Welcome to Spotlight. I'm Robin Basselin. And I'm Ryan Geertsma. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. It is the night of February 22nd, 2006. Atwar Bahjat looks out at the television camera. Bahjat’s face is famous throughout Iraq and the Middle East. She is a member of the television news media. Bahjat tells people about the day’s news stories. And the people who watch her trust her. They know that she will tell the truth. But tonight, Bahjat is tired. It is hard for her to hide her sadness. She is speaking about the war in Iraq – about fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims. On that night, Atwar Bahjat looks into the camera. She speaks an important truth: “If you are Sunni or Shia, Arab or Kurd, there is no difference. We are all Iraqis, united in fear for this nation." These were the last words Atwar Bahjat ever spoke in front of a camera. Less than 24 hours later, three men murdered her. Bahjat is one of hundreds of media or press workers who have died telling their important stories. May 3rd is World Press Freedom Day. In honor of this day, today’s Spotlight is on the importance of press freedom and safety. Today's world is becoming more and more dangerous for news media workers. It is especially dangerous for press workers that report on areas of conflict. Some of them are killed by accident - when they report on battles. Others are murdered. People kill them because of what they say or write. A media worker’s goal is to report the facts. But in areas of conflict, people often disagree about facts. Sometimes, groups of people and even governments disagree with media workers. This can lead people to hurt and even kill news workers. In the last 20 years, more than 1,000 news media workers around the world were killed. The Committee to Protect Journalists reports that only 20% of these deaths are an accident. Like Bahjat's death, nearly 70% of these deaths are murder. And in the last 20 years, 90% of these murders have not been solved. Michael Nicholson is a British reporter. He has been reporting on wars for 40 years. He talked with the Al-Jazeera news organization. He explained that his work has always had natural risks. However, in recent years something has changed. He said, “When you start in this business of reporting wars and conflicts... there is this comforting idea that because of the word ‘press’ on the side of our vehicles ... we are protected. But not today. Today the word ‘press’ could kill you.” This is what happened to Atwar Bahjat. At the time of Bahjat's death, Iraq was one of the most dangerous places for media workers. The organization Reporters Without Borders reports that more than 200 media workers died during the war in Iraq. Most of these deaths were deliberate murders. Bahjat’s job was to report on all parts of the conflict. Her reports did not support either side. Bahjat refused to become a part a war that was dividing her country. Bahjat’s friend and co-worker Amna Dhabi talked with American reporter Megan Stack. Dhabi said, “Atwar would say, 'I am for Iraq - not for a particular group." But not everyone was happy about Bahjat's reports. The people who were fighting each other did not like her support of a united Iraq. Reporter Hala Jaber wrote a news story about Bahjat. In it, she said, “Atwar's reporting made her enemies on both sides of Iraq's divide. She could never satisfy one without making the other angry." Bahjat always wore a gold pendant around her neck. This piece of jewellery was made in the shape of Iraq. Her pendant represented Bahjat’s support of a united Iraq. But not everyone liked the pendant. Reporter Megan Stack wrote, “That pendant was famous. Men would call her. They threatened to kill her for wearing it." Bhajat was afraid. But she would not stop reporting. She believed in telling the truth. She told Megan Stack, “My country is falling down and breaking apart. And it is my job to watch." On the day Bahjat died, she was reporting in the village where she was born. It was the end of the day. As she got into the news vehicle to drive home, men carrying guns drove up. They took her, the camera man, and the driver. By the end of the night, they had killed all three of them. Atwar Bahjat’s death was tragic. But she died doing something she believed was important – telling the facts. Many people believe it is important to protect the news media. They believe that media workers must be free to report without fear. That is why groups such as the United Nations, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters without Borders work hard to protect media workers. They keep a careful record of media workers who have been killed, murdered, kidnapped, or put in prison. These organizations also tell the stories of hurt and killed media workers. They want people to know about this growing problem. They raise money to help families of murdered journalists. They also use this money to change laws around the world. With the power of knowledge, they pressure governments to keep media workers safe. Joel Simon is the head of the Committee to Protect Journalists. He spoke with the Huffington Post about their work. They have kept records of crimes against journalists for 20 years. These records show something interesting. 88% of all the killed media workers were local media workers. Simon said, “We want more people to know about the attacks against local journalists working in their own country. We want there to be a political cost to killing local journalists." After Bahjat’s death, the Committee to Protect Journalists gave her the International Press Freedom Award. They said that she always made a brave effort to tell the truth. They praised her for her excellent skills and her courage. In their magazine "Dangerous Assignments," reporter Jihad Ballout praised Bahjat. He wrote about her reporting skill and her love for Iraq. He explained, "Bahjat represented everything that people on all sides of the war hate." It is too late to save Atwar Bahjat's life. But it is not too late to protect the thousands of media workers that still bravely serve around the world. The writer of this program was Jennifer Hawkins. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. All quotes were adapted and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, "World Press Freedom: Atwar Bahjat." We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye!