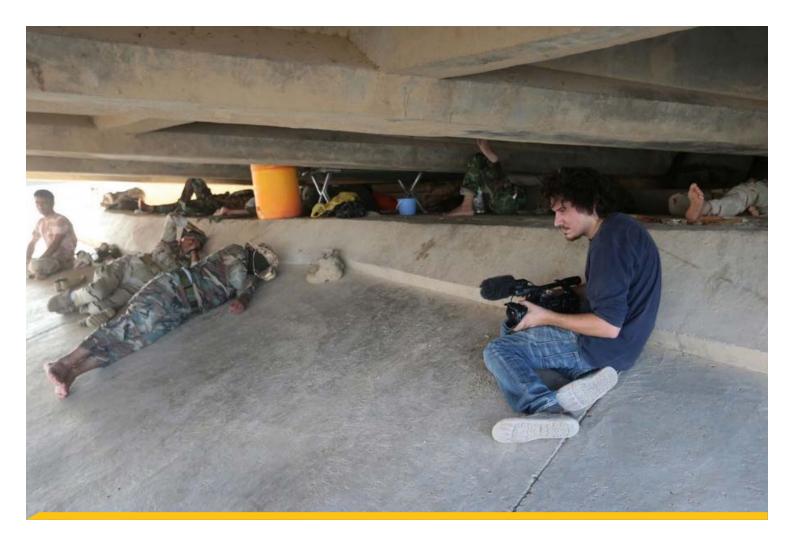


TALES OF WAR
ITALIAN JOURNALISTS,
PHOTOJOURNALISTS AND
DOCUMENTARISTS:
CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF CONFLICTS
FROM 1943 TO THE PRESENT DAY.





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Cover photo: press photographer Stefano Camilli, working on a reportage in the Gaza

strip. He was killed in Gaza in 2014.

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"Stay human". These were the words with which Vittorio Arrigoni used to end each of his reportages from the Gaza Strip. He used to write about the dead, the injured and the horror of war. He himself ended up a victim of the conflict he was covering, just like many other media operators who lost their lives on forgotten, remote war zones around the world. The latest data collected by Reporters without Borders (www.rsf.org) reveal an alarming fact: in 2016, 57 journalists, 9 bloggers and their 8 collaborators were killed while covering the massacres taking place in front of their eyes. This paper retraces several emblematic stories about Italian journalists, photojournalists, camera operators and documentarists who lost their lives during conflicts from 1943 to the present day. The circumstances in which their death occurred reveal the uniqueness of their professional experience, ethical dimension and sacrifice. Some have died while actively participating in the fight for freedom from Nazi-Fascism; others were killed while on mission with peacekeeping forces. But the majority of them lost their lives in the course of their work in war zones. Their stories differ from one another, in that they may have occurred in a different context and time in history, but what they all have in common is that they are about civilian victims of conflicts.

Keywords: Civilian victims of conflicts, Reporter, Journalists, Humanitarian Law, Right to information, Embedded.

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Journalists, civilian victims of conflicts: the latest report by Reporters without Borders

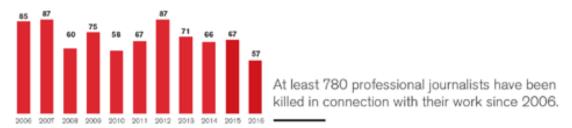
The latest report by Reporters without Borders, published in December 2016, reveals an extremely alarming fact: in 2016, 57 journalists, 9 bloggers and their 8 collaborators were killed while carrying out their duty to inform the public opinion on what was happening in places ravaged by conflicts.

The graphs in the report illustrate a dramatic reality which should shake the conscience of the international community.



Source: Rapporto RSF 2016

From 2006 through 2016 no less than 780 media operators have been killed. Two thirds of them (65 %) have perished in war zones.



Source: Rapporto RSF 2016

The slight decrease in the number of victims compared to 2015 (when 110 journalists lost their lives) is due to the fact that an increasing number of media operators has had to flee from the most dangerous areas such as Syria (where risks are higher), Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Burundi. These figures therefore reflect a decreased presence of journalists in these black holes of information where impunity rules.

Almost all the journalists who have lost their lives in 2016 were local war reporters. Because of lack of adequate safety tools, media companies have become very cautious about sending their own staff on assignment to war zones.

