his tasty, wholesome dishes and warm hospitality.

The response among diners since the trio took over in January has been overwhelmingly positive. The new Correspondent's Lunch is proving particularly popular. Available between noon and 2pm, it comprises a main dish of either fish, meat or pasta, accompanied by soup, bread and coffee.

The dishes come with an elegant and colorful flourish, garnished with fresh herbs and accentuated by the lightest of sauces. The attractive

prices, to go into effect in February, are a bonus: ¥900 excluding tax, with the option of a dessert for an additional ¥400.

Club members are delighted with the quality of the food and the value for money they are getting. "With the coronavirus scare, the Club is the best place to dine given its exclusivity," said Kazuko Drake whose favourite seat is at the long Open Table in the bar. "And now we have such great and affordable food. My plan is to eat here five days a week."

ONE TO DINE OUT ON



©FCCJ / JULIO SHIKI

▲
The FCCJ's new head chef, Tadaaki Shimizu (second from left), with, from left, Tadahisa Shimizu, Champika Bandara and Mohammed Hanif

Dan Slater, a regular at the restaurant, told friends he had just eaten “the best meal I’ve had for a while” at the Club. Bradley Martin, a longtime member, could barely believe the new price of his favourite tiple - a gin martini - which has dropped by almost half to ¥450. “That means I can order a double,” he said.

Shimizu’s approach to cooking, honed over 45 years in the catering industry, suggests there will be strong demand for a table in the restaurant.

He insists on using the freshest ingredients and cooking every dish from scratch. “By following these rules my cuisine stands out for its perfect flavors,” he said. “That is more important than even visual presentation, which some other chefs put before everything else. The greatest reward is when diners not only tell me they’ve enjoyed their meal but keep coming back.”

Shimizu’s time in France taught him that for many people dining out is something akin to a spiritual experience. He recalls French diners spending hours talking to friends over lunch

and dinner. “That tradition has become an important part of my career,” he said.

His day begins at 4 a.m. with a trip to Toyosu wholesale market to source ingredients, with an emphasis on seasonal produce. His team is now putting the finishing touches to their FCCJ fine-dining menu, which should be available as soon as Covid-19 restrictions have eased.

Shimizu, though, is aware that the unique atmosphere of the FCCJ will keep him and his staff on their toes. “We are catering to a global membership with diverse palates and expectations,” he said. “In addition, the Club isn’t a public space, so our business must put the needs of our customers above everything else.”

Devising a bold new menu for a discerning clientele and instilling a new approach to dining at the FCCJ will be a challenge. But it is one that Shimizu and his talented team are relishing.

● Suvendrini Kakuchi is Tokyo Correspondent for *University World News* in the UK.

CLUB NEWS

New members

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



DAISUKE TAJIMA
Yoshimoto Kogyo Co., Ltd.



MASAKAZU HORITA
Jellyfish



ROLAND HONEKAMP
Delegation of the European Union



TARŌ FUJIKAWA
SMBN Nikko Securities, Inc.



YUTA NAGAKURA
Crecer Management Partners, Inc.

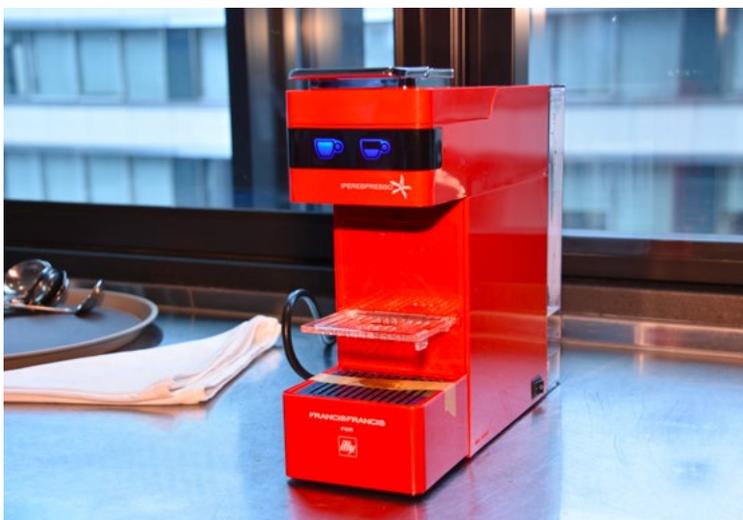


YUTO IZAWA
Izawa Special Research Institute

REGULAR MEMBER



NOAH SNEIDER is The Economist's Tokyo Bureau Chief, covering Japanese politics, business, society and culture. Prior to this he covered Russia and the former Soviet Union as Moscow Correspondent. Before joining The Economist, he reported for a range of publications, including The New York Times and The New Republic. His writing has also appeared in Harper's, The Atlantic, and Slate, among others. He is a member of the third generation in his family to live and work in Japan.



