

The GLOBAL Press Freedom Struggle

Because we defend hundreds of journalists who are threatened, physically attacked, and imprisoned for doing their jobs, the Committee to Protect Journalists has a unique perspective on the dangers that members of the media around the world face in bringing all of us the news. Through our magazine, *Dangerous Assignments*, we introduce you to that perspective by highlighting their stories.

With the fall/winter 2002 issue, we've redesigned *DA* to make it more accessible and engaging, and to recast it as the pre-eminent magazine on international press freedom. We hope you like the results, and we welcome and encourage your feedback.

This issue of *DA* is truly global in scope, from detailed reports about a war of words on the Horn of Africa and a murdered journalist in the Philippines, to the challenges independent broadcasters face in Afghanistan. With this issue, we introduce a new

format that allows us to present profiles of journalists in Morocco and Chechnya, and to hear from frustrated reporters trying to cover the West Bank. Plus, in an interview by CPJ executive director Ann Cooper, Hollywood director Joel Schumacher talks about bringing the story of slain Irish journalist Veronica Guerin—a 1995 CPJ International Press Freedom Award recipient—to the big screen. We also use the pages of *DA* to honor the life and work of Brazilian journalist Tim Lopes, who was brutally murdered in June for his hard-hitting investigations of drug lords.

In a world where distant events have meaning, these stories are too important to ignore. We think that *Dangerous Assignments* can and should be the first source for anyone interested in the global press freedom struggle—for anyone who knows that a free press is essential to international understanding. ■

—Susan Ellingwood, Editor

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On the cover: Eritrean soldiers listen to the radio during a border conflict with Ethiopia.

Photo: Reuters/Sami Sallinen

Dangerous Assignments Fall|Winter

IN FOCUS By Amanda Watson-Boles

A journalist unwittingly gets into the ring with a riley politician. 2

AS IT HAPPENED By Amanda Watson-Boles

Editors remain missing in government custody • Czech officials catch a reporter's would-be killer • Iran's press crackdown continues • Chickens as a threat in Mozambique? 3

CPJ REMEMBERS: Tim Lopes By Rosental Calmon Alves

Though he was brutally murdered last summer, Lopes changed investigative journalism in Brazil forever. 4

War and Words By Yves Sorokobi

Journalists in Ethiopia and Eritrea get caught in the middle of their warring governments. 6

Schumacher's Take

CPJ talks to director Joel Schumacher about bringing a journalist's murder to Hollywood. 12

Elusive Justice By A. Lin Neumann

In a country where eyewitnesses and solid evidence mean little, the murderers of Philippine journalist Edgar Damalerio remain free. 14

IN THE NEWS: Journalism at the Roadblock By Joel Campagna

As conflict in the Middle East intensifies, getting the story has never been harder—and that's exactly what the Israeli government wants. 18

NEWSMAKERS: The Business of Journalism By Hani Sabra

Once prone to throwing journalists in jail for uncovering scandals, the Moroccan government has found a more "democratic" way to stifle the media—hit at their bottom line. 20

DISPATCHES: Being Heard By Ivan Sigal

In the post-Taliban era, the Afghan media are in the middle of a revival. But private radio broadcasters have yet to catch up. 23

CORRESPONDENTS: In a Conflict Zone By Olga Tarasov

How do you cover a war when both sides want you dead? CPJ examines the struggle of one Chechen journalist. 25

KICKER By Josipovic Borislav 28

Bratislava, Slovakia

On September 13, 2002, Slovakia's former prime minister Vladimir Meciar (pictured on the left in adjacent photos), attacked Luboslav Choluj, a reporter with the privately owned TV station JoJ, while campaigning for general elections scheduled for later that month. The journalist had repeatedly asked Meciar to explain how he had paid for a \$1 million renovation of his luxury villa even though the politician claimed to own nothing more than a beat-up car and a three-bedroom apartment when he left office in 1998. According to Choluj, Meciar—who is a former amateur boxer—told the journalist, “If you ask me the same question again, I am going to give you a punch that you won’t forget.”

Despite his aggressive attitude toward the press, the one-time pugilist managed to score a seat in Parliament. His party won more votes than any other political faction in the country. ■

—Amanda Watson-Boles



A look at recent red-letter cases from the CPJ files...

June

13 Indonesian officials drop the investigation into the murder of *Financial Times* journalist Sander Thoenes, despite strong evidence linking members of the Indonesian army to the killing.

25 The Russian Supreme Court upholds the conviction and prison sentence of journalist Grigory Pasko (below), who was found guilty of treason on December 25, 2001.



AP/APTN/RTRTV

28 CPJ asks Nepal's prime minister about the status of pro-Maoist editor Krishna Sen—who was arrested in May and allegedly killed in government custody—but receives no response.

July

1 Radio station owner Efraín Varela Noriega is shot and killed in north-eastern Colombia, less than a week after announcing on air that paramilitary fighters had arrived in his town and were patrolling the streets.

11 Palestinian free-lance photographer Imad Abu Zahra is shot by Israel Defense Force troops in the West Bank town of Jenin and dies the next day.

15 Omar Saeed and three accomplices are convicted for the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan.

17 Kidnapped Haitian journalist Israel Jacky Cantave (below, with his wife) is found, bound and gagged but alive, two days after disappearing.



AP/Daniel Morel

18 After receiving a tip from drug-addicted criminal Karel Rziepel, nicknamed "Lemon" (below, left), Czech police reveal that a former high-level government official had masterminded a plot to kill investigative journalist Sabina Slonkova (below, right).



AP/Pancer Vaclav



AP/Michael Dolezal

25 The cases of Geoff Nyarota and Lloyd Mudiwa, Zimbabwean journalists being tried under the country's draconian press laws, are referred to the Supreme Court, which later ruled that the laws the men are accused of violating are unconstitutional.

August

15 CPJ demands that Liberian president Charles Taylor reveal the whereabouts of journalist Hassan Bility, who has been held incommunicado since June and is rumored to have been killed in government custody.

29 Three men beat and stab prominent Kazakh journalist Sergei Duvanov, saying of his work, "If you carry on, you'll be made a total cripple."

September

9 CPJ hand-delivers a letter to the Israeli government calling for the release of journalists Hossam Abu Alan, Youssry al-Jamal, and Kamel Jbeil, who had been detained without charge since April. By October 22, all three had been freed.

15 An Iranian press court suspends two newspapers, bringing to 54 the total number of papers banned since a crackdown began in April 2000.



AP/Hasan Sarbakh Shian

28 Journalists involved in the publication of a column that linked Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano's son—described in the report as "the son of the rooster"—to the November 2000 murder of renowned journalist Carlos Cardoso receive about 100 chickens, apparently a "gift" from the country's first lady. ■

—Amanda Watson-Boles

Tim Lopes

A reporter's death gives new life to Brazilian journalists.

By Rosental Calmon Alves

When Brazilian journalist Tim Lopes learned that patients in a government drug rehab center were being abused, he checked into the clinic. When Tim Lopes wanted to know how the street children and beggars of Rio de Janeiro survived, he went to live with them.

This was the style of Lopes, an investigative reporter for Globo Television Network who was brutally assassinated by drug traffickers in Rio de Janeiro on the night of June 2, 2002.

He grew up in the favela, or shantytown, of Mangueira, in Rio. Lopes, who was black, fought to get an education so that he could leave—a daunting challenge in this country, where blacks usually remain low on the socioeconomic pyramid. Even when Lopes moved to the “asphalt,” as the people from the favelas call the rest of the city, he never abandoned his roots.

A samba enthusiast, Lopes returned often to the favelas, where

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the musical style was first created. As the years passed, however, Lopes' attention turned from music to the growing power and ruthlessness of the drug dealers who were swiftly gaining control of the favelas, transforming them into war zones.

Favela residents suffering under the “mini-dictatorships” of drug lords appealed to government authorities with no success. So they called Tim Lopes instead. In 2001, he used a hidden camera to capture the images and sounds of an open-air drug market, revealing sellers noisily shouting their offers for cocaine and marijuana while people armed with rifles circulated among the crowd.

That story won Lopes Brazil's most important journalistic prize, the Premio Esso. But exposing drug traffickers also cost him his life a year later. Shortly before his death, Lopes received calls from the favela of Vila Cruzeiro that some drug dealers were forcing minors to perform explicit sex shows during parties in the shantytown. Armed with a hidden camera, Lopes was abducted while reporting on the story and was brutally murdered by gangsters led by a thug known as “Crazy Elias.”

After Lopes' assassination, Brazilians finally realized that his murder was not an isolated case. In fact,

according to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists, nine other Brazilian journalists have been killed in the line of duty since 1992. But few knew of those crimes since most of them occurred in small rural communities and were ignored by the mainstream media.

Lopes' murder happened to coincide with the establishment of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin. Created thanks to a generous donation from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the center is dedicated to assisting journalists in the Americas and focuses particularly on professional training. It was only natural that the center's first event be a seminar in Rio to help our colleagues there cope.

