

Global Journalist: The Killing of Palestinian Journalist - Mazen Dana

Abstract: In this Aug. 21, 2003 program interviewees discussed the killing of Journalist Mazen Dana. In 17 August 2003, Mazen Dana a Reuters cameraman was filming when American soldier shot at his chest. Latter an American spokesman called it a terrible tragedy, saying the soldier had mistaken Dana's camera for a rocket propelled grenade launcher. Dana spent years covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Hebron and in the West Bank. For his courageous coverage from the war zone he was awarded the 2001 International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Host: Stuart Loory

Guests:

- [Jane Arraf](#)
- [Glenys Sugarman](#)
- [John Hendren](#)
- [Paul Holmes](#)

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SPEAKERS:

Stuart Loory, Jane Arraf, Glenys Sugarman, John Hendren, Paul Holmes

Stuart Loory 00:02

Welcome to Global Journalist on KBIA, This is the program that says mid Missouri is indeed many Americans are interested in international news. I'm Stuart Loory of the Missouri School of Journalism. Terrorism was the big news story this week, bigger even than the power blackout which put perhaps 50 million Americans in the dark. in Baghdad, terrorists attacked the United Nations Headquarters with a huge truck bomb and killed more than 20 including the senior UN officer in a Iraq. In Israel, a suicide bomber struck a blow against the roadmap peace process, attacking a bus in Jerusalem, killing more than 20 including young children. Israel responded today killing three leaders of Hamas, the Palestinian organization that organizes the bombing of civilians. Hamas declared it was no longer interested in the roadmap. Covering the story in Iraq a prize winning Reuters journalist Mazen Dana was shot and killed by an American soldier who said he thought Dana's camera was a grenade launcher. Dana was a Palestinian journalist sent to Baghdad for safety sake. He had been wounded by Israeli gunfire several

times, covering the current Intifada to discuss what can be made of all this tragedy. We have today Jane Arraf Baghdad bureau chief of CNN in Baghdad Glenys Sugarman, South African Broadcasting Corporation correspondent in Jerusalem. John Hendren, Pentagon correspondent of the Los Angeles Times in Washington, and Paul Holmes, worldwide editor of political and general news for Reuters. Let's start with Mazen Dana, if there is anybody who ties these two stories together, it is he a Palestinian who was assigned to Baghdad and killed by a an American soldier who thought he might have been a terrorist, Paul Holmes start, what do you think happened here? And what do you think the result might be for journalists and and for journalism's response to the United States?

Paul Holmes 02:24

Well, Mazen and his Salmon and other Palestinian coordinators shuki had gone to the Abu Ghraib prison on the outskirts of Baghdad film on the day after a mortar attack on that us wrong facility where six detainees were killed in the attack. as we understand it from Mars and sound man, they had made their presence known to an American soldier on the gate and they had sought permission to fillm. They then withdrew somewhat from the prison to a vantage point on on a piece of high ground atop a bridge. Filmed from that position for a few minutes and then move down when they saw two American tanks approaching. Mazen got out of the car, lifted his camera onto his shoulder and started filming the approaching tanks and shots rang out from one of the tanks and hit him in the chest. The American military has said that a soldier mistook the camera that Marlon was carrying for a grenade launcher. We've asked for an investigation into this incident an investigation has fallen as comprehensive as possible. Firstly, because this is the second Reuters journalist has been killed by American forces.

Stuart Loory 03:42

And I think the fifth journalists in all who's been killed by the American forces.

Paul Holmes 03:47

Yeah, I mean, the total number is 17 in total in the course of the conflict since since the start of hostilities, but not all of those, as you say by American soldiers. I mean, we feel strongly that the journalists in a conflict like Iraq have a unique place as independent witnesses to what's going on. And obviously, we're seeking an investigation because we want to ensure as far as possible that this sort of thing doesn't happen again.

Stuart Loory 04:15

Yeah, Jane Arraf, if I can bring you into this, how do journalists operate in Baghdad these days after the killing of Mazen, I imagined, they are much more careful about certain things are they?

