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# JOURNALIST

POST

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SUFFERING  
JOURNALISTS'  
COUNTRY: TURKIYE

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CANNOT CALL  
IT A "WAR"

50

GEN Z STANDS UP  
FOR JOURNALISTIC  
PRINCIPLES

NEWS,  
INTERVIEWS,  
ARTICLES FROM

19  
COUNTRIES

**I HAVE NO ARMY  
AGAINST DICTATORS,  
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ART DIRECTOR:  
ÖMER AKBULUT

DESIGN:  
KEMAL KAHVECİ

COVER PHOTO BY:  
THOMAS SAMSON / AFP

TRANSLATOR:  
İSMAİL KUL  
BERA ÇEVİK

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
Address: Poststraße 2-4,  
60329 Frankfurt am Main  
Deutschland  
Tel:+49 069 84846306  
GSM:+49 179 1385035  
Email: journalistpost@  
internationaljournalists.org  
www.internationaljournal-  
ists.org

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YÜKSEL DURGUT EDITOR

## The dictators' New Fearful Dream

**T**he dominance of autocratic re-  
gimes around the world con-  
tinues to increase every day. In a  
world where expression freedom is increas-  
ingly restricted by one-man regimes, media  
employees are looking for new solutions to  
ensure that the oppressed public has access  
to reliable news.

### 2022 HAS BEEN A BAD YEAR

The year 2022 has been full of pain for  
journalists again. According to the Commit-  
tee to Protect Journalists, at least 67 journal-  
ists and media workers were killed last year.  
This figure was recorded as the highest num-  
ber since 2018. The war in Ukraine and the  
increase in murders in Latin America have  
brought this figure to a record high.

The wars in 2022 and the unprecedented  
pressure on press freedom have also caused  
a mass migration of media organizations  
abroad. The media is looking for ways to  
overcome numerous challenges such as de-  
veloping new business models, finding new  
methods to access news sources, and devel-  
oping technical solutions to maintain ties  
with its followers despite censorship.

Recent international developments  
have also brought to light the difficulties  
of journalists in exile. Although the current  
technological situation makes journalists  
more efficient than ever in reaching their  
target audience, on the other hand, they  
continue to be an open target through so-  
cial media.

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND JOURNALISM

There are new technological devel-  
opments in the field of journalism in the  
world. Currently, artificial intelligence ex-  
perts are discussing the impact of produc-  
tive use of it on the news industry.

Since the artificial intelligence (AI)  
powered chatbot ChatGPT was launched,  
journalists have been discussing the poten-

tial impact of it on the news industry. "How  
many journalists will this replace?" the ques-  
tion comes to mind. Is it necessary to see  
CHATGPT as a challenge or an opportunity  
to solve some of the problems faced by the  
news industry.

The Financial Times has already intro-  
duced its first artificial intelligence editor  
"Murgia" to its readers. Murgia summarizes  
its job description in response to the ques-  
tions posed to him as follows: "I am espe-  
cially interested in the impact of artificial  
intelligence technology on our daily lives,  
for better or worse. I want to tell great stories  
that people won't forget."

Murgia's statement raises the question;  
"Can artificial intelligence systems such as  
ChatGPT completely replace journalists?"  
Mathias Doepfner, CEO of Axel Springer, the  
largest media company in Europe with 15  
thousand employees, which includes media  
organizations such as Bild and Die Welt, an-  
swers this question with a letter sent to his  
employees. Underlining that artificial intel-  
ligence has the potential to make or replace  
independent journalism better than ever,  
Doepfner signals that there will be layoffs.

### Will artificial intelligence become the fearful dream of dictators?

In the last 20 years, 1668 journalists  
have lost their lives in the line of duty  
around the world. Artificial intelligence,  
which replaces journalists targeted by dic-  
tatorial regimes that are on the rise, will be  
a big problem for single men in the future.  
Artificial Intelligence (AI), which will ex-  
pose scandals, bribes, lies, will be the fearful  
dream of autocratic regimes. I hope the dic-  
tators won't get any more journalist blood  
on their hands with this.

Journalism educates, informs and in-  
spires us, guiding us towards a brighter fu-  
ture. Even if the way journalism is presented  
changes, the influence of this concept will  
continue to remain consistently strong. ■





PROF. DR. FRANK ÜBERALL \*

## Danger to Democracy

**L**oud typing on a mechanical typewriter, time-consuming research in an archive basement with dusty documents, a fixed editorial deadline - That's how my professional life began more than three decades ago. There were no cell phones, no computers and certainly no digital cameras. Like it or not, editorial jobs are increasingly shifting to the Internet. Journalists and media organizations must adapt to it.

In the process, it should be remembered that the basic concept of journalism is to inform and enlighten society. This is becoming increasingly difficult because people are using more and more various media channels every day. Many younger people even state in surveys that they consume their news almost exclusively on social networks. There is then often hardly any differentiation between reliable, editorially produced offerings and those that are in fact advertising or disinformation. This is dangerous for democracy and shows how important the teaching of media competence is and will remain.

The media houses that cling solely or preferably to time-honored business models will not survive. The demise of the German magazine publishing house Gruner + Jahr is a case in point. It is now a matter of thinking and organizing journalism in multimedia terms. This is not simply about digitalization. It is not a panacea to simply put content on the Internet, even if that comes with a "paywall." That alone will not be a business model in the long run. It takes more than that.

The way of working in journalism that we should reach now should be: In the first step, the content must be researched to a high standard of quality; secondly, the "playout channels" must be selected. A video on social networks works differently from a TV report, a podcast differently from current radio coverage, a quick news item on the Internet differently from an in-depth reading text. However, the separation of those are becom-

ing increasingly blurred. This in turn leads many media companies to impose a blanket obligation on media professionals to "play" all channels.

This is a problematic misunderstanding that is usually based solely on an iron will to save money. Instead of constantly saving on employees and product, we need to invest in contemporary "forms of presentation". This also includes the division of labor. Not everyone is equally good at all forms of presentation. Journalism education must provide an understanding of audio, video and text. But then you have to concentrate on what you do best, constantly train yourself and practice cooperating with other experts.

Stephan Russ-Mohl and Sebastian Turner describe it as "domain competence" to fill the channels skillfully, both in terms of content and technology. The British Guardian, for example, has shown that such a cross-media strategy can work. The necessarily short posts on Instagram and the links they provide also encourage young people to want to know more - and the number of paid digital subscriptions has increased significantly as a result.

Ultimately, it will come down to the credibility not only of the media brands, but also of the journalists. In wide circles, it was and still is frowned upon for media professionals to put themselves in the spotlight. Presenting contributions in the "I-form" is seen as excessive personalization, as exaggerated self-promotion. In the sense of journalistic "influencers," however, in the future it will also be a matter of standing by one's research and portrayals as a person, which makes a certain degree of self-presentation in public necessary. ■

*\* Prof. Dr. is the Federal Chairman of the German Journalists' Association (DJV). He also works as a freelance journalist and teaches and researches journalism and social sciences at the HMKW University of Media, Communication and Business in Cologne.*





VOLHA KHVOIN \*

## Belarus is in the vortex of totalitarianism and oppression

**T**he problems are growing every day in Belarus, which is under the pressure of totalitarian rule. It has been 2.5 years since the suppression of mass protests that began over the rigging of the election results in 2020. The government reacts to the current revolution of the people in a ruthless, planned and systematic way. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Belarusians left their country. The opposition media was expelled from the country. Civil society was disbanded. But there are many signs in this depressing picture that give hope for the future:

In 2022, the Belarusian Union of Journalists (BAJ) reported that 43 journalists were arrested and there were search warrants against 55 journalists. Journalists have been imprisoned 20 times due to administrative arrest. They were fined. In addition, law enforcement agencies questioned journalists and also questioned their relatives.. Searches were conducted at the homes of journalists, including those who had left Belarus. Even those who have left the country are being followed by intelligence units. More than 1500 attacks (arrests, detentions, fines, physical violence, etc.) against journalists in Belarus in 2020 were recorded. In 2021, more than a thousand attacks took place. In other words, a significant number of those who are active in the journalism profession have left the country and the number is rising day by day. Because it has become almost impossible for independent media to do journalism due to high fines.

Some of the 32 imprisoned media representatives have already completed their sentences and have been released. Some of those who have been previously convicted are given additional sentences. Belsat TV channel correspondent Katerina Andreyeva (Bahvalova) and her colleague Darya Chultsova broadcast live where people gathered at the 'Exchange Square' in Minsk on November 15, 2020 in memory of the murdered Roman Bondarenko were dispersed by police violence. Andreyeva and Chultsova were arrested for this reason and sentenced to two years in prison. Darya left Belarus as soon as she was released. However, Katerina Andreyeva was sentenced to another eight years in prison on charges of treason against the state. The details of the accusations are not known because the trial was decided on confidentiality. This is just one example in terms of showing the state of the media, journalism and the law in Belarus.

In Belarus, the media, which is almost outside the control of the state, is considered extremist. There is a criminal responsibility for subscribing to a Telegram channel, sending photos or any messages

to the editorial office. Darya Losik, the wife of political prisoner Igor Losik, was sentenced to two years in prison for an interview she gave to the Belsat TV channel. Relatives took Darya and Igor Losik's little daughter. Otherwise, she could have been sent to an orphanage. Similarly, expert Yegor Lebedok, who commented to private media outlets about events connected with Russia's war against Ukraine, was sentenced to 5 years in prison. These are just a few examples.

Fear is the main goal of powers. To ensure this, many people are detained every day in Belarus. Likes made to opposition posts directed against the government, anti-war statements, or any other reason on social media.. It doesn't matter what the reason is anymore!

Anonymous authors and anonymous sources have become common. But there are also positive things in this gloomy picture. The commitment of Belarusian journalists to the ideal of profession, international solidarity and support within the country. Most of the editorial offices left Belarus in the second half of 2021 and are continuing their work. We are grateful to them. Thanks to them, we learn about what is happening in the country. Those who work in exile, despite the fact that it is dangerous, access information sources in the country. Some of them have their own correspondents in the country. But no one is revealing the identity of these people.

Russia has been at war in Ukraine for a year. Aleksandr Lukashenko allowed Vladimir Putin to use the territory and infrastructure of Belarus for the invasion. The war in Ukraine and the attitude of Russian and Belarusian society towards these events have shown how important mass media are in influencing people's consciousness.

I believe that the free media outside the Belarusian state media is doing great things in meeting the information needs of those living in the country. In 2020, the Belarusian people showed that they stand for values such as freedom and anti-war stances and the protection of their rights. In 2021 and after, Belarusian society did not support the war. Sociological research, surveys, migrations from Belarus and partisan resistance show this.

32 media workers are still under arrest. These are the victims of freedom of expression. And free journalists should continue to work so that these sacrifices do not go in vain. ■

*\* Volha Khvoin, Journalist. She worked as an editor, project manager at the Belarusian Association of Journalists. She currently works for Polish Radio. Member of the Board of Directors of BAJ.*



NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER **TAWAKKOL KARMAN:**

# I HAVE NO ARMY AGAINST DICTATORS, BUT I HAVE MY WORDS

YÜKSEL DURGUT

Tyrants become most enraged when confronted with the truth about who they really are or when their crimes are exposed by any means and in all places. I never pass up the chance to do it. Even if I lack an army to fight these strong spoilers, I do have my word, my connections, and my positions. Thus, opposing tyrants and their harsh actions against people should be every human rights defender's first priority.

**T**he world know Tawakkol Karman as the “iron woman,” the “mother of the revolution” and the “woman of the Arab Spring.” As a journalist, human rights activist and politician, she became a figurehead of the Arab Spring as well as the pro-democracy protests in Yemen in 2011. She was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize along with Ellen John Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee for her non-violent leadership in the struggle and her advocacy against authoritarianism, corruption and repression.

She is the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in the Arab world and the second in the Muslim world after Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi (2003). She was 32 years old and in a tent in a square when she received the news that she had won the Nobel Peace Prize.

We spoke to Tawakkol Karman about her role in the Arab Spring and her human rights advocacy today.

**What inspired you to become a journalist and human rights activist?**

My hatred of injustice and belief that supporting the downtrodden is essential if we want to see meaningful change in the country in which we live served as my inspiration for it. I think that if injustice toward others is not stopped, eventually it will impact you.

**Since 2011, you have become one of the symbols of the Arab Spring and the**

**pro-democracy protests in Yemen. What has changed in your life in the past 12 years?**

Not many things have changed, so some accuse me of still having a very sharp tone toward various subjects. This may be the case, but no matter what the repercussions, I cannot praise tyrants while ignoring breaches of human rights. My access to platforms where I may express myself freely is the genuine shift I can point to.

**You told people to “wake up” and “defend their rights” and stand up to “injustice and corruption”. Has anyone heard this voice outside Yemen, especially in Islamic countries?**

I believe that people have an effect on each other, and it would be the same in my case. I can confirm that, yes, my voice is being heard both domestically and abroad, and as with any voice that refuses to make concessions, opinions towards my voice are divided. While some support my stances against oppressive governments, others believe I am part of a global conspiracy to sow instability. In fact, a person's attitude depends on their degree of acceptance or resistance to tyranny and injustice. My positions are questioned by individuals who consider oppressive governments to be national regimes, which does not upset me or change my main positions. ►







► ***You did not remain silent about the authorities' threats to "be silent". In countries dominated by one-man regimes, journalists in particular are on the side of the strongman. What would you advise these journalists?***

A journalist is not a clown or a phony witness, and all journalists should keep in mind that their work is more significant than being on the governments' doorsteps.

Your work has brought you into conflict with the Yemeni government and other powerful entities. Have you ever felt afraid for your safety? How did you deal with this fear?

If I told you I wasn't afraid, I'd be lying. Everyone experiences dread naturally, but I don't respond excessively to it. I consider protecting one's rights to be a noble honor well worth the cost. Without noble positions, life is worthless.

***You have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for your nonviolent efforts to promote peace and your fight for women's rights." What kind of struggles can be waged without violence in a geography where wars have been going on for years?***

Peaceful struggle is more difficult under the rule of law-breaking militias and armed organizations. But even in the most difficult situations, like in the fight against the infringement of people's personal rights, it is always possible to fight nonviolently by exposing the de facto authorities, making clear to the populace their true nature, and discrediting their false claims. Also, any effort to bring about social change must also include the fight for women's rights since doing so will aid in the fall of the current structures of political and religious tyranny.

***You said that "The world has done nothing to stop the atrocities against Yemenis". Can we say the same with regard to, for example, Afghanistan or Syria?***

Yes. The world's same abandonment and indifference that my own country experienced also occurred in Syria and Afghanistan. If not, how is it justified to give these peoples over to brutal rulers who persecute their own people? This isn't, in my opinion, appropriate conduct. I think it's crucial to put an end to these atrocities, and I think it's wrong to tolerate governments that violate human rights and rule by intimidating their citizens.

***In general, totalitarian regimes dominate the world. What do you think is the biggest threat to democracy right now? Can we go back to democracy for peace between people?***

Racism, in my opinion, poses the largest threat to democracy. Regrettably, it is alarming that certain Western politicians push to turn democracies like the United States and Europe into a replica of the Middle East. There is a need to defend democracy from its adversaries, and US President Biden made a statement to similar effect in his inaugural address.

## TODAY'S YOUTH CANNOT BE CONSTRAINED BY IDEOLOGIES

***You have spoken a lot about the power of youth and the importance of getting youth involved in activism. How have you seen youth participation in human rights and democracy movements change over time, and what role do you think they***

PHOTO: AHMAD GHARABLI / AFP



***will play in shaping the future of Yemen and the broader Middle East?***

In many nations, young people make up the majority of the population. They are highly capable, have a greater understanding of the world, are not constrained by ideologies, and have the power to improve a great deal of things. I think Yemen's young can bring about significant changes because of their abilities and cultural background. It is in their interest to create a world without violence and strife. Young people are quickly launching campaigns of solidarity and support for civil rights concerns, and the majority of them reject appeals for racism, as is evident. Also, it is encouraging to see how eager young people are to freely express their beliefs and their desire in expanding their knowledge.

***You were called the "Mother of the Revolution" when you started going out every week in protest. What are your sugges-***





## “TWO THINGS I NEVER FORGET”

***What has been the most important moment or achievement in your career so far?***

Two significant events in my life will always be seared into my memory. The first day signifies the start of Yemen's peaceful revolution. It was a moment I worked very hard to achieve and eagerly waited for. I planned and led protests to uphold rights and liberties in several cities. I was one of the young people who helped draft the declaration urging peaceful protests on the evening of that promised day. The following day, we walked outside and started calling for the overthrow of the dictatorship; we stayed in that position until the regime had been overthrown and a transitional authority had been declared.

As regards to the other day, that was the day the news broke that I had won the Nobel Peace Prize. I saw this as a universal acknowledgement of the fairness of our cause and the greatness of our fight for liberty and democracy.

## SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS FOR A FREE PRESS IS VITAL

***What are the motives that motivate you to work in the “Women Journalists Without Chains” project?***

I inspire that both the press and those who work in it should be completely free, with their only restraints coming from their own consciences. In my opinion, my country needs a lot of things, including a free press, organizations that defend rights, courses that prepare people to work in this industry, and protection for citizens' right to free expression. In a country like Yemen, where the rule of law still does not exist to defend rights and freedoms, human rights organizations are essential.

***When Jamal Khashoggi was murdered, you fought hard for his killers to be punished. Journalists have been killed or imprisoned in many parts of the world. As a journalist, what would you like to say to those who target journalists?***

Those who attack journalists provide proof against themselves. What leads a government or powerful individual to target the media? They undoubtedly worry that the truth will be revealed. If they believe that they can conceal the truth, they are mistaken; they cannot accomplish their goals.

***tions for young journalists and activists living under authoritarian regimes? What advice would you give to young people who want to make a difference in the world, but feel overwhelmed or unsure where to start?***

I advise them against making free compromises, informing them that they are more aware of their surroundings and have a better aptitude than others to comprehend the consequences of their choices. They must maintain optimism and refrain from making concessions if they are to succeed. The most important thing for them to do is to refrain from supporting such regimes.

It's crucial for young people to understand that change for the better is a principle that shouldn't be compromised if they want to make a difference but feel unprepared or overwhelmed. We can first begin to develop ourselves scientifically, culturally, and economically if the circumstances are not favorable for engaging in legitimate political action. We can begin improving ourselves. This is critical for us, our nation, and our just causes. ■





# SUFFERING JOURNALISTS'

## COUNTRY: TURKIYE



BÜLENT CEYHAN

**I** haven't been actively performing journalism for a while. I write reports on human rights violations instead. Through the last report about the targeting and attacks of journalists in Türkiye I was working on, I crossed paths with my profession and journalists again. It's also an issue that I'm a victim of. It is such a victimization that made me live a refugee life away from my country, away from my family, in a desolate, cold, and foreign land where I am an alien to the language and culture for 6 years.

Hundreds of journalists, broadcasters are living similar lives in exile. Some of them are engaged in different jobs to earn their living or because they think that harm will come to their relatives or because they cannot find opportunities. In a sense, some of them are content to watch the events in silence, exactly as the targeters want. Some of them continue to do journalism and struggle. However, the Erdoğan regime and its long arms continue to target these journalists and go even further to organize attacks regardless of which country they live in.

Since all autocratic governments want to shape societies through their own propaganda, they target journalists first. The regime is trying to take control of the media outlets, it is providing journalists with materials for hate speech and lynching campaigns, it is trying to silence them with threats, unlawful trials, arrests and attacks.

During the AKP government in power since 2002, Türkiye has become one of the most notorious countries in the world for attacks on freedom of the press and expression, repression and arrests of jour-

nalists. Since 2016, In the research conducted by international journalist organizations; Reporters Without Borders (RSF), PEN International and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Türkiye has been mentioned as the country that arrests and convicts the most journalists in the world.

Under the AKP government, at least 848 journalists were arrested between 2002 and 2022. Especially after the controversial coup attempt of July 15, 2016, the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who shelved the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye and the international human rights conventions he signed, had hundreds of journalists arrested within a few weeks. A total of 179 media organizations (53 newspapers, 34 TV, 37 radio stations, 20 magazines, 6 news agencies and 29 publishing houses) were closed during the State of Emergency Administration in 2016 on the grounds that they were “Gülen associated media”, “PKK media” and “leftist organizations media”. According to the Turkish Journalists’ Association (TGC) 2016 press report; In 2016, the press cards of 780 journalists were canceled, and 839 journalists appeared before a judge in lawsuits filed because of their news. 189 journalists were verbally and physically attacked, and the number of unemployed journalists exceeded 10 thousand.

According to CPJ data, in 2016 alone, Türkiye ranked first with 191 journalists in prison, followed by China with 38 journalists and Egypt with 25 journalists. As of 2022, according to the Reporters Without Borders (RFS) Press Freedom Index, Türkiye ranked 149 out of 180 countries.

### HOW DID TÜRKİYE BECOME THE WORLD’S LARGEST JOURNALIST PRISON?

The main reason for the decline in independent journalistic activities and freedom of expression in Türkiye is that democratic values have been shelved together with the Erdoğan regime and the judiciary has completely lost its independence. Another reason why Erdoğan has turned Türkiye into the world’s largest prison for journalists is, of course, the major corruption crimes he is involved in. All the journalists who brought these crimes to light are either exiled, are being detained or are trying to be silenced by being subjected to violent acts and threats.

In addition, media bosses were also affected by the lawsuits filed by Erdoğan-controlled courts and had to withdraw from the media sector. On the other hand, many media organizations were closed down by the police force on unlawful grounds, their management was confiscated and they were handed over to government-controlled names. Thus, the Erdoğan government has managed to seize 90 percent of the media in Türkiye, silence dissenting voices and prevent the public from knowing the facts. Not only journalists, but citizens with different views criticizing the government began to live in fear of being unjustly and unlawfully detained, tried, arrested and convicted.

Even the existence of intellectuals who are sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment just for their writings, swings like the sword of Damocles over the heads of journalists who want to do free journalism. The disregard of the freedom of press and Expression, the fact that the justice mechanism is completely under the control of the government, pushed journalists who did not want to be declared ‘enemy’ or ‘traitor’ because of their news to practice self-censorship.

The Decriminalization law, which Erdoğan approved on October 18, 2022, makes “spreading false information” a crime with prison sentences of one to three years. This law is also seen as an arrest measure against journalists targeted by Erdoğan.

### ERDOĞAN’S HUNT FOR JOURNALISTS

Erdoğan is using the full authority of the state to ensure that the journalists he targets are punished in the most severe way. Erdoğan, who accused journalists of being “spies”, “terrorists disguised as journalists”, did not let go of journalists who were imprisoned, whose assets were confiscated, and who were forced to continue their professions abroad because a decision was made to arrest them. With the red bulletins prepared through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Interpol was contacted and the names of the journalists targeted along with members of the armed terrorist organization were entered into the “Wanted for terrorism list”.

### FOREIGN JOURNALISTS ARE ALSO TARGETED

According to the studies of press organizations, at least 65 journalists were subjected to attacks by law enforcement officers, politicians and civilian citizens while following news or because of their news in 2022. In 2022, there were at least 174 cases involving journalists and press organizations. At least 263 journalists were tried in these cases. Some journalists appeared before the judge in multiple cases. At least 40 journalists were given imprisonment or fines in the cases. The journalists were sentenced to a total of at least 92 years, 11 months and 15 days in prison and a fine of at least 317 thousand 900 Turkish lira. At least 24 journalists were acquitted. At least 33 journalists were arrested and at least 72 journalists were detained during the year.

Foreign journalists working in Türkiye have also become unable to perform their duties due to targeting and lynching campaigns. Some of them were deported, while others were arrested. Erdoğan has also tried to treat some of the arrests as a bargaining tool. The release of Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel, whom Erdoğan targeted by calling a “spy” and a “terrorist” and arranged his arrest, as a result of political negotiations with the German government, had been the subject of discussion.

### ERDOĞAN’S LONG ARM AND THE PURSUIT OF JOURNALISTS ABROAD

The targeted journalists are being followed by agency reporters, informants or intelligence agents acting on behalf of Erdoğan in the countries where they have taken refuge. In particular, the flagship Sabah newspaper of the ‘Pool media’, which is controlled by the Erdoğan family and businessmen who receive tenders thanks to Erdoğan, illegally tracks down wanted journalists, discloses their addresses and publishes their photos.

As a result, the targeting of journalists, their exposure to lynching campaigns, their unemployment and acts of violence also mean a blow to the democratic rights of the entire society. The absence of free and independent journalists makes the people prisoners of propagandist publications linked to power. As a result, the people become a society that is constantly deceived, unable to learn the facts, unable to defend its rights, oppressed under pressure because it cannot find the strength to resist. ►



# Journalists Who have Been Targeted and Attacked



## CAN DÜNDAR

During his tenure as Editor-in-Chief of Cumhuriyet Newspaper, he published documents of weapons shipped by MIT trucks to organizations in northern Syria. Journalist Can Dündar has suddenly become one of Erdoğan's biggest enemies. Erdoğan made a harsh statement, saying, "I will not leave them alone." and personally made the arrest of Dündar on his complaint. The High Criminal Court, whose delegation was formed from the names requested by the government, sentenced Dündar to 27 years and 6 months in prison for the crimes of "espionage" and "assistance to an armed terrorist organization". Dündar, who left Türkiye and lived in exile in Germany while he was being tried but the it was not the end. Finally, Erdoğan ensured that Dündar's name was included in the "Wanted for terrorism list" announced to the entire world through the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In an article published in Die Zeit newspaper, Can Dündar summed up his experiences with the following words: "I had not killed anyone, bombed the city, robbed a bank. My whole "crime" was that I documented that Erdoğan was secretly sending weapons to the jihadists in Syria through the intelligence agency. The news, which brought the award of many international press organizations, first resulted in a 27.5-year prison sentence in Türkiye, then a solitary confinement for a while, a failed armed attack, then the confiscation of all my assets, and finally exile. But apparently, this was not enough for Erdoğan. When the news came out, in order to keep his "I will make him pay heavily for this," promise, he was now raising the "terrorist" charge, promising 500 thousand pounds (25 thousand euros) to those who would help me get caught."

## BÜLENT KENEŞ

Journalist Bülent Keneş, was serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the English-language newspaper Today's Zaman. After broadcasting opposition to Erdoğan, he was arrested and placed in Silivri Prison on October 10, 2015, initially on the grounds of insulting President Erdoğan, citing his twitter posts. Keneş, who was released after a while, was among the journalists whose arrest decisions were issued after the 2016 coup attempt. Having taken refuge in Sweden, Keneş founded a human rights organization called SCF (Stockholm Center for Freedom) with his journalist friends, which prepares reports on human rights violations in Türkiye.

While not pausing in his harsh criticism of the AKP government, he continued to be one of the names targeted by Erdoğan. Among the conditions put forward by Erdoğan, under which Sweden had to get approval for Nato membership, was the return of some names to Türkiye. Answering journalists' questions together with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson at a press conference broadcast live, Erdoğan's personally pronouncing the name of Bülent Keneş and requesting his extradition caused a shock effect in the press world. While putting Keneş's name forward for NATO negotiations, Erdoğan did not hesitate to say that he wanted to go to the elections to be held in May 2023 with a strong hand. Fortunately, the Swedish supreme court also decided to reject the request, as there were no criminal elements that would require Keneş to be extradited.



## ABDULLAH BOZKURT

Abdullah Bozkurt, a journalist living in exile in Sweden, was also on the target board because he was actively doing English-language journalism about Türkiye and the Erdoğan regime through the Nordic Monitor website. In addition, they are targeted in the list of "Wanted" and "Deserters" regularly published through the Anadolu Agency, the official agency of the state in Türkiye. Bozkurt was attacked by three unidentified people in front of his home in Stockholm. Bozkurt, who made a press statement after the incident, said that the Nordic Monitor will continue to tell the world about the lawlessness in Türkiye more decisively. Bozkurt stated that he had been a target of Erdoğan and his regime for many years, stating that Erdoğan's aide had openly said on a national channel that he wanted him to be killed.



## AHMET DÖNMEZ

Journalist Ahmet Dönmez is also one of the independent journalists who reports on Erdoğan, AKP government ministers and their mafia connections. Dönmez was attacked by two or more suspects who followed him after picking up his 6-year-old daughter from school. He suffered permanent brain hemorrhage, lost consciousness and remained in intensive care for a while, and came back from death. Ahmet Dönmez explained that mafia groups protected by Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu had threatened him with death and that he had complained to the Swedish authorities before this attack.



## CEVHERİ GÜVEN

Journalist Cevheri Güven was targeted for his covers and publications about Erdoğan during his time as Editor-in-chief of Nokta Magazine. Before the elections, using heavy expressions to the Nokta Magazine employees because of the graphic cover showing him taking a selfie in front of the martyr's funeral, Erdoğan said; "Those who made this cover are dishonorable, despicable. and they will pay the price." After that, some issues of the magazine were collected and banned. Soon after, Cevheri Güven and the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, Murat Çapan, were arrested. Güven had to leave Türkiye when he was released after 2 months of detention and continues to work as a journalist with his Youtube broadcasts from Germany. Çapan has been detained in Türkiye for 6 years.

Güven made statements at the Türkiye Tribunal in Geneva investigating rights violations in Türkiye, stating that he had been summoned and warned by the police authorities in Germany, while stating that an assassination squad had been established for journalists living in Europe, and that his name was also on the list of 21 people. Güven, who explained that he was constantly targeted by the media controlled by the Turkish government, said; "I was constantly branded as a terrorist during this process. I have been associated with many different terrorist organizations. Various moves have been made to undermine the credibility of my news before the public by constantly putting pressure on it. Of course, we feel the pressure of the long arms of the Erdoğan regime in Europe as well." Güven's photos and personal information were published by the Erdoğan-controlled Sabah Newspaper in front of his house in Hassen.

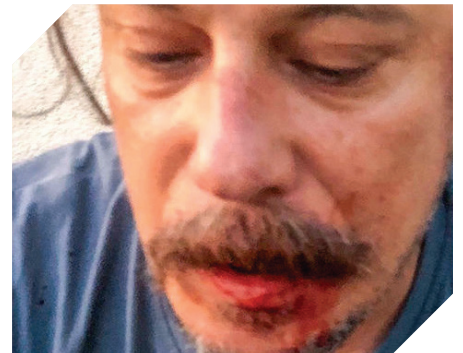


## METİN CİHAN

Journalist Metin Cihan came to the public agenda when he obtained information that 11-year-old Rabia Naz Vatan had died as a result of being hit by a car driven by an AKP member and revealed that the incident was recorded as a suicide in the court minutes and the incident was tried to be covered up. Cihan, who was later a target of the AKP due to government corruption reports, stated that he was forced to go abroad due to being targeted, being investigated and receiving threats. Cihan shared on social media, "I feel like there is a mafia in front of me, not the state. Whatever the state is anyway, but I'm afraid of the mafia." said he.

## ERK ACARER

Journalist Erk Acarer, known for its opposition broadcasting aimed at the AKP government and one of the journalists living in exile in Germany. Erk Acarer, who also works as a columnist for Birgün Newspaper, was attacked with "fists and knives" in the courtyard of his apartment building where he lives in Berlin.



*\* Bülent Ceyhan, who works as a journalist in Türkiye, was forced to leave Türkiye due to the arrest warrants against him and sought asylum in Sweden. During his asylum process, he was awarded the "Written News of the Year Award" at the Metin Göktepe Journalism Awards Competition. However, due to pressure on the jury, his award was withdrawn. Ceyhan, who has left active journalism after that, prepares reports on human rights violations in Türkiye for human rights organizations.*





# We are silenced!

Our mouths were sealed with court papers. Our hands were handcuffed behind our backs with the lives of our families, our feet were tied with the freedom of our colleagues. Our work was stolen with ideological hatred. The government wanted it, the judiciary did it, journalists saw it and turned their heads away, my people didn't care...



**GÜLİZAR BAKI**

It was my last half hour to get the pages to the printing house.

The printing house wanted the paper at 18.00.

There was only one printing house left that still agreed to print us.

20 July 2016, 17:30.

Others said they could no longer stand the government's pressure and did not print our newspaper. We sent it as far as we could with lorries. It turned out it was our last newspaper.

That half hour was the last moments of my professional life. My freedom and the freedom of the press in my country...

I didn't know.

...

As I put the tea brought by Uncle Zafer, the tea man, on my table, I did not know that I could not drink it.

There was a knock on the front door.

More precisely, there was banging on the door as if to break it. The young designer sitting at the table opposite the door stood up and looked at the screen showing

the corridor.

"Somebody turned off the camera!" he shouted.

Everybody in the paper stood up where they were.

Because the door was being forced.

I'm standing, but my eyes are on my computer screen, looking at the news I'm proofreading. Suddenly there were a lot of men running in.

Like a flood

The tea in my cup was steaming.

It was very hot.

...

Dozens of men, whose only unmistakable words were "Police, this is a raid!" poured into the newspaper like a destructive flood.

"Get down, get down!" shouted everyone who entered.

I was standing and I'm in shock from all the swearing I heard.

I was shouting at a policeman passing by, even though he couldn't hear me, with my hand in the air, "This is a newspaper and sir, you can't swear."

Actually, you can't swear even it was not a newspaper.

"Why are you shouting! We can hear you! Don't swear, what nonsense."

It was like I was in a film scene.

I'm like a spectator beamed into the scene.

There was no end of police coming through the door. In a few minutes, the other police officers who had been scattered all over the newspaper gathered in the centre.

A man came in with a piece of paper.

He says that the publication was stopped by a court order and that the edition of that day would be confis-



cated.

It's 5.45 p.m.! That day's newspapers were sold out. The police enforced the confiscation order by raiding the offices of the editors and designers.

Justice (Adalet) is now only a woman's name in Türkiye!

There was a warrant for the arrest of two people, the others were to be released after the search.

...

I was still standing.

