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THE DANGERS OF REPORTING ON HUMAN RIGHTS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OF THE

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THE DANGERS OF REPORTING ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thursday, May 16, 2019
House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations,
Committee on Foreign Affairs,

Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Karen Bass (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. BASS. Good afternoon, everyone. This hearing for the Subcommittee for Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations will come to order. I note that a quorum is present.

The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the dangers of reporting on human rights. Today, we are here to highlight the dangers, the atrocities against journalists, press freedom, and to consider the various ways the international community can work to protect journalists. The seriousness of the threat to press freedom and global freedom, writ large, requires the United States to expand its alliances with fellow democracies and deepen its own commitment to democratic shared values. The world's democratic nations must show a united front and defend democracy as an international right in order to decrease the current authoritarian and anti-liberal trends across many places in the world.

So, without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

I would like to start out by thanking our distinguished witnesses who are here with us today. I would also like to especially thank Hatice Cengiz and Ms. Hoja who will be speaking about their personal experiences. It is becoming increasingly harder for journalists to do their jobs, educating the public about issues and events that affect citizens' everyday lives and enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable. The press is constantly threatened by authoritarian governments and their security forces, judges who enforce harsh punishment, violent extremist groups, media companies that want to control the narrative, and online trolls who make threats via the internet.

The Committee to Protect Journalists notes that the number of journalists killed on the job as reprisal murders for their work nearly doubled in 2018 from just a year earlier. CPJ also noted

that the jailing of journalists also hit a high. The World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders shows that the number of countries regarded as safe where journalists can work in complete security continues to decline. Amnesty International regularly highlights countries are specific journalists who are harassed, threatened, detained, held without charge, are given extreme sentences for reporting on human rights.

Human Rights Watch has highlighted Uganda's attempts to gag the media, Tunisian bloggers held for criticizing officials, the many journalists in Myanmar who face charges, Burundi's crackdown on media freedom including suspending the Voice of America and BBC operating licenses, the Digital Security Act passed in Bangladesh that strikes a blow to freedom of speech in that country, and many other instances of the increasing global crackdown on journalists. The difficult situation in Hungary where the government now controls 90 percent of the media outlets in the country. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, during the 10-year period between 1909 and 1918, there were a total of 602 journalists killed because of retaliation, exposure to combat, exposure to other dangerous assignments. In general, nondemocratic governments are traditionally more likely to engage in censorship, legal restrictions, or other actions that restrict media freedom.

But there has been a shift across the world. Challenges to journalism and press freedoms may be contributing to global stagnation or declines in democracy generally over the past decade. Whether it is an attack on the Capital Gazette newsroom in Annapolis, Maryland that killed five journalists, the rape and murder of Bulgarian journalist Victoria Marinova, or the human rights atrocity that happened to Mr. Khashoggi in Turkey, journalists are being violently attacked for doing their jobs.

The rise of digital authoritarianism is another way for governments to control their citizens and use the term "fake news" to suppress those who oppose them, helping to discredit the internet and other media platforms. Right here in the U.S., the leadership, the administration continues to mock the press, often rejecting the news media's role, calling it fake news hoping to discredit our own press. This is unacceptable of a leading global democracy and goes against the fundamental principles of press freedom and gives license to political leaders who silence the media as part of their larger authoritarian agenda.

My colleagues and I here in Congress believe in a diverse media and protecting journalists' ability to do their jobs without the fear of physical violence or repression. Fortunately, for the United States, we have strong institutions including robust constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and speech and healthy legislative and judicial systems that check executive power, or I should say try to check executive power, but we know that this is not the case around the world. The numerous attacks on journalists around the world are jarring and it is clear there is profound global crisis of press freedom.

There also seems to be a lack of international leadership on journalists' rights and safety. I look forward to hearing what you all think we should do to combat the violence against journalists and ensuring the continued strength of our press freedoms. I now recog-

nize the ranking member for the purpose of making an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chair Bass follows:]

Congressmember Karen Bass
AGH Subcommittee Hearing
Hearing: "Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights"
May 16, 2019

This hearing for the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations will come to order.

I note that a quorum is present.

The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the **"Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights".**

Today, we are here to highlight the dangers of reporting on human rights, the atrocities against journalist, press freedom, and to consider the various ways the international community can work to protect journalists. The seriousness of the threat to press freedom and global freedom writ-large requires the United States to expand its alliances with fellow democracies and deepen its own commitment to democratic shared values. The world's democratic nations must show a united front and defend democracy as an international right, in order to decrease the current authoritarian and antiliberal trends across many places in the world.

So... without objection, all members may have five days to submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

I would like to start out by thanking our distinguished witnesses who are here with us today. I would also like to especially thank Hatice Cenguiz (Ha-tee-ja - Sing-Gaze) and Ms. Hoja (Hoo-Ja) who will be speaking about their personal experiences.

It is becoming increasingly harder for journalists to do their jobs—educating the public about issues and events that affect citizen's everyday lives and enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable. The press is constantly threatened by authoritarian governments and their security forces, judges who enforce harsh punishments, violent extremist groups, media companies that want to control the narrative, and online trolls who make threats via the internet.

- According to a Freedom House report, global press freedom has declined to its lowest point since 2003 and during this decline, there have been an unprecedented number of threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies; and new moves by authoritarian states to control the media, including beyond their borders.

- The Committee to Protect Journalists notes that the number of journalists killed on the job as reprisal murders for their work, nearly doubled in 2018 from just a year earlier. CPJ also noted that the jailing of journalists also hit a high.
- The 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shows that the number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline.
- Amnesty International regularly highlights countries or specific journalists who are harassed, threatened, detained, held without charge, or given extreme sentences for reporting on human rights. Among them are:
    - A radio journalist in Mozambique who is facing charges for interviewing displaced people fleeing attacks by militant groups.

  - The Editor in Chief of a local newspaper in Zambia who is in jail for publishing an opinion piece alleging corruption in the judiciary.
  - At least 30 journalists who have been killed in Nicaragua have been killed in the last three years.
  - An investigative reporter in Pakistan who has been accused of "cyber terrorism" after he criticized a state institution.

- Human Rights Watch has highlighted
  - Uganda's attempts to gag the media,
  - Tunisian Bloggers held for criticizing officials,
  - The many journalists in Myanmar who face charges, Burundi's crackdown on media freedom including suspending Voice of America and BBC operating licenses,
  - The imprisonment of three journalists who are affiliated with the congressionally funded Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Voice of America (VOA), by authorities in Vietnam; the politically motivated arrest of Philippine journalist, Maria Ressa;
  - The Digital Security Act passed in Bangladesh that strikes a blow to freedom of speech in the country, and many other instances of the increasing global crackdown on journalists.
  - The increasingly difficult situation in Hungary, where the government now controls 90% of the media outlets in the country.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), during the ten year period between 2009 and 2018 there were a total of 602 journalists killed because of 1) retaliation for their work; 2) exposure to combat or crossfire; or 3) exposure to other dangerous assignments in conflict areas such as Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan but

several journalists have also been killed in the United States and United Kingdom over this span.

In general, non-democratic governments are traditionally more likely to engage in censorship, legal restrictions, or other actions that restrict media freedom. But there has been a shift across the world. Challenges to journalism and press freedoms may be contributing to global stagnation or declines in democracy generally over the past decade-plus. This means that we should all be concerned about the undermining of journalism and the lack of respect for the freedom of press because this is the very foundation of human rights and democracy.

Whether it is the attack on the Capital Gazette newsroom in Annapolis, MD, that killed five journalists, the rape and murder of Bulgarian journalist, Victoria Marinova, or the human rights atrocity that happened to Mr. Khashoggi in Turkey, journalists are being violently attacked for doing their jobs----

The rise of digital authoritarianism is another way for governments to control their citizens and use the term "fake news" to suppress those who oppose them, helping to discredit the internet and other media platforms.

Right here in the United States of America, President Trump continues to mock the press, often rejecting the news media's role-- calling it "fake news" hoping to discredit our press. This is unacceptable of a leading global democracy and goes against the fundamental principles of press freedom and gives license to political leaders who silence the media as part of their larger authoritarian agenda.

My colleagues and I here in Congress believe in a diverse media and protecting journalist's ability to do their jobs without the fear of

physical violence or repression. Fortunately for the United States, we have strong institutions including robust constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and speech, and healthy legislative and judicial systems that can check executive power, but we know that this is not the case around the world.

The numerous attacks on journalists around the world are jarring and it is clear there is a profound global crisis of press freedom. There also seems to be a lack of international leadership on journalists' rights and safety.

I look forward to hearing what you all think we should do to combat the violence against journalists and ensuring the continued strength of our press freedoms.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Closing remarks

Thank you for joining us to address the worldwide fight for press freedom and safety of those who risk their lives to share vital information with the world.

This hearing is now adjourned

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is a delight to welcome these unbelievably effective witnesses, those who have borne a terrible price for either in the case of one individual, Jamal Khashoggi, a terrible, terrible murder by the Saudi Arabians, and of course others from Radio Free Asia who is here to testify.

I do want to thank you for this hearing. It is part of an ongoing effort that we are all making to say that a free, unfettered press is extraordinarily important. And unfortunately, the freedom of the media worldwide is under siege particularly at the totalitarian countries. Human rights reporters in particular are dealing with core civil and political rights, the right to a fair trial, the right to freely assemble or to practice religion, and the right to the most fundamental of all human rights, the right to life.

Freedom of speech is doubly implicated when journalists are targeted by a repressive government. Not only are the voices of journalists silenced, but also the voices of the victims of civil rights abuses for whom journalists allowed to have their stories told, and their sources as well who are often tracked down and abused.

Take the example of one of our witnesses, Gulchehra Hoja, from Radio Free Asia. I had the privilege of inviting her to testify at a hearing last year before the congressional-Executive Commission on China for her work on reporting on the repression of the Uyghurs by the Chinese Government in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. As a direct result of her brave reporting, more than two dozen of her relatives were placed in so-called "reeducation camps," concentration camps. In other words, she both reports the news and becomes the news insofar, as her family has been victimized on account of her fulfilling her professional duties.

When we put the face of a victim on an issue and we hear what they have endured or their families, it becomes personalized and it makes it even more compelling and more understandable to everyone, including Members of Congress. So thank you for sharing that story. I would point out that another person who worked for Radio Free Europe is Khadija, who I actually met with in Baku some years ago, got seven and a half years by the Government of Azerbaijan for reporting on the kleptocracy of the president of that country, Aliyev.

And so I did convene a hearing. We heard from a number of important people in the journalist world including Radio Free Europe's leader, head director, and made an appeal to Aliyev to let her go. She reported on corruption. She had every right to do so, and yet she was serving a seven and a half year sentence, and she was working as a stringer for us, the U.S. Government. I introduced a bill, the Azerbaijan Democracy bill, an act, and really began saying Aliyev needs to release all of his political prisoners and that includes members of the press. He did release them. He released her.

But again, the message had been sent and I think it still remains and has a chilling effect that lasts for a very, very long time that if you cross swords with a dictator, you will pay a very, very severe price. So self-censorship becomes a very real issue as well and I am sure our distinguished witnesses can speak to that.

Hatice, thank you for the time that we spent together yesterday. Both my staff and I were greatly moved by your love for your

fiance d the lack of accountability on the part of those people who murdered him. It seems to me that coming now again in Washington should keep that the issue is not just alive in terms of the accountability, but there are people within the Saudi Arabian Government that need to be held to accountable. And I for one believe that Magnitsky sanctions need to be meted out against those individuals and I am sure we have very good actionable information on them for their role in this terrible atrocity.

And then sometimes we go from the horrific murder or incarceration of journalists to things that are like ridiculous. For example, in China we know the children's character Winnie-the-Pooh is now subject to Chinese censorship because Winnie-the-Pooh—and members might have seen in the Guardian, Winnie-the-Pooh and a picture of Xi Jinping was run. And the Guardian newspaper starts off by saying, "Who is afraid of Winnie-the-Pooh? The Chinese Government, apparently." It shows you how the skin-deep and how easily offended, and then of course there is retaliation against real people, not characters from the Disney folks, that occur. I mean, it is just the tip of the iceberg of just how extreme.

I held hearings in this committee years ago when Google, Microsoft, Cisco, and Yahoo were enabling the dictatorship to censor just about everything on the internet, and still do, sadly. But then it was Google's complicity in that, that I and others found to be appalling.

Yesterday, we heard from Hong Kong democracy activists at a hearing of the China Commission, and one of them pointed out because they talked about the chilling effect that the new extradition amendments might have and basically what the lack of press freedom in Hong Kong is having on journalists, particularly in the area of self-censorship, not only are people in mainland China, and as you pointed out, Mr. Simon, you know, after Turkey, China is second in terms of incarcerated journalists. And it is probably an under-count, because it is such a secret society, we do not know how many are being held fully, particularly bloggers.

So you have a situation where the Apple Daily, which is one of the Chinese language newspapers, it is one of the biggest for years, has literally shrunk in size, because not only are they chilled from carrying certain articles, the Chinese Government goes to their advertisers because Hong Kong still has some freedoms, and tells them, "You do not put your advertisements into that newspaper." So they go after them in every which way including economically.

Elsewhere, Erdogan is waging a war on journalists, and again Joel Simon will talk about the fact that they are the single largest jailer of journalists in the world and that is appalling. It is not, I mean when you compare that in population to China, it is just, it is an outrage and hopefully you will speak further to that later on.

Again, I want to thank you for your testimoneys in advance and thank you for bearing witness to a very ugly truth about the censorship, the incarceration, the intimidation of those men and women who are journalists who are trying to bring truth to light. Yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

I now want to introduce the panel. And before I do, let me say that I believe you all have written testimony that you have given

and that we would ask that you summarize your testimony. I am going to hold everyone to the 5-minute rule. You will know though that there will be an opportunity to speak again. We will have another round. But I at least want to go through with everybody sticking to 5 minutes and I would apply that to witnesses as well as myself and my colleagues here on the dais.

Our first witness, Joel Simon, has been Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists since 2006. Simon has led the organization through a period of expansion, growing CPJ's network of global correspondence, creating a new North America program focused on press freedom in the United States, and helping to develop an emergency response team focused on safety and direct assistance to journalists in crisis around the world.

Sarah Repucci is Freedom House's Senior Director of Research and Analysis. In this capacity she leads the team producing Freedom House's flagship research and analysis reports, including Freedom in the World, Freedom on the Net, and the latest project, Freedom in the Media. She has 20 years' experience in research in the area of democracy, human rights, and good governance.

Hatice Cengiz is a PhD candidate living in Istanbul, Turkey and the fiance of Jamal Khashoggi. Since his disappearance and death last October, she has been a steadfast voice in the call for justice for Khashoggi. We thank you very much for your willingness to share your story.

Gulchehra Hoja is a broadcaster with Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service where she has worked since 2001. Prior to that Ms. Hoja was a successful TV personality and journalist in China's Uyghur Region with Chinese State media. But after hearing RFA's Uyghur Service news broadcast, she decided to leave China and join the U.S.'s effort to provide the Uyghur people with trustworthy, uncensored journalism. Again, thank you so much for your participation today.

And you may begin, Mr. Simon.

STATEMENT OF JOEL SIMON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS

Mr. SIMON. Well, I thank you, Chair Bass. Thank you, Ranking Member Smith and other distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting the Committee to Protect Journalists to testify. As executive director for an organization that advocates globally for press freedom and as a former reporter in Mexico and Central America where I saw firsthand the violence encountered by local journalists who cover human rights, I commend you for holding this hearing.

Press freedom is among the most fundamental of human rights. It is essential to democracy, accountability, and global security. The U.S. plays a vital role in ensuring that this right is protected. Governments around the world seek to censor human rights coverage by criminalizing journalism. This is how Myanmar retaliated against Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who were jailed for over 500 days after reporting on a massacre of the Rohingya Muslim minority in that country. Their pardon, though welcomed, does not undo the terrible injustice committed against them.

At the close of 2018, CPJ recorded at least 250 journalists behind bars. Of these, 151 had reported on human rights issues. In 70 percent of all of these cases, the journalists were jailed on anti-State charges including accusations of terrorism. Turkey, Egypt, and China all had high numbers of journalists in prison for reporting on human rights. And I want to make one point about China, which is that half of all the journalists jailed in China according to CPJ data were Uyghur journalists which gives an indication of the extent of that crackdown.

And what is also alarming is that the number held around the world on false news charges, that was 28 globally compared to 9 in 2016. It is disconcerting to see that governments, most recently Russia and Singapore, justify repression by claiming they are cracking down on fake news. Denouncing critical journalists as fake news can also spur online attacks and inflame public opinion, making it easier for repressive governments to justify legal action. Filipino journalist Maria Ressa of Rappler is facing a slew of legal cases over that publication's investigation into abuses by the government of Rodrigo Duterte.

The ultimate form of censorship is of course murder. Of the 54 journalists killed for their work in 2018, 13 reported on human rights and 8 of those were targeted for murder. Since 1992, CPJ has documented at least 1,340 journalists killed in retaliation for their work; at least 285 of those covered human rights. This brutal method of silencing critics was seen last year with the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi. He was killed by Saudi officials dispatched from Riyadh for that purpose. I commend the committee for making Khashoggi's case a focus of today's hearing and I also urge that you consider the role played by technology.

A digital rights group reported that Pegasus, an advanced cyber weapon sold by the Israeli spyware company NSO Group, likely allowed the Saudi Government to listen to calls between Khashoggi and a Saudi dissident. Khashoggi's killing was an abominable crime that has thus far gone unpunished. CPJ has found that in nine out of ten cases of murdered journalists, the killers are never brought to justice. This impunity sends an empowering message to those seeking to use violence to censor journalists.

The U.S. record on press freedom is not perfect, but has long been a leader in ensuring robust protections both at home and abroad. Unfortunately, the current administration has not been a forceful advocate for press freedom. To the contrary, President Donald Trump has sought to delegitimize the work of news organizations, has failed to criticize repressive regimes, and has praised leaders who crush dissent. To counter this, Congress must step up its efforts. We applaud past action and call on Congress to ensure that the State Department applies pressure on foreign governments to release imprisoned journalists, ensure justice in murders, and reform laws or practices that infringe on press freedom. It is vital that Congress speak out when these rights are violated.

Finally, as the author of a book on hostage policy, I have a special interest in the fate of American journalists taken hostage overseas. Congress should insist that the administration do all it can to ensure the safe recovery of Austin Tice who was detained in Syria in 2012. Congress should also insist that the two men de-

tained in Syria who are suspected of murdering journalist James Foley and Steven Sotloff and the U.S. humanitarian worker Peter Kassig are brought to justice to stand trial in a U.S. civilian court. Thank you so much and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Simon follows:]

Testimony of Joel Simon

Executive Director
Committee to Protect Journalists

Hearing on "The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights"
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

May 16, 2019

Chair Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I want to commend you for holding this important hearing on the dangers of reporting on human rights, and for inviting the Committee to Protect Journalists to testify before you. My name is Joel Simon and I am CPJ's executive director. The Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide and defends the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal. CPJ protects the free flow of news and commentary by taking action wherever journalists are under threat.

CPJ employs roughly 55 experts around the world who research, track, and advocate on global press freedom violations. We are driven to do this because press freedom is among the most fundamental of human rights. It is essential to democracy, accountability, and global security. The U.S. plays a vital role in ensuring this right is protected.

I originally joined CPJ in 1997, after more than a decade as a reporter in Mexico and Central America. I regularly covered human rights issues, and it was an awareness of how local journalists reporting on these sensitive issues often faced violent attacks that led me to join CPJ. In the intervening two decades, the challenges for journalists covering human rights issues have only grown, as a number of high-profile recent cases make plain.

In Myanmar, Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were jailed for more than 500 days in direct reprisal for their groundbreaking reporting on violence against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority. Their recent pardon, though welcome, does not undo the terrible injustice against them. In the Philippines, Maria Ressa and the staff of the news website *Rappler* face a series of crippling legal actions in response to the outlet's courageous investigations into allegations of serious human rights abuses by the government of Rodrigo Duterte. And of course, the murder and dismemberment of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, by officials dispatched from Riyadh, is an abominable crime that has thus far gone mostly unpunished. Until all those responsible for Khashoggi's murder are brought to

justice, journalists around the world, particularly those covering human rights, will continue to work in an environment of uncertainty and vulnerability.

The serious threat to press freedom, and in particular to journalists covering human rights issues, is further evidenced by the number of cases CPJ has documented of journalists imprisoned or murdered in retaliation for their work. Today, I will provide an overview of the dangers faced by journalists around the world who report on human rights, the methods governments use to prevent the free flow of information, and examples of country situations and individual cases. I will also present recommendations to the U.S. government.

Overview

Around the world, journalists reporting on human rights face a variety of threats. One of the ways that CPJ tracks and measures the state of global press freedom is by conducting a census and analysis of the number of journalists imprisoned or killed each year.

At the close of 2018, CPJ recorded at least 250 journalists behind bars for the third year in a row.[1] Of those, 151 reported on human rights issues. These imprisonments not only deprive journalists of their rights, they deprive citizens of the right to access information, and threaten global stability of society.

Consider the case of Azimjon Askarov, in Kyrgyzstan. Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek and contributor to independent news websites, documented human rights violations in his hometown of Bazar-Korgon amid ethnic violence that swept southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. He exposed fabricated criminal cases, arbitrary detentions, and the rape and abusive treatment of detainees in the Jalal-Abad region. He was arrested, convicted on charges that included incitement to ethnic hatred and complicity in the murder of a police officer, and sentenced to life in prison. A CPJ investigation found that authorities retaliated against Askarov for his reporting.[2] Askarov told CPJ that authorities had long threatened to retaliate against him.

Separately, at least 54 journalists were killed in 2018, 34 of whom were singled out for murder—an 88 percent jump from 2017.[3] Of the 54 total killed journalists in 2018, 13 reported on human rights, and eight of those were targeted for murder.

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[1] CPJ special report. "Hundreds of journalists jailed globally becomes the new normal" https://cpj.org/reports/2018/12/journalists-jailed-imprisoned-turkey-china-egypt-saudi-arabia.php
[2] CPJ special report. "In Kyrgyzstan, injustice and torture in Askarov case" https://cpj.org/reports/2012/06/in-kyrgyzstan-injustice-and-torture-in-askarov-cas.php
[3] CPJ special report. "More journalists killed on the job as reprisal murders nearly double" https://cpj.org/reports/2018/12/journalists-killed-murdered-afghan-saudi-us.php

Two of those were Raed Fares, founder and director of the independent radio station Radio Fresh and the Kafranbel Media Center, and his colleague Hamoud al-Jnaid, a reporter and photographer for Radio Fresh,[4] who were shot dead in eastern Kafranbel, Syria, on November 23, 2018. Fares was known for creatively defying demands from the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra Front (currently known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) that Radio Fresh stop playing music on air or get rid of female news readers. In his last Facebook post—dated October 5, 2018—he posted a video of a demonstrations in Kafranbel calling for the downfall of the regime.

