



## *Professionalism and Sensationalism in the presentation of crime content in the Algerian media.*

### *-A critical study-*

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#### *Abstract*

*The present study is a critical analysis of the manner in which criminal activity is depicted within the Algerian media. It is demonstrated that such content is frequently of considerable interest to the media, due to its capacity to attract the maximum audience size possible, and thus is frequently sought after and exploited by the media. Despite the significance of addressing these issues in the media, the methods of presentation are the subject of extensive debate among experts. On the one hand, there is a strong emphasis among some experts on the necessity of presenting these issues in an ethical manner that respects the rights of viewers. In contrast, others regard such presentation as an effective strategy for maintaining viewership ratings and audience engagement. In view of this, the present study aims to emphasise the vital role of the media in raising awareness of the gravity of crime and its deleterious effects on human and community security. It also seeks to underscore the necessity to adhere to the ethical standards governing the presentation of such content.*

#### *Article info*

Received

October 08.2025

Accepted

December 05.2025

#### **Keyword:**

- ✓ crime
- ✓ media
- ✓ professionalism and sensationalism

## 1. Introduction:

One of the most salient social phenomena confronting societies across the spectrum of development is that of deviance and crime. It has been observed that such phenomena have been increasing steadily in recent years, and the methods and techniques used to perpetrate them are also evolving. Contemporary crime has become increasingly diverse in terms of its demographic characteristics, with patterns no longer being confined to adult males as they once were in the past. The phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent among both adult and adolescent females, with no discernible distinction based on gender or age. An examination of crime statistics reveals a marked increase in the number of cases of deviant behaviour and in the number of crimes. This has prompted researchers to investigate and attempt to explain the main causes of this phenomenon, on the one hand, and to find solutions and practical means to prevent and combat it, on the other.

It is evident that Algerian society is susceptible to the challenges and difficulties experienced by other societies. In the recent years, this concept has undergone significant advancements

across diverse disciplines, playing a pivotal role in the evolution of social structures, cultural expressions, economic systems and, notably, technological innovations. Consequently, this has given rise to phenomena such as rural exodus and migration to large cities, which have contributed to the expansion of these cities and the concomitant increase in unemployment, poverty and marginalization. Research indicates that a significant proportion of Algerian families are living below the national median income. These circumstances have given rise to phenomena that are alien to Algerian society, characterised by deviance and a departure from Algerian social values, the most significant of which is crime in its various forms.

In such circumstances, the formation of opposition groups by some individuals becomes a logical response to the denial of their rights within their society. These groups engage in activities such as assault, theft, the embezzlement of both public and private property, kidnapping for ransom, and the trafficking of contraband, including drugs and stolen goods. However, it is important to acknowledge that Algeria has encountered unique challenges related to violence and crime. The repercussions of the so-called

'black decade' continue to resonate among Algerian citizens, particularly those who were born and raised in regions where terrorist organisations were prevalent. These individuals have first-hand memories of killings, torture and bloodshed.

In addressing the question of the fundamental factors that drive individuals to engage in criminal activity, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives within the academic community. Schools of thought differ in their identification of these factors, with opinions ranging from individual and personal factors inherent in the perpetrator of the crime to societal causes. The latter perspective suggests that societal factors, such as unemployment, the marginalisation of young people, domestic violence and the decline of the family's role in performing basic duties, particularly the upbringing and socialisation of children, have contributed to the growth and development of the phenomenon. This decline in familial values has resulted in the emergence of generations that are largely devoid of morals.

Conversely, certain scholars have posited that the media is a significant contributing factor to the propagation of

criminal activity within societies. Technological advancements in media and communication, along with the subsequent emergence of sophisticated technological media, have also played a role in the evolution of crime, encompassing both the diversity of its manifestations and its escalating prevalence. There is a divergence of opinion regarding the impact of the media on the behaviour of its audience in relation to crime. On the one hand, there are those who argue that the media is one of the primary causes of the spread of crime. On the other hand, there are those who emphasise its role in raising awareness and preventing deviant behaviour and crime. As in other countries, the Algerian media has witnessed a substantial proliferation in recent years of channels offering content directed towards Algerian society. These channels present a diverse array of content and messages to their audience, including crime news, which is not concealed. Indeed, some of these channels regard it as an indispensable component of their media output. This prompts the following research question: does the media's reporting of crime across various outlets contribute to the growth and spread of crime or its reduction?

