

Press Under Duress: Journalists Confronting Multifaceted Challenges in  
Conflict and Crime Zones

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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# Approval

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# **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to all the journalists from every corner of the world for their profound contributions, as they stand as paragons of resistance and truth. The paramount devotion they showcase while carrying out their notable duty is truly preeminent. This paper commemorates their courage for carrying out their responsibilities with utmost dedication, integrity and unwavering adherence in the quest for justice.

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# Abstract

Caught up in the midst of turbulent terrain, journalists operating in conflict and crime zones confront multifaceted challenges, where truth-seeking and exposing becomes the first casualty in warfare. Endangering their lives—not only physical injury but also psychological trauma, repression, and ethical dilemmas. This thesis commits to endeavor by taking an interdisciplinary route, blending the art of literature and journalism. The interwoven tapestry of fictional novels, *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, with real-life journalistic complexities, this research paper highlights the role of journalists transcending their power of reportage to bring justice. Beckoning trauma theory, media ethics, nonviolent resistance, and postcolonial paradigm—this study aims to plumb the depths by conducting a nuanced understanding of how journalists, in the face of violence and suppression, instead of engaging in defensive reprisals, they respond through creative alternative means as an act of morality and resistance. Thus, this thesis addresses the gap that conventional reporting often lacks flair in comparison to creative journalism, which uses more emotionally-charged narratives, empowering journalists to showcase their defiance in conflict zones. Anchoring the fictional novels with journalistic issues, with a magnifying lens on Gaza and Bangladesh, displays the contemporary concerns that need to be addressed. The double homicide case of the Bangladeshi journalists, Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, is a grim testament of the jeopardous duties performed by journalists. Each standing as a pillar in the infinite storm, leaving behind a legacy of adherence in steadfast pursuit of justice toward a just tomorrow.

**Keywords:** Conflict and Violence; Literature and Journalism; Nonviolent Resistance; Gaza; Bangladesh; Suppression of the Press.

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# Chapter 1:

## Literary Texts

### 1.1 Introduction

Literature can be depicted as a corpus of canonical works that demonstrate the complexities of war, crime, violence, and truth—all of which mirror real-world scenarios but are often daunting for journalists to convey adeptly. This research exemplifies how literary novels provide insight beyond the physical danger journalists face. As it displays the psychological challenges and ethical dilemmas they encounter while operating in conflict zones as well as in crime-affected environments. Scrutinizing the fictional rendition of war, hegemony, and ethical ambivalence, presents the readers with an enhanced comprehension of how journalists confront multifaceted challenges that oppose them.

This chapter concentrates on the two novels—*The Quiet American* by Graham Greene and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut—which, though distinct in style and setting, both offer portrayals of journalists navigating ethical dilemmas, trauma, censorship, suppression and violent realities. Yet persevering in responding to violence through non-violent means in pursuit of justice. Furthermore, the prolonged struggles of the protagonists in both texts raise overarching inquiries regarding responsibilities, complicity and ethics—issues that remain highly contemporary concerns which are focal to the vocation of journalists in threat-exposed regions.

By delving into these two literary texts, which in various aspects parallel the embodied experiences of journalists, this chapter forges the foundation for an inclusive interdisciplinary discourse. As it bridges literary analysis with real-world contexts in the domain of documenting and defiance.

## 1.2 *The Quiet American*

The protagonist, Thomas Fowler, is in an ethical dilemma and battling within himself in the fictional novel *The Quiet American*, written by a British journalist and writer, Graham Greene. The narrative took place during the Vietnam War, a conflict between the French Union and Viet Minh, who were battling for their rightful liberation. Thomas Fowler is a British reporter, who went to observe the war and report facts on the conflict occurring there. The supporting character, who is somewhat of an acquaintance to Fowler, is Alden Pyle, and these two have quite a complex relationship with one another due to their attraction for the same woman. Apart from their infatuation with the same woman, another thing they have in common with one another is their political interests, though Fowler keeps on disagreeing and opposes the ideals and opinions of Pyle at every course and turn. Fowler seems to be a proud man who holds huge pride in his own broad knowledge and intellect. In comparison to that, he thinks lowly of Pyle's depth of knowledge, which only boosts up his ego more. Fowler prioritizes his profession more than anything else, and he takes his job as seriously as possible. As he is aware of the fact that, as a reporter, he must stay neutral at all times of any news, and that no other personal beliefs or opinions, not even his own subjective thoughts or opinions, mislead him in his reporting the news. But as the story unfolded, we could see he was having a hard time doing that, as his emotions were sneaking in as he could see the brutal reality of what was going on, but he also knew the British government and what they might find worthy of making it to the news. His job is only to report the news; he is not to take any step towards making any changes nor make any attempt of getting involved in any course of action.

In Chapter Three of Part One, he thinks of death as a relief, as though he is saying that the earth human beings reside in is somewhat of a purgatory, and if someone takes the life of someone else, they are only doing them a favour, as death is something inevitable to beat at. It is a quicker way of being released from all the pain and loss one deals with in so much agony while they are still alive. He also believes in the philosophy of impermanence—that nothing in this world is permanent. However, he resonates with this concept, not with death, but with losing the maiden named Phuong, the lead female character of this novel. As he believes that the philosophy of impermanence plays out this way in his life: that he might not be able to hold onto her forever and would end up losing her. He always tried his level best to maintain some strict boundaries and never to let his personal life interfere with his professional life and work, but when it is the matter of the heart, it becomes quite nearly impossible for him to do so as he seemed to be irrevocably enamored with Phuong. However, his nemesis, Pyle, was also completely besotted by her, which left Phuong with making the ultimate choice between the two men. Here again, the philosophy of impermanence comes into play, as Fowler cannot help but keep on worrying that Pyle would steal her away from him.

Although it seemed as though Fowler could not promise Phuong the safety and security she should be getting if they were to get together, that was only because of the danger and the uncertainty of his job. Such as, he got promoted to be the foreign editor, meaning he would need to leave for England to do this job. Hence, he knew very well that it would mean he would need to leave behind Phuong, and that would be the moment when Pyle would step in and steal his woman. But Phuong ended up still choosing to be with Fowler, and that she was willing to shift and reside where Fowler needed to be. But that meant for her to compromise everything in order

to be with Fowler as she exclaimed that she was excited to see the Statue of Liberty and the skyscrapers, but Fowler replied that those were in America and that she definitely would not find those in England.

Fowler began to feel the strain of unraveling in both his personal and professional life. Although, being a journalist, he only needed to report the news and facts of what was going on, and he did not need to interfere in any political matters nor take any actions towards anything. However, the investigation process was no less than putting his life at risk and carrying out his job. For instance, in Chapter Four of Part One of his narration, he describes vividly how he started to fear for his life, and he even mentally prepared himself for his own death, as he saw he might not be able to get away from the situation he was stuck in. He heard a rumour that a Cathedral, which was situated in the Northern part of the Vietnamese town called Phat Diem, was supposed to be demolished and burned down to the ground. He went there to investigate whether the rumor was true or not. Upon reaching the town, it was seen to be under attack. Shots firing from every side made Fowler turn pale, as he realized the danger he was in at that moment and thought he might not make it out alive to see another day. The battle took place for about a week, when the French troops took everything under control and created a barricade around the town. People who tried to escape from the attacking soldiers took shelter inside the cathedral, and the bishop of the cathedral expressed his concern for the limited amount of food, supplies and medical assistance for all the people there. Fowler realized that all those innocent people will either die out of starvation or due to the exposure of their injuries and wounds. He never felt more helpless in his life, that he was unable to do anything about it either, as his only job there was to report the news, and that was where his jurisdiction ended. But that was not all with which he was having

an ethical battle within himself, when they set out for a lookout, they reached upon a canal where they found numerous dead bodies piled up. The horror and the revolting feeling that Fowler had at that moment was about to get worse, as he later came across a farm where he spotted a woman and a young boy lying dead. He realized a mother and a son, who were just two civilians trying to make a living in this small town, got winded up into the battle and lost their lives. These scenarios were hard for Fowler to cope with, as he saw the brutality of the war and how the poor civilians suffered and died in the name of politics and power. These were the times when he found himself in a world of conflict within himself. As a journalist, he was always supposed to stay neutral while reporting, however, these were the times when he found himself in a dilemma and in a difficult position as to how he could possibly stay neutral when he could clearly witness and also experience the terror that reigned over these innocent people. Another moment like this, where Fowler nearly escaped from a deadly situation, was in Chapter Two of Part Two, when Fowler was in company of Pyle, and in the midst of their conversation regarding the political matters and forces, an explosion went off in the nearby distance from where they were. The two men were in a watchtower, and as they made their way down, suddenly a bazooka was shot right towards the tower, and Fowler was thrown to the ground, twisted his ankle, and got injured quite badly. The tower exploded, throwing Fowler on the side. Unable to move swiftly with his broken leg, Fowler, along with Pyle, crawled their way through the paddy field in search of a nearby road or another watchtower to take shelter for the time being. In a nearby distance, Fowler heard the cries and the devastating screams for help, but being in an injured position himself, he could do nothing to help out the poor souls who all desperately kept on crying for aid. His own life was hanging by a thread at that moment, because if he did not get out of there and to some safe spot, then he might die. He felt guilty about how the people cried for help and knew very well that no

one would actually go there to rescue them. These were the times he felt as if he was disrespecting his sole purpose of his profession in the name of politics, also him putting his life on the line over and over again. Although he might make it out alive, all the other helpless civilians would be dying in their own land after being attacked for reasons which they were not even involved in the first place.

Fowler was perfectly aware that the Vietnamese people did not care about endless victories and triumphs, nor did they want any other lands or territories to dominate and hold power. All they ever wanted was to reside in their own land in peace, with safety and security, where they would not have to worry about when there would be another explosion or a bomb detonating upon them every second. He was well aware of these facts but could not do anything about it, as he knew that might put him in danger with officials who are higher in hierarchy than him.

Pyle and Fowler got into a conversation about what would be a better way for a country like Vietnam in terms of political issues and leadership. Pyle suggests huge political forces intervening and taking over, such as communism and colonialism. He strongly believed that if a Third Force were to come and take control, then this country would see its way achieving democracy in the nearer future. However, Fowler straightforwardly disagreed with this statement of Pyle's, as he thought it to be too opinionated and very dictatorial in manners. He put forth his idea of liberalism as a much better way to go, as this notation indicates a progression and works as a way of securing people's dignity, rights and freedom. Although, he could not help but think to himself that people took the concept of liberalism in a negative way and did not utilize it the proper ethical way that it should be. He blamed the politicians for it, as they use this notion as a

means to hold more power and get themselves meddled into other countries' states of affairs and political matters. Instead of focusing on their own country and their people's peace, freedom and rights, the politicians become blinded with greed for power. But Fowler had to keep all this to himself most of the time, as he knew talking regarding such sensitive matters could cause him to put himself in danger amongst all the men in power.

Another time where he was again battling with his conscience was when he went to report on the fight that started in Haiphong. He got an offer to take along with a pilot named Captain Trouin, who was flying the plane from which he would be dropping a bomb on the land; however, he forbade Fowler from reporting regarding that incident. But what disturbed Fowler even more was when Trouin dropped another bomb on just a mere boat, which was completely irrelevant and caused the death of more innocent people who were completely harmless. Later, after they landed, the two men started talking, and Trouin noticed the horrified look on Fowler's face, he then opened up to him that what they did back there was far better than what he had done in the past, when even bigger and more destructive bombs were detonated and in the blink of an eye, the entire region caught fire and people turning into ashes and melting away. Trouin got emotional as he uttered these words, and Fowler exclaimed, saying that these are the exact reasons why he does not get involved in these wars. However, Trouin claimed that Fowler might not physically be involved in the war by the means of any actions, but he was somewhat a part of it as he was a journalist, reporting news and politically involved, and hence, no matter what, he would always remain complicit.

