

News Graveyards: How Dangers to War Reporters Endanger the World

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*“Every journalist killed or neutralized by terror is an observer less of the human condition.
Every attack distorts reality by creating a climate of fear and self-censorship.”²*

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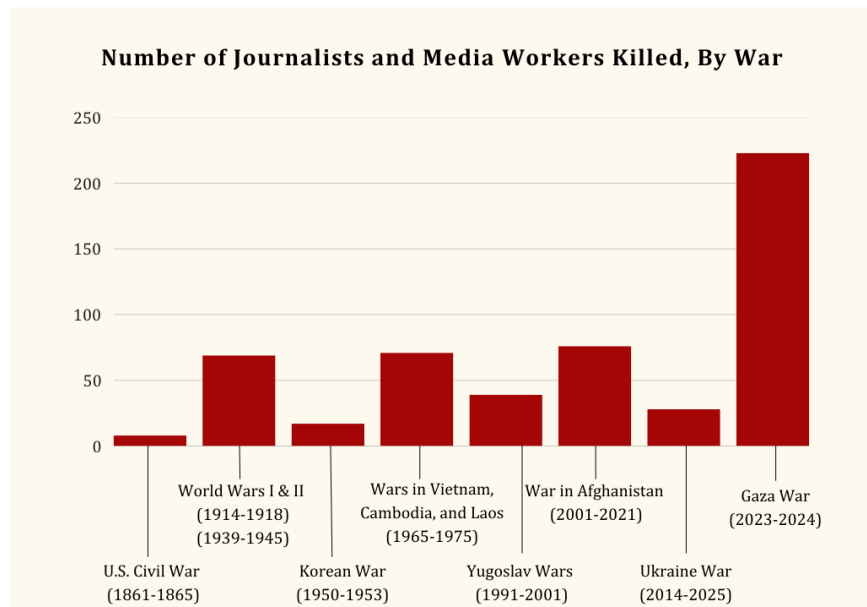
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² James, B. (2002). *Press freedom: Safety of journalists and impunity*. UNESCO Publications.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/journalists/2023-01-31/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf

Summary

Threats to journalists in conflict zones are increasing at a time when journalism is under unprecedented threat and the news industry is mired in a decades-long downward spiral. Since the 2000s, national governments and terrorist groups – from Israel, Syria’s Assad regime and the United States to the Islamic State – have found ways to curtail conflict coverage through myriad means, from repressive policies to armed attack. All have killed journalists and helped to foster a culture of impunity, turning conflict zones like Syria and Gaza into “news graveyards.” The war in Gaza has, since October 7, 2023, killed more journalists than the U.S. Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War (including the conflicts in Cambodia and Laos), the wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s and 2000s, and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan, combined. It is, quite simply, the worst ever conflict for reporters.³

Figure 1. Number of Journalists and Media Workers Killed, By War⁴



³ More journalists, in total, have been killed in the Iraq War than in war in Gaza since October 7, 2023 but the death tolls are not comparable. From the U.S. invasion on March 19, 2003 through March 26, 2025, 285 journalists and media workers were killed in Iraq – roughly 13 per year. In Gaza, 232 were killed between October 7, 2023 and March 26, 2025, an average of around 13 killed each month. Committee to Protect Journalists database. <https://cpj.org/data/>; Hussein, M. A., & Duggal, H. (2025, January 7). Know their names: The Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in Gaza.

Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2024/12/31/know-their-names-the-palestinian-journalists-killed-by-israel-in-gaza>.

⁴ “Media workers” include support personnel without whom journalism wouldn’t exist, including translators, drivers, and so-called fixers. *Aljazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2024/12/31/know-their-names-the-palestinian-journalists-killed-by-israel-in-gaza>; Committee to Protect Journalists database; Forste, S. (2006, May 31). Iraq journalist deaths match number killed during Vietnam War. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2006/05/iraq-journalist-deaths-match-number-killed-during/>; Freedom Forum. *Journalists Memorial*. <https://www.freedomforum.org/journalists-memorial/>.

Most reporters harmed or killed, as is the case in Gaza, are local journalists. The world increasingly relies on these often underpaid, under-resourced, and under-equipped journalists to carry out the most dangerous types of coverage as the number of Western foreign correspondents dwindles. This outsourcing of risk not only imperils the lives of local reporters, leaving them to stand alone in the face of extraordinary violence, but impairs news coverage and, as a result, the worldwide information ecosystem.

The decreasing number of experienced foreign correspondents in conflict zones has crippled critical knowledge and helped facilitate the creation of news graveyards. In Gaza, for example, the Israeli government's ban on foreign reporters, coupled with its unrestrained killing of Palestinian reporters, means there are far fewer journalists skilled at translating the news out of Gaza to the American public. This is especially problematic since the U.S. approved around \$18 billion in security assistance for Israeli military operations in Gaza and elsewhere in the year following October 2023.⁵

At a Glance

Journalists killed in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023: 147 - 232⁶

Journalists killed in Gaza, 2023-2025 versus killed during World Wars I & II: 232 vs. 69⁷

Journalists killed worldwide (in and out of conflict zones), 2000 to present: 1,683 – 2,000⁸

Abuses (incl. detentions and forced disappearances) of journalists, 2000 to present: 5,233⁹

Newspaper journalism jobs in the United States that have disappeared since 2005: 43,000¹⁰

U.S. newspapers lost since 2005: ~3,300¹¹

⁵ Bilmes, L. J., Hartung, W. D., & Semler, S. (2024, October 7). United States spending on Israel's military operations and related U.S. operations in the region, October 7, 2023 – September 30, 2024. *Costs of War*, Watson Institute, Brown University.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2024/USspendingIsrael>

⁶ The International Federation of Journalists counts 147 journalists killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023, while an Al Jazeera investigation counts 222 killed as of December 26, 2024. Costs of War added 10 journalists killed between Dec. 27, 2024 and March 26, 2025, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, for a total of 232 journalists and media workers killed. Hussein, M. A., & Duggal, H. (2025, January 7). Know their names: The Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in Gaza; *Al Jazeera*.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2024/12/31/know-their-names-the-palestinian-journalists-killed-by-israel-in-gaza> Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, March 26). Database of attacks.

https://cpj.org/data/killed/2025/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&cc_fips%5B%5D=ISS&start_year=2025&end_year=2025&group_by=location

⁷ The Freedom Forum "Journalists Memorial" database counts two reporters killed in World War I, between 1914-1918, and 67 reporters killed in World War II – 66 between 1939 to 1945 and one who died after the war years from war-related causes. <https://www.freedomforum.org/journalists-memorial/>

⁸ Includes media workers. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO counts 1,683 journalists killed, worldwide, since 2000. The Committee to Protect Journalists counts 2,000.

⁹ "Abuses" include all those killed, detained, taken hostage, or disappeared. Reporters Without Borders. Total of victims of abuses data. https://rsf.org/en/barometer?annee_start=2000&annee_end=2025#exaction-victimes. Journalists are listed only if their death or imprisonment was confirmed as linked to their journalistic activity.

¹⁰ Metzger, Z. (2024, October 23). *The State of Local News: The 2024 Report*. Medill School of Journalism, The State of Local News Project. <https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/projects/state-of-local-news/2024/report/>

¹¹ Metzger, Z. (2024, October 23).

Part I

Introduction: A War on War Reporters

In December 2023, *Al Jazeera* journalists Samer Abudaqa and Wael Dahdouh were reporting on the bombing of a school serving as a shelter for displaced Gazans when the Israeli military attacked again. Dahdouh – who lost his wife, son, daughter and grandson in a previous Israeli bombing and another son, a fellow *Al Jazeera* reporter, to a drone attack – was wounded but escaped to a nearby hospital. Bleeding and unable to move, Abudaqa was trapped.¹²

Pinned down by bombardment and without clearance from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), rescue teams could not reach Abudaqa. As minutes and then hours ticked away, *Al Jazeera* posted a live counter on its broadcast, displaying the elapsed time since the cameraman had been wounded. Fellow journalists pressed the Israeli military to facilitate an evacuation. Jonathan Dagher, the head of the Middle East desk at Reporters Without Borders (known by its French acronym RSF) appeared on *Al Jazeera* to call on Israeli authorities to allow first responders to save Abudaqa. More than five hours after he was wounded, medics finally reached him. It was too late. Abudaqa had bled out.¹³

More than a decade ago, war reporting was altered by the conflict in Syria as journalists were repeatedly targeted, kidnapped, and killed in the course of their work. Since then, the situation for conflict reporters has only deteriorated. The collective toll of the 2023 war in Gaza, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and conflicts across Africa and Asia coupled with worsening impunity on the part of governments, failures to hold the killers, abusers, and jailors of journalists to account, attacks by militant groups, a maelstrom of

¹² Al Jazeera. (2024, November 12). National Press Club hands Al Jazeera's Wael Dahdouh press freedom award. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/12/national-press-club-hands-al-jazeeras-wael-dahdouh-press-freedom-award#ixzz8u3srdNsG>; Al Jazeera. (2023, December 16). Al Jazeera to refer journalist Samer Abudaqa's killing to ICC. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/16/al-jazeera-to-refer-journalist-samer-abudaqas-killing-to-icc>; Salhani, J. (September 23). Israel is deliberately targeting journalists in Gaza: Experts. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/israel-is-deliberately-targeting-journalists-in-gaza-experts>; Alsaafin, M. (2023, December 15). "Aljazeera Arabic have a live counter (5 hours and 20 minutes) of how long it's been since cameraman Samer Abu Daqqa was injured by an Israeli drone strike." X.com 12:16 PM. [https://x.com/malsaafin/status/1735710433749737688?s=46&t=mssVC9USl-l4VmlgM0SCRO](https://x.com/malsaafin/status/1735710433749737688?s=46&t=mssVC9USl-l4VmlgM0SCRO;);

Sharif Abdel Kouddous, (2024, January 12). Israel Bombed an Al Jazeera Cameraman — and Blocked Evacuation Efforts as He Bled to Death. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/12/al-jazeera-journalist-israel-gaza/>

¹³ Al Jazeera. (2023, December 16). Al Jazeera to refer journalist Samer Abudaqa's killing to ICC. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/16/al-jazeera-to-refer-journalist-samer-abudaqas-killing-to-icc> Salhani, J. (2024, September 23). Israel is deliberately targeting journalists in Gaza: Experts. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/israel-is-deliberately-targeting-journalists-in-gaza-experts> Alsaafin, M. (2023, December 15). "Aljazeera Arabic have a live counter (5 hours and 20 minutes) of how long it's been since cameraman Samer Abu Daqqa was injured by an Israeli drone strike." X.com 12:16 PM. [https://x.com/malsaafin/status/1735710433749737688?s=46&t=mssVC9USl-l4VmlgM0SCRO](https://x.com/malsaafin/status/1735710433749737688?s=46&t=mssVC9USl-l4VmlgM0SCRO;);

Abdel Kouddous, S. (2024, January 12). Israel Bombed an Al Jazeera Cameraman — and Blocked Evacuation Efforts as He Bled to Death. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/12/al-jazeera-journalist-israel-gaza/>

misinformation, and the continued economic freefall of the news industry have left war reporters more imperiled than any time in the history of the profession.

War is a growing threat for an already perilous occupation. Across the world in 2023, a journalist or other media worker was, on average, killed or murdered every four days.¹⁴ In 2024, it was once every three days. More journalists were killed in 2024 than in any other year since the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) began tallying reporters' deaths three decades ago.¹⁵ The United Nations says journalism is one of the most dangerous professions in the world.¹⁶

No one knows how many reporters have been killed doing their jobs. Available counts are fragmentary and deaths of non-Western journalists, especially prior to the 1990s, are largely undocumented. But Reporters Without Borders counts 1,668 journalists killed in connection with their work between 2003 and 2022.¹⁷ Almost 35 percent were concentrated in two long war-torn countries – Iraq and Syria – followed by conflict-plagued Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine, and Somalia.¹⁸ Last year, more than 60 percent of all journalists slain were killed in conflict areas (versus those who died outside of war zones), the highest percentage in more than a decade, according to the United Nations.¹⁹ These war zone deaths – in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine – marked a five-year high.²⁰

Attacks on journalists have exacerbated long term socio-economic shifts that have crippled the global news industry over decades and led to the de-prioritization of international news coverage and the closure of foreign news bureaus. In the United States, this financial freefall in journalism has led to almost two thousand “news deserts” – counties with one or no local newspapers. Across the globe, the economics of the industry, the violence of war, and coordinated censorship campaigns threaten to turn an increasing

¹⁴ One hundred and one journalists and other media support workers (translators, drivers, fixers, security guards, and administrative workers) were killed, whatever the motive, in 2023. CPJ confirmed that 92 were likely killed because of their journalism.

https://cpj.org/data/killed/2024/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&start_year=2023&end_year=2023&group_by=location

¹⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, February 12). *2024 is deadliest year for journalists in CPJ history; almost 70% killed by Israel - Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/special-reports/2024-is-deadliest-year-for-journalists-in-cpj-history-almost-70-percent-killed-by-israel/>

¹⁶ Kibaba, M. (2019, September 18) *Journalism – one of the most dangerous professions in the world*. World Press Institute.

<https://worldpressinstitute.org/journalism-one-of-the-most-dangerous-professions-in-the-world/>

¹⁷ Reporters Without Borders. (2022). 1,668 journalists killed in past 20 years (2003-2022), average of 80 per year) Reporters Without Borders <https://rsf.org/en/1668-journalists-killed-past-20-years-2003-2022-average-80-year>

¹⁸ Reporters Without Borders (2022). *1,668 journalists killed in past 20 years (2003-2022), average of 80 per year*. <https://rsf.org/en/1668-journalists-killed-past-20-years-2003-2022-average-80-year>

¹⁹ UNESCO. (2025). *Journalists killed in 2024: a heavy death toll in conflict zones for the second year running*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/journalists-killed-2024-heavy-death-toll-conflict-zones-second-year-running#:~:text=UNESCO%20reports%20that%20at%20least.in%20more%20than%20ten%20years.>

²⁰ Reporters Without Borders. (2024). *RSF Round-up 2024: Journalists killed, detained, held hostage, and missing*. <https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/medias/file/2024/12/RSF%20Round-up%202024%20EN.pdf>

number of conflict zones into news graveyards, with Gaza being the most extreme example. “Without a solid basis in deeply reported, well-sourced facts from around the globe as a counterweight to the social media-driven flood of narratives, opinion, and disinformation, it becomes ever more difficult to have an informed public debate about foreign-policy choices,” observed longtime war correspondent, Janine di Giovanni.²¹

The War on Gaza, the Toll on Journalists: October 7, 2023 to the Present

The recent spike in journalists’ deaths has been fueled by the unprecedented toll of the conflict in Gaza since October 2023. After years of resentment over international coverage of its wars with Hamas, the Israeli government has unleashed an unrelenting war on the press. Since October 2023, Israel has barred independent foreign correspondents from Gaza while killing local journalists in record numbers – and without any repercussions.