This encompasses a series of sub-questions:

- How do Algerian media outlets deal with crime, and does this have an impact on the audience?
- How much ethical standards are taken into account when Algerian media presents crime-related content?

It is the contention of the present study that, prior to an examination of the issue of crime in the Algerian media between professionalism and sensationalism, it is both cognitively and methodologically beneficial to address the phenomenon of crime in order to comprehend its meanings.

## 1- The concept of crime:

### 1-1- Definition of crime:

**Linguistically:** the Lisan al-Arab dictionary states: "the term 'crime' is defined as the act of severing or cutting off, and to commit a crime is to sever or cut off. Crime is synonymous with transgression and sin, and the plural form is 'crimes' and 'transgressions', which collectively constitute 'crime'. The individual in question has committed a crime and is therefore classified as a

criminal and a transgressor". (*Ibn Mandhour, 1990, p90*).

It has been posited that the term may be derived from the word 'criminal'. The plural forms of the word are "ijram" and "jarum". It is asserted that an individual has committed a criminal act or sinned, and consequently, they are deemed to be a criminal and a sinner. The act of transgressing, in addition to the commission of a crime, is considered to be a sin. In the English language, the term crime is derived from the Latin word *crimen*, which itself is derived from the Latin word "cernere", meaning "to be biased" or "to deviate from normal behaviour". (*Khalfa, S, 2024*)

**Terminologically:** with regard to the terminology employed, it is evident that the concept is defined in a variety of ways. A number of these definitions are founded upon legal principles, whilst others are rooted in psychological and social factors.

In general, the following definitions are employed:

Crime can be defined as human behaviour or conduct resulting from psychological, physical or emotional causes that violate morals, customs, traditions or values, or contravene laws, statutes or beliefs. It is therefore behaviour

that indicates a deviation or temporary delinquency leading to the commission of an act that is prohibited. (*Hamdi, 2012, p16*).

Carrara, an Italian jurist, defined it as: "the term 'anti-social behaviour' a behavior contrary to society, prohibited by the state due to its harm to both the state itself and its citizens". (*Hamdi, 2012, p18*).

Crime is also defined as: Criminal behaviour is defined as an act or pattern of behaviour that is punishable by law because it constitutes an infringement of a legal norm and poses a threat to the security and safety of the individual or the community.

It is asserted that an individual is deemed a criminal only in the event of a formal legal designation by a competent court. Furthermore, the concept of criminality is inherently linked to the recognition of an individual or group by the relevant judicial authority. Clenard also defined it as "crime and deviance in general, a set of situations in which behaviour takes a direction that is reprehensible or unacceptable to the extent that it exceeds the limits of tolerance in the local community." Durkheim defined it as 'any act that conflicts with the values and ideas established in the conscience of

the community' (Durkheim, 1965). It is generally acknowledged that criminal behaviour is defined as the deliberate and conscious violation of the values, standards and norms established by a given community, with such violations potentially resulting in tangible or moral harm. The punishment meted out serves a dual purpose: it acts as a deterrent to others, and as a form of retribution against the individual who has transgressed the general rules that govern the social system.

It is further defined as a deliberate act that breaks or violates the criminal law, and requires official punishment or penalties. Additionally, it is characterised as a departure from the rules and codes of conduct that society establishes for its members. The term is also employed to denote an act perceived by the community to be detrimental to its interests. (*Talib, 2002, p32*).

The Fourth International Congress of Criminal Law, convened in Paris in 1937, delineated the concept of crime as 'any act or omission by a specified individual that results in a pervasive or specific social infraction or disruption, and is subject to legal sanction in the form of criminal penalties or precautionary measures'. The following elements

constitute the concept of crime  
(*Hamdi, 2012, p19*) :

- ❖ Criminal act.
- ❖ A criminal act is committed voluntarily.
- ❖ Criminalisation and legal punishment
- ❖ The existence of a victim is a prerequisite for the initiation of legal proceedings.

**1-2- Types of crimes:** crimes are broadly categorised into three distinct classifications: criminal offences, civil offences, and disciplinary offences.

Criminal offences encompass a broad spectrum of infractions, including murder, robbery, and crimes against property and persons. In contrast, civil offences encompass a range of legal liabilities, such as contractual obligations and ethical considerations. Finally, disciplinary offences are related to deviant behaviour, particularly in terms of manners and ethics. (*Hamid, 2012, p :19*).

