

2022 ROUND-UP

**Journalists detained, killed,
held hostage and missing**

OVERVIEW

p. 3

1 DETAINED JOURNALISTS

p. 4

The figures	p. 4
Prisons filled with journalists	p. 5
Historic rise of nearly 30% in the number of women journalists in prison	p. 6
Women on the front line in the land of the Mullahs	p. 7
Other countries that jail women journalists	p. 7
The world's five biggest jailers of journalists	p. 9
The most noteworthy cases of 2022	p. 10

2 JOURNALISTS KILLED

p. 12

The figures	p. 12
Number of killed on the rise again	p. 13
Riskiest stories to cover	p. 14
The most dangerous countries	p. 15
A record deadly year in the Americas	p. 16
Europe hit by the war in Ukraine	p. 17
The Middle East's deadly conflicts	p. 17
Asia, gagged courage	p. 18

3 JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

p. 19

The figures	p. 19
High-risk countries	p. 20
The leading hostage-takers	p. 20

4 MISSING JOURNALISTS

p. 23

Two journalists reported missing in 2022	p. 23
Nearly 50 journalists have disappeared in the past 20 years	p. 23

METHODOLOGY

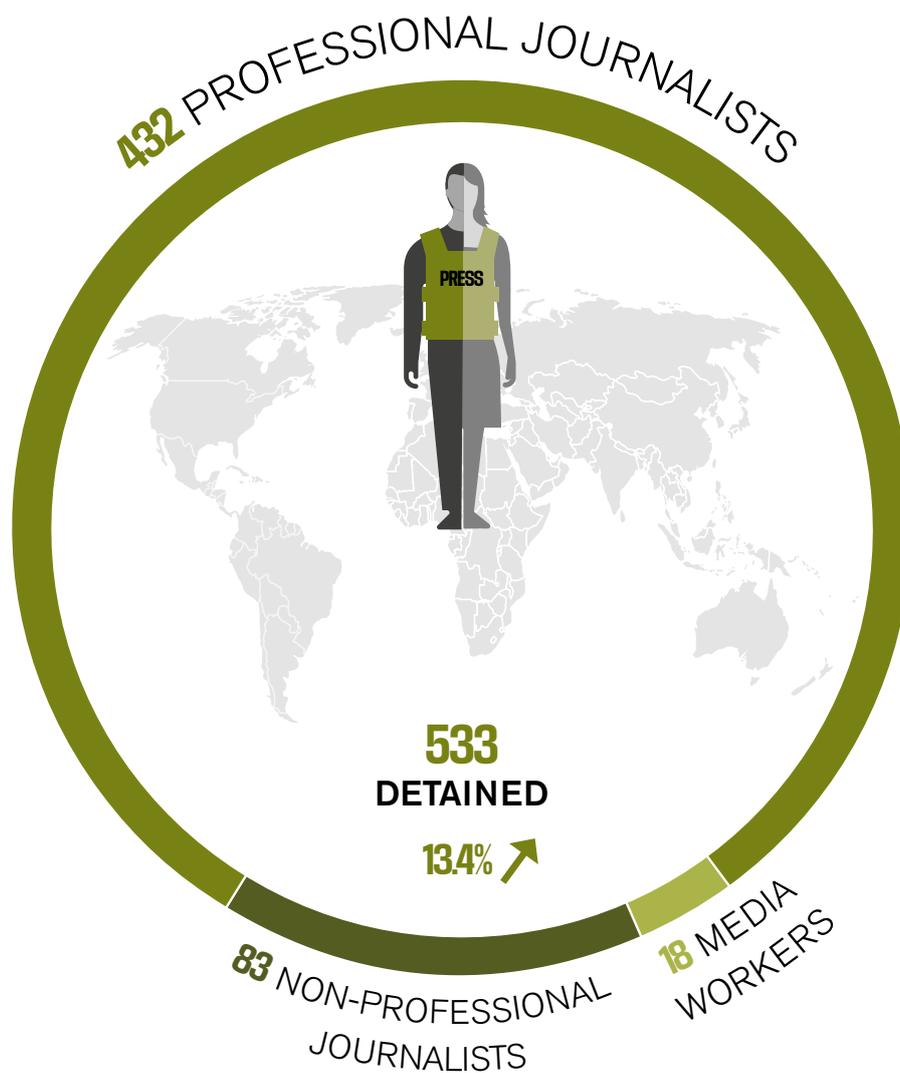
p. 24

OVERVIEW



DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The figures



DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Prisons filled with journalists

Last year's record has been broken again. As of 1 December 2022, a total of **533 journalists were being held for doing their job**, more than a quarter of whom were arrested in the course of the year. RSF has never previously registered such a high number of imprisoned journalists.

This **latest increase in the number of detained journalists (up 13.4% in 2022**, after a 20% rise in 2021) confirms that authoritarian regimes are becoming more and more comfortable with jailing the journalists who bother them, in most cases without even putting them on trial. **Just over a third of the journalists who are detained have been convicted. The others (63.6%) are being detained without having been tried.**



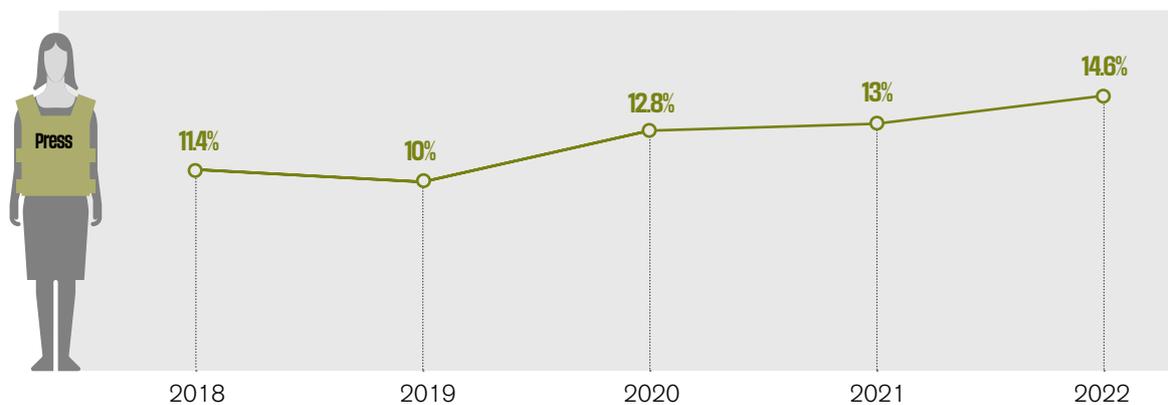
China, where **censorship and surveillance have reached extreme levels**, continues to be the world's biggest jailer of journalists, with a total of 110 currently held. In **Myanmar** – where **journalism is now effectively prohibited**, as seen by the many media outlets that were banned after the military coup in February 2021 – 62 journalists are currently detained. In another sign of a major crackdown, **the Islamic Republic of Iran**, with 47 detained journalists, became **the world's third biggest jailer of media personnel** just one month after the outbreak of massive protests.

Two regions alone hold three quarters of the world's imprisoned journalists: nearly 45% in Asia and more than 30% in the Maghreb and the Middle East. **Russia has also seen a major crackdown since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.** Almost all independent media there were banned, blocked and/or declared “foreign agents” in the course of the year. Most of the journalists who stayed behind have been forced to work underground, as they could face as much as 15 years in prison for spreading “false information” about the Russian army. At least 18 journalists are currently imprisoned, including 8 Ukrainian journalists who were arrested in Crimea, which was annexed in 2014 and is now subject to Russian law.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Historic rise of nearly 30% in the number of women journalists in prison

In what is yet another unprecedented figure for RSF, a total of **78 women journalists are currently behind bars**. After an increase of nearly 20% last year, the number registered **another record rise of 27.9% in 2022**. By comparison, the number of male journalists in prison rose by only 11.2%. **Women now account for 14.6% of imprisoned journalists**, whereas women comprised less than 7% of imprisoned journalists five years ago.



Rise in the proportion of detained women journalists
on 1 December of each year

This rise both reflects the growing proportion of women in journalism and confirms that women are not spared from the repression faced by journalists. Like their male colleagues, they are victims of the regimes that are harshest towards press freedom. **Four countries** among those with the lowest rankings in RSF's World Press Freedom Index detain **more than 70% of the world's imprisoned women journalists** – China (with 19 women journalists detained), Iran (18), Myanmar (10) and Belarus (9).

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Women on the front line in the land of the Mullahs

Shaken since mid-September 2022 by a wave of protests on a scale rarely seen since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran alone is holding 18 women journalists. While 3 of them, including the winner of the 2022 RSF Prize for Courage, [Narges Mohammadi](#), have been held since before the start of the protests, the remaining 15 were jailed following their onset caused by the death of Mahsa Amini, the 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman arrested by the morality police for being “dressed inappropriately.”



Narges Mohammadi
© DR



Elahe Mohammadi
© RS



Nilufar Hamedei
© Shargh

The high number of detained female journalists is indicative of the Iranian authorities' desire to systematically reduce women to silence. Among them, the cases of [Nilufar Hamedei](#) and [Elahe Mohammadi](#) are of particular concern. Arrested in September for being the first journalists to draw attention to Mahsa Amini's death, they are now charged with “propaganda against the system and conspiring against national security,” punishable by the death penalty.

Other countries that jail women journalists

China is currently holding 19 women journalists, including the courageous [Zhang Zhan](#), winner of the 2021 RSF Press Freedom Prize, sentenced to four years in prison for “causing trouble” by covering the Covid-19 pandemic on social media. They also include [Huang Xueqin](#), an investigative journalist who documented sexual harassment of women and girls and covered stories involving corruption and industrial pollution. Arrested on a charge of “inciting the subversion of state power,” she has been held without trial for more than a year.



Zhang Zhan
© YouTube via AFP



Huang Xueqin
© FreeXueBing

DETAINED JOURNALISTS



Htet Htet Khine
© RS

Ranked 176th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index (just behind China), **Myanmar is holding 10 women journalists behind bars.** They include [Htet Htet Khine](#), who was arrested in August 2021 and is now serving a six-year prison sentence and forced labour for "inciting hatred against the army." As a reporter for various outlets including BBC Media Action, she was at the forefront of the coverage of the street protests that followed the military coup on 1 February 2021.



Maryna Zolatava
© "Bolchof"

While **Belarus** released some of the women journalists it was detaining just a year ago, President Alexander Lukashenko's government has made new arrests and **nine are currently behind bars.** They include [Maryna Zolatava](#), the editor of *TUT.BY*, the country's most popular news site until it was banned. She was arrested on 18 May 2021 and was **added to the official list of "terrorists" in October.** Her provisional detention has been extended repeatedly for the past 18 months.



Pham Doan Trang
© Paul Mooney

Criticising the government in her articles is also the reason why [Pham Doan Trang](#), a Vietnamese **journalist who was awarded the RSF Prize for Impact in 2019, is serving a nine-year prison sentence on a charge of "propaganda against the State."** After being held for two years in Hanoi, the capital, she was recently transferred to a prison 1,000 km further south, a manoeuvre Vietnamese prison authorities often use to suppress information about a detainee's state of health. Three other Vietnamese women journalists are similarly languishing behind bars.

In Turkey, 3 women journalists and a female media worker have been in provisional detention since June 2022, when pro-Kurdish media outlets and production companies faced a new wave of arrests for their alleged support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), regarded as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government. Among them was Jin News agency director **Safiye Alagas**, who, in 2019, had already been arrested and accused of "propaganda for a terrorist organisation" before being acquitted.



