

## Media Coverage of Acts of Terrorism: Troubling Episodes and Suggested Guidelines

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*Abstract:* During the past 40 years there have been many instances in which media coverage of terrorist events was problematic and irresponsible, evoking public criticism and antagonizing the authorities. This article aims to shed light on the intricate relationships between government, media, and terrorists. Through close scrutiny of irresponsible actions of some media outlets in crisis situations in the U.S., the U.K., Israel, Canada, and Germany, it argues that important lessons should be learned, indicating the need to develop a set of guidelines for responsible media coverage of terror. One might think that in this triangle of government, media, and terrorists the media would side with the government in the fight against terror. This study shows that this was not always the case.

*Résumé :* Au cours des quarante dernières années, il y a eu plusieurs situations où la couverture médiatique du terrorisme s'est avérée problématique et irresponsable, suscitant des critiques de la part du public et contrariant les autorités. Cet article vise à mettre au clair les rapports complexes entre le gouvernement, les médias et le terrorisme. En examinant attentivement les actions irresponsables de la part de certains médias lors de crises aux États-Unis, au Royaume-Uni, en Israël, au Canada et en Allemagne, l'article soutient qu'il y a des leçons importantes à apprendre et indique le besoin d'établir des normes sûres pour assurer une couverture médiatique du terrorisme qui soit responsable. On supposerait que les médias appuient le gouvernement dans sa lutte contre le terrorisme; pourtant, cette étude montre que ceci n'a pas toujours été le cas.

*Keywords:* Media and terror; Media ethics; Political communication

The job of the press is not to worry about the consequences of its coverage, but to tell the truth . . . . As much as those of us as in the press would like to be popular and loved, it is more important that we are accurate and fair . . . and let the chips fall where they may.

—Larry Grossmann, president, NBC News

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**Canadian Journal of Communication, Vol 30 (2005) 383-409**

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### Preliminaries

In the nineteenth century, a terrorist attack in Washington, D.C., would have become known to the people in Jerusalem only after a few days. The evolution of mass communication dramatically changed the scene of terrorism and the way terrorists conduct their affairs. Today's terrorists are well aware of the power of the media and manipulate them to their own advantage and need. By giving unusual events extensive coverage, the mass media evoked the notion that "you cannot be revolutionary without a color TV: it's as necessary as a gun" (Rapoport, 1988, p. 33; see also Cordes, 1988; Weimann & Winn, 1994, esp. pp. 58-64). The German terrorist Michael (Bommi) Baumann wrote in *How It All Began*: "We took a great interest in the press. We always immediately looked how the newspapers, especially in Berlin, reacted to our actions, and how they explained them, and thereupon we defined our strategy" (Gerrits, 1992, p. 48). Baumann explained why the media are so important for the terrorists' success by saying: "At that time, we were already very much on that media trip . . . . It was always great when those actions were planned. You could have a good laugh. They were really well put together, so that the symbolism would appear. And when all went well, you had great fun. We would go home and watch it all on the telly. That was great" (Gerrits, 1992, p. 57).

Some studies had delved into discussion on the distinction between terrorists and freedom fighters (Jackson, 1990; Simmons, 1991; Stohl, 1988; Weimann, 1985). This distinction serves the interests of terrorists who wish to blur issues and to gain legitimacy and public support. Senator Henry Jackson rebutted the notion that one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter by saying:

The idea that one person's "terrorist" is another's "freedom fighter" cannot be sanctioned. Freedom fighters or revolutionaries don't blow up buses containing non-combatants; terrorist murderers do. Freedom fighters don't set out to capture and slaughter school-children; terrorist murderers do. Freedom fighters don't assassinate innocent businessmen, or hijack and hold hostage innocent men, women, and children; terrorist murders do. It is a disgrace that democracies would allow the treasured word "freedom" to be associated with acts of terrorists. (Quoted in Shultz, 1986, pp. 18-19)

This study confines its assumptions to terrorism in liberal democracies, where people are free and able to promote their rights and freedoms by legal means. Terrorism is defined here as the threat or employment of violence against citizens for political, religious, or ideological purposes by individuals or groups who are willing to justify all means to achieve their goals. The underlying assumption is that a zero sum game exists between terrorism and democracy, i.e., a win for the one constitutes a loss for the other. Democracy needs to provide ample alternatives for citizens to voice their satisfaction as well as their grievances with regard to social policies. Political groups and associations have legal avenues to explore in order to achieve their aims. Terrorism is conceived as inhuman, insensitive to human life, cruel, and arbitrary. To remain morally neutral and objective toward terrorism and to sympathize with terrorist acts is to betray ethics and morality (Cohen-Almagor, 2005).

Terrorists should be explicitly condemned for their deeds by all who care about the underlying values of democracy: not harming others, and granting respect to others. Terrorism, by definition, runs counter to these underlying values. Acts of terror are newsworthy, but when the media report on terrorists, journalists do not have to view themselves as detached observers; they should not only transmit a truthful account of “what’s out there” (Reese, 1990, p. 394). Instead, they may feel free to make moral judgments. It is an objective matter that terrorism in democracies is wrong. That is another way of emphasizing that terrorism is plainly wicked, not wicked only because people think it is (see Dworkin, 1996).

There is a delicate relationship between terrorists and the media. Free speech and free media—the basic instruments (many would say values) of every democracy—provide terrorists the publicity they need to inform the public about their operations and goals. Indeed, democracy is the best arena for those who wish to reach their ends by violent means. Violent movements and individuals recognize the “democratic catch”—that the principles that underlie and characterize it may, through their application, bring about its destruction, and exploit the available liberal instruments to find “golden paths” (from their point of view) to further their ends without holding themselves to the rules of law and order. Those movements and individuals would be crushed immediately were they to employ similar tactics in autocratic systems. (For further deliberation, see Cohen-Almagor, 1999.)

The media have been accused of being the terrorist’s best friend. Walter Laqueur explains that if terrorism is propaganda by deed, the success of a terrorist campaign depends decisively on the amount of publicity it receives. The terrorist’s act by itself is nothing; publicity is all (Laqueur, 1976, 1977, 1987; see also Schmid, 1992). Dowling (1986) goes as far as arguing that terrorists owe their existence to the media in liberal societies. The media are helping terrorists orchestrate a horrifying drama in which the terrorists and their victims are the main actors, creating a spectacle of tension and agony. As this article will show, the media sometimes do not merely report the horror of terror. They become part of it, adding to the drama.

Some scholars speak of the “theatre of terror.” At the heart of the theatre metaphor is the audience. The media personnel are a bit like drama critics who convey information to the public. Furthermore, like good drama critics, the media also interpret the event. The slant they give by deciding what to report and how to report it can create a climate of public support, apathy, or anger (Rubin and Friedland, 1986; see also Catton, 1978). By their theatrics, the insurgent terrorists serve the audience-attracting needs of the mass media, and since the media care primarily about holding the attention of the audience, this symbiosis is beneficial for both (Jenkins, 1975; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982). However, terrorism is *not* theatre. Terrorism concerns real people, with concrete fears, who wish to go on with their lives without being coerced into becoming victims.

