

Picturing the Sri Lankan War: A Study on the Practice of War Reporting and Photojournalism

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Photojournalism is a form of journalism that employs images in news reporting. In conflict reporting, the news value of a photo is high. A photo speaks louder than words and war-related news always has a high demand in journalism. In order to examine the picturing of war reporting in Sri Lanka, covering the last period of the 30-year-old civil war, war photographs that were published in daily newspapers from 2nd April 2009 to 22nd May 2009 were selected. The selected all daily national newspapers were in Sinhala, English and Tamil languages. Altogether 1928 pictures from 10 national daily newspapers were analysed. There is a lack of front-line action war photographs and war art photographs published in newspapers. Tamil newspapers published a minimum number of photographs, which amounted to 15% total published photographs about war. Photographs were published 26.2% by the Sri Lanka Army media and the Defence Ministry and 35.2% photographs were published without photographer's name. The source of those photographs seems to be army media or defence ministry. Altogether 61.4% Photographs published from Sri Lankan army or the Defence Ministry. Newspapers reported Sri Lankan civil war from single perspective using the photographs provided by the above-mentioned sources. In this case, Newspapers have broken the fundamental ethical framework of reporting. Thus, the news photographs report by Sri Lankan newspapers can be considered as a totally one-sided depiction of the war. They report the story using the photographs who given them one part of the war. The contribution by newspaper reporters and provincial reporters was very low. The three-decade war ended. But the quality of photojournalism was below the standards.

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