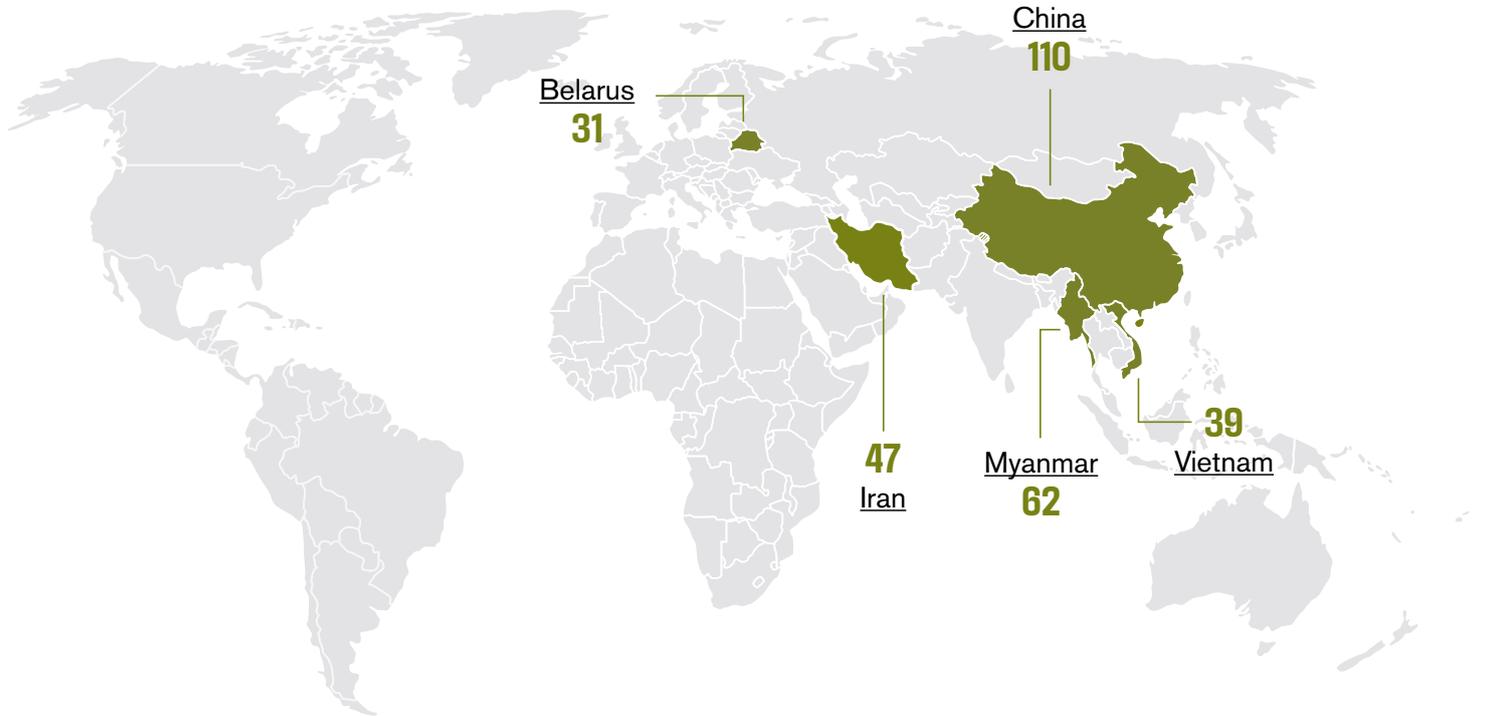
Hala Fahmy
© Teller Report

Terrorism charges are also widely used by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's regime in Egypt to justify the continued detention of 26 journalists, three of whom are women. Two of them were arrested in 2022, including [Hala Fahmy](#), a national radio and TV presenter committed to defending journalists' rights. She went missing for several days in April before reappearing in front of the office of the general prosecutor of State Security at the end of the month. Charged with belonging to a terrorist group and spreading "fake news," she has gone on several hunger strikes in protest against her arrest, most recently when the COP 27 climate conference was being held in Egypt.

Two women journalists are also jailed in Saudi Arabia, two in Guatemala and one each in Russia, the Philippines, Uzbekistan, Laos, Israel and Burundi.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The world's five biggest jailers of journalists



More than half (54%) of the world's imprisoned journalists are held in five countries.

After a month of protests, Iran became the world's third biggest jailer of journalists. The scale of the Islamic Republic of Iran's crackdown on the protest movement that began on 16 September is such that more journalists are currently detained than at any other time in the past 20 years, according to RSF data. Thirty-four journalists have joined the 13 who were already behind bars before the protests following Mahsa Amini's death began.

Unlike Iran, the four other countries that are among the five biggest jailers of journalists were already in the top five in 2021.

Year after year, China maintains its status as the world's biggest jailer of journalists, with a total of 110. While the number is slightly lower than last year, 99 journalists are held in prisons in mainland China and 11 are in Hong Kong. The lack of new imprisonments in 2022 is less a sign of an improvement in the situation than the **result of unrelenting oppression, ever-growing censorship and far-reaching surveillance.** In 2022, many cities were shut off from the outside world due to the Covid-19 pandemic, while an army of censors blocked "sensitive" keywords and independent comments on social media.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The situation is just as critical **in Myanmar**, which, in terms of population size, is by far the world's biggest jailer of journalists. During the first few months after the February 2021 coup, arrests of journalists usually took place while they were covering anti-junta protests, but 2022 was marked by an increase in arrests of journalists in their homes or in the places where they had gone into hiding to escape the repressive machinery deployed by the Tatmadaw, as Myanmar's armed forces are known.

Finally, **in Vietnam and Belarus**, despite slight falls in the number of detained journalists in 2022, **authoritarian regimes** led by [General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong](#) and [President Alexander Lukashenko](#) have continued their efforts to crush the independent media. In Vietnam, the number of imprisoned journalists has virtually doubled in the space of five years, while in Belarus, RSF has tallied more than 500 arrests of journalists in the past two years, with [31 still behind bars](#).

The most noteworthy cases of 2022

Talented reporter crushed by Russia's judicial machine



Ivan Safronov
© AFP

Considered one of Russia's best investigative journalists, [Ivan Safronov](#) was sentenced on 5 September 2022 to **22 years in prison for revealing "state secrets" that were readily available online**. The [indictment](#)'s incoherence confirmed that he was being punished for doing his job. This grossly unjust and vindictive jail sentence is the heaviest recorded by RSF in 2022.

Octogenarian behind bars



Yiu Mantin
© China Political Prisoner Concern

[Yiu Mantin](#) (also known as **Yao Wentian**), **82**, the founder of the Morning Bell Press publishing house, spent another **birthday in prison** in China in July 2022 for having tried to publish a book about President Xi Jinping. He was sentenced to [ten years in prison](#) in 2014 for "smuggling prohibited products." All of his **requests for parole on medical grounds have been denied** although he has had **five strokes** and suffers from asthma and hepatitis B. There has been no new information about him since November 2017.