But my male colleagues were all lying on the floor, hands on their heads, 5-6 policemen on each of them.

A man holding a piece of paper, whom the others called "Commissar", said the names of the Editor-in-Chief, Levent Kenez and myself. The policemen in front of us put handcuffs on us.

...

Bakırköy Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation into the headline news of Meydan Newspaper published on 20 July 2016. Within a few hours, the prosecutor, who must have been inspired, concluded that the news article fell within the scope of terrorist offences and applied to the court for a recall, and the 6th Criminal Judgeship of Peace approved the prosecutor's application.

Lady Justice was swift, you see.

Our headline, which the prosecutor and the judge considered a terrorist offence, was about the coup and the title was 'You knew but did not prevent it'. We were asking for an account of the night of the coup, of the 249 people killed that night, and the source of the news was the Anadolu Agency. On 19 July, AA served a news report to its subscribers with the title "Here is the day of the coup hour by hour", but later removed the news report from publication. According to the state agency, the Undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) had informed the General Staff of the coup at 16:00 on the day of the coup. According to the judge, the news item containing this information could have caused outrage and the society was in a sensitive situation, the broadcast should have been stopped!

...

They took him to the hospital for a medical check-up.

I was now the suspect in the sentence "Suspects taken to Vatan Security Directorate after the health check..." that I used in countless news items.

We experienced something in the police car that I will never forget.

There was a rifle in the back seat.

I don't know the model, I don't know anything about guns, it's just a big gun with a long barrel. It was standing next to us.

I looked Mr Levent.

We smiled.

He called out to the policemen in front, "You are taking us as terrorists, you have automatic rifles with us." The frowning policeman, who was about 50 years old, looked back as if to say that he was right, and turned to the papers in front of him.

...

There is a terrible evening traffic in Istanbul.

Mr Levent complains about the traffic.

He's always in a hurry.

"Why are you in a hurry, it may be the last time we see the



city, the traffic and the sky, the later we leave the better," I say.

We laugh.

The cops were more nervous than we are.

...

We were in a room at Vatan Police Headquarters.

Many police officers came in and out during the procedures.

One of them, a fatherly type, you wouldn't call him a policeman, in fact he looked more like a coffee seller, greeted everyone and sat down on one of the chairs, put his hands behind his head, leaned back, "I'm tired now, they've cancelled my leave, I'm going to ask for my retirement, my friend. Whoever comes to power fires one another"

He looked at me and said, "Tomorrow when you come to power, you'll fire us."

I'm thinking, "This scene is news."

But when I remembered that I was the addressee of the man's words, I got angry at what I was being accused of, "Not at all, sir, I'm a journalist." There was no sir here, I should have said 'Mr. officer', 'Mr. police officer' wouldn't have worked either.

What to tell people with prejudices!

This is the main problem in my country... Everyone interfering in the life of the other. Reading their intentions. Knowing his offence...

In other words, everyone is guilty of an offence according to their nationality, country of origin, lifestyle and clothing style, gender and even profession. It's certain!

Either you are reactionary, bigoted, evil, a dinosaur or one of us...

Therefore, there have been oppressors and oppressed in every period.

...

There is also such a thing as ideological heritage.

You can't renounce your inheritance.

As if passed down from father to son, each generation inherits the hatred that is the result of the previous generation's choices.

For example, all right-wingers are potential perpetrators of the Madimak atrocity, all leftists and Kurds are terrorists, Armenians, atheists, even rockers, and so on. ►



I mean, mister, I'm a journalist, I'm not this and that...

They took everything we have on us, even our shoelaces, in case we commit suicide...

So many things came out of my bag that Mr Levent said, "Why do you have ten million pieces of stuff in your bag!" You would think I would never be able to go home again.

I couldn't go back anyway.

Then the policewoman asked for my headscarf. What do you mean! "Your headscarf too!" What's the big deal? During the 28 February period, during the post-modern coup d'état, I was not allowed to the university with my headscarf on, so what's the big deal! They were taking the headscarves of all women in case of suicide risk.

It was a scandal!

During the period of this government that fought for the freedom of headscarves and boasted that it had made them free in public institutions and schools, women were taken to detention centres...

"Kill me! I won't give you my headscarf!" A crisis is brewing.

Mr Levent intervenes; In the news, women are always wearing headscarves when they are taken to the health check and the courthouse, obviously they give them at the exit!

The policewoman, who had seen us during the body search, said, "You have an inner headscarf, you can stay with it."

"But do I tell you, that you can sit in your underwear!"

What rubbish!

In addition to my own victimisation, I think that tens of thousands of hijabi women, teachers, doctors, university lecturers, civil servants, housewives, or 70-80 year old aunts who were taken into custody for making dumplings are all going through the same thing. My heart sinks.

I am so full of anger that I want to shout at the people outside who are holding a democracy vigil and shouting slogans,

The country, justice, justice, human rights, human rights have been lost! The headscarves of those women were taken from their heads. And that too by the government, which boasts every day in the squares that it has liberalised the headscarf.

They "graciously" let me go to the detention centre wearing my headscarf.

But I just stayed in my chair. It takes hours while the police do the procedures. I just stayed there. I felt like I'm dead.

Nothing left on a corpse...

That's how I was...

...

After the procedures were completed, they gave phone permission.

But I only remember my father's number.

Maybe I remember his number because he was the strongest in the family, the play of my consciousness...

I hope I can reach them as they were on holiday.

The phone rings twice, my father answers.

What a difficult moment.

I said, "I'm fine,"

Anyway, my father didn't talk much.

At that moment I realised the ache in my wrists.

Does the heart hurt in the wrist?

...

I can't believe I'm in here.

I look at the blue bed on the floor, the walls.

I'm sitting on the corner.

The sound of people shouting slogans at the democracy watch could be heard from outside.

I couldn't think about anything. In fact, I think about so many things at once that it's like nothing.

I think I'm in shock.

That night was very long, but "How is it that time does not pass, but years and lives pass." Years passed after that day.

...

We're going to the prosecutor in the morning.

He's asking me about the headline.

I'm telling them it's agency news.

Moreover, the news that led to the suspension of our broadcast was confirmed 10 months later by the then Chief of General Staff himself. And he is now a minister.

Some of us were in, some of us were out. But we've all been assassinated. We're mortally wounded. ...

Somehow the prosecutor released us. Our lawyer was in shock.

Our colleagues were waiting for us at the courthouse gate.

They could have been detained just for coming there, but they came anyway. We sat in the bakery opposite the courthouse.

A cup of tea in front of me.

It was the last tea I had with my colleagues. When can we drink again?

Kismet

...

The day we were released, an arrest warrant was issued for Mr Levent again.

I left my house in the morning to go to work and I couldn't come back.

For a month and a half when I stayed with my family, neither I nor they could sleep.

Because every day on television, members of the government were calling for the denunciation of your family and friends.

My presence was a danger to my family.

And every day there was a new case against me.

Journalists were arrested, their houses were raided, our passports and press cards were cancelled.

...

My lawyer was detained. I never heard from him after. I didn't know the status of the cases against me.

I can't persuade anybody to go to the prosecutors office. Everyone was afraid they'll be arrested.

As a matter of fact, there have been such detentions so that nobody even want to check the mailbox at my house.

I felt like I have the plague.

I was worried about my family, my colleagues.

My country was the fire inside me.

My colleagues were my disappointment.

They were in psychology of ideological blindness and 'don't let me get in trouble'. And they do not realise that the reputation of journalism has been ruined because of this situation. ■





CENTRAL ASIA: PRESS FREEDOM ENDANGERED BY EXTINCTION

# PRESS IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

The state of the press in Central Asian Republics is dreadful. Even social media is banned. It is impossible to do journalism, those who write under a fake name are under the surveillance of intelligence. They are either imprisoned or face a shady death or silenced with money.



ILONA PFEFFER \*

**F**or many Europeans, Central Asia is still terra incognita. When one of the five former Soviet republics does make the headlines in the Western press, it is usually when something tragic happens, such as the bloody mass unrest in Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2022. Those interested can find out more about the Central Asian republics in their own press. But what are the conditions like for media professionals in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan?

Once the model student in terms of press freedom and - at least in the view of the West - the only democracy in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has taken a precarious turn in recent years. Although the small republic was ranked 72nd in the 2022 rating of Reporters Without Borders-a much higher level of freedom than the other Central Asian states-it is said to have "recognizable problems." ►



**Kazakhstan** ranked 122nd in the Reporters Without Borders ranking in 2022. According to Freedom House analyses, the vast majority of the media is controlled by the state and independent media is rare.

**Tajikistan** ranks 152nd in terms of press freedom. Journalists used to be able to fight back in the past, but nowadays they have given up. The situation is unfortunately very bad." The overall situation is also categorised as "difficult" by Reporters Without Borders.

► This is also confirmed by media professionals on the ground. Freedom of the press is the last bastion of democracy in Kyrgyzstan, which those in power are purposefully and consistently trying to destroy in order to maintain their own power, says Kyrgyz journalist Azat Ruziev. The state leadership prefers to intimidate its critics rather than listen to them, always feels it is in the right and is unwilling to listen to other points of view. This has happened under every president, and the current president is no exception; if anything, he is even more radical than his predecessors.

Sadyr Dzhaparov has been president of the Kyrgyz Republic since January 2021. This was preceded by violent mass unrest in October 2020, during which his supporters freed him from prison, where he was serving a sentence of 11 years and six months for organizing mass unrest and taking hostages. Dzhaparov and the chairman of the Committee for State Security, Kamchibek Tashiyev, are sacred figures in the regime, which has been classified as "authoritarian" by international organizations since 2021, who should not be criticized in any way, according to Kloop's journalist.

To silence any critics, they would be threatened, arrested, expelled from the country. The websites of unwelcome media such as the Kyrgyz branch of Radio Free Liberty are blocked. In addition, there would be hacker attacks and paid demonstrations, either with the knowledge of the president or on his orders. "If the powerful had nothing to hide, they could show their openness. But instead, all that comes is threats, intimidation, public arrests, foisting drugs, blackmail with sex videos, and similar things," Azat Ruziev states. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the entire post-Soviet space that has sentenced a journalist and human rights activist to life imprisonment.

#### **KAZAKHSTAN: SILENCED BY BULLYING OR MONEY**

In the other four Central Asian republics, press freedom is even worse. Although Kazakhstan improved slightly in Reporters Without Borders' rating, ranking 122nd in 2022, its handling of the initially peaceful protests in January 2022, which turned into bloody mass unrest, was a vivid example of the repressive methods used by the state to respond to unwelcome events.

All available instruments were used: Arrests, attacks, the use of firearms, torture, and the shutting down of mobile phone networks and the Internet. For days, people were almost completely cut off from each other and from the outside world.

The population received selected information about what was happening in the country from state television. According to official figures from the Ministry of the Interior, 18 journalists were among those arrested, but their number was probably higher in reality. Charges were brought against six of them, and twelve were released. Some of them experienced physical violence in the process. But it is not only in a state of emergency like this that the Kazakh state exercises strong control over what information is released to the public.

According to analyses by the organization Freedom House, most of the media is controlled by the state; independent media are rare. In addition, journalists' questions at press conferences are censored, and commercial media are not infrequently paid by the state to disseminate state propaganda. Comparatively prosperous Kazakhstan provides \$150 million annually for the "promotion" of the media, and this figure is rising. Thus, there has been no significant improvement in the area of freedom of opinion and freedom of the press, as some had hoped under Nazarbayev's successor Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

#### **TAJIKISTAN: PRESS SUPPRESSED, PEOPLE GET NEWS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA**

Tajikistan ranks 152nd in the Reporters Without Borders rating. Although this is an improvement of ten ranks compared to 2021, the state still exercises a high degree of control. For example, websites, news portals and social networks are regularly blocked, and large areas of the Internet and mobile phone networks are shut down to suppress criticism of the state. Independent media outlets are closed, and the few independent journalists are persecuted and intimidated. Faced with growing censorship and self-censorship in the media, the population is increasingly turning to social networks instead of the press for information. "The media are trying to avoid current affairs," says Marat Mamadzhoev, editor-in-chief of Cabar.asia in Tajikistan. "They are forbidden to write about an-



**In Uzbekistan**, during the presidency of Islam Karimov, many independent media organisations were closed down. In addition to state control, financial problems make journalism unattractive as a profession.

anything. While in the past they could somehow counteract it, fight it, nowadays they have just given up. The situation is very bad, unfortunately.” The overall situation is also rated as “difficult” in the Reporters Without Borders rating.

#### **UZBEKISTAN: NOT FREE AND WORSE IN ECONOMY**

Neighboring Uzbekistan fares somewhat better. With an improvement of 24 ranks over the previous year, it ranked 133rd in 2022. But here, too, most media are controlled by the state, and private media hold back on criticizing state structures for fear of being shut down otherwise. According to Reporters Without Borders, there are only about fifteen media houses that provide quality reporting, with some of them, such as the Fergana news agency, are based abroad. Many independent media outlets have been closed or blocked during Islam Karimov’s presidency. In addition to state control, it is the lack of financial resources that poses major problems for media houses and makes journalism as a profession unattractive.

#### **TURKMENISTAN: THE SITUATION IS SO SERIOUS, EVEN FACEBOOK IS BANNED!**

“Very serious” is the situation in Turkmenistan, according to Reporters Without Borders. Only Iran, Eritrea and North Korea fared worse in 2022. Facebook, Twitter, the Russian Facebook counterpart Vkontakte, YouTube, and all independent media are blocked in Turkmenistan. As one Turkmen journalist writes, the existing press in Turkmenistan fulfills solely the function of a state propaganda organ.

The government’s successes are praised, and recordings of festive openings by the president are disseminated. There is no bad news. Young journalists are trained to do just that, and not to represent the interests of the population or to criticize the government. As a de facto state organ, the press is also in close contact with power. Those who stand out as particularly useful can hope to make a career for themselves. Why should one expose oneself to the danger of being

banned or imprisoned - or worse - for one’s journalistic activities? Nevertheless, a few Turkmen are brave enough to report on the country’s grievances for foreign media outlets such as Radio Free Liberty’s Turkmen branch, Radio Azatlyk. For the most part, these are not professional journalists, but activists and citizen journalists. This does not make their efforts any less courageous, but it does affect the quality of their reporting. A differentiated picture of what is actually happening in the isolated country is therefore not possible.

Because of the constant danger to life and limb, these citizen journalists work in secret and use pseudonyms. Those who do get into the secret services’ net are tried on false charges and sentenced to long prison terms. Not infrequently, journalists are subjected to physical and psychological pressure. And some disappear without a trace or die under unexplained circumstances, like Annamurad Bugayev, a reporter for Radio Azatlyk. Even ordinary citizens who have spoken to the foreign media, using their real names, about grievances in the country are not seldom the target of state repression. Under Serdar Berdimuhamedov, who succeeded his father as president of Turkmenistan in 2022, one need not hope for any positive changes in terms of press freedom; on the contrary.

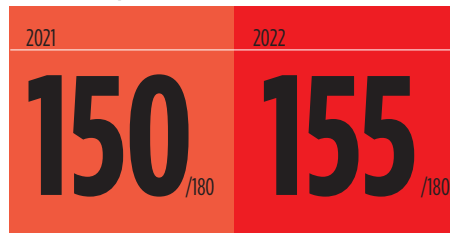
Despite improvements in Reporters Without Borders’ rating, press freedom throughout the region remains at a deplorably poor level. In a panel of experts at Cabar.asia, participants therefore called on politicians in the republics to work to strengthen an independent press, which they consider a basic prerequisite for democracy. In their view, the media throughout the region must move closer together to collectively protect their interests. They should also strive for financial independence and support new and promising media projects. Last but not least, the Central Asian media should learn from countries where such a strengthening of press freedom has been achieved under similar conditions. ■

*\* Ilona Pfeffer is a Media Expert | Humanitarian Journalism Trainer | Journalist*

“Very serious” is the situation in **Turkmenistan**, according to Reporters Without Borders. Only Iran, Eritrea and North Korea fared worse in 2022. Facebook, Twitter, the Russian Facebook counterpart Vkontakte, YouTube, and all independent media are blocked in Turkmenistan.



Russia ranks in press freedom



Source: Reporters without Borders

# CANNOT CALL IT A WAR

Prison sentences of up to 15 years for choosing the wrong words, hundreds of exiled journalists and strict censorship on the Internet: Press freedom in the country has been largely abolished since Russia's aggression in Ukraine. But the Kremlin could expand the crackdown even further.



BIRGER SCHÜTZ \*

**A** few hours after Russia's attack on Ukraine, an open letter appeared on the Internet. "War is not and never will be the right way to solve problems." It was signed by more than 70 Russian journalists. Other free media workers analysed the situation in a similar way. "War is madness" was the headline of the respected newspaper Nowaja Gaseta. It emphasised that the Ukrainian people are not the enemy. Prominent journalists signed open calls against the war, and many others criticised it on social media. However, these few reactions were largely ineffective. The government stepped up its repression of journalists.

