

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/libya-nato-attacks-on-national-tv-01-08-2011,40729.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Libya

Illegal NATO airstrikes

NATO attacks on national TV headquarters and installations in Tripoli

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Reporters Without Borders condemns NATO airstrikes on the Tripoli headquarters of the state-owned national TV broadcaster *Al-Jamahiriya* and two of its installations on 30 July. According to *Al-Jamahiriya*, three of its journalists were killed and 21 others were wounded in the airstrikes but this could not be immediately verified.

The impossibility of immediate verification is yet another reminder of the difficulty of establishing what is happening in a war when there are no journalists on the ground or their ability to work is severely curtailed. *"We appeal again to the authorities in Tripoli to let journalists work freely,"* Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Jean-François Julliard said.

"We remind NATO that news media are civilian installations and cannot be regarded as military objectives," Julliard said. *"Even if Al-Jamahiriya is clearly used by the Gaddafi regime as a propaganda outlet, it does not in any way legitimize these attacks. Other means, such as support for independent media, must be used to minimize the regime's propaganda and threats."*

"We call for a transparent investigation into the circumstances of these airstrikes. Military attacks on civilian installations constitute war crimes and serious violations of the Geneva Conventions. It is essential to establish who was responsible."

In a statement, NATO said it carried out the air strikes in order to silence the regime's "terror broadcasts" and put a stop its "use of satellite television as a means to intimidate the Libyan people and incite acts of violence against them."

This is not the first time that NATO has targeted news media. It was condemned by an International Criminal Court commission of enquiry for bombing Serbian television headquarters in 1999. The commission ruled that the broadcaster's propaganda activities did not suffice to make it a legitimate military target.

In 2003, a US and UK-led military coalition deliberately targeted the Baghdad bureaux of two Arab TV stations (*Al-Jazeera* and *Abu Dhabi TV*), the Palestine Hotel (used as a base by many of the foreign journalists operating in Baghdad) and the Iraqi national TV stations headquarters. This was also strongly condemned by Reporters Without Borders.