Terrorists, news people, and media experts share the view that those whose names make the headlines have power. Getting one's name on the front page and being included in prime-time electronic news both constitute a major political achievement. Modern terrorists seek access to the media by committing acts that closely fit news agencies' definitions of news: being timely and unique, involving adventure or having entertainment value, and affecting the lives of those being informed (Dowling, 1986). Gerbner and Gross (1979) argued that representation in the media gives an idea, a cause, a sense of public identity, importance, and relevance. No movement can get going without some visibility. This is especially true when the movement is weak. Then media access might be its major, sometimes sole significant asset.

During the past 40 years there have been many instances in which media coverage of terrorist events was problematic and irresponsible, evoking public criticism and antagonizing the authorities. Let me shed light on a number of irresponsible actions of some media outlets in crisis situations. The tone of the discussion is obviously critical, but I do not argue that the media always behaved irresponsibly in their coverage of terrorist incidents. On the other hand, unfortunately, the sampling here is not exhaustive. The aim is to analyze some of the most troubling terrorist episodes during the past 30 years or so and to deduce from them responsible guidelines for professional and ethical coverage of acts of terrorism.

#### **Troubling episodes**

A Rand Corporation review of 63 terrorist incidents between 1968 and 1974 showed that terrorists achieved 100% probability of gaining major publicity (Bell, 1978). Media coverage of some of these episodes was ethically problematic, helping terrorism or contributing to the prolongation of violent episodes. Laqueur (1987) mentions in this regard the 444 days' detention of the American diplomats in Tehran (1979-1980). Only after the captors had squeezed the last drop of publicity out of the situation were the hostages released (see also Altheide, 1982, 1985; Friedlander, 1982; Larson, 1986; Meeske & Javaheri, 1982; Schlesinger, 1981a). The question arises as to whether members of the media understood the difficult position they put President Carter in when they repeatedly dwelled on the suffering of the hostages and their families, or when they pressed the president for action. Hermann and Hermann (1998) argue that the media need to continue to consider the responsibilities of a free press in covering hostage episodes, including the distinction between reporting new developments and rekindling a story that for the moment has not changed. Some guidelines might heighten their sensitivity to the role they can play in increasing the stress of the president. (For further discussion, see Scanlon, 2001.)

#### **Endangering life**

On February 4, 1974, Patty Hearst, daughter of the media tycoon Randolph Hearst, was kidnapped by terrorists associated with the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). Later she was coerced to join that violent revolutionary group. Marilyn Baker, a reporter for KQED television station, became obsessed with the

story. She and her aids played “cops and criminals” with the SLA; she took upon herself police work, stalked suspects, chased cars, endangered lives. With her news director Joe Russin she tuned in FBI channels and broke their code to enable the station to listen to their communications.

One night Baker and two friends thought they saw Emily Harris, an SLA member, doing some shopping. The young woman was with her boyfriend. The couple drove away in their car, and the reporter began a wild chase that endangered the couple’s and their own lives as well as lives of bystanders. The dangerous chase ended when the couple stopped at a police station, screaming for help. The fanatical reporter had made a mistake. The girl was not the suspected SLA member, nor was her boyfriend. Meanwhile, the couple thought the trio in the pursuing car was a group of murderers who sought to kill them (Baker with Brompton, 1974). They nearly did.

The astonishing thing about this episode is that Marilyn Baker brags about it and feels no shame, apparently completely unaware of her irresponsible, unprofessional, and unethical behaviour. Baker rushed to publish a book about her direct involvement in the Hearst affair, which was on bookstore shelves a few months after the Hearst kidnapping, even before Hearst was arrested (in September 1975), so eager she was to publish her story. Unsurprisingly, her book is filled with misinformation, misconceptions, and fundamental mistakes (like, for instance, the identity of the SLA leader and the reasons that drove Hearst to join the SLA) as well as simple mistakes. Even the revolutionary names of some of the SLA members were misspelled.<sup>1</sup>

There have been cases in which hostages were endangered or killed because of the urge for journalistic scoops. During the 45 days of the kidnapping of Hanns Martin Schleyer in 1977 the German media refused, on the whole, to co-operate with the terrorists and instead abided by the authorities’ directives. They went to the undesired extreme of not reporting *any* developments in this tragic affair. At the same time, there were some breaches of this news blackout. *Der Stern* magazine, in its September 19, 1977, edition, reported that the government remained firm in its decision not to succumb to the terrorists’ demands, and that it was said to have entered into mock negotiations to play for time. This report could have endangered the life of Schleyer. When the kidnappers saw that the government was unwilling to negotiate, they approached Schleyer’s son, who was ready to pay \$15 million for the release of his father. The German news agency DPA revealed this and also mentioned the time and place of the transaction. Hundreds of journalists flooded the Hotel Intercontinental in Frankfurt. The terrorists, of course, could not carry out the deal. Four days later, Schleyer’s body was found (Horchern, 1987).

There have been other episodes in which victims were killed. For instance, the slaying of a German businessman in November 1974 in a British Airways plane on its way from Dubai to Libya, and the murder of Jurgen Schumann, the captain of a Lufthansa jet in Mogadishu (October 1977). In both cases the hijackers had learned from the media that their demands had not been fulfilled

and the authorities were just playing for time to prepare a rescue mission. In the case of the German captain, killed on October 16, 1977, he had passed on information via the plane's radio. The media broadcast the information he had transmitted; the terrorists heard the broadcast and their leader, Zohair Youssef Akache, executed the pilot (Laqueur, 1987; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982).

The Israeli television coverage of the hijacked Lufthansa airplane to Mogadishu was also problematic. A special German anti-terror unit, established after the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic games, freed the passengers from the plane in a daring military act on the night of October 18, 1977. The ethical problem arose when Michael Gordus, the Kol Israel's radio expert, managed to locate the German attack force's frequency while they were preparing to take over the plane. In the evening edition of the news on national TV, the Channel 1 anchorman, Haim Yavin, decided to broadcast the item, disregarding Gordus' pleas to wait until after the take-over of the plane. The item was reported about five hours before the manoeuvre, at 9:00 p.m., when the take-over was scheduled for 2:00 a.m. Mr. Yavin insisted that the broadcast take place. It seems that he did not consider the potentially dangerous consequences of his action: the possibility that the hijackers would discover the rescue plan before the rescuers could take over, further jeopardizing the hostages and causing difficulties for the German force.<sup>2</sup>

Another hijacking incident took place on November 22, 1974, when four terrorists took over a British Airways airplane, demanding the release of 13 imprisoned terrorists in Egypt and two in the Netherlands. The Egyptian authorities claimed that they were freeing the requested terrorists and sending them into the hands of the hijackers. At this point, a reporter revealed that there were no freed prisoners on the board of the Egyptian aircraft and that the terrorists were deceived. The hijackers apparently heard the report and executed one of the hostages, a German banker (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982).

Immature and irresponsible behaviour on the part of the media was manifested during the siege that started on April 30, 1980, when six terrorists, members of an Arabistan anti-Khomeini movement called "The Mahealdin Al-Naser Martyr Group," took over the Iranian embassy in London.<sup>3</sup> They held 26 people as hostages, demanding the release of 91 ethnic Arab militants being held in Iran and a plane to fly themselves and their hostages to an unspecified destination outside Britain. They threatened to blow up the embassy and kill the hostages if their demands were not met in 24 hours (Blanche, 1980b; "Six Days of Waiting," 1980). During the negotiations the authorities pressured the terrorists to release some hostages, and indeed they agreed. They were about to release more hostages when they heard on the radio that the police had changed their mind regarding the number of gunmen inside the embassy. Earlier reports had said there were three gunmen and now they said there were six. "See what happens when I release hostages," said the leader of the group to one of the hostages (Cramer & Harris, 1982, p. 96). The released hostage had been promised that nothing of his statement would be released (Cramer & Harris, 1982). Still, vital information

found its way to the media. That leak and report could have endangered the prospects of releasing more hostages and possibly pushed the angered terrorist to harm the hostages.

