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### JOURNALISM IN SPITE

### OF EVERYTHING

As we celebrate May 3 World Press Freedom Day in 2022 (!), our minds are on our fellow journalists who were imprisoned in many countries, forced into exile with death threats, or even executed in exile. 11

Palestinian photojournalist Muath Amarneh



**ARE WE STILL** THE EYES OF

**MUATH?** 

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Mexican journalist Marcela Turati



"MEXICO USED TO JOURNALIST **DEATH!" 42** 



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YÜKSEL DURGUT EDITOR

### Press should be free, so that...

he media has been hit hard by COVID-19 over the past few years. Advertising revenues fell and weakened the already struggling industry. However, people started exhibiting a stronger search for accurate and reliable news. High-quality and independent productions on digital platforms helped the journalists who continue their activities outside their countries pull through the pandemic period successfully. Journalists who were forced into exile displayed the best example of solidarity with each other during this rather difficult period.

When journalists leave their home country, they lose their Professional capacity in two dimensions. They lose their news sources and can't perform in their mother tongue. The scarcity of news sources in foreign languages pushes them to seek new careers in different professions like most refugees from other sectors. Some exiled journalists, humbly including myself, continue their profession in different countries despite everything that goes against them.

In this issue, you will read on this subject through five journalists from different countries who had to leave their countries and see how they cling to life over and again. There is also a huge staff who write under pseudonyms out of the concern that their family members could sustain harm in the home countries. These people, quite understandably, refused to give interviews.

The number of people who lost their lives in the first three months of the year, according to the data of the Committee to Protect

Journalists (CPJ), has reached 15 as Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, Russia invaded Ukraine and journalists were targeted in Mexico and Haiti.

The hybrid war which plays an important role in the disinformation campaigns of the pro-Russian media continues. Journalists are struggling with the threat of organized crime and the aggressive and polarizing rhetoric of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico which is known as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. Their colleagues are also being targeted by gangs in Haiti

Public debate is influenced by the troubled relations between government and the press. This tension changes the ranking in the annual press freedom index. Unfortunately, governments do not seem to spend any special effort to rise higher in the index.

"The press must have the freedom to say anything so that certain people do not have the freedom to do anything." This statement belongs to the French statesman, diplomat and literary scholar Alain Peyrefitte. Without exception, the authoritarian governments aim to silence critical voices. If you free the media, they become an indispensable protector of democracies.

As the world's first and only multilingual magazine that defends freedom of press and expression, we demand the unconditional release of our colleagues in different geographies and the abolition of the laws that criminalize freedom of thought. Happy May 3 World Press Freedom Day!

Germany



**MONIQUE HOFMANN** \*

## We must defend the freedom of the press

In the 2021 report prepared by Media Freedom Rapid Response, it is stated that 119 attacks took place against press freedom in Germany. 223 people were affected by these attacks. The German government should immediately implement security measures against journalists in concrete terms.

or almost exactly two years now, people in Germany have regularly taken to the streets to protest against what they believe to be unjustified restrictions on their basic rights in the Corona pandemic. Yet this is precisely what they themselves are doing: restricting fundamental rights, namely the freedom of the press guaranteed in Article 5 of the German Basic Law.

In its annual report, the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) project recorded 119 attacks on press freedom in Germany in 2021, affecting a total of 223 people. By comparison, in 2020 there were 72. These attacks include physical attacks at demonstrations as well as online agitation and intimidation lawsuits. By far the largest proportion, however, occurred in connection with anti-Corona protests. Last December alone, a demonstrator in Flensburg attacked a freelance photojournalist with pepper spray; a freelance photojournalist at an anti-Corona protest in Munich was attacked by a police officer with a baton; three journalists at a Corona deniers protest in Saxony were at-

tacked and beaten by a group of hooligans; a female journalist and a male journalist were beaten and kicked while lying on the ground by members of the neo-Nazi youth group "Division Mol" during an unauthorized Querdenker march in Berlin; both suffered minor injuries; a freelance journalist was punched in the face by demonstration participants on two consecutive days, first in Berlin and then in Munich. "There is now not a single demonstration surrounding the Corona protests where I am not attacked," a freelance photographer told MFRR.

On the other hand, a freelance journalist from Thuringia recently told me: "From the beginning, I have observed and documented the Querdenker\*innen protests and also researched connections to right-wing and farright networks. Then, a few months ago, I had to stop this work because it became too dangerous for me." What was a disturbing prospect a year ago has now become reality: More and more frequently, media professionals are forced to cancel their coverage of anti-Corona protests due to

assaults, or stay away from such marches in the first place out of fear for their safety. We are therefore faced with the real problem that blind spots in public perception arise precisely where our democratic values and principles are questioned and fought against by aggressive means. The Corona demonstrations are hotbeds of a dangerous new extremism, behind which there is no ideology but a fundamental rejection of our free democratic basic order. Media professionals must make these efforts visible to the public and classify them so that civil society and politics can defend themselves against them. We must therefore defend freedom of the press. But how?

She was afraid to go to a "Querdenker"-protest in order to report from there, but her employer demanded this of her without making her offers to support her at the same time, the cry for help from a reporter from a public broadcaster reached us as dju in ver.di some time ago. This is one of the reasons why we, together with Reporters Without Borders, the New German Media Makers and the Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-Wing, Racist and Anti-Semitic Violence, went public with a protection code for media companies in April of last year. At that time, the "Frankfurter Rundschau," the "dpa," "Zeit" and "Zeit Online," the "taz" and the "Spiegel" had already declared their intention to implement the code in their houses. In the meantime, Südwestdeutsche Media holding, to which the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" belongs, the Funke Media-Group and the Weser-Kurier, the first regional newspaper, have also joined. Media companies that sign up to the code assure their employees, both permanent and freelance, of protection and support in the event of attacks and threats. Those who feel uncomfortable reporting on a demonstration alone are provided with personal protection by their employer, and those who need help coming to terms with an attack receive external psychological support. The code of protection also includes (financial) assistance with relocations, for example, if the private addresses of media professionals have fallen into the wrong hands. In addition, the media companies appoint contact persons who support affected journalists in sifting through hate messages, checking them for criminal relevance and then, if necessary, reporting them to the police.

Because yes, this is also part of the whole evil: Not only at demonstrations, but also on the Internet, the tone has become even tougher. The attacks at protests are symptomatic of rampant hostility toward the media in this country, which is being unleashed ever more loudly and unrestrainedly against journalists. We are facing a problem for society as a whole that also requires political solutions. The announcement by the governing parties in their coalition agreement that they want to commit themselves to the safety of journalists urgently needs to be translated into concrete plans. A good start would be a round table of interior ministries, police forces, journalists' organizations and public prosecutors.

It is important that we act now, because it is five past twelve. This applies just as much to freedom of the press as the RKI head Lothar Wieler postulated last fall regarding the pandemic.

#### **MONIQUE HOFMANN**

In 2014, she was the director of the 'Europäische Burgerinitiative für Medienvielfalt' (European People's Initiative for media diversity).

In 2015, he started to work in the media sector at Ver.di as the person responsible for communication and public relations.

Hofmann, who has been the director of the Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (German Journalists' Union) at ver.di since November 2020, represents the rights of all journalists organized in the ver.di union.

She organizes workshops for press workers and provides legal support. As the DJU manager she is also responsible for the press cards. Since 2016, she has been working as a freelance journalist on media issues for the media magazine "Menschen Machen Medien".

South Africa



**REGGY MOALUSI \*** 

## Freedom of the Fourth Estate

Media freedom is the lifeblood of a democratic state. If there is no freedom of the media, the power of the press to hold the rulers accountable will be taken away. When we look at the generations that will carry the flag of journalism to the future, media freedom brings with it the responsibility of unity and association.

edia freedom is paramount in constitutional democracy as it ensures that the Fourth Estate plays a decisive role and the citizenry is at the centre.

One of the most important pillars that have played a leading role in most societies around the the world has been the media. Their critical role range from exposing the ills and corrupt, to cementing democracies. South African media is no exception.

Over the years the local media has faced challenges but has certainly played a leading role in exposing the evil that was apartheid and being a critical voice to bring about change – which saw the dawn of democracy.

It's now twenty-eight years since South Africa became

a constitutional democracy, in almost these three decades, the media has once more played a critical role in getting the governing party to be accountable, in getting the private sector to play its role, when it came to those whose voices have been muted, and when it came to those whose economic circumstances are not as great as they should be.

As last week's World Bank report articulated, South Africa stands out globally as the most unequal society – a fact the local media has well reported on, a fact the rich, and those running government and the private businesses, are aware, largely thanks to what the local media reports on.

The South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF), formed in 1996 when two organisations unified to form a



single media entity that would play a critical role in South Africa's democratic dispensation. This is a role that was not beset by challenges that varied from harassment of journalists, lack of finances to run the office, lack of support from some sectors in the media, and worryingly, hated by critics who wanted the organisation to be shut down as it became a voice for most practitioners.

South Africa's Constitution safeguards freedom of expression through the Bill of Rights. This has central importance, even though it gets trampled upon often by those seeking to exploit the Constitution and disregard media freedom when it is convenient to them. This safeguard in the Constitution is not only monitored by SANEF, but also by other pivotal organisations that are aware of the dangers this may imply if such a right is not upheld.

There have been instances where media freedom is undermined. Instances where journalists are regarded as the enemy by those not wanting the media to do their job, by the same people who do bad things and trust that no light will befall on them. That will never be the case, because the South African media is known for being robust and always willing to report stories fairly. The number of investigations over the years covered by the South Africa's media is well captured, and the awards won by these are there for all to see.

The recently released Edelman Trust Barometer lists the media second when it comes to the lack of trust. Politicians take the first place. The second place is worrying as the media cannot be seen as fraternity not to be trusted. Among the causes of the lack of trust in the media in recent years has been how unethical journalism has taken precedence.

When trust dissipates, there is no single individual that would be willing to engage with that media entity.

It's worrying when the Trust Barometer says: "None of

the major information sources are trusted as a source of general news and information, with trust in search engines at 59%, followed by traditional media at 57%, owned media at 43% and social media at only 37%."

There are currently trust issues facing South Africa's media, a concern that SANEF is working on with our member editors. We are working on this so that we can have newsrooms filled with ethical journalists, who are not part of political factions and are not known to be "brown envelope" journalism practitioners. SANEF is working towards curating an Ethics Barometer, as recommended by the Independent Panel Report in the Inquiry into Media Ethics and Credibility, prepared by Judge (retired) Kathleen Satchwell, Nikiwe Bikitsha, and Rich Mkhondo.

The recommendations of this August report are being taken in their stride by SANEF, among them a continued discussion around how to sustain journalism and find financial models that would see media entities, from community to mainstream, being financially stable.

Freedom of the media is the lifeblood of the democratic state. Without the freedom of the media, the press is robbed of its ability to call those in power to account. Freedom of the media comes with responsibility for the fraternity, something that cannot be underestimated as we look at coming generations who would carry the journalism flag into the future. This is the generation that should not look at the work currently being done present journalists and be left with disappointment by failures to properly safeguards journalistic rights, by failure to call out evil governments that continue to harass, jail and murder journalists. Ours is a profession that the greater public know its importance, hence the need to regain trust, to be ethical, while we continue to call for safe spaces that allow the Fourth Estate to do its job, without any fear or favour.

\* Reggy Moalusi, Executive Director of the South African National Editors' Forum SANEF (South African National Editors' Forum)



## JOURNALISM IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING

Ithough exile means being taken away from the place of life as a word, it actually means taking a person out of life. In our old world, these exiles took place every century and were generally caused by dictators, destroying the memories, remembrances, loved ones and lives of millions of people... The leading exiles were revolutionaries, journalists, writers, scientists and artists who "disturbed the authorities" in general.

There isn't any clear figure on how many journalists are living in exile around the world. But only Hitler alone forced millions of people into exile. Many Jewish journalists were also among these people. Each new attack by Hitler on another country further increased the number of exiled lives. For example, the German journalist of Jewish origin, writer Erika Mann is just one of those who had to change exactly 5 countries between 1938 and 1942. Mann finally settled in America.

It seems like the situation doesn't change at all. Today, dozens of journalists are forced to leave their homes every year due to threats of imprisonment, torture, violence and death.

While celebrating (!) the World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2022, our thoughts are with our fellow journalists who have been put behind the bars in many countries, forced into exile with the death threats, or even executed in exile. Murders of Saudi-born journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Emmy Award-winning Dutch journalist Peter R. de Vries, Turkish journalists Abdullah Bozkurt and Erk

Acarer, who lived a life of exile are what we could count at a stroke...

Meanwhile this file was being prepared for publication, the incident in Sweden, one of the safest countries in the world, reminds us once again how high the threat is. Ahmet Dönmez, a journalist who left Turkey and sought asylum, was attacked in the middle of the street in Stockholm in front of his 6-year-old daughter. As soon as he returned with a brain injury, he spent weeks in the hospital.

Last year, our colleagues in Afghanistan and Belarus joined the journalists who were threatened by different countries of the world every year and had to leave their homeland, and this year our colleagues in Ukraine joined the club as well. And, naturally, the whole lives of these journalists turned upside down...

In this issue, we have written stories of journalists from different countries who had to leave their countries due to threats. You will read the stories of Egyptian journalist Soulafa Magdy whose only way to save her life was to leave her country and settle in France, Turkish colleague Adem Yavuz Arslan, who had be in the United States, the Afghan journalist Nesar Ahmad Fayzi, who began living in Germany after the Taliban, Clavel A. from Venezuela. Rangel Jiménez and Alejandro Gutiérrez from Mexico, who lived a life of exile in Spain.

Even though we talk to our fellow journalists about deportations, threats, deaths, instead of talking about the quality of our news, the awards we receive, Happy World Journalists' Day on May 3rd!...

5

FEDERICO PARRA / AFP

### JOURNALIST ADEM YAVUZ ARSLAN:

## TRUTH SETS YOU FREE

Everyone writes their own story-history. What you do in difficult situations, what you prefer is your story. I continue to pursue the truth and I know that "the truth sets you free".

ou went to the USA as a representative of your publishing group, you became an 'exiled journalist' after July 15th. How has this change affected your journalism?

I was appointed as a Representative from the Ankara Office to Washington DC Office of the Ipek Media Group (Bugün Newspaper, Bugün Tv and Kanalturk). As it is known, the Ankara Representative Office occupies an important position in the Turkish media order. Naturally, I had also acquired a wide network from both, the world of politics and bureaucracy. I was doing television programs, commenting on mainstream channels, and also writing columns. I had two books published after 2010. It is no exaggeration when I say that my Ankara period was fruitful

But there is a price to pay for doing critical and independent journalism. I have experienced these as well, especially after the major corruption and bribery operation of December 17, 2013. Actually, the fact that I was sent to the United States as a representative was also the result of such an atmosphere. I moved to Washington in June 2014 and continued my journalism here. However, on October 28, 2015, the trustees of the Erdogan regime extorted the Ipek Media Group with water canon vehicles and gas bombs. I was one of the first people to be laid off that evening. A group of journalists who left the Bugün Newspaper started publishing in the Özgür Düşünce Newspaper, and I was their Washington correspondent until July 15, 2016. However, after the strange and suspicious military events that occurred on July 15, it was also shut down. Meanwhile, I started to be tried in absentia with a life sentence request because of my book "There is this Armenian: the secrets of the Dink operation" published in 2011. My passport (even my newborn child's) has been canceled. We were stuck in Washington. However, we did not give up and switched to online journalism.

A group of colleagues based in Brussels founded TR724.COM and I started there as their Washington correspondent and columnist. At the same time, I started to publish in all social media channels, especially Twitter and Youtube. Since I didn't have a regular income and was not able to earn the money needed to make a living from journalism, I supported my family by driving Uber during this time. It's a bit like an arabesque story, but I was working as a journalist in the daytime and as a taxi driver in the evening.

Of course, incredible stories were written about us in the regime's media. We have been demonized. In fact, it was the most painful thing; people who knew me personally, from whom I thought they were my close friends, wrote tons of things about me. One of them even saw me doing Uber, living on the minimum wage, living in a small two-room apartment, but he wrote "he lives in a mansion in the United States, a luxurious life with stolen charity benefits". As it is, many people from Turkey were scared and afraid



Journalist Adem Yavuz Arslan had achieved a great journalistic success by finding the traces of Iranian Reza Zarrab in USA, who bribed the ministers in Turkey with millions of dollars. In this picture Arslan is in Miami, where he went to follow Zarrab.

to stay in touch with me. Many news sources also withdrew themselves as a result of this demonization. And when that happened, journalism became more difficult than it used to be.

