

### Case Analysis #3

The media ethics issue, in this case, is whether or not the photos of Ambassador Andrey Karlov, after being shot, should be published. Additionally, the ethical issue of whether or not the photograph should have been chosen as the world press photo of the year is present.

This is a hard case to analyze as it can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. First of all, you have the western public perspective of an ambassador of an ally being shot by a middle eastern terrorist. As westerners, I feel too often we don't look at the whole picture. I do not condone terrorism, nor do I support it. Still, I believe it is essential to understand the entire context of terroristic events and understand the perspectives of the terrorist as well as those of the general public.

Thousands of Middle Easterners have had their homelands destroyed while stuck in a war-torn era. As westerners, we are inclined to think from our perspective but put ourselves in the shoes of a middle eastern family who may have lost everything because of a war they never wanted. If you come from the same background as the shooter, you may idolize the shooter. It may seem like a Bin Laden moment. It is all about perspective. For some people, this photo would be one of pride whether we agree with it or not.

We do have to strongly consider the perspective of the rest public as well, though. This is a terroristic event. Most people would agree that they hold the right to be informed about terror events around the world.

The publisher of the image has to come to terms with their decision one way or another of whether or not to publish the photo as ultimately, they will need to take responsibility for the publication. As a publicist, you may fear for your safety, and you also may be concerned about the legal boundaries. In the fast-paced media world we live in, these sorts of decisions need to be

made fast, sometimes without legal counsel. Although, I would imagine that the publishing organization of a photo like the one in this story would phone a legal expert to make sure they are in the clear.

While an assassination in a public place is very extreme, the U.S. has done many similar things with its military, whether they were photographed or not. Earlier this year, in January, a U.S. drone killed Iran General Qasem Soleimani. People in the U.S. were divided, but many felt the decision was sound. A short while later, drone footage of the assassination was released. Some in the U.S. viewed this as a great moment as he was an essential player in Iranian backed militias that have been responsible for the killing of a number of American soldiers, just as the ambassador killed by the assailant in the photo played a role in Russia's destruction of Aleppo which brought the civilian death toll to over 1000.

As a journalist following the SPJ code of ethics, it is your role to seek the truth and report it. From the perspective of the reporter, this is a historical moment that the public deserves to see. The National Press Photographers Association also states that photojournalists should "Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see." This is a moment of terror, which in most cases, the public has a justifiable need to see and understand. In addition to the NPPA, The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has a whole guidebook on how to handle terroristic events in the media, including a section covering what to do about images. While UNESCO does cite many different people and give a rather vague answer, they do cite Paul Wood, a seasoned BBC reporter in saying, "In the case of terrorist acts, use the rules of "taste and decency" effectively "soften or sanitize – that is censor – the horror of the event." In

the photo from this case, it is clear that the photographer was attempting to censor the horror of the shot while highlighting the hatred of the assailant along with the sheer reality of the moment. The perspective of the photos is about as good as a photographer could capture at the moment. The ambassador's shoes can be seen, but there is no (or little) blood, and there is no gunshot wound shown in the photos. The absence of blood and gore produced by the gunshot makes the photo a bit more censored and more appropriate for publishing.

Personally, I would choose to run this photo, but I would not publish the name of the shooter, nor would I simply publish the photo without providing context. It is a historical moment. Sometimes reality is hard to look at, but the journalist around the world need to protect the free flow of accurate information. PRSA Code Provision of Conduct states, "Core Principle Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society." Additionally, it would be imperative to provide context about the background of both the assailant and the ambassador. The public should hear the full story to understand why this event happened in the first place. The Society of Professional Journalist Code of Ethics states that journalists should "Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear."

By including the full story, people will be able to understand the motive better. At the time of publishing, the full story may not be available; however, as the publisher, you will have to take responsibility, so gathering this information as soon as possible will prove beneficial. The SPJ Code of Ethics also mentions that public figures do not get the same rights to control information about themselves as private people. An ambassador's role is a significant and public role that does strip some of your right to control information about yourself. Considering

recommendations PRSA, SPJ, NPPA, and UNESCO, I believe that this photo should be run.

Journalists serve the public and have an obligation to report the truth while minimizing harm. As mentioned earlier, the framing of the photos ran makes them appropriate for publishing.

The second issue of whether or not the photo should have been chosen as the world press photo of the year in my mind is a bit more open to interpretation. The World Press Photo states, "we showcase stories that make people stop, feel, think and act." This photo definitely makes people think as it is so simple, yet you wonder what the context is. It is a provoking photo of human nature and history. The simplicity of the photo also helps it stand out ecstatically as a "good" photo. Canva, a well-respected design software, states that one of the ways to create an aesthetically please photo is to "keep it simple" as "crowding your frame with too many visual elements can take attention away from your subject. Sometimes the simpler your approach is, the more effective it can be with getting your point across." Personally, I believe this photo is deserving of the award. Still, in the end, it is up to each person's interpretation as art is always open to each person's interpretation.