Virginia journalists killed

August 26, 2015

Unifor, the union for journalists in Canada, expresses its deepest condolences and solidarity at the news of two journalists shot and killed on the job this morning in Virginia.

Journalists Alison Parker and Adam Ward were broadcasting live from Bedford County when shots rang out, killing the reporter and her cameraman. Within minutes, their TV station, WDBJ7, issued a brief statement on Twitter, “Law enforcement is on scene at Bridgewater Plaza in Moneta. The incident involves a WDBJ7 crew. This is all we know.”

Those words, ‘This is all we know,’ haunted as we searched to understand how two journalists working on a breakfast-hour story about local tourism could be the target of a killer.

Around the world, journalists are killed with alarming regularity. The International Federation of Journalists lists 68 media workers killed on the job so far this year. Two more were added to the list this morning.

Most journalist killings take places in conflict zones and in countries with poor human rights records. But this year has also seen 10 killed in the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris last January, and this morning’s killings in Virginia.

The freedom of the press to do its job without fear is the bedrock of democracy. When killers target journalists, they silence an essential voice in ensuring an informed public that can hold its leaders to account.

Unifor sends its support to the families of Alison Parker and Adam Ward, and to their co-workers at WDBJ7 struggling to cover a story too close to home, and urges anyone with information to assist police in catching their killer.