

Journalism in a world of terrorism Terrorism in the world of journalism

International conference for journalists and media researchers

9 – 11 May 2017

The Linnæus University

Kalmar, Sweden

Terrorist actions create chaos. Everywhere in the world, regardless if in Norway, Tunis, Pakistan, France or Iraq, acts of terror disturb the society in its foundations. The effects are dramatic, often including destruction and the death of many people, men, women and children.

Who are terrorist?

What is a terrorist act?

What is terrorism?

How do journalists report terrorism and find reliable sources?

What are the effects on society when hit by terrorist acts?

It is an increased challenge for journalists to cover terrorism. Threats of revenge and political decisions limit journalists from doing a fair job. Sometimes journalists are the targets of terrorist acts, like in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and in Paris against Charlie Hebdo. Alleged anti-terrorism policies increasingly prevent journalists by limiting freedom of expression as in the USA after 9/11 and in Turkey recently.

Journalists are citizens of the society to which they report. Different societies look differently on terrorism. What is called 'terrorists' in some places might be labeled 'freedom fighters' somewhere else.

Terrorism hits not only war-torn countries, but also societies that terrorist groups regard as enemy, as fault to blame. The attack on 9/11 is a brutal example with global consequences.

Civil society, democracy and the general public's rights are collateral casualties.

Terrorism and anti-terrorism policies are combined forces making journalism a more dangerous, but also a more indispensable profession than ever. The terrorist attacks and the subsequent new wars, increased immigration, xenophobia, right-wing populism and massive surveillance of populations worldwide have put media and journalists in a crisis with global reach. It is urgent to encourage understanding and communication of perspectives and experiences among professional journalists and media researchers with an aim to improve reflective and ethical media reporting about terrorism and its implications.

This call for a conference on ***Journalism in a world of terrorism - terrorism in the world of journalism*** May 9-11 2017 at the Linnæus University in Kalmar, Sweden, offers a unique opportunity where academics and journalists meet to share experience, discuss and reflect the dilemmas journalism in the world of terrorism has to cope with.

Themes for discussions

- > Safety of journalists and the issue of impunity
- > Reporting legal issues and human rights
- > Semantics: uses of words such as 'terrorism' and 'terrorist'
- > Protection of journalists' integrity and independence
- > Consequences of social media and new ICTs on terrorism reporting

Cooperative and coordinated efforts internationally and locally are needed to protect and secure journalists covering terrorism and related conflicts. Increased collaboration between journalists' collectives and civil society organizations seems important, but who is taking the lead? What can journalist education institutes do?

Keynote speakers

Robert Fisk: Award-winning author and international correspondent

Daya Thussu: Professor of international communication at Westminster University

Corney C Radsh: Advocacy director of Committee to protect journalists

Can Dündar: Turkish journalist and editor-in-chief of *Cumhuriyet*, Turkish newspaper

Preliminary program

Tuesday 9 May, Noon – 5.00 pm

Keynote speakers

Buffet dinner

Wednesday 10 May, 9am – 5 pm incl. breaks for lunch and refreshments

Presentations, workshops and discussions

Formal dinner

Thursday 11 May, 9am – noon incl. breaks for refreshments

Plenary sessions and conclusions: what now?

The conference is free of charge.

The conference will result in a book including papers and presentations.

Application

To apply please send an email with abstract to: kalmarconference@lnu.se

Please include contact information: name, position, email address and phone number.

Deadline: 15 February 2017.

Full text is expected mid-April.

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Conference Aim and Purpose

Terrorism and anti-terrorism policies are combined forces making journalism a more dangerous, but also a more indispensable profession than ever. The terrorist attacks and the subsequent new wars, increased immigration, xenophobia, right-wing populism and massive surveillance of populations worldwide have put media and journalists in a crisis with global reach. It is urgent to encourage understanding and communication of perspectives and experiences among professional journalists and media researchers with an aim to improve reflective and ethical media reporting about terrorism and its implications.

This conference on *Journalism in a World of Terrorism* 9-11 May 2017 in Kalmar, Sweden, offers an opportunity for such meetings and discussions. Editors and reporters with experiences of news reporting from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and other war-torn countries will, together with advanced scholars in conflict journalism, share facts and views on the challenges that journalism about terrorism has to cope with today.

Themes for Discussions

Conditions on the field for journalists reporting from the new wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere are deteriorating because of lack of respect for the protection of journalists in international law. Increasingly journalists are killed, targeted by terrorists and even regular troops, kidnapped and harassed. Fewer correspondents dare to take the risks, and war crimes are committed without media attention. The lethal dangers may result in self-censorship and jeopardize the fourth estate role of journalism. Civil society, democracy and the general public's rights are collateral casualties too.

Content, formats and language of the reporting are constant concerns. Media logic and the sense for drama amplify horror and fear, anxiety and threats, as calculated by terrorists like ISIS/Daesh and Breivik recently and by Baader-Meinhof and PFLP in the 1970s. Notions such as 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' are continuously controversial and contested. The UN definition excludes state terrorism, and is therefore not always sufficient and self-evident. Police officers have compared media reporting about terrorism with a loaded weapon on the street for anyone to use, and propose restrictions on the media. Globalization is said to encourage media reflexivity, but are journalism better today than yesterday in informing about the strategies applied by terrorists and anti-terrorism agencies apply to make media and journalists their allies, tools and weapons? What lessons have the profession learned from previous cases?

Contextual coverage of terrorism and counter-terrorism policies is a critical issue for news media with its obsession of immediacy. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2015 the number of deaths as result of terrorism have increased nine-fold between year 2000 and 2014, and is now almost 33.000. How could backgrounds, contingencies and hidden agendas be exposed in a more relevant way? How should media get the courage to reveal the counter-productivity of anti-terrorism policies

– as often been the case – when fear and anxiety is proliferating? “The global war on terror” has been a disaster but is still fought, although under other banners. What kind of journalism is needed to immunize the public from simple warmongering under the pretext of security and protection? What journalism can operate in a global culture of fear and re-define the fourth estate role at a global level? What journalism will remind about the connections between the global war on terror and the growing racism and xenophobia worldwide? What media report that 80 percent of the deaths of terrorism in the West is caused by lone wolf, right-wing extremists (GTI report 2015; data from 2014)?

Communication-technology development has radically changed the ground for opinion building and propaganda. Terrorists mobilize supporters through social media and other “echo-chambers” hidden from public attention and critical information. A less noticed complication is that also mainstream media and the political elites are marginalized as they are constituting a – although larger – echo chamber too, where pluralism is failing.

Consequences of the reporting – is that a professional concern? What ethical principles are adequate to cope with the obvious risks of being targets and weapons in the combined terrorism/anti-terrorism conflicts? Is it, as some would argue, reasonable to follow the credo “Publish and be damned”, i.e. the idea of consequential neutrality? Is it moral and applicable?

Cooperative and coordinated efforts internationally and locally are needed to protect and secure journalists covering terrorism and related conflicts. What can be done to make safeguarding of reporters and prosecution of human rights violations key issues for the global community? How can journalism and media research intensify the support for establishing institutional and legal frameworks that will change the situation for the better. Increased collaboration between journalists’ collectives and civil society organizations seems important, but who is taking the lead? What can journalist education institute do?