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Current News

World Music Star Emmanuel Jal Featured at Global Forum for Media Development

At Conference in Jordan, African Hip Hop Artist Speaks for Independent Media

AMMAN, JORDAN (October 3, 2005)
African hip hop star Emmanuel Jal, whose first international album, *Ceasefire*, went straight to number one in the World Music Charts Europe this month, was featured at the three-day inaugural forum of the Global Forum for Media Development, which concluded today. At a concert and also a press conference held as part of the conference in Amman, Jordan, Jal spoke of his belief in the importance of free and independent media, and of the key role local media have played in his life.

"Local radio in Kenya was the first to play my songs – that's how my music reached the people," he said. The media have also played a role in spreading the life story of Jal, a former child soldier from Sudan, around the world. "My story is now able to inspire people and to educate them about the issues, and it reaches them because of the media."

The conference focused, in part, on the importance of independent media for political, economic and social development. At a press conference on Saturday, Jal spoke of the struggle that many face in order to achieve freedom of the press in their countries, "You have to be willing to fight for free media. It's like the pain of childbirth for a woman – you have to suffer and struggle, but the end is worth it."

Jal is a young rapper from southern Sudan, who for five years was involved in the bloody civil war in Sudan. He was adopted by British aid worker Emma McCune at the age of 11, and taken to Nairobi, Kenya, where he got the chance to change his life and get an education.

Jal developed a passion for music and started rapping in Nuer Arabic, Swahili and English. Last September his single *Gua* (Peace) became a huge hit in Kenya, launching him on the world music scene. *Ceasefire* is Jal's first album to be released in the West. The album is a collaboration with another Sudanese musician, Abdel Gadir Salim. This collaboration between Jal, a Christian rapper from the south, and Abdel Gadir Salim, a



Bill Lyons Photography
Emmanuel Jal's concert on Sunday at the GFMD conference included special guest Ayak, an R&B singer and rapper born in Sudan.

Muslim musician from the north, contains messages of hope for peace in Sudan.

Jal is a spokesperson for Make Poverty History, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Control Arms campaign, and performed in the winter of 2004 at a UN event in Switzerland to help create awareness for the plight of child soldiers. He was awarded a 2005 American Gospel Music Award for best international artist, and appeared at the 2005 Live 8 Concert in Cornwall, England.

The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) is a newly-formed, practitioner-led process designed to be long-term and open to the community involved in media development around the world.

From October 1-3, 2005, over 600 media development NGOs, media rights activists, independent broadcasters, journalists, and others involved in media development work, from some 100 countries, gathered in Amman, Jordan for the inaugural conference of the GFMD. The conference marked the first time that this broad and growing movement has gathered together on this scale.

Held at Le Meridien Hotel in Amman, Jal's concert on Sunday as part of the conference included special guest Ayak, a Sudanese R&B singer and rapper raised in England.

The concert was the first in Jordan to be registered as part of the Daniel Pearl Foundation's Harmony for Humanity Music Days, a ten-day celebration in which performers around the world dedicate a concert or song to the mission of tolerance through music.

Daniel Pearl was the *Wall Street Journal* reporter kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan in 2002. An accomplished violinist, Pearl's two passions were journalism and music; the foundation his family began in his name uses both to promote cross-cultural understanding.

The steering committee of the Global Forum for Media Development consists of 18 organizations from around the world dedicated to media development issues, including Arab Press Freedom Watch, BBC World Service Trust, Colectivo de Investigación, Desarrollo y Educación entre Mujeres, Environmental Education Media Project, Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, International Center for Journalists, International Federation of Journalists, Internews Europe, Internews International, Internews Network, Internews Russia, Media Development Loan Fund, Media Rights Agenda, Panos, Southeast Asian Press Alliance, World Association of Newspapers and Zambezi FoX.

The Government of Jordan, through the Jordan Information Center, hosted the Amman meeting. GFMD is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, the Ford Foundation, the Government of Jordan, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Lodestar Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Open Society Institute, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, UNESCO and the United Nations Foundation.

Al Ghad, Jordan National Bank, Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, Aqaba Development Corporation, Greater Amman Municipality Management, Jordan Aviation, the Housing Bank for Trade and Finance, and Jordan Kuwait Bank are conference sponsors. Media partners are Link TV and Jordan TV. Koordinata 20 in Russia provided in-kind support.

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