Fowler developed a sense of hatred towards Americans as he realized how selfish and hypocritical they could be after an atrocious incident that took place in Chapter Two of Part Three. He first thought he disliked Pyle for trying to steal away his woman from him, but what later followed made him realize the hypocrisy and selfishness of the American people and how it is embedded in their characteristics. It was when he was in Saigon, and both Pyle and Phuong were there as well. When Fowler visited a pavilion to get himself a drink, he overheard two women, who appeared to be American, one saying to the other that someone warned her not to stay out and not go to the other side of where the pavilion was. Just a few moments later, a huge explosion took place on the other side, and the magnitude was so huge that the walls of the pavilion, which divided the two sides, blew up. Fowler immediately ran to the other side, and in his horror, he found the whole place wrecked. His eyes instantly followed to a man whose legs blew up due to the explosion, and a mother sat there in disbelief and horror with the decapitated body of her child. Fowler saw no official nor anyone from the higher authority coming to the place for investigation. He stood there, petrified at the sight behold in front of him, moments later after which, Pyle came rushing to the scene and looked around in horror at the destruction that took place, with injured and dead people lying all around. Pyle tells Fowler that Phuong is alright, as he forewarned her not to go out there. Hearing this, Fowler put two and two together, as he remembered the two women were talking about something similar to that, about some sort of warning. He immediately charged Pyle for knowing about this incident and only warning the Americans about the explosion, and selfishly letting the Vietnamese people die so mercilessly in the bombing of the place. Fowler was raging in anger as he asserted more that Pyle knew that the place at that time of the day was filled with people, especially women and children, and he did not even think about forewarning any of these people about the explosion. But Pyle tried to

convince Fowler to understand that he knew nothing regarding this and that he was only told there was going to be a military parade and that all the people went there to watch that, and he was not informed that the parade was cancelled at the last minute. Fowler did not have the heart to believe in what Pyle said anymore, as he knew that this was all planned. A devious plan to kill all these innocent people, not any soldiers, as he knew that was what the government wanted in the first place. The news of innocent people dying, and all the women and children losing their lives from a bomb detonation, would make the news receive more reach than soldiers dying. Fowler was disgusted as he came to this realization and was even more appalled when he learned that Pyle was a part of the bombing and that he schemed it himself.

Hence, Fowler realized the potential danger that Pyle possessed and that he was already responsible for such a huge magnitude of casualties, and he might plan another attack on the innocent lives. For which, along with the help of a communist named Mr. Heng, they planned a scheme to assassinate Pyle. They did the work quite meticulously and left no trace for any evidence, and so the death of the American remained a mystery. Though it could not be proved that Fowler was a part of the murder of the American, however, he could not shake the feeling of guilt and remorse for getting his hands bloody and for silencing the American forever.

### ***1.3 Slaughterhouse-Five***

The narrator, who is the author of the novel himself, sets on to write a book about the experiences of the deadly war going on in Dresden but as he starts to write, he finds it difficult to put words together and faces challenges in writing the actual truth of the brutality of the war scenario. This is something that journalists go through all the time, as they face the difficulty of conveying the actual messages out to the world of the actual scenarios and that means they need to put themselves in risk and danger. So the tension is palpable, which we can see the narrator of the novel seems to be feeling that exact way. They need to navigate the challenges before them as to how much truth they can tell, while also keeping in mind the limitations up to which they can actually capture through the language and media.

The story moves on to a character who is the protagonist of the novel, named Billy Pilgrim, who served his time as a soldier in the second World War and the novel gets a glimpse of his time during the war. However, the timeline is distorted, as it seems to be skipping some timelines, fastforwarding, or sometimes providing only a scenario for a momentary lapse. He witnessed, with his own eyes, how the city of Dresden was bombed to the ground slowly, however, even within this narration, it seemed to be told in fragmented parts. This also shows how journalists tend to only tell fragments of the truth of what goes on in conflict zones, whether it is a massive war or even if a crime takes place, journalists only mention some parts of it instead of providing the full context of what actually happened. The horror of what Billy felt when he was present during the war time, what he witnessed, and the traumatic experience that he went through—he could not speak of it to anyone else, which is what even the journalists need to go through every

single time. The horror and trauma they face as they witness it all with their own eyes but cannot speak of it, nor can they truthfully report it and convey the message without putting their lives at risk, hence, they need to keep it to themselves and carry the burden. These are the things that are not always spoken of, and they are always pushed away into the darker side. The narration later slowly slips into displaying fictional thoughts and mentioning, for instance, Billy talks about the Trafalmadorians, who are these aliens that invaded and took him as a captive, and imprisoned him. Mentions like these blur the lines in the novels between fiction and reality, meaning that it was stated this way to hide the full truth and keep the public in the dark, which journalists often do with any sensitive information in order to avoid any ramifications. But while doing so, they go through an ethical dilemma as they know they are not doing justice to their profession, as they are supposed to stay neutral in cases like these and report the full, truthful account of each and every scenario. However, this will lead them in grave danger, and so, scared for their own lives, the journalists report only fragmented parts of the scenario, concealing facts from the public.

The bombing of Dresden that Billy witnessed and also experienced, as he was present at the scene of the war, left an everlasting impact on him. So, this was also another thing that contributed to how he felt, and also him getting affected by it so badly that he was unable to express or share it all. The same way that journalists feel that they are present at the conflict zone or any scene of crime, even where they not only are the observers but also they become the participants during that time. Furthermore, they also get affected and traumatized badly that they do not speak about it, and so, while reporting the news, they underrepresent the scene, or also in many cases, neglects or ignores it, choosing not to report it at all. Thus, many brutal things that occur never make it to the news most of the time, because the journalists hesitate to do so. But

the reality of it is that they are not in the stable mind to capture the full scenario of the sufferings or crimes that took place.

Billy and some other prisoners of war were taken in as hostages in a labor camp in Germany, and in that closed space, as he is held captive, his mind started racing, as he started to count down his days. In moments like these, a person starts to have flashbacks of his life before his eyes, as Billy was reminiscing about different scenarios of his past experiences, but the scene of the bombing of Dresden came back to haunt him. He tried not to get swept up by any more of his traumatic past, but the memories came flooding back in his mind, which almost pushed him over the edge. Anything that was occurring around him in his present time, reminded him of something very similar to that which took place in his past memories. If he heard any footsteps approaching near him, it instantly reminded of the times of the heavy footsteps of the German guards creeping up towards him. But the readers still do not get a full glimpse of the scenario of what actually went down. As it is quite evident from the hesitation and the fragmented parts in the story, where some specifics were cut out and several moments, which were continuous flashbacks, that are depicted often throughout the novel, seem to be only trying their best not to mention the specific moments which they wished to keep confidential from the public. It once again reflects what goes on in the minds of journalists, also that they also provide only some fragmented parts out to the public while leaving out specific information. They witness every horrific event with their own eyes, which they know they should be documenting. However, the danger and risk that will come with it, along with the emotional toll and cost, makes them question, and ultimately, they arrive at the decision of what part to share with the public and what to leave out. Because when it is a matter of their life and death, and they have to choose between facing the consequences or live to see

the next day, their conscience would automatically make them lean towards choosing the latter choice. As they know that if they get in trouble for sharing too much information, then they won't be able to live to see the next sun rising up, nor see their loved ones again. Moreover, the readers get a sense of the trauma and anxiety that Billy felt every moment during those flashbacks and from jumping back within those various realities of every scene, in warzone or in any other traumatic crime scene he was involved in. Journalists often suffer from depression and post-traumatic depression, anxiety, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder, and it is not only in conflict zones but also in gruesome crime scenes as well. This can very well impede on their ability to write or speak regarding the horrors and terrors they witnessed.

It is not until the second last chapter of this novel, where the bombing of Dresden was discussed; however, but still not truly in full scale. But it is also mostly because Billy was trying to comprehend what was going on when he saw the horror all around the battlefield. The violence and the massacre were too much for him to take. Although he was fully aware of what the outcomes of a war was capable of looking like, it hit him to the rock bottom as he did not exactly imagine the true scale of the outcomes of such a fatal war. He could not control his emotions any further, as he bursted into tears and sobbed pitifully. When Billy was admitted to a hospital in Vermont, he met a History Professor named Bertram Copelan Rumfoord, with whom he shared his hospital room. The Professor's book, called Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two, which had twenty-seven volumes and was mainly about the Dresden raid, received quite a successful reach to a wide audience. But it was kept hidden from the public, especially the Americans, as to not receive any public backlash or criticism for the raid and bombing. They feared that it might seem as an immoral and unnecessary act from the perspectives of the public,

especially the Americans, as it was the American Government that was responsible for causing the riot, only the Russians and the Germans knew who occupied Dresden after the war. It was about twenty three years later that the Americans got to know about the incidents that took place, and a lot of the citizens realized that it was far more destructive than the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Hence, this again proves that not only some specific details are hidden from the public, but also an entire event that could be so horrific are completely kept as a secret from the public, as to not get any criticism as the public might not take the news well and cause a riot and uproar against the government for their barbaric actions. Professor Rumfoord was telling about all this to his wife, Lily, when Billy heard the whole thing, and spoke up, mentioning that he was present at the war site and witnessed it all. Rumfoord did not believe his words, as he thought that Billy was simply repeating the words from the conversation that he and Lily were having and that it was an effect of the disease that Billy was suffering from, called echolalia. This is also a showcase of how the witnesses are disregarded and that what information goes out to the public solely depends on what the writers or journalists decide to write down. Thus, that is the extent to which the world gets to know the incidents, and it is never the full truth of the events taking place.

The narrator of the book signals that the tragic events of the war and death of people are inevitable, and that it is the circle of life. The violence, sufferings, and countless deaths that took place but nothing could be done. The same way that journalists are only there to observe and report back, they witness all the horrors and the sufferings of the people, and people getting killed mercilessly and it is all occurring before their eyes, but they are not to get involved in those. As they do not have the power to stop them, but they are obliged to report it back while

also keeping the fact in mind up to what extent they can provide the news out to the public. The emotional toll they go through during this period, while also knowing how they are disrespecting their professions by going unethical, but these are not any excuses for them, and so, they deal with their anxiety and trauma all alone while reporting the tragic events.

Throughout the novel, it is quite evident how the narrator explored the absurdity, fatal and devastating scenario of the war while navigating on how to report it in a coherent manner. We see how the narrative style is non-linear and goes back and forth to the flashbacks and provides glimpses of probable future glimpses, which also serves as a metaphor as how war and crime stories are often portrayed in a distorted way and in fragments. On the other hand, in *The Quiet American*, the narrator had to balance out and try to keep his own personal biases and emotions on the side while trying his best to stay professional to his role as a neutral observer. Moreover, he compromises his personal life and relationship while altogether putting his life on risks and danger over and over again only to serve the purpose of his profession. This demonstrates how the portrayal of wars, conflict zones, and even crime scenes are represented to the public. The violence and sufferings and the crimes committed are all hidden or minimized, and instead, very sanitized narratives and reports are portrayed by the media. All those times, the journalists need to face extreme challenges physically, emotionally, and also morally, as they even start to question themselves, as they feel they are compromising their professions. They witness the horrors, but they are only the observers, as they do not hold the power to get themselves involved in the massacre, leaving them to feel powerless. Thus, they seize the power right back with their proficiency of documenting in alternative and creative ways.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Literature Review**

Journalists contribute significantly in reporting and informing crucial information or messages out to the public and they hold the ultimate power in conveying them to the people. News from around the world about incidents or crimes, especially in conflict zones, is mediated through the journalists' reporting, shaping how it is perceived by the people worldwide. However, when it is a matter of politics, especially in conflict zones, the truths are oftentimes manipulated, censored or distorted. When the countries are in a state of ravage due to war, uproar or movement, or even a region with political instability or oppressive regimes, journalists are faced with risks as they are the most exposed to the danger. As they need to go through with reporting violent events, human right abuses and systemic failure. In cases such as these and much more, the journalists go through a dilemma and face challenges in maintaining and carrying out their duties and responsibilities in conveying the message out to the public. While at the same time, tackle the danger that poses them by powerful units such as the governments, armed forces, and even multinational organizations and corporations. As all these forces would want to suppress them from leaking certain information that they would want to keep confidential from the public in order to maintain their images or keep control or evade any political fallout or uproar. This literature review first and foremost analyzes the challenges the journalists encounter. For instance, the physical and psychological issues they need to tackle, the moral and ethical dilemmas, censorship and propaganda. As well as aims to explore how previous studies

addressed the multifaceted challenges the journalists face in conflict zones and also in high-risk situations.

## **2.1 The focal research question that guides this review is:**

What are the primary challenges the journalists face in conflict and crime zones, and how are those challenges addressed and represented in previous studies of journalistic and scholarly discourse?

