

In the Ultimate Media War, Governments Target Reporters

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Governments Target Reporters Worldwide

We've reported that reporters are an [endangered species](#), are [targeted as terrorists](#), and journalists have been killed [all over the world](#). And see [this](#).

The New York Times [notes](#):

In many parts of the globe, its profession is under murderous assault.

"Targeting journalism has become a trend, and now the people who are harassing and killing journalists include governments as well as the people you would expect," said [Alan Rusbridger, editor in chief of The Guardian].

Journalists who dig into murky and dangerous corners of the world have become accustomed to being threatened and sometimes hunted by drug lords and gangsters, but now some governments have decided shooting the messenger is a viable option. The [Committee to Protect Journalists] [reports](#) that government officials and their allies are now suspected of being responsible for more than a third of the murders of journalists, a higher proportion than killings attributed to terrorist groups or criminal enterprises.

So it has come to this: killing members of the news media can be justified by a phrase as amorphous as "relevance to terror activity."

A direct attack on information gatherers of any stripe is deeply troubling. And such attacks are hardly restricted to Israel: recall that in the United States assault on Baghdad, television stations were early targets.

A distinction needs to be made. The battle over ideas — over who owns the truth in a given conflict — should be fought with notebooks and video cameras, not weapons of war.

On Wednesday, the International Press Institute [issued a report](#) saying that 119 journalists had been killed this year, the highest total since it started keeping track in 1997. The total included all journalists who died while doing their jobs, not just journalists who might have been targeted for their affiliation

or reporting.

Journalists in Gaza claim Israel targeted them as militants:

As the New York Times notes:

On the same day as the Waldorf event, three employees of news organizations were killed in Gaza by Israeli missiles. Rather than suggesting it was a mistake, or denying responsibility, an Israeli Defense Forces spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Avital Leibovich, told The Associated Press, "The targets are people who have relevance to terror activity."

The ... important principle at work is whether governments in the Middle East and elsewhere will succeed in shaping or silencing different points of view by training missiles and bullets on journalists. If they do, the battle for the truth will disappear into the fog of war.

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