



JATSS, 2025; 7(3), 230-242

*First Submission: 02.06.2025*

*Revised Submission After Review: 19.07.2025*

*Accepted For Publication: 28.09.2025*

*Available Online Since: 30.09.2025*

**Research Article**

**The Role of Media in Crimes Against Humanity: A Comparative Analysis of  
Rwanda and Ukraine**

**Selin Başer Özgen<sup>a</sup> & Yaşar Onay<sup>b</sup>**

**Abstract**

**Introduction:** This study explores the dual role of media in crimes against humanity. Media may at times amplify hate and incite violence (as in Rwanda), while at other times it may expose truth and contribute to the pursuit of justice and accountability (as in Ukraine). Understanding this dual capacity is essential for developing legal and ethical safeguards in the digital age.

**Method:** Using a qualitative methodology, the study conducts a comparative analysis of the Rwandan genocide and the war in Ukraine. Based on court judgments, print and visual media sources, and NGO reports, it analyzes how media functioned either to fuel violence or support accountability.

**Findings:** In Rwanda, RTL radio played a central role in spreading hate speech and orchestrating mass violence. In Ukraine, open-source investigations and citizen journalism have aided in documenting war crimes and verifying them through digital tools. The contrasting roles illustrate that media's impact depends heavily on its ownership, values, and the political environment in which it operates.

**Discussion or Conclusion:** The role of media in crimes against humanity is shaped not by the medium itself but by how and by whom it is used. These findings call for stronger international standards to regulate incitement and promote responsible media. Media literacy, press freedom, and digital evidence protocols play a critical role in preventing future atrocities.

*Keywords:* media, crimes against humanity, hate speech, propaganda, peace journalism, digital verification

*JEL Codes:* K33, K14, D83, L82, O35

---

<sup>a</sup>Asst. Prof. Dr., İstanbul University, International Institute for Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, İstanbul/Türkiye, [selinbaser@istanbul.edu.tr](mailto:selinbaser@istanbul.edu.tr), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1267-6254> (Corresponding Author)

<sup>b</sup>Prof. Dr., Istanbul Kent University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, İstanbul/Türkiye, [yasar.onay@kent.edu.tr](mailto:yasar.onay@kent.edu.tr), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0166-4128>



JATSS, 2025; 7(3), 230-242

*İlk Başyuru: 02.06.2025*

*Düzeltilmiş Makalenin Alınışı: 19.06.2025*

*Yayın İçin Kabul Tarihi: 28.09.2025*

*Online Yayın Tarihi: 30.09.2025*

**Araştırma Makalesi**

**Medyanın İnsanlığa Karşı Suçlardaki Rolü: Ruanda ve Ukrayna Üzerine  
Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz**

**Selin Başer Özgen<sup>a</sup> & Yaşar Onay<sup>b</sup>**

**Öz**

**Giriş:** Bu çalışma, medyanın insanlığa karşı suçlardaki ikili rolünü incelemektedir. Medya kimi zaman nefret söylemini yayarak şiddeti körükleyebilir (Ruanda örneği), kimi zaman ise gerçekleri ortaya çıkartarak adalet ve hakikat arayışına katkı sağlayabilir (Ukrayna örneği). Bu ikili doğanın anlaşılması, dijital çağda hukuki ve etik önlemler geliştirmek açısından önemlidir.

**Yöntem:** Çalışmada, nitel bir yöntem kullanılarak Ruanda soykırımı ve Ukrayna savaşı örnekleri karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir. Mahkeme kararları, yazılı ve görsel basın kaynakları ve STK raporları temel alınarak, medyanın ya şiddeti körükleyen ya da hesap verebilirliği destekleyen bir araç olarak nasıl işlediği analiz edilmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Ruanda'da RTLМ radyosu, nefret söylemini yayarak ve soykırımı koordine ederek kitleleri harekete geçirmiştir. Ukrayna'da ise açık kaynak araştırmaları ve yurttaş gazeteciliği, savaş suçlarının belgelenmesine ve dijital araçlarla doğrulanmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Medyanın etkisi, sahiplik yapısı, etik normları ve bulunduğu siyasal ortama bağlı olarak büyük ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir.

