



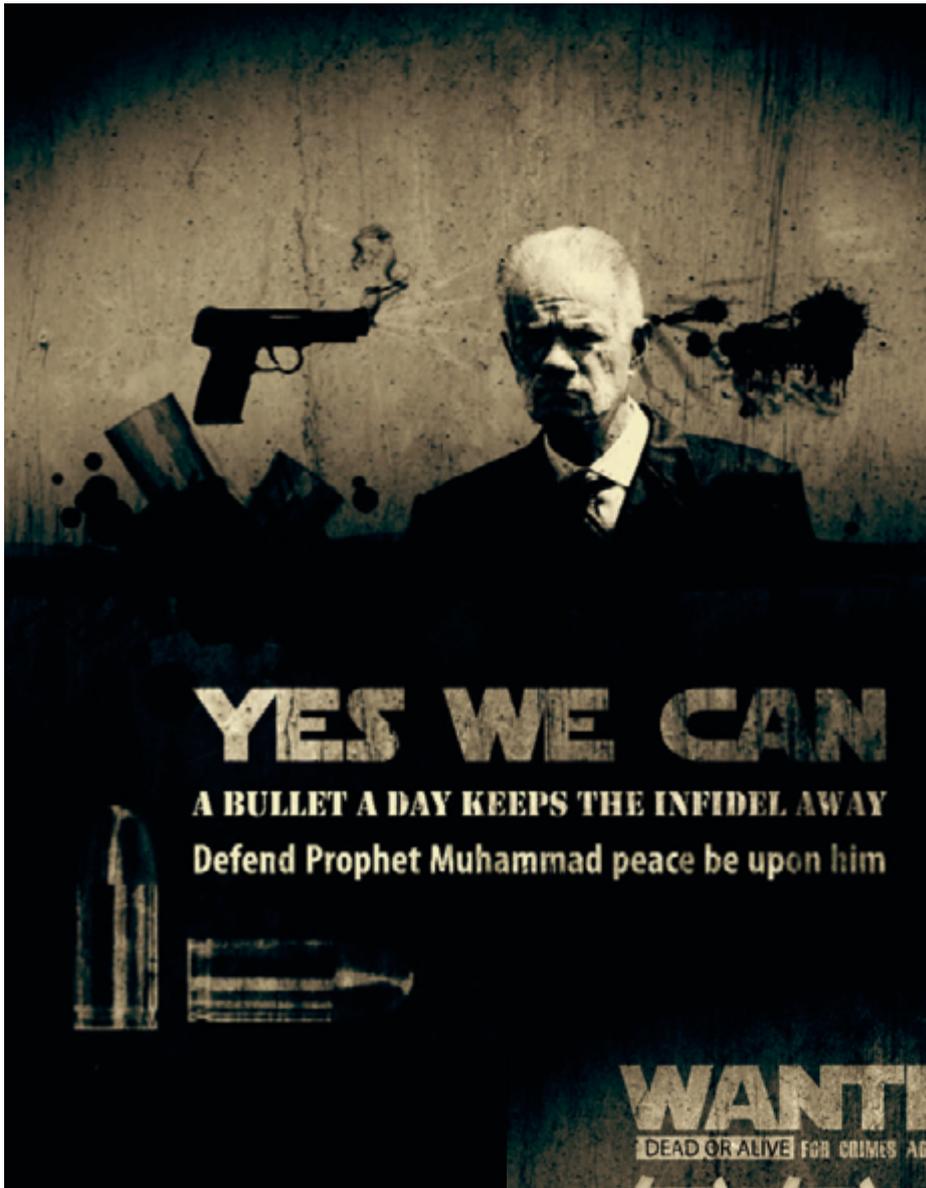
JIHAD AGAINST JOURNALISTS

**REPORTERS
WITHOUT BORDERS**
FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

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In its Spring 2013 issue, Al-Qaeda's English-language online magazine Inspire published a list of 11 people to be killed. They included the cartoonist Charb.



INSPIRE'S BLACKLISTS

Inspire, the “official magazine” of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQPA), had published a photo of Stéphane Charbonnier, the *Charlie Hebdo* publisher and cartoonist also known as Charb, as long ago as 2013. It was in a double spread in Issue No. 10 and it had this chilling caption: “Yes we can, a bullet a day keeps the infidel away.” He was one of a total of ten targets named. The others included Flemming Rose, the editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish newspaper that published a series of Mohamed cartoons, and Salman Rushdie, the author of *Satanic Verses*. Charb was murdered along with seven of his *Charlie Hebdo* colleagues on 7 January 2015.

“The dust will never settle down.” This was the headline of the eight-page feature that the first issue of *Inspire*, in the summer of 2010, dedicated to the subject of the Mohamed cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005. It was a combination of wanted notice and permit to kill. A page with a threatening photo of a Colt 45 threw nine names to the Jihadi lions. Five of them were journalists or media contributors. They included Flemming Rose, the cartoonist Kurt Westergaard and Lars Vilks, an artist who like Westergaard had drawn some of the Mohamed cartoons.

Jihadis in Iraq and Syria do not regard journalists in the same way that traditional dictatorships and authoritarian regimes do – as troublesome witnesses to be silenced one way or another. The Jihadis regard journalists simply as military targets to be eliminated. This could be seen in Issue No. 9 of *Inspire* (in May 2012). It said Jihad's targets include not only political leaders, economic infrastructure and military installations but also “media personalities and media centres that are leading the war against the Muslims and justifying the attacks on them.” Instead of being seen an observer who is more or less tolerated, the journalist is regarded from this ideological standpoint as a belligerent who has to be eliminated, a soldier in the enemy army that is the rest of the world.

This is how *Inspire* portrayed the 7 January 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, in which the 11 fatal victims included eight of *Charlie Hebdo*'s staff members and contributors. Issue No. 15, published in the summer of 2015, described the massacre as “the 9/11 of France.” In other words, an operation that was not just revenge for the Mohammed cartoons but also an extension of the attack on New York's Twin Towers in 2001, an act of war against the United States and the West in general.

The threats are never ending. Issue No. 14 makes no mystery of the fact that the Jihadis intend to strike again. Luz, a *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonist who avoided being killed on 7 January because he arrived late, was the target of an initial warning. “Who can guarantee your freedom, Luz?” *Inspire* asked. The entire staff was addressed in a second warning: “And to *Charlie Hebdo*... if you return, we too shall return.”

1 INSIDE THE MINDS OF THE JIHADIS

War trophy, hostage for ransom, or propaganda tool? To the Islamist terrorists, a journalist may have a variety of uses, depending on circumstances, nationality, personal profile and the content of a reporter's work. The one inflexible condition is that the journalist not turn against them.

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In 2010, the Iraqi Jihadi militant Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi took over as leader of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, a Salafist Jihadi terrorist group. In 2014, he declared himself to be caliph of the Islamic State, under the name of Ibrahim, and thereby claimed to be commander of all Muslims.



