

## PREFACE

..... by *Christiane Amanpour* .....

**M**urder is a terrifying reality for independent journalists around the world. A group or government embarrassed by a critical report hires a gunman rather than a lawyer to silence the messenger. More than 60 journalists were killed for their work in 2007, the second-deadliest year for the press that CPJ has ever documented.

In the Hollywood version, reporters and photographers die covering wars. They are caught in crossfire or are unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. To be sure, journalists are killed in combat—but those cases are the exception. In these pages you will see that murder is the main cause of work-related deaths among journalists. Seven out of 10 victims are targeted and hunted down, then shot, bludgeoned, or stabbed.

This fact is chilling enough. What is even more outrageous is that 85 percent of these murders are carried out with impunity. The killers and those who hire them walk away. To colleagues left behind, the message is clear: Stop reporting anything sensitive. In too many countries, that message is heeded. Journalists censor themselves and a whole society is the poorer, deprived of vital information and the ability to hold those in power to account.

On the face of it, the situation offers little hope. How, for example, can reporters in provincial Russia or rural Colombia protect themselves against powerful local officials or paramilitary groups? Faced with ineffective law enforcement, corrupt courts, and weak institutions, media owners and their staffs seem to stand alone.

They do not. Based on its 26 years of experience in fighting attacks on the press, CPJ believes passionately that advocacy can make a difference.

I have been to many countries—Russia and Iraq and others—where I have witnessed the violent and lawless climate that allows journalists to be silenced. When Russia's intrepid investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya was shot at point-blank range on October 7, 2006, her murder was designed to send a message to all those who dared challenge the system. As her friend and family lawyer said, "When you kill, when you silence, the bravest journalist, it makes all the others think twice."

I have been very lucky myself, but many of my friends and colleagues in Iraq have been killed or injured by groups hostile to the notion of an independent press. Societies cannot thrive without journalists brave enough to put themselves on the line for important stories.

CPJ is now launching a comprehensive campaign to combat impunity. The strategy is simple. Garner human and financial resources to investigate journalist murders thoroughly and in a timely manner; publicize the killings and the findings of the official inquiries; pressure law-enforcement authorities and prosecutors through

lobbying, public campaigns, and lawsuits; and finally, provide assistance to the families of victims to help them win justice.

It is high time for such a campaign. The support of international colleagues buoys local journalists and gives them courage to continue to tell their stories. The CPJ campaign, supported by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has been launched with pilot projects in two of the world's most murderous nations for the press, the Philippines and Russia. Strategies are tailored to meet conditions that vary greatly between regions. For example, taking out advertisements to highlight journalist killings can be a successful technique in the Philippines, which boasts multiple, diverse, and independent media. In Russia, no broadcast or print outlet would dare run such ads. Meticulous research of journalist killings coupled with continuous international advocacy is a better approach toward the Kremlin, which has long dragged its feet on combating impunity.

Since 2000, when President Vladimir Putin came to power, 17 Russian journalists have been killed in direct relation to their work. Fourteen of them were murdered, and most of these were shot execution-style. In all that time, convictions have been secured in only one case. The Russian government has not been slow, however, to move against journalists themselves. It has progressively narrowed the boundaries of what is permissible to report. A series of measures adopted over the past two years effectively equates critical journalism with "extremism." Simply reporting on terrorist groups could in itself be construed as illegal. This dark shadow of censorship is now creeping across central Asia, as Russia's neighbors, all former Soviet states, take their cue from an increasingly authoritarian Kremlin.

Combating impunity is daunting. Yet after working extensively with local journalists' groups, CPJ has helped bring about success in the prosecution of journalist murder cases. In a breakthrough verdict in Russia, five people were convicted in 2007 in the murder of reporter Igor Domnikov seven years earlier. In the Philippines, gunmen were recently convicted in the murders of two journalists, including the 2005 slaying of investigative reporter Marlene Garcia-Espurat. Even so, Russia and the Philippines are among the worst in solving journalist murders, obtaining convictions in only about one in 10 cases.

Impunity is the single biggest threat facing journalists today. Murder, after all, is the ultimate form of censorship. That is why this book is so important. It reflects CPJ's work in documenting assaults on journalists and their right to gather and distribute information and opinion—the lifeblood of a healthy society.



**Christiane Amanpour** is CNN's chief international correspondent and a CPJ board member. In her 24 years at CNN, she has reported extensively from the Middle East, the Balkans, and war zones across Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

..... by Joel Simon .....

**I**n August 2008, when the Olympic torch is lit in Beijing, more than 20,000 journalists will be on hand to cover the competition between the world's greatest athletes. Behind the scenes, another competition will be taking place. If the Chinese government has its way, this one will remain hidden. It will be a battle over information, and it will have far greater implications for the world than the medal count.

Last August, a year before the Games were scheduled to begin, the Committee to Protect Journalists sent a delegation to Beijing to issue an in-depth report, "Falling Short," outlining China's appalling press freedom record. China is the world's leading jailer of journalists, with 29 editors and writers behind bars, but the government also relies on a sophisticated system of repression and rewards to control the media. Journalists, for example, receive bonuses if their articles are rated positively by local officials. They can be docked pay—or fired—if they earn a negative rating.