Sixty-five editors and reporters from Rio de Janeiro's leading news organizations attended the workshop on August 31. Only days later, more than 100 Brazilian reporters and editors began actively participating in an online forum created by the Knight Center to discuss founding a group dedicated to protecting and promoting investigative journalism in the country.

Lopes' death has energized Brazil's journalism community—and that's exactly what he would have wanted. ■



After Tim Lopes was abducted, journalists held up images of the reporter at a rally in Rio de Janeiro.

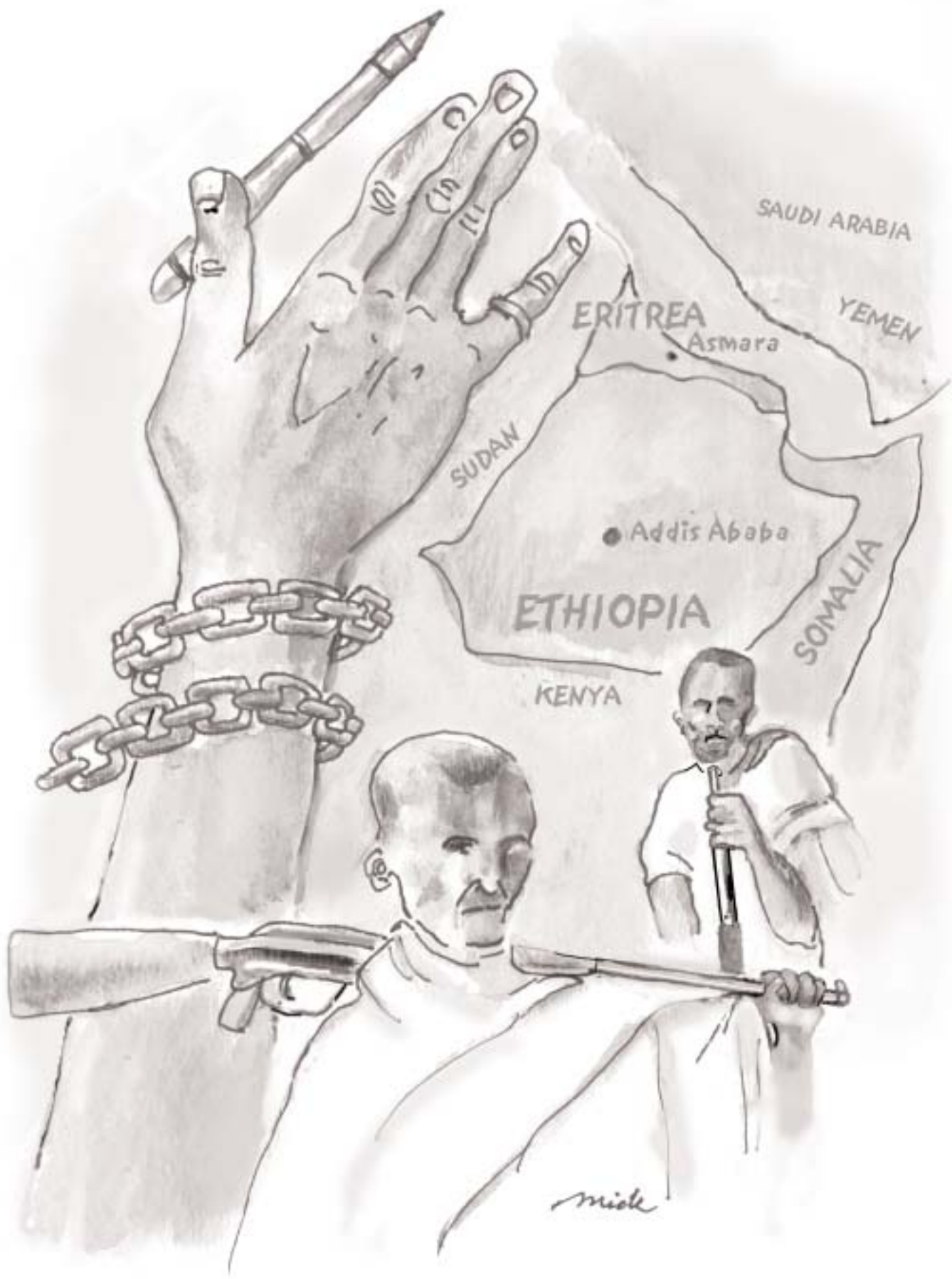


Illustration: Mick Stern

War and Words

Two years after the end of a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, journalists in both countries are struggling to do their jobs in increasingly repressive environments.

By Yves Sorokobi

During the recent two-year border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, security agents in both countries dissected press reports for hints of betrayal. But it was a futile exercise, because most Ethiopian and Eritrean journalists stood firmly behind their respective leaders. In fact, throughout the war, reporters on both sides “peddled hate propaganda and serious insults in newspapers, radio, and television, calling each other puppets of their respective governments,” says Nita Bhalla, the BBC correspondent in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. In Eritrea’s capital, Asmara, adds U.S. journalist Dan Connell, a longtime Eritrea expert, “the mind-set was ‘don’t wash the dirty laundry in public.’” He notes that private newspapers won respect by sending reporters out to the front lines to bring back stories that “were supportive of the war effort.”

For the two rival governments, the press was a vital tool in garnering support during the border dispute. Today, Ethiopia’s free press still survives after a decade of ever more sophisticated state repression, while Eritrea’s press has literally ceased to exist.

“It was 6 a.m. when they came to our house,” she recalls, her eyes widening in disbelief. “They were four security men with guns. They banged on the door, so my husband got up to open it. It was the last time I saw him.”

The woman was three months pregnant at the time. She has since given birth to a healthy baby girl. But her

***Yves Sorokobi** is CPJ program coordinator for Africa. This article is based on a summer 2002 fact-finding mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia with CPJ Washington, D.C., representative Frank Smyth and board member Josh Friedman.*

husband, a popular editor in Asmara, has not been able to see his daughter since his arrest on September 21, 2001. “Later that day, I learned that many other journalists had also been arrested,” the woman says. In fact, at least 18 journalists are now imprisoned in Eritrea, held without charge. “Nobody knows what they have done,” says the editor’s wife.

Sipping tea in his office in Asmara, Eritrean presidential spokesperson Yermane Gebremesken steadfastly insists that some of the jailed reporters are Ethiopian agents who deserve incommunicado detention, along with a freeze on their bank accounts. “They are not in Guantanamo Bay,” he says, arguing that Eritrea’s harsh crackdown on the press is less draconian than the United States’ indefinite detention of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. “Revoking publication licenses for a while is a minor point in the long-term project of building our country. Journalists are human beings, not a special breed above the law.”

Across the border in Ethiopia, meanwhile, the official rationale for media repression is equally blunt. Deputy Justice Minister Ali Suleiman says that the private press handles “sensitive national security matters without care for the country’s interests. We know that terrorist groups like OLF [the armed separatist Oromo Liberation Front] are bankrolling newspapers.” His comments echo those of Federal Affairs Minister Gebreab Barnabas, who estimates the Ethiopian media to be “quite free”—the only problem being that “journalists are forcing our hands. There is a lot of politically motivated agitation in the press.”

The roots of war in Ethiopia and Eritrea can be traced back nearly 50 years. Eritrea had been ruled by Italy until World War II, at which time the United Kingdom took over the temporary administration of the tiny country on



AP/Sayid Azim

Ethiopian soldiers in a training camp during the country's border conflict with Eritrea

the Horn of Africa. Then, in 1952, the United Nations decided to federate Eritrea with its much larger and more powerful neighbor, Ethiopia. But 10 years later, Ethiopian troops invaded Eritrea and quashed its U.N.-guaranteed autonomy, leading to the emergence of an Eritrean armed resistance. Beginning in 1974, Ethiopia's Soviet-backed government, known as the Derg (Committee), pursued the war against the Eritrean liberation movement doggedly. In May 1991, however, Eritrean rebels helped topple the Derg, and Eritrea regained full autonomy. Two years later, through a U.N.-sponsored referendum, 98 percent of Eritreans voted to secede from Ethiopia.

In the years that followed, the Eritreans began building their country. The young nation's government, led by the revered rebel leader Isaias Afewerki, initiated ambitious development projects, securing unpaid labor through a compulsory National Service Program. But President Isaias (Eritreans and Ethiopians are known by their first names) resisted calls for open governance, and laws crafted to introduce democracy—including the liberal 1994 constitution—were never implemented. However, at the behest of Eritrea's diaspora in the United States and Europe, Eritrea adopted a law in June 1996 that, although subscribing heavy penalties for press offenses, allowed private ownership of print media. The law opened the way for about a dozen private newspapers and magazines, which operated throughout the border war.

Since the end of the two-year border conflict in December 2000, Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities have been mixing old suspicions with fresh anti-terror rhetoric to mute alternative voices. In Ethiopia, which was Africa's foremost jailer of journalists until recently, three

reporters are now serving time for their work, while more than 40 others have fled abroad to avoid trial for alleged press offenses. The picture is even bleaker in Eritrea, where leaders banned the entire private press in September 2001. In Asmara, "after the war," says journalist Connell, "when the press tried to exercise more freedom, the government's response was first silence, then silencing the press."

