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Tribute to Almgidad Mojalli

BBG CEO and Director John F. Lansing

VOA Acting Director Kelu Chao

VOA News Center Managing Editor Clara Dominguez

John F. Lansing, Thank you all for coming.
BBG CEO & Director

And, I'd like to welcome a Yemeni diplomat to this event, Ms. Malak Abdelhameed. I appreciate you coming on such short notice.

Today is a solemn day for the Voice of America, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the rest of the BBG family.

Last month, we lost one of our own.

Almgidad Mojalli, a freelance reporter, was killed in an air raid in his home country of Yemen while on assignment for VOA.

He was 34.

I will be brief because I know Kelu has remarks that she will make after me.

Almgidad Mojalli worked for VOA from October 2015 until January 2016.

He also contributed to IRIN, an international news service that specializes in humanitarian issues, and to the British newspaper *The Telegraph*.

He specialized in reporting on humanitarian issues in Yemen, which has been devastated by a bloody civil war over the past year.

Mr. Mojalli sought to portray the terrible human cost of conflict – respectfully, accurately, and in the end, powerfully.

With his signature professional touch, he documented many scenes of trauma and destruction, even as the outside world turned a blind eye.

His articles – on homes demolished by airstrikes, hospitals deprived of medicine, or on people simply crying out for help, and justice – were of great quality, and published by several media outlets.

On the morning of January 17, Mr. Mojalli traveled with colleagues outside Sana'a, Yemen's capital city, to cover the effects of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes that had killed at least 15 civilians to that point.

Terribly, Mr. Mojalli was himself killed by an airstrike, which also seriously wounded his colleagues.

His death is tragic, but Mr. Mojalli passed away doing work that he felt was his responsibility as a human being.

Mr. Mojalli was utterly dedicated to covering humanitarian crises, exposing human rights abuses and providing unbiased reporting.

In fact, his brother said Mr. Mojalli viewed his coverage as “humanitarian work.” He gave voice to the victims of war, and to the most vulnerable members of society – he filed stories on those suffering from crushing poverty, and children caught in the crossfire.

Like many journalists who risk their lives during wars, political strife and other times of peril, he was courageous and fearless.

And he accepted the risks, without reservation.

And so today, and for years to come, we remember Mr. Mojalli, as we add his name to this memorial with the other fallen BBG journalists.



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None of them died in vain – we will carry on our important work around the world in their memory.

Mr. Mojalli was a loving father and family man with seven dependents including a small son.

And so we extend our condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

Thank you.

I would now like to invite Kelu Chao to offer remarks as well.

Kelu Chao,
VOA Acting Director

I look at the people on this wall often, and remember the price they paid for the work we do.

Almigidad Mojalli was like many of our stringers and journalists who regularly put their lives in danger. He risked his life to give a voice to those in his homeland who yearned for peace, prosperity and freedom.

Through Mr. Mojalli's work, he upheld the ideals of the Voice of America. We must continue to honor him and others on this wall by telling the stories that need to be told.

Clara Dominguez,
VOA News Center
Managing Editor

Today we salute one of our own – Almigidad Mojalli – who was killed on assignment for VOA in his native Yemen.

Almigidad was a journalist, a mentor and a father.

As a journalist, he died covering what was important to him: the terrible cost of war. He was filming the aftermath of an airstrike on a civilian area, when a new attack was launched.

The cost, whether for Almigidad or to thousands of civilians in Yemen in what he tried to show. He wrote about how even he could be numbed by the sheer volume of victims.

He wrote about how prejudice keeps black Yemenis at the margins. In his interview with a black Yemeni leader we



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hear how “the ground is their mattress, the sky is their blanket.”

As Yemen descended into chaos, Almgidad could have left but chose to stay. He became a lifeline for foreign journalists trying to cover the story. He worked closely with our Cairo Bureau Chief Heather Murdock, who says he will be missed as a journalist and as a friend.

He also helped colleagues strive for the same principles and commitment. Since his death, many have written how he often gave them advice and support.

But most of all he was a family man. His 6-year-old son, Abdulaziz, was the center of his life. He was the sole support of a large family.

In paying tribute to Almgidad we also pay tribute all of those journalists who are casualties of war and conflict. Those who risk their lives so we can get a better understanding of the world we live in, and give voice to the voiceless.