Thirty-seven journalists were slain in the Gaza Strip during the first month of the 2023 Gaza War, making it the deadliest month documented by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) since it began collecting data in 1992. “The Israeli army has killed more journalists in 10 weeks than any other army or entity has in any single year,” said Sherif Mansour, CPJ’s Middle East and North Africa program coordinator, in December 2023. “And with every journalist killed, the war becomes harder to document and to understand.”²²

As of March 26, 2025, at least 232 journalists and media workers had been killed in Gaza since the war began, according to an *Al Jazeera* investigation and recent updates from the Committee to Protect Journalists.²³ That conflict has killed more journalists in a year than any other conflict recorded by CPJ.²⁴ The vast majority slain were Palestinians; six were Lebanese. Two were Israeli journalists killed by Hamas militants on Oct. 7, 2023,

²¹ The type of news and the source, of course, matters. A sophisticated study of the media and the Iraq War found that paying close attention to the news was no guarantee of being better informed. For those who followed the news very closely but relied on FOX News, 80 percent had the misperception that close links between al Qaeda and Iraq had been found. Those who followed print news were less likely to misunderstand events. Kull, S., Ramsay, C., & Lewis, E. (2003). Misperceptions, the media, and the Iraq War. *Political Science Quarterly*, 118(4), 569–598. Di Giovanni, J. (2021e, March 19). The Decline of Foreign Reporting Spells Worse Foreign Policy. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography/>

²² Committee to Protect Journalists. (2023, December 21). *Israel-Gaza war takes record toll on journalists*. <https://cpj.org/2023/12/israel-gaza-war-takes-record-toll-on-journalists/>

²³ For citations see footnote 6.

²⁴ Hussein, M. A., & Duggal, H. (2025, January 7). Know their names: The Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in Gaza. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2024/12/31/know-their-names-the-palestinian-journalists-killed-by-israel-in-gaza>; Fahmy, S., Salama, M., & Alsaba, M. (2024). Shattered lives, unbroken stories: journalists’ perspectives from the frontlines of the Israel–Gaza war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381767419_Shattered_lives_unbroken_stories_journalists'_perspectives_from_the_frontlines_of_the_Israel-Gaza_war; Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, January 8). *Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war*. <https://cpj.org/2025/01/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>

alongside more than 1,200 people.²⁵ Almost 380 journalists in Gaza have also been wounded as of January 2025, according to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate.²⁶

As of late June 2024, nine months into the 2023 Gaza war, an analysis from Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism and *The Intercept* found that 1 in 10 journalists in Gaza had been killed by the Israeli military.²⁷ The death toll of Palestinian journalists is roughly equivalent to the killing of 8,500 U.S. newsroom employees.²⁸ By comparison, the total number of reporters killed in Ukraine since the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, for example, stands at 19. Since that war officially began in 2014, CPJ counts 29 journalist deaths in Ukraine due to crossfire, dangerous assignments, murder, and all other causes.

It's unclear how many Palestinian reporters in Gaza have been intentionally killed because of their work and how many were simply the victims, like tens of thousands of fellow civilians, of Israel's bombardment of a densely populated 140-square mile strip of land. But there have been at least 35 cases since October 2023 where there is enough information to confirm the journalists killed were directly targeted by Israel because of their work, according to RSF.²⁹

Reporters in Gaza have also been left to cover the war alone. Roughly 4,000 international journalists have been provided press accreditation to work in Israel since October 2023. This allowed journalists access to Israel and the West Bank but only a handful of foreign reporters – most notably *CNN's* Clarissa Ward – were able to enter Gaza to independently cover the conflict.³⁰ “This is exactly what Syria tried to do,” said longtime

²⁵ Other counts list four Israeli journalists killed by Hamas in the October 7, 2023 attacks. United Nations: Regional Information Centre for Western Europe. (2024, June 2). *Gaza: UN experts condemn killing and silencing of journalists*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381767419_Shattered_lives_unbroken_stories_journalists'_perspectives_from_the_frontlines_of_the_Israel-Gaza_war](https://unric.org/en/gaza-un-experts-condemn-killing-and-silencing-of-journalists/#:~:text=According%20to%20UN%20reports%2C%20since,in%20the%207%20October%20attacks%20; Fahmy, S., Salama, M., & Alsaba, Mona. (2024). Shattered lives, unbroken stories: journalists' perspectives from the frontlines of the Israel-Gaza war. <i>Online Media and Global Communication</i>, 3(2). <a href=) Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, January 8). *Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war*. <https://cpj.org/2025/01/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>; Gorani, H. & Sowden, B. (2024, September 27). Israel-Hamas war in Gaza the deadliest on record for journalists who describe killings, attacks and arrests. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-hamas-war-gaza-journalists-deadliest-conflict-rcna172282>

²⁶ Data provided by the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate on January 9, 2025. Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. (2023-2024). *Silencing Voices: The Plight of Palestinian Journalists Detained by Israeli Occupation during Ongoing Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2023/2024*. <https://pjs.ps/file/attachs/990.pdf>

²⁷ Osman, H., Taweel, F., & Jallad, F. (2024, June 27). Israel's War on Gaza Is the Deadliest Conflict on Record for Journalists. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/06/25/israel-gaza-war-journalists-killed/>

²⁸ Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. (2024, April 19). *Journalists in Gaza Call on US Journalists to Boycott White House Correspondents' Dinner*. <https://www.pjs.ps/ar/page-3100.html>

²⁹ Reporters Without Borders. (2024, December 12). *RSF's 2024 Round-up: journalism suffers exorbitant human cost due to conflicts and repressive regimes*. <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-s-2024-round-journalism-suffers-exorbitant-human-cost-due-conflicts-and-repressive-regimes>. Salhani, J. (2024b, September 23). Israel is deliberately targeting journalists in Gaza: Experts. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/israel-is-deliberately-targeting-journalists-in-gaza-experts>

³⁰ CNN's Clarissa Ward was the first foreign journalist who made it into Gaza without the army, and she did this by [accompanying an aid convoy supported by the United Arab Emirates](#) in December 2023. Ward, C.,

conflict journalist Anand Gopal, noting that Sri Lanka also employed a media blackout to avoid scrutiny during its atrocity-filled civil war which ended in 2009. “It seems like a playbook – and I think it sets a really dangerous precedent.” Despite pleas from more than 70 news outlets and civil society organizations, Israel consistently rebuffed calls to grant independent press access to Gaza.³¹ The only other permitted press trips to Gaza during the 2023 war have been via IDF-controlled embeds where the military restricts what reporters can see and cover.³²

In addition to killing local reporters and restricting foreign journalists, Israel has employed a full spectrum effort to undermine the free flow of information. “There has been a near total destruction of media offices in Gaza, of media infrastructure, of equipment, the cutoffs of internet and power, and the media blockade that forbids journalists from leaving Gaza, with only a few exceptions,” said Jonathan Dagher of RSF. “And the lucky few that have left have no chance of return.”³³ Israel has destroyed approximately 90 press facilities in Gaza since October 2023, according to the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate.³⁴ Almost all the journalists in Gaza have also been displaced several times. Some have been arrested and tortured.³⁵

Palestinian reporters who have, at great personal risk, continued to work in Gaza have been victimized by targeted smear campaigns, accusing them of aiding combatants or having participated in the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel.³⁶ Palestinian news organizations and individual journalists have also been repeatedly subjected to

Swails, B., McWhinnie, S., Clarke, R. (2023, December 14). Looking into the eyes of an orphan in Gaza. *CNN World*. During this two-hour trip to Rafah, where 2.3 million residents are now based, the area was bombed and she filmed operations in a field hospital and talked to doctors and injured children. Salhani, J. (2024, September 23). Israel is deliberately targeting journalists in Gaza: Experts. *Al Jazeera*.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/israel-is-deliberately-targeting-journalists-in-gaza-experts>
wbur. (2023, December 28). Reporter’s notebook: Rare independent access into Gaza. *WBUR.org*.

<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2023/12/28/reporters-notebook-gaza>

Murrell, C. (n.d.). How Israel continues to censor journalists covering the war in Gaza. *The Conversation*.

<https://theconversation.com/how-israel-continues-to-censor-journalists-covering-the-war-in-gaza-228241>

³¹ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024, August 19). *Media organizations urge Israel to open access to Gaza*. <https://cpj.org/2024/07/media-organizations-urge-israel-to-open-access-to-gaza/>

³² Murrell, C. (n.d.-b). How Israel continues to censor journalists covering the war in Gaza. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/how-israel-continues-to-censor-journalists-covering-the-war-in-gaza-228241>

³³ Jonathan Dagher, interview with Nick Turse. (2024, October 24).

³⁴ Data provide by the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate on January 9, 2025. Reiff, B. (2024, June 26). Tracing attacks on Gaza’s press buildings. *+972 Magazine*. <https://www.972mag.com/gaza-press-attacks-israeli-army/>

³⁵ Reporters Without Borders. (2024, September 1). *31 Palestinian journalists currently held in Israeli prisons in record wave of detentions*. <https://rsf.org/en/31-palestinian-journalists-currently-held-israeli-prisons-record-wave-detentions>

³⁶ Reporters Without Borders. (2024, May 11). *Ismail al-Ghoul’s killing: targeted and discredited, Palestinian journalists suffer double punishment in Gaza*. <https://rsf.org/en/ismail-al-ghouls-killing-targeted-and-discredited-palestinian-journalists-suffer-double-punishment>

Reporters Without Borders. (2023, October 11). *Israeli politicians call for journalists in Gaza to be killed*. <https://rsf.org/en/israeli-politicians-call-journalists-gaza-be-killed>

cyberattacks.³⁷ The Palestinian digital rights organization 7amleh has also documented censorship of Palestinian commentators on social media, including suspension of accounts and content blockage.³⁸ “The attacks on media in Gaza and restrictions on other journalists from accessing Gaza, combined with severe disruptions of the Internet, are major impediments to the right of information of the people of Gaza as well as the outside world,” according to a U.N. panel of experts.³⁹

Israel’s censorship regime also includes the employment of mis- or dis-information which bogs down the journalistic process, thwarting timely and accurate reporting. The Gaza Health Ministry, for example, said a February 2024 Israeli attack on aid delivery in Gaza – the “Flour Massacre” – killed 100 people and injured 700 more. Mark Regev, the Israeli prime minister’s special adviser, initially told *CNN* that Israeli forces were not involved.⁴⁰ Then Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, a top IDF spokesman, said Israeli soldiers had only fired “warning shots” in the air.⁴¹ It took *CNN* more than a month to piece together evidence from eyewitness testimonies and dozens of videos to debunk Israel’s official narrative.⁴²

The situation in Gaza is only the most egregious example of the danger facing journalists and journalism, today. Globally, one hundred and twenty-two journalists and media workers were killed in 2024, 43 percent of them outside of Gaza and Lebanon, according to the International Federation of Journalists.⁴³ Last year, for instance, photographer Anas Alkharboutli was killed in an airstrike near the city of Hama in Syria while covering the rebel offensive that ultimately overthrew longtime autocrat Bashar al-

³⁷ Mandour, M., Daoud, D., Culebras, I. M. D., & Alsharif, S. (2024b, November 15). *Attacks, arrests, threats, censorship: The high risks of reporting the Israel-Gaza war*. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2024/10/attacks-arrests-threats-censorship-the-high-risks-of-reporting-the-israel-amas-war/#hostile-cyberattacks>

³⁸ 7amla. (2023, October 19). *7amleh’s “Violence Indicator” documents 103,000 instances of hate speech and incitement against Palestinians on social media*. حملة - المركز العربي لتطوير الإعلام الاجتماعي. <https://7amleh.org/2023/10/19/7amleh-s-violence-indicator-documents-103-000-instances-of-hate-speech-and-incitement-against-palestinians-on-social-media>

³⁹ Ukteam. (2024, February 6). *Gaza: UN experts condemn killing and silencing of journalists*. United Nations: Regional Information Centre for Western Europe. <https://unric.org/en/gaza-un-experts-condemn-killing-and-silencing-of-journalists/>

⁴⁰ Amanpour. (2024, February 29). Amanpour questions top Netanyahu adviser on deadly aid incident. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2024/02/29/amanpour-regev.cnn>

⁴¹ Israel Defense Forces. (2024, February 29). *IDF Statement Regarding Humanitarian Convoy in Gaza [Video]*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mrv-wnJHdgM>

⁴² Polglase, K., Mahmood, Z., Dahman, I. & Mezzofiore, G. (2024, April 10). Dying for a bag of flour: Videos and eyewitness accounts cast doubt on Israel’s timeline of deadly Gaza aid delivery. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/09/middleeast/gaza-food-aid-convoy-deaths-eyewitness-intl-investigation-cmd>

⁴³ Most of the journalists killed in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023 died that same year. Hussein, M. A., & Duggal, H. (2025, January 7). Know their names: The Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in Gaza. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2024/12/31/know-their-names-the-palestinian-journalists-killed-by-israel-in-gaza>
International Federation of Journalists. (2024, December 31). *122 journalists and media workers killed in 2024, says the IFJ*. [https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/122-journalists-and-media-workers-killed-in-2024-says-the-ifj#:~:text=One%20hundred%20and%20twenty%2Dtwo,\(IFJ\)%20on%2031%20December](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/122-journalists-and-media-workers-killed-in-2024-says-the-ifj#:~:text=One%20hundred%20and%20twenty%2Dtwo,(IFJ)%20on%2031%20December)

