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## Foreign Correspondent: 2015 – Digital Disruption

**Monday December 21 at 8:30pm on ABC – a one-hour special**

In an age when everyone has a phone camera and the internet links billions of people anywhere, anytime – has the foreign correspondent become redundant? And does the information blizzard make us better informed?

**A preview of this one-hour Foreign Correspondent special is available on request and interviews may be available.**

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*"It's kind of a brave new world out there...We are starting to feel a little bit like the dinosaurs wandering around Jurassic Park after the comet has hit, the comet being digital." - Eric Campbell*

*"Sometimes we have nightmares that the cat video will be king - I hope not - but I think the change is going to be incredible and I think journalists need to be really quick on their feet." - Sally Sara*

In this one hour special report, *2015 – Digital Disruption*, the reporters and producers who brought you *Foreign Correspondent's* stories this year reflect on the technological revolution transforming the international newsgathering business: the benefits, the challenges, the dangers.

*"I think there's never been a more exciting time to be a journalist,"* says Sophie McNeill, who was appointed this year as one of the ABC's new video journalists in the Middle East.

Sophie takes us along for a 'day at the office' as Israeli troops and Palestinian protestors clash on the West Bank.

*"I guess I really am a baby of the digital age – I can't imagine what it's like to be journalist without the internet."*

Sophie works through clouds of tear gas and rock throwing to get the story – before retreating to a nearby café table with camera and laptop to file TV, radio and Online news reports back to Australia.

*"These days...you just need an internet connection, Wi-Fi through your phone works well, that's all you need! And it's half way around the world in the space of minutes."*

But as Sophie sees it, the fundamentals of the job remain unchanged.

*"As an outsider you bring independence that no citizen-journalist, no local will ever have."*

Al Jazeera journalist Peter Greste spent 400 days in an Egyptian prison on terrorism charges, before being released and telling the story of his ordeal in an exclusive two part *Foreign Correspondent* special.

While acknowledging the critical role played by social media in the campaign to secure his freedom, Peter Greste argues that the lightning speed of Twitter and other platforms now puts enormous pressure on correspondents to get the news out too fast.

*"The quality of our coverage has gone down... News editors are withdrawing foreign correspondents because foreign news is expensive, it's unpalatable and yet we need the foreign news more than ever now because we are now more connected with the outside world than ever before so I think it's a very dangerous and very worrying trend."*

Sally Sara, who first went on the road as Africa correspondent 15 years ago before postings in India and Afghanistan, found the technological revolution liberating:

*"I could operate as a journalist on my own with satellite gear in my backpack that was only the size of a laptop."*

But Sally warns that the demands of the 24/7 digital news cycle are becoming relentless.

*"The technology's been wonderful... but it's also created dangers, it's created isolation and I think it's too early to tell, we don't know really what the long term affects will be for those who are now going out and spending huge amounts of time on their own doing this kind of work, without colleagues and under deadlines that have never been experienced in the history of news."*

For veteran journalist and *Foreign Correspondent* founding Executive Producer Jonathan Holmes, the age of digital disruption has made journalism a more complex business than when he started at the BBC.

*"If I were starting my career now would I choose journalism? I tell you what: I reckon it's an awful lot tougher option than it was when I chose to be a journalist in 1969."*

**2015 - Digital Disruption, produced by Mark Corcoran, airs on Foreign Correspondent at 8.30pm Monday December 21 on ABC.**

**A preview of this one-hour special is available on request.**

You can view previous episodes on **ABC iview** and online at: **abc.net.au/foreign**

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