The flow of information was completely controlled and the dominant view of the war was determined by the state. On the first day of the attack, Roskomnadsor, the state organisation responsible for controlling the media, issued a warning. It pointed out that only information from official sources could be used in reporting on the war. It was forbidden to use words like "attack", "war", "invasion". It was a "special operation". Anyone who broke the rules was penalised.

On the fifth day after the start of the invasion, the authorities blocked access to two of the most important figures in the independent media. These were the





PHOTO: NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA / AFP

internet TV channels “Doschd” and “Echo Moskwy”. This decision caused widespread concern. “Nowaya Gaseta” also suspended its reporting for a month.

The Duma, the Russian parliament, dealt the biggest blow to press freedom on 4 March 2022. It approved two laws. These laws provided for prison sentences of up to 15 years for the owners of news reports that allegedly gave false information about the military or for those accused of discrediting the military. The laws laid the foundations for military censorship. Any news that differed from the official statements of the Ministry of Defence was considered “fake news” and subject to punishment.

Censorship on the internet was also toughened. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were shut down in March and access to many addresses was blocked. Only Telegram and YouTube remained as independent sources of information. The new laws led to a mass exodus of Russian media workers. According to estimates, 30 news centres and over a thousand journalists have been forced to leave Russia. Most of them are now practising their profession in countries such as Georgia, Latvia and the Netherlands.

The only news organisations left in the country are the propaganda channels, the newspapers of oligarchs close to the regime and a number of private regional media outlets. These either impose strict censorship on themselves or do not publish any news about the war. However, there are a

few examples, such as the online newspaper “Ljudi Baikala” from Irkutsk, Siberia. This organisation is trying to overcome the censorship by publishing reports on the economic and social consequences of the war on a regional scale.

However, despite the toughening of the laws, the number of journalists imprisoned in Russia remains relatively low. Seven journalists have been arrested since the war broke out and are currently in prison. 14 journalists have been released. But these developments are no cause for relief – quite the opposite. The Kremlin has not yet even needed to use most of its repressive tools to kill independent journalism in the country. It may therefore resort to more radical methods in the fight against press freedom. For example, mass arrests or, as has been discussed for months, a complete blocking of YouTube and a Belarusian style of internet censorship. In this neighbouring country, the use of VPN services or subscriptions to channels considered extremist are also punishable by criminal sanctions. ■

*\* Birger Schütz is press officer for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia at Reporters Without Borders (RSF). He studied political science, modern history and Russian studies in Greifswald and Irkutsk and worked as a reporter for the daily newspaper “Nordkurier”. He then worked for 2.5 years as a correspondent for the “Moskauer Deutsche Zeitung” in the Russian capital and later as Russia correspondent for the daily “Neues Deutschland”.*





PHOTO: LOIC VENCE / AFP

In 2012, Reporters Without Borders activists organised a protest in Paris to denounce the imprisonment of journalists in Iran. Since then, conditions have worsened for journalists in Iran.

## Being a journalist in Iran means holding the “Death rope” in your hands

# MOST DANGEROUS PROFESSION:

# JOURNALISM

Iranian activist and engineer Azadeh Dindar talked about journalism in her country. As you can imagine, the most dangerous profession in the country is journalism and publishing. Both the government and the people need journalists to ensure the continuity of the regime and to take back their freedoms. and journalists need their safety...



**AZADEH DINDAR \***

**D**ictators need slaves bound to the state for unlimited control and obedience. These slaves are usually unconscious people with extremely radical beliefs, weak in terms of thinking. Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards depict examples of this slavery. When these people are given weapons, the consequences can end in disaster. They take on either teacher or director duties in schools. It is very important for the state that they carry the

identity of the Revolutionary Guard.

The Iranian regime is penetrating our lives with the help of tools such as social media, television, newspapers, books, pictures and music. In the past, even watching videos was forbidden during the Iran-Iraq war, so various methods were used to store tapes in houses with video devices. At that time, it was also forbidden to play chess, for men to wear T-shirts, for women to have their hair uncovered and to wear tight trousers. Many of these bans are still in place, and I want to tell you how they have taken our lives captive.

The regime's books are designed more to manipulate people than to educate. It is taught to destroy the values you believe in, to ensure that you are connected to the state and its leader. People from the background, who have great power in society, have penetrated into all areas of the state. They want Iranians to live under the full control of the state.



When I was watching TV as a child, there was a woman who presented children's programs. Cartoons Old cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, Pinocchio, Sinbad, Tusubasa were shown. They were all censored. In foreign films, women used to be censored if they wore short sleeves or low-cut. The scenes in which the songs were sung were censored and removed without explanation.

In the family scenes in Iranian films, girls hug their mothers and boys hug their fathers. It is forbidden to touch hands. It is forbidden to show the wrists of female cooks in cooking programs. The songs usually consist of martyrs, revolution or religious songs. You can't hear the names of English brands on TV. They use sadness as a method of controlling everyone's subconscious by imposing it. Dictators aim to control people more easily by preventing the hope.

Children used to wear white headscarves and dark navy blue coats in schools in the 90s. The walls were colorless. There were black-colored inscriptions, pictures of martyrs, verses and words of Khomeini. Pictures of Khomeini and Khamenei are hung all over the school. It was forbidden to use colored pencils in schools. There were not many colorful chapters in the books. In the books, a girl did not play with a boy, she could only play with girls.

In these teachings, children were told that happiness was a bad thing. The school used to tell the story of a tortured family. During inspections of public schools, it is checked whether children are really crying or not. Especially when the month of Muharram begins, students are asked to draw painful pictures.

#### **WAYS TO BECOME AN ACCEPTABLE JOURNALIST**

Secondary schools are more simple and colorless. There is nothing hanging on the walls either. It was forbidden to use mirrors and wear makeup. School newspapers were required to emphasise issues praising the regime. If our articles were liked, they would direct us to do journalism or to television.

In this way, journalist candidates who start university are checked from one hand. The government loves these journalists very much. They are aware that they will direct the public with the news they make by brainwashing them. These people earn decent because of their pro-regime news. If this kind of journalist earns a lot of money, there is a big problem.

Some journalists, in addition to their professions, extend helping hands to people in need. But these journalists have started to be subjected to a lot of pressure. However, they were publishing their articles in a way that would not harm the state within the framework of the laws.

Journalist Niloufer published only pictures to clarify the Mehsa Emini incident that put Iran on the world agenda. She was touted as a spy for announcing the facts to the world.

#### **JOURNALIST OR INTELLIGENCE?**

Most of the journalists who want to do interviews in Iran are connected with intelligence. You should answer the questions by knowing whether the person you are dealing with is a journalist or an intelligence officer. If you make oppositional statements, you will be detained.

When journalists tell the truth, they are jailed or executed. Being a journalist in Iran means holding the 'death rope' in your hands. Books are censored. An author cannot publish his books without the approval of the state. Both writing and publishing are the most dangerous professions in Iran.

Foreign words are not published in Iranian newspapers. Traces of Islamic culture should be used in publishing. Young journalists are obliged to participate in the events organized by the state. Most journalists should have a Mullah friend as a reference. This is an incident specific only to Iran.

#### **ANCIENT THEN MUM'S YOUTH**

There are big differences between my mother's youth and my youth. During elementary school, I used to look at my mother's pictures and think that the period I lived in was still in the past. My father brought a satellite TV and we used to watch the Turkish music channel. We would feel ourselves in a completely different world. It was forbidden to watch television at that time. If you got caught, you would be jailed. That would have scared us. But thanks to television, we used to see that the world was normal, only we were different.

We are starting to see what is happening in the world now. We are learning more about different cultures, lifestyles and people. This has made me a tolerant, understanding person. I started to see both the beautiful and challenging aspects of life.

The Iranian people were not surprised at all when the Taliban began to increase its pressure on the bans imposed in Afghanistan, and especially on women. Because we have been living with these bans for years. - State administrators act brainwashed when implementing bans. This has nothing to do with Islam. Most people know where Iran is, and those who don't already found out after the murder of Mehsa Emini.

No matter how much we live under oppression, we should not lose our faith in freedom. I believe that one day we will achieve our freedom and the persecutions we have experienced will come to an end. We will not give up women's basic human rights such as the right to education, freedom of thought and expression. By fighting together, we can build a future in which freedom prevails in the world. The most important thing on this path is that we don't lose hope by supporting each other. ■

*\* Azadeh Dindar lives outside Iran as a human rights defender and electrical engineer.*

López Obrador's Six-Year Term: The Gravest Threat to Press Freedom in Mexico

# ACCURATE REPORTING IN MEXICO IS LIKE COMMITTING SUICIDE

The six-year presidency of the self-described leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador, in office until 2024, has been the deadliest period for press freedom in Mexican history.



VANIA PIGEONUTT \*

**T**he six-year presidential term of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who identifies as a leftist and is currently in office from 2018–2024, is proving to be the most lethal period for press freedom in the history of Mexico.

Being a journalist in Mexico has tragically become synonymous with a death sentence, with 37 colleagues losing their lives over the past four years. 2022 was the worst year yet, as 12 journalists were murdered. This number is alarming, especially in a country with an average of 100 homicides per day, and every 14 hours, a journalist is assaulted.

Article 19, a human rights organization dedicated to defending the freedom of expression and press, reported 507 cases of aggression against journalists in 2017, which rose to 544 in 2018, 609 in 2019, 692 in 2020, and 644 in 2021. These figures represent an 85% increase during López Obrador's six-year term. Moreover, there is a clear pattern of polarization and confrontation towards journalists who dare to criticize the government in López Obrador's daily morning conference, known as "La mañanera," broadcast nationwide via streaming.

Most of the aggressions against journalists come from public officials and security forces embroiled in criminal violence and impunity. This dangerous climate makes it virtually impossible for journalists to operate in areas beyond the big cities, such as indigenous regions and communities where marijuana and poppy are grown. Kidnappings and extortion have become more prevalent as well.

The murder of a journalist is just one of many crimes that fall under a wide range of criminal activity, such as femicide, forced disappearance, displacement, and the killing of human rights activists. In most cases, these murders and disappearances go unpunished; Article 19 reports that 99.3% of cases remain unresolved.

The figures for attacks and murders against journalists vary depending on the organization that measures them. The precarious nature of employment in Mexico means that not all of the murdered individuals are considered journalists, as many of them combine their professions with other jobs. Additionally, the government openly discredits and disregards the efforts of journalists.

The Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), an organization of owners, editors, and directors of newspapers, periodicals, and news agencies of the Americas, expressed concern in late 2022 that of the 40 journalists murdered in the continent, 20 were killed in Mexico. Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil are also experiencing similar levels of violence against journalists in Latin America.

In the World Press Freedom Index 2022 compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Mexico's standing is alarmingly low, ranking 127th out of 180 countries evaluated. This classification places Mexico among the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to carry out their work, not only in the Americas but globally, with a ranking worse than that of Ukraine (106th), despite the ongoing war with Russia (155th) in the country.

According to the same index, anti-democratic or dictatorial countries are ranked not far behind Mexico, where freedom of expression is severely restricted and embroiled in years of conflict. Iran is placed in the 178th position, China in 175th, Palestine in 170th, and Türkiye in 149th.

In addition to the cases highlighted by Article 19, there have been 157 murders related to journalistic work from 2000 until today. Within this group, 145 were men, and 12 were women. This grim statistic is accompanied by 30 cases of forced disappearances, with many linked to corruption.

Certain states, such as Veracruz, have experienced a staggering 31 cases of journalists being murdered over the past 22 years. Of these murders, 47 occurred during the previous term of President Enrique Peña Nieto (center-right), while 37 have been documented during the current term of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Additionally, Guerrero, a southern state in Mexico, was the site of the mass disappearance of 43 teacher education students in 2014, with 15 journalists also falling victim to violence in the same period.

## JOURNALISTS' FATE

On January 31, 2022, Armando Linares López, the director of the regional media Monitor Michoacán, publicly denounced the murder of his colleague Roberto Toledo and demanded justice. This accu-





sation was made from the TV studio belonging to his news outlet. Tragically, only 43 days later, on March 16, Armando himself was also murdered, and both cases remain unsolved.

This event occurred in the western state of Michoacán, one of the most militarized areas of Mexico, and has a high prevalence of armed civilian groups. People in this area arm themselves for self-defense against criminal groups, as federal operations are ineffective. The violence displaced around 20 individuals and their families, who were forced to flee their homes to preserve their lives.

Armando's murder was the eighth targeting a journalist in 2022, with at least three more to follow. January of that year was a particularly lethal month. José Luis Gamboa Arenas was murdered in Veracruz, Margarito Martínez Esquivel and Lourdes Maldonado in Tijuana, Baja California, a state bordering the United States, and Roberto in the municipality of Zitácuaro, Michoacán.

Joel Vera Terrazas, one of the survivors of the Monitor Michoacán case, states that everything has changed in the region, which borders violent and armed states such as Guerrero and the State of Mexico, and not for the better. "You feel like you lose your identity. Even if you can feel safe, even if you are in a place where you cannot be identified, you cannot practice your profession fully," he says.

This media outlet publicly exposed the corruption of local politicians and Attorney General's Office members responsible for investigating crimes. According to Terrazas' criminal theory of the case, "the corrupt politicians, whose illicit enrichment we denounce, are colluding with local drug trafficking groups, using each other to displace, terrorize, and murder the population."

On December 15, 2022, Ciro Gómez Leyva, one of Mexico's most renowned television hosts, was targeted in a violent attack. Shooters fired at his armored car.

Unlike the cases of local journalists murdered, this incident occurred in Mexico City, the country's capital. The local Security Secretariat launched an operation that led to the arrest of 11 individuals linked to the attack and the apprehension of the perpetrator. However, no significant progress has been made in the other cases.

### LOW WAGE, NO GUARANTEE

Before being disappeared or were murdered, Mexican journalists faced a host of challenges, including the precarious nature of their profession, with some local media outlets paying as little as \$200 per month. Freelancers face even more significant difficulties; there are months when they cannot sell a single article or photograph. They are also subjected to stalking by politicians who respond to criticism with aggression, persecution, and harassment.

According to Dalia Martínez, director of Sol de Morelia, a state publication in Michoacán, hyperlocal journalists are the most neglected and poorly compensated. Increasingly, more areas are being classified as zones of silence, where journalists cannot report on events due to the high level of danger.

"They are deserted villages with abandoned crops, where people are compelled to leave their belongings behind every day. It is impossible to survive there, let alone work as a journalist," she decries. She has collaborated with media outlets such as The New York Times, which equip their reporters with satellite phones, a luxury she cannot afford to provide for her team.

In an era where the critical role of journalism in safeguarding democracy cannot be overstated, it is unconscionable that the loss of a journalist's life is relegated to an insignificant event. The pervasive demonization of the press and the administration's overt propagation of hostility and aggression have led to a disturbingly diminished public appreciation for the dangers those in the field face. ■

*\* As a journalist for 13 years, Vania Pigenutt has covered tragedies that are part of Mexican history, such as the disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa. She founded [www.mataranadie.com](http://www.mataranadie.com) and the Guerrero-based web portal Amapola in memory of murdered and disappeared journalists. Her news has been published outside Mexico in foreign media such as The New York Times and ViceNews. In 2015 and 2021 she won the Walter Reuter German journalism prize. She is currently working in Germany on a research project on freedom of expression offences with a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.*

There is no room for complacency in the fight for media freedom

# THE WORLD JOURNALISTS

## A DYING SPECIE



AYANDA HOLO \*

**A**lthough enshrined in the Constitution, Freedom of speech, Freedom of expression, and press freedom in South Africa must be constantly reaffirmed and strengthened by the people of the republic, the institutions of government, civil society, the judiciary, business, media practitioners, labour movements, and ordinary citizens.

Section 16 (1) of South Africa's Constitution should become a standard clause for every constitution in the World. This apex law in our country states that everyone has the right to Freedom of expression, which includes Freedom of the press and other media; Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; Freedom of artistic creativity; and academic Freedom and Freedom of scientific research.

Section 16 is emphatic about the limitation to Freedom of expression: "The right in subsection (1) does not extend to propaganda for war; incitement of imminent violence; or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm..."

All who reside in the republic widely enjoy Freedom of expression and of the press, whether through robust debates in our parliament, legislatures, and councils or during engagements at the Thusong Service Centre in Nyanga East. The fact that all of us are free to engage and debate on critical issues such as just energy transitions, transparency in governance, and land redistribution is a clear testimony of a democratic society in conversation.

South Africa's commitment to Freedom of expression and the media stands as a beacon and

our country attracts and hosts international media houses from all parts of the globe, who in turn enrich the culture of Free Media.

### NEW MEDIA RENOVATED THE PRESS CULTURE

Social media and citizen journalism have also enhanced the culture and deepened democracy with a plurality of voices. The democratic era has shown the free press's vital role in promoting good governance. As an open and transparent society, South Africa strives to increase media access and provide credible information that helps people make decisions and improve their lives.

As a member of the globe, we face the reality that powerful media voices and social media platforms shape daily conversations globally. These are owned mainly by pressure groups who continue to have their vision and version of Africa, not the Africa we want and need.