Since CPJ began collecting data in 1992, at least 1,340 journalists have been killed in relation to their work around the world. At least 285 of those covered human rights.[5] Among the best known was Russian reporter Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot dead outside her Moscow apartment in October 2006. Her murder, allegedly carried out in reprisal for her reporting in human rights violations in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, has had a profound impact on our understanding of the human impact of that conflict, and the fragile peace that endures today.

CPJ has found that in nine out of 10 cases of murdered journalists, the killers go unpunished. Murder is the ultimate form of censorship, insofar as the murderers seek to kill a story by killing a person. Impunity sends an empowering message to those who seek to censor and control the media through violence, and has a chilling effect on journalists who see that their government will not protect them.

Key Threats

The numbers of imprisoned and killed journalists around the world are an expression of the global threats to journalism, and in particular, human rights reporting. New threats seem to emerge every day. The following is a summary of those CPJ considers to be the most pressing:

Anti-press rhetoric and the criminalization of journalism

One way governments censor reporting on human rights is by criminalizing the act of journalism. CPJ has documented several ways that governments employ this strategy. Perhaps the most prevalent is the use of national security or anti-terror laws to justify crackdowns on the press.

In 2018, 70 percent of all imprisoned journalists were jailed on anti-state charges, including accusations of terrorism. The false dichotomy between national security and free expression and journalistic practices makes it increasingly difficult for journalists and media organizations to

[4] https://cpj.org/data/people/raed-fares/index.php
[5] Explore all CPJ data: https://cpj.org/data/killed/

report freely and independently. The case of Aasif Sultan in India is instructive.[6] Sultan, a journalist with the monthly magazine *Kashmir Narrator*, was arrested during a raid on his home in Srinagar on August 27, 2018. Jammu and Kashmir police accused Sultan of being in touch with a militant group and promoting it on social media. A month earlier, Sultan wrote a cover story for *Kashmir Narrator* on Burhan Wani, a Kashmiri militant whose killing by Indian security forces set off anti-government demonstrations in July 2016. Sultan's story included interviews with non-combatant members of Wani's militant group. Sultan's editor, Showkat Motta, told CPJ that police pressured Sultan to disclose his sources. Indian outlets reported that police subjected Sultan to repeated interrogation during his detention, including questions about why he reported on the conflict in Kashmir, why he had not reported on development in the state, and questions about headlines that had appeared in *Kashmir Narrator*.

The national security framework is also used to put pressure on technology companies to remove content and undermine encryption, which in turn undermines reporting on human rights cases. Since 2012, 13 countries have used Twitter's "country withheld content" tool to effectively censor content, according to the social media platform's transparency reports. Governments usually cite laws around national security, counter-terrorism, defamation, or hate speech when requesting such removals. Figures from Twitter transparency reports show that legal demands to remove content on the platform went from 432 requests in the first part of 2014 to 6,651 requests in the second part of 2017. Turkey and Russia were responsible for 74 percent of all requests during that period. As legal demands can specify more than one account and/or tweet, over 78,000 accounts were reported by governments during that period. Twitter complied fully or partially with 24 percent of legal demands from Turkey, compared with about 9 percent for the rest of the world. Facebook's transparency reports for the same period show it made close to 154,000 content restrictions worldwide. In the second part of 2017 in Turkey, more Twitter accounts were withheld and Facebook content restricted than in any other country.[7]

Another concerning trend is the increased passage and use of "false news" statutes to jail journalists. In 2018, the number of journalists imprisoned on charges of false news rose to 28 globally, compared with nine such imprisonments in 2016. Of those, 19 are imprisoned in Egypt.[8] But government attacks on the press for "false news" are not limited to Egypt.

In recent weeks, several countries have moved to criminalize "fake news." On March 7, Russia's parliament advanced legislation that would allow courts to jail and fine people who use the internet to spread "fake news" or disrespect government officials and state symbols, including President Vladimir Putin. The bills would also allow Russian authorities to block websites that

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[6] https://cpj.org/data/people/aasif-sultan/index.php
[7] CPJ blog. "How Turkey silences journalists online, one removal request at a time" https://cpj.org/blog/2018/08/how-turkey-silences-journalists-online-one-removal.php
[8] CPJ alert. "CPJ calls on Egyptian authorities to release journalists held on false news charges" https://cpj.org/2018/07/cpj-calls-on-egyptian-authorities-to-release-journ.php

publish the offending material.[9] And just last week in Singapore, the country's parliament approved a bill that gives all government ministers broad and arbitrary powers to demand corrections, remove content, and block webpages if they are deemed to be disseminating falsehoods "against the public interest" or to undermine public confidence in the government.[10]

Usually, such criminalization is accompanied by strong anti-press rhetoric that lays the groundwork and builds popular support for legal restrictions. It is no coincidence that in states that have moved to pass "fake news" statutes, leaders are on record using the term to delegitimize critical news and human rights reporting.

Even in robust democracies, notably the U.S., elected officials have accused legitimate news organizations and journalists of being "fake news." Some democracies with strong institutions have resisted most legal threats to reporting. But rhetoric itself is deeply troubling. It undermines public confidence in the media, which can open the door to legal restrictions. It inspires threats against journalists and media outlets. And it empowers autocratic leaders around the world who are seeking a justification for their own repressive media policies.

When direct attacks on the press fail, governments and individual actors sometimes opt to attack journalists through criminal defamation laws. In certain places, such as Latin America, provisions inhibit reporting on public officials.[11] Similar provisions that exist in many African and Asian countries prohibit public insult.[12]

Defamation laws are easily misused by governments to suppress critical speech and intimidate reporters with the threat of criminal prosecution, fines, or jail time. In January, Pekin Ünker, a reporter for *Cumhuriyet* in Turkey, was the first journalist to be found guilty for her participation in the international "Paradise Papers" investigation. She was sentenced to 13 months in prison for "defamation and insult" and fined 8,860 Turkish lira (US$1,629) after reporting on the alleged offshore dealings of Turkey's former Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and his two sons. She is currently free pending the outcome of her trial.[13] Similarly, last month in Myanmar, the military's Yangon Region Command filed a criminal defamation complaint against *The Irrawaddy* news outlet's Burmese-language editor, Ye Ni. The criminal complaint was filed

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[9] CPJ statement. "Russia advances legislation on 'fake news' and 'disrespecting authorities'" https://cpj.org/2019/03/russia-advances-legislation-on-fake-news-and-disre.php

[10] CPJ alert. "Singapore passes 'fake news' legislation that threatens press" https://cpj.org/2019/05/singapore-passes-fake-news-legislation-that-threat.php

[11] For example, see "Critics Are Not Criminals: Comparative Study of Criminal Defamation Laws in the Americas" https://cpj.org/reports/critics_are_not_criminals-english.pdf

[12] In a 2013 report, the special rapporteurs on freedom of expression at the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organization for American States jointly called for the repeal of criminal defamation in favor of civil laws: https://www.osce.org/fom/99558?download=true

[13] CPJ blog. "Turkey Crackdown Chronicle: Week of January 7, 2019" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/01/turkey-crackdown-chronicle-week-of-january-7-2019.php

under the Telecommunications Law's Section 66(d), a provision that permits two-year prison sentences for convictions.[14] The complaint was prompted by an April 1 report in *The Irrawaddy* on assaults by the military on March 18 and 19 that allegedly resulted in civilian casualties in Rakhine state's Maruk-U town.

Elections

Elections are often a dangerous time for journalists. Autocrats who seek to control the narrative around an upcoming election will, if they have not already, seek to censor what the press can publish, and punish news organizations or journalists who cross a perceived line. For example, ahead of elections in Cambodia last year, the Information Ministry ordered local internet service providers to block 17 websites—including the U.S. Congress-funded Radio Free Asia—for 48 hours ahead of the election because their coverage was perceived as "provocative" and "very political."

Threats to journalists during elections are especially intense when the campaigns are marked by protests and violence. Journalists covering unrest related to elections often find themselves caught between protesters and police. Just last week, CPJ issued an alert about election-related violence on journalists in India.[15] To ensure elections are transparent and fair, there must be an open media environment that ensures public debate and accountability.

Technology

Technology has had a complex impact on reporting on human rights. On the one hand, the advent of smartphones and social media has allowed individuals who witness human rights violations to immediately publish evidence, in the form of videos or photographs, to millions of people around the world. The advance of protected communication services has allowed activists to connect more safely, and journalists and advocates to speak with victims of human rights violations through more secure communication methods.[16]

But social media platforms and communication services have also allowed governments to censor dissent. The earlier case of Turkey's crackdown on Twitter is one example. The "false news" law in Singapore is another, as it gives government ministers power to demand corrections, remove content, and block webpages on public websites and within private chat programs such as WhatsApp.

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[14] CPJ alert. "Myanmar military sues The Irrawaddy for criminal defamation over conflict coverage" https://cpj.org/2019/04/myanmar-military-sues-the-irrawaddy-for-criminal-d.php

[15] See https://cpj.org/2019/05/journalists-injured-in-election-related-violence-i.php

[16] *The Washington Post*. "U.N. report: Encryption is important to human rights — and backdoors undermine it" https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2015/05/28/un-report-encryption-is-important-to-human-rights-and-backdoors-undermine-it/?utm_term=.b4b9903ba6b0

Targeted surveillance is also deeply concerning. The Saudi government was likely spying on *Washington Post* columnist Khashoggi by using a piece of spyware known as Pegasus. A digital rights group reported that Pegasus—one of the world's most advanced cyber weapons, which is sold by the Israeli spyware company NSO Group—likely allowed the Saudi government to listen to phone calls between Khashoggi and the Saudi dissident Omar Abdulaziz.[17]

Technology has also allowed for members of society—often backed by governments—to use social media platforms to harass those who report on human rights, a problem that is particularly acute for female journalists. In some cases, including that of Gauri Lankesh in India,[18] the harassment has led to death. Lankesh was shot dead outside her home in Bangalore as she returned home from work on September 5, 2017. She published and edited *Gauri Lankesh Patrike,* a Kannada-language weekly tabloid known for its coverage of communal violence and the caste system, and criticism of right-wing extremism and the establishment. Lankesh had spoken publicly about threats against her.

Governments also have the authority at borders to search electronic devices of journalists and activists . Electronic device searches threaten the protection of sources, have a chilling effect on journalists that impacts broader society, and raise serious privacy rights issues. Canadian journalist Ed Ou said that when he was stopped on his way to the U.S. to cover the Standing Rock protests in October 2016, many of the questions from U.S. border agents concerned his interest in covering indigenous groups in America, and that an officer told him "covering a protest is not a valid reason to come into the country." Ultimately, border agents denied Ou entry to the U.S. after he refused to give them the passwords for his electronic devices.[19]

Additional Case Examples

CPJ tracks press freedom around the world, broken into six regions: Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa, North America. The following is a summary from each region of some of the most severe attacks on journalists seeking to report on human rights.

Africa

In **Cameroon**, Ahmed Abba, who reported on the impact of the militant group Boko Haram, was sentenced to 10 years in prison on terror-related charges. He was eventually released in late

[17] CPJ blog. "How the Saudis may have spied on Jamal Khashoggi" https://cpj.org/blog/2018/10/how-the-saudis-may-have-spied-on-jamal-khashoggi.php
[18] https://cpj.org/data/people/gauri-lankesh/
[19] CPJ blog. "Security risk for sources as US border agents stop and search journalists" https://cpj.org/blog/2016/12/security-risk-for-sources-as-us-border-agents-stop.php

2017, but in late 2018, at least seven other journalists were still behind bars in Cameroon. Two cases stand out:

- Thomas Awah Junior, a correspondent for the privately owned Afrik 2 Radio in Yaoundé, and publisher of the monthly *Aghem Messenger*, who was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a military court in Yaoundé on May 25, 2018.[20] He was found guilty of terrorism, hostility to the fatherland, secession, revolution, insurrection, the spreading of false news—including by electronic means—and contempt for civil authority. Awah Junior was tried along with two other journalists and four Anglophone detainees on charges relating to the crisis in Cameroon's two English-speaking regions that began in late 2016, with protests by teachers and lawyers about the perceived marginalization of English by Cameroon's majority French-speaking government.

- Michel Biem Tong, editor of the privately owned *Hurinews* website, who was detained on October 23, 2018, after being summoned to the State Secretariat for Defense in Yaoundé.[21] Tong published articles criticizing the government's handling of grievances of Anglophone Cameroonians from the western regions of the country in the run-up to presidential elections in October. He was charged with apologizing for terrorism, false declarations, and outrage to the head of state.

In **Tanzania**, CPJ has documented attacks on journalists reporting on human rights issues:

- Azory Gwanda, a freelance journalist who frequently wrote for *Mwananchi* and *The Citizen*, has been missing since November 21, 2017.[22] In an interview with *Mwananchi*, Gwanda's wife, Anna Pinoni, said that although little was clear about the case, she believed that her husband's disappearance might be linked to his reporting on a series of killings in Tanzania's Coast region. In April 2019, CPJ launched a campaign to help locate Gwanda.[23]

- In November 2018, two CPJ staff—Angela Quintal, CPJ's Africa program coordinator, and Muthoki Mumo, CPJ's sub-Saharan Africa representative—were detained while in Tanzania for a fact-finding and networking trip to better understand local press freedom conditions. Immigration and security officials detained Quintal and Mumo at their hotel in Dar es Salaam, before taking them to an unknown

[20] https://cpj.org/data/people/thomas-awah-junior/index.php
[21] https://cpj.org/data/people/michel-biem-tong/index.php
[22] https://cpj.org/data/people/azory-gwanda/index.php
[23] CPJ press release. CPJ's #WhereIsAzory campaign to highlight missing Tanzanian journalist https://cpj.org/2019/04/cpjs-whereisazory-campaign-to-highlight-missing-ta.php

location, and interrogating them about their work. After several hours of questioning, they were allowed back to their hotel. During their detention, Quintal and Mumo's passports, phones, and computers were seized. While they were detained, a false tweet saying they had been released was sent from Quintal's personal Twitter account, and repeated attempts were made to access Quintal's email. After more than five hours, the two CPJ staff members were released and safely left Tanzania. Tanzanian officials falsely claimed they were in the country without proper visas. However, both were traveling on valid visas, on a legitimate trip.[24]

Asia

In **Myanmar**, armed forces and the police have engaged in severe human rights violations in their crackdown on Rohingya Muslims. Journalists seeking to cover this story have been threatened. Many are local reporters who do not have the same protections as international journalists.

- In December 2017, Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were arrested after they had dinner with, and received documents from, two police officers in Yangon. In September 2018 they were sentenced to seven years in prison under Myanmar's colonial-era Official Secrets Act. The reporters insisted throughout legal proceedings that they had not committed any crime. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were investigating a massacre of Rohingya men and boys by Myanmar security forces in Rakhine state; their reporting was subsequently published by Reuters in February 2018 and led to seven soldiers being sentenced to prison for their involvement in the killings, according to reports. They were awarded a Pulitzer Prize for their reporting this year. In April, Myanmar's Supreme Court rejected their final appeal. One month later, the two reporters were released under a presidential pardon.[25]

- In May 4, the *Washington Post* reported that Myanmar police used Cellebrite, a cellphone-breaching technology from an Israeli company, to hack reporters' phones.[26] Cellebrite equipment pulled documents from the reporters' phones including itineraries for Pope Francis's visit to the country and the vice president's travels, as well as details of the military's campaign in Rakhine.

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[24] CPJ statement. "CPJ outraged at Tanzania's treatment of its Africa program team" https://cpj.org/2018/11/cpj-outraged-at-tanzanias-treatment-of-its-africa-.php

[25] CPJ statement. "Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo freed by pardon in Myanmar" https://cpj.org/2019/05/reuters-wa-lone-kyaw-soe-oo-freed-myanmar-pardon.php

[26] *The Washington Post.* "Security-tech companies once flocked to Myanmar. One firm's tools were used against two journalists." https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/security-tech-companies-once-flocked-to-myanmar-one-firms-tools-were-used-against-two-journalists-/2019/05/04/d4e9f7f0-5b5d-11e9-b8e3-b03311fbbbfe_story.html

In the **Philippines**, President Roderigo Duterte has launched a full-scale war on drugs and has attacked news outlets that publish information critical on his policies.

- The online news outlet *Rappler* and its executives, including CEO and Executive Editor Maria Ressa, have faced a myriad libel, tax, and regulatory lawsuits, and has paid an estimated 2 million pesos (US$38,260) in bail and bonds as of March 29, 2019, according to the news website. Ressa has been arrested twice this year, although she has been released on bail and has been able to travel internationally after posting bond. *Rappler*'s reporting focuses primarily on political corruption and the impact of President Duterte's policies on civil society. In April 2019, Duterte alleged that media and legal groups orchestrated a "plot" to discredit and oust him.[27]

In **China**, the government aggressively polices and cracks down on any reporting on human rights violations. At least 47 journalists were imprisoned in China at the end of 2018, making it the second largest jailer of journalists worldwide, after Turkey. Two incidents in March illustrate the risks of human rights coverage and of anti-press rhetoric.

- In March, police arrested Wei Zhili, editor of *ILabour*, in the city of Guangzhou, in Guangdong province, on charges of disturbing public order.[28] Ke Chengbing, another *ILabour* editor, went missing the day prior and is believed to also be in custody. The website's editor-in-chief, Yang Zhengjun, remains in prison after he was arrested in January and charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," according to *ILabour*. Prominent feminist writer Zheng Churan told CPJ that she believes authorities arrested Wei and his co-workers because of their reporting on labor rights issues and on the prevalence of black lung disease among workers. She told CPJ that she does not believe Wei did anything illegal, and was just "telling workers' stories and helping them get justice."

- Also in March, officials used attacks on the media in the U.S. to downplay reports on human rights abuses in China. After the release of the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said the U.S. report was filled with "ideological prejudice" and advised "that the United States take a hard look at its own domestic human rights record, and first take care of its own affairs."[29] China responded to the State Department with its own

[27] CPJ alert. "Philippine news and human rights organizations accused of 'plot' against Duterte" https://cpj.org/2019/04/philippine-news-and-human-rights-organizations-acc.php
[28] CPJ alert. "Labor rights website editor Wei Zhili arrested in China; another is missing" https://cpj.org/2019/03/labor-rights-website-editor-wei-zhili-arrested-in-.php
[29] Reuters. "China hits back at 'prejudiced' U.S. with own rights criticism" https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-rights-china-idUSKCN1QV0MR

report, which stated "Press freedom has come under unprecedented attack" and "Reporters' legal right to report has been violated" in the U.S., and that "The U.S. government continues to publicly and fiercely accuse the media and journalists of creating 'fake news' and creating an atmosphere of intimidation and hostility."

Americas

In **Venezuela**, autocratic leadership and civil unrest have given rise to ongoing attacks on the press and restrictions on media outlets, the internet, and social media platforms.

- On March 4, 2019, opposition leader and self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaidó, who faced possible arrest by the authoritarian regime of Nicolás Maduro, returned to Venezuela. The majority of Venezuela's TV and radio stations, which are controlled by the government, ignored Guaidó, and Venezuela's dominant state-run internet service provider temporarily blocked Twitter, streaming portals including YouTube and Soundcloud, and numerous websites that are among the only sources of independent news.[30] In the civil unrest that followed, the government has continued to censor the internet[31], and seek to intimidate[32] and detain journalists.[33] During a pre-arranged interview with a Univision team led by reporter Jorge Ramos, in February 2019, Maduro shut down the interview after being asked about democracy in Venezuela. The team was detained for more than two hours and had their equipment confiscated by security agents.[34]

In **Nicaragua**, imprisonment numbers are low and murders are down, but violations persist.

- In December 2018, Nicaraguan police entered the offices of 100% Noticias, a privately owned cable and internet news station in Managua, ordered the station off the air, and arrested the channel's director Miguel Mora and news director Lucía Pineda Ubau.[35] Authorities charged Mora with crimes including "inciting hate and violence" and did not grant him access to a lawyer. Police also confiscated

[30] CPJ blog. "Venezuelan authorities restrict internet, block outlets amid unrest" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/03/maduro-venezuela-internet-blackout-censored-guaido.php
[31] CPJ alert. "Venezuelan authorities restrict internet, block outlets amid unrest" https://cpj.org/2019/05/venezuelan-authorities-restrict-internet-block-out.php
[32] CPJ blog. "Venezuela's intimidation tactics include arbitrary arrests, deportation" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/03/venezuela-crisis-detained-journalist-weddle-maduro.php
[33] CPJ alert. "Venezuelan police detain reporter Danilo Gil while covering protests, charge him with resisting authority" https://cpj.org/2019/04/venezuelan-police-detain-reporter-danilo-gil-while.php
[34] CPJ alert. "Venezuelan authorities must return equipment to Jorge Ramos, Univision crew" https://cpj.org/2019/02/venezuelan-authorities-must-return-equipment-to-jo.php
[35] CPJ alert. "Nicaraguan police raid independent news station, arrest two journalists" https://cpj.org/2018/12/nicaraguan-police-raid-independent-news-station-ar.php

broadcasting equipment from the station. A week earlier, police broke into the Managua office of the privately owned *Confidencial* news website and its sister television programs, "Esta Noche" and "Esta Semana," and confiscated equipment and documents.

In **Mexico**, at least 48 journalists have been murdered since 1992. Several were prominent national journalists who covered human rights and related issues. The targeting of journalists has received attention from Congress, including a January 2018 letter from U.S. senators to then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.[36]

- Javier Valdez Cárdenas, an investigative reporter and editor, was fatally shot on May 15, 2017, near the editorial offices of *Riodoce*, the investigative weekly he co-founded in 2003, in the northern Mexican city of Culiacán.[37] *Riodoce* focuses mostly on organized crime, corruption, and regional politics. Valdez was also the correspondent in Sinaloa for *La Jornada*, a Mexico City-based newspaper, and he gained national recognition for authoring a series of books that chronicled the Mexican underworld and the victims of Mexico's drug war. He was a 2011 recipient of CPJ's International Press Freedom Award.

