The Case of Meriam Ishag Yahia in the Swedish Media

*An investigation into framing of systematic civil injustices of apostasy*

Hulda Fahmi

MA thesis

Journalism Connected

Supervisor: Liudmila Voronova
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title Page</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key and Glossary</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Background to Meriam’s case and Apostasy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. The case of Meriam</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Apostasy laws worldwide</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purpose of Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Hypothesis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Defining Framing and Previous research</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Criticised Framing theories</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Alternative Framing Theories</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Method and Material</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. Method</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2. Lexical Analysis: Quantitative approach</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1. Lexical Analysis: Qualitative approach</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. Material</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. Limitations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Analysis: Framing of Meriam Ishag’s case in Swedish media</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1. General</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Repeated words and themes</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1. International pressure</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2. American citizen</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. Keywords</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1. Shari’a law</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2. Apostasy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4. Use of foreign sources</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5. Examples of sensationalism</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5.1. International condemnation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6. Wording of the Source of the Conflict</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7. Identifying Factor and Evidence of Global Journalism</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion and future study</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sources</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The case of Meriam Yahia Ishag in Sudan is a recent example of apostasy law practiced in numerous Islamic states. She was a woman sentenced to death and 100 lashes when she chose to marry Daniel Wani, a Sudanese Christian man, in 2014. The study seeks to address how Meriam’s case was portrayed in three different Swedish newspapers. Her case is one of many, the result of apostasy laws practiced in over 14 countries. It looks at the reporting of Meriam’s case in Swedish media who have no connection with Sudan to see how they frame the story. The three newspapers analysed were Dagens Nyheter, a daily broadsheet; Dagen a Christian newspaper and Aftonbladet a slightly left leaning tabloid. Though in the literature foreign news has often been found to have simplified and mirrored one another, there were slight differences in how the stories were framed each to suit their specific audience. There was shown however, to be similarities in choosing what was significant to the story. The hypothesis from the outset was that Meriam’s case would be addressed as a lone wolf disconnected from the global implication of the apostasy laws. The essay puts forward an evaluation in which it is discussed whether simplicity or full detail should be favoured.

keywords: Meriam Ishag Yahia Apostasy Shari’a law Framing Darfur Otherness Legal aspects
Key and Glossary

The spelling used for Meriam’s full name will be the following, Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag. Though she will mostly be referred to as Meriam or Meriam Yahia, to keep the phrasing short. In the articles different variations of her name were used: Mariam Yahya, Mariam Yahia, Meriam Ibrahim, etc. For consistency only one spelling will be used regardless of the spelling in the articles to make it easier for readers to search for her name in the document.

*Dagens Nyheter*, a Swedish broadsheet that will be analysed, will be referred to as *DN* so as to clearly distinguish it from the Christian daily news broadsheet *Dagen*.

Following is a glossary of words referred to in the study. The interpretation used for each:

*had al-ridda:* The right of *Allah* in the punishment of an apostate, a person who leaves Islam.

*apostate:* A person who has left or renounced their religious or political belief or principle.

*kuffar:* Word used for non-believers in Arabic within Islam, literally means unbelief, apostate.

*ridda:* Apostasy, the act of becoming an apostate.

*murtadd:* A Muslim who renounces Islam, an apostate.

*Shari’aa law:* Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the *Qur’an* and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed, found in the *Hadith* (literally traditions) and Sunna (literally laws/rules).

*Islamic state:* A state which recognises itself as an Islamic state in the constitution and where Islamic law is wholly or partially cited in the courts, i.e. State and religion are not separated.
1. Background to Meriam’s case and Apostasy

This study will discuss the effect of the media in simplifying conflicts and crises as shown to be the case in a substantial amount of the previous literature. Therefore, to identify whether this is true of the reporting of Meriam’s case a brief summary of the case of Meriam will be given. Moreover the systematic system of discrimination her case is implicit in will be discussed.

1.1. The case of Meriam

In mid-May Meriam Ishag Yahia, a 27 year old doctor, was sentenced to death in Sudan. Her crime was that she chose to become a Christian. In August 2013 she had already been arrested and charged for adultery, since her husband was Christian. As a Muslim she was not allowed to marry a non-Muslim. Her marriage was therefore considered null and void and she was accused of adultery which is punishable by 100 lashes according to *shari’a* law.\(^1\) It was not until February 2014 that she received her apostasy charge, in conjunction with her declaration to be Christian and not Muslim.\(^2\)

The death sentence of Meriam Ishag Yahia, then pregnant, became highlighted in newspapers all over the world. International pressure followed the large media attention and Sudan released her for a while.\(^3\) A day after her release however, she was arrested again when trying to leave the country, this time accused for carrying false papers. Meriam was released and found asylum in the US embassy until she was finally able to escape to Italy and from there, emigrate on to the USA.\(^4\)

In the Sudanese prison Meriam Ishag was offered to be released if she only recanted her Christian faith, an option available under the Sudanese apostasy law. She refused however, and was kept in


\(^2\) ibid.


prison. When the Sudanese government released Meriam they never denounced the Sudanese penal code which incriminated Meriam and which imposes the death sentence on apostates from Islam.

### 1.2. Apostasy laws worldwide

Looking back in history Meriam’s case is not a solo one. Violent repercussions following anyone who leaves or questions Islam has been the case in Sudanese jurisprudence before. An example is Muhammed Taha. He was a muslim who sought to reform Islam, allowing for greater human rights. He was considered a kuffar, a non-believer, and sentenced to death for his thoughts.

Apostasy known as ridda is the act of renouncing one’s Muslim faith and is punishable by death according to article 126 of the Sudanese penal code. Laws banishing apostasy are practiced in over 20 Islamic states to date. Often they are tied together with blasphemy laws. Paul Marshall highlights how these laws are “choking freedoms worldwide.” Ann E. Mayer also writes in her book that though the amount of converts may not be many, the effects of the laws hinder moderate Muslims from professing their more liberal views. Examples of countries practicing these apostasy laws are found in Egypt, Saudi-Arabia, U.A.E., Malaysia and Qatar. If the death sentence is not written in the penal code there are many civil repercussions put into place such as restrictions on the right to marry and on the right to raise your children in your new faith. This was the case for Lina Joy in Malaysia who wanted to register her conversion from Islam to Christianity in order to

---


12 Set My People Free, Human Rights organisation.

Though the constitution in Malaysia theoretically allows the \textbf{freedom of religion} it is not practiced when it comes to Muslim citizens,\footnote{14}{\textit{ibid.}} their civil rights are determined by Islamic law.\footnote{15}{\textit{ibid.}} Dr. Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd from Egypt is another example. He was born Muslim and was an assistant professor at Cairo University.\footnote{16}{Meral, Ziya, \textit{No Place to Call Home Experiences of Apostates from Islam Failures of the International Community}. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), United Kingdom, 2008. at 44.} He was accused of apostasy for his views on Islam and his interpretations of the \textit{Qur’\textasciitilde{n}} albeit him professing to be Muslim. This followed in a court case calling for his marriage to be dissolved since he was no longer Muslim.\footnote{17}{\textit{ibid.} at 44.} He was therefore forced to escape Egypt with his wife.\footnote{18}{\textit{ibid.} at 44.}

There are no statistics on the amount of people who are subject to these laws. Pew Research Centre was able however, to map out the countries which practice these laws or who have laws in place where the effect is similar, restricting freedoms when leaving Islam.\footnote{19}{Theodorou, Angelina. “Which Countries Still Outlaw Apostasy and Blasphemy?” \textit{Pew Research Center RSS}. Pew Research Center, 28 May 2014. Web. 26 May 2015.} In light of the widespread application \textit{de facto} of these apostasy and blasphemy laws in Islamic states, one can conclude that the case of Meriam Yahia is not a haphazard case. It is established in the practice of numerous Islamic states.
2. Purpose of Study

2.1. Introduction

“Where human rights violations make the news, they are usually reported as the actions of individual perpetrators, not as the product of a system and of structures that construct and sustain long-term relations in conflict.”

Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, senior lecturer in Media at Northumbria University

“The role of journalism is not to retell everything. The role of journalism is to report what is true, relevant and enough information for the audience to understand, in a way that does not unnecessarily wound or hurt somebody.” (translated)

Britt Börjesson, lecturer in Journalism at Gothenburg University

The unequal treatment of apostates has been shown to be implicit in many Islamic states. Thus Meriam’s predicament can be placed in a wider setting of systematic discrimination. Meriam’s case


21 Swedish translation: “Journalistikens uppgift är inte att berätta allt. Journalistikens uppgift är att berätta sant, relevant och tillräckligt för att publiken skall kunna hålla sig orienterad, och göra det på ett sätt som inte i onödan sårar eller skadar någon.”


was a natural opportunity to address these human rights abuses with reference to the school of thought that promotes human rights journalism and peace journalism.23

There is a history of oversimplification however; especially when it comes to conflicts and the roots of them.24 Examples were given from the Darfur conflict in Sudan which was first portrayed as Arab herders against African farming tribesmen.25 Until the media later on was able to give a more accurate summary that showed the conflict to be more than just a “bloody rivalry”26 between Arab herders and African farming tribesman rather a wanting killing of the civilians.27 Some argue media will never reach this level of prowess, the system doesn’t allow for it.28 Nohrstedt holds however, still holds that the ideal should still be strived for.29

For media to fulfil its democratic goal30 news information needs to be clear and understood. At the same time the scope and and complexity of conflicts needs to be highlighted and there is a need for lengthier explanation. Whether simplicity and complex truths can ever meet up can be questioned when there is a demand from news corporations to have quick selling stories which often result in distorted Hollywood-style framed news.31

---


25ibid.

26ibid.

27ibid.


30ibid.

Meriam’s case is interesting on two accounts. Firstly foreign news from Africa is rarely brought into the light, therefore her story getting as much attention is significant. Also apostasy cases in the past have not received equivocal coverage in mainstream media. Secondly earlier studies have focussed more on reporting regarding war conflicts and rarely on systematic severe human rights abuses, with reference to peace journalism. Shaw is alone in introducing the importance of reporting on systematic human rights abuses in order to solve greater conflicts. Therefore, there is a need for more literature to discuss this issue.

2.2. Hypothesis

Out of curiosity I wished to analyse how the case of Meriam was reported, whether reports addressing her situation brought up the wider situation of apostasy. Due to my legal background it was interesting to see how media addressed human rights abuses and if they mentioned any of the laws that legitimised them. Also having ties to both Sweden and Sudan, I decided to look at three Swedish broadsheet newspapers’ reporting on Meriam. How was her case reported on? Did it simplify the issues, focussing on the “sentimental” rather than legal implications?

I formulated the following hypothesis in light of the simplifications that have been shown to take place in news journalism in the past where the need to sensationalise news is prevalent.

My hypothesis for the study is that Meriam’s case will be treated as a lone wolf.

The goal of my research is to determine if this is the case. If Hollywood-style, simplistic framing prevalent in the reporting of the three different Swedish newspapers? Framing effects how the story is perceived and also plays a role in how the problem can be solved. Thus framing theory will be addressed in this study and further explained in the following chapter. The effects of the frame choice for articles which discuss the case of Meriam will be looked at.

32 For example, Mahmoud Muhammed Taha, Pastor Saeed an anonymous Afghani man.


The decision to choose three different newspapers can be explained as followed. It was to see if they work independently of one another, considering that media corporations are accused of borrowing from each other rather than approaching stories with fresh and unique eyes. Would there be any significant differences in how the different newspapers framed the story?

The thesis chooses to keep a very narrow focus on the case of Meriam. Thus it is more telling on framing of foreign reporting and is not interested on reporting on a local level. Still it cannot be telling of all foreign reporting on a general level but it does gives an important insight to how reporting can look like on closer inspection. It will analyse the choices made and reflect on how they could be improved finally. The thesis will keep the focus on framing of foreign news. Of course when discussing the different types of framing, there are some moral questions that present themselves, whether the journalist has a responsibility to report stories in a certain way. These will however, not be delved into in any great detail. The responsibility of journalist to give a wholesome view of conflicts is taken for granted, whether it is practically possible is another question but it should always be the goal.

3. Defining Framing and Previous research

My research is based on framing theory which suggests that the choice of frame has significant implications on the democratic process. This is because the theory paints a version of reality that is later consumed by people and policymakers. In the case of Meriam Ishag, I will be analysing how her story is framed and speculate on the effects of it. Framing theory will be discussed here thoroughly first by addressing the main media criticisms of common framing mistakes and secondly by analysing whether human rights journalism and global journalism offer satisfactory alternative framing options for civil injustices.

3.1 Criticised Framing theories

One of the framing theories referred to in the literature is indexing. Here the choice of frame in media is usually subconscious and tends to mirror the foreign policies of the states. This type of

---


36 ibid. at 76.

framing was observed by Olausson in Sweden’s reporting about environment. Though Meriam’s case is not about the environment, Olausson’s research still says something about how media can reflect foreign policy. Sweden in their media reporting then portrayed the environmental situation from a Swedish and European perspective by highlighting the Swedish and European progress and painting the United States as the bad guy in the whole process. Thus ignoring that many Swedish foreign corporations benefit from the poor environmental industries in third world countries. This trend of favouring the policies of the country are referenced several times in the literature. Nohrstedt highlights how during the Afghan war Swedish journalists took governments information at face value. They did not go further to investigate the underlying truths. Whether this is true in the case of Meriam will be observed when analysing the articles about her.

