



THE COST OF JOURNALISM IN LEBANON:

Targeted Attacks, Violations,
and Structural Vulnerabilities

Report

August 2026

اتحاد الصحفيين/ات
في لبنان
UNION OF JOURNALISTS IN LEBANON

Writing and Research: Cendrella Azar

Supervision & Review: Elsy Moufarrej & Alexandre Adam

Data analysis: Charbel El-Khoury

Creative Director: Jamal Saleh

Photography: Mohammad Kleit



SECTION I | CONTEXT

Lebanon since October 2023 has been mired in conflict that has rattled the tiny country. The Israeli military's strikes and ground invasion has left villages and towns along the country's southern border destroyed, and left behind battered neighborhoods in Beirut's southern suburbs, the eastern Bekaa province and elsewhere in the country. The conflict which went through cycles of intensity between Israel and Hezbollah left the country paralyzed for three years.

Critical infrastructure left many of Lebanon's over one million displaced people returning to their towns with damaged electricity and water systems, and neighborhoods reduced to rubble. Israeli troops occupy a large area of southern Lebanon under what they call a "Yellow Line", where mass demolitions of villages are heard from a distance through valleys and mountains, and where many of the over 300,000 people still displaced cannot return.¹

The Lebanese Health Ministry says 8,920 people have been killed in Israeli strikes over the past three years, of which 4,350 of them lost their lives since the latest escalation on March 2, 2026. Tens of thousands were wounded.² Among the killed are hundreds of women, children, and medical workers.

In such a situation, journalists and media workers have emerged as among the professionals most exposed to risk and vulnerability in the conflict. Committed to documenting the unfolding events and impact on the affected communities, many journalists continue to operate in dangerous frontline areas. This ongoing war has left a lasting impact on them, not only due to the reshaped physical environment in which they work in, but also because of the significant shifts in their their socioeconomic and psychological well-beings.

Field reporting in conflict-affected areas routinely exposes journalists to life-threatening risks, as they navigate active bombardment zones, shaky buildings, and unpredictable military activity, often without adequate protective equipment or institutional backing. Over the past three years, similar to other conflicts that erupted in the region, there have been several well-documented incidents of the direct targeting of journalists while they do their work, compounded by the broader patterns of attacks on civilian infrastructure where journalists could be located. These patterns show that these dire circumstances cannot be reduced to an unfortunate series incidents, and ultimately raise serious concerns about systematic violations under international humanitarian law. Article 79, Paragraph 1 of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions explicitly states that frontline journalists working in areas of armed conflict are classified as civilians and must be protected as such, provided they do not take action adversely affecting their civilian status. This protection is also recognized under customary international humanitarian law.³

According to multiple international watchdogs, the war since October 2023 has

1 <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/news/briefing-notes/lebanon-more-850-000-displaced-return-areas-origin-crisis-remains-far-over>

2 <https://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/127/83821/number-of-martyrs-and-wounded-yesterday-wednesday-april-8-2026-by-region>

3 ICRC — Article 79: Measures of Protection for Journalists

marked one of the deadliest periods for journalists worldwide in modern history.⁴ The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which documents attacks on journalists, called 2025 the deadliest year on record for media workers globally. This came a year after CPJ marked 2024 as the deadliest year on record for media workers.

Among 129 journalists killed, Israeli forces were responsible for nearly two-thirds of those deaths. This pattern extends beyond the Gaza Strip into Lebanon, where attacks on journalists have been documented as part of a broader military campaign.⁵

In Lebanon alone, at least **11 media workers have been killed since October 2023** in Israeli attacks, according to documented cases compiled by press freedom organizations. These killings are not isolated incidents, but show a clear pattern of journalists being struck while reporting, traveling in marked press vehicles, or even inside their homes.

The killing of Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah on October 13, 2023, was one of the earliest case, which came under shocking circumstances. Abdallah was killed by Israeli artillery fire while filming from a distance in the southwestern border village of Alma al-Shaab alongside colleagues from Agence France-Presse and Al Jazeera, all wearing gear that clearly identified them as the press. His death triggered international condemnation and calls for an investigation from rights groups and many international news agencies - including their own. Amnesty International said the incident must be investigated as a war crime, and that there was sufficient information for the Israeli military to know that they were journalists and civilians, not a military target.

Abdallah's killing was the first of other incidents that followed with other journalists from different outlets. Some of those attacks were double-tap strikes, in which an initial strike was followed by a second targeting rescuers or those responding to the scene. This tactic, widely condemned by human rights organizations, has also endangered journalists covering the aftermath of attacks.

Independent United Nations human rights experts have explicitly raised alarm over what they described as the “targeted killing” of Lebanese journalists, calling for an independent international investigation into these incidents.⁶

In addition to the dangerous security situation, Lebanon's ongoing economic meltdown since 2019 compounds these vulnerabilities. Media institutions have struggled financially, reducing staff, cutting salaries, and as a result shifted towards freelance and more informal employment models. This left a large number of journalists now work without stable contracts, health insurance, or social protection. The impact of this new status quo is especially apparent in times of war, with journalists no longer having an ability to secure safe housing, access healthcare, or absorb income shocks that come as a result from displacement or having far more limited work opportunities.

Preliminary data from recent assessments indicate that many journalists have been displaced multiple times since the escalation began. Some have lost their homes entirely, while others are living in overcrowded or temporary accommodations, often shared with extended family members. Access to basic services, including electricity, internet, and transportation, is limited, directly affecting their ability to work and report.

4 <https://rsf.org/en/103-journalists-killed-150-days-gaza-tragedy-palestinian-journalism>

5 CPJ — Record 129 press members killed in 2025

6 OHCHR — Lebanon: UN experts call for international independent investigation into Israel's killing of journalists

The impact of war extends beyond safety and economic dimensions, causing psychological distress. The continued exposure to violence, loss, and uncertainty has contributed to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout among journalists. Many report difficulties in maintaining professional detachment, particularly when covering events that affect their own communities, families, and personal lives. Coping with these distressing realities is especially different when access to mental health and psychosocial support remains extremely limited, and social stigma continues to deter some from seeking professional help.

At the same time, the documentation of violations against journalists remains fragmented and inconsistent. Although individual organizations and media outlets have reported incidents, there is no centralized system that consolidates data on attacks and threats against journalists, and their unsafe working conditions. The lack of structured documentation undermines both immediate response efforts and longer-term accountability processes. It also sets back the ability for advocates to mobilize evidence-based interventions at national and international levels to enact change.

The lack of a unified research and analytic framework shared between institutions further complicates ability to adequately respond to critical needs. Current data collection efforts vary in methodology, scope, and depth, making it difficult to establish clear criteria for prioritizing assistance. As a result, support mechanisms, where they exist, are often reactive, short-term, and insufficiently targeted to the most vulnerable cases.

Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to develop a systematic approach to understanding and addressing the situation of journalists affected by the war. This includes consolidating existing data, consistently identifying key vulnerabilities, and producing comprehensive analysis that captures both immediate needs and structural challenges. Such an approach is essential not only to better humanitarian responses and protection efforts but also to strengthen advocacy to safeguard press freedom and ensure accountability for violations. Ultimately, the situation of journalists in Lebanon today reflects a broader intersection of conflict, economic crisis, and institutional fragility. Addressing the needs of journalists and media workers not only requires emergency interventions but also a deeper understanding of the systemic factors that shape their vulnerability. This report aims to provide that foundation, combining data-driven analysis with contextual insight to support both immediate assistance and longer-term strategic responses.