“Journalists who write against Islamic State (Daesh) are considered enemy soldiers, and therefore as targets to be destroyed,” concludes Romain Caillet, a specialist in jihadism and a former lecturer at the French Institute for the Near East.¹ In this regard, Daesh – the Arabic acronym for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - has broken with other Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who would never execute a journalist hostile to their ideology. But for IS, “a critical article is an act of war,” the researcher says.

1.
Interviewed by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 22 December, 2015.

are local journalists who are monitored, intimidated, persecuted and executed by IS fighters. For example, the Daesh seizure of Mosul, in June, 2014, was marked by the killing of 13 journalists, according to an investigation by the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory, an Iraqi NGO, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF).²

2.
“Mosul journalists are dying amid resounding silence,” October, 2015.

Despite the spectacles of violence Daesh has mounted, the organization's handling of journalists is not limited to beheading foreign reporters who had been held as hostages (the Americans James Foley and Steven Sotloff, Kenji Goto of Japan). Those barbaric acts were shrewdly staged by “caliphate” propagandists. But for the jihadis, a good journalist is not necessarily a dead journalist.

The key to the Daesh press strategy is control. Like the rulers of totalitarian states, the IS emirs want to manage information and impose word-for-word control over what the media say about Daesh (see, “Inside the Daesh propaganda machine”).

But jihadi fighters are also capable of taking a more pragmatic approach – in fact, an opportunistic one - in dealing with journalists. This can be seen especially in the cases of foreign reporters who have had the bad luck to fall into jihadi hands. As

hostages, journalists represent an important revenue source for these groups. In Syria, commerce in hostages is a veritable industry. Ransom for a foreign journalist can reach 10 million dollars, depending on nationality.



↑
Abou Moussab Al-Zarqawi



↑
Daniel Pearl (photo released by his abductors)

Of the 54 journalists taken hostage worldwide in 2015, 26 were captured in Syria. The great majority were local journalists, generally “arrested,” and tried in IS courts. The most recently seized hostage is Japanese: Jumpei Yasuda, a freelancer who was captured shortly after arriving in Syria in early July.

Executions take place when negotiations fail (for Kenji Goto, Daesh raised the stakes as high as 40 million dollars), or when politics take precedence. The latter seems to have been the case for Foley and Sotloff, Caillet says. The two Americans were murdered in reprisal for U.S. policy in the region, he says.

Ultra-violence – especially, filmed beheadings – has become an IS signature, but it is not a Daesh invention. The first journalist to suffer this horror was Daniel Pearl, an American reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, in Karachi, Pakistan in February, 2002. That murder was attributed to the local Al Qaeda chief, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Until then, Osama Bin Laden’s organization had refrained from killing journalists.

The victim’s father, Judea Pearl, said that his son’s murder set a precedent. From then on, journalists were perceived as “agents of a foreign body.”¹ Patrick Cockburn, a British journalist and author of *The Jihadis Return: ISIS and the New Sunni Uprising*, shares this view, seeing that view as an unfortunate consequence of the “embedding” of many reporters in American and British military units during the Iraq war. In Cockburn’s view, images of journalists perched on American tanks in Baghdad continue to haunt the jihadis’ imagination and to nourish their propaganda. Foreign journalists are seen, in other words, as auxiliary forces of an occupying army.²

One of Bin Laden’s lieutenants, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a native of Jordan who founded Al Qaeda in Iraq and was killed in 2006 by an American air strike, is considered one of the main sources of inspiration of Daesh. Zarqawi’s cruelties account for his rapid rise to notoriety. He carried out beheadings, including those staged for video. And it was he who ordered those about to die to wear orange jumpsuits, a reference to the prison uniforms of Guantanamo prisoners.

When Bin Laden had a message to deliver to the world, he made a thought-out recording, explaining his world vision at length, citing numerous religious and political sources. But when Zarqawi delivered a message, he appeared with knife in hand, wrote Nicolas Hénin, a French journalist and former Daesh hostage. “He utters a few words, then beheads his hostage...before posting the video on YouTube. The ideological content is reduced to its simplest terms. No long dissertation. One is tempted to say that there is no message. But, in fact, the violence is the message.”³

Nevertheless, for specialists on Islam, it is difficult to connect Daesh policies toward the media with a theological doctrine, however extremist it may be. Some see a carrying out of the precepts of a 2007 jihadi pamphlet, *The Management of Savagery*, attributed to one Abu Bakr Naji. The text is considered an Islamist *Mein*

1. Interview in the Washington Post, 21 February, 2012.
2. *The Jihadis Return: ISIS and the New Sunni Uprising*, OR Books, 2014.
3. *Jihad Academy: The Rise of Islamic State*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.

1. *Kampf*. It is filled with references to media, but these are treated in the context of an information war, in which attacks and acts of violence aim to destroy the prestige of the United States, especially its “media halo.”

« Retour sur le massacre à huis clos des journalistes algériens » (Another look at the massacre behind closed doors of Algerian journalists), Hassane Zerrouky, 28 January, 2015, L'Humanité.

Another connection, which Daesh has never claimed, can be seen in the violent attacks on the press in Algeria, especially by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), during the civil war of the early 1990s. Artists, writers, singers, dramatists – and, above all, journalists – were singled out as “enemies of Islam.” One of the GIA emirs, Jamal Al-Afghani, developed a theory by which journalists had become legitimate targets, as “Judeo-Zionists” and foreign agents. “Those who fight Islam with the pen, shall die by the sword,” he said.

Leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which won parliamentary elections in 1990, immediately called on Algerian journalists to “repent,” then published a hit list. Hassane Zerrouky has named 123 journalists and media workers who were shot to death or beheaded in 1993-1997. “A tragedy behind closed doors,” he wrote.¹

The “11 Commandments of Daesh for the journalists of Deir Ezzor” can be read in light of the above events. Made public in October, 2014, shortly after the Syrian province of the same name was seized by IS, it clearly shows a Daesh press law in embryonic form. Many of its provisions refer directly to sharia law and establish an information control system run by the “authorities.”

For example, the 11th commandment sets up a summary accreditation procedure. And seven of the 11 articles refer journalists to the media division of Islamic State. Articles 2, 6, 7 and 9 openly set out a classic censorship system. The first article is the most explicit and sums up by itself the Daesh relationship with the press: Local journalists are called upon to swear allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the caliphate’s supreme leader and spiritual guide.