Jane Arraf 04:31

You know, I think on a corporate level, certainly the news organizations are much more careful. And they're all looking at what they can do, how they can avoid this sort of thing. On a personal level for journalists here on the ground, you really can't very, very much what you do. Either you're here and you take that risk and you go out and you try to protect yourself the best you can or you decide you're not going to be in Baghdad and sadly, it's as simple and stark a choice is that in many cases now. One of the things that journalists are doing when they can is to wear a bulletproof vests, that has its own inherent problems and nobody likes wearing them. They're bulky, they're hot. And on top of that, there

are a lot of places you know what it goes with a bulletproof vest, it just sends the wrong message. So, it's all system of calculated risks. Journalists, perhaps are being a little bit more careful. But there's not much more you can really do and one of the main problems is these soldiers are very, very nervous. These are really young guys. They see everyone is a threat. And I don't know what the rest of you think, but I have to believe that they saw meson perhaps is more of a threat because he was not a white guy with a camera. They are very antsy and going out in the streets. They're particularly antsy when confronted with people who they automatically assume might be threatening well.

Stuart Loory 05:44

From everything that I've read Mazen was not easily identifiable as a Palestinian. He could easily have been taken for a an American or Western European is that right?

Paul Holmes 06:00

Well, I knew Mazen personally, I worked very closely with Muslim for three years, he could easily be mistaken for an Irishman, in fact, he's over six feet tall. He's he's built like a wardrobe, and he has a very ruddy complexion. I think one of the issues I mean, Jane is absolutely right that the journalists in war zones take calculated risks. All our journalists and journalists from any major news organization are given training by specialists, former commandos in how to operate, how to minimize those risks in combat zones. And I have to say in the case of Mazen that he worked for most of his career in his hometown of Hebron, probably one of the most consistently violent places in the West Bank. And he and his sound man, were very skilled, very schooled in how to minimize the risks of injury and was.

Stuart Loory 06:53

John Hendren, how seriously is the Pentagon taking this incident and what's being done in Washington about it?

John Hendren 07:00

There's definitely a lot of concern in the Pentagon, they realize that a lot of the goodwill they built up through this embedment program has been eroded through incidents like this. ITN, the British broadcast organization is still trying to find out information about missing staffers. They have confirmed I think that at least one of three missing staffers was killed by US forces. And there's not a whole lot that the Pentagon can do. I mean, these are acts taken by individual soldiers and every soldier has an under most rules of engagement, the right to defend themselves by firing on anybody they perceive as a threat. And so that kind of independence of action on the part of the soldiers does not rule out the possibility that these things are going to happen, if anything makes it nearly inevitable.

Stuart Loory 07:55

Glenys Sugarman, this is also a problem on the West Bank and in Gaza, with Israeli forces shooting journalists. What is being done by the Israelis to try to minimize this?

Glenys Sugarman 08:16

Well, the Foreign Press Association has asked Israeli army on on countless occasions to take note of foreign journalists and locals who work for foreign agencies. What the FBI does is of course encourage the journalists to wear protective gear that is very clearly marked. But I agree with the people that have

just been talking out of Baghdad what happens in very often and what happened here a few months ago, was Italian photographer in the streets of Ramallah. The soldiers understand that either they shoot so they shot at and that is why happened, the Italian was filming in one of the streets of Ramallah tank came around the corner. And within seconds, he was shot dead for exactly the same reason as a Mazen Dana was shot dead. And this is the risk of covering office. There's no question about it. There's very little one can do except plead with the authorities to explain with two soldiers on the ground, they should take care. But in the heat of battle, I don't think that holds much water.

Stuart Loory 09:34

Yeah, we used to be able to say that the journalists were spectators who sat in and who watched what was going on on the playing field, but obviously, this is no longer the case. Journalists are now players themselves and as a result of grave risks. I hate to leave this subject but I would like to move on to the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad Jane Arraf, if I may ask you, what impact is this going to have on the United States's ability to stabilize things in that in Iraq?