Killed on the ground

So many different stories have been covered by the Italian journalists who have lost their lives on war fronts ever since 1943. Without their reports we would have been unable to grasp the extent of the atrocities committed by Nazi-Fascists and the heroism of those who fought against them.

We would have certainly not learned the unmentionable truths behind international arms trafficking and how they have always fomented conflicts, from the Middle East to Central Africa. We certainly would have never had the opportunity to see some of the most shocking images from the massacres that were carried out during the war in ex-Yugoslavia. There would remain barely any trace in our collective memory of the commitment of the Italian peacekeeping forces deployed in Iraq or in Afghanistan.

The lives, and especially the deaths, of those reporters, media operators and press photographers who were killed while covering the horrors that they were themselves experiencing, share a common denominator. They were all "civilian victims" of conflicts they felt the duty to observe from close up and on which to report, without the convenient filters of virtual reality or fiction but through the eyes and testimonials of those who were experiencing the pain in person. Just like they were.

While there are differences in the historical and political contexts in which their precious work came to an end, what they all have in common are their existential, ethical and professional choices.

This article outlines the personal stories of the media operators who were killed:

- During the Resistance (1943-1945), as partisans fighting in the underground;
- In areas where Italian peacekeeping forces were deployed (i.e. Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq);
- In circumstances where the victim was operating on the side of Italian armed forces on peacekeeping missions (i.e. Nasiriya massacre);



Journalist on a war front
Credit: Reporter di guerra
Source: http://www.giornalemetropolitano.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/freelance-coraggioso.jpg

• In the context of conflicts where Italian armed forces were not directly involved (i.e. Georgia, the West Bank, Thailand).

The press during the war of Liberation

Although journalists-partisans contributed a great deal to the fight against Fascism through their courageous writing, the stories of those war reporters killed during the Resistance appear not to have received much attention from historical reports. The annals of Italian Resistance celebrate the heroism of three journalists who died as civilian victims of the war against the Nazi occupation: Ezio Cesarini, Carlo Merli and Enzo Malatesta. It is possible, however, that the contribution of other journalists who had the same fate is simply unknown.

Ezio Cesarini, silver medal of military valor, worked for a long time as part of the editorial staff of the Bologna-based newspaper "Il Resto del Carlino". On 8th September 1943, after the armistice, he was one of the very few journalists who refused to be at the service of the Nazis' propaganda and became instead an active militant in the third partisan brigade Matteotti, participating in various acts of sabotage. He was arrested on 4th January 1944 by the Italian Social Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana) militia and locked up in the prison of San Giovanni in Monte, in the region of Emilia Romagna, just as the news were spreading about the vile murder of the seven Cervi brothers by fascists in Reggio Emilia. He was killed in retaliation by a firing squad near the shooting range of Borgo Panigale, on 27th January 1944. One of the meeting rooms at the office of the Order of Journalists of Emilia Romagna is dedicated to his memory.



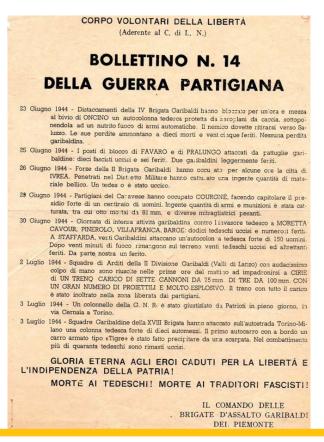
Ezio Cesarini

Source: http://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/cesarini-ezio-478127-persona

Carlo Merli was the editor of an underground newspaper. He was shot upon order of the Special German Court on 2nd February 1944, in Forte Bravetta, Rome, together with Enzo Malatesta, editor in chief of "Il Giornale d'Italia". Both were members of the Italian Communist Movement (Movimento Comunista) and had contributed significantly to the Roman Resistance through the organisation of partisan groups.

The underground press represented a fundamental tool through which many young people like them could share and disseminate concepts related to national redemption, Europeanism and pacifism. It was through these informative publications that people could be kept abreast on the developments in the struggle for freedom, Liberation. The story of Cesarini, Merli and Malatesta shows that, after 8th September 1943, the intellectual production and the dissemination of information by Resistance journalists went hand in hand with a proactive commitment towards the re-establishment of democracy.

