Fraught with risks
The Work of Journalists
Amid Armed Conflicts
in the Middle East

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Introduction

Journalists in the countries plagued with conflicts in the Middle East are subjected to unspeakable human rights violations. They face arbitrary arrests and unfair trials, including politicized death sentences. Defamation campaigns and death threats are also rife. Journalists are subjected to harassment and physical assaults while doing their jobs and covering the crises that citizens are going through in those countries. Journalists play a role in uncovering the truth and holding parties to conflict accountable for violations committed in these armed conflicts. All the warring parties in these areas, including governments and armed groups, imposed their control over press freedom. They muzzle the voices of independent journalists who uncover the human rights violations. The conflict parties practice intimidation against journalists and media professionals in the absence of accountability. Impunity for crimes has also become the norm. The press and journalists are facing great danger in conflict countries in the Middle East. Journalists cannot do their work in a safe, free, and transparent environment. The Middle East's main countries plagued with conflicts are Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and occupied Palestine, and these countries are classified as the most dangerous places to work for journalists worldwide.

Human rights estimates indicate that journalism in crisis and conflict-affected areas in the Middle East is very risky and hazardous, especially when they report on militias and armed group violations, particularly in absence of human rights charters or treaties stipulated by international law to protect citizens. For example, Reporters without Borders' 2021 report on freedom of the press worldwide indicates the low levels of press freedom in conflict countries in the Middle East. It stat that occupied Palestine ranks number 132, Iraq 163, Libya 165, Yemen 169, and Syria 173 out of 180 countries[1]. Press freedom becomes the weakest in armed conflicts in the Middle East.

In Palestine, violations by the Israeli occupation forces against journalists have dramatically escalated. The journalists reveal the ongoing crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces, the most important of which are the process of Judaizing Jerusalem, demographic change, and the displacement of citizens. These violations varied between arbitrary arrests and cases of physical assaults and the prevention of journalists from reporting on the human rights violations that accompany the confiscation of press equipment and materials. Human rights estimates indicate that the

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[1] التصنيف العالمي لحرية الصحافة 2021، مراسلون بلا حدود ، https://bit.ly/2QMlG7f

Israeli occupation government committed about 215 violations of media freedoms during the year 2020[2]. In Iraq, the situation is not much better; militias and armed groups targeted and threatened journalists due to their journalistic work. That forced many journalists to leave the media work for fear of reprisals by these groups. Meanwhile, a human rights report recorded 305 violations against Iraqi journalists and media institutions during the year 2020[3].

Armed groups and factions target Syrian journalists, which puts them at risk. They behave as if they are government authorities, and increase the kidnapping and threat of media activists and journalists. Human rights estimates indicate that all the conflicting parties committed violations against media professionals during 2020. The armed factions of the Turkish government in northeastern Syria and the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham movement committed 100 violations of the right of journalists and more than 15 attempts and murders[4]. Moreover, in Yemen, the Houthi group topped the list of perpetrators of violations against journalists, as it arrests journalists and issues sentences against them that reach the death penalty. In the context of politicized trials that lack the legal rules and procedures for a fair trial. Some human rights reports also document 143 violations of press and media freedoms in Yemen; the politically contested parties committed them[5].

In Libya, personal attacks on journalists are increasing, as armed militias threatened journalists and media professionals. The conflicting parties do not want to guarantee the minimum freedom of the press, but rather each party tries to impose its control over the various means of press expression. Journalists in conflict countries in the Middle East pay the price for all these human rights violations, as they are the weakest in armed conflicts. In light of the above human rights violations, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights discusses the state of press freedom in Yemen, occupied Palestine, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. These are countries of political conflict in the Middle East in which there are many armed parties, especially non-state actors and terrorist and jihadist movements. These parties are working to silence journalists' mouths through various methods of intimidation and intimidation, including verbal