Assad's regime in Syria.⁴⁴ A Turkish drone strike in Iraq killed journalists Gulistan Tara and Hero Bahadin and injured their colleague Rêbîn Bekir.⁴⁵ Armed men affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces, a belligerent in Sudan's civil war, kidnapped freelance journalist Aladdin Abu Harba.⁴⁶ Armed soldiers in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo went to the home of reporter Parfait Katoto and threatened to kill him over his criticism of insecurity in the region.⁴⁷ Journalists Win Htut Oo and Htet Myat Thu were killed in a military raid on a home in Myanmar alongside members of a local armed group resisting the military government.⁴⁸ In that same country, Myat Thu Tan, a contributor to various news outlets (including newspapers that were shuttered or banned by the junta), was shot and killed while in military custody.⁴⁹ A Russian attack in Ukraine killed *Reuters* safety adviser Ryan Evans and injured three journalists.⁵⁰ Last fall, Reporters Without Borders also sounded the alarm about increased threats to journalists in the West African Sahel.⁵¹ Years of escalating violence by Islamist militants and a string of military coups have plunged the region into turmoil and made reporting exceptionally dangerous.⁵² At least two community radio reporters were killed and two others kidnapped by armed groups in Mali and Chad since November 2023.⁵³

War Reporting: Risky But Essential

⁴⁴ International Federation of Journalists. (2024, December 5). *Syria: DPA photographer killed in an airstrike near Hama city*. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/syria-dpa-photographer-killed-in-an-airstrike-near-hama-city>

⁴⁵ IFJ. (2024, August 27). *Iraqi Kurdistan: Two women journalists killed and one other injured*. <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/iraqi-kurdistan-two-women-journalists-killed-and-one-other-injured>

⁴⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024b, August 29). *Paramilitary group kidnaps, demands ransom for Sudanese journalist*. <https://cpj.org/2024/08/paramilitary-group-kidnaps-demands-ransom-for-sudanese-journalist/>

⁴⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024a, May 16). *DRC soldiers threaten to kill journalist Parfait Katoto over broadcasts*. <https://cpj.org/2024/05/drc-soldiers-threaten-to-kill-journalist-parfait-katoto-over-broadcasts/>

⁴⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024d, September 11). *Myanmar soldiers shoot dead 2 journalists in raid on home*. <https://cpj.org/2024/08/myanmar-soldiers-shoot-dead-2-journalists-in-raid-on-home/>

⁴⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024a, February 16). *Myanmar journalist Myat Thu Tan killed in military custody*. <https://cpj.org/2024/02/myanmar-journalist-myat-thu-tan-killed-in-military-custody/>

⁵⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024d, August 27). *Reuters safety adviser killed, 3 journalists injured in Ukraine*. <https://cpj.org/2024/08/reuters-safety-adviser-killed-3-journalists-injured-in-ukraine/>

⁵¹ Banchereau, M. (2024, September 24). Media freedom group sounds alarm on increased security risks for local journalists in Africa's Sahel. *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/media-freedom-sahel-reporters-without-borders-journalists-fc10aef159ffc631c58140efdb3b7934>

⁵² Turse, N. (2020, October 15). How one of the most stable nations in West Africa descended into mayhem. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/magazine/burkina-faso-terrorism-united-states.html> Turse, N. (2023, April 2). After Two Decades of U.S. Military Support, Terror Attacks Are Worse Than Ever in Niger. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2023/04/02/us-military-counterterrorism-niger/>

⁵³ Banchereau, M. (2024, September 24). Media freedom group sounds alarm on increased security risks for local journalists in Africa's Sahel. *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/media-freedom-sahel-reporters-without-borders-journalists-fc10aef159ffc631c58140efdb3b7934>

At its core, journalism provides the public with the information needed to better understand the world around them. Freedom of expression and the right to receive information have been called fundamental “meta rights” without which other core rights would not exist.⁵⁴

Modern conflict coverage is more than an accounting of armies and a scorecard of battles cobbled together from the official accounts of belligerents. It is centered on the act of bearing witness to the realities and horrors of wars. Journalists serve as the eyes and ears of the world, seeking out solid, verifiable information amid a vortex of violence and a welter of rumor, manipulation, misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. “In times of conflict, the right to information is a ‘survival right’ on which the very lives of civilians depend, and journalists play an indispensable role as a vital source of information, and as human rights defenders and witnesses to atrocities,” a panel of U.N. experts announced last year.⁵⁵

Violence against war reporters is, therefore, a threat to the global information ecosystem, undermining the media’s watchdog role and diluting its function as a “Fourth Estate” dedicated to informing the citizenry and providing a check against power. Attacks on the press anywhere in the world weaken open societies which rely on the free flow of accurate and reliable information. The killing of journalists is the most extreme form of press censorship and is compounded by rampant impunity. Around 90 percent of murders of journalists worldwide go unpunished, encouraging enemies of transparency and accountability to target reporters.⁵⁶

In addition to exposure to direct harm and risk of death, war reporters are often subject to mental, emotional, and psychological stressors, including repeated or extreme exposure to traumatic events. The violence of the warzone means that conflict journalists run a significant risk of experiencing trauma as targets of violence, indirectly as eyewitnesses, as well as through narrative accounts from victims and witnesses to violence.⁵⁷ Repeated viewing of vivid images and video footage of bloodshed and human suffering may also lead to vicarious traumatization.⁵⁸

Conflict reporters often encounter people in extreme crisis, including those who have been sexually assaulted, maimed, traumatized, and displaced. Reporters also bear

⁵⁴ Sen, A. (1984). *The right not to be hungry*. In P. Alston & K. Tomaševski (Eds.). *The right to food* (p.70–71). Heyns, C., & Srinivasan, S. (2013). Protecting the right to life of journalists: The need for a higher level of engagement. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 35(2), 304–332. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24518018>

⁵⁵ UN the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2024, February 1). *Gaza: UN experts condemn killing and silencing of journalists*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/gaza-un-experts-condemn-killing-and-silencing-journalists>

⁵⁶ Kotišová, J., & Deuze, M. (2022). Decolonizing Conflict Journalism Studies: A Critical Review of Research on Fixers. *Journalism Studies (London, England)*, 23(10), 1160–1177. IMS. (2023, October 31). Journalists must be protected, even in war zones. <https://www.mediasupport.org/blogpost/journalists-must-be-protected-even-in-war-zones/>

⁵⁷ Obermaier, M., Wiedicke, A., Steindl, N., & Hanitzsch, T. (2023). Reporting trauma: Conflict journalists’ exposure to potentially traumatizing events, short- and long-term consequences, and coping behavior. *Journalism Studies*, 24(11), 1398–1417.

⁵⁸ Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. (2014). Working with traumatic imagery. In *Dart Center*. <https://dartcenter.org/content/working-with-traumatic-imagery>

witness, sometimes routinely, to gruesome events involving death and destruction.⁵⁹ “There was a bombing just a few meters in front of me, with body parts flying and landing at my feet as I stood there,” recalled Haneen Harara, a reporter in Gaza, of an Israeli attack. “I didn’t have time to feel sad or shocked... There were people we needed to report about in the news, live reports.”⁶⁰ Then there are the under-appreciated and unforgettable odors of the conflict zone – explosives, fire, and the terrible scent of putrescence.⁶¹ As Nataliya Vasilyeva, who covered the aftermath of the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians recalled:

I was among the first group of reporters that the IDF allowed into Be'eri, a kibbutz that would become a byword for Hamas atrocities... Later that day, a colleague who was waiting outside asked: 'So what did you see?' It's not what I saw, I admitted. It was the stench of rotting corpses that was overwhelming... Shaken, I drove along the pitch-black road late at night, with the windows down so I could hear any sirens. As I raised my hand to scratch my nose, I could still smell it, that stench. I smelled of it too.⁶²

War reporters have a higher risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression than other journalists.⁶³ Their lifetime prevalence of PTSD is similar to that of military combat veterans.⁶⁴ A recent study of 32 Pakistani conflict reporters found that, after covering traumatizing and life-threatening events, most experienced some form of psychological distress including anxiety, agitation, insomnia, lack of focus, and intrusive recollection of events.⁶⁵ A 2023 survey of 82 Syrian war reporters found almost 87 percent reported losing a colleague, causing them “high levels of sorrow and pain.”⁶⁶ Despite a growing realization of the psychological toll of conflict reporting over

⁵⁹ Simpson, R. A., & Boggs, J. G. (1999). An exploratory study of traumatic stress among newspaper journalists. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 1(1), 1–26.

Buchanan, M. (2011). Coping with traumatic stress in journalism: A critical ethnographic study. *International Journal of Psychology*, 46(2), 127–135.

⁶⁰ Fahmy, S. S., Salama, M., & Alsaba, M. R. (2024). Shattered lives, unbroken stories: Journalists' perspectives from the frontlines of the Israel–Gaza war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(2), 151–180.

⁶¹ Turse, N. (2017). Ghost Nation. *Harper's Magazine*. <https://harpers.org/archive/2017/07/ghost-nation/>;
Al-Hajjar, M. (2024, January 18). In Gaza, you don't only see death. You smell it. You breathe it. *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/gaza-dont-only-see-death-smell-breathe-it>; UN News. (2024, October 22). 'The smell of death is everywhere' in northern Gaza, UNRWA chief says. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1155971>

⁶² Vasilyeva, N. (2024, April 1). "I tried to scrub the smell of death off of my body...": A war reporter's Israel-Hamas diary; Six months on from the start of the conflict our correspondent -- who also covered Ukraine and Syria -- explains why this war is like no other." *Telegraph Online*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/04/01/war-correspondent-israel-gaza-six-months-on/>

⁶³ Feinstein, A., Owen, J., & Blair, N. (2002). A hazardous profession: War, journalism, and psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159(11), 1570–1576.

⁶⁴ Feinstein, A., Owen, J., & Blair, N. (2002).

⁶⁵ Siddiqua, A., & Iqbal, M. Z. (2024, February). Journalists and exposure to trauma: Exploring perceptions of PTSD and resilience among Pakistan's conflict reporters. *Journalism Practice*, 1–16.

⁶⁶ Peralta García, L., & Ouariachi, T. (2023). Syrian journalists covering the war: Assessing perceptions of fear and security. *Media, War & Conflict*, 16(1), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635221999377>

the last two decades, studies have found that few war reporters have received trauma training prior to assignments nor psychological debriefings afterward.⁶⁷

Conflicts can affect reporters in myriad ways beyond personal danger and exposure to frontline trauma.⁶⁸ Palestinian journalists in Gaza have also, since October 2023, faced malnutrition and a lack of clean water, shelter, and electricity, adding to their stress and fatigue.⁶⁹ Women journalists and media workers face torrents of online trolling and sexist hate speech as well as physical assault, rape and even murder.⁷⁰ Cyberattacks are also a growing threat. A 2023 survey indicated that 68 percent of media professionals and 82 percent of bloggers in Ukraine have faced increased cyberattacks since Russia's full-scale invasion.⁷¹

Other under-appreciated risks to war reporters include occupational exposures endemic to conflict zones. Such dangers include toxic agents like the carcinogenic herbicide Agent Orange, which was employed by the U.S. during the Vietnam War; depleted uranium munitions used by the United States in the Middle East and associated with the debilitating Gulf War syndrome; and asbestos and other toxic materials like metals and silica, found in the smoke and dust of bombed buildings.⁷²

Danger to War Reporters: A Brief History

William Howard Russell of the Times of London, who covered the Crimean War of the 1850s, the Indian Mutiny, the American Civil War of the 1860s, and the Franco-Prussian War – was the first reporter to be called a “war correspondent” by his editors. He thought

⁶⁷ Obermaier, M., Wiedicke, A., Steindl, N., & Hanitzsch, T. (2023). Reporting trauma: Conflict journalists' exposure to potentially traumatizing events, short- and long-term consequences, and coping behavior. *Journalism Studies*, 24(11), 1398–1417; Wende, S.-F., & Schäfer, M. (2021). War das noch Amok, oder ist das schon Terror? Mechanismen und Hindernisse der journalistischen Berichterstattung über (terroristische). *Gewaltereignisse. Studies in Communication and Media*, 10(4), 447–489.

⁶⁸ Schneider, A. K. (2009). International media and conflict resolution. *Marquette Law Review*, 93, 1–6. Journals at Marquette Law Scholarly Commons. <https://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/mulr/vol93/iss1/1/>;

Allan, S., & Zelizer, B. (2004). *Reporting war: Journalism in wartime*. Routledge;

Crawford, E., & Davies, K. (2014). The international protection of journalists in times of armed conflict: The campaign for a press emblem. *Wisconsin International Law Journal*, 32(1), 1–32.

⁶⁹ Fahmy, S. S., Salama, M., & Alsaba, M. R. (2024). Shattered lives, unbroken stories: Journalists' perspectives from the frontlines of the Israel–Gaza war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(2), 151–180. Serhan, Y. (2023, December 8). Palestinian Journalists Offer a Rare Glimpse Into Life in Gaza. But for How Long? *TIME*. <https://time.com/6343715/israel-hamas-war-journalists-gaza/>

⁷⁰ UNESCO. *Safety of Women Journalists*. UNESCO.Org, www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/safety-women-journalists?hub=687.

⁷¹ Nastyia, & Nastyia. (2023, August 3). 14% of Ukrainian journalists and bloggers faced wiretapping and surveillance, and 40% received threats. *ZMINA*. <https://zmina.info/en/news-en/ukrainian-journalists-and-bloggers-faced-wiretapping-and-surveillance-and-received-threats-imi/>

⁷² Some journalists who covered the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, for example, have reported suffering from Balkan Syndrome, a complex chronic illness experienced by troops who were also deployed to the region. Magnavita, N., Congedo, M. T., Di Prinzio, R. R., & Iuliano, A. (2021). War journalism: An occupational exposure. *BMJ Case Reports*, 14(10).

the title was absurd, however, and described himself, toward the end of his career, as the “miserable parent of a luckless tribe.”⁷³

In the decades after Crimea, many conflicts were typified by clashing armies on defined battlefields.⁷⁴ Coverage tended to focus on militaries and their leadership, combat, and the politics of war. Attitudes about war and the suffering it generated were also in flux and protocols regulating both were repeatedly debated and codified in places like Geneva, Switzerland and The Hague, Netherlands. These included provisions regarding journalists, which were first adopted in 1929. Such efforts culminated with the adoption of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, four treaties that reaffirmed and revised the previous agreements and expanded the rules protecting noncombatants.⁷⁵

At the same time, however, civilians in war zones were increasingly targeted, and their deaths came to exceed those of combatants. While it wasn’t always portrayed as such, civilian slaughter and suffering were fast becoming the defining story of modern warfare. As many as 750,000 people were killed during the American Civil War, but only about seven percent of them were civilians.⁷⁶ Eighty years later, World War II left 65 million civilians dead – nearly two-thirds of the 100 million total killed – according to new estimates.⁷⁷

During the Second World War, journalists like Edward R. Murrow, who broadcast live reports from London during the Blitz; Martha Gellhorn who covered the D-Day invasion from a hospital ship and exposed the horrors of the Nazi death camp at Dachau; and Ernie Pyle, who reported the conflict from the perspective of ordinary soldiers, offered unprecedented coverage of a global war on a global scale. But the conflict was also largely reported by embedded journalists whose direct access to combat zones was controlled by militaries and whose reportage was constrained by government censors.