THE 11 COMMANDMENTS OF DEIR EZZOR¹ :

1. *Journalists must swear allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They are subjects of Islamic State and, as such, are required to swear loyalty to their imam.*
2. *They will perform their work under the exclusive supervision of the IS media division.*
3. *Journalists may work directly with international press agencies (such as Reuters, AFP and P), but they must avoid all international and local satellite television channels. They are prohibited from supplying them with exclusive material and with having any contact (sound or image) with them in any capacity.*
4. *Journalists do not have any right at all to work with television channels placed on the blacklist of channels that are fighting Islamic countries (such as Al-Arabiya, Al Jazeera and Orient). Violators will be held accountable.*
5. *Journalists may cover events in the governorate by way of articles or photos without having to consult the IS media division. All published articles and photos must carry the names of the journalists and photographers.*
6. *Journalists may not publish any work (print or video) without first consulting the IS media office*
7. *Journalists may have personal social network accounts and use them to disseminate news and photos. However, the IS must have the addresses and names of these accounts and pages.*
8. *Journalists must obey the law when they take photos in Islamic State territory, and avoid filming places or events under security control, where taking photos is prohibited.*
9. *The Islamic State media division will monitor the work of local journalists within Islamic State territory and the national media. Any violation of the regulations will result in suspension from work. And the journalist will be held responsible.*
10. *These regulations are not definitive and may be changed at any time according to circumstances, to the level of cooperation from journalists, and their commitment to their counterparts from the Islamic State media division.*
11. *Journalists will be accredited in order to carry out their work, after first sending an application to the Islamic State media division.*

↑
In October 2014, Islamic State militants in the Syrian province of Deir Ezzor issued 11 Commandments designed to suppress media freedom.

1.
The commandments were translated into French by the "Fabrique de l'info," a news site of the Journalism Institute of Bordeaux-Aquitaine.

2

EXTREME VIOLENCE UNLEASHED AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Recent months have seen an increase in violent attacks on journalists in areas controlled by Islamist militant groups including Al-Shabaab, Islamic State (Daesh), and Boko Haram.

They will not surrender. But journalists for the news site “Raqqā is Being Slaughtered Silently,” face formidable odds. They lost another member of their team in December, 2015. Ahmad Mohamed al-Mousa was the latest on a long list of losses.

Al-Mousa was killed in Idlib, Syria, by a group of masked men, probably from Daesh. By October, 2015, two other reporters for the site, Ibrahim Abd El Kader and Fares Hammadi, were tracked down by killers who had crossed the Turkish border to find them. They were found beheaded in Sanliurfa.

Surviving members of RBSS have no doubts about where responsibility for these murders lies. After all, Daesh has issued death threats against the site’s journalists, along with all men and women doing media work. The site has assembled and published a list of violent attacks by Daesh (including crucifixions, decapitations and rapes) against civilians, especially in Raqqā. The jihadi group seized that city in the spring of 2013.

Daesh has decreed 11 regulations for journalists (see Part 1). Any journalist who breaks any one of them is subject to the supreme punishment: crucifixion. Generally, this is preceded by a first punishment - beheading – a double penalty reserved for civilians. However, it appears that no journalists have been crucified in Raqqā or Mosul, or anywhere else.

THREAT OF CRUCIFIXION

The first crucifixions were carried out by Daesh against innocent civilians in March, 2014. Those atrocities motivated six journalists from Raqqā and its surrounding area, who were in contact on Facebook, to found a news site the following April.

One month later, one of the team’s journalists, Bellah Ibrahim al-Moutaz, was executed in a public square in Raqqā. He had been arrested at a checkpoint, then held for three weeks. Clearly, Daesh militants had tracked down the source of reports disseminated outside their fiefdom about the organization’s methods of control.

The number of journalists fallen victim to Daesh has increased since then. In October, 2014, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published a report prepared with the Baghdad-based Journalistic Freedom Observatory, an RSF partner founded in 2004. The report chronicled the ordeal of 13 journalists whom Daesh executed, and 48 kidnapped by the organization, in Mosul alone. The list is not exhaustive.

Among those executed was Maysaloon al-Jawadi. A presenter for the television station Al-Mosuliya since 2009, she was kidnapped and thrown into the Badush prison, according to information gathered by JFO. After undergoing torture there, she was shot on 29 June 2014. Her crime? Above all, being a female journalist.

Others, including editorial writer Fadel al-Hadidi, executed on 15 July 2014 after 12 days of imprisonment and torture, wanted no more than to think and express themselves freely.

And some, such as Jala'a Adnan al-Abadi, a photojournalist executed on 16 July 2015, had decided to return to Mosul in order to resume professional work. The young photographer, married and the father of two children, had already run into trouble with Daesh for wanting to leave IS territory, in June, 2014. Kept in detention for many days, brought before an Islamic court, he was freed on condition that he not engage in any journalistic activity. He then found refuge in Kurdistan. Nevertheless, his continued contacts with fellow journalists made him acutely aware of the terror campaign underway in Mosul. In addition, the financial and other difficulties of exile led him to choose to return to Mosul. He did so "completely aware of the danger," according to the RSF/JSO report. A few weeks after his return, Daesh militants burst into his home, seized his phone and laptop, blindfolded him and took him away. He was taken to a detention centre, where he was apparently executed only minutes after arriving.

→
Logo of "Raqqā is
Being Slaughtered
Silently"



HOSTAGE INDUSTRY

Hostage-taking is one of the basic Daesh methods for suppressing all information and all reporting on the jihadis' systematic human rights violations. Among the 48 journalists on the list of kidnap victims listed in the RSF/JFO report, some are believed to be held in camps, including Tasfirat, Badush and Ghazlani. An estimated 25 other detained journalists were freed after tribal chieftains interceded on their behalf. Those released reported having been tortured.

Among those captured was Hisham al-Hirbawi. He was taken along with his assistant on 18 June 2014, while filming for a documentary on the daily lives of Mosul citizens under Daesh rule. He had hoped to sell the piece to one of the two television channels he worked for. What did his torturers want? To know exactly how journalists worked and, especially, their methods of communicating with their employers.

Al-Harbawi survived only because he gave in to a ransom demand. He paid 20,000 dollars directly to a Daesh member, and pledged to refrain from practicing his profession, as an Islamic court had demanded.

Daesh does not only target local journalists. It is also fond of snaring foreign reporters, whose plight generates immediate global media impact. The strategy is to hold them as hostages. This may turn out well or badly. Badly, as in the case of Japanese freelancer Kenji Goto. He was murdered in early 2015, as a horrifying video of his beheading attests. But the case of Nicolas Hénin, French freelancer, turned out well. He was taken in June 2013 and freed one year later, after being held by Daesh in Syria.

According to the RSF/JSO report, published in October, 2015, in addition to the 48 journalists who were kidnapped (many of them immediately executed), 10 reporters or assistants have been taken hostage in recent months. Their fates are uncertain.

→
Screen capture from
the video of Japanese
journalist Kenji Goto's
execution





↑
Naji Jerf, a Syrian
journalist murdered in
Turkey on 27 December
2015

James Foley
↓



© NICOLE TUNG / AFP PHOTOS

IN LIBYA, SOMALIA AND NIGERIA AS WELL

Daesh is not the only Islamist “army” to attacks journalists in the name of a totalitarian denial of freedom of expression.

In Libya, journalists have targeted by violent attacks from armed groups over the past two years. Not all of the organizations claim to be Islamist radicals, but there is no doubt of the ideological motivation in the case of at least one victim. Meftah Bouzid, an editorial writer known for his criticism of local jihadis, was killed in May 2014 in Benghazi, a centre of the extremist movement. He had been explicitly warned about the fate that awaited him.