#### How did you feel when the regime confiscated your broadcasting group and how did you draw a road map for yourself?

I started my career as a police courthouse reporter. I witnessed the 2003 Iraq war and the 2004 Kosovo conflicts on the spot. I mean, I'm used to being in troubled areas. Colleagues say that I am cold-blooded. However, I was very struck by what happened on the morning of October 28, 2015. I was on the other side of the world and I got caught far away. I wanted to be able to be in Turkey and defend the door of Ipek Medya with my colleagues. Because if that door was broken, there would be no set in front of Erdogan, as a matter of fact, that's what happened afterwards. The events I was watching from the screen, the stories of the colleagues I was talking to, did really wore me out a lot. I wrote a column for the Bugün Newspaper for the last time that day. I wrote an article titled "We're going to walk with our heads held high, aren't we?" and it was published on the newspaper's website. Unfortunately, we were left alone that day in the face of the despotic forces of the regime, and Turkey paid very heavily for it. Turkey would not have gone this far if the door of Ipek Media had not been broken down on that day.

As for what kind of path I was taking for myself;

There weren't many alternatives ahead of us. Either we would leave the profession or we would find a new path for ourselves. Leaving the profession was not an option for me.

That's why I continued to work as a journalist in every possible way I could find. I started a blog, created a Youtube page, used Twitter and Facebook effectively and finally I continued to work as a journalist at TR724.com. I couldn't earn enough money to make a living from journalism, but I continued to do full-time journalism in online media. I can say that I didn't leave journalism even for a day after the newspaper was confiscated. On the one hand, I also looked at ways to improve myself. I can say that my practice as a journalist who has been working in the field for many years was good, but I found that I needed to educate myself academically. That's why I started my master's degree in international relations. I have been working in this field for two years and my master's thesis was on the social media policies and bans of the Erdogan regime.

### What are the difficulties of being a journalist in exile? How do you overcome those difficulties?

The most difficult part of journalism in exile is that you are targeted by the regime. They demonize you so much that many people stop contacting you. Therefore, your news sources are really drying up. But if you don't give up, you can find new sources in the meantime. Because real journalism is actually diminishing in Turkey. This situation can actually give you an advantage. For example, someone who thinks 'no one can publish this news in Turkey' can somehow provide you with that information. So there are advantages, as well as negative aspects. Financial difficulties, etc., are a fact experienced by every exile journalist.

### You continue to work as a journalist, but it is not possible to earn the money to make a living with journalism. Where do you get the motivation to work in a side job and also continue your profession as a journalist?

Journalism is an action. If you are not actually a doctor or an engineer, you can still be considered a 'doctor' or an 'engineer', but journalism is not like that. You are not a journalist unless you act. First of all, out of decency for the profession, I have never taken a break. Secondly, it was necessary to fight for our colleagues in prison, which I think we have done a lot of hard work on. Thirdly, everyone writes his own story-history. What you prefer to do in difficult situations is your story. I continue to pursue the facts and I know that "truth sets you free".

### You became the journalist who uncovered Reza Zarrab many years later. Can you express your feelings about this?

Although it is not done today, following up the idea, the story' is a must in journalism. I was one of the first to hear about Reza Zarrab in Turkey. I had heard of him in 2013, just before the December 17th was off, and he's been on my agenda for years. I was there when he was arrested in Miami in 2016 and brought to court in New York with his feet and hands cuffed. I am one of the few people who followed the trial in 2017 from the first day to the last day. I narrated all the proceedings from periscope with two broadcasts a day, and it was watched hundreds of thousands of times. Even those who slandered me inconceivably followed this case from my publications.

I have not stopped chasing Zarrab again and he has remained on my agenda for many years. After all, he was living in America, and I had to find out. One day I was provided with a crumb of information and went after that. In fact, I had tracked down Zarrab by following open sources, asking the right people the right questions. After doing the research, I went to Miami. In fact, it was a risky business, but it is necessary to take risks in journalism. I found Zarrab and talked to him a few words. I think the news that I have prepared with all my information has been an excellent investigative news story. All the Turkish media and even the world media used my excellent research news in everyway, but the Turkish media stole my news and credited it to itself. It wasn't surprising, but it made me think a lot. Those who act hostile even in such an obvious incident can do worse in other scenarios.

### Although you scored the journalism event of the year, the publications quoting the Reza Zarrab news ignored you or called you 'Feto Runaway'. How do you evaluate this hypocritical attitude?

It's not surprising, as I stated in the previous question, but it made me think. It made them think as well. Because this was an excellent piece of news. It put its stamp on history. I was the person who made the news that can be called the news of the year, and they went down in history as the people who stole this news. Nothing can change this fact. And I will remind them of their hypocrisy one day. Many of my colleagues say that the Turkey chapter is closed due to the traumatic effect of what they had to experience. I think differently and I say; I will return to confront them, to confront those who have insulted us with these slanders. Everyone will pay for what they did.

Threats continue to come from the Erdogan regime. Strange men wandered in front of my house for days. They took photos of my wife and children and published them in the media. My address was shared on social media and I received messages saying 'wait for us'.

### How do you assess the situation that the Turkish press is in today?

The press is not spared from the collapse that has occurred throughout the country. Like everything else, the press collapsed, ran out, stunk. Only a handful of journalists remained there. Some of them pretended to adopt the regime's rhetoric -willingly or unwillingly. Those who act more royalist than the king, those who wait for the order 'attack, wolf', those who say 'no need' and call innocent people terrorists even if they know in their hearts... Unfortunately, there is no mainstream media. Now newspapers, television and Internet sites are just a propaganda device of the regime. Online media is now the only way to get real news. I also focus on this. Despite all the bans my accounts (my YouTube and twitter accounts are banned in Turkey and cannot be accessed from there) are still being watched and followed by hundreds of thousands. I can say that the content I produce alone reaches more people than the total of the newspapers of Hurriyet + Sabah.

### What problems did you experience during the visits of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ministers to Washington?

Of course, your job as a man declared an enemy by the regime is not easy. For example, you cannot monitor the contacts of delegations from Turkey in Washington. Before July 15, we could follow a little bit of the programs. However, it caused too much trouble. In May 2016, I was invited to a program at the Brookings Institution during Erdogan's trip to Washington. A 100-year-old institution invited me to the speech of Brookings and Erdogan. I was attacked by Erdogan's bodyguards while I had a press card and an invitation on my collar. I was attacked and taken out of the building. It all happened in front



Arslan states that since he does not have a regular income, he makes a living for his family by driving Uber.



Arslan says that he has turned a part of his house into a studio in order to continue to be a journalist.



Trying to follow important cases in the USA, Arslan attaches special importance to the meetings at the White House.

of the cameras. Reputable institutions such as CNN and the Washington Post took what happened to their front pages. It was inconceivable that this happened in a city where Freedom of the Press was almost blessed. As a matter of fact, the next day, the then president Obama was asked directly about the incident and Obama had to say that they don't approve such things happening.

One of the things that upset me the most regariding that day was this: I have actually been a journalist since 1994. I've never taken a break except for military service. I have worked in every field from correspondent to editor, from Ankara Representative Office to columnist. Therefore, I have acquired a considerable network. That day, when Erdogan's bodyguards attacked me, my colleagues, whom I had worked in the same institutions for many years, went on long trips and spent a lot of time with, turned their faces away. None of them said to Erdogan's bodyguards "what are you doing?". They even took pictures of me as if it wasn't enough, twittered mind-blowing tweets and wrote articles about me. However, until a few years ago, these people referred to my work in their writings, programs, and asked me to publish them. Everything is and will be somehow forgotten, but the attitude of these colleagues will not be forgotten.

Threats continue to come from the men of the Erdogan regime. Strange men wandered for days in front of the apartment building where I lived in the USA. They took pictures of my wife and children, and all the media published them on the first page. My \$3000 car has become a luxury car in their media, and my ordinary modest two-room apartment is shown as a mansion. They posted my home address on social media and texted 'wait for us'. Similar harassment has been going on and on in various ways.

### What are your recommendations to exiled journalists?

Firstly, being an 'exile' is a value. It is proof that you do not compromise your principles. So there's no need to give a way or to despair. The foot finds a way to walk, and we somehow find a way, we will find it. Despite the fact that we do not have the means, we are able to reach more people than Erdogan's media with the work we produce.

I have seen so many mighty generals in my professional life, so many politicians- They all came, they all left. But good journalists will always exist. Be a good journalist, produce and present good things, the rest does not matter. In addition, exile is instructive as well as all its difficulties. Resetting, losing everything is also an important experience. The main thing is to always produce good work. All the troubles that you have experienced will pass, all the difficulties will be forgotten, but the work, the contribution that you have made to history, the ones that you have produced will remain. Keep producing without limiting yourself with excuses.





### hat is really going on in Venezuela?

Venezuela is governed by an authoritarian regime since 21st century. It combines the use of the democratic election and populism to kill the liberties of the countries and takes power from using the consing of the left movement. The corruption and the persecution of the opposition are part of the system in Venezuela.

### 2022 started with violence against journalists around the world. Is the situation that critical for journalists in your country as well?

Yes, it is since Hugo Chavez became the president. In Nicolas Maduro's government, the situation was going worse, and it pushed many journalists to leave the country for many reasons. Two of these reasons were political persecution and the shut down of a lot of newspapers and tv/radio stations due to some kind of an economic or legal suffocation.

### You became an exiled journalist at a very young age? Why?

I am 36 years old, and I never thought that I would have to leave my country to do journalism in Venezuela. I always thought I would live abroad for a while only for a master's degree or other studies, but the situation forced me to do it.

#### Why did you have to flee Venezuela? Why did you become a target to your government?

Together with a partner, I wrote an investigative report on a businessman in Guayana who is working with aluminum and iron, and intruded on corruption in the south of Venezuela. My work in my city was always about syndicate and investigative of the state companies involved in the mining industry. In 2016, the newspaper where I worked was sued for a report that I wrote, and the editor and the newspaper supported. I was not sued at that time, but my editor was. This time, in 2022, the sue was against my partner co-author of the investigative report and me. This situation and the deterioration of the political panorama in Venezuela

made me leave the country.

### What challenges and problems do you face as an exiled journalist?

The most difficult part is the psychological adaptation to a new country and missing my family, friends, and boyfriend. Then, when you realize that as a journalist you are far away from your country, sometimes you feel like you are from nowhere, which is very sad and confusing. And finally, you have to take care of all the legal things to be safe and have all the permissions to work. All these processes are long and you need a lot of patience and money to manage them.

#### Venezuela is a very difficult country for journalists. Does the threat of government still continue in where you are living now?

No, here not. I feel safe, but I know that some of the people involved in corruption in Venezuela live in my new country.

#### Can you access your news sources now? When politicians want journalists to be quiet, should journalists stop writing and researching?

Yes, but I lost some of my sources because some of them are afraid to talk to someone who is living in another country.

### If you had the opportunity, what would you like to ask the people who forced you into exile?

I don't know. Nothing, I think.

### You now live in a democratic and free country. Do you really feel free now?

I feel free now, but you never know.

### What is your message to your colleagues who are in exile and are fighting for the respect of freedom of press and expression in their country?

I don't know. I have been away from my country for a year and I don't know what to say to others in my situation. I would like to talk to others in this place, but I can say that they should trust in their own work and the result of that work.

### Afghanistan-Germany

### NESAR AHMAD FAYZI, JOURNALIST FROM AFGHANISTAN:

## TALIBAN AFRAID OF JOURNALISTS!

I believe the Taliban are afraid of journalists. Because they do not believe in freedom of expression. The Taliban mentality, which took control of the country after 20 years, is the same as the Taliban I remember when I was a child. I observed that there was no change or development in their thoughts and hehaviors.

hy did you become an exiled journalist?

I believe the Taliban were scared of me and other journalists, because they don't believe in freedom of speech. If I wanted to continue my job from my country I had two options, first: limit my activities and make reports in the Taliban's favor, second: or get killed by an accident like my many other friends who got shot to death by accident. And the other option was to keep doing my job from abroad.

### Why did you have to flee Afghanistan?

I was born and raised in war, never wanted to leave my country, I was doing my job under any circumstances because I love my job but exercising my job as a local journalist was not possible anymore in the country, to continue my goals I decided to fly from my country.

### Why did you become a target with the control of the Taliban?

The Taliban are an oppressive and selfish terrorist group, they don't want anyone who are against them like civil society people, journalists, human rights activists ... As a journalist my job is to show the reality and they are afraid if the world knows their reality, so that's why my job was making me a Taliban target.

### What challenges do you face as an exiled journalist?

I have had a job since the second day I was here. I earn enough money and have a good life, but I wish I was free in my own country and do my job not remotely.

### Afghanistan is a very difficult country, do the Taliban threats continue? Can you access your news sources?

I have to answer this question very carefully.

I have to say there are two major things in Afghanistan going on at the moment:

Poverty

What is the Taliban doing after 20 years they are back?

Most of the media outlets are doing reports on poverty, and it's easy to do reports on that, because you can find almost any kind of element/source for this.

But about what the Taliban are doing in the county, I have to say the accesses are very limited, people are afraid to be interviewed, and sources are very limited.

### When politicians want journalists to be quiet should journalists stop writing and researching?

Of course not! I think journalism starts when politicians want journalists to be quiet, journalists should find a way to report, to show the people why or what's going wrong that the politicians are afraid to be reported.

I think the relation between



journalists and people [we think they don't like journalists] it's not about liking or disliking, I think those people are afraid of journalists and that's why sometimes they threaten or kill journalists.

### If you had the opportunity, what would you like to ask the people who forced you into exile?

I have many questions from them but my main question is: do they really believe they will exist for long with their current thoughts and beliefs?

### You live in a democratic and free country; do you really feel free?

I am very new here, so far there is nothing which keeps me from doing my job.

### What are your messages to your colleagues who are in exile and are fighting for the respect of freedom of press and expression in their country?

I tell them to keep fighting, because Afghanistan is not the same Afghanistan which was 20 years ago, people have changed and we have their support. ■

### Mexico-Spain



#### ALEJANDRO GUTIÉRREZ

Alejandro Gutiérrez has been a reporter for Proceso magazine in Spain since 2007. Previously, he has worked for other media institutions in Mexico which report about policy and border security issues. He is also the author of the book "Drug trafficker: The Great Calderon challenge". Among the articles he wrote for Proceso "Dark fortune of I. Juan Carlos" draws attention

ALEJANDRO GUTIÉRREZ:

## THOSE THREATENED ME ARE IN PRISON TODAY

hat is really happening in Mexico?
For years, Mexico has been experiencing a growing process of institutional and social decomposition, which is reflected in a perception of citizen insecurity and high levels of violence, which have been affecting journalism workers in a notorious way, making us one of the most dangerous countries in which to practice journalism

In my opinion, this violence against journalists - through murders, assaults, threats and forced displacements - is basically an attack and a violation of the right to information and freedom of expression, which are pillars of a democracy.

Organizations such as Article 19 have documented the murder of 150 journalists (138 men and 12 women) so far this century. So far, governments of all political stripes (PAN, PRI and Morena) have shown their inability to confront and contain this phenomenon. Beyond the speeches from power, public policies do not differ beyond insignificant changes. In fact, the knots of these networks that

cross politics and organized crime continue to strengthen.

In Mexico we have a branch of the police, the prosecutor's office and the courts of the judiciary eaten away by corruption, stultified and not at all interested in investigating cases of journalists' murders.

### 2022 began with violence against journalists in Mexico, is the situation so critical for journalists?

This year has been dramatic for journalism workers in Mexico, as six colleagues have been murdered, making a total of 31 so far in the current government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, compared to 47 during the previous term of office of Enrique Peña Nieto.

Unfortunately, impunity persists because, as with the rest of the murders in the country, the number of cases with judicial sentences against those responsible does not reach 2%. Politics and organized crime continue to intersect.

Just as an example, the government of Javier Duarte, in the state of Veracruz (December 2010-November 2016)

has been the most lethal for journalists: 18 journalists murdered, as documented by Article 19. In that period, in separate events, two colleagues from my media, Proceso magazine, were murdered and remain unpunished: Regina Martínez, our correspondent in Veracruz, and the photojournalist Rubén Espinosa (although he was murdered in Mexico City, but his informative work was done in Veracruz). The authorities of the prosecutor's office have always avoided going deeper into the line of investigation of their journalistic work.

#### Why did you become an exiled journalist?

In 2007, we received information that the Familia Michoacana-Zetas cartel had ordered my assassination. And the management of my media, Proceso magazine, considered that the risk of staying in Mexico was too high, so they suggested I come to Spain as an alternative. In seven days I was in Madrid.

At Proceso magazine in Mexico City, I was in charge of covering political issues and investigating corruption cases, but at my previous position, as a correspondent in Chihuahua and the border city of Ciudad Juarez, I frequently dealt with investigations on drug trafficking, narco-politics, national security and border issues.

Due to an internal rearrangement in the Mexico City staff, from 2005-2006 I dealt with drug trafficking issues, which at that time were becoming more frequent and had a greater impact.

I was in that place when, at the beginning of Felipe Calderón's government, he announced what he called "the war against drugs", which was like a blow to the hornet's nest, because it unleashed violence like never before in Mexico.

I had finished writing a book on the narco and narco-politics (Narcotráfico. El gran desafío de Calderón - Planeta, 2007), and I had returned to reporting for the magazine. There were confrontations in Michoacán and in one of them some soldiers were killed. We published and, days later, the director of Proceso received the information about the threat against me.