Repeated hearings but no conviction



Amadou Vamouké
© Facebook

Since his arrest in Cameroon in 2016, [Amadou Vamouké](#) has been **taken from his cell to a special criminal court in Yaoundé a total of 137 times**, including 57 in 2022. Despite these repeated hearings, he has yet to be convicted. **The former director-general of the state radio and TV broadcaster CRTV has so far spent more than 2,300 days in preventive detention**. He is charged with embezzling state funds but the authorities still haven't produced any evidence against him. Now aged 72, this journalist has many ailments that are not being treated.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Collective punishment



Jimmy Lai
© Next Animation Studios

It is in China that we can find **the most imprisoned journalists belonging to the same news organisation**. [Jimmy Lai](#), the **founder of Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper** (which the authorities closed in 2020), and **six members of his staff** are accused under the draconian national security law of "conspiracy to collude with a foreign country or with external elements." All are **facing the possibility of life imprisonment**.



Ilham Tohti
© The New York Times

Furthermore, **in the Uyghur autonomous region of Xinjiang**, where the authorities are waging a [violent campaign of repression](#) against the Turkic Muslim population, **19 Xinjiang Education Press employees, 11 Kashgar Uyghur Press employees and 8 Uyghur Online website employees are being held in unknown conditions**. *Uyghur Online's* founder, the journalist and academic [Ilham Tohti](#), a recipient of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize, is **servicing a life sentence** for "separatism."

An expensive text message



Mohamed Mouloudj
© Liberté

[Mohamed Mouloudj](#), an Algerian journalist working for the now defunct daily *Liberté*, spent **13 months in pre-trial detention** for **requesting an interview by text message**. The interview request was addressed to the head of the Movement for Self-Determination for Kabylie (MAK), which was classified as a "terrorist" organisation three weeks after Mouloudj sent the text. His message was nonetheless absurdly used as "proof" of his membership of a terrorist organisation.

A very heavy sentence



Julian Assange
© WSWS

WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange faces the heaviest sentence of anyone targeted in connection with journalism in 2022 – **a possible total of 175 years in prison if the United States succeeds in securing his extradition from the UK**. [Julian Assange](#) has been charged with 18 counts in connection with WikiLeaks' publication in 2010 of hundreds of thousands of leaked classified documents that exposed information in the public interest. Pending review by the UK High Court of his appeal against the extradition order, Assange is currently jailed at London's Belmarsh prison, where his mental and physical health remain at risk.

At death's door

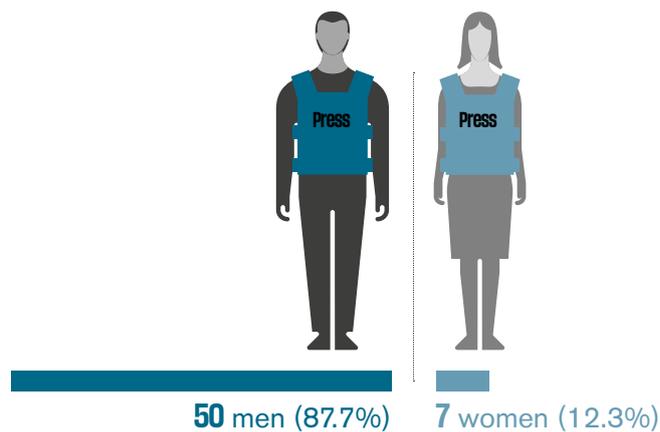
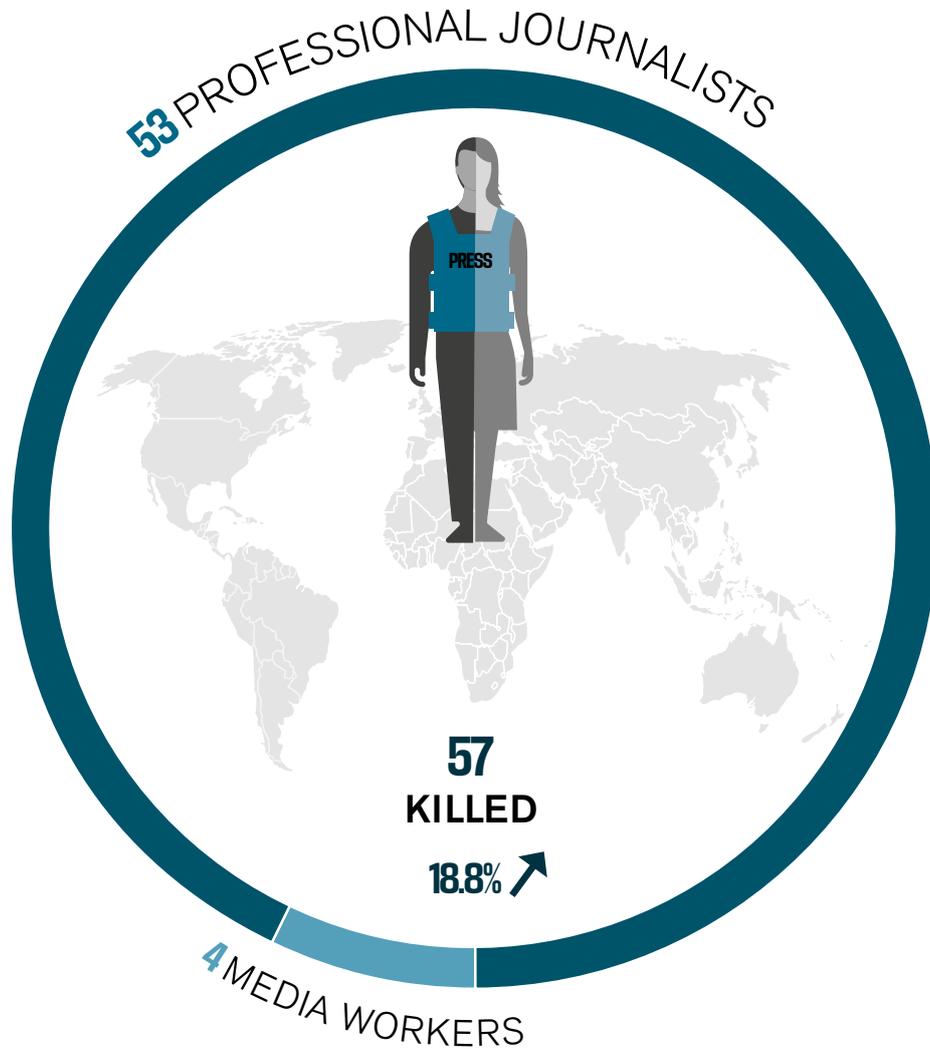


Alaa Abdel Fattah
© AFP

Putting his life on the line, [Alaa Abdel Fattah](#) nearly died in prison for attempting to get the world's attention during the COP 27 climate conference in Egypt. Already on a partial hunger strike since April **to protest his arbitrary imprisonment since 2019, the British-Egyptian blogger stopped drinking water for six days in early November**, a long and worrying time marked by the authorities' obstinate refusal to let his family visit him.