In Somalia, journalists are targeted by al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda affiliate. There has been no claim of responsibility for the most recent killing, in December 2015, but it bore the group’s trademark. Television journalist Hindiya Mohamed was killed when her car exploded. The same method was used on 21 June 2014, against Yusuf Ahmed Abukar, a reporter for Radio Ergo and Mutaqbal Radio. Known by his professional name, Yusuf Keynan, he was killed en route to his office when a bomb placed under the hood of his car exploded.

Why was he targeted? Because he criticized al-Shabaab. Local observers are not certain of the identities of those behind the killing. No criminal case has been opened, and no investigation has been undertaken. However, observers are sure that Keynan was killed because of his work. To be sure, there is some possibility of government involvement. But suspicions point more strongly to al-Shabaab, given its record of violent attacks on media.

By 2010, al-Shabaab had taken over about 10 radio stations, in order to ensure that their broadcast content was “religiously correct.” Like other extremist groups, al-Shabaab has issued decrees on how journalists may do their jobs. In addition, they have defined some zones as “off-limits” to journalists. What happens in these areas – which amount to information black holes - no one knows.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram, which was founded in 2002 and formally affiliated itself to Daesh in March, 2015, also targets journalists. Boko Haram accuses journalists of not “correctly” reporting the group’s activities in areas that it occupies.

In addition, Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for some murders. One was the killing of Zakarya Isa in October 2011. He reported from the country’s north. So did Enenche Akogwu, who was killed several months later. Boko Haram also took responsibility for that murder. Since then, the organization has taken to mounting bomb attacks against newspaper offices, and to issuing threats against reporters.

One of them was Adeola Akinremi. The features editor of the independent This Day, in the Lagos area, had written a May 8, 2015, editorial that angered Boko Haram by denouncing the idea of amnesty for members of the group. Two days later, the journalist received an unvarnished threat by email: ““You are now a walking dead and a prey to the Lions of Islam from the bullet of a passing car or a nearby rooftop. We will get you.”



© DIPLOMAT:SO

↑
Fighters of the Somali
Islamist militant group
Al-Shabaab



© REUTERS/EMMANUEL BRAUN



Nigerian army soldiers displaying a flag of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram in March 2015

In Pakistan, the killers are the Taliban. Whether they had a role in the most recent killing – of television journalist Hafizur Rehman in Kohat in late November, 2015 by two unidentified men – is not clear. But the organization did claim responsibility for the previous murder of a journalist. That victim was Zaman Mehsud, a journalist in the city of Tank and a staff member of the Pakistani Neo TV Network. The Taliban let it be known that they did not appreciate the way they were covered by Neo TV. Attacks had been mounting against the network's journalists in late 2015. Victims included a technician and journalist who were murdered in Karachi in September 2015, and a journalist who was wounded by gunfire in Peshawar.

Moreover, following the brief Taliban takeover of Kunduz, Afghanistan, the organization warned that whoever provided information to the two government television channels would be killed. Apparently, no one risked violating that edict.



In Mali, the group to watch is AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). AQIM claimed responsibility for the November 2014 murder of two *Radio France Internationale* journalists, Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon. They were killed in Kidal, in northern Mali. Seized after leaving an interview at the home of a leader of Azawad, the national Tuareg liberation movement), they were murdered two hours later.



Claude Verlon (left) and Ghislaine Dupont (right)

3 ISLAMIC STATE'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE

→ Entitled "Principles in the administration of the Islamic State," this internal document reveals how the "caliphate" is organized and demonstrates the existence of a "methodical bureaucracy."



1. According to Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan in *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (Regan Arts, London 2015).

1. "Don't listen to what they say about us, listen to what we have to say to you." Repeated like a mantra by Islamic State militants, this phrase sums up this terrorist group's media strategy¹. The "Islamic State" that was proclaimed with much fanfare in 2014 is a "state" in name only but, as regards media freedom, the "caliphate" behaves just like a totalitarian state, maintaining complete control over its image and eliminating dissidents in an extremely brutal manner.

2. "The ISIS papers: a masterplan for consolidating power," *The Guardian*, 7 December 2015

2. An organizational chart of the media outlets operated by Islamic State (also known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh) shows a powerful press empire with tentacles reaching in different directions, an empire controlled from the very peak of the terrorist organization. In December 2015, the British daily *The Guardian* published a leaked internal IS document describing in great detail how the self-proclaimed "caliphate" is administered². Chapter 10 of this document is about the media, regarded as "essential" for achieving its goals. An entity called the "Base Foundation" oversees regional "media foundations" and "media offices." It reports directly to the "Office of the Caliph" (Diwan al-Khilafa) and liaises with the military commander and chief security official, the document says.

3. *Documenting The Virtual "Caliphate,"* October 2015

Quilliam, a British think tank specializing in counter-terrorism, includes an even more detailed breakdown of the IS propaganda apparatus in its latest report³. The Base Foundation, called here the "Islamic State central media command," supervises seven media divisions with separate specialities (video, text, photo, radio, translation and so on) The seven divisions are the Al-Furqan Foundation, Al Ltisam Foundation, Al Himma Foundation, Ajnad Foundation, *Al Bayan* Radio, Al Hayat Media Centre and *A'maq* News Agency. The "central media command," probably located in Raqqa, Islamic State's "capital" in Syria, centralises the information from 38 "media offices" worldwide, mainly in Iraq and Syria but also Afghanistan, West Africa, the Caucasus,

Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia. This media multinational seems to be headed by Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani, the caliphate's main spokesman, seen by some as one of the masterminds of the November 2015 attacks in Paris.

1.
Agence France-Presse,
13 December 2015

Islamic State has well-established media outlets in the territories it controls: five TV stations and *Al Bayan* Radio in the Iraqi city of Mosul, two other TV stations in Raqqa, and *Dabiq*, a magazine that is published in several languages and is targeted at a western public. According to the latest information, the job of “editing” *Dabiq* has supposedly been assigned to John Cantlie, a British journalist who is being held hostage by IS and who is being used as an additional propaganda tool (see below). But IS exists above all on – and thanks to – the Internet, via which it wages most of its information war. It has hundreds of websites and tens of thousands of accounts on social networks, where its PR campaigns quickly go viral. Many people think that IS would not be IS without the Internet and the skill with which its militants use it. “We’re in a new age where terrorist groups like ISIL are using social media to reinvent how they recruit and plot attacks,” says US Senator Dianne Feinstein, one of the authors of a bill that would require tech companies to report online terrorist activity¹.

