

Dangerous Assignments

covering the global press freedom struggle

Fall | Winter 2005

www.cpj.org



Erasing the News

Mass graves, corruption, and drugs are under-reported in Colombia.

Attacked by all sides, the press censors itself ...



Four Great Press Turnarounds
Micah Garen's Rescuers

Committee to Protect Journalists

Executive Director: Ann Cooper
Deputy Director: Joel Simon

Dangerous Assignments

Editorial Director: Bill Sweeney
Senior Editor: Robert Mahoney
Contributing Editor: Leigh Newman
Designer: Virginia Anstett
Printer: Photo Arts Limited

**Committee to Protect Journalists
Board of Directors**

Honorary Co-Chairmen:
Walter Cronkite
Terry Anderson

Chairman: Paul E. Steiger

Andrew Alexander, Franz Allina,
Christiane Amanpour, Dean Baquet,
Tom Brokaw, Josh Friedman, Anne
Garrels, James C. Goodale, Cheryl
Gould, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Gwen
Ifill, Steven L. Isenberg, Jane Kramer,
David Lavanthol, Anthony Lewis,
David Marash, Kati Marton, Michael
Massing, Geraldine Fabrikant Metz,
Victor Navasky, Andres Oppenheimer,
Burl Osborne, Charles L. Overby,
Clarence Page, Norman Pearlstine,
Erwin Potts, Dan Rather, Gene Roberts,
Sandra Mims Rowe, John Seigenthaler,
Paul C. Tash, and Mark Whitaker

Published by the Committee to
Protect Journalists, 330 Seventh
Avenue, 11th Floor, New York, N.Y.
10001; (212) 465-1004; info@cpj.org.

Find CPJ online at www.cpj.org.



On the cover: A cameraman runs for cover during fighting between government troops and guerrillas with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in rural southern Cauca.

Photo: AP/J. George

Dangerous Assignments Fall|Winter 2005

AS IT HAPPENED

The top press freedom stories 2

IN FOCUS By Leigh Newman

A Kashmir battle injures eight journalists 3

COMMENTARY By Ann Cooper

U.S. quietly imprisons journalists in Iraq 4

FIRST PERSON By Galima Bukharbaeva

An Uzbek reporter witnesses a slaughter 6

FEATURES

COVER STORY

Untold Stories By Chip Mitchell

Gustavo Santiago knew he couldn't fully report a politician's slaying. It would have cost him his own life. The killing is among many untold stories in Colombia. Besieged by all sides in a deadly civil war, the press is muzzling itself 8

Murderers Go Free By Nina Ognianova

No one except police thought reporter Natalya Skryl died in a robbery. The case has followed standard Russian procedure: no arrests, many questions 16

PLUS: Moscow Q&A with David Marash. 19

About Face By Leigh Newman

CPJ recounts the four great press turnarounds of the past quarter century. In Argentina, Nigeria, Poland, and Indonesia, courage and commitment paid off. 20

A Hostage's Ordeal By Maya Taal

Micah Garen thought his Iraqi captors would behead him. In a new book, he tells how journalists helped win his release 24

Zimbabwe's Exiled Press By Elisabeth Witchel

Dozens of the nation's best journalists have been forced to flee their homeland. Now, they fight to keep their careers alive 26

CPJ REMEMBERS By Kamel Labidi

A "Prince of the Pen" is silenced 31

DISPATCHES By Michael Marizco

A slugging reporter vanishes in Mexico 32

RADIO WAVES By Alexis Arieff

Freedom delayed may be freedom denied 34

CORRESPONDENTS By Martha Wexler

A Russian reporter is trapped in his hometown. 36

UPDATE By Shawn W. Crispin

In Aceh, the press is reborn after the tsunami. 38

KICKER By Mick Stern 40

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

June

2 Samir Qassir, columnist for the daily *Al-Nahar*, is killed outside his Beirut home by a bomb planted in his car. Mass demonstrations (below) follow. (Story, page 31.)



26 Corruption, easy access to guns, and an unresponsive justice system threaten the Philippine press, CPJ finds after a weeklong mission. CPJ later issues a report saying rural radio commentators have been killed in record numbers.

July

3-18 In its first mission to Saudi Arabia, CPJ finds that the government interferes in newspaper operations and top Saudi editors shy away from sensitive topics. (Kicker, page 40.)

6 A U.S. judge jails *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller (below) for refusing to reveal a confidential source to a grand jury investigating the leak of a CIA operative's identity.



August

6 Cuba jails Albert Santiago Du Bouchet Hernández, director of the

independent news agency Havana Press, for covering a meeting of opposition activists. He joins 24 other Cuban journalists behind bars.

24 Tunisia bars the Tunisian Journalists Syndicate from holding its first national congress. The move comes as Tunisia prepares to host a UN-sponsored summit on Internet expression.

September

14 The U.S. military fails in investigating the killing of journalists by its forces in Iraq, CPJ says in a new analysis. In 13 fatalities, the military did not address questions of accountability; did not make its inquiries public; or simply failed to investigate at all.

15 After deadly attacks against journalists in Mexico's northern states, President Vicente Fox (below) says he will seek a special prosecutor to investigate crimes against free expression. Fox's pledge comes in a meeting at CPJ headquarters. (Related story, page 32.)



16 CPJ demands that Eritrea, the worst jailer of journalists in Africa, account for 15 journalists held incommunicado, some in secret prisons, since September 2001.

20 A Chinese court sentences Zheng Yichun to seven years in prison for "inciting subversion." Zheng is the third Internet journalist sentenced to jail this year in China.

25 May Chidiac, a Lebanese TV news anchor and critic of Syria, is seriously wounded when her car explodes.

October

4 CPJ condemns Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's latest attack on the press: criminal defamation complaints against two talk show hosts. Thaksin's government and affiliated business interests have filed several such cases. ■

As They Said

"Imagine what would have happened if during the 1980s an American communications company had provided information that allowed the South African government to track down and imprison an anti-apartheid activist. That is pretty much the moral equivalent of what Yahoo has just done in China in the case of journalist Shi Tao."

—Max Boot, Council on Foreign Relations, in the *Los Angeles Times*. Yahoo provided China with information about Shi, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for e-mailing "state secrets."

"We're just asking for due process and some answers, which so far the military has refused to provide."

—CBS News President Andrew Heyward, in *Huffington Post*, about the case of a CBS cameraman detained by U.S. forces in Iraq for several months.

"That is our own affair, a sovereign issue. It is up to us what, why, when, and where we do things."

—Eritrean Information Minister Ali Abdu, to Agence France-Presse, in response to a CPJ report on the detention of 15 journalists.



Srinagar, India

Racing to cover an explosion in Kashmir, eight journalists were wounded by gunmen.

Around 5 p.m. on Friday, July 25, two Islamic gunmen targeted the central Lal Chowk district of the capital, through which government officials frequently travel. One attacker fired on a bunker in a nearby Indian paramilitary camp. The other hurled a grenade and fired at a Border Security Force vehicle (top photo), turning it into a "slow moving ball of fire and smoke," *Indian Express* reporter Muzaamil Jaleel said.

Three journalists, including cam-

eramen from India TV and Zee TV, were immediately wounded. Another cameraman was later hit in the hand. Security forces returned fire and the gunmen split up, each on one side of the busy Maulan Azad Road. In the ensuing gunfire (bottom left), four more journalists were wounded, including Sahara India TV cameraman Muzaffar Ahmad Bhat, who was hit in the stomach and carried out by his colleagues (bottom right).

The fighting continued for more than 24 hours until both gunmen were killed. Two security officers were killed, and at least 25 officers and

civilians were injured.

Al-Mansurian and the Pakistan-based Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the attack. Indian forces and militant groups accused each other of targeting the journalists. Journalists at the scene said the wounded were probably caught in the crossfire.

Since 1989, more than a dozen Islamic groups have been fighting for control of Indian-administered Kashmir. More than 44,000 people have died in the conflict, including 11 journalists killed on duty. ■

—Leigh Newman

Jailing Iraqi Journalists

The Pentagon is silent as U.S. military imprisons local journalists.

By Ann Cooper

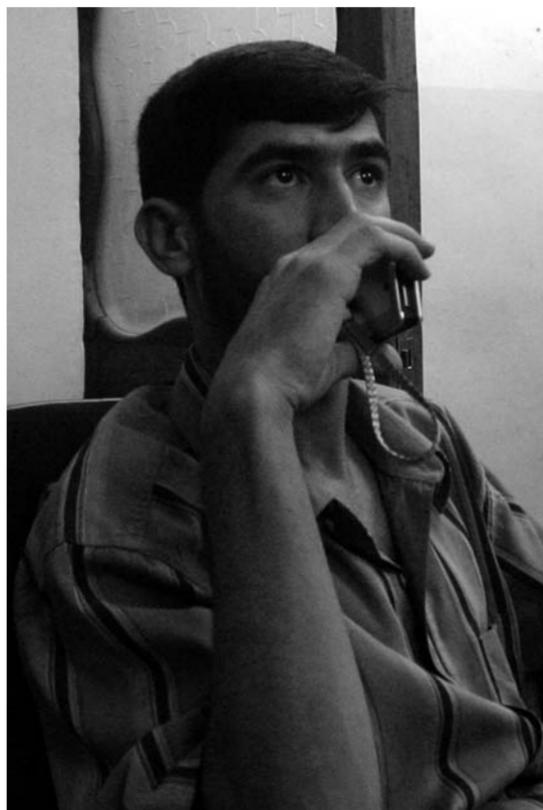
Much has been said about what is and is not being reported in Iraq, but one thing is clear: Local, front-line journalists are not only risking their lives, they are risking imprisonment for their work.

Ali Omar Abrahem al-Mashhadani, a 36-year-old freelance cameraman and photographer who worked for the Reuters news agency in Ramadi, was taken from his home on August 8 during a general sweep of his neighborhood by U.S. Marines. His family says the Marines were suspicious of photos he stored in his cameras. He was sent to Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison, held without charge, and denied access to his family and a lawyer.

U.S. officials refused requests from Reuters to discuss his case, and they provided no explanation or evidence supporting his detention. In September, a secret tribunal ordered al-Mashhadani held for up to six months before the case would be reviewed.

Open-ended and unsubstantiated detentions of journalists in Iraq have undermined the ability of the press to report on the conflict. The Committee to Protect Journalists has docu-

Ann Cooper is executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists.



Reuters cameraman Haidar Kadhem was wounded by U.S. forces in an August shooting that killed colleague Walid Khaled. U.S. forces then detained Kadhem without substantive explanation.

Press, and Agence France-Presse, among others.

At least three documented detentions exceeded 100 days; the others have spanned many weeks. CPJ has received reports of numerous other detentions that, because of the secrecy of the proceedings, it has been unable to confirm.

Most of the confirmed detainees are Iraqis—local journalists covering the conflict in their own country. These journalists are vulnerable because they are most frequently in the field reporting from places deemed too dangerous for Western reporters. They are often the first on the scene to report on clashes or insurgent attacks. In at least five cases documented by CPJ, the detainees were photojournalists who initially drew the military's attention because of what they had filmed or photographed.

Despite repeated inquiries over many months, the U.S. military has refused to provide evidence to support these detentions. Instead, military officials have made vague and unsubstantiated assertions that these Iraqi journalists may pose "security risks."

There is no doubt the U.S. military has an urgent need to ensure security, and journalists are not above scrutiny.

mented seven cases in 2005 alone in which reporters, photographers, and camera operators were detained by U.S. forces for prolonged periods without charge or the disclosure of any supporting evidence. These detentions have involved journalists working for CBS News, The Associated

But the record of detained journalists is plain: In each case documented by CPJ over the past two years, journalists detained on security suspicions were released without charge.

Another August detention, although not as long as others, highlights the secretive and arbitrary nature of the process. Reuters cameraman Haidar Kadhem was detained by U.S. troops on August 28, moments after his car came under U.S. fire in Baghdad's Hay al-Adil neighborhood. A colleague riding in the same car, soundman Walid Khaled, was killed in the gunfire, Iraqi police reported. Reuters said its news bureau had dispatched Kadhem and Khaled to the neighborhood after a police source reported a skirmish involving police and gunmen.

A U.S. military spokesman said Kadhem was detained by U.S. troops and taken to an undisclosed location.

A military spokesman said "inconsistencies in his story" warranted further questioning. After a public outcry, Kadhem was freed three days later.

These detentions inhibit front-line journalists from covering a conflict that is already exceptionally dangerous. CPJ research shows that 56 journalists and 22 media support workers were killed between March 2003, when hostilities began, and September 2005. A large majority are Iraqis.

The cases also reflect the wider issue of detentions in Iraq. Thousands of Iraqi citizens have been detained by U.S. forces, many for weeks or months at a time without charge. The handling of these cases reflects on the leadership of the U.S. military and is bound to resonate among Iraqis for many years to come.

Responsiveness and accountability are antidotes. But the Pentagon has

instead displayed a pattern of disregard when confronted with issues involving the security of Iraqi journalists and citizens.

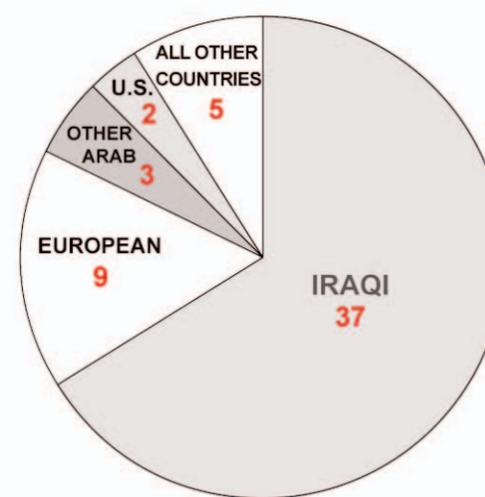
In June, CPJ and Human Rights Watch wrote to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to urge the Pentagon to adopt basic safety procedures at military checkpoints. The recommendations were basic: Install signs, speed bumps, lights. In fact, they had been made by military investigators themselves in the aftermath of a fatal shooting of an Italian intelligence agent and the wounding of an Italian reporter in March. Secretary Rumsfeld did not respond, and checkpoints remained unnecessarily dangerous.

By being unresponsive, the Pentagon gives every impression that it sees no need to be accountable. That's not a good lesson to pass on to the citizens of an emerging democracy. ■

Iraq's Death Toll

Here is a breakdown of journalists killed between March 2003, when hostilities began, and September 2005, as compiled by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Total: 56



BY NATIONALITY

By Year:

- 2005: 18
- 2004: 24
- 2003: 14

By Gender:

- Men: 51
- Women: 5

By Circumstance:

- Insurgent action: 33 (Includes crossfire, suicide bombings, and targeted killings.)
- U.S. fire: 13
- Iraqi armed forces, during U.S. invasion: 3
- Crossfire or other acts of war in which source unconfirmed: 7

By Job:

- Photojournalists: 20 (Includes still photographers and camera operators.)
- Reporters and editors: 27
- Producers: 6
- Technicians: 3

Earlier conflicts:

Journalists killed in major conflicts since CPJ was founded in 1981.

- Algeria (1993-96): 58
- Colombia (1986-present): 52
- Balkans (1991-95): 36
- Philippines (1983-87): 36
- Turkey (1984-99): 22
- Tajikistan (1992-96): 16
- Sierra Leone (1997-2000): 15
- Afghanistan (2001-04): 9
- Somalia (1993-95): 9
- Kosovo (1999-2001): 7
- First Iraq war (1991): 4

Witness to a Massacre

An Uzbek reporter risked her life to tell the world of Andijan assault.