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[2] انتهاكات الحريات الإعلامية في فلسطين، المركز الفلسطيني للتنمية والحريات الإعلامية مدي ، التقرير السنوي 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3t9O5kL
[3] تقرير رصد إعلامي بخصوص الانتهاكات التي طالت الصحفيين العراقيين، جميعة الدفاع عن حرية الصحافة في العراق، التقرير السنوي 2020 https://bit.ly/3xF0dhc
[4] العمل الإعلامي في سوريا خلال 2020 نحو 100 انتهاك بحق النشطاء والصحفيين وأكثر من 15 محاولة وعملية قتل وإدلب ومناطق الفصائل الموالية لأنقرة تتصدر المشهد، المرصد السوري لحقوق الإنسان ، يناير 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3aVY9aP
[5] تقرير عن انتهاكات بحق الصحفيين في اليمن وشهادات جديدة، المشاهد ، فبراير 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3eFWXt2

threats and physical attacks, murder, attack the media headquarters, arbitrary arrests, and kidnappings, in addition to the issuance of judgments based on unfair trials.

Killing and targeting journalists

Armed groups targeted many journalists in conflict countries in the Middle East region with physical liquidation and direct assassinations or direct murder while covering the events. Many journalists paid their lives as a price for their opinions opposing the leaders and individuals of these armed groups. That comes in conjunction with governments' reluctance to take serious measures to investigate these incidents. It makes the perpetration of incidents of targeting journalists again as a direct result of the prevailing climate of impunity resulting from lax investigations into the murders of journalists while they are working or subjecting them to physical liquidation by armed groups. In Syria, three journalists were killed while carrying out their media work while documenting grave violations against civilians during the armed conflict. A Russian airstrike killed Abdul Nasser Haj Hamdan on February 20, Ma'arat al-Naasan, in northern Idlib governorate. Journalists Ibrahim Al-Darwish and Ahmed Rahal were also wounded while they were covering the war events[6].

On 4 February, journalist Amjad Anas Aktalati was killed in Ariha, south of Idlib, while covering the events[7]. The Syrian journalist and photographer Rashid Bakr was also killed in an airstrike while reporting local news in October 2020[8]. In a related context, many journalists were seriously injured, which almost resulted in death. Russia Today's correspondent, Wafaa Shabrouni, Syrian journalist for RT, was seriously wounded in Idlib in January 2020, after a jihadist of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham placed a bomb on her way[9]. The reporter Diaa Kaddour and camera operator Ibrahim Kahil from Iranian-funded broadcaster Al-Alam TV, reporter Kinana Allouche from the pro-government Syrian broadcaster Sama TV, and camera operator Suhaib al-Masry from the Iranian-funded broadcaster Al-Kawthar TV, according to reports by their employers. In February of the same year, reporter Diaa Kaddour, camera operator Ibrahim Kahil from Iranian-funded broadcaster Al-Alam TV, and the cameraman of Al-Kawthar Channel, Sohaib Al-Masry, suffered severe injuries due to the targeting of armed groups

[6] الطائرات الروسية تقتل ناشطا إعلاميا بإدلب، زمان الوصل ، فبراير 2020 ، https://bit.ly/2PGvFdI

[7] الجمهورية العربية السورية: المديرة العامة لليونسكو تُدين مقتل الصحفيَين أمجد أكتلاتي وعبد الناصر حاج حمدان، اليونسكو ، مارس 2020
https://bit.ly/2RmlRWD

[8] Syrian journalist Rasheed Bakr killed in an airstrike in northern Idlib. The Committee to Protect Journalists. October 2020 https://bit.ly/3eMpa1F

[9] RT correspondent seriously injured by blast while filming jihadists' ammo depot in Syria. Rt. Jan, 2020 .
https://bit.ly/3f2OHnt

during their coverage of the Syrian army's operations in southern Aleppo governorate[10]. The journalist Shadi Helwa and the photographers Sherif Abs and George Orflian were injured. These groups targeted them during their coverage of the army's operations in western Aleppo countryside[11]. On 12 December 2020, masked gunmen on a motorbike shot the journalist of the Arabic channel on the Turkish (TRT) television Hussain Khattab in western Aleppo countryside[12]. On 07 January 2021, a masked and unknown gunmen group attempted to assassinate Syria TV correspondent Bahaa al-Halabi they wounded him with gunshots in his arm, shoulder, and chest[13].