**Tartışma ya da Yapılan Çıkarımlar:** Medyanın insanlığa karşı suçlardaki rolü, aracın kendisinden değil, nasıl ve kim tarafından kullanıldığından etkilenmektedir. Bu durum, nefret söylemini düzenleyecek uluslararası standartlara ve sorumlu medya pratiklerini teşvik edecek mekanizmalara duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır. Medya okuryazarlığı, basın özgürlüğü ve dijital delil protokolleri gelecekteki vahşetlerin önlenmesinde kritik rol oynamaktadır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* medya, insanlığa karşı suçlar, nefret söylemi, propaganda, barış gazeteciliği, dijital doğrulama

*JEL Kodlar:* K33, K14, D83, L82, O35

<sup>a</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Uluslararası Soykırım ve İnsanlığa Karşı İşlenen Suçlar Enstitüsü, İstanbul/Türkiye, [selinbaser@istanbul.edu.tr](mailto:selinbaser@istanbul.edu.tr), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1267-6254> (Sorumlu Yazar)

<sup>b</sup> Prof. Dr., İstanbul Kent Üniversitesi, İktisadi, İdari ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, İstanbul/Türkiye, [yasar.onay@kent.edu.tr](mailto:yasar.onay@kent.edu.tr), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0166-4128>

## Introduction

We often think of media as something simple — a tool that reports, informs, maybe entertains. We turn it on, scroll through it, or listen to it without much thought. In daily life, media seems harmless and even helpful. But during times of war, genocide, or political violence, this same tool can become dangerous. Media does not always stay neutral. It can be a witness — or it can become an active player.

In 1994, during the Rwandan genocide, the radio station Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) broadcast hate-filled messages calling Tutsis "cockroaches" and encouraging Hutus to kill them. These broadcasts were not formal government statements, but casual, conversational shows that used jokes, music, and simple language. Yet their impact was deadly. More than 800,000 people were killed in just 100 days (Des Forges, 1999; United Nations, 1999). The journalists did not fire any guns, but their words helped to organize and motivate the killing (Thompson, 2007; Kellow & Steeves, 1998).

Almost thirty years later, a very different media landscape appeared in Ukraine in 2022. This time, instead of state-run hate radio, we saw decentralized, digital networks. Civilians used their smartphones to record bombings and destruction in real time. Investigative journalists, like those from Bellingcat, used satellite images and geolocation tools to verify attacks and report war crimes. Platforms such as Twitter (currently named "X"), Telegram, and YouTube were filled with both raw evidence and propaganda. The same digital technology that spreads lies and hate also became a tool to seek truth and accountability (Higgins, 2022; Toler, 2020).

These examples raise an important question: Can media help protect life and dignity, or can it lead to mass destruction? When does media cross the line from being a passive observer to becoming an active instigator of crimes against humanity? What role does the structure of the media system — whether free and open or tightly controlled — play in these outcomes?

This study explores these questions through two main case studies: Rwanda and Ukraine. It compares how media functioned in each situation, who controlled it, and what impact it had on violence and justice. By doing so, we aim to understand how media can either fuel or resist crimes against humanity depending on the political, technological, and ethical context.

Despite extensive research on media's influence during conflicts, a comprehensive framework specifically addressing its pivotal and often contradictory role in inciting versus documenting crimes against humanity remains underexplored, particularly through a comparative lens that bridges distinct historical and technological contexts like Rwanda and Ukraine. This study, therefore, aims to address this critical gap by providing a nuanced comparative analysis that examines media's multifaceted impact on mass violence and accountability across these contexts.

## Hypothesis

Media systems that are controlled by authoritarian governments or by strong ideological groups often do more harm than good. These kinds of media are usually not free to report the truth. Instead, they spread hate, lies, or extreme political messages that support the goals of those in power. In many past cases, such as in Rwanda or Nazi Germany, state-controlled media helped turn normal people against their neighbors and encouraged them to take part in violence.

The media in these cases did not simply reflect what was happening; it helped to create the conditions for mass killings and serious crimes (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

On the other hand, when the media is independent — meaning it is not under the control of the government or political parties — it can play a very different role. Free and honest journalism can warn the public and the world early when human rights are being violated. It can help gather evidence and shine a light on crimes that some actors want to hide. This kind of reporting can make it harder for governments or armed groups to carry out abuses in secret. It can also increase international pressure, which sometimes forces leaders to stop violence or change their actions (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

So, the way media is organized — who owns it, who controls it, and how much freedom it has — plays a key role in how it affects human life during conflict. Media can be a tool for peace and justice, but only when it is allowed to work freely and responsibly.