## **2.2 Additionally amalgamating to the existing research work, this review highlights an emerging perspective—Objective of this thesis:**

While journalists are targeted and violence is used to suppress them, they never respond with force. Instead, they use creative journalism to imply and spread the news to bring justice through the means of investigative and creative journalism to expose the truthful events.

While journalists in any region in many cases operate under challenging situations that could be of high danger to them, however, those who work under any authoritarian sovereignty or oppressive regimes, especially in regions where a conflict is going on, are exposed to even greater dangers and challenges. They are not only faced with physical harm but also go through emotional turmoil which leads them to depression and trauma. They need to navigate the complex matters of the government and political issues by dealing with matters of censorship on how much to report and disseminate the news to the public in order to avoid threats or violence from any powerful entities. However, by doing so they often have an inner conflict where they face ethical dilemmas on what certain news or information should be published and what to withhold. While simultaneously protecting their sources and also being aware of their own

safety, all the while having an inner battle in maintaining the integrity of their profession. Hence, in such scenarios, self-censorship is what they often choose in order for their own survival in these danger zones, but it also obstructs the press's crucial duty in revealing the truth which keeps the public in the dark. Journalists not only face challenges in major events like conflict zones and war spaces, they are also faced with risks that pose danger to their personal lives in even reporting on much smaller cases as they also need to tackle various forms of threats and work under critical situations and feel the pressure from their jobs at those moments. As Đokić (2020) argued how independent journalists living in a democratic country are exposed to severe pressure from the government. They are subjected to extreme levels of consequences that endanger their lives.

Earlier BCSP research indicated that journalists and activists who are critical of the government are exposed to various threats and pressures even under “normal” circumstances. The pressure journalists and activists are exposed to range from physical attacks, death threats, endangering their economic security via potential loss of employment, smear campaigns in regime-friendly media, and all the way to the adoption of legislative approaches that obstruct activism. (Đokić, et al., 2020)

Even so, they might get out of their dire hard situations alive, but with all the other innocent people dying without any fault of their own, they would feel as if their conscience died. But the trauma they go through and how they should tackle those challenges are always up to them. Because they are hardly provided with any protection or security, nor any psychological aid in their times of need. “How journalists should behave and how they can protect themselves from physical and psychological effects is often left up to them” (Verhovnik, 2017). Hence, they are left to be their own protector while carrying out their duties. Journalists are always the frontline

fighters in every given situation all around the world. They need to be present in those scenes no matter how dangerous it could be for them. As Verhovnik (2017) mentioned how in every corner of the world, every journalist needs to go through extreme measurements to report on every news in precise details with evidence which is a lot of stressful work for them.

Case studies from different countries point out that reporting on catastrophes and disasters can be very onerous for journalists. As “first responders,” journalists are usually on the scene quickly. They feel pressure to not only bring back a good story, but also to deliver pictures and video footage which is as exclusive as possible, as detailed as possible and as close as possible to the scene (Verhovnik, 2017).

The dreadful experience that they go through, leaves an everlasting impression on them, often finding themselves getting flashbacks and at those junctures they feel like they are reliving those moments once again. Such as when in the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy Pilgrim, started to reminisce about his past experiences, the terrifying memories came rushing back in his mind. Although that was a fictional tale, these are not rare cases in reality. As there have been studies where journalists did confirm that they do have flashbacks from when they see something and it immediately reminds them of a certain time when they found themselves in a critical situation, “Sometimes I had flashbacks. When I saw a certain color that reminded me of the color of a vehicle that was involved in an accident, I had flashbacks. The accident became vivid again.” - stated by a freelance journalist (Verhovnik, 2017). This job exposes them the most, making them a target, for which they go through great depths to collect the necessary information, that too in precise details, putting their own lives at great risk. But they take those risks willingly because it is a violation of human rights so it invokes compassion amongst those journalists. Which makes

them go through great lengths even more, to spread the news out into the world more to bring justice, even if that means bringing more danger in their own lives, as they dedicate their entire lives into their careers. As Cohen mentioned in her studies about two journalists who set forth on a mission to report the full truth on a heinous event, all the while endangering their lives.

Video journalists like Camey and fellow Australian Mark Davis, are a special breed of Journalists who often risk their lives to expose miscarriages of justice and breaches of human rights. Their constant witnessing of atrocities and killings engages them more deeply with the victims. I would argue this is not necessarily a bad thing as it can drive them on to report the truth and expose injustices, often at great risk to themselves. (Cohen, 2010)

However, their profession strictly mentions to only observe and report, so even after witnessing the obscenities, their hands are tied. Even if they feel the need to assist the innocent people crying out for help, the instructions clearly state to never get involved. Similarly, when Thomas Fowler from the novel, *The Quiet American*, found himself in similar situations, in Chapter Two of Part Two, when he was in the watchtower with Alden Pyle and suddenly a bazooka hit the tower. As he and Pyle ran off to find shelter for themselves, he heard the cries from nearby distance. This was one of the many other moments where he found himself in a dilemma on what he should do, whether he should strictly stick to this profession and carry out his duty only to report on the news or whether he should run off to help the innocent victims. Cases, such as this, occur also in the real world where there have been news where journalists often face such dilemmas and they are given a choice on either to carry out his duty or act with humanity and offer aid. For instance, the Israel-Palestine War has been going on for about a century now, the

journalists there are also faced with great risks and danger to their lives, furthermore, battle with ethical dilemmas in the conflict zones after witnessing mass murder and cruelty of the oppressors. Cohen added more to her research how the journalists are faced with a difficult choice to either carry out their duties or lend a hand to help the innocents who are in need of immediate assistance.

At one point, Camey filmed a family in Jenin pulling their daughter's body parts out of the rubble. Camey said he was faced with a choice: to stop filming and help, or continue documenting the tragic event. He said he kept filming and did not offer assistance because there were others around who could help and he thought the most important thing he could do was show this horrible scene to the world—to bear witness. But when to stop filming and give aid to people in distress is always problematic. There are no clear rules. No professional guidelines. Often it is a very personal decision taken by the individual journalist. (Cohen, 2010)

Because, their training never included how to act when these critical situations appear before them, hence, they need to make a decision on the spot whether to obligate themselves to the responsibility or offer aid. In this case which Cohen reported, they give themselves a reason to continue to carry out their duty, take notes and record videos. Because they knew it was one way to bring justice and that was a way of consolation they brought to themselves. Though, it comes with difficult challenges like fighting with the guilt they cannot escape from. These ethical and moral dilemmas that present themselves where they find it hard to grapple with, but their profession always comes first, just like Fowler always chose to follow his duties no matter how difficult it became at times, similarly, which Cohen mentioned more in her article.

The moral/ethical dilemmas they face never present themselves as simple choices. Sometimes a journalist may feel the need to put the camera down and give aid to those in need. The constant challenge, however, is to bear witness to atrocities and at the same time remain fair and honest in the journalistic narrative. No matter how abhorrent the actions of the perpetrator, the profession should strive for this. (Cohen, 2010)

They go through suffering themselves and put their lives on the line over and over again which not only is a risk to their lives physically but also they get affected psychologically as they witness all the brutality of the war and crimes for days. “Davis obtained graphic accounts from families of atrocities committed on their loved ones. This ongoing exposure to brutal killings and accounts of torture deeply affected Davis. He risked his life to bring this story to the world” (Cohen, 2010). Many journalists experience more intense psychological distress, who are left to confront their trauma in seclusion. Despite having previously demonstrated accuracy and clarity in their reporting, prolonged exposure to violence and human suffering can gradually deteriorate their mental health. This, in turn, impairs their professional capacity to document the very atrocities they once reported with precision. Such as the case of a journalist named Kevin Carter, who did a tremendous job and won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for his work. However, the cumulative stress of his profession began to overwhelm him, resulting in a decline in performance and the eventual loss of his career and livelihood. Unable to cope with the psychological burden, he ultimately took his own life, “Three months after winning the Pulitzer Prize, Kevin Carter, penniless, and depressed after years of photographing conflict and human atrocity, committed suicide” (Cohen, 2010).

The Israel-Palestine War evoked again in October 2023; it has been over a year and a half since then, and situation there is even more critical and fatal than ever, as Israel continues the genocide, killing hundreds of innocent people everyday. Within the first few days, hundreds of death tolls were reported, from which over a hundred of them were journalists, “As of October 7, 2023, a minimum of 107 journalists and media personnel – comprising 102 Palestinians, two Israelis, and three Lebanese, have tragically lost their lives, underscoring the grave dangers inherent in war reporting” (Fahmi, et al., 2024). Since then the risks increased along with the number of injuries and deaths, as airstrikes and missiles are fired at Gaza, along with the armed conflicts, which makes it even more challenging and difficult for them to carry out their duty, as their lives were always on the line.

Amidst the ongoing conflict in Gaza, journalists face heightened risks and challenges in their reporting. Recent events, including airstrikes, rocket attacks, and ground incursions, have resulted in civilian casualties and widespread destruction, making it increasingly difficult for journalists to operate safely and effectively. (Alsarayrah & Al houl, 2024)

A Palestinian journalist named Hossam Shabat, who was only in his early twenties, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on March 24, 2025. He was targeted as he documented the horrors in Northern Gaza, he knew he was constantly at risk, but that did not stop him from carrying out the duty that he set forth to accomplish. This was one of the many journalists who were condemned to torture or death for their contributions. Another footage on the eighth of April, 2025, was viralled, where an Israeli airstrike was targeted on one of the tents of journalists, resulting in the tent catching fire and a journalist was burned to death, alive (ALJAZEERA, 2025). The Israeli forces aimed specifically to eradicate the journalists, in order to prevent them from reporting on incidents and to maintain their political power and stance. A female journalist of Gaza, named

Fatima Hassouna, documented the conflict in Gaza for over eighteen months. Because the documentary was supposed to be screened at the New Cannes Film Festival, she was killed by an Israeli airstrike just 24 hours before it was accepted, alongside ten members of her family (Ellis-Petersen, 2025). One of the most prominent personage voicing out regarding the conflict in Gaza is a British-born, award winning journalist named Mehdi Hasan. In spite of being a Western, he called out the U.S. media, as they are heavily pro-Israel, for not conveying the true messages of the accounts occurring in Gaza to the audiences.

Acclaimed journalist Mehdi Hasan joins us to discuss U.S. media coverage of the Israeli war on Gaza and how the war is a genocide being abetted by the United States. Hasan says U.S. media is overwhelmingly pro-Israel and fails to convey the truth to audiences. (Democracy Now!, 2024)

This is because the U.S government confederated with the Israel government and has been financially supporting them from the start. For which, to maintain their image, the U.S media obfuscate and misrepresent the incidents by bending the truth. Since Mehdi Hasan spoke up against this, his show, “The Mehdi Hasan Show”, which used to air on the American cable news channel, MSNBC, got cancelled.

In the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there are scenes where it was quite evident that specific moments or information are tried to be kept hidden as the scenarios were depicted in fragmented parts, which aligns with what journalists often tend to do on the orders from the higher authority, to keep some specific information confidential. The journalists are forced to do this out of fear, as if that information is out to the public because of them, then they would be targeted for leaking the news. So due to the fear of being harmed by any powerful individuals or the

government, they are forced to leave out some specific information, even though they realize that the public needs to hear those vital news.

...due to the involvement of high-ranking Kosovar politicians, she also stated that the publication of the story might have had a negative consequence for her personally, such as harassment or threats. This anecdote demonstrates that journalists sometimes hold back a story despite its obviously existing public interest or news value. (Jungblut & Hoxha, 2017)

As a result, journalists often opt out for self-censorship when they know that danger is just around the corner with the information that they withheld. “Self-censorship can be defined as the individual self-restriction of one’s freedom of speech. Specifically, journalists realize that reporting something would do more harm (to themselves or to others) than good and therefore restrain from covering particular events” (Jungblut & Hoxha, 2017). Furthermore, it is not just the potential of causing physical harm to them which is their only concern, but it could also ruin their career. There have been research regarding this by Jungblut and Hoxha (2017) who both interviewed journalists when asked on the usage of self-censorship:

When asked to define self-censorship, our interviewees provided two differing perspectives on the issue. The first definition can be summarized as self-censorship to prevent physical harm. Here self-censorship can be subsumed as the inability to run a story due to the fear of negative consequence and is a result of physical threats and the connected fear for oneself and/or one’s family. Additionally, journalists are also afraid of negative consequences for their career. (Jungblut & Hoxha, 2017)

Because, the journalists fear not only the physical harm that could befall upon them, but also on their loved ones. Moreover, they fear that they might be fired from their job as the agency or

organization that they work for might stop supporting them as the target to the journalist might become a target to the whole company, and hence, it could result in severe consequences in their profession in various ways. Therefore, they are left with no other option but to self-censor, and at times the reports are halted and not allowed to be published at all.