On March 10, 1977, a group of Hanafi Muslims took over three buildings (B'nai Brith national quarters, the city Islamic Center, and the District Building) at the heart of Washington, D.C. The location was perfect from the terrorists' perspectives and the hostage taking immediately became a major media event.<sup>4</sup> Reporters from all over the country gathered in Washington. TV and radio stations interrupted their programs to provide their audiences with some live drama during the 39-hour siege. The Hanafi leader Hamaas Abdul Khaalis was asked by Robert A. Dobkin of the Associated Press if he had set a deadline, when none had been stated earlier ("Excerpts from Khaalis Interviews," 1977; see also Weisman, 1978). The security experts thought that the absence of a deadline was an encouraging sign; luckily Khaalis was too engrossed in his own rhetoric to pay adequate attention to this thoughtless question. One radio reporter prompted Khaalis to mark 10 hostages for execution after suggesting to the Hanafi leader that the police were trying to trick him. To calm him down, the police withdrew sharpshooters from nearby buildings. Hostage Alan Grip recalled a broadcast reporting that a fire ladder was being erected outside the District Building and police were going up the ladder. The reporter implied that they were about to break into the room where the hostages were kept. "One of the gunmen just went crazy. He screamed, 'You tell those police to take the ladder away or we're gonna start blowing people away'" (Weisman, 1978, p. 5). Evidently, the journalists decided to increase the tension for their audience, as if the tension for those under duress were not enough.

One of the terrorists' demands was to stop the screening of a film called *Mohammad, Messenger of God*, which the Hanafis regarded as blasphemous. The film opened on March 9, 1977, in New York theatres but was stopped quickly in mid-screening when the police relayed a request to the United Artists distributor ("Hanafi Muslim Bands," 1977). The Washington TV station WTTG showed a 40-second segment of the film, which might have satisfied the curiosity of the audience but could have been dangerous to the hostages. Many viewers, more cognizant of the danger than the stations' directors, called the studio and voiced concern that the clip might endanger the hostages' lives (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982; Shales & Carmody, 1997). Furthermore, when the police negotiators tried to build their credibility with the terrorists, one talk show journalist asked the Hanafis: "How can you believe the police?" ("Crisis Cop Raps Media," 1977). It was as if an alliance had formed between the terrorists and the media against the police.

As opposed to those troubling episodes I wish to commend the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* for their conduct in the Unabomber case. Here the consideration of saving lives was foremost in the minds of the editors. Between May 1978 and April 1995 Theodore J. Kaczynski, nicknamed the "Unabomber" by the FBI because of the targets he picked for his attacks, mainly university and

airlines professionals, had killed three people and injured 23 others in a series of 16 attacks. In June 1995, the Unabomber demanded that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* publish a 35,000-word manifesto calling for an industrial and technological revolution. If the two newspapers complied, the Unabomber promised to refrain from any further bombings. Publication of three additional annual statements was also demanded. Federal authorities, including Attorney General Janet Reno, pleaded with the newspapers to agree to the request for publication. After weighing the question for nearly three months, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* agreed to publish the lengthy manuscript. Donald E. Graham, the *Post*'s publisher, and Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr., publisher of the *New York Times*, said they jointly decided to publish the document "for public safety reasons."<sup>5</sup>

Kaczynski was a crude terrorist. The FBI was after him for many years, unable to track him down. During those bloody years he did not even establish contact to explain his deadly purpose. Suddenly he did, and the FBI thought that readers might recognize the distinct style and ideology of the Unabomber and provide leads to capture him.<sup>6</sup> The record of the serial killer established his willingness and ability to kill. His threats were credible and to be taken most seriously. Human lives were at stake. Thus, after consultation with the authorities, both papers decided to take the right professional and ethical decision and publish the manifesto. Indeed, one reader, David Kaczynski, the Unabomber's brother, recognized the marked ideas and style of the killer and led the FBI to Kaczynski's isolated cabin in Montana where he lived close to nature, averse to technology and to human beings (Duffy et al., 1996; McFadden, 1996; for further discussion, see Boeyink, 2000; Kovalski & Thomas, 1996; Lavelle, 1997; for a general discussion, see Chase, 2003). After 18 years of investigations, the man most wanted by the FBI was captured. Many people, especially in American academic and aviation circles, were finally relieved.

People in the media voiced concerns at the time that now that the two leading American papers had succumbed to terrorist extortion in sponsoring this expensive personal advertisement for the Unabomber, the road to further extortion was opened.<sup>7</sup> However, the "slippery slope" argument did not materialize.

Prior to this incident the last high-profile publication in the face of threatened violence occurred in 1976, when the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times* published a statement by Croatian nationalists who had hijacked a Chicago-bound airplane and threatened to kill its 92 passengers. The hijackers later surrendered in Paris after receiving an ultimatum from authorities. To date, papers have not succumbed to further terrorist extortion to publish their ideas.

#### **Hindering government activities**

Besides not publishing information that might jeopardize human life, another guideline the media should adopt is not to hinder government activities to forestall and curb terrorism. During the Patty Hearst kidnapping, John Bryan, publisher of a small newspaper called *The Phoenix*, printed a long, rambling letter he claimed was written by the SLA as an answer to his request to contact him. This was a



hoax. Bryan himself wrote that communiqué. Apparently he was far more concerned with his selfish journalistic gains than with Patty Hearst's life. He should have stood trial for harming a police investigation (Baker with Brompton, 1974). The SLA appreciated the recognition and publicity generated by the hoax, and later they returned Bryan's favour by sending their next communiqué to him (Hearst with Moscow, 1982).

NBC played a pernicious role in the Tehran crisis when it reported in the early days of the hostage taking that two U.S. emissaries were being dispatched to Iran. The report was broadcast despite government objections, and shortly thereafter Ayatollah Khomeini announced that the emissaries would not be received in Tehran (Sick, 1998). NBC failed to understand the delicacy of the situation and the need to co-operate with the government in such sensitive matters, where lives were at stake. Instead of co-operating with the American authorities, the media network competed with them, proving their "independence."

The media also failed to adequately consider the consequences of their reporting in an incident that took place in 1974, when terrorists took over part of the courthouse in the District of Columbia. The hostages were kept in a room separated by a two-way mirror from another room, which allowed the police to watch them closely. This advantage was removed when the media disclosed the fact, whereupon the terrorists ordered the hostages to tape the mirror with newspapers (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982).

Another problematic episode concerned the most extensive media coverage of the hijacking of TWA 847 to Beirut on June 14-30, 1985. The United States turned to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the first 24 hours after the hijacking to arrange a swap for the passengers and the prisoners. But because of published and broadcast reports that the U.S. Army had dispatched its Delta Force anti-terrorist squad to the Middle East, the terrorists fled Algeria and soon landed in Beirut, where it was far more difficult for the Americans to carry out a rescue operation (Ottaway, 1985). Especially noteworthy was the inappropriate detailed account of the *London Times*: "The U.S. has reportedly sent a commando unit to the Mediterranean ready to storm the hijacked plane if necessary . . . The unit is said to be part of a crack anti-terrorist squad of several hundred men . . . The commandos, known as the Delta Unit, may have been sent to the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* which is currently in the western Mediterranean" (Binyon, 1985, p. 4).