### **Literature Review**

Crimes against humanity are not random or isolated events. They include systematic acts such as mass murder, torture, sexual violence, and the forced movement of people. These crimes are usually carried out with some degree of planning and coordination, often by state actors or powerful groups. According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998), such acts must be directed against civilians and carried out as part of a widespread or organized attack. Understanding how media interacts with these kinds of crimes requires both legal and communication-based frameworks.

One of the most influential theories about media and power comes from Herman and Chomsky (1988), who developed the "propaganda model." This model argues that when media systems are controlled by governments or large corporations, they tend to support the interests of those in power. Instead of holding power accountable, such media often repeat official narratives and ignore or downplay uncomfortable truths. Especially during times of war or political unrest, media can act as a filter that shapes how the public understands events, often leaving out the voices of victims or marginalized groups.

In response to this problem, some scholars have proposed alternative models. One of the most notable is peace journalism, developed by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), building on Galtung's (2002) original framework that reimagines journalism as a tool for conflict resolution rather than escalation. Peace journalism encourages reporters to move beyond the usual "who is winning?" frame. Instead, it suggests journalists should focus on the human costs of conflict, report on the causes of violence, give space to civilian voices, and highlight efforts to resolve disputes peacefully. This kind of reporting does not ignore conflict, but it treats it as a complex issue rather than a battle between good and evil. Peace journalism challenges the idea that neutrality means repeating both sides equally; it argues for ethical responsibility.

However, while the normative value of peace journalism is widely recognized, its practical application presents several challenges:

**Operational Risks:** In conflict zones, journalists often lack the freedom or safety to challenge dominant narratives. They may face censorship, surveillance, or even physical danger when attempting to adopt a peace-focused lens (Hanitzsch, 2007).

**Perceived Bias:** Peace journalism may sometimes be interpreted as advocacy journalism, leading to accusations of bias. In polarized environments, even balanced and ethical reporting may be seen as taking sides.

**Structural Constraints:** Commercial pressures, limited newsroom resources, and editorial policies often favor simplified, sensational content. These realities can make it difficult for journalists to provide the kind of in-depth, nuanced coverage that peace journalism demands.

**Audience Expectations:** Long-form, context-rich reporting promoted by peace journalism may not align with the fast-paced media consumption habits shaped by digital platforms, reducing its reach and impact.

Despite these limitations, peace journalism continues to provide a crucial framework for more humane and responsible reporting. When combined with new verification technologies and supported by institutional protections, it can offer a meaningful alternative to war reporting that reinforces cycles of violence.

Real-world examples show how media can either support or resist violence. In Rwanda in 1994, the media was used as a weapon. The radio station RTLM played a central role in preparing the public for genocide, and in creating the conditions necessary for the commission of a wide range of crimes against humanity. Its broadcasts made hatred seem normal and violence acceptable. Listeners were told that Tutsis were "cockroaches" who had to be eliminated. These messages were delivered in a relaxed, even humorous tone, making them easier to absorb and act upon (Kellow & Steeves, 1998).

By contrast, in more recent conflicts such as Syria and Ukraine, new forms of media have played a different role. Platforms like Bellingcat, which rely on open-source intelligence (OSINT), have shown how digital tools can be used to document human rights abuses and challenge official lies. OSINT investigators use satellite images, metadata, and social media posts to verify what is happening on the ground. This approach has helped uncover war crimes and provide material for international legal investigations (Toler, 2020). It also allows ordinary citizens to take part in truth-telling, even when traditional media is censored or absent.

This participatory role of ordinary individuals in documenting and verifying human rights violations aligns with what Allan (2013) conceptualizes as "citizen witnessing". In his view, non-professional actors using smartphones, social media, and publicly available tools are transforming how crises are reported and understood. By taking on the role of real-time observers, these individuals challenge the monopoly of traditional journalism and contribute to a more decentralized form of truth production.

Taken together, these studies suggest that media can be both dangerous and lifesaving. Its influence depends on who controls it, what values guide it, and how it is used in practice. The literature calls for deeper attention to media structures, ethical standards, and new technologies that can either support or resist crimes against humanity.