The bulk of framing failures pointed out by media researchers are blamed on the business issues and financial constraints media companies face. It is given as one of the reasons Africa does not get as much coverage. Thus to attract an audience there are some factors which have been shown to exist when framing a story. Two of them are an identifying factor, and a simple sensational story to create a sense of justice indignation. A great deal of international reporting is highly selective and has a disproportionate interest in what it reports on, not equal to the human casualties. Examples include the high Israel-Palestine reporting when greater casualties were found in the DRC conflict. Hawkins highlights the greater coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict to be an identity issue. Jerusalem and Israel as a whole have considerable importance for Jews, Christians and Muslims around the world. Thus being able to identify with the news is important for its coverage. Is there an identifying factor for Meriam’s story? Second to having an identifying factor is the need

39 ibid. at 433.
40 ibid.
43 ibid.
44 ibid. at 79.
45 ibid.
46 ibid.
47 ibid.
for simplicity and sensationalism. Virgil Hawkins framed it as far as saying that the news tends to choose “a Hollywood movie-style morality play format”.\(^{48}\) She expresses the media’s need in news for a villain, a helpless victim and if possible a hero to save the day. Hawkins mentions this same reason for the reporting about the Darfur conflict and the absence of reports about the DRC.\(^{49}\) The Darfur coverage only became substantial when it could be pinpointed that it was the Arabs against the Africans, clear good-guys and bad-guys.\(^{50}\) Therefore, in the coming analysis the same will be sought out in the Swedish newspapers. Is there evidence of a sensationalist frame being practiced?

**3.2 Alternative Framing Theories**

In response to inadequate reporting and framing of foreign news, theorists have come with alternative frames to different issues. This is to counter the mainstream news, where wars are often framed as a good vs. bad battle and election campaigns are often been spurned on as a horse race.\(^{51}\) Researchers have thus been criticising this narrow framing which they believe shuts doors on finding a solution to conflicts. This media research critique however, has often landed on deaf ears.\(^{52}\) Three of the alternative approaches to foreign news that will be addressed here are: peace journalism, human rights journalism and global journalism.

Peace journalism as described by Lynch and McGoldrick is, simply put, adopting a different and more creative way of reporting about wars; moving from the instinctive win-lose approach in wars which often encourages violence, to instead seeing the solutions by framing the conflict from a win-


\(^{49}\) *ibid.*

\(^{50}\) *ibid.*, at 80.


\(^{52}\) Nohrstedt, S.A. “Legal Context in Journalism.” Personal interview. 18 Mar. 2015.
This is achieved by approaching all sides to the conflict and focusing on all victims. It is also interested in exposing all untruths on both sides of the conflict.

Human rights journalism coined by Shaw, is an extension of peace journalism with a focus not only on conflicts but also on systematic injustices which suits well with Meriam’s story. Human rights journalism wishes to create a frame which refrains from pointing the abuses at “others.” This is accomplished by exposing all human wrongs and by avoiding provocative depictions of abuses. It refrains from depicting others’ “human violations” but also looks at their own. Human rights journalism is always for the vulnerable.

Global journalism is another option, coined by Peter Berglez. According to Berglez Global journalism is a stronger type of identification process than emotional ties which are usually the case in foreign news. Since we live in a globalised world global journalism taps into those natural links such as, but not limited to, International Law and using them to bring the national and international implications closer together. Foreign news often emphasises human emotions or personalities to get local audiences interested, and incite them to sympathise and empathise; as Hawkins revealed in her finds, the need for the Hollywood-style reporting. The role of global journalism however, is not devoid of that but its main use for framing comes from existing links. An example found in a Swedish news article expands on this. In the article the rights of Chinese workers were tied to the


54 ibid.

55 ibid.


57 ibid.

58 ibid.

59 ibid.


Sweden via the H&M factories that make the very clothes Swedes wear. The article thus drew personal responsibility from an article that might have seemed merely to pity the poor conditions to instead realising one’s hand in it. This article could also be classified as taking into account human rights journalism.

The different alternatives for framing however, have been unsuccessful in reaching the newsroom. One reason is that it is the human stories that sell. Great critique has been voiced by Audrey Lustgarten who goes against Sue Tait’s call for a “responsibility to report” and the idea that journalists can be monitors of International Law. She argues that in light of how media has shown a trend in oversimplifying things, they cannot play such a role: “The media tend to reduce political issues to simplistic, binary constructions that are more easily digested by the general public.”

According to her media inherently does not provide for the right platform. This is exactly why Stig-Arne Nohrstedt sees a clear need to equip journalists, without it international conflicts can never be surveyed. Furthermore according to Argren, journalists are playing a role in shaping international law whether they like it or not. He gives examples of how newspaper articles were used as evidence for the customary law of states. Therefore there needs to be a greater awareness of framing and its repercussions.

### 3.3 Summary

Human rights journalism puts forward a very decided form of framing. When being outspoken about framing it seems to be verging on activism. As well as being propagators, it is a valued tenet of journalism to be objective. However, it is clear that earlier news has not followed this before.

---


67 ibid.

68 ibid.


Even subconsciously, journalists choose a frame for foreign news, a lens in which to look through. This is even the case although human rights journalism and global journalism force the journalist to make a conscious choice, to keep a look out for the links and bring the globalised world together. Framing is not a haphazard thing but has an aim. For human rights journalism it is a form of reconciliation. Shaw contrasts this with “human wrongs journalism”\(^{71}\) which seeks to point out the perpetrators.\(^{72}\) It is wrong to deny the importance of that as well. In regards to the case of apostates there are many voices within the system criticising it, not only without. Therefore, to avoid the “we” “them” syndrome, human rights journalism would have all voices be heard. As a school of thought called the holistic approach mentions, there is often a third party actor. The difficulty in global journalism is how a local journalist is able to make such links, going back to education is an important point. Even more so however, is the need to take use of journalists worldwide, for even all the education in the world cannot give the most wholesome view of an issue.

Olausson vouched for a similar approach albeit, within environmental issues, where there is a need for global responsibility. She argued that journalism, “in order to uphold their (self-)assumed role as a tool for democracy, national media should function as “discursive bridges,” facilitating communication between various communities which in all essentials would mean abandoning “banal” nationalism.”\(^{73}\) Globalisation is not a new phenomenon yet instead of seeing a more globalised world there is evidence of greater nationalism even with foreign reporting.\(^{74}\) Many would have that globalisation is the antithesis of nationalism but Ibelema argues that it just goes one-way, where local perspectives permeates the world and not vice versa.\(^{75}\) Thus global journalism is a way to get local media back on track, using globalisation as a bridge that is not one-way.


\(^{72}\) ibid.


\(^{75}\) ibid.
Just as business and economy links everything together, there are many links to be joined in regards to foreign conflicts, there are themes which are transnational. The existence of Islamist Saudi sponsored mosques in Sweden. The resistance in applying ordre public in Swedish law. The effects of the law are widespread. Populations of immigrants in Sweden are affected by these rules. The chief editor El Haj Warrag of the award-winning Arabic online newspaper, Hurriyat Sudan, criticised Western media for not joining the dots in regards enlightenment of the Islamic world by ignoring the effects Islamism in the developing world. He argued, “The battle of enlightenment in the Islamic world and the battle against Islamic fascism is unavoidable…We keep saying to the West that it is unavoidable and they keep trying to avoid it. Till they realise now it is not our own battle alone. It is also battle of the west because it will go to them.”76 Thus the importance of reporting globally is relevant in the globalised world and to have discursive journalism that not only addresses those in power but those living under or being suppressed by the power.