By Galima Bukharbaeva

Galima Bukharbaeva was interviewing demonstrators in the eastern Uzbek town of Andijan when President Islam Karimov's troops rolled into Bobur Square and opened fire. She had a narrow escape when a bullet tore through her backpack, punching a hole in her notebook and press card. Her eyewitness reporting of the crackdown in which hundreds of civilians were shot dead informed the world and angered the authorities. Fearing prison, she fled Uzbekistan and is enrolled in Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in New York. She is one of CPJ's 2005 International Press Freedom Award recipients.



Galima Bukharbaeva fled to New York after her coverage of the Andijan crisis angered Uzbek authorities.

CPJ/Mick Stern

It was only after I had stopped running that I realized I could have been one of the men, women, and children falling around me. I reached for my backpack to take out my notebook only to find that a bullet from an AK-47 rifle had torn through it, punching a neat hole in the face of Che Guevara on the cover. My press card from the Institute for War & Peace Reporting was also shot through.

It was just after 5:20 p.m. on Friday, May 13. Minutes before, I had been moving through the 10,000-strong crowd, listening to the speeches and laughter of people exhilarated by their sudden defiance of years of Soviet-style oppression. Now I was shaking with an animal fear. I had covered fighting once before in Afghanistan



CPJ/Mick Stern

I had rushed to Andijan from my home in Tashkent on Friday morning after news that armed men had attacked government buildings and stormed a prison to free 23 local businessmen on trial for allegedly forming an Islamic resistance group. Thousands of unarmed civilians poured into the streets after the uprising, protesting freely for the first time against repression, poverty, and unemployment. Political trials are nothing new in Uzbekistan. The accused businessmen, however, were well-educated, influential, and organized. They denied belonging to any Islamic group.

Up to 5,000 supporters had gathered outside the court in the final days of the trial and the authorities were nervous. They began arresting demonstrators outside the courthouse on May 12 and confiscating their cars. This, according to Sharif Shakirov, whose two brothers were among the 23 men on trial, provoked the armed uprising the following day. The rebels stormed the jail and freed the prisoners, but Shakirov would never celebrate his brothers' release. He was killed in the attacks.

By early Friday morning the rebels had taken a local government building on Bobur Square and barricaded themselves inside. A few residents ventured out to watch the standoff. As the day wore on they were joined by thousands more who vented their

but always from a safe distance. Here, I was among a handful of local reporters in the square who had to dive for cover from a hail of bullets that came without warning.

Uzbek soldiers take position outside the administration building in Andijan on May 13. Hundreds died when soldiers opened fire on protesters.



AP/Efrem Lukatsky

frustration with President Karimov's authoritarian rule and economic mismanagement. The protests were peaceful. Parents brought their children to see the unprecedented spectacle. The rebels expected that the army would move against them to retake the buildings, but the crowd had no inkling of its fate.

From nowhere, a column of eight-wheeled armored personnel carriers surged onto the avenue alongside the square. Atop each vehicle special forces soldiers in black flak jackets sat in a circle, their weapons pointing out.

Without warning, the soldiers opened fire into the crowd. Bodies fell like mown hay, row upon row. People in the center of the square ran in all directions, but soldiers had blocked off side streets. A helicopter clattered overhead, pointing out those trying to escape to the troops below. I don't know how I escaped. I just ran. "They think we are just dirt," a woman cried to me.

That night, witnesses later told

me, soldiers finished off the wounded lying in the blood-washed square. Opposition and human rights groups say up to 1,000 people were killed in Bobur Square and a nearby border town the next day. Karimov says some 30 Uzbek soldiers and 137 other people were killed.

Neither I nor the other five reporters and one photographer in Andijan that day could stay to count the casualties. Like many others much worse off than me, I became a refugee. The prosecutor in Tashkent has opened a case against me for working as a journalist without proper accreditation. It would be dangerous for me to return while the present government is in power. The authorities will want revenge for my reporting and testimony to the U.S. Congress about the Andijan killings.

After slipping out of Uzbekistan, I went with my colleagues to a refugee camp in neighboring Kyrgyzstan to which some 500 Andijan residents



CPJ/Mick Stern

A bullet pierced Galima Bukharbaeva's notebook and press card as she sought cover during the government's assault on Andijan.

had fled. Many of them recognized us from Bobur Square and began weeping and shouting: "They're alive."

A beautiful young girl, Nailya, turned to me with tear-filled eyes and asked: "Do you think we will ever go back home?"

I held her gaze and said: "Of course, we will go back." But I could not say when. ■

Untold Stories

Threatened by all sides, Colombia's news media muzzle themselves.

By Chip Mitchell

MONTERIA, Colombia

The main suspect in Orlando Benítez's murder was never in doubt. Benítez, a lawmaker here in the northwestern province of Córdoba, was preparing to run for mayor of a municipality controlled for years by Diego Murillo Bejarano, a paramilitary chief known as "Don Berna." Murillo, once a close associate of drug lord Pablo Escobar, hadn't given the campaign his blessing.

The local and national press reported briefly on a police announcement of the hit, in which five men gunned down Benítez, his sister, and his driver on April 10. But the press didn't mention Murillo or subject the triple murder to any significant investigation. "No journalist tried to check into what everyone suspected," says Gustavo Santiago, news director of the Caracol Radio affiliate in Montería, the provincial capital. "It could have cost you your life."

It takes mettle to be a journalist in this Andean nation riven for decades by a war that pits government and paramilitary forces against leftist guerrillas, by international syndicates that enable Colombia to supply most of the world's cocaine and much of its heroin, and by an array of underworld organizations that control contraband, extort from businesses, and manipulate public officials.

Chip Mitchell is a radio and print journalist based in Bogotá. Frank Smyth of the Committee to Protect Journalists contributed to this story from the southwestern province of Valle del Cauca.



Reporters in northwestern Sucre interview a paramilitary chief known as Ernesto Báez. Paramilitaries are demobilizing, but journalists say threats continue.

In this case, news outlets feared reprisals not only from Murillo, who insists he had nothing to do with the assassination, but from President Alvaro Uribe's government, which had suspended arrest warrants for the warlord as part of negotiations to demobilize paramilitaries. The talks had dragged on for more than two years, lately in a paramilitary haven the government set up just a few miles from the murder. Naming Murillo as the suspect would have focused attention on violations of a "ceasefire" the paramilitaries declared for the talks. And it would have fueled international criticism of Uribe-backed legislation awarding judicial leniency to paramilitaries who disarm.

Two weeks after the assassination, authorities finally broke the silence, announcing a fresh arrest warrant for Murillo. Even then, few news outlets explored the paramilitary chief's alleged role in any depth. One fear, Santiago notes, was that journalists would end up having to testify against him.

Such hands-off treatment is pervasive in Colombia, a Committee to Protect Journalists investigation has found. Interviews with three dozen news professionals show that media outlets and journalists across the country routinely censor themselves in fear of physical retaliation from all sides in the nation's conflict.

At least 30 Colombian journalists have been murdered over the past decade for their work. "We love our profession, but we're human," says Carmen Rosa Pabón, news director of Voz de Cinaruco, the Caracol Radio affiliate in the northeastern city of Arauca. "Threats and killings make us afraid. To survive, we have to limit ourselves."

On some occasions, verified news is suppressed shortly before broadcast or publication. In other cases, probing journalists are killed, detained, or forced to flee. More often, investigations never even get started. The issues short-changed are human rights abuses, armed conflict, political corruption, drug trafficking, and links from officials to illegal armed groups. Journalists end up focusing instead on "pleasant topics like fauna and flora," says Angel María León, news chief of Arauca's RCN Radio affiliate.

Communities pay a high price. "Any region without investigative journalism is going to have impunity," says Jaime Vides Feria of Radio Caracol in Sincelejo, a provincial capital near the Caribbean coast.

And the self-censorship has international dimensions. The Uribe administration, for example, is pushing for U.S. and European funding of a \$130 million plan to reintegrate the demobilized paramilitaries into society. But foreign taxpayers can hardly judge whether the plan might bring peace if the press doesn't dare investigate drug trafficking by paramilitaries or their civilian attacks.

"We're talking about serial massacres—extremely cruel deaths with torture," notes reporter Beatriz Diegó Solano of *El Universal*, a daily newspaper that curtailed its investiga-



Hundreds of paramilitary fighters from a faction called "Heroes of Granada" gather for a demobilization ceremony in Cristales in August.

tion of scores of unmarked graves discovered near Sincelejo this year. "Do you think these people are going to become corn farmers? They're psychopaths."

Colombia's main guerrilla groups—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN)—formed in the mid-1960s, calling for socialism on behalf of the country's impoverished majority. But the guerrillas have earned a reputation for abusing human rights through tactics such as extortion, kidnapping, and assassination. And the FARC, now more than 15,000 strong, has generated much of its revenue from "taxing" peasants who cultivate coca, the raw material for cocaine.

In the early 1980s, ranchers, military officers, drug traffickers, and businessmen began forming regional private armies to ward off the guerrillas. But the paramilitaries,

dubbed “self-defense forces,” have focused largely on unarmed social movements. Often working closely with government forces, they’ve murdered thousands of peasant leaders, trade unionists, politicians, human rights advocates, and other civilians accused of supporting the guerrillas. And they’ve played a leading role in turning narcotics into Colombia’s largest export sector.

Since the Uribe government began negotiating with them in 2002, the paramilitaries have ostensibly demobilized units totaling more than 8,500 of their 20,000 fighters. At the same time, however, they’ve expanded and entrenched illicit operations ranging from extortion to drug running to gasoline smuggling. They now hold sway over city halls, provincial governments, and federal agencies across the country. They boast of controlling a third of Congress.

The FARC, meanwhile, remains potent. “Here we have found a terrorism reigning for decades, a terrorism hidden in our large cities and in more than 300,000 [square] kilometers of jungle, a terrorism financed by drug trafficking,” Uribe said in a 2003 speech. “Nowhere in the world in my generation has it been necessary to confront a terrorism more powerful, rich, aggressive, and dangerous than what we’ve confronted in Colombia. And how are we confronting it? With the hand of the Constitution. We’re confronting it without trimming press freedom.”

While the Colombian government exerts little formal control over news content, officials sometimes persuade media outlets to censor themselves. In 2000, Caracol’s television network sent reporter Jorge Enrique Botero and

two other journalists on an 11-day journey to a secret southern camp where the FARC was holding scores of captured soldiers and police. The video footage formed the basis of a 43-minute documentary substantiating claims by relatives that the government had virtually forgotten about the captives. Botero called it “the most anticipated story of my career.”

But a letter from the government’s National Television Commission urged Caracol to scrap the work, claiming it would “seriously hurt the feelings of large segments of television viewers, such as children,” and that “this sort of broadcast could turn out to be counterproductive” for peace efforts.

The documentary never aired. A statement from Caracol President Ricardo Alarcón acknowledged the letter but said the network made the decision on its own, already “having divulged many of the images in our news.”

Another way officials encourage self-censorship is by accusing journalists of guerrilla ties. In Saravena, a town in Arauca Province, soldiers of an Army battalion called the Revéz Pizarro Mechanized Group entered community radio station Sarare Estéreo on August 21, 2003, and arrested the town’s only full-time journalist, Emiro Goyeneche. He was one of 19 people in the province swept up that day, charged with “rebellion” and accused by the attorney general’s office of being an ELN member.

The mass detention came as part of government efforts to increase security along an oil pipeline run by Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum. “We had been reporting on [guerrilla bombings], attacks on government forces, and



Danilo Sarmiento

A photographer traveling with the Army’s 18th Brigade trains his camera on soldiers loading the bodies of alleged paramilitary fighters in the northeastern province of Arauca.

decrees restricting people’s movement, but also on sports, cultural events, and daily life,” says Goyeneche, who frequently shot video for Caracol TV on top of his radio work. “We were always respectful toward the rule of law and the bounds of democracy.”

Reporters in the Arauca capital praise Goyeneche’s work and call the charge against him specious. But he ended up in prison for more than 20 months. The jailing wiped out Sarare Estéreo’s news programming, a blow to a town with no newspapers and no other radio station except one run by the battalion.

Station Manager Mireya Camacho and her small staff have struggled to resume the news amid repeated confrontations with the Army. At one point last year, the battalion threatened to close the station for broadcasting a community meeting about the killing of three local trade unionists by soldiers. “There’s self-censorship,” she says. “We can’t air statements from legally constituted social organizations about human rights because military forces immediately arrive to question us.”

Interviewed in May, battalion commander Col. Luis Francisco Medina Corredor said many of those organizations—he named the town’s teachers union and its most prominent human rights group—take orders from the ELN. But he insisted his relations with Sarare Estéreo were fine: “I don’t know what the fear is about.” The colonel said Goyeneche, released in April and still awaiting a ruling on the charge, is free to work at the station “as long as he doesn’t get involved with terrorist groups.”

Far-flung military commanders aren’t the only officials

trying to link journalists to guerrillas. In February, Vice President Francisco Santos chastised reporting that questioned the country’s security policies following an upsurge in deadly FARC bombings against government forces. The media, he said, had created “a sounding board for terrorist actions that, without a doubt, was more effective than the use itself of the explosives.”

Jorge Otero Martínez, founder of the Montería weekly newspaper *Cuarta Opinión*, says such statements accom-

In Their Words

The Committee to Protect Journalists interviewed three dozen journalists around the country. Here is a sample of topics they said they’d investigate if not for fear of reprisals.

“In Sucre, many people have disappeared in recent years, not only at the hands of paramilitary groups but also guerrilla groups. To start investigating would be very delicate as far as security goes.”

Jorge Velásquez Crespo
Caracol Radio
Sincelejo, Sucre

“One topic to investigate would be corruption of, for example, the [oil] royalties that were robbed in Arauca for years. Another would be all the province’s unexplained

deaths. We’d look into all the facts if it didn’t mean getting killed.”

Javier Sepúlveda Ramírez
Kapital Radio
Arauca, Arauca

“I would be investigating the links from politicians to the paramilitaries and guerrillas, and the money laundering by certain individuals and these same groups.”

Jorge Eliécer Quintero Cuéllar
Diario de Huila
Florencia, Caquetá

“One thing you don’t want to touch is drug trafficking. Even more risky is corruption. The drug traffickers at least work, but a handful of people inside the government don’t.”

Alfredo Martín Rodríguez
La Jota Estéreo
Tuluá, Valle del Cauca

“There are a lot of misgivings about investigating the big corporations. I don’t think they’re bullies, but they can hurt you professionally.”

Carlos Eduardo Huertas
Semana
Bogotá

“I’d like to report on the topic of hostages held by the guerrillas and the impossibility of a humanitarian exchange [for guerrillas held by the government] or some sort of negotiation so these people, for God’s sake, could return to their homes. I’d like to know what’s the blindness of both the government and the guerrillas that could eternalize suffering of such magnitude.”

Jorge Otero Martínez
Cuarta Opinión
Montería, Córdoba

While the Colombian government exerts little formal control over news content, officials sometimes persuade media outlets to censor themselves.

plish ends similar to formal censorship. “A journalist’s duty is to give the news, to be a witness to our times,” he notes. “If they attack the [Army’s] 11th Brigade, do we have to keep our mouths shut because the national government says it never happened?”

Uribe, speaking at a March conference of news executives, urged media outlets to exercise “self-control” and consider barring the publication of interviews with members of illegal armed groups. “The terrorists maintain a very dangerous political game,” he said. “One day they kill and the next they want to be news personalities.”

The Hands that Feed

Colombia may be unique in the extent to which its press censors itself in fear of physical reprisals. Powerful economic factors, though hardly exceptional, add yet more pressure.

Bogotá-based Grupo Empresarial Bavaria was accused last year of paying a \$2 million bribe to a former Peruvian intelligence chief to clear the way for the company's purchase of Peru's sole beer brewer. Peruvian authorities are investigating the accusations, which Bavaria denied. "It was an international scandal, and it was Colombia's biggest conglomerate," *Semana's* Carlos Eduardo Huertas notes. "There was a lot of red meat."

