

## **Letter to the editor**

### **In doubtful cases choose freedom of the press**

There is no doubt that journalists who take their profession seriously stand for freedom of the press. In practice this means that the IFAJ and all its member organizations should support with money and publications all individuals (part-time and full journalists) and organizations in countries without freedom of the press. Countries without freedom of the press, where there are government and/or 'journalistic' organizations with a suspicious structure, definitely do not belong in the IFAJ. People who believe they can have a positive influence on those countries are naive.

However, it should be possible for individuals from those countries to be a member of the IFAJ, otherwise people and organizations in countries without freedom of the press lose backing and a platform. You have a peculiar understanding of solidarity and freedom of the press if you think that members with hardly any money use their membership only to get financial support. IFAJ and/or its member organizations should support colleagues who have to work under the most difficult circumstances.

As journalists we are bound to support freedom of the press and not those who are either a passive or active part of a power force that aims to repress or limit that freedom. This should be underlined: This fundamental rule also applies to agricultural journalists, otherwise the 'J' should be taken out of our name. So IFAJ should always support freedom of the press, even in doubtful cases.

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*Comment from Hans Siemes, chair of the IFAJ freedom of the press working group*

Reinhold Bonfig is right. IFAJ should support colleagues in countries without freedom of the press, but it is questionable if individual membership is the solution. It is better that the IFAJ work together with the International Press Institute in Vienna, which specializes in this issue to explore the best way to operate. That's how the Executive Committee of the IFAJ wants to go. We think this is the best way to help individual agricultural journalists or organizations, which fight for freedom of the press.