SECTION II | METHODOLOGY

This report uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative testimonies, to assess the working conditions, risks, and vulnerabilities faced by journalists in Lebanon during the ongoing war.

Data Sources

The analysis draws on **four** primary datasets:

- A **war coverage assessment** surveying 40 journalists actively reporting from conflict-affected areas, focusing on safety conditions, institutional support, work contracts, and compensation.
- A **needs assessment survey** of 60 journalists, covering employment conditions, housing and displacement, economic pressures, health needs, and psychosocial well-being.
- An **insurance dataset** covering freelancers, employees, and media organizations, analyzing disparities in health coverage, access to social security, and institutional insurance policies.
- A multi-year **Documented Incidents Dataset** recording of crimes, attacks, and violations against journalists, documented by trained senior journalists and the Union of Journalist in Lebanon's documentation team through field reporting, interviews, and case documentation.

In addition, the report includes in-depth interviews with journalists across diverse media institutions, employment structures, and personal circumstances, including freelancers, displaced journalists, and reporters working for local, regional, and international outlets. These testimonies offer contextual insight into how structural conditions are experienced in practice.

Analytical Approach

The report uses a comparative analytical framework to identify patterns of vulnerability across three main dimensions:

- **Employment structure** (permanent, freelance, temporary, or without contract)
- **Media type and institutional scope** (local, Arab regional, and international organizations)
- **Type of journalistic work** (field reporting, technical roles, editorial work)

Quantitative data was analyzed to identify key trends in protection gaps, income distribution, housing conditions, and access to basic services. Cross-analysis was used to highlight overlapping vulnerabilities, particularly where employment instability, low income, and high-risk exposure intersect. Qualitative testimonies were used to complement these findings by illustrating how institutional decisions, protection gaps, and economic pressures translate into lived realities on the ground.

Limitations

This assessment is based on a limited sample and relies primarily on self-reported data. While the findings indicate clear patterns, they may not fully capture the diversity of experiences across the entire media sector in Lebanon. In addition, access constraints and the ongoing security situation may have affected participation, particularly among journalists operating in high-risk areas. Despite these limitations, the convergence of multiple data sources and testimonies strengthens the reliability of the overall analysis.

Scope

The report focuses specifically on journalists working in Lebanon during the current period of armed escalation. It examines both the immediate risks of war coverage and the broader structural vulnerabilities tied to employment conditions, institutional practices, and economic pressures. By combining data-driven analysis with lived experiences, this methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how risk is produced, distributed, and sustained within the journalism sector under conditions of conflict.

The various sources of evidence are analyzed collectively rather than as separate datasets. Employment status, income, insurance, safety provisions, and displacement are examined alongside exposure to conflict-related violence and journalists' testimonies to identify how different forms of vulnerability interact. The analysis does not assume that socioeconomic insecurity causes attacks on journalists. Rather, it examines how structural conditions can shape journalists' ability to anticipate, mitigate, and recover from the risks associated with conflict reporting.



SECTION III | KEY FINDINGS: STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES

The quantitative findings reveal a media workforce that is highly exposed to conflict-related risks while operating under limited financial, institutional, and social protection. Across the datasets, the same pattern emerges: journalists reporting under dangerous conditions are frequently doing so without adequate insurance, protective equipment, safety training, stable employment, or sufficient income to absorb the consequences of injury or interrupted work.

These vulnerabilities are particularly worse among freelancers and field reporters. Employment insecurity, low incomes, weak insurance coverage, and inadequate safety measures compound the risks among journalists who are already among the most exposed.

3.1 | Conflict Exposure Is High, but Protection Remains Limited

75% of journalists

surveyed in the war coverage assessment reported actively covering conflict zones or areas affected by security tensions.

Despite this high level of exposure:

55.5%

said they do not receive protective equipment.

Only 22.5%

said they have insurance that covers war-related injuries.

Less than 30%

said they have access to hostile environment training or institutional security support.

Therefore, three out of every four journalists surveyed are exposed to conflict-related reporting, yet fewer than one in four have insurance that specifically covers war-related injuries.

This is a significant concern in a setting where exposure to conflict appears to have become a routine part of journalistic work, but specialized protection remains available to only a minority.

That is not to say that protective equipment and training would eliminate the risk of military attacks for frontline journalists, nor that lacking them would be a viable reason of why journalists would be harmed. They do, however, affect journalists' capacity to assess risk, respond to emergencies, obtain treatment, and recover after an incident.

The data therefore points to a fundamental imbalance: the level of



institutional protection has not increased in proportion to the level of physical risk journalists are being asked to assume.

“

YOU'RE STILL AT RISK... BUT AT LEAST YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISK.

EZZAT BALTAJI

3.2 | Freelancers face the widest protection gap

The insurance dataset provides an even clearer picture of disparities when employment status is considered.

Among the 32 freelancers surveyed in the insurance assessment:

81.8%

have no social security coverage.

60.6%

have no health insurance.

39.4%

have health insurance.

Among the 51 employed journalists surveyed:

74.5%

have health insurance.

25.5%

do not have health insurance.

82.3%

have no social security coverage.

The contrast reveals two different dimensions of insecurity.



Health insurance coverage among employees is almost twice that among freelancers:

74.5% versus 39.4%.

Full employment therefore substantially increases the likelihood that a journalist will have access to basic health coverage, despite the similar risks faced regardless of form of employment.

Yet, formal employment does not provide comprehensive protection, with the vast majority employed journalists surveyed lacking social security coverage.

The vulnerability of freelancers is nevertheless considerably more acute because they are less likely to have health insurance and are overwhelmingly excluded from social security.

The institutional insurance data reinforces this finding. Across the media organizations assessed, only three journalists working in war or high-risk environments were identified as having institutional insurance coverage specifically relevant to such work.

This creates a significant gap between occupational exposure and occupational protection.

For freelancers in particular, an injury can trigger multiple consequences simultaneously: medical expenses, loss of income, inability to continue working, and a lack of employer-provided compensation. The professional risk associated with producing journalism is therefore frequently shifted to the individual journalist.

“

NO INSURANCE. NO SUPPORT. WE CARRY THE RISK ALONE.

RANA JOUNI

3.3 | Institutional Protection Varies Sharply Across Media Organizations

The data also shows that protection is not evenly distributed across media institutions.

Among respondents from female journalists, only one of eleven reported having health insurance, while among those surveyed in Lebanon, none reported being insured.

This variation is important because it shows that inadequate insurance is not simply an unavoidable feature of Lebanon's economic crisis or media market. Different institutional practices yield substantially different levels of protection.

In other words, where a journalist works can significantly determine the level of protection available to them.

At the same time, health insurance should not be confused with conflict-specific protection. Even organizations that provide general medical coverage may not offer policies that cover war-related injuries or the specific risks associated with frontline reporting.

It is therefore essential to make the distinction between general health coverage and occupational war-risk coverage. The data suggests that the latter remains exceptionally limited, even when it is needed the most.

3.4 | Income and Housing Costs Reveal Severe Economic Vulnerability

The socioeconomic dataset indicates that the journalists surveyed also face significant financial challenges that has compounded in times of conflict:

- The average monthly income was **approximately \$1,046**
- The average monthly rent was **approximately \$804**
- **77%** approximately of average monthly income was therefore used to pay rent.

Freelancers faced even more daunting circumstances:

- The average monthly income was **approximately \$885**
- The average monthly rent was **approximately \$1,062**

Therefore, freelancers tend to make less than income than their monthly rent, being **about 120%** than their monthly wage.

Among part-time journalists, the imbalance was even more pronounced, with average rent reaching **approximately 148%** of average income.

Field reporters, among those whose work can involve the greatest direct physical exposure, reported an average monthly income of **\$765**,



about **27%** lower than the overall average of **\$1,046**.

This is one of the most important intersections in the dataset.

The journalists most directly exposed to field conditions are not necessarily compensated financially in proportion to the risks they assume. At the same time, freelancers, who have significantly weaker insurance protection, are nowhere near compensated through their income, as average housing costs exceed their average wages.

Economic vulnerability therefore intersects directly with occupational vulnerability.

While the data does not demonstrate that financial needs cause journalists to accept dangerous assignments, but it shows that high-risk decision-making is impacted under severe economic constraints. A journalist whose income does not cover basic housing costs has less financial capacity to absorb unpaid periods, purchase equipment independently, cover medical expenses, relocate during displacement, or stop working after an injury.

Therefore, economic security is not an issue separate from the protection of journalists. It affects the resources and bargaining power available to journalists when they face professional risk.

3.5 | The Journalists Most Exposed Are Not Necessarily the Most Protected

When integrating the two datasets, one can notice a particularly significant contradiction.

75% of respondents

in the war coverage assessment are reporting from conflict zones or areas of security tension.

Yet:

57.5%

are not provided with protective equipment.

Only 22.5%

have insurance that covers war injuries.

Less than 30%

have access to safety training or security support from their institutions.

Freelancers have a 60.6%

uninsured rate for general health insurance.



81.1% of freelancers
lack social security.

Field reporters earn **approximately \$765** per month, under with the
overall **average of \$1,046** across different media workers surveyed.

These results synthesized reveal that physical exposure, weak social protection,
and economic instability overlap within the same professional environment.

As a result, the issue cannot be reduced simply to journalists being poorly paid, or
lacking insurance or sufficient protective equipment. There is a deeper problem
in the media sector in which it relies on journalists to undertake dangerous work
without needing to ensure the provision of appropriate protective measures.

This is particularly impacts freelancers, who at times simultaneously
face the combination of weaker insurance coverage, unstable incomes,
and limited institutional responsibility for their safety.

“

*THE MOST DANGEROUS THINGS AREN'T THE ROCKETS.
IT'S THE LOCATION, THE EDITORIAL DECISION,
AND THE ABSENCE OF PROTECTION.*

ANONYMOUS JOURNALIST, REGIONAL NETWORK

3.6 | **Working Conditions Add Another Layer of Vulnerability**

When integrating the two datasets, one can notice a particularly significant contradiction.

70% of respondents

described their work environment as unstable or inadequate, while

only 30%

reported having access to a proper workspace.

These conditions are not merely questions of professional comfort in
times of conflict and war. Displaced journalists may be required to work
from temporary accommodations, often without reliable connectivity
or without access to their normal equipment and infrastructure.

Housing data reflects this instability:

70% of respondents
lived in rented accommodation.

15%
were lived in temporary accommodation or hotels.

Others relied on family or shared housing arrangements.

Displaced journalist therefore have to cope with instability in both their personal and professional lives. Losing access to a home can also mean losing a workspace, equipment, reliable internet, transportation networks, and other components of their daily lives that will impact their ability to do their journalistic work.

This is particularly significant because displacement does not necessarily reduce professional demands. Conflict often increases demand for reporting, even if journalists themselves are experiencing its consequences.

“

I MOVE FROM PLACE TO PLACE JUST TO BE ABLE TO WORK.

FATIMA CHOUCAIR

3.7 | Psychological Impact Is Widespread

The psychosocial data reveals that the impact extends beyond physical and economic insecurity.

45% of respondents
explicitly reported needing psychological or psychosocial support.

A further **38.3%**
were uncertain whether they needed such support.



Combined,

83.3% of respondents

either identified a need for psychosocial assistance or indicated potential need.

Only a small minority reported no such concern.

Journalists are not experiencing psychological strain in isolation, as they navigate the same professional environment with high exposure to conflict, displacement, financial insecurity, inadequate protection, and uncertainty about employment.

It is difficult for journalists directly affected by the conflict to set boundaries between professional exposure and personal experience, compounding the psychological impact they experience in such distressing circumstances. For example, some of the journalists interviewed for this report had reported on the displacement crisis while also being displaced themselves.

Psychosocial protection should therefore be understood as part of occupational safety rather than as an additional welfare service. Yet psychological treatment is often missing from the insurance and institutional protections available to journalists.

“

I DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY TO SIT WITH MY FEELINGS.

FATIMA CHOUCAIR

3.8 | The data reveals a layered protection gap

Taken together, the quantitative findings reveal three overlapping vulnerabilities:

PHYSICAL EXPOSURE:

75% of surveyed media workers

reported working in conflict zones or areas affected by security tensions,

while **57.5%**

lack employer-provided protective equipment and

only **22.5%**

have insurance that covers war-related injuries.

ECONOMIC EXPOSURE:

average rent consumes approximately **77%**

of average income; among freelancers, average rent reaches

approximately **120%**

of average income; and field reporters earn

approximately **27%**

less than the overall sample average.



INSTITUTIONAL EXPOSURE

81.8% of freelancers and **82.3%** of employees

lack social security, and access to insurance varies widely across media organizations, though specialized war-risk coverage remains extremely limited.

These different crises cannot be seen as individual issues, as they are all interlinked and compound on the affected media workers.

For example, a freelancer without health insurance becomes more financially vulnerable if injured. A journalist whose housing costs consume most of their income has less capacity to absorb the impact of their work being interrupted due to the conflict. Meanwhile, a field reporter earning below the sector average may opt to work in the most dangerous environments despite risks in order to secure more income. And finally, a displaced journalist can experience professional, financial, and psychological instability that compounds their vulnerability.

The key quantitative finding of this section is therefore well beyond the fact that journalists lack protection. Rather, it is that there are multiple forms of vulnerability that accumulate around these journalists and media workers.

Recognizing the accumulation of these vulnerabilities matters for understanding the violations against journalists that is examined in the next section. Socioeconomic precarity is not the cause military attacks against journalists, and inadequate institutional protection does not diminish the responsibility of those who carry out unlawful attacks. These factors determine something else, which is the conditions under which journalists encounter danger and the resources available to them before, during, and after an attack.

The next section shifts from risk exposure and protection gaps to the attacks themselves. It examines documented incidents in which journalists were killed, wounded, threatened, or obstructed from doing their work, as well as the evidence of possible deliberate targeting, and the ongoing gap that exists between documentation and accountability.

“

*WE ARE THE ONES WORKING THE MOST...
BUT WE ARE THE MOST MARGINALIZED.*

RANA JOUNI



SECTION IV | TARGETING, VIOLATIONS, AND IMPUNITY

The structural vulnerabilities documented in the previous section shape the conditions under which journalists enter and operate in conflict environments. However, they do not explain the violence directed against journalists once they are on site. Since October 2023, journalists and media workers in Lebanon have been killed, wounded, threatened, and obstructed from in Israeli attacks while carrying out their professional duties. In several cases, independent investigations by international rights and press freedom organizations have found that the journalists were clearly identifiable as members of the press, that Israeli forces knew or should have known of their civilian status, or that the circumstances of the attacks warranted investigation as possible war crimes.

This distinction is essential. Weak insurance coverage, inadequate protective equipment, economic precarity, and poor institutional safety procedures can increase journalists' vulnerability and magnify the consequences of an attack. However, however conditions do not diminish the obligations of parties to an armed conflict. Journalists carrying out professional missions in armed conflict are civilians under international humanitarian law and are legally protected as such from violence unless they directly participate in hostilities.