## **Methodology**

The study employs a qualitative comparative case study method to explore the contrasting roles of media in contexts of mass violence. Two cases were selected: the Rwandan genocide (1994) and the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022). These were chosen to represent different historical periods, media structures, and outcomes regarding the role of media in either inciting or documenting crimes against humanity.

### **Case Selection Criteria**

The selection of cases was based on the following considerations:

Historical and legal significance: Both cases have been subject to international legal scrutiny and involve serious human rights violations.

Documented media involvement: Each case features substantial evidence of media activity—either as a tool of incitement or documentation.

Data accessibility: Sufficient media records (e.g., radio transcripts, social media posts, journalistic reports) were available for analysis.

### **Data Collection**

Data was gathered from multiple sources:

For Rwanda: archival transcripts and translated content from RTLM, court records from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and academic analyses.

For Ukraine: publicly available digital content such as social media posts, videos, satellite images, and reports by investigative journalism groups (e.g., Bellingcat), as well as statements by human rights organizations and international observers.

### **Content Analysis**

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine the role of media in each case. The steps included:

Reviewing and categorizing the content based on recurring themes such as hate speech, dehumanization, calls for violence (Rwanda), or efforts to verify and document crimes (Ukraine).

Identifying narrative frames, such as whether the media portrayed groups as threats, victims, heroes, or enemies.

Comparing the role and structure of media institutions: state-controlled vs. independent, centralized vs. decentralized, analog vs. digital.

Analyzing the broader impact of the media in terms of either contributing to mass violence or supporting transparency and accountability.

### **Reliability and Ethics**

To enhance reliability, findings from media content were cross-checked with official reports, NGO publications, and academic sources. Ethical sensitivity was maintained by using only publicly available or already verified material and avoiding the exposure of sensitive personal data. This approach is in line with broader principles of criminal law methodology, especially concerning evidentiary reliability and legal admissibility in international proceedings (Ambos, 2013).

### **Case Study I: Rwanda – Radio as a Weapon**

The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 stands as one of the most tragic examples of how media, especially radio, can be used not just to spread information, but to spread hate and fuel mass violence. At the center of this tragedy was RTLM, a privately owned radio station that became an active tool of propaganda and incitement. Its broadcasts were not presented in a formal, news-like manner. Instead, they used casual language, local dialects, jokes, popular music, and even storytelling — all of which made the hate-filled messages more familiar, accessible, and powerful to ordinary listeners (Thompson, 2007).

---

RTLM did not appear dangerous at first. It presented itself as a popular, youth-oriented station with lively shows and humor. But underneath this surface was a deadly message. The station regularly described Tutsis as “inyenzi,” meaning cockroaches, and called on the Hutu majority to “do their duty” — a coded reference to participating in the killings. What made RTLM especially effective was how it blended entertainment with ideology. Music and mock interviews were followed by clear calls to violence. Over time, repetition and normalization made these calls seem acceptable, even necessary, to many listeners.

Scholars argue that RTLM’s influence was not passive. It did not merely reflect existing tensions in society — it actively shaped them and contributed directly to the genocidal process, which international criminal law scholars have since analyzed in depth (Schabas, 2009). It directed people where to go, whom to target, and when to act. It gave names, locations, and instructions. In this sense, RTLM operated more like a command center than a typical radio outlet. Its daily broadcasts contributed directly to the speed and coordination of the genocide, which claimed over 800,000 lives in just three months (Kellow & Steeves, 1998).

The role of RTLM has also been addressed in international courts. The ICTR found that RTLM was not only morally responsible but legally liable for its part in the genocide. The court ruled that media figures who used their platforms to incite mass killing were found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity. This was a landmark judgment — one of the first times in international law where journalists were held accountable not for what they did with weapons, but for what they did with words (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 2003).

This case illustrates how media can become a weapon when it loses its ethical foundation and serves a violent political agenda. It also shows the importance of media literacy, regulatory oversight, and early international response to hate speech — especially when it is being broadcast under the mask of entertainment.

## **Case Study II: Ukraine – Media as Documentation**

The war in Ukraine, which began with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, has brought about a new era in how conflicts are recorded and understood. Unlike in earlier wars, where information was tightly controlled by governments or traditional media outlets, Ukraine's information landscape is highly decentralized. There is no single voice or dominant broadcaster. Instead, thousands of voices—citizens, journalists, activists, and volunteers—are actively documenting events as they unfold.

