

## PREFACE

BY FAREED ZAKARIA

TOWARD THE END OF HIS 118-DAY ORDEAL INSIDE TEHRAN'S EVIN PRISON, *Newsweek* reporter Maziar Bahari had a bizarre exchange with his interrogator. Bahari had been held in solitary confinement since his arrest after Iran's disputed presidential election in June; he had been subjected to near-daily beatings and interrogation sessions that stretched for hours. But his jailers had not been able to prove their accusation that Bahari was a spy for Western intelligence agencies. So they had an ominous-sounding new charge to levy against him: "media espionage."

As Bahari later recounted, his interrogator didn't have a specific definition for the crime, only an analogy. As a reporter for a Western news organization, the man said, Bahari had been paid to send reports to foreigners—in his words, to "enemies of Iran." Was that not precisely what spies did? Case closed.

Bahari could laugh when telling the story later, home with his wife and child in London. But Iran's Revolutionary Guards have essentially criminalized journalism in their post-election crackdown. Like Bahari, several reporters have been accused of being instigators of a "velvet revolution" in the Islamic Republic—shapers, rather than witnesses to events. Since June, more than 90 have been arrested. Twenty-three remained in prison in late year, and some received years-long sentences after quick show trials. In 2009, Iran became one of the world's leading jailers of journalists, second only to China. Other authoritarian governments are watching, and no doubt learning from Tehran's effort to muzzle the press.



Bahari was lucky. He had the resources of *Newsweek* and the Washington Post Company behind him. With the help of the Committee to Protect Journalists and others, we were able to mount an international campaign on his behalf. Newspapers around the globe ran ads and editorials calling for Bahari's release. World leaders pressured the Iranian government both publicly and privately.

**But the media business is changing rapidly. Unable to afford foreign bureaus,** more newspapers and magazines are relying on freelancers abroad. These stringers look just as suspicious to dictators and militant groups—and they are distinctly more vulnerable. In late year, Iran was still holding three U.S. hikers, one of whom had worked as a freelance journalist in the Middle East.

**FREELANCERS AND LOCAL  
JOURNALISTS TAKE ON ADDED  
IMPORTANCE AND GREATER RISK.**

In November, two freelancers, a Canadian and an Australian, were released by a Somali rebel group after 15 months in captivity; with no media organization behind them, their case had received scant attention. Nine freelancers were killed in reprisal for their work in 2009, while 60 others were in prisons worldwide in late year. As publications and TV networks continue to shed staff and look for ways to cover conflicts more affordably, the number of such cases is only going to grow.

In this new environment, local journalists are going to assume added importance—and they will take on greater risk. In increasingly violent Pakistan, local reporters face threats from the Taliban and other militants, along with government harassment and military indifference to their safety. (A year ago, *Newsweek's* Sami Yousafzai was shot at point-blank range by a Taliban assassin and then detained by Pakistani police as soon as he left the hospital.) The Somali press corps has suffered devastating losses. Nine local journalists were killed in 2009 and dozens have fled the country. Western correspondents—few of whom venture into Somalia now—no longer have sources to rely upon for basic information. Says Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Paul Salopek: "They were the first responders, if you will, to breaking news in Somalia. And most of them are gone." Other than the U.S. hiker, the reporters inside Evin Prison are Iranians who worked for local media outlets; many others have been cowed into silence or have left the country.

Quite a few of those Iranian prisoners are bloggers, or reporters and editors

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Associated Press—*In Tehran, more than 100 dissidents and journalists faced vague antistate accusations during a mass, televised judicial proceeding in August.*

for opposition Web sites. And with good reason: In many repressive societies, where newspapers and radio and TV stations are routinely shuttered, online journalists have often been the most nimble at circumventing press restrictions. In Cuba, for example, where at least 25 journalistic blogs cover social issues and political news, bloggers cobble together personal computers from black-market parts and use their precious spare money to buy time at Internet cafés. But like other freelancers, they also work without the sort of institutional protections—including lawyers, money, and professional affiliations—that can help shield them from harassment or detention. These types of journalists are especially vulnerable in China, Burma, Vietnam, and Iran. Indeed, half the news people in jail worldwide are online journalists.

**This changing landscape makes the work done by the Committee to Protect Journalists more critical than ever.** Repressive regimes like Iran's count on the anonymity of their victims, on the world ignoring or overlooking who they've arrested and why. And without the imprimatur of a major news organization, it's indeed all too easy for freelancers, bloggers, and local journalists to disappear. What they need is the kind of spotlight that CPJ can bring to bear. Governments do respond to pressure that is consistent, principled, and well-publicized—otherwise, a reporter like Bahari might still be in jail. In Russia, three more journalists were killed during the year, bringing to 19 the number of reporters slain since the beginning of the decade. But in response to growing international concern, including a CPJ delegation's visit to Moscow, Russian authorities have agreed to re-examine several unsolved cases.

Advocacy works, and this work benefits all of us—those of us who hire freelancers, who rely on local blogs for firsthand information about faraway countries, who work with local journalists who have the kinds of insight and connections that can only be built over years. More than anything else, it benefits our readers and viewers and listeners. By targeting journalists, the regime in Tehran is hoping to screen off from the world's view the repression and abuse of its own people. Preventing them and others like them from succeeding is a mission deserving of our utmost efforts.

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