

INSI

INTERNATIONAL  
NEWS SAFETY  
INSTITUTE

# KILLING THE MESSENGER 2025

An analysis of news media casualties carried out for the  
International News Safety Institute by Cardiff School of Journalism

# KILLING THE MESSENGER

## FOREWORD FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Elena Cosentino  
INSI Director



2025 WAS ONE OF THE DEADLIEST YEARS SINCE INSI BEGAN RECORDING JOURNALIST DEATHS MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO. YET THE KILLINGS, OFTEN TARGETED, DISRUPTED NOTHING.

In September 2025, at least 31 journalists and media workers were killed when a missile struck a building housing two newsrooms in Sana'a. It was one of the largest single massacres of journalists in modern history. Outside Yemen, it barely registered.

Israel claimed it was targeting Houthi "military" and "propaganda" infrastructure. Journalists were folded into that definition. Despite the shocking loss of life, no urgent diplomatic rupture followed. There was no sustained international response. The killings were acknowledged, processed and absorbed. The news cycle quickly moved on.

This non-response to a massacre was far from an anomaly in 2025 which was one of the deadliest years since INSI began recording journalist deaths more than 20 years ago. Yet the killings, often targeted, disrupted nothing.

Throughout the year, journalists were killed in extraordinary numbers around the world – from Gaza to Ukraine, from Peru to Mexico, in Sudan, India and Iran. INSI's *Killing the Messenger* 2025 report documents 168 journalists and media workers who died while doing their jobs.

Most were local reporters killed by missiles, drones or gunfire, many in countries not officially at war. They were not accidental casualties. Many were clearly identified as media workers. Their deaths were foreseeable, and in many cases preventable.

Gaza blatantly showed how many journalists could be killed without altering military conduct, diplomatic relations or media practice. KTM recorded 68 journalists and media workers killed in Palestine in 2025, many directly targeted by Israel.

When we put Gaza on the same graph as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and the Balkans and everything else shrank.

Once deaths were adjusted for time, population and territory, Gaza shot up as a brutal outlier, a mountain of journalist killings unlike anything recorded in modern war. You can see the graphs on pages 21 and 23.

What made Gaza distinct was not the scale of the violence alone, but how efficiently it was absorbed. Accountability was deferred and responsibility will be diluted over time. A version of the story continues – just without the journalists who were reporting it.

Our report includes a dedicated investigation into the Sana'a newsroom strike by Laura Silvia Battaglia al-Jalal, a journalist with long-standing experience in Yemen who recently visited the destroyed building and spoke to those who survived. Her reporting brings us face-to-face with what the killing of journalists means – fewer journalists, and witnesses, makes controlling the narrative easier.

The erosion of international law, accelerated by Israel's conduct in Gaza and reinforced by the Trump administration's rejection of international legal norms, has further normalised the killing of journalists. Despite laws designed to protect journalists and mechanisms to investigate their deaths, those who died in 2025 lost their lives with near total impunity.

This report records the names and faces of all those killed in 2025 across conflicts, protests, criminal violence and political repression.



Cover Image: Relatives mourn over the body of Palestine Today journalist Ahmed Mansur at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis on 8 April. AFP; This page: A blood-covered camera belonging to Palestinian photojournalist Mariam Dagga who was killed in an Israeli strike on the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis on 25 August. She had freelanced for the AP since the start of the war. AFP

THIS REPORT EXISTS BECAUSE FORGETTING HAS BECOME THE DEFAULT. REMEMBERING REQUIRES EFFORT, CHOICE AND RESISTANCE – AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US ALL.

Each name marks more than a life lost. It marks an investigation that ended, a set of facts that will now be contested without evidence. The cumulative effect is not abstract. It reshapes what the world is able to know.

Including their photographs resists the final erasure that follows death: anonymity. These images restore their individuality, reminding us they were not interchangeable units in a dangerous profession but specific people removed from the public record.

There is no comfort to be found here. Courage does not compensate for the withdrawal of protection. Memory is no substitute for justice. Documentation does not equal accountability.

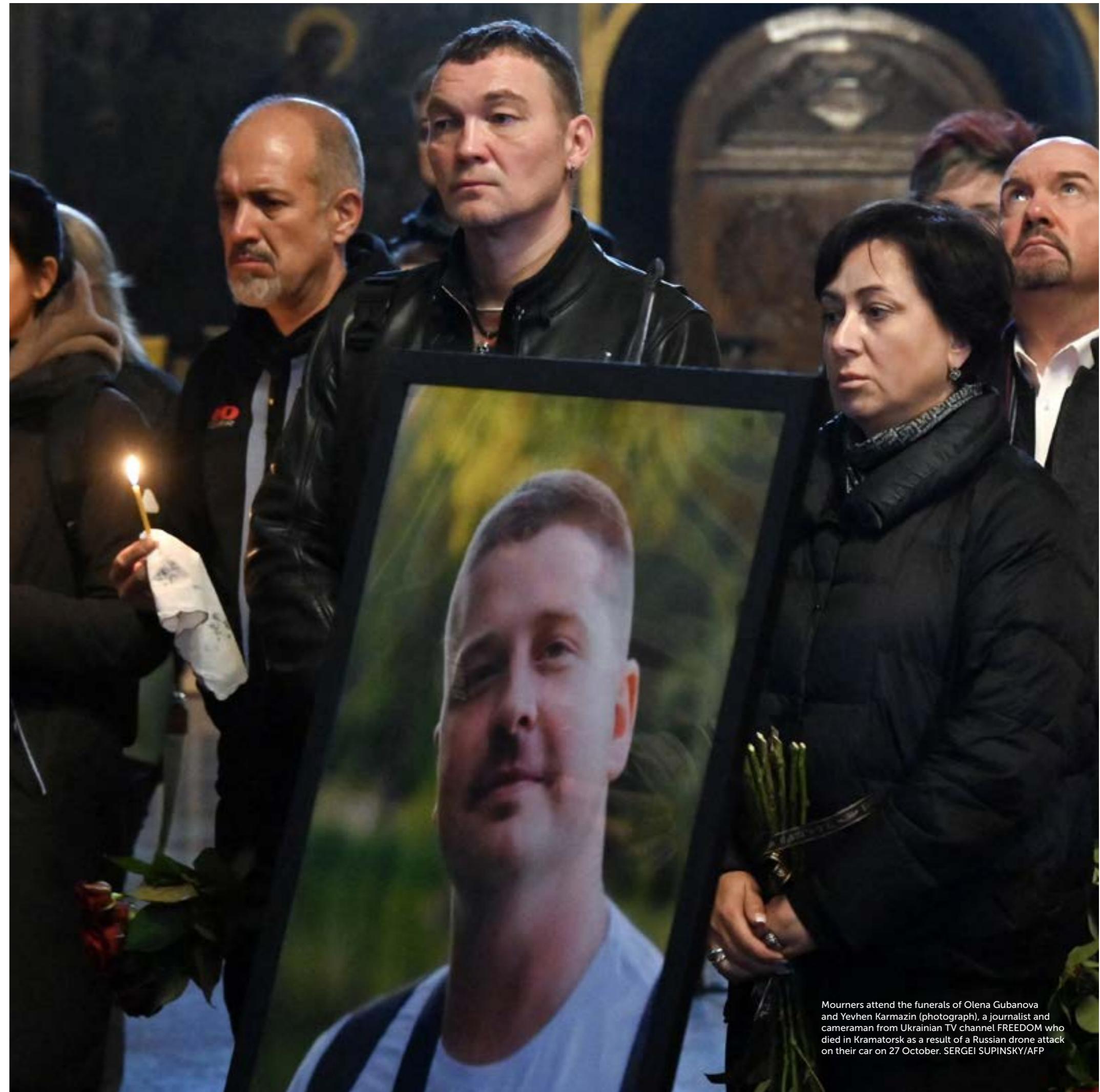
This report exists because forgetting has become the default. Remembering requires effort, choice and resistance – and this is exactly what is required of us all.

This normalisation described in this report is not irreversible but will not correct itself. It can be disrupted only through sustained effort, conscious choice and active resistance. We must document and preserve facts when they are under assault; prioritise accountability over convenience or alignment; and resist the growing pressure to accept exclusion, substitution and silence as the cost of doing business. Where these conditions are met – collectively, not sporadically – the tide could be forced to turn.