But Colombian media outlets didn't launch their own probes. Instead, they briefly recapped what the Peruvian press had revealed and provided platforms for Bavaria to assert innocence. The tame coverage avoided trouble with one of the country's biggest advertisers—a company that controlled Colombia's beer market and trailed few in the production and distribution of bottled water, juices, malt beverages, and soft drinks. Bavaria, since purchased by SABMiller, filed defamation suits against the Peruvian journalists who broke the story.

Outside Colombia's largest cities, the lion's share of media revenue comes not from corporations but from provincial and municipal agencies, which advertise everything from aqueduct maintenance schedules to health and educational programs. In the southern province of Caquetá, *Diario de Huila's* Jorge Eliécer Quintero Cuéllar recalls what happened this year after he wrote two unflattering reports about Gov. Juan Carlos Claros Pinzón: "The governor himself called our office and canceled the [province's] contracts with us." Quintero Cuéllar says the ad withdrawal didn't dampen his reporting and that the newspaper's local sales chief managed to restore the contracts a month later.

But such manipulation often succeeds. In small cities and even provincial capitals, staffing at news outlets is usually so tight that reporters are responsible for selling ads, which puts them in the untenable position of covering the very politicians feeding their families. Quintero Cuéllar describes the results in Florencia, the Caquetá capital: "You listen to the radio and turn the dial. The same news story on one station is positive

and, on another station, negative. There's no balance. There's no objectivity."

Some media bosses exact payments for coverage, making it impossible for their news staff to report objectively. "The owner calls up the governor or mayor and says, 'Give me a million pesos [US\$435] and we'll keep working together,'" explains Kapital Radio's Javier Sepúlveda Ramírez of the northeastern province of Arauca.

The pressure is similar when the owners themselves are immersed in politics. Many news outlets are the property of current or former governors, mayors, or members of Congress. Other outlets, even major network affiliates, are owned by the Roman Catholic Church, which takes stands on public issues and holds government education contracts. "It's impossible to fight with the owner," notes Jaime Vides Fera, a radio reporter in the northwestern city of Sincelejo.

The family that owns *El Tiempo*, the country's largest newspaper, includes Vice President Francisco Santos, who was editor-in-chief throughout the 1990s, and his cousin, former Finance Minister Juan Manuel Santos. The paper's editorials have supported President Alvaro Uribe's military and economic policies and a constitutional amendment that, if approved by the nation's highest court, will allow him to seek a second four-year term next year. Co-publisher Enrique Santos, another cousin of the vice president, insists the newspaper's editorial stance will have no impact on its campaign reporting. "It's not going to influence the balance at all," he said in an August 29 radio interview.

Some observers aren't convinced. "If the people who sign the paychecks think one way," says *Semana* columnist Daniel Coronell, "it definitely reduces a journalist's spirit to report any story to the contrary."

Yet another factor encouraging self-censorship is the profession's poor compensation. Most full-time Colombian journalists earn less than \$350 a month, and some earn even less than the nation's loosely enforced minimum wage, \$165. "On any given day, your work may have damaged someone's reputation, and the whole country may be talking about it," says *El Universal's* Beatriz Diegó Solano of Sincelejo. "But you still have to walk home alone every night because you can't afford a car or bodyguard." ■

—Chip Mitchell

In a June 27 radio interview, Uribe admonished one journalist in particular. He said Hollman Morris, a Colombian television reporter who has written critically about the administration's security policies, had traveled to the southern province of Putumayo based on advance knowledge of June 25 FARC attacks that killed 25 government troops there. The allegation turned out to be false: Morris, who was working on a BBC documentary, arrived after the clashes. The president's office retracted the claim, but Morris says he had to cut his Putumayo visit short in fear of retaliation.

The number of attacks on Colombian journalists has declined in recent years, but the country remains one of the world's most hazardous places to report news. This year, at least one journalist has been murdered for his work, several others have survived attempts on their lives, and dozens have reported receiving threats.

The slain journalist, Julio Hernando Palacios Sánchez of the northeastern city of Cúcuta, hosted a Radio Lemas program that regularly focused on local corruption. Two unidentified men on a motorcycle opened fire as he drove to work January 11.

Six explosions this year have damaged news facilities. The worst was a February 20 car bombing that destroyed the building housing the RCN radio and television stations in the southwestern city of Cali. The FARC claimed responsibility four days later.

On May 16, funeral wreaths were delivered to the offices of three nationally known journalists whose work often cast negative light on the Uribe administration. The wreaths came with cards inviting the journalists to their own burials. One of the three, Daniel Coronell, also received e-mail messages threatening the life of his 6-year-old daughter. Coronell, who directs a news show on the TV network Canal Uno and writes a column for the weekly magazine *Semana*, tracked the messages to a computer in the Bogotá mansion of former Congressman Carlos Náder Simmonds, a close friend of Uribe. Náder denied sending the threats but admitted they came from his computer. An investigation by the attorney general's office has shed no light.

The lack of security owes much to Colombia's justice system, described in a February report by the U.S. State Department as "overburdened, inefficient, and subject to intimidation and corruption." Inefficiency, at the very least, has stalled many cases involving journalists. Two Army soldiers were convicted in the 1991 murder of Henry Rojas Monje, an Arauca correspondent for the Bogotá daily newspaper *El Tiempo*. The Defense Ministry was eventually ordered to pay more than \$20,000 to his family, but the

government appealed that ruling. In August, almost 14 years after the killing, the president of a national panel of administrative judges known as the State Council said the case's evidence files, weighing more than 100 pounds, had "disappeared" and would have to be reconstructed. The family won't be receiving the reparation any time soon.

Last year the Bogotá-based Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) examined 157 attacks on journalists reported to authorities in recent years. A court had ruled whether a defendant was guilty in only two of the cases. In one—the 2002 murder of newspaper reporter Orlando Sierra—the



President Alvaro Uribe waves during a military parade in Bogotá. He is joined by Armed Forces Commander Gen. Alberto Ospina, center, and Navy Commander Adm. Mauricio Soto.

killer received a lengthy prison sentence, but those who ordered the hit hadn't been investigated. In the other—the 1999 murder of political satirist Jaime Garzón—the convicted mastermind, paramilitary chief Carlos Castaño, went missing on April 16, 2004.

Some lawmakers and human rights advocates have blamed such impunity on paramilitary infiltration of the justice system. Within months of assuming his post in 2001, according to Human Rights Watch, Attorney General Luis Camilo Osorio fired 26 human rights prosecutors and promoted many others who eventually faced corruption charges. *The Miami Herald* reported last year that prosecutors in the cities of Cúcuta and Medellín had tolerated or participated in paramilitary atrocities. The U.S. State Department has reported on a score of separate cases in which the attorney general has taken little or no action in response to the disappearances or deaths of lawyers, union leaders, journalists, and other prominent figures.

Osorio stepped down this August, but journalists may

not fare differently under his replacement, former Deputy Justice Minister Mario Iguarán, appointed by the Supreme Court on Uribe's recommendation. Osorio describes Iguarán as his "clone." It happens that Iguarán co-authored the legislation for demobilizing the paramilitaries. The measure, supported by the United States and signed into law by Uribe in July, reduces jail sentences and provides cash awards to illegal combatants who disarm. Uribe calls such incentives crucial for peace. "The law is universal," he noted in a July speech. "It's for guerrillas and paramilitaries."

But the law's critics—including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the human rights commissions of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States—warn that it sets prosecution time limits that may allow some of the worst paramilitary offenders to remain free. The few convicted, they say, could serve sentences as short as two years and keep their forces intact.

That sort of impunity weighs heavily on the news media. In Florencia, a southern provincial capital, radio journalists

Some of the censored news involves routine reporting. Meyer Sánchez recalls a press conference in which the Army's 12th Brigade announced it had captured a few paramilitary fighters. He says a man outside the event introduced himself as the detainees' commander and urged that there be no reporting on the arrest "for your security and the security of your family." That threat, Meyer Sánchez adds, persuaded the station not to broadcast anything about the capture.

El Caleño, a daily newspaper in Cali, decided against publishing an image of a June murder victim after the photographer received a threat on his cell phone. "Sometimes it's hard to be a good journalist because of the fear," Managing Editor Blanca María Torres Ramírez notes.

On July 14, authorities near Medellín captured José Aldemar ("Mechas") Rendón Ramírez, wanted in the United States for his suspected role as a financial officer of the Norte del Valle drug cartel. The national and international press covered the arrest, but media outlets in the southwestern city of Cartago, where Rendón grew up, gave the story a pass. "There are things we can't report," Cartago Stereo's Luis Angel Murcia explained the day after the arrest. "We're afraid of reprisals."

In another form of self-censorship, news outlets abandon important investigations. In April and May, *El Universal* reporter José Javier Sarmiento broke several stories about 72 unmarked graves found on farms where paramilitary chief Rodrigo ("Chain") Mercado Pelufo operated. Sarmiento never received explicit threats, he says, but "many people with clear knowledge" of Mercado Pelufo's unit told him his reporting had gone far enough. "The newspaper also said I had to tone it down and not mention the farm owner," he adds, referring to his only report that named the proprietor of the 6,000-acre tract where most of the bodies had turned up.

Numerous angles begged for more investigation. Authorities, for example, weren't pursuing the farm owner and hadn't identified most of the bodies. Area residents said hundreds of corpses remained to be found. And Mercado Pelufo, wanted in 10 massacre cases, was enjoying a suspension of his arrest warrants as part of the demobilization talks. Yet *El Universal* dropped the story. Juan Manuel Sánchez, who supervised the newspaper's Sincelejo edition, acknowledges the danger of investigating the paramilitaries: "We try to inform without bothering any armed group." But he insists this story died on its own. The farm owner "didn't have links" to Mercado Pelufo, he says, and the other angles lacked "reliable sources."

Semana, the nation's largest newsmagazine, last year published a string of reports questioning the demobilization talks. The coverage peaked with a transcript of tapes from the



Santiago Pérez

Gustavo Santiago, news director for the Caracol Radio affiliate in Montería, says in-depth reporting on the murder of a mayoral candidate could have cost reporters their lives.

Alfredo Abad López, Guillermo León Agudelo, and José Duviél Vásquez Arias were murdered over an eight-month period in 2000 and 2001. "The attorney general's office still hasn't determined who's responsible," notes Carlos Meyer Sánchez, news director of the local RCN Radio affiliate. "That has led to self-censorship. There are topics you can't touch."

Self-censorship turns up in every corner of the country but most intensely in regional media. "We live here, our families live here, and everyone knows us," says León, the radio reporter in Arauca. "It's not the same with journalists who visit for a few days from Bogotá or an overseas news agency."



Daniilo Sarmiento

Canal Cuatro's Hernán Morales, Caracol's Rodrigo Avila, and RCN's Carlos Pérez cover the deactivation of explosives in downtown Arauca.

negotiating table revealing that the government had offered to protect paramilitary chiefs from extradition to the United States, where Murillo and many others are wanted on drug-trafficking charges. "After that, there wasn't a direct threat, but there were clear and strong signals from underworld sources to be careful," says Carlos Eduardo Huertas, *Semana's* investigative coordinator. The magazine's reporting on the talks softened. "People noticed a change," he says.

As journalists censor themselves, they invariably rely more on government sources. In Buenaventura, the country's major Pacific port, 12 youth soccer players were massacred on April 19. Local reporters learned quickly that paramilitaries had accused two of the players of FARC ties. "The whole neighborhood knew what happened, but we couldn't publish anything because of fear," says Adonái Cárdenas Castillo, correspondent of the Cali-based daily newspaper *El País*, noting that a dozen journalists in Buenaventura have been murdered over the past 15 years. "Even if you know who killed someone," he says, "you can publish only what the police report." So the press offered no hint who might be responsible for the massacre until authorities announced a paramilitary fighter's arrest four weeks later.

Cárdenas Castillo notes that the lack of information damages the credibility of both the government and the press, increasing the likelihood of violent reprisals, especially in a city like Buenaventura, which averages a murder a day among its 270,000 residents. "If we could publish what happened, it would curtail impunity," he says.

In perhaps the most extreme form of self-censorship, journalists pack up and leave. During the crackdown to protect the oil pipeline, almost every reporter in Arauca fled the province. Several events triggered the exodus. On June 28, 2002, suspected paramilitaries gunned down Efraín Varela, owner and news director of the radio station Meridiano 70, on a highway just outside the provincial capital. On March 18, 2003, two other suspected paramilitaries killed Luis Eduardo Alfonso, Varela's replacement as news director, as he arrived for work at the station. Eleven days after Alfonso's murder, a mysterious list named 16 local journalists as assassination targets of the guerrillas or paramilitaries. "We were on planes for Bogotá within days," recalls León, who didn't return to Arauca for five months.

"Threats against us persist today," León adds. Most Arauca journalists now confine

their reporting to the capital. Even then, they move in packs and rarely stray from bodyguards provided by the government. "It's very hard for a journalist to work like this," he notes. "When we show up in a neighborhood with the escorts, it scares people away."

Threats and attacks have uprooted many other journalists. In April, Angélica Rubiano fled Florencia, where she reported for the local radio station Cristalina Estéreo and *La Nación*, a daily newspaper based in the nearby city of Neiva. Her investigation of FARC operations had led to threatening phone calls and apparently a March 13 bombing of an antenna used by the station. "She was one of the best journalists around," says reporter Jorge Eliécer Quintero Cuéllar of *Diario de Huila*, a competing newspaper.

Television director Julian Alberto Ochoa Restrepo fled Andes, a municipality in the northwestern province of Antioquia, in July after a May 23 assassination attempt and subsequent threats over his rumored contribution to a national journalist's report on area corruption. Buenaventura television journalist Fanor Zúñiga Hurtado left that city July 24 after months of threats from the FARC.

In Coronell's case, fear for his 6-year-old convinced him to move his family outside the country in August. He accepted a one-year fellowship at Stanford University, took a leave from his TV show, and got *Semana's* permission to submit his column from overseas. "The possibilities for investigation have deteriorated," he laments. "But the safety of my daughter comes first." ■



Murderers Go Free

Omission, obstruction, secrecy mar investigations into slayings of journalists in Russia.

By **Nina Ognianova**

MOSCOW

It was after 10 o'clock on the night of March 8, 2002, and Natalya Skryl, a reporter with the Rostov newspaper *Nashe Vremya*, was walking from the bus stop on her way home from a party. Skryl, 29, who lived with her parents in the industrial town of Taganrog, covered local business news for the paper, including a struggle for control of the local pipe-making plant.

From behind, a man struck Skryl a dozen times with a pipe or other heavy object. Her screams roused neighbors, who found her lying in a pool of blood. Taken to the town hospital, she died of head injuries the next day, her body so disfigured that her father did not recognize her. The attacker, described by witnesses as a young man with long black hair, did not take the money in Skryl's purse nor did he take her gold jewelry. It seemed clear to all—including police, initially—that he struck to kill.

An investigation by the Committee to Protect Journalists—based on interviews with colleagues and analysts and

Nina Ognianova is CPJ's Europe and Central Asia program researcher. She was part of a CPJ mission to Moscow in July.

a review of the few publicly available documents—has uncovered a pattern of inconsistencies, omissions, and secrecy in the probe of Natalya Skryl's murder. The Skryl case—along with problem-plagued investigations into the slayings of Eduard Markevich and Dmitry Shvets—illustrates official shortcomings in a series of unsolved murders of journalists in Russia since 2000, CPJ has found.

Natalya Skryl's attention in recent months was focused on Tagmet, a Taganrog metal plant and one of the biggest steel pipe producers in southern Russia. By March 2002, a two-year fight over Tagmet had reached its peak: an alternative board of directors was seeking to oust management; armed guards were deployed around the plant; its director had virtually barricaded himself inside.