**1-3- Types of Crime in the Media:**

The classification of crime types is a subject that varies among scholars, but in general terms, they can be classified as follows: (*Ahmed, 2005, pp 7,8,9*).

**\*The first category:** encompasses murder, theft and various forms of assault that transpire between individuals within society. This type of crime has the potential to cause societal unrest and may encourage some individuals with a propensity for imitation to emulate the behaviour they observe or encounter in the media.

**\*The second category:** comprises crimes that are considered to be the most egregious violations of societal values. In light of the gravity of the matter, and given the pernicious nature of the content in question, which is known to subvert and annihilate the most fundamental values and ideals of Arab Islamic society, whether they pertain to religion, national identity or even honour-related concerns, it is imperative that the media exercises the utmost caution in its approach and meticulously determines what constitutes permissible and what is prohibited in terms of publication.

**\* The third category:** this group includes road accidents, fires, building collapses, and similar incidents, which are caused by negligence, corruption, or the

failure to implement measures to ensure the safety of citizens.

**\*The fourth category:** this form of criminal activity is associated with the systems of government and the events that may arise within them. The publication provides coverage of terrorist groups and organisations, individuals who work against the prevailing systems, and the chaos, riots and other events that may result from these factors.

The Algerian legislature has imposed severe penalties with the aim of reducing crime; however, the country still has alarmingly high crime rates, with offenders committing criminal acts that pose a real threat to individuals' lives and negatively affect society's security. *(Sadjel, 2024).*

It is important to note that despite extensive research, no official statistics are currently available for the years 2023 and 2024. However, statistics from the World Atlas website indicate that 795 intentional homicides were recorded in 2022. *(Yahi, A. (n.d) 2025).*

Consequently, the documentation of such a high number of crimes prompts a sense of urgency, as the perpetration of these offences is regarded as a societal phenomenon predominantly influenced by prevailing social conditions, societal

transformation, and the cultural standards and sophistication within that society. The underlying causes of this phenomenon are numerous and varied, and include the proliferation of narcotics, the influence of unsavoury companions, the pernicious effects of idleness, the challenges posed by unemployment, the dearth of religious guidance, the dissolution of familial structures, the escalating rates of divorce, and the influence of the media and its content on the promotion of criminal activity.

#### **-Sensationalism in the coverage of crime by some Algerian media outlets and its impact on audiences:**

In today's society, media outlets have the capacity to capture and sustain public attention at any given moment. The content disseminated via these channels, encompassing a wide array of forms including but not limited to text, audio, and visual media, is omnipresent and accessible on a continuous basis. Consequently, members of the public are exposed to this content in their daily lives. Consequently, it is imperative for researchers to examine this content to ascertain its detrimental and beneficial impacts on the audience, as it plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's personality and identity by cultivating the

audience's awareness and influencing their concepts, values, and even their habits and behaviours. Conversely, there is a possibility that this may exert a detrimental effect on their psyche, potentially compromising their social and moral values.

The issue of crime in the media has been a longstanding preoccupation for researchers, scholars and media practitioners in both Western and Arab societies. The depiction of criminal acts in the media has become a significant component of the industry, encompassing a wide range of incidents including murder, vandalism, altercations, theft, rape, abduction, and torture, among others. This has given rise to concerns regarding the potential adverse impacts of such content on viewers, particularly those who are vulnerable, as they are the most susceptible to the influence of visual and audio media.

In the context of the substantial developments that have transpired within the Algerian media landscape, criminality has assumed a pivotal role within news programmes and the media at large, with criminal news garnering considerable public interest due to its human and social dimensions. It has become evident that Algerian media outlets, in their endeavour

to attract the maximum number of viewers, have been observed to resort to sensationalism in their reporting of these issues. These outlets have been noted to place undue emphasis on the dramatic and exciting aspects of the issues, while simultaneously presenting the facts in a meticulous manner that is intended to arouse curiosity and capture the public's attention.

