

Long shadows over the new

MILLENNIUM

Freedom of the press under threat

While

war and conflict marked the beginning of the new millennium (the IFJ reported 100 confirmed killings and deaths under investigation in 2001 – the highest for six years), journalists the world over are experiencing worsening problems of safety.

Many have died in war zones, others were targeted by brutal assassins, still others were in the wrong place at the wrong time when a story was breaking.

Among the cases the IFJ has highlighted is that of Martin O'Hagan, an investigative reporter for the Dublin-based *Sunday World*, who was gunned down in September 2001. He was the first journalist to be killed by terrorists after 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland.

Another targeted victim was Mario Coelho, a campaigning Editor who exposed corruption among local politicians in Mage, Brazil. He was shot dead by a contract killer a day before he was due to testify in a criminal defamation suit.

Beata Pawlak, a Polish journalist on assignment in Indonesia in pursuit of information on the terrorism network, was one of the victims of the Bali bombing in October. Her badly burned body was only identified two months after the attack.

Another victim was Tim Lopes, an award-winning investigative repor-

ter with TV Globo in Brazil, who disappeared in June 2002. He was tortured and murdered for reporting on drug gangs and sexual exploitation of minors. And in another shocking case, Ram Chander Chaterpatti, editor of a local newspaper in the north India state of Haryana was shot four times outside his home in Sirsa in October 2002. Chaterpatti was reportedly targeted by a religious sect, Dera Sacha Sauda, for his reports on the sect's illegal activities. His death, like that of Valery Ivanov, Editor-in-Chief of the *Tolyattinskoye Obozreniye* newspaper – shot dead by contract killers because he was reporting on corruption – show that journalists who ask tough questions often pay the ultimate prize for their stories.

Wherever media are engaged in exposing governmental corruption, or official links with organised crime, journalists are most at risk.

The case of Zahra Kazemi in Iran, who was brutally tortured and killed in July 2003 while in police custody, is one example where international pressure can force a government to properly investigate a journalist's death. The prompt calls for action by the Canadian authorities and a chorus of outrage from press freedom and journalists' groups worldwide forced the au-

thorities in Tehran to act in this case.

The problems in India also deserve mention. With five deaths and one case under investigation, journalism in this country with one of the most robust and diverse landscapes for press freedom is facing a crisis of safety for journalists.

Meanwhile, the continuing crisis for democracy and press freedom in the occupied Palestinian territories has once again delivered media victims with the killing of Palestinian cameraman Nazeeh Darwazeh and the shooting of freelance cameraman James Miller, both at the hands of Israeli soldiers. A fierce campaign for justice in the Miller case has highlighted once again the need for independent inquiries into such killings and reminds us of the constant threats facing those caught in the crossfire of the continuing Intifada. The case of investigative journalist Gyorgy Gongadze, brutally murdered in the Ukraine in September 2000, has come to symbolise the need for a global campaign against impunity, further highlighted by the case of Russian journalist Ali-khan Guliyev and that of Ukraine newspaper journalist Volodimir Karachenzev who was apparently discovered hanged on the handle of a fridge.