Jane Arraf 10:19

I think it's going to have a huge impact this was they keep saying it was a soft target, but it's very visible target, obviously. And the message that it sent is that nothing here is safe. And that really has an impact not just on the local population, but certainly on a whole facet of things. Practically speaking from the UN point of view, how it keeps its operations going here, from a wider point of view, whether businesses are going to come to invest on large scale that's probably not possible after something like this in the foreseeable future. It has had it is having and it will have a huge impact on stability and just as importantly, that sense of stability, that sense of security, which almost entirely missing right now.

John Hendren 11:03

This is John Hendren, I was at a base in Ballade north of Baghdad, where they had just had government contractors set up a food service for the soldier there. And after mortar attacks, hit that base. The food service company just said, I'm sorry, we can't do this. It's not secure enough and bailed out. I think that sort of thing is already happening all over the country, and that it's only going to get worse as a result of it.

Stuart Loory 11:29

Colin Powell is at the United Nations today trying to convince the UN to send in more forces from perhaps India, Pakistan and Turkey, will they go? Who can deal with that Jane?

Jane Arraf 11:48

They probably won't go in this current climate. We've already seen that Japan, for instance, is rethinking whether it can send troops in the wake of the UN bombing other countries saying that they needed UN mandated presence now one of the interesting things that we're following is whether the Turkish troops are going to come. Now this is a fascinating thing, because the US has asked Turkey to come to the three most volatile places that it has troops in places like Ramadi, places like Foliya, where they have almost constant attacks against US forces. It is unclear whether the Turks will agree to this, they are considering it, the government would like them to do it. But it would be forced coming in. And it

would be fascinating to see what did they do any better? They are Muslim, but still, they were an occupier at one point. And that's one of the interesting potential foreign forces that are going to be here.

Stuart Loory 12:38

What is known about who is organizing this guerrilla warfare, is Saddam Hussein himself involved in this in any way?

Jane Arraf 12:49

If I could just touch on that. No, there's a perception that he is, has his hand on everything but the feeling on the ground when you talk to military officials, coalition officials, counterterrorism experts that Saddam basically has his hands full, trying to keep it aside and trying to hide they see no link from here to from the attacks to him what they're targeting really are those mid level people, they tell us, the middle level bad party people, the people who are funding these attacks. And it doesn't the organization doesn't seem to go much higher than that, that they are saying that Saddam ideologically is having an impact on these people with the continuing messages he's sending. But on the organizational level, it appears not.

John Hendren 13:36

I'd add into that that the the circumstances under which Saddam's son Qusay and Uday were caught after spending 30 days in a residential house in Mosul kind of suggested they're not running anything. I mean, it was really the two sons, a bodyguard and the son of Qusay. There is not as if there was some larger organization and indeed there was no there to protect them when it when the time came.

Stuart Loory 14:02

Well, this would appear to mean then that even if Saddam Hussein is caught that this guerrilla warfare is going to go on. Is that right Jane?

Jane Arraf 14:12

It is quite likely will to some extent because the thing is it's not just Saddam, it's not just the Saddam's. It's not about party loyalists, there are a lot of reasons why people are attacking US forces. And while the US believes it's making progress here in the organization, and every time it launches, these raids, it's collecting explosives intelligence, it's arresting people, as long as it's a wide variety of factors with the only common link being they want the US forces out. That makes it so much harder to combat.

Paul Holmes 14:41

I think there's a further factor here as well, and that is that in a situation like the one that exists in Iraq today, it's so hard to get a handle on intelligence. You know, there was, you know, there are tens of thousands of American troops there, but there is really no organized major Iraqi security forces that can have its ears to the ground and know who's doing what in specific areas. And that makes it very difficult over the short term, medium term, I think, to actually take preventive measures against this.

Stuart Loory 15:16

Paul Holmes, what you just said, reminds me of Vietnam, one of the big problems in the Vietnam War was that American forces in Vietnam, so misunderstood Vietnamese culture and society, that they had

trouble gathering intelligence. And as a result of that, it was a relatively low level as far as technology is concerned insurgency that finally did the United States soon, could that happen again in Iraq?