Governments must investigate, prosecute and punish the killing of journalists, or accept responsibility for enabling it. Media organisations must act together to force access, expose unlawful restrictions and refuse to amplify narratives produced where independent reporting is deliberately obstructed or made lethal.

International bodies must treat attacks on journalists as immediate warnings of wider civilian harm and respond with enforcement, not just “concern”.

Without effort, choice and resistance, the killing of journalists will continue to be absorbed, and lies will replace the truths journalists were killed for trying to establish.



Mourners attend the funerals of Olena Gubanova and Yevhen Karmazin (photograph), a journalist and cameraman from Ukrainian TV channel FREEDOM who died in Kramatorsk as a result of a Russian drone attack on their car on 27 October. SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP

# KILLING THE MESSENGER KNOW THEIR NAMES



# JOURNALISTS KILLED COUNTRY OF DEATH

TOTAL KILLED

168



Kristian Zavala/Mexico ©Facebook

10 Mexico

2 Guatemala

1 Honduras

2 Ecuador

1 Colombia

4 Peru



Gaston Medina/Peru ©Facebook



Ahmed Abu Aziz/Gaza ©Facebook



Maryam Abu Dekka/Palestine  
©Independent Arabia



Mohammed Salama/Gaza ©Reuters



Alnur Suleiman Alnur/Sudan  
Uncredited image

68 Palestine

8 Ukraine

1 Russia

1 Uzbekistan

1 Turkey

1 Syria

4 Iran

2 Afghanistan

1 Iraq

3 Pakistan

4 India

1 Nepal

9 Sudan

32 Yemen

1 Somalia

1 Tanzania

3 DRC

1 Zimbabwe

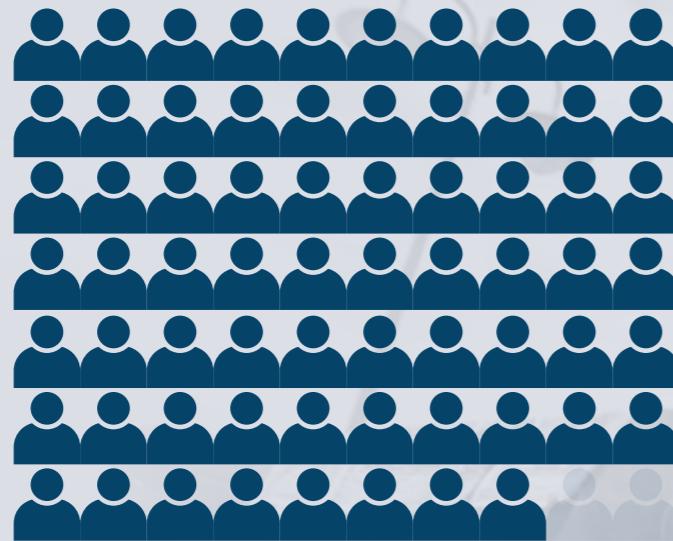


Olena Hramova/Ukraine  
©Antti Kuronen/Yle

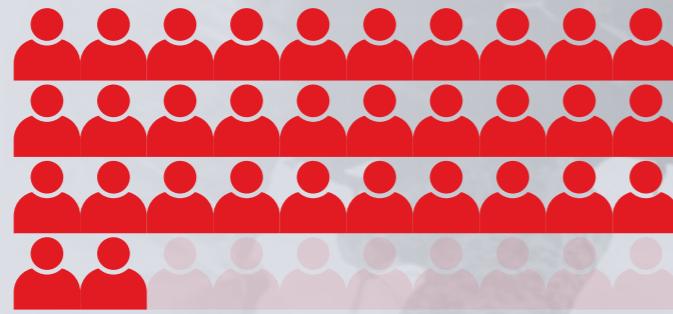


## JOURNALISTS KILLED COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

68 Palestine



32 Yemen



10 Mexico



9 Sudan



4 India, Iran, Peru,  
Russia, Ukraine



3 DRC, Pakistan,  
Philippines



2 Afghanistan,  
Bangladesh,  
Ecuador, Guatemala



3 Colombia, El Salvador,  
France, Iraq, Nepal,  
Saudi Arabia, Somalia,  
Syria, Tanzania, Turkey,  
Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe



## JOURNALISTS KILLED CAUSE OF DEATH



\*No specific cause of death was identified in the cases of Mukesh Chandrakar, Miguel Ángel Beltrán and Jorge Agustín Zapeta Aguilera. Yahya Hamad Fadallah and Mustafa Tursynbayev died in detention



## JOURNALISTS KILLED STATUS IN COUNTRY OF DEATH

6 162

International / Local

## JOURNALISTS KILLED CONTEXT OF DEATH

129

Conflict / Non-conflict

39

## JOURNALISTS KILLED IMPUNITY

11

157

Identification/legal proceedings / No identification + no legal proceedings

Mourners and relatives gather around an ambulance carrying the coffin of Abdul Ghafour Abid, a reporter for National Radio Television of Afghanistan. He died during border skirmishes between Pakistan and Afghanistan on 15 October. AFP



## JOURNALISTS KILLED DEATHS UNRELATED TO CONFLICT REPORTING

12

Corruption

12

Unclear

11

Political violence

8

Investigating crime

1

Civil unrest

1

Politics

Mourners march with the bodies of the Al Jazeera journalists who were killed on 11 August in an Israeli strike on their tent at the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Al Jazeera said that five of its journalists died in the attack. OMAR AL-QATTAQ/AFP



# "WE WERE CALLING THEIR PHONES AND SHOUTING THEIR NAMES"

BY LAURA SILVIA BATTAGLIA AL-JALAL

There is a particular kind of violence in destroying a newsroom. It is not only the killing of people, nor even the obliteration of a building, but the deliberate erasure of memory and record of the slow, daily labour of bearing witness in a place where almost everything else has already been stripped away.

On 10 September 2025, that violence arrived in central Sana'a. A series of Israeli airstrikes struck the offices of the 26 September weekly newspaper, killing 31 journalists and media workers and injuring more than 130 others.

Among those killed was Amal Mohammed Ghaleb al-Manakhi. She was not a public figure. Her face does not appear in death notices, obscured in line with rules imposed by the Houthis who govern northern Yemen. But her life is remembered with precision by her aunt, Fatima al-Daemari, who also worked at the paper as a secretary.



Fatima al-Daemari ©Laura Silvia Battaglia al-Jalal

"I felt a great panic, fear and anxiety," Fatima says, crying as she walks among the rubble of the government's Moral Guidance Directorate headquarters in Sana'a, where the newspaper was based since its founding in 1990. "I called everyone. No one answered. I tried Amal. She didn't answer."

She describes leaving home immediately, pushing through traffic by bus, as smoke rose over the city, moving from the newspaper building to the military hospital, then from hospital to hospital across the capital. "We looked everywhere," she says. "We didn't find her."

Fatima and Amal grew up in the same house. They later shared desks and deadlines. The newsroom was not simply a workplace but a shared life. Amal, she says, was diligent and generous, intent on improving her skills, always asking to be trained, always ready to help colleagues. Her ambition was simple and demanding at once: to do her work better, to learn, to progress.

The editor-in-chief of 26 September, Nassir al-Khodari, was at home that afternoon, preparing to leave for work. He lives around 500 metres from the office. "I heard a great explosion," he says. At first, he assumed the building would be safe. "There were journalists there, cameras, equipment. We thought this place was safe."

Then people in the street told him the target had been the newspaper itself. "I was shocked and ran quickly to

the office," he says. What he found no longer resembled a newsroom. "Everything was on the floor outside, rubble and papers. I saw people's cars buried under the rubble."

Witnesses and survivors, as well as videos documenting the immediate aftermath of the attack, show people thrown from shops and minibuses, bodies on fire, and others crushed by falling concrete. Smoke and fire were everywhere. It took a long time before the bodies and injured could be recovered, said a videographer who filmed the first images later released by news agencies



THE PEOPLE INSIDE THE BUILDING THAT DAY WERE NOT SOLDIERS OR COMBATANTS. THEY WERE EDITORS, TECHNICIANS AND SECRETARIES, PEOPLE AT DESKS, PRODUCING WORDS UNDER CONDITIONS FEW OUTSIDERS WOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND, LET ALONE TOLERATE

and asked to remain anonymous.

