



## **Journalistic Correspondent in Algeria and Local News Between Legal Constraints and Professional Ethics**

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**Received: 18-02-2026**

**Accepted: 10-04-2026**

**Published:09-06-2026**

### **Introduction:**

The journalistic correspondent is considered an important source for providing media outlets with news and facts, especially those related to local affairs, given the utmost importance that press institutions attach to local news and what relates to citizens' daily life or local development policies. Based on this perception, the role of the journalistic correspondent has become very essential in conveying the concerns and interests of the local public to the authorities responsible for solving their problems and finding appropriate means to improve their social conditions and living circumstances. This has pushed media outlets to allocate a significant space in their programs and journalistic coverage to everything that is local.

The attention given to local events and issues has made the presence of journalistic correspondents in all provinces an unavoidable necessity to monitor the extent of the implementation of state policy on the ground in various fields and sectors, especially in relation to "shadow areas" in the first degree.

From here, the pen of the journalistic correspondent must be of high quality and his vision must be sharp, and he must respect the ethics of his profession. However, this is not sufficient, as his work requires a human and civilizational awareness through which he adheres to the standards of objectivity, neutrality, integrity, and honesty.

## **2. The Journalistic Correspondent and the Nature of His Work**

### **2.1. Concept of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

Article "53" of the Algerian Information Law of 1982, in its second chapter entitled "Practice of the Journalistic Profession," in the second section entitled "The Journalistic Correspondent," defines the journalistic correspondent as follows: "He is the one employed by a foreign written, spoken, or visual press organization, and who dedicates his activity within the territory of the Republic to collecting journalistic news or exploiting it for the purpose of publishing it, and makes this activity his sole and regular profession for which he receives a salary."

Article "54" of the same law describes him as a special envoy of a written, spoken, or visual press organization, who is legally accredited and who carries out a temporary media mission within the territory of the Republic for the purpose of publication and covering a current event. (Algeria, 1982, p. 36).

Article "74" of the Algerian Organic Law on Information issued on January 15, 2012, in its sixth chapter entitled "The Journalistic Profession and Professional Ethics," in the first section,



defines the journalistic correspondent as follows: “A professional journalist is also considered any permanent correspondent who has a contractual relationship with a media organization in accordance with the procedures set out in Article ‘80’ of the same law.” (Algeria, 2012, p. 76). The journalistic correspondent is the one appointed by a media institution, whether a newspaper, radio, or television, in a certain place or city to cover the events taking place there and send them in due time to the editorial management of the institution. (Bahi, 1998, p. 12). The journalistic correspondent is not only a witness to a past event, but also an engineer and producer of a feeling generated by what he writes. He promotes all the potentials of his region in all their forms, whether consciously or unconsciously. (Mercier, 2009, p. 167). He is a witness who transmits events and atmospheres; he is the eye, ear, nose, mouth, and hand of the public. (Sauvage, 1998, p. 139). He is the one who goes into the field, into mountains and plains, to report events, to see, hear, and ask.

## **2.2. The Nature of the Work of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

It is known that the journalistic correspondent is committed to performing his professional duties in order to achieve the desired goal, which is the daily search for new news. The correspondent works outside his country or even within it, but away from the headquarters of the media organization, and the nature of his work requires him to build strong relationships with officials in the region he covers, and to understand the nature of that region so that he has acquaintances and friends who help him perform his work.

The journalistic correspondent must express the pulse of the street, and the needs, ambitions, and desires of the citizen in his region, in order to bring the citizen’s voice closer to decision-makers. His mission is no longer limited to transmitting news as in the past, but he seeks to interpret and add more engaging details. Therefore, the journalistic correspondent has a sensitive role, first represented in selecting the news and verifying its authenticity. In this regard, William Reuters, a professor at Stanford University, says: “One of the most difficult problems in journalism is determining the correct attitude of the correspondent toward the source from which he obtains news.” (Abu Seif, 1978, p. 78).

The profession of the journalistic correspondent is not limited to searching for and uncovering current local news, but extends to the international level, where he sends his reports to the news institution he works for in secrecy without appearing in front of cameras. He can also communicate with other correspondents in order to exchange news and information and follow developments of issues that are of importance to local public opinion.

## **3. Types of Journalistic Correspondents:**

### **3.1. External Correspondent:**

The external correspondent works outside the country in which the newspaper is issued or the television station broadcasts from, where he carries out his journalistic activities and covers news in another country. There are three types of external correspondents.