JOURNALISTS **KILLED**

The figures

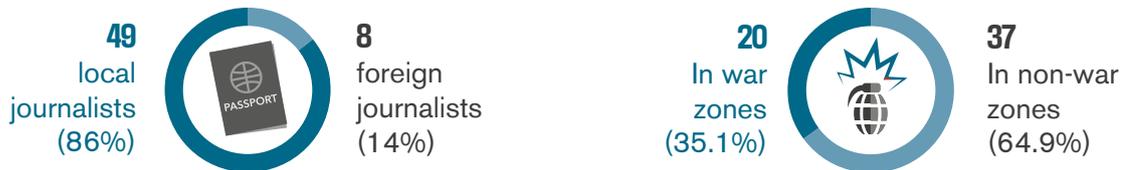


JOURNALISTS KILLED

Number of Journalists killed on the rise again

After two years of relative respite and historically low figures, **the number of journalists killed** in connection with their work **rose by 18.8% in 2022**. A total of **57 journalists paid with their lives for their commitment to report the news**, versus 48 in 2021 and 50 in 2020.

The war in Ukraine, which broke out on 24 February, is **one of the causes of this increase**. **The number of journalists killed in war zones** now represents more than 35% of the overall number killed (against 32% last year). The war in Ukraine has also contributed to a doubling of the **number of journalists killed outside of their home countries**. Of the eight journalists killed since the start of the war in Ukraine, five have been foreign reporters.

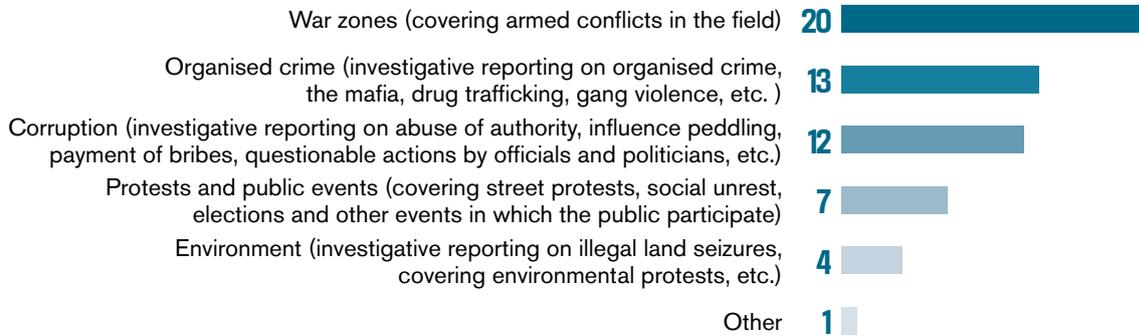


The increase in the number of journalists killed in countries considered to be at peace – more than six out of every ten journalists (64.9%) killed in 2022 – can be explained in part by **the end of travel restrictions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic**, which allowed journalists to do more reporting in the field. At the same time, some countries, such as Mexico, have still not been able to stem the violence plaguing their territories and directly affecting journalists. **In Mexico alone, 11 journalists were murdered**. That is **nearly 20% of the overall number of journalists killed worldwide**.

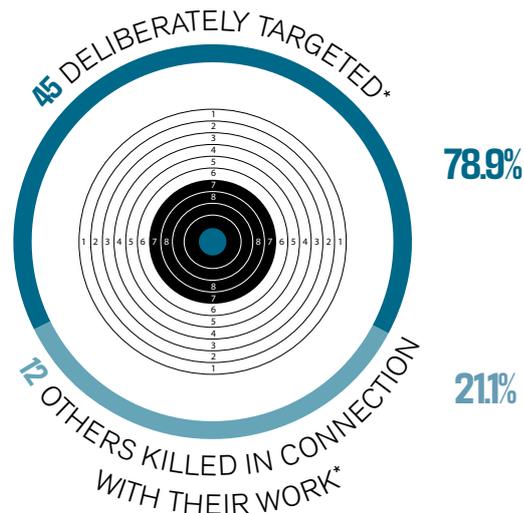
Women, of whom there are an increasing number in journalism, have not been immune to this upward trend. **The proportion of women journalists killed** in connection with their work **has tripled in two years**, from 4% in 2020 to more than 12% in 2022.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Riskiest stories to cover



Nearly 80% of the media professionals killed in 2022 were deliberately targeted in connection with their work or the stories they were covering. Organised crime (the mafia, drug trafficking, gang violence, etc.) and corruption (abuse of authority, influence peddling, payment of bribes, questionable actions by officials or politicians, etc.) **are among the most dangerous subjects for journalists to investigate.** Reporting on these two topics led to the killing of 13 and 12 journalists respectively in 2022. Further, 4 journalists who were working on deforestation and land seizures by major business corporations were also killed during the past year.



* **MURDERED OR DELIBERATELY TARGETED:**
journalists deliberately killed because of their work

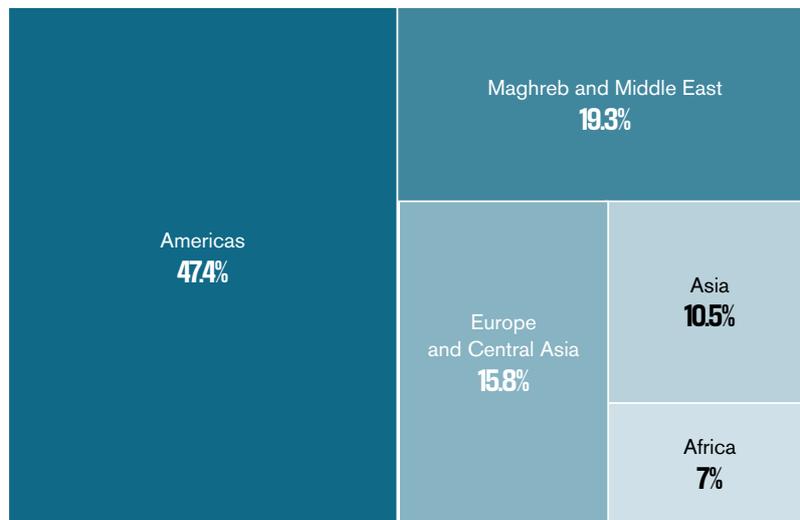
* **KILLED IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR WORK:**
journalists killed while in the field without being targeted as journalists

JOURNALISTS KILLED

The most dangerous countries



One continent alone accounts for nearly half of all journalists killed



JOURNALISTS KILLED

A record deadly year in the Americas

This continent was the world's most dangerous region for journalists in 2022, with **nearly half (47.4%) of the overall number killed worldwide**. With 27, the Americas region has the highest number of journalists killed in 20 years, according to RSF's data.

