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CPJ: more than 80 attacks against journalists in Libya in March & April

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has documented more than 80 attacks on the press since political unrest erupted in Libya last month.

They include four fatalities, at least three serious injuries, 49 detentions, 11 assaults, two attacks on news facilities, the jamming of Al-Jazeera and Al-Hurra transmissions, at least four instances of obstruction, the expulsion of two international journalists, and the interruption of Internet service.

At least six local journalists are missing amid speculation they are in the custody of security forces. One international journalist and two media support workers are also unaccounted for. Here's a running list of all attacks on journalists and the media in Libya since February 16:

Reported on April 25

- American photographer James Foley, who was detained near Brega on April 5, was permitted to call his family on Saturday for the first time since his capture, *Global Post* [reported](#). He told his mother that he was being treated well and was uninjured, according to the same report. Spanish photographer Manuel Varela, who was detained with Foley, was also able to call his family, his father told CPJ

Reported on April 22

- Anton Hammerl, a freelance South African photographer who was detained in early April, has appeared in government custody in Libya and is apparently in good health. *Global Post* told CPJ on April 22 that the South African government has received information from Libyan authorities that Hammerl is well and will be permitted to speak to his family soon.
- Clare Morgana Gillis, an American freelancer for *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Atlantic*, and *USA Today*, who was [detained](#) near Brega on April 5, was allowed to call home on Thursday for the first time since her capture. She told her parents she is well and being held in a women's civilian jail in Tripoli, according to [multiple news reports](#)

Reported on April 20

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Chris Hondros, US Pulitzer nominee and a multi award winning photographer for the International photographic agency, Getty Images, was killed on 20 April 2011 while covering fighting in the city of Misrata, Libya after a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) struck a house he was in.

- Acclaimed photojournalists Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros were killed April 20 in an explosion in the western Libyan city of Misurata. Hetherington, a veteran war photojournalist, co-directed the Academy Award-nominated documentary "Restrepo." Hondros was an award-winning photographer and 2004 Pulitzer Prize finalist. Two photographers were injured. News reports identified the wounded as Guy Martin, a Briton working for the Panos photo agency; and Michael Brown, who was working for Corbis.

Reported on April 18

- On April 14, Libyan authorities released Rana Akbani, a reporter for the arts and culture section of the Libyan daily *Al-Shams*, local journalists told CPJ. Akbani, a Syrian national, was detained on March 28 on charges of "conspiring with the enemy during war."

Reported on April 15

- In Libya, authorities released Al-Jazeera cameraman Ammar al-Hamdan on Thursday, the Qatar-based news station [said](#). Al-Hamdan was detained in mid-March. An Al-Jazeera colleague, Kamel Atalua, remains in custody.

Reported on April 12

- Iran's state-run Arabic-language news channel Al-Alam [said](#) on April 5 that one of its correspondents in Libya has been in government custody since March 16. Lotfi Ghars, a Canadian national of Tunisian origin, was arrested while entering Libya from Tunisia, according to the same report. Al-Jazeera correspondent Lofti al-Messaoudi, who was [released](#) from custody on April 3, told Al-Alam that he heard Ghars' voice at a Tipoli jail while being detained.

Reported on April 11

- Cameramen Magdi Hilali and Mohamad al-Shuwayhadi of the privately owned Middle East Broadcasting (MBC) were detained on April 6 in the north-central city of Brega, MBC news director Ahmad Gurashi told CPJ in an email. A third MBC journalist, reporter Hassan Zaituni, was also detained but was released on April 8, MBC said. The MBC crew's driver, a Libyan identified only as Yahya, was detained at the same time but was separated from the three journalists. His condition and whereabouts were unknown as of April 11.
- Al-Jazeera correspondent Ahmed Vall Ould Addin was released on April 11, the Qatar-based news station reported. Two other Al-Jazeera journalists, Kamel Atalua and Ammar al-Hamdan, remained in custody.