### **3.2. Permanent Correspondent:**

He is the journalist chosen by the press institution, which employs him to represent it in a city or a global capital for an unlimited period, ensuring continuous coverage of the most important events occurring in his place of work. He is assigned to investigate news and produce reports, investigations, and interviews. The work of the permanent correspondent is free, as he does not wait for instructions from the institution that employs him, but rather takes the initiative himself to search for new news and investigate new journalistic material that he will provide to his institution. Thus, he contributes to its development and continuity for the better, as it is his sole source of income. Most media outlets in Algeria have correspondents in all provinces; sometimes we find for one newspaper three correspondents in the same province when it comes to major regions. Most international newspapers also have correspondents in major capitals and war zones. (Bahi, 1998, pp. 12–13).

### **3.3. Temporary Correspondent (Special Envoy):**

He is the journalist sent by the press institution to a certain place or city to cover an important event or a series of successive events on site. For example, a newspaper, television, or radio may send one of its journalists on a mission to cover the visit of the President of the Republic to one of the provinces of Algeria, then the envoy returns to the institution's headquarters after the mission is completed. (Bahi, 1998, p. 13).

### **3.4. Freelance Correspondent (Collaborator):**

He is the journalist who works on demand. When it comes to covering an important event, the press institution requests him to carry out the coverage mission, in order to avoid the costs of sending a special envoy from the institution's headquarters. The freelance correspondent may receive several requests from different media institutions to cover one event, and he receives his financial dues according to different criteria agreed upon in advance between the press institution and the freelance correspondent. (Bahi, 1998, p. 13).

### **3.5. Internal Correspondent :**

He is one of the most important internal sources of the newspaper. Therefore, the distinction of the institution and its ability to build a distinguished news identity lies in having a team of qualified correspondents to cover all news. In order for the media outlet to perform its function of fulfilling the readers' right to knowledge, it must have its own news team in which roles are distributed in the process of gathering and publishing news. (Naud, 2005, p. 195).

### **3.6. War Correspondent:**

Also called the dispatched journalist, he covers events in war zones alongside security forces of a state or with opposition groups. The war correspondent can send his journalistic material to several television channels, radio stations, or newspapers.



#### **4. Ethics and Characteristics of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

##### **4.1. Ethics of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

Journalistic ethics are extremely important as they constitute self-guiding principles for the correspondent's decisions in the various situations and dilemmas he faces in journalistic work. A correspondent with a living conscience must carefully examine all facts and, when necessary, refrain from publishing any news of doubtful authenticity. This required scrutiny in news for a newspaper, for example, must result from commitment and an unwritten contract between the correspondent and himself, and between him and his audience. (Mahmoud, 1970, p. 33) Thus, he acts under the impulse of his conscience.

Therefore, adherence to journalistic ethics gives him professional qualities, including being honest, responsible, experienced in journalistic work, and possessing a good level of culture and education. He must also be proactive and creative, and have a high ability to communicate with colleagues or the public. This increases further when he is able to benefit from modern technical services in photography and communication. In addition to all this, the journalist correspondent must adhere to the following standards: (Kamal A., 2003, p. 25)

- The journalistic correspondent is committed, in what he publishes, to the requirements of honor, integrity, honesty, and adherence to journalistic values such as truthfulness, courage, fairness, balance, and independence. Moreover, he must not violate the rights of another citizen or attempt to undermine their legitimate freedoms.
- The journalistic correspondent seeks to reach the truth through research and objective presentation based on realism and clear evidence, and he verifies information accurately and attributes statements and actions to their sources in accordance with professional laws and customs.
- The journalistic correspondent uses legitimate means to obtain information, news, and documents, and works to correct and amend published information if its inaccuracy or lack of precision is proven.
- The journalistic correspondent avoids racist calls against peoples and religions and deals objectively with diversity and differences that characterize human societies in all their ethnicities, cultures, and beliefs.
- The journalistic correspondent commits not to deliberately conceal information from citizens, and not to follow the method of selective reporting in journalistic work, which leads to transmitting part of the information to the public while withholding another part that does not align with his ideas or with the entity he works for. (Kamal A., 2003, p. 26)
- The journalistic correspondent does not use journalism to accuse citizens without evidence and documents, and does not exploit their private lives to defame them, distort their reputation, or achieve personal interests and gains.
- The journalistic correspondent commits not to publish any material that contradicts the mission and laws of journalism, and not to distort facts for personal purposes.
- Commitment to publication laws and the rights of news and information sources when quoting.
- The journalistic correspondent is individually responsible in case of violation of laws and



rules governing the exploitation of the profession for unlawful personal benefit, and on this basis, criminal responsibility falls upon him. (Ibrahim K., 2013)