It was a turbulent time in Taganrog, an important industrial port on the Azov Sea. "There was big money to be divided among interested parties at the time," said *Nashe Vremya's* top editor, Vera Yuzhanskaya, referring to a wave of privatization in Taganrog. Many prominent people were turning up dead that year. A court official was found shot in his office; a well-known businessman and a police offi-

cial were found dead in what were termed suicides; the mayor was gunned down next to his house.

The day she was attacked, Skryl told a colleague she planned to meet a source for the Tagmet story. "Natalya didn't say who the person was, but she mentioned that he was supposed to pass her more detailed, confidential information about Tagmet," said Irina Hansivarova, an editor who sat nearby in the newsroom. Aleksandr Pestryakov, another colleague, said the young reporter's coverage was increasingly detailed and critical. Skryl, he said, "had her finger on the pulse" of Tagmet.

Officials in the Taganrog prosecutor's office initially ruled out robbery as a motive because Skryl's jewelry and cash were undisturbed. Just five days after the slaying, the Taganrog police chief told a press conference that three suspects were in custody. But the three were soon released and the probe seemed to take an entirely new direction. By July 25, 2002, police announced that robbery was the motive after all, and that the crime had nothing to do with Skryl's work, the Ekho Rostova radio station reported. No explanation of what prompted the shift was offered. Another suspect was arrested four days later, but he was released as well.

By September 2002, investigators decided to wrap things up. Taganrog authorities closed the investigation, saying they did not have suspects, Yuzhanskaya said. The case sat with no evident change for nearly three years before authorities, facing new questions this summer, issued contradictory statements.

In a June 10 letter, the Prosecutor General's office in Moscow—the nation's top prosecutor—told the press freedom organization Glasnost Defense Foundation that investigators in Taganrog had halted the probe and "did not neglect

a single version" of possible events in Skryl's murder. The office gave no further explanation of the decision to shelve the case. Yet a month later, the prosecutor's office issued a different statement in response to CPJ inquiries. A.P. Kizlyk, a senior assistant in the Prosecutor General's office, said in a July 11 letter that the Skryl investigation "continues."

That's news to Skryl's colleagues, said Grigory Bochkaryov. "Nobody has informed or discussed anything with us," said Bochkaryov, who worked with Skryl and now works for the Moscow-based press freedom organization, Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations.

Skryl's colleagues said the authorities' evasiveness compounds suspicions they've long had about the investigation. Bochkaryov said Skryl's colleagues were not questioned in any depth, nor was any composite drawing of the suspect ever released. Hansivarova, the editor who worked near Skryl, said an investigator spoke briefly with her once—for about two minutes, she estimated. She volunteered that Skryl had planned to meet a source for the Tagmet story, but the information generated no follow-up from investigators.

Twelve journalists have been killed in contract-style murders in Russia since 2000. The slayings have occurred all over the country, from Togliatti in the south to Murmansk in the north. Many have gone virtually unnoticed as authorities halted investigations despite open questions. By the Prosecutor General's standard, a case is "solved" once a suspect is identified. But even high-profile slayings such as the 2004 assassination of American Paul Klebnikov have yielded no convictions.

Relatives and colleagues of the slain journalists met in Moscow on July 7 at a conference organized by CPJ. In-

Death Roll

Twelve journalists have been killed in contract-style murders in Russia since 2000. All of the cases are unsolved, according to CPJ's analysis. Here are the victims, their news organizations, and the dates and places of their deaths:

Igor Domnikov,
Novaya Gazeta
July 16, 2000,
Moscow

Sergey Novikov,
Radio Vesna
July 26, 2000,
Smolensk

Iskandar Khatloni,
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
September 21, 2000,
Moscow

Sergey Ivanov,
Lada-TV
October 3, 2000,
Togliatti

Adam Tepsurgayev,
Reuters
November 21, 2000,
Alkhan-Kala

Eduard Markevich,
Novy Reft
September 18, 2001,
Reftinsky

Aleksei Sidorov,
Tolyattinskoye Obozreniye
October 9, 2003,
Togliatti

Natalya Skryl,
Nashe Vremya
March 9, 2002,
Taganrog

Valery Ivanov,
Tolyattinskoye Obozreniye
April 29, 2002,
Togliatti

Dmitry Shvets,
TV-21 Northwestern Broadcasting
April 18, 2003,
Murmansk

Aleksei Sidorov,
Tolyattinskoye Obozreniye
October 9, 2003,
Togliatti



Dmitry Shvets

Paul Klebnikov,
Forbes Russia
July 9, 2004,
Moscow

Magomedzagid Varisov,
Novoye Delo
June 28, 2005,
Makhachkala



Karen Nersisian, who represents relatives of three slain journalists, says prosecutors have compelling reasons to avoid the powerful forces behind the murders.

Tolyattinskoye Obzreniye

stopped a car 25 miles (40 kilometers) outside Reftinsky and detained the driver. After 10 days, the suspect was released without charge, the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations reported.

Sverdlovsk prosecutors vowed publicly to give the case special attention and Markevich's widow, Tatyana, continued publishing *Novy Reft*. But six months after her husband's killing, Tatyana Markevich started getting anonymous phone threats, the Glasnost Defense Foundation said. By October 9, 2002, someone tossed a dumbbell with a threatening note through her apartment window. The next morning, her apartment door had been splattered with varnish, and burnt matches were on the ground. Fearing for her safety, and that of her 3-year-old son, Tatyana Markevich shut *Novy Reft* on October 15, 2002, and fled Reftinsky, the Glasnost group said.

Now, after four years of stops and starts, the investigation into Eduard Markevich's murder has been officially halted. In its July 11 letter to CPJ, the Prosecutor General's office said that, "after checking all possible versions, the investigation is stopped." Possible motives were never explained publicly or to Markevich's relatives, said Maria Istomina, a family friend. "I think prosecutors deliberately ignored journalism as a motive because Eduard Markevich actively criticized local officials," she said.

Even in instances where authorities claim progress, they have withheld information. Such is the case of Dmitry Shvets, the 37-year-old deputy director of the independent television station TV-21, who was gunned down outside the station's offices at around 5 p.m. on April 18, 2003, in the northern city of Murmansk. An assailant fired several times in the presence of many witnesses, then fled in a waiting car.

Shvets was a prominent local figure with many commercial interests, someone active in public relations and politics. Family and colleagues believe he was killed for his hands-on work at TV-21. Svetlana Bokova, news editor at TV-21, said Shvets was investigating a mayoral candidate's alleged links to organized crime in the days before the slaying. The candidate had recently threatened TV-21 staff for broadcasting an unfavorable interview, the station reported. Murmansk police and prosecutors requested copies of Shvets' TV-21 reports over the previous two years.

In early April, prosecutors said they had found Shvets' alleged killer—now dead, they said—but they refused to identify the suspect or provide any other detail. In deflecting questions, authorities cited the confidentiality of the investigation. One of the few things they did say: Investigators now had a clear idea of who ordered the killing.

But the status of the case is not at all clear. In its July 11 letter, the Prosecutor General's office described the Shvets' case as "solved." By mid-August, Murmansk prosecutors told Shvets' widow that investigators had stopped looking for the mastermind—because they had no suspects. Yet the

next month, responding to CPJ inquiries, the Prosecutor General said the hunt for the mastermind was on.

"I do not trust the prosecutor's office," said Inna Shvets, who added that investigators routinely withheld information about her husband's killing. "Nobody talks or meets with me. I only get vague statements in written form, and even those I get after filing at least two written requests."

That is a common refrain from families of the slain journalists, who say authorities have been evasive, sluggish, and unresponsive. This pattern held true when CPJ sought explanation from prosecutors. On June 14, CPJ faxed a

request to Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov, seeking to meet with him in Moscow. CPJ requested a meeting in early July, around the time of its conference with the families.

The response from Ustinov's office was sent by mail, dated July 11, and postmarked July 25. It reached CPJ's New York headquarters on August 5. A meeting was impossible, the letter said, because of the "intense work schedule of the Prosecutor General's office." ■

For updates on the Russian journalist murders, visit www.cpj.org.

Moscow Q&A: David Marash



ABC News correspondent David Marash, a veteran CPJ board member, met with families and colleagues of 12 slain journalists during a mission to Moscow in July. He talked with CPJ's Maya Taal afterward.

Given your long involvement with CPJ, how was this mission different from others you've undertaken?

Usually we meet with a lot of government officials. This time, we hoped to meet with prosecutors and we didn't—we didn't really meet with anyone in the government who was directly involved in these cases. However, the conference accomplished a great deal. It brought these families together to synthesize their protests, and it worked as moral reinforcement. Looking into one another's faces, hearing one another's voices, hearing one another's stories had a very strong, psychologically boosting effect.

What left the strongest impression?

It's the sheer courage necessary to practice professional journalism on a meaningful level in Russia. The threat of some kind of intervention, whether it be legal or fatal, is constant.

Has government indifference in these murder cases affected the families' resolve?

The single defining fact is that all 12 murders are unsolved, and many of them are officially closed "for lack of a suspect." The uniformity of this powerless outcome is a real indictment of the government. Most of the killings seem to be professional, organized hits; in none of the cases have the progenitors of the crime been found. This suggests that the Kremlin and the prosecutor's office don't want very much to find these criminals.

What was common to the families' experiences?

What's most telling is the pattern of details. First off, the journalists knew that they were working in dangerous territory. Secondly, in most cases, the journalists had received open or veiled threats not to persist in their reporting. Third, the hits are almost all professional-style, involving lethal use of a very professionally handled weapon and a pre-planned getaway. The subsequent investigations tend to be under-funded, and they rarely persist. The one notable exception is the murder of American journalist Paul Klebnikov, where at least investigators claim to be proceeding to a real prosecution.

Have they gone further in the Klebnikov case because of international pressure?

There's no question international attention has helped in the Klebnikov case. So has government pressure. President Bush and Condoleeza Rice, as national security advisor and secretary of state, have personally pressed the issue with their Russian counterparts. This obviously has the effect of getting formal action. Whether these formal actions penetrate to the core of the crime remains to be seen.

How do people compare the current press climate to that of the Soviet era?

Families and journalists who had been there from the mid-'80s say that press freedom conditions are approaching the bad old days of the Soviet state and are far worse than during the glasnost era of the late '80s and the perestroika era of the early '90s.

How do journalists and others encourage the Russian government to make progress in these cases?

The best thing we can do is to shine a spotlight on it, to show through our own reporting and our own advocacy that what happens to journalists in Russia matters to journalists and their readers, viewers, and listeners all over the world. ■

About Face

Four Great Press Freedom Turnarounds of the Past 25 Years

Compiled by Leigh Newman

It was 25 years ago that Poland's Lech Walesa led his first strike at the Gdansk shipyards and Argentina's military junta was in the midst of its brutal "dirty war." From Nigeria to Indonesia, authoritarian regimes held a tight grip on power and the press.

The ensuing political changes seem nothing short of monumental. Regimes fell, the balance of power shifted, and, in many places, press conditions were transformed. As the Committee to Protect Journalists marks its 25th anniversary next year, we salute four great press freedom turnarounds—in Argentina, Nigeria, Poland, and Indonesia. In each nation, the emerging free press served as catalyst for political change and barometer for societal freedoms.

Time and again, the presence of a vibrant underground press helped ensure the transition. The support of press advocacy groups encouraged front-line journalists and deterred government repression. International attention and investment helped foster new media outlets. And in each nation, the sheer courage of writers, editors, and photojournalists made the transition possible. Here are their stories.

ARGENTINA: Up from the ashes

The Argentine press rebuilt itself from the ashes of 25 years ago. With the country locked in what its leaders framed as a good-versus-evil struggle, the mainstream Argentine media supported the junta's "dirty war," exaggerating the threat from leftist guerrillas and covering up the regime's atrocities.

Journalists themselves were victims. During seven years of military rule from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, nearly 100 journalists were among the thousands of people who "disappeared," human rights organizations now report. The loss of life made it one of the deadliest conflicts for the press in modern history.

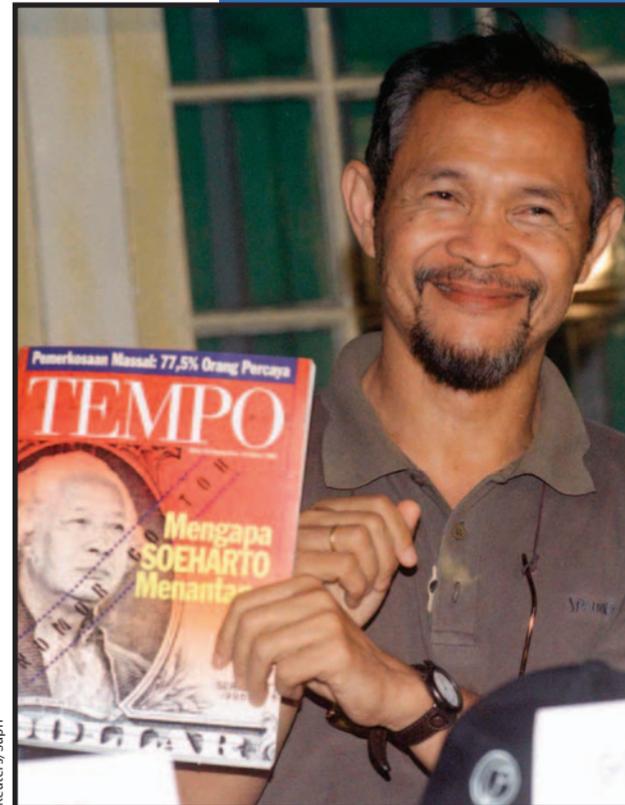
The turning point is reflected in the powerful story of Jacobo Timerman, editor of *La Opinión*, and one of the country's most prominent journalists. An early supporter of military rule, Timerman was abducted, tortured, and detained for more than two years. His 1981 memoir, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, became a touchstone in the human rights and press freedom movements.

The next generation of reporters went on to re-establish the credibility of the press as the country moved to democracy in 1983. The Argentine media began to play a significant role in investigating human rights abuses during the junta's rule. It grew bolder during the Menem administration of the 1990s, despite the government's legal persecution of critical media outlets.

Leigh Newman is a freelance writer and contributing editor to *Dangerous Assignments*. *Alexandra Zabjek* contributed research to this story.



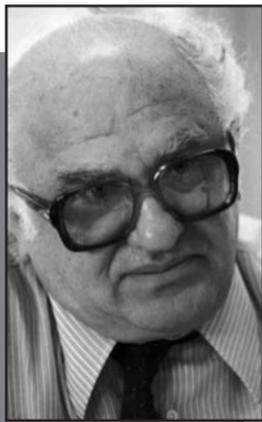
Archaeologists in Buenos Aires uncover a detention and torture center used by the military junta during Argentina's "dirty war." The news media, once complicit in covering up the regime's atrocities, became tough investigators of the abuses.



Editor Goenawan Mohamad shows a copy of *Tempo* as he and colleagues resume publication in October 1998. Indonesian President Suharto had revoked the magazine's license four years before.



Copies of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's popular daily, roll off the press. Launched by the Solidarity movement, the newspaper has become a powerful, independent voice.



AP/Eduardo di Bala

Argentine editor Jacobo Timerman, seen in this 1984 photo, helped spark human rights and press freedom movements with his powerful memoir.



Supporters carry Polish labor leader Lech Walesa in Warsaw in 1981. Walesa's Solidarity movement is closely linked to the emergence of Poland's independent press.



AP/Muchtar Zakaria

Indonesian President Suharto announces his resignation in May 1998, his administration battered by riots, economic woes, and international criticism.



AP/David Guttenfelder

Nigerians line up in Lagos to cast their votes during the 1999 presidential election. By enduring violent repression during years of dictatorship, the Nigerian press helped set the stage for the vote.