Some of the world's most repressive countries, including Cuba and Burma, simply block access to the Internet. But recognizing that modern communications are central to economic growth, China has welcomed the expansion of the Internet for the economic benefits, all while seeking to control and censor the content. Technology, some of it provided by U.S. companies, filters Web sites deemed subversive. Thousands of human monitors track postings and delete offensive content. If those strategies fail, the government wields an array of state security laws to imprison critics; 18 of the jailed Chinese journalists were working online.

Not long ago, Internet idealists argued that the Web was impossible to censor or control. Not anymore. China has proved them wrong. But the Chinese government's bolder gambit is that it can enter the world economy, enjoy international legitimacy, and even host the Olympic Games without loosening controls on the country's political life.

If the Olympic Games occur while China is still the world's leading jailer of journalists, still censoring and controlling access to the Internet, still restricting the global media, then it will have demonstrated that it's possible to join, even lead, the international community without honoring the basic right to express ideas and circulate information freely. That would be a terrible development for press freedom at a time when new models of authoritarianism are taking hold in so many areas of the world.

China's successful formula of economic liberalization and political control is being emulated in nations such as Vietnam. And as its international influence grows, China's no-questions-asked approach to foreign aid in Africa and Latin America is blunting efforts by international donors to link assistance to human rights.

China's evolving tactics pose one of many new challenges for press freedom advocates. Here are a few others from the pages of this book:

- In Russia, where President Vladimir Putin has created a national security state ruled by spies, dissent has been redefined as “extremism.” Under sweeping new laws, media criticism of public officials is now a criminal offense. The Kremlin's tactic of rewriting laws to criminalize journalism has been exported to countries such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.
- In parts of Africa where democracy has supposedly taken root after years of strife, press conditions have actually worsened. While accepting accolades from Western donors, repressive leaders in Ethiopia, the Gambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have cracked down on critical media, shuttering newspapers and putting journalists in jail.
- A similar strategy is unfolding in the Middle East, where a number of Arab governments are expressing public commitment to democratic reform while using less visible legal strategies to control the press. “Manipulating the media, they have found, is more politically palatable to the international community than outright domination,” writes CPJ Senior Program Coordinator Joel Campagna.
- In Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez Frías' government forced a critical television station off the air in January by failing to renew its broadcast concession. Venezuelan authorities said they were acting within the law, but a CPJ investigation found that the process was arbitrary and politically motivated.

In all these countries, powerful figures have developed a wide range of innovative approaches that cumulatively represent a soft authoritarianism that is spreading in many regions of the world.

Governments are now less likely to imprison a journalist explicitly for his or her work than to bring vague antistate charges such as subversion. Our research shows that imprisonments rose significantly after governments worldwide imposed sweeping national security laws in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Imprisonments stood at 81 in 2000 but have since averaged 129 in our annual surveys.

Journalists in many repressive societies suffer, if you will, from too much government: smothering, self-serving, and intrusive governments that seek to sharply restrict the boundaries of dissent.

The other threat to journalists is too little government. In Iraq, Somalia, Gaza, and the tribal areas of Pakistan, a state of pervasive lawlessness leaves journalists at

the mercy of armed factions. Iraq has become a virtual killing field for the press, with more than 170 journalists and media support workers killed since the March 2003 U.S. invasion. In 2007, more than 40 journalists and media workers died on duty, the vast majority of them Iraqi reporters gunned down by local militants.

The Iraqi press grew rapidly in the period immediately after Saddam Hussein was overthrown. But without a functioning government to enforce the law, militants soon targeted these newly minted journalists for perceived partisanship or because of association with Western media outlets.

The same phenomenon has played out in strife-riven Somalia, the second-deadliest place for the press in 2007. A handful of independent radio stations emerged in Mogadishu during the periods of relative calm that have come amid 16 years of unrest. As the conflict intensified in 2007, journalists were in the crosshairs. At least three of the seven Somali journalists who died in 2007 were targeted by militants and murdered. With no effective central government, the violence occurs with impunity.

In other parts of the world where journalists are routinely killed or threatened, governments are unable to assert control or provide basic security. This is true in much of provincial Philippines, in the tribal areas of Pakistan, on the border between Mexico and the United States, and in rural Colombia, where the 40-year civil war continues to simmer.

Governments are often indifferent to violence against the press because they benefit from the pervasive self-censorship that the attacks engender. But all too often, CPJ research has confirmed, governments go further. While insurgent and opposition political groups are responsible for a good portion of the killings, government-allied forces, including paramilitaries, are behind many murders as well.

Journalists are whipsawed between periods when powerful governments suppress the media and periods when weak governments are unable to enforce the law. If journalists are to work freely, we must confront with equal force both categories of abusers: governments that do too much, and those that do too little.



**Joel Simon** is CPJ's executive director. He led missions to Russia and the Philippines in 2007.