- In March 2019, the Canadian research group Citizen Lab released a report documenting how Griselda Triana, his widow, was targeted by spyware identified as Pegasus in 2017, in an apparent spying attempt. According to the report, Triana received text messages on May 25 and May 26, 2017, containing links that, when followed, would have installed software on her mobile phone without her knowledge. That software would have allowed a third party to have access to, and even control, most functions of the phone. The spyware attack occurred 10 days after Valdez was shot dead. Mexican media first reported in June 2017 that spyware known as Pegasus was purchased by the Mexican federal government from Israeli security firm NSO Group.[38]

- Miroslava Breach Velducea, a correspondent for the national newspaper *La Jornada*, was murdered on March 23, 2017, in Chihuahua City.[39] Breach covered, among other subjects, politics, crime, and the intersection of the two. Since January 2017 she headed her own news agency, MIR, and had long been a contributor to the Chihuahua news website *Norte*, which announced after her murder that it was closing. *La*

[36] U.S. Senator Marco Rubio press release. "Rubio, Colleagues Urge State Dept to Address the Targeting of Journalists in Mexico" https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=E6232169-B8F7-401D-A303-F775D7CA0093
[37] https://cpj.org/data/people/javier-valdez-cardenas/
[38] Milenio. "PGR recibió Pegasus en 2015" https://www.milenio.com/politica/pgr-recibio-pegasus-en-2015
[39] https://cpj.org/data/people/miroslava-breach-velducea/

Jornada reported that a note was found at the scene of the murder that read: "For being a snitch. You're next, governor.--The 80." Police say "The 80" refers to Arturo Quintana, who allegedly leads a criminal gang associated with the organized crime syndicate known as La Línea, which operates in the western half of the state. On March 4, 2016, Breach reported on alleged links between organized crime and mayoral candidates in several small towns in the mountainous region of western Chihuahua. The story mentioned "The 80" as supporting candidates for mayor in at least two towns, including the mother-in-law of the alleged gang leader. Chihuahua Attorney General César Augusto Peniche said Breach was killed because her reporting affected the interests of organized crime.

Europe and Central Asia

In **Turkey**, the world's leading jailer of journalists, 68 journalists were imprisoned at the close of 2018. Most were detained following an attempted coup in 2016 and least 43 covered the human rights beat. All face anti-state charges. In some cases, authorities have targeted entire news organizations, including but not limited to the daily Cumhuriyet.

- In July 2018, İdris Yılmaz, a former reporter for the shuttered pro-Kurdish Dicle News Agency (DİHA) and an editor and reporter for the news websites *Ajans Erbil Haber* and *Gazete Yaşam*, was sentenced the journalist to 15 months in prison for "slander via the press." The charge relates to a video the journalist published on *Gazete Yaşam* that showed militia groups—formed to assist the military in rural south and southeastern regions—allegedly mistreating a minor. On a separate occasion, Yılmaz and a colleague were beaten by people he was investigating for alleged corruption in October 2017.[40]

In **Russia**, press freedom continues to suffer.[41] At least 58 journalists have been killed since 1992, 38 of whom were targeted for murder. The government silences critical reporting through a variety of old and new laws. Protests are particularly dangerous for journalists, who are often attacked and/or arrested while covering clashes between protesters and police.

- Earlier this month, a group of at least five police officers assaulted and then arrested Timur Hadjibekov, a freelance photojournalist who works under the name George Markov, and arrested Oleg Nasonov, a photojournalist with the St. Petersburg-based online news outlet *Dva Stula*, while they were covering a Labor Day march in St.

[40] CPJ blog. "Turkey Crackdown Chronicle: Week of October 15, 2017" https://cpj.org/blog/2017/10/turkey-crackdown-chronicle-week-of-october-15-2017.php
[41] https://cpj.org/europe/russia/

Petersburg.[42] When police approached Hadjibekov and Nasonov, Hadjibekov identified himself as a journalist. Police then punched him in his ribs and head and arrested him, he told CPJ. Nasonov told CPJ that police threw him to the ground before arresting him.

- On April 2, deputies in the State Duma, the lower chamber of the Russian parliament, considered amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses that would levy fines on individuals and companies for distributing print media from foreign outlets without permission from Russia's state media regulator, Roskomnadzor.[43]

In **Ukraine**, controversy over the presence of Russia-backed militias in the eastern part of the country, and a two-year-old case of a murdered journalist, continue to cloud press freedom.

- Russian-backed separatists in the east continue to detain Donetsk-based journalist Stanyslav Aseyev. Aseyev, who has contributed to the Ukrainian service of the U.S.-government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty under the pseudonym Stanyslav Vasin, went missing on June 2, 2017. In August 2018, Russian state-run TV channel Rossiya 24 broadcast footage of an apparent forced confession, in which Aseyev said he was spying for Ukraine.[44]

- Despite President Petro Poroshenko's vows for a swift investigation, [45] Ukraine has failed to make arrests in the July 20, 2016 murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet. The journalist was killed in Kiev when an explosive device detonated under the car he was driving. Sheremet wrote for the independent news website *Ukrainska Pravda* and hosted a morning show on the independent broadcaster Radio Vesti. In his work for *Ukrainska Pravda*, Sheremet commented on political developments in Ukraine, Russia, and his native Belarus. In the weeks before his murder, he had written about Ukrainian volunteer battalion fighters' joining criminal gangs after leaving the militias, petty corruption among police in Belarus, alleged corruption among Ukrainian government officials and police, and the work of Russian government propagandists. Sheremet was a 1998 recipient of CPJ's International Press Freedom Award.[46]

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[42] CPJ statement. "Russian police beat at least 1 journalist, arrest 2 during May Day protests in St. Petersburg" https://cpj.org/2019/05/russian-police-beat-at-least-1-journalist-arrest-2.php
[43] CPJ statement. "Russian draft legislation would ban distribution of foreign print media without government permission" https://cpj.org/2019/04/russian-draft-legislation-would-ban-distribution-o.php
[44] CPJ statement. "Ukrainian reporter held by Moscow-backed separatists forced to confess in Russia state TV interview" https://cpj.org/2018/08/ukrainian-reporter-held-by-moscow-backed-separatis.php
[45] CPJ special report. "Justice Denied: Ukraine comes up empty in probe of Pavel Sheremet's murder" https://cpj.org/reports/2017/07/justice-denied-ukraine-pavel-sheremet-murder-probe-journalist.php
[46] https://cpj.org/data/people/pavel-sheremet/

Middle East and Northern Africa

In **Saudi Arabia**, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has sought to improve the country's image and usher in a new era, but the climate for journalism and human rights reporting is even more repressive, with at least 16 journalists imprisoned at the close of 2018.[47] Saudi Arabia's crackdown on the press extends beyond the country's borders.

- The Saudi government has come under international attention and pressure for the arrest and detention of four bloggers and women's rights activists—Eman Al Nafjan, Hatoon al-Fassi, Nouf Abdulaziz, Nassima al-Sada—over their writing and advocacy against the kingdom's ban on women driving. Al Nafjan[48] and al-Fassi have been released provisionally, but still have to stand trial. A Saudi court handling their case barred reporters and U.S. and European diplomats from attending the trial.[49] Abdulaziz and al-Sada remain imprisoned. Human rights groups report that al-Sada is being held in solitary confinement. Meanwhile, the roundup and detention of bloggers continues.[50]

- The murder of *Washington Post* columnist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, on October 2, 2018 was an outrageous act that has rightfully resulted in widespread condemnation. We were heartened that Congress responded with swift, bipartisan action.[51] However, we are disturbed that the administration of President Donald Trump has downplayed or challenged reports that the CIA concluded with high confidence than the murder was directed by Crown Prince Salman,[52] and ignored a requirement to report to Congress with a report on who the administration considers responsible for Khashoggi's murder, and what it has done to hold them accountable. We remain deeply concerned that the U.S. intelligence community may have intercepted communications in which Saudi

[47] CPJ blog. "'New' Saudi Arabia ushers in even more repressive climate for journalists" https://cpj.org/blog/2018/09/new-saudi-arabia-ushers-in-even-more-repressive-cl.php
[48] CPJ statement. "CPJ welcomes release of Saudi blogger after 10 months, calls for charges to be dropped" https://cpj.org/2019/03/cpj-welcomes-release-of-saudi-blogger-after-10-mon.php
[49] BBC News. "Saudi Arabia puts women's rights activists on trial" https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47553416
[50] CPJ alert. "At least four more journalists arrested in Saudi crackdown" https://cpj.org/2019/04/at-least-four-more-journalists-arrested-in-saudi-c.php; and, CPJ alert. "Saudi Arabia detains 3 more bloggers" https://cpj.org/2019/04/saudi-arabia-detains-3-more-bloggers.php
[51] CPJ letter. "Senate Foreign Relations Committee must keep up pressure over Khashoggi" https://cpj.org/2018/10/khashoggi-senate-foreign-relations-pressure.php
[52] *The Washington Post.* "Pompeo challenges accuracy of reports that CIA is confident of Saudi prince's involvement in Khashoggi death" https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pompeo-challenges-accuracy-of-reports-that-cia-is-confident-of-saudi-princes-involvement-in-khashoggi-death/2018/12/12/8620629a-fe1e-11e8-83c0-b06139e540e5_story.html

officials discussed a plan to capture Khashoggi. Under what is known as Directive 191, U.S. intelligence agencies are required to warn individuals of "impending threats of intentional killing, serious bodily injury or kidnapping." Accordingly, CPJ has teamed with the Knight First Amendment Institute to file requests under the Freedom of Information Act to learn what intelligence agencies knew and whether they complied with their own processes.[53]

In **Egypt**, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has continued to crackdown on the press and critical reporting on human rights. At least 25 journalists were imprisoned at the end of 2018, 14 of whom covered human rights. Leading up to the country's election, the state's media regulator used a new censorship law to block access to websites.[54] Journalists impacted by the crackdown include:

- Alaa Abdelfattah, a prominent blogger and activist who has written about politics and human rights violations for numerous outlets, including the independent *al-Shorouk* newspaper and the progressive *Mada Masr* news website. He was sentenced to a five-year prison sentence for organizing an illegal protest and assaulting a police officer.[55] Abdelfattah denied the charges, and his defense lawyers submitted cell phone records proving Abdelfattah was not at the site of the protest at the same time as the police officer he was accused of assaulting. The prosecution submitted as evidence tweets and quotes from Abdelfattah's writing in which he was critical of the judiciary and security forces. State media broadcast tweets and excerpts of Abdelfattah's articles and Facebook posts, branding them proof of his anti-state beliefs. After five years in prison, Abdelfattah was released on March 29, 2019—on the condition that he report to the police station each day at 6 p.m. and stay overnight. [56]

- Mahmoud Abou Zeid, a freelance photographer known as Shawkan, was arrested in Cairo in August 2013 while covering clashes between Egyptian security forces and supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi during the dispersal of the pro-Morsi sit-in at Raba'a Al-Adawiya in Cairo. Shawkan contributed to the U.K.-based journalism and photo agency Demotix. On September 8, 2018, after more than five years of pretrial detention, a Cairo criminal court convicted Shawkan of murder and being a member of a terrorist group, and sentenced him to five years in prison and

[53] *The Washington Post*. "U.S. spy agencies sued for records on whether they warned Khashoggi of impending threat of harm" https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-spy-agencies-sued-for-records-on-whether-they-warned-khashoggi-of-impending-threat-of-harm/2018/11/20/21ef3750-ed21-11e8-8679-934a2b33be52_story.html?utm_term=.67ba2dc3f07b
[54] CPJ blog. "Egypt tests new censorship law with handling of al-Mashhad website block" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/05/egypt-tests-new-censorship-law-with-handling-of-al.php
[55] https://cpj.org/data/people/alaa-abdelfattah/
[56] CPJ blog. "In Egypt, 'freedom' ends daily at 6pm for Shawkan and Abdelfattah" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/04/egypt-shawkan-abdelfattah-release-custody.php

five years' probation. Shawkan was released on March 29, 2019—also on the condition that he report to the police station each day at 6 p.m. and stay overnight.[57]

- Police on May 23, 2018 arrested the blogger Wael Abbas in his Cairo home and seized his computer, phones, books, and other personal items.[58] The government prosecutor accused Wael of "the crime of communicating with foreign organizations and organizations to spread their ideas... to incite against the state and promote the overthrow of the regime and the destruction of the Egyptian state." The prosecutor did not cite any specific content or name the foreign organizations Abbas allegedly communicated with. Abbas denied the accusations and said that he expressed his opinion in a legitimate and peaceful manner. Abbas documented police abuse and torture in Egypt on his blog, Misr Digital (Egyptian Awareness). Abbas also had a YouTube channel, in which he posted a number of videos about sexual harassment, police abuse, and other human rights issues. Over the years, Abbas has received threatening phone calls, was detained at the Cairo airport, was pulled off the street and held for hours, and called a criminal on television and online. Authorities have repeatedly renewed his pretrial detention.

In **Syria,** reporters and photojournalists seeking to cover the civil war have done so at great personal cost.

- In April 2014, a group Syrian activists set out to document the abuses of Islamic State after the militant group declared the city of Raqqa to be the caliphate's capital. The activists, working anonymously for their safety, formed a group, Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS). RBSS was declared an enemy of God by the Islamic State group, and at least two RBSS members have paid the price with their lives. CPJ honored RBSS at its 2015 International Press Freedom Awards.[59]

- The risks to journalists covering the Syrian civil war was brutally illustrated by the murders of U.S. journalists James Foley[60] and Steven Sotloff,[61] and Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, who along with other Western hostages in 2014 and early 2015, were kidnapped, tortured, and then beheaded by Islamic State.

- Another journalist, Austin Tice, was detained while reporting in Syria in 2012. A U.S. freelance photojournalist who contributed to *The Washington Post*, McClatchy, Al-

[57] Ibid.
[58] https://cpj.org/data/people/wael-abbas/index.php
[59] https://cpj.org/awards/2015/raqqa-is-being-slaughtered-silently-syria.php
[60] https://cpj.org/data/people/james-foley/
[61] https://cpj.org/data/people/steven-sotloff/

Jazeera English, and several other news outlets, Tice was last heard from on August 13, 2012. U.S. intelligence suggests he is still alive, and the FBI maintains a $1 million reward for information leading to his location, recovery, and return.[62]

United States

In the **United States,** press freedom enjoys strong legal protections, but reporting on human rights can still be a risk.

- In October 2018, CPJ released a report documenting cases of journalists crossing U.S. borders being pulled aside by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents for secondary screenings, being questioned about their reporting, and having their electronic devices searched without warrant.[63] In February 2019, CPJ documented several cases of journalists covering the migrant situation at the U.S.-Mexico border being asked invasive questions about their reporting.[64] Less than one month later, NBC San Diego broke a story based on leaked documents that the U.S. and Mexican governments were working together to track journalists through a secret database.[65] CPJ considers these policies and practices detrimental to press freedom and, along other press freedom organizations, has engaged with CBP and the Department of Homeland Security over two administrations to address these issues.[66] That includes a recent series of meetings with CBP officials. After the NBC San Diego report, however, CBP canceled its meetings with us and other press freedom groups.[67]

- Aggressive investigations into intelligence leaks and related prosecutions under the Espionage Act also pose serious threats to press freedom in the U.S. The trend began under the Obama administration, whose Justice Department prosecuted at least eight Espionage Act cases, more than all previous administrations combined.[68] No journalist has been directly prosecuted under the Espionage Act. However, while prosecutions slowed in Obama's second term, they have picked up again under

[62] ABC News. "US believes Austin Tice still alive as FBI offers new $1 million reward" https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-believes-austin-tice-alive-fbi-offers-million/story?id=54609046
[63] CPJ special report. "Nothing to declare: Why U.S. border agency's vast stop and search powers undermine press freedom" https://cpj.org/reports/2018/10/nothing-to-declare-us-border-search-phone-press-freedom-cbp.php
[64] CPJ alert. "Several journalists say US border agents questioned them about migrant coverage" https://cpj.org/2019/02/several-journalists-say-us-border-agents-questione.php
[65] NBC San Diego. "Source: Leaked Documents Show the U.S. Government Tracking Journalists and Immigration Advocates Through a Secret Database" https://www.nbcsandiego.com/investigations/Source-Leaked-Documents-Show-the-US-Government-Tracking-Journalists-and-Advocates-Through-a-Secret-Database-506783231.html
[66] https://cpj.org/campaigns/borders/
[67] CPJ letters. "CPJ calls on US Customs and Border Protection agency to reschedule meeting" https://cpj.org/2019/03/customs-border-protection-cbp-border-journalists.php
[68] CPJ special report. "The Obama Administration and the Press' https://cpj.org/reports/2013/10/obama-and-the-press-us-leaks-surveillance-post-911.php

Trump. Most recently, the Justice Department indicted Daniel Hale, a former U.S. intelligence analyst, for allegedly leaking information about a classified drone targeting program to *The Intercept*.[69] Hale is the fourth source to be indicated under the Espionage Act since Trump took office, and three other sources have faced criminal prosecution under other statutes. The Justice Department says that many other such cases are pending. People who leak information to the media have a variety of motivations, usually complex. But leaking to the media is not a form of espionage, and to prosecute it as such not only conflates leaking with spying, it chills media-source interactions and sets a dangerous precedent in the U.S. and around the world.

Signs of Progress

As this snapshot of cases illustrates, the state of press freedom globally, especially for journalists reporting on human rights, is grim. But, before concluding, I would like to recognize examples of progress.

Ecuador

When Lenín Moreno, who served as former President Rafael Correa's vice president from 2007-13, was elected president in April 2017, most Ecuadorans assumed he would serve as Correa's proxy, perhaps until the ex-president returned to power. But since Correa left office, numerous reporters and editors have described to CPJ a honeymoon between Moreno's government and the news media. The Moreno administration, they said, has sidelined the media regulator Supercom; sought to improve relations with the news media; encouraged newspapers, websites, and radio and TV stations to carry out investigative journalism; and pledged to reform the country's Communications Law, which was among the region's most repressive pieces of media legislation.

During a CPJ mission in March 2018, journalists said that Correa's policies had created both editorial and financial havoc for independent news organizations, and that until Moreno made good on his pledge to strip the Communications Law of its most repressive articles and to dissolve the Supercom, Ecuadoran journalists will continue to work in fear.[70]

Together, the Supercom and the Communications Law put tremendous pressure on Ecuador's media. The country's two major newspapers, *El Universo* and the Quito daily *El Comercio*, and

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[69] *Columbia Journalism Review*. " The real threat to press freedom is prosecuting leakers" https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/daniel-hale-intercept-leakers.php

[70] CPJ special report. "The U-turn: Moreno steers Ecuador away from Correa's media repression" https://cpj.org/reports/2018/07/U-turn-moreno-steers-ecuador-away-correa-media-communication-law.php

the two largest privately owned television channels, Teleamazonas and Ecuavisa, both broadcasting nationally from Quito, repeatedly found themselves in the government's crosshairs for offenses ranging from failing to reprint flattering stories to publishing a controversial cartoon.

In December 2018, however, the Communications Law was reformed and, as a result, Supercom is being phased out.[71]

Even in cases where pressure does not create immediate change, it sets precedent. President Moreno, seeking to distance himself from his predecessor, recognized that press freedom reform was one way to do so.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia was one of the most-censored countries in the world and one of the worst jailers of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa. For more than a decade, the government shut down newspapers and television stations, blocked internet services and social media platform, and used its harsh anti-terrorism law to target journalists, bloggers, and activists.

But Ethiopia has gone through dramatic reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who took office last April. In 2018—for the first time in 14 years—CPJ recorded no journalists behind bars in its annual census. As recently as 2016, there were 16 journalists imprisoned. Those released included prominent journalists Eskinder Nega, Darsema Sori, and Khalid Mohammed, who were held for years on charges ranging from treason to inciting extremist ideology and planning to overthrow the government.

After a trip to Addis Ababa in January 2019, CPJ's Sub-Saharan Africa Representative Muthoki Mumo wrote that it was "impossible to miss the signs that Ethiopian media are enjoying unprecedented freedom."[72] A flurry of new publications were on the streets. At a public forum that CPJ attended, journalists spoke about positive reforms, but also openly criticized their lack of access to the government. At a press conference, journalists from state media and the Oromia Media Network, an outlet previously banned and accused of terrorism, sat side by side, she wrote.

Mesud Gebeyehu, a lawyer who heads the Consortium of Ethiopian Rights Organizations, an alliance of human rights groups, told CPJ he had been on television "many times" in the past year to speak about human rights, an issue that was previously taboo for the media.

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[71] Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. "Ecuador's National Assembly eliminates controversial sanctioning body with reforms to Communications Law" https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-20435-ecuador%E2%80%99s-national-assembly-eliminates-controversial-sanctioning-body-reforms-communic

[72] CPJ blog. "Under Abiy, Ethiopia's media have more freedom but challenges remain" https://cpj.org/blog/2019/04/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-press-freedom-reform.php

The country has also ended its block of over 260 websites[73] and ban on media outlets forced to work in exile.[74]

In recognition of this shift, UNESCO formally marked World Press Freedom Day 2019 with a conference in Addis Ababa.[75]

Challenges still remain.[76] On February 23, 2019, two journalists with the privately owned online news outlet Mereja TV were briefly detained by regional police and then attacked by a mob in Legetafo, a town in Ethiopia's Oromia region.[77] But there is no doubt Ethiopia, as it pertains to press freedom, is on the right track. The global community must now make sure that the country does not revert to suppression.

Global Coordination

More broadly, news organizations, advocacy groups, and journalists have adapted to a changing press freedom landscape and advancing technology in myriad ways.

In recent years, press freedom organizations have ramped up their efforts to help journalists at risk. These efforts are both proactive and reactive: CPJ's Emergencies Response Team provides comprehensive, life-saving support to journalists and media support staff working around the world through up-to-date safety and security information, and rapid response assistance to journalists at risk.[78] The ACOS Alliance, of which CPJ is a partner, is a coalition of major news companies, journalism organizations, and freelancers, seeking to develop worldwide freelance protection standards.[79]

When a journalist is killed or murdered, their colleagues are increasingly working together to keep their stories alive. Forbidden Stories is an organization established to continue the work of killed, imprisoned, or otherwise incapacitated journalists. After the murder of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta, Forbidden Stories coordinated and led a group of 45 journalists representing 18 news organizations from 15 countries in starting the Daphne Project,

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[73] CPJ statement. "Ethiopia allows access to over 260 blocked websites" https://cpj.org/2018/06/ethiopia-allows-access-to-over-260-blocked-website.php

[74] Africanews.com. "Oromo activist, Jawar Mohammed to return to Ethiopia as OMN opens Addis office" https://www.africanews.com/2018/06/27/oromo-activist-jawar-mohammed-to-return-to-ethiopia-as-omn-opens-addis-office/

[75] World Press Freedom Day 2019 https://en.unesco.org/events/world-press-freedom-day-2019

[76] Ibid.

[77] CPJ case. "Two journalists detained, attacked in Ethiopia" https://cpj.org/2019/03/two-journalists-detained-attacked-in-ethiopia.php

[78] https://cpj.org/emergency-response/

[79] https://www.acosalliance.org/

designed to continue her work. The project was supported by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which facilitated the sharing of documents and information across the participating organizations and assigned researchers and reporters to investigate allegations about wrongdoing among Malta's elite.[80]

Conclusion and Recommendations

A consistent and principled position in defense of press freedom is rooted in U.S. history and foundational legal documents. The 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights—that was echoed by the Declaration of Independence and which influenced the text of the Bill of Rights—stated, "That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments."