Nowadays, a number of web sites offer the possibility to view some of the articles related to the partisan chronicles. The Isec Foundation, a not-for-profit institute for contemporary history, has digitalised the vast corpus of records from the Second World War and the Resistance period. They consist of 84 newspapers edited, sporadically, mainly between 1943 and 1945 by antifascist organisations (www.stampaeresistenza.net)¹. Other documents of inestimable interest to scholars are also accessible thanks to the Senate's initiative "Archivi on-line", which aims to create a virtual archive of publications connected to political figures and parties, parliamentary groups and trade unions. At



Copy of a Resistenza's bulletin, distributed by the Corpo Volontari della Libertà (the coordinating entity of the Resistenza) Source: https://labottegadelciabattino.wordpress.com/2014/08/28/la-stampa-clandestina/

present, approximately three million digital files are available, among which important documents related to the Second World War and the war of Liberation (www. archivionline.senato.it)². The Ferruccio Parri library of the National Institute for the History of the Freedom Movement in Italy (INSMLI) participates in the Epoca project (Emeroteca Politica Culturale Antifascista), within the framework of the platform of digital newspapers and periodicals of the Braidense National Library: this projects allows for instant online access to periodicals and magazines (normally extremely difficult to get hold of), produced by antifascists in exile (www.italia-resistenza.it)³.

From Beirut to Kabul, from Mogadishu to Mozambique

On 18th August 2014, on his flight back from a mission in South Korea, Pope Francis shared some sad thoughts with press agencies: "We have entered World War III - he said - "a war fought piecemeal. The level of cruelty existing in this world is frightening". The ways in which wars are fought nowadays have deeply changed compared to the past. Futuristic technologies, new weaponry, ultra-sophisticated drones and a sky crowded with military satellites allow for unprecedented war dynamics. What remain unchanged, perhaps even enhanced, are the death scenarios and the devastating effects on civilian victims of conflicts. New types of communication channels and social networks have provided bloggers and journalists with additional spaces through which they communicate about this "piecemeal World War III". The reporters undertaking these old and new paths of communication are, however, still putting their lives at risk.

The bodies of **Italo Toni,** editor of "Diari" and **Graziella De Palo,** collaborator of the newspapers "Paese Sera" and "Astrolabio", were never found. The two reporters



Journalists on a war front Source: http://comedonchisciotte.org/il-giornalismo-come-arma-di-guerra-in-libia/

were last seen in Beirut, Lebanon, on 2nd September 1980, while carrying out an investigation on arms trafficking. According to investigations, Toni and De Paolo vanished while they were being hosted in the premises of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist organization, led at the time by George Habbash. From there, the two correspondents were supposed to reach the area of Beaufort, on the Lebanese front of the Israeli-Palestinian war. Supposedly, they were meaning to join fighters with the intent to reconstruct the supply channels for Palestinian soldiers. The Italian intelligence has invoked the state secret privilege as regards the relations between the Italian government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The two journalists often used to raise very sensitive issues. In a daring article published on the newspaper "Paese Sera" on 21st March 1980, Graziella De Palo wrote: "(...) Ex-agents of the Italian intelligence services (SID), corporate branches in the Third World, business representatives and import-export cover-up companies are some of the pieces that compose the big puzzle of illicit arms trafficking. (...) Besides ordinary export activities, there exist much more forceful ways to ensure control of those areas in the world that are experiencing tensions. This is a much hard game to control"5. A dangerous "game" which was most probably the reason behind the mysterious disappearance of the two reporters.