The so-called co-existence of politics and journalism therefore injects political interests into the newsroom and thereby leads to more potential situations of self-censorship. As a result, stories that might be opposed to the owner's political stance are often abandoned at some point. (Jungblut & Hoxha, 2017)

In the penultimate chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy shared a hospital room with a History Professor named Bertram Copeland Rumfoord, who was writing about the Dresden raid. The event had been deliberately concealed from the public for nearly twenty-three years, as the government suppressed media coverage to prevent public backlash. Cases such as these are not just fictional, but occur on a daily basis, whether it is in war zones or any crime scenes, and if the information is leaked by any journalists, then severe consequences awaits them. As Moges (2017) stated in his article regarding an incident that took place where journalists were subjected to harassment and eventually were arrested on the orders of the government.

The government relentless pressures on, harassment and prosecution of journalists, especially those working in the free press, have discouraged many publications and forced them out of the market. Particularly, the highly contested 2005 general election that ignited violence eventually resulted in a massive arrest of journalists, politicians as well as in the banning and shutting down of many private newspapers. (Moges, 2017)

Thus, self-censorship acts like a defense mechanism for the journalists where they have to be mindful while reporting, and make the crucial decisions on which part to report on and what to leave out from the news. In many cases, they take the bold decisions, which are fully out of fear for their own lives, to not just leave specific parts but fully stop reporting and leave out an entire incident which is too horrific to tell, “So far, the media’s underreporting of internal conflicts has been discussed from the perspective of government coercion and the subsequent fear it invokes and self censoring such fears forces journalists to stop reporting” (Moges, 2017). Because, there is a high possibility that sensitive news might evoke rage amongst the public and they might go against the government for their barbaric actions. For which, the pressure from the government compels them to self-censorship, ultimately omitting vital information from their documentary. Due to the fear of being exiled or going to jail, just for their survival, to stay safe and keep their jobs, journalists prefer to ignore or take heavy self-censorship while reporting news that is sensitive. They live in constant fear, which ultimately impedes their ability to exercise the right to freedom of expression and affects in reporting the heinous acts of barbarism in conflicts and daily tasks, “This fact is also articulated by exiled journalists. They accuse the government of enacting the anti-terrorism law to silence independent journalists/voices. In addition to the newly passed law, the fear of being arrested has negatively affected their day-to-day activity” (Moges, 2017).

*The Quiet American* is set during the time when the First Indochina War took place from 1946 to 1954, and it highlights on the involvement of the United States in Vietnam, as it later was proved how Alden Pyle was affiliated with the political matters that foreshadowed on the involvement of the U.S. military. The Second Indochina War, also known as the Vietnam War, took place right

after the first one, starting from 1955 and ended in 1975. This journal article by Karen Turner, upon her thorough research, stated clearly that during the Vietnam War, the Department of Defense realized the potential the media's prowess can have, especially with their reporting on the failures of the government. The media, being such a powerful force, became a threat, for which, on the orders of the government, the journalists were excluded or sidelined during the actions in Grenada and Panama.

But due to widespread reporting of the government's failures in the Vietnam war, notwithstanding President Lyndon Johnson's assurances of a "winnable" war, the press was viewed by the Department of Defense as a force to be reckoned with and not to be ignored. As a result, during the military conflicts in Grenada and Panama, the press was completely left behind. (Turner, 2002)

And so, during the Gulf War, the government took precautions beforehand by making the journalists sign agreements to strict guidelines to follow, to have their reports checked before being published. This included them being escorted or followed at all times, and any stories that were found sensitive or that spoke against the government, it was all censored.

The use of press pools was implemented in 1990 and continued throughout the Gulf War. However, due to the requirements that reporters sign the agreement to comply with "guidelines" and "ground rules" which, among other restrictions, included a binding agreement to allow a security review of everything reported, many reporters were disillusioned with the Department of Defense's management of press relations. Reporters had to be accompanied by an "escort" at all times,' and their reports were censored capriciously for any material deemed a security risk. (Turner, 2002)

For which, many journalists and reporters became frustrated with this, however, any of them, if ever seen travelling alone or not following these guidelines, were either jailed or threatened. “Several reporters were caught in violation of the law, jailed, and threatened with revocation of their press credentials and visas” (Turner, 2002). Hence, due to the fear of what the government might do to harm them or their loved ones, the journalists prefer to play safe, resulting in censoring any sensitive news. Although they realize that by doing so, they are compromising their profession, moreover, the public starts to lose trust in them, as the main aim of the journalists is to provide the public with authentic information that is fair and from a neutral point of view. It starts to affect their freedom of speech and expression, ultimately affecting their ability to report the issues.

In the case of self-censorship in the selected newspapers, however, editors and journalists exclude some critical issues from the story due to fear of government officials. It is essential to emphasize that self-censorship limits trustworthiness of the media, which ultimately worsens the future of the profession. It affects the profession, which claims to serve the public by providing free, neutral, and balanced information objectively and fairly. In the meantime, it limits freedom of expression that is the fundamental right to citizens. As a result, it is described that self-censorship is jeopardizing the right to freedom of expression as well as the media professionals’ intervention in reporting issues freely. (Moges, 2017)

The suppression of the journalists in reporting issues in a free manner is still an issue to this day, and not just in authoritarian regimes, but also in democracies as well, because the government would always prefer to have the press to serve those powerful individuals instead of the public.

They silence the press to keep their power in check. “Although Netanyahu has resisted efforts to formally indict and try him on these charges, the evidence suggests that the prime minister was willing to sacrifice press freedom in order to maintain political power” (Repucci, 2019). The Israeli occupation authorities have reportedly hacked accounts of journalists, anyone who writes against Israel and of their oppression on the innocent people of Gaza. Furthermore, the journalists also have to undergo interrogation, and their reports are investigated, and if any of their work has information on the barbaric activities of the Israeli government and their military, then the reporters and journalists are thrown into prison. As mentioned by Adwan and Naser (2019) after their in-depth research, they mentioned how the Israeli government restricts the freedom of expression of the journalists of Gaza. They are blocked at the entrance by Israeli armed forces, not allowing them to even pass through the terminal to reach another destination to report on the events. Because, as per the Israeli government, no perturbing news should be disclosed. Furthermore, they are being investigated or arrested on any suspicious criticism of the actions of the Israelites.

Those who work in the journalism sector and media activists are deprived of their lawful rights to express their opinions freely and to obtain information as a result of many restrictions imposed by Israeli occupation authorities who hack accounts of activist journalists. They are also subject to investigation and/or arrest when they pass through the Bait Hanoun terminal if they are lucky enough to obtain a permit to exit Gaza through this terminal controlled completely by the Israeli occupation. (Adwan & Naser, 2019)

After further research, the article states how armed forces arrived at the premises of a news agency in Palestine called Palestine Television and vandalised the place and destroyed every equipment, so that they cannot broadcast any news and the conflict going on in Gaza to the rest

of the world. They also damaged the premise of a radio station called Palestine Voice and threatened the employers working there and forcefully removed them from their workplace. A Palestinian journalist was interviewed on her experience, and she reported on how she was suspended from her job as a journalist and that she has been charged for her reportage, and she was to be held on trial for it. That was the sixth time that she would be appearing before a judge solely because she voiced out the truth on what was happening in Gaza. She further stated that as journalists, they do not receive any security on the field, yet they jeopardize their own lives to get the information because the public needs to know the truth, and it is also in the best interest of the audience all around the world. Another journalist was also interviewed, named Huda Baroud, who stated that she had received threats and was in constant pressure in her work, and the information she gathered for reporting was also blocked countless times by the administration of the Israeli government who were on patrol in Gaza. She also started to receive calls of threats that oppressed and suppressed her, eventually snatching away her freedom of expression and speech. She stated on how these were the reasons for which the other journalists started losing their voice for their freedom of speech and expression, while self-censorship increased amongst them. Baroud further reported on how her husband was a journalist, and he became a “subject to grievances” due to his work related to journalism against the Israeli government. He was later deported from the country, as a result, he was separated from his wife and children. She feared that she might end up with the same fate as her husband, only because she cherished and used freedom of expression as a tool in her work as a journalist and conveying the truth to the world. “She pointed out that restrictions against journalists and depriving them of enjoying freedom of expression and opinion was the main factor behind the disintegration of her family and her husband’s emigration” (Adwan & Naser, 2019).

Every journalist holds the right to utilize freedom of expression and opinion for their own journalistic work while reporting. Because these individuals are trained in such ways, they go through great lengths out in conflict zones to gather crucial information, then, as the witnesses, they hold the right to voice out their opinions. Moreover, journalists tend to use creativity while reporting or writing stories, and it is one of their strongest tools that they apply in their tasks. Although it might seem liberating, however, this does not align with the interests of the political figures and the government in most cases, and so, even while using creative writing, the journalists are faced with strict rules and regulations to follow. Hence, the heavy control of the government, restricts the freedom that the journalists ought to possess, and so they work meticulously as they need to work within some certain boundaries that are imposed on them forcefully. But these journalists are the eyes and ears of the public, rendering a crucial outlook from a neutral perspective. However, due to the limitations set forth by the government, they are bound to abide by the imposed regulations out of fear of severe repercussions.

The role that creativity plays in establishing authenticity is ambivalent: on the one hand, the fact of expressing oneself creatively is prioritized over the content of what is expressed; on the other, in a professional environment only a limited range of creative practice is authorized. (Markham, 2012)

This article further states that, although the senior journalists have been able to utilize creative writing while reporting, however, the junior journalists do not possess the same opportunities. Hence, they are at a disadvantage, as they are unable to use their creative agendas for the greater good, all because of the limitations that are thrown their way, "...there are stakes in creativity, yet

those starting from a relatively dominated position have little scope of using it to their advantage in a journalistic context” (Markham, 2012).

Extensive research across several dimensions of journalism operating in conflict zones has revealed valuable insights. This study builds upon existing studies by particularly focusing on how journalists are subjected to multifaceted challenges which include—suppression, violence, self-censorship, ethical dilemmas, tackling emotional trauma. Thus, the journalists decide upon to implement creative journalism as an alternative means under hostile situations. Because it is their lawful right in voicing out their perceptions in any way they decide to be beneficial the most. They employ freedom of expression and creative journalism as forms of resistance and as an alternative technique, “Journalists are also entitled to have a point of view—to make it obvious that they can only report on what they see. Artificial balance in our reporting, journalism without passion, completely misses the point” (Cramer, 2010). Because the true essence of journalism lies in—journalists being able to share their fresh perspectives on the issues they witness firsthand. Even so, they need to be careful on what they write as the ones they are writing against might come to target them specifically. Hence, due to these limitations, they are imposed to follow certain guidelines on what to report. The objective of this study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how, even in the face of violence and suppression, journalists in conflict zones use creative journalistic practices not merely to report, but to resist, empower, and pursue justice through nonviolent means. As it becomes both a tool and stance—an intentional rejection of the notion that violence must be met with violence. Thus, instead of using force, they apply creative journalistic practices as an act of non-violence resistance.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of this research paper to explore how journalists face multifaceted challenges in conflict zones and crime-affected regions, with a focus on the literary depictions of these issues, specifically in *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. This research scrutinizes the physical and psychological exhaustion the journalists go through alongside the ethical dilemmas they tackle in high-risk situations while also encompassing analysis of multiple theories.

#### **3.1 Aims of the Study**

The focal research question of this paper: What are the primary challenges the journalists face in conflict and crime zones, and how are those challenges addressed in previous studies of journalistic and scholarly discourse?

In addition to that, this research highlights an emerging outlook: While violence is used against journalists to suppress them, they never respond with force or violence, rather they utilize creative journalism to expose the truth in order to bring justice.