4. Method and Material

4.1. Method

Framing is significant in the sense that it shapes the stories and the understanding of conflicts or in this case the civil injustices. The framing of a conflict is revealed in the wording of the conflict. An example is the Rwandan genocide which at first was framed as a tribal dispute till it was shown as a systematic cleansing of a specific group.77 The choice of frame affected the choice of words used to describe the conflict influencing the response to the conflict.78 Thus to discover the various framings of a conflict or event it is imperative to analyse the language, especially the word choice. The choice of words reveals the angle the authors decided to take on the story. The words will give a clue as to the framing. Therefore, to determine the frame a lexical analysis will be made. In applying the lexical analysis both a qualitative and a quantitative approach was used. The two will be described in detail below.


78 ibid.
In regards to various alternative framing forms it was important to perform this lexical analysis. Human rights can be mentioned and still not constitute human rights journalism, therefore a deeper analysis needs to be made to see the context of the words and uncover the underlying reason for them.  

**4.1.2. Lexical Analysis: Quantitative approach**

The qualitative analysis would not have been complete without the complementary quantitative approach. The quantitative served to give an overview of the articles but also identify words which were reoccurring and thus possibly of importance in the framing of the articles.

In addition to taking into account the literature that addressed features pervasive in poor framing, there was also a need to identify keywords that could point to one of the alternative framings, global journalism or human rights journalism. In order to do this certain vocabulary was searched for pertaining to law and other possible connecting factors to Sweden. Bearing in mind chapter 1 which discussed the extent of the practice of apostasy law, words such as undoubtedly apostasy or *ridda* and others relating to those laws were searched for. Also words which highlighted the global perspective, the mention of international bodies or treaties were also of interest.

By monitoring the reference of legal terms in the articles will judge how well the journalists were aware of the legal background and if they took the time to map it out. The quantitative analysis allowed for an overview of the articles and aided in pinpointing recurring patterns in the discourse. With most lexical analysis there is a reservation for personal interpretation that can seep through the analysis. Nonetheless, the research does give a good comparison between the newspapers in relation to the case of Meriam and clearly reveals differences of approach. The joining of a bother quantitative and qualitative aids to lessen the subjectivity and weakness of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

---


81 *ibid.* at 216.
Graphological relations were touched upon in the final analysis comparing the choice of photos and the message they portrayed.

4.1.1. Lexical Analysis: Qualitative approach

“The aim of CDA is to uncover the implicit or taken-for-granted values, assumptions and origins of a seemingly neutral self-evident, and objective news text, and relate it to structures of dominance and power”\(^82\)

In order to address whether Meriam’s case was addressed as a lone wolf I needed to create a custom made analysis stencil based on earlier research pinpointing faulty frames. What did they have in common?

Important features implicit for the newsworthiness of stories were discussed in chapter 3.1, an identifying factor and a simple and sensational story to create a sense of justice indignation. These were some of the reasons for faulty framings. Thus when analysing the texts I tried to identify any of those features in the text. By analysing the text I could tell what the goal of the articles were. The choice of words and tone are good evidence if there is a sense of exaggerated justice indignation, such as placing clear antagonistic ideas next to each other. Thus identifying these different features was part of the macro analysis, getting the overarching themes of the article.

A more closer inspection was done as well, inspired by the lexical analysis practiced by Olausson.\(^83\) This implied looking at the choice of quotations, who were chosen to be cited and who wasn’t? This all to identify an under-arching intent to frame the story in any of the ways mentioned earlier in chapter 3.1. The choice of sources and how they were addressed and the value that is placed on different testimonies was also important to look at on a micro level.

---


\(^83\)ibid.
4.2. Material

The choice of Swedish newspapers was due to the accessibility and my connection with the country. I could thus investigate the questions of news story choices easier. The three newspapers *Dagen*, *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* were chosen for their three different angles. *Aftonbladet* represents a national Swedish daily tabloid newspaper, leaning more to the left. *Dagen* is also a national daily broadsheet newspaper however, with Christian values thus giving it an interesting approach to the Meriam’s case since she was a convert to Christianity. *Dagens Nyheter* is an example of a well-known daily broadsheets in Sweden. *Dagen* and *Dagens Nyheter* both recognise themselves as independent, free from any political party ties.

The 20 articles ranged from the beginning of when the case was mentioned in mid-May 2014 until 2015, which goes to show the implications this case had. All articles were read and narrowed to those that addressed the Meriam case more fully. All articles were subject to corpus linguistics and only some underwent CDA. Using the different variations of Meriam’s name, I searched within the database Retrieve mediaarkivet to find all the articles addressing Meriam Ishag’s case on a large or small scale.\(^84\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Amount of Articles Mentioning Meriam’s case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imprisoned SUDAN May, June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagens Nyheter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aftonbladet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Article search**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dagen</th>
<th>DN</th>
<th>Aftonbladet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meriam Ibrahim</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam Ishag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam Yahia</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Meriam Yehya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam Sudan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam Sudan</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^84\) “Meriam Yahia”, “Mariam Yahya”, “Meriam Ibrahim”, “Meriam Sudan”
Interviews were made with Sudanese scholars to get a different approach/perspective to the conflict, a national perspective. Their opinions were used as a an approach in reviewing the information from the newspapers. I relied on both opinion and feature articles and compared the significant differences between them.

**4.3. Limitations**

There are numerous weak points with this means of research. Firstly, since it is an interpretation of the text, it is subject to my own framing and biases; I apply meaning to the words I find important. As a result the words chosen are the ones which I found to affect the article, which of course can be debated. Therefore to alleviate this haphazard choice of words, I chose to look into the quantitative aspect; which words were mentioned more often. According to lexical analysis, repetition is often a sign that something is important and often leaves a lasting impression with the reader. Thus by observing words that were ubiquitous among the articles regarding Meriam, there is a lot that stands in favour of them bringing meaning and being crucial in the storytelling. Consequently by using both a quantitative and qualitative analysis when approaching the word choice I hoped to reduce the randomness in the choices of words which were deemed important. Secondly, the use of an ethnographic method was missing. It would have aided the results further by interviewing the journalists involved in the analysed articles or the editors for the international sections to better understand the choices behind the stories. At the moment it is only conjectures as to what their intent might have been. Finally, all the texts were translated by myself which might give a slight discrepancy, since words have numerous interpretations. In light of that the original titles and articles were always mentioned in Swedish and where citations were made the English translation was always followed by a Swedish translation in the footnotes, for the reader to double check.

**6. Analysis: Framing of Meriam Ishag’s case in Swedish media**

**6.1. General**

The Meriam Ishag case differed in its amount of portrayal in each newspaper. *Aftonbladet* had significantly fewer and shorter articles discussing the case and without a print newspaper article to mark the final release of Meriam from prison. *DN* on the other hand, a more reputed liberal paper, addressed the case six times in both news and opinion articles. *Dagen*, the Christian newspaper,
tapped the newspaper with the amount of coverage. It had a total of 14 articles addressing Meriam’s case, with two short front cover appearances as well. The publicity in the Dagen newspaper was more abundant. The question is how was the case portrayed in each and how did it reflect the source of the conflict. The following analysis will be divided into different topics, where within each a qualitative and quantitative analysis will be made where relevant.

6.2. Repeated words and themes

There were several words and themes that were repeated several times in the articles from all the three different newspapers. These will be mentioned below and then analysed qualitatively.