Reported on April 8

- Freelance journalist Matthew VanDyke has been missing in Libya since mid-March, according to his family and news reports. VanDyke arrived in Libya on March 6 via the country's eastern land border with Egypt, and has not spoken to his family since March 12, his mother, Sharon VanDyke, told CPJ. On March 13, she received a GPS tracking email from him; the coordinates correspond roughly to the location of the Libyan city of Brega. VanDyke has not been heard from since. On April 4, Nouri Fonas, a Libyan friend of VanDyke's contacted his mother and informed her that her son was believed to have been captured along with three Libyan friends on March 13 or 14 near Brega by forces loyal to leader Muammar Qaddafi, the mother told CPJ. They were later transported, along with more than 1,000 Libyan civilians to Surt, a Qaddafi stronghold, according to Fonas.

Reported on April 7

- Forces loyal to Qaddafi detained four international journalists on the outskirts of the city of Brega. Photographers Manuel Varela, Anton Hammerl, James Foley, and reporter Clare Morgana Gillis were detained on April 5, the *Global Post* reported. Witnesses said the four journalists

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came under fire while traveling in a van near the north-central city, forcing them to stop, the Global Post said, citing information from Human Rights Watch. CPJ research shows that Hammerl, who is South African, works for *The Christian Science Monitor*; Varela, who is Spanish, is a freelance photographer on contract with the European Pressphoto Agency; Foley, who is American, works for the *Global Post*; and Morgana Gillis, an American, is a freelancer for *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Atlantic*, and *USA Today*.

Reported on April 6

- Authorities told more than 20 journalists working for numerous international news outlets to leave the country within 24 hours, National Public Radio reported. The next day, the government told the journalists that they would have to leave by April 9, NPR said.

Reported on April 4

- Lotfi al-Messaoudi, one of four Al-Jazeera journalists detained by Libyan authorities, was released and arrived in Tunisia on April 3, the Qatar-based news station reported. Al-Messaoudi, along with colleagues Ahmed Vall Ould Addin, Kamel Atalua, and Ammar al-Hamdan, were arrested in mid-March and freed on March 31 only to be re-arrested on the same day. The three other journalists remain in custody, according to Al-Jazeera.
- On April 4, Libyan authorities ordered Damien McElroy, a correspondent for London's Daily Telegraph, to leave Tripoli, according to news reports. The Libyan government provided no explanation.

Reported on April 1

- On March 31, Libyan authorities re-arrested Al-Jazeera correspondents Ahmed Vall Ould Addin and Lotfi al-Messaoudi, and cameramen Kamel Atalua and Ammar al-Hamdan hours after they were released. In a telephone interview with Tunisian radio station Jawhara FM, al-Messaoudi confirmed the news of the release and stated that the journalists were safe and had been treated well in detention. The journalists met in Tripoli with ambassadors from their home countries to discuss their departure from Libya, Al-Jazeera officials told CPJ. Later that day, however, Al-Jazeera received news from the International Federation of Journalists that all four journalists had been re-arrested by Libyan authorities. Authorities did not immediately provide an explanation.
- On March 28, Libyan security forces detained Rana al-Akbani, a reporter for the arts and culture section of the Libyan daily *Al-Shams*, a friend told CPJ on condition of anonymity. A Syrian national, al-Akbani was charged with "conspiring with the enemy during war." On March 30, Libyan state TV aired an interview with al-Akbani in which a state journalist questioned why she had spoken to foreign media about the conflict.

Reported on March 30

- Libyan authorities expelled Michael Georgy, a Reuters correspondent who had been covering the conflict for several weeks, the news agency said. The Libyan government provided no justification for its action. Georgy, who was among a group of foreign journalists allowed to report from Tripoli under severe government restrictions, arrived in neighboring Tunisia on March 30.

Reported on March 28

- A bruised and agitated woman entered the Rixos Hotel in Tripoli, where many foreign reporters are staying, claiming that she had been tortured and raped by Qaddafi militiamen. She was forcibly restrained by government minders and hotel staff, who drove her away to an undisclosed location. When journalists tried to intervene to hear the woman's story, they were "punched or knocked to the ground," The Washington Post reported. A government minder pulled a handgun, and a CNN camera that recorded the mayhem was smashed in an effort to destroy the footage, according to news accounts.