Social media platforms like X (formerly “Twitter”), Telegram, and YouTube play a key role in this process. They are not only used to share breaking news but also serve as digital archives of potential war crimes. Videos of bombed schools, destroyed apartment buildings, and civilian casualties are uploaded within minutes. This kind of real-time documentation, often carried out by people on the ground, gives the world immediate access to evidence that might otherwise be hidden or delayed.

What makes the Ukrainian case unique is the widespread use of OSINT. Civil society groups such as Bellingcat and the Center for Information Resilience (CIR) are leading efforts to verify and analyze the flood of digital content. These organizations use advanced tools such as geolocation, satellite imagery, metadata analysis, and timestamp matching to confirm the authenticity of videos and images. Their work has helped uncover deliberate attacks on civilian targets, the use of banned weapons, and the destruction of critical infrastructure (Bellingcat & Global Legal Action Network, 2022).

Importantly, these findings are not just for public awareness—they have legal impact. Verified digital content has been submitted as part of reports to the United Nations and has contributed to preliminary investigations by the International Criminal Court (Columbia Journalism Review, 2023). In this way, media in Ukraine has moved beyond storytelling. It has become a form of digital witness—collecting, organizing, and preserving data that may one day serve as evidence in international trials.

Unlike Rwanda, where media was used to incite and direct violence, in Ukraine, the media has largely become a tool for resistance and accountability. This does not mean all media is truthful—there is still disinformation, especially from state-sponsored actors. But the presence of independent journalists and digital verification networks makes it harder for false narratives to go unchallenged.

The Ukrainian experience shows that when people are empowered with technology, they can help document war in ways that were impossible just a decade ago. It also demonstrates the need for ethical standards in using and sharing such content—because while media can expose crimes, it must also protect dignity.

### **Digital Tools and Media Verification**

In today's digital age, documenting war crimes and crimes against humanity increasingly depends on the ability to verify visual and audio content. With smartphones, drones, and social media being widely available, massive amounts of data are generated during conflicts. But raw footage alone is not enough. For this material to be useful in legal or investigative contexts, it must be verified, authenticated, and properly stored. This is where digital tools—and especially artificial intelligence (AI)—play a critical role.

AI technologies are now being used to detect deepfakes, analyze metadata, and track the origins of photos and videos. Deepfakes, which are manipulated videos that make people appear to say or do things they never did, pose a serious threat to truth and accountability. Specialized software can analyze facial movements, audio inconsistencies, and pixel-level data to determine whether a video has been altered. These tools are not perfect, but they provide a valuable first layer of defense against misinformation (Juskalian, 2021).

Metadata—the hidden information attached to digital files such as GPS location, time, and device type—can also be analyzed to establish where and when a piece of content was created. This is especially useful in conflict zones where there are competing narratives about what happened and who was responsible. In many cases, metadata has helped confirm the timing of missile strikes, the location of mass graves, or the movements of military vehicles.

However, verifying content is only half the battle. The next step is to ensure that this digital evidence is admissible in legal proceedings. International courts, such as the ICC, require strict standards for what counts as reliable and valid evidence. Simply showing a YouTube video is not enough. Investigators must be able to prove the chain of custody, the authenticity of the file, and that it has not been tampered with in any way.

To meet this need, the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations was developed in 2020 by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) in partnership with the University of California, Berkeley. This document outlines both legal and technical guidelines for collecting and analyzing digital content in a way that is compatible with international human rights investigations. It provides standards on everything from file storage and verification to ethical considerations when handling sensitive

material (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights & University of California, Berkeley, 2020).

What this means in practice is that journalists, activists, and investigators must now act not only as storytellers, but also as digital archivists. The success of their work depends not only on what they uncover, but on how carefully they handle and present the information. As technology continues to evolve, so too must the methods we use to protect the truth.

## Discussion

The case studies of Rwanda and Ukraine reveal two very different faces of media in times of mass violence. On one hand, the Rwandan example shows how media—when guided by hate, state ideology, or unchecked power—can become a direct instrument of genocide. RTLM did not simply reflect public opinion; it shaped it, weaponized it, and helped coordinate acts of killing. The voices coming through the radio were familiar, local, and persuasive. That is what made them so dangerous. Media, in this context, was not passive. It was active, intentional, and deadly.