American newspapers also published reckless, unprofessional, and unethical speculations about military movements and possible use of military force. For instance, the *New York Times* published the following: "The United States has reportedly sent a commando unit to the Mediterranean to be ready to storm the hijacked Trans World Airlines plane if deemed necessary" (Gwertzman, 1985, p. 1), and "There have been reports that elements of a United States commando unit called Delta Force left their base at Fort Bragg, N.C., Saturday for a destination in the Mediterranean area" (Berger, 1985, p. 1). In turn, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "The Army's Delta Force an anti-terrorist unit is understood to have

been dispatched to the Mediterranean, probably to a base on Cyprus" (Kemptster & Irwin, 1985). It is believed that these and other reports might have prompted hijackers to decide to fly between Beirut and Algiers several times in addition to taking hostages off the plane due to fears of a military intervention ("Pentagon bars reports," 1985).

Departing from the normal practice of confirming general locations for some military units, the Pentagon decided to ban reports on U.S. deployments in response to the much-publicized reports on the movements of the Delta Force. In reference to the publication of those reports, Michael I. Burch, a Pentagon spokesman, said: "There seems to be more respect for the next fall's scripts for 'Dynasty' and 'Dallas' than there is for U.S. contingency plans . . . . A number of news agencies are doing their darnedest to report U.S. contingency plans in advance and thereby are defeating them" ("Pentagon bars reports," 1985). In hindsight, we know that the hostages as well as the hijackers had extensive access to the media. Journalists must be aware of the consequences of their reporting, especially at times when the lives of innocent victims are at stake.

One of the Hanafi leader Hamaas Abdul Khaalis' demands was that the convicted murderers of his family and their accomplices be delivered to him. The negotiator stalled by pleading ignorance of the accomplices' location, when a reporter unwittingly leaked that one of these people was in Washington at that time. This information not only enhanced Khaalis' position in the negotiation process, but also undermined the relationship the negotiator was trying to build (Alexander, 1981; Deitch, 1999; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982; see also Herbers, 1977).

After the hostages' release, one of them said about the media: "They are poison. They don't care about us. They would be happier if we were dead because that would make a much bigger story." Another said: "The press is after blood, gore and mayhem. The press revels in sickness and perversion" (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982, p. 78). The *Washington Post* reported: "One hostage's husband punched a photographer in the face while the wife, in tears, shouted, 'Animals! Animals!' at the journalists" (Shales & Ringle, 1977, p. B1).

#### **Glorifying terrorists**

The media should not glorify terrorism. As discussed, Patricia Hearst was kidnapped by a small terrorist organization called the Symbionese Liberation Army. They demanded that the media carry their messages in full and the media agreed; in so doing the media magnified the case out of proportion and provided sensational mass entertainment that served the publicity needs of the ephemeral organization. Yonah Alexander (1981) argued that the most disturbing aspect of this case was that the media gave a small group of criminal misfits a Robin Hood image and transformed it into an internationally known movement possessing power and posing an insurmountable problem to the authorities.

During the hijacking of TWA 847 to Beirut June 14-30, 1985, some of the hostages bitterly resented the activities of the American media networks, referring to ABC as the "Amal Broadcasting Corporation" (a reference to the name of the militia) and NBC as "Nabih Berri Corporation" (after the name of the Shi'ite

leader). Each morning, ABC anchormen called Berri from New York to negotiate the day's news story, requesting to talk to the hostages and, if the request was denied, interviewing Berri himself. There was no good reason to invite Berri to appear regularly on network television, communicating his demands. Berri undoubtedly understood that public opinion would create pressure to strike a deal to save the hostages, even if the price was high. But it was quite unnecessary to provide him with such excessive platform (Klaidman, 1985). One American hostage stated, "Maybe ABC had us hijacked to improve their ratings" (Brown, 1990; Laqueur 1987; see also Atwater, 1991; Schmid, 1989; Weimann, 1987; Weimann & Winn, 1994). The CBS *Evening News* devoted nearly two-thirds of its air time to the hijacking (Martin and Walcott, 1988).<sup>8</sup>

#### **Sensational coverage**

Since the early 1990s Israel has been subjected to many atrocious and bloody suicide attacks. The phenomenon of suicide murderers started on April 16, 1993, at a restaurant near Mechola in the Jordan Valley. Between April 1993 and May 2005 there were 164 suicide attacks. They resulted in 670 people killed and 4255 people injured.<sup>9</sup>

The media in their craving to cover each and every aspect of those events served as a platform and loudspeaker for the terrorists, magnifying the impact of their horrifying brutality. The most popular newspaper in Israel is *Yedioth Ahro-noth*, a tabloid that has the largest circulation in the country: 390,000 daily and 660,000 on Fridays. Given the size of Israel's population, some 6.5 million people, there are not many newspapers in the world that surpass *Yedioth's* achievement. *Yedioth* has circulation of more than 40% of the press market on weekdays and 70% of the press circulation on weekends. This circulation exceeds the circulation of all the Hebrew dailies combined and is more than double the circulation of its main competitor, *Maariv*. This impressive achievement gives *Yedioth* a monopoly in its field (Caspi, 1997).

Neither *Yedioth* nor *Maariv* had much experience in covering suicide bombings and they played into the terrorists' hands, in effect putting their pages at the service of Israel's enemies. After each and every terror attack, the pages were full of detailed and horrifying stories that frequently violated the victims' privacy and horrifying pictures taken immediately after the attacks. The headlines screamed: "Nation in Fear," "Nation in Shock," with running visual image of young women screaming. It seems that no senior editor stopped to ponder for a minute, asking what purpose the paper served when it dedicated the vast majority of its pages, sometimes *all* its news pages, to the previous day's brutal attack in such a sensational, graphic way. The coverage did not calm the public, quite the opposite, and paid little or no respect to the victims. I am not saying that the media should not report such events. Of course they should, but in a less exaggerated, graphic manner, with more reflection and thought. Standards of magnitude, decency, and good taste should be contemplated by editors deciding how to cover such events.

To illustrate: On October 19, 1994, a suicide bomber exploded himself inside a bus on Dizengoff Street, at the heart of Tel Aviv, killing 22 people and injuring

many others. *Yedioth Ahronoth's* main headline on the following day was: "A State in Shock and Outrage" (October 20, 1994, p. 1). Beneath it was a large photo of the "deadly bus" shortly after the suicide attack. All the news pages, 28 in number, were dedicated to the bloody event, with a running header "Blood Bath in Dizengoff." There were coloured photos of injured people, covered in blood, clearly in a state of shock, of a person picking up body parts, of the destroyed bus, of security officers crying in the face of the horror. There were headlines such as "Horror at the Heart of Tel Aviv" (pp. 4-5) and "For Hours Body Parts, Ashes and Dust Were Collected" (p. 7). Other headlines asked: "Where Is Mom?" (p. 7) and "My Daughter Was There, Where Is She?" (pp. 12-13). In later terrorist attacks, the papers refrained from showing close-ups of bodies inside blasted buses, bus stops, and restaurants, and the volume of coverage was somewhat reduced. Still, with events that had cost many casualties, most of the news pages were dedicated to the horrifying event, with colourful pictures at the front.