Reported on March 23

- Libyan authorities released Agence France-Presse journalists Dave Clark and Roberto Schmidt and Getty Images photographer Joe Raedle in Tripoli today, AFP reported. Libyan military forces detained the journalists on March 19 a few miles outside the eastern city of Ajdabiya.

Reported on March 22

- Agence France-Presse journalists Dave Clark and Roberto Schmidt and Getty Images photographer Joe Raedle, who had been missing since Friday, are in government custody, AFP reported. According to an individual who was traveling with them, the three journalists were detained on March 19 about seven miles outside the eastern city of Ajdabiya.

Reported on March 21

- *The New York Times* said today that Libyan authorities had freed four of its journalists who had been detained since March 15. The journalists are Beirut Bureau Chief Anthony Shadid, reporter Stephen Farrell, and photographers Tyler Hicks and Lynsey Addario. The team's driver, identified by the *Times* as Mohamed Shaglouf, is unaccounted for. The journalists later [recounted](#) beatings and abuse while in captivity.

Reported on March 20

- Al-Jazeera disclosed on March 20 that correspondents Ahmed Vall Ould Addin and Lotfi al-Messaoudi, and cameramen Kamel Atalua and Ammar al-Hamdan, had been detained while reporting from western Libya. An Al-Jazeera statement did not specify the date of the detentions, but managers told CPJ they occurred a few days earlier.
- Mohammed al-Nabbous, founder of the online opposition broadcaster Libya Al-Hurra TV, was killed by sniper fire on March 19 while covering a battle near Benghazi, The Associated Press and regional news websites reported.

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- Agence France-Presse reported that AFP journalists Dave Clark and Roberto Schmidt, and Getty Images photographer Joe Raedle are unaccounted for. AFP said the journalists were last heard from via e-mail on Friday night, as they were about to drive out of the eastern city of Tobruk.

Reported on March 16

- *The New York Times* said it lost contact with four journalists on March 15. They are the paper's Beirut Bureau Chief Anthony Shadid, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner; reporter Stephen Farrell; and photographers Tyler Hicks and Lynsey Addario. The *Times* said "it had received second-hand reports that members of "its reporting team on the ground in the port city of Ajdabiya had been swept up by Libyan government forces." Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, son of leader Muammar Qaddafi, confirmed the detentions in an interview with ABC's Christiane Amanpour. Qaddafi said the four *Times* journalists would be released.
- The U.K. *Guardian* confirmed that its correspondent Ghaith Abdul-Ahad has been released from custody in Libya. Abdul-Ahad, an Iraqi award-winning war reporter, was detained by Libyan authorities with Andrei Netto, a correspondent for Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, on March 2, according to the *Guardian*. Netto was released on March 10.

Reported on March 13:

- Unidentified gunmen killed an *Al-Jazeera* cameraman and wounded his colleague near the eastern rebel-held city of Benghazi in an ambush on March 12, according to the Qatar-based satellite station. This is the first confirmed journalist death reported in the *Libyan conflict*.
- The *Al-Jazeera* crew was returning from covering an opposition demonstration in Suluq, 30 miles (50 kilometers) southwest of Benghazi, when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their car, according to *Al-Jazeera* correspondent Baybah Wald Amhadi, who was traveling with the crew. Wald Amhadi said on the air that cameraman Ali Hassan al-Jaber was hit with three bullets and taken to the hospital, where he died. Naser al-Hadar received one bullet above his ear, causing light injuries. Wald Amhadi said that the type of ammunition used in the attack, disintegrating frangible bullets, was the same type that pro-Qaddafi forces have been using against civilians.

