

As UN Scandals Uncovered, Independent Media Banned from Open Meeting on Peacekeeping

By [Inner City Press](#)

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Theme: [United Nations](#)

United Nations security guards [ejected independent media](#) from a public meeting at UN headquarters yesterday afternoon, in an apparent retaliation against recent investigative reporting.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was scheduled to address a meeting of top UN peacekeeping personnel. UN Peacekeeping, run by Herve Ladsous, has been embroiled in one scandal after another, most recently for its failure to prevent – or report on – the alleged sexual abuse of children by French soldiers in the Central African Republic, and for sexual exploitation by UN peacekeepers themselves in Haiti and elsewhere.

Inner City Press has reported in detail on these scandals and on [Ladsous' role in the cover up \(for example, here\)](#)

The UN's response to our reporting has been cartoonish at best.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Ladsous' colleague ordered ICP's reporter, Matthew Russell Lee, to put away his camera...at a photo op held just before the meeting of peacekeepers. [Tweeted photo here.](#)

Then, Ban Ki-moon's own security detail ordered Lee to leave the meeting on peacekeeping. Lee, who'd been accompanied in by a UN Media Accreditation staffer and was standing at the back of the room broadcasting the proceedings via Periscope, protested that the meeting was [listed](#) as open to the press. The guards replied that the meeting's organizer – Ladsous – had ordered them to eject him. They also threatened to use force (“throw you down to the ground”) if necessary, [see video here](#), [audio here](#).

It's tough not to see this as retaliatory. Inner City Press is known for its sharp, no-nonsense reporting on the UN's failings. Recently, ICP has covered not only the peacekeeping scandals, but the scandals and [real estate dealings in Ban Ki-moon's own family circle \(for example, here\)](#).

This may explain why Ban just stood by, saying nothing, when his guards threw out Inner City Press' reporter. But it is ironic: Ban's security stood by earlier in the week when Ban met in the UN's Palais de Nations in Geneva with a person on the US' Al Qaeda sanctions list, see Inner City Press [story with photo, here](#).

Inner City Press' Lee, who co-founded the Free UN Coalition for Access to try to make the UN more open including in how it selects Ban's replacement, said after the exclusion, “This is

called censorship. And it happened right in front of Ban Ki-moon. With UN Peacekeeping increasingly embroiled in scandals, it should become more rather than less open. But this is today's UN, UNtransparent, descended to censorship."

The [Free UN Coalition for Access](#) believes UN does plenty of good work around the world. And the world body pays a lot of lip service to the idea of a free press. So it's especially troubling to see UN territory run like a fiefdom, where journalists have to depend on the whims of those in charge.

Inner City Press, and the [Free United Nations Coalition for Access](#), will stay on this story.

FUNCA has also this month [raised to the UN the plight of journalists forced to flee Burundi](#) amid the president's drive to run for a third term in office. At first the UN would not even confirm receiving the journalists' petition. Now the UN admits getting it - but what will the UN do? FUNCA will stay on all of these issues, while continuing to press for a freedom of information act at the UN.

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