The evidence examined in this section therefore reveals a second dimension of the protection gap identified in Section III. Journalists may enter the field inadequately protected by the institutions for which they work, and also face violence that institutional safety measures alone cannot prevent. When such attacks are followed by inadequate investigation and little or no legal consequence, this physical vulnerability is reinforced by impunity.

4.1 | Journalists killed in Israeli attacks in Lebanon

The human cost of this pattern must first be made visible by naming those who were killed.

On October 13, 2023, Reuters video journalist Issam Abdallah was killed by Israeli tank fire while reporting near the southern Lebanese border town Alma al-Shaab, alongside six other journalists including some Qatar's Al Jazeera network and France's Agence France-Press (AFP) news agency who were all wounded. AFP photojournalist Christina Assi's right leg was amputated due to the severity of her injuries.

On 21 November 2023, a team of the pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen network comprised of correspondent Farah Omar, photographer Rabih al-Maamary, and their local guide Hussein Aqil were killed in an Israeli strike in Tayr Harfa in southern Lebanon.

A year later on 25 October 2024, Al-Manar camera operator Wissam Qassem, Al-Mayadeen camera operator Ghassan Najjar, and broadcast engineer Mohammad Reda were killed in an Israeli airstrike in a residence in the southeastern Hasbaya region where several press teams were staying, close but not in a conflict zone. Human Rights Watch subsequently concluded that the attack was most likely a deliberate attack on civilians and an apparent war crime. HRW found no evidence of fighting,

military forces, or military activity in the immediate area and concluded that Israeli forces knew or should have known that journalists were staying at the location.⁷

On **March 18, 2026**, Mohammad Cherri, director of political programs at Al-Manar, was killed with his wife in an Israeli strike on their apartment in Beirut's Zoqaq el-Blat neighborhood.

On **28 March 2026**, an Israeli strike targeted a marked press vehicle on the Kfar Houneh–Jezzine road, killing Al-Manar correspondent **Ali Shoeib**, Al-Mayadeen correspondent Fatima Ftouni, and her brother, cameraman **Mohammad Ftouni**.

On **22 April 2026**, Al-Akhbar journalist **Amal Khalil** was killed following a series of Israeli strikes in al-Tiri while on assignment with photojournalist Zeinab Faraj, where she succumbed to her wounds because paramedics were not permitted to access her until hours later.

These cases differ in their circumstances and should not be conflated in law. Some journalists were reporting in the field, some were killed at a location where press teams were staying, and one was killed at home. The evidence regarding intent also varies across cases. What connects them is that the killing of journalists in Lebanon has not been limited to incidental exposure during active frontline combat.

As of August 2026, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented 16 journalists killed by Israeli forces in Lebanon since October 2023.⁸

7 Human Rights Watch — Lebanon: US Arms Used in Israeli Strike on Journalists
8 CPJ — Amal Khalil and journalists killed by Israeli forces in Lebanon

4.2 | Issam Abdallah Extensive Evidence, No Accountability

The killing of Issam Abdallah is among the most extensively investigated attacks against journalists in Lebanon.

On 13 October 2023, Abdallah and six other journalists from Reuters, AFP, and Al Jazeera were in southern Lebanon, clearly identifiable as members of the press. Human Rights Watch found that the journalists wore helmets and ballistic vests marked “PRESS,” were positioned near a vehicle visibly marked as television press, and remained stationary in an exposed location within line of sight of an Israeli military position for more than an hour before they were struck. HRW concluded that the Israeli military knew or should have known that those it was firing upon were civilians and described the strikes as apparently deliberate attacks on civilians.⁹

Independent investigations by Reuters, AFP, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch found evidence pointing to Israeli responsibility for the attack. A subsequent technical investigation by UNIFIL, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon, found that there had been no exchange of fire between Hezbollah and Israeli forces for at least 40 minutes before Abdallah was killed, or at the time of the attack, and that an Israeli Merkava tank fired two shells in quick succession at the group of journalists.

The UNIFIL inquiry, however, was not a criminal investigation. Its mandate focused on possible violations of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 rather than on individual criminal responsibility. UNIFIL subsequently recommended that the Israeli military conduct its own investigation and review its procedures to prevent a recurrence.

Nearly three years later, that distinction between establishing facts and accountability remains central to the case.

Tatyana Eatwell, an attorney at prominent Britain-based barrister chambers Doughty Street Chambers and international counsel for Abdallah’s family alongside Jennifer Robinson and Nikila Kaushik, said in an interview for this report that the family still has not received an official, independent, and thorough investigation into his killing.

According to Eatwell, the Israeli military has continued to tell the family that its investigation remains ongoing. Yet in June 2026, Israeli Ambassador to France, Joshua Laurent Zarka, publicly described the attack as a “mistake.” CPJ rejected that explanation, noting the extensive evidence that the journalists were clearly identifiable and had been stationary at the location for an extended period.

Eatwell said that requests from the family’s lawyers for the Israeli military to disclose the findings and details of its investigation have repeatedly gone unanswered. She also pointed to Lebanese authorities’ failure to conduct an independent and thorough investigation.

“At the most fundamental level Issam’s family have a right to an investigation, to have answers, and to accountability and justice for Issam.”

The Abdallah case therefore demonstrates that documentation is not synonymous with accountability. Multiple investigations have established substantial facts

9 Human Rights Watch — Israel: Strikes on Journalists in Lebanon Apparently Deliberate

about the attack. What remains absent is an effective official accountability process to determine responsibility and produce legal consequences.

4.3 | From a single case to a pattern of Impunity

For Eatwell, the lack of accountability in Abdallah's case is part of a broader history of Israeli forces' attacks on journalists.

She described the gap between evidence and legal consequences as stemming from an "ongoing culture of impunity," citing previous cases in which journalists reporting in Palestine were killed or seriously injured without subsequent prosecution.

"This culture of impunity only serves to create an environment in which the wholly unacceptable – the unlawful killing and targeting of journalists – becomes an accepted consequence of conflict," Eatwell explained.

What is therefore significant about this impunity is not only limited to the absence of justice for an individual victim. The lack of investigation and prosecution also weakens deterrence. When attacks are repeatedly documented without meaningful consequences, the legal protections afforded to journalists' risk become merely protections in principle rather than in practice.

The developments following Abdallah's killing reinforce this concern. Two years later, Human Rights Watch warned that the failure to secure accountability for his killing had been followed by additional attacks on journalists and civilians in Lebanon.

4.4 | Amal Khalil: Surveillance, Repeated strikes and Delayed Rescue

Over two years later, killing of Amal Khalil on April 22, 2026, again raised questions about whether journalists were knowingly exposed to Israeli attacks and whether they were subsequently denied timely access to rescue.

Khalil alongside her photojournalist Zeinab Faraj were on assignment in southern Lebanon when, at approximately 14:30, an Israeli drone struck a vehicle traveling ahead of them, killing two people. Subsequently, appeals were made by Lebanese and international humanitarian and security actors to secure their evacuation, as they were stuck in an abandoned store in a building close to the site of the attack. According to documentation provided for this report, their own vehicle was then struck at approximately 15:30, wounding the journalists. The following hour, at approximately the building in which they had sought shelter was hit. The rescue operation itself became part of the case.

According to the documentation, rescuers who entered the area were forced to withdraw after Israeli troops lobbed sonic bombs and fired live ammunition near where the rescue operation took place. Access then remained obstructed for several hours, despite Khalil's deteriorating situation. Her body was eventually recovered at approximately 23:00. The forensic report cited in the documentation placed her death at approximately 19:00 due to cardiac arrest and acute hemorrhage associated with a head injury.

The circumstances surrounding the strikes also raise questions about what Israeli forces knew and the extent of information they had throughout the whole ordeal.

Faraj, the sole surviving journalist, reported that an Israeli surveillance drone repeatedly descended above them as they tried to remain motionless. The documentation also records threats allegedly sent to Khalil's personal phone in August 2024 and a subsequent threat directed at Al-Akhbar regarding her reporting for the local newspaper.

These allegations have since been reinforced by independent scrutiny. Amnesty International concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the strike that killed Khalil and seriously wounded Faraj constituted a direct attack on civilians and should be investigated as a war crime.¹⁰ CPJ noted that prolonged Israeli drone surveillance indicates that Israeli forces knew, or should have known, that the remaining individuals at the site were two unarmed civilian women.¹¹

The significance of the Khalil case lies not only in the strike that killed her but also in the sequence of events surrounding it: surveillance, repeated strikes, prior threats alleged by the investigation, knowledge of civilians' presence, and the obstacles facing rescue teams.

Almost three years later, the case of the killing of Issam Abdallah brings about a difficult question for accountability mechanisms: what protection does documentation offer when prior documented attacks have produced no meaningful legal consequences?

Enass Cherri, who worked on the investigation into Amal Khalil's killing, believe that documenting the attack was intended from the outset to not only serve a journalistic purpose but also for a potential legal case in the future. During an interview with her, she explained that her objective of the investigation was to preserve evidence, testimonies, photographs, and other material that could contribute to a judicial probe if effective accountability mechanisms become available. In the absence of such a pathway at this point in time, Cherri also sees documentation as a means of preserving national memory and challenging narratives that deny the killing of journalists. "We are documenting while we are demanding pathways to justice, so that when a judicial path becomes possible, we are able to hold Israel accountable," she said. Journalism, she stressed, cannot replace a judicial investigation, but it can ensure that the evidence, the circumstances of the killing, and the individual journalist's story are preserved rather than reducing the victim to "just a number."

¹⁰ Amnesty International investigation

¹¹ CPJ statement

4.5 | Seventeen Incidents: From Individual Cases to Recurring Patterns

It is crucial that the major cases investigated must also be looked at alongside the broader incident data collected for this report.

Across 17 documented incidents involving journalists in southern Lebanon and Beirut in 2025 and 2026, all affected journalists carried press credentials, and

94%

were visibly identifiable as journalists to the attacking or obstructing party.

In 82% of these incidents

journalists reported that conditions were relatively calm rather and were not areas where active combat was taking place.

In 76% of the incidents,

no prior warning was reported before the attack.

Israeli forces were identified as responsible for 65%

and for all incidents in the dataset involving lethal or physically harmful force. Other incidents involved obstruction and intimidation of journalists, or interference with their work.

Synthesized, these findings reveal a disturbing trend:

- Journalists were overwhelmingly identifiable as members of the press
- Most incidents occurred without prior warning
- The majority of these incidents took place in relatively calm conditions, not in the midst of active clashes.

This pattern raise serious questions about whether the civilian status of journalists was respected and further underscore the need for independent investigations and accountability.

In addition, the incident data also correlates with some of the socioeconomic findings in Section III. Most notably, among freelancers involved in the documented incidents, 89% lacked insurance.

This is where structural vulnerability and physical violence intersect most vividly. Lack of insurance does not explain why a journalist is attacked, but determines what protection remains after the attack. A freelancer injured while reporting may face medical costs, lost income due to their inability to work, and long-term consequences without an employer-based system to absorb those costs.

The protection gap therefore operates both before and after physical violence occurs.

“

THERE IS NO SAFETY... NOTHING IS PROTECTED.

RANA JOUNI

4.6 | The Legal Protection of Journalists

Under international humanitarian law, journalists engaged in professional missions during armed conflict are considered civilians, provided they do not directly participate in hostilities. Targeting them is therefore unlawful.

In several of the cases examined in this report, independent investigations by international human rights organizations have gone even further, finding evidence of what they say are apparent deliberate attacks on civilians, and calling for the incidents to be investigated as possible war crimes.

When it comes to cases in Lebanon, the independent investigations go well beyond documenting journalists' deaths in combat and the circumstances surrounding it. In Abdallah's case, for example, HRW concluded that Israeli forces knew or should have known the group of journalists were civilians, and concluded that the strikes were apparently deliberate. In the attack that struck journalists in a Hasbaya residence, HRW found no evidence of military activity in the immediate area, and concluded that the strike was most likely a deliberate attack on civilians and an apparent war crime. In Khalil's case, Amnesty found reasonable grounds to believe the strike was a direct attack on civilians, warranting investigation as a war crime.

Therefore, journalists in Lebanon do not lack of legal protection on paper, but face the issue persistent weakness in the existing mechanisms that can enforce these critical legal protections.

4.7 | The Accountability Gap: What Legal Avenues Remain?

The case of Issam Abdallah demonstrates the limitations of existing accountability mechanisms.

According to Eatwell, both Lebanon and Israel have obligations to investigate his killing and, where the evidence warrants it, to prosecute those responsible. Lebanon's responsibility comes from the fact that is the state on whose territory Abdallah was killed, and Israel as the state from whose territory the attack originated and whose military personnel are implicated.

International avenues in the current circumstances are more limited.

Lebanon is not a state party to the International Criminal Court, and has not ratified the Rome Statute. However, as Eatwell notes, Lebanon can accept ICC jurisdiction over war crimes committed on its territory. Other potential avenues include the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures and the exercise of universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction by states whose domestic laws permit them to investigate and prosecute war crimes committed elsewhere.

These mechanisms offer potential pathways to accountability, but their existence does not guarantee effective proceedings. Investigation, evidence collection, jurisdiction, political will, and state cooperation remain significant obstacles.

The consequence is a striking imbalance: the capacity to **document** attacks has become increasingly sophisticated, while the capacity to **enforce consequences** remains weak.

4.8 | Political Agreements and Access to Justice

This accountability deficit also heightens the importance of recent political developments that could affect Lebanon's ability to pursue international legal avenues.

Article 13 of the recently signed framework agreement between Lebanon and Israel commits the parties, as part of efforts to achieve stable and peaceful relations, to take good-faith steps, including refraining from hostile or harmful actions in international political or legal forums.

The provision has raised concerns among Lebanese legal experts about how broadly it could be interpreted and whether it could affect future efforts to pursue accountability internationally. Former parliamentarian and lawyer Ghassan Moukheiber warned that any interpretation requiring Lebanon to halt, refrain from initiating, or discontinue international legal proceedings could seriously undermine the rights of both the Lebanese state and victims to access international judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms.¹²

The distinction is important: a political commitment between states should not automatically be treated as extinguishing individual victims' rights or Lebanon's obligations under international law. The concern is instead whether the provision could, in practice, further narrow an already limited set of avenues for accountability.

For journalists and their families, this question is not theoretical, but critical in their aspirations for justice. The cases documented in this report show that international mechanisms may become especially important when domestic investigations fail to produce results.

12 Al Hadath — Article 13 of the Lebanon-Israel agreement

4.9 | Condemnation Without Consequences

For survivors, the accountability gap is noticed not only by legal mechanisms but also by the absence of consequences after an attack.