In Yemen, A TV journalist Adeeb Al-Janani was killed in a missile attack on Aden Airport, and the correspondent of the Yemeni channel, Sadiq Al-Ratibi[14], was wounded. Unidentified gunmen assassinated photographer Nabil Hasan al-Qaiti on June 2, outside his home in a suburb of Aden city located in the south of Yemen[15]. In this regard, Maat clarifies that the government's failure to pursue the perpetrators of the assassination incidents has resulted in non-prevent of these successive crimes. Meanwhile, unknown gunmen shot Iraqi Dijlah TV journalist Ahmed Abdul Samad and his cameraman Safaa al-Ghali in Basra[16]. Abd al-Samad was known for his opposition to the pro-Iranian parties in Iraq. In a related context of the repeated assassinations that journalists are subjected to by unknown gunmen in Iraq, in February 2020[17], unidentified people shot the director of the al-Janabi media group, Al-Rasheed CEO Nizar Thanoun, in Baghdad. In this context, Maat confirms that the operations the constant targeting of journalists in conflict zones in the Middle East has created a climate of fear that poses a threat to freedom of the press. Consequently, Maat demands the necessity to provide the necessary protection to journalists and media professionals who work to convey the citizens suffer in conflict zones in the Middle East.

Arbitrary arrests and unfair trials against journalists

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[10] اصابة مراسلة ومصور قناة العالم ومراسل قناة الكوثر في حلب، وكالة أنباء فارس ، فبراير 2020 https://bit.ly/3aWZPRs

[11] استهداف فريق لوسائل إعلام سورية رسمية غرب حلب، قناة أر تي السورية ، فبراير 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3tceuOW

[12] اغتيال مراسل قناة TRT عربي حسين خطاب في ريف حلب، اسكاي أيزي، ديسمبر 2020 https://bit.ly/2Rj5g62

[13] إصابة مراسل تلفزيون سوريا بهاء الحلبي إثر محاولة اغتيال، التليفزيون السوري ، يناير 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3aWG8ZY

[14] اليمن: مقتل مراسل "قناة بلقيس" في هجوم على مطار عدن، الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين ، https://bit.ly/3u9uGC0

[15] اليمن مقتل مصور وكالة فرانس برس على يد مجهولين في عدن، الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين في العالم العربي والشرق الأوسط ، يونيو 2020 https://bit.ly/32VSopm

[16] العراق: مقتل الصحافي أحمد عبد الصمد ومصوره صفاء غالي في البصرة على أيدي مسلحين مجهولين، فرنسا 24 ، يناير 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3aXSaSN

[17] "عشرون عشرون أسوأ عام للعمل الصحفي في العراق، IQ NEWS، ديسمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3h1OCmB

Journalists face the risk of detained arbitrarily, enforced disappearance, and torture solely about their work or critical views. They refused systematic discrimination and repression of enforcement agencies or armed movements in conflict countries in the Middle East, in a climate of continuing media workers' harassment in general. Some of them were also tried in the context of uncontrolled legal proceedings marred by allegations that undermined the right to a fair trial. In Yemen, the various political parties subjected journalists to investigations and arrests for their alleged involvement in activities hostile to the Yemeni national security.

However, they arrest against the background of condemning the practices of these parties for human rights violations. During the first quarter of 2021, 7 journalists were arrested[18], while seven others were tried and summoned. Meanwhile, the Houthi group issued arbitrary, politicized rulings that lack any fair procedures to try 11 journalists in 2020, among which four journalists were convicted in April 2020 to death[19]. In November 2020, armed factions affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in the Shabwah governorate arrested Al-Ghad Al-Mashreq channel reporter in Ateq, Jamal Schneiter. Schneiterdue was arrested due to his coverage of popular protests in the governorate before they released him due to human rights pressure in the same month[20].