In contrast, the situation in Ukraine highlights how media, especially in its decentralized digital form, can serve as a tool for truth, resistance, and documentation. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Telegram, and YouTube have allowed civilians to become witnesses, journalists to verify evidence, and the global public to observe in near real time. The availability of open-source intelligence methods has helped break down the monopoly of official state narratives and brought transparency to a complex and evolving war. In Ukraine, media has not ended violence—but it has helped uncover it, resist denial, and support calls for justice.

What these cases show is that the power of media lies not only in its content but in who controls it, how it is used, and within what political system it operates. State-run or politically captured media often loses its ethical compass and becomes a tool for propaganda, demonization, and repression. In contrast, independent media—though not perfect—has the potential to protect human dignity by challenging lies, exposing abuse, and amplifying voices that are often silenced.

Yet between these two extremes lies a broad and often dangerous grey zone. For instance, in Myanmar, Facebook was widely used to spread hate speech against the Rohingya minority, contributing to mass displacement and violence (Amnesty International, 2022). Similarly, in Ethiopia, inflammatory posts on social media have intensified ethnic tensions and led to real-world harm (Mozur, 2018). These examples remind us that even platforms designed for connection and communication can be weaponized if left unregulated.

This brings us to the issue of responsibility. The burden of ethical communication does not rest solely on journalists. Tech companies, whose algorithms often promote the most extreme and emotionally charged content, must do more to moderate harmful speech and protect vulnerable groups. Recent developments raise urgent legal questions about platform liability and freedom of expression under international human rights law. As Douek (2020) argues, content moderation by powerful tech companies now operates as a form of “quasi-constitutional governance,” yet remains largely unaccountable in contexts like Myanmar, where real-world harm resulted from algorithmically amplified hate speech.

Other actors, like tech companies, also have critical responsibilities. Governments must support press freedom, not suppress it under the guise of national security. Educational institutions have a role in teaching media literacy, helping citizens learn how to analyze,

question, and verify what they see and hear. International organizations must continue developing legal and ethical frameworks for digital evidence and speech accountability (Sadat, 2005).

In the end, media is a reflection of the society that shapes it—but it is also a tool that can shape society in return. If left unexamined and unregulated, it can easily become a force for harm. But when guided by ethical values, transparency, and critical inquiry, it has the power to protect truth, challenge injustice, and uphold our shared humanity – and, as it is seen, achieving this in today’s technological landscape is anything but easy.

### **Conclusion**

Media is never neutral. In times of peace, it may inform, entertain, or educate. But in times of conflict, its role becomes far more serious—and far more dangerous. It can ignite violence or help prevent it. It can amplify voices of hate or give a platform to those seeking justice. What determines this outcome is not simply the technology or the format, but the people who control the message and the ethical choices they make.

As the case of Rwanda has shown, media can be turned into a tool of destruction. With just words, a radio station encouraged neighbors to kill each other, spreading fear, dehumanization, and obedience to violence. By contrast, the example of Ukraine shows that media—especially when decentralized and supported by civil society—can become a form of digital resistance, documenting war crimes and exposing lies in real time. These two cases remind us that media is not just a mirror reflecting reality; it can actively shape it.

Preventing crimes against humanity in the future will require much more than international treaties or court rulings. It is unfortunate that legal systems often act too late. What is needed is a proactive, responsible, and ethical media culture. This means investing in media literacy, supporting independent journalism, and creating global standards for digital evidence and content verification. It also means holding both governments and technology platforms accountable for how information is produced, shared, and used.

At its best, media can act as a shield—protecting the vulnerable, raising awareness, and triggering international action. At its worst, it can become a weapon more powerful than any gun—capable of fueling genocide, silencing truth, and destroying entire communities through words alone.

The challenge moving forward is not to silence media, but to strengthen its role as a force for justice. This requires truth. It requires transparency. And above all, it requires courage—from journalists, from institutions, and from every citizen who chooses to listen, to speak, or to remain silent. This collective endeavor calls for putting aside personal interests, prioritizing the protection of human life and rights above all else.