Reported on March 11:

- After *The Guardian* this week issued a public plea for information on correspondent Ghaith Abdul-Ahad's whereabouts, the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli acknowledged that the reporter was in state custody, the newspaper [reported](#) on March 10. The basis of the detention was not disclosed.
- A group of foreign journalists was prevented from covering protesters who had gathered in a mosque in the Tajoura district of Tripoli, Reuters [reported](#). The journalists were approached by men in uniforms, told they must leave, and then driven back to their hotel. Another reporter who tried to reach Tajoura by taxi was stopped by police and barred from traveling there, Reuters reported.
- Peter Beaumont, reporting from Tripoli for *The Guardian*, [reported](#) on March 8 that "journalists cannot operate freely in Tripoli at all, despite repeated promises from individuals including [Qaddafi's] son, Saif al-Islam, and the deputy foreign minister, Khalid Khayem." *The Guardian* reporter said he had been detained twice since he arrived in Libya. Among those held near Zawiya for hours on March 5, Beaumont was later detained for three hours by military forces at a Tripoli checkpoint. Three other journalists were detained with him in the Tripoli episode, he said.

Reported on March 10:

- Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, a correspondent for London's *Guardian* newspaper, was reported missing. Abdul-Ahad, an Iraqi who is an award-winning war reporter, was last known to be on the outskirts of the coastal city of Zawiya, where there has been heavy fighting between rebels and forces loyal to Muammar Qaddafi. *The Guardian* said Abdul-Ahad was last in touch with the paper through a third party on March 6.
- Andrei Netto, a reporter for Brazil's *O Estado de S. Paulo*, was released today to the Brazilian ambassador in Tripoli after being [jailed for eight days](#) in the city of Sabrata, *O Estado* reported on its website. *O Estado* said Netto, who had been held by troops loyal to Qaddafi, was in good health but was told to leave Libya on March 11.
- The whereabouts of at least six local journalists remained unclear. Atef al-Atrash, a contributor to local news outlets, [disappeared](#) shortly after speaking on air on *Al-Jazeera* from Benghazi. Mohamed al-Sahim, a blogger and critical political writer; Mohamed al-Amin, a cartoonist; and Idris al-Mismar, a writer and former editor-in-chief of *Arajin*, a monthly culture magazine, have also been reported [missing](#). Two Tripoli-based journalists—Salma al-Shaab, head of the Libyan Journalists Syndicate, and Suad al-Turabouls, a correspondent for the pro-government *Al-Jamahiriyah*—were [detained](#) last month but are now unaccounted for.
- Three BBC journalists—reporter Feras Killani, cameraman Goktay Koraltan, and producer Chris Cobb-Smith—were released on March 8 after 21 hours of abuse that included beatings and mock executions, according to news reports. Killani [told the BBC](#): "They were kicking and punching me, four or five men. I went down on to my knees. They attacked me as soon as I got out of the car. They knocked me down to the ground with their guns, AK47s. I was down on my knees and I heard them cocking their guns. I thought they were going to shoot me." He said he was later beaten severely and accused of being a spy. Cobb-Smith described a mock execution: "A man with a small submachine gun was putting it to the nape of everyone's neck in turn. He pointed the barrel at each of us. When he got to me at the end of the line, he pulled the trigger twice. The shots went past my ear." Cobb-Smith managed to place a call to the BBC with a phone that had not been discovered by security agents.

Reported on March 9:

- In the early morning hours of March 9, assailants whom witnesses said may have belonged to Libya's Revolutionary Guards threw a hand grenade into the lobby of the Ouzo Hotel in central Benghazi and fled the scene, according to international and regional news reports. No deaths or injuries were reported, German Press Agency DPA reported. A BBC spokeswoman said on March 8 that three BBC employees were detained overnight but have since been released. The BBC did not provide additional information. Reuters quoted government spokesman Mussa Ibrahim as saying that "the military don't have any experience dealing with the media. They are involved in ground operations. They don't want any media presence."
- Also, on March 9, [three BBC journalists](#) recounted a harrowing 21 hours in the custody of Libyan military and security forces this week during which they were subjected to physical assault and psychological torment. The three, along with their driver, were detained at a checkpoint in Al-Zahra, south of contested city of Zawiya.