#### **3.2 Rationale for the Research Approach**

This research adopts a qualitative approach which enables a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by journalists. As they navigate their emotions and ethical dilemmas using strategies under critical conditions of violence and censorship.

### 3.3 Theoretical Framework

#### 1. Trauma theory

- The traumatic events experienced by individuals can lead to psychological distresses, resulting in anxiety, depression and difficulties with regulating memories.
- Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma emphasizes the fragmented and delayed reactions of traumatic events on individual experiences.

#### 2. Media ethics

- Pressures from political figures and institutional control leads to ethical dilemmas amongst the minds of the journalists, resulting in opting out for self-censorship of certain information that beholds unspeakable circumstances of high-risk environments.

#### 3. Nonviolent resistance

- The direct representation of violence is rejected by the journalists in the forms of nonviolent means and resistance, which is interpreted in the form of creative journalism.

#### 4. Postcolonial theory

- Edward Said's concept of Orientalism particularly critiques the intervention of the West in Vietnam in *The Quiet American*. Thomas Fowler as a British journalist

himself was in a state of disconcerting at the sight of the devastating scenarios due to the postcolonial tensions and vanquishment of Vietnam.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

- For a qualitative analysis, two novels are used as primary sources: *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. The literary texts provide a thematic depiction of violence against journalists in conflict and crime-affected environments, aligning with the objective of this research.
- This research also comprises secondary sources, such as articles from journals, news reports and case studies are used to substantiate the claims made from analysis of the literary texts, presenting a crucial overview of journalistic challenges in conflict zones and in crime scenes.

### **3.5 Limitations**

- This study is solely based on literature novels and secondary sources, hence, there is an absence of in-person interviews and surveys with journalists. Furthermore, this research is limited to using only two literary texts, although highly enriched in the relevance of the issues, however, might not capture the full glimpse of challenges faced by journalists.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Method**

Because of the intricate convergence of literature and journalism, a literary-critical methodology which is strengthened by interdisciplinary theories, is pertinent for this research. The two fictional narratives used as primary sources offer valuable comprehension into the psychological and ethical dimensions of conflict faced by journalists, which are further enriched by the secondary sources that provide deeper insights of high-risks zones taking place in reality. With an emphasis on how violence, trauma, ethical dilemmas, and self-censorship are woven into literary representations followed by news reports, this research displays the nuanced roles played by journalists.

## Chapter 4:

### Analysis

This chapter showcases a detailed analysis of some selected news sources, entailing journalists facing multifaceted challenges operating in conflict and crime zones. It further scrutinizes the strategies of utilizing creative journalism in response to the suppression and violence used against them. Drawing from literary texts depicting journalistic narration, *The Quiet American* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and case studies from news sources, this section aims to demonstrate, in a thematic manner, how creative journalism prevails as a response to violence, in the form of resistance and pursuing justice.

Creative journalism blends the technique of storytelling using descriptive languages and imagery, but it is not just limited within literature, novels, and narrative nonfiction. It can also be found in literary magazines and longform platforms, such as, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's Magazine*, etc. Furthermore, it can also be found in documentaries, digital, and independent platforms. Most importantly, it is featured in sections in major news outlets, such as, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, and many more prominent news outlets, featuring beautifully written narratives which aim to expose the truth in a more artistic manner.

#### 4.1 Research Gap:

These news stories that employ creative journalism focus on the more personal aspects of a person's situation, making it more emotional and engaging, while stating the factual truths of the situations. On the other hand, uncreative journalism is a more traditional form of news reporting,

which states the facts in a straightforward manner. Although this style of journalism is efficient, as it states the facts to the point and is clear, however, there is often an absence of flair.

Prioritizing the neutrality and objectivity of the events unfolding in crimes and conflict zones, it is the standardized format found in daily newspapers, following the structure of inverted pyramids. Inverted pyramid is a type of writing structure mainly applied in journalism work, where the information withholding the utmost importance is classified right at the beginning (Wikipedia, 2025). While these news are precise and provide clarity, they do not exactly evoke much emotion within people.

## **4.2 Literary Representations Paralleling with Real-World Contexts**

### **4.2.1 Gaza:**

This research delves into an in-depth analysis of how journalistic figures in the selected literary texts, *The Quiet American* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, face challenges while operating in conflict and crime-affected zones. Furthermore, how they harness creative journalism as an act of resistance to capture the truth, rather than emulating the violence and suppression used against them. As journalists, they are mandated to carry out their responsibilities of solely reporting on the events unfolding without directly getting involved in actions. Although they feel the urge to race towards assisting the people in need, their wings are clipped. Furthermore, it is a deadly situation for them as well, to operate and report properly in the battlefield, with missiles and shots firing, their own lives are in grave danger in those moments. As mentioned by Alsarayrah and Al houl (2024) in their article about the ongoing conflict in Gaza, where the lives of the journalists' hangs on by a thread while reporting on the spot. With massacres and mass

destruction all around, it becomes an onerous challenge for them to document judiciously. Because the shots could also be fired on them as well on purpose, yet they display their resistance by not engaging in counter attacking them. The most constructive way for them to seek justice is by reporting regarding the incidents, as Thomas Fowler stated in *The Quiet American*, “I wrote what I saw. I took no action – even an opinion is a kind of action” (Greene, 1955, pp. 28). Just a few moments later, Fowler and Alden Pyle were attacked on the watchtower, which was blasted by a bazooka. They immediately fled the scenario in search of shelter. Though heard the cries for help, he could not stop to provide assistance, as he needed to stick to his words—to remain a neutral observer as a war correspondent, not engaging in any physical action. At the same time, he feared for his own life as well at that moment, also to save his career. For these reasons, even upon hearing the cries for help from a nearby distance, Fowler had no choice but to refrain from intervening, bound by the assertion he made previously to remain as a non-participant in these situations. But although he initially displays the embodiment of detachment and neutrality in the war zone, his disposition starts shifting upon witnessing the gradual increase of violence and torment all around him, upon the innocent citizens of Vietnam. The terror he witnessed all around left a lasting impact of horror and mental anguish. His deliberate refusal to engage in any of the actions or to take sides was purely out of self-protection, as well as fear. Having said he extensively detested war, his presence at the war zone was imperative, as per his profession. Therefore, despite his personal convictions, his professional contract stipulated that he refrain from using violence in response to the injustices. His first-person narration is entirely a sort of creative framing, as it is full of ambiguity by narrating a nuanced story, such as towards the end as he learned about the true intentions of Pyle

and his menacing idealism. He was being more reflective of his own personal opinions rather than straight reporting.

Creative journalism in this novel, thus, is portrayed through the means of the movements of the protagonist, Thomas Fowler, on how he shifted from being an observer to an ethical and moral witness, by utilizing creative journalism to reveal the truth. As there is a saying, a pen becomes sharper than a knife, similarly, his words became a more efficacious weapon against propaganda and violence. But these occurrences are not just circumscribed to literary novels, as journalists face similar ethical dilemmas of whether to offer a hand for aid or continue carrying out their duty. As illustrated previously with the case study in a news article by Cohen (2010), during the war between Israel and Palestine, how she was torn between whether to put down her equipment and rush off to provide succour, or keep on documenting. With a heavy heart, she chose to keep on reporting, as she was restricted from getting involved because there were no clear guidelines on what should be done otherwise in such cases. They fight with all their inner instincts and emotions to continue documenting, but at the same time, they know reporting the events will be a way to bring justice, which showcases their resistance. It could be comprehended, these two novels used fictional tools which mirror a form of creative journalism, including literary journalism, hybrid storytelling, and poetic reporting. Because it embodies how journalists get entangled in complex, life threatening challenges, all the while, using their power of documenting as a form of resistance. Both the literary texts illustrate how journalists cannot simply escape from the political or the emotional turmoil due to the consequences of the war. Although they do not physically get involved in any action, their storytelling and creative journalism is an act of power itself.

Documenting severe cases of incidents is already a difficult task which journalists need to cope up with. Furthermore, to top it all off, they go through violence and pressure from higher authorities, which pushes them towards the edge. Due to that, it consequently affects them psychologically, resulting in anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and difficulties in regulating memories. The trauma theory of Cathy Caruth (1996) highlights the fragmentation, flashbacks, and delayed reactions of traumatic events experienced by a person. This theory provides a deeper understanding of the distorted narratives, as well as the continuous flashbacks Billy Pilgrim experiences in the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Any occurrence in his surroundings echoed as vivid recollections of a similar incident from his past, tragic experiences. This sort of circumstances is not only limited to fictional tales, as according to various studies, one of which is by Verhovnik (2017), where she interviewed a freelance journalist on his experience of receiving flashbacks regarding a devastating incident he previously encountered at his workspace. How only a certain shade of a color reminded him of a vehicle with the same color, present in the scene of the accident, instantly reminded him of the incident in lucid details. A single piece of reminder floods their mind with memories of past, work-related experiences upon viewing or encountering any similar adversity. Moreover, the trauma they experience is always left up to them to deal on their own, with no therapeutic support. Billy witnessed and experienced all the events unfolding one at a time; however, he was restricted from mentioning them to anyone else. Because it was not only the psychological burden weighing over his shoulder, but also the political sensitivity of it all exhorted him to remain silent. He had to keep it all to himself, which was even more harrowing for him on an emotional level. Similarly, what journalists go through as well on a daily basis—staying silent on these sensitive topics—which

they are forbidden to speak about. Leaving them to work through their emotional wellbeing, depression and anxiety in solitude. Billy Pilgrim's flashbacks are not nostalgic memories of happy thoughts nor any cherished remembrance; they are jarring interferences that burdened his mind, making him collapse into a plight of depression and trauma. As Cathy Caruth argued, trauma is not always wholly experienced when it takes place, but reawakens in their mind, "belatedly, in the form of an intrusive flashback", provoking them a surge of buried trauma and anxiety. Viewed through this lens, the flashbacks, as well as the fragmented perception of time—not only of Billy's but also how the novel has been narrated by the author in fragmented parts—are not only used as a literary or a fiction-writing device. But it is, more importantly, a symbolization of an emotional landscape and fluctuation journalists are challenged with. All the traumatic echoes of the past whisper back in unambiguous retrospections. The author, Vonnegut, harnesses this spatial disorderliness in order to refrain from the linear clarity predominantly found in official histories regarding wars. Hence, it can be deciphered that the traumatic events the journalists experience while carrying out their responsibilities, may come back to haunt them, making it difficult to report. In a wide array of situations, these psychological tenses intensify, pushing them over the edge, as they are left to confront their traumas in seclusion. These are the challenges that they bear throughout their career, dealing with the trauma which leads to burnout, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, without any moral support, their mental stability becomes detrimental. It can also result in much more extreme measures, where they begin to feel overwhelmed, eventually affecting their professional trajectory and economic sustenance. Nevertheless, they are prohibited from speaking up regarding it, as the possibility of getting violated or harmed by the government invades their mind, ultimately making them silent. The fear embedded in their mind, eventually starts encumbering their

credentialed capacity of reporting the invariant barbarism they once documented with meticulous clarity. This seamlessly links to the article by Cohen (2010), in which the author recounts the story about a journalist named Kevin Carter, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his momentous contribution as a journalist. However, the cascading mental fatigue began to inundate him, which orchestrated in the deterioration of his daily performances resulting in losing his job and source of income. Unable to deal with this accumulated emotional burden, he took his own life, as he became the architect of his own destruction.

Self-censorship acts as a recurring theme in both the novels, as in *The Quiet American*, Fowler keeps certain information confidential, while in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the narration was portrayed in fragmented parts. The journalists are left with no choice but to choose not to report on those sensitive topics, to maintain the standard of media, but more importantly, due to the institutional control and the fear driven by political figures. If any article speaks anything against the government or any powerful individual, then they are prohibited from including those in their reports. Hence, to avoid the risks, they need to abide by these certain strict rules and guidelines set forth towards them. During the Gulf War, which took place from August 2, 1990 and ended on February 28, 1991, journalists were forced to sign contracts with austere guidelines to follow, as mentioned by Karen Turner (2002) in her research work. It was a precaution the government took beforehand to have the documentations inspected before being broadcasted out to the general populace. Every step they took was followed by people working under the higher authorities, watching their every move. Any reports that spoke anything against the government were seized, which later were not even published. The ones which were released were either in fragmented parts, as every crucial information was censored, or were, to the fullest extent,

eradicated. This parallels with the event that unfolded in the culmination point of the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*—it was revealed that the Dresden raid was kept hidden from the public for over two decades to avoid public backlash. There was a raging success of the book by the History Professor, Bertram Copelan Rumfoord, with whom Billy shared his hospital room. However, such an official historical documentary book did not mention an incident, which was directly related to the events he covered in his book.

