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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Journalists' Rights in Armed Conflicts

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### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

#### Interdiction:

In today's world, press freedom is recognized as one of the fundamental pillars of democracy and the freedom of information. This freedom is especially important not only in normal circumstances but also during times of crisis and armed conflicts. Journalists play a vital role in disseminating information and ensuring transparency regarding current issues. By reporting on crises and wars, they help keep people informed and act as intermediaries who contribute to saving lives. However, journalists have historically faced numerous threats and violations of their rights. In recent years, hundreds of journalists have been killed worldwide while carrying out their duties, highlighting the urgent need for their protection in conflict zones. The United Nations and UNESCO have emphasized the importance of supporting the safety and freedom of journalists through various resolutions. For instance, UN Security Council Resolution 1738 specifically highlights the protection of journalists in crisis areas. On the other hand, With the rapid advancement of

technology, we are increasingly facing the challenges of cyber warfare. As this type of warfare becomes more prevalent, it is crucial to address legal gaps concerning the protection of journalists. Establishing safe zones for journalists and ensuring their safety in conflict zones is one of the most critical measures we can take. These protective strategies can draw inspiration from UNESCO and UN resolutions focused on enhancing journalists' safety. Violating the rights of journalists carries significant moral and legal consequences, as such violations can be viewed as breaches of international obligations that expose governments to potential legal accountability. Therefore, it is vital to protect journalists' rights through robust legal and global frameworks. Therefore, the main question of this research is: What rights do journalists have under international humanitarian law (IHL)? Hence, this article explores journalists' rights in the context of international humanitarian law and underscores the importance of safeguarding their security and freedom, especially in crises. As mentioned, with the rise of cyber warfare, it is particularly important to examine journalists' rights in this evolving landscape.

### **Method:**

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. The data collection method is library-based, focusing on the study and analysis of resources available in libraries, scientific articles, and international documents regarding the rights of journalists in crisis situations and cyber warfare. This approach allows for a thorough examination of journalists' rights within the framework of international humanitarian law and an analysis of the challenges they face. In this research, various sources are utilized, including UN and UNESCO resolutions, government guidelines and policies, resolutions from intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, it incorporates scientific articles on the rights of journalists in crisis zones. The data analysis is based on legal and humanitarian concepts, aiming to enhance our understanding of the existing challenges and identify potential strategies for supporting journalists' rights.

### **Results:**

Considering the role of journalists and with the advancement of technologies and the rise of cyber warfare, there exists a legal gap for protection of Journalists' Rights in Armed Conflicts that must be addressed. The freedom of the press is a cornerstone of the right to freedom of information, enabling journalists and reporters to play a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and societal progress. By providing accurate and clear reporting on the actions of officials and authorities, journalists inform the public about both the fulfillment of duties and any errors committed. This critical function underscores the importance of safeguarding press freedom to ensure that journalists can contribute effectively to societal development. During crises, the media serve as essential communication tools, informing people about events and locations while acting as intermediaries to save lives. In times of armed conflict, journalists' rights become even more significant due to their role in transmitting information and ensuring transparency in ongoing issues. Protecting their security under such conditions is paramount.

While traditional legal frameworks have offered protections for journalists during armed conflicts, modern warfare - especially cyber warfare - has introduced new challenges that require updated approaches. Cyberattacks targeting media organizations or individual journalists can compromise their safety and impede their ability to report freely. In this context, The Tallinn Manual 2.0, which provides guidance on how international law applies to cyber operations, offers valuable insights

into addressing these challenges. It emphasizes that cyber operations during armed conflicts must comply with international law principles, including the protection of civilians such as journalists. However, current legal frameworks still lack specific provisions tailored to address the unique threats posed by cyber warfare against journalists.

To enhance protections for journalists in both physical and digital realms, several measures should be implemented. Establishing safe zones in conflict areas can provide necessary physical safety for journalists working in dangerous environments. Additionally, it is important to expand legal frameworks to ensure that international humanitarian law evolves to explicitly address cyber threats against journalists. Promoting global collaboration is also crucial, as violations of journalists' rights have significant consequences. These violations represent breaches of international obligations undertaken by states through treaties and agreements, undermine the credibility of human rights on a global scale, and obstruct transparency, thereby threatening democratic values by hindering the free flow of information. Furthermore, such violations may lead to legal accountability through mechanisms such as prosecution by international tribunals or other competent bodies.

### **Conclusion:**

The protection of journalists and their rights is increasingly recognized as a critical issue in international legal frameworks, reflecting its importance for both ethical and legal considerations. Journalists play an indispensable role in promoting transparency, accountability, and the dissemination of accurate information, particularly during crises and armed conflicts. Their work not only informs the public but also serves as a lifeline by providing timely updates that can save lives. However, this essential role often places journalists in perilous situations, exposing them to violence, harassment, and even fatal attacks. Historically, legal instruments such as the Hague Regulations (1907), the Geneva Conventions (1949), and their Additional Protocols have sought to provide protections for journalists, particularly during times of armed conflict. These frameworks classify journalists as civilians, granting them protections under international humanitarian law as long as they do not directly participate in hostilities. Article 79 of Additional Protocol I explicitly recognizes journalists on dangerous assignments as civilians who deserve protection. Despite these legal provisions, significant gaps remain in addressing the unique challenges faced by journalists in modern conflict scenarios. One of the most pressing challenges today is the rise of cyber warfare. The digital age has introduced new risks for journalists, including cyberattacks targeting media organizations and individual reporters. Such attacks not only undermine press freedom but also jeopardize journalists' safety and their ability to report freely. This highlights an urgent need to extend existing legal protections to cyberspace and address the legal voids related to cyber conflicts. In conclusion, safeguarding journalists' rights is not merely an ethical obligation but also a legal necessity with profound implications for states on the international stage.

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Data available on request from the authors.

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**Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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