On 28th January 1994 Marco Luchetta was in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with two Rai (Italy's national public broadcasting company) operators, to gather information on what was happening in that tortured city. He was filming a documentary on "children with no name", kids who were born out of ethnic rape or whose parents had gone missing. He was torn to pieces by a mine, together with his two colleagues Alessandro Sasa Ota and Dario D'Angelo. Their bodies shielded a child, Zlako, who miraculously survived thanks to them. Today, a foundation in the city of Trieste, named after the three Rai journalists, is particularly active in perpetuating their memory through solidarity initiatives geared towards children victims of conflicts. They were not the only journalists to have lost their lives on the fronts of the civil and separatists wars in ex-Yugoslavia. On 12th June 1999, Gabriel Gruener, a Bolzano-born Italian reporter for the German weekly "Stern", was killed, together with a colleague, by a sniper in Dulje, Kosovo. If Italian households were able to experience what was happening in the Balkans through their tv sets, this was also thanks to these reporters. The massacres of Vukovar, Srebrenica and Sarajevo will remain well engraved in our collective memory: an unequivocal proof that the war leading to the breaking of Yugoslavia, as one newspaper from Belgrade put it, "embedded all the wars that history has ever known: it was an ethnic, religious, civil, imperialistic as well as a war of aggression".6

More journalists have lost their lives during the 90's in conflicts in Africa. **Ilaria Alpi,** correspondent for the TG3, the Italian news programme on the Rai channel, was killed in Mogadishu, Somalia, on 20th March 1994, together with her camera operator, **Miran Hrovatin.** Hashi Omar Hassan, the only person who was convicted of the Alpi-Hrovatin murder, was acquitted after the rehearing of the trial. Although he was

not found guilty, he still spent 17 years in prison because of the previous sentence to 26 years. Hassan's acquittal, which was requested by the prosecution and welcomed by Ilaria Alpi's family itself, returned freedom to an innocent man who had been unjustly detained, but did not bring any clarity to the many ambiguities and uncertainties looming over this story.

To date, the dynamics of the ambush remain unclear. Despite diplomatic efforts, the eastern Ukrainian authorities have not offered any concrete assistance to the Italian justice authorities. On 30th June 2017, Vitaly Markiv, a young italo-ukranian, was arrested in Bologna by order of the office of the Public Prosecutor in Pavia. He is suspected to be one of the executers of Rocchelli's murder. He is known to have fought on the side of the Ukranian militia. Rocchelli has received several prestigious international awards for his brave work as a photojournalist, the most important of which were, unfortunately, posthumous.



Massimo Jatosti's drawing of Ilaria Alpi and Miran Hrovatin, published on huffingtonpost.it

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/05/23/ilaria-alpi-atti-declassificati-camera_n_5380216.html

It is also in Mogadishu that another Rai camera operator lost his life. **Marcello Pal-misano** was shot by a group of Somali bandits on 9th February 1995, while he was out filming with his camera. Journalist Carmen Lasorella was at the scene and got slightly injured. They were both working on a reportage on the bloody civil war that engulfed the country since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991.

It was a stray bullet that put an end to **Almerigo Grilz's** life, who perished in the province of Sofala, Mozambique, on 19th May 1987. He had produced a number of documentaries from various war scenes. Armed with his camera, he was covering the bloody fight between the Renamo militia forces, funded by pro-apartheid South Africa, and government loyal forces.

Maria Grazia Cutuli, a "Corriere della Sera" reporter aged 39, was killed on 19th November 2001 near Sarobi, Afghanistan. She was travelling together with three foreign colleagues from Jalabab to Kabul. Only a day earlier, the Milan-based newspa-

per had published her breaking news article on sarin gas storage facilities at an Al Qaeda military base abandoned by terrorists: "This is a sinister piece of evidence of the existence of an arsenal that could be in the hands of Osama's fighters", explained the journalist, who had gone to a "remote place in the middle of a rocky wasteland, one hour's drive from the city of Farm Hada", to verify in person the existence of those dreadful means of mass destruction. It was the "proof that there are not just kalashnikov, missiles or grenades, but also non-conventional weapons that can be deployed to carry out terrorist attacks anywhere in the world". Three people have been sentenced to death for her murder. The first execution was carried out on 8th October 2007. Maria Grazia Cutuli's family has always been strongly against the execution of her murderers.