Mexico



Lourdes Maldonado López
© Facebook

For journalists, Mexico is the world's most dangerous country at peace, with 11 killed in 2022 (compared to seven in 2021). At least **80 journalists have been killed in connection with their work in Mexico in the past ten years** (including 46 in the past five) despite repeated calls from civil society and international organisations, including RSF, for the government to combat the violence more effectively. Mexico's protection mechanisms demonstrated their limitations yet again in 2022 when journalist **Lourdes Maldonado López**, who was in principle enjoying protection in the northwestern state of Baja California was gunned down outside her home in January.

Haiti

Haiti was another of the region's countries that saw a record number of media fatalities this year. **With six journalists killed** (after none the previous year), it became the world's third most dangerous country for the media in 2022.



Romelson Vilcin
© Haiti Libre

Journalists were targeted by Haiti's heavily armed neighbourhood gangs or fell victim to the widespread violence resulting from an escalating political, social and economic crisis. The latest media victim, **Romelson Vilcin**, was fatally wounded when police fired teargas and live rounds to disperse journalists who had gathered outside a police station to demand the release of a colleague arrested arbitrarily while covering a protest in Port-au-Prince.

Brazil & Latin America



Dom Phillips
© Facebook

In South America, **Brazil registered three deaths**, including **Dom Phillips**, a British journalist whose dismembered body was found in a remote part of the Amazon. He had gone there with a well-known defender of the Amazon's Indigenous peoples (who was also killed) to document their attempts to combat poaching, illegal gold mining and deforestation.

In the other **Latin American countries** that registered at least one death each in 2022 (Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Chile and Paraguay), **most of the victims had a similar profile and were murdered according to a recurrent modus operandi:** journalists investigating stories linked to local politics, organised crime or human rights, and killed near their homes or workplaces in hits planned by contract killers.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

United States



Jeff German
© Las Vegas Review-Journal

It should be noted that journalists in the north of the continent were not spared either. For the first time since 2018, a reporter was killed in the United States in connection with their work. The victim was **Jeff German**, a veteran reporter for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, who specialised in organised crime, corruption and local politics, and was stabbed to death outside his Las Vegas home in September. At the time of his death, he had reportedly been working on a follow-up piece about alleged misconduct by Clark County public administrator Robert Telles, who was arrested for his murder.

Europe hit by the war in Ukraine



Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff
© Sam Cottet



Maks Levin
© Markian Lyseiko

Russia's invasion on 24 February turned Ukraine into the world's second most dangerous country for the media, with **eight journalists killed** in the **first six months of the war**. They included **Maks Levin**, a Ukrainian photojournalist who was deliberately shot by Russian soldiers on 13 March, according to the conclusions of an RSF investigation. **Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff** also paid with his life for his commitment to reporting. A video reporter for the French TV news channel BFMTV, he was part of a humanitarian convoy to film the evacuation of civilians when he was hit by shrapnel from an exploding shell that pierced the truck's armoured windshield.

The Middle East's deadly conflicts



Saber Al-Haidari
© RS

Journalists continue to face multiple dangers in Yemen as a result of the civil war that began in 2014. They are as likely to be killed while covering clashes between the Arab coalition and Houthi rebels, as they are to be murdered by a bomb planted in their car, as was reporter **Saber Al-Haidari** in Aden in June. In all, three journalists were killed in 2022 amid a growing climate of fear that discourages the media from doing their job.



Ísam Ebdella
© RS

Even if Syria's civil war has let up in intensity, it continues to take its toll on media personnel. Two journalists were killed while covering clashes between militias and the Islamic State, while the latest victim, **Ísam Ebdella**, a reporter for the AHNA news agency in Syrian Kurdistan, was killed by one of the airstrikes launched by Turkey against the Kurdish groups in northern Syria and Iraq that it blames for a terrorist bombing in Istanbul on 13 November.

JOURNALISTS KILLED



Shireen Abu Akleh
© AlJazeeraMediaNetwork

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict proved deadly for journalists again in 2022. Two Palestinian journalists were killed, including [Shireen Abu Akleh](#), a well-known Al Jazeera reporter. Although several independent investigations concluded that she was deliberately shot by the Israel Defence Forces despite being clearly identified as a journalist, the IDF has so far refused to accept culpability and identify the person responsible.



Baktash Abtin
© Facebook

Far from reporting in the field, the journalist and writer [Baktash Abtin](#) died in prison in Iran in January from a lack of medical care, a method often used by the Iranian authorities to silence dissident voices.

Asia, gagged courage

While no single Asian country was ranked among the deadliest countries this year, the region as a whole was the fourth most dangerous region, with six journalists killed, or just over 10% of the worldwide total. The circumstances in which three of them died show how authorities try to cover up their crimes.



Arshad Sharif
© RS

[Arshad Sharif](#), a well-known Pakistani TV journalist who was critical of the military, fled his country to escape imminent arrest and death threats, but he was shot dead in very suspicious circumstances in Kenya. Although the Kenyan police tried to pass off his death as an accident, evidence gathered by RSF showed that he was deliberately shot at very close range. An international investigation is essential to identify the perpetrators.



Aye Kyaw
© RS

In Myanmar, those responsible for the killing of photographer [Aye Kyaw](#) botched their efforts to conceal the cause of his death. Arrested by soldiers on 30 July after covering many anti-junta protests, he was found dead a few hours later with a large wound on his chest that had been hastily sewn up in a crude attempt to disguise the fact that he had died while being subjected to an extremely violent interrogation.