Pyle was one of at least 67 reporters who died in World War II.⁷⁸ No less than 17 journalists were slain reporting on the Korean War in the 1950s.⁷⁹ And at least 71 reporters

⁷³ Patton, R. H. 1. (2014). *Hell before breakfast: America's first war correspondents making history and headlines, from the battlefields of the Civil War to the far reaches of the Ottoman Empire (First edition)*. Pantheon Books, xv; Simpson, J. (2016). *We chose to speak of war and strife: The world of the foreign correspondent*. Bloomsbury, xiii.

⁷⁴ Notable exceptions in which large numbers of civilians were targeted include the slaughter of the Paris Commune of 1871, the Italian wars in Libya and Abyssinia in the 1910s, and the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. For more, see: Merriman, J. (2014). *Massacre: The life and death of the Paris Commune* (1st ed.). New York: Basic Books. Simpson, J. (2016). *We chose to speak of war and strife: The world of the foreign correspondent*. Bloomsbury.

⁷⁵ Grossman, L. R. (2017). All the news that’s worth the risk: Improving protection for freelance journalists in war zones. *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, 40(1), 141–166.

⁷⁶ Ó Gráda, C. (2024). *The hidden victims: civilian casualties of the two World Wars*. Princeton University Press.

⁷⁷ Ó Gráda, C. (2024).

⁷⁸ Counts of the number of reporters slain vary. The Freedom Forum counts 67 reporters killed in World War II. Freedom Forum. (2023, June 22). *Journalists Memorial*. <https://www.freedomforum.org/journalists-memorial>.

⁷⁹ Freedom Forum. (2023, June 22). *Journalists Memorial*.

were killed covering the wars in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam from the 1960s through the 1970s.⁸⁰

From the Crimean War through the Vietnam War, journalists covering conflicts generally enjoyed safeguards as neutral observers with civilian status. Most reporters' deaths resulted from shelling, ambushes, crossfire, landmines or aircraft accidents. But during the late stages of the U.S. conflict in Southeast Asia, Cambodia's murderous Khmer Rouge began killing, sometimes even capturing and executing, journalists.⁸¹ By one count, 25 foreign correspondents were killed in Cambodia in 1970, 20 in April and May of that year alone.⁸² These deaths in Cambodia foreshadowed the targeting of war reporters that would become commonplace post-9/11, part of an increasing hostility toward journalists by both nation-states and militant groups.

The Vietnam War was also notable for ushering in a new enmity toward the press in the halls of American power. Angered by honest coverage of U.S. military and political failures in Southeast Asia, the White House and Pentagon saw the media as a convenient scapegoat. "[O]ur worst enemy seems to be the press," President Richard Nixon insisted, blaming TV networks for the American public's increasing disenchantment with the conflict.⁸³

After the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, the Defense Department instituted strict press controls over its military interventions in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), severely curtailing coverage. During the 1991 Gulf War, more than 1,500 journalists poured into Saudi Arabia but that country and the United States obstructed coverage with a pool system that allowed only small groups of reporters with military escorts access to battlefield areas. Secretary of State James Baker celebrated the situation, casting journalists as "poor demoralized rabble – outwitted, outflanked, outmaneuvered by the U.S. military." Only after Saddam Hussein's repressive Iraqi regime began granting access to the front line, did the U.S.-led coalition begin loosening press restrictions.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Forste, S. (2006, May 31). *Iraq journalist deaths match number killed during Vietnam War*. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2006/05/iraq-journalist-deaths-match-number-killed-during/>; Santora, M., & Carter, B. (2006, May 30). Iraq becomes deadliest of modern wars for journalists. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/30/world/middleeast/iraq-becomes-deadliest-of-modern-wars-for-journalists.html>

⁸¹ Axelrod, J. (2013, June 2). Fallen journalists in Cambodia remembered. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fallen-journalists-in-cambodia-remembered/>

⁸² At least 37 journalists, foreign and Cambodian, were killed in Cambodia between April 1970 to April 1975. No less than 31 Cambodian journalists died after communist forces seized the capital on April 17, 1975. McGilligan, C. (2010, April 23). Journalists killed in Cambodia remembered by relatives, colleagues. *The Cambodian Daily*; Volkert, K., & Williams, J. T. (2001). *A Cambodian Odyssey: and The Deaths of 25 Journalists: Kurt Volkert*. (n.d.). Writer's Showcase Press.

⁸³ Pach, C. (2015, April 29). Public Learned Less After Media Was Blamed for Failure in Vietnam. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/04/29/lessons-40-years-after-the-fall-of-saigon/public-learned-less-after-media-was-blamed-for-failure-in-vietnam>

⁸⁴ Bliss, J. C. (2003, July 30). *The Press Goes to War*. Hoover Institution. <https://www.hoover.org/research/press-goes-war>; Pach, C. (2015, April 29). Public Learned Less After Media Was Blamed for Failure in Vietnam. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/04/29/lessons-40-years-after-the-fall-of-saigon/public-learned-less-after-media-was-blamed-for-failure-in-vietnam>

As late as the early 1990s, autocratic governments like Hussein's Iraq and even guerrilla groups at least tolerated war reporters. Journalists were useful in getting a belligerent's message out and bolstering their legitimacy on the world stage. New dangers were, however, emerging. Foreign correspondent Scott Anderson remembered that while the conflict in El Salvador during the mid-1980s was "vicious," reporters could still tape "TV" on their cars and "drive back and forth across no-man's land." Less than a decade later, during the war in Bosnia, he said that taping "TV" to your car was "like putting a bull's-eye on it."⁸⁵ Between 1992 and 1995, 19 reporters were killed in Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, alone.⁸⁶ "It was during these conflicts that our reporters' immunity ended; no longer were we considered neutral objective witnesses," CNN's Christiane Amanpour observed of the wars in the Balkans. "We became deliberate targets."⁸⁷

In early 2002, just months after the 9/11 attacks, *The Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl was deceived by a would-be source, kidnapped and brutally murdered by terrorists in Pakistan. A video released online showed Pearl's throat being slit and his decapitated head.⁸⁸ In 2012, James Foley, an American conflict reporter who had been abducted in 2011 while covering the Libyan civil war, was kidnapped again, this time by ISIS militants in Syria. In 2014, ISIS released a video of Foley being beheaded.⁸⁹ British photojournalist John Cantlie was taken hostage alongside Foley in Syria. He is presumed dead.⁹⁰ Freelance journalist Austin Tice was abducted in Syria in 2012 and remains missing.⁹¹ In 2013, Steven Sotloff, a freelance U.S.-Israeli reporter covering the refugee crisis in Syria, was also kidnapped and, the next year, beheaded by ISIS.⁹²

On the other side of the post-9/11 wars, the U.S. military introduced new measures to control media access and curtail independent reporting by embedding journalists with

⁸⁵ Caesar, E. (2014, August 22). Ed Caesar on the end of war reporters & journalism. *British GQ*.

<http://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/war-reporting>;

Høiby, M., & Ottosen, R. (2019). Journalism under pressure in conflict zones: A study of journalists and editors in seven countries. *Media, War & Conflict*, 12(1), 69–86.

⁸⁶ Simpson, J. (2016). *We chose to speak of war and strife: The world of the foreign correspondent*. Bloomsbury, 250, 32.

⁸⁷ Hankir, Z. & Amanpour, C. (2019). *Our Women on the Ground: Essays by Arab Women Reporting from the Arab World*. Penguin Publishing Group, xi.

⁸⁸ Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. (2002, August 1). *Government urges CBS, Web site host to refrain from airing Pearl murder video*. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

<https://www.rcfp.org/journals/the-news-media-and-the-law-summer-2002/government-urges-cbs-web-si/>

⁸⁹ Fredrick, Y. & Cohen, A. Media martyrs: Among those who died while working as journalists in the past 15 years. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/11/opinion/free-press-media-martyrs/index.html>

⁹⁰ Harkin, J. (2021, November 20). The last hostage: the story of John Cantlie. *British GQ*. <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/the-last-hostage-the-story-of-john-cantlie>;

Harkin, J. (2022, February 1). *Stories of kidnapped journalists must be told despite blackouts*. Columbia Journalism Review.

https://www.cjr.org/first_person/john-cantlie-james-foley-syria.php

⁹¹ Hudson, J., Nakashima, E., & Lamothe, D. (2024, December 10). U.S. group travels to Syria in search of missing reporter Austin Tice. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/12/10/austin-tice-syria-assad/>

⁹² AFP. (2020, October 7). Journalists and aid workers: US hostages killed by Islamic State. *France 24*.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20201007-journalists-and-aid-workers-us-hostages-killed-by-islamic-state>

military units in exchange for battlefield access and the protection of U.S. forces.⁹³ The result was constrained reporting that offered little contact with civilians.⁹⁴ George C. Wilson, who covered the Vietnam War and was embedded with U.S. Marines during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, recognized the effect on his work. “I felt that my auditing function and my responsibility to my reader to give some accountability was very much restricted,” he observed. “So in effect I was putting myself in a position to be a propagandist, which was great for the Pentagon, but not so great for the readers.”⁹⁵

U.S. military efforts to influence press coverage were, however, the least egregious of American assaults on media freedom during the Iraq War. In March 2003, questions were raised about the U.S. “crossfire” killings of Independent Television News’ reporter Terry Lloyd, his cameraman, Fred Nérac, and fixer, Hussein Osman. That April, U.S. forces fired on the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, a home to many unembedded journalists, killing cameramen Taras Protsyuk (*Reuters*) and José Couso (*Telecinco*). In the wake of the deaths, Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke said Baghdad “is not a safe place. You should not be there.” The same day as the hotel attack – and despite the fact that the network supplied the Pentagon with their headquarters’ coordinates – a U.S. missile struck *Al Jazeera*’s Baghdad office, killing reporter Tariq Ayyoub. *BBC* reporter John Simpson who was wounded in an American “friendly fire” incident that killed his translator Kamaran Abdurazaq Muhamed, suggested that the targeting of some journalists by U.S. forces may have been deliberate.⁹⁶ Two years into the war, in fact, CPJ had already confirmed U.S. forces had killed 13 journalists in Iraq.⁹⁷ By 2009, the number had crept up to at least 16.⁹⁸ The next year, new details would emerge about the U.S. military’s killing of two reporters and a years-long cover-up.

On July 12, 2007, a U.S. helicopter gunship in Baghdad opened fire on a group of people milling around on a street, including two unarmed *Reuters* journalists, Namr Noor-

⁹³ Di Giovanni, J. (2021, March 19). The Decline of Foreign Reporting Spells Worse Foreign Policy. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography/>

⁹⁴ Høiby, M., & Ottosen, R. (2019). Journalism under pressure in conflict zones: A study of journalists and editors in seven countries. *Media, War & Conflict*, 12(1), 69–86.

⁹⁵ The Media’s War in Iraq. (2003, April 21). *PBS News*. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-medias-war-in-iraq>

⁹⁶ McLaughlin, G. (2016). *The war correspondent*. London: Pluto Press.; Jamail, D. (2013, April 11). Iraq: The deadliest war for journalists. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2013/4/11/iraq-the-deadliest-war-for-journalists> Byrne, C. (2020, July 1). US soldiers were main danger to journalists, says Simpson. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/jun/27/Iraqandthedia.bbc1>

⁹⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2008, November 2). *Iraq Report: Killed by U.S. Forces - Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/reports/2006/01/js-killed-by-us-13sept05/#:~:text=When%20Ayyoub%20and%20Nadhim%20went,been%20killed%20by%20other%20or dnance>.

⁹⁸ Tyson, A., Washington Post, Reuters, Finkel, D., Kim, T., Smyth, F., & Whitman, B. (2009). Military’s Killing of 2 Journalists in Iraq Detailed in New Book. *The Washington Post*. <https://benhuser.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/militarys-killing-of-2-journalists-in-iraq-detailed-in-new-book.pdf>;

Jamail, D. (2013, April 11). Iraq: The deadliest war for journalists. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2013/4/11/iraq-the-deadliest-war-for-journalists>

Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh.⁹⁹ The helicopter crew watched for about three minutes as the wounded Chmagh crawled for his life. A good Samaritan stopped and two unarmed men carried Chmagh to a van, after which the Americans opened fire again, killing all three.¹⁰⁰

In all, 11 people died in the attack and two children were seriously wounded.¹⁰¹ U.S. troops seized Noor-Eldeen's two cameras, so *Reuters* couldn't check what he had been photographing and invented a story about Noor-Eldeen and Chmagh being killed in crossfire between U.S. forces and militants. "There is no question that coalition forces were clearly engaged in combat operations against a hostile force," Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, a military spokesman in Baghdad, told the *New York Times* following the attack.¹⁰² U.S. gun-camera video of the killings, kept secret for years, showed something quite different.¹⁰³ "The U.S. assertions that Namir and Saeed were killed during a firefight was all lies," said Dean Yates, *Reuters'* Baghdad bureau chief at the time of the attack, after watching footage of the killings years later.¹⁰⁴

The true story of Noor-Eldeen and Chmagh's deaths may have never been known if not for whistleblower Chelsea Manning, a U.S. military intelligence analyst in Baghdad. Manning leaked video of the attack to WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange who published a 17-minute edited version and the full 38-minute version in April 2010.¹⁰⁵ Posted online under the title "Collateral Murder," the footage sparked international condemnation and put the lie to the Pentagon's official narrative of the killings.

Following a flood of media reports, the U.S. government took unprecedented action – not against the perpetrators of the "collateral murder" attack or their commanders but against the whistleblowers. Manning was court martialed for leaking the video along with hundreds of thousands of government documents and sentenced to 35 years in prison.