6.2.1. International pressure

Quantitative

Five articles that were analysed mentioned and stressed on the importance of “International pressure.” International pressure in the various newspapers was portrayed as being caused by two different things, people in a position of power and/or the free press. Two of the articles will be analysed more here.

Qualitative

Dagen put significance in two pastors’ visit to the Sudanese embassy in Sweden and their diplomatic efforts. This event was reported as quite triumphant where the title was worded “Pastors’ take the fight for woman sentenced to death in Sudan.”85 The use of “take the fight” marks the pastors’ involvement as belligerent and forceful. When you read the article however, it seems that it was more of a friendly dialogue with the embassy. Moreover the person most quoted throughout the article wasn’t even a pastor but a politician from the Christian democrats, who went with the two pastors. “We had a good talk,” the politician was quoted as saying and the articles writes that “They talked about the case against Meriam.” Thus the visit was more passive as described by the pastor than the article title suggests.87 The extent to which this visit played a role is bleak seeing that


86 “Pastorer tar strid för dödsdömda kvinna i Sudan.” Dagen 22 May 2014, Birgitta Waern.

87 Swedish version: “Pastorer tar strid för dödsdömda kvinna i Sudan.” Dagen 22 May 2014, Birgitta Waern.
Meriam was freed only to be arrested again. The wheels for change in the article were represented as pastors and politicians, limiting the responsibility for Meriam’s case to power structures.

The same international pressure is mentioned in DN where it prompted a journalist to write an opinion article to address the topic in DN. The author writes, “the power of the free press can reach even the darkest repression and save lives.”

88 This optimism and heralding international pressure was seen in many of the articles. Dagen as mentioned, portrayed the pastors’ visit to the Sudanese embassy as substantial. These positive portrayals contrast greatly with the sent in opinions which criticise the government and other bodies for not addressing the problem such as one titled, “What is Sweden doing for the death sentenced Meriam?”

89 They seem to contradict each other. The news feature articles could possibly inadvertently be supporting the governments by showing their actions as substantial when others seem to differ.

6.2.2. American citizen

Qualitative
That Meriam’s husband was an American citizen was mentioned in six articles and probably had significance to bring the case into the international stage, there was an anchor to a western/developed country. Bearing in mind Hawkins remarks about news needing a national link to become relevant to local readers, this is an interesting find. In all three newspapers it was important to mention the husband’s American citizenship and this was done in all the main articles. In contrast only two of the six articles which mentioned her husband wrote his name, Daniel Wani. This points to that the significance with Meriam’s husband was his American nationality. It could be a pointer to the importance of an international connection for a story like Meriam’s to reach the news.


91 ibid. at 71.

92 ibid., at 81.

93 His name was found in Aftonbladet (Melin, Erik. “Byte tro- dömdes till döden.” Aftonbladet 1 June. 2014:28. Print) and in a DN article (“Kriget mot Kvinnorna.” Dagens Nyheter 3 June. 2014:4. Print.).
6.3. Keywords

As mentioned in the methods chapter several keywords were searched for that pertained to Meriam’s case and tied her story to the greater issue of apostasy. The ones that were found are reported below and analysed in how they add to Meriam’s story.

6.3.1. Shari’a law

Quantitative

Shari’a law was mentioned in only two of the articles that wrote about Meriam; once in Aftonbladet and once in Dagen.

Qualitative

In Aftonbladets article the reference to shari’a is given as a background to Sudan, “Shari’a laws have been valid in Sudan since the beginning of 1980s and according to them converts should be punished by death.”

A further explanation here to what shari’a is, is not given. There is no mention being made that they are made up of two parts, the Quran and the sayings of the prophet Muhammed (hadith). It is the saying of the prophet Muhammed that calls on the death of apostates.

How the article writes about shari’a laws hints that it implies the existence of prior knowledge of what shari’a is. This can be noticed since there is no introduction of the phenomena, only that it exists, and according to shari’a the anti-conversion laws exist.

In Dagen the mention of shari’a laws also is also written to an audience who has heard the concept before: “27-year old Sudanese woman married a Christian man - a crime against the Shari’a laws.”

Also: “According to the shari’a law it is not permitted for a Muslim woman to marry a


non-Muslim man.” There is no elaborate explanation of the practice of shari’a law. It is only fixed that it exists and that the law has been breached due to the act of Meriam marrying a Christian.

In both articles that mention shari’a there is no clear definition of what it is, it relies on the prior knowledge of the reader, pertaining to shari’a laws. The reference to shari’a, though not explicitly defined, seems to reference an unwanted law or explain the reason for Meriam’s harsh sentence. Even when the articles create a distance or “otherness” by the use of shari’a without a stated definition, the articles still bring a context to Meriam’s case that is missing from the other articles. Considering apostasy is a practice from shari’a law, it is interesting to note that only two articles chose to mention it. It is these universally practiced laws that place Meriam’s case in the grander scheme of things and into the problematics of apostasy and blasphemy laws worldwide.

6.3.2. Apostasy

Quantitative
Apostasy was another keyword that was searched for in the articles since it, similar to shari’a law, places Meriam’s case in the greater context of discrimination of apostates. Only one article however, mentioned the word apostasy, it was found in DN. The same article will be analysed below.

Qualitative
Here in contrast to shari’a law the word was treated as unknown to readers and given its own definition. This is evident when the author writes, “It is a word that, thank goodness, is not used often in Swedish.” The author goes on to give the encyclopaedia definition of an apostate and then explains that the word is more common in English. Here research from the Pew institute is

99 see chapter 2.1. for examples of Apostasy being practiced in Islamic states.
referenced where 20 countries, all with Muslim majority, still practice these, “middle-age laws.”\textsuperscript{101} For the first time in any of the newspaper articles, not including letters to the editor, Meriam’s case is shown to be the fruit of a law that is practiced in more countries than only Sudan. Thus bringing forth not only the case of Meriam as one helpless story but also bringing forth the framework that led to the death sentence. There is no evidence however, to the human rights journalism suggested by Shaw. The apostasy law is seen as barbaric but the underlying reasons for its existence are not touched upon, it points to what Shaw considers the antithesis of human rights journalism, “human wrongs journalism,” where there is a demonisation orientation.\textsuperscript{102}

The significantly limited used of apostasy within the articles is notable. Only \textit{DN} expounds upon how apostasy laws are part of a structural problem which is an example of human rights journalism, shedding light on the larger picture. On the other hand, as shown, how the apostasy laws were mentioned in \textit{DN} would in Shaw’s criteria not meet up, due to the belligerent tone and reflection of the otherness of the laws, “middle-age laws,” pointing out the otherness.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{6.4. Use of foreign sources}

\textbf{Quantitative}

Hawkins references the use of foreign journalism as a reason for the failing of news journalists’ reporting on what is happening on the ground. They end up copying each other’s reports.\textsuperscript{104} The use of foreign sources was seen in the reporting regarding Meriam. Many of the news sites got their information from foreign news organisations TT, AFP, etc.\textsuperscript{105} None of the journalists went to Sudan, the story was important but not enough to send their own journalists there. This however, does not mean that the journalism has to be lacking.


