

*The Australian's* Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov and Europe correspondent Peter Wilson were nominated for the Chairman's Award in recognition of the considerable courage and initiative they displayed in covering the war in southern Lebanon.

Chulov and Wilson both put their safety at risk by travelling to Lebanon in July to report on the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah and to detail attempts to evacuate Australians and other civilians.

They reported from Beirut when it was under attack by the Israeli air force and at different times both travelled to the war zone in the south of the country to report on the conflict from the cities of Sidon and Tyre, which bore the brunt of Israel's military action.

Chulov first went to Tyre on July 24 to report on the devastation wrought on the region and its civilian population by Israeli F16s and commando raids.

On July 27, Wilson was captured by Hezbollah guerrillas in Beirut when he was travelling with photographer Stewart Innes in the capital's southern suburbs to cover the destruction of the city and the reaction of the Shia militia to the Israeli onslaught. Wilson and Innes were released after proving they were not Israeli spies, but their capture underlined the risks they were taking to cover the story.

Wilson also travelled south to the devastated town of Qana on July 31 to report on an Israeli air strike on a building that killed at least 28 people, including 16 children. Wilson's reports included interviews with Lebanese Red Cross workers that gave Australian readers first-hand insights into the war and its effect on civilians. He also went north into Lebanon to report on civilian deaths in the town of Baalbeck.

Chulov went to Damascus during the conflict, filing reports detailing Syria's response to the conflict and describing the Assad Government's moves to mobilise the military as the war threatened to pull Lebanon's neighbours into a regional conflict.

On his return to Lebanon, Chulov went back to the dangerous south of the country, reporting on the deaths of civilians in the Bekaa Valley before returning to the city of Tyre. At one stage, he was cut off by Israeli actions which destroyed roads out of the city and was forced to base himself in Tyre for several days.

Both correspondent showed considerable courage in covering the war, as moving around southern Lebanon was highly risky due to Israeli air strikes on vehicles in the area.

Their interviews with victims, political leaders and Hezbollah fighters and descriptions of the carnage brought home to readers the confronting reality of the war.