As Journalists around the World, we need to use our voices and participate in the global governance systems toward new reforms. We ought to emphasise the need for strengthened and equitable rules-based multilateral systems to give genuine meaning to the Freedom of expression and the plurality of diverse media voices. We should also continue to collaborate with global media practitioners on the role of the media in strengthening and reforming the global multilateral system.

As media practitioners, we have the power to contribute to a better world when we genuinely aim to reduce conflicts by expressing ideas that improve debates, encourage dialogues that put people



Palestinian women stand in front of a mural in the occupied West Bank, part of an art exhibition in memory of the murdered Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh.



PHOTO: RONALDO SCHEMIDT / AFP

first and ensure tolerance of different views. The dangerous challenges journalists face in some countries constitute a significant concern that needs attention from world leaders.

We should all condemn the killing of the journalist Jeff German in Las Vegas (Nevada, USA) on 3 September. The shooting and brutal killing of Abu Akleh from Al Jazeera, and the killing of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation video editor Betty Barasa. These are some recently reported names by the UNESCO observatory of killed journalists.

There will never be true freedom of speech until we can bring life to Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Freedom of Expression. Every country needs to work harder to put protections in place and to ensure that they are upheld.

There is no point in calling your country a democracy when there is an evident lack of balanced, reliable, and trustworthy information that enhances social cohesion, safety, and security.

An independent media sector can indeed assist in building good governance. However, the media can elevate its position to play a critical role in advocating for human development and a just world where leaders respect and put people first.

We ought to question whether our media

freedoms are used effectively enough to hold world leaders accountable to citizens. Is the power we have enough to push world leaders to reduce conflict and hunger?

Can we influence the course of world events and create a new world order where all countries are equal before international laws?

How do we encourage the openness of the mind and tolerate others who see the future of the World differently from us?

These and many other similar questions will define the role of the media and Freedom of speech and expression in years to come. Now more than ever, our voices and thoughts must be used to set the agenda and ensure a better tomorrow for all. ■

## WHO IS AYANDA HOLO?

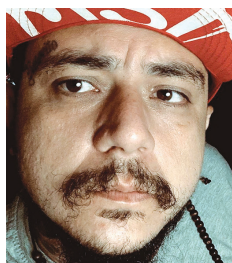
Ayanda Holo is a journalist from Nyanga East in Cape Town. A survivor of Apartheid (the racist regime in South Africa from 1948 to 1994), he is an activist and senior public servant with advanced expertise in International Media Relations and Public Administration. Former spokesperson for the Department of Communications and former adviser to the Deputy Minister of Communications in South Africa. Holo is a contributing writer to several African publications including the Daily Nation in Kenya, Cape Argus and Daily Post of Nigeria. He was the organiser of the African Communications Week in South Africa and curator of the Freedom Park Heritage site and Ubuntu Music Festival in Pretoria.





# 22 YEARS OF STRUGGLE AGAINST THE STATE THAT BLINDED HIM

After 22 years, Alex Silveira – a Brazilian photographer who was shot in the face with rubber ammunition while covering a teachers' demonstration – won the State of São Paulo in the Federal Supreme Court, but, according to him, the fight is not over yet!



LUCAS SIQUEIRA



Alex Silveira's fight began on May 18, 2000, when he received coverage of a teachers' demonstration on Avenida Paulista as part of the newspaper *Agora São Paulo*. On that day, the state government enlisted cavalry and shock troops of the Military Police to confront and disperse the demonstrators. In the confrontation between the MP and the approximately 20,000 civil servants, Alex, who was documenting the incident with other journalists, was startled by the explosion of a gas bomb, when he looked back, with the intention of identifying who had shot, he got shot in the face. The attack took away the vision of the photojournalist's left eye, as for his

right eye, his vision does not correspond to 10% due to a congenital problem. Unable to work as a photojournalist, Alex waged a judicial war against the State of São Paulo.

**LS:** In 2008, the first instance of the Court of Justice of São Paulo (Tribunal de Justiça de São Paulo - TJSP) condemned the State for moral damages, being denied material damages. In 2014, the court overturned the decision finding you solely at fault for your injury; the rapporteur for the case at the TJSP, Abreu Amadei, claimed that you were the only one to blame for being shot in the eye, according to his words "The perpetrator placed himself in a frame in which it can be said that he was solely to blame for the regrettable episode which was a victim of". Finally, in June 2021, now ultimately, the Federal Supreme Court again condemned the State to indemnify you. How do you feel after 22 years of fighting the state?

**AS:** I feel relief that this hell is ending. It's like after 22 years, someone came along and took an anvil out of my back. What made me the happiest was that this situation generated my greatest contribution to the profession,



like it or not, my case created a jurisprudence, at least in the Brazilian context. This makes me very happy, as I now know that when it happens again, the professional will not have to wait as long as I did and their situation can be resolved in the first instance. Today I feel that my social duty to the profession has been fulfilled.

#### POLICE HURTS, INJUSTICE KILLS

**LS: You have received your first lifetime indemnity payments (material damage), which you are appealing for review of values; still need to receive the retroactive since the date of the accident and also the compensation for physical and moral damages stipulated by the STF. Considering all this, what do you have to say about Brazilian justice?**

AS: The police hurt you, but it is the Brazilian justice that massacres you. The intricacies of justice, the way it is done, the delay, all of this is done with absurd cruelty. Think, what is it like for a photographer to lose his sight? "I heard that what they were going to pay me was reparation. Stop to think, I'm 52 years old, 40% of my life, that's what little vision I have left! Assuming that I had already received everything and that I was satisfied, I can say that this is not reparation. Man, I have difficulties at school, I can't see the board, I feel back pain from bending over my notebooks. I don't see people a meter away, I only see shapes, shadows and light; there is no more clarity. So, there's no way to price this, no amount that justice determines can be called reparation, and worse than that, is there any way you can price 22 years of waiting? — What I am receiving, or what I still have to receive, is "small rubbish" for what they did to me, but it is what I have and what justice has determined. There is no price, no reparation for what happened to me.

**LS: Since your attack, has anything changed in the way the police and the state operate against protesters and media professionals?**

AS: Nothing has changed! Nothing! That's why I think it's important that compensation be painful for the state. 22 years ago this happened to me, then to Sérgio Silva, a little while ago to another group, including two people from Pernambuco who did not even participate in any manifestation. The approach has not changed, because the system has not changed, so the "fine" has to arrive, and not be significant and fair, otherwise nothing will ever change.

**LS: Earlier, we had a conversation on the Monitor do Oriente channel with you, Sérgio Silva (who lost his sight in the 2013 demonstrations) and Muath Armaneh (a Palestinian who lost his eye in a demonstration in the occupied West Bank, in 2019), all, victims of the same type of attack. Do you think that, even after more than two decades, your case can influence the course of other cases or even the future of the police approach?**

AS: Taking into account that the media professional is there



## I RECEIVED AWARDS FOR BEING BLINDED FOR BEING SHOT

**Despite already receiving the pension, you still have a few months to struggle to recalculate the amounts and receive the compensation stipulated by the STF. Do you think that justice has been done?**

In a way! I believe that after 22 years, I emerged victorious and the victory is also for the profession and for democracy, but I think it is important to remember that this is not over. — I received the Vladimir Herzog award, which is a journalism award for human rights, however, if humanity were at least right, this award should not even exist. Look at the absurdity, I received an award for being shot, blinded and fighting the state for 22 years. Today, talking about these cases, and always going back, is a way of forcing changes, as the State works to make you lose hope and give up. That is why, after 22 years, it is important not to stop talking about these violations, not only for the professional class, but also for the defense of our democracy. In that regard, in a very cluttered way, but justice has been done. I hope that the jurisprudence that emerged with my case can benefit others, such as the case of my friend Sérgio Silva.

working as much as the police, I think this is absurd for several reasons. This all shows that a civilian is not worth "shit" to the State. — Press professionals are easy to identify, shooting a photographer in the face, a person who works with the eye, this seems to me like revenge! — They must think, "so you're here registering what I'm doing with the people," I don't know if those are the words, but that's what it seems to me. That's why I always fought and with all my stubbornness I went to the last consequences, because I think that the "fine" should be a "thwack" that makes the State think before authorizing the police to shoot at journalists, teachers, students or any type of demonstrator, even because the order comes from above, or from the Secretary of Security or the Governor. Note that I am not even questioning the use of these weapons, I am questioning the lack of technical and psychological preparation for their use in accordance with the technical norms stipulated for their handling; and of course, impunity when these crimes are committed. ►

## ► HOLINESS GIVEN TO POLITICS

**LS: What needs to change in Brazil so that attacks like these are just dark marks from our past?**

AS: Many things need to change in Brazil, one of them is to stop treating politics as sanctity! We have to see that they are just employees. Like now that there are people on the streets asking for military intervention because the election didn't go as they wanted, nobody did any "shit" about it! "People have lost heart transplants because of it. Now, when teachers get together to demand their rights, all this shit happens! Part of this is our fault, that we allowed this to happen.

**LS: We Brazilians, even with the ideological change brought about by the last elections, ended up inheriting problems from the past administration, such as facilitating the carrying of weapons. What do you, who were blinded after being hit by ammunition considered "non-lethal", have to say about it?**

AS: I am completely against it! We live in an extremely violent society. Look at that crazy woman (Carla Zambelli), who went parading down the street putting a gun in someone's face, and there's still the fact that the guy was black, if it was me or you, she wouldn't have done it. - Just imagine it! Look at Roberto Jefferson, the guy was trapped at

home and shot at the Federal Police, that guy had a rifle and a grenade, and he used it against the FP! That's the society we live in, we don't live in Canada where the gun violence numbers are completely different.

**LS: You mentioned the Bolsonaroist protesters who closed roads and are now camped out in front of barracks in several cities. How do you evaluate the approach of the police and the State towards these demonstrators?**

AS: Man, they're there to join the barbecue and make sure nothing happens to these people. This is leadership, there are people who have reached the point of understanding that the police belong to the government and not to the State! Look at the inversion of values. This is utter insanity! There are some who keep calling Lula a thief, talking about communism, but they don't stop to think that there's a bunch of "sons of a b\*tch" doing Heil Hitler in Santa Catarina. Then the councilwoman who denounces this is running the risk of being "impeached"! Brazil is becoming the biggest nazifascist corral in the world! - It's obvious that these guys were already there, but a clueless, unprepared and bewildered person arrived to set an example, and everything went downhill! This is the inversion of values. ■



## EYES COVERED FOR SUPPORT

Alex Silveira's case mobilized several solidarity campaigns and repudiation of violence against press professionals. In 2014, when the TJSP declared Alex solely guilty of being shot in the face, journalists and photographers united in protest; they covered one eye during a work day.

In 2021, a letter signed by more than 400 people was sent to the Federal Court of Justice (Supremo Tribunal Federal - STF) highlighting the impor-

tance of the case for guaranteeing fundamental rights. Signed by journalists, artists, civil society organizations and photographers, including award-winning professionals such as Sebastião Salgado, Mauricio Lima, Lalo de Almeida, Vitor Moriyana, Araquém Alcântara, Jorge Araujo and Rosa Gauditano, the joint letter also highlights the role of security forces public during demonstrations and ask the STF to correct the injustices in the Alex Silveira case.



BEING A WOMAN IN AFGHANISTAN FROM THE PEN OF A FEMALE JOURNALIST...

# I AM IMPRISONED IN THE CORNER OF THE HOUSE LIKE A CRIMINAL

BARFEEN GÜL \*

I stare at the ceiling for hours, there is nothing in it, I remain dumbfounded. I look at myself in the mirror. I see nothing but melt falling to the ground. Eyes that are exhausted from severe insomnia. Lips that have been cracked for days. All I see on my face is pain and despair. I come back to my room, I think so much that I think that I am the only corpse left. The flesh of my body is decreasing day by day. I can't do the smallest thing for myself. I suffer.

I think about the hard days when I went to school with thirsty lips and hungry stomach, I studied day and night to succeed in the best public university. I studied with problems like lack of money. However, it doesn't matter to me. The only thing that matters to me is NOW.

## SURVIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

My survival is in Afghanistan. Here I am imprisoned and I can't even go out alone for a moment. For days, I have been dealing with mental problems like a prisoner at home. The Taliban took my human rights, they took my freedom, and finally they took my hopes and dreams away.

I am a Hazara girl. With the arrival of the Taliban in Afghanistan, my level of vulnerability has increased. I grew up with a lot of insults and humiliation in the Afghan society. Many times, educational centers, mosques, hospitals, sports clubs were attacked by the Taliban. They killed, insulted and humiliated our ethnic group. They did not allow us to study and to work. I am more vulnerable than a Tajik and Pashtun girl in Afghanistan, I believe.

My father and mother grew up illiterate. My father had to work day and night for a piece of bread in his childhood. He could not study. My mother also grew up illiterate, in a remote district deprived of education and got married there. In order to prevent us from growing up illiterate, my mother brought us up with a thousand economic and social problems to sent us to study.

I have suffered hardships and sleeplessness during the years of study and preparing for the entrance exam so that I could study and at least become someone for myself and my family. Now that the Taliban have closed the gates of universities and work to me and thousands of girls like me, I see my future full of darkness. My mother and me: what is our sin? We do not deserve the smallest priority and humanity.

I am addressing you in Europe and the countries of the world, where you value women more. Your men are not like the Taliban. All their wives and daughters are studying and working in Europe. They have all rights. I am addressing you. Put yourself in the place of your daughters. Do you forbid your daughters to study and work? We are under psychological torture in Afghanistan.

I think about the hard days when I went to school with thirsty lips and hungry stomach, I studied day and night to succeed in the best public university. I studied with problems like lack of money. However, it doesn't matter to me. The only thing that matters to me is NOW.

I don't bother how many meetings the UN holds a day, a week, a month on the situation of women in Afghanistan. I don't care how concerned the UN is about us. What matters to me is that action be taken. That there has been no change in the status of women in Afghanistan.

Since two years, all the girls of my country, including myself, have suffered heavily psychologically. Because of this Taliban, terrorists, I cannot work. My sister, who is in the 11th grade, cannot study. For thousands of sisters who cannot go to school, cannot work. With the new year coming, we hope that the Taliban would open the gates of schools and universities to girls. But it seems again that they will only open them to boys.

## WORLD IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT AFGHAN WOMEN

For days, I am imprisoned in the corner of the house like a criminal. What language should I use to express my situation so that you get aware? Don't you see us suffering? Do you support women? Why are you so indifferent to the women of Afghanistan?

We are commemorating 8th March. A day that we should not be congratulated for. Because we do not have the slightest rights. We women in Afghanistan die every day, sometimes from despair, sometimes from poverty. Imagine: in this hard cold winter, we had to heat our houses and find a piece of bread. Do you know about the inside of our houses? Do you know what problem we are dealing with? A full-scale disaster is happening in Afghanistan. Aren't we humans?

I and the girls of my country have always been victims of the governments. The Taliban is alien to all knowledge and science, they violate the law and regulations. The Taliban sees women as a sin. We have no expectations from the Taliban. They are alien to all civilization and the system.

Despite of all these injustices, I dream of studying and working, and like thousands of girls in my country, we are in daily hope. Besides being upset with Europe, I say: don't leave us alone. ■

*\* Journalist Barfeen Gul still lives in Kabul. Its name was also changed to a pseudonym for security reasons.*

After coming to power, the Taliban promised that the media would be free and independent. However, a month later, the Taliban, who strictly monitored and censored journalists and the media, shelved media freedom.



# JOURNALISM IS ALMOST DEAD IN AFGHANISTAN



**SOHRAB OMAR** \*

**A**fghanistan has become an increasingly hostile place for journalists, with the current regime cracking down on press freedom. Under the Taliban, it's harder than ever to be an Afghan journalist. We don't know where the Taliban's red lines are. Many have stopped working for fear of retribution, violent assaults and arbitrary detentions.

The Taliban have demonstrated no tolerance for the media and are believed responsible for the vast majority of recent attacks on journalists,

On August 5, 2022, I and my German colleague were detained by the Taliban, in the scene where Al-Qaeda leader Aiman Alzawahiri was killed by the U.S. airstrike despite having permission from Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cover news stories in the country.

As we came closer to the site, on a public street in the center of Kabul, both have been detained by the Taliban Intelligence forces (GDI). The agents locked us up in a container for almost one hour, threatened us and asked many questions about our activities.

The detention occurred shortly after we approached the scene where Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was reportedly killed by U.S. drone.

They checked our journalistic work permits, our cell phones and note pads. After one hour they released us and told us, never to come back, otherwise this would have severe consequences.

We were asked a range of personal questions by the Taliban including the purpose of our appearance in the area where Aiman Alzawahiri was killed by the U.S. airstrike.



## WE LIVE IN FEAR OF ARREST AT ANY TIME

During the detention, I and my German colleague experienced significant emotional trauma as a result of the custody, which lasted some hours.

Actually, The Taliban imprisoned me on the charge of “espionage” for the foreigners.

I did not expect to face troubles while reporting and covering stories in Kabul since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. and had attended multiple press conferences and briefings prior to the incident.

In fact, Taliban were attempting to prevent coverage of the killing of Al-Zawahiri.