⁹⁹ Christensen, C. (2014). WikiLeaks and the afterlife of Collateral Murder. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 2593–2602. <http://ijoc.org>

¹⁰⁰ Daley, P. (2020, June 15). 'All lies': how the US military covered up gunning down two journalists in Iraq. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/15/all-lies-how-the-us-military-covered-up-gunning-down-two-journalists-in-iraq>

¹⁰¹ Bumiller, E. (2010, April 5). Video shows U.S. killing of Reuters employees. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/06/world/middleeast/06baghdad.html>; Daley, P. (2020, June 15). 'All lies': how the US military covered up gunning down two journalists in Iraq. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/15/all-lies-how-the-us-military-covered-up-gunning-down-two-journalists-in-iraq>

¹⁰² Rubin, A. J. (2007, July 13). 2 Iraqi journalists killed as U.S. forces clash with militias. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html>

¹⁰³ Grier, P. (2010, April 7). Killings of Iraqi journalists: US says they were not war crimes. *The Christian Science Monitor*. <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2010/0407/Killings-of-Iraqi-journalists-US-says-they-were-not-war-crimes>

¹⁰⁴ Daley, P. (2020b, June 15). 'All lies': how the US military covered up gunning down two journalists in Iraq. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/15/all-lies-how-the-us-military-covered-up-gunning-down-two-journalists-in-iraq>

¹⁰⁵ Staff, A. J. (2024, June 25). Julian Assange timeline: A criminal or a hero? Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/25/julian-assange-timeline-a-criminal-or-a-hero>; Daley, P. (2020, June 15). 'All lies': how the US military covered up gunning down two journalists in Iraq. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/15/all-lies-how-the-us-military-covered-up-gunning-down-two-journalists-in-iraq>

(President Barack Obama later commuted the sentence to about seven years.)¹⁰⁶ Manning was imprisoned, again, in 2019 on a civil contempt charge for refusing to testify in a grand jury investigation of WikiLeaks.¹⁰⁷ Assange was engulfed in a 14-year legal battle, was eventually jailed in Belmarsh, one of Britain's highest-security prisons, and faced a maximum of 170 years in U.S. federal prison.¹⁰⁸ In 2024, he pled guilty to a felony count of illegally obtaining and disclosing national security material in exchange for his release. (The precedent is seen as a grave danger to press freedom in the future.¹⁰⁹)

The U.S. military's killing of Namir Noor-Eldeen and its execution of the wounded Saeed Chmagh in Iraq was no anomaly. In neighboring Syria, a civil war turned the country into a charnel house – and a killing ground for journalists, none more high profile than American Marie Colvin. A longtime war correspondent for The Sunday Times of London, Colvin spent 25 years – from the 1987 siege of Basra in the Iran-Iraq War to the 2012 siege of Baba Amr during the Syrian civil war – writing victim-centered dispatches from conflict zones. (After she was blinded in one eye during a 2001 ambush in Sri Lanka, her black eyepatch became her trademark.)

Broadcasting live from a clandestine media center in the rebel-held city of Homs, Syria in 2012, Colvin exposed the falsehoods being peddled by the ruling Assad regime. It was “a complete and utter lie that they're only going after terrorists,” she told *CNN*'s Anderson Cooper. “The Syrian army is simply shelling a city of cold, starving civilians.” The Syrian government traced Colvin's satellite phone calls, confirmed her location through an informant, and then launched a targeted attack on the media center, killing Colvin and French photojournalist Rémi Ochlik and gravely wounding British photographer, Paul Conroy, Syrian interpreter Wael al-Omar, and French journalist Edith Bouvier.¹¹⁰ A U.S. federal court found Syria's government liable for Colvin's murder and awarded her family \$302.5 million. “She was specifically targeted because of her profession, for the purpose of silencing those reporting on the growing opposition movement in the country,” wrote Judge

¹⁰⁶ Chappell, B. (2017, May 17). Chelsea Manning, Once Sentenced To 35 Years, Walks Free After 7 Years. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/17/528731790/after-serving-7-years-of-a-35-year-sentence-chelsea-manning-to-walk-free>

¹⁰⁷ Davies, D. (2022, October 17). Chelsea Manning shared secrets with WikiLeaks. Now she's telling her own story. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/17/1129416671/chelsea-manning-wikileaks-memoir-readme>

¹⁰⁸ Staff, A. J. (2024b, June 25). Julian Assange timeline: A criminal or a hero? *Al Jazeera*.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/25/julian-assange-timeline-a-criminal-or-a-hero>

¹⁰⁹ Thrush, G., & Specia, M. (2024, June 24). Assange agrees to plead guilty in exchange for release, ending standoff with U.S. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/24/us/politics/julian-assange-plea-deal.html>; Savage, C. (2024, June 25). Assange's plea deal sets a chilling precedent, but it could have been worse. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/25/us/politics/assange-plea-deal-press-freedom.html>

¹¹⁰ Fredrick, Y., & Cohan, A. (2017). Media martyrs: Among those who died while working as journalists in the past 15 years. *CNN*. [https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/11/opinion/free-press-media-](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/11/opinion/free-press-media-martyrs/index.html)

[martyrs/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/11/opinion/free-press-media-martyrs/index.html); *About Marie Colvin*. (n.d.). The Center for Justice & Accountability. [https://cja.org/what-](https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/colvin-v-syria/marie-colvin/)

[we-do/litigation/colvin-v-syria/marie-colvin/](https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/colvin-v-syria/marie-colvin/); Hammer, J. (2018, November 2). She reported from the world's combat zones, at the cost of her life [Review of the book *In Extremis: The Life and Death of the War Correspondent Marie Colvin*, by L. Hilsun]. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/02/books/review/in-extremis-marie-colvin-lindsey-hilsum.html>;

Barnard, A. (2016, July 9). Family of Marie Colvin, slain U.S. journalist, sues Syria. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/world/middleeast/marie-colvin-family-sues-syria.html>

Amy Berman Jackson. “The murder of journalists acting in their professional capacity could have a chilling effect on reporting such events worldwide.”¹¹¹

While the killings of Western reporters in Syria, like James Foley by ISIS and Marie Colvin by the Assad regime, garnered international attention, the deaths of foreigners constitute just 1.3 percent of the journalists killed in that conflict.¹¹² From the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, 717 journalists and media workers were reportedly slain by one of the parties to the conflict, most of them by the Syrian government, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights.¹¹³ (CPJ counts 140 work-related deaths of journalists there over that span.¹¹⁴) The killings were part of overlapping censorship efforts in a multifaceted conflict involving Assad’s recently-ousted regime, ISIS, the U.S.-backed Free Syrian Army, and the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah, among others. Reporters were subject to legal harassment, surveillance, smear campaigns, attacks, and arrests.¹¹⁵ All of it set the stage for an international information vacuum.

The war in Syria provided a template for other enemies of transparency, accountability and press freedom. During its 2009 conflict with Hamas, Israel attempted to portray itself as vulnerable and under siege but international media coverage showed it to be a formidable state that, as one analysis put it, unleashed “excessive force against powerless civilians.”¹¹⁶ During the six-week long 2014 Gaza War, 700 journalists, camera persons, and photographers arrived in Israel with more than 60 percent of them headed on to Gaza. A survey of 160 foreign correspondents in Israel that year found only two percent said military censorship had a major impact on their coverage.¹¹⁷ The casualties were disproportionate: about 2,200 Palestinian deaths compared to around 73 Israelis, most of them soldiers, while human rights groups like Amnesty International said there was

¹¹¹ Hilsum, L. (2019, February 3). Marie Colvin verdict gives meaning to her death. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/feb/03/marie-colvin-murder-verdict--risks-journalists-lindsey-hilsum>; Barnard, A. (2019, January 31). Syria ordered to pay \$302.5 million to family of Marie Colvin. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/world/middleeast/syria-marie-colvin-court-judgment.html>

¹¹² Syrian Network for Human Rights. (2024, May 3). On World Press Freedom Day: 717 Journalists and Media Workers Have Been Documented Killed in Syria Since March 2011, Including 53 Who Died Due to Torture. *ReliefWeb*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/world-press-freedom-day-717-journalists-and-media-workers-have-been-documented-killed-parties-conflict-and-controlling-forces-syria-march-2011-including-53-who-died-due-torture-enar>.

¹¹³ Syrian Network for Human Rights. (2024, May 3).

¹¹⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists. *CPJ’s database of attacks on the press*. https://cpj.org/data/killed/all/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&cc_fips%5B%5D=SY&start_year=2011&end_year=2024&group_by=year

¹¹⁵ Peralta García, L., & Ouariachi, T. (2023). Syrian journalists covering the war: Assessing perceptions of fear and security. *Media, War & Conflict*, 16(1), 44-62.

¹¹⁶ Blondheim, Menahem, and Limor Shifman. “What Officials Say, What Media Show, and What Publics Get: Gaza, January 2009.” *The Communication Review (Yverdon, Switzerland)* 12, no. 3 (2009): 205-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420903124036>

¹¹⁷ Cohen, Y. (2014). Foreign Correspondents in Israel, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Peace Process. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 7(2), 127-43, 132, 137 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276852162_Foreign_correspondents_in_Israel_and_the_Arab-Israeli_conflict_and_peace_process

“strong evidence” that Israel committed war crimes.¹¹⁸ In the aftermath of the conflict, the Israeli government rebuked the international media for what it deemed to be pro-Hamas coverage.¹¹⁹

While the foreign press proved irritating for Israel, the Israeli government was learning that it could permanently silence Palestinian journalists with complete impunity. A May 2023 analysis by CPJ found, for example, that at least 20 reporters were killed by Israeli forces over 22 years and no one has ever been held accountable. According to the investigation, Israel responded to the incidents with a standard playbook of preemptive denials of responsibility, dismissals of contrary evidence and witness testimony, the employment of false narratives and accusations that deceased journalists were terrorists, and slow and opaque investigations that never resulted in charges – even when Israel admitted potential culpability, as happened in the case of Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran Palestinian-American *Al Jazeera* correspondent.¹²⁰

In May 2022, Abu Akleh was, along with two other Palestinian journalists and her producer, Ali al-Samoudi, reporting on an Israeli raid in the Jenin refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. All of them were clad in protective vests with the word “PRESS” in large white letters across their chests and backs. In an instant, six shots rang out, one of them wounding al-Samoudi.¹²¹ The journalists ducked for cover as a second volley of gunshots rang out. A bullet hit Abu Akleh in the back of her head, in the gap between her helmet and her vest, killing her instantly.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Kershner, I. (2018, August 15). Israeli military clears itself of wrongdoing in 2014 Gaza war’s ‘Black Friday’. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/15/world/middleeast/gaza-israel-imports.html>; Amnesty International and Forensic Architecture. (n.d.). ‘Black Friday’: Carnage in Rafah during 2014 Israel/Gaza conflict. <https://blackfriday.amnesty.org/>

¹¹⁹ JPOST.COM STAFF. (2015, June 15). Watch: Israel gets 'animated' about Gaza war coverage. *The Jerusalem Post*. <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Watch-Israel-gets-animated-about-Gazas-war-coverage-406088>; Behar, R. (2015, February 19). The Media Intifada: Bad math, ugly truths about New York Times in Israel-Hamas War. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardbehar/2014/08/21/the-media-intifada-bad-math-ugly-truths-about-new-york-times-in-israel-hamas-war/>

¹²⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024, October 10). *Deadly Pattern: 20 journalists died by Israeli military fire in 22 years. No one has been held accountable*. <https://cpj.org/reports/2023/05/deadly-pattern-20-journalists-died-by-israeli-military-fire-in-22-years-no-one-has-been-held-accountable/>

¹²¹ Abdulrahim, R., Kingsley, P., Triebert, C., & Yazbek, H. (2022, June 20). The killing of Shireen Abu Akleh: Tracing a bullet to an Israeli convoy. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/20/world/middleeast/palestian-journalist-killing-shireen.html>. Forensic architecture. (2022). <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/shireen-abu-akleh-the-targeted-killing-of-a-journalist>

¹²² Abdulrahim, R., Kingsley, P., Triebert, C., & Yazbek, H. (2022, June 20). The killing of Shireen Abu Akleh: Tracing a bullet to an Israeli convoy. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/20/world/middleeast/palestian-journalist-killing-shireen.html>. Saifi, Z., Mackintosh, E., Alkhalidi, C., Khadder, K., Polglase, K., Mezzofiore, G., & Salman, A. (2022, May 26). ‘They were shooting directly at the journalists’: New evidence suggests Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in targeted attack by Israeli forces. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/24/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-jenin-killing-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>; Team, B. I. (2022b, May 15). *Unravelling the Killing of Shireen Abu Akleh - bellingscat*. Bellingcat. <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2022/05/14/unravelling-the-killing-of-shireen-abu-akleh/>

Independent investigations by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Associated Press*, as well as the Netherlands-based research firm Bellingcat, all concluded that Israeli military personnel likely fired the shot. *CNN* discovered evidence it was a targeted attack.¹²³ The London-based research group Forensic Architecture and the Ramallah-based human rights organization Al-Haq found evidence that Israeli forces intended to kill Abu Akleh and her colleagues. Even the Israeli Defense Forces eventually acknowledged there was a “high possibility” that the bullet was fired by one of its soldiers, albeit “accidentally.”¹²⁴ No one has ever been held accountable. Such impunity, in this and other cases, plays a key role in fostering future violence against reporters.

Beyond killings, strategic uses of cover up, propaganda, information control, weaponization of public records’ access laws, employment of claims and counterclaims, and the denial of basic information are routinely used to thwart war zone coverage. An April 1, 2018, U.S. drone strike in Somalia, for example, killed at least three, and possibly five, civilians, including 22-year-old Luul Dahir Mohamed and her 4-year-old daughter Mariam Shilow Muse. The Pentagon claimed it killed “five terrorists” and destroyed one vehicle and that “no civilians were killed in this airstrike.” An internal investigation conducted shortly after the attack acknowledged the deaths of a woman and child but it took almost a year for the U.S. military to publicly admit it. And still, the Pentagon continued to keep the details of the strike secret. The author filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the investigation documents, was forced to appeal redactions, and finally filed a federal lawsuit that dragged on for years. After receiving a heavily redacted copy of the investigation, which concluded the identities of the mother and child might never be known, he traveled to Somalia and spoke with seven of Luul and Mariam’s relatives.¹²⁵

The Pentagon’s inquiry found that the Americans who conducted the strike were confused and inexperienced and that they argued over basic details, like how many passengers were in the targeted vehicle. U.S. military personnel mistook a woman and a child for an adult male and killed Luul and Mariam in a follow-up strike as they ran from a truck in which they had hitched a ride to visit relatives. Despite this, the investigation – by

¹²³ Abdulrahim, R., Kingsley, P., Triebert, C., & Yazbek, H. (2022, June 20). The killing of Shireen Abu Akleh: Tracing a bullet to an Israeli convoy. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/20/world/middleeast/palestian-journalist-killing-shireen.html>;

Krauss, J. (2022, May 24). Review suggests Israeli fire killed reporter, no final word. *AP News*.