His one-volume history of the Army Air Force in World War Two was supposed to be a readable condensation of the twenty-seven-volume Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two. The Thing was, though, there was almost nothing in the twenty-seven volumes about the Dresden raid, even though it had been such a howling success. The extent of the success had been kept secret for many years after the war—a secret from the American people. (Vonnegut, 1969, pp. 244)

The reasons why people were not aware of this incident was because it was hardly ever broadcasted. The journalists were silenced by the government, as they were not allowed to cover the news regarding such a sensitive topic. This coercion from the sides of these powerful individuals becomes unbearable, but due to the fear of being harmed, they are left with no choice but to adhere to the assortment of rules and guidelines. They give in by choosing to self-censor of any sensitive information, as they prefer to be prudent and avoid any risk to their own lives, as well as their close kins. Because they might be targeted specifically for unleashing the truth out to the public. To illustrate, an Israeli airstrike specifically targeted and fired upon one of the tents used by the journalists operating in the field, located directly in front of the largest hospital in southern Gaza. The tent immediately caught fire, trapping a journalist inside, who was unable to move due to the injuries on his leg, resulting in him burning alive right on the spot. Along with

him, six other journalists who were also present on the site were all injured with third-degree burns. A couple of days later, a similar incident occurred, in which a female journalist in Gaza was specifically targeted and killed by an Israeli airstrike for documenting the war occurring in Gaza. She shed light on the truthful accounts and the inhumane exertions that are befalling upon the innocent citizens of Gaza. The documentary was accepted to be screened at the New Cannes Film Festival; however, just twenty-four hours before it was accepted, she was murdered. Moreover, ten members of her family were not spared either, as they were killed along with her. As mentioned by Jungblut and Hoxha (2017) in their article, where they interviewed two journalists on what situations they use self-censorship, the first journalist provided his reason, which was to prevent any physical harm or danger, where they could be the ones targeted for leaking the news. The second journalists stated it was entirely due to the fear of any negative consequences that might befall upon not only them and their career, but also their loved ones, who could be in danger due to being their blood relations. The authority figures perpetrate actions towards them in such odious ways, attempting to showcase their power and capability, eventually silencing the journalists. According to Repucci's (2019) article, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, was willing to even relinquish democratic principles for his own personal gain—all to “maintain political power”. Thereby, Israel keeps on targeting the journalists, as they do not want anyone to document the war crimes and to avoid accountability. Therefore, due to the fear of being targeted or being attacked, or in the worst case scenario, killed off brutally, the journalists deem it more risk-mitigated to self-censor. Although the realization creeps up on them, that they are compromising their professionalism—because being a journalist means to deliver the authentic and relevant news to the public, to alert them on the situations of

the critical occurrences transpiring. As a result, the people begin to lose trust in them, consequently leading the general public to turn against the journalists in a contentious clash.

The article by Adnan and Naser (2019) explicitly unmasked the case of journalists, on how their freedom of expression was expropriated by the Israeli government. The journalists were no longer allowed to express their viewpoints or opinions freely of the atrocities they witnessed. Moreover, it highlighted how they were forcefully halted at the entrance of the terminals from where they would travel from one destination to another to report on the events. They were investigated or arrested if any reports claimed of the barbaric activities of the Israelites, which would then immediately get confiscated. To some extent, this truthful incident imitates in *The Quiet American* as well, “This was a defeat: no journalists were allowed, no cables could be sent, for the papers must carry only victories. The authorities would have stopped me in Hanoi if they had known of my purpose” (Greene, 1955, pp. 48). It was forbidden for the journalist to enter Phat Diem, where the war was going on, full of total chaos and calamity. If any person in the profession of a journalist, reporter, or foreign correspondent attempted to go to the scene of where the war was taking place, then they were obstructed forcefully. Because the authorities of the provocateur state, the French, did not want anyone to cover any news of the catastrophe they caused. Four days went by, Fowler was still barred from getting anywhere close towards the cathedral. He was completely restricted from even setting foot in the town. They were also proscribed from writing or documenting any events which would speak about any massacres or genocidal acts. As they stated, if any news is published, then it should claim in an optimistic manner regarding only the triumphs they achieved, for “the papers must carry only victories”.

The only news which should go out is of another of their accomplishments in bringing another territory under their control.

#### **4.2.2 Bangladesh:**

Journalists are not only victims of systemic oppression in just these tyrannical regions and conflict zones, such as Gaza, but also in democratic, independent countries as well. Taking Bangladesh for example, the double homicide case of Bangladeshi journalist couple, Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, who were stabbed to death in their own residence on 11 February, 2012. The late journalists discovered confidential information which had connections with some powerful individuals from the former government and the leading party, Bangladesh Awami League. They were planning to disclose it to the public, which eventually became the cause of their brutal murder. Thirteen years and counting, the families of the deceased couple still seek justice for the case that shook the entire nation, as the case still remains unsolved. Because their probe report has been deferred for over a hundred times this year, “A Dhaka court today set May 21 for filing a probe report in the sensational case lodged over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, extending the deadline for the submission of the report for the 117th time” (BSS NEWS, 2025). From what can be deduced from this given information, they are unable to provide the probe report because they might have incinerated all the evidence that might lead to the culprits a long time ago. As it once came to light that extremely powerful individuals from the government were known to be involved in this double homicide case. Another case of injustice towards a journalist was about Shahidul Alam:

Alam, a well-known activist in the South Asian journalist community, was arrested in August after comments he made during an interview with Al Jazeera. Alam, who had

been covering student protests that paralyzed parts of the country's capital of Dhaka, told Al Jazeera that the unrest was about more than just road safety, and he accused the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of clinging to power by "brute force." (Almond, 2019)

The 2018 road safety movement, led by the students of Bangladesh, sparked when two high school students were killed by a bus operated by a driver without any verified driving license. The protest, which started out as peaceful, was disrupted when police attacked with tear gas on the young protesters and journalists. It was believed that members of the pro-government delegation executed the attack on the orders of Sheikh Hasina. Because Shahidul Alam gave an interview to shade the truth about the former fascist government, as a result, he was sent to prison for 107 days.

### **4.2.3 Bangladesh July Revolution 2024**

Years went by, however, the journalists of this country have yet to achieve press freedom. The July Revolution during 2024 was the most significant event in the history of Bangladesh, where it all started with the students protesting to reform the quota system, which was about how only the descendants of the freedom fighters of this country would receive the privileges and gain admissions to the public universities of this country. It soon took a drastic turn when the movement became directly against the pro-fascist government to overthrow the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and demolish her one-party system. But the news companies hardly broadcasted any of the significant or relevant incidents, due to which the student protesters blamed the journalists for not covering the news. It ultimately led to the evolving distrust of the media and journalists of this country, making the students turn against them for staying silent of all the

barbarism going on. However, little did they know the injustice the journalists were facing in their space of work, as reported by a journalist named Abu Sufian (2025) on his experience during the entire July uprising—how Sheikh Hasina hired people who were loyal to her in every television outlet of this country to take complete control over all the media contents that were to be broadcasted.

Their responsibility was to sit in the newsroom and monitor issues related to Sheikh Hasina's interests. Any news or footage that could embarrass the government was not to be aired. Instead, they were encouraged to spread falsehoods while highlighting only the wrongdoings of the opposition. Those who performed well in this role were specially rewarded. If one carefully observes Sheikh Hasina's press conferences, the manipulation becomes evident. In the name of press conferences, she staged blatant lies on a weekly basis. (Sufian, 2025)

Every news published or broadcasted was either heavily censored or fabricated by those news editors specially appointed by the Former Prime Minister. The kill-count, enforced disappearances, or the number of injured people were all reduced to avoid any aversion and accountability, as the government knew they would receive public backlash. Due to which, the journalists faced disruptions in carrying out their duties.

As journalists, we faced numerous obstacles during the July Uprising. As part of our duty, we had to cover the student protests. However, our reports were altered by news editors. When we wrote that thirty people had been killed on a Saturday, the news editor changed the number to three. They altered figures related to the number of people killed, injured, and missing. (Sufian, 2023)

As Jungblut and Hoxha (2017) also stated in their article about how the leading political party appoints its own loyal people in the newsroom, hence, any reports by journalists critical of the government are then sidelined. This somewhat corresponds to scenarios in both the chosen novels. Firstly, in *The Quiet American*, how Thomas Fowler faced a similar incident of foreign intervention when he attended a press conference. As he observed how the French colonel present there subtly attempted to take control by obscuring the actual number of casualties, “The colonel says our losses have not been heavy. The exact number is not yet known” (Greene, 1955, pp. 64). However, no matter how much they intended to conceal it by keeping the actual fatalities confidential, it was quite evident the number was much augmented. As the American correspondent, Bill Granger, who was also present there, turned towards Fowler and questioned in a state of perplexity, yet discerned by moderately recognizing the ploy, “Is the colonel seriously telling us that he’s had time to count the enemy dead and not his own?” (Greene, 1955, pp. 64) It is emphatically palpable of how the colonel sought to undermine the depravity they were capable of enacting. Secondly, in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, as mentioned above, how the bombing of Dresden was repressed by the U.S government, as they suppressed the truth of the entire event in order to avoid any accountability or backlash from the general public.

The journalists in Bangladesh during the revolution were further subjected to harassment and violence, who were spotted carrying out crucial information which spoke against the government, “In one case, RAB officers raided a media outlet, assaulted employees and tried to force them at gunpoint to identify a journalist who obtained information exposing serious violations by military officers” (Dhaka Tribune, 2025). The article further states how during those five weeks, dozens of journalists were mercilessly killed, along with many of them injured

by the armed forces on the orders of the higher authorities, “During the July uprising from 15 July and 5 August 2024, at least six journalists were killed at or around protests in Dhaka, Sylhet and Sirajganj, while about 200 journalists were injured” (Dhaka Tribune, 2025). But what can be comprehended is that many more journalists were silently killed, which never made it to the news as their loved ones continue to mourn for their losses. They were even forcibly captured and locked up in a secret prison called the “House of Mirrors”, where they were brutally tortured and interrogated—all because they dared to report against the barbarism and corruption caused by the fascist government. Because it is the duty of the journalists to cover the incidents of injustices occurring, but when a similar kind of injustice is done towards those journalists, there is no one to cover those news. The citizens were not apprised of the way they got violated and suppressed. Because of this, which the general population was unaware of, it made the people condemn and denunciate the journalists, even resulting in the attack towards many of them as well. These teetered them towards the edge, as even carrying a badge or an ID out on the streets became dangerous for them during that time.

Yet, many journalists still did not back down or hesitate for a moment, as they kept on persisting by dedicating their lives in contributing with as much authentic news to broadcast, even in the face of all the oppression, suppression and hostility. As articulated by Sifat Afrin Shams (2024), they kept on providing their service even when the country underwent a total blackout. When the government shut down the internet sources, the journalists found every other possible means to communicate and circulate the news.

