Reporters Without Borders

Middle East & North Africa - Libya

"Stray dogs"

Foreign reporters still hounded, four New York Times journalists missing

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Reporters Without Borders is deeply worried to learn that four *New York Times* journalists – Beirut bureau chief **Anthony Shadid**, reporter and videographer **Stephen Farrell** and photographers **Tyler Hicks** and **Lynsey Addario** – went missing on 15 March while reporting in the Libyan port city of Ajdabiya.

In a report posted on its website yesterday, the *New York Times* said it had received no news of the four since the previous day. It added that it was in contact with the Libyan authorities and hoped they would be freed soon (http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.c...).

Shadid is a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for foreign reporting. Farrell was kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2009 and was held for four days, until rescued by British special forces.

"The disappearance of the four *New York Times* journalists has come amid a climate of violence and hatred towards the media that is being sustained and encouraged by the Gaddafi regime," Reporters Without Borders said. "In a recent public address, Col. Gaddafi described foreign TV stations as 'stray dogs.' His foreign minister said journalists who entered Libya 'illegally' would be regarded as Al-Qaeda supporters."

The press freedom organization added: "The recent arrests of journalists and the violence to which some of them have been subjected suggests that the regime is carrying out its threats. It is doing everything possible to prevent the world from seeing its counter-offensive against the rebels."

Al-Jazeera cameraman **Ali Hassan Al-Jaber** was killed in an ambush near the eastern city of Benghazi on 12 March (http://en.rsf.org/al-jazeera-camera...). Three *BBC* journalists were mistreated while held for 21 hours by government forces on 7 and 8 March. Brazilian journalist **Andrei Netto**, a staff foreign correspondent of *O Estado de São Paulo*, was held by the Libyan authorities from 2 to 11 March on the grounds that he entered the company illegally (http://en.rsf.org/libya-two-foreign...).

Reporters Without Borders is relieved by the release of **Ghaith Abdul-Ahad**, an Iraqi reporter working for the London-based *Guardian* newspaper who was arrested at the same time as Netto. *The Guardian* reported yesterday that he had finally been freed and had already left Libya.