<https://apnews.com/article/politics-west-bank-middle-east-israel-8df6c999627efcef2fe0ca2b401e7a2c>; The Washington Post. (2022). How Shireen Abu Akleh was killed.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/shireen-abu-akleh-death/>; Team, B. I. (2022, May 15). *Unravelling the Killing of Shireen Abu Akleh - bellingscat*. Bellingcat.

<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2022/05/14/unravelling-the-killing-of-shireen-abu-akleh/>; Saifi, Z., Mackintosh, E., Alkhalidi, C., Khadder, K., Polglase, K., Mezzofiore, G., & Salman, A. (2022, May 26). “They were shooting directly at the journalists’: New evidence suggests Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in targeted attack by Israeli forces. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/24/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-jenin-killing-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html>.

¹²⁴ Rubin, O. (2022, September 5). *IDF says there is a 'high possibility' Israeli forces killed journalist Shireen Abu Akleh*. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/05/middleeast/idf-shireen-abu-akleh-investigation-intl/index.html>

¹²⁵ Turse, N. (2023c, November 28). Secret Pentagon Investigation Found No One at Fault in Drone Strike That Killed Woman and 4-Year-Old. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2023/11/12/somalia-drone-strike-civilian-deaths/>

the unit that conducted the attack – concluded that standard operating procedures and the rules of engagement were followed. No one was ever held accountable for the killings.

Uncovering the truth of Luul and Mariam’s deaths – and discovering that as many as three other civilians were also killed – took a years-long effort by multiple journalists including the filing and appeals of records requests and conducting national and international reporting; international and domestic travel on the part of reporters and sources; many thousands of dollars from news outlets and funders as well as in court filings, legal fees, and ancillary expenses. The investigation resulted in calls for the Pentagon to compensate Luul and Mariam’s family by two dozen human rights organizations — 14 Somali and 10 international groups — and five members of the U.S. Congress. Despite it all, the Defense Department has never offered a substantive response to the findings, an explanation of the failures that led to the killings, nor an apology to the family.¹²⁶

Part II

The News Industry’s Downward Spiral and the Fall of the Foreign Correspondent

Despite a deeply held belief in the necessity of a free press, strong interest in U.S. foreign policy, and a conviction that such issues affect their lives, Americans’ ability to access reliable international news coverage has been severely curtailed by a wide variety of factors, many of them economic.¹²⁷ Over decades, reporting in the public interest has been increasingly shunted aside by publishers’, broadcasters’, and their investors’ desire to turn a larger profit at the expense of quality news coverage and journalistic values.

Newspaper readership has been declining for decades due to competition from cable TV news and the Internet but stockholders and stock analysts increasingly demanded

¹²⁶ Sperber, A., (2021, July 22). US airstrikes have torn Somali families apart. they’re still seeking justice. *VICE*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/us-airstrikes-have-torn-somali-families-apart-theyre-still-seeking-justice/>; Turse, N. (2023e, December 18). Advocates Demand Compensation for U.S. Drone Strike Victims in Somalia. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2023/12/18/somalia-drone-strike-civilians-letter/>; Turse, N. (2024g, March 5); Turse, N. (2024b, January 9). Rep. Sara Jacobs Urges Pentagon to Make Amends to Family of Drone Strike Victims. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/09/pentagon-somalia-drone-strike-reparations/>; Turse, N. (2024d, January 31). Ilhan Omar Demands Pentagon Compensate Somali Drone Strike Victims. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/01/30/ilhan-omar-pentagon-drone-strike-victims/>; Turse, N. (2024j, March 5). Three More Members of Congress Call on Pentagon to Make Amends to Somali Family. *The Intercept*. <https://theintercept.com/2024/03/05/congress-pentagon-somali-drone-civilian-casualties/>

¹²⁷ Nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults say the freedom of the press – enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – is extremely or very important to the well-being of society. Only eight percent said it was a little or not at all important. A recent survey of U.S. voters also found that, in any given week, a clear majority report they either pay “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of attention to news and developments related to U.S. foreign policy and national security issues. Nearly two-thirds of American voters believe that “foreign policy decisions our government makes matter to me and my family.” Beshay. (2024, April 23). Most Americans say a free press is highly important to society. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/04/23/most-americans-say-a-free-press-is-highly-important-to-society/>. Halpin, J., & Katulis, B. (2019, May 5). *America adrift: How the U.S. foreign policy debate misses what voters really want*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/america-adrift/>

profit margins equal or exceed those of better times. Losses in circulation and revenue in the late 1980s and early 1990s began a downward spiral that has continued for decades. Two-thirds of newspaper journalism jobs in the United States – around 43,000 – have disappeared since 2005.¹²⁸ Over that same span, the U.S. has lost nearly 3,300 newspapers.¹²⁹ In 2024, newspapers closed at a rate of 2.5 per week. Around 55 million Americans now live in “news deserts” with limited or no access to local news.¹³⁰

Similar forces have affected the rest of the media landscape as sales, consolidations and mergers encouraged repeated cuts to operating costs and budgets – with little consideration of the effect on news coverage – to increase the bottom line and reward shareholders. Bonuses tied to profits also induced editorial and business-side executives to slash expenses, almost always to the detriment of news reporting.

In the 1960s and 1970s, international coverage was a staple of network television news. In the 1980s, American TV networks each maintained about 15 foreign bureaus. By 2010, they had six or less and only one (a one-person *ABC* bureau in Nairobi, Kenya) was located in Africa, India or South America.¹³¹ As foreign television bureaus closed, the number of minutes devoted to foreign news plummeted.

Between 1989 and 2001, network news reporting from foreign bureaus dropped by more than 50 percent.¹³² In 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, *ABC*, *CBS*, and *NBC News* devoted 4,828 minutes to international coverage.¹³³ By 2020, that number had plummeted to 720 minutes – an 85 percent drop. Out of a combined 14,000 minutes of national evening news broadcasts that same year, the three networks devoted just five minutes, in total, to coverage of Afghanistan, down from a high of 940 minutes. This marked a 99 percent decrease from the start of the U.S. war there in 2001.¹³⁴

The rise of the cable news- and Internet-driven 24-hour news cycle created, even for print journalists, a relentless pressure to produce content that undermined not only high-

¹²⁸ *The Death of the Washington Bureau*. (2024). Columbia Journalism Review.

https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/death_washington_bureau_local_news_la_times_layoffs.php

¹²⁹ Medill - Northwestern University. (2024). *Medill report shows local news deserts expanding*.

<https://www.medill.northwestern.edu/news/2024/medill-report-shows-local-news-deserts-expanding.html>

¹³⁰ Medill - Northwestern University. (2024). *Medill report shows local news deserts expanding*.

<https://www.medill.northwestern.edu/news/2024/medill-report-shows-local-news-deserts-expanding.html>

¹³¹ Constable, P. (2007, February 18). Demise of the foreign correspondent. *The Washington Post*.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2007/02/18/demise-of-the-foreign-correspondent/dfb489f6-2442-4910-b41a-6ff566fd9fdb/;](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2007/02/18/demise-of-the-foreign-correspondent/dfb489f6-2442-4910-b41a-6ff566fd9fdb/)

Sambrook, R. (2010). *Are foreign correspondents redundant? The changing face of international news*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/Are%20Foreign%20Correspondents%20Redundant%20The%20changing%20face%20of%20international%20news.pdf)

[12/Are%20Foreign%20Correspondents%20Redundant%20The%20changing%20face%20of%20international%20news.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/Are%20Foreign%20Correspondents%20Redundant%20The%20changing%20face%20of%20international%20news.pdf)

¹³² Fleeson, L. (2003). Bureau of missing bureaus. *American Journalism Review*, October/November.

<https://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=3409>

¹³³ Enda, J. (2011). Retreating from the world. *American Journalism Review*, December/January.

<https://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=4985>

¹³⁴ Lobe, J. (2023, July 6). Three major networks devoted a full five minutes to Afghanistan in 2020.

Responsible Statecraft. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2021/08/20/three-major-networks-devoted-a-full-five-minutes-to-afghanistan-in-2020/>

quality investigative reporting but deep-dive conflict coverage. Janine Di Giovanni, reflecting on her reporting from Bosnia, just before the rise of the Internet, noted that correspondents were still able to work with few interruptions beyond the hazards of snipers and bombs. “I was given a wad of cash, a medical kit, and a sleeping bag and told to come back in a few months’ time when I had a good story,” she recalled.¹³⁵

The Internet exacerbated difficulties already facing journalism. From 2000 to 2009, the number of Internet users around the world rose from 394 million to 1.8 billion.¹³⁶ Social media users skyrocketed from 970 million in 2010 to 5.1 billion users in 2024.¹³⁷ Newspapers almost immediately lost their classified ads to the Internet, according to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO.¹³⁸ At the same time, with Silicon Valley greasing the wheels to get people to go and stay online, newspapers and magazines made a fatal error, giving away for free the very same content that they had charged for in physical form. Internet companies capitalized as the news media’s traditional advertising-centric model collapsed. By the time newspapers and magazines began considering paywalls, it was too late. Many potential customers were no longer willing to pay for news.¹³⁹

A decades-long failure to effectively monetize digital news consumption was exacerbated by the 2008 global financial crisis.¹⁴⁰ Two companies, Google and Meta/Facebook, now receive approximately half of all global digital advertising spending. Across the world, newspaper sales continue to decline and media outlets struggle for “clicks” that determine online advertising revenue.¹⁴¹ Since 2020, Facebook has also drastically reduced the amount of news in users’ feeds, slashing ad revenue by further diminishing one of the few remaining sources of traffic to media websites.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Di Giovanni, J. (2021, March 19). The decline of foreign reporting spells worse foreign policy. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography/>

¹³⁶ Pursel, B. W. W. H. F. B. (n.d.). *Internet users and usage*. Pressbooks. Penn State. <https://psu.pb.unizin.org/ist110/chapter/1-4-internet-users-and-usage/>

¹³⁷ Team, B. (2024, September 6). *Social Media Usage & Growth Statistics*. Backlinko. <https://backlinko.com/social-media-users>

¹³⁸ UNESCO. (2022). *World trends in freedom of expression and media development: 2021/2022 online report - Journalism as a public good*. <https://www.unesco.org/reports/world-media-trends/2021/en/journalism-public-good>; Streitfeld, D. (2024, February 28). How the media industry keeps losing the future. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/28/technology/news-media-industry-dying.html>

¹³⁹ Streitfeld, D. (2024, February 28).

¹⁴⁰ Kamarck, E. C., & Gabriele, A. (2015, November). The news today: 7 trends in old and new media. *The Brookings Institution*. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/new-media.pdf>;

Di Giovanni, J. (2021b, March 19). The decline of foreign reporting spells worse foreign policy. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography/>

¹⁴¹ UNESCO. (2022). *World trends in freedom of expression and media development: 2021/2022 online report - Journalism as a public good*. <https://www.unesco.org/reports/world-media-trends/2021/en/journalism-public-good>.

¹⁴² Bauder, D. (2024, February 2). Think the news industry was struggling already? The dawn of 2024 is offering few good tidings. *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/journalism-layoffs-business-messenger-83afe18984c2a1fc78e78184dddee17d>

“We’re becoming more about marketing in journalism than truth in journalism because we’re depending on the customer to pay the price rather than advertising,” observed longtime magazine analyst Samir Husni. “The thing now is to make everybody happy. But that was never the role of journalism, making people happy.”¹⁴³ Shrinking news budgets – and the perception that Americans care more about celebrities and scandals (stories which are far cheaper to report) – have led media companies to disproportionately cut back on foreign coverage.¹⁴⁴

Front-page stories on foreign affairs in U.S. newspapers dropped by half between 1987 and 2004.¹⁴⁵ A 2008 report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that international news was “rapidly losing ground at rates greater than any other topic area.” According to the PEJ report, 64 percent of newsroom executives said that in the previous three years, their newspapers had decreased the amount of space allocated to foreign news. Only 10 percent considered foreign coverage “very essential.”¹⁴⁶

While the largest national newspapers, like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, continue to offer vibrant foreign reporting, and start-ups, freelancers, and not-for-profit newsrooms have stepped into the breach, they have been unable to compensate for the steep losses of other outlets. Between 1998 and 2011, at least 18 U.S. newspapers and two newspaper chains eliminated all their foreign bureaus, according to the American Journalism Review. These included key regional papers – *The Boston Globe*, *Newsday* (Long Island, New York), and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, among them – with storied traditions of unique foreign coverage.¹⁴⁷

The Los Angeles Times, then the flagship newspaper of the Tribune Company, closed 43 percent of its foreign bureaus between 2003 and 2011. Other newspapers in the group – *The Baltimore Sun*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Orlando Sentinel*, Fort Lauderdale’s *Sun-Sentinel* and *Newsday* – closed all of their 25 foreign bureaus during the same span. By 2011, *Newsday* – which won four Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting between 1985 and 2005 – no longer had any foreign correspondents.¹⁴⁸

Fewer journalists with overseas experience impaired the global information ecosystem, the media’s accountability function, and the ability of reporters to check and challenge power. Ben Rhodes, President Barack Obama’s deputy national security adviser for strategic communications, bluntly described how the White House weaponized the demise of foreign bureaus and the decimation of the news industry to manipulate public opinion. “All these newspapers used to have foreign bureaus,” he told *The New York Times* in

¹⁴³ Streitfeld, D. (2024, February 28). How the media industry keeps losing the future. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/28/technology/news-media-industry-dying.html>

¹⁴⁴ Likes, T. (2014). Does Anyone Care? The State of International News Coverage Among U.S. Media. *Electronic News* 8(1), 64–67; Kotišová, J., & Deuze, M. (2022). Decolonizing Conflict Journalism Studies: A Critical Review of Research on Fixers. *Journalism Studies (London, England)*, 23(10), 1160–1177.

¹⁴⁵ Carroll, J. (2007). *Foreign News Coverage: The U.S. Media’s Undervalued Asset*. Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard. https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2007_01_carroll.pdf

¹⁴⁶ Enda, J. (2011). Retreating from the world. *American Journalism Review*, December/January. <https://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=4985>

¹⁴⁷ Enda, J. (2011).

¹⁴⁸ Enda, J. (2011).