Shamima Sultana, senior reporter at Channel 24, mentioned how they were forced to revert to analog journalism methods. They gathered information from students and

protesters via texts and calls, despite frequent disruptions. Alternative, expensive, and rare communication methods, such as cable connections, were used to collect material from outside Dhaka. (Shams, 2025)

In comparable terms, the way Bangladeshi journalists were forced to abort from using digital platforms during the internet blackout period, by adapting other alternative methods to gather and disseminate information. Likewise, how Fowler in *The Quiet American* obtained guidance from a Vietnamese character named Mr. Heng, who acted as his informant throughout the novel. Mr. Heng was involved in a militant group feuding with the French. He was originally from Vietnam, hence, he served devotedly for his own nationalist cause. He allusively kept on urging Fowler to write about the truthful events by saying, “Mr. Fowler, you are English. You are neutral. You have been fair to all of us. You can sympathize if some of us feel strongly on whatever side” (Greene, 1955, pp. 129). Meaning that, he knew Fowler, as a journalist, always represented the events from a neutral perspective, however, he insisted upon how the people of Vietnam are deeply affected by the devastating situation that has befall upon them due to the conflict. Without even any fault of their own, the innocent citizens of Vietnam were caught up between the wicked foreign powers, greed, and ideologies. Because all they ever wanted was to reside in their small nation with utmost liberty, safety, and to reside in their homeland in peace. Hence, Mr. Heng brought him in the middle of the massacre of dead bodies lying around, with everything else collapsed to the ground, to show him the real severity of the situation—the aftermath of the bombing. In hopes of Fowler finally writing from his personal observations of the entire truth, full of emotions on the human consequences of the violence, and promulgate the information. “If anything unpleasant happens here in Saigon, it will be blamed on us. My Committee would like you to take a fair view. This is why I have shown you this and this”

(Greene, 1955, pp. 129). Mr. Heng hoped that by showing Fowler the situation, he would document it, which might make the opposing combatant back down and not attack Saigon. Their conversation ended with Mr. Heng stating, “I only want you to remember what you have seen. Perhaps one day you will have a reason for writing about it. But you must not say you saw the drum here” (Greene, 1955, pp. 129). The drum contained particles from the plastic explosives which were smuggled to use in the attacks on Vietnam, mainly involving the covert deployments of Alden Pyle. Mr. Heng cautioned Fowler on how to take a delicate approach while maintaining the parity of what crucial information should be shared, at the same time not to share about the explosives which were smuggled, in order to avoid discretion. Both of them were morally conflicted; however, they were left with no other choice, as it would be very dangerous. Consequently, Fowler agreed to write the story with graphic sentimental intricacy about the bombing and the innocents who fell victims of the situation. But he bypassed the specification about the smuggled plastic explosives—an apparent act of opting to self-censor on the particular information. As also mentioned by Moges (2017) in his article, how, due to the fear penetrated by the government, invoked trepidation into the minds of the journalists, resulting in censoring the news on their own. This reflects the risk and complexity journalists go through in disclosing critical information in a volatile situation while playing a pivotal role in promulgating the details of events occurring in conflict zones. Instead of exerting a comparable level of force or violence, they choose to document it by unveiling about the brutality of the war. In times like this, they utilize their skills of implementing creative journalism, as this conundrum encapsulates the creative and nonviolent journalistic resistance operationalized here by Thomas Fowler. Although he was not able to expose every detail, due to the constraints standing up against him, which he needed to navigate through the redaction, otherwise it would put him in great risk—resulting in

imprisonment, assault, or even being killed off silently. Notwithstanding this obstacle, he still made sure to interpret the social repercussions due to the bombing of the place. He rendered the incident using emotive diction, which would convey the poignant message to make the people contemplate the horrific condition. This worked as a strategy in attesting the truth, involving the tone, framing, and details in morally and ethically charged expressions, which direct data solely cannot provide. His refusal to expose the plastic explosives was a morally complex act, but coextensively, it was a very calculated move as well, since he needs to safeguard his own welfare of the lethal, life-threatening predicament. It was a very intrinsic nature of a nonviolent resistance that journalists often showcase in such cases. They continue to fulfill their responsibilities by documenting the entire event rather than choosing to directly confront the violence of the oppressors. As seen in *The Quiet American*, how Fowler dedicated his entire time in reporting instead of engaging in violent actions against the attackers. Thus, using his position as a journalist, he responded with the use of creative journalistic techniques, instead of complying with violence.

#### **4.2.4 Post-July Bangladesh**

Reverting to the real-world contextual backdrop, the movement led by the students, later united with all the other mass population, was a success, as on 5 August 2024, Sheikh Hasina officially surrendered by handing over her resignation and fled the country. One of the main achievements, as declared by the denizens, was the freedom of expression, as before then, no one dared to speak up against any injustices committed by the government and high officials. However, as seen in these recent times continuing beyond the July Revolution, asking relevant questions which would spark controversy, is seen as an offence, resulting in the termination of the journalists.

They later even refuse to speak regarding it due to the fear of being harmed or attacked, “The Daily Star has learned this after speaking with over 30 journalists, including some who have lost their jobs. They, however, would not comment on the record for fear of reprisal” (Adhikary, 2025). Moreover, there have been reports, Dhaka Tribune (2024) being among them, of trespassing and vandalism of a reputed news organization, with five journalists getting sacked, all because they criticized the actions of a leader of the student-led political party of Bangladesh. Also, for accommodating the fallen political party, which did not align with the interest of some people from the student-led party, “A group of student protesters entered the offices of the investor of a television station, Somoy TV, accusing it of "propaganda", protesters said on Tuesday, with at least five journalists subsequently fired” (Dhaka Tribune, 2024). Another recent case of three journalists, who dared to do something unseen in Bangladesh since August 2024—asked vital but unpalatable questions to the people in power. They questioned the source of the inconsistent death toll figures and whether someone can be called a "killer" before a court has ruled on the issue. Because they asked these questions, it enraged the advisor of Cultural Affairs, resulting in termination of two of them, and another one getting suspension. “Two journalists from two television media outlets have been accused of being fired for asking questions at a press conference of the cultural advisor to the interim government of Bangladesh. Another channel has dismissed a journalist from his post and launched an investigation over the same incident” (Ahsan, 2025). Soon after, supporters of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) Movement started a vicious hate campaign against these journalists and threatened to besiege the offices of their respective media houses unless they were fired. All these incidents once again intensified the fear amongst journalists, that even after an epoch-making revolution in July 2024 which was the fight for the freedom of speech, press freedom still remains as a myth in

this country, ranking this nation at 165 out of 180 countries in press freedom, in accordance to Reporters Without Borders.

#### **4.2.5 Observing from the Margins**

To further enrich the analysis of how journalists navigate challenges in conflict and crime-affected zones, exploring the novel *The Quiet American* through the lens of Postcolonial literary theory is vital. The setting of the novel is during the First Indochina War in French-colonial Vietnam, where the author, Graham Greene, encapsulated the dynamics of power, empire, journalism, cultural dominance and intervention—all intertwined within this one novel. Postcolonial theory, particularly the concept of Orientalism by Edward Said, which critiques the Western Neo-imperialism and the intervention of the West in Vietnam. It also helps to understand how the characters reflect and resist the colonial power structures. Primarily, the novel prompts critical examination of whose voices are more prioritized in the stories of war that are told. Additionally, reporting from a neutral perspective manifests as a medium for showcasing resistance for the foreign correspondents. Through the portrayal of the characterization of Thomas Fowler and Alden Pyle, Greene prominently displayed their contrasting traits and intentions regarding the Western intervention, as well as the ethical parameters of journalists. At that time, Vietnam was still a French colony, with towns being subjugated, and the tension was palpable. Aligning with the concept of Orientalism, Fowler, even being a British journalist, saw past what the West completely ignored, as the Western powers saw Vietnam as a weak, exotic, and chaotic realm, in dire need of a powerful regime, such as themselves, to take control. They utterly failed to acknowledge the cultural, political, and economical subtleties of the Vietnamese people. Fowler noticed Vietnam in an aestheticized

perspective, its subtle beauty and surreality, which made the state unique in its own way. He did not think that this peaceful country was in need of any Western political agency to usurp authority and make a complete shift of the natural beauty it beholds. This is a reflection of Orientalist gaze—viewing the East in a picturesque standpoint rather than a passive nation, from the perspective of a Western and for the Western narratives. This reflects aspects of how Mehdi Hasan, even being a British-American journalist, spoke up against the injustices and genocide being enacted in Gaza. Due to which his show in the American cable news channel got cancelled, making the pro-Palestines rage out, as he was one of the few journalists who brought harmony in the U.S. media coverage of the unceasing conflict in Gaza: “Several pro-Palestine advocates view Hasan as adding balance to mainstream US media coverage of the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, which has been viewed as having very little criticism of Israel's brutal campaign” (The New Arab, 2023). The U.S. government allied with the Israel government and has been the main source of the funding that Israel has been receiving to create heavy weaponry, ammunition, and missiles for use in the attack on Gaza. Which the U.S. media tries to hide by fabricating or whitewashing this news, to maintain their country’s image, or also due to the fear that the U.S. government might target them by shutting down their organization. Hence, the act of coercion or pressure might also be a possibility for censoring critical news. Because they need to save their image, avoid being physically or psychologically harmed by the government, as well as to abstain from any backlash from the supporters of Israel in America.

In a conversation where Fowler boldly asserted to Pyle how the Vietnamese people never wanted anyone breathing down their necks every second of the day: “They don’t want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the same as another. They don’t want our white skins around telling

them what they want” (Greene, 1955, pp. 94). Fowler made it clear that the Vietnamese people do not need the white Western people to give commands. They wanted to lead a normal life in ease, where everyday would be the same without having to worry about being shot at for any redundant reasoning. Both the characters were from the West, however, there was a clear distinction between their intentions and thought processes. On one hand, Fowler was a veteran, and since he was in this profession for quite some time, he knew about human nature more profoundly than Pyle, who exemplified as a naive, American interventionist. He saw Vietnam as a weak, old state in need of a “Third Force”. Hence, through his portrayal, the theory of Postcolonial augments in viewing Pyle as an emblem of neo-colonialism. He was one of those people who believed in American-style democracy, a modern-day sort of supremacy and potency in the name of “help” and “development”. For which there was always a continual feud between the two characters, as Fowler constantly critiqued Pyle’s blind idealism. He questioned Pyle in an aggravated way, whether he really thought the simple people of Vietnam would be so concerned about complex things such as democracy, when after their long, tiring day of laboring, their only place of relaxation was their small huts and houses, “Do you think the peasant sits and thinks of God and Democracy when he gets inside his mud huts at night?” (Greene, 1955, pp. 95) To which Pyle replied, “You talk as if the whole country were peasant. What about the educated? Are they going to be happy?” (Greene, 1955, pp. 95) It can be seen pictorially how Pyle was so ignorant of the collective crisis and the ordeal the majority of the people in Vietnam were going through due to the war. Because the rich people would always have their wealth to help them out in days of hardship; however, the underprivileged ones, which were way more in number, would not have anything to get out of their state of tribulation. Fowler further stated, “Oh no, we’ve brought them up in our ideas. We’ve taught them dangerous games, and that’s why we are

waiting here, hoping we don't get our throats cut. We deserve to have them cut" (Greene, 1955, pp. 95). At this point, he was wholly agitated because the peaceful mind of the humble Vietnamese people were getting corrupted because of the disruption caused by the West, trying to take away their land and freedom. Hence, if one day the Vietnamese citizens turn against them, then the West entirely deserves to be blamed. Although earlier, when he exchanged heavy words with Pyle, that as a journalist, he does not take sides, a clear shift in his disposition from being detached and neutral to being more ethically charged can be witnessed. Because they take a very personal choice—to choose humanity over their profession in such critical conditions. As later, in a deep conversation with Mr. Heng, the communist implored, "Sooner or later...one has to take sides. If one is to remain human" (Greene, 1955, pp. 174). Because, at the end of the day, people need to choose to be with a certain side, if they believe that humanity still perseveres and transcends.

But Fowler insisted upon not being involved in this deplorable conflict, as he is a journalist, upholding equanimity by remaining impartial: "For the sake of an argument – to pass this bloody night, that's all. I don't take sides. I'll be still reporting, whoever wins" (Greene, 1955, pp. 96). His sole responsibility is to be a neutral observer and report on the situation, despite the overall outcome of the fight and whichever belligerent prevails in the end. Irrespective of the difficulty, Fowler had to withhold his perspective of the Vietnamese; he could not let it succumb to his emotions. He needed to pull himself together every now and then, as it might start affecting his tasks. But at the same time, he sometimes did not see the point in putting his life at risk over and over again only to never see the actual news making it to the papers. As he exclaimed in a frustrated tone while bringing it up to Pyle, "There's usually a way round, and I haven't noticed

much regard for truth in our papers either” (Greene, 1955, pp. 96). Fowler specifically mentioned it as “ours”, meaning that the factual events never make it to the news even in the Western world, keeping the white people along with the rest of the world in the dark. On top of that, letting them assume whatever was happening was for the best. Because they were oblivious to the cruel circumstances devised and orchestrated by the French forces. Hence, their government would do anything to hide these incidents in order to safeguard their diplomatic standing to avoid global scrutiny. Thus, leading to censorship by suppressing and silencing the journalists by ingraining fear in their minds.