Collateral victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

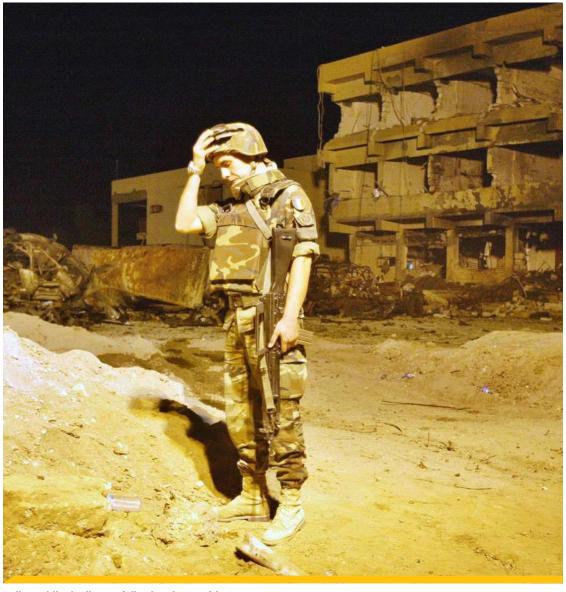
It is on that strip of land dividing two nations and two States – Israel and Palestine – that many other Italian and foreign correspondents' assignments came to an end. **Raffaele Ciriello,** a photographer for "Corriere della Sera", was killed by gunfire in Ramallah, in the West Bank, on 13th March 2002. He was covering an Israeli army round-up operation in the occupied territories. His work is a great example of good war journalism and can still be accessed through his web site.⁸

Vittorio "Vik" Arrigoni witnessed the violence imposed on the civilian population of the Gaza strip. His work for the newspaper "Il Manifesto" and for several other web sites is sound war reporting, and outlines his heartfelt commitment for civil and political issues. In a post sent to "Peacereporter" on 10th April 2011, four days before his death, he wrote: "The day started in the same way as yesterday: following the same old script of death and terror. Apache helicopters, f16 fighter-bombers and drones hovering over the whole Gaza Strip. (...) Ahmed has just called me on the phone saying 'Victor, do you have any bread left? Come one, let's go out and get some, we need to stock up on food'. Stay human". Stay human. He would end with these words each report from the Gaza Strip. His blog "Guerrilla Radio", created at the time of the Gaza War, had gained international popularity because Arrigoni had been, for a long time, the only journalist on the ground during the initial phase of the Israeli army military campaign.⁹ On 14th April 2011, he was kidnapped by a Salafi-jihadist terrorist group, who accused him of expressing the ideas of an "infidel State", and of having entered Gaza to "disseminate corruption". He of all people! He had always been a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause. His body was found on the following day by Hamas security forces. He was 36 years old.

As for **Simone Camilli,** a 35-year-old video reporter for the Associated Press, he lost his life in Biet Lahya, in the north of the Gaza Strip, on 13th August 2014, following the accidental explosion of an Israeli bomb. Before cutting out forever, his camera had filmed the conflict in Lebanon, the prisoner exchanges in the West Bank and the trial against Srebrenica's butcher, Ratko Mladic.

Iraq: inside the war on terrorism

Jean Baudrillard may have been right when he wrote that, ever since September 11th, "terrorism is in the very core of the culture that fights it". Io Iraq is the place in the world where war against terrorism and war terrorism blended into each other thus becoming two sides of the same coin. The Nassiriyah massacre on 12 November 2003 has engraved the Iraqi war in Italy's collective memory. On that day, a truck packed with explosives blew up in front of the headquarters of the Multinational Specialised Unit of the Carabinieri, the Italian military police, killing 28 people: 19 Italians and 9 Iraqis. Twelve of them were Carabinieri and five were Italian army soldiers. There were also civilians among them: **Marco Beci**, a humanitarian worker, and film director **Stefano Rolla**, who was there to film a documentary on the peace mission in Iraq. His assistant, Aureliano Amadei, survived the massacre and reported about this event in the film "20 sigarette" which came out in 2010.



Italian soldier in distress following the Nassiriya's massacre

Source: http://www.corriere.it/esteri/14_aprile_04/piras-soldato-nassiriya-ero-stravolto-anya-era-li-scatto-a91e516e-bc2c-11e3-a4c0-ded3705759de.shtml

Enzo Baldoni, one of the very first bloggers to have told us about the clashes and beauties of various communities across the world, died in Najaf, Iraq, on 21st August 2004, after being kidnapped by Iraq's Islamic Army. He was there on assignment for the weekly magazine Diario. The exact date of his death is unknown. His body was found a long time afterwards and was only repatriated to Italy in April 2010. He used to post on his blog under the pseudonym Zonker, a comic strip character he loved. Only a few days before vanishing forever, he published a post which is prophetic and irreverent at once: "While looking at the starry sky I thought that there's a chance I, too, may die in Mesopotamia. But I don't give a damn. Everything is part of a gigantic, funny cosmic soup, so I might as well go with the flow and let myself be caressed by this fresh breeze while the Earth keeps my bum warm. I've been such a lucky bum so far". This says a lot about the extent to which these forerunners of investigative journalism used irony to exorcise the fear of war.

