Report

And statistics show men are far more

likely to be killed. Reporters Without

Borders and the Committee To Protect

Journalists (CPJ) report that since 1992,

896 journalists have been killed around

the world and three in South Africa.

all men. There's no record of rapes or

sexual assault because to date none has

been kept. Yet the Columbia Journalism

Review has noted that 'female reporters

are targets in lawless places where gans

are common and punishment rare'. They

experience more sexual harassment

and rane than male colleagues, more

unwanted advances and 'lewd come-

women are viewed as promiscuous'.

ons', especially in places where 'western

Journalist Ammu Joseph of India has

suggested (in a Gender Links Opinion

And Commentary Service report) the

reason the CPJ and other organisations

incidents for fear of being overlooked

for assignments that carry a degree of

danger. 'Logan's decision to break the

silence may lead to change,' Joseph says.

Already a senior CPJ editor has posted

a blog on Tocumenting sexual violence

against journalists'. And the International

News Safety Institute has put out a Safety

Advisory For Female Journalists.

At present there is little in the self-

protection line. The only protection

you have is a flak jacket and your pen,"

jacket and Mace but gave up on both

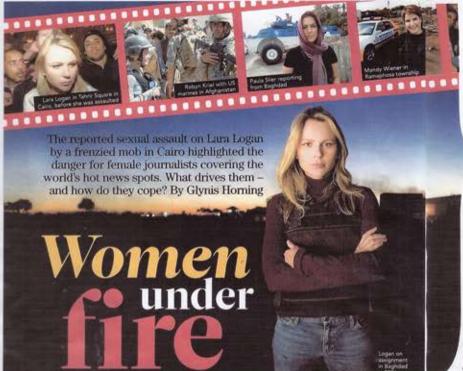
says Kriel. Tm now thinking about

corrying Mace.' Wener tried the

PLAYING SAFE

don't compile this data is that most.

women journalists don't report



hen Durban-born by protesters while reporting in Cairo during celebrations of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's resignation in February, to drive away as fast as possible. the world was shocked. So were fellow female reporters, who feet their gender

at times makes their jobs more dangerous. 'I definitely feel more vulnerable as a woman,' says Paula Sher, 38, another former South African journalist, who was in Cairo as Middle East bureau chief for Russia Today and head of her own Newshound production company at the time of Logan's attack,

Slier recalls an incident during CBS foreign-affairs the anti-Mubarak demonstrations earlier that month. The crowd around Lara Logan, 40, was us suddenly became unruly and started stripped and beaten - screaming at us. The cameramas and sound man, both Egyptian, pushed me into the car and ordered the driver The demonstrators were banging on the car, velling,"

> But like most female journalists whose work puts them in the line of fire, Slier says she tries not to think about this. It would just immobilise me,' she says. 'I think more about safety once an assignment is over and I'm back home, and I have had time to process what I've seen.

If I were to feel and absorb experiences fully while I'm in them. I suspect the reality and consequences of the situation would make it more difficult for me to work - and if not, I'd at least feel very frightened."

Slier always has 'a jittery feeling' in her stomach before dangerous missions. (See 'Dangerous assignments'.) 'But I don't like to talk too much about it with people close to me because they worry most. I often feel torn by what I put my family through."

Logan's family members are reportedly relieved that she has recovered physically and has received post-traumatic-stress therapy, and are reconciled to her returning to danger.

'She wouldn't want what happened to stop other women journalists doing what they want and need to do,' says someone close to them.

The family of Robyn Kriel, 27, a Johannesburg eNews reporter who was embedded with US marines in Afghanistan last year, understands the dangers more than most. Her mother, Margaret Kriel, was a

journalist in Zimbabwe, where Robyn cut her teeth covering protests and the volatile build-up to the country's

2008 reesidential election. Mom was imprisoned for four days because of me, says Kriel. I was reporting undercover for CNN when a tactical force raided our house. But I'm 1,53m tall and look like a schoolgirl without makeup, so they let me go and went out and arrested her. I'd far rather face trouble myself" She has done so many times since (see 'Dangerous assignments') but, like her colleagues, keeps going back for more.

DRIVING FORCE

Few of these women know just what drives them. Mandy Wiener, 28. Johannesburg Eyerritness News reporter and author of the recently published Killing Kebble: An Underworld Exposed (Pan Macmillan), has covered everything from gang hits to riots. You can get hooked on the sheer adrenalise rush of getting a scoop the rush of live broadcasts and short deadlines and foreign environments and interesting people," she says. 'And there's a sense of immortality you get as a journalist - you think you're invincible, protected by your vocation. That's part of why I was so shocked by what happened to Lara. It shows how vulnerable we are."

