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Asia - Afghanistan

Journalist gunned down

Swedish radio reporter killed by two gunmen on Kabul street

11 March 2014

Nils Horner, a journalist with Swedish and British dual citizenship, was gunned down on a central Kabul street early today, two days after arriving in Afghanistan to do several reports linked to next month's election for *Sveriges Radio*, the Swedish public radio station for which he worked as roving correspondent.

Aged 51, Horner was shot several times in the head by two unidentified men as left a restaurant in the Wazir Akbar Khan district with his fixer and driver. Kabul police spokesman Heshmatollah Stankzi said he was the victim of a targeted killing.

"We offer our heartfelt condolences to Horner's family and colleagues," said Réza Moïni, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Iran-Afghanistan desk. "Journalists are among those affected by a resurgence in violence since the start of the election campaign that is one of the biggest threats to freedom of information.

"Horner's death is a tragic reminder of the fact that journalists risk their lives every day in Afghanistan to provide us with news and information. We hope the authorities will quickly carry out a thorough investigation in order to maximize the changes of the perpetrators and instigators being brought to justice."

Moïni added: "Although the Afghan media have developed in the past few years, mounting violence and above all the complete impunity enjoyed by those responsible for attacks on journalists could jeopardize election coverage and, with it, the entire democratic process."

Some sources said Horner died of his injuries in the central Kabul hospital to which he was rushed after the shooting. Other said he was dead on arrival.

No group has claimed responsibility for the killing. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told *Agence France Presse* that he had "checked with our fighters and they were not involved."

The Taliban nonetheless issued a press release two days ago ordering their fighters to "disrupt" the 5 April presidential elections. The release also urged voters "not to put their lives in danger by participating in this election." There has been an increase in violent attacks since the start of the year, with many civilian victims.

[Journalists are often attacked](#) or threatened in connection with their reporting during elections. Since the start of this election campaign on 15 February, around 20 journalists have been the victims of violence, in some cases by supporters of presidential candidates.

Afghanistan was ranked 128th for the second year running in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) after jumping 22 places in the 2013 index.

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