Reported on March 4:

- Hundreds of anti-Qaddafi protesters gathered in Tajoura, a suburb of Tripoli, after Muslim prayers, but security forces quickly dispersed them with tear gas and live ammunition, according to international news reports. Official minders told foreign journalists to remain in the Rixos Hotel in Tripoli in the morning, preventing them from covering demonstrations, according to [news reports](#). Around 130 foreign journalists were

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reportedly staying in the hotel. The authorities finally agreed to allow the reporters to leave but only if they went on a government-led tour, press reports said. Foreign journalists attempting to reach the site were stopped and aggressively searched by militiamen loyal to Qaddafi, said Borzou Daragahi, who is reporting in Tripoli for the *Los Angeles Times*.

- Government spokesman Musa Ibrahim said that the restrictions on journalists' movements were due to security reasons. "We have intelligence that Al-Qaeda gunmen are in the city waiting for you," the *Wall Street Journal* reported Ibrahim as saying. "You can criticize us but we will not allow Tripoli to become the next Baghdad."
- Libyan Leader Muammar Qaddafi said on March 2 in a three-hour long speech said that "Libya doesn't like foreign correspondents. They shouldn't even know about the weather forecasts in Libya, because we are suspicious," the *New York Times* reported.
- Internet services and phone connections in Tripoli were sporadic, according to news reports.

Reported on March 1:

- Security forces arrested the head of Libyan Journalists Syndicate, Salma al-Shaab, and Suad al-Turabouls, a correspondent for the pro-government *Al-Jamahiriya* newspaper, on February 28 in Tripoli, according to [news reports](#). However, a local journalist told CPJ that al-Shaab disappeared about 10 days ago after she spoke to Al-Jazeera. The arrests were thought to be related to the journalists' work with Al-Jazeera, according to *Quryna*, a privately owned Libyan newspaper. *Quryna* said security forces are conducting a widespread campaign of arrests against journalists that are in contact with non-Libyan media.
- Jalal al-Kawafi, a detained Libyan blogger and political writer, was freed on February 26 after protesters expelled pro-Qaddafi forces from the city. Al-Kawafi had been [arrested](#) shortly before February 17, a local journalist from Benghazi, Naim Ibrahim al-Ushayba, told CPJ. The whereabouts of at least four journalists from Benghazi are still unknown. They are: [Atef al-Atrash](#), [Idris al-Mismar](#), Mohamed al-Sahim, and Mohamed al-Amin.
- Jamming of Al-Jazeera and Al-Hurra continued. Al-Jazeera's signal was being intermittently jammed since February 2, according to the network, although it intensified after anti-government protests began in the country. [Al-Hurra reported](#) it is being jammed on the Nilesat satellite.
- Ushayba said radio station Voice of Free Libya, formerly state-controlled but now controlled by protesters, received call-in threats of potential suicide bombings. Hanan Jallal, a local activist in Benghazi who is a member of a newly organized protesters' media office in Benghazi, told CPJ that Voice of Free Libya's signal was experiencing interference because of possible government jamming.
- In Misurata, 125 miles (200 kilometers) east of Tripoli, on February 28, a helicopter tried to destroy the antenna of a local radio station that protesters had taken over, international media reported. Anti-Qaddafi protesters took control of the city on February 24, according to [news reports](#). Misurata is the third largest city in Libya, after Tripoli and Benghazi.

Reported on February 25:

- In Libya, foreign journalists entering the country from Tunisia tweeted that their cameras, hard drives, and SIM cards were confiscated by border patrol guards. Paul Danahar, a BBC journalist [reporting from Tunisia-Libya border](#), said that Suresh Kothia, "an Indian who just arrived from Libya," told him that "at the last checkpoint the Libyan army took everyone's phone SIM cards and computer hard drives to stop images of the uprising getting out." Kothia told Danahar that equipment was broken and thrown to the ground.