Sensationalism is at its best when television stations broadcast grisly scenes. After each and every suicide attack, Channels 1 and 2 (and, at a later point, also the newly established Channel 10) of Israeli television dedicated long hours to bring to citizens' homes pictures from the killing scenes without considering the effects of needless repetition on viewers. Was it prudent to bring live pictures from the scene, when reporters could only rehash what they had said some minutes earlier and perhaps, in desperation, might relay the latest unchecked rumour? Were those photos considerate to the victims' families? Granted that the public wishes to know the situation and would like to see pictures from the event. Censorship is not the issue. Instead, balance and consideration are at issue. Respect for the victims and their families should be an interest. Sometimes it seemed that editors and reporters confused quantity with quality, thinking that more pictures would compensate for a lack of quality information and new insights.

Immediately after the September 11, 2001, tragedy the broadcast media played and replayed the recorded exchanges between victims in the World Trade Center and emergency police dispatchers. They exploited the suffering of the people trapped and soon to be dead inside the struck towers, playing again and again the emotional mayhem of people who were trying to cope amidst overwhelming horror, disbelief, fear, and terror. Those sensational broadcasters showed very little sensitivity to the victims in pursuit of better ratings (Nacos, 2002).

During the Hanafi Muslim takeover of three buildings at the heart of Washington, D.C., on March 10, 1977, the *New York Post* ran the headline "Capital Horror . . . Special Coverage . . . Siege of Death" on four pages. Beneath it one headline screamed: "Beheadings Threatened." Photos of four men were printed with the caption "These men are marked for death" (Lang et al., 1977, p. 2). On March 11, the *Washington Post* reported that a "killing room" would be set up at B'nai Brith "and heads will be thrown out of windows" (Feaver, 1977; Meyer and Becker, 1977). Both reports did not give much thought to the hostages' families who awaited peaceful resolution.

As Lt. Frank Bolz of the New York City Police said, these articles were in a very poor taste. Furthermore, Bolz noted that the anxiety the hostages and the perpetrators feel in such situations is felt by the police and could hurt the course of negotiations. The negotiators act under severe pressure. Moreover, that kind of journalism would tend to inflame. It might lead terrorists to entertain even more violent ideas ("Crisis Cop Raps Media," 1977).<sup>10</sup>

#### **Irresponsible terminology**

The media amplify and personalize crises. But journalists should strive to resort to responsible terminology that does not help the terrorists in their attempt to undermine the democratic order. In February 1974, when I heard of the Patty Hearst kidnapping by the SLA, the first picture that came to my mind was of an army storming an American city. I was a teenager at that time and the highly publicized army's symbol, the seven-headed cobra, made a great impression on me. I was also impressed with their demand to distribute food to the poor. The media did not advise that the so-called army included only a dozen people. They portrayed the group as "soldiers" in some sort of heroic image, as a group caring for the weak segments of society, and in this way provided a wide platform for their obscure agenda of fighting the establishment and protecting the rights of "the people." Some media outlets elaborated on the group's strange name, their agenda, and their "operations." Of course, 19-year-old Hearst, the granddaughter of the legendary newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, who joined the SLA and two months after her abduction participated in a bank robbery, attracted a lot of attention.

The media are expected not simply to report whatever the terrorists are saying. It is the media's duty to exercise some judgment and scrutinize the terrorists' messages. The media need not play into the hands of terrorism, serving their interests and their political agenda.

Journalists are morally required to be conscious of the terminology they employ in their reports.<sup>11</sup> An ephemeral terrorist organisation is not "an army." People who kidnap and murder randomly are not "students" or "saints" or "soldiers" or "freedom fighters." The killing of innocent civilians travelling on a bus or a train should not be described in terms of a "military operation." A difference exists between covering news and providing terrorists an equal platform to declare their agenda. To remain objective in the sense of moral neutrality with regard to terrorism is to betray ethics and morality. Terrorists deserve no prize for their brutality. Here I take issue with the CBC ombudsman, David Bazay, who in comments about the use of the word "terrorist" wrote that "There is nothing in the CBC's journalism policy that prevents the public broadcaster's journalists from calling a spade a spade or a terror attack a terror attack" (Bazay, 2002, appendix 1, p. 47). But, at the same time, he instructed the CBC to be careful with the use of language.

While quoting his colleague Jeffrey Dvorkin, ombudsman for National Public Radio in the United States, Bazay explained that while the use of "the 't' word" may be accurate, it also has a political and "extra-journalistic role of delegitimizing one side and enthroning the views of the other" (p. 49). In his view,

this is not the role of responsible journalism, “which is and should be to describe with accuracy and fairness events that listeners may choose to endorse or deplore” (p. 49). Indeed, this *is* the role of responsible journalism, and therefore journalists should resort to the term “terrorism” when such acts are conducted. Bazay was careful to explain that different sides in a given conflict use and abuse the word “terrorist” to frame the issues to advance their political agenda, but it does not matter how one side or another characterizes the acts of violence it carries out. What *does* matter is whether the acts fall within the definition of terrorism. However, because the description of a given event as terrorist might be difficult and controversial, the CBC is opting, in general, for the simple solution of refraining from use of the term.<sup>12</sup>

I asked David E. Hoffman, foreign editor of the *Washington Post*, about their policy on coverage of terrorism and the usage of words. He explained that one of their first principles is that “the language we use should be chosen for its ability to inform readers.” Hoffman maintained: “We seek to rely first on specific facts, not characterizations. Our first obligation to readers is to tell them what happened, as precisely as possible.” When the *Post* resorts to labels, “we strive to avoid being tendentious. We do not automatically apply a label to a group just because someone else has used it.” Reporters believe “we should use our journalism to delve into the specifics about an organization rather than slap a label on it. We should give readers facts and quotes—even if from disputed parties—about how to characterize an organization.” The *Post* prides itself on observation and discovery at first hand, rather than relying on derivative or second-hand information from others, whenever possible. The *Post* strives to tell the reader as much context as possible about the actions by both sides. Hoffman concluded that “In general, we seek to be careful and precise when describing the motivations of groups or individuals involved in violence and terrorism.” He rightly noted that “A more full and specific description is better than a shorthand one” (personal communication, May 11, 2004).

#### **Co-operation with terrorists and payment for interviews**

There have been rumours that reporters paid terrorists for granting them interviews. This is grossly unethical and might risk human lives, for the money is most likely to serve the murderous ends of the terrorist organizations. The media reported much of the Shi’ite leader Nabih Berri’s version of the TWA story, portraying the person who orchestrated the ordeal as a peacemaker. Berri made an appeal through the media, urging Americans to write to the president supporting the release of 700 Shi’ite prisoners in Israel. The news media helped Berri’s attempt to equate the fate of the innocent American hostages with the fate of the Shi’ite terrorists imprisoned in Israel. ABC news, as well as the other media, broadcast pictures of the hostages of the TWA jet and the Shi’ite prisoners, equating in the minds of the public these two very different groups. *Good Morning America* featured the families of the imprisoned terrorists, drawing an analogy between them and the families of the hostages. During the crisis, ABC had obtained an interview with John Testrake, the captain of the hijacked aircraft,

sitting in his cockpit while one of his captors waved a pistol above his head. Michael O'Neill, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, later described this staging as "an orgy of overkill that exploited the hostages, their families, and the American people" (Martin & Walcott, 1988, pp. 189-190). ABC denied that it paid the terrorists for those interviews (Schmid, 1989).