AFP photojournalist Christina Assi was critically wounded in the same October 2023 attack that killed Issam Abdallah. Despite international investigations, public condemnation, and extensive documentation of the case, no one has been held legally accountable.

Reflecting on that experience during an interview for this report, Assi argued that expressions of international concern are insufficient if they do not lead to enforcement:

“Global condemnation without enforceable legal consequences cannot protect those on the frontlines.”

Her assessment closely mirrors that of Abdallah’s international counsel. Eatwell argues that breaking the cycle requires more than condemnation; each killing requires an independent investigation, followed, where appropriate, by prosecution. This includes accountability for commanders or other superiors of troops who failed to prevent unlawful attacks by those under their command.

The evidence presented throughout this section points to an accountability gap that cannot be explained by a simple lack of information. In Abdallah’s case, though multiple independent investigations reconstructed the attack and UNIFIL established key facts, his family still lacks the independent official investigation it has sought. Meanwhile, in Khalil’s case, detailed journalistic and human rights investigations have reconstructed the strikes, surveillance, and obstruction to rescue efforts. In Hasbaya, Human Rights Watch concluded that the attack was most likely deliberate. Across the 17 incidents documented in this report, recurring patterns of press visibility, lack of warning, and attacks outside active clashes raise further questions that require investigation.

The problem is increasingly the gap between evidence and consequence.

This means that the protection gap for journalists in Lebanon identified in Section III is not filled when an attack occurs. It extends to what happens after the incident, such as whether or not the attack is independently investigated, whether responsibility is established, whether victims and their families can access justice, and whether those responsible face consequences.

Without that final layer of protection, impunity itself becomes part of the risk environment in which journalists continue to work.

“

*GLOBAL CONDEMNATION WITHOUT ENFORCEABLE LEGAL
CONSEQUENCES CANNOT PROTECT THOSE ON THE FRONTLINES.*

CHRISTINA ASSI



Reporting Under Fire: Testimonies from Journalists Living the War

The data outlines patterns. These testimonies reveal what they mean. Behind every statistic is a journalist navigating risk in real time, often without protection, stability, or distance from the story. Some are covering war while injured. Others are displaced. Many lack contracts, insurance, or institutional support. These accounts were collected through interviews for this report with journalists working in different roles and under varying conditions: staff reporters, freelancers, photojournalists, and those directly affected by the violence they document. They do not represent the entire sector. But together, they expose a shared reality: journalism in Lebanon today is not only practiced under risk but also lived through it.



I REFUSED A HIGH-RISK ASSIGNMENT. I WAS FIRED.

ANONYMOUS JOURNALIST (REGIONAL NETWORK)

By the time he spoke up about the conditions of war reporting, he was no longer working for the regional media network. He says he was dismissed following a series of disputes over labor rights, including insurance, coverage allowances, and overtime. But he says the immediate trigger for his dismissal was his refusal to accept a high-risk assignment.

He describes that refusal as an exercise of what he considered a legitimate right to protect himself, particularly because he says the institution had no formal risk-assessment mechanism and no security or risk expert to evaluate the assignment before sending journalists into the field.

His dismissal gives another dimension to the question of journalist safety: what does the right to refuse dangerous work mean if exercising it can cost a journalist their job?

“The goal became filling the screen... by any means.”

War, he says, has become content, a necessity for television’s survival, ultimately prioritizing the continuity of the broadcast rather than the story itself. Behind that screen, however, the cost is borne elsewhere. “The most dangerous things aren’t the rockets,” he explains. “It’s the location, the editorial decision, and the absence of protection.”

For him, risk begins long before reaching the field. It is embedded in newsroom decisions made by people who often do not understand the terrain, the conflict, or the consequences. Assignments are issued without knowledge of the ground, sometimes sending journalists into areas already under fire or into areas that are impossible to access safely.

At the same time, the basic safety equipment provided is outdated or unusable, rendering them nothing more than symbolic. “Most of the vests are expired... or not even proper press equipment.” What should be an institutional responsibility becomes an individual burden.

But the deeper cost, he insists, is not only physical. Work extends to extreme hours, up to 17 hours a day, without compensation, rest, or support. Psychological and physical health deteriorate, unnoticed and unaddressed. “People’s lives were destroyed during the war, not only because of a missile, but also because of the conditions of coverage.”

Even when insurance exists, it is not designed to cover war. Medical costs, psychological support, and long-term care fall entirely on the journalist. In this system, safety becomes secondary. Visibility becomes currency.

“The journalist is no longer just reporting the news,” he says. “He becomes part of it.” In that shift, the line between witnessing and being exposed dissolves.

“

*YOU’RE STILL AT RISK... BUT AT LEAST
YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISK.*

EZZAT BALTAJI



”

For Ezzat Baltaji has worked with both international and regional media, which he says are two fundamentally different experiences. In one, risk is managed. In the other, it is improvised.

“The difference is very big,” he says. “Especially in war.”

In international outlets, preparation is part of the job. Teams are trained. Risk assessments are conducted. Security advisors guide decisions. Journalists are not sent into the field unprepared. “The team knows what to do... there is always training, always risk assessment.” The danger remains, but it is understood. “You’re still at risk... but at least you understand the risk.”

In contrast, he describes a fragmented reality across many regional institutions. Safety exists, but not as a system. There are no consistent standards or clear protocols. Instead, the responsibility shifts entirely to the journalist. “You have to study the area yourself... understand how many times it was hit, where to go, where the nearest hospital is.” Every assignment becomes an individual calculation of survival.

Editorial decisions, however, are rarely shared. They are often imposed by people far removed from the field, producers who have never experienced the terrain, and who issue orders that ignore the realities on the ground.

“Someone sitting at a desk... gives the order.” He says these decisions are not just inefficient but extremely dangerous.

He recalls being sent on assignments that did not factor legal restrictions and local conditions, leading to detention and unnecessary risk. These are not isolated mistakes but symptoms of a deeper disconnect between newsroom decisions and realities on the ground. In the absence of clear security and risk assessment systems, safety becomes something each journalist must build on their own.

“

WE CARRY THE RISK ALONE... WITH NO PROTECTION.

RANA JOUNI



”

For Rana Jouni, risk is a lived experience. As a freelance journalist working on the ground, she moves through conflict zones without institutional backing, driven to document what is happening in her community.

“I go because I know the area... because it’s my land,” she explains.

Her work is deliberate and cautious. She waits for moments when the immediate danger seems to have eased, takes precautions, and moves with awareness. But in war, there is no safe moment, only less dangerous ones.

Despite the risks, she continues.

Her motivation is clear: to document “the crimes... the destruction of villages, of history, and of people.”

But unlike journalists backed by institutions, Rana works without protection. “No insurance. No support. We carry the risk alone.”

Even basic safety measures, such as helmets and vests, offer little reassurance in a context where everything is being targeted, including rescue teams and medical workers.

“There is no safety... nothing is protected.”

Financially, the imbalance is stark. Incomes are sometimes as low as \$40 per day, despite the level of risk involved. Freelancers are expected to deliver content from dangerous areas without compensation that reflects the danger or the cost.

“We are the ones working the most... but we are the most marginalized.”

She chooses to continue nevertheless because she believes the work matters.

“There is a message that needs to be delivered.” And in the absence of protection, that message comes at a personal cost she carries alone.

“

I AM DISPLACED... AND I AM COVERING PEOPLE LIKE ME.

FATIMA CHOUCAIR



”

Freelance journalist Fatima Choucair says her displacement is not a temporary disruption. It is a daily condition. “Every day, I feel a kind of paralysis,” she says.

