



The Orwellian nightmare facing Lebanon's journalists

Description

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Lebanon

Lebanon - Content warning: Some of the links in this feature connect to upsetting videos

On March 18th of this year British anchorman for RT [Steve Sweeney](#) went viral after narrowly [cheating death on camera](#). A 500-pound guided bomb aimed at him and his cameraman hit just feet away. Luckily, it landed in an existing crater sending the blast upwards instead of outwards which would have torn them both to shreds.

In the early hours of the same day, the Israelis assassinated 80-year-old [al-Manar TV News](#) political editor Mohamad Sherri with a drone strike on his apartment in central Beirut. It went largely unreported by Western media. His wife was also killed and several other family members injured.

Yasser, his son, recounts the story



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His son Yasser, also a journalist, who survived the attack, recounted the ordeal to me today (Sunday June 21st):

I woke up to an earthquake, everything was shaking and debris was falling on me and my baby daughter. I handed her to my wife and then I heard my mother's voice calling my name, she was still alive. The door was blasted off their room, and everything was on fire. She was trapped under burning debris; my father was just lying there.

I will never forget the toxic smell of the accelerant that made the fire impossible to put out. It just increased in intensity until I could no longer see or bear the heat. I could not see my brother who had been sleeping on the balcony with his family

When I found them, his wife was unconscious and he had a terrible wound on his hand, the flesh was open. My mother's voice disappeared I knew she had been martyred. Our neighbours broke down the front door using extinguishers to try and stop the flames. I jumped back into the fire and dragged my wife and children downstairs. We were all taken to hospital where I was treated, but both my parents were dead.

My brother and his family survived, both my brother and I were in the ICU for a long time. All had horrifying injuries.

God chose mother and father to leave life together because they were inseparable. It would have been a curse if only one of them survived without the other.

At the time Mohammad Sherri was recovering from recent surgery and was in and out of hospital. The Israelis clearly knew that he was at home - even which room he slept in. The level of surveillance is intense and high tech.

Yasser explained that he had not been taking any extra precautions despite his high profile job at Al-Manar TV:

He used his phone normally like any other person. In our work as journalists, we have no alternatives to smartphones and social media. We must stay connected to the world.

Only military and intelligence people are taking secure measures against such attacks, and only they know how to do this. This technology forced itself upon us. We can only hope to be protected by international law.



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In Lebanon, journalism is a deadly profession

Yesterday (Saturday June 19th) I met Elsy Moufarrej, President of the Union of Lebanese Journalists, in a Beirut café, while an Israeli drone hummed menacingly above.

She explained that the killing of Sherri and his wife matched a pattern in Lebanon that commenced in October 2023 when seven clearly identifiable reporters [were attacked on a Lebanese hillside near the border](#) with Israel by a tank and machine gun fire, killing [Issam Abdallah](#) and seriously wounding his colleagues including [Christina Assi](#) who lost one of her legs.

A few days ago, the Israeli ambassador to France described this incident as a "mistake." This seems inconceivable given that the group of journalists were being observed simultaneously by drones, helicopters and nearby watchtowers.

The following month, in November 2023, [Farah Omar and Rabih al Maamary](#) were killed along with [their local guide](#) on another open hillside. There was no live fire happening between the IOF & Hezbollah fighters on either side.

More blatant was the killing of [Ghassan Najjar, Mohammad Reda and Wissam Qassem](#) in October 2025 at a known media workers' residence. It was the only house in the area suggesting that the Israelis had only one target in mind.

Ali Shoeib and Fatima Ftouni

During the next round of carnage in March of 2026, the IOF both [claimed and celebrated](#) the killing of Ali Shoeib in a drone strike on his vehicle. They first claimed that he was a spy, then later admitted that an [image of him in a military uniform](#) was created in Photoshop.

Also martyred were [Fatima Ftouni and her brother Mohammad](#). She had escaped the first strike but was sadistically hunted by the drone while running from the scene killed along with two passing paramedics who had stopped to help.

Lebanon

The most high profile, and documented, of these attacks occurred on April 26th of this year when much loved reporter, for Al Akbar News, Amal Khalil was killed by Israel. She died under the rubble of a building in the village of Al-Tiri, after rescuers were prevented from reaching her for over four hours. She had taken shelter along with her colleague Zeinab Faraj after their vehicle was attacked. A second strike targeted the building, and civil defence volunteers trying to attend were pushed back by the IOF with stun grenades and gun fire.

Lebanon - Zeinab Faraj speaks to *the Canary*

Zeinab survived with life changing physical injuries including multiple fractures requiring permanent metal plates, blurred double vision, nerve damage to her hands and impaired mobility. This was accompanied by psychological trauma including flashbacks, insomnia and mood swings. Speaking to

me today in Beirut, she recounted being trapped in the building saying:

The drone would approach my face as if it was about to touch it. The Israelis are unimaginably malicious, and I believe they tracked Amal's car from the very moment we set off. We have become fully aware that the Israelis monitor us through the simplest tools we use in our daily lives which grants them the capability to spy through phones, televisions, social media, and similar means.

Israelis do not respect journalists's rights; a critical journalist has essentially become a fighter to them. Precautions we take include avoiding areas close to the front lines. Wearing vests and helmets (though this precaution is ultimately useless against this enemy). Coordinating in advance with the relevant authorities, ensuring the presence of the Lebanese Army in certain areas and often delaying the publication of news.

Amal, like many others, had received direct threats, demanding that she cease her journalism. One message received in 2024 via WhatsApp from an Israeli number warned her that:

Your head will be separated from your body if you continue reporting.

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Drone harassment

In a similar and equally sinister development journalists working in South Lebanon found themselves a just a few feet away from an Israeli surveillance drone hovering above them. Later, footage of their individual faces was messaged, accompanied by threats, to their phones as a warning.

<https://www.thecanary.co/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Creepydronefootage.mp4>



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One of them, [Ahmad Hariri](#) was also a volunteer paramedic and was killed in a double tap attack while attending to an airstrike on May 22nd of this year. The [incident was captured](#) by a local resident.

The electronic warfare being waged against journalists has also had the effect of isolating them from their standard safety protocols. Elsy explained that usual practices, like location sharing with team members on Google Maps, were being avoided for fear of sharing their whereabouts with the Israelis.

In total, over 260 media workers have lost their lives since October 7th 2023, most of them in the Gaza genocide. But unlike Gaza, Lebanon is accessible to outside investigation allowing a forensic approach by independent experts. A detailed report by Amnesty and Human Rights Watch into the Killing of Amal Khalil will be released in the coming days, with more cases to be examined. In her recent presentation to an international committee, Elsy concluded with:

We are targeted because we carry the stories and voices of the victims. Because we document and expose war crimes. The killer is known, it is Israel. But impunity is allowing these crimes to continue.

Away from the killing fields of Gaza and Lebanon, conclusions made in a [recent report](#) by the International Federation of Journalists on media access safety should concern everyone. They have ascertained that the spy-tech used by state actors and its western backers is now commercially available to individuals and corporations for the right price. Which means that those investigating or protesting the rich and powerful everywhere, could already be on the receiving end of the same technology.

Featured image via [Guy Smallman](#)

By [Guy Smallman](#)

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