Inside the building, al-Khodari recalls, phones rang unanswered. "We were searching, calling their phones, shouting their names," he says. "We couldn't find any survivors." The destruction was total. "The place I used to work turned into a hole. It was a massacre."

There is a tendency, when journalists are killed in war, to collapse their identities into the politics of the institutions they work for. As in previous cases in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran, Israel has repeatedly failed to distinguish between military targets and journalists, justifying killings by designating media workers as terrorists or propagandists. Under international humanitarian law, journalists are civilians protected from attack, including those working for state-run or armed group-affiliated outlets, unless they take a direct part in hostilities.

After the Houthi takeover of Sana'a in September 2014, 26 September became the official outlet of the Yemeni army and was produced and funded for a decade by the Houthi movement's political wing, Ansar Allah. Its offices were seized along with much of the state.

On 10 September, the Israel Defense Forces confirmed the strikes, saying on X that they had hit "military targets" in Sana'a, including the "Houthi public relations department", which it accused of distributing "psychological terror".



Nassir al-Khodari  
©Laura Silvia  
Battaglia al-Jalal

"This archive was the history of a country," al-Khodari says. "It was blown away," scattered and destroyed by the explosion. "We weren't able to save it."

For those who survived, the destruction did not end with the blast. Al-Khodari describes journalists living with persistent fear and disorientation, unsure whether they are safe anywhere, at work or away from it. "They think they are being targeted at any moment," he says. Some no longer carry mobile phones or avoid answering calls, afraid of being located. Others cannot return to the site at all. "They saw their colleagues die in front of them," he adds. "That shock stays in the head. It does not leave."

Al-Khodari does not mince his words. "Israeli bombs massacred 31 journalists in cold blood. And we have not heard a clear or firm condemnation, nothing that restores our trust that there are institutions that speak on our behalf."

His anger is composed but profound. International law, he notes, is explicit: journalists are civilians and targeting them is a war crime. Yet the response has been silence, or close to it. "Spilling the blood of journalists has become permitted," he says. "What justifies targeting journalists?"

For Fatima, the loss remains irreducibly personal. She remembers how Amal stayed with her after her mother died, refusing to let Fatima be alone. Now she walks through the rubble, trying to locate a desk that no longer exists. "She never left me," she says. "I left her one day, and this is what happened. I can't forgive myself."



Mourners carry caskets during a funeral for journalists killed in an Israeli airstrike. ©MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AFP

# JOURNALISTS KILLED DEATHS IN MAJOR WORLD CONFLICTS

Raw totals don't tell the full story. Wars last different lengths of time, are covered differently, and journalists face different risks depending on how conflict is fought. What distinguishes Gaza is not just the total number, but the speed and concentration of journalist killings in such a small place over a short time. Conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan unfolded over decades. Gaza's toll has accumulated in a matter of months. More journalists are being killed in a smaller, more crowded place, over a shorter period, than in any comparable conflict



**Conflict duration** is anchored to United Nations actions such as Security Council resolutions, UN peacekeeping or political missions, UN humanitarian system activation or Secretary-General reporting, rather than military or political timelines.