The U.S record on press freedom is not perfect but, given its historical commitments, the U.S. has long been a leader in ensuring robust protections for freedom of the press, both at home and around the world. Given the extent and intensity of threats to reporting on human rights, it is as important as ever that the U.S. provide global leadership. Those whose rights have been violated should know the U.S. government stands with them. And those who have violated others' rights should know there will be consequences for their actions.

While there remain officials in the State Department who care deeply about protecting and advancing human rights, the present administration has not been a forceful advocate for press freedom. The administration has refrained from criticizing restrictive regimes and praised leaders who brutally crush dissent. Furthermore, attacks on the press in the U.S. have negatively impacted the ability of the U.S. to advocate for press freedom abroad, as they give repressive states ammunition to fire back at the U.S. and delegitimize U.S. asks.

To fill this void, Congress must step up its efforts to protect press freedom. In many ways, it has. Members of Congress are increasingly active on this issue, including an uptick in actions—especially bills, resolutions, and hearings—on or related to press freedom issues.

We applaud these efforts and make the following general recommendations for Congress:

- Ensure that the State Department applies maximum pressure on governments to release imprisoned journalists, ensure justice in the case of murdered journalists, and reform any laws or practices that infringe on the rights of journalists. Senior U.S. officials—including the President—should express public support for such efforts.

[80] https://www.occrp.org/en/thedaphneproject/

- Ensure that the State Department supports journalists who are forced, because of credible threats to their lives, to flee their countries. The U.S. government should provide visas or asylum for persecuted journalists.
- Consistent with the Daniel Pearl Freedom of the Press Act, Congress should ensure that the State Department produce robust reporting in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on the situation for press freedom.
- Congress should use its oversight to hold the administration accountable when it fails to meet, promote, or defend freedom of the press, and should insist on the compliance with the recommendations listed above.
- Congressional committees and subcommittees should hold a series of hearings on the unique regional and country-specific threats to press freedom, and what the U.S. can do to reverse violations.

Specific to certain cases, we urge Congress to:

- Mandate an unclassified report by the Director of National Intelligence detailing what the U.S. government knew about threats to Jamal Khashoggi prior to his murder, and what the U.S. government has learned about who plotted and carried out the killing.
- Take action to punish any individuals found to be involved or responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, or any other journalists.
- Urge the Philippines government to stop its attacks on independent media, including *Rappler* and Maria Ressa.
- Ask the Tanzanian government and U.S. administration what it is doing to help locate missing journalist Azory Gwanda, and hold those responsible for his disappearance accountable.
- Finally, as the author of a recent book on hostages and hostage policy, I have a special interest in the fate of American journalists taken hostage overseas. Congress should insist that the administration do all it can to ensure the safe recovery of journalist Austin Tice, who was detained in Syria in 2012 and is believed to be alive. Congress should insist that the two suspects in the murderers of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff (along with other American and British hostages), who are currently detained by Kurdish forces inside Syria, are brought to the U.S. to face trial in civilian court.

Thank you again for holding this important hearing on the dangers of reporting on human rights, and for inviting the Committee to Protect Journalists to testify before you.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Repucci.

STATEMENT OF SARAH REPUCCI, SENIOR DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS, FREEDOM HOUSE

Ms. REPUCCI. Chairman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to testify before you today. I ask that my full written statement be submitted for the record.

Ms. BASS. Can you speak just a little louder?

Ms. REPUCCI. Yes. The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under threat. According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World data, freedom of the press has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade. The trend is linked to the global decline of democracy itself, which Freedom House has been tracking for the past 13 years.

I have four main points today. These points will also be elaborated in our forthcoming new report, Freedom in the Media, which will be released the first week of June. First, media in the world's least free societies have faced an intensification of traditional challenges. Over the past 5 years, countries that were already designated as not free in Freedom in the World were also those most likely to suffer a decline in their press freedom scores. Their methods are more of what we have seen for years, draconian laws, media shutdowns, arrests, and violence. It is striking that these governments continue to feel threatened despite already having near total control over the political system and flow of information.

Also, among the 209 countries and territories that we cover, we have identified the use of violence against journalists or media professionals in almost half of them over the past 5 years. Second, in some of the most influential democracies, large segments of the population are no longer receiving independent news and information. The decline in press freedom in democracies has risen in tandem with right-wing populism which has undermined basic freedoms, particularly in Hungary, Serbia, and India. It has become painfully apparent that a free press can never be taken for granted even when democratic rule has been in place for decades.

Third, as democracies retreat from holding press freedom up as a gold standard, China is filling the gap with a new authoritarian information model. Chinese authorities influence news media content around the world through three primary strategies. First, the Communist Party narratives are embedded in foreign media by proxies and allied figures including diplomats and foreign media owners. Second, the CCP and its agents and proxies work to suppress critical coverage of China abroad through diplomatic pressure and co-opting media owners and advertisers. And, finally, through firms such as StarTimes and the WeChat platform, the Chinese Government has new avenues for influence abroad. These moves are escalations in the aggressiveness with which Chinese officials attempt to undermine the watchdog role played by independent media in democratic settings.

And my final point is that the erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles. While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, their impact

on the State of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous. Without a free and independent media sector, citizens cannot make informed decisions about how they are ruled and abuse of power cannot be exposed and corrected. If the United States imposes no consequences for restrictions on media, free press could be in danger of virtual extinction. With this in mind, we make the following recommendations:

Please ensure that actions by U.S. officials do not excuse or inspire violations of press freedom. Take strong and immediate action against any violations of media freedom globally through press statements, phone calls, meetings, letters, and the imposition of targeted sanctions on perpetrators. Stand up publicly for the values of a free press and support civic education that will educate the next generation. Ensure U.S. foreign policy and assistance prioritizes support for democratic principles including media freedom. It is fundamental to national security and economic prosperity. Support social media as an alternative outlet for free expression in repressive environments. And pass legislation aimed at enhancing the publicly available information about Chinese media influence activities.

While press freedom is under threat around the world, experience has shown that it can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties including access to honest and fact-based journalism can never be extinguished and it is never too late to renew the demand that these rights be granted in full. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Repucci follows:]

DECLINING DEMOCRACY AND THREATS TO MEDIA FREEDOM

Written Testimony by Sarah Repucci
Senior Director, Research and Analysis

House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

HEARING: THE DANGERS OF REPORTING ON HUMAN RIGHTS
May 16, 2019

Introduction

Chairman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Subcommittee, it's an honor to testify before you today. I ask that my full written statement be submitted for the record.

The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under threat. According to Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* data, freedom of the press has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. The trend is linked to a global decline in democracy itself, which Freedom House has been tracking for the past 13 years.

I will make four main points today. First, media in the world's least free societies have faced an intensification of traditional challenges. Second, in some of the most influential democracies, large segments of the population are no longer receiving independent news and information. Third, as democracies retreat from holding press freedom up as a gold standard, China is filling the gap with an authoritarian information model. And finally, the erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles. These points will be elaborated in our forthcoming new report, *Freedom and the Media*, which will be released in early June.

Dangers in Dictatorships

The worsening records of Not Free states, combined with the negative trend among Free countries, have driven overall decline in global press freedom. The decline in global press freedom is most acute in Europe, previously a bastion of well-established freedoms, and in Eurasia and the Middle East, where many of the world's worst dictatorships are concentrated.

Over the past five years, countries that were already designated as Not Free in Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* report were also those most likely to suffer a decline in their press freedom scores, with 28 percent of Not Free countries experiencing such a drop. Partly Free countries were almost equally likely to experience a gain as a decline in press freedom, reflecting the volatility of these middle performers and the complex forces influencing their trajectory.

Established autocratic governments continue to tighten the screws on dissenting voices because any breach in their media dominance threatens to expose official wrongdoing or debunk government narratives. Their methods are an intensification of what we have seen for years: draconian laws, media shut downs, arrests, and violence. Recent examples include new legislative restrictions in Belarus, further arrests and convictions in Lebanon, and heightened insecurity and fatalities in war-torn Yemen.

What is striking is that these governments continue to feel threatened despite already having near total control over the political system and the flow of information. In 2018, Freedom House downgraded the press freedom scores for Belarus, Cameroon, China, and Yemen from 1 to 0 on a 4-point scale. All of these countries are Not Free in our ratings. These developments illustrate the ways in which already difficult environments can grow steadily worse in the absence of meaningful international support for media independence and other fundamental rights.

Trends in press freedom differ by region. Since 2014, there has been no net change in the average press freedom score for the Americas or Asia-Pacific, and sub-Saharan Africa has seen a slight increase of 3 percent. But the average scores in the two least free regions of the world, Eurasia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), declined by 9 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Reporting in Saudi Arabia often means courting danger. The Kingdom's performance on our metrics has declined since Mohamed bin Salman was named crown prince in 2017, despite his reformist reputation. This year has already seen at least eight new arrests and detentions. Journalists can be targeted under a number of capricious laws, including a vaguely worded 2017 counterterrorism statue that criminalizes, among other things, reporting on the king or crown prince "in a manner that brings religion or justice into disrepute." Once charged, journalists must confront a judiciary completely lacking independence. Anyone—reporters or otherwise—wishing to post news or commentary online must first register with the authorities.

Even in the regions where average scores were more stable, press freedom has come under threat in individual countries. A new privacy law in Nepal restricts collection of the personal information of any individual, including public officials, exploiting legitimate concerns about privacy to suppress media scrutiny of political leaders' conflicts of interest or corruption. In Pakistan, security agents have allegedly warned journalists against coverage of taboo subjects, such as abuses by the military, or given them instructions on how to cover specific political issues. The regime in China has worked to close off the last remaining avenues for accessing uncensored information by increasing pressure on private technology companies to police the content on their platforms more assiduously.

Violence is a main driver of declines

The recent downgrades Freedom House has been tracking can be attributed to a range of legal, political, and economic factors, but some stand out as more concerning and pervasive. Notably, violence and harassment aimed at particular journalists and media outlets have played some role in 63 percent of the countries with a press freedom score reduction over the past five years. Among the 209 countries and territories that we cover, we have identified the use of violence against journalists or media professionals in 95 of them. That is, by our measures, almost half of all countries and territories have seen physical attacks on the press. Just a week ago, Yavuz Selim Demirağ from the nationalist opposition newspaper Yeniçağ was beaten outside his home in Istanbul. Although six attackers were taken into custody, they have already been released, claiming that they beat the journalist over a traffic dispute.

The 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi is, of course, the most prominent recent case, but Freedom House has reduced freedom scores for many other examples. Journalists in El Salvador received death threats in 2015 after they uncovered stories of police abuse and extrajudicial killings. A Malian journalist who was outspoken about rampant political corruption was shot in the chest in 2017. Also that year, a Tanzanian journalist investigating the murders of local officials disappeared, and his fate remains a mystery.

As Khashoggi's murder advertised to the world, repressive regimes have increasing reach across the globe, reaching beyond their borders to target expatriates, exiles, and diasporas who disagree with them. Freedom House found 24 countries around the world—including heavyweights like Russia, China, Turkey, and Iran—that have recently targeted political dissidents abroad with practices such as harassment, extradition requests, kidnapping, and even assassination.

Attacks on press freedom in democracies

In some of the most influential democracies in the world—particularly Hungary, Serbia, and India—large segments of the population are no longer receiving independent news and information. The problem has arisen in tandem with right-wing populism, which has undermined basic freedoms in many democratic countries. Populist leaders present themselves as the defenders of an aggrieved majority against liberal elites and ethnic minorities whose loyalties they question, and argue that the interests of the nation should override democratic principles like press freedom, transparency, and open debate.

Among Free countries in Freedom House's Freedom in the World report, 19 percent (16 countries) have endured a reduction in their press freedom scores over the past five years. This is consistent with a key finding of *Freedom in the World*—that democracies in general are undergoing a decline

in political rights and civil liberties. Press freedom in Europe—where four out of every five countries are Free—dropped by 8 percent over the past five years.

Viktor Orbán's government in Hungary and Aleksandar Vučić's administration in Serbia have had great success in snuffing out critical journalism, blazing a trail for populist forces elsewhere. Both leaders have consolidated media ownership in the hands of their cronies, ensuring that the outlets with the widest reach support the government and smear its perceived opponents. In Hungary, nearly 80 percent of the media are owned by government allies.

Antimedia rhetoric is spreading to neighboring states. Leaders of the far-right Freedom Party of Austria, part of that country's ruling coalition, have increased their verbal attacks on journalists, for instance by claiming without evidence that certain outlets spread lies. Score declines linked to economic manipulation of media—including cases in which the government directs advertising to friendly outlets or encourages business allies to buy those that are critical—were more common across Europe over the past five years than in other parts of the world. Such tactics of influence and interference are a relatively recent phenomenon on the continent, which has generally displayed strong support for press freedom since the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago.

India, the world's most populous democracy, is also sending signals that holding the government accountable is not part of the press's responsibility. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has supported campaigns to discourage speech that is "antinational," and government-aligned thugs have raided critical journalists' homes and offices. The media have become widely flattering of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is up for reelection amid allegations that the government issues directives on how the press should cover his activities and intimidates journalists who push back. The government has also been selective in the allocation of television licenses, effectively excluding unfriendly outlets from the airwaves.

It has become painfully apparent that a free press can never be taken for granted, even when democratic rule has been in place for decades.

China Fills the Gap

As democracies ignore their own long-term interests and waver in their support for press freedom, China has been filling the void. Tight media controls and suppression of free speech are key features of China's authoritarian governance, where the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has developed the world's most multilayered, dynamic, and sophisticated apparatus of media control. The global expansion of Chinese state media regularly makes international headlines, but this is only one of a host of strategies the CCP employs to influence media reporting, content dissemination, public debate, and in some cases, electoral politics, outside China. And where the potential for undermining press freedom has not been activated yet, the groundwork is being laid for future influence, if—or more likely when—Beijing decides to deploy it.

Chinese authorities influence news media content around the world through three primary strategies: promoting the CCP's narratives, suppressing critical viewpoints, and managing content delivery systems.

Through a variety of distribution partnerships and through social media, Chinese state media reaches hundreds of millions of people in numerous countries and languages, and efforts to more deeply penetrate foreign markets show no sign of an ebb. A November 2018 *Financial Times* investigation found that the Chinese state-run television broadcaster CCTV provides free content to 1,700 foreign news organizations. Between September and November 2018 alone, Xinhua News Agency signed news exchange agreements with wire services in Australia, Belarus, Laos, India, and Bangladesh. CCP narratives are also embedded in foreign media by proxies and allied figures, including Chinese diplomats, friendly media owners and journalists, and foreign politicians with business interests in China. For example, New Zealand member of parliament Todd McClay—who attended a CCP-organized dialogue in 2017—recently referred to reeducation camps in Xinjiang as "vocational training centers," echoing the terminology used by the Chinese government to justify detention and political indoctrination of over one million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities.

The CCP and its agents, allies, and proxies also work to suppress critical coverage of China abroad. Diplomats pressure local journalists and at times have engaged in outright harassment in order to curb criticism, as in early 2019, when Chinese diplomats in Sweden and Russia intimidated reporters who had written critically about the country's economy or in support of democracy in Taiwan. The CCP has also successfully co-opted media owners, who then marginalize critical reporting, notably in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and outlets serving the Chinese diaspora, but occasionally in English-language media. Co-opting further extends to advertisers, satellite firms, technology companies, foreign governments, and international organizations, who take action to prevent or punish the publication of content critical of Beijing.

Finally, over the past five years, new technologies for the management of content delivery has opened new avenues for Chinese government influence abroad. In Africa, the Chinese television distribution firm StarTimes, which has become a key player in the continent's transition from analog to digital, holds the power to determine which stations its viewers are able to access. Although privately owned, StarTimes has benefited from a close relationship with the Chinese government and occasional subsidies. Meanwhile, Chinese tech giant Tencent's ubiquitous WeChat instant messaging service now also reaches an estimated 100 to 200 million people outside of China.

China's increasing number of news distribution deals, agents' more frequent and egregious acts of media suppression, and the institutionalization of Chinese content delivery systems abroad, point to escalations in the aggressiveness with which Chinese officials attempt to suppress independent news coverage abroad, spread the CCP's own narrative, and ultimately undermine the watchdog role played by independent media in democratic settings.

Freedom of the Press Is Integral to Democracy

The breakdown of global press freedom is closely related to the broader decline of democracy that Freedom House has tracked for the past 13 years. Although the press is not always the first democratic institution to be attacked when a country's leadership takes an illiberal turn, repression of free media is a strong indication that other political rights and civil liberties are in danger. Assaults on media independence are frequently associated with power grabs by new or incumbent leaders, or with entrenched regimes' attempts to crush perceived threats to their control.

While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous. A free and independent media sector that can keep the population informed and hold leaders to account is as crucial for a strong and sustainable democracy as free and fair elections. Without it, citizens cannot make informed decisions about how they are ruled, and abuse of power, which is all but inevitable in any society, cannot be exposed and corrected.

Recommendations

If the United States imposes no consequences for restrictions on the media abroad, free press could be in danger of virtual extinction. With this in mind, Congress should:

- ***Ensure actions by US officials do not excuse or inspire violations of press freedom***. Democratic nations, especially the United States, have a particularly important role to play in maintaining media freedom. Words matter, and when the United States verbally attacks the press or fails to immediately and vigorously condemn attacks such as that on Khashoggi, it sends a signal to undemocratic leaders around the world that attacks on the press and crimes against journalists are permissible.
- ***Take strong and immediate action against any violations of media freedom globally*** through press statements, phone calls, meetings, letters, and the imposition of targeted sanctions on perpetrators. This includes speaking out against violence against journalists and failure to identify and prosecute attackers, restrictions on media access, blocking of websites, and censoring of particular topics.
- ***Stand up publicly for the value of a free press, and support civic education that will educate the next generation.*** Press freedom is one of the most fundamental pillars of our democracy, and our constitutional protections are stronger than in any country of the world. Americans easily forget this amid media mudslinging and incendiary commentary. It is up to our leaders and our teachers to remind us of the value we gain from professional journalists who hold those in power to account.

- ***Ensure US foreign policy and assistance prioritizes support for democratic principles, including media freedom, as fundamental to national security and economic prosperity.*** As is frequently mentioned, the goal of foreign assistance is for countries to no longer need it. It is foolish for the United States to invest funding overseas without shoring up press freedom. Foreign aid supports independent media by providing training in technical capacity and emergency assistance. Media development funders should also make sure to include exile and diaspora media in funding, training, and other assistance opportunities for Chinese-language media and might consider allocating dedicated resources for these outlets separate from internal China funds.
- ***Support social media as an alternative outlet for free expression in repressive environments.*** Innovative alternatives to state-controlled media regularly spring up on social media, including recent cases in Venezuela, Armenia, and Sudan. Technology can be used to circumvent restrictions and keep reporters anonymous where needed. The United States should provide funding for technology that increases free expression.
- ***Pass legislation aimed at enhancing the publicly available information about Chinese media influence activities.*** One example of such legislation is S.480/H.R.1811, the Countering the Chinese Government and Communist Party's Political Influence Operations Act, which would require the formation of a long-term strategy to counter the Chinese government's political influence operations, including those utilizing the media. The Department of Justice should also thoroughly review media being disseminated in the United States by the Chinese government or linked outlets and the registration requirements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, including Chinese language media.

Conclusion

Press freedom is under threat around the world, dovetailing with the overall decline in global democracy. Populist leaders are undermining independent media, and dictators are doubling down in traditional means of repression. China is pushing its own authoritarian information model in less autocratic contexts.

Experience has shown, however, that press freedom can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to honest and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished, and it is never too late to renew the demand that these rights be granted in full.

Thank you, I look forward to your questions.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Cengiz? Yes?

The INTERPRETER. I will be interpreting for Ms. Cengiz.

Ms. BASS. Yes.

The INTERPRETER. She was wondering if she could go over 5 minutes or is she limited to 5 minutes for the——

Ms. BASS. You know what, let me go to Ms. Hoja and come back, OK?

STATEMENT OF GULCHEHRA HOJA, UYGHUR SERVICE BROADCASTER, RADIO FREE ASIA

Ms. HOJA. May I begin?

Thank you for having me at this hearing. I am not going to read my full statement today, but I will provide a short summary. I am very proud to be here to represent Radio Free Asia which was created to provide local and other news to the people living in closed countries. Their access to reliable journalism is restricted and censored for millions of listeners in Asia.

RFA often serves as a lifeline to the truth. As a broadcaster with RFA Uyghur Service, the only independent Uyghur language news service outside China, exposing the truth can come at severe cost. Not just for me and my colleagues, but especially for our families in China. Even our sources are not spared. Because of our work as journalists, China views RFA as a hostile foreign news network. This perhaps has never been truer than now when RFA has been at the forefront of covering unimaginable humanitarian crises in China Uyghur Region.

The Chinese authorities have detained more than one million Uyghurs as well as other ethnic Muslims, putting them in prison-like facilities while implementing a vast high-tech surveillance state to monitor and intimidate the remaining population. Throughout this development, my colleagues and I at RFA Uyghur Service have worked tirelessly to report on events as they occur in our former homeland. This includes breaking the news of mass detention of Uyghurs at the very beginning of China notorious re-education camps in the spring of 2017, first interviewing the camp security guards and officials who describe the harsh treatment and the conditions.

RFA first uncovered the construction crematoriums near the facilities and RFA first reported on the overflow of kindergartens and the orphanages of Uyghur children whose parents were detained. China attempt to suppress the stories start from the very beginning. We cannot ever visit our homeland again. China would never allow us to get journalism visas. Instead, we are forced to reach our sources using other means including phone calls, but even that is becoming very difficult because authorities monitor calls and they use AI technology and voice recognition software to cut us off from reaching sources. Even sources outside China face threats to their families and the loved ones still in the country. This makes it harder to get leads and to confirm developments.

As is well known, Chinese authorities have even resorted to threatening my colleagues at Radio Free Asia, even though we are based in United States and most of us are U.S. citizens. They do this by targeting our China-based relatives. I am among six journalists with RFA's Uyghur Service whose family members have

been jailed, detained, or disappeared because of our work. The sad thing is we cannot be sure about our families' well-being or their fate. Attempts at contacting them carries serious risks.

I know and my colleagues know that our work is important. After we began reporting on this human rights crisis in the Uyghur homeland, journalists in Western media have investigated and confirmed many details that were first reported by RFA. Knowing that so many of our peers turn to RFA as trusted source is very encouraging, but the cruel irony does not escape my colleagues and me. Though we have journalistic understanding about so many events happening in the Uyghur Region, we are often the last to know if our mothers, our fathers, our brothers, our sisters, and our children are in prison or not, if they are sentencing or punishment, if they are need of health or medical care, if they are still alive. That is the fear we live with every day, every hour.

