

## PREFACE

..... by Carl Bernstein .....

**W**HEN THE COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS WAS FOUNDED in 1981, the prevailing threats to freedom of the press around the world were still from juntas, dictators, authoritarian regimes, and social systems determined to dominate the media as a means of maintaining control over citizens, usually within the boundaries of the nation-state. Toward that end, newspapers and television were nationalized or controlled by party organs, strict censorship prevailed, and officially sanctioned news was delivered expeditiously.

International reporters and photographers who were killed or wounded getting the story—perhaps fewer than today—were more likely to be caught in the armed crossfire of revolution or war than targeted specifically. Sanctioned killing of local journalists came from obvious places: the Argentine junta in the era of the “disappeared,” the Medellín drug cartel in Colombia, the apostles of apartheid in South Africa. As CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon notes, “The lines were more clear-cut then.”

Today, the greatest threats to freedom of the press are more insidious than a generation ago because they are intended to induce a climate of fear and self-censorship through systematic violence and emblematic arrest aimed at those who would practice real, independent journalism. Kidnappings (not just of reporters

and editors, but of members of their families), murder, and torture intended to suppress the truth: These are increasingly basic strategies of criminal regimes, drug gangs, local despots, authoritarian cultures, and movements such as radical Islam that transcend national boundaries.

The extraordinary courage and success of journalists around the world as catalysts for human rights and resistance to oppression have produced a fierce and often lethal counter-reaction. This backlash is premised on the use of whatever means are necessary to force self-censorship upon journalists who would challenge the status quo or reveal discomfiting truths—whether reporting on

**Threats are more insidious than a generation ago because they induce self-censorship.**

environmental degradation in China, drug gangs in Mexico, corruption in the Philippines, fundamentalist terrorism in Iraq and Pakistan, secret policies in Putin’s Russia, or economic failure in communist Cuba.

Meanwhile, the tension between technology and outright repression—the availability of satellite television, the use of the Internet as impetus for growth and economic modernization—has rendered obsolete the old methods of press control and suppression of information such as media nationalization and overt censorship.

In documenting the changing pattern of worldwide violence, arrest, and imprisonment aimed at journalists—and the concomitant goal of inducing self-censorship through fear and terror—the 2008 CPJ report makes important distinctions among the perpetrators of draconian measures intended to force the press into submission.

First, it identifies what might be called traditionally repressive regimes—anomalous and isolated in today’s world such as those in Cuba, Burma, and North Korea—that cling to the old methods of total media control and, to the extent technologically feasible, of imposing blackouts on competing incoming information.

Second, it reports on repressive countries that pretend they are not repressive, whose rulers (“democratators” as CPJ’s director calls them) permit some convenient trappings of democracy and measures of economic freedom, whether in Putin’s backward-looking Russia or Hu’s forward-thrusting China.

And, finally, it focuses on countries and regions where the government may not be the primary threat to journalists or the truth, where people are more afraid of murderous organized groups, whether they are criminal syndicates in Mexico, terrorists in Afghanistan, or militias and vigilantes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All operate with relative impunity.

Opposite: AP/Ricardo Lopez—Photographers cover a murder scene in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, in November. The city is one of the world’s most dangerous for the press.



Done right, reporting—good journalism—is nothing more or less than the best obtainable version of the truth. In all three configurations of repression, that bottom line of truth is the intended casualty of those who have determined that they must resort to more and more depraved acts against journalists and against ordinary citizens who resist and provide information to the press. Of the 41 journalists who died in 2008 because of their work, 28 were targeted for execution. At least 26 reporters and photographers were kidnapped, nearly half of whom were still in captivity at year's end. Another 125 languished in prison cells around the world, 73 of them on vague “antistate” charges. More than 80 journalists fled their countries under threat.

Consider these examples from the report you are now reading:

- In Brazil, regarded by CPJ as the 12th deadliest country for the press worldwide (at least 15 journalists have been killed there since 1992), two reporters and a driver for the Rio de Janeiro daily *O Dia* were abducted and tortured while investigating the paramilitary groups that protect drug traffickers and control local politics.

***In Latin America, gun battles go unreported. Editors say they can't take the risk.***

The kidnapers beat them, put plastic bags over their heads, administered electric shocks, and threatened to kill them. The effect of such attacks has been profound throughout Latin America, where self-censorship has become a reportorial condition, huge gun battles and turf wars between drug traffickers go unreported, and even editors of national news organizations say crime-related issues are increasingly off-limits for their correspondents. “We can't take that risk,” the editor of the largest daily in Guatemala City told CPJ.

- In Vietnam, Nguyen Viet Chien and Nguyen Van Hai were convicted of “abusing freedom and democracy” for reporting on Transport Ministry officials who embezzled billions in Vietnamese dong to bet on soccer matches. Chien was sentenced to two years in prison, Hai to two years of “re-education.” Their primary source, Lt. Col. Dinh Van Huynh, was given a one-year sentence for revealing state secrets, and newspapers that raised skeptical questions about the case were officially rebuked and their editors fired.
- In Pakistan, a day after Abdul Razzak Johra's report on drug trafficking aired on national TV, six thugs dragged him from his home in Punjab

and shot him to death. His colleagues told CPJ that Johra had received a series of threats, warning him to stop covering the drug trade. His murder, still unsolved, was the 10th killing of a Pakistani journalist to go unpunished since 1998.