THE “MEDIA EMIRS”



←
Propaganda photo
produced by and for
Islamic State

Grouped into “media brigades,” Islamic State's propaganda operatives play an important and indeed essential role in the way the “caliphate” functions. Some start out with prior media experience as journalists, amateur videographers or activists on online forms and websites. Others learn the trade on the job. All of them get a few months of military training, in which they are taught how to use firearms and explosives, before joining the media front. Armed with cameras instead of Kalashnikovs, they have the same status as fighters but enjoy many financial and material advantages. Some are paid up to seven times more than the ordinary foot soldier, and are assigned a work car, a smartphone and the latest IT equipment. They do not have to pay taxes and sometimes their families are housed in one of the “villas” that the caliphate allocates to its most deserving operatives. The most experienced of them are treated as “emirs,” the equivalent of senior officials. As such, they are designated as “military targets” by the US-led international coalition and some have been killed in targeted strikes.

Abu Hajer, a former Jihadi recruit who defected in 2015, described a media “army” operating out of Raqqa and Mosul. This young Moroccan was one of a dozen or so Islamic State defectors in several countries who were interviewed by the *Washington*

1. *Post*. Some were members of these IS media brigades. They described a system that was not only very hierarchized but also extremely compartmentalized. They get their orders in the morning on a bit of paper with the IS flag and the emir's seal that just tells them where they have to go to film, but never what the subject will be. It could be a beheading, a mass killing, a meal ending the Ramadan fast, a wedding or the sun setting in the desert. They then hand over their footage to the local media unit's editors and "producers." The commentary, final format and the timing of release are left to senior IS officials – a sign of the importance assigned to propaganda. The kingpins of Islamic State's PR operations and the members of its "media brigades" exist in a world in which privilege goes hand in hand with coercion and surveillance. All personal initiative is forbidden and objecting is not an option. Abu Hajer said he would never have refused to film a massacre because he knew this would "consign him to the fate of those he filmed"¹.

Agence France-Presse,
13 December 2015

JIHADI UTOPIA

2. Quilliam researcher Charlie Winter is impressed above all by the volume of Islamic State's propaganda but also by its variety and its quality. Every day, it puts out an extraordinary amount of press releases, photos, videos and patriotic songs called "anasheed," which are a big hit online. "We're talking about just under 40 separate units of propaganda a day," says Winter. This does not include Islamic State's activities on social networks². In an exhaustive survey and analysis of IS propaganda, Quilliam recorded 1,146 "propaganda events" during a 30-day period from 17 July to 15 August 2015. This is approximately the monthly average. It is estimated that Islamic State releases about 15,000 propaganda items a year – including 800 videos and a score of magazines – in a total of 11 languages including Mandarin.

The Independent, 6

October 2015. Islamic State
is mentioned 2 million times
a month on Twitter alone.

→
Child soldiers enlisted
by Islamic State train
at an indoctrination
school



The first surprise of this survey was that – contrary to what might be expected, especially in the West, where IS above all known for its atrocities – images of "brutality" (including beheadings and mass killings) constituted "only" 2.13% of these propaganda items. "Military" videos, in which IS highlighted the strength and determination of its fighters along with their military equipment and their gleaming 4WDs, constituted 37.12% of the items analysed. And the enemy was nowhere to be seen.

More than half of this propaganda (52.57%) was dedicated to daily life in the "caliphate," shown as a utopia. In the territories controlled by IS, the state was portrayed not only as strong but also as merciful, as a place where it was good to live. The quality of food, the well-stocked souks and the variety of natural attractions were

all emphasized. A land of milk and honey! The Jihadis were shown building hospitals and schools, looking after the roads and urban infrastructure and even regulating fishing in the Euphrates in order to preserve species diversity. Scenes of weddings and camaraderie among fighters of different nationalities were also included.

According to Quilliam, this propaganda, which is rarely seen in the Western media, is targeted at another public altogether. The aim is to convince the region's Sunnis and the rest of the world that the "caliphate" constitutes a real social alternative, that it is a viable state that welcomes not just Allah's warriors but also engineers, doctors, agronomists and women¹.

MASTERS OF EXTREME VIOLENCE

Even if they represent just a very small proportion of its media output, Islamic State's ultraviolent videos continue to be its hallmark and main propaganda vehicle. They are above all designed to impress the West and create fear, but also to attract new recruits ready to sacrifice themselves for the Islamist cause. These videos almost always go viral on the Internet and enable IS to lead the news in the international media at little cost. To this end, it is always ready to push the limits of barbarity a bit further. Tired of burning prisoners in cages, blowing them up while tied to Palmyra's columns, mass executions with bursts of Kalashnikov fire or just beheadings, Islamic State's militants are constantly exploring new forms of perversion and torture. The latest? Using children to carry out killings and "quartering" in which the horses used in the Middle Ages are replaced, in an obligatory demonstration of modernity, by powerful four-wheel-drive vehicles.

The constantly escalating horror is combined with careful staging with technical resources worthy of a major TV production. Witnesses have reported use of cranes for camera tracking shots (in particular, during a mass execution on a Libyan beach) and the presence of several cameramen during executions in order to film simultaneously from different angles². The setting, the lighting and the time of day – almost nothing is left to change in these productions, which often take several hours. Special effects are sometimes used in the editing. Abu Abdullah, another cameraman interviewed by the *Washington Post* after defecting, said that during a filmed execution it is often the camera crew that decides at what point the execution is carried out, and not the executioner.

JOHN CANTLIE, JOURNALIST AND IS HOSTAGE

British journalist John Cantlie has a special place in Islamic State's propaganda apparatus. So far the only western journalist to be used full time by IS, he has been given the job of showing the "reality" in the territories it occupies. But it is obvious that the content of his very professionally presented reports are completely controlled by his captors and that his survival depends on his continuing to play this role. Cantlie continues to be a hostage. His situation, and the use being made of him, have been the subject of several Reporters Without Borders press releases expressing outrage and demanding his release³. Without success.

A veteran reporter who has worked for the *BBC* and *The Sunday Times*, Cantlie was kidnapped along with US journalist James Foley in November 2012. Islamic State beheaded Foley on 19 August 2014 and then posted images of his execution online. Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's National Front party, posted one of them on her Twitter account in mid-December 2015, and then quickly removed it. A few weeks after Foley's murder, Cantlie appeared in a video, the first of a series of eight, explaining that he was going to address western public opinion on behalf of his captors.

1. *Documenting The Virtual « Califate »*, october 2015, op. cit.

2. In "Le secret des sources" on 12 December 2015, with Luc Matthieu (Libération), David Thomson (RFI), Hala Kodmani (L'Express) and Eric Biégala (France culture).

3. In particular, on 18 September and 28 October 2015.

He did not hide the fact that he was still a hostage. “Now, I know what you’re thinking,” he read on camera. “You’re thinking, ‘He’s only doing this because he’s a prisoner. He’s got a gun to his head and he’s being forced to do this,’ Right? Well, it’s true. I am a prisoner. That I cannot deny. But seeing as how I’ve been abandoned by my government and my fate now lies in the hands of the Islamic State, I have nothing to lose.”