But there is one greater fear that urges us on: that if stop doing our duty as journalists, if we were silent, the world would simply forget.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hoja follows:]

Testimony of Gulchehra Hoja

Uyghur Service Broadcaster
Radio Free Asia

Hearing on "The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights"
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

May 16, 2019

I'd like to thank the Subcommittee's Chairwoman, Congresswoman Bass, and the Ranking Member, Congressman Chris Smith, for holding today's hearing, "The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights." I'm proud to be here and I'm especially proud to represent Radio Free Asia, which was created by Congress with a mandate of providing local timely, accurate news and information to people living in closed countries. There, access to in-depth, reliable journalism is restricted and censored. State-controlled media follows an agenda dictated by regimes. For RFA's audiences in Asia, the millions who listen to our broadcasts on the radio, access content on our websites, engage with us on social media, and watch our TV programming, RFA often serves as a lifeline to the truth.

As a broadcaster with RFA's Uyghur Service -- the only independent Uyghur language news service outside China -- exposing the truth can come at a severe cost. Not just for me, but also my colleagues, and our families in China. Also not spared are our sources -- the networks of people on whom we depend to provide our audiences with a clearer picture of what would otherwise be blotted out by state propaganda and disinformation.

Because of our work as journalists, China has long viewed RFA as a hostile foreign news network. This perhaps has never been truer than now, when RFA has been at the forefront of covering an unimaginable humanitarian crisis in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. There, Chinese authorities have detained more than 1 million Uyghurs as well as other ethnic Muslim minorities, such as Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, putting them in cramped, prison-like facilities, while implementing a vast, high-tech surveillance state to monitor and intimidate the remaining minority population in the XUAR. Throughout these developments, my colleagues and I at RFA's Uyghur Service have worked tirelessly to report on events as they occur in our former homeland.

This includes breaking the news of mass detentions of Uyghurs at the very beginning of the creation and use of China's notorious "re-education" camps, when 120,000 Uyghurs in Kashgar Prefecture were first detained in the spring of 2017; first interviewing the camps' security guards and officials -- who described the harsh treatment and conditions: the forced physical labor and cultural assimilation, scarcity of food bordering on starvation, and even the routine endangerment and harm inflicted on inmates. RFA first uncovered the construction of crematoriums near the facilities in anticipation of disposing of the deceased while disregarding Uyghur burial traditions; and RFA first reported on the overflow of kindergartens and orphanages of Uyghur children whose parents were detained.

RFA was also the first to confirm the deaths of Uyghur detainees in the camps, such as the mother of Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress, and Uyghur religious scholar Muhammed Salih. Some survivors from the camps shared their personal, often nightmarish stories with RFA before talking to other media, including Omerbek Ali, Gulbahar Jelilova, and Mihrigul Tursun -- all of whom I interviewed. Recently, RFA Uyghur confirmed a new and ominous development: the mass transfer of thousands of Uyghur detainees from the XUAR to prisons in six different Chinese provinces.

China has long tried to suppress this story, denying the camps' existence before finally acknowledging them as "job-training" centers under the pressure of global scrutiny. But as RFA has uncovered, many inmates in these camps are respected professionals, scholars, retirees and younger people with careers. China's desire to control the narrative also meant using any means necessary to make it difficult if not impossible to learn the truth. My colleagues at RFA and I do not have access to the region: China would never allow us to get journalism visas and visit the region -- which we once called home. We instead are forced to reach our sources using other means, among them, phone calls. But even that is becoming very difficult, as authorities not only monitor calls, but use AI technology and voice recognition software to attempt to cut us off from reaching sources. Authorities target our sources, even those outside China, by threatening family and loved ones still in the country. This makes it harder to get leads and confirm developments.

As is well known, Chinese authorities have even resorted to threatening my colleagues and me at Radio Free Asia -- even though we are based in the United States and most of us are U.S. citizens. They do this by targeting our China-based relatives. I am among six journalists with RFA's Uyghur Service whose family members have been jailed, detained, or forcibly disappeared -- often in connection with, if not as a direct result of, our work for RFA. One of my colleagues, Shohret Hoshur has two brothers, sisters-in-law and an elderly mother in detention. Mamatjan Juma has three brothers in jail. Eset Sulaiman and Kurban Niyaz each have a brother

in detention. I have about two dozen relatives of extended family who have been detained, almost all taken on the same day. The sad thing is we cannot be too sure about our families' well-being or their fate, since attempts at contacting them carry serious risks. My colleague Jilil Kashgary, who has two detained brothers, recently heard that they may have been sentenced to prison -- but he is still unable to confirm that information with any degree of certainty.

These conditions make our jobs extremely difficult -- but not altogether impossible. My colleague Shohret Hoshur was recently able to piece together information to uncover the tragic drowning of a Uyghur toddler whose parents were detained, working for days to confirm details with police precincts and other sources. Mamatjan Juma interviewed several former detainees now living in Turkey, where he was able to establish key details about the kinds of mistreatment and abuses in the internment camps. I have been able to interview parents who fled the XUAR who were able to locate their children after seeing them on Chinese social media. These are just a few examples of the many exclusive stories RFA is able to get -- all offering a different perspective, establishing an important fact or development, or providing a missing clue or detail that helps us to better understand the fast-evolving crisis in China.

I know and my colleagues know that our work is important. After we began reporting on the events unfolding in Xinjiang, journalists in Western media have investigated and confirmed many details that were first reported by RFA. *The Wall Street Journal, the New York Times*, BuzzFeed, BBC, CNN, CBS, *The Economist*, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, France 24, and many other reputable organizations and media have done outstanding work as well. Knowing that so many of our peers turn to RFA as a trusted source is very encouraging. But the cruel irony doesn't escape my colleagues and me. Though we have journalistic insight about so many events happening in Xinjiang, we are often the last to know if our mothers, our fathers, our brothers, our sisters, and our children living there are in prison or not. If they face sentencing or punishment. If they are in need of help or medical care. If they are still alive. That is the fear we live with -- every day and every hour. But there is one greater fear that urges us on: that if we stopped doing our duty as journalists -- if we were silent -- the world would simply forget.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Ms. Cengiz.

[The following statement and answers were delivered through an interpreter.]

STATEMENT OF HATICE CENGIZ, FIANCE JAMAL KHASHOGGI

Ms. CENGIZ. I want to thank you, first of all. Believe me, it is very hard for me to make this speech here. I am not sure how I will be able to voice the tragedy that I have been living through for the last 8 months in this short of a time, but I would like you to get the general idea if I can.

When we were talking 7 months ago with Jamal what we would do in the United States after we got married, what travel plans we would make to be here, as the witness of a very important tragedy is actually a trauma for me. Jamal told me that Washington was a beautiful city and that we would have a beautiful life. And he would tell me about U.S. politics, details that I did not know and he wanted to push me on to be interested in the United States before I arrived.

He told me that there were large gardens, museums, shopping opportunities. He told me that I would not be bored and that I would not be missing Turkey and that I would be very happy in the United States. When he came to Turkey for us to get married, we quickly got busy planning our marriage. We were buying furniture. As you know sometimes women have these, I was planning my dowry. I was very excited and I was happier to be alive than I had ever been in my life.

As I was heading for such an exciting start, the fact that it got suddenly cut on October 2d, I still cannot make human sense of it. I still cannot understand. I still feel that I will wake up and it will get back to that. And I cannot understand that the world still has not done anything about this.

I had time to walk the streets of Washington before I got here and if someone had told me 7 months ago that I would come here without Jamal but to ask for something about him, ask about justice for him, I would not have believed it.

But now I find myself in front of people that I had seen on TV. This is amazing. I am asking for justice and I cannot find the words to express my feelings about this.

There is much that I want to say, but I want to just focus on the things that are important. During the first days after the event, President Trump had invited me to the White House. But in those days, I told the U.S. values, the value system of the United States would help solve this and leaving aside the emotional side, I thought the politicians would be able to help, but then I did not come.

In the early days, President Trump said that this would be solved. Ms. Pelosi talked about how unacceptable this was. But seven, 8 months later we see that nothing has been done and that is why I am here today. I just want to say that what is most important here is within that official mission of the embassy on October 2d, it was not just Jamal that was killed. It was also what we are talking about here, the values that the United States represents. Did they not get murdered as well?

I think we choose between two things. We all have this on our minds that we can either go on acting as if nothing happened and we can walk out of here and act as if nothing happened, or we can act, we can leave aside all interests, international interests and politics, and focus on the values for a better life.

And, finally, for the United States, the values of freedom of thought and human rights as the United States is the fortress for these values, I think it is more than what the Constitution has, but it has the right, it has the opportunity to show that this is—it has the chance to show those who are responsible for this act. I think it is a test for the United States and I believe it is a test that it is true that it can pass and that is why I am here today.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

Ms. CENGIZ. One last thing. I hope that the Congress can initiate an international investigation, it can lead an international investigation into this act. And I think that international interests should not supersede values and being allies can also mean that these things, these people, the people responsible for this murder can be brought to justice. And I believe that President Trump can initiate this as well.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cengiz follows:]

Testimony of Hatice Cengiz

Hearing on "The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights"
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

May 16, 2019

On October the 2nd 2018, Jamal and I went together to the Consulate General of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul to get the documents needed for our marriage. He never walked out. As I hoped for good news from him that our marriage papers were in order, as I eagerly awaited the happy surprise of seeing him again, no such things ever happened. On October 20, the confirmation that my fiancée, Jamal was murdered, was announced to the world.

It has been more than six months since this horrible event, but there has been no truth, justice or accountability for those responsible for this terrible incident, to this stain on human rights and press freedom. Maybe that's the reason I am here today.

Jamal's killing was a violation of the most basic, universal human right: the right to live.

The United States is a beacon of hope and freedom to the world. I feel that it is important to send a message to the world that the United States treasures the foundational principles of universal human rights and expects its allies to uphold freedom of expression and freedom from persecution for one's political views.

To this day the Saudi government has not returned Jamal's remains, though they have admitted to his violent death on their diplomatic soil. Without his body it has not been possible to give Jamal the dignified burial and funeral that he deserves.

I feel it is important for me to mention that most people know about this story purely from the news they've seen on television and read in newspapers. But I am the one whose beloved was taken away from me and taken through a gruesome act of murder.

Every day, I have nightmares thinking of Jamal's suffering.

Is it not natural for me then to demand that those responsible for his death are held accountable through the proper channels?

The world is outraged at Jamal's murder. It is a violation of human rights, of international law and of a common sense of decency. What happened to him is part of a global pattern of journalists and those who speak and write freely being killed. Escaping abroad in search of safe harbor is no longer a guarantee of protection.

If Jamal's murder passes with impunity, then me speaking here today puts me in danger, it places everyone who shares these universal values in danger. Only by holding those responsible to account can we ensure that this does not happen again. I hope that the United States and the international community will take a stand for Jamal and for all journalists, dissidents and human rights advocates who were killed simply for exercising their right to free speech.

I was the closest witness to this incident. I was last person who's seen Jamal alive. I have reason to believe his murder was premediated. Investigators could not access the crime scene for many days. As the closest witness, I feel a moral obligation to remind the world that the people who perpetrated this act, still to this day, have not been brought to justice.

Given this void, I feel the event needs to be explained to everyone one more time.

I met Jamal in May 2018 at a conference in Istanbul as a PhD student. I was 36. Shortly after we met, our acquaintance grew into a very special relationship. Jamal visited Istanbul and our daily communication continued with passion and intensity. Finally, Jamal said that he wanted to continue this our beautiful voyage in a formal manner, and he proposed me. I was amazed. I was thrilled to marry someone who I could share my world with intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. He is the love of my life.

Jamal was an accomplished journalist, author and political commentator who observed and analyzed Saudi Arabia's internal and domestic politics. I had followed in the media and admired for years. In his work, he had often met kings, princes and world leaders. And he fell in love with me, a modest and simple Turkish woman, and made a decision to spend his life with me. This showed me what a humble and natural a person he was, deepened my own love for him even more.

The fact that Jamal, as brilliant as he was, wanted me by his side, made me think that, I, a young woman seeking knowledge, love and happiness, might have something to offer to the world. My life finally made sense to me.

In the beginning, my feelings for Jamal were only of intellectual admiration, but I soon felt a deep love and longing for him. When I was with him, I felt warmth and the exuberant, passionate love of a young woman. Jamal started talking about his need to be with me, to create our life together. We started to dream. We wanted to settle down and get married. We wanted to live our lives together. Always there for each other. Always loving each other.

I believed with all my heart that my life would change with Jamal, not just materially but also spiritually. For the first time in my life, I was happy to be alive. Up until his untimely death.

With Jamal, I felt fulfilled. This was my destiny: to stand beside him in his life and his work, and for him to stand behind me in mine. We dreamt together. We spent many nights talking in the dark until the early hours of the morning, exchanging views about politics, culture and the world. Nights like this were joyful for Jamal, and they were joyful for me, too.

But shortly after meeting Jamal, I began to see his inner world. He was in deep pain. He lost his country, his job and his family all at the same time. His decision to settle in the US was well thought out, but it left him with a sense of deep loss and loneliness. Jamal was uncomfortable with the changing political atmosphere in his country that began in 2017. He was disturbed by the uncontrolled exercise of power in Saudi Arabia, its violations of human rights, arbitrary arrests and detentions of scholars and writers, and unprecedented violations of people's basic freedoms.

Jamal was banned from writing anything in his own country. In Saudi Arabia, he was forced into silence for a very long time. While he was torn by the decision, he felt he had no choice but to leave.

Jamal chose a life of exile at age 60 so that he could continue to write, and to defend those without a voice. He fled to the United States, where he already had a home, and began writing for the Washington Post. He was thrilled to write freely again in the US, and to reach an even broader, international audience. He said that the experience of exile only sharpened his calling to write. He told me how happy he was. He told me the things he enjoyed most were to write, to read and to share ideas. This is why I loved him.

Jamal always said that his life in the States was good, and that he loved this country for its freedom and its greatness.

Jamal was a thinker. He was deeply connected and committed to his country. When he left Saudi Arabia it never occurred to him that he might never return home. He constantly told me that there was no hatred in his heart or any grudge between him and his country. He said he wanted to his good intentions and his positivity toward Saudi Arabia to be known.

He chose to fight for the principles he believed in and he chose to leave his country, fearing death if he were to stay. To honor Jamal's legacy, I must stand up for these principles. Jamal spoke for those without power, without a voice. He spoke for people who expressed their views, whatever the price, against oppression and authoritarianism. Those people have been silenced, and don't have the opportunity to address the world the way that I do.

The people who Jamal defended cannot speak to Congress, they cannot speak to the media. They cannot speak, without facing imprisonment or death. Now, Jamal has been

taken from us for speaking out for them. But who will speak for Jamal? I can't stop asking that question to anyone who will listen. That is what brings me here today.

Now, I ask for your help. Humanity must make a decision between two things. We either decide that Jamal was killed, and this case is closed. Or, we decide that the values that Jamal paid for with his life still mean something, and that the people of the world can still hope for justice. I know that the United States will always remain vigilant in defending the most basic principles of freedom, democracy and human rights.

Accountability for Jamal's murder might help protect me from those who killed Jamal, but more importantly it protects those who he passionately defended, who are in danger, and who risk their lives and their freedom every day as they stand up to the oppression of authoritarian regimes. I am here today to continue on that path and to honor the legacy of my beloved Jamal.

I dedicate this testimony to Jamal, I will love him until the end of my days even though I've lost him.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you very much.

I want to thank the witnesses. I appreciate you sticking to the time limit, but rest assured you will have additional opportunity to speak.

I am going to defer my questions until the end so that I can give my colleagues an opportunity to ask their questions. We will stick to the 5-minute rule, and then after everybody is finished we will do another round where people can continue. So let me go to the ranking member, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

And, first of all, thank you, Hatice. That was very, very powerful. Your written testimony really is a love letter to your fiance and I want to thank you for that and for making that a part of the record as well. You know, there is a great deal of concern that nothing has been done in terms of prosecutions. We know that Prince Mohammad bin Salman, in November 2018 there was a Washington Post article that made very clear that the CIA had high confidence that he was at the core of this terrible, terrible murder.

My hope, and I said it in my opening, would be that there would be, minimally, sanctions meted out against those who were part of this and we have very significant sanctions under the Magnitsky Act, the inability to do any business here in the United States pursuant to the clauses of that law as well as no visa. And I think there is a time now to draw a bright line in the sand and mete out that kind of punishment.

In terms of prosecutions, obviously it would be much harder for the United States to initiate a prosecution when somebody is overseas, but you know, there is a concern that there will never be a prosecution, so I do think we need to do what we can do right now and to do it. The information seems pretty clear. Mr. Simon points out there needs to be a non-secret, not a top secret, something that could be disseminated widely from the government, from our intelligence services that would lay out the case to the greatest extent possible.

I think it is—I mean obviously the Washington Post article is based on leaks, probably, or somebody talking, you know, without attribution. But high confidence is high confidence, so I think we need to pursue this more aggressively. So I thank you again for being here, for bringing this to light so eloquently and I do want to thank you for that.

I would also, Ms. Hoja, thank you for speaking out on behalf of all of the journalists in China. And, frankly, we know of, as Mr. Simon said, so many of them are Muslim Uyghurs that had been incarcerated, but I am of the belief that there are many, many more who are incarcerated or otherwise harassed that we simply do not know about. And like I said before, the chilling effect this has on unfettered reporting is abominable. There is just no way that anything is happening inside of China that is being reported on and that includes on the internet.

So I do thank you for that, for being here, for raising the issue again. I would point out that in the Reporters Without Borders data and you look at the countries that we are talking about, Vietnam is listed as 176 out of 180. Three times, three separate congresses, I have had the Vietnam Human Rights Act pass this

House with a heavy emphasis on press censorship and what they are doing to bloggers, only to die in the Senate. John Kerry had holds on it in the Senate, and I think, you know, it was unfortunate. We are going to try to pass it again this year. Zoe Lofgren has joined me as the prime democratic co-sponsor.

But things are going from bad to worse in Vietnam. I am not sure of anybody I have read—Mr. Simon, I did not see it in your testimony, but I am sure you are very concerned about it. Since 2011, more than 2,000 journalists and bloggers have been detained. And there is now a new law, a new cybersecurity law in Vietnam where Google and Facebook are blocking posts by Vietnamese in the United States. So, I mean the reach, as we see with the Uyghurs, as we have seen with many dictatorial countries, they are able to block that kind of, you know, they set up a firewall. I would ask you to speak to that if you could.

And we also know that a blogger, Truong Duy Nhat, who worked for Radio Free Asia, was abducted from Thailand by the Vietnamese agents and he is seeking asylum. So there is just, again if you could speak to that I would appreciate it. But I know I have asked a few questions and there is not much time, but perhaps you could respond.

Ms. BASS. And you respond to that and then the time will be out, but we will come back to Mr. Smith in a bit.

Mr. SMITH. OK.

Mr. SIMON. Yes. Well, first of all, I want to agree with Congressman Smith. We really do not know how many journalists are in prison in China and we do not know how many Uyghur journalists are in prison. We do the best research we possibly can to come up with an accurate number, but we acknowledge that it is becoming more and more difficult to do routine reporting in China and it is almost impossible as we heard from Ms. Hoja to report in the Xinjiang region.

International journalists as well are followed, harassed. What we know about what is happening, one of the gravest human rights situations confronting the world right now, is extremely limited. I also think that you raise some important points. You gave the example of Vietnam, but we really need to think about the internet as a shared global system. That is under threat. It is under threat by autocratic countries that are putting pressure on U.S. social media companies. It is under threat from a new framework through which we look at social media companies and the role that they play in this global information system. And Vietnam as you mentioned is a country of grave concern. You mentioned the RFA correspondent who was basically as best we can determine kidnapped from Thailand, taken to Vietnam where he remains in prison. And this is indicative of the broader, repressive environment that journalists in that country confront. Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

We are joined by the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee who would like to make a statement.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, and I appreciate your indulgence. I have just a short statement to make. I am glad that this subcommittee is holding such an important hearing. And to

our witnesses and members of the public and the press, thank you for being here today.

I will start. I will be brief and start with two short words and that is "fake news." We have all heard it and how does it make you feel? How are your lives and your safety protected when the President calls what you do phony and paints members of the press as a menace and brands you as enemies of the people? As chairman of this committee, I feel very strongly that politics should stop at the water's edge. We run this committee in a bipartisan, collegial manner, but I cannot sit here and discuss the dangers faced by journalists without mentioning what all of you have to put up with. The United States often sets the tone of the rest of the world and, plain and simple, when the President calls the press phony and tries to turn people against them, it is really just not helpful at all. I think it erodes American moral leadership on this critical issue attacking a founding principle of our great nation and we need to do better for ourselves and for the international community.

America's role in the world cannot just be about advancing our strategic and material interests. It is essential that our values lie at the core of our foreign policy, that they underpin everything we do overseas, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, the things that make governments more transparent and responsive, that makes societies more inclusive and prosperous, that builds stronger friends and partners for our own country, and there is nothing that shines a light on corruption and impunity better than the free press. There is nothing that reveals the plight of oppressed and marginalized populations better than a free press.

A free press has on its side the greatest tool to drive progress and change and help advance those values, and that tool is the truth. That is why journalism can be such dangerous work. When journalists seek and tell the truth, they become the targets of those who reject these values. That is true of Mr. Khashoggi. In far too many places around the world, journalists are harassed, detained, jailed, and killed for doing their jobs. Those of you here today know this all too well, so thank you to all our witnesses for the bravery you demonstrate every day and by coming to testify today.

I also want to take a moment and convey my deepest sympathies to you, Ms. Cengiz. Thank you for your strength in coming to speak to us today. Your story must be heard and we will help you in making sure that it is heard. There needs to be accountability for your fiance Jamal Khashoggi's murder. His loved ones deserve justice and we lawmakers have an obligation to push for that justice. And, frankly, I am worried. I wish that the people responsible had learned more from the international outcry over his murder, but instead it does not seem like people have learned anything. Journalists and bloggers remain languishing in prison.

In March, PBS reported that Saudi dissidents in the United States remain at risk. Just this week we have learned that the Norwegian security services have contacted a political asylee in Norway about a possible threat against him from Saudi Arabia. And, frankly, we are seeing efforts to restrict a free press all over the globe. It is happening in the Philippines, in Venezuela, in Hungary. President Trump just recently met with the Hungarian President Orban who is a very serious abuser of press freedoms. So

what does that mean for us? It means that Congress is not finished. The longer we go without seeing real accountability and real change, the tougher the path forward will be.

So let me make it clear right here and now. We will not rest until there is true accountability. Congress is not done on this issue and we will continue to fight to protect the free press. I thank you all for being here today. I thank Chairwoman Bass and the other members of the committee for their indulgence and I yield back.

Ms. WILD [presiding]. The chair recognizes Mr. Wright.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you. Thank you for having this hearing and it is certainly important because once again it reminds us that so many of the freedoms that we enjoy here in the United States and protected by our First Amendment to the Constitution are not enjoyed universally.

