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## Need for stronger newspapers in Middle East: WAN-IFRA

Asks authorities to protect journalists  
February 11, 2011 | By IPP Newsdesk based on a press release

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WAN-IFRA opened its annual Middle East Conference on 8 February 2011 by calling on authorities to protect journalists covering the ongoing demonstrations in the region and to allow the press to fulfil its role in providing free and credible news without fear of attack or arrest.



WAN-IFRA Middle East Conference

"The demonstrations in the Middle East illustrate the need for strong newspapers in the region," said, Christoph Riess CEO, WAN-IFRA. "We need newspapers that are free to provide credible, critical and timely information to the society."

One of the conference hosts, Dhaen Shaheen, CEO and Editor-in-Chief of Al Bayan newspaper in Dubai said that "the demonstrations have created a new situation in the media. We can see the new technology has created a virtual space, virtual parliaments and discussion platforms to express everything they want."

The conference, which continues till 11 February, will examine the transformation of newspapers into multi-media companies and how they can succeed in offering cross-media advertising solutions.

Although the conference included the discussion over the ongoing demonstrations in the Middle East, the major issue discussed was the transformation of newspapers into multi-media companies and how they could succeed in offer cross-media advertising solutions.

During the conference the never-ending topic of whether print will say a good bye or continue its domination popped up.

Speaking on the issue, Eamonn Byrne, Founder and Director of the Byrne Partnership admitted that it's a strange thing for him to say that print will dominate in the near future, given digital developments but he also said that it is impertinent to differentiate between fashion and trend.

"There is more advertising money spent on print than digital. That will change, but there is still massive amounts spent on print. You can't ignore the internet, but the internet isn't the only thing that is going on," he said.

"What I see now in the media industry is a self-produced focus on things that might happen rather than what is happening," he said. "For the community of journalists, Facebook and Twitter are important, and they communicate this importance to their publishers. But the message gets communicated as, 'it's the only thing that is important.' Those who focus their business plans on this exclusively are foolish," he added.

WAN IFRA also reports that the International Newsroom Summit will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary in the city of Zurich between 9 and 10 June 2011. The summit will hold discussions on how to reach audiences through innovative journalism.

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