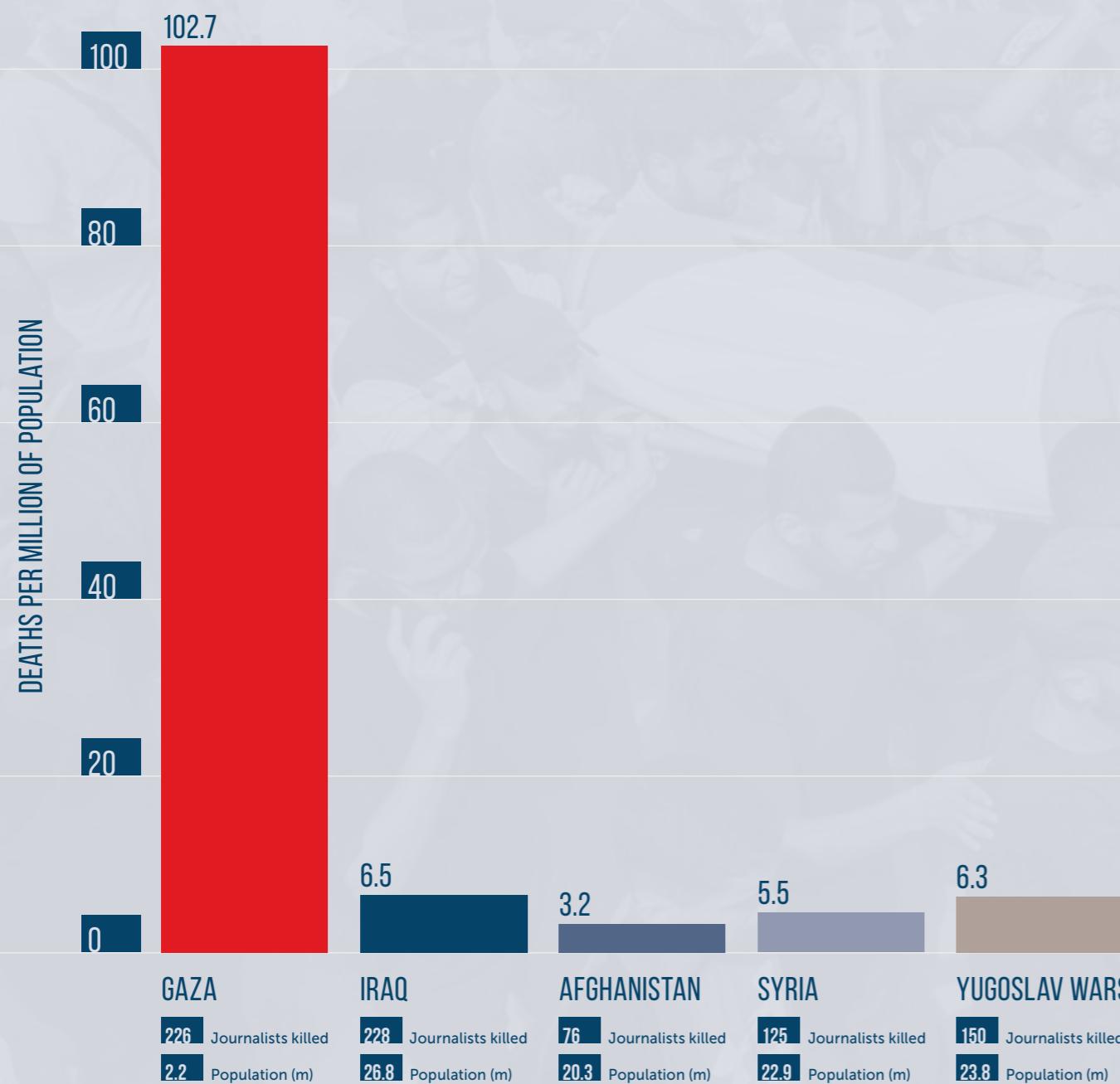
**Journalist fatality** figures are drawn from INSI's Killing the Messenger reports, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and, for the former Yugoslavia, where neither INSI nor the CPJ have consolidated totals, from the Freedom Forum.

**Afghanistan:** The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), established by Security Council Resolution 1401 (2002), remained operational until August 2021.