Do Cong Duong
© The 88 Project

In Vietnam, the authorities never gave an official reason for [Do Cong Duong](#)'s death in prison on 2 August. But this 58-year-old journalist had suffered from heart problems and recurrent pneumonia that worsened as he continued to be held. Despite his family's repeated protests, the prison authorities never granted him the necessary care and it wasn't until he was near death that he was transferred to the prison infirmary. But by then it was too late.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

The figures



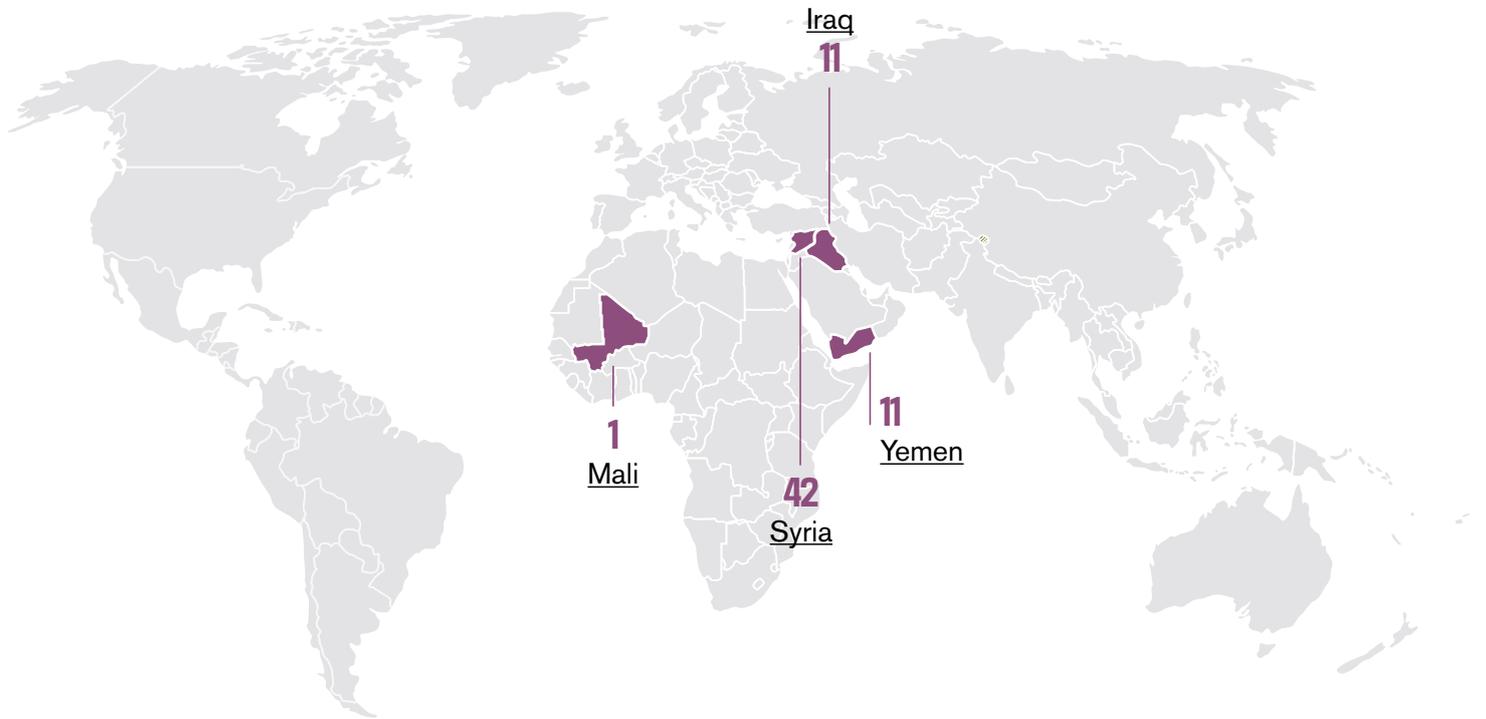
61
local
journalists
(93.8%)



4
foreign
journalists
(6.2%)

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

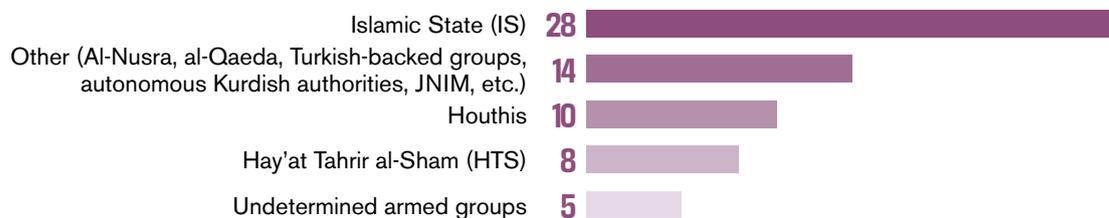
High-risk countries



At least 65 journalists and media workers are currently being held hostage around the world. The **overall number of hostages is the same as this time last year** following releases in Yemen and the reclassification of some cases on the basis of new information.

All of the hostages are being held in three Middle East countries, except Olivier Dubois, a French journalist held hostage in the Sahel (Mali). He is one of four foreign journalists still being held hostage worldwide.

The leading hostage-takers



Hostages: RSF regards journalists as hostages when they are being held by non-state actors who threaten to kill or injure them or continue to hold them as a means of pressure on a third party (a government, organisation or group) with the aim of forcing the third party to take a particular action. Hostages may be taken for political reasons or for economic reasons (for ransom) or both.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

No recent proof of life for hostages in Syria

Five years after the Islamic State's defeat, there is still no news about the fate of many hostages in Syria and Iraq. Three of them are foreign journalists.



Austin Tice
© RS

Ten years have passed since the US journalist [Austin Tice](#) was kidnapped at a checkpoint near Damascus. Despite the lack of official news, the White House thinks he is still alive and President Joe Biden has asked his national security staff to reach out to the Syrian government and do everything possible to bring him home. Israeli intelligence and a senior Lebanese official are also working on his release.



Ishak Mokhtar
© SaharaMedia



Samir Kassab
© Skeyes

There is also no recent news about the Mauritanian reporter [Ishak Mokhtar](#) and his Lebanese cameraman [Samir Kassab](#), who were working for the *Sky News Arabia* TV channel when abducted by IS near the Syrian city of Aleppo in 2013. They were last seen alive in Raqqa province in 2016, three years after their abduction. Kassab's family had not lost hope, despite the lack of proof of life. They organised a demonstration in Beirut on 14 October 2022, the ninth anniversary of his abduction, to press the Lebanese government to undertake new steps to find him.



