

Beat: Politics

Pro-government cameraman shot dead in eastern Syria

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USPA News - A cameraman working for pro-government television station al-Ikhbariya was shot dead in a city in eastern Syria on Wednesday while covering the ongoing civil war, making him the 25th journalist to be killed in the country so far this year. Cameraman Mohammad al-Ashram was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor while covering the conflict, according to al-Ikhbariya TV director Imad Sara.

The state-run Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) described the attackers as "terrorists", a term the government also uses to refer to rebels fighting to overthrow the government of President al-Assad. Sara strongly condemned the attack but said the murder will only make its journalists work harder to relay the "truth" of what is happening in Syria. He told SANA that "terrorists" had previously abducted al-Ashram, tortured him, and burned down the houses of both him and his mother. Syria's National Media Council also denounced the attack, saying that Syrian journalists are doing their duty of "uncovering the crimes and terrorism of the armed groups." A statement from the council said the death of al-Ashram is a "reprehensible crime" which violates the laws and conventions on freedom of press and the right of journalists to do their job during times of wars and preserving their lives. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), at least 27 local and international journalists have been killed on duty in Syria since November 2011, making it by far the most dangerous place in the world for journalists. The organization believes at least 22 of the deaths were work-related, but the death on Wednesday has not yet been investigated by the group. The crisis in Syria began as a pro-democracy protest movement in March 2011, similar to those across the Middle East and North Africa. The Syrian government violently cracked down on the protests, setting off an armed conflict between pro-Assad forces and anti-government forces. The United Nations estimates that more than 18,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed and more than 1.2 million have been displaced since the uprising against President al-Assad began 1.5 year ago. The opposition believes the number of deaths has already surpassed 29,000.

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