#### **Irresponsible mediation**

Journalists lack the necessary qualifications to serve as mediators between government and terrorists. They should not take upon themselves tasks that could put human lives (usually those of hostages) at risk and bolster the legitimacy of terrorists. During the TWA saga ABC's David Hartman took upon himself the role of a mediator when he concluded a live interview with the Amal militia's spokesman by asking: "Mr. Berri, any final words to President Reagan this morning?" (*Good Morning America*, 1985; Martin & Walcott, 1988, p. 190; Raynor, 1987; Shales, 1985a, 1985b) as if the president of the United States and the terrorist spokesman were equal and legitimate partners in a dialogue, and as if it was part of the media's role to serve as mediator. David Hartman is a capable broadcaster, but his qualifications as mediator in such a tenuous situation are questionable. This delicate role, involving human life, needs to be left to those who have the proper expertise. Dan Rather of CBS asked the hostages questions about what messages they had for Reagan and "What would you like President Reagan to do?" The networks were interviewing the hostages as if they were official U.S. emissaries perfectly free or coercion to speak their minds, serving the terrorists' interests in pressuring the government (Shales, 1985a; see also Corry, 1985).

During the FLQ crisis in October 1970 in Québec, the French-speaking media took it upon themselves to play an active role as mediators. Influential segments of the French-speaking media wanted to exert more pressure on the government by expressing concern for the fate of hijacked James Cross and Pierre Laporte, thereby hoping to push the government to succumb to the terrorists' demands. They gladly offered their services as mediators and messengers of the terrorists, disregarding their obligation to accurate reporting, and broadcast the terrorists' communiqués without the consent of the authorities. Through their extensive sympathetic coverage, Québécois journalists not only provided a grand platform for the terrorists, but also legitimized their demands and actions. Some of the editors also offered ways to resolve the situation, ways the government felt were damaging to the interests of Canada. (On the FLQ crisis, see Cohen-Almagor, 2000; Crelinsten, 1988, 1989.)

#### **Dangerous speculations**

During the 1980s, the national sport of the militias, in the no-man's-land called Lebanon, was kidnapping westerners. When Father Jenco was released from his captivity in July 1986, the other hostages who were held with him were forced to make videos delivered with Jenco. In one of them, David Jacobsen expressed condolences to William F. Buckley's wife and children. Buckley did not survive his kidnapping.<sup>13</sup> A television station reported that Buckley was in fact a bachelor and speculated that Jacobsen meant to convey a coded message. Jacobsen was threat-

ened by his guards. A month later he was forced to write a letter dictated by his guard with grammatical errors. When the media received the text, again speculations were made about encoded messages, and Jacobsen's captors were led to believe he made the mistakes deliberately. Jacobsen was harshly beaten and placed in solitary confinement in a small room (Martin & Walcott, 1988). Careless behaviour on the part of the media can be very costly and painful.

#### **Lack of homework and live interviews during crisis**

As if all misconduct that took place in the Hanafi event were not enough, Khaalis was outraged when a misinformed reporter, Jim Bohannon of WTOP radio, called him "Black Muslim," not knowing that the Hanafis were bitter rivals of the Black Muslim sect and that members of Khaalis' family were murdered by Black Muslims. Khaalis threatened to kill one of the hostages and "throw him out of the window" if Bohannon did not apologize publicly. Only after the newscaster issued an apology on radio and television did Khaalis back down from his threat (Deitch, 1999; Shales & Carmody, 1997; see also "Excerpts from Khaalis Interviews," 1977).<sup>14</sup>

The *Washington Post* attacked Max Robinson of WTOP radio "all-news" station for conducting the first interview with Khaalis (Shales & Ringle, 1977). However, the *Post* had published excerpts from Robinson's interview just two days before ("Tell Them Payday Is Here," 1977). The paper went on to print the entire transcript of a commentary Robinson delivered from the Hanafi compound (Robinson, 1977). It seems hypocritical that the newspapers attacked certain tactics that they themselves were utilizing. The *Washington Post* also published a very sympathetic interview with Khaalis' wife on March 11, 1977, in which Joseph D. Whitaker, the reporter, sounded very understanding, if not sympathetic, to the motives that brought Khaalis to take hostages (see Whitaker, 1977).<sup>15</sup>

During the TWA 847 crisis, the White House had let it be known it was considering asking the networks to refrain from broadcasting hostage interviews because they were proving "terribly harmful" to negotiations. The networks showed no indication that they would comply, even if asked directly (Corry, 1985; Randolph, 1985; Shales, 1985a, 1985b).

It is inappropriate for journalists to interview members of terrorist groups while acts of terror are under way. This type of interview has occurred many times during the course of prolonged acts of terror such as hijackings, building sieges, and kidnappings.<sup>16</sup> Interviews under such conditions are a direct reward for the specific act of terrorism under way and can interfere with efforts to resolve the crisis. In addition, such interviews all too often increase the spectacle of the event, spread fear, impede the negotiations between the terrorists and the authorities, and provide a contrived platform for the views of the groups involved (Picard, 1991). Khaalis gave so many interviews that the lines were jammed and the authorities found it difficult to reach him (see for example Goldman, 1977; Shales, 1977).<sup>17</sup>

#### **Live coverage**

For the prime reason of not endangering lives, the media should refrain from live coverage of terrorist events. This is especially true when attempts are carried out



to free hostages. Live media coverage showing special security forces preparing to enter the building where hostages are held might risk the entire operation and put the hostages in jeopardy. The terrorists might be attentive to media coverage and hear and even see the rescue operation while in progress. Their reaction might be deadly. Furthermore, hostages might hear about the plans, become alarmed and confused, and subsequently act in a way that would jeopardize the operation. What is suggested is not a complete shutting off of the media. Instead, I am suggesting delayed coverage so as not to risk human lives.

During the 1972 Olympic Games, terrorists from the Black September organization took hostage Israeli athletes and officials, demanding the release of some 200 terrorists, most of them jailed in Israel. The Israeli government refused to negotiate the release of prisoners, and talks with the German authorities quickly reached a dead end. The terrorists introduced a deadline, threatening to execute the hostages. The German police prepared to storm the building when the deadline expired. The East German television broadcast live everything that was happening, showing the policemen surrounding the building and preparing for the attack. Some years after the unfolding of the events that resulted in the murder of 11 Israelis in an isolated airport, a police officer gave the following testimony: "Later we discovered that there was a TV in every athlete's room and the terrorists had been able to watch us preparing live on screen. Thank God we called it off. It surely would have been a suicide mission if we had attacked."<sup>18</sup>

Another sensitive aspect concerns the victims and their families. When the first suicide attacks took place in Israel, television teams were sent to the scenes and they broadcast unedited footage. As a result, members of the victims saw their loved ones sitting dead inside the exploded buses. Most notorious was the photo of a dead man sitting inside the blasted No. 5 bus on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv (October 19, 1994). Apparently no one in the paper asked what kind of effect this photo could have on the victim's family. After this incident TV crews were more careful in airing live pictures from such carnage zones. Decency and human respect prescribe that the authorities must first notify the families about their loss before mentioning the victims' names on the airwaves, never mind showing their pictures. A qualified senior editor, with experience in covering such bloody scenes, should monitor the photos prior to their broadcast.

