

How can journalists avoid being used in disinformation operations? | The Strategist

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Journalists play a crucial role in bringing the truth to light and holding the powerful to account. Authoritarian regimes see how high-quality journalism can erode their legitimacy and support by exposing poor governance. This results in attempts to censor the free press, not only internally but also outside of autocratic states.

The Middle East provides myriad examples of autocratic leaders seeking to silence criticism from journalists overseas. The killing of Washington Post reporter Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi Arabia is one of the most notable and demonstrates how far some states will go to eradicate dissent. Iran is also known for its efforts to threaten critical journalists based overseas and to harass their Iran-based family members.

However, such states also exploit public trust in journalism, and weaponise journalists and news media organisations, to amplify propaganda and disinformation favourable to their regimes. Indeed, inauthentic content doesn't usually get much traction unless it is picked up and promoted by legitimate platforms.

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