2016. “Now they don’t. They call us to explain to them what’s happening in Moscow and Cairo. Most of the outlets are reporting on world events from Washington. The average reporter we talk to is 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around political campaigns. That’s a sea change. They literally know nothing.”¹⁴⁹

Almost a decade after Rhodes boasted about his White House’s ability to manipulate inexperienced reporters and turn them into what his then-assistant Ned Price – who became a State Department’s spokesman under President Joe Biden – called “force multipliers,” journalism remains in a state of free fall.¹⁵⁰ Job losses among print-, digital-, and broadcast-news organizations increased by almost 50 percent during 2023, according to the consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.¹⁵¹ The industry lost at least 8,000 jobs in the U.S., UK, and Canada, that same year.¹⁵² In January 2024, alone, another 1,000 media workers were affected by layoffs and closures. Since then, all manner of media – from venerable newspapers to non-profit newsrooms have downsized including *ABC News*, the *Associated Press*, *Axios*, the *BBC*, *Buzzfeed*, *CBS News*, the *Center for Public Integrity*, *CNN*, *Conde Nast*, *The Daily Beast*, the *Evening Standard*, *Gannett*, *GovExec*, *Hearst Magazines*, *The Intercept*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *NBC News*, *New York Public Radio*, *Scripps*, the *Tampa Bay Times*, *Time*, *Variety*, *Vox Media*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others.¹⁵³ Vice Media, worth almost \$6 billion as recently as 2017 – making it one of the most highly valued media companies ever – cut hundreds of jobs and declared bankruptcy in 2023.¹⁵⁴ The recent losses have come despite a relatively strong economy, booming stock market, rising income, and low unemployment in the United States.

¹⁴⁹ The type of news and the source, of course, matters. A sophisticated study of the media and the Iraq War found that paying close attention to the news was no guarantee of being better informed. For those who followed the news very closely but relied on FOX News, 80 percent had the misperception that close links between al Qaeda and Iraq had been found. Those who followed print news were less likely to misunderstand events. Kull, S., Ramsay, C., & Lewis, E. (2016, May 5). Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War. *Political Science Quarterly* 118(4), 569–598; Samuels, D. (2016, May 5). The aspiring novelist who became Obama’s foreign-policy guru: How Ben Rhodes rewrote the rules of diplomacy for the digital age. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/magazine/the-aspiring-novelist-who-became-obamas-foreign-policy-guru.html?mcubz=1&r=0>

¹⁵⁰ Samuels, D. (2016, May 5).

¹⁵¹ Challenger, G., & Christmas, I. (2023, December 7). Job cuts jump in November 2023 from October; second time this year cuts lower than same month year ago. *The Challenger Report*. <https://www.challengergray.com/blog/job-cuts-jump-in-november-2023-from-october-second-time-this-year-cuts-lower-than-same-month-year-ago/>

¹⁵² Aberneithie, C. (2024, June 4). At least 8,000 journalism job cuts in UK and North America in 2023. *Press Gazette*. https://pressgazette.co.uk/media_business/journalism-job-cuts-2023/

¹⁵³ Tobitt, C. (2025, January 6). Around 4,000 journalism job cuts made in UK and US in 2024. *Press Gazette*. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/publishers/journalism-job-cuts-2024/#:~:text=The%20tide%20continued%20in%202024,Times%2C%20NYPR%20and%20Hollywood%20Reporter>

¹⁵⁴ Streitfeld, D. (2024, February 28). How the media industry keeps losing the future. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/28/technology/news-media-industry-dying.html>.

Izadi, E., & Sommer, W. (2024, February 22). Former digital-media darling Vice to end website, lay off hundreds: Once valued at more than \$5 billion for its vaunted appeal to younger audiences, the company filed for bankruptcy last year. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2024/02/22/vice-media-shuts-down-layoffs/>

Oi, M. (2024, February 23). Vice Media stops publishing on website and cuts hundreds of jobs. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68377742>

The cutbacks – and fallout -- aren't confined to U.S. media. Canadian foreign bureaus have almost all disappeared. A 2024 analysis found there are apparently no permanent Canadian correspondents from the major newspapers or broadcasters based in the Middle East or mainland China, none on the ground in Russia, and only 60 full-time journalists from major news outlets – 45 of them working for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the publicly-owned media company – reporting on world events.¹⁵⁵ Research by the Media Standards Trust in the United Kingdom found international coverage across four key newspapers fell almost 40 percent between 1979 and 2009.¹⁵⁶ “At the *Sunday Times* 10 years ago, we used to have 10 pages of foreign news, now we have two or three... We also have far fewer correspondents,” observed Christina Lamb, the chief foreign correspondent of that UK-based newspaper, in 2024.”¹⁵⁷

The demise of the traditional Western “foreign” correspondent at major print or television outlets has been applauded in some quarters since the role has been traditionally associated with privilege, whiteness, maleness, and colonialist overtones. Patrick Gathara of *The New Humanitarian* notes that “international” news still largely consists of coverage of wars, disasters, and humanitarian emergencies mostly told by a select group of foreign journalists. “Ignorance infects how stories are told,” he wrote, calling on major media outlets to consider the ethics of dispatching “international journalists” rather than employing local press to “interpret their own country.”¹⁵⁸

The international reporting model was long typified by Western reporters hiring local “fixers” to assist them while sitting atop a hierarchy with stringers, freelancers, local reporters, and others below them in subservient roles.¹⁵⁹ A survey of more than 450 journalists from 70 countries examining the relationship between correspondents and fixers, described it as “a deep-pocketed foreign reporter hiring a local journalist in an often-poorer country, to do his or her bidding.” More than half of the fixers surveyed said that

¹⁵⁵ Lowman, H. (2025, January 3). Canada's foreign correspondents are almost extinct. *The Hub*. <https://thehub.ca/2024/03/12/canadas-foreign-correspondents-are-nearly-extinct/>

¹⁵⁶ Media Standards Trust (2010). *Shrinking world*. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/7922994/shrinking-world-media-standards-trust>

¹⁵⁷ Abrahams, J. (2024, March 26). “I don't remember a time like this”: Christina Lamb on rising global conflict. *New Humanist*. <https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/6261/i-dont-remember-a-time-like-this-christina-lamb-on-rising-global-conflict>

¹⁵⁸ Countries are not, however, monoliths. Many conflicts have an ethnic or religious basis which creates a unique set of pressures on local reporters. Journalists from one ethnic group have difficulties reporting on those from a different ethnic or religious group that a foreign correspondent may not. Shezaf, H. (2024, October 1). *The 'other' side: How identity shapes local coverage of violent conflict*. Reuters Institute. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/other-side-how-identity-shapes-local-coverage-violent-conflict>; Gathara, P. (2024, October 1). Decolonise How? Humanitarian journalism is no ordinary journalism. *The New Humanitarian*. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/column/2024/10/01/decolonise-how-humanitarian-journalism-no-ordinary-journalism-ethics-covering-crises>

¹⁵⁹ Borpujari, P. (2019, June 28). The Problem with 'Fixers'. *Columbia Journalism Review*. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/fixers.php

they were frequently put in danger.¹⁶⁰ In the worst instances, fixers have been kidnapped and foreign media have abandoned them.¹⁶¹

While they generally aren't in as perilous a position as local fixers, Western freelancers are frequently in precarious states. In 2011, during the opening stages of the Libyan civil war, South African freelance photojournalist Anton Hammerl was killed in an attack by government troops. Hammerl had a wife and three young children but, like many freelancers in conflict zones, no insurance. Journalists James Foley (who was later killed by ISIS in Syria), Clare Gillis, and Manuel Brabo, who had been traveling and reporting in Libya with Hammerl, were kidnapped and held captive. After their release, it fell to them to help organize a benefit auction for Hammerl's family. "The baseline among freelancers is that nobody is insured," said Gillis whose freelance employer, *USA Today*, only purchased insurance for her after she was kidnapped.¹⁶²

Almost 15 years later, many freelancers and fixers still find themselves in danger, underequipped, underpaid, and uninsured. Ukraine is atypical of many other nations as it requires that payments be made when a journalist is injured or killed. In April 2023, Ukrainian journalist and fixer Bohdan Bitik and Italian reporter Corrada Zunino were both shot by a Russian sniper. Reports indicate that Zunino, who recovered, was wearing a bulletproof vest while Bitik was not and was killed. Only after Ukrainian media elevated the issue into a scandal, did Zunino's employer *La Repubblica* pay compensation to his family.¹⁶³

Freelance rates have also stagnated or shrunk over the last two decades. Colombian journalist Nubia Rojas, who has spent more than 18 years as a freelancer for international outlets, works several jobs to stay afloat. "About 10 years ago, I noticed this trend where outlets do not want to pay you," she explained last year. "They just sell you the idea that you are going to associate your name with the prestige of a big media house."¹⁶⁴ Despite assumptions that freelancers in war zones can find outlets willing to purchase their work, reporters and photojournalists often have only a limited number of editorial contacts at publications with shrinking budgets. As Italian photojournalist Francesca Borri observed:

[W]hether you're writing from Aleppo or Gaza or Rome, the editors see no difference. You are paid the same: \$70 per piece. Even in places like Syria, where

¹⁶⁰ Borpujari, P. (2019, June 28).

¹⁶¹ Grytsai, M. (2023). Fixers in a war zone. Foreign media's invisible producers. *Journalism Research*, 6(3/4), 329-335.

¹⁶² Santo A. (2012, June 21). *Reporting from the battlefield, uninsured*. Columbia Journalism Review. https://www.cjr.org/the_news_frontier/reporting_from_the_battlefield.php

¹⁶³ Grytsai, M. (2023). Fixers in a war zone. Foreign media's invisible producers. *Journalism Research*, 6(3/4), 329-335; Nuju. (2023, May 4). *Fixer Bohdan Bitik, killed in Kherson, was a polyglot orientalist, volunteer, and a courageous person*. The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine. <https://nuju.org.ua/fixer-bohdan-bitik-killed-in-kherson-was-a-polyglot-orientalist-volunteer-and-a-courageous-person/>; Institute of Mass Information. (2023) *543 crimes against the media and journalists in Ukraine committed by Russia in the year and 9 months of the big war*. <https://imi.org.ua/en/monitorings/543-crimes-against-the-media-and-journalists-in-ukraine-committed-by-russia-in-the-year-and-9-i57177d>

¹⁶⁴ Kahn, G. (2024, April 12). *Is freelance journalism still viable? Not for most of the reporters we spoke with. These are their key problems*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/freelance-journalism-still-viable-not-most-reporters-we-spoke-these-are-their-key-problems>

prices triple because of rampant speculation. So, for example, sleeping in this rebel base, under mortar fire, on a mattress on the ground, with yellow water that gave me typhoid, costs \$50 per night; a car costs \$250 per day. So, you end up maximizing, rather than minimizing, the risk.¹⁶⁵

Risky Business: Local Reporters Face Greatest Dangers

A shift from foreign to local reporters is occurring in various contexts and conflicts, even if driven more by economics than evolving attitudes and ethics. “The financial reality of the established media is such that they can't afford to send experienced journalists into Syria and insure them and pay them adequately,” war reporter John Brabazon observed in 2014, noting that it might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per week to adequately support and protect a news crew.¹⁶⁶ “If all the freelancers stop going to Syria, all you'd get, potentially, is propaganda coming out.” Underpaid and under-resourced foreign freelancers did fill the gap, but after they began being kidnapped, news organizations came under scrutiny for encouraging them to take incredible risks. An industry-wide moratorium on freelancer copy did, as Brabazon predicted, curtail much on-the-ground foreign coverage from Syria.¹⁶⁷

Syrian journalists who stepped into the breach faced persistent danger. A recent study of Syrian war reporters, most of them freelancers, found 95 percent said covering the conflict in their country was extremely, very, or quite dangerous. The reporters frequently mentioned fears of endangering relatives. About 69 percent also felt they were being spied on by government authorities. Participants said reporting on radical Islam was also high risk. “The threat is two-fold: the risk of dying on the battlefield and the organization's threats to any journalist covering the war against them,” said one of the journalists about ISIS.¹⁶⁸ Coverage of the conflict suffered immensely. “The result has been a war about which the public debate has been shaped almost entirely by second- and thirdhand information, opinionating pundits, and social media,” Janine di Giovanni observed while the civil war raged. “Why bother going to dangerous, expensive Aleppo when you can tweet your take from your desk in your bathrobe? Fake news and disinformation, too, came to a head in the Syrian war.”¹⁶⁹

Eschewing foreign “parachute journalists” in favor of local reporters with native language skills and in-depth socio-cultural knowledge is welcome for improving many aspects of war zone coverage. At the same time, this means additional risks have

¹⁶⁵ Borri F. (2013, July 1). *Woman's work*. Columbia Journalism Review.

http://www.cjr.org/feature/womans_work.php

¹⁶⁶ Creech, B. (2018). Bearing the cost to witness: the political economy of risk in contemporary conflict and war reporting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(4), 567-583.

¹⁶⁷ Blacksin, I. (2023). Death's common sense: Casualty counts in war reportage from Syria and beyond. *Media, War & Conflict*, 16(3) 414-415.

¹⁶⁸ Peralta García, L., & Ouariachi, T. (2021, March 21). Syrian Journalists Covering the War: Assessing Perceptions of Fear and Security. *Media, War & Conflict* 16(1), 44-62.

¹⁶⁹ Di Giovanni, J. (2021, January 15). The First Draft of History. *Foreign Policy*.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/history-foreign-correspondents-media-press-journalism-war-reporting-photography/>

increasingly been outsourced to unsalaried, uninsured, under-equipped, financially and politically vulnerable local reporters.¹⁷⁰

Most reporters harmed or killed are local journalists.¹⁷¹ In 2023, 98 percent of journalists killed were local reporters, according to the International News Safety Institute.¹⁷² Unlike their international counterparts, local journalists often lack the means to escape threats or dangerous environments, forcing them into the dual roles of witnesses and victims.¹⁷³

Around the world, local reporters interpreting conflicts and crises in their own countries – from Pakistan to the Philippines – face physical, psychological, emotional, financial, and social risks.¹⁷⁴ Ibrahim Manzo Diallo, the publisher, owner, and editor of *Air Info*, a newspaper with an affiliated radio station in the town of Agadez, Niger is typical. His reporting, over the course of several armed conflicts, has repeatedly drawn the ire of state authorities. “When I was starting out, they tried to buy me off,” he said of government officials. “Then they threatened me with arrest, with prison, with torture.”¹⁷⁵ As the only independent media outlet reporting on a rebellion in the region in the late 2000s, his newspaper was shuttered for four months over articles allegedly “undermining the morale of troops.”¹⁷⁶ His radio station, he said, was closed down for four years. Arrested by plainclothes police while attempting to board a flight to Paris for a professional seminar, he was then held incommunicado for months and transferred from one remote prison to another.¹⁷⁷ “They accused me of being a rebel and locked me in a cell where I couldn’t stand but also couldn’t lie down,” he said, confirming that worse had occurred but that he would not share the details of his abuse. “In our culture, we don’t talk about these things. But what I experienced should never be spoken about.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁰ Sterling, *Encyclopedia of Journalism* (2009). p. 645; Grossman, L. R. (2017). All the News that’s Worth the Risk: Improving Protection for Freelance Journalists in War Zones. *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 40(1), 141–166; Kotišová, J., & Deuze, M. (2022). Decolonizing Conflict Journalism Studies: A Critical Review of Research on Fixers. *Journalism Studies*, 23(10), 1160–1177.