John Cantlie
© AFP

British photojournalist [John Cantlie](#) is now presumed dead, having been held hostage by the Islamic State for more than four years following his kidnapping in Syria 10 years ago, in November 2012. A [journalistic investigation](#) in 2022 determined there had been no credible evidence of Cantlie's survival following his last appearance on camera in Mosul, Iraq in December 2016. Cantlie's family also held a memorial service this year, and social media pages in support of the campaign to "Free John Cantlie" were taken down. As his body has not been found and his death has not been confirmed, RSF now classifies him as missing.

Yemen, the other big hostage-taker

With a total of 11 journalists held hostage, Yemen continues to be particularly dangerous for the media. Two journalists were released in 2022, including [Kamel Almamari](#), who had been held by the Houthis rebels for 292 days. In 2022, the Houthis also admitted to detaining [Younis Abdel Salam](#), a journalist who went missing in Sanaa in August 2021. In all, the Houthis are holding 10 of the 11 journalists currently held hostage in Yemen, seven of whom have been held for nearly eight years in especially appalling conditions. They include [Abdul Khaleq Amran](#), [Akram Al-Walidi](#), [Hareth Humaid](#) and [Tawfiq Al-Mansouri](#), who were sentenced to death in April 2020 for spying. The eleventh journalist, [Mohamed Al-Moqri](#), was abducted in eastern Yemen's Hadramout province in 2015 by a group linked to al-Qaeda.



Abdul Khaleq Amran
© DR



Akram Al-Walidi
© DR



Hareth Humaid
© DR



Tawfiq Al-Mansouri
© DR

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

Olivier Dubois, hostage in the Sahel

Olivier Dubois
© DR

Olivier Dubois has been held for more than 20 months by the Support Group for Islam and Muslims (JNIM), an armed group in Mali affiliated to al-Qaeda. This marks the first time since the Lebanon hostage crisis in the 1980s that a French journalist has spent such a long time in captivity. Based in Bamako as the correspondent of three French publications, *Libération*, *Le Point* and *Jeune Afrique*, Dubois was abducted on 8 April 2021 after flying to the northeastern city of Gao to interview the leader of a local armed group.

France has repeatedly said it is committed to obtaining Dubois' release. But, as time passes and concern grows, its statements are beginning to sound hollow, especially as relations between Paris and Bamako have worsened dramatically since his abduction. After two military coups, the army junta currently running Mali has been voicing a great deal of hostility towards France, while Operation Barkhane, the French-led, counter-terrorism operation launched in the Sahel in 2013, involving a deployment of more than 5,000 French troops, was officially ended on 8 November. In Mali, the French soldiers have been replaced by Russian mercenaries working for Moscow's Wagner Group, whose agenda clearly does not include freeing Dubois.

MISSING JOURNALISTS

Two journalists reported missing in 2022



Dmytro Khiliuk
© Facebook

One of the two disappearances reported in 2022 was in Europe. **Dmytro Khiliuk, a journalist working for the Ukrainian news agency UNIAN**, disappeared on 4 March in Dymmer, a then Russian-occupied village 45 km north of Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. RSF has learned that he was later taken to Russia. A request for information about his disappearance was filed with the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, which has yet to respond. As RSF classifies a disappearance as “enforced” when state agents are directly involved, it has added this case to the list of the ten other “enforced disappearances” it had previously registered.



Roberto Carlos Flores
Mendoza
© DR

The other disappearance reported in 2022 was in Mexico. **Chiapas Denuncia Ya** webpage editor **Roberto Carlos Flores Mendoza**, 41, has not been seen since 20 September 2022. The car he was using was also never located. Ever since creating this webpage in 2018, Flores had used it to investigate abuses by authorities in the state of Chiapas and to publish the complaints of his fellow citizens. And he had continued to do this until the eve of his disappearance. This new case brings to 27 the number of journalists missing in Mexico. RSF and its Mexican partner, Propuesta Cívica, reported these disappearances to the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva in a [formal complaint](#) against Mexico in November.

Nearly 50 journalists have disappeared in the past 20 years

The two new cases have brought to 49 the number of missing journalists registered by RSF since 2003. Three of them are women (two Mexicans and one Peruvian). More than one in eight of these cases concerns journalists who have disappeared in countries that are not their own.

The UK’s John Cantlie is not the only journalist to have gone missing following an abduction in Syria ten years ago. His fate is also shared by the Palestinian journalist **Muhib al-Nuwati** and the Jordanian journalist **Bashar al-Kadumi**. Two Tunisian journalists, reporter **Sofiane Chourabi** and his cameraman, **Nadhir Guetari**, have been missing ever since their abduction by an unidentified armed group in Libya in 2014. The US journalist **Paul Overby** disappeared the same year while travelling from Khost in Afghanistan to North Waziristan in Pakistan with the aim of interviewing the head of the Haqqani network.

RSF classifies journalists as missing when there is insufficient evidence of their death or abduction and no credible claim of responsibility has been made.



METHODOLOGY

Compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) every year since 1995, the annual round-up of violence and abuses against journalists is based on data collected throughout the year. We gather detailed information that allows us to affirm with certainty or a great deal of confidence that the death, detention or abduction of each journalist was a direct result of their journalistic work.

RSF only counts journalists who fall within the scope of its mandate, that is to say, anyone who – by any means of communication and on a regular or professional basis – collects, processes and disseminates news, information and ideas in such a way as to serve the general interest and the public's fundamental rights, all the while respecting the principles of freedom of expression and journalistic ethics.

The 2022 round-up figures compiled by RSF include professional journalists, non-professional journalists and media workers. The round-up distinguishes these categories in its breakdowns in order to facilitate comparison with previous years.

The figures in this round-up were compiled on 1 December 2022 and don't take account of arrests, releases, deaths or disappearances that took place after that date. The latest figures appear in RSF's [Press Freedom Barometer](#), which is updated on a regular basis.

CREDITS

Editor-in-chief: Catherine Monnet

Data journalist: Blanche Marès

Assistant editor: Anne-Laure Chanteloup

Translator & editor: Michael Tarr, Pénélope Smith

Contributors: RSF's regional desks and bureaus (Africa, Asia-Pacific, East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Maghreb, Middle East, Latin America and North America)

Layout: Sandra Héno



REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) defends and promotes journalistic freedom, independence and pluralism. Headquartered in Paris, it has consultative status with the UN and UNESCO, has 13 international bureaus and sections, and has correspondents in more than 130 countries.