Reported on February 24:

- Saif al-Islam, the son of Muammar Qaddafi, announced during an appearance on the official station, Libyan TV, that the country was accessible to the international press. "Starting today, Libya will be opened to journalists from all over the world," he said, according to Al-Jazeera. However, in the same speech he attacked the Arab media. "The conspiracy doesn't come from Libyans but from your Arab brothers who unleashed on you their broadcasters, poisoned words, and false rumors." He added that "this is a media battle. They misguided the Libyans with media and false information. The information that these stations and channels are broadcasting is a lie," he said, [according to](#) Dubai-based satellite channel Al-Arabiya.
- *The New York Times* [reported](#) that three Libyan bloggers tweeted that [Libyana](#), the country's leading cell phone provider, sent residents of Tripoli text messages that said that "a local cleric issued a fatwa against watching television channels 'like Al Jazeera,' that incite bloodshed."
- Naim Ibrahim al-Ushayba, a Libyan journalist from Benghazi and a correspondent for *Libya Al-Youm* news website, told CPJ that there was still no news about his colleague Atef al-Atrash, who disappeared after speaking to Al-Jazeera on the air on February 17. Al-Ushayba said the following other journalists have also been missing since the day before the demonstrations began: Mohamed al-Sahim, a blogger and political writer who published a critical article about the Libyan regime shortly before February 17; Mohamed al-Amin, a cartoonist; blogger Jalal al-Kawafi; and Idris al-Mismar, a writer and the former editor-in-chief of *Araj*, a monthly culture magazine.
- A government militia briefly detained a group of nine Italian journalists invited by the Libyan government to Tripoli as they drove to the city center from the airport, Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* [reported](#). Fabrizio Caccia, a correspondent for *Corriere*, was beaten and kicked. The journalists were released after an inspection and were able to reach their hotel in the capital, according to the paper.

Reported on February 23:

- Deputy Foreign Minister Khalid Khaim warned journalists who entered Libya illegally that they will be arrested if they do not give themselves in to authorities, according to [Agence France-Presse](#). "There are journalists who entered illegally and we consider them as if they are collaborating with Al-Qaeda and as outlaws and we are not responsible for their security," Khaim said. Qaddafi's government lost control over the eastern border on February 22, according to [news reports](#).
- [Attacks on Internet connectivity](#) in the region continued. In Libya, Net connections with the wider world were suspended entirely for periods of several hours over the weekend. Levels of incoming and outgoing Internet traffic as recorded by monitors outside the country are unusually low, suggesting that the Net may be being artificially restricted or specific regions cut off from outside access. Yemen traffic also dropped earlier in the month, which Internet security experts Arbor Networks have suggested may be due to the installation of increased filtering.

Reported on February 22:

- Atef Al-Atrash disappeared after [reporting live](#) on Al-Jazeera from demonstrations in Benghazi, the network reported. He also reported that "several journalists" had been detained in the second largest city of Libya but did not provide names. He added on the air that his mobile phone service had been cut off and that he felt there was "a clear attempt being made to isolate him," although he didn't name who he felt was pursuing him. Al-Atrash is a contributor to several Libyan news websites, including *Libya-Watanona* and *Libya al-Mustakbal*, where he often criticized the Libyan government. He also covered local news from Benghazi.

Reported on February 18:

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- Twitter, Facebook, and Al-Jazeera's website were blocked, according to multiple [news reports](#).
- Al-Jazeera's broadcast was jammed on Arabsat, the network reported on the air. It continues to broadcast from other satellites.
- Protesters in Benghazi took over a state radio station and are broadcasting live online, [according to Foreign Policy](#). "The radio commentary itself is gripping, with breathless amateur announcers calling on the international media to cover what 'the criminal Qaddafi' is doing and warning fellow Libyans about 'foreign mercenaries,'" the magazine reported.

Reported on February 16:

- Writer and blogger Mohamed Ashim was detained after security forces raided his home and confiscated his computer and mobile phone, [according](#) to news reports.
- Taqi al-Din al-Shalawi, the director of *Irassa*, a local, independent news website, and Abdel Fattah Bourwaq, the site's editor-in-chief, were summoned for questioning by internal security forces, according to daily newspaper *Libya Al-Youm*.

The list of reports is continuously updated on the CPJ website at <http://www.cpj.org/blog/2011/04/journalists-under-attack-in-libya.php>



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