A key factor in maintaining press freedom over time was the press advocacy group, PERIODISTAS. Organized in 1995 by prominent Argentine journalists, PERIODISTAS monitored press conditions, helped unite the media, and defended local journalists.

Although the 2002 economic collapse caused many media outlets to fold, the Argentine press continues to play a vital role in setting the public agenda. The thriving media community includes national dailies, private television and radio, and weeklies such as *Noticias*, which recently exposed the use of government advertising contracts to reward supportive media and to silence critics.

Dangers on the horizon: Local journalists worry that the dissolution of PERIODISTAS in 2004 has weakened provincial media outlets, which are suffering from government-imposed advertising embargoes.

NIGERIA: Bravery and endurance

This is a story of courage. From the mid-1980s, when Ibrahim Babangida took power in a military coup, repression of the independent press grew. But the darkest period came under the dictatorship of Sani Abacha, who seized control of the country in 1993. Abacha used detention, torture, office bombings, and killings to eliminate and intimidate journalists. By 1997, Nigeria had 17 journalists behind bars.

Christine Anyanwu, a CPJ International Press Freedom awardee, spent three and half years in prison for publishing news of a coup plot in *The Sunday Magazine*, a weekly she edited and published. Shortly after her release in 1998, Anyanwu wrote in a CPJ report: "It was a journey that spanned 1,251 days. I moved 10 times through the nation's most notorious detention centers, through spooky, forsaken prisons. It was a tour of a world that, even in my worst nightmares, I could never have imagined. I had a taste of life at its most raw—perhaps its lowest—and in the process got a fuller appreciation of human nature and our creator."

Unable to work openly during the height of repression in the 1990s, much of the Nigerian press published clandestinely. By sustaining its efforts, the press flourished with the end of military rule and the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as president in 1999.

Today, Nigeria's long-established independent press is able to operate freely again. The country's media are among the most robust on the continent, with many private newspapers that criticize Obasanjo and other authorities.

Dangers on the Horizon: Recent arrests and acts of censorship by the State Security Services have raised alarm. In May, a journalist was imprisoned for more than two weeks after his publication accused the first lady of corruption.

POLAND: Taking root underground

An underground press kept journalism alive during Soviet-era repression, eventually evolving from its partisan roots to become a vibrant, independent force. One woman, Helena Luczywo, and one newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, symbolize the evolution.

Luczywo ran two underground publications. The first, *Robotnik*, advocated a break from Soviet domination and reached a circulation of 20,000 by the time the Solidarity movement began in 1980. When Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law the following year, Luczywo went into hiding and started the underground newspaper *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, which featured the Solidarity logo on its masthead.

By 1989, popular resistance to the communist regime had grown and strikes had forced Poland's first free elections in 60 years. Solidarity launched *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Gazette) from a kindergarten classroom before the historic parliamentary elections, recruiting Luczywo as its editor.

The paper was essentially a booster for Solidarity during that first election. But as the political process moved ahead in Poland, *Gazeta Wyborcza* shed Solidarity from its masthead and asserted independence in its reporting. It continues to be one of the country's most influential and popular dailies.

State media were privatized and new media outlets have proliferated, some bolstered by foreign investment. National traditions were important as well. Polish citizens had known a relatively free press, economic growth, and free markets during the 1920s and 1930s. Underground

printing presses and an informal, well-organized distribution network established during the 1970s set the stage for an independent media.

Dangers on the horizon: Criminal libel remains on the books. On rare occasions, it is used to suppress critical news reporting of influential politicians and powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church.

INDONESIA: The one left standing

Twenty-five years ago, under the autocratic rule of President Suharto, small independent media faced stringent press laws. Some critical publications were banned and many journalists censored their work to avoid threats and harassment.

Yet Suharto left standing one publication whose fate eventually intertwined with his own. *Tempo*, founded in 1971 and considered the country's most respected news magazine, was credited by many with nurturing a generation of journalists and setting standards of professionalism.

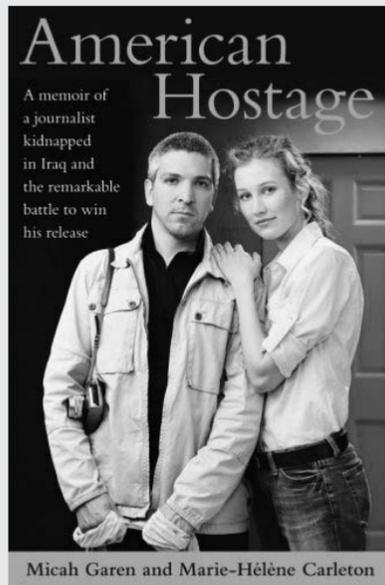
It, too, ran afoul of Suharto in 1994 with an article exposing government infighting over the purchase of East German patrol boats. When the government revoked *Tempo's* publishing license, the magazine's founder and chief editor Goenawan Mohamad led his colleagues in organizing the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI). Its journalists continued to write, sometimes without bylines for fear of government reprisal.

Former *Tempo* reporter Ahmad Taufik, the group's first president, was sent to prison for three years in 1994, along with two other AJI staffers, for publishing articles critical of Suharto. His case brought international condemnation of the Suharto government for its treatment of the press. Taufik and Goenawan each received CPJ's International Press Freedom Award.

Suharto, in power for more than 30 years, was forced to resign in 1998 because of student riots and an economic meltdown. Within days of Suharto's resignation, the new regime told Goenawan that *Tempo* was free to reopen. Here's how CPJ reported it in 1998: "The magazine's re-launch celebration on October 4 was a major event in Jakarta, drawing some 2,000 reporters, politicians, government ministers, and diplomats. *Tempo's* newsstand sales have so far exceeded expectations ... leading to a sense of buoyant optimism."

Today, Indonesia has democratic elections, hundreds of publications, and a diverse array of news broadcasts. Critical articles about government and corruption now make headlines, a testimony to the efforts of local reporters.

Dangers on the horizon: Outdated criminal defamation laws—some dating from the Dutch colonial era—are still on the books and continue to be used against the press. *Tempo* itself has been targeted by these cases. ■



A Hostage's Ordeal

In a new book, filmmaker Micah Garen recounts his captivity in Iraq.

By Maya Taal

U.S. documentary filmmaker Micah Garen was held hostage for 10 days in Iraq in August 2004 and released unharmed, thanks in part to the work of his fiancée Marie-Hélène Carleton. The couple spoke with CPJ about their new book, *American Hostage*, which recounts the ordeal.

Despite the blindfold, Micah Garen caught a glimpse of what he feared would be the site of his execution. A large white banner with Arabic writing hung from a back wall. A dozen young men with weapons stood around the room. In the center was a video camera.

"It was like they had set up a studio for a beheading," Garen said. It was in just such a setting that hostages Nick Berg and Kim Sun-Il had been beheaded, their brutal deaths filmed in spring 2004. Garen had seen them on television in his Baghdad hotel room. Now it was August 17, 2004, a day Garen thought would be his last. Instead, when his captors removed the blindfold, they made him hold his press card up to the camera and state his name. Then they launched into a stream of invective in Arabic, which he did not understand.

The next day, in New York, Marie-Hélène Carleton watched as her fiancé's captors, sympathizers of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, announced that if U.S. forces did not leave the holy city of Najaf, Garen would be dead within 48 hours. "For a short moment, it felt like the death of hope,"

Maya Taal is CPJ's executive assistant and board liaison.

she said. Carleton put aside her despair and went to her computer to mobilize journalists to lobby for Garen's release.

Garen had first gone to Iraq in June 2003 to research a documentary. He shunned bullet-proof vests and armed guards and found it easy to work. "I wasn't afraid of saying that I was an American," he said. He returned with Carleton in May the following year to finish the film on the looting of archaeological sites around the southern city of Nasiriyah.

But during his absence the mood in Iraq had soured. "Within a few months it changed dramatically, and then you realized your nationality was a target," he said. Carleton, who has French and U.S. citizenship, traveled in full Islamic dress and the pair carried only her French passport, leaving their U.S. passports in their hotel room. They took painstaking precautions to keep their movements secret. They would hire two drivers the night before a trip then cancel one on the morning of their departure, not revealing their destination to the other until they were in the car. The couple thought that their best protection was their status as independent journalists, separate from any government or military.

"The only thing that protects you out there ... [are] the principles of journalism," Garen said. "A lot of times people are tempted to look for other protection, like, 'I'm going to wear a bullet-proof vest. I'm going to go out in an American convoy.' ... There's only one thing that is going to protect

you, and that's being perceived as somebody who is really just there for the truth and is as objective as possible."

The pair stayed for three months, shuttling between Baghdad and Nasiriyah. At that time, they were the only Western journalists working in the area because the roads were so dangerous. Garen and Carleton filmed the guards hired to protect the Sumerian site of Umma as the recruits trained and bought guns at a local arms market. On July 30, Carleton headed back to the United States, leaving Garen to wrap up the project. On Friday, August 13, two days before he was to return to New York, Garen went back to the arms market with interpreter Amir Doushi to grab just one more minute of footage. "To get a story and really document it, you had to take risks," Garen said. Friday the 13th was not a lucky day. He aroused the suspicion of one vendor, and within minutes he and Doushi were bundled into a car.

Their captors held them in a cramped enclosure made from date palms in a remote marsh. They were completely cut off, and the guards were changed every few hours so that they could not strike up a relationship. His biggest stroke of luck was being held with Doushi. "If my translator hadn't been there, I don't know what I would have done," Garen said. Doushi was able to gather snippets of information from the guards, and the two men kept each other company. The guards treated Garen relatively well, but they were harsh on Doushi for working for Americans.

In New York, Carleton transformed the couple's West Village apartment into a "war room" in a campaign to free Garen. "In the end it was the grassroots effort that would really pay off," Carleton said. The leadership of the cleric's Mehdi army had collapsed, and al-Sadr's control over the splinter groups was tenuous. But a direct appeal to al-Sadr remained the best hope. Al-Sadr's groups were open to journalists, Carleton said, but they had to be convinced that you were willing to report their side of the story. She galvanized journalists through e-mails and phone calls to use whatever contacts they had with al-Sadr's people. She also worked with the U.S. government, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and other

It was like they had set up a studio for a beheading.

groups to get the message to influential Iraqis that Garen was an independent journalist covering a cultural story.

"We used all of our resources to convey that there's no benefit in holding an innocent civilian like Micah hostage," said Joel Campagna, CPJ's senior program coordinator for the Middle East. The campaign seemed to be making headway, Carleton recalled, until the "terrible, terrible moment," when the kidnappers' video of Garen was broadcast.

By this time, Garen believed death was imminent, and he began to devise an escape plan for the morning of August 19. At the last minute, however, Doushi backed out, arguing that an escape was too dangerous. He insisted that their chances of survival were greater if they stayed put. Despite the video, the families continued to make both private and public appeals to al-Sadr and local Muslim clerics. Garen's sister, Eva, went on Arabic-language Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya to plead for his freedom. Finally, al-Sadr, by now in hiding, wrote a letter demanding Garen's release. On August 22, Garen and Doushi walked free.



Micah Garen, seen here just after his release in August 2004, says he holds no grudges but fears that protection for journalists has eroded in Iraq.

Garen said he bears no grudges about his ordeal. "Iraq is a place where you try not to have judgments. Our job being out there was to document," he said. "In the greater scheme of things ... you walk out alive, and it's something to be happy about." He set to work writing a book with Carleton about the ordeal, a process he says has been "cathartic." The book is dedicated to their two sisters and the journalistic community. "That coming together was extraordinary," Garen said. "I never thought that hundreds of journalists would be out there doing this."

Garen and Carleton want to return to Iraq, although they believe it is even more dangerous today. More than 50 journalists have been killed in Iraq since hostilities began in March 2003. The status of journalists, which Garen called his best protection, has been eroded by the violence. "Most journalists are either embedded or confined to their hotels," said Garen. "Sadly, that barrier has kind of been crossed. ... It no longer matters that you are a journalist." ■

American Hostage, by Micah Garen and Marie-Hélène Carleton, published by Simon & Schuster, October 2005.

Zimbabwe's Exiled Press

Uprooted journalists struggle to keep careers, independent reporting alive.

By Elisabeth Witchel

LONDON

Sandra Nyaira was on a career high when she left Zimbabwe three years ago. For her work as political editor of the country's leading independent newspaper the *Daily News*, she had earned a prestigious Courage in Journalism Award from the Washington-based International Women's Media Foundation. After traveling to the United States to receive the prize, Nyaira attended the journalism master's program at City University in London on a scholarship.

Nyaira expected to be back at her job in Zimbabwe in a year. She has yet to return.

President Robert Mugabe's government, after several unsuccessful attempts to muzzle the *Daily News*, finally succeeded in closing the popular daily in 2003 amid an

Some left as a direct result of political persecution, others because the government's crackdown erased opportunities in the independent press.

escalating crackdown on the independent media. Family and colleagues warned Nyaira, who had already been arrested once on criminal defamation charges, that it would be foolhardy to return home.

Now Nyaira lives in Somerset, England, eking out a living

Elisabeth Witchel is journalist assistance coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists. **Gretchen L. Wilson**, a freelance journalist based in Johannesburg, contributed to this story.

doing odd jobs. She wonders at age 30 whether the career at which she excelled—the one for which she once risked her freedom—will be open to her again.

"We're rotting away here," said Nyaira, referring to her exiled Zimbabwean colleagues.

At least 90 Zimbabwean journalists, including many of the nation's most prominent reporters, now live in exile in South Africa, other African nations, the United Kingdom, and the United States, making it one of the largest groups of exiled journalists in the world, an analysis by the Committee to Protect Journalists has found. CPJ traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, and to London, conducting 34 interviews with exiled Zimbabwean journalists, analysts, and human rights advocates.

Some of these exiled journalists left as a direct result of political persecution, others because the government's crackdown virtually erased opportunities in the independent press. Authorities have routinely detained and harassed journalists in the past five years to quash reporting on human rights, economic woes, and political opposition to the regime, CPJ research has found. Repressive legislation such as the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act criminalizes journalism without a government license.

The crackdown has taken a devastating toll on Zimbabwe's independent media. Once home to a robust press corps, Zimbabwe today has no independent daily newspapers, no private radio news coverage, and just two prominent independent weeklies. Journalists remaining in Zimbabwe are either without jobs in their profession, or they work under threat of laws that, among other things, set prison terms of up to 20 years for publishing false information deemed prejudicial to the state.

Zimbabwean citizens are denied access to diverse, questioning voices at a time when the Mugabe administration, emboldened by this year's election victory, wields power more aggressively than ever. For instance, the government's

"Operation Murambatsvina"—or "Drive Out Trash"—has destroyed the homes and livelihoods of an estimated 700,000 Zimbabweans. Done under the guise of urban renewal, the demolitions are aimed at breaking strongholds of political opposition, critics say.

Spread as far as New Zealand, the exiled journalists have made their homes among the estimated three to four million members of the Zimbabwean diaspora. Unemployment, political violence, and human rights abuses have fueled a steady stream of emigration from Zimbabwe since the late 1990s, according to a study released this year by the International Organization for Migration. The survey of 1,000 Zimbabwean expatriates in South Africa and the United Kingdom found that most are professionals, whose absence creates "concerns for the longer-term future of Zimbabwe." Zimbabwe's exiled media reflect similar patterns.

Journalists such as Urginia Mauluka, a former *Daily News* photographer beaten and detained while covering an opposition political rally in 2001, initially left for temporary respite only to delay their return as press conditions deteriorated. Others such as Abel Mutasakani, who left for South Africa in 2004, decided that only by leaving their

country could they honestly report on events in Zimbabwe. And some such as Magugu Nyathi, whose newspaper, *The Tribune*, was shut in 2003, saw no job prospects at home.