In the early hours of September 19, 2001, "someone came to my house and told me that journalists were being arrested," says a young Eritrean journalist, adding that he does not want his name in print. "That person told me that police had already come twice to the paper's office looking for the staff, and that the editor-in-chief

had been arrested. I was terrified. My relatives told me they would help me flee to Sudan. But I couldn't even bring myself to do that. I was too scared."

The afternoon sun shines brightly on the open-air café where he sits with a group of friends around a table littered with cigarette packs and empty beer bottles. The noisy conversation around him has abated, and the waiter brings a new round of refreshments. The young man smiles nervously and puffs on his cigarette, exhaling a thick cloud of smoke. "I have to be careful," he whispers.

Fear of government eavesdroppers runs deep in Asmara, a tidy town of Italian-built architecture dwarfed by the colorful minarets of several mosques and the steeples of imposing Orthodox Christian churches. Despite the mild July afternoon, the city's avenues and promenades, lined with palm and fig trees, are devoid of humanity. This is because, a week earlier, the authorities ordered another *geffah* (a military roundup to bring young adults into the National Service Program), and soldiers were roaming the streets. Outspoken journalists were often targets of such raids. On July 25, 2001, soldiers picked up Mattewos Habteab, editor of the weekly *MeQaleh*, and sent him to a work camp in reprisal for his journalism.

Mattewos was freed in early September, only to be rearrested in a dawn raid on September 19, a day after the state broadcaster, the Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, announced a ban on the private press. At the open-air café, the young Eritrean journalist says he was so scared that day that he "stayed under the bed at a friend's house. But I couldn't sleep. So after a while I resigned myself to being arrested." To his surprise, police did not detain him when he showed up after a week in hiding, although they

could do so anytime. "They know I am here. They know they can get me anytime," he says. "But I'm not afraid anymore."

Even so, watching one's back has been a matter of course here since the end of the border war with Ethiopia, when a messy power struggle erupted in the ruling elite. The row, which pitted the liberal, reformist wing of the government against its conservative elements, became public in early 2000, after 13 foreign-based Eritrean academics close to the reformers sent a letter of concern to President Isaias. Leaked to the press, the letter sparked an unusual public debate on human rights and democracy.

Eritrea's youthful press eagerly covered the politicking and printed letters from citizens who criticized Isaias, angering the president and incurring the wrath of the police, who more and more frequently jailed outspoken journalists. In the summer of 2000, the worsening climate for the press and other emerging problems prompted *Setit*, Eritrea's largest and most moderate private weekly, to run an editorial calling for the implementation of the 1994 constitution, which had reasonable safeguards for basic rights, including press freedom.

"It was a pretty mild editorial, more thoughtful than bombastic, but it signaled a turning point," says Neil Skene, a U.S. publisher who taught media workshops in Asmara during the border war. Skene recalls that the students in his October 1999 course tended toward patriotism. "Their questions reflected confidence in Eritrea's cause, though there was also an obvious concern that the constitution and the press laws were not being followed," he says. "By April 2001, when I last visited, most of them no longer expected much positive out of President Isaias And the journalists were both frightened and combative. One of them handed me his photograph for me to keep, 'just in case.'"

By early 2001, the dispute over President Isaias' rule had split Eritreans and their government into two feuding camps. In May 2001, fifteen prominent liberal officials sent critical letters to the president and other members of the ruling elite, forcefully stating their pro-democracy stance. Isaias dismissed the reformers' arguments and warned his critics of severe consequences. "You are making a mistake," read one of his replies to the reformers. "I will patiently avoid any invitation to an argument. But if by continuous provocation, you want to escalate problems



AP/Andrew England

A man wheels his bicycle past the office of Eritrea's Internet service provider in downtown Asmara.



by exaggerating non-existent issues, it is your choice. Again I ask you to refrain from this mistaken path and come to your senses."

But the reformers, enjoying growing support from the press and the public, held their ground. On September 9, 2001, *Setit* printed an open letter to the president. It concluded by saying, "People can tolerate hunger and other problems for a long time but they cannot tolerate the absence of good administration and justice. Because they know that without these two things they cannot free themselves from hunger, disease, poverty, ignorance and



A sculpture of sandals in the center of Asmara honors soldiers in Eritrea's 30-year war for independence from Ethiopia, who could not afford combat boots.

war." Isaias was furious. Days later, he struck back in a devastating clampdown on dissent, arresting 11 out of the 15 reformers, banning the press, and jailing journalists and other critics.

Meanwhile, across the disputed 600-mile (965-kilometer) border, a wasteland of scrub and cactuses, Ethiopia's leadership also regards journalists with great distrust. Throughout its showdown with Eritrea, and in the years before that, Ethiopia jailed more journalists than any other country in Africa—a dubious distinction the country only recently shed. During the border war, the regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a soft-spoken disciplinarian, switched from charging journalists with criminal defamation to prosecuting them for breach of state security, terrorism, and “demoralizing the Army.”

Nevertheless, authorities sought to bolster popular support for the military campaign by releasing jailed reporters at the onset of the conflict. The Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) 1999 report on Ethiopia, for example, found that in early 1998 “about two dozen journalists were in prison, many for criticizing the government's close relationship with Eritrea. But that number dropped by about half after the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea erupted in May 1998.”

The root cause of the border war was Ethiopia's “ethnic federalism,” which introduced into Ethiopia's constitution the right of ethnic groups, or “nationalities,” to secede and also facilitated Eritrea's 1991 breakaway from Ethiopia. At first, journalists wrote positively about ethnic federalism

because they felt it addressed serious nationality problems. But after Eritrea's formal declaration of independence in 1993 (prior to Eritrea's secession, Ethiopia was made up of 10 provinces that consisted of more than 80 ethnic groups), many Ethiopian journalists began to criticize the government's resistance to secessionist demands by other provinces.

As Dr. Mekonen Bishaw, head of the nongovernmental Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, puts it, “No other social group has suffered more systematic and massive abuse as have independent journalists. They have been paying an exceedingly high price for advocating against ethnic federalism.”

One reporter who suffered tragic consequences for his commitment to secessionist demands by the Amharas, an ethnic group that makes up 20 percent of Ethiopia's 50 million

people, was Mekonen Worku. On January 26, 2000, a police squad found Mekonen, a reporter for the weekly tabloid *Maebel*, at his home in Addis Ababa, his clothes soaked with sweat, his neck broken by a noose fastened to the ceiling of the mud-walled studio. A week earlier, he had left the city's central police station after two months behind bars. At 25, Mekonen had spent a total of three years in jail for his reporting about the government's handling of tensions with the Amharas. In each of his court convictions, authorities stated that his writing lacked patriotism, incited people to ethnic violence, and demoralized the army.

Mekonen left no suicide note, but many sources say that the day before he hanged himself, the judge in charge of Mekonen's case had inexplicably annulled his bail posting and had ordered police to detain him. The journalist's former colleagues at *Maebel* are certain that the prison stints for his reporting on the Amharas played a role in his fate. They point to the 40-odd Amhara reporters and media workers who fled abroad between 1997 and 2001 to avoid trial. During that same period, Ethiopia jailed at least 50 reporters, according to CPJ data. Charges included incitement of ethnic hatred and demoralizing the army, as well as terrorism and criminal defamation.

Ethiopian officials deny that their treatment of the press has been heavy-handed. In fact, Information Minister Bereket Simon calls the self-exiled group of media workers “traitors.” Bereket says the private press is “obsessed with politics” and writes only “negative things about the government.” Like other officials, he has little

doubt that hostile domestic and foreign forces are bankrolling some private newspapers.

Curiously, as Ethiopia's war against its former province Eritrea wound down, Prime Minister Meles announced that he was abandoning ethnic federalism for "revolutionary democracy." The difference between the two policies is unclear, and journalists contend that the change is only cosmetic since the constitution remains the same.

Today, Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders say they are working hard on new press laws that would curb foreign or "terrorist" funding of the local press. In Asmara, presidential spokesperson Yermane says that "nobody can take away freedom of expression, because that's a constitutional right." But the constitution was never implemented, and journalists who complained about the status quo were jailed or sent to work camps to complete the National Service Program. Yermane says journalists received that treatment because "you can't simply defame a person on the grounds that they are a public figure."

Ethiopia's information minister, Bereket, would agree with that. He is currently helping to "reform" the Ethiopian media, a grand plan that includes rewriting the 1992 press



AP/Sayyid Azim

Throughout the border war with Eritrea, the inhabitants of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, went about their business as usual.

Until recently, Ethiopia jailed more journalists than any other country in Africa.

law and enforcing a government-drafted code of ethics for reporters. "Journalists here are amateurs, all without training," he explains. "They are doing more harm than good to the government and the public and to themselves."