*Aftonbladet* often referred to TT and AP for their sources. *Dagen* was the only newspaper to use alternative sources in their news articles. Such as their use of a newspaper run by Sudanese refugees albeit in Australia.\(^{106}\) *DN* also brought another perspective by giving the international pressure a personal face as well, by interviewing one of the Sudanese human rights’ activists in Sweden, bringing up the case of Meriam in a new and different setting.\(^{107}\) These articles will be briefly studied to see how the sources were used and to what effect.

**Qualitative**

In *DN*’s article they took their usual “STHLM i soffan”, a piece where they have a casual conversation with a person from a sofa, and added a twist. This time *DN* decided to follow a Sudanese human rights activist thus creating a clear link between Sweden and Sudan. The Meriam case was brought up in the usual conversation and gave a new picture of the situation in Sudan, it gave a local dissenting face which was lacking in most of the other articles.

Furthermore the *Dagen* article, which used an Australian based paper run by Sudanese, brought a different perspective and frame.\(^{108}\) It brought the history of Meriam and also a piece about the need for other countries’ involvement in protesting against the case. Thanks to the Australian based paper, Meriam's husband was quoted for the first time in the Swedish articles.

On the whole, the use of larger media corporations for reporting is not wholly bad since in this case it allowed for information about Sudan that probably would not have been possible to have access to by the local corporations, budget- and logistically-wise. Moreover in *Dagen* evidence of protests within Sudan was able to become news via Reuters, a foreign corporation. Thus allowing for a wider frame of view by showing opposition of the verdict against Meriam even within Sudan. This news which would have been unheard of if foreign news sources were not used.


6.5. Examples of sensationalism

The need to create a story that will sell and be read is often the driving force for many articles. Thus, reading through the articles evidence of this was spotted and analysed in how it effects the message of Meriam’s case. This was observed both in the texts and in the choice of photographs that were used. A short graphology analysis will be made at the end.

Quantitative

That Meriam was 27 years old and pregnant is emphasised in the papers. It is this clear barbarity that is highlighted as contemptible. Would the case have gained as much attention if this information was missing? It is difficult to say, perhaps it would have been harder to get the story out.

However, if Meriam’s case got room in the paper due to the shocking brutality of the sentence and the situation of her being pregnant and being held with her son it did not mean that Meriam’s story was featured on the front pages. This was only the case for Dagen where her case was placed twice in a small box on the left. For the other papers Meriam’s case took less than a quarter of the page. Surprisingly often it was put close to lengthier articles and opinions from the Middle East.\textsuperscript{109} This was the case for DN and Aftonbladet. There were a few exceptions, the first article in Aftonbladet’s article, for example did still have a 50% page about Meriam.\textsuperscript{110} Also with DN’s opinion piece about women, it was giving greater room.\textsuperscript{111} Dagen in comparison gave more room for the case, especially at the beginning and then finally at the end when she was released. A whole page was designated for those articles. It can be seen that business interest played a role in the choices made in the newspapers’ choice of articles.

Graphology References to Meriam as a mother.

The relevance of creating a sense of justice indignation through the fact that Meriam Ishag was a mother, can be observed in the photographs chosen to be used by Aftonbladet and Dagen. DN was the only one of the three newspapers that did not show any photo of Meriam Ishag. It is difficult to translate if this shows a lack of interest in the story on DN’s part or a lack of space for a story like


Meriam’s. *Aftonbladet* showed the photos of Meriam’s marriage and her new born baby, who was born in prison.\footnote{Melin, Erik. “Bytte tro- dömdes till döden.” *Aftonbladet* 1 June. 2014:28. Print} From a gender perspective this can be discussed. Again it was the brutality of this specific case that brought a lot of the media attention; that she was forced to give birth to her baby in the prison, in chains, all because she did not want to recant her faith.

### 6.5.1. International condemnation


The international condemnation is an important and natural response to the injustices of the case. However, it is easy for the condemnation to look one sided. “International wrath” is in the articles subconsciously understood as only including the western governments and in once case South Sudan, still leaving all other neighbouring countries out of the sphere of responsibility through their lack of mention.

Sudan borders over five different countries and yet the condemnation is presented as only coming from Europe and beyond. Either these neighbouring States support the Sudanese governments actions or their response was not as effective. The states become dead to the media which to an extent still confirms Olausson’s point about media closing out an all-encompassing international community.\footnote{Wallgren, Måns. “Jag kommer att kämpa för frihet och demokrati i Sudan så länge jag lever.” *Dagens Nyheter* 20 June 2014. Print.} Furthermore the mention of independent dissident actors within the systematic system are left on the wayside in many of the articles excepting one *Dagen* and *DN* article. In the article by *DN*, the interview reveals a person condemning the Sudan situation, but he is from Sudan.\footnote{Melin, Erik. “Bytte tro- dömdes till döden.” *Aftonbladet* 1 June. 2014:28. Print}
Dagen also did mention outrage from within Sudan. In the very first article about Meriam they drew attention to Sudanese students who protested outside the main university in Khartoum.\textsuperscript{117} This was unique to Dagen and it is an important feat because it does not paint human rights values as something solely for the west, there exists the same justice indignation in other countries, even if suppressed. By doing this it brought the national fight in Sudan to an international involvement.\textsuperscript{118}

With the context of the interview with Haj Al Warrag, the division of the media into two camps is doing no favours since the Islamist government in Sudan uses the colonial rhetoric to dissuade people from standing behind people such as Warrag who want to see a greater allowance for diversity.\textsuperscript{119}

\textit{“But still of course many think this is an imperialistic tool. What is the south? The people or the dictators? It [the International Criminal Court] is against the dictators of the south.”}\textsuperscript{120}

By placing the west against the views of the Sudan as a whole is assuming the government voices the concerns of all the citizens. This is faulty considering human rights are universal, the right of assembly for example, is not only a right the developing world feels the need to enjoy. This thinking is voiced indirectly by Berglez and Shaw. There is a need to join dots to allow for greater creativity in problem-solving, allowing for greater possibilities than cementing antitheses of different camps otherwise the vulnerable end up landlocked, stuck in the middle.

\textbf{6.6. Wording of the Source of the Conflict}

The different articles were approached and studied to see what the source of the conflict was found to be by looking primarily at the wording. Aftonbladet and Dagen will be addressed briefly

\begin{small}


\textsuperscript{119} Warrag, El Haj. “Sudan: Human Rights and Media.” Personal interview. 4 Apr. 2015.

\textsuperscript{120} ibid.
\end{small}
followed by a more lengthy analysis of two DN articles whose wording of the source of the conflict can be problematic.

The earliest article discussing Meriam came from Dagen already in May. The title is very straightforward, “She is forced to convert or be sentenced to death.” There is a clear sense that it is because of Meriam Yahia’s belief that she is being sentenced to death since it emphasises the conversion. In Aftonbladet the first article mentioning Meriam in June had in its title, “Changed belief, sentenced to death.” It is clear here that both headlines lay the emphasis on her faith.