On the other hand, the Israeli occupation government targets journalists with direct arbitrary detention simply because of their ability to influence the international community through their journalistic work. They reveal occupation forces violations against civilians; especially, women, and children, such as demographic displacement and the systematic Judaization of Jerusalem. In April 2021, an Israeli army unit of 12 fully equipped soldiers stormed the house of Al-Rimawi. They arrested Al-Rimawi after brutally and severely beaten; for exposing their violations against Palestinians, which has recently escalated in the West Bank. In a related context, the Israeli authorities arrested both the journalist Muhammad Ali Ateeq and the writer Mufid Taher Jalghoum during the same month[21]. During March of the same year, the occupation forces detained many journalists and arrested some of them for covering Palestinian marches against settlements in separate areas of the old Palestinian neighbourhoods. Moreover, the occupation forces arrested many media professionals due to their documentation of

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[18] اليمن: 24 حالة انتهاك للحريات الإعلامية خلال الربع الاول من العام 2021 مرجع سابق ذكره

[19] "الحوثي تتصدر قائمة مرتكبي الانتهاكات تقرير 2020 كان أسْوأ من سابقيه على الصحفيين والحريات الإعلامية باليمن، المصدر أونلاين ، فبراير 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3eQ6T4P

[20] اعتقال شنيتر الشرعية تخشى انتفاضة شعبية في شبوة، أخبار اليمن ، نوفمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/2RXEpgi

[21] احتجاز الصحفي الريماوي محاولة لحجب الانتهاكات الإسرائيلية في الأراضي الفلسطينية، المرصد الأوروبي لحقوق الإنسان، أبريل 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3bsR1Tq

assaults complicit settlers with the Israeli police against the indigenous population. Among these journalists is Mona Al Qawasim, who was detained and kept her from covering media activities in Jerusalem[22].

In 2020, the Israeli occupation forces arrested about 16 journalists and media workers, including the journalist Bushra al-Tawil. Israeli occupation forces also arrested the journalist Bushra al-Taweel in December 2019 and placed her under administrative detention. The occupation forces had previously arrested al-Taweel many times, including her arrest in late 2019 for seven and a half months before being released in July 2020. The Israeli Military Court also later sentenced the journalist Bushra al-Tawil to four months in administrative imprisonment without any fair procedures denotes the context of achieving justice[23]. These arrests were also accompanied by assaults amounting to torture crimes against journalists, among which was the assault on the journalist Thaer Abdel Nasser Al-Sharif during his detention[24].

In Libya, armed groups affiliated with the Government of National Accord arrest journalists for objecting to increasing their influence in Libyan affairs[25]. In October 2020, the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade, affiliated with the Government of National Accord, arrested the journalist Mohamed Baayou, the head of the Libyan Media Foundation, for his objection to the growth of the influence of armed groups, especially Islamic ones, in the Libyan affair. The Nawasi Battalion, a group affiliated with the Government of National Accord, hid the journalist Sami Al-Sharif, the director of the local broadcaster Al-Jawhara Radio, for 11 days before releasing him on December 3, 2020[26]. The disappearance was for threat and intimidation. In August 2020, Al-Sharif was covering anti-government demonstrations in Tripoli. The demonstrations came out to condemn the violations and corruption of the Al-Wefaq government and its collusion with armed factions that legitimize intimidation against the press freedom to silence their views against these armed factions[27].