Ethiopia's press corps is up in arms about the government's plans, which sources say would create proxy private newspapers with cash from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the strongest group in the ruling coalition. In fact, according to several sources, the TPLF runs the Endowment for the Development of the Region of Tigray, whose assets include Meganet Corporation, a media company led by the wife of Prime Minister Meles. Meganet, in turn, controls the Walta Information Center, a newswire service, and Radio Faana, the only private

broadcaster in a country whose leaders have consistently refused to free the airwaves.

Because of their privileged connections to the ruling elite, executives at Walta and Radio Faana say their hands are tied. An official at Walta complains that, "It's not easy to be this close to the ruling party. It is a dilemma, seen from our journalists' perspective. We are not handling the issues the way they deserve." The official says he deplores the state's treatment of the private press, which often does a better job than the official media. "But we can't say that loud," he adds ruefully.

Meanwhile, a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia and the rest of the international community have said little or nothing about the crackdown on the media. At a press conference this summer in Addis Ababa, Legweila Joseph Legweila, chief of the information office of the peacekeeping mission, said he feels "sorry for the repression of journalists in Eritrea and Ethiopia, but protecting free press is not part of the mission's mandate."

Back in Asmara, that's not what the Eritrean woman whose imprisoned husband has yet to see his little girl wants to hear. For her, hope is fading fast. Unable to afford the rent, she was evicted from her house and now lives with her parents. "At first I thought my husband would be interrogated for a few hours," she says, the tears welling up in her eyes. "Then I began to think it would last just a few days. But it's been a year now and he and the other journalists are still in jail." ■

Schumacher's Take

A Hollywood director brings the dangers of journalism to the big screen.

On the afternoon of June 26, 1996, at a traffic light just outside of Dublin, two gunmen on a motorcycle drove up to Veronica Guerin, Ireland's leading investigative reporter, and pumped five bullets into her neck and chest while she was in her car. Less than a year earlier, Guerin had traveled to New York City to accept the Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) International Press Freedom Award for her reporting on Ireland's criminal underworld.

"Veronica Guerin," a movie produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, directed by Joel Schumacher, and starring Cate Blanchett, will hit theaters soon. In late September, Schumacher spoke with CPJ executive director Ann Cooper about Veronica and the film.

Ann Cooper: What made you think this would be a good story for a film?

Joel Schumacher: Jerry Bruckheimer not only sent me a script, but he sent me a huge loose-leaf binder filled with Veronica Guerin's articles and tons of research. ... The minute I read it, I just felt I wanted to tell this story because I thought she was so bold and so brave. I know some people think she was reckless because she faced up to these thugs and criminals and would not be threatened and continued exposing them. But I always feel that that's sexist. I don't think people would say that about a man. I don't think they would call [*Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel] Pearl reckless because he was following a story, or any of the male journalists you see in the middle of war with shells going off near their heads as reckless, when most of them have families also. But when it comes to a woman with a child, many people think that she should have backed down.

AC: What sort of understanding did you gain about her and what drove her to do this?

JS: I think she, like a lot of strong journalists, wanted to really shine the light wherever it shouldn't be shone. I think hypocrisy and cover-ups and everything that was

going on that she felt was nefarious, she just wanted it out there. And it was also making her a star at the same time.

This [Irish Catholic] bishop had impregnated a young woman who was a part of his parish, and as soon as this young woman found out she was pregnant, the bishop, with the help of the church, was shipped off to Nicaragua. And the other newspapers had gotten the story of the young woman. They had gotten the story of the mother of the young woman. But no one had talked to this bishop. And so [Veronica], with her own money, got a ticket to Nicaragua and went down there. ... When she sat on his doorstep in Nicaragua, he got so frightened that he ran off to New York. And then she followed him to New York. And finally, he just broke down and gave her this interview. ...

She turned out to be the only person who had this interview with him. It ran for three consecutive Sundays ... The paper's circulation jumped from 150,000 to 350,000 overnight.

She had become very successful at what she called "doorstepping" people, which is just to knock on their front door. As you know, most journalists try to arrange an appointment to interview someone. And what she would do is just knock on their front door and they'd open the door, and she would try to get comments from them.

AC: Tell me about [her celebrity status]. Do you think that was part of what drove her?

JS: At the time, I don't think there were a lot of women in Ireland who had formidable positions and were acknowledged by the ordinary person as a success story and a real superstar, in a sense. She was extremely attractive. She had a great personality. She was obviously very bright. And she adapted herself to almost any situation. In other words, she was extremely comfortable in confronting bishops, members of Parliament, notable politicians, taking on her editors and publishers at the paper. But then she could also sit in a pub with the lowest of the low, watch a soccer game, have a pint, and get them to trust her.



Director Joel Schumacher and star Cate Blanchett on the set of "Veronica Guerin." Inset: A photo of Veronica Guerin, who was murdered when she was 37 years old.



AP Photo/PA

One of her most valuable relationships, although it was part of the seeds of her own demise, was with a man named John Traynor, whom she nicknamed "The Coach." He was kind of a popular character, sort of the mayor of his own neighborhood in the sense that he ran brothels. He ran a car parts garage and also a car [dealership], which was all a cover-up for him. Traynor was in bed with [notorious criminal] John Gilligan, the man who, in most people's minds, engineered Veronica's murder. Traynor worked everybody And Veronica struck this strange alliance with him. He actually fed her enormous amounts of true stories about crimes And she made him more of a celebrity by writing about him as "The Coach" and printing some of his quotes.

Ultimately, John Gilligan, who was a very violent sociopath, and who Traynor was in the drug business with, would realize of course that Traynor was feeding stories to Veronica As she got closer to exposing Gilligan, he wanted her out of the way.

AC: Do you have any sense from the people you spoke with what the [1995 CPJ award] meant to her?

JS: I think it was one of the most important things in her life. ... Because Ireland, for all its fame, is still a very small and, in many cases, overlooked country. And for her to be on that dais meant everything to her because it was such an international acknowledgment. And she had already been shot in the leg at that point and had been threatened many times.

AC: There were people who accused her of shooting herself in the leg.

JS: She received an enormous amount of jealousy from

other journalists because she came out of nowhere, did not study journalism. ... They were insanely jealous of her because she had become a real superstar and people really looked forward to everything she wrote. So they accused her of exaggerating the drug problem, of making up the statistics that she would write. And then, worst of all, they accused her of shooting herself in the leg just to get more publicity.

AC: In your research, did any of those accusations seem to hold water?

JS: None of them are true.

AC: In a sense, [CPJ's] award may have helped give her some legitimacy, although, alas, it did not save her life.

JS: Yes. I also think that sometimes, when a journalist becomes a major star, I think there can be the delusion that that might make you bulletproof in a way. ... I don't think most people realize how many journalists are murdered every year, and how many are jailed. At the end of the film, we show a photo of the real Veronica And that is followed by a card that tells the number of journalists that have been killed in the line of their work since her death.

AC: There are a lot of movies that have been made about journalists: "All the President's Men," "The Year of Living Dangerously," "Harrison's Flowers." Some of them have been great, and some, especially for journalists watching them, are absurd. And I wonder if you studied any movies like that in preparing for this, and were there any that you sort of thought "got it right"?

JS: Well, I don't know enough about journalism and the way it works on a day-to-day basis to make that judgment. What I used on this movie is exactly the same as I would use if I were telling the true story of a surgeon or a prostitute. What I did was I went to the source. Cate Blanchett and I spent hours and hours with the people [Veronica] worked with at the paper, who were very forthcoming I've gotten to know her mother very well. ... Her brother. The rest of the family. Also, Tony Hickey, who led the police investigation into her murder. ...

What we tried to do is not really concern ourselves with other films but more, "Are we being true to this person? Are we really showing her life to somebody who might be interested in it? Are we doing it justice?"

We really hope that Veronica Guerin's mother and son and family see the movie and feel that we did the job right. ■



Elusive Justice

Two witnesses have identified a journalist's murderer, but in a city of warlord politics and rampant corruption, the suspect remains at large.

By A. Lin Neumann

Just close the door and lock the gate. Be careful," Edgar Damalerio told his wife, Gemma, by cell phone as he was leaving a press conference. "I'll be home soon." It was 7:30 p.m. on May 13, and that was

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the last time they would speak to each other. Thirty minutes later, Damalerio, an award-winning journalist known for his fiery radio and cable television commentary and his stinging investigations into police corruption for the *Zamboanga Scribe* and the *Mindanao Gold Star* daily, was dead.

A gunman riding tandem on the back of a motorcycle hit the journalist, 32, with a single gunshot as he was driving



A street scene in Pagadian City. Inset: Edgar Damalerio, who was murdered on May 13, 2002.

tigators. Plus, the shooting occurred across the street from the local police station. But Pagadian City isn't your typical town. A dusty trading port surrounded on one side by verdant hills dotted with coconut plantations and on the other by a gentle coastline interspersed with fishing villages, Pagadian City has the slapdash feel of a poor town where a tiny cluster of people make quick money. Although coconuts and rice may be the staple crops, smuggling and corruption, say the locals, are the real source of wealth for a small percentage of the population.