Paul Holmes 15:51

Well, I mean, I wouldn't want to draw parallels too closely with Vietnam, but I think certainly, you know, we see in this case, sort of some of the classes Symptoms of an occupation and misunderstanding between the occupiers and the occupied over motives, a lack of intelligence. I mean, you know that the Americans themselves that knowledge that they have a crying lack of linguist can go in there and actually speak Arabic and know what's going on and a lack of, you know, a lack of local security forces widespread that can help crackdown on this.

Stuart Loory 16:30

Okey, we have to take a break now. This is Global Journalists on KBIA. I'm Stuart Loory. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Global Journalists, you may listen to this program again, ask questions or make comments by going to www.globaljournalists.org or here in mid Missouri by calling us at 573-882-9641. Let's switch the discussion now to Israel and the Israeli occupied territories. Glenys Sugarman as we know there was a retaliation today by the Israeli Defense Forces against Hamas leadership and a Hamas leader was killed. Hamas says the ceasefire is over as if it hadn't been over a couple of days ago. What is the outlook for the roadmap now?

Glenys Sugarman 17:30

Well, the Israeli security forces have been saying for some time, that yeah, I think that the this treaty between the Palestinian organizations that wouldn't as coming to an end, and in fact refused to give permission to release more Palestinian political prisoners because they said they would simply be releasing them back into the hands of the organizations that are waiting for them. The roadmap looks extremely rocky at the moment. There was a saying that the Hamas goal was actually to create a kind of state of what they called mutually assured deterrence with Israel. And what they wanted to do, what they ended up doing was to send in operatives, to attack Israelis, in response for every wanted militants killed by the Israeli Defense Forces. And now we've seen what that is done over the last week or two, especially on Tuesday night. The Israelis don't understand this, because on the one hand, they say, well, the militants that are killed by Israel are people who have to do directly with approving the military operations and they directly involved in these military operations against Israel, with you can't exactly call a whole load of very orthodox people who were coming back from pres combatants, these even people who live in such an orthodox area of Jerusalem that they, a lot of them don't even recognize the State of Israel. They really had nothing to do with this entire dispute. So, that is very difficult to take for the ordinary Israelis on the government side, which seems to be a large massive, one could almost call it confusion. On the one hand, Areal Sharon seems to want to appease the right wing is the extreme right wing is in the government. On the other hand, he doesn't want to disappoint President Bush. And Abun Asser I think he's in a far tighter position at the moment because he's pretty anxious over the possibility of a civil war.

Stuart Loory 19:54

Glenys, if I can just butt in for a second when you say Abun Asser you mean Mahmoud Abbas?

Glenys Sugarman 20:00

Mahmoud Abbas the Palestinian Prime Minister. He has such tremendous problems because disarming organizations as strong as the Islamic Jihad and the Hamas, or even attempting to can actually lead him straight into civil warfare. And that is the Palestinian Authority have been trying to avoid at all costs. But if I can say something interesting that the foreign press had to deal with today in this area, was a very curious phenomenon that the Palestinian Authority early this morning, want all of the foreign journalists representatives in Gaza, not to make contact at all with the Islamic leaders and the agencies were wondering what the motivation was over here was this to protect them or was this to really take steps or show the outside world that steps to finally be taken against these organizations? Perhaps both. It's very difficult to know it's a very complex situation.

Stuart Loory 21:16

The Palestinian leadership, this is Mahmoud Abbas's government is saying two foreign journalists, stay away from people practicing terrorism is that the idea?

Glenys Sugarman 21:31

No, they said stay away from the Islamic leaders. They didn't say they were people that were practicing terrorism. And then a couple of hours later, we saw the the helicopter attack on Abushanab's and so this caused some questions to be asked. What actually made the situation worse for some of the agencies in Gaza was that they were very clearly told that if their agencies from either from Israel or abroad would try and contact them, the the leaders of the Islamic parties, they would be repercussions in Gaza on the agency's ability to work. So, this is a kind of a ban on the works of journalists, that is not really acceptable.

Stuart Loory 22:24

Does it does it sound though, as if the Palestinian Authority is saying to journalists don't give too much publicity to Hamas or Islamic Jihad?