In the “advertorials” that followed, Cantlie interviewed IS fighters and went around Kobani, Mosul and Aleppo with a camera, condemning the international coalition’s air strikes and deploring the deaths of civilians. He wore an orange jumpsuit in the first video but was later seen with a beard and dressed like a local. In the last videos, he had shaved off his beard and looked Western again, but it was not clear whether his situation had really evolved. After a long absence that fuelled concern for his fate, he resurfaced in issue No. 12 of *Dabiq*, which was published on 18 November, five days after the Paris attacks. His by-line appeared on a review of what the international media were saying about the possibility of a “truce” with IS. It was accompanied by a photo of Cantlie wearing a prisoner jumpsuit again although now it was yellow, like the jumpsuits once worn by certain IS leaders including the organization’s founder, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, in Camp Bucca, a former US detention centre in Iraq.



← Propaganda photo produced by and for Islamic State

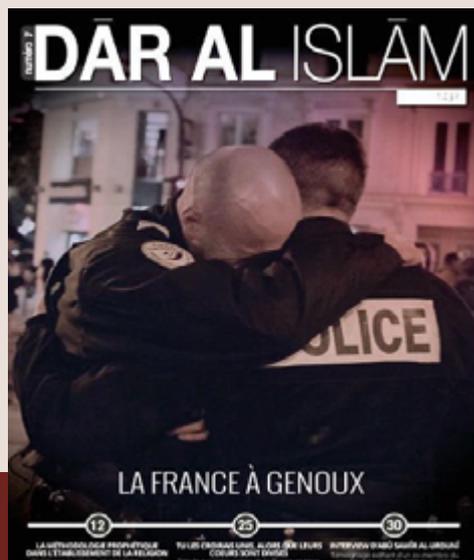
USING GLOSSY PAPER

TO MANIPULATE

Dabiq, the magazine that recently brought out its 12th issue, is named after a small Syrian town near Aleppo that occupies a central place in the religious and warrior belief system of Islamic State's militants. According to their reading of one of the Prophet's sayings, it is here that the final showdown between the crusader army and Allah's soldiers will take place. This English-language magazine meanwhile continues to publish an issue every two months or so containing propaganda targeted at the Western public that is vetted at the highest IS level. Printed on glossy paper somewhere in Raqqa, *Dabiq* is designed to be the caliphate's media showcase. Wielding words and photos like sticks of dynamite, it aims above all to promote the continuing recruitment of supporters in the West, and encourage Muslims to either do their *hijra* (emigration to a Muslim country) to territory under IS control or carry out attacks in the country where they live.

As with John Cantlie's video reports, the Islamic State ideologues in charge of *Dabiq* use journalistic tricks – sophisticated layout, catchy headlines and photos, and even “exclusives” – to promote their deadly ideas. The latest issue, headlined “Just Terror,” defends the 13 November attacks in Paris. Slimmer versions of *Dabiq*, sometimes with different names, are produced in other major west European languages, and in Russian and Turkish. Seven issues of the French version, called *Dar Al-Islam*, have so far been produced. The cover of the seventh, published in late November, shows an emblematic photo from the Paris attacks (two tearful policemen embracing outside the Bataclan nightclub) with the headline “France on its knees.” A particular feature of the French version is that IS uses it to explicitly urge supporters to murder teachers because, as the guardians of secularism in French schools, they are “in open war with the Muslim family.”

→
«Dar Al Islam» and
«Dabiq» magazine
covers covers of
November 2015 (left)
and July 2015 (right)



4 REPORTING IN JIHAD TERRITORY - MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?

Is it just extremely difficult or is it suicidal for reporters to try to cover Jihad in the field? Despite the dangers, there are journalists who venture into the territory of Islamic State (Daesh), Al-Qaeda, Somalia's Al-Shabaab or Africa's Boko Haram, and come out alive. How do they go about it?

1. Medyan Dairieh has lived in the belly of the beast. A Palestinian photo-journalist and war reporter based in Britain, he was the first journalist to go around with Islamic State militants in the Syrian city of Raqqa. He managed to be "embedded" with IS for three weeks in June 2014 in order to cover its inner workings and its indoctrination of children for *Vice News*. He was able to do this thanks to the many professional contacts he had established in the region on previous reporting trips.

Source : Huffington Post

Dairieh has had a lot of experience of working in hostile terrain. He previously went to Syria in 2013 for the *Vice News* website to follow the rebels of the Al-Nusra Front, a Jihadi group affiliated to Al-Qaeda. Without this background, he would never have been sent to Raqqa, said Kevin Sutcliffe, who oversees news programming for *Vice News* in Europe. Dairieh is a "heavyweight" in this kind of reporting, he added.¹

German author and former parliamentarian Jürgen Todenhöfer, 74, does not regard himself as a journalist but he was the first westerner to manage to enter IS-controlled territory and do a report there. He and his son Frederic spent ten days with IS members in December 2014, visiting the Syrian cities of Raqqa (the self-proclaimed caliphate's capital) and Deir Ezzor, and the Iraqi city of Mosul.

Before setting off, Todenhöfer corresponded with around 80 German Jihadis and struck up a friendship with two of them. This enabled him to contact representatives of Islamic State's press department online and not only get them to agree to the idea of his entering their territory to do a report but also persuade IS to guarantee his safety while working there.

THE LIMITS OF "EMBEDDED" REPORTING

Being embedded with IS militants is one way for journalists to be able to report from territory controlled by the Jihadi group, but it has its limitations, beginning with the reporting's credibility. How do you guarantee the veracity of the information you obtain when you are "under control"? Firstly, "you must ensure that the embedded reporting continues to be objective and does not just serve to transmit IS propaganda," said Hala Kodmani, a journalist with French and Syrian dual nationality who went to Raqqa in 2013 to cover IS. She nonetheless acknowledged that maintaining this balance is difficult because "embedded journalists usually have to agree to follow the orders of the groups that receive them."

Sutcliffe of *Vice News* conceded that, although Dairieh had unprecedented access to Islamic State militants in Syria, he was accompanied throughout by members of the caliphate's press office¹. It was the same for Todenhöfer, who acknowledged having been chaperoned by the Jihadis throughout his visit to Syria and Iraq, even if he believed he had real freedom to do his reporting.

1.
Source : Huffington Post

Although Dairieh and Todenhöfer were permanently escorted by Jihadi militants, which "raises a number of questions about journalistic independence," their reporting is nonetheless interesting, said Thomas Dandois, a French author who has done several reports about Somalia's Al-Shabaab movement in recent years. He said he is "convinced that journalists have a duty to go everywhere to do their work and must therefore accept the constraints sometimes imposed on them." He nonetheless stressed that they must be "transparent about the way the report was negotiated and explain that it was carried out under certain conditions."



↑
German journalist Jürgen
Todenhöfer interviewing a
German Jihadi in Syria

LIMITING RISKS IN THE FIELD

These conditions, often negotiated with great difficulty, are necessary to ensure the safety of the reporters. "It goes without saying that risk is part of journalism but no story is worth your life," said Hamid Mir, a Pakistani journalist who interviewed Osama Bin Laden three times in Afghanistan from 1997 to 2001, thanks to his Taliban contacts, and who was the only journalist to have met him after 9/11. "You have to weigh the pros and cons in order to decide if the story is worth taking that risk," Mir added.