In the Algerian media, a notable trend has emerged concerning the coverage of criminal incidents. A number of outlets have recently been observed to allocate a considerable portion of both airtime and print space to detailed reports on crime. This approach is often disproportionate when measured against other topics, suggesting a calculated decision to utilise this sensational material in order to generate higher viewership and engagement metrics. It is evident that certain channels demonstrate a propensity to broadcast crime news with the utilisation of visual media and live coverage from the scene of the occurrence. This coverage persists until all pertinent information has been obtained, while others have garnered acclaim for their presentation of such information in the form of programmes and dramas. These programmes adopt a style

reminiscent of action films, wherein the criminal is depicted as a hero who has accomplished extraordinary feats. A salient transgression that has been observed is the proclivity of certain media outlets to elaborate on criminal acts and perpetrators without duly contemplating the advantages of dissemination and the prospective ramifications of such reporting on criminal rates, particularly among adolescents, who may endeavour to emulate and replicate these incidents. (*Abu Hashim, H. (n.d).*)

This phenomenon may also serve to exacerbate prevailing sentiments of fear and anxiety within the general populace, as criminal activity is frequently depicted as a pervasive and incessant threat, engendering a state of collective panic and hysteria. The constant repetition of sensational crime details has been shown to accustom the audience to violence and even to motivate some groups, especially young people and teenagers, to imitate criminal behaviour. This has been demonstrated to exacerbate crime rates rather than reduce them. Researchers have emphasised that writing about and presenting crime news has the potential to educate a generation of criminals and provide them with the means used by

criminals to commit their crimes. (*Ahmed, G. S. (1986).*)

A substantial corpus of research has demonstrated that the depiction of crime in the media exerts a considerable detrimental influence on viewers, prompting them to emulate the violent behaviour they observe. Examples of such studies include those conducted by the National Commission, which studied the causes of violence and how to prevent crime in the United States in order to assess the circumstances that led to assassinations and unrest and riots in cities. The report indicated that images of crime on television dominate 80% of programming. The aforementioned report indicated that the cause of this phenomenon is attributable to the content of these programmes. The findings of the 1993 study on crime in the United States of America demonstrated that an 18-year-old individual would have been exposed to approximately 40,000 scenes of murder. The veracity of these results is substantiated by the incidents that are a regular occurrence in our daily lives, wherein a significant number of crimes are now perpetrated in a manner reminiscent of the international mafia. A considerable number of criminals have acknowledged that they have been influenced by the

portrayal of criminal behaviour in television films, which are characterised by their depictions of criminal activities in an appealing and enticing manner, presenting them in a heroic light that engenders power and even financial gain. In this case, the individual inhabits a world that is divorced from reality, and they seek to emulate film characters, failing to discern between fiction and reality. They rationalise their inability to differentiate between reality and fiction by seeking refuge in fantasy, seeking retribution against society and resorting to violence. They perceive violence to be a successful coping mechanism for dealing with marginalization, failure and psychological and social distress. **(Makawi, H.E & El-Sayed, L.H. (2001).**

In the contemporary era, the media has evolved into a significant partner in the realm of violence and crime. The content of Algerian television programming has been the subject of considerable controversy, primarily due to its depictions of criminal activity. This aspect merits critical scrutiny. The latter has been established as a tradition and a realistic depiction of the violent content that viewers encounter, ranging from depictions of murder and torture to the

mutilation of corpses and attempts to conceal evidence of crime. Consequently, the media has been referred to as a school specialising in teaching the arts of crime by some observers. The reenactments presented in investigative programmes offer a valuable educational opportunity by illustrating the practical application of criminal tools and methods. These reenactments provide a comprehensive overview of criminal activities, including the use of weapons, document forgery, kidnapping, and disposing of bodies. By showcasing these techniques, the reenactments serve as a valuable educational resource, offering insights into the professional methodologies employed by criminals. This phenomenon is exemplified by numerous television programmes, particularly those focused on investigative journalism. Prominent examples include **"The Crime Mystery"** on Al-Chorouk TV, **"Crime Investigation"** on Al-Bilad TV, **"Investigations"** on Ennahar TV, and **"Criminal Cases"** on Al-Chorouk News TV, among numerous others. This is merely a small sample of the numerous programmes that frequently present this type of content. Research has demonstrated that a significant proportion of media channels have a tendency to

approach criminal cases from an emotional and dramatic perspective, often to the detriment of meaningful content based on analysis and objective interpretation. This tendency is driven by commercial and polarising objectives, such as increased viewership and engagement, which are often prioritised over more nuanced and objective reporting. It has frequently been observed that this approach can engender the propagation of stereotypical conceptions pertaining to crime, perpetrators, and victims, thereby fostering an environment characterised by anxiety, fear and insecurity. Such an environment stands in direct opposition to the professional and balanced treatment that ought to underpin an educational and awareness-raising role.