### Why did you have to flee Mexico? Why did you become a target of the Mexican government?

Ramón Pequeño, a high-level official in the team of the Secretary of Public Security, Genaro García Luna, was the one who notified us of the threat against me, supposedly for publishing in detail the names and ranks of the criminal group in Michoacán that was implicated in the murder of the soldiers, one of whom was a high-ranking member of the Army.

However, at Proceso magazine we did not trust the words of García Luna and his closest team, because we knew reports that implicated him with organized crime people, in fact we even published some of his corrupt acts. My bosses and my colleagues set out to try to confirm or look for indications of the threat in off the record conversations with other security, intelligence and other sources.

A military source in the government itself confided to us that they had suspicions that the threat against me might come from Garcia Luna's own secretariat, and not properly from the drug trafficking group. We were never able to confirm this. But one unequivocal fact is that today García Luna

is in prison awaiting trial in New York Federal Court for his involvement with the Sinaloa cartel.

### What challenges and problems do you face as a journalist in exile?

Sometimes leaving our country is the only way to save our lives, however, it is not easy, especially when the departure is forced, you live a severe post-traumatic stress because you know the danger over your head. Even if you find good people in the new country, rebuilding your life in the face of such a violent and forced situation makes things not easy.

In Spain I have been fortunate to be able to practice journalism as a correspondent for my magazine, but it has not always been easy. Especially at the beginning there were strong changes, even depression. Unfortunately, other Mexican colleagues do not have that alternative.

### 6) Mexico is a very difficult country for journalists, is the threat of Mexico still present where you live now?

Mexico is a very dangerous country to practice journalism. But this is even more acute among colleagues who work in cities or towns in the states of the Republic, outside the capital, who are the most dangerous and vulnerable, often without the support of their own media. There are studies by psychologists that affirm that these journalists in the states of the Republic and small Mexican cities experience post-traumatic stress worse than a war correspondent.

In my case, the threat of being in Spain has dissipated. Putting some distance helped to reduce the risk and the pressure. I have returned to Mexico on several occasions and so far I have not had any problems.

### 7) Can you access your news sources now? When politicians want journalists to be quiet, should journalists stop writing and researching?

I have resumed contact with my old sources, although they are more sporadic, because many of these sources only talk to me face-to-face, for security reasons.

It is a dilemma: to continue researching or to stop writing. I would not dare to criticize a colleague who decides to stop writing, each of us must measure the risks and how far we should go. The ideal would be to be able to work on any subject with safety to our physical integrity.

However, colleagues themselves have been building their own safety nets, such as going as a group to cover certain topics, collaborative work, maintaining continuous communication codes between groups of colleagues, and activating the alarm in social networks and reports as soon as someone is in danger. Knowing how to manage stress and recommendations for reporting issues that could pose a danger.

### 8) If you had the opportunity, what would you like to ask the people who forced you into exile?

I would ask them: What was the real motive for ordering my assassination? Which members of the government were involved? Because I am convinced that it was not just a matter of organized crime due to being uncomfortable with a publication.

### **Egypt-France**

#### EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST SOULAFA MAGDY:

### I never wished to leave my homeland, I was forced to do so

gypt is one of the top 3 countries in the world who imprison most journalists alongside Turkey and China. How was the state of the press in your country? What does a journalists' life look like in Egypt?

Honestly, during my professional journalism life in Egypt in the past eleven years, I witnessed and observed the situation of the Egyptian press. The condition of the Egyptian journalists deteriorated and went from bad to worse.

In Egypt, this took place in 3 stages. At the specific period from 2008 to 2011, the former regime was forced to open a space for press freedom with the strong role of the Syndicate of Journalists in defending the rights of its members. Many websites opposed to the Mubarak regime started broadcasting and there were no problems at that time. Journalists, apart from the most extreme ones, have created their own unique atmosphere to work in the Egyptian press.

The second stage was immediately after the revolution, it was a golden period for the Egyptian press. Even the official newspapers rebelled against their permanent loyalty to the state. However, that period did not last for too long.

There is the third stage, which has been going on since 2013. The situation has been reversed since the military coup in Egypt. We have seen journalists getting arrested while carrying out their jobs. We have witnessed murders of photographers and journalists, and direct targeting of those who tried to document a different statement from that of the authorities.

Since then, the situation has gone from bad to worse, and being a journalist in Egypt has become an accusation alone.

The Syndicate did not intervene or issue a single statement denouncing the arrest of journalists during that period, except from some individual attempts by some members of the Syndicate's council. Even the Syndicate of Journalists that was once the last resort for Egyptian journalists left without a real role in defending journalists, and completely fell into the authorities to complement the crushing of the press.

### There were a lot of charges against you. Why were you arrested and why were you released?

I don't know exactly why I was arrested or why I was released. Both decisions were made illegally. For example, during the interrogation of my enforced disappearance and before I was presented to the prosecution, an officer in the National Security Agency told me that I am here to pay the price for all of my work. My presence in the "January Revolution", and indeed all of my journalistic activities focused largely on women's rights, the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, forced displacement, and political transformation, which made them even more uncomfortable, were investigated. In addition,

"While defending our profession, we lost our colleagues. Let's not let their sacrifices be in vain. Let's be the voice of weak groups. Our pens will prevail against dictatorships, we must believe in it."

the initiative that I launched in 2017 to convert personal accounts on social media platforms to alternative news platforms in an attempt to bypass the authorities blocking of the websites was included in this file. Being eligible for a scholarship at the United Nations, having a dialogue with the UN Secretary–General during the September 2019 demonstrations in Egypt, and my recent trip to the USA were cited as the most important reasons for my arrest.

As for the prosecution, I was accused of joining a terrorist group, misusing social media, and spreading false news, but during my imprisonment, I did not encounter a single piece of evidence or witness a single proof of these crimes. Neither the prosecution nor the court investigated me in a serious manner; however, the bulk of the official investigation revolved around my political orientation, my participation in the January Revolution, and my intellectual tendencies. The investigation never touched upon the charges brought against me. I demanded more than once for the accusations against me to be investigated, but my requests have been ignored. Even my release was illegal. An officer from the National Security Agency came to the prison at night, took me to the headquarters of the agency, and from there I was released without even being presented to the prosecution, only after that, the prosecution's decision was issued to release me.

### What made you a journalist in exile? What does being an exiled journalist mean to you?

I am a journalist in exile because my country does not respect the freedom of the press as I spent years in police pursuits that ended up with two years in prison. I am a journalist in exile because the Egyptian judicial system is not independent yet, because Egypt has become the third place worldwide in imprisoning journalists.

A journalist in exile is a journalist who starts searching for tools that were left in the country of origin and is fighting a new battle, to understand this new place and the dimensions, so continuing the profession of journalism from exile is difficult and few journalists can continue.

What challenges do you face as an exiled journalist?

One of the most important challenges I face as a journalist in exile is the difference in language, culture, and political structures, which are basic pillars among the journalist's tools, and it will take time to master these qualifications. The difference in the labor market also constitutes a great challenge.

### Now you live in a free and democratic country. Do you finally feel free in France?

I think that there is a lot of space for freedom of the press and freedom of expression in France, and the authorities support that as well. So far, I dealt with journalistic work directly in the French press circles in order to have a comprehensive view of the journalistic situation, but from what I see so far, the situation is promising.

### If you had the chance, what would you say to the people who forced you into exile?

I say that I will strive and demand until the end of my life to end impunity and that those who commit crimes will one day be held accountable before a fair court. This is not out of revenge, but to ensure no journalist nor any other person is exposed to what I have been exposed to again.

I never wished to leave my homeland, yet I was forced to do so. That's why I'm going to try to uncover what the actual criminals have done. As history has taught us, I will wait for the day when dictatorships will end, when we return to our homeland to build the foundation of justice for all, and for the day when a free press will be the vanguard of our victory.

### -All over the world, journalists are struggling to maintain their profession, and many are still in exile. What is your message to your fellow exiles who fight for freedom of the press and expression in their countries?

Preserving the freedom of the press is our war, in which we made many sacrifices throughout our lives. We lost colleagues and others disappeared while defending our profession. Do not let their sacrifices go in vain. Struggle and fight for the press in order to continue as a voice the weaker groups. Against darkness and dictatorship, our pens will eventually prevail, we must believe.

### -You are one of the founders of the Everyday Footage initiative. What is the founding motivation for the daily shots? What does Every day Footage do?

Established in 2017 when the Egyptian regime started blocking news sites, 'Everyday Footage' became a solution to make the voice of a free and independent press heard.

We started converting our accounts on social media to alternative news platforms using the difficulty of blocking social media. This was widely accepted by the Egyptian public who wanted to follow the news. Based on our belief in the necessity of conveying our experiences to others, we established Everyday Footage, which is the first mobile phone journalism school in Egypt. Our aim was to create a network of a new generation of independent journalists in different parts of Egypt. It was also to teach how to use the simplest tools to make news.



Ukraine-Switzerland



YUNUS ERDOĞDU

## Journalism, war, and migration in Ukraine

It was clear as day that Russia would attack Ukraine, but I was one of those who did not want to believe it. This thought of mine was changed by the sound of two rockets at 04.30 at night. I locked my family in the bathroom, which I thought was the safest place in the house with no windows, and continued to report on the latest developments.

am writing this post at a military base allocated in Switzerland as a camp for Ukrainian refugees. I started my journalism career in 1998 in "Zaman Turkmenistan." The second stop of my journalism profession was Ukraine, where I was appointed as the correspondent of "Cihan" News Agency on October 1, 2005.

I worked as the first Turkish reporter with a permanent press card in Kiev. My regular professional life suddenly changed on July 16, 2018. Journalist Yusuf Inan, who had a residence permit, was kidnapped to Turkey in a joint operation by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Ukrainian intelligence. The next day, Ukrainian media published a list of 5 other people whom the MIT wanted to kidnap.

Since I was a Cihan News Agency employee, my name was also included in this list, which was widely covered in the media. After the coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016, I was the target of the regime's witch hunt like thousands of other people. Ukrainian authorities have never denied the published list. Since I was on the target list of MIT, I did not go out for months.

In addition to social media accounts, I was called from Georgia and Russia phone lines and threatened with death. The Ukrainian Press Police examined the threats and the ev-

idence. They stated that there was no 'journalist protection program' in their law, so they cannot provide physical protection.

Fear of kidnapped and war

Because of MIT's kidnapping threat, I worked from home as much as possible. But that tension took a different turn in February when Russia threatened to invade Ukraine.

US and UK sources had announced long ago that Russia would attack Ukraine. They even announced the dates of the attack. One of these dates was February 16.

Before the news of the attack, many western countries such as the USA, Canada, and the UK moved their embassies to the city of Lviv, near Ukraine's border with Poland. During these critical hours, the Russian embassy burned all official documents and evacuated its building.

All sources and incoming intelligence revealed that Russia would attack Ukraine. However, this was not accepted by the public. They believed that such a war could not happen in the middle of Europe in 21st century. So, life went on for a while as normal. It was clear that Russia would attack Ukraine, but I was one of those who did not want to believe it. That's why I never had any plans to leave the country. "Knowing the truth and believing the truth", I realize much better now that these are two different things.

#### AND THE WAR BEGAN

On February 23, when Russian tanks advanced towards the Ukrainian border, daily life continued on the streets of the capital. When I reported on the video of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressing the Russian people on the night of February 24, I believed that this upcoming war could still be stopped.

My thought changed with the sound of two rockets at night. The first explosion sound was heard at around 4.30 am in the capital of Ukraine, Kiev. At 4.47, I sent my friends a "war has begun" message. I closed my wife and children in the bathroom, the safest part of the house without windows, and continued to report on the latest developments.

The effects of the war continued with the sounds of rockets and planes flying over the capital, Kiev, until the morning. At the crack of dawn, my acquaintances decided to leave Kiev. While my colleagues had not left their country, and journalists from all over the world were coming to Ukraine to follow the developments, I did not want to leave Ukraine as a reporter despite all the insistence.

I previously served in Bangladesh to follow the news of Rohingya Muslim refugees. I was one of the first Turkish journalists to go to the region after the Haiti earthquake. I was a journalist in conflict areas, but I did not have my family with me in any of them. Russian President Vladimir Putin had started a war. I experienced the difficulty of being a journalist while ensuring the safety of my family during the Ukraine-Russia war. I continued to follow the news for five more days by placing my family in a safe place as much as possible.

I conveyed instant developments to the page of Ukraine-haber.com (@ukraynahaber), of which I am the founder, as well as to the Telegram channel. However, it became impossible to enter news on the site due to the sounds of bombs outside and the increase of cyberattacks. On the fifth day of the war, bombs fell near our house. Thereupon, on March 1, I left the capital city of Kiev under artillery fire, taking my family and 6 other people, including 3 children, who were stranded in the war with us. I escaped from hell, leaving behind my colleagues who made news at the cost of their lives, my 16 years of experience, and my archive, which is my greatest value.

#### 6 JOURNALISTS KILLED

When I met with the President of the Ukrainian Journalists' Union, Serhiy Şturhetkıy, on March 17, he told me that the situation for journalists in the country got much worse,

6 journalists got killed since the beginning of the war, and there were also kidnapped ones.

Although all journalism professionals and human rights organizations around the world are on alert for journalists working in Ukraine, the situation is not bright at all.

Russian state media has been banned from calling the invasion of Ukraine "war". Instead, reporters were instructed to talk about a "special military operation" to "demilitarize" Ukraine. Russian journalist Marina Ovsyannikova unfurled a "No war" banner on state television against Putin's war in Ukraine.

Although this incident had a worldwide impact, it did not change the bitter truth of my journalist friend Şturhetkıy's message, which included the situation of journalists in the 21-day war:

"Ukrainian Dilerbek Shakirov (on 26 February), Yevhen Sakun (on March 1, when the television tower was hit), Ukrainian war correspondent Viktor Dudar (on March 6), US Rent Renaut (on March 13), Irish Pierre Zakrzewski, and Ukrainian Oleksandra Kuvshinova (on March 14) were killed.

On March 12, a Ukrainian journalist was kidnapped in Kherson. There are also many injured journalists. Stefan Weichert, photographer Emil Filtenborg Mikkelsen, Stuart Ramsay, cameraman Richie Mockler, Swiss journalist Guillaume Briquet, Mairan Kusnir, photojournalist Juan Arrendondo, Benjamin Hall were injured."

#### **JOURNALISTS WAITING TO EVACUATE**

Dozens of journalists were stranded in the city of Mariupol in the southeast of Ukraine, where the conflicts were the most severe. President of the Ukrainian Journalists' Association (NSJU) Serhiy Tomilenko stated that they tried to supply journalists with safety equipment such as helmets and ballistic vests, and our friends were stuck in the line of fire.

NSJU is working 24/7 to evacuate journalists from battlefields. Although 50 journalists have been evacuated from this region so far, others' lives are still in danger. Ukrainian civilians and media professionals in the region need morale and support more than ever. Now I had to immigrate to a different country, but I miss my friends and the society I lived with for 17 years.

My fight for media and freedom of expression in Ukraine will continue in Switzerland from now on. I hope that peace will come as soon as possible to the land of Ukraine that do not deserve this war.



## ARE WE STILL THE EYES OF MUATH?

Palestinian photojournalist Muath
Amarneh was injured when a bullet
fired by the Israeli
army hit just below
his left eye while he
was covering the
news. "I'm not going
to quit journalism,
but I don't feel safe
right now," Amarneh said.



**BY LUCAS SIQUEIRA \*** 

uath Amarneh is a Palestinian photojournalist. After November 15, 2019, he became known as "the journalist who lost his left eye", while covering a Palestinian protest in Surif near Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The bullet that was fired by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) hit just below Muath's left eye. The shot fired at the photojournalist had been looking for its target for four days. Nothing was sudden, but an orchestrated action.

On November 11 of that year, Muath Amarneh, along with three other journalists, recorded the action of the IOF in Al-Arroub refugee

camp, in the North of Hebron. On that occasion, Omar Haitham al-Badawi, a young rural resident, was going out to put out a fire on his roof, caused by IOF bombs. Omar was shot twice in the chest and immediately fell. Between the young man who was shot and the Zionist army, there were only journalists who tried to help him several times, but whenever they moved towards the young man they were met with more shots from the soldiers. IOF members who fired at Omar claimed that the young Palestinian might have been carrying a Molotov cocktail in his hands, but Muath's video shows he was carrying a white towel and was signaling the soldiers in a peace sign. As soon as the images in the video gained repercussion in the international media and provoked a repudiation reaction to the action of the IOF, the repression against the Palestinians increased significantly.

Four days after Omar's murder, Muath was preparing to cover another day of protests in the West Bank. This time, the demonstrations took place in the agricultural region of Surif. Palestinians protested against the decree that made that area a military zone, that is, another Palestinian area under Israeli control. Right at the start of

the demonstration, the IOF ordered journalists to remove vehicles from the local area. Muath was the last to leave and as soon as he found a place to park, one of the soldiers approached him and started a discussion, asking Muath to hand over his car keys. The journalist refused for fear of his car being used as a shield. The discussion was soon interrupted by an IOF sniper who uttered something in Hebrew that, although Muath didn't understand the language, he recognized the irony on the soldiers' faces.