You know, I grew up, not that I am old, but I grew up with a black and white TV and Radio Free Europe. And my grandchildren, and the eldest will graduate from high school next year, they have never known a time when there was not an internet and cell phones. And their assumption until they are told differently, until they learn, is that the whole world is that way, and it is not.

My question for Mr. Simon and Ms. Repucci has to do with China, and it is very aggressively pushing its 5G network and it is building broadband in developing countries. And knowing how repressive the Communist Chinese are in their own country, does that not send a chilling effect to not just journalists, but everybody that likes the free flow of information? When they are building broadband in these countries and will not—you know, I mean if you control the information you control the country.

And so my question is, does that not bother you and what can the United States and its allies do to confront that threat?

Ms. REPUCCI. Thank you very much for the question. It is very important. Yes, I mean as you know, the Belt and Road Initiative is reaching, it is a trillion-dollar project all over the world and China is using that to build infrastructure that can then be manipulated for surveillance both domestically and by China itself, so it is definitely a big concern. China is also bringing foreign government representatives to China to train them in information technology. And while we do not know exactly what happens at these trainings, the case of Vietnam is a good example. Very soon after Vietnamese Government representatives were in China for one of these trainings, they returned to Vietnam and passed a cybersecurity law that was eerily similar to the cybersecurity law in China.

So it does appear that China is trying to—is systematically spreading its version of digital authoritarianism to other countries through infrastructure and through person-to-person contacts. Certainly, the United States needs to take action on this. I think maximizing transparency as much as possible, information flows on what China is doing, making people aware of what we know about the impacts of these infrastructure projects and these technology projects. I think also it is important to speak out and to support the countries that are the targets of this.

In many ways, these countries are facing a choice between moving toward democracy or moving more toward China's model. And they need to know that if they want to move toward democracy,

they have supporters in the United States who will back them up and continue to provide a model that they can follow.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you.

Mr. Simon, do you have comment?

Mr. SIMON. Thank you and I will add just very briefly by talking about the impact that this smothering surveillance has on the ability of journalists in China to do their job. I mentioned the challenges that journalists face of reporting in Xinjiang, but this, you know, a surveillance State is being created throughout China and the technology is being developed and exported. So I think we are seeing a model in which technology is used to create a massive system of surveillance that undermines and threatens the most fundamental human communication and obviously would have a devastating impact on the ability of journalists to conduct the kinds of essential reporting that they need to do in order to inform people and inform the public.

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you.

Ms. WILD. Thank you. I now yield time to myself.

Ms. Cengiz, I hope that what you hear today does not sound like empty words. I feel as though so many people have let you down and let Jamal down. And I want you to know that what we are saying today is spoken from a place deep within us and that we care deeply. Your fiance ofJamal dedicated himself to the fundamental tenets of a free press, the notion that the pursuit of truth is an obligation owed to the public. And I feel as though we have let you down, let Jamal down, and in so doing have let down people all over the world who seek to be free.

I want to express what I believe our country has struggled to unequivocally express. My sincerest sympathies for your loss and my abiding commitment to speak the truth of the circumstances surrounding his death so that others will not suffer a similar fate. My mother was a journalist, although she was never put in harm's way as Jamal was, and I will commit in her honor and in your fiance's honor to never stop shedding light on this. It is important for us to discover the truth. It is our job to protect democracy here and to promote it abroad. An informed public and an accountable government are only possible with the help of a independent and free press.

For that reason, I have introduced, here, a free press resolution, House Resolution 325, which currently has 52 co-sponsors, to hold this administration and all future administrations to live up to the principles set by our Founding Fathers who recognized that freedom of the press is one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty. When we do not protect our brave journalists, such as Mr. Khashoggi, we move closer to tyranny.

I would like to also thank you, Ms. Hoja. I recently was visited in my district by a family who are Uyghur. And the wife's family members, multiple family members including her father and mother, are currently being held in, I guess they are called reeducation camps, what I think of as detention camps. And she and her family, her brothers, have not heard anything from her mother or father in more than 90 days. And she showed me pictures of them at their most healthy, enjoying their grandchildren, and then she showed me the last known photograph of her mother who was very

thin and ill. So I commend you for the work that you are doing and the sacrifices that you are making and the risks that you are taking both for you and for your family.

And so I just want to ask you this. Do you believe that the content that you produce reaches Chinese listeners at all, and do they experience risk just by virtue of listening or reading the materials you produce?

Ms. HOJA. Of course, this part, the source and the listeners' safety is the most we extremely worry about. Because we can, knowing of our families' numbers, telephone number, the ID, their pictures, everything, but we do not know our listeners' information about even after listen to us what is going to be happening to them it is unknown. But we have been published several cases, their charge was seven to 10 years even because they find out they been listening to RFA.

So it is a severe cost to even you download Western medias or you listen or even the pictures you can just end up in a concentration camp right now. So we have several cases have been published, but we believe the information itself even though Chinese Government using very harsh technology to black out, but still people using some kind of technology to listen to us, even as some people, travelers, to give them some information. Either aboard other Uyghurs bring those information we provide and they bring those information to them. That is why we constantly even today can get very, very valuable information from the Uyghur Region and the Uyghur listeners. That is why we continue working.

Ms. WILD. Well, I am glad that you do and I am glad that there is still the will of people to know the truth even in the face of great adversity.

With that I yield to Mr. Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. And I thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to each of you. The importance of the work that you do, the courage with which you do it is admirable, integral, and should be celebrated by this entire world. I am grateful to you all, particularly you, Ms. Cengiz. Your testimony has moved me, and may your beloved Jamal's memory be for a blessing and may one of those blessings be action on the part of this body to ensure that such tragedies never happen again.

As I was preparing for this hearing, I was reminded of the words of our third President, Thomas Jefferson, who remarked in 1787 that he would prefer to have a free press without government than a government without free press. Poignant words 230-some years later. And I will add to that. If journalists are at risk, then democracy itself is in peril. And I believe this very hearing may be one of the most important ones that we have all year long.

And my question to each of you is very simple one and that is, what action would you like to see this Congress take to take steps to protect journalists all around the world to ensure that democracy cannot just survive, but thrive?

Mr. Simon.

Mr. SIMON. Let me mention one thing that is general and something else that is every specific. Generally, I think that the Congress needs to ensure that the State Department and the executive branch perform its essential role of upholding press freedom, en-

suring that journalists who are unjustly imprisoned around the world governments that engage in that behavior face maximum pressure. Governments that fail to investigate the murder of journalists face pressure. Governments that impose censorship that restrict the work of the media face pressure. That is absolutely vital.

It is also—we also need to recognize that authoritarian governments, authoritarian leaders around the world will use whatever pretext is provided to them to justify their repressive action. They are repressive because they believe that by controlling information, they can retain power. However, it is deeply unfortunate to see repressive governments around the world justifying their action by citing a need to curtail and suppress fake news, to adopt the rhetoric of the President of the United States to justify their action. That is deeply troubling and I think it is important that this body speak out about that.

Last, I want to mention because we heard from Ms. Cengiz who spoke about her husband, her fiance, rather, in a very personal way, and I want to articulate what his murder means for the cause of press freedom. The way in which he was murdered, the brutality of the crime, the fact that it was exercised extraterritorially, the fact that it was planned and coordinated by a government, the fact that it was functionally a form of torture, the fact that the people who are alleged to have carried out this crime have not been held accountable, and the fact that the U.S. Government has been unable or unwilling to apply pressure to ensure justice sends a terrible message to tyrants and dictators and enemies of press freedom all around the world that they can engage in this behavior. That they can murder journalists. That they can censor the media and that they will not face consequences. That is a terrible message, a demoralizing message, a message which I believe cannot be allowed to stand. Thank you.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Repucci.

Ms. REPUCCI. Thank you. I will just reiterate how important it is that the United States stand up for the values of free press here at home and that those values serve as a model around the world. We have a disproportionate influence in the world, people continue to look to us despite our faults and mistakes, and we need to uphold that model here. The rhetoric that might be aimed at a domestic audience has an international, have international reverberations.

The rhetoric of fake news we have seen since President Trump first raised that term in 2016, we have seen more than 20 countries either pass or propose laws that are on the surface fighting misinformation, but are actually using that as an excuse to crack down on critical voices at home. It is incredibly important that we uphold our own values here and we speak out when those values are violated in other countries. Thank you.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you. I am out of time, but I want to express again my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. You have made an impact on me and I think this entire Congress, so thank you.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Omar.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, Chair Bass.

Mr. Simon, you painted a bleak picture of the threats faced by journalists worldwide. We often think about governments that threaten journalists as military dictators. In places like Egypt, Turkey or Saudi Arabia, Honduras that is kind of expected. But I worry a lot about what is happening here and the kind of message that our President is sending when he calls the press the enemy of the people or calls any story that paints him in a bad light as fake news, what effects that must have.

And I should say that we do not have to look too farther from our own country. We have seen bombs being sent to reporters in CNN in October. Last June, Gerald Fishman, Rob Hiaasen, John McNamara, Rebecca Smith, and Wendi Winters were murdered at the offices of Capital Gazette, and as members of the House of Representatives assaulted doing a campaign.

But talking back to the question of threats against journalists worldwide, when President el-Sisi of Egypt was here, for example, I spoke at a briefing where I mentioned the 19 journalists that have been arrested in Egypt under the charges of fake news; I will guess that the President Trump when he hosted him did not bring that up. Do you think other governments see the President's treatment as a green light in other countries?

And then just a second question to that, we have also heard reports of the U.S. Government committing surveillance against journalists and other human rights workers at the southern border. I signed on a letter that was authored by my colleague, Mr. Castro, regarding this problem, but I want to ask you, how does this hurt the U.S.'s credibility on press freedom and is it not only tweets by the President Trump that is causing more alarming action from all of us?

Mr. SIMON. OK. Well, that is a lot to cover. I think I spoke about the way in which the President talks about the role of journalists in this country, which as I think Ms. Repucci correctly indicated is aimed at a domestic audience, empowers autocratic leaders and undermines U.S. influence when the government tries to exert it on behalf of journalists and press freedom. So it is of deep concern. Obviously, it is not a press freedom issue, per se, the President is free to express his views in whichever way he chooses to express them. There is a risk as you indicated that some people may take this language literally, and there is some evidence that people have done that and that is as you indicate alarming as well.

I think you have identified one very critical press freedom issue and that is the way in which journalists who are crossing the border into the United States have been subjected to searches that we believe are overly broad and inhibit their ability to carry out their work outside the country. Securing, the ability of journalists to secure their data is critical to their work and we have raised concerns and we have engaged with DHS on that issue and we have not got satisfactory response in our view.

I also want to note a second concern that is a broader legal concern and that is about the aggressive prosecution of journalists' sources. This was a trend which actually began in the Obama Administration which prosecuted eight journalists' sources under the Espionage Act, which is an overly broad, in our view, instrument for this purpose and has a chilling effect on the media. But we

have seen a number of cases in the Trump administration, so this is a long-term trend. It is a legal threat to press freedom and it concerns us greatly. Thank you.

Ms. OMAR. Thank you. If I can take just 1 second. I wanted to say to Ms. Cengiz, thank you so much for the courage you are showing. There is not really anything any of us could say to ease the pain that you must have endured the last 7 months.

I had the privilege of attending an Iftar with Jamal last year. And as you were speaking about the loving relationship you shared, I remember he had said to me—he took a famous picture of Keith Ellison and I, and he said, "Ilhan, you need to run for Congress." And I said, "I cannot run for Congress because the person, the only seat I can run for is occupied by Keith Ellison." And we laughed about that and I did not really know that that would be the last time that I would see him.

But he was always courageous in the work that he did and you are showing courage, and I hope that we get to follow that in being courageous and making sure that justice is served in his death.

Ms. BASS. Thank you for sharing that, Rep. Omar.

Rep. Houlahan.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I also want to say thank you so much to you all for coming and for sharing your lives and your stories with us so that we can hopefully be helpful and do something about it. I am deeply grateful for your stories.

I also have a story as well that I would like to share with the record and with the Congress as well. In my home State of Pennsylvania, we suffered recently a loss as well of a journalist as well. His passion was particular to South Sudan and he was shot and killed by South Sudanese Government forces 2 years ago. And so if it is OK, I would like to enter this very recent article about him for the record.

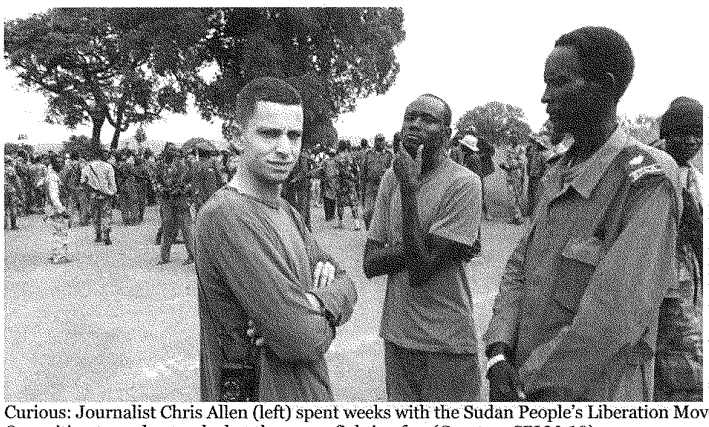
Ms. BASS. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mail & Guardian

Parents of slain journalist demand justice from South Sudan

Sam Mednick 12 Apr 2019 00:00



Curious: Journalist Chris Allen (left) spent weeks with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition to understand what they were fighting for. (Courtesy SPLM-10)

For the first time since American-British journalist, Christopher Allen, was killed in South Sudan more than a year and a half ago, his parents are publicly demanding that the country's government deliver justice for the death of their son.

"We are living a nightmare we cannot escape, we will never see our son again," Joyce Krajian, Allen's mother told the Mail & Guardian in her first statement to print media since Allen died on August 26, 2017. Krajian and her husband John Allen are calling for a full and transparent investigation by South Sudan's government, who they say has "lacked any will to respond" and has met questions about their son's death with "silence." If they fail to act, Allen's parents want the British and American authorities to intervene and investigate. "A foreign national and a journalist in South Sudan cannot be killed with impunity," said Krajian.

Allen, a 26-year-old freelancer and the only international journalist to be killed in South Sudan, died during an opposition-led offensive against government soldiers in the town of Kaya along the Ugandan border while on a weeks' long embed with the rebels.

In the excruciating months since his death, Allen's parents have made repeated attempts to find out how he was killed, using multiple avenues in both the United States and the

UK, to push South Sudan's government for answers.
These have been futile, said father John Allen.

The accounts surrounding Allen's death are conflicting, said Krajian. They include reports of him being shot in the crossfire and being intentionally killed by government forces.

A "white rebel that was filming"

In February, the *M&G* visited Kaya, a geographically and militarily strategic town in close proximity to both the Congolese and Ugandan borders. Interviews with both opposition and government fighters who fought in the battle on 26 August reveal that soldiers saw Allen taking pictures before he died and still fired bullets in his direction.

"We saw him taking photos, (we thought) he was a white rebel that was filming," Peter Mabior, a sergeant with the government army who fought in the August attack, told the *M&G*.

Standing at the edge of a field a few streets off of Kaya's main road and behind several dilapidated mud huts, Mabior points to a grassy patch on the ground where he said Allen was killed. "To us he was one of the rebels, even now we still think he's a rebel," he said.

Another government soldier present during the attacks, who didn't want to be named, told a ceasefire-monitoring investigator who traveled to Kaya on the same trip that he saw Allen hiding in the bushes with a camera and thought he was a "white Congolese so they shot and killed him"; and that when they went to check Allen's bullet-riddled body, they were "shocked and felt bad that they killed a white man". This is according to the investigator, who wasn't authorized to speak on the record.

Several government soldiers in Kaya explained that calling someone a "white Congolese" is how they refer to their lighter skinned neighbors who live across the border in Congo.

Due to the chaos that ensued during the clashes the two soldiers who were at the scene when Allen was killed said they didn't know who fired the shots that claimed his life. Running their fingers over bullet holes littered across a concrete wall several feet from where they said Allen was killed, the men pointed to proof of the fighting's intensity.

It didn't occur to either of them that Allen might have been a journalist, they said.

Culture of Impunity

Five years of fighting in the war-torn country has killed almost 400,000 people, displaced millions and plunged pockets of the nation into famine. South Sudan's government has been accused for its culture of "pervasive impunity" with few government-led investigations conducted in order to hold soldiers to account, according to a report in February by the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

Also in February, the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Mission in South Sudan warned that endemic conflict-related sexual violence was continuing in Unity State. Their findings came on the heels of a report by aid group Doctors Without Borders that 125 women and girls had been raped, whipped and clubbed in a 10-day period in the region at the end of November. However, a preliminary government investigation into the allegations denied that anything had occurred.

As the country slowly emerges from war, with a fragile peace deal signed in September, pressure is mounting from the international community for the government to provide answers about Allen's death.

"Whether the violence came from the hands of a private entity or an individual or from the government the obligation is the same because it's an obligation to protect the right to life of everybody within the territory," said Andrew Clapham, a member of the UN commission and a law professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. Under international law South Sudan is not only required to investigate Allen's death but there is also the duty to prosecute and punish, he said.

"The United States, with support from the UK, has been raising the investigation as a bilateral issue with South Sudan's government," the US ambassador to South Sudan, Thomas Hushek, told the *M&G*. "Whenever there's an American citizen that dies overseas, anything that's unusual you of course want to find out all the facts and report them back to the family," said Hushek.

A foreign diplomat, who wasn't authorized to speak on the record, said that producing a credible report might not only help give Allen's family peace of mind but also help build confidence in showing that South Sudan is a potential partner that foreign governments can cooperate with.

Last year, the US provided technical and logistical support for a trial where 10 soldiers were sentenced to jail for the July 2016 rampage in the Terrain Hotel, in which a local journalist was killed and five international aid workers were gang-raped. The trial was widely seen as a test of South Sudan's ability to hold its soldiers to account. In that case South Sudan's government allowed US law enforcement to help them do their job, but Hushek said that the same opening hasn't been provided in the case of Allen's death.

A Voice for the Voiceless

A freelancer, who wrote for outlets including Al Jazeera, The Telegraph and VICE, Allen dedicated himself to covering underreported places and telling the stories of the voiceless, said his father. Before coming to South Sudan Allen spent years in Ukraine, where he was based, reporting on the war. He was one of the first journalists on the scene after the Malaysia Airlines flight was shot down over the eastern part of the country in July 2014 killing all 298 people on board.

Chris Allen came to South Sudan for the first time at the beginning of August 2017,

crossing into the country with the opposition from the Ugandan border. He spent weeks living at the rebels' headquarters in Panyume, a small, nondescript town in Central Equatoria state, trying to understand what they were fighting for. It was the longest stint any journalist had spent with them during the conflict. "[He] was intensely curious about what motivated people to make the choices they did in regards to defending their country and their hopes for their lives," John Allen added.

After living with the rebels, Allen crossed 26 miles of rugged terrain to reach the government-held town of Kaya. Before entering Kaya he was joined by two journalists from Reuters who arrived shortly before the battle began. At approximately 6am on the morning of August 26, the rebels attacked the town, according to opposition fighters who took part.

During the fighting, Allen and the Reuters journalists separated. Allen wanted to be on the front lines, said his opposition-appointed bodyguard, who didn't want to be named for fear of his safety. Together with a group of fighters Allen split off at one point, hiding behind a few huts where government soldiers were suspected of being inside, according to his bodyguard. That's allegedly where he was shot and killed.

A Question of Intent

Allen's autopsy report, seen by the *M&G*, said he was shot five times from the left including once in the head, twice in the neck, once in his right thigh and once in his lower left leg. According to the report, the shots didn't appear to be in close range and Allen's wounds were most likely created by a "long-range firearm discharge", but the report was unable to determine the exact distance.

Two international experts who saw the report said that while they can't comment on intent, the consistency of the trajectory of the wounds raise questions about whether his death was accidental.

"Shots were intentionally fired in this direction, not ricochet, not an accidental wide spray of shots but rather a series of shots all in a line," said an expert neuropathologist, who didn't want to be named.

A forensic pathologist who read the autopsy report said that it is not conclusive. Allen may have been killed in the crossfire - in the wrong place at the wrong time - but also, "due to the bullet patterns particularly those in the neck and head, we also can not exclude the extrajudicial execution argument". The *M&G* isn't using his name to protect his identity.

No Reason to Investigate

In the immediate aftermath of Allen's death, South Sudan's government branded him a "white rebel" who entered the country illegally and was supporting the opposition.

"We have had to hear (along with the rest of the world) and endure untruths about our son, including that he was a mercenary, a white-rebel and a foreign agent," said Krajian,

calling the behavior by South Sudan's military in the wake of Allen's death "repugnant, reprehensible and undignified."

While the government later acknowledged that Allen was a journalist, and expressed condolences to the family, it maintains that there's no reason to investigate. "There was an attack, the government returned fire as they would anywhere else in the world and he entered illegally and without due process and was killed as a result and there was nothing that should be investigated," government spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny told the *M&G*.

Army spokesman, Lul Ruai Koang said if anyone's responsible for looking into the case it should be the opposition who "lured" Allen to be embedded with its forces and attack government soldiers.

For its part, the opposition is requesting an independent body to conduct the investigation, said spokesman Lam Paul Gabriel.

Understanding the Context

Allen's death has raised questions about the measures journalists, particularly freelancers, take in securing their own safety in conflict zones. South Sudan's fighting is complex with shifting frontlines and guerilla warfare conducted in remote areas, often by soldiers with limited formal training. Even journalists with extensive experience in the country find the conflict hard to navigate, rarely covering the war from the frontlines.

A former soldier in the Ugandan army, who has had American military training and is based in South Sudan, said that in this conflict when someone sees the enemy they "just react and return fire from the direction of where the gunshots were coming". Less emphasis is placed on clearly identifying targets.

There's also a disconnect between South Sudan's security sector and the press. While it's assumed soldiers would know that someone holding a camera isn't the enemy, some of South Sudan's soldiers have been isolated in the bush for years during decades of war and they haven't come in contact with journalists, said Laura Bain, team leader for Journalists for Human Rights, a Canadian media development organization operating in South Sudan.

"When a soldier sees a camera in the field the first thing they might think is that it's somebody who has been sent to spy on them and gather imagery of their position, they wouldn't necessarily think that it's a journalist, a neutral person just doing their job," said Bain.

She saw the disparity clearly during South Sudan's first ever security sector training event held in March by Journalists for Human Rights and South Sudan's Media Authority, a regulatory body created by the government. The event brought together 180 members of the country's security forces to explain the role of journalists, particularly in post-conflict situations. While it will take time to change perceptions, the event was a

first step in getting the country's high-level generals to promise to cooperate with the media, said Bain.