The beste of Trieste

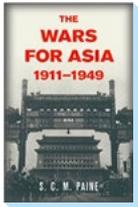
Thanks to the generous donation of a IPERESPRESSO coffee machine from illy Coffee Japan, we can now enjoy the beste of Trieste. Choose from Classic, Intense or Deca blends, all at a very reasonable price.



CLUB NEWS

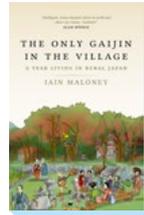
New in the library

1



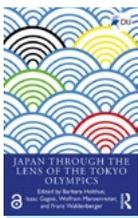
The Wars for Asia 1911-1949
S.C.M. Paine
Cambridge University Press

2



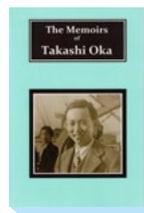
The Only Gaijin in the Village: A Year Living in Rural Japan
Iain Maloney
Polygon
Gift from Iain Maloney

3



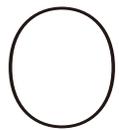
Japan Through the Lens of the Tokyo Olympics
Barbara Holthus (ed.); Isaac Gagné (ed.); Wolfram Manzenreiter (ed.); Franz Waldenberger (ed.)
Routledge
Gift from German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

4



The Memoirs of Takashi Oka
Takashi Oka
Frederking & Thaler
Gift from Megumi Oka

Join the Film Committee...



On Wednesday February 17 at 6:30 pm for a special screening of the 4K digitally remastered version of director Hiroshi Inagaki's *The Rickshaw Man* (1943), and a short documentary by Ema Ryan Yamazaki that imaginatively illuminates the process of restoration as well as the film's fraught history, *The Wheels of Fate: The Story of the Rickshaw Man*. Inagaki's film had been subjected to strict censorship not only by Japan's Home Ministry before its release, but also by the GHQ after WWII had ended. Made at a time when works of art were expected to celebrate the glory of the Japanese Empire, Inagaki and his renowned cameraman Kazuo Miyagawa nevertheless created a deeply humanist work about a rickshaw driver (Tsumasaburo Bando) who devotes his

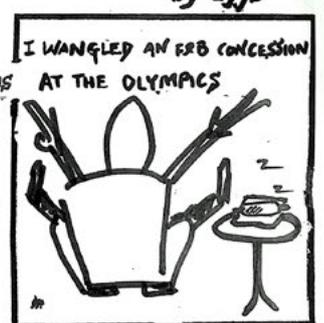
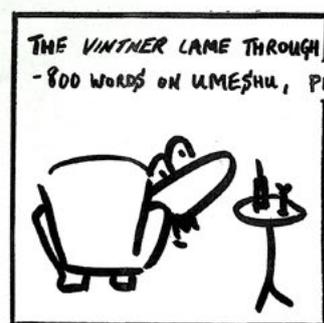
life to caring for a widow and her young son, with an innovative final sequence that is one long cut with 46 embedded shots. Joining us for the Q&A session will be director Yamazaki, restoration producer Eric Nyari and veteran cinematographer Masahiro Miyajima, who served as Miyagawa's chief assistant and spearheaded the restoration project. (*The Rickshaw Man*, Japan, 1943, 82 minutes; *The Wheels of Fate: The Story of the Rickshaw Man*, USA/Japan, 2020, 20 minutes. Both in Japanese with English subtitles).



©KADOKAWA1943

● Karen Severns

REGULAR in "Back in contention"



by eggs

EXHIBITION

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN IN PHOTO AWARD 2020

FEBRUARY 6 - MARCH 5, 2021

International Women in Photo, IWPA, is a French nonprofit association with two global missions: to promote women photographers of all origins and nationalities, and to work for parity and equality through photography around the world.

The roots of IWPA's goals lie in the underrepresentation of women photographers, who do not receive sufficient recognition or assignments, and whose work comprises a tiny percentage of all the photographs we see daily in the press, social media, museums and art exhibitions. IWPA also draws attention to social issues that are often ignored or simply not covered by a male-dominated perspective of the world.