This black on white clarity in regards to the source of Meriam’s arrest which was seen in both Aftonbladet and Dagen was missing in DN. The first DN article titled, “The war against women” is a new spin on how the source of conflict can be framed. The article highlights honour culture, islamic terrorism and laws against apostasy as three of the greatest global threats against women today. Though the article mentions apostasy, the basis/framing of the critique is not on the traditions or ideologies but on men, “Traditions and religion are grateful ideological superstructures to justify men’s violence and dominance over women.” This contrasts with the reports by Marshall where apostasy is tied to the teaching of Islam, it still confirms however, that there is a structure of discrimination. The result of DN’s article is that it places the battle as more of the sexes than politically religious. The ideologies are shown more as a means to practice violence against women rather than the source of them. This reveals a source of contrast between DN and the other newspapers. The effects of apostasy place greater restrictions on Muslim women, limiting their choice of spouse. Apostasy laws however, are also used in limiting the religious freedom of over 1.3


billion people.126 Thus the laws affect religious choices as well as the plight of being women. This can be seen in the wording of the penal code based on shari’a.127 Though DN’s article allows a specific focus on women and how they suffer under the laws, the framing chosen hides the religious bondage these laws entail with them, both for liberal Muslims and those who wish to renounce their faith completely. They do this firstly when after focusing on Islamic religious oppression on women name all religions to be under the same banner: “And it is just so. The large majority of Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and atheists don’t want to have anything to do with the extremists bloodstained interpretation of religion and traditions.”128 In light of Shaw’s human rights journalism and Britt’s statement this is important so as not to sweep a whole community under one comb. The difficulty however, with this statement is that it is a carte blanche in order to avoid offence, wrapping it up with “we are all good anyways but there are bad people.” This in my opinion detracts the focus of highlighting the effects of the laws. Placing the research done by Marshall and the Pew Research in comparison, there seems to be a clear correlation between Islamic texts and these laws. What is problematic is that the Muslims who overtly wish to deny this and steer Islam towards a more reformed version face reprisals. Thus DN’s statement of referring all violence to extremists, barbarians, is misleading. The laws are practiced in air conditioned corridors by, yes often men, but in suits as well as white jalabeyas.

The second article made by DN which was problematic was titled, “Awareness saved Meriam.”129 The article was an opinion piece, poetical which heralded the power of press which did indeed to a great extent save Meriam, there were however, some interesting statements made by the journalist which have repercussions. The statements are found below:


127 Where a requisite to be saved from the death penalty is to recant. The person is given a second chance to recant before the sentence is named. The link to the Sudanese Penal Code (in arabic) can be found here: http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=241802

128 “Och just så är det. Den stora majoriteten av muslimer, kristna, buddhister och ateister vill inte ha något att göra med extremisternas blodbefläckande tolking av religion oh traditioner.”

“A Muslim cannot marry a Christian in Sudan." Therefore to complete the Sudanese logic, she wasn’t legally married and had as a mother of two evidently been adulterous.”

At first glance these statements seem perfectly sound and no cause for alarm until you look further. The first sentence of the quote says a Muslim cannot marry a Christian, this is false. For a Muslim man to marry a Christian woman there is no problem, the difficulty is when a Muslim woman wishes to marry, as the earlier article in DN exemplified. The reason for this is that religion within Islam passes through the man. The second sentence about “Sudanese logic” is also faulty. It indirectly limits Meriam’s situation to a local Sudanese problem. There is no understanding of the legal system practiced. The wording though perhaps written harmlessly has implications; it indirectly isolates Meriam’s case to the practice of one backward government in Sudan and not the implicit structure of a global framework which births these laws. With the easy access to numerous sources of information one would hope journalists would be smart and be wary to see the greater picture. In light of Shaw, it is important to point out the structure and not only the isolated situation. The wording of the source can have implications on the treatment in how it is solved. History is a great testament of this, as seen in Rwanda. Misrepresenting the conflict, not being blatantly clear, resulted in international action being sluggish. While reading this understanding of Sudan in DN,
it is hard to not to refer to Ibelema’s literature on the otherness of Africa when the same “Sudanese logic” practice is the reality for numerous countries, including the richer gulf states.

There is a need for clear description of the source of Meriam’s arrest to understand how to tackle it. The effect of media having been noted in the case of Rwanda is important to bear with in reporting. Aftonbladet and Dagen simply explained the reason for Meriam’s arrest, though they did not mention it being practiced in other states it did not stray from the reason the law was practiced. In DN’s first article the decision to frame the story from a woman’s perspective was good. Although it did at the end frame the apostasy laws as a haphazard existence, even though their application is widespread. The second opinion article by DN in a way skews the source of Meriam’s arrest more so by localising a global problem, hinting at barbarity rather than a legal structured discrimination, equating it with a more random terrorist attack.

6.7. Identifying Factor and Evidence of Global Journalism

The justice indignation differs for the readers of DN and Dagen. In regards to DN’s article about extremism against women and Dagen’s article’s plight for the converted mother.

In Dagen they can relate to religious freedom being taken away as a problem but DN and Sweden in general is secular thus framing the crime as towards women means that they can relate more. It could be argued that they wish to avoid problems with mixing Islamism and liberal Muslims however, since the article mentions apostasy it seems likely they wanted to create a form of identity, so that the indignation would be understood in Sweden. Since religious freedom legally in Sweden is not as highly valued. For example the Åke Green case, where a pastor who spoke out against the

---


homosexual lifestyle was charged with hate speech according to Swedish law but was freed from charges when taking into account EU law, where the protection of religious freedom is greater.\textsuperscript{139}

In \textit{DN} the first article in the paper about Meriam is conjoined with a lengthier article titled, “The War Against the Women.”\textsuperscript{140} As in the article about the pastors there is a use of war rhetoric, “kriget.”/“war.” Women’s rights are a holy topic in Sweden, as personified in the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Margot Wallström who was willing to standup for the rights’ of women even in the face of Saudi’s riches.\textsuperscript{141} Thus it is what brings the connection with Sweden, bearing in mind global journalism. Moreover they write, “The global war against women rages on, day after day, week after week.”\textsuperscript{142} This gives a clear portrayal of the situation as critical. “Rasar vidare,”\textsuperscript{143} “rages on” here, connotes an urgency and paints an image where such violence is just allowed to continue unabated. The identifying factor for Meriam in this article is that she is a woman, “nybliven mamma”/“new mother”\textsuperscript{144} waiting for her death sentence. Though however, \textit{DN} approaches the case as being violence against women it does not deny that the charges are based on religion. The focus however is still on the actions of men when they write in reference to the practice of \textit{shari’a} law, “learned men decided that it was the wrong decision” (to convert).\textsuperscript{145} It was the men not the religion.