She continues to work while navigating the instability of displacement, without a fixed space, reliable internet, or the basic conditions needed to produce work.

Her “workspace” is constantly shifting. Internet access is unreliable. Equipment is incomplete, with some left behind. Each attempt to work carries additional financial, logistical, and emotional costs.

“I move from place to place just to be able to work.” At the same time, the demands of the profession intensify. War is peak season for journalism. Workload increases, expectations rise, and the pressure to produce does not let up.

But unlike others, she is not only covering the crisis. She is living it. “How do you cover war when you are directly affected?”

The answer, she suggests, is not a choice, but a compromise.

She speaks of an impossible balance between emotional survival and professional obligation. The need to work overrides the need to process grief, loss, and trauma.

“I don’t have the luxury to sit with my feelings.”

The consequences are physical. Stress manifests as pain, exhaustion, and symptoms with no clear medical explanation.

At the same time, financial pressure deepens the crisis. Supporting her family, covering living costs, and accepting low-paying assignments become necessary compromises.

“

I AM DISPLACED... AND I SEE MY STORY IN EVERYONE ELSE'S.

HADEEL ISKANDAR



”

When it comes to Hadeel Iskandar, the war did not just change the scope of the work. It changed her position in the communities and spaces she regularly covered.

She no longer only reports on displacement. She is part of it. “I left my home... and I see stories that look like mine.”

Each assignment becomes personal, and each interview echoes experiences similar to her own. The line that divides journalist from subject becomes thinner.

“I connect my story to theirs.”

This proximity creates a constant emotional tension. On one hand, there is a need to remain professional. On the other, a growing urge to speak, to share, to be seen.

“Sometimes I feel I want to tell my own story too.”

However, despite displacement, despite emotional strain, she remains committed to documenting what is happening, to “deliver the image” and make sure the world sees.

There is also mounting guilt, especially when she finds gratitude in her situation compared to others in similar positions, despite her struggles.

Seeing others displaced on the streets while she has some form of shelter intensifies that feeling.

This creates a layered emotional burden—one that is not visible in the final report but is present in every step of the process. But she says she insists on continuing her work, even when it is distressing on a personal level.



SECTION VI | THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COST OF JOURNALISM

Investigating the Death of a Colleague

Enass Cherri is a journalist who investigated the killing of Al-Akhbar journalist Amal Khalil. As she looked deep into the evidence and invested hours into the circumstances surrounding Khalil's killing, she says the psychological distress became severe.

Cherri did not know Khalil well. They were not friends, but she had met her following the 2024 war. As she began reconstructing the circumstances of Khalil's killing, that limited personal connection became difficult to separate from the evidence she was examining.

She recalled Khalil's voice, the way she spoke, and, particularly, the photographs in which she was smiling. Those details stayed with her as she worked through evidence about the final hours of Khalil's life.

"Knowing the last moments of her life, how they happened, imagining the situation she was in, all of this was very difficult."

The experience points to a form of exposure that is less visible than on-the-ground reporting from the scene of an attack. Investigative work requires journalists to return repeatedly to violent events, as they reconstruct timelines, review photographs and videos, speak with survivors and families, and try to understand what happened in the final moments before a colleague was killed.

As Cherri learned more about Khalil's death, it intensified her feeling of vulnerability. There was not emotional disconnect.

"You become afraid. You fear for yourself, you fear for the other journalists. But at the same time, there is a stronger desire to search more, find more information and document more of what happened."

Her fear was therefore both personal and professional. Investigating the killing of another journalist meant confronting the possibility that the violence she was documenting also put herself and her colleagues at risk.

This is particularly significant in a media community where the line between investigator and potential victim can be extremely thin. Journalists documenting attacks against journalists are investigating violence directed at members of their own profession, often working in the same locations and under similar conditions.

Between Fear, Grief and the Obligation to Continue

Cherri described the emotional experience not as a single response but as a movement between fear, determination, and periods of profound discouragement.

That discouragement becomes especially intense when she meets the families of journalists who have been killed. No investigation, regardless of its quality or eventual legal significance, can undo their loss.

As she explained, meeting the relatives of killed journalists can prompt a fundamental question about the value of the work: after all the documentation, investigation, and demands for justice, the person will still not return to their family.

But that same realization ultimately becomes part of her reason to continue.

“We could not protect them. We, the journalists who remain, have to document their stories and make sure they are heard.”

Cherri’s testimony shows that journalistic resilience is not equivalent to the absence of psychological harm. She continues despite fear and discouragement, not because such harm is absent.

Documentation does not necessarily resolve the psychological impact either. The investigation itself requires repeated engagement with the material producing that distress.

The Psychological Weight of Impunity

Cherri’s testimony also shows that the psychological cost of journalism cannot be entirely separated from the accountability crisis documented in the previous section.

She described fluctuations in hope while investigating Khalil’s killing. The investigation was intended, among other objectives, to preserve evidence that could contribute to a future judicial process. Yet she was doing this work while confronting a political and legal reality in which no effective pathway currently exists for holding Israel accountable through Lebanese courts.

Sometimes, that contradiction affected her motivation:

“There are moments when you feel as though you are losing hope, that your work has no value, and that you lose some of your motivation. But at the same time, someone has to continue,” Cherri explained.

This adds another dimension to the psychological consequences of impunity. Journalists are not merely documenting violence. They may spend months reconstructing killings, gathering testimonies, and preserving evidence, knowing that the material they produce may not reach a court for months or years.

For Cherri, the belief in eventual accountability is what keeps her continuing the work she does. She described documentation as preparation for a future moment when a judicial pathway may become available.

The emotional burden is shared, in different ways, by those who participate in that documentation. Khalil’s family, wounded colleague Zeinab Faraj and her family, witnesses, and individuals who provided photographs and videos all contributed evidence to the investigation. Cherri emphasized that this cooperation itself depends on continued belief in the possibility of justice.

“If all these people did not believe in the necessity of justice, we would not be able to do anything.”

The psychological consequences of impunity should therefore not be understood solely as frustration with institutions. The absence of accountability requires journalists and victims' families to repeatedly revisit violence to preserve evidence for a justice that remains uncertain.

Mental Health as a Protection Issue

Cherri's experience provides context for the broader findings of this report. The 83.3% of journalists surveyed who either identified or potentially identified a need for psychosocial support are working in an environment where exposure can take multiple forms.

It can mean being a direct witness to an attack and the communities affected, or being affected directly through displacement or injury and reporting on communities going through the same distress. And, as Cherri's testimony demonstrates, it can mean spending weeks reconstructing how another journalist was killed and recognizing one's own vulnerability in that story.

Mental health support should therefore not be treated as separate from journalist safety or as a service offered only after an extreme incident. It is part of occupational protection in a prolonged conflict.

The findings point to the need for media institutions to recognize cumulative and secondary exposure to trauma, including among editors, investigators, photographers, and journalists working with testimony and visual evidence, not only among reporters physically deployed to the front lines.

The concern is not simply whether journalists can continue producing journalism under these conditions. It is the cost of continuing to produce in these current conditions.

The findings of this report demonstrate that protecting journalists in Lebanon requires more than emergency responses during periods of escalation. Journalists face overlapping physical, economic, institutional, legal, and psychological vulnerabilities. Addressing these risks therefore requires action by the Lebanese state, media institutions, professional bodies, and international actors. The following recommendations address the protection gaps documented throughout this report.