Minutes before being hit, one of the journalists had photographed the Israeli sniper who changed the course of Muath's life.

In this interview, given in the month preceding the two years of violence against Muath, which resulted in the loss of his left eye, the photojournalist relives the moment of the shooting, but above all, he rescues the struggle of the Palestinian people and the challenges and commitment of being a journalist in West Bank.

### On the day of Omar's murder, did you realize that you had become a target of the IOF?

'Yes, before leaving the house my uncle asked me to come back in one piece. Since that week of Omar's murder, all of us journalists have become targets. After I parked the car, I put on all of my protective gear, including my helmet and bulletproof vest, both with the "Press" imprint, identifying that I was a journalist. As soon as I joined the other journalists, I asked everyone to equip themselves, as the army was preparing something against us.'

#### And how was the shooting moment?

'A few moments after talking to colleagues, I felt a strong impact on my head and heat burning in my face. In the first second, I thought I had been hit by a rock, when I realized it was a shot, I ran my hand behind my head looking for the bullet's exit. I had no idea whether I was alive or dead as I had just been shot in the face and was still standing. I lost consciousness for a few minutes, in fact, I don't remember being unconscious, and other fellow journalists rescued me, carried me in their arms, gave me water and washed my face. At that moment, Israeli soldiers approached me, took some pictures of my face and they said that what hit me was a "Palestine stone" and not a shot. I was taken to a hospital in Hebron but had to be transferred to the most modern hospital in Jerusalem due to the complexity of the wound. At Hadassah Medical Center hospital, they removed shrapnel from the bullet that hit me, but they had to remove my left eye with it. A part of the projectile could not be removed because it was lodged too close to the brain, surgery on this area could cause me irreparable issues or even my death.'

### What was it like after your case had wide repercussions in the media?

'While I was hospitalized in Jerusalem, still stunned by everything that was going on, some men came to interview me and said they were Europeans, so I told them in detail, from the assassination of Omar to the moment they transferred me to Jerusalem. After that interview, I didn't receive any more information, nothing. As for the Israeli government, his only statement was that the shot that hit me was accidental and was probably not an IOF shot. The following Sunday, after I lost my left eye, other Palestinian journalists staged a demonstration to express their repudiation of the way in which professionals whose only

According to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, Israel committed approximately 760 violations against "Palestinian and international" journalists in 2019. Two journalists covering the "Great March of Return to Gaza" protests were killed. Amarneh's case is another photograph of violence against the press.

"weapon" is communication. Fellow journalists wore eye patches in allusion to what happened to me, but once again the demonstration was violently repressed, leaving dozens of people intoxicated by inhaling tear gas and wounded by rubber bullets. After that, the movement "We are all the eyes of Muath" was created. This movement only gained attention after artists, students, political leaders, athletes and other international public figures published their photos by covering their left eye with their hand. Sadly, the "We are all Muath's eyes" campaign has faded and joined other statistics of Israel's violence against the Palestinians. Since the Israeli shot took my left eye out, nothing has changed. In 2020 alone, even during the pandemic, more than 600 cases of Israeli violence against Palestinian journalists were recorded.'

### You said it took over a year for you to be able to hold your camera again...

'Yes, it took me over a year to be able to do that. Sometimes, when I need to go to the hospital in Jerusalem, I still film something on my cell phone, but I'm really scared. Nowadays, when I go to a demonstration, I'm afraid someone will bump into me and knock me down because if the bullet in my head moves, it could kill me and leave my children orphans [Muath is the father of 3 children, the youngest one was born after the father was shot].'

#### What about coverage of demonstrations?

'For us Palestinians, the protest is different from what it is for you Brazilians, here we do not set dates to protest, practically every day we protest, especially on Friday, which is a day of greater participation by the Palestinians. Here, to protest is to guarantee the right to our existence, if we let even one day go out on the streets, Israel comes and occupies another neighborhood and expels more and more families from their homes. Today, I face an episode of depression, as I can no longer participate so closely in the coverage of demonstrations, I feel like a burden to Palestine, as I cannot fight as I used to. Our conversation today makes me emotional, as I feel that somehow what happened to me still serves as a tool for Palestinian liberation. ▶

I'm still shooting things from my cell phone, but even doing that I'm scared. When I go to the protests, I'm afraid someone will knock me down. Because there is a possibility that the bullet in my head will move due to the impact, and it could kill me. My children may become orphans.

Muath Amarneh with his children. In the background is the poster of the international campaign for Amarneh.



Today, when wearing the vest and helmet with "PRESS" inscriptions do you feel more protected or do you feel more like a target?

'I still use the equipment, in fact I've always used it, we know it so as not to give the army reasons to say they didn't know who they were shooting at. In the Intifadas ("shaking off"), many journalists were hit and Israel always claimed that they were not identified as the press. Using the equipment protects you, yes, but actually it serves more so that the army has no argument to say they didn't know, however, when they want to hit you, they hit you.'

Muath himself, in his ten years of work as a photojournalist in the West Bank, has already lost count of how many times he was hit by rubber bullets or tear gas, as well as he does not remember how many times his equipment was damaged or seized. Cases of press freedom violations are not a new Israeli tactic. According to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS), nearly 760 Israeli violations were carried out against "Palestinian and international" journalists in 2019. These figures show the deaths of two journalists covering the protests of the Great March to Return to Gaza. Muath is another number that entered the statistics of violence against the press, since then nothing has changed in relation to the Israeli government's position

against the press. In 2020, even in the first year of the pandemic, there were 608 cases.

In November, Muath's case will be two years old and so far no response has been given. The interview with him is to remind the Israeli government and the world that although they have hurt Muath and so many other journalists, we press professionals will continue to do our work as guardians of the human and civil rights of repressed peoples.

To everyone who sympathized with the photojournalist, who joined a media campaign, with great repercussions on social media, we have the obligation and the moral commitment to ask ourselves and answer the question: "Are we still the Eyes of Muath"?

Uceid Amarneh, Muath's cousin, said in interviews that the shot that blinded his cousin was deliberately fired and that Muath had become a target of Israel for his coverage of human rights violations against the Palestinians.

While still in the hospital, Muath responded to journalists who asked him if he would continue working as a photographer. His answer was reproduced by several press vehicles around the world: "I won't stop being a journalist, but now I feel insecure, because they could attack my other eye and that would make it harder to continue the work I'm doing" – referring to the fight for the human and civil rights of the Palestinians.

<sup>\*</sup> Photojournalist, documentarist and journalist.

<sup>\*</sup> Portuguese to English version by Isabella Pandolfelli researcher at HumanizaCom.

<sup>\*</sup> The interview in Arab was translated to Portuguese by Jehad Khamis Mohamed Afaghani.

Turkey



GÖKHAN DURMUŞ PRESIDENT OF THE JOURNALISTS' UNION OF TURKEY

### Weakness increases pressure

urkey has been consistently holding the last place in freedom of press and expression for almost the last 15 years. Being hostile to journalism and the truth, the government never gives up its aggression on the freedom of the press.

After the transition to the Presidential system, the government, which ruled the Presidency of Communication, the Press Release Agency and RTÜK with instructions and eliminated their autonomous structures, turned these institutions into a means of pressure against the media that has opposing views. The media is trying to be silenced with millions of lira fines and release penalties that will last for years. Currently, there are 37 journalists in prisons. While this number is decreasing day by day, unfortunately, there is no decrease in the number of journalists on trial in courthouses.

Like the whole world, Turkey leaves the second year of the coronavirus pandemic behind. The global financial crisis has influenced Turkey even more deeply. Policies of economic dependency have turned into a crisis.

The ministers, whose "gleam in their eyes" is extinguished, can neither control the currency nor inflation. The people struggling with hunger are rapidly moving away from the government under these circumstances. The government increases the pressure to find a solution to the permanent damage.

#### WHAT IS THE REASON FOR SEDEF KABAŞ'S ARREST?

Turkey entered 2022 with the arrest of a journalist. Journalist Sedef Kabaş was arrested on charges of insulting the President and released after 49 days of detention. Allegedly insulting the President over a proverb she used on a television channel, Kabaş got arrested in a midnight raid. Statements from the government before detention also denoted that the law could not make an independent decision. Following the statements of Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu, Minister of Justice Abdülhamit Gül, Vice President of AK Party Ömer Çelik, Deputy Chairman Numan Kurtulmuş, Director of Communications Fahrettin Altun and MHP Chair Devlet Bahçeli accusing Sedef Akbaş, no judge could be expected to make an independent

decision. And so was the case with Sedef Akbaş. She was arrested. Consequently, this arrest shows us that our legal system has turned into a structure that works with instructions. Unfortunately, if the press is not free, the law cannot be free.

#### A JOURNALIST WAS KILLED, A NEWSPAPER WAS ASSAULTED

Such hostile attitudes of the government towards journalists have a reflection in the local life as well. At the beginning of 2022, Güngör Arslan, the Concessionaire and Editor-in-Chief of Kocaeli Ses Newspaper, was massacred due to the news about a tender. 10 people were arrested along with the murderer Ramazan Özkan, who said "I did not like his writings".

At the same time, Mersin Haberci Newspaper was assaulted by dozens of people. The incident that led to the assault was again because of news about a tender. And again, the assaulters said 'we don't like your news.'

Regardless of whether the aimer is nationalist or corrupt, journalists have been targeted while corruption and decay have surfaced.

The responsibilities of journalists are also increasing these days when information and truth are most needed.

Peace Journalism

This gloomy atmosphere is undoubtedly not only experienced in Turkey. After Russia invaded Ukraine, successive deaths and violations of freedom of the press began. 6 journalists were killed in Ukraine. (Written on March 21) A censorship law has been enacted to restrain anti-war writings in Russia. Peace-loving journalists became the target. European countries, which claim to be the centre of democracy, banned the Russian media. Twitter blacklisted journalists working in Russian media in Turkey.

Thousands of innocent civilians lost their lives in this conflict of imperialist interests, while journalists became targets.

The priority for journalists should be peace journalism in such cases. Society must act without forgetting that journalists, who are the voice and the power of the oppressed, play a great part in wartime.

Brazil



**CILENE VICTOR / LILIAN SANCHES \*** 

## Press release of terror

The authoritarian regime, which has used terrorism as a trump card and controlled the media for this, and the atmosphere of fear and insecurity caused a Turkish journalist to leave Brazil.

e must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend. It was July 15 1985, when Margaret Thatcher, then the prime minister of the United Kingdom (1979-1990), spoke these words in her statement at the annual American Bar Association convention held in London.

Thatcher's speech referred to the hijacking in June of that year of a Trans-World Airlines plane en route from Cairo to San Diego, in which more than 150 passengers were taken hostage, an incident that was widely covered by the media worldwide. In this article, we have decided not to mention the name of the "terrorist group" associated with the attack, in order to maintain the coherence of our proposal.

For decades, the rhetoric expressed by the former British prime minister's speech regarding the meaning, role and impacts of terrorism coverage in the media, especially on the understanding that media could empower the terrorists, was considered absolute truth and incontestable, which fed the academia, governments and their institutions, media outlets and the public opinion.

In recent years, however, research and studies of terrorist attacks have shown that silence could promote the escalation of more violent attacks in ways that cannot be ignored. This argument is present in the "Terrorism and the Media: a handbook for journalists", produced by UNESCO, which mentions that media can stifle terrorism, instead of being its oxygen.

Herein lies the backbone of this article, especially when UNESCO's handbook mentions, even modestly, that "some states have used the 'terrorism' argument to silence the media and bring disruptive journalists under control".

More than ever, media should also stifle and not be the oxygen to these states and their plans to silence their enemies be they journalists, intellectuals, politicians or civilians.

Is the media prepared to cover press releases on terrorism delivered by these same authoritarian states against journalists, media outlets and opponents?

Considering some episodes in Brazilian media, we could state that we have a long way ahead. Let us mention two cases. The first one took place in 2019, when a Turkish businessman who has lived in Brazil since 2007 and was naturalized as a Brazilian in 2016, was arrested in São Paulo because he was accused of being a terrorist by Erdogan's administration due to his connection with the Hizmet movement. The Turkish government wanted his extradition, but Brazilian Supreme Court refused it. Even though the media had stifled Erdogan's strategies, the coverage could not assess and manage the risk of similar case recurrences.

The second episode happened recently, in December 2021, when a press release from the Treasury Department of the United States, disseminated by the US embassies worldwide, listed the name of three small businessmen as terrorists affiliated with al Qaeda for having supported the group. Two of them are from Egypt and the other one is from Lebanon and has been living in Brazil for the past 32 years. This press release was spread and published in many media vehicles here and abroad. In some of them, the text was published without an in-depth analysis or critical thinking applied.

In the first case we mentioned, the businessman was released, and the extradition did not occur. This outcome can be considered, in part, as a result of the media coverage given, especially the work of experienced journalists that were engaged in it, and, of course, added to the pressure and strength of the Turk community in Brazil. Nevertheless, it was not enough

to avoid fear in many Turkish immigrants, leading them to leave the country. Regarding the second case, the three men had to move on with their lives deeply impacted by this accusation. Their bank accounts were closed, their email addresses were cancelled, and their names were spread as terrorists and supporters in many parts of the world where the media reproduced that press release.

Besides these two events, more cases have occurred in Brazil and the media coverage has not addressed the authoritarian regimes and their political allies that have been using terrorism to persecute their enemies and, for that, exploring the media as its partners.

Fear and the sense of insecurity led a Turkish journalist to leave Brazil. He left the country in face of the risk of, someday, having his name stated in a terrorism related press release and disseminated to and in every Brazilian media vehicle.

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\*Lilian Sanches is a journalist and currently a Social Psychology PhD candidate. As a researcher, she has worked in the humanitarian and peace journalism field, focusing on terrorism and its media representation phenomena. She has 10+ years of professional experience, covering international affairs, economics, city management and public services. In 2019, she produced five special pieces for Jornal da Cultura as an international envoy to Iraq, Lebanon and Lebanon.

PROF. PHD. ROBERTO CHIACHIRI / MARCELO DAMASCENO \*

# Brazil, a background of violence against journalists that worries unions in the 2022 elections

According to the National Federation of Journalists, investigations into corruption and organized crime in all Brazilian states have reached 858 over the past two years. This is the highest figure so far.

ases of violence against journalists in Brazil have always been reported, such as the murder of Luiz Eduardo Merlino during the military dictatorship (1971) and Mário Eugênio Rafael de Oliveira, aka Gogó das Sete (1984). These are some of the many episodes of violence suffered by journalists during or after the publication of political, police or investigative reports in the media.

One of the most emblematic cases in Brazil was that of journalist Vladimir Herzog, known as Vlado. According to historical documents, the crime happened after he voluntarily presented himself to testify at the Information Operations Detachment - Internal Defense Operations Center (DOI-CO-DI), a political repression body created by internal Army directives during

the Emílio Médici's presidency (1969-1974), with the aim of fighting communism, subversive actions and leftist organizations.

The scenario of violence against journalists has not changed much after the country's redemocratization in the late 1980s. News coverage and investigations into politics, corruption and organized crime carried out in Brazilian states in the last two years, 2020/2021, according to the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ), have the highest rates, 858 records of violence.

Today, cyber attacks, virtual aggression, discrediting the press, impediment of professional practice, racial slurs/racism, among others have become more present on the internet, as detailed in the FENAJ report in 2021.

Among the 430 cases of violence



in 2021, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (PL) was responsible for 147 of them, which totals 34.19%. Of this total, 129 episodes were of discrediting the press, by making use of terms such as "scoundrel", "quadruped", "pickers", "idiot", among others, in addition to sending a professional shut up.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who was responsible for 147 of 430 violence cases in 2021, made heavy accusations to discredit the press. Something that already worries union representatives. "We are watching with great concern. We fear that the escalation of violence when preparations for the coup against President Dilma Rousseff will be repeated. We may have an intensification of popular demonstrations with people wanting to "take it out" on press professionals. We are already talking to company directors to monitor this throughout the year",

points out the Union of Journalists of Goiás (Sindjor).

Relevant concern, since journalists are guided to cover political demonstrations promoted by different political currents. And the streets are favorable environments for possible cases of violence, such as those recorded in Fenaj's 2021 report: verbal aggression, threats, intimidation and violence against workers' organizations/trade unions.

A concern shared by the president of the Union of Journalists of Acre (Sinjac), Luiz Cordeiro, "Sinjac is concerned about this frightening escalation of violence against journalists. We live, today, in a country of extremes, and true journalism, which is guided by social responsibility and impartiality, will have an arduous mission, which will be to take information and be very careful with attacks promoted by extremists motivated by hatred and by ideologies."

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The concern of state unions is even more visible when we look at the 26 states plus the Federal District. The 2021 Fenaj report pointed to occurrences of violence in different states plus the Federal District, something that raises the attention of institutions to combat all forms of violence and support journalists.