Anywhere in the world

In a world ravaged by undeclared conflicts rarely covered by mainstream media, those news items about journalists losing their lives in "forgotten" conflicts are often relegated to short articles with little visibility. This is what happened with the death of **Antonio Russo**, a reporter for "Radio Radicale". He had been reporting from several remote places before ending up in Tbilisi, Georgia, from where he wanted to tell about the massacres in Chechnya. He was killed in the night between 15th and 16th October 2000, after suffering severe torture. His murderers were never identified.

Fabio Polenghi was a photojournalist who had a fine eye for beauty. He worked with prestigious photo agencies and in high fashion photography. His outlook on the world, however, went beyond glossy magazines' fabulous models. He died in Bangkok, Thailand, while covering the clashes between demonstrators of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship and the Royal Army. He was fatally shot by a stray bullet fired by government forces.

Andrea Rocchelli, too, was a well-known photographer despite being only 30 years old. His last reportage tragically came to an end when the car in which he was travelling, together with other people, was targeted by gunfire in Sloviansk, in the Donbass region. He died on 24th May 2014.

To date, the dynamics of the ambush remain unclear. Despite diplomatic efforts, the eastern Ukrainian authorities have not offered any concrete assistance to the Italian justice authorities. On 30th June 2017, Vitaly Markiv, a young italo-ukranian, was arrested in Bologna by order of the office of the Public Prosecutor in Pavia. He is suspected to be one of the executers of Rocchelli's murder. He is known to have fought on the side of the Ukranian militia. Rocchelli has received several prestigious international awards for his brave work as a photojournalist, the most important of which were, unfortunately, posthumous.



Giulio Regeni Source: http://yellowmotori.com/2016/03/dietro-torture-giulio-regeni-verit-scomoda-la-madre/

Truth about Giulio Regeni

Giulio Regeni was not a professional journalist, although he had started off an informal collaboration with the newspaper "Il Manifesto", to which he had submitted a courageous article on independent trade unions in Egypt. He wrote: "within an authoritarian and repressive context such as the one in al-Sisi's Egypt, the very fact that there exist a number of popular, spontaneous initiatives aimed at breaking through the wall of fear, indicates that there is a thrust towards change". Regeni was not afraid to denounce the new power system in Egypt: "to defy the state of emergency and the calls for stability and social peace on the ground of the war on terrorism, equals, essentially, to questioning the narrative used by the regime to justify its very own existence and its repressing of civil society". 13 Giulio was a 28-yearold PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. He was carrying out research on the situation of Cairo's public vendors, a very sensitive subject in nowadays Egypt. He was abducted on 25 January 2016, on the fifth anniversary of the Tahrir Square protests. His body was found on 3rd February, on the side of the Cairo-Alexandria highway, showing signs of severe torture and mutilation. The campaign demanding truth and justice for Giulio Regeni is receiving widespread support.

Conclusion

Media operators who have died in war zones are at once civilian victims of conflicts and victims of what is a difficult and important job. The multiplication of communication channels and the rising number of conflicts around the world have led to higher risks connected to the practice of this profession.



Press photographer at a demonstration
Source: http://www.radioinblu.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/12/giornalisti-uccisi.jpg

In April 2016, several international organisations called on the United Nations for the creation of a special representative to the UN secretary-general for the safety of journalists. They are also urging for the establishment of new mechanisms for the enforcement of international law, with a view to reducing the number of journalists being killed or abused in the course of their work in conflict areas.

In some of the most tormented corners of the world, journalists, photojournalists and media operators act, in a way, as watchdogs for the safeguard of human rights. Ensuring better protection mechanisms for them will therefore contribute significantly to the international community's efforts towards the establishment of long-lasting peace.

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Maria Grazia Cutuli

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Endnotes

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