To give more visibility to women photographers, IWPA acts as a platform and organizes the annual IWPA Award, a photography competition followed by exhibitions in major cities and capitals across the Middle East, Asia and Europe showing the work of the laureate and finalists to a large international audience.

All of the exhibitions were cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, so IWPA is pleased to present for the first time in public a selection of photographs from the 2020 finalists, as well as special awards, in collaboration with the FCCJ. The winners were chosen by an international jury from 650 submissions from 70 countries and six continents.

The current exhibition features only a limited number of the submitted images. The complete series of the best photographers in 2020, as well as their statements, interviews, and a virtual tour can be viewed online at <https://iwpa.fr>

IWPA would like to express its gratitude to the main sponsors Leica Camera Japan Co., Ltd., East Japan Railway Company and their partners for their invaluable support in making this exhibition possible.





© MARA SANCHEZ RENERO

Laureate:

Mara Sanchez Renero, Mexico
« ILUIKAK » series

In her series « ILUIKAK », Mara Sanchez Renero denounces the socio-political instability, the precarious economic conditions and injustice in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, causing the original inhabitants, the Nahua people, to lose contact with their roots, heritage and territory. Once farmers, they have become migrant communities. Iluikak, meaning « close to the sky » in Nahuatl, this project moreover explores the thin borderline between documentary and fiction in photographic creation and the pendular relationship between the visible and invisible.



© ANA MARIA AREVALO GOSEN

Finalist:

Ana Maria Arevalo Gosen, Venezuela
« DÍAS ETERNOS » series

“Días Eternos” (Eternal Days), by Ana Maria Arevalo, shows without filter Venezuelan female prisoners living in extreme conditions. The artist living in Bilbao, Spain, questions the daily life and future of these anonymous women through photography.



© MARTA ZGIERSKA

Finalist:

Marta Zgierska, Poland
« VOTIVE FIGURE » series

“Votive Figure” is a series by the Polish photographer Marta Zgierska living in Jadwisin. By staging her own body, the artist denounces both the cult and oppression of the female body by contemporary society.



© ROSA RODRIGUEZ

Sustainable Award:

Rosa Rodriguez, Spain
« WHITE LINE » series

The images of the “White Line” series, taken in an extremely natural environment rarely inhabited by man, take us on a journey and make us aware of the fragile nature of the Arctic region. The Spanish artist living in Madrid, reflects on life, our identity and freedom.



© LIVIA SAAVEDRA

Discovery Award:

Livia Saavedra, Argentine/France
« EBOLA IN TIMES OF WAR » series

With a strong reminder of the current health crisis, Saavedra's series "Ebola in Time of War" gives insight into the life of health workers and residents involved in the fight against ebola in Congo. The French - Argentine photographer lives in Paris.



© NATALIA KOVACHEVSKI

IWPA Special Mention:

Natalia Kovachevski, France
« GIRLS EDUCATION » Series

The images of Kovachevski's series "Girls Education" are intended to highlight the fundamental role of educating girls and young women so that they can take control of their lives and overcome social prejudice. Particularly in Africa, girls are still considered a burden to their family and their school enrollment rate far below boys in all levels. The French artist lives in the south of France.

EXHIBITION

International Women in Photo Award 2020: Feb. 6 - Mar. 5, 2021



© DINA OGANOVA

Finalist:

Dina Oganova, Georgia
« ME TOO » Series

The series “Me too” by Dina Oganova is a testimony about sexual harassment. The landscapes and portraits taken in Sakartvelo, Georgia, show exterior and interior spaces of tense silence, somber places where violence happened. Dina Oganova is Georgian and lives in Tbilisi.



© SNEZHANA VON BÜDINGEN

Finalist:

Snezhana von Büdingen, Russia
« MEETING SOFIE » Series

With the series "Meeting Sofie" the Russian artist living in Berlin shares her view of Sofie, a young teenager with Down's syndrome. This set of photographs highlights her daily life and shares the ups and downs of her first steps in love.



© TAMARA ECKHARDT

Finalist:

Tamara Eckhardt, Germany

« THE CHILDREN OF CARROWBROWNE » Series

With her series “Children of Carrowbrowne” the German artist from Berlin draws attention to the hostile conditions for Irish children growing up in a nomadic caravan community.



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