## **2- Professionalism in presenting crime topics for the purpose of prevention:**

The media must adopt a professional approach when presenting crime issues if they are to fulfil their effective role in preventing this dangerous social phenomenon. The objective and balanced analyses provided by professionals in this field are based on accurate information that explains the causes and consequences of crime. It is important to avoid sensationalism and exaggeration, as this can be

counterproductive. There is an increasing academic interest in the role of the media in the prevention and combating of crime, and in raising awareness of it. This interest is especially pronounced in large urban areas where there is a high prevalence of all kinds of crime. While some experts posit that the media has exerted a detrimental influence on society and is responsible for the increase in crime, as discussed in the preceding section, those who hold a contrary view contend that the media can serve as a pivotal positive factor in modifying and reducing criminal behaviour, particularly when it operates in conjunction with other social institutions such as the family, the mosque, the school, and others. Furthermore, the dissemination of information pertaining to criminal activities, incidents, investigative proceedings and judicial proceedings is of paramount importance to the media and constitutes a fundamental and legitimate right of the public. The professional presentation and discussion of crime-related subjects entails more than the mere narration of factual information through various media channels; it involves a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted dimensions of crime, with the objective of elucidating its underlying

causes and disseminating awareness-raising and value-based messages. This analysis facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the potential implications of crime on individuals and society, with the overarching aim of fostering respect for the law and ethical and educational standards among the public.

It is widely acknowledged that law enforcement and security agencies fulfil a pivotal role in the fight against crime and the maintenance of public order. The media plays a complementary role in this regard, working in collaboration with these agencies to promote security and combat all forms of criminal activity through joint efforts. (*Wali, A. L & Boubaaya, K. (2021).*)

It is an irrefutable fact that the media has a wide reach and influence among different segments of society, which can facilitate the task of crime prevention and raising awareness of its dangers. In this regard, the media plays a pivotal role in monitoring potential threats to society that could give rise to criminal activity. Moreover, media outlets allocate significant resources to the dissemination of educational material that aims to raise awareness about the perils of certain deviant behaviours that have the potential

to compromise individual values, thereby preventing individuals from succumbing to criminal behaviour.

Audio-visual media have been argued to act as a reflection of society; as such, they are expected to reflect all aspects of society, regardless of the individual's personal attitudes towards the content being published and their level of agreement or disagreement with it. It is imperative that violence in all its forms, including heinous crimes such as murder, rape and theft, is recognised as a social phenomenon and given due attention. Moreover, the dissemination of news pertaining to criminal activity, various incident reports, investigative proceedings and judicial proceedings across various media platforms is not only a legitimate right, but also an integral component in fulfilling the fundamental principle of the public's right to information and knowledge. It is incumbent upon the state to ensure the dissemination of information to citizens in order that the latter may have the opportunity to satisfy themselves that those guilty of criminal acts shall not evade retribution and that the processes for pursuing and investigating such offences are being conducted in an impartial and equitable way. Conversely, the dissemination of information

pertaining to criminal activities and the methods employed by perpetrators serves to encourage members of society to exercise caution and evade circumstances that may render them susceptible to victimisation, thereby ensuring their protection from criminal acts.

In the contemporary era, it is imperative for media entities to assume an effective role in motivating individuals to adhere to proper conduct. This can be achieved by ensuring the provision of accurate and reliable information, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of prevailing circumstances and instilling adherence to Islamic values as a paradigm for behaviour and interaction. Such a role is instrumental in orienting society towards positive and constructive pathways. This has been demonstrated to positively influence the minds of the audience, nourishing their minds and souls with noble values. It has been demonstrated that this medium has the capacity to contribute to the treatment of behavioural deviations. This contribution is made according to a strategy that has been studied and prepared by specialised media professionals. The aim of this strategy is to weaken support for crime and to reinforce awareness of its harms. It should

be noted that this strategy does not involve the use of exaggeration or sensationalism.

The efficacy of crime prevention through various media outlets is contingent on the specific characteristics of the media outlet in question. The following points summarise the aforementioned discussion. (*Al-Sarani, A.S. bin M. (2011)*) :

-The preparation of informational materials, incorporating audiovisual presentations, and the allocation of newspaper pages for the dissemination of educational content pertaining to criminal phenomena, is undertaken for the purpose of public enlightenment and information. This initiative entails the identification of criminal methodologies, alongside the exposition of countermeasures, thereby facilitating the prevention and deterrence of criminal activities. Additionally, the promotion of virtuous values and the dissemination of knowledge are undertaken, aiming to cultivate public security awareness and to furnish individuals with the requisite information to ensure their safety and well-being.