"You have to know how to limit the risks when going into hostile terrain," said Kodmani. This includes being discreet. When she reported in Syria in 2013, she did not tell anyone she was coming except the family she stayed with. "People talk a lot and could put you in danger, even unintentionally, because they know too much about your activities," she warned. Mir insisted on the importance of certain formalities, explaining that he always kept his superiors abreast of his plans to interview Bin Laden.

Dandois said you must sometimes opt for prudence when the situation permits no alternative. He decided it was too dangerous for him to go and meet Al-Shabaab militiamen when they controlled much of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, in 2010. Instead he entrusted his camera to a local contact, a journalist in whom he had "full confidence," and asked him to interview one of the rebel group's fighters on his behalf.

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Osama claims he has nukes

Continued from Page 1
 weapons. We have the weapons as deterrent.
 HM: Where did you get those weapons from?
 OSB: Got to the next question.
 HM: Demonstrations are being held in many European

countries against American attacks on Afghanistan. Thousands of the protesters were non-Muslims. What is your opinion about those non-Muslim protesters?
 OSB: There are many innocent and good-hearted people in the West. American media insti-

gates them against Muslims. However, some good-hearted people are protesting against American attacks because human nature abhors injustice. The Muslims were massacred under the US patronage in Bosnia. I am sure that some officers of the State Department

had resigned in protest. Many years ago the US ambassador in Egypt had resigned in protest against the policies of President Jimmy Carter. Nice and civilized are everywhere. The Jewish lobby has taken America and the West hostage.
 HM: Some people say that war is no solution to any issue. Do you think that some political formula could be found to stop the present war?
 OSB: You should put this question to those who have started this war. We are only defending ourselves.
 HM: If America got out of Saudi Arabia and the Al-Aqsa mosque was liberated, would you then present yourself for trial in some Muslim country?
 OSB: Only Afghanistan is an Islamic country. Pakistan follows the English law. I don't consider Saudi Arabia an Islamic country. If the Americans have charges against me, we too have a charge sheet against them.
 HM: Pakistan government decided to cooperate with America after Sept 11, which you don't consider right. What do you think Pakistan should have done but to cooperate with America?
 OSB: The government of Pakistan should have the wisdom

of the people in view. It should not have surrendered to the unjustified demands of America. America does not have solid proof against us. It just has some surmises. It is unjust to start bombing on the basis of those surmises.
 HM: Had America decided to attack Pakistan with the help of India and Israel, what would have we done?
 OSB: What has America achieved by attacking Afghanistan? We will not leave the Pakistani people and the Pakistani territory at anybody's mercy.
 We will defend Pakistan. But we have been disappointed by Gen Pervez Musharraf. He says that the majority is with him. I say the majority is against him.
 Bush has used the word crusade. This is a crusade declared by Bush. It is no wisdom to barter off blood of Afghan brethren to improve Pakistan's economy. He will be punished by the Pakistani people and Allah.
 Right now a great war of Islamic history is being fought in Afghanistan. All the big powers are united against Muslims. It is 'ansab' to participate in this war.
 TM: A French newspaper has

claimed that you had kidney problem and had secretly gone to Dubai for treatment last year. Is that correct?
 OSB: My kidneys are all right. I did not go to Dubai last year. One French newspaper has published an imaginary interview with Islamabad deadline with

one of my sons who lives in Saudi Arabia. All this is false.
 HM: Is it correct that a daughter of Mulla Omar is your wife or your daughter-in-law?
 OSB: (Laughs). All my wives are Arabs and all my daughters are married to Arab Mujahideen. I have spiritual

relationship with Mulla Omar. He is a great and brave Muslim of this age. He does not fear anyone but Allah. He is not under any personal relationship or obligation to me. He is only discharging his religious duty. I, too, have not chosen this life out of any personal consideration.



SOMEWHERE NEAR KABUL: Hamid Mir, Editor Asafiq with Osama bin Laden.



SOMEWHERE NEAR KABUL: Osama bin Laden and Asyraf Mousawi.

THE ART OF REPORTING FROM A DISTANCE

Because of the dangers to which they would be exposed, some journalists opt to report from afar. Isn't this paradoxical for reporters in the field? Not necessarily. The areas controlled by Islamic State are much less opaque than they seem. Information gets out. In fact a lot of it does. "We're in a completely crazy situation in which everything going on in Syria is documented," the French journalist David Thomson said. "It's an area that is inaccessible to all of the planet's journalists but we have immediate and very good knowledge of it" (3)

"You don't need to interview militants in order to cover the situation in an area controlled by a Jihadi group," said Kodmani, who now operates on the Turkish side of the border with Syria, focusing on people who have fled Syria and on those who can describe what daily life under Islamic State rule is like. She has many contacts in Syria and turns to militant networks and citizen-journalists on the ground to corroborate the information she obtains.

Getting as close as possible to areas controlled by Islamic State without actually entering them was the method chosen by Jérôme Fritel in November 2014 to make *Daech: naissance d'un Etat islamique*, a documentary broadcast by the Franco-German TV channel Arte. He spent three weeks in Iraq and a week along the border between Turkey and Syria, meeting people living in IS-controlled territory who could describe the organization's growing power.

"The invisible border separating Islamic State territory from the rest of the country is actually quite porous, even if it is almost uncrossable for journalists," Fritel said. "Those living in areas controlled by Islamic State often come and go, and by going to meet them, you can get a fairly accurate idea of what is going on without actually going there." Fritel added that he and his cameraman "never spent more than a few days in the same place (...) to avoid the risk of being spotted."



Journalist Hamid Mir's interview with Osama Bin Laden after 9/11, published in the Pakistani newspaper "Dawn".

1.
Source :
La Fabrique de l'info





←
VICE News journalist
Medyan Dairieh

27

RAQQA IS BEING SLAUGHTERED SILENTLY

Created in April 2014, Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS) is a citizen-journalist collective with about 20 members that set itself the task of telling the outside world what is happening in Raqqa, Islamic State's self-proclaimed capital. Thanks to its intensive activity on social networks and its links with the international media, it has emerged as one of the few credible and independent sources of information about IS atrocities. Its work is extremely difficult and dangerous because the Jihadi group regards RBSS as an "enemy of God" and is out to get its reporters. At least two of them have been murdered by IS. Ibrahim Abd El Kader was beheaded by IS in the apartment he was using in southeastern Turkey in October 2015. Bellah Ibrahim al-Mutaz was murdered in May 2014 after being kidnapped by IS.

RESS

MITE

5

COLLATERAL EFFECTS OF THE FIGHT AGAINST JIHADISM

The collateral effects of counter-terrorism and its often murky methods have been quickly felt by the media. Media freedom and the war on terror don't always get on well together. In many parts of the world, journalists have been the victims trumped-up charges such as complicity with terrorism, defending terrorism and even spying on behalf of terrorist organizations. And yet they were just doing their job as journalists.



↑
The Egyptian government headed by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi gags the media on the pretext of combatting terrorism.