Among the regions, for the second consecutive year, the Midwest had the highest incidence of attacks on freedom of the press, 169 cases in 2021. In addition, it recorded six cases of violence against journalists in Goiás. Two cases in Mato Grosso and two more cases in Mato Grosso do Sul were also recorded.

A care also adopted by the Union of Journalists of Mato Grosso, where the institution seeks to be present in different regions of the state to support professionals, have a good relationship with the police forces, dialogue with public bodies, in addition to "structuring the legal department to assist journalists residing in cities in Mato Grosso and the institution", highlighted

trade unionist Itamar Perenha.

It is against this backdrop of violence and political polarization in Brazil that journalists prepare to cover this year's general elections. A lawsuit that in the years 2014 and 2016 recorded 364 episodes of violence against journalists, representing 30.76% of the cases investigated by Fenaj in 2020 and 2021. Something that according to Cordeiro (Sinjac), worries more about national coverage of the elections due to the polarized environment than in the state. "I believe that at the national level, yes. Even because of the scenario that has been shown, where information is attacked, because a pole understands that the fact is not favorable to its convictions."

"Unfortunately, journalists here in the State do not make the attacks that they suffer in the exercise of their functions reach the Union. However, recently, through the press, we received information about the case of the mayor of Bagé, who exposed the identity of the investigative reporter, Giovani Grizzotti. This year, Daniel Carniel, a journalist from Garibaldi/RS, received 10 internal and external stitches in his mouth and had several bruises on his body, when he was attacked by two men who ambushed him, in front of the building where he works, from local TV. He believes there are political reasons behind this attack and, for now, the police have not found any suspects, despite appearing on security cameras", Seabra.

"It is known that he will be a candidate for reelection and will compete with the one who was removed from the election, in 2018, for being the likely winner, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, political prisoner in a legal web carried out by Judge Sérgio Moro - and then, made Bolsonaro's minister. The traps engendered by this group that took over the government are unmasked by the free press and, therefore, this hatred, this violence against journalists. It is regrettable to believe that the scenario should be worse, with violence increasing in the pre-election period this year, which promises to be tumultuous", explained Seabra.

These numbers place Brazil as one of the most dangerous countries for the exercise of professional journalism, as they expose communicators to physical and psychological violence in a year in which information, investigation and journalistic investigation are important to help Brazilian citizens in the evaluation of their representatives in the Executive and Legislative branches.

Violence against women journalists

In Brazil, despite the majority of the press being made up of women, men were victims of violence in 55.89% of cases, however, despite the facts against women representing 26.64% in 2021, Fenaj figures the episodes collected and passed on in the media, especially in political coverage, reveal the difficulties of being a communicator in Brazil that is pointed out by the Rio Grande Do Sul Union, "the increase in violence against journalists and especially women journalists, after the 2016 coup, against the then president is undeniable. Dilma Rousseff," Seabra said.

Last year, 61.3% took place while professionals were covering political issues. One of the victims of these attacks was CNN Brasil presenter Daniela Lima. She was the target of seven assault cases between January and November 2021, all involving stigmatizing speech. In another case, President Jair Bolsonaro (PL) sent reporter Laurene Santos, from TV Vanguarda, an affiliate of TV Globo in São José dos Campos (SP), after being questioned for not wearing a mask at a public event

Training of new political journalists

Despite the violent environment for journalists in Brazil, there are actions to develop political journalism in the

country. In addition to universities that offer journalism courses, government institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations offer free courses to train students and newly graduated journalists interested in covering politics in Brazil.

The "Project Reporter of the Future", maintained by the communication company Oboré, is one of them. Since 1994, it has sought to promote self-development alternatives for journalism students who wish to deepen their knowledge and practice of reporting.

With a focus on covering the political agenda, the Ricardo Boechat Political Journalism Course and Award, maintained by the Municipality of Itapevi (SP), seeks to help train future political journalists in the country. "This course aims to join the efforts of Journalism schools to improve the training of journalists who already cover the political area or are interested in joining this editorship", comments the coordinator of the action Cilene Victor.

Actions that are added to the activities focused on the development of political journalism promoted by the Instituto do Legislativo Paulista, Saberes, Oficina Municipal, among others, which, in the view of the director general of the School of Parliament of Itapevi, Roberto Lamari, strengthens freedom of the press and the journalist's work. "The free press, with access to information and knowledge of the role of public authorities and the political system, reinforces the Brazilian democratic regime and ensures that the citizen is well informed daily about political life. This informational work values citizenship", says the director.

#### Prof. PhD. Roberto CHIACHIRI

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Marcelo Damasceno

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RENATA JULIOTTI / MARILIA CARRERA \*

# Female journalists as the main target of the state violence

Research reveals
that attacks on
women journalists
in Brazil have become systematic.
Attackers harass
female journalists
and share their
personal data.

ocial communication plays a fundamental role in society. Thus, journalism becomes a link between political, economic and social power and citizens, giving individuals a point of reference through which they can relate to others. A diverse newsroom thus refers to sensitivity in dealing with underrepresented issues from a humanitarian perspective and internalising journalism's commitment to society.

Representation of women journalists means advancing inclusion in newsrooms. Unfortunately, however, this representation is threatened by constant reports of violence against women journalists. According to a survey conducted in late 2020 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) with 901 participants from 125 countries, 73% of the 714 women journalists surveyed said

they had experienced online violence in relation to their work. The impact of online violence on mental health was the most frequently cited consequence, at 26% - the study found.

"Online violence against women journalists is designed to belittle, humiliate, and shame; induce fear, silence, and retreat; discredit them professionally, undermining accountability, journalism and trust in facts" - said the report, which also aims to exclude women from public debate.

In Brazil, such violent scenarios have recently tended to occur at protests or press conferences with members of the current federal government, particularly President Jair Bolsonaro. Political polarization has brought to light a misogynist culture that operates behind the flies of Congress. Moreover, this culture of bias extends to the political and skewed social views of most newsrooms.

In November 2020 alone, the Bra-



zilian Association for Investigative Journalism (Abraji) recorded 43 specific alerts that fall under the category of "attacks on freedom of expression". Five of these attacks took place on the internet - and all were directed against women. Of the 72 entries in this category during the year, 20 were against women professionals, 36 against the media and 16 against men. The survey shows how attacks on women journalists in Brazil have become systematic. Attackers have found a way to spread in the digital environment through their networks and practices that combine characteristics of harassment, misogyny, persecution and disclosure of personal data.

In addition to recent initiatives on the safety of

women journalists in the workplace, we need to go beyond reports to effectively address the need for institutional support for gender inclusion, mental health and the quality of the work environment. From a humanitarian and inclusive perspective, we propose to think outside the box when addressing this issue.

Inclusive journalism as a communicative practice provides society with a sound knowledge of its diversity as well as an understanding of the relationship between individuals and society. Nonetheless, the importance of social inclusion in raising awareness about the violence faced by women journalists means a way to reduce biased behavior through an understanding of gender equality and representation.





**WAGNER RIBEIRO** \*

## Photojournalists in the crosshairs: challenges and risks of covering protests in Brazil

o be a photojournalist in Brazil is an activity for passionate storytellers. This premise is especially true for professionals who cover protests and conflicts. The work equipment is extremely overpriced, the risks of the job are great and the pay is absurdly low.

The work has become more complex in the last 5 years for two reasons. 1) The number of people photoshooting has greatly increase. 2) In the course of the political campaign and the election of the current President, Jair Bolsonaro, photojournalists have been suffering aggressions from the police and by citizens who support the new chairman of the country.

## WHO IS ON THE STREET TO PHOTOGRAPH PROTESTS?

When there is tension at protests, photojournalists from small, medium and large newspapers, magazines and portals are in the field. This means that the hired professionals are able to rely largely on the support of news outlets or minors to get the job done with something, including the legal matter.

The largest group is the independent photojournalists. These professionals face the challenge of getting their work done without the seal of a news outlet, without financial or legal support. Still in the heat of the action, they try to sell the photographs for image news outlets and get an average amount of R\$15 (about US\$3) per photo. If they can sell them at all.

#### THE PARADOX OF PRESS IDENTIFICATION

The police and the citizens of the insurgent right, as

well as the president's supporters, know the faces of the photojournalists. In other words, they know in which direction to aim the weapons, fists and verbal aggression. If you identify yourself as a photojournalist, you may be putting yourself in an even more dangerous situation. Therefore, if working unnoticed is the only option, many professionals do not even bother to wear safety equipment.

This is a paradox of the profession in Brazil and perhaps worldwide. On the one hand, protective equipment is essential to preserve the physical integrity of professionals. Nevertheless, the word "press" on helmets and safety waist-coats can be a target on the head or on the back of photo-journalists. Against this background, photojournalists have developed new means for their work.

Instead of using helmets and waistcoats with "press" printed on them, photojournalists have opted for detachable Velcro straps that can be easily removed when needed. Curiously, this idea was cribbed from a strategy used by the Brazilian police.

Although it is illegal, some police officers remove their badges from their uniforms during protests to prevent attackers from being easily identified. This actually discourages photojournalists from reporting the abuse of force and even physical violence against photojournalists, leading to even more underreporting of the cases.

#### UNDER-REPORTING OF CASES OF VIOLENCE

I searched the journalists' union, Arfoc (Brazilian Association of Photograph and Film Reporters) and Abraji (Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism) for data on violence against photojournalists. Thus, only

Photojournalist Wagner Ribeiro covering anti-fascism protests in São Paulo, 7September 2017 (Brazil's Independence Day) PHOTO: RODRIGO PIVAS

Abraji has provided some information.

According to Abraji, there were 22 cases of aggression against photojournalists and cameramen in Brazil in 2021. There is a reason why the data on attacks against photojournalists and cameramen is only available for this year. According to Katia Brembatti, the director of the institution, photojournalists were counted together with other media workers in previous years.

When analysing the cases reported by Abraji, based on the work of the author of this article on the ground, one can find a number of acts of violence against photojournalists that are not included in the institution's short list. Apart from the fact that the journalists' union and Arfoc fail to provide accurate data, the fact that violence against photojournalists and cameramen in Brazil is underreported is very worrying.

#### PHOTOJOURNALIST IS THE NARRATOR OF THE FACT

In Brazil, photojournalists and cameramen in print and digital media are the professionals most likely to be directly affected by violence when reporting on protests and conflicts, as they are on the frontline. The photojournalists transmit the information from the field to the text reporters who write the stories in the newsrooms.

The photojournalist is thus the narrator of the written facts. Hence, journalism companies, public organisations and companies in the sector need to look for mechanisms to ensure the safety of photojournalists and camera operators. This is one of the urgent problems we have to face in Brazil and worldwide. Photojournalists' passion is not enough to tell good stories. They also need protection and decent working conditions.

\* Wagner Ribeiro is a Brazilian professor and photojournalist. He has been working for a several newspapers, magazines and TV covering protests, conflicts and humanitarian crises in Latin America, Europe and Middle East.



M. BEHZAD FATMI WRITER AND POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

## Press Freedom in India

As a democratic republic in its 75-year history, India has not yet fully attained the freedoms in its constitution.

Ithough India never enjoyed the robustness of Western democracy, it has always been viewed as a troubled yet functioning democracy since its independence from Britain in 1947. It won praise for being able to conduct largely free and fair elections, adopting secularism as a constitutional value, establishing an effectively functioning national parliament, and other fine state institutions among other things. Like in any other democratic setup, the media played a critical role in India's collective endeavours to meet the high standards set by its founding fathers, visionaries like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. There were times when democracy in the country faltered, more evidently between 1975 and 1977 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a nationwide Emergency, and the media, in the words of a seasoned Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politician Lal Krishna Advani, "were only asked to bend but they crawled". Yet arguably the state of media today is much worse than it was during Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

In the intervening years, the media suffered from restrictions imposed by all parties that came to rule India. However, the situation now is quite alarming.

Many in the country describe Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP

government rule as a period of "undeclared Emergency". In power since 2014, Modi's iron grip on media houses is progressively tightening as is the case with all other institutions meant to keep a check on his authority. India's ranking on the Press Freedom Index plummeted to 142 in 2020 following his victory for a second consecutive term in the 2019 general elections.

Apparently, as the Prime Minister of India, Modi is successfully doing what he could not do as the Chief Minister of the western state of Gujarat during the gruesome three-day anti-Muslim pogrom in 2002 where more than a thousand Muslims were raped and murdered under his watch. In a bone-chilling interview with a reputed international media house, when asked what his biggest regret was, Modi said it was his lack of management of the media.

Most Indian television news channels have become a scene for popular on-screen personalities turning into party propagandists as they increasingly collaborate with ruling party politicians and pro-government corporate houses. These channels play a key role in spreading government propaganda through their debate shows as well as social media accounts. Those resisting this trend have been left with no other option but to resign. Remarkably though, a lot of these principled



PHOTO: ANDYL EUNGHK, PIXABAY.COM

journalists have taken their work to YouTube and are running some of the most-watched news programs on the platform. Despite all the odds, they are preventing independent journalism from dying out in India.

One of the reasons that make Indian media vulnerable to government and corporate interference is that for decades newspapers and television stations have relied on advertisements from them for revenue generation. As a result, pro-Modi billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited has progressively come to own a large chunk of mainstream TV news channels, a consequence of which is the fact that Reliance-owned media houses are some of the biggest Modi apologists and peddlers of fake news favouring the ruling of BJP.

On the face of it, the Indian media is one of the most diverse ones in the world with publications in more than 123 languages and dialects, however, this diversity is also being rendered useless as they are all but gradually being taken over by a few crony corporate houses.

India has also become one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists in terms of violence against them by both state and non-state actors. According to Reporters Without Borders, four journalists were killed in 2020 because of their journalism. Furthermore, physical attacks against reporters on the ground by police and political mobs are an everyday reality, and online intimidation and harassment are consistent, so much so that some of the prominent government critics like Ravish Kumar from NDTV cannot even step out on the streets without high-level security.

In its 75-year history as a democratic republic, India has never fully realised the freedoms enshrined in its glorious constitution. However, because the ruling BJP and its ideological master Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) do not approve of this constitution, they are particularly ruthless in attacking constitutional freedoms, including freedom of the press.



Journalist Marcela Turati:

# IN MEXICO, PEOPLE ARE USED TO THE MURDER OF JOURNALISTS

There are too many journalists who experience burnout due to economic problems, working conditions or problems faced by journalists. Yes, I'm scared, but I'll keep going.



YÜKSEL DURGUT

ccording to statistics, Mexico is the place where the largest number of journalists have been killed for a country that is not at war. It ranks first as one of the most dangerous countries in the world. According to the human rights organization Artículo 19, a total of 145 members of the media have been killed in the line of duty since 2000 to the present day. This number did not include the 5 journalists killed in the first 3 months of 2022.

In Mexico, a journalist has two options for survival. Either you will obey or you will risk death. "The risks for Mexican journalists start before you even get out of your car," said Marcela Turati, an investigative journalist, in an article.

Many journalists who have devoted themselves to their profession are not only killed, lost or threatened. They are also subjected to all kinds of pressure to shut up. The perpetrators of murders and kidnappings always go unpunished.

Marcela Turati, is an investigative, award-winning journalist who investigates the victims of the drug war in Mexico and their backgrounds. Despite the threats she received, Turati told the Journalist Post about the recent situation in her country and what our colleagues are going through.

## A journalist wants to be free when writing an article. Do you feel free to write your articles or express your ideas?

Do I feel free to write my articles? The answer is no. There is a different kind of censorship and repression against journalists in Mexico. It is difficult to know which topics are prohibited. It is absolutely unclear what topics you can and cannot publish. It is also unclear from which areas you are allowed to collect information. If you collect information, you become a target for threats. Some threats are delivered directly and indirectly. We are unable to publish articles related to topics considered dangerous.

Journalists are often subjected to threats. It is possible to receive threats because you have access to information sources. The problem here is that even when there is no war, we face a lot of difficulties in the country that is the biggest threat to journalists in the world.

In this place where there are no sanctions, it's quite easy to arrange a hitman to silence journalists. After all, no one is going after the perpetrators. Maybe the hitman can be caught, but those behind these threats are guaranteed that nothing will happen to them.

And we are constantly under threat. Some people think that journalists are always paranoid. We always get the idea that someone is constantly following us.

"Journalists are subject to frequent threats. You can receive threats just because you have access to information sources. The problem here is that even there is no war, we face lots of challenges in Mexico, which is the biggest threat to journalists in the world."

A lot of us were on the Pegasus list this year. This is a big scandal in Mexico. There were 50 thousand Mexican activists on the list of potential targets of Pegasus. There are 35 journalists on the list of 70, which includes the most dangerous. My name is also on this list. Me and three of my colleagues have exposed these lists that threaten journalists.

#### What are you researching as a journalist in Mexico?

I'm looking for mass graves in the file I have right now. I'm looking for missing people, abductions. I'm trying to get to the bottom of issues such as murders and human rights. There are also assassinations of journalists. I always agree with the coordination of such projects related to human rights. I've seen judicial prosecutions of unidentified bodies, mass graves and all that. I've been followed all along.