"As professionals we said 'How do we continue?'" recalled Mutsakani, who served briefly as managing editor of the *Daily News* until authorities shut the paper. "I felt we had a choice. We could sit back in Zimbabwe, but that would be tantamount to surrender," Mutsakani said. Instead, he and several colleagues went to South Africa and started the Web publication, *ZimOnline*.

But some did not have the luxury of planning an exit. In February, three Zimbabwe correspondents for foreign media outlets—Angus Shaw of The Associated Press, Bryan Latham of Bloomberg News, and Jaan Raath of *The Times* of London—faced imminent arrest after being accused of spying and publishing information detrimental to the state. They left behind their homes, families, and decades-long careers.

Most journalists interviewed by CPJ have found exile a bitter experience, even as they point out that they have greater security than many colleagues back home. To penetrate competitive media job markets abroad, many must secure work permits and prove their qualifications anew. A



AP/Karel Prinsloo

President Robert Mugabe campaigns for re-election this year. In the weeks before the vote, his government ousted critical journalists and blocked press coverage of the opposition party.

Cubans: Direct Line to Readers

Since 1995, when the first independent news agencies emerged in Cuba, dozens of journalists have fled the country to escape harassment, threats, detention, or jail. Many have settled in the United States or Spain, where some continue to work as journalists.

Manuel Vázquez Portal, who won CPJ's 2003 International Press Freedom Award, settled in Miami in June after being released from a Cuban jail on medical parole in 2004. He had been unjustly imprisoned for more than a year, one of 29 journalists swept up in a massive government crackdown.

"As for practicing journalism, I feel much more comfortable now," said Vázquez Portal, who had helped establish the independent news agency Grupo de Trabajo Decoro when he was in Cuba. "I don't have to justify what I'm doing to anybody."

Vázquez Portal works as an editor at the Miami-based news Web site *CubaNet* (www.cubanet.org). He also writes a column for *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish-language edition of *The Miami Herald*, which employs other exiled Cuban journalists as reporters. "Here, through my opinion columns, I'm able to communicate with my readers, unlike in Cuba, where journalists are managed by political organizations. Those organizations are the ones that communicate with the readers."



AP/José Gollia

Manuel Vázquez Portal is now based in Miami and works as an editor for the news Web site *CubaNet*.

Some exiled journalists continue to work with colleagues on the island, reporting on local developments that the official press ignores. Independent journalists have no voice inside Cuba, where the government owns all media. So they file for Web sites such as *CubaNet* and Miami's *Nueva Prensa Cubana* (www.nuevaprensa.com) that are run by exiles.

Other exiles in the United States, Europe, and Latin America publish in the online daily *Encuentro en la Red* (www.cubaencuentro.com), which is run by Cubans in Madrid, Spain. With an emphasis on opinion pieces, the Web site provides a forum for cultural and political debate among Cubans at home and abroad. ■

—Sauro González Rodríguez

few have secured jobs with international media outlets, but most make ends meet by working in factories, service jobs, or clerical positions.

"It feels very frustrating. It is very, very difficult for a foreigner to break into mainstream journalism here," said Conrad Nyamutata, former chief reporter with the *Daily News* who now lives in Leicester, England. "Very few of us have managed to get work in the field."

The emotional cost is high as well. Dingilizwe Ntuli, a former correspondent for the *Sunday Times*, said that adjusting to life in South Africa and leaving his family—including his ailing father who died before Ntuli could see him again—had thrust him into depression.

"When you are forced to leave your country of birth, it is devastating," said Ntuli, whose first name means "wanderer." Though he now works again for the *Times* out of Johannesburg, Ntuli said he was out of the profession and disenchanted with journalism for a long period. "I felt nothing was worth living for. I gave my all to journalism and what happened? I lost my home."

Zimbabwean journalists in exile stand out in size and prestige—CPJ interviewed at least four winners of international awards for this report—but their situation is not unique. A crackdown in Eritrea and the threat of imprisonment in Ethiopia spurred flights of more than two dozen journalists to Kenya, Sudan, Europe, and North America.

Communities of Burmese and Cuban journalists have been publishing in exile for years, becoming valuable sources of information on their closed societies. The exodus of Zimbabwean journalists has led to the emergence of similar media-in-exile that strive to keep news flowing about their homeland.

Behind the walls of a nondescript office complex on the outskirts of London, Gerry Jackson and her staff at SW Radio are fighting to broadcast within Zimbabwe. Jackson started SW Radio in 2001, after the government closed Capital Radio, her first independent radio venture in Zimbabwe. From London, SW Radio broadcasts programs into Zimbabwe in English and in the Shona and Ndebele languages. "Radio is such a lifeline to people there who feel forgotten," Jackson said. "It gives them a sense of creating dialogue."

But the station suffered a major setback this year when the Zimbabwean government succeeded in jamming its shortwave broadcasts. Jackson tried to overcome the obstacle by broadcasting on multiple frequencies, but this costly arrangement proved unsustainable and the station now sends programming online and via medium wave—methods that draw very limited audiences within Zimbabwe, though accessible to the diaspora.

In Johannesburg, working in an office unmarked for security reasons, editors of *ZimOnline* focus on getting breaking news out of Zimbabwe and into the international community. Launched in South Africa in 2004 by Zimbab-



Ben Bonjiesi

Sandra Nyaira, once a rising journalist in Zimbabwe, makes a living doing odd jobs after being forced into exile. She's among 90 journalists who have fled the country.

wean journalists and lawyers, the site is intended to be a news service for international media to pick up "the real Zimbabwean story," according to its managing editor, Abel Mutsakani.

"No news groups are allowed in Zimbabwe so news is not coming out from the ground," said Mutsakani, who relies on an in-country network of sources for information. "We want to tell the story of ordinary people, especially black Zimbabweans, who suffer the most from food shortages and unemployment."

Zimbabwean law does not explicitly bar foreign publications from circulating without a license. Wilf Mbanga, a co-founder of the *Daily News*, used that opening to launch *The Zimbabwean* newspaper this year. From a small cottage in Hythe on the southern coast of England, Mbanga and his wife produce the weekly, which the couple said has a circulation of 30,000 in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The paper relies on largely unpaid contributions by

Burmese: Delivering with Depth

BANGKOK, Thailand

After Burmese troops fired on democracy demonstrators in August 1988, Aung Zaw, a student who had already been jailed for helping to publish pro-democracy pamphlets, fled into the jungle. Seventeen years later he has yet to return home. Aung Zaw, a pseudonym, is a senior member of a vibrant community of Burmese journalists in exile in neighboring Thailand.

In 1992, he established the *Irrawaddy* newsletter on a shoestring budget of \$2,000 with one desktop computer. *Irrawaddy* has outgrown its humble format and is now published as a glossy news magazine with a monthly circulation of more than 3,000 copies, many of which are spirited into news-starved Burma.

"Then people were looking for something independent that wasn't associated with any particular opposition group," says Aung Zaw, who is also chief editor. "That's what we deliver: In-depth, unbiased coverage of Burma affairs."

Once the pioneer, *Irrawaddy* is no longer alone. In recent years more than a dozen Burma-focused publications have sprouted across Thailand, India, and Bangladesh. Many of the Thailand-based publications have an ethnic twist: *Kao Wao*, *The Kachin Post*, and *The Shan Herald Agency for News* all report in their respective ethnic dialects and focus on issues relevant to their home regions.

Exile-run publications fill an important news gap, particularly in Burma's lawless ethnic territories. Some papers track abuses in the decades-old conflict between the military and ethnic insurgents. In ceasefire areas, exile publications focus on illegal logging, illicit drug production, and forced relocations of the local population.

Barred from distributing inside Burma, all of the exile-run news publications rely on outside donor funding. The U.S. National Endowment for Democracy and the Dutch-run nongovernmental organization Noviv are among foreign donors that have pledged funds to *Irrawaddy*.

Exiled journalists from Burma, however, still stand on shaky ground, particularly in Thailand. Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has implemented a more conciliatory policy toward Burma than his predecessors, and the Burmese junta has publicly lobbied him to close exile publications in exchange for commercial concessions in Burma. ■

—Shawn W. Crispin

Zimbabwean journalists in exile, as well as some anonymous reporting in the country.

Mbanga, who left Zimbabwe with his wife and “one suitcase each” in 2003 to take a fellowship in the Netherlands, decided he couldn’t return home after a story he published on the militant activities of youth groups in Zimbabwe landed him the official status of “enemy of the people.”

“While I was in the Netherlands I felt cut off from news at home,” he said. “I realized I would have liked a newspaper with Zimbabwean news available for the diaspora.”

Media-in-exile also include Studio Seven, a radio service on the U.S.-government funded Voice of America in Washington that is staffed mainly by exiled Zimbabwean jour-

information, and few fact-checking resources, some exile media also struggle to establish credibility. Pervasive anonymity in their reports exacerbates the problem. To protect sources in Zimbabwe and family members back home, many contributors to *The Zimbabwean* use pseudonyms while *ZimOnline* does not use bylines at all.

“It is easy for the government to discredit an unknown voice coming from so far away,” said Geoffrey Nyarota, former editor-in-chief of the *Daily News*, who has been in exile in the United States since December 2002.

Still, the exile media play an important role for the diaspora. Daniel Mololeke, who recently launched an organization of expatriate Zimbabwean journalists called the Media Reference Group, said the exile media maintain unity and build identity in the diaspora. “Media is the glue that holds Zimbabweans living outside their country together,” said Mololeke, a former lawyer and now a columnist for *NewZimbabwe.com*.

Whether Zimbabwean journalists become entrenched in exile appears closely linked to political and economic developments at home. The majority of Zimbabwean exiles interviewed for this report told CPJ it would take not only the end of Mugabe’s rule, but reform of the country’s media laws, and a loosening of the ruling party Zanu-PF’s control for conditions to allow their return. At least some, though, say they would return now if there were job opportunities in journalism.

Nyarota, the former *Daily News* founder and editor, said the return of exiled journalists is important to the future of democracy in Zimbabwe. Nyarota, who hopes to return home, noted that national elections in 2001, when independent media outlets still dotted Zimbabwe’s media landscape, were far more competitive than this year’s vote, when the opposition Movement for Democratic Change was nearly shut out of press coverage.

Though critics accused the Zanu-PF of manipulating this year’s polls, “cheating was not necessary for them to win,” Nyarota said. The lack of media diversity, he said, ensured the ruling party’s victories.

For now, financial and professional needs are plentiful, both in Zimbabwe and in the exiled community. Scores of journalists in Zimbabwe have been left unemployed in their profession by the closing of media outlets. Some exiled journalists seek funding for new and existing media projects; others need professional work, training, and education.

Nyaira and some of her colleagues started the Association of Zimbabwean Journalists in the United Kingdom as a first step in addressing those needs. “There is no question—eventually people will go back,” she said. “And when we do, there will be a lot of work to do.” ■

For updates on threats to Zimbabwe’s journalists, visit www.cpj.org



Daniel Mololeke, now a Johannesburg-based columnist for *NewZimbabwe.com*, is trying to organize Zimbabwe’s exiled journalists.

CPJ/Elisabeth Witchel

nalists. An online version of the *Daily News* is produced out of South Africa, while *NewZimbabwe.com*, featuring tabloid-style news and commentary online, is produced out of Wales. In August, Zimbabwean journalists in London launched *Zimbeat.com*, a news, culture, and commentary Web site.

Mugabe’s government has taken notice. The state-owned *Herald* newspaper has published articles lambasting *The Zimbabwean* as “a propaganda tool for the former colonial power Britain.”

Despite their growth, the exile media face serious challenges. Reliant on private donations and charitable foundations, with little or no advertising revenue, they struggle to be financially viable. And while these outlets have had success reaching the diaspora, their reach within Zimbabwe is limited to urban and affluent populations.

With shoestring budgets, limited access to government

Samir Qassir

A voice for Lebanese freedom is silenced.

By Kamel Labidi

BEIRUT, Lebanon

As a thoughtful and provocative columnist, Samir Qassir knew he had many enemies, including the chiefs of the Lebanese and Syrian secret police.

“I, whom the security services failed to silence, will not be silenced by you,” he told right-wing activists who tried to prevent him from reading a message of support from Syrian intellectuals at a rally in Beirut’s Martyrs’ Square in March.

He quieted the hecklers and read the message, which backed the uprising against 29 years of Syrian dominance of Lebanon. It also urged Lebanese not to vent their anger at Damascus on innocent Syrians working in Lebanon. Qassir, an architect of the emerging democracy movement, then hammered home the message in his own words.

The following month, Damascus withdrew its troops under international pressure, and Qassir said nothing could stop the march toward democracy. “The ruling relics of the Baath (Party) are handling the situation in Syria the way they used to control Lebanon, making mistake after mistake and managing at the same time to stir hostility among the people,” Qassir wrote in his column in *Al-Nahar* on May 27. It proved to be his last. Within a week, he was dead.

Kamel Labidi, a freelance journalist and CPJ consultant, lives in Egypt.

A bomb exploded in his Alfa Romeo on June 2, plunging the Arab world’s beleaguered independent journalists and democracy advocates into grief and despair.

Qassir managed to be both charismatic and academic; international human rights groups are indebted to him as a result. He helped researchers and campaigners plan their work and provided them with contacts in Lebanon and other Arab countries. His strategic thinking and courage unnerved security agents, who harassed him and confiscated his passport in 2001. When I first met Qassir in 2000 at his small



Colleagues raise Samir Qassir’s coffin in front of *Al-Nahar* in central Beirut, where a huge poster of Qassir hangs. Hundreds of mourners flocked to his funeral amid calls for an international inquiry into his assassination.

Reuters/Jamal Saidi

office in Beirut, he said that all Arab states “have dangerous and ruthless men supported by security services.”

“Samir symbolized freedom of opinion in its full meaning,” said his younger brother, Walid Qassir, a law professor at Beirut’s St. Joseph University. “Nothing in the world, not even a ministerial portfolio, could tempt him to turn his back on his principles. No matter how difficult the circumstances, he guarded his freedom of thought. His articles mirrored his thoughts exactly.”

Ghassan Tueni, the publisher of *Al-Nahar* who convinced Qassir to return from France 13 years ago, said he symbolized “the successful journalist, thinker, liberator, and academic.” Qassir, who had a doctorate from the Sorbonne, wrote for many newspapers, including *Le Monde Diplomatique* of Paris.

“Now I wonder if he had stayed in France, would he have been killed? That is the tragedy and the catastrophe with which I live every day,” Tueni confided at a memorial ceremony in July at the American University of Beirut.

Qassir, a Lebanese and French national, was 45 and had two daughters.

His widow, Gisele Khoury, a prominent television journalist, called for an international investigation with French participation. She and his close friends established the Samir Qassir Cultural Foundation to promote his legacy and protect press freedom in the Arab world.

Few deaths of Arab journalists have prompted such anger and sadness in the region and around the world. Hundreds of journalists, activists, and students took to the streets of Beirut in June to protest the murder, and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the killers to be brought to justice. For weeks, articles in Lebanese and foreign newspapers paid tribute—calling him the “Martyr of Freedom and Democracy,” the “Professor of Independent Journalism and Ethics” and the “Prince of the Pen.” ■

A Fighter Goes Missing

Mexican reporter Alfredo Jiménez Mota took on drug lords.

By Michael Marizco

HERMOSILLO, Mexico

As a boy, Alfredo Jiménez Mota wanted to be a boxer. Instead, he became a bare-knuckle reporter, taking on drug lords and corrupt officials along Mexico's border with the United States. The 25-year-old, who nearly flunked school because he spent too much time in the offices of his local newspaper, quickly earned a reputation as a journalistic slugger for his exposure of organized crime.