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[22] مدى رصد وتوثيق 20 انتهاكاً ضد الحريات الاعلامية في الضفة والقطاع خلال آذار، مركز مدى الإعلامي الحقوقي، مارس 2021 ، https://bit.ly/33NBKZu

[23] الاحتلال يحول الأسيرة الصحفية بشرى الطويل للاعتقال الإداري ، النجاح الإعلامي ، نوفمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3tQsUES

[24] التقرير السنوي للحريات الاعلامية 2020 مرجع سابق ذكره

[25] البعثة الأممية بليبيا تأسف لاعتقال الصحافي بعيو وتدعو لإطلاقه، العربية ، أكتوبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3hqK3Ct

[26] مصدر أمني النواصي تطلق سراح الإعلامي سامي الشريف بعد اختطافه 11 يوما، الساعة 24 ، سبتمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3w9GRiK

[27] بيان صحفي حول واقعة اختطاف الإعلامي سامي الشريف في العاصمة طرابلس، المنظمة الليبية للإعلام المستقل ، سبتمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3bsjvwU

Meanwhile, the same thing is repeated in Syria, as armed factions arrest journalists to restrict them to media freedoms and prevent them from covering the various violations committed by these factions in the conflict environment. In July 2020, Fulayq al-Sham members, one of the armed factions of the Turkish government in northern Syria, arrested journalists Hassan al-Mukhtar and Ibrahim al-Darwish for several hours; due to their media coverage of the events in Northern Aleppo countryside [28]. In August of the same year, the military court of the Ankara factions in Afrin sentenced the media activist Mahmoud al-Dimashqi to three months in prison on charges of insulting the Syrian National Army of Turkey on social media[29]. In April 2021, the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham detained the media activist Amer Ismail Asi[30].

In Iraq, armed factions are subjected journalists to arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances. That is due to their fieldwork in most cases related to covering demonstrations and protests organized by Iraqi citizens to object to the growth of armed factions in Iraqi political life and the instability it causes at all levels. Additionally, the Iraqi police arrest some journalists and media professionals who cover usurped demonstrations due to the poor economic and social conditions resulting from the government's mismanagement of state resources. For example, Basra police arrested Al-Ghadeer channel correspondent Fouad Al-Halfi, Reuters photographer, Mohamed Al-Fartousi and Sharqi photographers, Ahmed Raed and Mamoun Muhammad, a freelance photographer working for several news agencies, while they were covering the demonstrations in January 2020, before they were released a few hours later[31]. According to human rights estimates, Iraq recorded 268 violations against journalists, including threats, prosecutions, beatings, and prevention of coverage, in the period from May 2020 to May 2021[32]

Incitement against journalists forces them to leave the media

The threat of physical liquidation, murder, defamation, and hate speech by many journalists led to intimidation of journalists, and many of them left the media profession.

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[28] ثلاثة انتهاكات بحق الإعلاميين في سوريا خلال تموز 2020، عنب بلدي ، يوليو 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3uMsWyJ
[29] الناشط محمود الدمشقي يعلّق على الحكم الصادر بحقه في جنديرس، عنب بلدي ، أغسطس 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3flvEER
[30] في إدلب. تحرير الشام تواصل احتجاز ناشط إعلامي منذ أسبوع، رابطة الصحفيين السوريين الحرة ، أبريل 2021 ، https://bit.ly/33QyOex
[31] قوة الصدمة تعتقل العشرات بينهم صحفيون في تظاهرات البصرة، شبكة روادي الإعلامية، يناير 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3w8rzKR
[32] ثلاثة خطوط حمر العنف يهدد الصحفيين في العراق، الحرة ، مايو 2021 ، https://arbne.ws/2QkSROW

Others feared and remained silent, fearing punishment by the threatening parties, wherever there is no law, impunity, and the verbal targeting of journalists. In Yemen, the Yemeni reporter Journalists and Syndicate (YJS) board member Nabil Al Osaidi has repeatedly received phone call threats; in a bid to intimidate him. Al Osaidi revealed the corruption of Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi government members and their relationship with the Houthi group[33]. Moreover, the Houthi group threatened journalist Hassan Al-Warith with death due to his criticism of the corruption in the institutions under Houthi leaders' control[34]. Not only that, the former head of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, Abdul-Bari Taher, was threatened with death by the Houthis because of his views against them. The group is using threats of physical liquidation as a tool to silence journalists opposing its policy[35].