The \textit{DN} opinion/ledare continues by highlighting a supposed previous scare to criticise traditions and religious practices, “The disinclination, and post-colonial fear, that existed mostly in western countries which hindered people from criticising traditions or religious practices seems to be

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{ibid}.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
diminishing as knowledge about women’s vulnerability increases.”\textsuperscript{146} This article in a way really embodies global journalism, by finding a uniting factor and using the plight of women to bring the local connection.\textsuperscript{147} There is no doubt that there is the use of the ethical factor but it is making primary use of the rights of women first and foremost, “It doesn’t mean that ethical identification is excluded in global journalism, but ethics is not the salient aspect.”\textsuperscript{148} In this case Olausson’s conclusion that the frame of pity and postcolonial guilt which the developing world, “is more or less mechanically constructed in the press”\textsuperscript{149} is fading. Interestingly enough the guilt is disregarded when politicians do so too in this case by mentioning David Cameron being “appalled”\textsuperscript{150} by the case and it also reprimanded Sweden’s political leaders for not taking a clear stand.\textsuperscript{151} It would seem that DN is not following the public policy of Sweden and is in a sense challenging it, contrary to the indexing theory that states that media merely mirrors national policy.\textsuperscript{152} This can possibly mean that the journalists are moving to be more like the greater UK and US powers through the so-called “peer review”\textsuperscript{153} of journalists of larger corporations or they are in fact taking their journalism role seriously and working independently from the subconscious follow of public policy.

7. Conclusion and future study

Undoubtedly framing plays a role in the understanding of a conflict or systematic civil injustice as has been shown in several of the newspapers. The study has from the hypothesis seen that Meriam’s case was mainly treated as a lone wolf. DN, Aftonbladet and Dagen shared this similarity in reporting. They mostly held Meriam’s case to be a local event and they never explicitly stated that apostasy laws are practiced worldwide, save one DN article. There were differences however, these


\textsuperscript{147} ibid. at 25.


\textsuperscript{150} ibid.


\textsuperscript{152} ibid., at 81.
were found in how they defined the source of Meriam’s arrest, this varied in how they framed Meriam’s story. *Dagen* mainly focusing on the religious issue, *Aftonbladet* on her pregnancy and child and *DN* framed the case the effects of men’s violence. All three newspaper took use of larger media corporations media sources, with differing effects. The use of sources was extended by *Dagen* to make use of a Sudanese ex-patriot newspaper. Revealing of dissenting voices from within Sudan was shown in *Dagen* and somewhat in *DN*. Apart from one *DN* article none of the newspapers’ feature articles wrote on apostasy nor the earlier history of it in Sudan.

The question remains how much should journalists retell, how deep should the history and research go? There were signs throughout the analysis of the need for simplicity in portraying Meriam’s story. There was no time to map the historical background and practices. Thus the news focussed mainly on the case at hand. This does not have to be harmful unless it ends up redefining the source of the conflict. In the *DN* article about women the identity was found in that Meriam was a woman and thus her judgement resting solely on that.154 The implication of the apostasy law on both male and female, of course still being felt most by women, is not mentioned. Thus effects of leaving out information is that there is a limited light on the possibilities to solve the conflict. By leaving out that Meriam’s case was not just a local problem but a global one sends a different message and calls for how a change can take place. The reporting on Meriam’s case, released her but in the Swedish media did not draw attention to the plight many non-Muslims and reformist Muslims face as a result of the same law.

Opinion articles proved to be more creative in giving the story greater depth and national anchor other than through Meriam’s husband’s American citizenship. Few articles in any of the news media used the Meriam case as a reason to go into investigative journalism to dig more into the case and not treat it as an isolated event, by looking at the global effect of apostasy cases. Since none mentioned the earlier people charged with apostasy in the history of Sudan. The information stays with the facts at hand, at least in all feature articles.

What interest did the newspapers have in limiting Meriam’s case to local? Often times it is to gain a greater reading audience and to have a more personal story. Moreover the wariness to report the larger framework is possibly because it risks making sweeping claims and unnecessarily “harming

people” as Börjesson warned about in her debate article. She said, “not all should be told” if it harms somebody. There are risks as Sennerteg points in his books how media can be implicit in spreading racial hatred. However, these apostasy laws are harmful, revealing them is essential regardless of the effects on societies view of the rules. The reporting is against the laws, not the people, an important distinction to make. Though Shaw’s human rights journalism vouches that it is paramount that the victims and the vulnerable are the focus, and that wrongdoing is found on both camps.

A guidelines not to stray to generalisations is to make use of all the information there is to be cleaned from local sources. As Berglez has mentioned we live in a globalised world and the access to information is endless. The laws of countries can be googled at our fingertips. Making use of these is essential, and a legal backing mapping out the practice of these apostasy laws is a clear signal of the structural discrimination. Another feature to avoid the otherness effect and faulty framing, is to find dissenting voices within systems such as Dagen did briefly by mentioning the protests outside Khartoum university. Therefore making use of laws for example, which stretch globally, and reporting from them is key. Naming laws however, is not enough. There needs to be an exemplification of the \textit{de facto} effects of them, such as Meriam’s case supplies.

The case of Meriam was good example of how different articles can spinoff the story. Though the debate articles proved more active on this front than the reporters, by bringing an activist side and criticism towards the public policy. The creative ways of making Meriam’s case local was most prevalent in the articles sent into Dagen. These were clearly following the path of Berglez. A greater joining of dots is needed within the journalistic profession. Too often are events isolated when we live in a globalised world. Just as business issues can affect the well-being of a country faraway, laws and other circumstances effect other countries. Thus mapping that connection is key such as by

\begin{itemize}
  \item ibid.
\end{itemize}
looking into human rights and laws to discover their practices. Framing is sensitive, thus ensuring a broader picture, focusing on the real victims and hearing the dissenting voices within is key.

For future study it would be good to address which apostasy cases are approached. An article in Aljazeera quoted someone as referring the apostasy case in Sudan as a “tribal practice.”\textsuperscript{160} This was interesting when it in fact anti-apostasy measures are practiced in many countries in the Gulf though perhaps not ending in death penalty. It addresses that Africa’s otherness extends also to the Arab world. It would also be interesting why apostasy cases are brought to light from Afghanistan, Pakistan and now Sudan but rarely from Jordan or Qatar. A possible reason could be the fact that these oil rich and important countries aren’t targeted by the international community and thus not by media.

Limitations with the research was the lack of feedback from a journalist. For future study an interview with the journalists of the articles would be useful, in order to discover how they think and work when writing news. Too often theoretical news criticism is unable to reach the doors of practicing journalists since it is so far-fetched.\textsuperscript{161} Thus to allow for a theoretical claim that will lead to practical change, which is what the goal is I hope, there needs to be a closer dialogue with practicing journalists and their reality and how they best can incorporate a whole study into problems in their newsrooms. Stig-Arne mentions the importance of education as an important feature in improving journalism.\textsuperscript{162} Therefore further study would address the journalists as well as how their education looks like, can it be improved?

\textsuperscript{160} “Sudan Woman Gets Death Sentence for Apostasy.” - \textit{Al Jazeera English}. Aljazeera and Agencies, 17 May 2014. Web. 28 May 2015.

\textsuperscript{161} “Challenges to the global journalists in the digital age.” Global Journalism Day. Örebro university. Örebro university, . 23 May 2014. Lecture.

\textsuperscript{162} Nohrstedt, S.A. “Legal Context in Journalism.” Personal interview. 18 Mar. 2015.
8. Sources


**Articles Analysed (listed chronologically)**

**FEATURE**


Wallgren, Måns. “Jag kommer att kämpa för frihet och demokrati i Sudan så länge jag lever.”


**NEWS**


—


—


**OPINION**


**DEBATE**