Glenys Sugarman 22:38

Well, at this at this point is it's very difficult to know because we haven't got any real statements from the Palestinian Authority on this. We just have the reports from the people on the ground, who code back to the offices and said, no way we can't make contact today. Some the some of the bigger organizations did go out and eventually my contact especially after the attack. And it seems as if that regulation by the PA is not going to work very well. But we still objected to the fact that it was made.

Stuart Loory 23:16

Paul Holmes if I could bring you into this, how would an organization like Reuters or worldwide news gather, react to a request like this not to get in touch with certain people?

Paul Holmes 23:29

Well, I mean, we in principle, we will, be against any attempt to censor by whatever means, the work that we do, whether it's in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel or anywhere else, that there have been occasions in the past with the Palestinian Authority. When they have attempted to limit contact with leaders of Islamic parties. I'm thinking particularly of the spiritual leader of Hamas Sheikh Ahmed

Yassin on several occasions in the past. They have prevented journalists physically from approaching his house. There have been occasions in the past when when the Palestinian Authority was confiscated the film that cameramen and photographers take, whether of demonstrations by Hamas or Islamic Jihad or clashes between supporters of Hamas and Palestinian security forces. And on each occasion we've registered our protest and tried within the limits of the possible and and with a view to the safety of our staff to continue reporting as we should report.

Stuart Loory 24:34

Yeah, Jane Arraf, this happened in Iraq?

Jane Arraf 24:39

It doesn't happen on that blatant scale. But certainly it happens in other ways the the desire to control the media to send the right message. Just on the street level, we have more and more instances where the American military for instance, has been trying to confiscate our tapes for no real reason. There's no real security threat and they probably comes from a lack of understanding, but the perception on the ground that they're under threat from everybody. But it goes all the way up to just the difficulty of getting information which you have to wonder, is that completely is that maybe somewhat deliberate, as well as, particularly when you're embedded, I was into Korea to the military base and to Crete along with the crew for the past week or so where they are becoming much more restrictive and their rules of people covering the military, and covering that military base. And certainly there are a number of measures. They've taken them the trend seems to be that they are cracking down on journalists trying to direct the coverage, trying to get more good news stories, but it is really very hard to find good news in Baghdadi this days.

Stuart Loory 25:43

John Hendrenjohn of course in Washington, you don't have this kind of thing, but you do have a lot of restrictions on newsgathering, don't you ? Just because people will talk to you all the time?

John Hendren 25:54

Yeah, that's the biggest restriction is people telling you that for security reasons, they won't give you that information. It's often questionable whether it is really for security reasons that these things are are going on. And that's a frustration, I know on the ground in Baghdad as well, where you've got lower ranking people who are waiting for higher up people to approve them speaking about a number of things, it's a it's a frustration, but one way we deal with in wartime and other times as well.

Stuart Loory 26:24

Okay, we have about a minute and a half left and I would like to ask Jane Arraf first and then Glenys Sugarman to give each of you your best guess on the outcome in the currencies that you're covering. Jane?

Jane Arraf 26:41

I would say it's going to sadly go on the way it's going on for some time to come possibly a year or so with continued attacks on these targets that will be impossible to secure with the current level of US troops. It's going to take a long time to get Iraqi forces up and running. There will be some slight

improvement we're seeing them in the electricity sector. But the key to stability is certainly security and that doesn't look like it's going to improve anytime soon.

Stuart Loory 27:08

Okay, Glenys Sugarman? Well I can only quote the spokesman for the Palestinian Minister for security of faith and he said this afternoon that the PA will have to reassess the decisions taken yesterday to take action against militant organizations in the wake of this afternoon's targeted killing. The tragedies that people on the ground both in the Palestinian areas and in Israel have had six weeks of rest despite all, a little more freedom and a feeling of calm and it's very, I would not take the risk of proficiying what is going to happen now. Glenys, I'm sorry to say we are out of time. Our guests today have been Jane Arraf of CNN in Baghdad Glenys Sugarman of South African broadcasting in Jerusalem, John Hendren Pentagon correspondent for The Los Angeles Times in Washington, and Paul Holmes Jane, worldwide editor of political and general news for Reuters. Our director is Pat Acres our producers Yusuf Kalyango and Sarah Katan. For all. I'm Stuart Laurie. Global journalists will be back next week.