For the moment, however, press freedom groups still consider South Sudan to be one of the harshest places in the world for journalists. In 2018, the World's Press Freedom Index ranked it 144 of 180 countries, according to Reporters Without Borders. At least 20 foreign journalists have been denied entry or kicked out in recent years and nine journalists have been killed since the war erupted in 2013. The Committee to Protect Journalists has confirmed that in at least six of those cases, including Allen's, the journalists were killed either while working or in connection with their work.

Those who have lived or worked in South Sudan are placing the onus on the government to change its "dangerous environment", said Richard Stupart, PhD researcher in the department of media and communications at the London School of Economics.

"Yes, there is an argument to say that [Allen] wasn't perhaps experienced enough in actual combat situations to have been there that day, but the fact that South Sudan's government has little respect for the laws of war, its troops are poorly trained and it refuses to allow free reporting of the conflict, all combined to create an overall dangerous situation for reporters that ought not to have existed," said Stupart.

Journalists are aware of the risks when choosing to enter a war zone and while it might seem like "madness" for those who decide to stay home, we owe it to Allen, someone who tried to bring people's stories to the wider world, to at the very least "understand the dark, tragic, terrible events of his death," said Peter Martell, journalist and author of a new book on South Sudan, First Raise a Flag.

The day before Allen died, his parents urged him to leave, "but he said he could not report 'on the whole story' if he left before the battle," said Krajian.

During the conversation, Allen's parents discussed their son's commitment to his work, its clear risks and their love for him. The conversation ended with his parents singing Allen a song - one they had sang to him and his brother as children and later as young adults each time Allen would leave and travel to far-flung places. "Shalom, Christopher, Shalom, Christopher, Shalom, Shalom," they sang. "We'll see you again, we'll see you again, Shalom, Shalom."

https://mg.co.za/article/2019-04-12-00-parents-of-slain-journalist-demand-justice-from-south-sudan

Ms. HOULAHAN. Because I know that his family is grieving as well and we grieve for him and his family in the same way that we grieve for you.

And so, I guess what I would like to ask, because it sounds as though many of my colleagues have asked questions about what can we do against government to make sure that we are helpful as a Congress, my first question is to Mr. Simon. In your estimation, how much of the violence against journalists is government-directed or attributed, and how much is perpetuated, do you think, by criminal or terrorist organizations or other nongovernmental organizations to the degree that you have data or information about that?

Mr. SIMON. Well, the data base that we have that would be most relevant would be the number of journalists killed and the perpetrators of that violence, because obviously repressive action, journalists imprisoned, that is all perpetrated by governments. I would like to get back to you on the specific numbers rather than citing them off the top of my head, but I will say and I can affirm that the threat from non-State actors is rising and has been rising for a number of years.

So these would include criminal organizations like Mexican drug cartels, like other criminal organizations, for example, in Central America and Brazil journalists are threatened by criminal organization. Also, radical Islamist groups in places like Syria, in Iraq. And, you know, the way, the engagement that you have to have in order to defend journalists working in those kinds of high-risks environment is different since advocacy with those groups is generally not going to be effective.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Is there anything that you can think of from a United States standpoint, from a congressional standpoint that we can do to sort of tease those things apart and to be helpful in the cases where it is not necessarily directly attributable to a State?

Mr. SIMON. Yes. I mean one thing that I talked about in my remarks is hostage policy. That is one dynamic that is part of the threat from non-State actors is they have and they continue to take journalists hostage. And I think we need a more flexible and dynamic approach to that issue as government. I think we have a kind of rigid framework in which we operate and that does not always lead to the best outcomes. And I think that the U.S. Government can and has supported initiatives to ensure that journalists have access to safety information and the support that they need to do their jobs safely in those kinds of environments and that is absolutely an action that the U.S. Government can take.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. And with my last little bit of question I would love to hear about what steps we can take specific to female, women journalists and the particularly different issues that face them, if any, that you guys can give us as advice to be helpful, to anybody who can answer that question.

Mr. SIMON. I am sorry. I was actually looking at a note with data on that my colleague passed to me on the number of journalists killed since 1992. 213 of those crimes were attributed to government, 139 to criminal groups, 253 to military officials which are functionally governments, and then 453 to political groups. So that is a pretty good breakdown of the data.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you.

And with the last few seconds of my time, I also have a story also from a member of my community, Coatesville, Pennsylvania, a Mr. Rachadi Abdallah who was a resident and now is an American citizen of Comoros. And he has been recently engaged in his version of fighting back against a non-democracy in his former nation and was recently imprisoned as well as journalists in his community have been imprisoned too. And this was his testimony when he came to visit me, so this is also for the record as well.

Thank you very much for the work that you are doing. It could not be more important. It is one of the reasons why I ran for Congress, turns out the truth that matters, so thank you.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

A couple of quick questions, Ms. Hoja, I know that you have several members of your family, what it says here is at least two dozen that are missing. And I was wondering, do you have any information about them? What is being done?

Ms. HOJA. We have heard about instance of this happening, but we have not been able to verify. So it is very unclear because we cannot directly contact with them. We just hear rumors or hear some about our, for—yes, relatives. So, I can contact with my parents. After I give testimony last year, they open up, the Chinese Government, the phone line. I do not know why, but they did, so I can contact with my parents.

But other relatives as my cousins and my brothers, we are not sure about them, are they alive or not. So I would love to ask the U.S. embassy in Beijing, can ask about the whereabouts and the well-being of me and my colleagues' family members. Also——

Ms. BASS. Excuse me. You are asking us if we can ask; is that what you were saying?

Ms. HOJA. Yes.

Ms. BASS. And you have the list of names?

Ms. HOJA. Yes, we have—we already gave the full of the list of our families to State Department, also in the Congress.

Ms. BASS. OK.

Ms. HOJA. Yes. So all around, like me and my other five colleagues, like about 50-something people in the camps, you know.

Ms. BASS. Geez. OK, thank you.

Ms. Cengiz, I was wondering if you could—and I think you referenced this before, but I would like for you to restate it. What would you like to see the U.S. Government do?

Ms. CENGIZ. As I have mentioned this to an extent, this act, this murder was a great brutality and the last seven, 8 months nothing was done. The legal procedures and the legal procedures that Saudi Arabia undertook is not transparent. We still do not know why he was killed. We do not know where his corpse is. Congress, if it undertakes an international investigation and puts pressure on Saudi Arabia to share the information with the public and the United States that could be one thing.

There should also be sanctions on Saudi Arabia, because the reason Jamal moved to United States was because there were other people like him in prisons in Saudi Arabia who could not voice their own opinions and he felt responsible for them. And he said, "In the United States, I can be their voice." If we cannot bring him

back, maybe at least we can help those people and other prisoners of thought.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think the record should know and reflect that the Saudi Arabians have been very, very unforthcoming when it comes to information, even those who conspired in 9/11. We had a major battle in Congress, it was bipartisan, and the legislation, sadly, was vetoed by President Obama.

But in his only act that was overturned by a veto override, the legislation to really try to get to the Saudi individuals who were part of 9/11, the security agents, so that the courts could pursue it without the redactions that would occur because of national security so that could go forward, and that did pass the House. Chuck Schumer joined in with the Republicans. It was a total bipartisan effort. Again, it was the only piece of legislation to the best of my knowledge that Barack Obama vetoed and then had it overridden by the House and the Senate, underscoring the incredible arrogance on the part of Saudi Arabia not to be forthcoming about information. I find it appalling. I think we all must find it appalling.

You know, I would ask unanimous consent, Madam Chair, that the Washington Post article, "CIA concludes Saudi Crown Prince ordered Jamal Khashoggi's assassination," datelined November 16, 2018, written by Shane Harris, Greg Miller, and Josh Dawsey, be made a part of the record. Hopefully, without objection, it will be made a part of the record.

Ms. BASS. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Washington Post

National Security

CIA concludes Saudi crown prince ordered Jamal Khashoggi's assassination

By Shane Harris ,
Greg Miller and
Josh Dawsey
November 16, 2018

The CIA has concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul last month, contradicting the Saudi government's claims that he was not involved in the killing, according to people familiar with the matter.

The CIA's assessment, in which officials have said they have high confidence, is the most definitive to date linking Mohammed to the operation and complicates the Trump administration's efforts to preserve its relationship with a close ally. A team of 15 Saudi agents flew to Istanbul on government aircraft in October and killed Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate, where he had gone to pick up documents that he needed for his planned marriage to a Turkish woman.

In reaching its conclusions, the CIA examined multiple sources of intelligence, including a phone call that the prince's brother Khalid bin Salman, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, had with Khashoggi, according to the people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the intelligence. Khalid told Khashoggi, a contributing columnist to The Washington Post, that he should go to the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul to retrieve the documents and gave him assurances that it would be safe to do so.

It is not clear if Khalid knew that Khashoggi would be killed, but he made the call at his brother's direction, according to the people familiar with the call, which was intercepted by U.S. intelligence.

Fatimah Baeshen, a spokeswoman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington, said the ambassador and Khashoggi never discussed "anything related to going to Turkey." She added that the claims in the CIA's "purported assessment are false. We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

The CIA's conclusion about Mohammed's role was also based on the agency's assessment of the prince as the country's de facto ruler who oversees even minor affairs in the kingdom. "The accepted position is that there is no way this happened without him being aware or involved," said a U.S. official familiar with the CIA's conclusions.

The CIA sees Mohammed as a "good technocrat," the U.S. official said, but also as volatile and arrogant, someone who "goes from zero to 60, doesn't seem to understand that there are some things you can't do."

CIA analysts believe he has a firm grip on power and is not in danger of losing his status as heir to the throne despite the Khashoggi scandal. "The general agreement is that he is likely to survive," the official said, adding that Mohammed's role as the future Saudi king is "taken for granted."

A spokesman for the CIA declined to comment.

Over the past several weeks, the Saudis have offered multiple, contradictory explanations for what happened at the consulate. This week, the Saudi public prosecutor blamed the operation on a rogue band of operatives who were sent to Istanbul to return Khashoggi to Saudi Arabia, in an operation that veered off course when the journalist "was forcibly restrained and injected with a large amount of a drug resulting in an overdose that led to his death," according to a report by the prosecutor.

The prosecutor announced charges against 11 alleged participants and said he would seek the death penalty against five of them.

The assassination of Khashoggi, a prominent critic of Mohammed's policies, has sparked a foreign policy crisis for the White House and raised questions about the administration's reliance on Saudi Arabia as a key ally in the Middle East and bulwark against Iran.

President Trump has resisted pinning the blame for the killing on Mohammed, who enjoys a close relationship with Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser. Privately, aides said, Trump has been shown evidence of the prince's involvement but remains skeptical that Mohammed ordered the killing.

The president has also asked CIA and State Department officials where Khashoggi's body is and has grown frustrated that they have not been able to provide an answer. The CIA does not

know the location of Khashoggi's remains, according to the people familiar with the agency's assessment.

Among the intelligence assembled by the CIA is an audio recording from a listening device that the Turks placed inside the Saudi Consulate, according to the people familiar with the matter. The Turks gave the CIA a copy of that audio, and the agency's director, Gina Haspel, has listened to it.

The audio shows that Khashoggi was killed within moments of entering the consulate, according to officials in multiple countries who have listened to it or been briefed on its contents. Khashoggi died in the office of the Saudi consul general, who can be heard expressing his displeasure that Khashoggi's body now needed to be disposed of and the facility cleaned of any evidence, according to people familiar with the audio recording.

The CIA also examined a call placed from inside the consulate after the killing by an alleged member of the Saudi hit team, Maher Mutreb, a security official who has often been seen at the crown prince's side and who was photographed entering and leaving the consulate on the day of the killing.

Mutreb called Saud al-Qahtani, then one of the top aides to Mohammed, and informed him that the operation had been completed, according to people familiar with the call.

This week, the Treasury Department sanctioned 17 individuals it said were involved in Khashoggi's death, including Qahtani, Mutreb and the Saudi consul general in Turkey, Mohammad al-Otaibi.

The CIA's assessment of Mohammed's role in the assassination also tracks with information developed by foreign governments, according to officials in several European capitals who have concluded that the operation was too brazen to have taken place without Mohammed's direction.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said his government has shared the audio with Germany, France, Britain and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to calls and audio recordings, CIA analysts also linked some members of the Saudi hit team directly to Mohammed himself. Some of the 15 members have served on his security team and traveled in the United States during visits by senior Saudi officials, including the crown prince, according to passport records reviewed by The Post.

The United States had also obtained intelligence before Khashoggi's death that indicated he might be in danger. But it wasn't until after he disappeared on Oct. 2 that U.S. intelligence agencies began searching archives of intercepted communications and discovered material indicating that the Saudi royal family had been seeking to lure Khashoggi back to Riyadh.

Two U.S. officials said there has been no indication that officials were aware of this intelligence in advance of Khashoggi's disappearance or had missed any chance to warn him.

Khashoggi "was not a person of interest" before his disappearance, and the fact that he was residing in Virginia meant that he was regarded as a U.S. person and therefore shielded from U.S. intelligence gathering, one of the officials said.

Trump has told senior White House officials that he wants Mohammed to remain in power because Saudi Arabia helps to check Iran, which the administration considers its top security challenge in the Middle East. He has said that he does not want the controversy over Khashoggi's death to impede oil production by the kingdom.

One lingering question is why Mohammed might have decided to kill Khashoggi, who was not agitating for the crown prince's removal.

A theory the CIA has developed is that Mohammed believed Khashoggi was a dangerous Islamist who was too sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, according to people familiar with the assessment. Days after Khashoggi disappeared, Mohammed relayed that view in a phone call with Kushner and John Bolton, the national security adviser, who has long opposed the Brotherhood and seen it as a regional security threat.

Mohammed's private condemnation of the slain journalist stood in contrast to his government's public comments, which mourned Khashoggi's killing as a "terrible mistake" and a "tragedy."

U.S. officials are unclear on when or whether the Saudi government will follow through with its threatened executions of the individuals blamed for Khashoggi's killing. "It could happen overnight or take 20 years," the U.S. official said, adding that the treatment of subordinates could erode Mohammed's standing going forward.

In killing those who followed his orders, "it's hard to get the next set [of subordinates] to help," the official said.

John Hudson and Missy Ryan in Washington, Souad Mekhennet in Frankfurt, and Loveday Morris and Kareem Fahim in Istanbul contributed to this report.

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Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that, Madam Chair, because it makes very clearly that the CIA as I said before had high confidence that they, indeed, it went right to the very top. And so again, we need to be very clear and that is why I think, minimally, the Magnitsky sanctions ought to be imposed upon the very top, including the Prince.

Second, if I could, you know, I had a bill that I tried for years to get passed called the "Ethiopia Human Rights Act." The Bush Administration opposed it. The Obama Administration opposed it. My good friend and colleague who was then the ranking member, then he became chairman—it went back and forth a few times—Donald Payne, we were in lockstep in trying to get this legislation passed with a very, very serious emphasis on the lack of press freedom in Ethiopia as well as individuals who were being incarcerated for their journalistic writings.

Last Congress, I authored a bill that laid out a number of important benchmarks that we hoped that the new government would follow, prominent among which was press freedom. And when my good friend and colleague, Ms. Bass, and I traveled to Ethiopia and met with the new leader of Ethiopia, Abiy, we were very encouraged by his release of political prisoners, his sense that press freedom was sacrosanct.

But I have to tell you, I sat here and had in both parties, Democratic and Republican White Houses, State Departments, tell me that "No, this bill will do more harm than good, let's not do this." Then after we get a change of regime and get a true democrat, small d, into the position of power in Addis Ababa and is doing all these great things, everybody is on board like, "Yes, we always knew they were a problem." So I get very cynical sometimes, you know, with the way State Departments in all administrations handle things.

And, Mr. Simon, I want to thank you for your comment a moment ago, talking about the long-term trend that you mentioned. And I would ask again that with unanimous consent that an opinion in the Washington Post by Eric Wemple be made a part of the record.

Ms. BASS. Without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Washington Post

Erik Wemple Opinion

Seizing journalists' records: An outrage that Obama 'normalized' for Trump

By Erik Wemple

Perhaps there is no one more familiar with the strong-armed tactics of the U.S. national-security establishment than James Risen, the long-serving New York Times reporter who's now with the Intercept. In a well-documented saga, Risen fought a seven-year court battle against government attempts to compel his testimony in a leak case against ex-CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling. Though the government won the case against Sterling, it didn't ultimately force Risen's testimony.

Even so, Risen had experienced firsthand the Obama administration's scorched-earth stance on leaks. Weeks before President Barack Obama was to leave office, Risen wrote in the Times, "If Donald J. Trump decides as president to throw a whistle-blower in jail for trying to talk to a reporter, or gets the F.B.I. to spy on a journalist, he will have one man to thank for bequeathing him such expansive power: Barack Obama."

What prescience. On Thursday night, the New York Times reported that years' worth of the phone and email records of Ali Watkins, a reporter for the newspaper, were seized in a case involving 57-year-old James Wolfe, the former director of security for the Senate Intelligence Committee. (The content of those records was not accessed.) Written by Adam Goldman, Nicholas Fandos and Katie Benner, the Times story also discloses that Watkins had been in a three-year relationship with Wolfe. The indictment in the case charges Wolfe with lying to FBI investigators about his contacts with reporters.

Per the indictment: "From in or around mid-2014 through in or around December 2017, WOLFE and REPORTER #2 [Watkins] exchanged tens of thousands of electronic communications, often including daily texts and phone calls, and they frequently met in person at a variety of locations including Hart Senate Office Building stairwells, restaurants, and REPORTER #2's apartment." At one point during the investigation, the FBI pressed Wolfe on a story written by Watkins that contained information provided to the Senate Intelligence Committee. After denying knowledge of the sourcing, the FBI showed Wolfe pictures of him and Watkins. Faced with such evidence, Wolfe admitted lying to agents, but insisted that he hadn't shared "classified information or information that he learned as Director of Security for the [committee] that was not otherwise publicly available," according to the indictment.

During a brief phone call, Watkins declined to answer questions, referring the Erik Wemple Blog to a statement from the New York Times, which reads in part, "Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of democracy, and communications between journalists and their sources demand protection," noted New

York Times spokeswoman Eileen Murphy. In an email to the Erik Wemple Blog, New York Times Executive Editor Dean Baquet wrote, "this is a troublesome development, that the government would dig into a journalist's records this way."

The indictment is notable for what it's missing. Here we have what the New York Times calls a "leak case" with no charges for leaking. The three counts collectively charge Wolfe for lying to investigators about his contacts with Watkins and other reporters. That said, the indictment is expansive about what Wolfe allegedly lied *about*: According to the document, Wolfe said he "did not disclose to REPORTER #2 information that he learned as Director of Security for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that was not otherwise publicly available, when in truth and in fact, and as he then well knew and believed, WOLFE did disclose such information to REPORTER #2."

As New York Times reporter Charlie Savage writes in his book "Power Wars: Inside Obama's Post-9/11 Presidency," indictments are a very modern way of dealing with loose-lipped government officials. "In the past, when an official was suspected of leaking, it was handled differently. The official might find himself cut out of the loop and not invited to the key meetings. He might get a letter of reprimand in his file," writes Savage. "He might even lose his security clearance and be fired. But it was virtually unheard of, until very recently, for the government to treat as a crime the unauthorized public disclosure of military and intelligence information."

The concerted application of criminal investigations to this activity, writes Savage, finds its roots in the George W. Bush administration, whose Justice Department commissioned a task force under the direction of prosecutor Steven Tyrrell to pursue leakers. Among its early obsession was tracking down those who assisted Risen and fellow New York Times reporter Eric Lichtblau for their stunning 2005 scoop on Bush's warrantless wiretapping program. The work of the task force would provide the Obama administration a head start in racking up around ten leak prosecutions — more than the tally of all previous administrations combined.

The Obama adminstration's aggressiveness on this front mushroomed into a scandal in spring 2013, as revelations surfaced that the Justice Department had subpoenaed two months' worth of phone records of Associated Press journalists, and that it had named James Rosen, then of Fox News, as a potential co-conspirator in a criminal leak as it pursued his reportorial records.

Which is to say that entangling the media in leak investigations isn't a Trump-era outrage; there's nothing here for Trump to "normalize."

Howls of protest from media executives — not to mention a spontaneous ambient outrage — led Obama's Justice Department to revise its policies for seeking to journalists' records. The policies sought to protect news organizations from arbitrary actions, dubbing the pursuit of media records as "extraordinary measures, not standard investigatory practices." The policy also laid down three conditions under which Justice Department officials may proceed with trying to access reporters' records: that the information

sought is "essential" to the proceeding; that "all reasonable alternative attempts have been made to obtain the information from alternative sources"; and that the effort follows negotiations with the affected media outlet — though the attorney general may grant an exception to this rule.

According to the New York Times, Watkins was not notified in advance of the seizure of her communications records. The seizure netted "years" of customer records from two email accounts and a phone number. Was that really necessary? Though it seems heavy-handed, it is best to postpone judgment. "It's hard to say, but the breadth and time-frame of the records compiled and the failure to disclosure the collection to the reporter raise concerns," notes Suzanne Nossel, the chief executive of PEN America, in an email. "The DOJ's own guidelines are clear that seizing a reporter's records must be a last resort, so a key question is what other avenues were pursued and how assiduously."

A key fact, meanwhile, is that law enforcement — without notifying the reporter — secured records of her electronic communications. With that information, agents were able to establish sequences like this one, from the indictment:

18. On or about March 17, 2017, the Classified Document was transported to the SSCI. As Director of Security, WOLFE received, maintained, and managed the Classified Document on behalf of the SSCI.

19. On or about March 17, 2017, WOLFE exchanged 82 text messages with REPORTER #2, and that evening engaged in a 28-minute phone call with REPORTER #2.

20. On or about April 3,2017, a news organization published an online article, under REPORTER #2's byline, that revealed the identity of MALE-I.

a. On or about that same date, both before and after the online news article was published, WOLFE and REPORTER #2 exchanged approximately 124 electronic communications.

b. Approximately 20 minutes after the online news article was published, WOLFE and REPORTER #2 had a cellphone call that lasted 7 minutes.

That April 3, 2017, BuzzFeed published an article written by Watkins with the news that former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page had met with a Russian operative in 2013. (Watkins has also worked for McClatchy, the Huffington Post and Politico in addition to BuzzFeed and the Times).

A list of some of the folks entitled to be worried by this indictment:

Any and all sources of Watkins going back years
Any and all reporters who may have corresponded with Wolfe
Any and all sources interested in spotlighting malfeasance in the federal government
Any and all people who want information that the government controls.