In Afghanistan, increasingly strict media censorship under Taliban rule has been accompanied by a rising number of incidents of violence against journalists.

On July 22, Australian reporter Lynne O'Donnell was threatened by Taliban intelligence agents and forced to retract stories written during her visit to Afghanistan.

I was followed by agents on various occasions afterwards. A bit more than two weeks later, was followed and tracked by a suspicious Taliban-owned vehicle when he was on my way home late at night.

As an Afghan journalist, I face uncertain future under the Taliban regime. I live in fear of being detained by the Taliban for my 6-year journalistic works.

A report by media watchdogs last month confirms that Afghanistan has lost nearly 40 percent of its media outlets and just under 60 per cent of its journalists since the Taliban takeover. Afghan citizens who enjoyed a variety of media choices over the past two decades now have little access to critical news and information.

## 6 Thousand Journalist Lost Their Jobs

It is hard to continue doing journalistic activities under Afghanistan's de facto regime. The Taliban do not allow Afghan journalists to cover security issues and girls' education affairs.

Following the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, they promised media would be free and independent to operate across the country, however, a month later, a new set of rules were imposed that strictly monitor and censor the journalist and media. The short-lived media freedom was gone after the initial weeks of the Taliban regime.

More than 200 violation cases have been recorded against journalists in Afghanistan in 2022, which include arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, harassment, threats, and intimidation according to the United Nations.

Media freedom in Afghanistan has gone from bad to worse and journalists are suffering from low morale under the ruling regime. Many reporters have been arrested, persecuted and threatened with death for reporting sensitive issues which are not to the likes of Taliban authorities across the country.

Taliban's return had a devastating effect on the media which are struggling to survive. A considerable number of radio and TV stations as well as news agencies have closed their doors, with some estimates indicating that more than 6,000 journalists have lost their jobs.

## CENSOR SUPPOSEDLY DUE TO “RELIGION”

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada issued a new decree on 22 July 2022 warning that “defaming and criticizing government officials without proof” and “spreading false news and rumors” are forbidden under Islam and that those who slander government employees are unwittingly collaborating with the enemy and will be “punished.” This announcement by the Islamic Emirate's highest official is indicative of the determination to suppress press freedom in Afghanistan.

## Women journalists hit hardest

Worst of all, female Afghan journalists suffer from double pressure for being a journalist and a woman. The latest restrictions imposed by the Taliban administration restricting women from attending university, working with government or non-governmental aid organizations, and appearing in public places have turned the situation extremely for female journalists.

Female Afghan journalists' worst nightmare “being left at home” has turned into reality after two-decade long freedom in Afghanistan, during which media freedom was one of the great achievements of the U.S.-backed government in Kabul.

Many journalists have fled abroad as a result of the Taliban takeover. Many others have also been questioned or arrested by the Afghan police and the Taliban Intelligence. These arrests can be violent and can last from a few hours to almost a week.

## No place for Women

Women have suffered most in the carnage inflicted on Afghan journalism in the past year and have disappeared completely from the media landscape in 11 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces

One year after the fall of Kabul, 76.19% of women journalists are no longer working in the country. Accusations of “immorality or conduct contrary to society's values” are widely used as pretexts for harassing women journalists and sending them home. This traditionalist worldview in the new Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's official discourse resulted in women TV presenters being made to cover their faces while on camera. ■

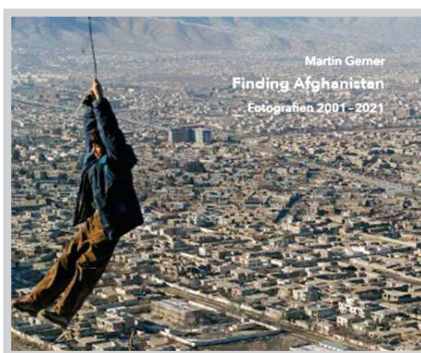
*\* Sohrab Omar is a freelance journalist, reporter and photographer for various media outlets. He has worked as a correspondent for TRT (Turkish Radio & Television corporation) in Kabul for four years. Sohrab has worked with SRF (Switzerland) and Stern Magazine (Germany) as a freelance producer. He is working as a freelance reporter for ZDF (German Tv) since 2022. Dispatching from the heart of the conflicts in Afghanistan, Sohrab exposed the difficult conditions of 3 million Afghan child workers, who forcibly employed in hazardous industries.*



PHOTO: JOSEPH BARRAK / AFP

## ADVICE FROM A DYING GENERATION

Martin Gerner, who worked as a journalist for 20 years in the Afghan war and many other conflicts, gives advice to the younger generation who wants to become war correspondents and conflict journalists: "Prepare yourself professionally for a conflict zone, the conditions, the people and the security situation."







**MARTIN GERNER** \*

**W**ars, crises and disasters (such as the recent earthquake in Türkiye and Syria): all are situations in which journalists intervene. Called by what they understand to be the task, indeed the mission, of the so-called fourth estate. The form of reporting is at the same time conflict-laden. Intervening reporters want to learn a lot in a very short time. They find themselves in situations where trust is a rare commodity and must first be earned. A learning process. Reporting and thus the audience benefit from it. If the challenge of reporting is negated or neglected, the sources will also close themselves.

I am asked to contribute here on the topic “War journalism and advice for the young generation who want to become journalists in conflicts”. Twenty years of experience in the Afghanistan war, in the conflicts in Iraq, Türkiye and Africa are little and much at the same time that I can look back on.

Is there such a thing as war journalism? Who is called a war reporter? I can’t speak here for the younger generation, for whom 9/11, the War on Terror is history rather than experienced reality. I distinguish between good and not so good journalism. In other words: to prepare professionally for a conflict area, for the circumstances, people and security situation. Everyone should know and have in mind the two-source principle and counterstatement as quality criteria, although the limits to this lie in the nature of a conflict.

#### **CONFLICT SIDES AND THE CIVILIANS**

War reporters who call themselves such or are given this label by prominent media are often enough parachuted, i.e. briefly intervening in a conflict. That makes them strangers. Nevertheless, stories can become authentic. Most likely when a minimum of time is invested in the conflict parties. But above all toward the civilian population.

Where wars and crises are becoming more and more numerous, involved (media) actors have been trying to propagate peace journalism for quite some time. Recently, the concept of constructive journalism has been on the rise. The latter asks important, absolutely necessary questions. At the same time, it, too, is in danger of being instrumentalized by interest groups in and outside the media sphere

In the past, so-called leading media from TV and print, occasionally radio, dominated the market. Today, the field has become unmanageable in the face of social media, which is often enough no longer social. Who can still claim a leading function

here, and on the basis of what criteria? At the same time, new diversity and confusion increase the likelihood that real and self-appointed media moguls will choose their audience in order to manipulate it (successfully). Authoritarian systems, but also democracies, send their regards.

Never has an independent “fourth power” been more urgent than today. But the consensus on what kind of means are needed to establish an informational consensus in the media society is increasingly faltering. The growing distrust of the public media worldwide is just one sign of this.

#### **WAR CORRESPONDENTS ARE ENDANGERED SPECIES**

(Crisis) journalism is changing rapidly with each passing month. Data journalism, for example, is becoming increasingly important. Quantitative information is gaining importance. But does that automatically mean we get better qualitative reports? A false conclusion, if you think about statistics of soccer matches. 90% ball possession does not guarantee a goal.

One of the few positive trends in the current conflicts and wars: solvent media work more and more with research teams, often made up of permanent employees. This makes longer, ideally investigative research more possible. Research teams bring more security for the individual author and reporter. In times of growing militarization and aggressive manipulation, these teams appear to be a pure necessity, both politically and legally, and probably also in order to survive in the real world. The foreign and crisis reporter on his own belongs to a dying breed.

#### **LOCAL CONTACT IS IMPORTANT**

Those who go into conflicts need local contact points. Whether in war zones or earthquake zones. Local stringers or fixers are often important guarantees of survival. They establish a network of contacts, create trust and overcome language and cultural barriers. Unfortunately, we all too rarely find the names and work of these colleagues in the reports.

In the Afghanistan war, the majority of foreign reporters worked embedded, that is, integrated into a military logic from which (alone) no balanced reporting is possible. The best way to learn about the many realities, moods and truths of a conflict is to get out of the embed and into the midst of the people, the civilian population, and thus between the fronts. This takes time, an independent spirit and, increasingly, resources.

When things get tight, you need allies who will jump to your aid if necessary. Proven journalists’ associations are helpful here, both international and national, representing the profession as best they can in the corners of the world. Knowledge of the local languages helps, according to all experience. Just as we in the West welcome people from crisis areas when they begin to speak our language, so do people at war when they realize that someone is genuinely interested in them and beyond preconceived stereotypes. ■

*\* Martin Gerner is a reporter for ARD and Deutschlandfunk, film writer and book author. Since 2004 he has been training local journalists in crisis and war zones.*

CONGOLESE JOURNALIST EWING AMADI SALUMU:

# I'm trying to be the voice of the voiceless

LAILA MÜLLER FREELANCE JOURNALIST



Man who only writes the facts, tells them and experiences the fate of journalists is Congolese Ewing Amadi Salumu. He has been living away from his country for many years, in a European country, in the Netherlands. Or rather, where he has to live. He has to do this in order to hold on to life and continue his journalism.

Salumu, who was working for the United Nations Radio in Congo, was a journalist who was looking for common grounds to prevent conflicts in his country, to solve problems through dialogue. He came to the Netherlands in 2009 and due to threats he received and requested asylum.

When asked about the state of journalism in his country, he said, "Everything is in a mess." Salumu adds: "Some time ago, Congo's President Fela Kuti announced that anyone who criticizes him will be imprisoned. In 2022, more than six journalists were killed in the Congo. There are also too many journalists who have been arrested recently. Last July, an American journalist was arrested along with two Congolese journalists in Lubumbashi, in the south of Congo. Journalists in the Congo are not doing an easy job at all. I've been targeted myself. That's why I left my country. In 2006, two of my friends were shot." What they are describing is grave. But despite this, about 7 thousand journalists are trying to do their job in the Congo.

Ewing Amadi Salumu, who received an award from UNESCO for his work on peace, says that the repressive government in Congo is trying to lead journalists under the name of patriotism, to discredit them in the eyes of the public; "They often use terms of nationalism. When they say they are patriots, you should do propaganda for them. You can not criticize and you will not express your own point of view, but you must

present the government's opinion. They also want people to self-censor. This is not journalism, this is all propaganda."

Explaining that Congolese journalists are trying to do their job despite everything, Salumu emphasizes that journalists show that journalism is an honorable profession by writing on blogs and publishing on the Internet.

## FLEEING FROM DEATH AND TAKING REFUGE IN NOTHINGNESS

Congolese journalist and activist Ewing Amadi Salumu describes what it is like to be a refugee journalist in a European country; "I didn't get any help from the beginning. I was alone. You will see that other journalists in the Netherlands are left without documents, unable to obtain asylum and residence permits. But we know them as Congolese journalists. Our journalism continues here. Journalists' associations are working together in the Netherlands. They know each other. They have the same background. They have improved themselves. It's not easy to come here and work among them after all that happened. I see that they are doing very good things. A refugee journalist continues to do his job in a great way, but at the end of the day he doesn't get what he deserves. Even on social media, people are constantly excluding. The situation is desperate. When you are exiled from another country and it is always complicated to rebuild a life in another country, you have to start from scratch. And it's not easy. From the moment you apply for asylum, you are no longer a journalist. You're nothing. That's what I know. You can go and show people what you've done. They won't believe you. But what people need to know is that the asylum





request is for protection purposes only. There are always situations that lead you to seek asylum. You expect protection from the government and help from your colleagues. Being deprived of this assistance is a big problem and it still remains a problem.

**“YOU ARE JUST A NUMBER  
IN YOUR COUNTRY AND HERE TOO.”**

When they kill you in your country, you are just a number. And when you claim asylum, you're just a number. That's it. But I'm in good shape physically and emotionally. I'm free to travel. Free to work. I'm doing what I have to do. But there are always ups and downs because I come from an area where there is a conflict. Journalists are not as free as they should be. Some activists, if not all, are also not free. Words remain inadequate. There are countless stories to listen to in my country.

**IT IS A BLESSING TO HAVE A NORMAL LIFE**

Actually, it's a blessing to have a normal life. Sometimes it slips out of our hands, and then we realize how sacred it is and try to build it from scratch. The first people to pioneer this change were journal-

ists, academics and students. We're still doing our job after everything that's happened. This is really great. You know, you can't get anywhere without hope. When I come here, I can hear people in my community saying, “you are famous in your country.”

It is very important to be positive and stay positive. These gave me hope. What I do every day now is to give hope to those people. When I have a advisee who is crying, I do my best to fill him/her with joy. I have to find a good word to motivate people and say, “Yes, I understand your situation, but believe me, you still have a job, but you will achieve something. Don't lose your motivation. keep your goals high and one day you will achieve them.”

You have to give hope to help people who have left their country. As I said, we were only a number back in our country. That's why you have to talk to these people and let them know that they are not numbers, they are wise people and they can still achieve things in this country. That's why hope is something we should always bring to people. You have to stay healthy so you can be more competitive in this world. This may put a little pressure on people, but it's an invaluable way to help them rebuild their lives. ■

WORKING TOGETHER IN A TEAM OF JOURNALISTS  
FROM SYRIA, AFGHANISTAN AND UKRAINE

# “WE HAVE TO EAT SIXTEEN KILO OF SALT TOGETHER, BEFORE WE CAN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER”



PARWIZ RAHIMI \*

**A**mal is Frankfurt's newest addition to its media landscape. In January 2023 Amal, Frankfurt! launched its website. It's a local news platform covering the city and the Rhein-Main-Region in Arabic, Dari/Farsi and Ukrainian. It targets a very special group of readers: The newcomers from Arab countries, Afghanistan, Iran and Ukraine. Most of these came to Germany as refugees.

The logo of Amal is a dandelions flower that is known to spread its seeds with the wind. The dandelions symbolize the spirit of Amal in more than one aspect: When Amal started its operation in 2016 in Berlin the logo was meant to symbolize the spreading of hope amongst the readers. Since then, the logo has gotten a second meaning: The idea of Amal is spreading from the German capital to other cities: In 2019 an office in Hamburg started to operate and now - even before the spring - we

are in Frankfurt with a hope of growing more.

## One platform, three languages, six journalists, many different experiences

The editorial team of Amal consists of Souzan Nassri and Haytham Abo Taleb for the Arabic team, Tamriko Shoshyashvili and Olena Iskorostenska for the Ukrainian page and Sona Sahar and myself for the Page in Dari and Farsi. We all have a very close relationship to our readers as we come from the same communities and we share the same experiences. We know how it feels to be new in Germany: To struggle for a spot in the German language class, to find a place in university or to make the first tax declaration. We have been through the same. We know what it means to get a work permit, find an internship or a job. We have experience in living in refugee camps and how difficult it can be to protect your mental health



Parwiz Rahimi, an Afghan photographer who has worked for various media organisations in Herat, including Tolo TV and Radio Saade Javan, has been living in Germany since the end of 2015 and is part of the editorial staff of Amal Frankfurt.



with little chance for privacy. We know how it feels to be on an endless waiting list for a tiny flat. We know what it needs to solve all these problems because we are facing them ourselves. This is what we offer to our readers. We write about these topics and we try to help our readers to solve their problems. And more than this: We would like them to understand the background: How is the political discourse? What is the German public discussing about? What is at stake in the elections?

Our motto is “You need to know what is happening to be able to participate in the society and in the political debate”.

As we are publishing our news on social media we also have a very regular and vibrant interaction with our readers and we often engage in discussions about what is happening in our region.

### **Eating salt - together**

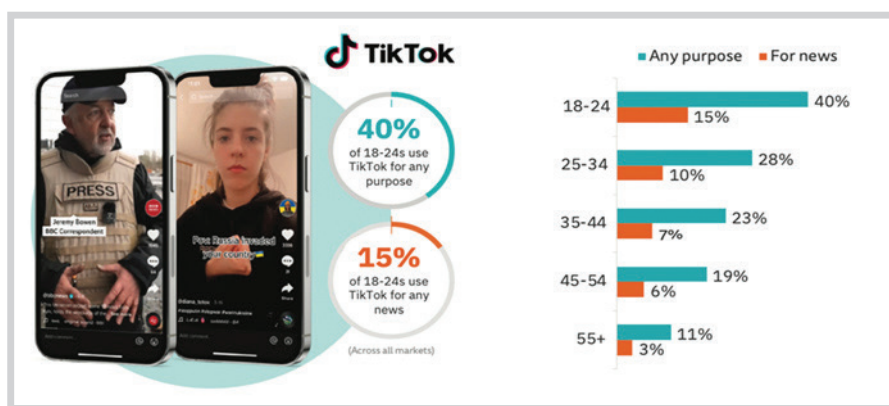
By the way: The quote that we used for the headline of this article is an Ukrainian proverb. Our colleague Olena Iskorostenska used it the other day to highlight the most interesting part of our day to day work as a very mixed team of journalists. We try to learn from each other and work together. To give an example: In mid February we divided our team in two groups: One member of every language group covered the anniversary of the racist attack in Hanau and wrote about what is happening in the city three years after nine people were killed by a right-wing terrorist. The other group – also consisting of one journalist

from every language team, traveled to Mainz to cover the Rosenmontags-Karneval. We tried to explain to our readers the spirit of this very German tradition. We received a lot of positive feedback for our journalistic work and more importantly it was a very interesting experience for all of us.