## References

- Allan, S. (2013). *Citizen witnessing: Revisioning journalism in times of crisis*. Polity Press.
- Ambos, K. (2013). *Treatise on international criminal law: Volume I – Foundations and general part*. Oxford University Press.
- Amnesty International. (2022, September 29). *The social atrocity: Meta and the right to remedy for the Rohingya*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/5933/2022/en/>
- Bellingcat & Global Legal Action Network. (2022, December). *Justice and Accountability Unit methodology for Ukraine investigations: Methodology for online open source investigations into incidents taking place in Ukraine since 24 February 2022*. <https://www.bellingcat.com/app/uploads/2022/12/JA-Manual-for-PUBLICATION.pdf>
- Columbia Journalism Review. (2023). *Open-source journalism and the future of war coverage*. Retrieved May 15, 2025, from <https://www.cjr.org>
- Des Forges, A. (1999). *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved May 20, 2025, from <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1999/rwanda/rwanda0399.htm>
- Douek, E. (2020, February). *The rise of content cartels*. The Knight First Amendment Institute Working Paper, Retrieved May 5, 2023, from <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3572309>
- Galtung, J. (2002). Peace journalism – A challenge. In W. Kempf & H. Luostarinen (Eds.), *Journalism and the new world order: Vol. 2. Studying War and the Media* (pp. 259–272). Nordicom.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2007). Situating peace journalism in journalism studies: A critical appraisal. *Conflict & Communication Online*, 6(2), 1–9.
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books.
- Higgins, A. (2022, April 2). In Ukraine, phones become tools of war crimes investigation. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/02/world/europe/ukraine-war-crimes-investigation.html>
- International Criminal Court. (1998). *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. Retrieved May 22, 2025, from <https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/Documents/RS-Eng.pdf>
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. (2003). *Judgment: Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza and Hassan Ngeze (ICTR-99-52-T)*. Retrieved May 22, 2025, from <https://www.refworld.org/jurisprudence/caselaw/ictr/2003/en/91852>
- Juskalian, R. (2021, October 4). How AI is changing war crimes investigation. *MIT Technology Review*. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/10/04/1036331/ai-war-crimes-investigations/>
- Kellow, C. L., & Steeves, H. L. (1998). The role of radio in the Rwandan genocide. *Journal of Communication*, 48(3), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1998.tb02762.x>

- Lynch, J., & McGoldrick, A. (2005). *Peace journalism*. Hawthorn Press.
- Mozur, P. (2018, October 15). A genocide incited on Facebook, with posts from Myanmar's military. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html>
- Sadat, L. N. (2005). *The International Criminal Court and the transformation of international law: Justice for the new millennium*. Transnational Publishers.
- Schabas, W. A. (2009). *Genocide in international law: The crime of crimes* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Thompson, A. (2007). *The media and the Rwanda genocide*. Pluto Press.
- Toler, Aric. (2020). *The rise of open-source investigations in international justice*. Bellingcat. Retrieved May 10, 2023, from <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/how-tos/2020/01/15/open-source-investigations-and-justice/>
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (1999, December 15). *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*.  
<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/report-of-independent-inquiry-actions-of-united-nations-during-1994-genocide-rwanda-s19991257>
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) and University of California, Berkeley. (2020, December 2). *The Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: A New Standard for Human Rights and War Crimes Reporting*. <https://humanrights.berkeley.edu/publications/berkeley-protocol-on-digital-open-source-investigations/>

## **Information About the Article/Makale Hakkında Bilgiler**

### **The Ethical Rules for Research and Publication / Arařtırma ve Yayın Etięi**

The authors declared that the ethical rules for research and publication followed while preparing the article.

Yazarlar makale hazırlanırken arařtırma ve yayın etięine uyulduęunu beyan etmiřtir.

### **Conflict of Interests/ ıkar atıřması**

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Yazarlar ıkar atıřması bildirmemiřtir.

### **Grant Support/ Finansal Destek**

The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Yazarlar bu alıřma iin finansal destek almadıęını beyan etmiřtir.

### **Author Contributions/ Yazar Katkıları**

The draft process of the manuscript/ Taslaęın Hazırlanma Sreci S.B../Y.O., Writing The Manuscript/ Makalenin Yazılması S.B../Y.O., Submit, Revision and Resubmit Process/ Bařvuru, Dzeltme ve Yeniden Bařvuru Sreci S.B../Y.O.