Despite the town's remote location, Damalerio's murder drew condemnation within the country and abroad, and authorities in Manila, a world away from Pagadian City, say they are also trying to move the case along. In the Philippines, however, justice can be elusive. In the countryside, far from the capital, warlord politics, official corruption, and a breakdown in the judicial system have contributed to the fact that 39 journalists have been murdered since democracy was restored in 1986—and all those cases remain officially unsolved. Damalerio's murder, number 38 on that grisly list, fits into this familiar

A gunman riding tandem on the back of a motorcycle hit the journalist with a single gunshot, killing him instantly.

his jeep home on a crowded street in Pagadian City, 490 miles (780 kilometers) south of the Philippines' capital, Manila, on the island of Mindanao. He was killed instantly. Two friends riding with Damalerio recognized the shooter as a local police officer, a man investigators now say has a notorious criminal record. "He circled the block and came back a second time, just to make sure Edgar was dead," says Edgar Amoro, one of the witnesses. "This time, he was riding alone on the same motorcycle. He slowed down and looked carefully. We had a clear view of him."

In another place, this crime might be relatively easy to solve. The victim was well known locally, and two witnesses were eager to come forward and talk to inves-

pattern. (On August 22, newspaper editor Sonny Alcantara was gunned down in the town of San Pablo, 50 miles [80 kilometers] south of Manila.)

Number 35 on the list was also killed in Pagadian City. Olimpio Jalapit, a radio personality and perhaps the city's best-known journalist, was killed under similar circumstances to Damalerio in November 2000 by a drive-by shooter on a motorcycle. Jalapit frequently criticized one of the most powerful political families in the area.

The Jalapit case, like so many others, languishes. The sole witness went into hiding after a stranger confronted him during the victim's funeral and said, "You're next." Jalapit's family has given up hope of ever finding the killer. "Nothing has happened. Nothing," says Jalapit's brother, Albin. "We are also afraid, and we cannot rely on law enforcement or government to help us."

In Damalerio's case, all fingers point toward the police. Piecing together the incident, it is clear that something was afoot from the outset of the investigation. Within

minutes of the crime, local police arrived, cleaned the area thoroughly, removed the body, and impounded Damalerio's jeep. According to the two witnesses, no photographs were taken of the crime scene, and any physical evidence that might have been part of the investigation was destroyed. Even the local coroner refused to order an autopsy, says Damalerio's widow.

Fearing a police cover-up, Damalerio's family and friends turned to the local office of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the Philippines' equivalent to the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation. Friolo Icao, the lead NBI investigator in Pagadian, says that the witnesses are credible, that they had identified the assailant from a photo array, and that the NBI had recommended that local prosecutors issue an arrest warrant for Officer Guillermo Wapili, the alleged gunman, as far back as May 17.

"He is in my rogue's gallery," Icao says of Wapili, taking a heavily creased, inch-thick folder from a dusty filing cabinet in his cramped office. "Here he is." Icao turns the page to a photograph of Wapili and a record of previous allegations for car theft and kidnapping, all of which a local court dismissed. "He is a notorious character in this place. We do not understand why he is still in uniform as a policeman," says Icao. (Numerous attempts to contact Wapili for comment on this article were unsuccessful.)



local police issued a statement naming Ronnie Kilme, a local criminal, as a suspect in the murder.

Icao, who is familiar with Kilme, says that Kilme couldn't be the murderer because he wasn't in Pagadian at the time of the crime. "All of these other cases are just obstruction," says Icao. "I have every reason to believe that the police are only trying to complicate the case."

The result of the charges and countercharges was predictable: The case stood still. Fearing threats against her and the couple's 5-month-old son, Gemma Damalerio went into hiding in another province with her late husband's family. In a feat of extraordinary courage, the two witnesses, Amoro and Ongue, stood their ground, signing affidavits and insisting they were ready to testify.

When nothing happened to advance the case in the weeks following the murder, Gemma and Amoro traveled to Manila in June to ask national authorities for assistance. They called on a relative of Gemma's, a retired air force officer, who helped them weed through the

bureaucracy and convinced the Justice Department to transfer jurisdiction of the case from the local prosecutor to a regional office. Interior Secretary Joey Lina, who also chairs the National Police Commission, says that because of the murder, he personally ordered the reassignment of the Pagadian police chief, Asuri Hawani. "I ordered that fellow relieved," says Lina, sitting in his office above the noise and pollution of downtown Manila, "because he was covering up the crimes of his men."

Behind the scenes, additional pressure was being brought to bear. A senior army general with long experience in Pagadian is now on the personal staff of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. He knew Damalerio personally and made phone calls trying to move the case along. He has even provided a uniformed army soldier as a bodyguard for Hernan de la Cruz, editor of the *Zamboanga Scribe*, a local tabloid to which Damalerio contributed regularly. "Just after the murder, we received four calls at the office warning that I might be the next one," says de la Cruz. A devout Christian and father of three young children, he adds, "I pity my profession in Pagadian. I want to divulge these anomalies in this place, the corruption. But I think to myself, what will happen to my family if I do?"

Even local leaders are intimidated by the system of secret allegiances and hidden pressures that exists in Pagadian City.

At the NBI's recommendation, Wapili was detained, but officials released him a few days later because no charges were filed. Following the allegations against him, Wapili's lawyer—a local politician for whom, according to the NBI, Wapili once served as a bodyguard—claimed that Damalerio's friends, the witnesses to the murder, Amoro and Edgar Ongue, were *accomplices* to the crime. Meanwhile,

De la Cruz and other Pagadian journalists say that with Damalerio dead, the airwaves no longer resonate with outspoken commentary or probing journalism. Damalerio made a lot of enemies, including the local mayor and former police chief Hawani, but he knew what he was talking about. “Edgar spoke the truth and he was not afraid. He went forward without fear,” says Decca Judilla, the general manager of the local electric cooperative, who hired Damalerio to help edit the cooperative’s newsletter.

“There are so many killings here,” she sighs. “They are done very professionally and they never find the real culprits. The freedom of expression is really at risk here. It is really not safe for the journalists and it curtails our freedoms.”

And it isn’t getting any safer. On August 10, a possible third witness in the case, a local civilian militia member named Juvy Lovitaño, was killed in an ambush in a village near Pagadian City. Local investigators found a note he was carrying that outlined how a Pagadian City police officer contacted Lovitaño looking to take out a contract on Damalerio’s life. In the note, Lovitaño wrote that an officer offered him 50,000 pesos (US\$1,000) to kill Damalerio on behalf of then police chief Hawani.

According to NBI’s Icao, before Lovitaño was killed, he had turned the information in the note over to NBI authorities in Manila, and the bureau was attempting to locate Lovitaño in order to get him to sign an affidavit. But the NBI was too late. Lovitaño was murdered, and it is now unlikely that any court will introduce the note into evidence. The police officer who allegedly approached Lovitaño was murdered shortly before the Damalerio killing, says the NBI.

Hawani, who has been reassigned to a desk job at local police headquarters, could not be found for comment on the allegations in the note. His immediate superior, Police Chief Superintendent Pedrito Reyes, the police commander for the province, canceled two scheduled interviews in Pagadian and failed to return phone calls.

“It is really difficult ever to know who is the mastermind of these killings,” says Icao. “The transaction is between the gunman and the mastermind, so unless someone tells us, how will we know?”



CPI/A. Lin Neumann

Edgar Amoro (right) and Edgar Ongue witnessed the journalist’s murder.



CPI/A. Lin Neumann

Edgar Damalerio’s widow, Gemma, holds on to her son.

The witnesses, Amoro and Ongue, meanwhile, are trying to join the Department of Justice’s Witness Protection Program, but that, too, is slow in coming since no one has yet been arrested for the crime.

On August 22, Ricardo Cabaron, the lead prosecutor in the case from the regional prosecutor’s office in Zamboanga City, south of Pagadian City, conducted an informal hearing on the matter. During the proceedings, the witnesses confronted Wapili in court, identifying him as the gunman. Cabaron explained, however, that he needed more time to consider the police’s countercharges, which named a different gunman.

When asked if there will be an arrest, Cabaron—who openly concedes that he is nervous about his own security in Pagadian and admits that he “left right after the hearing because it is not safe to stay there”—says maybe some time this fall, maybe longer. Meanwhile, Wapili is living in the local police headquarters camp and moving freely around the city, says the new police chief in Pagadian, Nelson Eucogco. Reyes, the provincial police commander, lifted a temporary suspension order against Wapili because “no case was ever filed in court.” Eucogco, who succeeded Hawani, says he is willing

to arrest Wapili when and if the government files a case against him in court.

The congresswoman representing Pagadian, Nenette San Juan, says she is also pursuing the Damalerio case, but that she, too, feels powerless to do much given the system of secret allegiances and hidden pressures that exists in the area. She has brought her concerns to the president and has asked for changes in the local police. “These powerful people have been around for so long, and they can file any case. They use any power at their disposal. These journalists were the only ones to challenge them, but we all have to be careful if we are going to survive.”