#### **4.2. Characteristics of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

There is a set of characteristics that cannot be separated from journalistic work, including:

- ‖ The journalistic correspondent must have the ability to identify events and understand the importance of ongoing developments within his country and region.
- ‖ He must have the ability to identify indicators that lead him to discover important news, i.e., identifying the truth that is of special importance to the reader.
- ‖ The journalistic correspondent must be able to identify other news that may be related to the available information.
- ‖ The journalistic correspondent must possess what is called the news sense, meaning that a competent correspondent must think about everything and view all developments as potentially transformable into a news story.

A correspondent who does not have sufficient political, economic, cultural, and historical background lacks a deep understanding of local and international affairs and of economic and political developments inside or outside the country. (Ibrahim K., 2013).

A successful journalistic correspondent is an investigative field journalist who asks many questions, works in-depth at the heart of the truth, collects his data himself, and then transmits the event as it is, truthfully and without any addition.

### **5. Conditions for Selecting a Journalistic Correspondent and Factors of His Success:**

#### **5.1.. Conditions for Selecting a Journalistic Correspondent:**

Some newspapers set several conditions when selecting a journalistic correspondent, including:

- Good sight and hearing.
- Note-taking.
- Finding information.
- Asking questions.
- Verifying and specifying information.
- Analyzing and interpreting information.
- Being fast-moving, able to reach event locations at the time of occurrence as quickly as possible.
- Being highly observant and quick-witted, perceiving with his ears and eyes what an ordinary person cannot notice.
- Having a talent for style. (Jawad, 2013)

#### **5.2. Factors of Success of the Journalistic Correspondent:**

Among the factors that help the journalist correspondent succeed in his work properly:

- ⊗ Be fast: Speed is the capital of a successful journalist correspondent. He must learn quickly and master the language of media instead of the language of literature.



⊖ Be accurate and do not lie: Accuracy means avoiding false or distorted information; otherwise, the journalist correspondent commits defamation.

⊖ Protect yourself: The journalist correspondent can protect himself through the following:

- Verifying the accuracy of information before publishing it.
- Recording corrections and keeping them for a long time.
- Using words that allow him to avoid legal accountability.

⊖ Be careful with gifts: The status of the journalist correspondent and the sensitivity of his work make him a target for those who offer gifts, as they may limit his freedom and honesty in dealing with topics and events in which the gift-giver may be directly or indirectly involved. (Mohamed, 1970, pp. 36–37)

⊖ Respect people’s private lives: Adhere to public morals and ethics and avoid interfering in others’ lives.

⊖ Be fair and responsible: Fairness means telling the truth and avoiding the publication of anything that harms the country or citizens.

⊖ Organize your time: The journalist correspondent is required to organize his time in order to organize his work.

⊖ Raise problems, do not solve them: The correspondent’s responsibility is limited to reporting citizens’ daily problems to officials.

⊖ Learn several languages: This is important as it enables communication with any person regardless of their language.

⊖ Build multiple relationships with different individuals: So that he finds someone in every place he goes to who helps him complete his work and obtain all information.

⊖ Search for the new: by obtaining new news that has not been previously published. (Mohamed, 1970, pp. 38–39)

## **6. Local News: Definition and Importance**

### **6.1.. Definition of Local News:**

“Gerald and Johnson” believe that news is a report on those types of events that a journalist feels comfortable writing and publishing. (Dagger, 1988, p. 188) “Thomas Yerry” sees news as any subject that is publishable, broadcastable, or transmissible and is considered by the editor-in-chief to be of interest to readers. (Rowan, 1987, p. 89)

“Jalal al-Din al-Hamamsi” considers news to be any report that the editor-in-chief or head of the news section deems worthy of being collected, printed, published, or broadcast to the widest audience. (Al-Din, 1963, p. 24).