On April 2, Jiménez told a colleague he was slipping out to meet a "nervous source." He never came back. Family, friends, and journalists at *El Imparcial*, his newspaper in the northwestern city of Hermosillo, have not heard from him since.

Mexico's northern states have become some of the most hazardous places in Latin America for journalists, according to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists. Jiménez, eager for fame, went after the big names and refused to pull punches. He quickly made enemies, said *El Imparcial* Assistant Editor Jorge Morales Borbon. He angered the Attorney General's office by hounding its Sonoran bureau over dropped investigations; he investigated a

Michael Marizco covers border issues for the *Arizona Daily Star of Tucson*. CPJ Americas Program Coordinator **Carlos Lauria** contributed to this story.

police chief for alleged drug trafficking in a border town; and he riled Mexico's most powerful drug cartels by naming names. "Those stories distinguished the type of reporter he was," Morales said.

Jiménez idolized Jesús Blancornelas, publisher of the Tijuana weekly, *Zeta*, who nearly died in an assassination attempt in 1997. "That man was like his guide," said Morales, recalling that his reporter talked about Blancornelas incessantly and smiled when a colleague compared him to the publisher.



In the hours before he vanished, Alfredo Jiménez Mota told a friend that he feared he was being followed. The young reporter, who tried to spotlight drug cartel activities, has not been seen since April.

Starting out, Jiménez worked as a feature writer at a Sinaloa newspaper, but he hated covering the mere surface of Mexican life. Jiménez wanted to dig deeper into the drug smuggling rackets plaguing the country, and he got his chance at the Culiacán daily *El Debate*. He showed his mettle as a reporter early on when assigned to cover what could have been a simple car crash, said former colleague Ismael Bojórquez Perea, editor for *Río Doce* in Sinaloa. In December 2003, a gangster and a police commander were involved in a car crash. The commander could identify the man—but let him go. Ignoring a threat from the gang, Jiménez wrote the full story.

Jiménez, who lived alone, was careful to protect his family, telling sources that his parents lived in Culiacán when their home was actually many hours away. "He wanted the danger. He was just excited by that life," said his mother, Esperanza Mota Martínez.

That excitement was evident on September 11, 2004, when he heard of the killing of a drug trafficker's brother. As a reporter for *El Debate* he predicted correctly that the shooting of Rodolfo Carrillo Fuentes would trigger a war among the drug cartels for control of the Tamaulipas crossing point to Texas. In the ensuing months, more than 500 people were killed along the border from Baja California to Chihuahua.

At the urging of a friend, Jiménez left the violent city of Culiacán two



Michael Marizco

A soldier guards the offices of *El Imparcial* on August 30 as press executives from throughout northern Mexico gather to issue the "Hermosillo Declaration." The executives agreed to work together to protect their reporters. Alfredo Jiménez Mota, who covered drug trafficking for *El Imparcial*, went missing in April.

weeks after the Fuentes shooting and came to Hermosillo in the state of Sonora.

Sonora is home to drug smuggling cartels that have escaped close scrutiny in the local media—even though its border with the U.S. state of Arizona is second only to south Texas for drug smuggling. It is the entry point for more than half of all illegal migrants arrested attempting to enter the United States.

Jiménez tried to turn the spotlight on the cartels, but even he became frightened. In February, he called his

mother, sounding panicked for the first time, his mother said.

Three men were following him. He went to the Hermosillo police department, where officers told him he was paranoid.

Piecing together accounts from family, friends, and colleagues, it appears that Jiménez walked into a restaurant owned by a childhood friend, Rodolfo Urias, at about 4 p.m. on April 2. He said two men were outside in a Volkswagen Beetle taking his photograph. "I told him to quit

being paranoid," Urias said, shaking his head. But when Jiménez asked about a back door Urias showed him the way.

Later, Jiménez telephoned a colleague to postpone a dinner, saying he had to meet a source he described as nervous. A state official told authorities that he gave Jiménez a ride to a convenience store that evening but did not see him again, Morales said. Jiménez made a telephone call shortly afterward to a federal prosecutor, the editor said. Authorities have questioned both officials.

Three days later, Jiménez's father and editors from *El Imparcial* filed a missing person report with the Sonora Attorney General's Office. Police found the reporter's cell phone, police scanner, radio and all his clothes in his apartment, together with his passport. The case was turned over to federal investigators in May; tips and sightings have been reported, but nothing has come of them.

The disappearance has baffled investigators. In transcripts of a meeting between *El Imparcial* staff and federal investigators, Mexico's top drug prosecutor, Jose Santiago Vasconcelos, said drug cartels were capable of "all types of barbarities." He pointed out that the Arellano Félix cartel in Tijuana and the Osiel Cardenas Guillen organization in Tamaulipas dispose of victims' remains by burning them in barrels of diesel oil.

"Sometimes I tell my wife that our son wanted recognition," said the reporter's father, Jose Alfredo Jiménez Martínez. "He wanted to be a powerful journalist who was known internationally." The father played with his eyeglasses at his simple kitchen table. On the open door he has pasted a sticker with his son's missing person photograph and a telephone number. He began to cry.

"I suppose he has that now. Everybody knows he's missing." ■

For updates on threats against Mexican journalists, visit www.cpj.org.

Freedom Delayed

One station's struggle highlights Cameroon's subtle repression.

By Alexis Arieff

"Freedom FM is Free at Last," Cameroon's *Post* trumpeted on July 18. But freedom for the stillborn radio station conceived by award-winning journalist Pius Njawé came at a price. When the government finally unsealed the studios in the port city of Douala—two years after the station's scheduled opening—neglect and leaky roofs had destroyed or damaged its expensive broadcasting equipment.

"Yes, they lifted the seals from Freedom FM," Njawé said. "But this is a poisoned gift." It could be months before Njawé raises money to repair the studios and train new staff. Even then it is not certain Freedom FM's promised independent voice will get on the air.

The government ordered the station closed in May 2003, the day before Njawé planned to begin broadcasting, saying Freedom FM failed to submit the proper paperwork. The move prevented Freedom FM from covering the 2004 election that returned President Paul Biya to office for another seven years, a vote marred by allegations of fraud and media self-censorship. Biya, in office for 23 years, is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders.

The case illustrates the evolution of press restrictions in Cameroon.

Alexis Arieff is research associate for CPJ's Africa program.



A billboard in Yaoundé touts the 2004 re-election of President Paul Biya. Cameroon's government blocked the launch of Freedom FM in the months before the vote.

Although journalists complain of government intimidation when reporting on sensitive issues, this nation of 16 million on the Gulf of Guinea boasts a diverse press and many private radio stations today.

Until the late 1990s, the government frequently jailed journalists, including Njawé, on charges such as "insulting the president." International pressure made Cameroon sensitive to criticism of its press freedom

record, independent observers said. But repression continues in a more subtle and legalistic form, with journalists subject to lawsuits and regulatory actions, according to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

"(Security forces) no longer invade newsrooms with guns and nightsticks to break computers and confiscate equipment," said Njawé, who, in 1991, was one of the first journalists to win CPJ's International Press Freedom

Award. "They aren't running down the street, gun in hand, chasing after newspaper vendors."

Instead, the government tries "to give the impression of being an open state that is freeing the media and all that—when in fact we are dealing with a sophisticated repression," added Njawé, who became a symbol of Africa's press freedom struggle after frequent jail terms for challenging Biya in his popular newspaper, *Le Messager*.

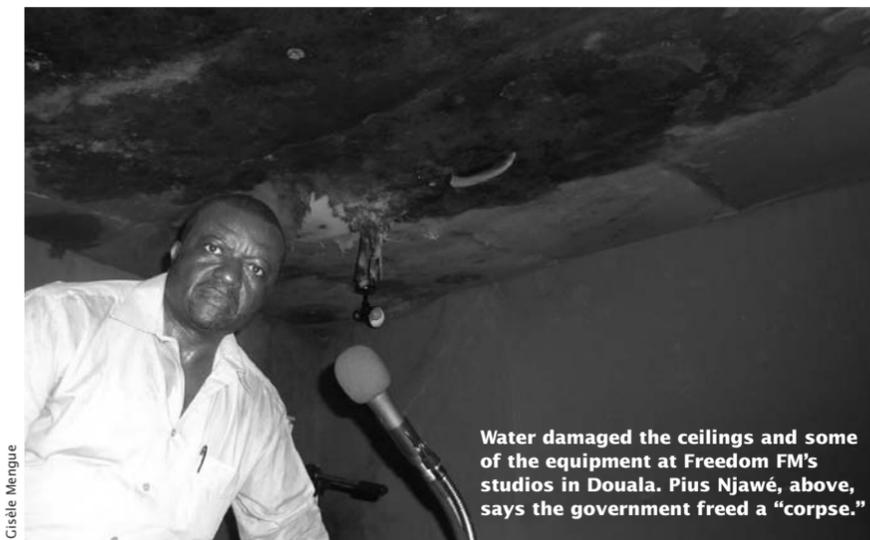
"It was obvious that by the time they lifted the seals, the equipment would be unusable," Njawé said. "And so they would be able to say with good conscience, 'We have freed the radio station,' whereas in fact they were freeing a corpse."

Cameroonian journalists say that rather than issue formal broadcast licenses the government has relied on a nebulous system of "provisional authorization," which leaves broadcasters in a legal limbo where they are liable to be closed down if they anger the authorities.

"It's not a license, it's not a contract, it doesn't give you any rights—they could take it away the next day," said Darian Pavli, an attorney with the Open Society Justice Initiative in New York. He helped bring a complaint against the government on behalf of Freedom FM to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, a watchdog of the African Union. "So it's a great invention for keeping everyone quiet and under watch," he added.

Communications Minister Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo disputed such criticism. "The system of provisional authorization has greatly benefited radio and television owners" by allowing them to operate without paying licensing fees, he told CPJ. The minister said Cameroon had more than 60 private radio stations, including "radios that do not at all favor the government ... which continue to exist, and have never had any problems."

Njawé filed for permission to broadcast in fall 2002. He bought



Water damaged the ceilings and some of the equipment at Freedom FM's studios in Douala. Pius Njawé, above, says the government freed a "corpse."

equipment, hired staff, and took out newspaper ads announcing Freedom FM's launch on May 24, 2003. But at noon on May 23 the Communications Ministry told him he had not followed proper procedures and could not go on air.

"While I was trying to reach the ministry in order to understand what was happening, the army, the police, and the gendarmerie simply circled the building, invaded the studios, and occupied the area," Njawé said.

Alain Batongué, a veteran journalist and director of the independent

Journalists say the government relies on a nebulous system that leaves broadcasters vulnerable to closure if they anger authorities.

daily *Mutations*, said Biya's government would have had a compelling motive to keep Freedom FM off the air in an election year. Radio is popular, it has a wider reach than newspapers, and Njawé was a proven critic, he said.

After two years of negotiations and under a new communications minister, the ministry signed an agreement with Free Media Group to allow the station to open. As part of the deal both sides agreed to drop litigation over the clos-

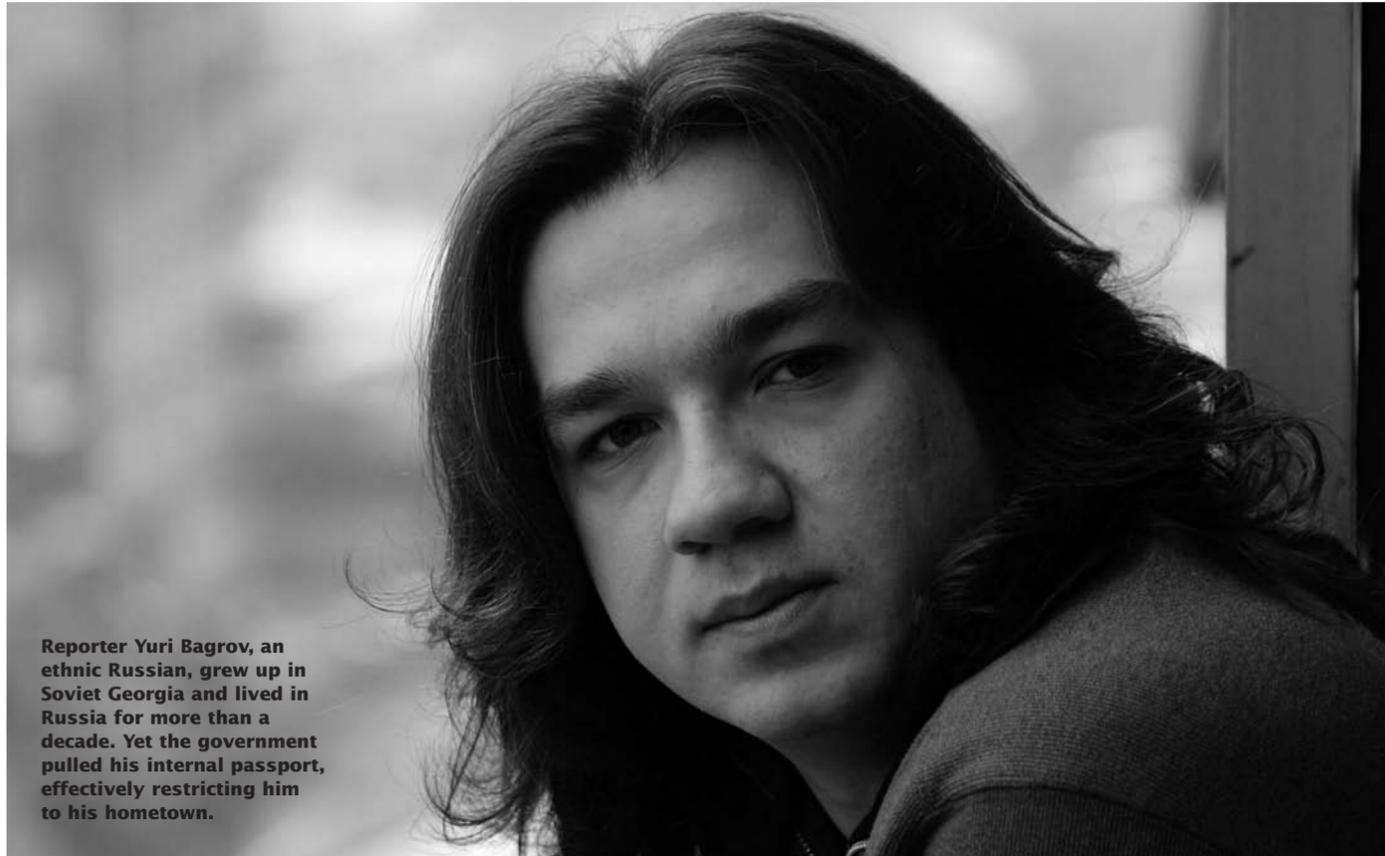
ing, including the station's suit before the African Commission, which had the potential to embarrass the government. In August, the state-owned daily *Cameroon Tribune* said the Communications Ministry would begin accepting applications from private broadcasters for official broadcasting licenses.

Mbonjo said that a committee drawn from several government ministries, as well as the National Communications Council, a nominally independent media regulatory body, would decide which stations to approve for licenses. "This issue of

licenses will not drag on with me," he said. "It will go very quickly."

Local journalists are skeptical, and some expressed doubt that licenses would be issued in a timely fashion. Njawé and the Open Society Justice Initiative are asking the African Commission to monitor the government's handling of Freedom FM's application.

"Sophisticated repression," Njawé said, "requires a sophisticated response from the international community." ■



Reporter Yuri Bagrov, an ethnic Russian, grew up in Soviet Georgia and lived in Russia for more than a decade. Yet the government pulled his internal passport, effectively restricting him to his hometown.

Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations

Reporter Without a Country

In Russia, a prominent Caucasus reporter is stripped of a passport.