Amal is a project by the Gemeinschaftswerk der Evangelischen Publizistik gGmbH. It is financed by Foundations like Crespo-Foundation, Porticus Foundation, Körber-Stiftung and Schöpfung-Stiftung as well as by the protestant church. The aim is to facilitate integration by offering information to the newcomers and to create jobs for journalists in Exile.

After some months of working together now we have a good routine in reporting on the problems of Frankfurts Bahnhofsviertel, the election of a new Oberbürgermeister and also all kinds of festivals and traditional fairs. We are local journalists like many other colleagues in Frankfurt. But each of us also have something extra to add to our platform: We have our own stories from the mesmerizing citadel of Herat to the tiny houses on the hilltop of “Kabul”, and from Souq Al Hamidiyah in Damascus to the ancient Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kyiv. We are all different and this is what we have in common. ■

*\* Parwiz Rahimi is an Afghani photographer who worked for several media outlets such as Tolo TV and Radio Saade Javan in Herat. He has been living in Germany since the end of 2015 and a member of the editorial staff of Amal Frankfurt.*



Digital News Report 2022

# NEWS PUBLISHERS ON TIKTOK

While TikTok is primarily known for its entertainment content, it has become a popular platform for news organizations to reach younger audiences who may not be consuming news through traditional media channels.



**YASİR YILMAZ \***

**I**n traditional journalism, news was presented in a more formal and objective manner. Journalists strived to remain unbiased and were trained to report only the facts, leaving opinions and personal beliefs out of the story. The news was mostly delivered through print media, such as newspapers and magazines, and television news programs. The focus was on providing information that was relevant and important to the community, without the need for sensationalism or clickbait headlines.

With the rise of digital media and social media, the landscape of journalism has changed significantly. New forms of journalism have emerged, such as citizen journalism and blogging, which have allowed anyone with an internet connection to report and share news stories. This has led to a greater emphasis

on opinion-based reporting, where journalists express their views and perspectives on the news.

While traditional journalism focused on delivering the news objectively, the new style of journalism puts greater emphasis on the journalist's perspective and opinion. This has led to concerns about the quality and accuracy of news reporting, as well as the potential for bias and misinformation. However, it has also allowed for a greater diversity of voices and perspectives to be heard in the media.

Nic Newman, a journalist, digital strategist and founding member of the BBC News Site, who played an important role in shaping the BBC internet services, prepared a report called "How Publishers are Learning to Create and Distribute News on TikTok". Report provides a comprehensive overview of how news publishers are engaging with the popular social media platform.

TikTok, which has rapidly gained popularity over the last few years, is known for its short, entertaining videos that are created and shared by users. However, the platform is also being used by publishers to create and distribute news content to younger audiences. This report explores the opportunities and challenges of this trend, and how publishers can best approach TikTok to create engaging and informative news content.

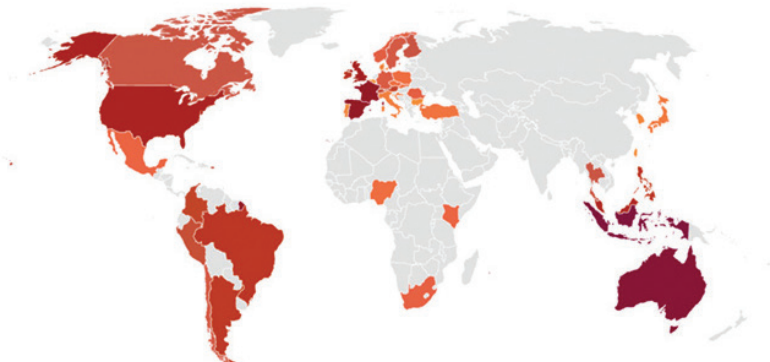
Newman's report, there are several other sources



**Figure 4: Proportion of top news publishers on TikTok by country**

Note: Darker colours represent higher levels of adoption by mainstream news companies. Grey indicates no data collected due to lack of source list or TikTok not operating.

0% 90%



that provide insights into the use of TikTok as a news platform. According to a report by Reuters, news organizations such as the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera are also experimenting with the platform to reach younger audiences. The report notes that while the use of TikTok for news is still in its early stages, it has the potential to be a powerful tool for engaging with younger audiences and making news more accessible.

According to a report by Pew Research Center, social media is a primary source of news for many younger Americans, with platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat being particularly popular. TikTok, with its focus on short, visually engaging videos, is well-suited to this trend.

However, the use of TikTok as a news platform is not without its challenges. As noted in Newman's report, publishers must be mindful of the potential for misinformation and disinformation on the platform. They must work to ensure that their content is accurate and credible and build trust with younger audiences who may be skeptical of traditional news sources.

Overall, the use of TikTok as a news platform is an exciting development in the rapidly evolving landscape of digital news. While there are challenges and opportunities for publishers, it is clear that TikTok has the potential to be a powerful tool for reaching younger audiences and making news more accessible and engaging.

Newman adds that news on TikTok is still mostly generated by social media influencers, activists, or ordinary people rather than by journalists. There is an increasing interest among publishers to engage with the platform and create news content that is tailored to TikTok's unique format.

The report notes that TikTok's algorithm surfaces an endless stream of short, entertaining videos that are often fast-moving, funny or musical memes. However, the platform has also become a hub for content around current events such as the Black Lives Matter movement, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine.

Despite these challenges, the report notes that many news publishers are finding success on TikTok. The report highlights several examples of news organizations that are effectively using the platform to engage with younger audiences. The Wash-

ington Post, for example, has created a TikTok account that features short videos that cover news events and promote their reporting. The Post has also used TikTok to create videos that explore topics such as the history of the presidential inauguration and the science behind the Covid-19 vaccine. Other news organizations such as Sky News and Le Monde have also found success on the platform, using TikTok to create short, informative videos that explain complex news events in a way that is easily digestible for younger audiences.

The report also discusses the strategies that publishers are using to create engaging news content for TikTok. One key strategy is to create content that is tailored to the unique format of the platform. This includes using short, snappy videos that are visually engaging and include elements such as music and humor. The report notes that successful news content on TikTok often includes elements of humor, satire, and self-awareness, and is focused on storytelling rather than traditional news reporting.

Since TikTok is a unique platform with its own specific audience and culture, publishers cannot simply take content from other social media platforms or traditional news sources and expect it to perform well on TikTok. Instead, they must experiment with different formats, styles, and approaches to find what works best for the platform.

For example, many news publishers have found success with creating short, visually engaging videos that use text overlays to convey information. These videos often incorporate music, humor, or other creative elements to make the content more engaging and shareable. Some publishers have also found success with more traditional news formats, such as news briefings or explainer videos, as long as they are tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the TikTok audience.

Creativity and experience are important to create news content for TikTok. News publishers should be open to innovations and ready to adapt to such platforms in order to reach younger audiences and provide quality news content. ■

*\* Freelance journalist Yasir Yilmaz graduated from the Polish Collegium Civitas University, Department of New Media and Journalism. He is fluent in Arabic, Turkish and English.*



SERHIY SHTURKHETSKYY \*

# War is as you know

Ukrainian journalists are ready to give their lives to defend freedom of expression. However, there is a huge problem. Will they be able to protect their professional rights?

**V**ideo of the execution of an unarmed Ukrainian soldier, recorded on a mobile phone by one of the Russian invaders, shocked all Ukrainians in early March. The explicit footage of the execution sparked ethical debates regarding the deceased. Journalism rules were disregarded as the video went viral on social media.

Some media outlets were really irresponsible. The identity of the murdered person spread rapidly and uncontrollably. Accuracy or the moods of his relatives were not cared for. Some journalists drew attention to similar happenings during the war. Such executions, which are obviously war crimes, have taken place thousands of times. But not all are boldly recorded by the invaders or caught on cell phone cameras by chance.

## EXECUTION OF MAKSIM LEVIN

It takes selfless work to document such murders. In March last year, the Russians executed the Ukrainian journalist Maksim Levin. Details of the crime came to light through an investigation by Reporters Without Borders.

Levin's colleague, journalist Sonya said to Koshkina, before she was shot, her bulletproof vest and helmet with the word "PRESS" on were taken off. Sonya describes the details of the incident as follows: "The Russians were burning Oleksiy Černišov alive 300 meters away. So Maksim sensed what had happened and what awaited him. We do not know his last words, but I am sure that he closed his eyes with honour. Maybe he shouted "Long live Ukraine!" or "Death to enemies!". I have no doubt because I knew him. He was standing when they shot him. They put a total of three bullets in his head in a controlled manner so that he would definitely not live."

## 43 JOURNALISTS IN ONE YEAR

Amid countless videos on social media, Ukrainian journalists are trying to find the truth and inform the world. In the first year of the war in Ukraine, 12 journalists lost their lives. Local organisations say that 43 journalists have died, the discrepancy is due to the inclusion of colleagues who were unable to perform their journalistic duties at



the time of their death. But let's face it, every loss is terrible in any case.

"When the war starts, the first victim of the war is the truth," journalist Lüdмила Vannik once noted, analysing the coverage of the conflict in Iraq. In the early days of the Russian offensive, Ukrainians were told that we would learn the exact number of casualties after the war.

Meanwhile, the General Staff updated a number of previously existing news bans. Russia has been fighting in Ukraine since 2014, and with the full-scale start of the war it took on special significance. It was forbidden to describe the movements and positions of military units, to show the location of important objects. In April last year, the Criminal Code of Ukraine introduced a request for imprisonment of up to 12 years for such violations. However, censorship remains prohibited in Ukraine according to the Constitution.

Moreover, a year ago the relevant authorities began to grant accreditation to foreign journalists almost without any obstacles. Largely thanks to their success and courage, the whole world has witnessed the terrible picture of what is happening in Ukraine.

### **MEDIA UNDER OCCUPATION**

Hundreds, if not thousands, of journalists remain under occupation in Ukraine. Our partners in professional solidarity around the world urgently provided solar panels, financial aid, journalistic equipment and much more. Journalistic solidarity centres set up by the International and European Federations of Journalists provided legal, psychological, educational and even food assistance. These centres continue to operate. Hundreds of Ukrainian journalists (mostly women) have travelled abroad.

Ukraine's information space has undergone a fundamental change. The nationwide Telemaraton "One and common news", which started a year ago, is still running. However, there are three television channels that are outside the Telemaraton and inaccessible to

the general audience. Although these channels have a pro-Ukrainian position, they are highly critical of President Zelensky. The positive effect of the joint broadcasts, which were initially intended to unite society, is now being replaced by propaganda. Violations of journalistic standards by the presenters of the one-voice project Telemaraton are increasing every day.

This is of course not helping journalism to progress. Rejections of accreditation applications by foreign media organisations have increased. The new media law is scheduled to come into force on 1 April. The government is pleased, but journalists' professional organisations are unhappy.

### **'DEPENDENT MEDIA' CONCERN**

The main issues of concern for Ukrainian journalists include the political dependence of the regulatory body, the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting (NRTR), the expansion of regulation of print and internet media, and the extension of extrajudicial criminal sanctions.

Today, Ukrainian journalists have become symbols of courage and dedication to their profession. In many respects they set world trends. They have survived a year of war, enduring blockade, occupation, emigration, the destruction of their editorial offices and their country, the loss of colleagues and relatives. But they still need help and continue their work despite the repression inside their country. Journalists report on the crimes of the Russian occupiers and the situation on the war front, expose abuses and corruption, and demand the resignation of senior officials. There is therefore hope that the truth in Ukraine will remain alive after the war, albeit wounded. ■

*\* Serhiy Shturhetskyy, journalist, Chairman of the Committee of the Trade Union of Independent Media of Ukraine. He worked as a lecturer at the National Ostroh and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Member of the Council for Freedom of Expression and Protection of Journalists under the President of Ukraine.*



IRYNA SYNELNYK \*

# True information is as valuable as bread in war

**L**ast year was the hardest in the history of Independent Ukraine. No one believed that Ukrainians would stand up after the Russian attack. But one year after we continue to fight for the future of our country and our own future. The main role belongs to the Ukrainian army but journalists matter too.

A head of the Chernihiv regional branch of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine Oleksandr Nazarenko is sure that during war, especially on the border, local media are indispensable. They are often the only sources of information for community residents, precisely local information. This is also a front, only informational. 'In very difficult conditions, our media workers do everything possible to ensure that local media survive,' says he. And I agree with him.

## WE FOUGHT ONLINE

I didn't believe that war was possible in Europe in the 21st century. But on the 24th of February the Russian army began the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. When I woke up after my sister's call I didn't know what I should do. So I left Chernihiv on the first day of the war and went to my sister in a small township Lyubech on the border with Belarus. After a few days I found myself surrounded by Russian troops. They did not enter the township itself, but they

were close by. For six weeks we have been living in fear that if they came in, the same thing could happen to us that happened in Bucha.

I was afraid I might be detained. But I was even more worried that my family might suffer because of my journalistic activities and civil position. Nevertheless, I continued working, as long as I had a mobile phone and access to the Internet.

Social media and TV were the main sources of information in that time. As for me it is the first war which is going online. Many described their experiences on social media. We could see photos and videos from the event locations. I also collected these materials. But I understand that sources from social media must have detailed verification. As it was possible I contacted officials or local government to verify information from the locals in social media.

I wrote many articles about the war in the Chernihiv region - how people fighting the enemy, how the situation was in Chernihiv city that was under siege; how was living inhabitants of communities in the region. There were few personal stories, for example about a family with two children which left Chernihiv and drove through the enemy's block posts. And the mother of a small boy was worried that he could swear and send a Russian soldier on the way...of the Russian ship.



### MY JOB GAVE ME STRENGTH

For me it seemed necessary to tell the whole world how people live in Chernihiv; that we have no electricity, no water supplies, there are problems with food, people are put in harsh conditions of survival, and this is happening in 2022 in the center of Europe. I wrote for UNIAN. My colleagues and I worked without pauses. My work gave me strength. I needed to work because I wanted to tell the truth, I wanted to tell everyone what was going on, because everything that was happening was so unfair and terrible.

I hope that one day the results of Ukrainian journalists' work will become part of history. I would like to publish these stories as a book with translation for English so that more people know the truth about the war in Ukraine. Because I am sure the individual experience is a mirror of events in the country.

All day long my family and I watched the Ukrainian news marathon, and in the evening I watched what the Russians were showing and how their rhetoric was. It made my hair stand on end. I did not understand how they could lie so openly.

### JOURNALISTS AND LOCAL MEDIA ARE MATTER

After the full-scale invasion of Russia to Ukraine in February 2022, newspapers in the Chernihiv region stopped publishing. Because we don't have any possibilities to deliver bread, food and essential goods to occupied territories. In February-March of last year only one newspaper was printed in the south of Chernihiv oblast, as they had their own printing house, said in the Chernihiv military administration. Some of the editors were working online and informing locals for a few months in this way.

In those times the role of social media was increased and TV channels were an important source of current information. Every local government created its own Telegram channel. The channel of local media, for example, Suspilne Chernihiv had thousands subscribers. Some of Suspilne Chernihiv's journalists stayed in the city and continued to work. Journalist Alina Klymenko was awarded the Order of Princess Olga for her professional work during the war in Chernihiv. She was the first journalist who filmed the consequenc-

es of the Russian shelling of the bread line in one of the residential neighborhoods of Chernihiv. The shelling took place not far from the journalist's house, and her father, who managed to survive, was in the firing line. As a result, 14 civilians were killed and dozens were injured. This happened in March, when Chernihiv was blocked by Russian invaders. At that time it was almost impossible to get into the city.

In the beginning of April Chernihiv was released. Most editorial offices resumed their activities in May - at the beginning of summer. Some of them cooperated and made newspapers together. Nearly 30 newspapers are printed in Chernihiv oblast now, but 7 newspapers were closed due to financial and other reasons.

Minimal income from advertising, a personnel crisis and the lack of an anti-crisis strategy are the main problems faced by the Chernihiv media after the expulsion of Russian troops from the territory of the region, says Pavlo Pushchenko the Institute of Mass Information (IMI) representative in Chernihiv oblast. The IMI team created Mediahub in Chernihiv to help local journalists working in war times in the border region. But now the situation isn't better, claimed Pushchenko, most of the media teams in Chernihiv oblast still have no instructions or protocols on what to do in the event of a second Russian offensive.