7.1 | Legal & Policy Reforms

The Lebanese government and Parliament should:

- Strengthen the legal framework that protects journalists and media workers, including freelancers, during armed conflict and other high-risk assignments.
- Ensure that attacks, threats, obstruction, and violence against journalists are promptly and independently investigated by competent Lebanese authorities, regardless of the alleged perpetrator's identity.
- Establish clear procedures for preserving evidence of attacks against journalists, including testimonies, photographs, videos, medical records, and other materials that may support future judicial proceedings.
- Assess available international accountability mechanisms, including the possibility of accepting the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction over crimes committed on Lebanese territory, as identified in this report by international counsel for Issam Abdallah's family.

Ensure that political agreements or commitments do not prevent victims and their families from pursuing available domestic or international avenues for justice. This is particularly important given concerns about the possible implications of Article 13 of the Lebanon-Israel framework agreement for international legal action.

7.2 | Accountability for Attacks Against Journalists

Lebanese authorities, professional bodies and international actors should:

- Establish a centralized mechanism to document killings, injuries, threats, obstruction, and other violations against journalists in Lebanon, using consistent standards and preserving evidence for potential legal action.
- Ensure that documentation does not end with public reporting. Documented cases should be systematically referred, where legally possible, to competent investigative, judicial, or international mechanisms.

- Pursue independent investigations into attacks on journalists and publicly communicate the status and outcomes of those investigations to victims and their families.
- Support victims and families seeking accountability by providing access to legal representation, documentation assistance, and expertise in international legal mechanisms.
- Explore universal and extraterritorial jurisdiction where applicable, particularly when domestic accountability mechanisms are unavailable or ineffective.
- Move beyond condemnations toward sustained diplomatic and legal pressure for investigations and accountability. As Christina Assi told this report, “Global condemnation without enforceable legal consequences cannot protect those on the frontlines.”

7.3 | Protection & Safety Measures

Media institutions should:

- Conduct mandatory risk assessments before deploying journalists to conflict-affected or high-risk areas.
- Provide appropriate, functional, and regularly inspected protective equipment, including press-marked helmets and ballistic vests, at no cost to journalists.
- Provide regular hostile-environment, first-aid, and emergency-response training to journalists likely to cover conflict.
- Develop clear security protocols covering deployment, evacuation, communication, transportation, medical emergencies, and loss of contact with field teams.
- Ensure that security decisions incorporate the knowledge and assessments of journalists on the ground rather than relying exclusively on editorial decisions made remotely.
- Give journalists the right to refuse or withdraw from an assignment they reasonably consider unsafe without retaliation, loss of future assignments, or other professional penalties.
- Apply these protections to freelancers commissioned by the organization, not just permanent employees.

These measures directly address the finding that although 75% of surveyed journalists were covering conflict or security tensions, 57.5% did not receive protective equipment, 22.5% had insurance for war injuries, and fewer than 30% had access to safety training or institutional security support.

7.4 | Insurance & Psychological Support

Media institutions, insurers and professional bodies should:

- Ensure that journalists assigned to conflict coverage have insurance that explicitly covers war-related injury, disability, emergency treatment, evacuation, and death.
- Develop accessible insurance mechanisms for freelancers, who are currently far less protected than employed journalists. Among freelancers assessed for this report, 60.6% had no health insurance, and 81.8% lacked social security coverage.
- Ensure that organizations commissioning freelance journalists provide appropriate insurance for the duration and risks associated with the assignment, rather than transferring those risks entirely to the individual.
- Include psychological and psychiatric care in health and occupational insurance plans available to journalists.
- Provide confidential access to professional psychosocial support during and after extended periods of conflict coverage.
- Recognize cumulative and secondary exposure to trauma. Support should therefore extend beyond journalists physically present at attacks to include photographers, investigators, editors, and others who repeatedly work with traumatic testimony, images, and evidence.
- Develop internal protocols for rest, rotation, and follow-up after particularly traumatic assignments, rather than waiting for journalists to request psychological assistance.

This is particularly urgent, as 45% of respondents explicitly reported needing psychosocial support and another 38.3% were uncertain whether they needed it, meaning 83.3% identified or potentially identified a need. Enass Cherri's testimony further demonstrates that investigating the killing of a colleague can itself produce fear, distress, and a heightened sense of personal vulnerability.

7.5 | Labor Rights, Contracts & Social Security

Media institutions, the Lebanese authorities and professional bodies should:

- Ensure that journalists receive written contracts that clearly define employment status, compensation, working hours, insurance, safety responsibilities, and provisions for high-risk assignments.
- Extend labor and social protection mechanisms to freelance and non-traditional media workers, whose employment status leaves many outside conventional protection systems.
- Develop minimum standards for freelance assignments, including fair

compensation, insurance, safety equipment, and reimbursement for expenses incurred while reporting.

- Prevent excessive working hours during conflict coverage and establish minimum requirements for rest, rotation, and recovery.
- Ensure that journalists are appropriately compensated for overtime and high-risk work.
- Strengthen access to social security across the media sector. The report found that 81.8% of surveyed freelancers and 82.3% of surveyed employed journalists lacked social security coverage.
- Recognize economic security as a component of journalist protection. Field reporters surveyed earned an average of about \$765 per month, 27% below the overall sample average, while average rent among freelancers exceeded their average journalistic income.
- Ensure that journalists injured while carrying out professional assignments have access to continued income, medical treatment and rehabilitation rather than bearing the financial consequences of occupational injury alone.

7.6 | Role of the Union of Journalists in Lebanon and Professional Bodies

Professional syndicates play a central role in connecting these layers of protection. The Union of Journalists in Lebanon already provides legal assistance, documents violations and attacks against journalists, advocates for labor and social protection, supports journalists facing unsafe working conditions, and engages with institutions on journalists' rights and safety. Therefore, this is not about creating these mechanisms from scratch but strengthening capacity, ensuring sustainability, and expanding their reach, particularly for freelancers and journalists working outside traditional employment structures.

This requires sustained financial and institutional support for the UJL's existing protection and legal assistance mechanisms, expanded capacity to document and follow up on violations, stronger mechanisms to respond to high-risk assignments and labor-rights violations, and greater resources to support journalists seeking insurance, psychosocial assistance, and legal accountability. Media institutions should also be required to engage with these mechanisms and to meet minimum labor and safety standards.

UJL's role in documenting attacks also places it in a critical position between evidence and accountability. As the cases examined in this report demonstrate, Lebanon does not primarily suffer from a lack of documentation. Significant evidence has already been collected by journalists, professional organizations, human rights groups, and international bodies. The challenge is ensuring that this evidence reaches effective legal and accountability mechanisms capable of producing consequences. Strengthening UJL's capacity to preserve evidence, coordinate legal follow-up, and connect journalists and victims' families with national and international accountability mechanisms should therefore be a priority.

Ultimately, the recommendations reflect the central finding running throughout this report: journalist protection cannot be reduced to helmets and ballistic vests. It requires physical safety, economic security, institutional responsibility, psychosocial support, legal protection, and credible accountability when journalists are attacked. Unless these dimensions are addressed together, the burden of sustaining journalism during conflict will continue to fall disproportionately on individual journalists.

© 2026 Union of Journalists in Lebanon (UJL)

All rights reserved.

This publication may be reproduced or quoted for non-commercial purposes, provided that appropriate credit is given to the Union of Journalists in Lebanon.

Suggested citation:

Union of Journalists in Lebanon (2026), The Cost of Journalism in Lebanon: Targeted Attacks, Violations, and Structural Vulnerabilities. Beirut: UJL.

The views and testimonies presented in this report reflect the experiences of the individuals interviewed. Anonymous testimonies have been anonymized to protect participants' identities and safety.