In Iraq, the Iranian-backed The Popular Mobilization Forces and other Shiite armed groups have threatened reporters and media workers on the Dijlah media channel since August 2020 through social media; due to their journalistic work. Reporter Ziyad al-Fatlawi, photography worker Muhammad al-Bolani, reporter Ali Muhammad and other media professionals in the channel were exposed to insults, slander, and death threats, which forced no less than six journalists working for the channel to resign. Correspondent Zaid Al-Fatlawi received a message from an unknown person that included a picture of his car with a message saying we will get you even if you are in your room[36].

Along these lines, the Sabereen News page on Telegram, affiliated with the Shiite armed militias in Iraq, published threats of burning, assassination, and incitement against the channel's employees. The threats to the channel's workers continued after submitting their resignations, describing it as delusional[37]. On the other hand, the Iraqi government has been unable to protect these journalists from pursuing armed groups and militias, indicating the climate of fear prevailing among the media circles in Iraq on the Internet. And which calls on journalists at times to exercise self-censorship on them and remain silent about the various human rights violations committed by the parties and armed groups in Iraq. Meanwhile, accounts affiliated with armed militias threaten the media with threats, incitement, and hate speech. Among these threats, the publication of a

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[33] الصحفي نبيل الأسيدي يتعرض للتهديد والنقابة تدين، المواطن ، يونيو 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3fjLKil
[34] اعتداءات الحوثيين على وسائل الإعلام.. إرهابٌ يُسكِت صوت الحقيقة ، المشهد العربي ، ديسمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3bspJgg
[35] صدى تدين تهديد الكاتب الصحفي طاهر وتحمل جماعة الحوثي المسئولية عن سلامته، صدى المنظمة الوطنية للإعلاميين اليمنين، ديسمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3olYnNN
[36] الجداحة أو الكاتم أسلوب ولائي جديد للانتقام من احتجاجات تشرين، مرجع سابق ذكره
[37] تهديد ولوائح اغتيال.. هكذا ترهب الميليشيا صحافيي العراق، العربية، سبتمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/32Uabgl

fabricated picture of the building of the German newspaper Deutsche Welle, which constantly criticizes the Iranian armed militias in Iraq while it is burning[38].

In Palestine, Ma'an Network presenter journalist Nahid Abu Taima was subjected to a campaign of rape and abuse on social media after the proposed law discussion to strengthen women's rights and protection against domestic violence in June 2020 in her program[39]. In Libya, journalist Hind Ammar was subjected to a smear campaign on Facebook and Twitter in October 2020. It described her as infidel, immoral, and violating the traditions of Islam[40], due to the spread of false information and statements about her attacking the Islamic religion. All previous indicates that journalists have been targeted with smear campaigns, murder, and physical liquidation, to silence their dissenting voices and force them to left free media work.

Obstructing journalistic work is the norm in the Arab countries of conflict

The governments failed to provide a suitable environment for journalistic and media work, and the attacks against the media and media workers in the conflict countries in the Middle East by various parties continued. Journalism crews are subjected to assault and denial of coverage, and some media offices have been directly stormed. In some cases, law enforcement agencies participate in attacks on peaceful journalists to prevent them from covering the violations committed by these forces in cases of ending peaceful anti-government demonstrations. That occurs in conjunction with the continuing state of impunity and the lack of serious dealing with attacks on journalists' cases, which constitutes an almost complete obstruction of journalistic work in an environment characterized by direct suppression of citizens' rights, which requires continuous media coverage. In May 2020, in Iraq, dozens of protesters stormed the headquarters of the MBC channel in Baghdad after it broadcast a program criticizing the late deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Forces, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis[41]. In September, many demonstrators destroyed and burned the headquarters of the Dijlah channel in Baghdad; in protest at its broadcasting of songs on Ashura Memorial Day[42].