- In Somalia, antigovernment insurgents opened fire on an anchorwoman for the independent Eastern Television Network while she drove to her home. The journalist, Bisharo Mohammed Waeyes, was uninjured, but a series of threatening text messages finally forced her to leave the country.
- In Azerbaijan, state security officers beat Agil Khalil, a reporter for *Azadlyg*, a newspaper that has run stories critical of the government. Local prosecutors took no action against the perpetrators, claiming instead that Khalil had intentionally fallen on his back and faked his injuries—a broken finger and bruises where a cord from his camera had been wrapped around his neck. Within weeks, Khalil was assaulted three more times, stabbed in the most serious attack.
- In Afghanistan, Parwez Kambakhsh is serving a 20-year prison sentence on charges of distributing anti-Islamic literature. The case is regarded by Afghan journalists as reprisal for the work of his brother, Yaqub Ibrahim, a correspondent for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting who exposed human rights abuses committed by warlords in the country's north.

Much of this latest CPJ report focuses on Internet censorship, as regimes try to contain the danger the Web poses to their 21st century models of authoritarian governance and emerging market economies.

Magomed Yevloyev, publisher of an independent Web site in the Russian republic of Ingushetia, died from a gunshot wound to the head shortly after he was taken into police custody on unspecified charges. Police said an officer's

***The publisher of an independent Russian Web site is shot and killed in police custody.***

gun went off accidentally. Yevloyev's Web site, *Ingushetiya*, had reported on rampant government corruption, human rights abuses, and a string of unsolved disappearances in the Moscow-controlled republic. Just weeks before he was killed, Yevloyev told CPJ that regional authorities had filed more than a dozen lawsuits and criminal complaints seeking to shut down his site. His editor had fled the country after being threatened and beaten.

More Internet journalists are jailed worldwide today than journalists working in any other medium, according to the latest CPJ census of imprisoned journalists. Forty-five percent of all media workers jailed worldwide are bloggers, Web-based reporters, or online editors—making up the largest professional category in CPJ’s prison census for the first time.

In China, which now has more than a quarter billion online users, self-censorship is enforced through government rules and regulations that guide Internet service providers about what news can be posted and who can post it. “China imposes state control on all media, but it allows leeway for independent coverage of stories that are not perceived as threats to social stability or the Communist Party,” the report notes. “Chinese journalists understand the limits of the government’s tolerance, but they also know they can push those limits at times.” When they’ve pushed at the wrong times, however, the consequences have ranged from beatings to arrest to long jail terms.

CPJ’s report describes how the Chinese model of Internet self-censorship—and its success—is being adopted by other Southeast Asian countries “as disparate as communist-led Vietnam, military-run Burma, and ostensibly democratic Thailand.”

In every country following the Chinese model, Internet access has been severely restricted or the plug pulled entirely during periods of potential social unrest. Burma has been particularly vicious in its punishment of bloggers who dare to circumvent the rules. Maung Thura, known online as Zarganar, was sentenced to 59 years in prison for illegally disseminating video of private relief efforts after Cyclone Nargis and giving interviews to foreign media in which he was critical of the junta’s sluggish rescue and rebuilding efforts. Burmese authorities said he was “causing public alarm.” At least four other local journalists were jailed for coverage of the cyclone—again making clear the consequences of reporting the best obtainable version of the truth, and creating a perfect storm for self-censorship.

**In the United States, we have had our own periodic bouts of fearful (as opposed to responsible) self-censorship, always to the detriment of the country. Indeed, what the publisher and editor of *The Washington Post* refused to do in covering Watergate, and *The New York Times* would not do in its publication of the Pentagon Papers, was capitulate to government efforts to impose self-censorship through economic pressure, allegations of biased and**

***Throughout Southeast Asia, governments follow China’s Internet censorship model.***

***We have a responsibility to help colleagues as they courageously reject self-censorship.***

inaccurate coverage, and accusations of endangering national security in wartime (Vietnam).

The Nixon White House, with great success for a disturbingly long period of time, made the conduct of the press the issue in Watergate,

instead of the conduct of the president and his men. The Bush administration, too, vigorously pursued (and for too long succeeded in) a policy of press self-censorship by making spurious claims of endangerment to national security during wartime (Iraq) and accusing news organizations of being “unpatriotic.” The results were the same as in the Nixon administration: The essential hidden truths about both presidencies and their policies were finally revealed by news organizations whose editors and publishers and reporters resisted the claims and refused to be intimidated into self-censorship.

What this homegrown experience in self-censorship teaches journalists in the United States, I believe, is to appreciate even more the courage and principled sacrifice of thousands of our colleagues worldwide who resist self-censorship in hellish environments where they have been singled out for nothing more than doing their jobs.

The struggle of these journalists is the struggle of all of us, which is why CPJ exists—to provide a sophisticated network of practical and financial support that aids their continued pursuit of the truth, as well as to assist journalists and their families caught in the crossfire of war and conflict everywhere.

In almost every country and culture where basic human rights have been won in the past 35 years, the press—sometimes underground, sometimes half-above, sometimes in open resistance—has been in the vanguard of this great effort.

The conditions and human cost of resistance today are no less challenging than in the era of the Soviet empire, the military dictatorships of Latin America, and apartheid in South Africa. Those of us who practice our craft in the relative safety of “Western” journalistic and democratic traditions have a special responsibility to help our colleagues as they courageously reject self-censorship on behalf of their fellow citizens and basic human dignity and freedom. CPJ has become the essential tool for doing this.



**Carl Bernstein’s** most recent book is the biography *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton*. He and Bob Woodward shared a Pulitzer Prize with *The Washington Post* for the paper’s coverage of Watergate.