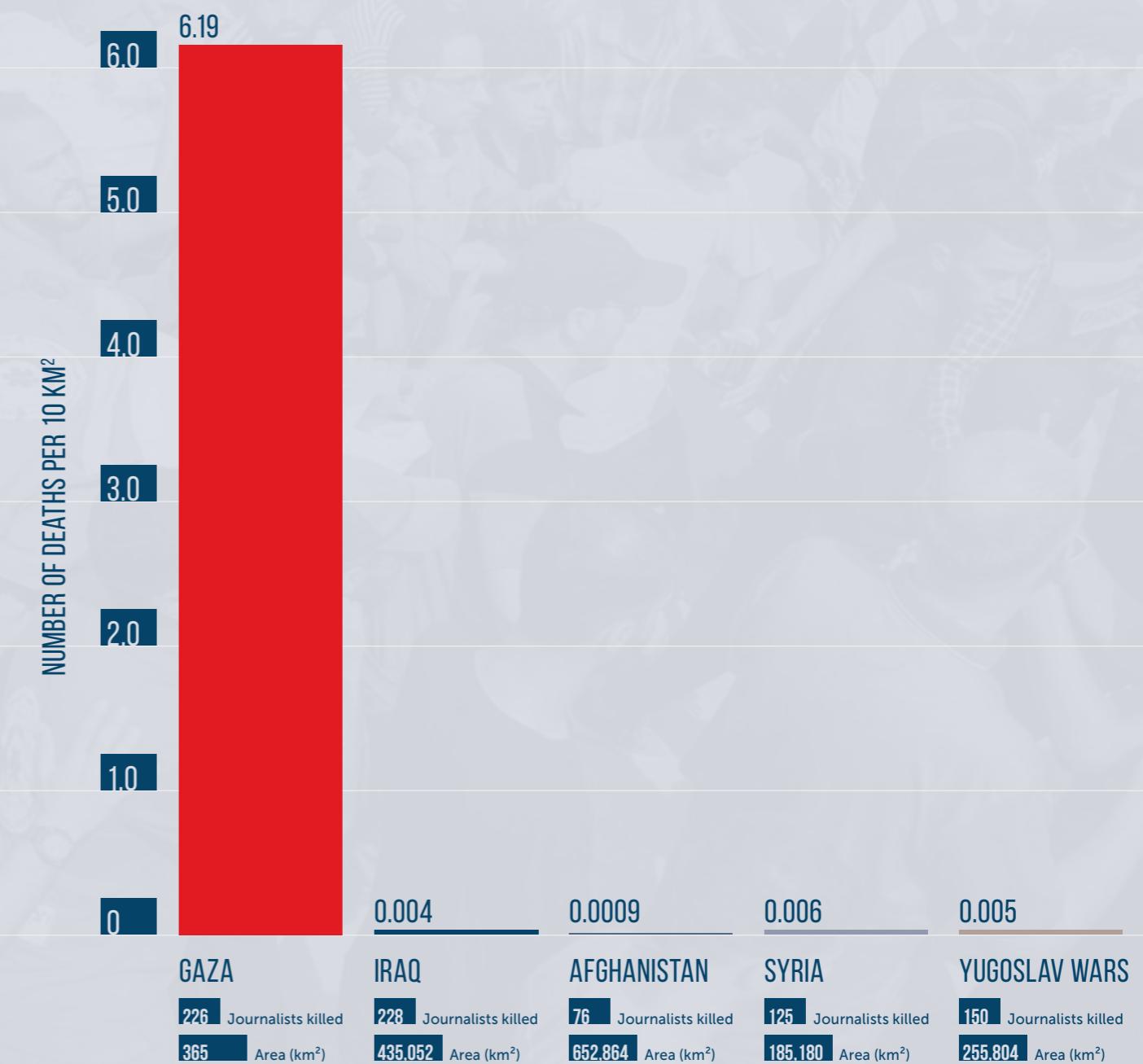
**Syria:** While the intensity of hostilities varied over time and across regions, the United Nations continues to treat Syria as an ongoing non-international armed conflict.

**Population figures** were taken from United Nations Trade & Development (UN CTAD), using population estimates at the start of each conflict. Geographic area figures were sourced from UN data and the Encyclopedia Britannica.

## JOURNALISTS KILLED DEATHS PER MILLION OF POPULATION



## JOURNALISTS KILLED NUMBER OF DEATHS PER 10 KM<sup>2</sup>



IN MEMORY OF  
**Nick Mosdell**



INSI dedicates *Killing the Messenger* 2025  
to our friend Nick Mosdell who curated this  
vital record for more than 20 years.

Journalists work on the roof of a residential building in Tehran that was hit in an Israeli missile on 25 June. ATTA KENARE/AFP

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