The hostage taking event at the Iranian embassy in London by six members of the Mahealdin Al-Naser Martyr Group ended on May 5, 1980, when members of the elite Special Air Services regiment (SAS) stormed the building and killed five terrorists, captured the sixth, and rescued the hostages. Two of the hostages were killed before the commandos arrived (Blanche, 1980a; Downie, 1980). During the siege on the Iranian embassy, senior media editors received briefings on government policy and were aware of the likely outcome of the siege. The two television stations, BBC and ITN, went live from the scene only after SAS had stormed the building and rescued the hostages. Millions of people watched the rescue on television, as bank holiday entertainment on all channels was interrupted to show the drama as it unfolded. The moment of entry into the embassy was videotaped by

both stations. The ITN report began four and a half minutes after. The BBC report started after eight minutes. Both reports were delayed in order not to provide the terrorists with vital information that might have endangered the operation and risked the lives of hostages and SAS members (Schlesinger, 1981b).

#### **Staging events**

The media are advised not to co-operate with the staging of events. A notorious case was that of Carrickmore in 1979, when a production team of the BBC received an anonymous phone call saying that they would see something interesting in this small village. On reaching Carrickmore, the IRA staged an event especially for the camera, showing that they controlled the village. A few armed men in balaclavas stopped four or five cars, checking the drivers' licences. The IRA stayed in control of Carrickmore for three hours and pulled out after the *Panorama* film crew said that they had enough footage. The BBC was subsequently accused of arranging for IRA gunmen to take over an Ulster village for an afternoon stunt and of treasonable activity. The Opposition leader, James Callaghan, said that "it is not the duty of the media to stage manage news, but to report it" (Clutterbuck, 1983; for background information, see Smith, 1972). Finally, the BBC decided not to show the film.

A similar incident took place the same year when the American embassy in Tehran was taken by the Iranians. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation filmed a mob demonstration. As soon as the cameras were on, the demonstrators began shouting "Death to Carter" and burned American flags. After two minutes, the cameramen signalled the end of the "take." Then the same episode was done once more for the French-speaking Canadians, with the crowd shouting "Mort à Carter" (Schmid, 1989, p. 559).

Gideon Ezra, former deputy head of the Israeli Shabac (Internal Security Forces) said that during the Palestinian Intifada (Palestinian popular uprising) of 1987-1993, foreign reporters offered Palestinians money to initiate violence against Israeli forces: the tariff was \$50 for stone-throwing, \$100 for Molotov cocktails.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

A study of victims' attitudes toward media coverage of terrorism lists pushiness and failure to respect families' privacy as examples of unprofessional conduct. Sensationalism, being more interested in tears and grief than in the substance of the story, and posing as family members to gain access to the home were other complaints. While local newspaper and radio reporters were singled out for being unprepared and not knowing the stories they were reporting, television reporters were singled out for their obtrusiveness (Crelinsten, 1992).

The above discussion demonstrates how irresponsible behaviour of journalists negligently fuelled the events. Journalists wished to introduce a fresh new dimension to their stories, as if they were not dramatic enough, and by doing this unnecessarily endangered human lives. What is required is accountability: thinking about the consequences of reporting.

When people are coerced into alarming situations, the media should accept the instructions of the authorities. Experienced personnel can be an important factor. In sensitive circumstances it is better to have senior reporters on the scene than eager, less experienced reporters who may act without adequate judgment as, for example, in the Hanafi crisis, where inexperienced, highly motivated, and ambitious reporters were involved and risked the hostages' lives.

In this context, it is worth mentioning Article Ten of the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) of Canada's Code of Ethics, which holds:

Reporting of criminal activities, such as hostage takings, will be done in a fashion that does not knowingly endanger lives, hamper attempts by authorities to conclude the event, offer comfort and support or provide information to the perpetrator(s). RTNDA members will not contact either the victim(s) or the perpetrator(s) of a criminal activity during the course of the event, with the purpose of conducting an interview for broadcast.

The Code maintains that "Broadcast journalists will always display respect for the dignity, privacy and well-being of everyone with whom they deal."<sup>20</sup>

In turn, Section IV (A) 9.2 of the CBC *Journalistic Standards and Practices* (1993) says: "CBC journalists must ensure that any action they take will not further endanger the lives of the hostages or interfere with efforts of authorities to secure the hostages' release. They must guard against being used or manipulated by the terrorists/hostage takers."<sup>21</sup>

There is an urgent need to develop a set of guidelines for the media when covering terrorism. This suggestion should not be conceived as a step toward licensing. Rather it is a step to prevent licensing and to increase ethical and professional conduct by reporters and editors. The guidelines should include the following:

- The media need to be accountable for the consequences of their coverage.
- The media should not jeopardize human life.
- The media are advised to co-operate with the government when human lives are at stake in order to bring a peaceful end to the terrorist episode.<sup>22</sup> This is not to suggest that the police or other security organizations should have a veto power over reporting. What is suggested is co-operation and mutual respect and understanding between the government agencies and the media.
- The media should not glorify acts of terror as they glorified the SLA during the Hearst kidnapping.
- The media should refrain from sensational and panicky headlines, from inflammatory catchwords, and from needless repetition of photos from bloody scenes.<sup>23</sup>
- Terrorism should be explicitly condemned for its brutality and violent, indiscriminate nature, as the Israeli media on the whole condemn terror.
- The media must not pay or be paid for covering terrorist incidents.
- The media are advised not to take upon themselves to mediate between the terrorists and the government. Special qualifications are required before one

assumes such a responsibility upon oneself. Journalists are there to cover the event, not to become part of it.

- The media are expected to refrain from making dangerous speculations about the terrorists' plans, government response, hostages' messages, and other matters. Speculations might hinder crisis management.
- Media professionals should have background information about the terrorists they are required to cover. They should do research prior to their coverage. We should learn from the Hanafi incident, which luckily did not end with the murder of a hostage just because one reporter was ill-informed and did not do his homework as he should have.
- The media should not broadcast live terrorist incidents that include hostage taking. This is in order not to jeopardize human life and not to impede a government's attempts to rescue the hijacked. This is not to say that the media should not cover such incidents. Rather, there should be a delay of a few minutes during which an experienced editor inspects the coverage and authorizes what should be on air and what should not, as was the case when hostages were released from the Iranian embassy in London in 1980.
- The media are advised not to interview terrorists while the terrorist incident is still in motion. Lines of communications between the authorities and the terrorists should be left open. The media should not impede the negotiations process, as they did in the Hanafi takeover in Washington.<sup>24</sup>
- The media should not co-operate with terrorists who stage events. The BBC's decision not to broadcast the spectacle in Carrickmore was right.
- The media are required to show sensitivity to the victims and to their loved ones. This critical guideline should be observed during terrorist incidents and, no less importantly, also after their conclusion.
- The media are expected not to report details that might harm victims' families.
- The area in which the terrorist incident takes place should not be open for anybody who testifies that he or she is a journalist. Only senior and experienced reporters should be allowed in. Junior and inexperienced reporters should undergo a learning process during which they fathom the complexities involved. Adequate training is a necessary precondition.

### Acknowledgments

The author thanks the *CJC*'s reviewer and editor for their comments. A similar version of this article is included in Raphael Cohen-Almagor, *The Scope of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Larry Grossmann was quoted in Tusa (1990), p. 550.