[38] Hate Speech, Social Media and Political Violence in Iraq: Virtual Civil Society and Upheaval .The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. https://bit.ly/2QBuZGT

[39] فلسطين الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين يطالب السلطات المختصة بالتحرك في قضية التهديدات ضد صحفية، الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين ، يونيو 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3xv4544

[40] ليبيا الأحرار تتهم هند عماربالإلحاد بناءً على حساب فيسبوك وهمي، الساعة 24 ، أكتوبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3nr529h

[41] العراق اقتحام مكتب قناة ام بى سى من قبل محتجين، الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين بالعالم ، مايو 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3ntVUQX

[42] العراق حرق مقر فضائية بتهمة إهانة الدين، الاتحاد الدولي للصحفيين بالعالم ، سبتمبر 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3sZjO8e

In March 2020, two journalists, Hussein Rahm and Khouloud Al-Taie were brutally beaten by members of the Peace Brigades of Muqtada al-Sadr while they were covering a demonstration in Baghdad[43]. In April 2021, Iraqi riot police severely beat Asia Channel correspondent Haider Saleh while covering the protests in Najaf[44].

In Syria, armed groups attack media professionals and prevent them from carrying out their work by targeting them severely while carrying out their peaceful work. In June 2020, the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham attacked a group of media professionals in Idlib Governorate[45]. On the other hand, the Israeli occupation forces constantly attack journalists and media professionals while carrying out their work. The occupation soldiers prevented a group of journalists from covering a peaceful march against settlement in the village of Deir Jarir in Ramallah governorate in January 2021 after throwing tear gas canisters at the media[46]. Meanwhile, the two journalists, Mahmoud Farrash and Abdel Hafeez Al-Hashlamoun were injured by their targeting by the occupation forces with two stun grenades; while they were directly covering a peaceful event against the settlements[47]. Maat confirms that these practices occur periodically by the Israeli occupation forces and systematically. The occupation forces targeted any journalist who seeks to highlight human rights violations committed by the occupation forces to the international community, which includes attempts to demographic change and the accompanying repression of the peaceful demonstrations against it.

Recommendations: Towards an effective press environment in conflict-affected countries

Many journalists have been victims of serious human rights violations in conflict countries in the Middle East. Some were killed while they work, others arrested and kidnapped. Armed factions attempt to silence them and prevent covering the physical violations during armed conflicts. The lack of protective measures for journalists from

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[43] شاهد طعن ناشط عراقي في هجوم جماعي لأتباع الصدر، العربية ، مارس 2020 ، https://bit.ly/2Qm0dBN
[44] القوات الامنية في النجف تعتدي بالضرب المبرح على مراسل قناة اسيا، جمعية الدفاع عن حرية الصحافة في العراق، أبريل 2021 ، https://bit.ly/3om7yxU
[45] علاقة تحرير الشام مع الصحفيين العصا لمن عصا، أخبار ، يونيو 2020 ، https://bit.ly/3yeUhLY
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hate speech and death threats also contributed to many journalists leaving their work as well as intimidating others; in a climate of impunity and indolence by law enforcement. In most cases, media work is obstructed, whether by preventing media professionals from covering them or attacking them and their media headquarters, including the equipment necessary for their peaceful work. Consequently, the media environment in conflict countries in the Middle East region has become fraught with dangers and poses a real threat to the safety of journalists. For this purpose, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights recommends the following: -

- Investigating the murders of journalists in conflict countries, while providing a protective and protective environment against the targeting of journalists by armed factions.
- The release of all detained journalists; while not using arbitrary arrests as a tool to silence journalists to talk about various violations.
- All hate speech and death threats are pursued and investigated by law enforcement agencies so that there is a legal environment that allows freedom of the press without various pressures.
- Protecting journalists and media offices in conflict countries from repeated targeting and harassment.