



War Crimes Case Against Assad Regime Moves Forward for Slain Reporter Marie Colvin

In the first war crimes case against the Assad Regime, newly unsealed insider testimony and internal Syrian government documents reveal how Assad's inner circle oversaw attacks on civilians and media

Washington D.C., April 9, 2018 – Today, the Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA) and Shearman & Sterling LLP unsealed a motion on behalf of their clients, the family of slain journalist Marie Colvin, requesting that the federal court in Washington, D.C. enter default judgment against the Syrian government for the assassination of Marie. The motion makes public for the first time a wealth of evidence showing the Regime's crimes – including statements from high-level defectors and confidential Syrian government documents.

“The evidence unsealed today leaves no doubt that the Assad Regime methodically planned the attack that killed Marie. Insider witnesses, audio-visual recordings, and nearly 200 documents secretly smuggled out of Syria confirm that Marie's assassination was part of a greater plan by the Assad Regime to silence opposition and neutralize the media,” said **Scott Gilmore**, the attorney leading this case for CJA.

Marie Colvin was killed by artillery fire on February 22, 2012 while reporting from the besieged city of Homs in Syria. An American citizen, Colvin was a highly-acclaimed war correspondent with *The Sunday Times* of London.

“My sister was killed for exposing the Assad Regime's brutality, but her work lives on,” said plaintiff Cathleen Colvin. “We submit this evidence to seek justice for Marie – and for the thousands of Syrian victims of torture and murder who have not yet had their day in court. We hope our case will inspire the international community to finally bring Syria's war criminals to justice.”

Highlights from the evidence made public today include:

- Testimony from a Syrian intelligence defector code-named **Ulysses**, providing a meticulous account of how the Regime planned the attack that killed Marie Colvin and French photographer Rémi Ochlik.
- The world's first view of **nearly 200 confidential documents** from Syria's military and security agencies, collected by the Commission for International Justice and Accountability. The documents reveal not only how the Regime adopted a policy of targeting journalists, but also how senior Syrian officials set in motion the crackdown on dissent in 2011 that led to Syria's civil war. These documents shed light on the inner workings of the Assad Regime.
- **Expert evidence** from Robert Ford, Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria, and David Kaye, U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.

“This lawsuit is among the first to ask a court to hold the Assad Regime directly responsible for its crimes,” said Henry Weisburg, a partner at Shearman & Sterling. “It is not only an effort to provide Marie’s family with some measure of justice – inadequate as it may be – but also to reveal the Assad Regime’s atrocities more broadly, something we hope will contribute to ending the Regime’s abhorrent treatment of its own people.”

NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

Marie Colvin was assassinated on February 22, 2012 while reporting from the besieged city of Homs in Syria. According to evidence obtained by CJA through six years of cross-continental investigation, senior Syrian officials tracked Marie’s whereabouts by intercepting her broadcasts from a secret media center in Homs and confirming their findings with local informants. Using this information, they launched a targeted rocket attack on her location, killing Marie and French photographer Rémi Ochlik; and wounding French reporter Edith Bouvier, British photographer Paul Conroy, and Syrian media activist Wael al-Omar.

Colvin traveled to Syria in February 2012 to cover the siege of Homs, which at the time was an opposition stronghold. It was also a testing ground for the Assad Regime’s tactics of siege, starvation, and shelling of civilian areas, which it has subsequently deployed throughout Syria. In one of her final broadcasts, Colvin told CNN’s Anderson Cooper: “[i]t’s a complete and utter lie that they’re only going after terrorists. . . . The Syrian Army is simply shelling a city of cold, starving civilians.”

Learn more about Marie Colvin at www.mariecolvin.org.
Access all documents submitted as evidence by CJA at:
www.cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/colvin-v-syria/pleadings

Legal Background:

The *Colvin et al.* lawsuit was filed in 2016 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of Marie Colvin’s sister, Cathleen Colvin; her niece, Justine Araya-Colvin; and Cathleen’s two other children. The plaintiffs assert claims under a provision of the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act that permits victims to sue states that, like Syria, have been designated by the United States as state sponsors of terrorism for the extrajudicial killing of U.S. citizens.

Notes about the Syrian documents:

The nearly 200 documents submitted to the Court are part of a greater project by the [Commission for International Justice and Accountability](#) to gather evidence of Syrian war crimes.

About the Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA)

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization. CJA’s mission is to deter torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other severe human rights abuses around the world through innovative litigation, policy, and transitional justice strategies. CJA partners with victims and survivors in pursuit of truth, justice, and redress. Visit www.cja.org.

About Shearman & Sterling LLP

With more than 850 lawyers in 21 offices, Shearman & Sterling is a global law firm that partners with corporations, major financial institutions, emerging growth companies, governments, and state-owned enterprises to provide the legal and industry insight needed to navigate the challenges

of today and to achieve their ambitions of tomorrow. Among Shearman's core principles are a commitment to justice, accountability, and *pro bono* contributions to our global community to achieve these ends. Visit www.shearman.com.

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