### Notes

1. Compare Baker's version of the SLA story to Hearst's (1982) version in Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow, *Patty Hearst: Her Own Story*.
2. The details of this episode were confirmed in separate private conversations I had with Miki Gordus and Haim Yavin in June 1996. Yavin explained that he was a young and dedicated editor at that time, in pursuit of news without thinking too much of consequences. He further said that he

was sure that if he did not broadcast, others would, and he would lose the scoop. Some time after the interview, when Yavin appeared on Yair Lapid's talk show in February 1998 (Channel 3, Israel Cable TV), he publicly confessed that this was the most serious error of judgment he had ever made in 30 years of broadcasting. This event did not prevent Haim Yavin—Israel's "Mr. Television"—from winning the Israel Prize for Journalism, the highest prize Israel awards its leaders in their respective fields.

3. The movement was active in the predominantly ethnically Arab area of Iran called "Khuzistan" by the Iranian government and "Arabistan" by the autonomists. See "Rescue 'Made Us Proud to Be British'" (1980).
4. Israel's prime minister Yitzhak Rabin visited the capital during the Hanafi takeover, and President Carter gave "a most remarkable press conference" in which he proposed many programs on the home front and suggested many compromises and innovations abroad. Both Rabin's visit and Carter's press conference received only a little attention. See Reston (1997). See also Nacos (2002), chap. 3, and Seib (1977), who has a very positive view of the media's conduct during the Hanafi takeover.
5. The papers agreed to split the cost of an eight-page insert, which appeared only in the *Post* because it had the mechanical ability to distribute such a section in all copies of its daily paper. See Kurtz (1995). For a very good filmed depiction of the case, see *Hunt for the Unabomber*, American Justice, New Video Group, 126 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, Cat. No. AAE-16180. Another valuable resource is the ABC News production *The Unibomber* [sic], 20/20 (May 4, 1998), T980504-01.
6. You may find the entire 35,000-word manifesto at URL: <http://www.panix.com/~days/UNA/>.
7. The manuscript appeared as the Unabomber submitted it, with his subheads and paragraph breaks. The text ran five columns per page with a black border around the edges. There were 232 numbered paragraphs, some of them several inches long, and nearly a full page of "notes." The only graphic was a Unabomber diagram at the end of the text showing "symptoms resulting from disruption of the power process." The cost of publication was between \$30,000 and \$40,000. See Hernandez (1995), p. 10.
8. For an excellent depiction of the crisis, see MPI Home Video, *Great TV News Stories: The Hijack of TWA 847*, ISBN 1-55607-634-7.
9. Cf. URL: <http://www.ict.org.il>. I thank Arie Perliger for the updated information (personal communication, May 11, 2005).
10. More responsible journalists asked: "Have the mass media allowed themselves too to be held hostage by terrorists—and do they in the process contribute to the plague rather than the cure?" Cf. Goldman (1977), p. 25. For further critique of the American media in this affair, see Yuste (1977).
11. American critiques may hold that under the First Amendment there is no such requirement and that journalists should be left free to express themselves as they see fit. I am not arguing for government interference or for government education. I am arguing for awareness regarding the issues at hand and for acting in a moral and responsible way when covering terrorist events.
12. Similarly, as a general rule, the BBC World Service refrains from using the term "terrorists," which is perceived to be too loaded, and prefers to resort to more neutral terms, even when the brutality involved in the violent crime against innocent civilians is obscene. I thank Fraser Steel, BBC head of Programme Complaints; Margaret Hill, Senior Advisor, BBC Editorial Policy, and David Levy, BBC Policy and Planning, for providing me with material about the BBC and its policies. For the most recent controversy on the July 7, 2005 attack on London, see URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/news/2005/07/13/20561.shtml>.
13. For information about Buckley, see <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/wbuckley.htm>.
14. After their surrender, Khaalis and his men complained that the media attention they received interfered with their right to fair trial. See *Khaalis v. United States*, 408 A.2d 313 (D.C. 1979).

15. Here are some excerpts:

Khaalil: Ok. Would you like to come home and find your little girl in tub, foam on the mouth, drowned?

Whitaker: No, I wouldn't.

Khaalil: A little violence would stir up in you wouldn't it?

Whitaker: Yes.

Khaalil: Okay. We're human beings. That's the way Hamaas came in and found four babies stacked up in the tub, foam coming from the mouth. He went upstairs and found my older son in the prayer room with his brains blown out. He was in the room, he found my other son with a coat tied around his head, shot in the head. He found my daughter coming down the stairs bleeding profusely. She was covered with blood. He went to the basement, he found BeeBee down there covered with blood. And he found the other baby, in the sink, shot, and then drowned. Drowned in front of her mother. And the little boy was beaten and she heard his screams when they took her upstairs. Heard the little boy screaming and the man beating him, before they drowned him, 'cause he was old enough to fight back. He was three. How what would stir in you?

Whitaker: It would certainly stir anger . . . I certainly would want to do something about it.

16. For problematic episodes concerning Irish terrorism in Britain, see Clutterbuck (1983), esp. pp. 109-123. For further disturbing episodes, see Deitch (1999), pp. 244-255.
17. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* criticized the American media by saying: "[Khaalil] gave interviews on television, which took so long, that the interviewers told him: 'We have to stop now and to switch, we will call you again.' The first crime was the crime of television" (Cf. Wieland, 1977, p. 3).
18. Testimony in *One Day in September*, produced by Arthur Cohn, directed by Kevin Macdonald. 1999 Academy Award winner for best documentary feature.
19. Ezra spoke at the Forum on Terror and the Media, Department of Communication, University of Haifa (April 30, 1996). Photographer Ed Keating was accused of staging a photo of a boy with a toy gun, which was published by the *New York Times*. See Shaw (2003), p. C1.
20. The Radio Television News Directors Association of Canada Code of Ethics, revised in 1986. Quoted in Russell (1995), p. 200; URLs: <http://www.crtc.gc.ca>, <http://www.screen.com/mnet/eng/issues/violence/LEGISLAT/code1.htm>, and <http://www.cbsc.ca>.
21. *CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices* (1993), p. 62. See <http://www.crtc.gc.ca> and <http://www.cbsc.ca>. See also the Web sites of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (<http://www.crtc.gc.ca>) and the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (<http://www.cbsc.ca>). For further discussion on codes of ethics around the world, see <http://www.press-councils.org/html/frameset.php?page=library2>.
22. Jim Warren, reporter for KPHO-TV, Phoenix, said: "The one basic guideline is that the media work closely with the authorities. No one tries to circumvent what the authorities want. We pretty much accede to what the authorities want." Cf. "Crisis Cop Raps Media (1977)", p. 21.
23. George Gerbner said: "Terror can only succeed if the act is conveyed to the audience whose behavior the terrorists are seeking to influence. The media, in conveying the terror, are cooperating. This makes them accomplices . . . . The press is directly responsible." Cf. "Crisis Cop Raps Media" (1977), p. 21.
24. In the wake of the Hanafi incident, CBS News president Richard S. Salant issued guidelines on coverage of terrorism. A pertinent guideline instructs: "News personnel should be mindful of the probable need by the authorities who are dealing with the terrorist for communication by telephone and hence should endeavor to ascertain, wherever feasible, whether our own use of such lines would be likely to interfere with the authorities' communications." Cf. "Crisis Cop Raps Media" (1977), p. 21.

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