Syria is clearly the country where the authorities have used counter-terrorism as a pretext for jailing, torturing and killing journalists on the widest scale. On 16 February 2012, for example, air force intelligence officers raided the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) in Damascus and abducted all of its staff. SCM director Mazen Darwish and two of his most senior assistants, Hussein Ghareer and Hani Al-Zitani, were held until the summer of 2015. Two colleagues, Mansour Omari and Abd al-Rahman Hamada, had previously been freed on bail in February 2013. But all of them were initially held incommunicado for several months and all were mistreated and tortured.

According to an indictment issued on 27 February 2012, these five SCM staff members were charged with “publicizing terrorist acts” under article 8 of an anti-terrorism law promulgated by President Bashar Al-Assad at the start of 2012. The SCM’s only crime was to have issued reports about the situation of the media in Syria and about persons detained, disappeared, wanted or killed in connection with the Syrian conflict. Darwish, Ghareer and Zitani were freed under a June 2014 amnesty although their release did not take place until a year after the amnesty, by when they had spent a total of three and a half years in jail. Speaking at the Paris headquarters of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on 12 December 2015, Ghareer (who is also a blogger) said their release was part of a public relations offensive by the government with the aim of resuming talks with the international community.

You don't need to be suspected of sympathizing with Islamic State to get arrested. Counter-terrorism can be used as a pretext for tinkering with the facts, even historical facts. A good example is Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, an austere Islamist movement that was founded in the northeastern city of Ismailia in 1928 and now has branches in many countries. The new government conveniently declared it to be a terrorist organization a few months after the army overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood-backed government headed by Mohamed Morsi on 3 July 2013. This allowed the authorities to crack down not only on Muslim Brotherhood members but also on many journalists accused of affiliation to the movement or complicity with it. This is the case with most of the 23 journalists currently jailed in Egypt.

They include Mahmoud Abu Zeid, a photojournalist also known as Shawkan, who was arrested while covering clashes between security forces and pro-Morsi activists on 14 August 2013. Accused of murder, attempted murder and membership of an outlawed organization, he is still being held in Cairo's Tora prison although provisional detention for more than two years is prohibited by Egyptian law. His trial, along with that of 700 detainees, began on 12 December 2015 but was immediately postponed because of a "lack of room" for so many defendants. RSF has repeatedly called for his immediate release and the withdrawal of all the charges against him. Without success.

It was a presidential pardon that ended the detention of two members of *Al Jazeera's* Cairo bureau, Egyptian journalists Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed, on 23 September 2015. Arrested in 2013 together with their Australian colleague Peter Grete (who was deported in February 2015), they were sentenced to seven and ten years in prison respectively on charges of supporting a terrorist organization and disseminating false news. In all, they spent more 400 days in prison, of which several months in solitary confinement.



↑
Mahmoud Abu Zeid

Their release was the result of an energetic international campaign by many NGOs (including RSF) and protests by many of Egypt's allies including the United States. The Egyptian government's determination to punish *Al Jazeera* was due to the Qatar-funded TV channel's supposed support for the Muslim Brotherhood. The media are now forbidden to publish, broadcast or even possess Muslim Brotherhood material and demonstrations in support of the movement are violently dispersed by the security forces, which do not hesitate to use live rounds to fire on any photographers covering these demonstrations.

Declared a priority by governments, counter-terrorism tolerates criticism with difficulty and regards discretion and even opaqueness as overriding requirements. Many countries have not hesitated to go so far as to obstruct the work of journalists covering their operations against Jihadis. This was the case with France and Mali during Operation Serval against Islamist groups in the Sahel in January 2013. Aside from a few reporters embedded with the military, Malian and foreign journalists were kept about 100 km away from the theatre of operations, as many reporters told RSF at the time.



←
In Egypt, journalists can go to prison if they are identified with the Muslim Brotherhood.

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RSF reacted by issuing a press release on 15 February 2013 urging the French and Malian authorities to stop obstructing the media. "The French authorities, supported by their Malian counterparts, are strictly controlling access to information," the release said. "Excessive citing of security grounds is seriously curtailing media freedom. While we can understand the French military's stated desire to prevent reporters being abducted or attacked, the defence ministry should conform to the demands of democratic values by allowing the media to have direct access to the news rather than keeping them at a distance, as it has done until now."

Journalists trying to cover developments in Mali repeatedly expressed frustration at having to rely solely on the photos, video footage and press releases provided by the authorities. When they were finally allowed into liberated towns to talk to a few locals, they were under heavy military escort and the visits seemed orchestrated, reporters said.

In the Horn of Africa, the Somali authorities have been guilty of many violations of media freedom in the name of combatting the rebel Islamist militia Al-Shabaab. Any

reference to this terrorist group in radio or TV broadcasts has been banned since September 2014. Many independent radio stations, including *Radio Shabelle*, have been persecuted by the security services for contravening the ban. Most are now closed and their journalists have spent long periods in detention and have been subjected to heavy-handed interrogations.

At times the tendency to identify journalism with terrorism assumes grotesque proportions. Ali Anouzla, the editor of the Arabic-language version of the Moroccan news website *Lakome*, was charged on 24 September 2013 with providing “material assistance” to a terrorist group, “defending terrorism” and “inciting the execution of terrorist acts” for reporting that Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) had just released a long propaganda video about Morocco criticizing the monarchy and calling for Jihad. To support this information, Anouzla included a link to a blog post by a journalist with the Spanish daily *El País* in which the video could be seen. For this, he spent more than five weeks in detention, until released provisionally on 25 October 2013. Officially, the investigation is still under way.

In Cameroon, investigative journalist Simon Ateba was arrested on 28 August 2015 and was accused of spying for the militant Islamist group Boko Haram because he had visited the Minawao refugee camp in the far north to do a story on conditions in camp for Nigerians fleeing Boko Haram atrocities in neighbouring Nigeria. “They repeatedly asked me if I was a Boko Haram spy,” he said in an account of his experience posted on social networks. He was finally released on 1 September after spending “three nights and a day in a stinking cell,” he said.

The fight against Boko Haram, which is terrorizing the population in Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon, has highlighted the lack of respect for media freedom in these countries. In Nigeria, where Boko Haram has its stronghold in the north, the authorities have imposed a virtual blackout on media coverage of military operations in areas with a rebel presence and refuse to provide any assistance to journalists venturing into these areas. In June 2014, the Nigerian army seized several issues of the country’s leading newspapers on the grounds that the distribution trucks were suspected of being used by the terrorists. Nigerian journalists have also been the victims of reprisals for articles criticizing the army’s inability to combat Boko Haram and its probable infiltration by Boko Haram members.



←
Simon Ateba, a Cameroonian journalist who was arbitrarily accused of spying for Boko Haram.

REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS promotes and defends the freedom to receive and impart information worldwide. Based in Paris, it has ten international bureaux (in Berlin, Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, New York, Stockholm, Tunis, Turin, Vienna and Washington DC) and has more than 150 correspondents in all five continents.

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