Of course, all of this provides little comfort for Damalerio’s widow and his son. When Damalerio died, there was no insurance and no pension—nothing but memories of a young man who believed in what he was doing, recalls Gemma Damalerio from her new home, where she has been staying to avoid threats back in Pagadian. “Now we just want to know who killed him.” ■

Journalism at the Roadblock

Why the Israeli government hamstringing the media.

By Joel Campagna

Bombs and bullets have regularly imperiled reporters and impeded newsgathering since the second intifada began in the West Bank and Gaza in September 2000. Although conditions on the ground began improving in August 2002 as the violence abated, Israeli government restrictions continue, as do occasional violent attacks by troops, making covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more difficult than ever before. And, some journalists say, Israeli officials are pleased with that result.

At the beginning of the second intifada, journalists could maneuver through the West Bank and Gaza with relative ease. “At first you could go

the extensive web of army checkpoints and dirt barriers set up after September 2000, bargaining with troops and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson to pass checkpoints, or enduring occasional verbal or physical threats from soldiers.

But beginning in late March 2002, when Israel launched its massive military offensive—Operation Defensive Shield—into the West Bank following a series of Palestinian suicide bombings, the IDF declared nearly all of the West Bank’s main cities “closed military areas” and, therefore, off-limits to the press. The Government Press Office announced that “anyone found in the closed zone henceforth will be removed.” Journalists were warned

barred journalists from West Bank towns when it launched another offensive, Operation Determined Path, which resulted in Israel’s reoccupation of most major West Bank towns—a situation that remains in effect today. (As of August, access had improved somewhat—a result, many journalists say, of a general easing of the conflict.)

Although the army lifted the ban against the press on June 28, the situation for journalists on the ground is more challenging than at the beginning of the intifada. The army has established more checkpoints and, according to journalists, has blocked alternate back roads that journalists previously used to evade army roadblocks. In late July, it was “almost impossible to go into the field,” says a seasoned U.S. newspaper correspondent. “The roadblocks and the sealing off of Palestinian areas [were] so heavy. It cut down on a lot of coverage, I think.”

Furthermore, a tough new Israeli government policy, instituted in January 2002, of withholding accreditation from Palestinian journalists has left many news outlets short-handed, complicating their coverage in the field. Many Palestinian journalists work as stringers or fixers for international media and are essential personnel on the front lines of reporting. Only a handful of those employed by Western news organizations have received their accreditation, which facilitates movement through military checkpoints.

Stringers have been stymied by IDF-imposed curfews in West Bank towns, and Palestinian reporters for news agencies often can’t get to their bureaus in Jerusalem because of the restrictions or accreditation problems. And, according to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), three Palestinian journalists—including two working for Western news agencies—were detained without charge. Israeli officials accused the three of having contacts with militant

Some of these restrictive measures are a calculated attempt to dictate news coverage.

anywhere at your own peril. You could get as close to the action as you wanted,” explains Neil MacDonald, a Jerusalem-based reporter for Canada’s CBC TV. “The Israelis weren’t keen on you being there [but you could go].” The biggest logistical challenge for reporters often entailed navigating

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that violators could be arrested and stripped of their credentials, or have their offices closed. In the ensuing days, the restrictions were extended to other cities.

Since Operation Defensive Shield ended in May, the Israeli army has intermittently reimposed similar constraints during brief incursions into Palestinian areas. Most significantly, on June 19, the military

groups but provided no evidence to support their allegations. By late October, the men had been released. (CPJ is currently investigating two other cases of journalists reportedly being held without charge.)

For their part, most Israeli journalists have not reported from inside the Palestinian Authority Territories during this latest intifada due to army restrictions barring Israelis from the territories, as well as threats from Palestinian militants against Israeli journalists. The few who do go must sign a waiver absolving the Israeli government of responsibility for their safety.

Some foreign correspondents attribute the Israeli government's hard line against the press in part to a growing animosity in Israel toward the media. In the eyes of a number of jour-

feeling that it was getting a bad deal with the foreign press They felt free to pursue this policy, feeling things can't get worse and there is nothing to gain [by accommodating the press]."

Israeli citizens and politicians were drawn into a vociferous debate about the media's role in the conflict in March 2002, when Israel's Channel 2 allegedly broke an army pool-report arrangement, bypassed military censors, and aired disturbing footage of an IDF raid on a Palestinian home, during which a mother died as her children watched. Shortly thereafter, the Defense Ministry barred the army from allowing television crews to accompany troops on raids. "If you have soldiers inside houses, even though it is the reality, it doesn't always look good," the *Toronto Star* quoted retired major Yarden Vatikay,

assaulted by a soldier while a senior officer looked on in early April during the invasion of Nablus," he recalls. "Soldiers would tell you how you should be ashamed of yourself when they found out you were a journalist."

When the army barred journalists from closed military areas in April and June, some Israeli officials maintained that the ban was instituted for safety reasons. The Associated Press quoted Daniel Seaman, head of the Government Press Office, as saying, "Anyone walking around is a combatant. You don't want journalists shot, do you? I don't think it's an issue to be discussed."

But many members of the media reject this explanation. Journalists acknowledge the risks inherent in covering a war but maintain that if the IDF were concerned about journalists' safety, then soldiers would not shoot at members of the media. During the army's six-week operation in March and April, CPJ documented numerous instances in which soldiers deliberately fired at or in the direction of journalists—even though they or their vehicles were marked as press. Other journalists were detained, threatened, or had their press credentials and film confiscated.

What is deeply troubling about the success of these new, heavy-handed restrictions on the media is that the government is willing to endure and ignore criticism of its press policy for the sake of bolstering Israel's international image. In June, "when a suicide bombing occurred, you had unfettered access to Jerusalem and the area, [but] when three kids were killed in Jenin by IDF tank fire because they broke the curfew, getting to Jenin and writing that story was a difficult thing for journalists to cover," says *Toronto Star* reporter Sandro Contenta. "As the conflict goes on, the difference in access could distort news coverage."

And that, it seems, is exactly what the Israeli government wants. ■



AP/Maxim Marmur

An Israeli soldier stops a car at the checkpoint between Jerusalem and the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

nalists, some of these collective measures represent a calculated attempt to dictate the course of the conflict's coverage. "Israelis believe that Palestinians have taken over the story and are doing it through the foreign press," observes CBC's MacDonald.

According to one journalist, "In mid-2001, a change began. Israel was

the spokesperson for Israel's defense minister, as saying at the time. "And if it doesn't look good, why should you invite the reporters?"

Tim Palmer, a Jerusalem-based correspondent for Australia's ABC News TV, believes that this negative attitude toward the press has filtered down to troops on the ground. "I was

The Business of Journalism

Against the odds, Aboubakr Jamai's fiercely independent publications are setting a precedent in Morocco—and the government is determined to stop him.

By Hani Sabra

Aboubakr Jamai is busy working on an article about an oil deal involving a member of the Moroccan royal family—an oil deal that never was. King Mohamed VI announced two years ago that the country had large quantities of oil, but his claim turned out to be wrong. Jamai and the staff at his weekly, *Le Journal*, however, saw another angle to the strange tale. After some muck-raking, they acquired documents they say proved that one of the king's cousins would receive preferential treatment if the oil had, indeed, been found. Sitting in his office in downtown Casablanca, 34-year-old Jamai's dark eyebrows are furrowed. It's a complicated story, but it's not the only thing on his mind this particular morning in March 2002. The controversial paper's "financial independence," says Jamai, has a concerned government telling advertisers to "stop advertising in *Le Journal* and *Assahifa*."

In 1997, Jamai, along with two associates, established *Le Journal*, which has quickly become one of Morocco's most influential independent weekly newspapers. In just five years, the French-language *Le Journal*—and its sister Arabic weekly, *Assahifa*, which was launched in 1998—has provided the public with

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Karim Seimaoui

Moroccan publisher Aboubakr Jamai has to satisfy the sometimes contradictory demands of remaining both independent and profitable.

a new brand of feisty journalism. The government has noticed these influential, staunchly independent publications, and, as a result, the editors have faced largely unsuccessful legal sanctions and harassment. But now authorities seem to have found a new method of persecution—a method that hits at the balance sheets.

Jamai is one part journalist and one part businessman. He runs his publications as a business, and his business is aggressive investigative

journalism. He speaks as comfortably about business trends, market reports, and crony capitalism in Morocco as he does about politics and press freedom.

Since the launch of the first issues, *Le Journal*, now known as *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, and *Assahifa*, now *Assahifa Al Ousbouiya*, have broken several taboos. Issues that Moroccan media previously avoided, such as Western Sahara's independence, the role of the king's court in business transactions, the military, and politi-

cal exiles, are regularly debated in the pages of Jamai's publications.

Jamai, Ali Ammar, and Fadil al-Iraqi—publisher, general manager, and partner, respectively—did not originally set out to publish a controversial newspaper. Jamai, a financial guru with an MBA from Oxford University, and his colleagues initially founded a publishing company called Mediatrust. The idea was that Mediatrust would produce publications that would respond to the political and economic reforms sweeping over Morocco, including deals with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both of which were pressuring Moroccan leaders to liberalize the economy.