¹⁷¹ UNESCO. 2020. *Protect journalists, protect the truth*. Highlights from the 2020 UNESCO Director-General’s Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity. <https://www.unesco.org/reports/sjdi/2020/>; Tejedor, S., Cervi, L., & Tusa, F. (2020). Perception of journalists reporting in conflict zones: Labour situation, working conditions and main challenges in information coverage in contexts of violence. *Media, War & Conflict* 15(4), 530–552; Fahmy, S. S., Salama, M., & Alsaba, M. R. (2024, June 27). Shattered lives, unbroken stories: journalists’ perspectives from the frontlines of the Israel–Gaza war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(2), 151–180.

¹⁷² Cosentino, E. (2023). KILLING THE MESSENGER. Cardiff School of Journalism, *International News Safety Institute*. https://newssafety.org/media/resources/pdf/insi_ktm2023pdf.pdf

¹⁷³ Betz, M & Beighley, P. (2020). *Fear, trauma and local journalists*. In Grøndahl Larsen, A., Fadnes, I., & Ro Krøvel (eds.), *Journalist safety and self-censorship*. Routledge. 148–163.

¹⁷⁴ Kotišová, J., & Deuze, M. (2022). Decolonizing Conflict Journalism Studies: A Critical Review of Research on Fixers. *Journalism Studies*, 23(10), 1160–1177.

¹⁷⁵ Turse, N. (2023, January 10). Interview with Ibrahim Manzo Diallo.

¹⁷⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2020, May 27). *Ibrahim Manzo Diallo - Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/data/people/ibrahim-manzo-diallo/>

¹⁷⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2020, May 27) Ibrahim Manzo Diallo. <https://cpj.org/data/people/ibrahim-manzo-diallo/>

¹⁷⁸ Turse, N. (2023, January 10). Interview with Ibrahim Manzo Diallo.

Arrests are frequently used to inhibit the reporting of local journalists. Between 1992 and 2024, 2,262 journalists have been imprisoned according to CPJ. Almost 97 percent were local reporters.¹⁷⁹ When it comes to the 229 war reporters imprisoned for doing their jobs since 1992, about 94 percent were local journalists.

Since the war in Gaza began in October 2023, CPJ has documented 75 arrests of journalists in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza and in the city of Jerusalem. (Israel arrested 72 media workers while Palestinian authorities have arrested three.)¹⁸⁰ Last year, Israel became the world's third-largest prison for journalists, behind China and Myanmar and just ahead of Belarus, according to RSF.¹⁸¹

Threats to local reporters – especially in crisis areas and conflict zones – may also come from criminals, religious extremists, rebel groups, terrorists, and ethnic, sectarian and mafia groups.¹⁸² Local journalists often find themselves precariously employed with heavy workloads and low wages and may be susceptible to a wide range of pressures – political, economic and violent – like bribery and intimidation.¹⁸³

After a civil war broke out in Sudan in 2023, many media outlets closed – adding to financial pressures already affecting reporters. That same year, a survey of 213 Sudanese journalists found only 23 percent received a salary, with some earning less than \$100 per month.¹⁸⁴ Two-thirds of the respondents said they were also subject to at least one type of threat: physical (53 percent), psychological (90 percent), or cyber (51 percent). “Journalists are targeted by people on both sides of the conflict,” said one respondent. More than three-quarters of the journalists surveyed said their reporting was restricted in some way, with 26 percent practicing self-censorship and 20 percent stating that they were subject to direct censorship. “Having a different opinion about the war in Sudan or expressing

¹⁷⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024). *Explore CPJ's database of attacks on the press.*

https://cpj.org/data/?status=Imprisoned&start_year=1992&end_year=2023&group_by=year&localOrForeign%5B%5D=Local

¹⁸⁰ Daoud, D., Mandour, M., Culebras, I. M. D., & Alsharif, S. (2025, January 9). *Arrests of Palestinian journalists since start of Israel-Gaza war.* Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2024/10/arrests-of-palestinian-journalists-since-start-of-israel-gaza-war/>

¹⁸¹ Reporters Without Borders. (2024, December 12). *RSF's 2024 Round-up: journalism suffers exorbitant human cost due to conflicts and repressive regimes.* <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-s-2024-round-journalism-suffers-exorbitant-human-cost-due-conflicts-and-repressive-regimes>

¹⁸² Jamil, S. (2017). Safety threats, impunity and professionalism: Journalists' dilemma in Pakistan. *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 6, 571–578.

¹⁸³ Tejedor, S., Cervi, L., & Tusa, F. (2022). Perception of Journalists Reporting in Conflict Zones: Labour Situation, Working Conditions and Main Challenges in Information Coverage in Contexts of Violence. *Media, War & Conflict*, 15(4), 530–52; Høiby, M., & R. Ottosen. (2019). Journalism Under Pressure in Conflict Zones: A Study of Journalists and Editors in Seven Countries. *Media, War & Conflict* 12(1), 69–86. See also, Merchant, D. (2018). Agentes, no víctimas. Estrategias de periodistas para evadir las agresiones no físicas en Baja California. *Sur le journalisme*, 7(1), 80–97.

¹⁸⁴ MiCT - Media in Cooperation and Transition. (2024, April 2). *In the shadow of violence: The pressing needs of Sudanese journalists.* <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ecbde016a831b2551433606/t/654a557a2a31857b8f4643d5/1699374756358/Report+The+Pressing+Needs+of+Sudanese+Journalists+English>

personal convictions can strain social relations and, in some cases, lead to conflict,” said one journalist. “So I practice self-censorship and opt for silence.”¹⁸⁵

Such dangers to local reporters are compounded by rampant impunity. Over 15 years, 87 percent of cases of slain journalists remain unresolved, including 98 percent in the “Arab region,” 89 percent in Asia, and 87 percent in Africa, according to a 2022 UNESCO report.¹⁸⁶ When crimes against journalists are not credibly investigated or prosecuted it sends a clear message that reporters can be silenced without repercussions and also intimidates other journalists, creating a chilling effect that causes them to self-censor.¹⁸⁷

Preventing News Graveyards: Gaza and Beyond

Many see a need for complementary relationships involving local reporters and foreign correspondents, each leveraging their strengths. While the dynamics of foreign correspondent/fixer relationships have been evolving for decades, room still exists for more equitable associations, ensuring protections for fixers, and for Western reporters to, as one analyst recommended, eschew “expat comfort zones” like international hotels, to embed with local journalists.¹⁸⁸

Whatever their faults, foreign correspondents can provide an outside perspective that may, in certain circumstances, be just as important as an insider’s understanding of a situation and context. Foreign reporters can often publish articles that may be too dangerous for local reporters to write and provide corroboration that can be critical for countering claims of local partisanship.

International correspondents can also, as Anand Gopal pointed out, be crucial in translating foreign experiences to their own country’s audiences, providing critical context and nuanced information about the implications of events occurring beyond their home nation’s borders. “I think Gaza is a good example of how the decline of foreign reporting has really been a tragic occurrence for Americans trying to better understand what’s happening,” he said recently. “What we’ve lost are the kind of correspondents who have expertise in translating these kinds of foreign experiences to an American audience and making it relevant to an American audience.” This is especially crucial given that, as a recent Costs of War analysis found, the U.S. government approved \$18 billion in security assistance for Israeli military operations in Gaza and elsewhere in the year following October 2023.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ MiCT - Media in Cooperation and Transition. (2024, April 2).

¹⁸⁶ UNESCO. (2022). *World trends in freedom of expression and media development; Global report 2021/2022*. <https://www.unesco.org/reports/world-media-trends/2021/en>

¹⁸⁷ Tejedor, S., Cervi, L., & Tusa, F. (2022). Perception of Journalists Reporting in Conflict Zones: Labour Situation, Working Conditions and Main Challenges in Information Coverage in Contexts of Violence. *Media, War & Conflict*, 15(4), 530–52.

¹⁸⁸ Giotis, C. (2018). Conflict zones and non-physical risks to journalism practice. Notes from Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo. *Sur Le Journalisme*, 7(1), 34–49.

¹⁸⁹ Bilmes, L. J., Hartung, W. D., & Semler, S. (2024, October 7). United States spending on Israel’s military operations and related U.S. operations in the region, October 7, 2023 – September 30, 2024. *Costs of War*, Watson Institute, Brown University.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2024/USspendingIsrael>

Many Palestinian journalists working in Gaza agree that the war is not being adequately covered because of the persistent dangers and obstacles they face.¹⁹⁰ “[T]he Palestinian narrative rarely reaches the world, especially since large segments of global societies do not engage with Palestinian journalists on social media,” observed Palestinian journalist Haitham Al-Sharif, noting that reporting by journalists in Gaza is often met with skepticism.¹⁹¹ “I think the journalists in Gaza are doing a great job. Unfortunately, they are subjected to disinformation and propaganda that accuses them of working with Hamas – unfounded claims questioning their integrity. They are being killed off. They are threatened. They are exhausted,” says RSF’s Jonathan Dagher. “So, I think it’s important for their international colleagues to be by their side.”¹⁹²

The Israeli information blockade has, instead, forced Palestinian journalists – who courageously continue to work, despite the risks – to stand alone. “The Israeli army has prevented the foreign press from entering the Gaza Strip, so the responsibility was great on us as journalists in Gaza to convey the truth with complete credibility. We had two options: either stop the coverage to protect ourselves and our families from being targeted or continue the coverage. We chose to continue,” said *Al Jazeera* correspondent Anas Jamal Al-Sharif. “I was subjected to a lot of harassment and threats from Israeli officers to move from the north to the south and stop working. However, I did not leave the north with my family. So the Israeli army targeted my house and martyred my father. He had refused to leave me.”¹⁹³ The Israeli military has repeatedly threatened Al-Sharif, claimed he was supporting Hamas, and, later, that he was one of six *Al Jazeera* journalists based in Gaza who are members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, another militant group. *Al Jazeera* swiftly condemned the “unfounded allegations” as a “blatant attempt to silence the few remaining journalists in the region, thereby obscuring the harsh realities of the war from audiences worldwide.”¹⁹⁴

In a July 2024 letter to Israeli authorities, more than 70 media and civil society organizations – including the *Associated Press*, *Agence France-Presse*, the *BBC*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* – called on Israel to provide foreign journalists independent access to the Gaza Strip.¹⁹⁵ Sixty-five members of the U.S. Congress also called on then-President Joe Biden to push Israel to allow unimpeded access for American and international journalists. “This effective ban on foreign reporting has

¹⁹⁰ Abu Salem, S. (2024, October 3). ‘I lose lots of stories’: Palestinian journalists working under fire. *New Internationalist*. <https://newint.org/war-and-peace/2024/i-lose-lots-stories-palestinian-journalists-working-under-fire>

¹⁹¹ Al-Sharif, H. (2024). The world “did not see” Gaza’s true face... How did Israel prevent international journalists from covering the genocide? *Raseef22*.

¹⁹² Jonathan Dagher, interview with Nick Turse. (2024, October 24).

¹⁹³ Kamal Amer, R. (2024, October 22). “The Israeli Army martyred my Father”: What Gaza’s journalists have endured. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/gaza-journalists-genocide-testimony/>

¹⁹⁴ Kamal Amer, R. (2024, October 22);

Al Jazeera. (2024, October 24). *Al Jazeera decries ‘unfounded’ Israeli claims about its Gaza journalists*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/23/al-jazeera-decries-unfounded-israeli-claims-about-its-gaza-journalists>

¹⁹⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists. (2024, July 11). *Media organizations urge Israel to open access to Gaza*. <https://cpj.org/2024/07/media-organizations-urge-israel-to-open-access-to-gaza/>

placed an overwhelming burden on local journalists who are documenting the war they are living through,” they wrote, also referencing the tremendous number of reporters killed.¹⁹⁶

The survivors reporting in the news graveyard of Gaza continue to work under threat of death, injury, arrest, and cyberattack. They have endured the loss of family, friends, colleagues, and homes. They have persevered in the face of intolerable hardships. Solidarity in the profession demands that international reporters call out repression, break blockades and support embattled journalists in Gaza and beyond.

Reporters are in danger around the world – and the sources of those threats are apparent. “Journalists do not die, they are killed; they are not in prison, regimes lock them up; they do not disappear, they are kidnapped,” observed Thibaut Bruttin, RSF’s Director General. “These crimes — often orchestrated by governments and armed groups with total impunity — violate international law and too often go unpunished.”¹⁹⁷ Israel, the Assad regime in Syria, the United States, and others have honed methods meant to strangle press coverage and have provided a playbook for others bent on suppressing free speech, muting dissent, thwarting transparency, and undermining accountability.

Reliable information is essential in conflict zones for the wellbeing of the local population and is necessary to enlighten the world on the forces behind wars and the toll on civilians. It is unacceptable that journalists – mostly local reporters – pay with their lives to do this vital work. Combating this worldwide threat to the information ecosystem necessitates a global effort to aid reporters. Journalists, especially those in countries at war, need support. They require financial and legal backing, safety and security assistance, psychological and emotional support, and advocacy from not only colleagues but also people around the world who rely on accurate information. Failing to give journalists under threat the resources they need aids and abets the forces of censorship and repression and threatens the free flow of information on which the people of the world depend.

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¹⁹⁶ U.S. Representative Jim McGovern. (2024, October 21). *McGovern, 64 House Democrats write to Biden administration urging unimpeded media access to Gaza*. Press Release.

<https://mcgovern.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=400123>

¹⁹⁷ Reporters Without Borders. (2024, December 12). *RSF’s 2024 Round-up: journalism suffers exorbitant human cost due to conflicts and repressive regimes*. <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-s-2024-round-journalism-suffers-exorbitant-human-cost-due-conflicts-and-repressive-regimes>