By Martha Wexler

VLADIKAVKAZ, Russia

If authorities want to muzzle journalists, they can pull their press passes. But Federal Security Service (FSB) agents have gone a step further. They confiscated reporter Yuri Bagrov's internal passport, effectively stripping him of his citizenship and making him a prisoner in his hometown.

Martha Wexler is senior editor of "Weekend All Things Considered" on National Public Radio. She reported for NPR from Russia this summer. Irina Mikhalyova, NPR's Moscow bureau producer, contributed to this report.

Without identification papers, Bagrov can't be accredited to cover stories or even pass through the many police checkpoints on Russian roads.

Bagrov began reporting as a freelancer for The Associated Press and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) from his base in the city of Vladikavkaz in 1999. He was known for investigative pieces, including stories that revealed closely held casualty figures for Russian military and police forces in Chechnya.

When asked which of his reports might have cost him his passport, the 29-year-old Bagrov points to a May

2004 piece about kidnappings in the Russian republic of Ingushetia. "I wrote about the complicity of FSB agents in this. The father of one of the kidnap victims was a former judge who conducted his own investigation into the abduction. He gave me the name of the FSB commander involved and the license plate numbers of the cars used in the kidnapping."

Bagrov, who studied genetics in college, had no formal journalistic training. But after Russian forces launched the second Chechen war in late 1999, Bagrov caught the reporting

bug. He began covering the conflict, traveling with his RFE/RL colleague and mentor, Andrei Babitsky, whose own reporting on Chechnya has enraged the Russian government.

Reporting trips have been out of the question for Bagrov since August 25, 2004, when FSB agents rang his doorbell at 8 a.m. Ten men barged in and began turning over his apartment.

"They announced they were searching for materials that could be used to forge official documents," Bagrov recalls. "They said they would also be looking for weapons, ammunition, and narcotics. They watched as I put on my clothes. It took some effort to make sure they didn't watch as my wife got dressed."

The agents spent five and a half hours rifling through every book and paper. Bagrov stood in dismay as they went through his wife's underwear and dug into the soil of the potted houseplants. The agents confiscated his internal passport, birth certificate, college diploma, computer, tape recorder, and video and audiotapes. "I asked how I could possibly use a tape recorder to forge a document," Bagrov remembers. The men proceeded to search his car.

Bagrov was called in for questioning and asked how he had become a Russian citizen. He explained that he had grown up an ethnic Russian in Soviet Georgia. In 1992, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, he moved across the border to the Russian republic of North Ossetia. His grandparents lived in the republic's capital, Vladikavkaz, and he enrolled at the local university.

Bagrov registered his residency in Vladikavkaz in 1992, but ran into trouble with his documents in 2003, when the Russian government adopted a new passport format. He went to exchange his old Soviet passport and was told he was not a Russian citizen, although he had lived in Russia for 11 years, and both his mother and wife were Russian citizens.

"At the passport office, they

acknowledged this was absurd, and gave me a temporary residency permit. They told me to wait several months and hand in all my identification papers to the local court. I did this, and after about a month and a half, I did receive a Russian Federation passport."

This was the passport that the FSB agents confiscated during the raid on his apartment in August 2004. Four months later, Bagrov was tried on charges of using false documents to obtain the passport. The prosecutor alleged that the stamp and signature of the judge granting Bagrov Russian citizenship were forgeries. The court turned down a request by Bagrov's attorney for an independent analysis of the judge's signature. Bagrov was convicted and ordered to pay a 15 thousand ruble (US\$500) fine, which he did, after an appeals court upheld the verdict.

After paying the fine, Bagrov decided to apply again for a Russian passport. In March, he submitted copies of his identification papers to his local passport office and was told to wait for six months. On August 31, the passport office sent him a letter informing him that his request for Russian citizenship had been denied. Bagrov was told he could not apply again until February 26, 2006—one year from the day he paid the fine.

This latest rejection came as a heavy blow for Bagrov. "I don't know what to do. I don't know how I can live, if I can't work," he says, his voice breaking.

For months, Bagrov tried to work, as best he could, for the Russian service of RFE/RL. He reported inside the city limits of Vladikavkaz and did phone interviews. But the authorities then lifted his accreditation for the biggest news story in Vladikavkaz—the trial of a Chechen charged in last year's terrorist attack on a school in Beslan. Bagrov hitched a ride with fellow journalists to Beslan, 25 kilometers (15 miles) from Vladikavkaz, to

cover the first anniversary of the tragedy in September, but police prevented him from working.

Bagrov's lack of a passport affects more than his professional life. In June, his wife Marina gave birth to their first child, Daniil. He could not register the birth. "Marina will have to register him, and eventually, when this is cleared up, I'll have to 'adopt' my own son," he says with some irony, just 10 days after becoming a father. Marina, whom Bagrov describes as a tremendous moral support, has herself received threatening phone calls referring to her as "Bagrov's widow."

His editor at RFE/RL in Moscow, Oleg Kusov, has another theory about what may have drawn the ire of authorities. Kusov thinks Bagrov is not so much an irritant for Russian federal authorities as he is for local officials and FSB agents in North Ossetia. Kusov, himself an Ossetian and native of Beslan, says Bagrov may be viewed as an outsider, someone without the family and local ties necessary for social survival in the Caucasus.

Kusov says Alexander Dzasokhov, until recently the president of North Ossetia, was "categorically against" the presence of foreign journalists in his republic. Kusov remembers that when he was working as a reporter in the republic, he felt very uncomfortable. "But I held on," he says, "thanks to my personal ties." Bagrov, however, is a Russian originally from Georgia, a neighboring state that has strained relations with Ossetia.

Kusov says of Bagrov: "He simply wasn't under the control of the local authorities, and they *do* control every journalist working in the republic, including those who work for national Russian media.

"You know, some reporters in North Ossetia even resort to writing under pseudonyms—men take women's names and vice versa," Kusov says. "But Yuri was independent." ■

For updates on Bagrov's case, visit www.cpj.org.

After the flood

Freer press emerges from tsunami devastation in Aceh.

By Shawn W. Crispin

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia

Saiful Bahri's home and the radio station where he worked for 20 years were swept away with much of the coastal town of Sigli on December 26, 2004. But within two weeks Saiful was reporting on the tsunami's devastation and was compiling "missing person" and "I'm alive" announcements for Sigli's radio station, Megaphone FM. A friend of Saiful gave the station space in his home and promised it could stay for the next two years rent-free.

Saiful now works in a house, but he returns home each evening to a tent in a refugee camp where he, his wife, and daughter have taken shelter since the disaster. "We never thought this sort of thing could happen," he says. "It will take a very long time before we return to normal—if we ever do."

Aceh's fledgling media were particularly hard hit by the tsunami. Of about 1,000 journalists in the region, around 100 were killed and 70 were forced to live in camps, according to the Alliance of Indonesian Journalists in Aceh (AJI-Aceh). An estimated 170,000 Indonesians were killed or are still missing, while more than 500,000 people lost their homes.

Yet Saiful's determination to get back on the air was shared by other journalists in Aceh, many of whom

Shawn W. Crispin is a freelance journalist and CPJ's Asia program consultant.

had lost friends and relatives to the killer wave. Foreign aid workers credit the media's rapid reporting of public health and relocation announcements with helping to prevent disease and starvation. Nearly three-quarters of the region's 45 or so radio stations were hit by the tsunami, and many of them were destroyed. Almost all are now back on air. Aceh's only local television station, state-run TVRI-Aceh, lost 12 staff members, but it, too, was quick to resume broadcasting.

Serambi, then Aceh's only local newspaper, lost 54 of its 200 staff as well as its offices, printing press, and equipment. Remarkably, the daily broadsheet was publishing just five days after the wave. For weeks it was given away free.

The public's hunger for news of reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts has allowed Aceh's historically restricted media to operate more freely. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, the Indonesian government eased many of the restrictions it had imposed on reporting from Aceh, where a rebellion had raged for nearly 30 years and where martial law was frequently imposed. Indonesian and foreign reporters were given unprecedented access to the resource-rich region on the northern tip of Sumatra.

The media still enjoy those freedoms and have taken the opportunity to publish and broadcast reports crit-

ical of the government's reconstruction efforts. "It is more open for local journalists after the tsunami," says Nurdin Hasan, head of the AJI-Aceh, adding, "particularly if you compare it to the previous situation under martial law."

Large amounts of aid money have flowed in since the tsunami, including funds earmarked for media rehabilitation. The Jakarta-based broadcaster, 68H, which provides programming to 420 radio stations nationwide, was quickest to react to the crisis, providing temporary transmitters and equipment for seven of its Aceh-based members.

Santosa, 68H's founder, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, sees an opportunity in crisis. His media group plans to help establish or rehabilitate another 20 stations across the underdeveloped region by 2006. "We see an opportunity from the tsunami to open access to information in more remote areas," he says.

Established news outlets, meanwhile, took a little longer to get back on air. Radio Prima FM, which lost four of its 22 reporters, its office building, and all of its equipment, was broadcasting again by January 20, 2005—albeit from its proprietor's back yard, where the station's former storage room has been converted into a studio and seven of its reporters now live in tents. Uzair, Radio Prima's news director, hosted a popular call-in show before the tsunami hit. With the easing of government restrictions, Uzair is exploring new, sometimes controversial, subject matter—leading to a surge in the station's audience, he claims. In mid-August, he hosted a talk show that debated whether the post-tsunami influx of Western aid workers carried an increased risk of HIV/AIDS transmission to the local population, a rumor that had gained currency in some communities. "We are testing new waters," Uzair says.

"Peunegah Aceh," a daily radio program produced in cooperation with Internews Network, a U.S.-based media



Reuters/Dadang Tri

An Acehese boy looks at photographs of more than 50 *Serambi* staffers killed in the December 2004 tsunami.

training and advocacy organization, has aired a series of hard-hitting reports since the tsunami, including investigative stories showing that reconstruction authorities have used illegally harvested timber to build homes and accusations that officials are hoarding rather than distributing medicines donated by European countries. "Before the tsunami," says Yon Thayrun, the program's news director, "airing such criticism of the government would have been unimaginable."

Journalists and editors hope the new era of openness will extend beyond monitoring tsunami reconstruction to checking the implementation of a new peace deal. On August 15, the government in Jakarta and the rebel Free Aceh Movement (GAM) signed an accord to end three decades of fighting that has cost 15,000 lives in a region of four million people.

The print media, are testing new boundaries. "Before the tsunami we

had pressure from GAM and TNI (the Indonesian military)," says Syambul Kahar, chief editor and founder of *Serambi*. "Even when we wrote a balanced story, still both sides were mad with us," he says. "After the tsunami, things changed. Now nobody is pressuring us. We can play an independent role." *Serambi's* circulation has jumped 25 percent since the tsunami, due partially to its now freer reporting of the conflict, Kahar says.

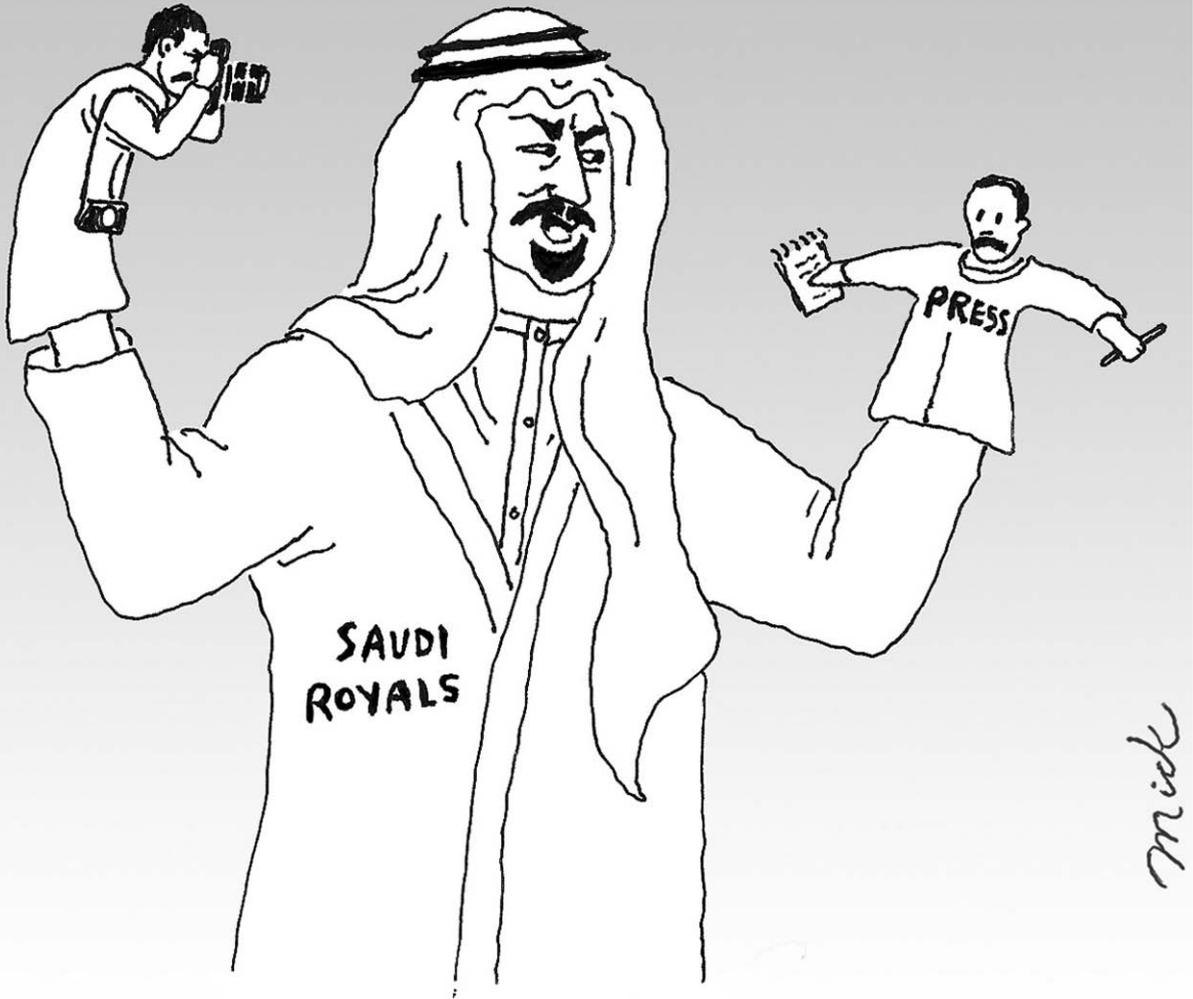
The media were restricted in their coverage of earlier peace deals in 2001 and 2002, which both unraveled. Now, journalists hope to be able to monitor the ceasefire and planned withdrawal of 50,000 Indonesian troops, and the disarming of some 3,000 rebels. "If someone gets killed, we will expose who did it," says Isfandiar, a reporter for *Rakyat Aceh*, a newspaper established three weeks after the tsunami. "Now is our golden chance to establish [media] independence."

Perhaps, but reporting on some

military matters is still taboo, while covering the GAM can be risky. One print reporter told CPJ that he and several colleagues were harassed by police intelligence officers, who followed them and made threatening phone calls after they wrote about the GAM. According to AJI-Aceh, another local journalist was recently forced to hand over his tapes to a senior military officer after interviewing a GAM leader.

Still, the media are eager to cover the peace deal's "truth and reconciliation" measures, which promise to unearth information about past abuses and atrocities on both sides. The opportunity for such investigative reports will arise after the Indonesian military has withdrawn and GAM rebels are reintegrated into society, local journalists say. "We want our country to be a democratic one," says Kahar, the *Serambi* editor. "We want to play our role to make sure this peace lasts a long time." ■

SAUDI ARABIA



“ Go ahead, ask me anything at all!”