In some cases, all the research we have done and the efforts we have given go straight to the trash. This happens quite often. Every year, all the information I collect is lost and I am experiencing a decline. This year I was pursued by the prosecutor general's office, because they included me in an organized crime and kidnapping charges, and the reason was investigating a mass grave. I mean, I'm on trial right now. I've been sued for 1.5 years.

## How did you react when you heard that your name was on the Pegasus list?

One day they called me and said that they would publish the list tomorrow and that I was one of the targets. I was shocked at first. But then I got used to the fact that I was on the list.

In Mexico, you are always in danger and under surveillance. Nothing always gets better. I was angry and scared. I have thought a lot about how I can publish my interviews again if I cannot guarantee confidentiality to my sources of information, which is a vital necessity in Mexico.

It's very easy to become a target of the government. The government does not set rules against terrorists or drug cartels. They're using their powers against people who investigate. My investigations are not only about who the perpetrator is, but also about the illegal work done by the government. In addition, why do they not find out the identities of the perpetrators and why do they allow mass graves to exist. I am also looking for answers to these questions.

Javier Malde and Sienna Laura were also killed because of the news they wrote about a criminal organization.

## Our colleague De la Cruz wrote an article about the budget of natural resources and suddenly disappeared...

▶ In 2017, an armed person left a note saying that your colleague Miroslova Breach was murdered because it was thought that she was a "big mouth". Even before you get out of your car, you are exposed to risks. What are these risks?

Everything is a mess in Mexico. The number of journalists killed this year is unknown because the authorities are hiding it. But we have a lot of cases for both protected journalists and those who were killed. And the disappearances are quite high as well.

We know that the cartels and the government are working together in many places. They think that the crime should take place quietly and that the public should never find out. There are many lawsuits against journalists that we don't know what they are accused of. One of them is our friend De La Cruz, who was kidnapped. He was doing research on ecology. He published an article about the budget of natural resources, and then suddenly disappeared.

Javier Malde and Sienna Laura were also seen as threats. They were killed because of the news they had uncovered about a criminal organization. The government is not conducting any investigation. Journalists are targeted just because they pose a threat.

You can see the violence all over Mexico. Journalists like me who follow narcotics topics are engaged in politics and drug cartels, and they are under threat. But you get used to being threatened. Javier Maldez tried to escape but failed and returned to his country. Whether living in exile provides protection is also a mystery.

In an article you mention that you decided to go down a path which is a matter of life and death. Are you really afraid, and how do you protect other journalists?

We're trying to create programs to keep us safe. We have to communicate for our investigations. It depends on what information we send and what method we use. At a time of danger, when you are being followed, you need to be in touch with a colleague to let him know that you are all right.

If you do not inform them you are well, your colleague who is following you starts asking questions by informing the authorities. We are together with my journalist friends for psychological support. I used the facilities I had for security and therapies. Because I can't stand it anymore. I was afraid of everything, thanks to the therapies we had to stop the investigations we were doing, because I had a lot of fears. We have never paid so much attention to collective therapy.

## Politicians or the military are asking journalists to stop their research. Do you think journalists should stop investigating in these situations?

It varies depending on the situation. Every topic is different. I think you should take this warning seriously because we know that 80% of the journalists killed in Mexico received warnings beforehand. First of all, they are trying to convince me not to inform the public. The biggest problem is that no one is accountable for this. They know that they will not be subjected to any sanctions for killing a journalist, because in Mexico this is very normal. No one will pay the price. For us, this is very normal, and people are used to the murder of journalists.

## You conduct demonstrations and campaigns to find journalists and to get them released. Does the government respond to this call?

No, nothing's happening. We protested in November. When I found the forensic files and espionage documents filed about me, the government didn't say anything. So what we say doesn't matter to them. There are no political sanctions against them. No one asked them, "Hey, why are you doing this, aren't you ashamed of what you're doing?" We, journalists, have to look for other ways to make this political price paid. We are taking to the streets for the government to investigate the perpetrators.

## What kind of censorship is imposed on journalists in Mexico?

We can never publish under our own name. We write other names under the articles. The most common method is to broadcast our news on other media channels.

When writing articles, we have to wait when we think the topic is dangerous. Sometimes we are worried about the appearance of our news source, so we try to find a way to



protect the source by leaving the news.

You have to wait to deal with such risks in this country. For example, I am doing my research because I am working on massacres. But I'm also worried. There are 4-5 investigations about me and sometimes I get threats that I don't know what the reason is. That's why I have to stop and rethink every step of the way.

## In your article you say, "It's up to us journalists to follow and protect each other, we can't trust anyone other than each other". Is this true?

Sometimes non-governmental organizations defending freedom of expression help us.

They have a lot of cases they are pursuing. They said they couldn't return our calls because they had other files. Everyone may be tired of struggling with this problem. Therefore, digital security is better for us.

Most of the murders, kidnappings or other types of crimes are aimed at journalists, and we now think that this is normal. We have to know how to stand on our own two feet. People are tired of this issue now.

145 journalists were killed. This is our only agenda lately. In fact, the most impor-

tant thing for me is that journalists are in a good emotional state. I dream of opening the doors of my house to help journalists who experience burnout. There are too many journalists who are experiencing burnout due to economic problems, working conditions, or all these problems that journalists are experiencing. Now I want to minimize the risks. I'm working on this a lot more now. I am writing more in the field of emotional and psychological self-sufficiency.

The situation is much more desperate in some parts of Mexico. We need to find solutions to journalists' emotional problems by finding other ways to secure them.

## You were talking about threats. Is it so difficult to find sources and publish news? How do you do that?

Yes, it's quite difficult. For example, a month ago I left the country, but I made statements not to take the threats seriously. The lack of clarity sometimes comes across as a strategy. The reason they threatened me was vague. Obviously because they didn't care, they were just sending messages. When you are exposed to a threat, you need to talk to people to understand what is happening.

"We can never publish under our own name. We put different names under the articles. Sometimes we try to protect the source by leaving the news because we are worried about our news source being exposed."

## Yes, I am scared, but I'll keep going.

"Criminal organizations have a hand evervwhere to stop us. I don't think the police were the only ones involved in the murder of a journalist. In our research. we discovered the army, the big cartels and the big people behind it."

Sometimes I think I'm crazy. Most of the time, you can't find a news source, so you don't know which topics are dangerous. I mean, there's a lot of information out there. To be able to see the risks, you need to know more about the people who are investigating. Because sometimes we don't know they have a connection until they threaten us and put us in danger. At first, we had very little information. In order to get more news details, you should use a good methodology.

Criminal organizations have a hand everywhere to stop us. I don't think it's just the cops who were involved in the murder of a journalist. In our research, we discovered the army, the big cartels and the bigwigs behind this. That's when you start to realize which resources are dangerous, and as you dig deeper, you meet people you'll never guess.

Almost all the articles and research we have written are about corruption. You need to set the rules from the very beginning, and then, perhaps, when writing the most dangerous article, you decide to set the same rules for all your research.

## You said you were out of Mexico. Haven't you thought about staying abroad? Then you could have helped journalists in exile better.

Now people are asking me if I want to leave the country. But I'm not sure. I'm taking stricter measures. There is no signal at the moment that will force me to live abroad. Firstly, I was abroad in 2014, then in 2017 I asked for help for 5 months to be abroad, stay calm and reconsider my life. However, I did not leave completely.

Even if you are working on a research, it may be necessary to focus on something else and come back months later. Strategies can be found to avoid doing

this alone. You can invite international organizations to be with you and increase participation. Yes, our research is important, but I also need to take care of myself.

Your name, your life are not in the hands of the people you are investigating. The main thing is information. Never would have I thought that I am in a position to live in another country. I can focus on what other types of research I want to do. I'm capable of doing that. I can continue my research bulletproof. I'm going to find a way to let me do this in this country. Yes, I'm scared, but I'll keep going.

## Are you afraid of being in exile or being killed?

Am I afraid of being killed? Sometimes I'm really scared. First I have to investigate and see if the threats are groundless. Then I know that I have no choice but to ask for help to go abroad. I'm trying these things out. There is time to stop and think, and then decide to move on.

My last question is that journalists in many parts of the world are experiencing the same problems as in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. Do you have a message for journalists in prisons? Because you know that you have three possibilities just like them: to be in prison, to be exiled or to be killed.. What would you like to tell these colleagues?

First, I admire their commitment to the truth. Commitment to the truth and the only valuable touchstone for this profession. Helping people, informing people about what is happening and shouting out the facts that others do not want to tell keeps us in this business.

"As Mexican journalists, we have groups that we have established to support each other. I hope one day we can form a global and large network to strengthen journalists..."



As Mexican journalists, we have groups that we coordinate and keep each other safe. When you think you are alone, we listen and are there for you. We meet with journalists to add information about what is happening to other journalists around the world to our network. We learn a lot from others. I hope that one day, by empowering each other, we can build a great network with journalists around the world, and for everything we stand for, we will be seen as heroes.

When a journalist is killed in Mexico, we are too late to react. Despite the silence we have been in, we admire our expectation of justice and the people who are trying to inform the public and defend them. In Mexico, we are doing this on our own scale. We are defending our own way and trying to escape from dangers. We are like brothers and sisters with people from unfamiliar parts of the world, and therefore my message is only that you continue to be strong because we are with you... You are not alone.

### MARCELA TURATI

Born in Mexico City in 1974, Marcela Turati devoted herself to investigating victims of violence during human rights violations and the drug struggle in Mexico. She founded the network 'Periodistas de a Pie', which supports the strengthening of regional independent media and the cooperation, protection and training of journalists throughout the country. Since 2014, she has worked on numerous investigations, including the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa and the role played by the military in these disappearances.

Turati is the author of Cross Fire: Victims Trapped in the War on Drugs, winner of several international awards such as Gabriel García Márquez Journalism Award, Louis Lyons Conscience and Honesty Award in Journalism, WOLA Human Rights Award and LASA Media Award. In 2018, she won the Gabo journalism award in the field of the best research news in Latin and South America for her research on hidden graves.

**Australia** 



**ZIA AHMAD \*** 

# An essential human right: Freedom of Media

reedom of information is one of the key elements of a free society and essential for peaceful and harmonious living. It is also a human right to gain and disseminate facts with truthfulness and accuracy without fear or favour.

Mass media that employs diverse means of media technologies to reach large audiences via mass communication has played a vital role in our modern society. Together with political, judicial and law enforcement agencies, media is one of the essential institutions of good governance in nation states.

Books, journals, magazines and newspapers have traditionally fulfilled the role of dissemination of information and now increasingly broadcast media transmitting information electronically via films, radio, TV, internet, email, social media platforms have revolutionised this exchange of information.

One of the strengths of Western democracies has been freedom of media to provide information to the general population, providing check and balance on government institutions. However, the consolidation of large media empires in the hands of a few media barons with their own agendas and vested interests had its limitations for freedom of media.

On the other hand, control on mass media by

authoritarian regimes in a number of countries has limited flow of information to the general masses resulting in poor governance, corruption and oppression.

Journalists play a vital role to fulfil the human right of providing information with truthfulness, accuracy and responsibility. In a good society, Journalists must be provided with the opportunity to report facts and express their ideas and opinions on current affairs without fear or favour.

They also have the responsibility to reflect on diverse ideas and opinions of the population without any bias share their criticism and grievances working towards good governance.

Journalists must seek out truth and boldly raise awareness of injustice, corruption, persecution and abuse of power and wealth and promote corrective action in order to build an equitable, fair and just society.

Unfortunately in third world countries in general and many Muslim countries in particular, there have been limitation to media freedoms where the journalists had limited opportunities to freely disseminate information.

A number of independent media institutions are not tolerated and journalist who wish to ex-

ercise their freedom to freely express facts and any criticism of authorities have been jailed, exiled and even killed.

A glaring case is that of Jamal Khashoggi, an inside Saudi journalist turned critic who commented on the policies pursued by the Saudi regime, who was killed inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018. His body has yet to be found.

The UN human rights investigator Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard leading the international inquiry into the murder of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi obtained conclusive evidence implicating the Saudi government for the crime, calling it "a brutal and premeditated killing, planned and perpetrated by officials of the state of Saudi Arabia", in a statement released on Thursday 7 February 2019.

In a number of Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Bahrain, UAE, and Bangladesh, independent media institution have been either been closed or are not tolerated and journalists have been harassed, jailed or forced into exile.

Many of these exiled journalists have found refuge in Western countries where they have been trying to rebuild their lives by learning the local language, obtaining additional qualifications, improving their skills and trying to find jobs in their field, an uphill struggle indeed.

Multicultural and multilingual media institutions have developed in North America, UK, Europe and Australia providing the opportunities for a number of migrant journalists to serve their specific community as well as people in their home countries.

While mainstream media largely highlights negative news of wars, conflicts, crimes and assaults, community based media providing the good news, positive aspects of community life sharing news of community organisations and the good works that people are doing.

On the Australian media landscape, in addition to mainstream newspapers and other media outlets, there are a large number of ethnic and multilingual community newspapers representing the Australian multicultural community.

The Australasian Muslim Times, AMUST started its publication back in 1991 as a multilingual community newspaper Australasian Muslim Times, published on a weekly basis.

AMUST was rebranded in July 2014 becoming the voice of Australia's diverse Muslim community. With a weekly email newsletter and a national print newspaper edition each month together with a dynamic website and social media presence, AMUST covers local, national and global news, opinions, community events, lifestyle and sport activities.

Having lived in Australia for more than half a century, I am proud to claim that this lucky country provides the best opportunity in terms of media freedoms where one can share their thoughts, express their ideas verbally and in writing without any fear or favour, unlike in many other parts of the world.

### **ZIA AHMAD**

Zia Ahmad is the Editor-in-Chief of the Australasian Muslim Times AMUST and a Trustee of Islamic Foundation for Education and Welfare (IFEW) as well as Australian MEFF Consortium (organisers of Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair, MEFF).

He won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Premier's Multicultural Communications Award 2021 (PMCA 2021). He has also personally won a number of awards including the Premier's Multicultural Communications Award 2019 (PMCA 2019) in the category of Best Print Report of the year, Interfaith Dialogue Award 2018, Excellence Award 2018, Multicultural Communities Council of NSW, Premier's Multicultural Media Awards 2016, in the category of Best Editorial/Commentary of the Year; AMU Alumni of Australia Award 2016 and University of Sydney LS Medal in 1998.

## Yawsef Beth Turo: In order not to left Syriac to dissappear

## MEDIA HAS A LOT TO DO

"The decrease in the use of Syriac language in daily life due to globalization worries Syriacs in this regard.

For this, more work falls on the media."



HASAN CÜCÜK

awsef Beth Turo, one of the first names that come to mind in the Assyrian media, was born in 1975 as a child of a father from Siirt and a mother from Midyat, Turkey. He spent his childhood and youthhood in Mardin, Turkey. After completing his primary and secondary education, he studied at the Deyrulzafaran (Mor Hananyo) Monastery in Mardin. He faced discrimination during his secondary school years. He faced educational setbacks due to the pressure and insults he was exposed to. He left school due to the pressures and started to study in the monastery.

In 1993, there were radical changes in Beht Turo's life. Thousands of Assyrians chose to migrate to Europe because of the oppression they faced due to their ethnicity and beliefs. Yawsef Beth Turo shared a similar fate with the Assyrians and the Netherlands became his new direction.

He started his media career in 1996. In those years, he started to host Assyrian programs on Med TV, Medya TV, and Kurdish TV, which would later be called Roj TV. Beht Turo has been working for a quarter-century now. Yawsef Beth Turo, who made a great effort in the formation of the Assyrian media, is one of the founders of the Bahro Production Foundation in the Netherlands in 1999. He is one of the founders of Suroyo TV, the first Assyrian channel to be launched in 2004. In addition to financial support for the launch of the channel, he plays a major role in the training of TV employees. In a way he was their teacher.

On the other hand, he has the opportunity to get to know the

Assyrians, who live in different countries and make a program with them. He prepared and presented dozens of seminars, meetings and television programs related to the 1915 Armenian genocide.

He prepared and presented documentaries such as "1915 Sayfo", "The Cry Unheard", "Suryoye in Nederland", "Sayfo 1915 u Mrodo". In addition to being a member of the television board of directors, he has various duties such as news centre directorate and political programs editor. Beth Turo is presently hosting programmes about current issues on Suroyo TV broadcasting voluntarily from Södertalje, Sweden.

In which countries are the Assyrians heavily populated in Europe? How are their relationship with each other? Is there an institution that assembles them under the same roof?

Today, there is an Assyrian diaspora with a population of nearly half a million in European countries. The Assyrians, also known as Assyrians-Aramaic-Chaldean, are affiliated with different churches, including Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. But I must say that they are predominantly affiliated with the Orthodox Church, which is under the jurisdiction of the Damascus-based Patriarchate. Assyrians live mostly in Germany and Sweden, and in different countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Austria and Switzerland. They are trying to integrate into society by establishing approxi-



mately 160 churches, 120 associations and federations in the countries they reside. The Assyrians see themselves as part of the country in which they live because they are Christians.

The relations of the Assyrians with each other continue mostly under the roof of the Church and through federations. They try to come together and maintain their traditions thanks to the activities and festivals they carry out on a socio-cultural, religious and national basis.