"Initially, we thought our comparative advantage was to decipher complex economic issues to make them attainable, intellectually speaking, by the widest audience possible," Jamai says. Many things were happening in Morocco in 1997 that "would have a direct impact on the lives of Moroccan citizens," he adds. "For us, the Moroccan press needed a new actor which would basically facilitate the comprehension of these matters."

Le Journal gained popularity through word-of-mouth. The first few issues sold only about 3,000 to 4,000 copies, but readership steadily climbed, and more and more advertisers noticed. In the beginning, Morocco's business community, a group of people who are intimately involved in economic reform and liberalization, comprised the core of the Morocco-based readership. In fact, it was *Le Journal's* success with that group that prompted Mediatrust to publish *Assahifa* a year later. At its highest point, *Le Journal* sold nearly 20,000 copies a week. Today, according to Creargie, a Moroccan newspaper company that tracks publications' circulation figures, *Le Journal* sells about 13,000 copies a week, while the more accessible Arabic-language *Assahifa* sells about 26,000.

Their audiences have now moved well beyond the business world.

Articles that uncovered alleged economic and political corruption by private businessmen and government officials first provoked the ire of Moroccan authorities. An April 2000 interview in *Le Journal* with separatist leader Muhammed Abdelaziz, who mounted a direct challenge to Morocco's claim of sovereignty over Western Sahara, was seen as a particularly bold editorial move for the paper. Because of the interview, the Ministry of Communications banned the publications, accusing them of "excesses in [their] editorial line concerning the question of Morocco's territorial integrity," as well as "collusion with foreign interests." (*Assahifa* never ran the interview but was banned nonetheless.)

More bad news came two days later, when Foreign Minister Mohamed Ben Aissa, angered by a 1999 *Le Journal* series about alleged financial malfeasance during his tenure as ambassador to the United States, filed

Le Journal. But that didn't happen." The ban caused an international outcry, and, according to Jamai, authorities were not prepared for the "outrage from NGO's and the international community." The closure of the newspapers was a huge public relations disaster for the government, which was desperately trying to appear more democratic, says Jamai. The ban tarnished the image of young King Mohamed VI as a "democracy-leaning king," he adds, and, as a result, the papers were soon allowed to reopen.

Along with international support, the papers gained even more readers because, in a repressive society where people are often leery of the government, punishment by authorities often brings more credibility. With their increased readership, *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* entered a golden age. Advertisers began pouring money into the publications, making the papers even more financially independent. This, in turn, allowed them to provide even more hard-hitting exposés.

In a repressive society where people are often leery of the government, punishment by authorities often brings more credibility.

a criminal defamation suit against both publications. Ben Aissa "was waiting for a signal" to attack the newspapers, says Jamai. And the prime minister's ban was his signal. (The judge in this case ruled that Jamai and Ammar are liable for damages and is demanding that Mediatrust pay both Jamai and Ammar's salaries directly to Ben Aissa.)

But the banning was, in many ways, a victory for Jamai. Asked if the ban had a negative effect on advertising revenue, Jamai says, "Not at all, on the contrary." He thought the "natural outcome before would have been that advertisers by themselves would decide not to work with

The golden age, however, was short-lived. In late November 2000, *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* published a 1974 letter written by a former leftist leader implicating socialist politicians (including Prime Minister Abdelrahman Youssefi, formerly a leftist activist) of plotting to assassinate the king in a failed 1972 coup attempt. The next month, authorities again banned the publications. Jamai says that officials then became serious about stifling dissent and getting rid of his newspapers.

But then, on December 4, 2000, Prime Minister Youssefi was asked about the banning while visiting German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.



Karim Selmaoui

A staff meeting at *Le Journal*: Jamai sits at the head of the table.

Shortly thereafter, the newspapers were allowed to reopen under new names. Again, international support was critical, says Jamai.

Observers say that Morocco's international image is a major factor in the relationship between the authorities and the two publications. "When an article is published in *Le Journal*, [it] is immediately going to have international attention because it is going to be reported in the French media, and other European countries are going to pick it up," says Abdelslam Maghraoui, a professor of Moroccan politics at Princeton University. Moroccan authorities, he adds, are keen to maintain the image that Morocco is "liberal, moderate, and democratizing."

But, says Jamai, authorities are becoming more clever. Lately, they've concocted "another way, the commercial way" to quash *Le Journal* and *Assahifa*. Although public trials and bannings bring international attention, the more subtle, financial pressure in place today could result in the closure of the newspapers with no

real way to hold authorities accountable. According to Jamai, several former *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* advertisers have revealed that government authorities told them not to place ads in his publications. These advertisers include, most notably, Omnium Nord Africain (ONA) and its subsidiaries—which, according to Jamai, represent more than 60 percent of the capital in Casablanca's stock market—and Maroc Telecom. (In addition, the king has financial stakes in ONA.)

With less advertising, the newspapers have suffered. Jamai says that advertising revenue has dropped about 70 percent, though he adds that some of the downturn is due to a general lull in the Moroccan economy. This slow strangulation may prove more effective in silencing Morocco's independent voices. Already, Jamai has had to take several cost-saving measures. For instance, he and the upper management took large pay cuts, and one-third of the staff has been laid off.

Jamai says that he refuses to compromise the editorial line or the

quality of his papers' reporting. But downsizing has not solved the current financial crunch, and Jamai is considering further measures. One option, he says, is to make the higher circulation *Assahifa* a daily and *Le Journal* a monthly. Another possibility is to close the papers altogether. Jamai the businessman refuses to produce a paper that he knows will cost him large amounts of money he does not have. And Jamai the editor will not publish a newspaper whose editorial line has been compromised.

But whatever happens, the good news is that readers have noticed *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* and say that the weeklies are still the two most important independent papers in Morocco. One journalist working for a foreign news station says that *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* have "opened the door for independent press" in Morocco. The closure of the newspapers would slow that process, but at least the precedent for quality, independent reporting has now been established. ■

Being Heard

Media are freer than ever, but local, private radio broadcasters remain marginalized in the new Afghanistan.

By Ivan Sigal



Ivan Sigal

Jamila Mujahed, the first woman to appear on Afghan television after the fall of the Taliban, is interviewed by a French television reporter in her Kabul studio.

Nine months after the fall of the Taliban, the airwaves over Afghanistan are crackling with voices. State broadcasting in Kabul returned quickly after the Taliban fled in November 2001, and some 15 regional state stations were broadcasting a few hours a day by summer 2002. Both Dari- and Pashtu-language shortwave radio is thriving thanks to cash infusions from foreign governments that need to support their increased presence in

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Afghanistan. The U.S. military and the United Nations International Security Assistance Force have installed medium-wave transmitters in Afghanistan. Internet radio, satellite diaspora radio—all exist. But one voice is conspicuous for its absence: As of September 2002, only one private Afghan radio station broadcasts in the country.

On November 18, 2001, a few days after the Northern Alliance entered Kabul, state-run Kabul TV resumed broadcasting. That a female journalist, Jamila Mujahed, read the first night's news signaled that the new government supported

a more open and tolerant culture. The government restored the 1964 constitution—generally the most liberal in Afghanistan's history—but certain strictures on the media remain. The Ministry of Culture and Information quickly approved the publication of private newspapers, and in February 2002, the ministry removed regulations banning private broadcasting. At the time, Minister of Information and Culture Makdoom Raheen had a stack of documents ready to register newspapers, magazines, and journals, but since then, he says, "no potential private broadcaster has approached me for permission to broadcast."

For now, the country's only private radio station is the former opposition radio broadcaster, Radio Solh. Now based in Jabal Saraj, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Kabul, the station was originally funded by the famous Northern Alliance defense minister Ahmad Shah Massoud and French nonprofits as a Northern Alliance mouthpiece, before the fall of the Taliban. Today, the station has received additional nonprofit funds and is seeking money from other sources.

In other recent post-conflict situations, commercial and nonprofit community radio have flourished. In Afghanistan, this has not happened. On the surface, conditions seem sim-

ilar: a new government, a new set of freedoms, and international funding to support such initiatives. But this lack has only surprised international observers. Afghans, not so: Beyond the by-now standard rhetoric of 23 years of war to excuse a lack of sudden change, there lies a history mostly void of a tradition of independent broadcasting, and of objective and impartial reporting. To this day there is suspicion—and in some quarters resistance—to the idea of private media.

Another reason for this absence is the lack of influence media had in bringing about regime change in Afghanistan. Unlike recent political revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe, Indonesia, and Peru, where media played a crucial role in political change, in Afghanistan, media were almost irrelevant to the fall of the Taliban. Change in those countries came about to a great extent because of internal pressures from activist media and intellectuals. Change in Afghanistan came about to a great extent through external force.