-The organisation of media campaigns is of primary importance in areas with high crime rates. These campaigns should involve various

influential figures in society, including specialists in sociology and psychology, as well as security personnel. The linking and activation of the role of mosques and educational institutions through these campaigns is also of significance.

-It is imperative for media outlets to underscore, through the content of their programming, the function of official authorities and their endeavours to curtail criminal activity with a view to eradicating fear and intimidation from individuals, thereby encouraging them to provide testimony in a court of law and report suspects.

### **3- Ethics of presenting crime subjects in the media:**

As demonstrated above, crime represents a constant threat to peace, security and stability within societies. In light of this challenge, there is an urgent need for the formulation of effective strategies to combat crime in all its forms and types. This imperative is further exacerbated by the globalisation of media and communication technology, which has facilitated the automatic dissemination of crime to any location worldwide. This has precipitated widespread panic and trepidation among nations, as they

apprehend the deleterious consequences of crime, including the erosion of societal values and the dissemination of such values on a large scale. In consideration of the extant literature pertaining to the role of the media in the propagation or mitigation of criminal activity, it is evident that the formulation of a meticulously conceived strategy is imperative for the management of criminal issues and the adherence to ethical standards in media representation. The following points encapsulate the salient aspects of this strategy:

-The professional standards that are observed by the media in their practice are defined by the principles of propriety and social responsibility. In this sense, the media should exercise extreme caution when dealing with crime news, given its direct and significant impact on society. This is, in essence, what professional journalism should embody. This is what professional journalism should do.

-Media training and education mechanisms in Algeria must focus on the ethical and legal aspects of media coverage of crime. Journalists should adopt a professional approach that focuses on the social and cultural backgrounds of crime without resorting to sensationalism.

-The development of a clear national and legal charter is imperative in order to delineate the performance of the media and media coverage in this area, whilst concomitantly supporting the maintenance of community security.

- Media professionals working in the domain of crime news must exercise a degree of self-censorship in their work, in consideration of its sensitive and perilous character, and abstain from disseminating information pertaining to specific crimes prior to the conclusion of pertinent security investigations.
- It is imperative to exercise restraint from the publication of any explicit information pertaining to either victims or suspects, or indeed particulars of the crime itself. Such actions have the potential to compromise the integrity of the investigation by diverting attention from the pursuit of truth and justice.
- Media professionals must remember that their message is important. They must educate the public about the seriousness of crime. They should prioritise ethics over speed when reporting on crime. They help citizens to

understand the negative effects of deviant media. (*Abu Zahid, L.S. (n.d).*)

- The commitment to honesty in reporting criminal activity with accuracy and objectivity is of paramount significance. Furthermore, there is a commitment to publishing ethical principles and refraining from any actions that constitute slander or defamation of individuals, as the accused is innocent until proven guilty.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the sensationalist media coverage of criminal acts has been demonstrated to engender a short-term increase in viewing figures. However, such reporting has also been shown to engender fear, to distort reality, and to contribute to the breakdown of the social fabric. Consequently, the development of responsible media that acknowledges the sensitivity of the subjects it addresses is a pressing priority for Algerian media institutions, who must approach this task with full awareness and professionalism. It is imperative to emphasise that the establishment of security can be likened to a fence that engenders a sense of safety and security for individuals, their

property, their families, their honour, and even their community. This security serves as a shield that protects the process of development and progress. Crime is a pervasive social phenomenon that is observed in almost every society. This phenomenon is as old as humanity itself and cannot be denied or ignored. The factors that cause it are varied. As previously stated, the media may be a primary contributing factor to the proliferation and evolution of this phenomenon, through reporting that is characterised by exaggeration and sensationalism. Conversely, a balanced and professional media presence could serve as a catalyst for addressing the issue, enhancing public awareness of its associated risks, and thereby contributing to its prevention. The issue remains the subject of considerable debate, both from an ethical and legal perspective. While it is acknowledged that journalists possess the right to disseminate information and news, it is imperative that this prerogative is not exploited to infringe upon individuals' privacy or to manipulate public opinion through biased reporting. Media legislation, laws and codes of professional conduct in Algeria require more rigorous and strict enforcement, particularly by the audiovisual regulatory

authority. The responsibility of this authority is to monitor content and ensure that it complies with professional ethics and respects the right of viewers and the public to informed and valuable media content.

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