It is possible to talk about the existence of several umbrella organizations across Europe. These mostly consist of federations, confederations and troops. I can tell you that their relationship with each other is quite good. We see that such institutions are interlocked, especially in matters related to their homeland.

## What comes to mind when you think of the Assyrian media? Why did you need a media tool?

It is possible to talk about the existence of television, radio, social media and different online platforms. However, I would like to state that television is the most sustainable and common medium among these. More than 10 television channels are broadcasting primarily from Europe and America. These are the channels that deal with socio-cultural, religious and social issues.

The fact that the Assyrian people live in a highly dispersed geography and that the media plays an active role to keep them together has been motivating. Media organs have articulated the feelings of the Assyrian people. Media tools have provided the most important role in bringing Assyrians scattered across America, Australia, Europe and other continents together.

## What news and broadcasts are predominantly included in the Assyrian media?

Television and other social media platforms mainly cover music, folklore, religious and ritual issues. Additionally, some programs address social issues. There are also political programmes. Of course, people mainly watch the news.

#### What do Assyrians living in the diaspora long for?

The first thing that comes to mind, of course, is longing for the homeland. Also old memories, history and nostalgia keep the Assyrians' interest and longing for their homeland alive. The decrease in the use of the Assyrian language in daily life with globalization worries the Assyrians. The media has a lot to do in this regard.

#### Do you broadcast in your native language or Turkish?

Most of the broadcasts are made in Assyrian. There are also broadcasts in Arabic and Turkish. Of course, some broadcasts in Europe also had to be made in German, Swedish and English. I should indicate that such programs are made to appeal young people and reach a wider audience.

## Assyrians are a minority group in Turkey. You are a minority among minorities in Europe. How does this resonate with your broadcasts?

The biggest challenge we face is that the Assyrians live so widely dispersed. Although we live around certain cities and towns, being located outside the homeland and in distant geographies such as Europe, America and Australia make our job difficult. For example, we are having trouble finding guests for our programmes. Nevertheless, we try to use the possibilities that technology offers us to overcome distances. In other words, we strive harder to be united and achieve a difficult objective and we struggle to keep our culture, tradition and language alive.

Figures like İbrahim Baylan, who was raised in a village without electricity and became Minister for Energy of Sweden, Reem Alabali-Radovan, who came from a despised society and became German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Minister, or Assyriska FF and Syrianska FC football teams, which came from Turabdin villages that have no football pitch but now play in Swedish Premier League give us hope that the impossible can be possible.

Greece



Journalist Marianna Kakaounaki:

## OUR ROLE IS TO MAKE PEOPLE'S STORY KNOWN



**SUHEILA ISMAIL** \*

he night I found out my friend is terrorist. We were in college and every night, me and my Turkish roommate were drinking tea and telling stories to unwind. One night, she told me stories about how she came to Romania from Turkey. At the end, I was waiting for her to tell me that it was just a made up story or a nightmare she had.

In the summer of 2016, she was 18 years old, dreaming about studying abroad. In the airport police harassed her. The police were after her family. The crime? Her father was a teacher at a school affiliated with Gulen Movement. That day was the last time she saw her family. In the eyes of the Turk-

ish leaders they all were terrorists.

I was about to finish my college degree in journalism. Hearing this story i feel powerless. What can I do as a future journalist? Can I make people believe that these are more than stories they read on their way to work? Alot of overwhelming come to my mind in that night.

All this becomes easier for young journalists like me when we find role models, who already fight the fight, from you can see how it's done, not just the professional part, but the human parts.

Marianna Kakaounaki is one of those. A journalist from Greece, in the process of discovering the stories of turkish people as one of my roommate, felt like writing the stories is not enough and people will forget them soon. That's why she filmed the documentary "Invisible". One thing I learned is that, in the authoritarian era, when leaders want to exclude some people from society, putting them in the spotlight, it's not just doing your job, but it feels like an act of rebellion. It's needs a lot of courage to put your soul next to the one who is suffering in order to give them a voice.

Here the answers of some of my curiosities, from where i still have a lot to learn.

## What can a journalist do to make people more visible? Is empathy or professionalism more important in this situation?

I believe that our role is to make people visible, make their stories known. That's all we can do. To really do that though we need to go deep, and gain a real understanding of the person, their story, the greater landscape of the world they come from. To me, empathy and professionalism are equally important. I feel one needs both in order to be truly good at this job.

## What is the event that most impressed you in the ongoing wave of immigration to Europe?

There are so many different things that stay with me from all these years of reporting on immigration. When it comes to the Turkish persecuted community, i think the fact that these people are not fleeing war, but are persecuted from a country that is supposed to be a democracy is what really strikes me. The Turkish president is violating human right laws but he still gets to sit at the table with other world leaders like nothing is going on.

## During your journalism career, have you ever thought that you will document the story of people who had to immigrate to your country? Did you notice these people before you started to report about them?

The big wave of immigration started more or less when i was also starting of as a young journalist. We didnt know who these people were or their stories, but as soon as i started working on this, i knew very early on that this was a very important story.

## You are reporting from one of the countries where the most critical human stories are experienced in the world. What made you, in the first place, to document these stories? What caught your eye?

There are many different things that attracted me to these stories. The feeling that this can happen to any one of us. Also, the fact that after a while there were negative sentiments towards immigrants – this was shocking to me, especially since i come from a country where our great grandparents also imigrated to other countries in the past. I thought it's important to tell the world the real story and for us, Greeks, to be in the right side of history.

## During the shooting of the documentary 'Invisible', you spent five months with the heroes of the story. What was the point when you realized that "it must be a much bigger work than an article that will be soon forgotten"?

I first met people from the persecuted community a few months after the attempted coup in the summer of 2016. And i quickly realized that the people i met and their persecution were not some individual cases but that there was an ongoing and massive persecution going on. I felt the urgency to tell this story mainly because no one was talking about it. The people themselves were too afraid to speak up. It took a long time for them to agree – not to a film but to a series of articles for the newspaper. And thats when i felt that this was not enough, that i wanted to go deeper. I felt the only way to acheive that was through a film, where i could follow the story as it developed.

#### During the filming of 'Invisible', as a journalist, did you ever

#### felt how it is to be exiled from your country?

Definitely! Many times i thought to myself "This could be me". These people lost everything, more or less overnight. So when i was filming, this was my main goal: That the audience will feel this too. I wanted them to leave the screening, and feel like they have walked alongside these families & have a better understanding of their lives. Because their goals are completely relatable, all they wanted was to be free and then find a job, pay the bills, and make a better life for their children.

## Do you think that your reporting on these cases have been a solution to the problems experienced? Would you like to do more than reporting to come to a solution?

I never believed that it's our role to bring solutions. But I do hope that the people who take the decisions will see the film, and read the articles and make more imformed decisions. That ultimately may bring solutions. This is the goal: to have impact through our reporting.

## What is the fine line between your journalist side and your human side? Or do you have a red line about it?

I have definitely crossed that red line a few times. But this is inevitable when you are so embeded in a story and ultimately in someone's life. But as long as we keep our journalistic principles in check, i don't consider this to be a problem. On the contrary, i think it can bring emotions and "heart" to the journalistic work.

## If you were an exiled journalist, what would be the first things you would do?

I think, at the beginning i would be in survival mode. It's so hard to find yourself in a foreign place after you have lost everything. Once i had secured the basics for my family i think i would try and tell the story of what is going on. I feel and hope that i would be able to continue doing my job even thought i probably would need to do another "day" job in order to survive.

## Are stories of athletes from the Olympic Games or stories of people more valuable to you?

All stories are important. They may seem different – and in many cases they are- but they all share some characteristics that truly inspire me . How hard those people try for their goals, their focus and perseverance.

## How does it feel to be there as a reporter as history is being made?

It's an amazing feeling. feel really proud and honored, that i have worked in a story that will be part of history. And most importantly the right side of history and that i gave voice to those that didnt have one.

### It seems like there are new political activities between Greece and Turkey. Do you think this will be a good thing or a bad thing for the people and exiled journalists?

I always remember what one of my main protagonists told me one night. That it concerns him when he watches the news and sees there is political activity between the two countries because they – gullenists- are always on the table as bargaining chips. Meaning President Erdogan is often requesting, sometimes demanding their extradition. So i think its natural for those people to not feel safe. I don't personally believe they have reasons not to feel safe but i think its totally understandable.

\*Reporter Zaman Romania

**Pakistan** 



**SHAKEEL AHMED \*** 

## State of Media in Pakistan

In the past, journalists were mostly killed in conflict zones. However, in recent years, they have lost their lives due to the exposure of corruption and speading the mistakes made by those in power.

t would be neither wrong nor an exaggeration to say that the Pakistani media currently enjoys a parallel freedom.

There is no doubt that Pakistani journalists and media have the freedom and independence to speak or write what they want. One may be surprised that I say "what they wish".

While it is possible for even controversial journalists to disseminate information, whether in the mainstream media, print media, social media or digital media, they still face a number of obstacles and hurdles in their work.

The most recent example is the proposed change in the law through a regulation called the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, which criminalizes the sharing of defamatory and fake content on social media.

The new law gives law enforcement or the Cybercrime Division the ability to arrest a person accused of making or posting abusive, vulgar, and defamatory statements on the Internet or social media without a warrant. Release on bail is not possible.

The new law has been condemned by all media organizations as a "gagging, strangulation and suppression of press freedom." Even opposition political parties have joined the protest. The proposed amendment has already been challenged in the Supreme Courts, where an injunction has been issued preventing arrests. Pakistan's top judicial official, the Attorney General of Pakistan, has himself said in court that the proposed law is "draconian."

Pakistani journalists and media organizations have already expressed serious concerns about the proposed amendment, as it is widely seen as a tool to silence critics of the government.

The Pakistani government rejects these observations and reservations. The latest controversy arose when a journalist made some offensive remarks about Prime Minister Imran Khan's wife and a minister during a live television broadcast.

I believe in objective journalism that raises voice in the corridors of power for someone who has been

wronged. Sponsored journalism that protects vested interests or covers up their crimes does not fall under freedom of the press. Misleading, unsubstantiated reports or broadcasts do not contribute in any way to the healthy growth of social values. Journalists are like lighthouses that bring to light what is hidden in the dark.

Unbridled criticism for the sake of criticism is not responsible journalism. As the fourth estate in the state, the media has a sacred duty to expose the abuses, corruption and misdeeds of the current government and institutions in order to provide a better future for the people.

Under the proposed amendment, the prison sentence for defaming people or institutions on social media, including the judiciary and the army, will be increased from two to five years. Courts are required to rule on cases within six months, and the offense is not bailable.

Dialogues on media legislation with the government have been suspended until the draconian amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) are reversed, according to a joint statement from the Pakistan Media Organizations Committee.

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) includes the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and the Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND).

The joint statement said there were a number of examples of the Ministry of Information restricting freedom of expression, muzzling journalists and financially crippling the media in order to exert influence over reporting.

Freedom of the press in Pakistan has been damaged over the past three years not only by restrictions but also by intense financial pressure. Media owners ordered job cuts. Financial constraints are to some extent a reason for this. Media owners have made billions from government advertisements and investments in other private companies - at the expense of salaries that have not been paid for months. The Corona pandemic is also a factor. Thousands of journalists have been put out of work. Hungry journalists cannot

fight for the freedom of press.

Meanwhile, the recently passed PECA Ordinance 2022 has been challenged in the Lahore and Islamabad High Courts. The petitions complained that the ordinance violates not only the Supreme Court's rulings but also Pakistan's constitution.

In the past, several journalists in Pakistan were banned from working and some of them died in various incidents for unknown reasons. In Pakistan, 138 journalists have been killed since 1990, mainly for exposing corruption.

Journalists used to be killed mostly in conflict areas, but in recent years they are increasingly being killed for exposing corruption, withholding facts related to climate change and the environment, and many other types of misconduct by those in power. They also receive death threats, are intimidated, harassed, and otherwise pressured into giving up their investigative reporting. There are many subtle methods to force journalists to give up. Journalists are being killed by influential people with impunity, the Express Tribune reported in its November 6, 2021 editorial.

Overall, however, freedom of the press and expression in Pakistan is far better than in other countries in the region, including India.

### SHAKEEL AHMED

He has worked as a senior journalist in Business, Economics and Finance for more than 20 years. Samaa TV senior reporter. He has done business with different news channels including Aaj TV, Dunya TV, Bol Network and Samaa TV. He worked as a presenter at Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC). He worked as an assistant editor at Online News Network. He has worked as a freelance journalist for British Channel 4 and NBC America.

# NEW JOURNALISM IN THE TALIBAN AND AFGHANISTAN



**EHSANULLAH ZIYAYI** AFGHAN JOURNALIST

housands of journalists have lost their jobs in the last 9 months in Afghanistan, and many media outlets have begun to put locks on their doors due to increased security and financial problems.

According to a December report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 40% of media outlets closed in the last five months of last year, and about 6,400 journalists lost their jobs. Hundreds of them have left the country. In some provinces in Afghanistan, there are only a handful of media outlets left, and the rest have stopped broadcasting music, removed foreign content, and pulled female presenters from the air. More than 80 percent of female journalists nationwide are no longer able to do journalism.

Before August, 543 press organizations were broadcasting across the country. Since the Taliban seized control of the country on August 15, at least 153 media outlets have been shut down and thousands of press workers have become unemployed. According to the Afghan Association of Independent Journalists (AIJA), 4 out of every 10 media outlets in the country have been closed. Sixty percent of media workers became unemployed. The number of media outlets closed in the country is 231. According to AIJA, the number of people who lost their job is more than 6400.

In Kabul alone, one of every two media outlets was forced to close. Before the Taliban, there were 148 media organizations in the city, and now there are 72. Nowadays, while the country's economy is suffering greatly, journalists have no alternative job options left. In order to make a living, the press workers turned to different lines of work.

The Taliban, which continues its progress throughout the country, has closed down media outlets whose broadcasting policies they do not like, while journalists have turned to other areas either because of threats, or emerging economic problems. In addition to those who had to leave their country, those whose names were on the arrest lists changed their residences and began living in other cities under different identities.

Hassan Sirdash is just one of hundreds of journalists who were forced to leave their country. His experience of 17 years of journalism and his work in dozens of national and international media organizations have made him a target. He has been kidnapped twice by the Taliban and arrested three times by government authorities.

Sirdash, who also served as a press consultant in the Ministry of Economy of the former government, was the target of immediate threats when the Taliban took over the administration. Now he is one of those who, after these threats, was forced to leave his country and take refuge in the neighboring country of Iran. Sirdash, whose journalistic profession is full of achievements, now carries about 50 professional certificates that remain in his bag as memories.

Hassan Sirdash says that the main reason for leaving Afghanistan was unemployment. In addition, the prisoners released from the prisons by the Taliban government had increased the threats against him and his family, so he had to leave the country. The released prisoners made death threats and sent anonymous threatening letters to his address.

Sirdash, winner of the "The Bravest Reporter" award and

Afghan journalist Hassan Sirdash, the winner of many awards, can no longer practice his profession due to the pressure of the Taliban. Having to leave his country, Sirdash is trying to make a living by cleaning and porting in Iran.





recipient of a certificate of gratitude from the Human Rights Commission and the Afghan Parliament, initially refused to go to Iran because of the racist rhetoric and attitude toward journalists there. However, after receiving refusals from many embassies whose doors he knocked on, he was forced to change his plans and go to Iran. Hassan Sirdash, who has been trying to find an apartment with his family for 2 weeks, now works for \$150 a month as both a cleaner and a load carrier in a store.

Sirdash underlines that the Taliban are completely opposed to freedom of expression. For the Taliban, journalists are a remnant of the government of former President Ashraf Ghani and are accused of treason. Not only journalists, but also the Afghan people cannot express their opinions. The loss of these freedoms restricts journalists' reporting; they are subject to censorship. Journalists are only waiting for mistakes to be made; they are arrested and prosecuted on flimsy grounds.

#### BANS ON FEMALE JOURNALISTS

In 15 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, there are no longer any working women journalists. In the northern province of Jausjan, where 112 female journalists worked and 19 media companies were based before the Taliban, 7 institutions closed their doors, and none of the remaining 12 media companies employed women journalists. It was announced from the first moment that the Taliban prohibited women from working in the local media.

According to Asliye Ahmadzai, chief of women journalists in the northern region, journalism and freedom of expression are considered a stigma in the Taliban era. Ahmadzai regrets that the Taliban's years-long efforts to silence freedom of expression are succeeding and fears that there will soon be no women journalists left throughout the country.

It should be noted that the heyday of women journalists was the period when Afghanistan was ruled by a republic. With the collapse of the republic, it became more and more difficult for women journalists to practice their profession. Hundreds of women journalists became unemployed. With the Taliban's Sharia law, women were again forced to give up their jobs. Many of our female colleagues could not return to their jobs due to fear of the Taliban.