Local news is news that covers topics related to the local environment, where local news is limited to the province, district, or municipality as its source. “Abdelaziz Al-Ghannam” defines local news as that which deals with events and problems specific to a certain city, making it closer to the recipient as it addresses the surrounding issues they experience and that affect their life. “Farouk Abu Zaid” defines it as news that occurs within the community where the newspaper is issued or the radio is broadcast. (Hassan, 2002, p. 144)







♣ Including an opinion or viewpoint aimed at influencing the audience. (Mansour, 2009, pp. 60–61)

### **7.3. Characteristics of Local News:**

The capital of any newspaper lies in the news it contains, which must be characterized by accuracy and novelty, as such news attracts public attention, leading them to read the newspaper, watch television, or listen to the radio. For news to be useful and accurate in its information, it must answer six questions agreed upon by journalism specialists as the foundation of journalistic production. These questions are divided into two parts:

First section: consists of five questions: Who? What? Where? Why? When?

Second section: consists of one question: How?

What matters to the recipient is finding the answer to the question “Who?”, meaning who is behind the event. Then attention shifts to the question “What?”, followed by the question of when the event occurred and understanding its consequences. The question of time is linked to the question of place. (Nawar, 1998, pp. 23–24)

News is required to have a set of characteristics or standards, and lacking any of them represents a weakness, the most important of which are:

- Importance: the event must be interesting to a large segment of people.
- News language: it must be simple and easy, avoiding complexity and unnecessary use of technical terms that some readers may not understand. The news editor must also carefully select appropriate words and expressions and avoid uncommon terminology.
- Brevity: the news presentation must be as concise as possible.
- Clarity: the news must be clear and free of ambiguity so that the recipient can understand it without interpretation or further explanation.
- Balance: the news must be presented in a balanced way, giving each element its proper weight without overemphasizing one element at the expense of others.
- Source: attributing news to its source is one of the elements of credibility, and it also relieves the transmitter of responsibility in case the content includes inaccuracies.

Media professionals agree on other characteristics of local news, including:

a/ Truthfulness: Truth is one of the fundamental bases of news. News cannot be considered suitable for publication or broadcast unless it relates to an actual event. Truthfulness is essential for presenting news to the public, although it alone is not sufficient, as not all truthful news is suitable for publication. (Abdel Latif, 1958, p. 58). Researchers in media studies have confirmed that media outlets that publish false news quickly lose credibility. Abdel Latif Hamza states in this regard: “I believe that false news is more harmful than adulterated and spoiled food, because journalism, with its distinguished influence on recipients, has as its primary material the public mind and its commodity is human beings in general.” (Abdel Latif, 1958, p. 58).

b/ Accuracy: This characteristic derives its importance from being the real field in which the credibility of the media outlet is tested. Accuracy is a complement to truthfulness; a news item may be correct, but lack of accuracy in its presentation may distort its truth and correctness. (Imam, n.d., p. 115). Accuracy is defined as transmitting news carefully without distortion or



alteration. Press institutions strive for accuracy by urging their correspondents to strictly adhere to this principle. (Badran, 1985, p. 97). This characteristic grants the media institution a prestigious position among its audience, but it remains difficult to achieve because it is related to the fine details of the news itself; correct data may be altered by those handling the news process, which directly affects accuracy. (Gehan, 1985, p. 97).

c/ Objectivity: Objectivity is defined as the opposite of subjectivity. It means stating facts in the news story while avoiding opinions. It is one of the most important yet most difficult journalistic standards to apply, since choosing one news story means neglecting others. (Atif, 2007, p. 84). A distinction must be made between news and opinion so that the recipient is not influenced by the sender's views. Objectivity may even require transmitting news even if it contradicts the beliefs of the communicator. This principle has received great attention from all media experts, although there are differences among press institutions in adopting it as a mandatory condition due to institutional affiliations. (Abdullah, 2002, p. 236).

### **Conclusion:**

The journalistic correspondent is not merely a transmitter of news; he is also a creator in the way he conveys it. A single news item may be transmitted by ten correspondents in ten different ways, producing different effects on the recipient. Any article written, or news broadcast or transmitted, provokes discussion in neighborhoods, villages, and cities. This demonstrates that the journalist is a cultural agent who seeks to deepen awareness within his local society and reinforce the cultural identity of the country. He listens to reactions that feed his articles and news, meaning that based on audience responses, new issues may emerge that lead him to revisit the same topic with new information and different perspectives.

Hence, the task of the journalist correspondent remains the collection of accurate news and the faithful presentation of its details to readers, listeners, or viewers. This is an ethical duty that contradicts the dissemination of false and misleading news to an audience that may exploit such information to spread rumors and lies within the local community. Therefore, the journalist's conscience remains the primary safeguard against such improper behaviors in the world of journalism and media.

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