**To Report or Not to Report?**

On April 11, 2003, an op-ed was written by Eason Jordan, then chief news executive at CNN.  In the piece, he reflected on the information CNN reporters knew about, but did not report, regarding the atrocities being committed by Saddam Hussein's regime.  He explained that the information was withheld to protect individuals from additional harm.

Eason Jordan

CNN was criticized for violating journalistic ethics and principles thought to be basic by most reporters.  In this activity, you will explore the circumstances surrounding this particular issue.

Read the following:

* [The News We Kept to Ourselves](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/iraq/jordan_oped.pdf) by Eason Jordan - published April 11, 2003 by the New York Times.
* [CNN's Decision Sparks Media Debate](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june03/jordan_4-17.pdf) - April 17, 2003
* [Guiding Principles for the Journalist](http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=36&aid=4349) by Bob Steele - posted March 29, 2000 at Poynter.org
* [The Media's War, April 15, 2003](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june03/cnn_4-15.html) - NewsHour (with Jim Lehrer) Interview of Eason Jordan

As you read, consider the following:

* Reflect on the tone, nature, and intent of his piece.
* How would you characterize the format he uses?
* Is it written as a letter to the reader, an essay, a journal entry, or as a response to an accusation?
* What is Jordan trying to do?  How does he sound?  Do you think he is genuine?
* How does it make you feel as a consumer of news?
* What are the reactions of other journalism professionals to CNN's choice?
* Do you think CNN violated journalistic ethics?
* Where do you stand?  Would you have published news of the specific atrocities at the time they were committed?

For this assignment, you are to write a one-page reaction to **one** of the following quotes from a New York Times article titled, "CNN's Silence About Torture is Criticized" and the NewsHour Extra story titled "CNN's Decision Sparks Media Debate."

* "It's very simple," he [Eason Jordan] said.  "Do you report things that get people killed?  The answer is no."  (April 15, 2003 New York Times, "CNN's Silence About Torture is Criticized")
* Alex S. Jones, director of Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, sad Mr. Jordan was being unfairly singled out.  "I think every news organization has to make those kinds of calls from time to time," he said.  (April 15, 2003 New York Times, "CNN's Silence About Torture is Criticized.")
* On CNN's rival, the more conservative Fox News Channel, columnist Charles Krauthammer said, "It's a classic example of selling your soul for the story.  He clearly gave up the truth for access."  (April 17, 2003 NewsHour Extra, "CNN's Decision Sparks Media Debate.")

Do you agree or disagree with the quote you selected?  Explain your position.  Use the information provided in the Guiding Principles for the Journalist as you develop your piece.  Were any violated by CNN?

Adapted from a lesson plan found at PBS Teacher Source.  Source:  Greeves, Lisa (2006).  To report or not to report?  Retrieved from [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/) on August 25, 2006.