With the Taliban's capture of the capital Kabul, they declared that women should stay at home. Women journalists who still dared to go to work could be counted on the fingers of one hand. In recent months, however, female journalists have begun to return to media houses in the capital. The number of female journalists in Kabul, which was 1,190 at the beginning of August, now stands at only 320. In the northern province of Jawizjan, where 112 women worked before the Taliban and 19 media outlets were located, 7 institutions closed their doors.

#### **NEW RULES FOR JOURNALISM**

Media professionals must now abide by the "11 Rules of Journalism" issued by the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Islamic commandment to "enjoin good and forbid injustice." News and music programs are banned, and only programs with religious content are broadcasted. Local radio stations stopped broadcasting during this period.

Journalists who are still trying to practice their profession in some way are exposed to Taliban violence. There are reports of nearly 40 violent attacks against journalists so far.

IAJA President Hojatollah Mujadadi, in his appeal to international organizations, stressed that the closure of half of the country's media outlets is a disaster for freedom of the press and that the other half of journalists are suffering in difficult conditions and will lose their jobs if urgent action is not taken. In the World Press Freedom Index published by RSF before the Taliban took power, Afghanistan ranked 122nd out of 180 countries. Given the above figures, it should not be difficult to estimate where the country will rank in this year's index.

RABIA YAVUZ TÜRE \*

# The world turned into a giant prison for journalists

Media workers never deserve pressure! Despite everything, as journalists, we have the right to neither be offended nor give up. We should all be united on this. We must fight until the end to protect the freedom of press and expression!

he world is turning into a giant prison with iron bars for journalists trying to be the voice of truth. Last autumn, during a media conference in one of the Scandinavian countries, I listened to a Belarusian journalist couple. When they were making a presentation about what happened in their country, I was very impressed by what was told. They explained in detail that because their colleagues were arrested, they had to hide for a while, and then they had to flee to another country.

The Belarusian husband and wife explained that the presidential elections in Belarus in August 2020

were fraudulently won by Alexander Lukashenko. They also talked about the protests of the people in the streets, threats, and violence against journalists, their detentions, and the deportation of foreign journalists. What the Belarusian couple told, lawlessness, violence, injustice, and the mood, did not seem foreign to me as someone who tried to do journalism in Turkey.

Not knowing what will happen to you tomorrow and the danger of death are the great risks of journalism. However, it should not be the fate of journalists to be subjected to violence by the police, to be deprived of their freedom by slander one night, to see the sky through wire fences, to survive in solitary confinement, to be exposed to the cold stone walls!

Journalists cannot be prosecuted unlawfully, as they have a profession to inform the public correctly. They cannot be imprisoned for years without proof. Journalism is not a crime! Freedom of the press is an indispensable part of democracy! At this point of freedom, global media freedom is unfortunately deplorable!

The International Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) announced that the number of journalists jailed hit a new global record of 293 in 2021. According to the committee's annual report, there are three countries with the highest number of journalists in jail. China ranked first. Myanmar came second while Egypt came third. Vietnam and Belarus came in fourth and fifth place.

The number of journalists behind bars has increased and reached a high record in 6 years. It has become a clear indication of the growing intolerance towards press freedom and independent journalism in the world, and the ruthlessness of authoritarian regimes. The world has turned into a giant prison for journalists.

Turkey is in sixth place on this list! Since 15 July 2016, the pressure on the media has gradually increased. Thousands of journalists who are defined as dissidents no longer carry out their profession. Hundreds of them are being tried unlawfully.

According to the CPJ report, many journalists left their profession in the last five years in Turkey. The report of Reporters Without Borders (RFS) supported this fact. The report also underlined that the government controls approximately 90 percent of the Turkish media.

Unlike RSF and CPJ, non-governmental organi-

zations state that the number of journalists in jail in Turkey is higher than what is stated in the reports. According to the list prepared by the jailed-journos.com platform, which works on journalists in prison, 68 media workers and 64 journalists have been in jail unlawfully for years in Turkey.

The method of punishing journalists is not limited to keeping them behind bars. According to the press freedom report for July 2021 by the Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWIJ), 61 women journalists were subjected to violence, threats or harassment. The countries with the highest number of cases were Turkey, Georgia, and Belarus.

No one deserves to be unlawfully detained. Media workers do not deserve oppression. They try to do their jobs with the rights given to them by the law, constitution, and democracy, and they do not give in to pressure. As journalists, we are the voice of truth. Despite everything, we have the right neither to be offended nor to give up. We should all be united on the attitude against journalists. We must fight until the end to protect the freedom of the press and expression!

### **RABIA YAVUZ TÜRE**

She worked as an editor for important news sites in Turkey. As an exiled journalist, she settled in Norway with her family after the lawlessness in Turkey. She works as a freelance journalist and content producer in Norway. She gives voluntary support to human rights associations and charities.

## **Malta-Germany**



# HAS THE MYSTERY OF JOURNALIST MURDER BEEN SOLVED? NOT YET!

According to Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova, there were more than 900 attacks on journalists in Europe in 2020. Since 1992, 23 journalists have been killed in the EU, most of them in the last six years.



**IRIS ROHMANN\*** 

aphne Caruana Galizia, a 53-year-old Maltese journalist and blogger, died on 16 October 2017 not far from her home as a result of a cruel attack by a bomb placed in her car.

Journalist Daphne's revelations about politicians on her blog Running Commentary caused quite a stir, especially after the publication of the Panama Papers in 2016. It is clear from these documents that the democracy of the young island has been disrupted by mafia organisations and a family involved in crime. The documents exposed this quagmire of corruption and nepotism.

Daphne has exposed sordid relationships by publishing dozens of scandals one after the other on her blog site, and she has made more and more enemies with each passing day. Being a woman in a Catholic patriarchal society made the situation even more difficult for her.

The fact that politicians and businessmen were involved in money laundering, bribery and profiteering, and that these news were coming up day after day, led to the tightening of measures against Daphne. Many journalists did not stand behind their colleague for reasons such as pressure, fear and fear of losing advertising revenue and even became part of the slander and verbal attacks.

Most media in Malta are controlled by political parties. However, many journalists either did not realise the extent of this threat or did not want to see it.

Daphne Caruana Galizia was helpless and completely isolated from society in her final days. Shortly before her death, she wrote: "It's tragic, but they can gladly see me as a dead person." This text painfully came true.

The strategies aimed at silencing the journalist were approved, funded and implemented by officials at the top of the country's Labour Party government. Rebecca Vincent - Director of International Campaigns at the non-governmental organisation Reporters Without Borders - says such strategies are used against media professionals around the world, especially women. "These strategies have always been used to target journalists with a combination of insults, agitation, physical threats, isolation and physical attacks, up to and including murder."

In a total of 93 interviews conducted by the Independent Investigation Committee with 120 witnesses over a period of four years, it turned out that many people knew what had happened from the beginning. Her family, friends and col-

leagues made heartbreaking statements at these interviews. The final report announced by the investigating committee contained the following clear statements: "The state must take responsibility for the murder!". Because the perpetrators of the murder spread like an octopus from the bureaucrats at the highest levels of the Prime Minister's administration to the police and other relevant institutions, creating an atmosphere of innocence. They have led to the rule of law being trampled underfoot.

In concrete terms, this meant that the journalist had to endure years of state-sanctioned smear campaigns. Those who attacked and threatened the journalist went unpunished. She was isolated and followed until her last day, and her photographs were taken everywhere. Her bank accounts were also frozen by a minister. This is an isolated case, unheard of in Malta, and a serious breach of the law.

With the approval of the then Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, lawsuits were filed against the journalist Galizia for millions of dollars and she was on the verge of total financial collapse. At the time of her murder, there were 48 defamation cases against her, mainly from politicians and their cooperators.

Daphne Caruana Galizia stated in an interview a few days before her murder: "Actually, all the problems I encountered are completely in line with the "scapegoating" in psychology. If you look at what happened to me, you see the classic example of me being a nationwide scapegoat. A true medieval method. Look at the name they gave me most often: "The Witch from Bidnija". I mean, when were women called witches? This is how they were openly called before the Age of Enlightenment. To them, I'm a witch and I'm evil. And I even have problems with people on the street."

The celebration and applause of Daphne's death in the Labour Party groups on Facebook is going to be remembered as one of the sickening details of this medieval witch hunt. Even in conversations with "normal" citizens on the street, who did not know the journalist, I heard hateful remarks about Daphne. You can see very well how the strategic objectives of these hate speech, social media campaigns, fake news and legal practices (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation - SLAPP) threaten democracy and freedom of the press. This strategy is aimed at making Daphne hostile to the public and distracting them from themselves. In Malta, this strategy worked very well.

Just weeks after this heinous act, three suspected bombers were arrested. These individuals were suspects who were members of Maltese mafia groups. Despite the clear evidence of the suspects' involvement, they have not spoken out so far. However, from the beginning of the attack, major obstacles were put up or diversionary tactics were used that made it impossible to investigate the background of the crime more closely. There were even rumours that her own family members committed the murder! The investigation of the real criminals has practically been discontinued. Three years later, the European Union sent several delegations to Malta, accusing the Maltese government of serious failures in the investigation and requesting full clarification.



International journalist associations continue to campaign for the investigation of the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the preparation of an in-depth report.



After that, an unexpected event occurred. One of the accomplices, Melvin Theuma, broke his vow of silence (omertà). Theuma uncovered a mafia-like scenario. The suspected perpetrator turned out to be the well-known Maltese businessman Yorgen Fenech, who had set up a criminal enterprise disguised as a large company that had bribed numerous politicians with a bribery wheel worth millions. Just as stated in the Panama papers. In return, he received tenders worth millions from the state. Fenech paid 150,000 euros to the three murderers mediated by Theuma. After his arrest, he accused the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, Keith Schembri, of planning the murder. Riots broke out in the capital Valletta. Schembri and other ministers, as well as Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, were forced to resign in November 2019 after weeklong protests.

Many breathed a sigh of relief and hoped that this system of corruption and crime would soon collapse. But then things settled down again. Foreign observers have exposed the obstruction and delay of the investigation into the murder case by the current Labour Party government. Keith Schembri, Joseph Muscat and the others are still not charged to date. However, the families of those killed took a strong stance and continued to fight for justice, so they founded the Daphne Foundation.

NGOs like Occupy Justice in Malta have never given up on their regular public protests. Daphne's colleague and friend Caroline Muscat took over her legacy with "The Shift News." Caroline and her colleagues are still uncovering scandals in politics today. They continue Daphne's mission by opposing smear campaigns and lawsuits against them. In addition, international journalists' associations such as the European Center for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) and Reporters Without Borders continue to advocate for a detailed research report.

The recommendations of the Independent Commission will now also apply in Malta: "For the rule of law to remain independent, the Prime Minister can no longer appoint the Chief of Police and the Attorney General. Laws are being introduced to protect journalists. A team of experts has now been commissioned by the government to implement these regulations. One of these experts is an open enemy of Daphne and calls the journalist the "Queen of Hate".

#### THERE IS STILL A LOT TO DO

Daphne Caruana Galizia was honoured by the Cologne-based artist Joanna Vortmann. With the support of the murdered journalist's family, a video was produced with texts written by Daphne and read by her sister Corinne Vella. You can access the video from the website below. https://www.fotovideokunst.net/kopie-von-videoinstallation-we-want

\*Who is Iris Rohmann: In 2018, she was awarded the Daphne Caruana Galizia Fellowship of the German Correspondents' Forum. He works as a freelance journalist for Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Deutschlandfunk and various newspaper

Suggestions:

INVICTA- The Life and Work of Daphne Caruana Galizia, The Pertinent Press (30 November 2017).

Daphne Caruana Galizia - Speak the truth, even if your voice trembles, Orell Füssli Verlag (18 September 2020)

Truth Warriors - Portraits of Murdered and Persecuted Journalists http://wahrheitskaempfer. de/portfolio/daphne-caruana-galizia-malta-ermordet-oktober-2017



ANA KARADAREVIC BOARD MEMBER OF THE NVJ

## Keeping Journalists Safe in the Netherlands

he urgency of freedom of the press got clearer since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the journalists reporting about the pandemic and its consequences have been under attack of Covid deniers. In 2020, the national broadcaster NOS felt compelled to hide its logo from the reporter vans that travel across the Netherlands, because they were confronted with intimidating behavior from protestors of the Dutch Covid-19 measures. In the summer of 2021, two men threw Molotov cocktails into journalist Willem Groeneveld's home. The two men were Covid deniers and wanted to scare the journalist, who has written articles against conspiracy theorists. Fortunately, Groeneveld did not get hurt as he managed to extinguish the fire that was caused by the Molotov cocktails.

The attack against Groeneveld was a low point, but it is not the only incident where journalists in the Netherlands were targeted. In 2021, 272 journalists were threatened or attacked whilst doing their work. In 2020, this number was much lower, being 121. Since freedom of the press is one of the most important themes for NVJ, we have established PersVeilig (Press Safety) a few years ago. This is a joint initiative of NVJ, the Dutch society of chief editors, the Dutch national police and the Public Prosecution Service. Together we aim to strengthen the position of journalists when they are faced with violence and aggression in the streets or on social media, as well as when they are faced with legal action.

#### HOW TO DEAL WITH AGGRESSION

PersVeilig offers several services to journalists and media. When confronted with violence, journalists can follow a special protocol drafted by PersVeilig. The protocol states that media outlets file a police report on behalf of the journalists who are dealing with aggression. The prosecutor's office treats police reports re-



garding violence against journalists with high priority, and punishments against perpetrators are high. Furthermore, PersVeilig offers media outlets and journalists a course in how to deal with aggression, and how to de-escalate possibly dangerous situations.

It is important that we do more to protect journalists. That is why the NVJ supports the international mission by the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) on the safety of journalists in the Netherlands that will map the declining security of journalists. With the increase in attacks on journalists, the state of press freedom in the Netherlands is receiving more and more international attention. The international mission on the safety of journalists in the Netherlands will consist of discussions with journalists and editors-in-chief, policymakers, the police and the Public Prosecution Service, experts, and members of the parliament. The end result will be a comprehensive report on the safety of journalists in the Netherlands, and it will be presented in an international press conference as the conclusion of the mission.

Hopefully the report will be useful for journalists in other countries as well. Because a society can only be free if freedom of the press is guaranteed. ■

Germany



**ERKAN PEHLİVAN \*** 

# How Russian President Putin is banning independent journalism

he Russian president has carried out his threats and invaded Ukraine with some 200,000 troops. Reports of war crimes are coming in daily. The images from Kiev, Kharkiv and Mariupol resemble those of Grozny, Aleppo and besieged Sarajevo in the 1990s. In Russia, the invasion of the Ukraine is sold as a military operation to denazify the country and put an end to the genocide of ethnic Russians. And much of the population believes it.

For years, Putin had brought the media in his country almost completely under his control. As early as 2004, Volker Schulze, the managing director of the Federal Association of German Newspaper Publishers, criticized the pressure on media houses and foreign journalists in Russia. He said it was regrettable that even a country like Russia, on which publishers and journalists worldwide had pinned great hopes after the fall of the Iron Curtain, was falling back into repressive structures that were thought to be outdated and was obstructing domestic and foreign media representatives.

A few weeks before last year's parliamentary elections, freedom of the press and freedom of expression were once again restricted in Russia. At least five news sites critical of the regime were forced to cease their work. To this end, the government declared the affected media to be so-called "foreign agents." Reporters Without Borders has scrutinized the corresponding laws that the Russian parliament waved through during the Corona pandemic. These laws on defamation and alleged false news allow the Russian government to prevent unwelcome information. Barely invasion of Ukraine had begun, the Russian president intensified the pressure on journalists. The war against Ukraine cannot be called a war or an invasion in Russia; in the Kremlin's view, it is a "special operation." Those who dare to speak out risk years of

imprisonment. That is why Russia's main independent newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, suspended publication in March. Enormous pressure is also being exerted on foreign journalists. The Russian Ministry of Justice has classified Deutsche Welle as a "foreign agent." Despite all this, Russian citizens continue to demonstrate against the war, and Aleksei Navalny is also calling for protests from the penal colony.

Ukraine, meanwhile, is considered particularly dangerous for journalists.

According to the Swiss news site www.nau.ch, twelve journalists had been killed and ten injured by the end of March. Attacks on Kiev, Kharkiv and other cities have even increased. Mariupol is completely surrounded and consists largely of burned-out ruins.

By the end of the war, the number of killed and wounded journalists in Ukraine will continue to increase. The number of Russian and Ukrainian journalists is also expected to increase during this period.

The art project "Truth Fighters" is a memorial to the independent journalists in Russia and Ukraine. So far, 36 of them have been portrayed. The work of independent journalists in these countries requires a lot of courage. The artists admire this and want to honor it. Since 2015, a total of 500 portraits from all over the world have been shown in an online exhibition and in a traveling exhibition worldwide. These portraits can be viewed at www. wahrheitskaempfer.de. Texts about the documented journalists and selected countries complete this memorial to freedom of the press. The project, which is open to everyone, is looking forward to more collaborators who want to help with research, write texts or draw portraits.

\* Erkan Pehlivan is a freelance journalist from Frankfurt/Main and a member of the art project "Truth Fighters".







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