

Just the Facts, Please

"A reporter's job is to find out if something is true or false and report it to the people"

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The Gateway

"All you can report upon is NOW - on what you see, what you hear, and what you touch," said Ann Medina, CBC foreign

correspondent, "if you play God - think you can read in a crystal ball what's going to happen tomorrow... tomorrow gets

blown up in your face."

Medina was speaking before a large gathering at the University of Alberta Nov. 27th on 'The Role of The Media in International Politics.'

According to Medina, a reporter's primary objective is to report, not to 'go out and cru-

sade, not to save lives, not to mould peoples opinions'.

"There is no such thing as pure objectivity... but there's still something in our guts that can distinguish between what is more objective or less objective, more subjective or less subjective."

It is very important for a reporter not to have a pre-

conceived notion on what she is going to write 'like a tourist who has all the details planned out even before boarding the plane'; a true reporter has to be ready for the unexpected, the contrary.

"Everyone was saying the people of Syria hated Assad," Medina said, "but I went there and found out it was his brother the head of internal security,

that the people hated; they love Assad." Reporters should go looking for a story. They don't know what they are going to find.

Reporters should not be considering what effect their stories are going to have on millions of readers or viewers.

"Aid is being abused in Africa; should we keep from reporting it just because there might be less aid and more people would die?" she said, "Our job is to report the facts... maybe that will change government attitude and the abuse of aid."

"The Israelis were trying to justify their raids by publicising the suicide bombings by the Shiite extremists in Lebanon," said Medina, "I went to Tyre... talked to the people... they were just regular people. The Israelis have done something to the whole Shiite that prompted them to do these. But the Israelis wanted us to believe they were extremists only to justify what they were doing."

"President Reagan did the same thing about Gaddafi," she noted, "It is tragic that the media was accepting what Reagan was claiming as true faith."

"A reporter's job is to find out if something is true or false and to report it to the people," Medina said, "I am as much worried about the government controlling us as I am about terrorists controlling us." Medina discussed the Vietnam war and its coverage by the media. "Maybe the coverage stopped the war," she said, "but we should not weigh the consequences of our reporting and self-censor the reports."

"If people die in Africa, I am very sorry. I cry at night thinking that my report contributed to that, but it is better for me to report than to hold back information," Medina said.