As referenced previously, the journalists continue to dedicate themselves wholly by contributing to the cause for justice. They keep on enduring every obstacle that gets in their way, as they refuse to give up by resisting cessation. They go out to great lengths through every difficulty, by finding out alternative means to deliver and broadcast as much substantiated reportage as possible to all the people globally. As noted previously with the article by Shams (2024), the journalists took extensive steps to gather information, and how they further engaged in considerable exertions to disseminate the news. Correspondingly, how Abu Sufian (2025) finally emboldened himself by mustering up the courage to write about all the incidents he and other journalists went through during the entire revolution period in Bangladesh. Beyond that, despite the perilous condition in Gaza and hundreds of journalists being violated, attacked, or killed, still the other journalists intrepidly carry on the legacy by pursuing the truth in line with their professional obligations. Be that as it may, they still need to navigate the challenges—to maintain their corporate integrity and safety, their own security, also their loved ones, suppression,

oppression, violence, censorship, and many more—just so they can survive to see the next day while making another one of their contributions.

### **4.3 Harnessing the Power of Creative Journalism**

In respect of which, the journalists take the route of employing creative journalism as an alternative means. Because it is more a necessity to avoid any consequences which could be detrimental for them. This type of journalism blends in their personal reflections intertwined with emotions while reporting the empirical data. As put into words by Cramer (2010), how journalists have full rights to express their “fresh perspectives” on the issues; otherwise, it fails to grasp the true essence of what journalism effectively stands for. Hence, journalists resort to creative forms of reporting. Notably, an award-winning Palestinian journalist, Motaz Azaiza, has been accoladed globally for documenting on the conflict in Gaza using first-person narratives, raw emotions, and his embodied experiences, especially in his social media platforms, which cannot be done in the same way in the mainstream media and outlets. Because, as Markham (2012) in his article, how in the professional environment in the media, there is a limitation of how much creativity can be implemented, due to the constraints and boundaries set by the government and the danger that imposes upon them. Thus, social media platforms are used as an operational asset, as it acts as an exhibition of the resistance and testimonies against the oppression enforced upon them and the innocents. This type of journalism is creative in a way which circumvents the traditional form of news reporting by expressing in direct discourse to all the people worldwide in real time, supported with concrete evidence. Tim Markham further stated in his article how even if the senior members in the media can yet implement a level of

creativity in documenting, the junior journalists experience disparities, as they are denied equal opportunities in the mainstream media agencies. Because of which, burgeoning journalists seek ways to implement creative journalism through ways by which they do not have to worry much regarding self-censorship, surveillance, and violence. In particular, a project named "We Are Not Numbers" was inaugurated back in 2015 by Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, to create an opportunity for the young aspiring writers and journalists, especially for the young Palestinians. It helps to empower these young people to amplify their voices by constructing them into all forms of creative writing while stating the factual information, such as, through poetry, memoirs, and text-based journalism. Journalists from Gaza primarily publicize their featured documentary and writing via longform platforms, such as, *Al Jazeera*, *The New Arab*, and *Middle East Eye*, which encompasses reporting the substantiated findings and data interwoven with their raw emotions and expressions.

Both the novels, *The Quiet American* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, depict the multifaceted challenges faced by journalists operating in conflict and crime-affected zones, which they need to navigate through. Further adding to this research, supported by articles and news sources, how instead of responding with violence to the suppression exerted upon them, they adopt to utilizing creative journalism as a countermeasure to bring justice. Because when the traditional reporting method lacks efficacy, this method serves as an alternative way, as it not only drives as a vehicle for truth-telling but also acts as a means of demonstrating their non-violent resistance and empowerment in a sentiment-driven style. This analysis constitutes corroboration of the significance of the profession of the journalists, how in the conflict and hostile zones, they report

the events unfolding when being exposed to extreme dangers to their lives, creative journalism becomes a vital form to disseminate news that captivates the global audiences using their artfully constructed narratives. By and large, this analysis provides an evaluative approach of how the world views the vital roles the journalists play in conflict and crime zones. Going beyond the many complicated challenges they need to endure, journalists from all corners of this globe proffer the hope for justice, leveraging their creative practices. As it is not just a gesture or manifestation to resist and respond to the violence but a constituent which crusades for a more cognizant and righteous world.

# Chapter 5:

## Findings and Conclusion

### 5.1 Key Findings:

This chapter synthesizes the principal findings of this research paper regarding the multifaceted challenges the journalists face in conflict and crime zones through an interdisciplinary lens. Whilst reflecting on the broader implications of the tribulations they go through, this thesis provides a contribution to a more nuanced understanding of how in the light of the violence the journalists face, they employ their creative journalistic strategies to disseminate the truthful accounts. This serves as the gap and the central objective of this research paper, as when using traditional reporting methods is devoid of expressiveness, utilizing creative journalism is their way of not only to report on the bigoted events, but is also an act of resistance, empowerment, and seeking justice.

In the first chapter of this thesis paper, two fictional novels are incorporated, *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, to serve as representations of the obstacles and oppression they face off. Although both the novels are fictional, they serve as literary representations of journalists steering through extremely politicized situations while dealing with traumatic events. The second chapter is a literature review which supports the claims and insights made in the previous chapter with journal articles and news coverage from around the world. This review reinforced the fictional portrayal with real-world examples of the complexities faced by journalists from various corners of the globe, shedding light on the ethical dilemmas, censorship, coercion, surveillance, violence, and suppression they are subjected to.

The third chapter introduces the methodology of all the theoretical frameworks, namely—trauma theory, with an emphasis on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, media standards which needs to be maintained, the showcasing of nonviolent resistance utilizing their power of storytelling and creative journalism which acts as a defiance in the face of all the suppression and oppression. Lastly, postcolonial theory reveals the enduring impact of imperial power dynamics due to which the work of the journalists gets affected and controlled, snatching away their freedom of speech and expression. The fourth chapter provides an in-depth analysis and research of the issues the journalists need to tackle through that has been continuing for decades. The claims are significantly supported with journal articles and news sources, with a magnifying vantage point on the situation of the journalists operating in Gaza and Bangladesh, highlighting how the importance of the issues addressed are still an enduring concern to the present moment.

## **5.2 Discussion of the Findings:**

In the context of both the fictional and real world, journalists ascend as the frontline warriors, becoming an embodiment of resistance and defiance of oppression and suppression. Providing enlightening revelations of the psychological, ethical and political challenges the journalists face, they pilot through all these complexities to disseminate the truth, utilizing creative journalistic practices that become both an armor as well as a weapon which is mightier than any arsenal used against them.

In the novel, *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene, Thomas Fowler navigates the ethical dilemmas and turmoil, all the while, confronting the moral ambiguities due to the intervention

and imperial political structures imposed by the West in the peaceful towns of Vietnam, causing heaps of massacre and destruction in the name of power, development and help. Firstly, displaying detachment due to his position as a war correspondent, his disposition starts to shift as he witnesses the horrendous barbarism of the Western military power, which ignites a sense of humanity and emotions within himself. Hence, his reporting strategies, mixing irony and understatements, can be seen as a coping mechanism intertwined with creative narration, showcasing his emerging willpower and resistance. Furthermore, exploring a second fictional novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, which mirrors the complexities and imminently fatal challenges they face which poses an existential threat to their lives. Moreover, the fragmented and nonlinear structure of the narrative serves as a metaphor as well which depicts how war stories are also even portrayed in a very distorted manner. The continuous flashbacks of Billy Pilgrim's traumatic events not only offer the readers with the trauma and mental anguish of the experience, but also how it tries to keep crucial information confidential by masking it with flashbacks every now and then. As he would be ravaged with a jarring force of vivid recollections of any same incidents from his past, traumatic experiences. This illustrates the fractured memory of journalists as well when they have delayed reactions of any incidents.

The literary depictions reflect real-life scenarios regarding how journalists face all these multifaceted challenges and complexities in conflict and crime zones. But it is not only limited within totalitarian or subjugated regions such as Gaza, but these issues can also be witnessed in democratic countries as well, for instance, in Bangladesh. Thus, this research paper, supported by journal articles and news coverages, unveiled the physiological and psychological experiences they go through which leaves a lasting impact on them. As in accordance with the trauma theory

of Cathy Caruth's, underscores the importance of the fragmented and delayed reaction a person experiences of any traumatic event they went through. Along with the psychological stress, trauma, anxiety and depression which falls upon their shoulders as a burden, they are also faced with somatic jeopardy as they conduct their operations in conflict and crime-affected zones. Moreover, they need to grapple with ethical dilemmas, censorship and propaganda as the government coercion befalls upon them. Hence, to spare themselves from any corporeal injury and targets of victimization, many journalists gravitate towards self-censoring as it becomes an act of defense mechanism for them. Because, the government would not hesitate to cause endangerment to those journalists if they leak out any confidential information, all in spite to maintain their political power and stance, as well as to avoid accountability. Besides, this fear of being harmed by the government that is embedded in the minds of the journalists, begins to impede their freedom of expression. As a result of all the repercussions, the public starts to lose their trust in them, meeting with reputational damage and social backlash due to perceived transgression. However, the journalists need to abide by the media ethics and standards which eventually shape up the journalistic practices. The analysis is further supplemented by exploring it with a Postcolonial lens which presents a dynamic perspective on journalism, cultural dominance, intervention and power, which adds a layer of resplendency and resonance to this research paper.

Therefore, the objective of this thesis establishes the significance of creative journalism which acts as a form of defiance and nonviolent resistance. As when they are subjected to heavy suppression and violence, instead of responding with a physical attack, they respond by applying literary strategies, symbolic illustrations and emotionally charged narratives to reclaim their

agency in order to bring justice. When these are published in news outlets, digital and independent platforms, literary magazines or longform platforms—weapons curtail, as the power of writing dominates.

### **5.3 Contributions:**

First and foremost, this thesis paper bridges literary fictional works with real-world journalism, furthermore, it addresses an issue which is a contemporary concern to this day, hence, offering a more nuanced understanding of journalism studies and its complexities. A comprehensive exploration of vital theories of trauma and media ethics are demonstrated and analyzed by entailing it with journalistic fictional characters, which are not traditionally conducted in research papers involving complex political contexts. Furthermore, a holistic and extensive analysis has been conducted through a postcolonial lens of the literary novels, and connecting it all with journal articles and news reports of real-world experiences of journalists to explore truth-tellings using alternative and creative means. Thus, introducing how even in the face of violence and suppression, instead of engaging in any physical counter attacks, the journalists respond by using ingenious nonviolent activism. Because the conventional method of documentary journalism is suboptimal, it is curtailed in the face of creative journalism with its cadence of authentic expression. As journalists stand as not only passive conveyors but also become active avatars of defiance and resistance.

## **5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research:**

This study encompasses research on two literature novels, journal articles and news reports, hence, there is a deprivation of physically administered interviews with journalists. Although the secondary sources involving the direct contact interviews of the journalists from Palestine conducted by other researchers are included, however, there is an absence of interpersonal interviews with journalists, especially the ones operating in Bangladesh.

Thus, this void could be filled by conducting on-site interviews with more journalists from Bangladesh, as well as from Palestine. Moreover, to deepen this particular research work further, more fictional novels regarding journalism studies could be incorporated.

## **5.5 Closing Reflection**

Through the medium of the fictional world of *The Quiet American* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, to the reality of Gaza and Bangladesh, this study signifies the importance of the vital role the journalists play, which is more than just a profession. The palpable dissonance between articulating the truth and succumbing to silence amidst the extreme violence, repression, censorship and propaganda, they challenge the despotic power structures that obstruct their path. Moreover, by conducting an interdisciplinary research, the intersection between literature and journalism studies provides an original glimpse into both academic exploration and contemporary societal salience.

The power of expression and writing entailing raw emotions in a creative manner always perseveres, which becomes a vehicle for resistance and defiance against violence and belligerence, driving towards a more awakened and rectitudinous world. Thus, this research is to honour and pay a tribute to journalists from all corners of the world for their immense contribution. For their voices are the most powerful ones that echoes effective messages, reverberating across geopolitical and cultural boundaries.

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