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NEWS 10/04/2018 16:25 BST

Journalist Marie Colvin Was 'Deliberately Targeted' In Syria, Court Docs Claim

The documents also claim military leaders 'celebrated' her death.

 By Steven Hopkins



02:25  HD 

A Sunday Times journalist who was killed at the start of the war in Syria was “assassinated” in a targeted attack by the government, court documents claim.

Journalist Marie Colvin died alongside French photographer Remi Ochlik in Homs on 22 February 2012, when the building they were in was shelled.

The 56-year-old's death was branded an "extrajudicial killing" in a [claim filed to a US court](#) by her sister Cathleen that seeks compensation from the Syrian government.

The case was filed in Washington in July 2016, but unsealed on Monday. Reports suggest it the claim for compensation will be decided on in the next few months.

"The evidence unsealed today leaves no doubt that the Assad regime methodically planned the attack that killed Marie," says Scott Gilmore, the lead lawyer representing the Colvins, the [Washington Post](#) reported.

The documents, which include memos and testimonials from detractors, state that President Bashar al-Assad's government did not just allow Colvin's death to happen, but that high-level officers directed the Syrian military to target her and other journalists covering the conflict.



COLVIN FAMILY

A picture of Marie Colvin taking in Tahrir Square Egypt during the Arab Spring in February 2011 contained within the court claim

Evidence from one anonymous detractor, named Ulysses to protect his identity, detailed a celebration that he said followed the confirmation of Colvin's killing.

Major General Rafiq Shahadah, a commander in the operation, is alleged to have said:

“Marie Colvin was a dog and now she’s dead. Let the Americans help her now.”

Shahadah was later promoted to head of military intelligence, Ulysses’ evidence states, and others involved in the attack received rewards, including a Hyundai Genesis car.

64. At around 11:00 am, Colonel Firas al-Hamed, the head of General Intelligence Branch 318 [REDACTED] arrived [REDACTED] [REDACTED] electronic surveillance had confirmed that Marie Colvin and Rémi Ochlik had been killed in the attack. [REDACTED] had intercepted outgoing calls from Baba Amr asking for help evacuating the bodies and the survivors.

65. As Major General Shahadah’s staff was drinking and celebrating [REDACTED] [REDACTED] shout: “That blind bitch was Israeli.” Major General Shahadah replied: “Marie Colvin was a dog and now she’s dead. Let the Americans help her now.”

66. A few days later, al-Fares received a new car: a black Hyundai Genesis. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the car was a gift from Maher al-Assad, a reward for the successful operation.

67. Later on, Major General Rafiq Shahadah was promoted and named head of the entire Military Intelligence Department.

SUPPLIED

Evidence from a detractor details how military officials toasted Colvin's death

tion, in January 2012, senior Regime officials – including CCMC m Brigadier General Issam Zahreddine and Colonel Ali Salim
ocation of the Baba Amr Media Center from Arab League observers he heads of the Homs branches of the intelligence agencies also after
er Arab League observer, recalls a discussion on or around Janua adier General Muhammad Zemrini, head of Military Intelligence Br
Deputy Minister of Defense Assef Shawkat asked Nouar to reveal tis al-Hamed, head of General Intelligence Branch 318. *Id.*
ter, which Nouar had previously visited. Nouar Decl. ¶ 27. [REDACTED] of the Special Forces eventually arrived at the celebration a
this discussion, Shawkat characterized *The New York Times* and *Thified* him as the officer who had launched the attack, congratulated
ist newspapers” and alleged that foreign media, such as CNN and Al- soon be getting a promotion. *Id.* ¶ 63.
with terrorists. *Id.* ¶ 28. Shawkat asked if Nouar had seen forei announced that an intelligence office had intercepted communicatio
sa Amr, telling him: “In reality, they are not journalists. They are affirming the deaths of Marie Colvin and Rémi Ochlik. *Id.* ¶ 64. The
erican intelligence services who are trying to infiltrate Syria.” *Id.* ¶ the success of the attack. *Id.* ¶ 65. “That blind bitch was Israeli.”
ach journalist who enters into Baba Amr without state authorization [REDACTED] shouted. *Id.* Shahadah replied: “Marie Colvin was
They are targets for our military services and our security forces.” *Id.* et the Americans help her now.” *Id.*



Murtaza Mohammad Hussain
@MazMHussain

Shocking new details about the killing of Marie Colvin by the Syrian government. Deliberately targeted by commanders who then threw a party to celebrate her death:

theintercept.com/2018/04/09/mar...

8:04 AM - Apr 9, 2018

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New York Times World

@nytimesworld

“Marie Colvin was a dog and now she’s dead,” a Syrian officer said after government fire killed the journalist, new court documents say. He was promoted. nyti.ms/2HnJ0PA

11:47 AM - Apr 9, 2018

Syrian Forces Aimed to Kill Journalists, U.S. Court Is Told

Evidence was presented in a wrongful-death suit against Syria’s government brought by the family of Marie Colvin, a war reporter
nytimes.com

107 175 people are talking about this

Paul Conroy, a British photographer and former soldier who was wounded in the same attack, said in the documents that he had previously been warned of Syrian government orders “to kill any Western journalists found in Homs”.

In his [testimony](#), Conroy told how the attack was targeted using a technique called “bracketing” which was “very different” to the methods usually deployed by Syrian forces.

Conroy said the building he and the others were in – a makeshift media centre – “could not possibly have been a legitimate military target” as he never saw any activists there bearing arms.

Ulysses’ evidence suggested Syrian forces tried to track intercepted satellite transmissions from the media center to find its location and that once it was pinpointed, it was targeted.

Speaking on Tuesday about the new court details, former Middle East editor for The Guardian, Ian Black, who worked in Syria not long before Colvin’s death, told HuffPost UK:

“nothing surprises me”.

He believes an interview Colvin gave to the BBC the day before her death, something noted in the evidence filed with the court, may have led to her killing.

“You don’t need to be a genius to listen in to an interview on the BBC and it is entirely possible that motivated them to eliminate a journalist,” he said.

Interviews featuring Colvin also aired that day on CNN and Channel 4.

Black explained that he had not read the new court evidence, but had seen the headlines about his “much loved and appreciated” colleague.

Having worked in Syria, Black said he knew “anything is possible” given the regimes “ruthlessness and brutality”, which he had witnessed first hand.



IAN BLACK/TWITTER

Former Middle East Editor for The Guardian, Ian Black, said 'nothing surprises' him about the 'brutality' of the Assad regime

Black said he wasn't hopeful Cathleen Colvin's case would hold the Syrian government to account.

"At the end of the day it won't make a difference in the way the conflict develops... Assad has won the support of allies ... the fate of one journalist, albeit a high profile one ... given how many people have been affected... it won't make much difference."

More than 200 journalists have reportedly died in Syria in the seven years since it began in March 2011. The Syrian government has denied targeting journalists.

President Assad has previously said that Colvin entered the country illegally, had "worked with the terrorists", and was "responsible for everything that befell her".

Cathleen said her sister "knew the risks she was facing, and she took them anyway, because she believed so deeply in the importance of firsthand reporting and showing the victims of war".

"They wanted to tell their stories and Marie listened to them. That's why it's so important for me to get this evidence out to the public," the Washington Post quotes her as saying.

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 **Steven Hopkins** Assistant News Editor

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