I probably do what I do because the people I report on are a hell of a lot braver than I am," says Kriel. In 2007, when the police broke up a protest I was filming by Women Of Zimbabwe Arise Ja civil-rights group] and beat the living daylights out of us. I thought I was going to die. But for me it was a one-off, while those amozing women keep doing their protests, risking everything to make their voices heard. I had to do what I could."

At the same time, Kriel knows that 'dangerous stories are ones journalists make a name on. And I want to make my career mark early and live fully before I have kids,' she says bluntly.

Slier too admits to 'noble and notso-noble' reasons. The noble reasons include my love of people. I genuinely find them fascinating and believe each of us has a story to tell. I've covered three earthquakes so far in Alperia, Iran and India. There's a sense and I'm so humbled that people in these of immortality you situations will share their pain and hearthreak with rise. I'm still

get as a journalist - you think you're invincible, protected in touch with a family in Alperia by your vocation who lost their daughter - the mother told me she had lost one daughter but had found

another in me. People regularly ask Slier whether she's afraid to go where she does. But there are people like you and me living in these places, being raped, watching family members killed in front of them. What makes them so different from us? Nothing, aside from the misfortune of being born into a different part of the world! So if a young single woman in Gaza - who is half my age - can have her legs blown off and be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life, it. seems almost superficial to consider whether I'm afraid to enter her world for a short while. What a privilege to

be there, and what a responsibility

to tell her story. She trusted me with

it - and it's a trust I take seriously."

Vet Slier is not immune to the 'not-

so-poble' thrill of doing live television

from a war zone. I remember arriving

in Kabul for the parliamentary elections.

We went straight from the airport,

hitching rides and running through

the streets because there were no

taxis and half the roads were closed

off, to get to our position on time.

pronounced in Egypt, where men will stare, whistle and touch you if they can while pretending to be just walking past Depending on where I am I might wear a long skirt and headscarf out of respect, but sometimes it's just practical to wear leans. I'm not there to insult their culture but I also feel I want to be true to mine.

While Stier, Kriel and Wiener realise they're more vulnerable than their male colleagues to rape and sexual assault, they point out that men, too, are at risk of these if caught and tortured, when humiliation is the prime objective. >

And then I'm on live television, trying to memorise important facts I want to mention, answer the questions, be wary of my surroundings, and took calm with my hair combed - all at the same time. I'm not married and I often think I'm going to have to have one hell of a wedding to beat that!"

GENDER ISSUES

The issue of whether being female in the firing line is more of a disadvantage or advantage is just as complex. With the Arab world, many men I've encountered actually don't know how to react

to a western woman doing everything her male counterparts do,' Slier says. 'In many places women are covered up or kept at home. so I'm fighting prejudices that sometimes make it difficult to work. There have been times

when men would not talk to me and would address my cameraman as though I was not there."

At the same time, because seeing women in such positions is so rare, Stier can often - 'just with a smile or a polite "please" - get an interview she doubts would be as easy to come by if she were a man. 'I remember going down a tunnel in which goods were smuggled from Ervot to Gaza. My translator was amazed that the tunnel diggers had allowed it, and kept saving that if I were a man they'd never have agreed to it."

Particularly challenging, she says, - the jacket was restrictive, the Mace a is sexual innuendo. This was most problem with airport and other security. Neither they nor Slier were given specific safety training, or expected it. It's an on-the-iob learning experience," says Wiener, 'but the media pack takes care of its cubs.' Slier adds, 'Til never forget the advice of my former SABC news editor, Jimi Matthews: "No story is

worth potting your life on the line for!" Women journalists have beoken into previously male-dominated areas but are still more vulnerable than men because of the kind of society we live in, says Mary Papayya, deputy chairperson of the South African National Editors' Forum.

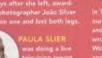
Today the most dangerous assignments locally are service-delivery protests where emotions often run high. and projects in rural areas. 'I think, in general, the fact that freedom of expression is enshrined in our constitution makes our jobs much easier, but we've had women reporters chased from a scene and told they have no place there, so more work needs to be done,' she says.

Papayya says most newsrooms have a code of practice governing reporters' safety, 'whether or not it's formal. In general, editors are savvy and well aware of the dangers out there, and journalists know what to expect. But unpredictability is the nature of this job. You can plan as much as you want - as I am sure Lars Logan and her team did. Things can still go wrong." X

Dangerous assignments



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re started running. I couldn't see kept talking. Afterwards I foun ut a Cassam had fallen just a



rangouffed and in jail," she

was horrendous, she added late



and threatened to kill us," she wints recently for US News & undercover goernilla fighters. Hac

without anyone being harmed.

and EU , who work North Korea in 200

the Chinase border. They were sentenced to 12 years in a labo prison for entering North Korea legally and committing unspecifie hostile acts. They were released months later.

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