On the other side stands the Trump administration, which views leak investigations as a wholesome pursuit — so wholesome that Attorney General Jeff Sessions said his people were pursuing three times

the number of such inquiries as during the Obama administration. The president himself cheers such investigations, and even once suggested to then-FBI Director James B. Comey that journalists be jailed for dealing in leaked material. The Supreme Court wouldn't stand for such a move. Instead, the president will have to settle for what the Wolfe case presents: A reporter who's not charged with any crime but whose work suffers from federal intrusions, and an industry whose suppliers have fresh reason to worry — outcomes that should please the greatest enemy of the First Amendment ever to occupy the White House.

Erik Wemple
Erik Wemple, The Washington Post's media critic, focuses on the cable-news industry. Before joining The Post, he ran a short-lived and much publicized local online news operation, and for eight years served as editor of Washington City Paper. Follow

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Mr. SMITH. He does make the point that the criminal investigations had its roots in George Bush's administration. But then he says the Obama Administration's aggressiveness on this front mushroomed into a scandal in the spring of 2013 as revelations surfaced that the Justice Department had subpoenaed 2 months' worth of records of Associated Press journalists. And he goes on and talks about a whole lot of other examples. But it certainly had a chilling effect on the press during those 8 years, and we do not want to have any more of that, frankly.

You know, I was part of a group that went to the Soviet Union under the auspices of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which I have chaired or co-chaired or been ranking member for years. It was before the first election of the Duma, so it was during the beginnings of Glasnost and Perestroika in Russia, the Soviet Union. We had 3 days of roundtable discussions with existing members of the Duma, all of them unelected, facing their first elections if they were going to run again.

It went into a whole big conversation about press freedom and they asked us what do we do when we are attacked by the press. And since I sometimes get that a lot, I pointed out that we write op-eds, we contact the journalist involved and try to set the record straight, and we talk to their editors and try to—and maybe even have a letter to the editor to, by someone on your staff or a friend to try to make the point that they got it wrong. But that is it. The idea of bringing a defamation suit when you are a public person is nil and none and almost never is successful. But is one of the prices we pay in democracies, I think, for having a free and unfettered press. They can get it wrong sometimes and grossly wrong.

I do wish that there was more of an emphasis on responsible journalism by some. I remember in the journalism class I took in college, the first thing I learned was: What are the three As of journalism? Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy. And I wish we would get back to some of that. But I raise that because, you know, unfortunately, under Putin we have gone back in Russia to the bad old days of a lack of journalistic freedom. So I again want to thank you for pointing that out. The last administration made serious, serious mistakes when it comes to press freedom and we do not want to see that replicated through the current one. And we certainly do not want Jamal Khashoggi's case to go the way of those who were complicit in the Soviet Government with 9/11, which continues to this day to be, still, not resolved.

Let me ask just one final question, if I could. There are a number of countries in Africa—we are the Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights Committee—that are on the list, your list. They are also on Reporters Without Borders. And I wonder if you could just speak to some of those countries like Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, all of which, you know, just to speak to what we could be doing. You know, you mentioned, I thought it was a good point that we be in your recommendations that visas and asylum be available to journalists escaping.

My question, is that happening or not? Are they getting it when they try to—fear, you know, escape? And, second, is the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which you also recommend,

Mr. Simon, is that also, is the report robust enough in your opinion on focusing on journalists? Thank you.

Mr. SIMON. So the answer to the press freedom element in the State Department Human Rights Report under the Daniel Pearl Press Freedom Act—the State Department is required to have robust reporting on press freedom issues—I would say that that is not happening. I would like to see that strengthened, absolutely, and that is why it is a recommendation. I believe that those reports, they can seem bureaucratic, but they send an important message about U.S. values and they are received with a great deal of attention in the countries whose practices are documented.

So absolutely, I would like to see that strengthened. Visas, we deal with that, that is in a very practical way. And I think it was more than about the fate of specific individual journalists who were threatened that the U.S. was perceived as a haven for those persecuted journalists around the world who needed to find refuge. That is no longer the case. It is simply too difficult even for our organization when we look to evacuate journalists who are facing imminent threat of death. We often look to other places because we simply——

Mr. SMITH. Is that new or is that a continuation?

Mr. SIMON. It was always a challenge, but it has gotten a lot worse. It absolutely has gotten a lot worse. It troubles me.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you for that. We will make inquiries on that.

Mr. SIMON. Yes. And I think that lives are at stake.

You asked the question about Africa and I am afraid I cannot answer that in 30 seconds. But I will say that Africa in some ways defies expectations. There are huge challenges to journalists in Africa, but there are some tremendous success stories you mentioned.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. SIMON. Ethiopia, as an example, and, you know, I think when people think of Africa and press freedom they think that, you know, there are many journalists imprisoned and high numbers of journalists killed. But, actually, Africa is a part of the world where as I said there are huge challenges, but they are not reflected in that data. So if you want to find some good news in Africa you can about press freedom.

Mr. SMITH. One last question, if I could, Madam Chair?

Ms. BASS. Go ahead.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Hoja, you made an interesting and very important point that not only did they mistreat journalists, including people like yourself who are not even in-country, but they also go after the families. And I wonder if that is a trend that we are seeing elsewhere, because that is especially what dictatorships do. But you also say, "Also not spared are our sources." And I am wondering, do they track them down too, you know, because they do have surveillance capabilities that are second to none in China. Do they track down the people that are the source in the gist of your articles?

Ms. HOJA. Yes, it has been. We have several cases we can talk more about with the staff later. But recently after the camps started, even the one of the survivors, Omir Bekali, even he was in Kazakhstan, he was tracked down in Kazakhstan-threatened by Chinese officials by phone, also threatening by Kazakh officials in

Kazakhstan. That is why he leave his family to the Turkey. So he just, after he spoke about the experience in the camps to the Western media, his father and the whole family wound up in the camp. His father passed away in the camp. And then other sources, we cannot just openly to give the information about them, so I would like to——

Mr. SMITH. But is a problem, as there is a problem?

Ms. HOJA. Yes, it is.

Mr. SMITH. Do you find that too as well that sources become targeted just like the journalists themselves?

Mr. SIMON. Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think, you know, one of the things I mentioned in my opening remarks is the software developed by the Pegasus Group that was used to track Jamal Khashoggi's contacts, that is another example. So there is surveillance. There is State-level surveillance, but there is also a privately available surveillance tool that——

Mr. SMITH. Now you did say in your testimony that it was likely. How confident are you that it was Pegasus? Because you got it from another NGO, correct?

Mr. SIMON. Yes. I mean I think there is a high degree of likelihood and that is what our researcher was able to determine, so that is what we believe.

Ms. BASS. OK.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you so very much.

Ms. BASS. I want to——

Mr. SMITH. Can I just make a—the ranking member of the full committee, and I would ask unanimous consent that Michael McCaul's statement be made a part of the record?

Ms. BASS. I am sorry?

Mr. SMITH. Michael McCaul's statement be made a part of the record?

Ms. BASS. Oh, sure. Of course, without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Human Rights, & International Organization
"The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights"

Ranking Member Michael T. McCaul

A free press is one of the strongest pillars of a healthy democracy and one of the greatest protections against human rights abuses.

Tyrants and dictators do not like news stories they can't control. They crush dissenting opinions and negative reports by intimidating, jailing, torturing, and even killing journalists.

These brutal tactics have been implemented all over the world. As a result, many courageous reporters and their families are living in fear.
One of the most shocking examples of this kind of persecution is the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

Jamal was a veteran journalist, a commentator for the Washington Post, and a Legal Permanent Resident of the United States. He consistently advocated for independent media throughout the Middle East.

In his last column, published *after* his death, Jamal stated, "Arab governments have been given free rein to continue silencing the media at an increasing rate."

Fighting for a free press is a cause that Jamal gave his life for.

I have consistently condemned his murder in the strongest possible terms.
And I will continue to call for justice until I believe it has been served.

Sadly, Jamal's story is just one of many.

Today, China is leading a brutal crackdown on Uighur Muslims.
It is believed that 1 to 3 million Uighurs have been forcibly placed into what DoD calls "concentration camps".

They are interrogated and subjected to political indoctrination.
We know about this mass internment because brave journalists have reported about it.

We also know that the communist government in Beijing targets these reporters and their families for highlighting these atrocities.

Many have been arrested or have seen their family members disappear. Others have seen worse.

It is part of a plan to scare reporters and keep them from highlighting human rights abuses in China. This must stop.

As American policymakers we must keep our voices loud and condemn these actions wherever they take place. Regardless of politics, we share a responsibility to support freedom of the press all around the world.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here. You have experienced a tremendous amount of pain and suffering.

I admire your courage, and your perseverance. I'm hopeful that your story will inspire others to share their own.

Ms. BASS. Let me once again thank you all for being here today. I do want to just make a statement just for the record in terms of what we are facing here with the current administration, in my lifetime, is something that I have never seen, a President who has called journalists and the press the enemy of the people, who has called for the media to be investigated, who has called for reporters in the media to be jailed, who at rallies has intimated, you know, if they were attacked, you know, whatever.

We had the act of domestic terrorism which one of the members referenced the bombs that were placed, you know, at CNN, and so what we are going through right now in our country is something that we have to pay very careful attention to. We cannot just ignore it and say this is the antics of this President, because we have to be careful that we do not allow this administration to change social norms in this country where it then becomes acceptable.

When you have someone who is deranged that walks into a newsroom and actually murders people, you have to be very careful of the environment that you are setting if you are the leader of the country and are spreading vitriol. And I know that prior administrations have made mistakes, but again in my lifetime we have never seen anything like we are witnessing today.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming. I want to thank Mr. Simon and Ms. Repucci for the work that you do on a daily basis, holding the line and making sure the journalists are protected.

And, Ms. Hoja, for what you do with Radio Free Asia. And I just cannot even imagine what it would feel like to have two dozen of my family members missing and not have the ability to find them.

And then to Ms. Cengiz, I just appreciate you opening yourself up to speaking publicly about what has happened. I think the world was horrified at the open, blatant murder of your fiance and the fact that that has gone unanswered in the world is a source of shame. I appreciate what you said in terms of what you would like to see from our country. You should know from myself and from the ranking member, who has put in more than three decades working on these issues and fighting for human rights, that we will do what we can. There needs to be justice for what was done. Thank you very much. And with that the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:52 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Karen Bass (D-CA), Chair

May 16, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/):

DATE: Thursday, May 16, 2019

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights

WITNESS:

Mr. Joel Simon
Executive Director
Committee to Protect Journalists

Ms. Sarah Repucci
Senior Director
Freedom House

Ms. Hatice Cengiz

Ms. Gulchehra Hoja
Reporter
Radio Free Asia

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations* HEARING

Day *Thursday* Date *May 16, 2019* Room *2172*

Starting Time *2:06pm* Ending Time *3:52pm*

Recesses [*0*] (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Karen Bass, Rep. Susan Wild

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

The Dangers of Reporting on Human Rights

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached.

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

Rep. Eliot Engel

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

IFR, Houlahan (2)
IFR, Smith (2)
IFR, Bass (2)
SFR, McCaul

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *3:52pm*

Harris
Subcommittee Staff Associate

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

COMMITTEE HEARING

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Karen Bass, CA
X	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
X	Ilhan Omar, MN
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
	James F. Sensenbrenner, Jr., WI
X	Ron Wright, TX
X	Tim Burchett, TN

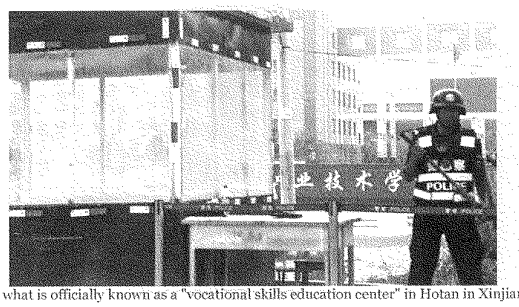
ADDITONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

The Atlantic

What It's Like to Report on Rights Abuses Against Your Own Family

Radio Free Asia's Uighur journalists report on China's internment of hundreds of thousands of members of the country's Muslim minority—including, in many cases, their families and friends.

ANDREW MCCORMICK
March 1, 2019



A guard stands outside what is officially known as a "vocational skills education center" in Hotan in Xinjiang in September 2018. THOMAS PETER / REUTERS

Soon after Radio Free Asia (RFA) broke the news that thousands of Uighurs were being interned in China's far-western Xinjiang province, Shohret Hoshur, a reporter with RFA's Uighur Service, set out to determine just how many people authorities intended to detain. On the phone with a Communist Party secretary in one village, he pressed for a number. *Forty percent of adults*, came the reply. *Was this an estimate, or an order from above?* Hoshur asked. *It was an order*, the official responded.

That was in the fall of 2017. At the time, even more than now, Xinjiang's detention centers were shrouded in mystery. The quota shocked Hoshur for its sweeping scale. It also belied dubious government claims that those being taken into custody were guilty of crimes or associated with extremist activity. Today estimates place the number of Uighurs in detention at more than 1 million, and researchers say China's actions amount to ethnic cleansing, if they do not mark a prelude to genocide.

The full scope and severity of the situation in Xinjiang are still unknown. But from the day China's detention campaign began in earnest, RFA's Uighur Service—the only Uighur-language news outlet in the world that is independent of Chinese government influence—has frequently been at the tip of the spear of coverage. From the RFA offices in Washington, D.C., its team of 12 journalists has broken

hundreds of stories, sometimes bearing sole witness to China's alarming and escalating crackdown on Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups in the country.

Beijing devotes immense resources to restricting access for and stanching scrutiny from international groups and reporters. It's a feat for any journalist to break through the obstacles—all the more so for the Uighur Service's staff, who themselves grew up in Xinjiang and for whom the work exacts a heavy emotional toll. Many have had family members in China detained as a direct result of their reporting. And every day, it seems, another prominent Uighur goes missing, another symbol of Uighur life is erased, and the situation grows bleaker. At a time when the Chinese government appears bent on stamping out Uighur culture and religion, though, members of the Uighur Service say they have no choice but to press forward.

"This is not just my job; it is a duty to my people," Hoshur told me. His 78-year-old mother in Xinjiang was detained and his two brothers are currently in camps, along with their wives and sons. "The urgency of this situation needs to be known by the world."

From the day RFA began broadcasting in 1996, funded by grants from the U.S. government, Beijing has viewed the outlet as an implicit threat. Xinjiang, blanketed with police checkpoints and high-tech surveillance equipment, can be a difficult place for reporters to cover. But for RFA's journalists, who are barred from entry to mainland China, matters are all the more complicated.

These days, Uighur Service reporters usually each place hundreds of calls a day to Xinjiang, including at night to account for the time difference with China. Few calls connect, however, and with many Uighurs missing—or rightly fearful of the consequences of speaking with journalists—willing sources are becoming more difficult to come by. In recent months, RFA has come to suspect China of employing voice-recognition technology against its reporters, as calls reliably cut off within the first minute. Even when journalists employ tools that alter their voice, windows to speak are fleeting. "If I can confirm one or two facts, I am lucky," says Eset Sulaiman, a former professor of Uighur literature at Xinjiang University who joined RFA in 2013. "Then I start again."

What RFA reporters lack by way of access, they make up for with extensive knowledge of the region. Armed with a local's understanding of Xinjiang's culture and bureaucratic minutiae, they often know precisely which entities to call to verify the latest scoops. Between them, they also boast a wide-ranging linguistic repertoire—Uighur, Mandarin, English, Russian, Turkish, Kazakh, and a smattering of European languages—which enables them to engage with both Chinese authorities and members of the Uighur diaspora, spread across parts of Central Asia, Europe, and North America.

Reports are recorded in Uighur and broadcast over shortwave and medium-wave radio, satellite, and the internet. Written versions of stories appear online as well, with the most important pieces translated into English and sometimes other RFA-supported languages. For Uighurs living in Xinjiang, jamming of radio frequencies and internet censorship limit access to the reports, but according to a spokesperson for the World Uighur Congress, an international Uighur advocacy group, RFA's coverage is a vital resource for Uighurs outside of China who are cut off from loved ones back home.

The work can be exhausting. In a cubicle-filled office shared with other RFA language services, long days are a mad scramble of interviewing, transcribing, writing, recording, and editing. Adding to the heartbreak of their own family members being detained, reporters frequently find that the the subjects of their stories are former mentors, colleagues, teachers, and friends. When the work feels like its too much to bear, Gulchehra Hoja, who has as many as two dozen family members presently detained, says she finds strength in knowing that her colleagues understand her struggle. "The Chinese government wants us to be silent, so we must use our voices," she told me. "We are all suffering, but I believe the truth matters."

In a former life, Hoja, who joined RFA in 2001, served as the host of a children's TV program in Xinjiang. In recent months, she has found herself especially concerned with the fate of Uighur children whose parents have been detained. In January, Hoja learned of a video making the rounds on social media showing children in one of the many government-run orphanages where they are placed when their parents are taken. A source in Turkey connected her with a mother in exile who had identified a young girl in the video as her own. "I recognized her straight away," the woman told Hoja in a tearful interview. "I was happy and overjoyed knowing that at least one of my children is alive." (Some stories of the children left behind are more horrific. Also in January, Hoshur reported on an unattended toddler who fell through the ice of an irrigation ditch in Xinjiang and drowned.)

RFA's work routinely helps illuminate key issues in Xinjiang, according to foreign correspondents for whom reporting in the province can be a fraught and resource-intensive undertaking. "What RFA has been able to uncover has been remarkable," says Megha Rajagopalan, who reported extensively from Xinjiang for *BuzzFeed News* until China refused to renew her visa last August. Chris Buckley, who covers China for *The New York Times*, described the Uighur Service's reporting to me as "extremely courageous" and said it has been critical to keeping the Xinjiang story alive in the international press.

At present, however, it is not clear if any amount of reporting will be enough to force change in Xinjiang, up against the combined heft of China's political and economic influence on the world stage. Foreign leaders have condemned the internments, and a growing group of lawmakers in Washington is pushing Donald Trump's administration to take punitive action against Beijing. But amid ongoing trade disputes and other high-profile issues in which China is a key player, such as negotiations with North Korea, the plight of the Uighurs has tended toward the wayside.

Last fall, following strident denials of the detention camps' existence, Beijing wrote them into law. Then in January, it passed legislation giving the government authority "to guide Islam to be compatible with socialism and implement measures to Sinicize the religion." China is set to welcome United Nations inspectors into Xinjiang, but the visit is widely expected to be an act of theater, rather than a sincere effort toward transparency.

In rare interviews with survivors, RFA has documented overcrowding, malnutrition, torture, and even death inside the camps. But Alim Seytoff, the Uighur Service director, says that his team's reporting has likely only scratched the surface. "What is happening there is hell on Earth," Seytoff says. He worries that the whole truth might never be known.

https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/03/radio-free-asia-uighur-service/583687/

What happened to me during my last stay in Comoros in March 2019?

Who am I?

My name is Rachadi Abdallah, a former Comorian army officer. I have a Masters degree in Homeland Security and another Master degree in Professional Accounting and Information System.

I am an American citizen living in Coatesville, PA. I am married and father of 4. I came to the United States in 2001 after serving 12 years in the Comorian army. My last assignment there was Chief of the Office of Operations and Instruction.

In April 1999, while the Comoros was on the brink of civil war, I helped the current President of the Comoros, Azali Assoumani, then Chief of Staff of the army to restore peace to the country and avoid that the country sinks into chaos.

After a year in power, I began asking that we return to our army barracks after realizing that Azali did not want to leave the power to civilians as promised.

After threats, intimidations and an attempt to arrest me, I decided to leave the country for the USA in January 2001.

What happened to me during my last stay in Comoros in March 2019?

I arrived in Comoros on March 5th for my mother funerals. She died 2 days before after a long illness.

After the funerals, I decided to stay a few weeks in the country to help, politically, a retired friend of the Comorian army who was running for President on the Presidential elections of March 24, 2019.

I was a member of his campaign team and later became one of spokesmen for the Comorian opposition.

Taking advantage of my aura and my fluency in making public speeches, I managed to convince many voters who were previously undecided to join us and then vote for my candidate.

In the meetings my speeches were focused on the necessity to vote for my candidate instead of the current President Azali, in order to restore peace and security in the Comoros, a country undermined by dictatorship, nepotism and deprivation of liberty and individual freedom.

Thus, a week after my entry into the electoral campaign, I was summoned by the Public Prosecutor who asked me to lower the tone in my speeches because "my popularity and the way I hold my speeches can lead others to think differently and to put the country in difficulty. "

In short, I was asked not to denounce this dictatorship in a country where people are afraid, and where political prisoners are numerous, journalists are simply imprisoned and the only voice that could be heard is that of the regime in place.

Of course, I refused to obey.

Then came on March 24, the elections day.

Early in the morning the country is crisscrossed by heavily armed soldiers. Some polling stations opened at 4am when they were supposed to open at 8am. In these polling stations the ballots were already filled with the ballots of the candidate Azali Assoumani. Even people died years ago voted.

Elsewhere in the country, the assessors representing opposition candidates are forbidden to enter the polling stations or they are outright replaced by new assessors who are in favor of the regime in place.

Motor Vehicle traffic was forbidden to members of the opposition and only the vehicles of people in favor of the regime were allowed to circulate.

Around 3 pm the inhabitants of the cities, having noticed the increasing irregularities and the ballot boxes full of the ballots of the candidate of the regime whereas many had not yet voted, decided simply to boycott the votes.

Thus, the army came into play to stop the voting and bring the ballot boxes into their vehicles before the time set for the end of the vote.

Live ammunitions were shot and led to deaths and injuries especially in the island of Anjouan.

Two days later, the international observers who were in these elections, in a press conference, denounced these irregularities and clearly said that the vote was anti-democratic, non-transparent and tainted with irregularities.

And to top it off, March 28, 2019, the regime in place arrested my candidate.

The regime will then simulate, on the same day, an attempt to escape of an army Commander who was imprisoned for 5 months.

They then accused the opposition of being behind this escape that cost the life of the Commander and two others people cowardly murdered by the army.

It is in this context that I was once again arrested by the Gendarmerie for 3 hours of interrogation.

In the interrogation the Gendarmes wanted to make a connection between the Commander's escape with my candidate and me.

I have fiercely denied the accusations by saying that we have nothing to do with this story and that we are fighting only for the triumph of democracy and the end of tyranny in the Comoros.

At the end of the interrogation, they released me but clearly told me that they will call me back for another interrogation.

Meanwhile the arrests of opposition leaders continued as well as journalists who denounced the dictatorship.

Having learned from a few gendarmes' friends that soon I might be arrested again and this time sent to prison, I decided to go into hiding first. After a week into hiding left the country.

At the airport, the police detained my American passport for "checking" and my check-in was delayed by an hour, the time for the police to call their Commanders. But as it was Ramadan day their Commanders were unreachable and they ended up giving me my passport and I flew.

According to a friend, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Police who contacted me after my departure, the airport police officers received, 15 minutes after the plane took off, a call from the Secretary of the Interior ordering them not to me let boarding. Is was too late as the plane had already taken off.