During the last 30 years, Kabul University has graduated some 3,000 journalism students, and most of them went to work for the state, filling the ranks of the Baktar Information Agency, Radio/TV Afghanistan,



A radio and TV transmitter lie scrapped on the hills above Kabul after the U.S. bombing in fall 2001 destroyed transmission facilities.

in language. While studying at a radio journalism training course sponsored by the nonprofit media development company Internews, a journalist from a station in Ghazni, a small city south of Kabul, uses the Dari word for “censor” when he speaks of editing tape.

In Afghanistan and in the international community, there is talk of democracy, of freedom of expression. But much of this remains talk.

That expanded freedom of expression won’t come about quickly is not only determined by a lack of access to ideas but also by strong competition among political interests within Afghanistan. Alex Plichon, co-director of the French media nonprofit AINA in Kabul says, “The only people with vision for media are political.” They pursue media projects as part of a political agenda, not necessarily to respond to the broad interests of a diverse population. Until that changes, Afghan media will remain highly political in character.

Despite some optimism and the enormous advances of the last year, few have completely swallowed the presumption that the present peace will lead to long-term political stability and, therefore, to successful media reform. Getting private radio stations on the air will require challenging entrenched cultural attitudes and interests in the broadcasting bureaucracy, the ministries, and in powerful political factions. As *Kilid’s* Zahine observes, for now, Afghanistan remains caught in the middle, “not exactly a free media, not exactly a democracy.” ■

Most Afghan journalists consider the government as source, subject, and audience for news.

and the regional broadcasters. Most of them consider the government as source, subject, and audience for news. In a roundtable discussion in January 2002, journalism students at Kabul University said they viewed journalism as an obligation to “enlighten people about the views of the government.” The notion of listenership as the motivator of content is only starting to take root.

This mind-set is even entrenched

The notion of a broadcaster completely independent of authorities is foreign to Afghan culture, even, for the most part, to the culture of the present government. According to Shahir Zahine, founder of *Kilid* magazine, one of Afghanistan’s most widely distributed and read new journals, the current government wants to “look clean to the Western people but some also want to control the country with an iron hand.”

In a Conflict Zone

Musa Muradov isn't a war correspondent. He's a local reporter who just happens to be covering a war.

By Olga Tarasov

Musa Muradov has seen his town destroyed and his equipment and files reduced to ashes. Worst of all, he's had to bury two colleagues. As editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Groznensky Rabochy*, Chechnya's only truly independent publication, Muradov has witnessed war, but, he insists, he's not a war correspondent.

"I'm a reporter," says the 44-year-old Muradov. "It just happens that I walk on territory that is labeled a 'conflict zone.'"

To Muradov, covering the fighting in Chechnya is not about political struggles and gruesome statistics, it's about showing that the detriments of war extend beyond physical destruction and casualties. His articles focus on the psychological impact of war on civilians. He writes about child soldiers who fight for the rebels, about the losses sustained by the art gallery in the capital, Grozny, and about the impact of the fighting on artistic expression, among other topics.

Muradov likes to smile and laugh, but, during a recent interview in Moscow, when he talks about the hardships that he and his newspaper have endured during the last decade, a shadow of sadness spreads across his face. For a man who has survived

detention, repeated interrogation, and even death threats, Muradov remains passionate about his profession, proud of *Groznensky Rabochy*, and committed to impartial reporting. And that's not easy in a war where shifting alliances and biased reporting are commonplace.

"The idea of our newspaper was not to serve one of the hostile sides. The main idea is to report everything that happens [in Chechnya] as dispassionately as possible," he says.

Muradov was born and raised in Chechnya, near Grozny. He says that he knew he wanted to become

a journalist in "fifth or sixth grade," when he saw a French film about an investigative journalist trying to expose organized crime. In 1982, after graduating from Moscow State University's journalism department, Muradov returned to Chechnya and started reporting for *Groznensky Rabochy*, which, like all Soviet publications, the Communist Party controlled.

In 1991, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, the communist chiefs left the publication following a failed coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. *Groznensky Rabochy* became independent, and its staff chose Muradov as its editor-in-chief.



The April 26-May 2, 2002, edition of *Groznensky Rabochy*

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CPJ/Olga Tarasov

At the same time, secessionist movements were gaining momentum throughout the Soviet republics. In elections, which Moscow denounced, the Chechens chose former Soviet Army officer Dzhokhar Dudayev to lead the tiny republic in its fight for independence.

Meanwhile, *Groznensky Rabochy* was doing very well. The newspaper printed about 100,000 copies per week, and prospects looked bright. “We saw the kind of future for ourselves enjoyed by *Moskovsky Komso-molets* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Izvestia*,” successful Moscow-based dailies.

restive region, Russian president Boris Yeltsin ordered federal troops into Chechnya and declared war. Within a year, Moscow claimed control of Grozny, and fighting shifted to mountainous and remote areas. During the fighting, Muradov, his wife, and daughter could not survive on his income, so he moved to Moscow to earn more money. Muradov tried to start a publication and dabble in business while there, but none of his projects took off. In 1995, he returned to Grozny.

When Muradov returned, the city was unrecognizable after damage from extensive fighting and shelling.

In 1996, Dudayev was killed when a Russian bomb blew up his car. The rebels seized Grozny after a lengthy assault, and separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov became president of Chechnya. At the newspaper, everything came to a grinding halt. One of Muradov’s reporters was killed in cross fire, and Muradov himself was trapped in a basement for 14 days because of fallout from the intense shelling. Money dried up, and Muradov struggled to keep the paper afloat.

In 1999, Russian president Vladimir Putin—who came to office on a campaign promise to bring order to Chechnya—sent Russian troops back into Grozny. A bomb destroyed *Groznensky Rabochy*’s editorial offices, and Muradov lost another reporter, who was killed in the bombing.

Finding it impossible to live and work in Grozny, Muradov—who then also worked as a special correspondent for the influential, Moscow-based daily *Kommersant* and the popular German newspaper *Die Welt*—and what remained of his staff joined tens of thousands of Chechens and fled to the neighboring region of Ingushetia. They immediately resumed publishing *Groznensky Rabochy* in Ingushetia’s capital, Nazran, distributing the paper mostly for free among the Chechen refugee population.



CPJ/Olga Tarasov

Musa Muradov files a story on his computer.

But these aspirations were short-lived. In 1993, Dudayev attempted to convert *Groznensky Rabochy* into his administration’s official publication. Muradov and most of his staff refused to compromise the paper’s newfound freedom and neutrality and walked away. *Groznensky Rabochy* was consequently shuttered, and Dudayev created his own paper. Muradov took a job as a correspondent for a regional publication and taught in the journalism department of a local university.

In 1994, desperate to rein in the

Most of the buildings, including the Central House of the Press, where *Groznensky Rabochy* had been headquartered, were demolished. But Muradov was determined to rebuild his beloved newspaper, and in the spring of 1995, *Groznensky Rabochy* resumed publication with Muradov at its helm. Federal money and state and private business began to pour into Moscow-controlled Grozny. “We were swimming in money,” says Muradov with a note of nostalgia. “*Groznensky Rabochy* could not sell ad space fast enough.”

Throughout the war in Chechnya, Muradov has been accused by Chechen rebels of collaborating with the Russians, and by Russians of being a mouthpiece for the rebels. Russian forces have searched and detained him for sneaking into Russian-held Grozny to cover the news, and Russian prosecutors have repeatedly interrogated him for publishing interviews with Maskhadov and other Chechen leaders, and for reporting about allegations of human rights abuses by the Russian military.

Last year, Muradov says he received an anonymous flyer announcing that the highest court of



AP/Yuri Turov

Russian troops stand guard at a checkpoint in the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Ichkeria (the name separatists use for Chechnya) had sentenced him “to death for collaborating with Russians and taking money from a Jew.” (*Groznensky Rabochy*, explains Muradov, received funding from U.S. financier George Soros’ Open Society Institute.) Although it remains unclear whether the flyer was a charade by Chechens or Russians, since no one has taken responsibility for the “verdict,” the incident was sobering. Fearing for his and his family’s safety, Muradov decided that he needed to leave the region, and *Kommersant* transferred him to Moscow.

Sitting in his office in Moscow, Muradov reflects upon the last decade. Covering the various campaigns in Chechnya has been difficult, he notes, and it’s gotten worse. “It was a lot easier during the first military campaign,” says Muradov.

“One could write about anything. But now, it’s like a bubble was put over everything. There is no information, and the journalists are under the close watch of federal forces. No step can be made without their knowledge, control, and escort.”

lished on an irregular basis from Ingushetia.) A few of his correspondents remain in Chechnya, and he’ll rely on them for firsthand reporting. But he’s nervous for their safety. He’s told his staff, “If you don’t feel safe, don’t do it.”

During a lengthy assault on Grozny, one of Muradov’s reporters was killed in cross fire, and Muradov himself was trapped in a basement for 14 days.

With the help of the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy, Muradov plans to begin publishing *Groznensky Rabochy* from Moscow and sending it by train to Grozny. (Currently, the newspaper is pub-

Living and working in Moscow saddens Muradov, but he’s hopeful that eventually he will return to Chechnya. After all, in his heart, he’s a local reporter—and Grozny is where he belongs. ■