Some journalists remain abroad and continue to work. I am too. But on the one hand, I feel safe, and I have all I need for my work. On the other hand, I start the day with the news and am worried about my loved ones. We moved away from the war. But the war is still with us. I continue to work because I know that true information is as valuable as bread in war. We need to fight Russian propaganda and win. We continue to work and fight. ■

*\* She lived in Chernihiv city in the north of Ukraine before the war but now she is taking part in "Journalists in Residence - Kosovo" program, therefore currently living in Prishtina. She has a PhD of history. She has been working for the information agency UNIAN since 2005. Currently working as a journalist for Ukrainian media. Covering political, social issues and topics about the contemporary Russian invasion of Ukraine.*



# **A MONUMENT IN EXILE:** **INNOCENT MUHOZI**

The life story and professional career of veteran Burundian journalist Muhozi illustrates the challenges of journalism in repressive regimes.





**BOB RUGURIKA**

**A**ll over the world, monuments are protected and cherished. This is not the case in Burundi. Only a few of those who lost their lives have monuments and they are either not valued or abandoned. The owner of the monument I am going to talk about now is alive, but in exile. His name is Innocent Muhozi. Burundian journalist and director of Renaissance Radio Television and is now a media pioneer broadcasting online from exile. He was forced to leave Burundi following the general crisis triggered by the illegal third term of the late President Pierre Nkurunziza. Taking advantage of this crisis, the regime shut down the 4 main independent media in the country and stopped their publications. Two of them were virtually destroyed and set on fire for their complete independence from the regime in Burundi. These are the African People's Radio and the Renaissance Radio Television (Radio Publique Africaine and Radio Télévision Renaissance) directed by Innocent Muhozi.

#### **INNOCENT MUHOZI'S WAS A PAINFUL BUT PASSIONATE CHILDHOOD.**

He was born into a family of 14 children, a Burundian father and a Rwandan mother. His father, Ntunguka, was a Chief. He had everything he needed to make his family happy. Unfortunately, Belgian Colonisation did not allow this. Between prison life and persona non grata status at home, Ntunguka became a man ruined by the Colonisation. Nevertheless, these experiences did not deter one of the sons, Innocent Muhozi, from his ambitions. Every time he went to his Protestant primary school in District 2 of OCAF (Office of African Cities), he would meet his friends to play football with great joy. His childhood life was divided between studying and football. Spend two minutes with him and you immediately feel the vastness of his general culture. His dream was to become a history teacher.

#### **HE ALWAYS WANTED TO CHANGE THINGS BY FIGHTING INJUSTICES.**

Instead of studying history at the university, he entered the Higher Institute of Military Cadres (ISCAM). An interesting choice. Eventually, he and some of his friends told themselves that there was too much injustice in the country, in 1981. And in order to change things, it was necessary to get his education from the army and make a military

coup. The country was still under military regimes with coups taking place. For him the army adventure did not last long because the barracks life was unbearable for him.

The doors of the future were opening for the mechanic's assistant who had left the military school.

Innocent Muhozi spent some time at the University of Burundi before orientating himself towards his life's work this time. After a short 6-month stint as a mechanic's assistant in the garage of one of his brothers, he decided on journalism. In a way, Muhozi became the mechanic of the media.

In 1984, a half-brother called him and told him that National Radio Television was recruiting new journalists. Innocent Muhozi went to the interview and easily progressed to the next level. "Piece of cake!" he said to himself. He quickly completed his exams in French and the local language Kirundi.

Surprise! One of the two members of the jury refused to hire Muhozi because he was Rwandan. He immediately recognised it by the shape of his face. But since the other candidate was from the same ethnic community as Muhozi - Tutsi - and the other member of the jury, a member of the Hutu community, could not resist his very good French, Muhozi entered this new profession. It was to be a job that would mark 40 years of the country's history...

#### **GOLDEN YEARS IN THE PROFESSION**

As soon as he started in journalism, Innocent Muhozi made a name for himself. Above all, he was characterised by his good relations with his colleagues, who elected him President of the Staff Union of Radio Television National of Burundi (RTNB). In 1996, he held this position until his appointment as Director General of RTNB. During the term of President Ntibantunganya, it was proposed that Innocent Muhozi be appointed Director-General of the National Radio Television because of his work with the First Lady of the country, Pascasia Minani. And in agreement with a prime minister of the government of congress Antoine Nduwayo, Innocent Muhozi accepted the offer.

#### **BACKTRACKING**

His career at National Radio Television entered a sad period. This was the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, the first democratically elected Hutu President. It was a difficult and dangerous time. "First and foremost, as a journalist, I covered the ethnic massacres between Hutus and Tutsis. I witnessed absolute horror," says Muhozi, "I organised debates with different political actors. I was often with the protagonists of the crisis. It is difficult to find common ground on issues that lead to the death of men... As Director General of RTNB, I also managed issues related to staff safety. Journalists, drivers and technicians were killed or threatened with death while passing through neighbourhoods where unrest was ongoing. Sometimes I found myself managing logistics for those who had to stay overnight at RTNB." ►

► Above all, Innocent Muhozi always says, “I will never forget my struggle for the independence of National Radio Television vis-à-vis different authorities. This has earned me relationships, of course, respectful but often strained.”

During Muhozi's time at NPR, two men served as Head of State; Sylvester Ntibantunganya and Pierre Buyoya. The latter was known as Innocent Muhozi.

Our protagonist explains that he persuaded the President with policies and decisions in favour of Burundian reconciliation and the opening of the democratic space, multi-partyism, the birth of civil society organisations and the press.

While Innocent Muhozi and Pierre BUYOYA established links in public opinion that made Muhozi pro-Buyoya, politics and governance remained controversial in Burundian society.

### **TOWARDS A WORLD OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

In 2003, Innocent Muhozi left National Television Radio (Radio Télévision Renaissance) to set up his own media. He was a failed historian, but his love for history remained unchanged. This is how the idea of creating a media focusing on history and economics remained intact in him. Together with his brother David Gakunzi (Paris-based journalist and writer), they turned to French philosopher Bernard Henry Lévy, who donated equipment. The RTR was born and gradually became embedded in the daily life of Burundians. Success was immediate and RTR, like RPA and other independent media, became the Burundians' crying wall. Exactly the Muhozi idea was realized. When he created Renaissance Radio Television (the first independent television), the aim of this media was to become a lifeline for all victims of injustice in a country battered by decades of crisis and multifaceted injustices. During this time, together with his colleagues, Muhozi founded the Burundi Press Observatory (OPB). This organisation became a real compass for professional ethics and deontology. Through this Observatory, Muhozi and his colleagues also fought against attempts by the authorities to silence the press through legislation. In various statements to the press, Muhozi did not hesitate to tell the authorities that the Burundian media and the Observatory would never enforce laws contrary to the universal values of press freedoms and expression.

### **NEW REGIME AND SILENCE**

Innocent Muhozi covered Burundi's civil war as a journalist from 1993 to 2005. He witnessed the terrible crimes committed by elements of the ruling party still in the maquis. - Despite the reformist rhetoric that characterised the beginning of the reign of the CNDD-FDD party, Innocent Muhozi was not naive. He had seen so many crimes committed by these men that it was hard to believe in a future of peace.

Moreover, it did not take long for the new regime to justify the scepticism. In 2006, the regime quickly organised massacres of civilians in Muyinga, in the north-east of the country. A few months later, ruling party and presidential officials staged a fake coup to jail their predecessors, former president Domitien Ndayizeye and vice-president Alphonse Marie Kadege, along with a dozen former dignitaries. Some still bear the scars of torture in the offices of the National Intelligence Organisation. This authoritarian drift worries all of Burundian society. Independent media and civil society are being targeted. Journalists and activists (more than 20 between 2005 and 2015) have been repeatedly arrested on trumped-up charges of unspent crimes and fictitious accusations of undermining state security. At the time of writing, A fellow journalist Floriane Irangabiye has collapsed in prison and was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a fine of 1 million Burundian francs. She is accused of undermining the security of the state for voicing criticism of the authorities' management and the assassinations of Burundi's leaders.

Despite everything, Muhozi continues to be respected by a large part of the leaders of the CNDD-FDD regime. Despite his critical journalism, he has never been arrested or imprisoned. One exception is that three of his colleagues from the other 3 independent media are either in jail or have been in exile for some time. A few names, such as Muhozi the Wise, Dean Muhozi, have earned him the regime's clemency. Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about the struggle for press freedom in Burundi without the name Muhozi. All journalists agree on this.

### **THE LAST STRAW**

10 Years of democratic backsliding (2005-2015) took place against a backdrop of persistent tensions between the Nkurunziza administration and Burundi's independent media. Media experts and Burundians in general hoped that President Nkurunziza would leave at the end of his second constitutional term. And boom! The footballer president was not at the end of his reign. With the approval of the CNDD-FDD party, he illegally decided to run for a third term, contrary to the constitution and the Arusha agreements that ended the 1993-2005 Civil War. The civilian population, civil society and opposition political parties called for peaceful protests against this third presidential term. The police and parts of the army suppressed the protests with bloodshed. Thousands of people were killed, thousands are still missing.

As usual, the independent media played a watchdog role, documenting and publicising various forms of serious human rights violations. At the height of the killing of civilians, a group of soldiers and police wanted to stop it. Taking advantage of President Nkurunziza's absence from a summit in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 13 May 2015, they attempted a failed coup. The following day the authorities car-





ried out a real manhunt within the army and police. Scores of soldiers and police suspected of supporting the protests were arrested and killed, while others disappeared. At the same time, in order to prosecute these crimes behind closed doors, the regime ordered the closure of 4 independent media outlets. They were accused of transmitting the coup plotters' statements. Muhozi's RPA and RTR institutions were systematically destroyed with heavy weapons. This was the first clear message Innocent Muhozi received. Since the attacks on the media on 14 May 2015, more than 100 journalists have been exiled. Innocent Muhozi preferred to wait. Even deep down, he does not yet know what he is waiting for. But death is getting closer every day. Calls are coming from everywhere for him to leave the country. Information about plans for his physical elimination is not enough for him to flee the country he loves so much.

In this general crisis, he is consulted by some international decision-makers trying to find peaceful solutions. He met with an African Union diplomatic mission in Bujumbura in July 2015 and continues to meet with other civil society actors still in the country. Among them is one-time human rights hero Pierre Claver Mbonimpa. On 3 August 2015, at the beginning of the day, Mbonimpa and Muhozi met to assess the situation. Unfortunately, the elderly Mbonimpa did not return home that night. Agents of the National Intelligence Organisation fired several shots, some of which passed through his skull. Nevertheless, he was lucky and did not die there. He was evacuated to the Bujumbura polyclinic and later taken to Belgium for intensive care. Muhozi remained in Bujumbura. He stands almost alone in front of a crowd of executioners just waiting for the order to kill.

Muhozi is known for his honesty and moral values. He is not corrupt and has never received illegal help. He leads a modest life. "I was wondering how I would escape and start a new life at the expense of my friends and relatives in exile," Muhozi told us when he arrived in exile in Rwanda, his first country of asylum before travelling to Brussels, where he lives as a political refugee.

#### ANGER

Innocent Muhozi has a forty-year career as a journalist in Burundi. From reporter, President of the RTNB Staff Union to Director General of the National Radio Television, Innocent Muhozi has been involved in all aspects of the Burundian press. Among them is the Burundi Press Observatory, which he continues to direct from exile, leading struggles against all attempts to silence the press. He sometimes plays the role of mediator in strained relations between the authorities and journalists. Not to mention his participation in improving the sometimes gloomy relations between senior journalists and newcomers to the profession.

Today he is still in exile and heads the RTR. He and his fellow colleagues provide news for an on-line channel dealing with Burundian news. They are currently setting up a digital TV platform where subscribers can also follow current affairs programmes, in particular special programmes focusing on Burundi's political, economic and social history.

Of course, Innocent Muhozi does not complain about the difficult conditions of exile, but he is very angry at those in exile who call them a "nationless society". Innocent Muhozi believes that a little more commitment could have prevented the ongoing tragedy in Burundi. ■

# GEN Z STANDS UP FOR JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLES

GenZ's views of the world are shaped by the internet and social media. Two Austrian projects want to ensure that journalistic principles such as fact-checking have a future there too.



**DORIS NEUBAUER \***

**W**hether it's COVID-19 or the Ukraine war - 18-24 year olds mainly get news from the

Internet, shows the Digital News Report Austria published in June 2022. At 55 percent, social media is the most common source.

"Journalism there is often hard to find", criticises Valentine Engel that research, transparency, storytelling and integrity receive little to no attention on these channels. The start-up Hashtag by editor-in-chief Stefan Apfl and BlooMedia want to change that. "We try to prepare journalistic content in such a way that young people wants to consume it," the 26-year-old explains, "that's why we often connect journalistic principles with humour."

Humour is already visible in the names of Hashtag's formats on Instagram, TikTok or YouTube: On geschichte.oida, for example, the 17,000 subscribers learn that in 1945 American soldiers - supposedly on their way to a brothel

- got stuck in the streets of Salzburg with their tanks.

## COMMUNICATION AT EYE LEVEL

"In communication with young people, eye to eye is important. They are not interested if you talk down to them", Engel knows the needs of the GenZ, "that is why it is particularly important for us to have young people in the team who let their perspectives flow into their work."

Supported by the Hashtag core team, History.oida is created by students of the FH Joanneum in Graz, who compile the "random facts of Austrian History" since January 2022.

The startup acts as an incubator and "hub for media professionals with a journalistic ethos," says Engel, "we advise and develop individuals in their professional activities - in terms of content, form, entrepreneurial decisions."

## YOUNG JOURNALISTS WELCOME

For Iris Strasser and her colleagues from BAIT, too, young journalists are "always welcome". Not so much to produce content for social media, but rather to uncover fake news. "False news not only affect young people though", says the editor. According to the Digital News Report Austria, one in three is concerned about being able to distinguish between fakes and facts on the Internet. Other than older surrounding generations, however, GenZ are "more receptive, have the energy to have a say and, above all, still have time to change something."



The BAIT team states that the important issue is not to produce content for social media, but to uncover fake news. The team also wants to teach young people how to recognise fake news.



**Bait**



That's why we start with this target group."

The idea for the fact checking channel came from Strasser's fellow campaigners Thomas Prager and Tim Dombrowski from the Digital Compass Association - Institute for News Competence and Digital Education: "Digital Compass visits a large number of school classes every year to teach media competence and is therefore in direct contact with students who report on viewing habits and trends," the 33-year-old explains.

#### HOW TO RECOGNISE FAKE NEWS

Based on this data, the team developed the journalistic and graphic concept for BAIT: Since 2023, short clips on TikTok - a channel the 13 - 19 year olds love - check trends and topics for correctness. In addition, BAIT also wants to show the young people how they can recognise fake news themselves.

Following BAIT's big vision to create a "generation of adolescents who are learning basic journalistic techniques and independently examine information in digital space for its truthfulness" Strasser is optimistic: "We're on the right track." ■

*\* Doris Neubauer, born 1978, is a freelance Austrian journalist with a passion for travel, food, alternative concepts, social issues and the environment. After traveling the world, she now lives and works in Aotearoa New Zealand.*



"It is often difficult to find real journalism in these environments," says Valentine Engel, noting that research, transparency, storytelling and honesty are either highly valued or not valued at all on social platforms.



MARTIN HELLER \*

# The basics for success in online journalism

**T**he power of Twitter surprises me. Normally, it's hard to reach or even impress a teenage son with professional stuff. But suddenly it succeeded, not via Tiktok or Snapchat, via Twitter! A well-known national soccer player had retweeted one of my videos. My 13-year-old son at the time was asked about it at school. Jackpot.

The video, which has been viewed nearly a million times, was about protests against Germany's Corona policy; the 41-second clip showed a rapping and dancing demonstrator in front of the Red City Hall in Berlin. And it's a textbook example of the viral power of the Internet. Of course, the content has to be convincing. But there are also factors that can be generalized and taken away as learnings. And it's not just about the sheer reach of a social media channel, but ultimately about advertising revenues and digital subscriptions. More on this later.

First of all, it's always crucial to understand how social media works, how search engines work, and how users behave on websites and in apps. And a feeling for the right media genre, the best form of output for the respective content.

Many journalists come from print and accordingly always try to bring their content to their readers primarily with the power of words, illustrated with photos

and infographics. Newspapers in the paper age were not searchable, sharing an issue or article with friends could not lead to so-called viral hits as they can on the web. Once the newspaper was sold it used to be not so relevant, whether the readers turn the pages or not, whether they like the articles or what kind of opinion they have on them.

Trained TV producers still think very much in terms of linear TV because of their background. Here, journalists usually try to squeeze all content into the moving image form. If there is no strong material from the event itself, they work with moderation, live broadcasts, graphics, archive material and TV talks. The question of how many viewers see a contribution depends largely on the placement within the program or a linear stream, on the pre-program, on the TV station. In traditional ratings measurement on TV, it is less important whether viewers are committed to watching or leave the program on the side.

On the web, it is also important for content creators, i.e. for us journalists, to become aware of the mechanisms that lead to success there. Search engines and the way algorithms work on social media platforms determine the reach of a piece of content much more than the paper's creator or the program director.





User engagement is the magic word; the web is not a one-way street. Whether it's interaction or dwell time, how users engage with individual pieces of content is measurable and decisive. How much a piece of content moves users is usually the decisive question. How do I reach the target group emotionally. Video is valued not only by users but also by the creators of the platforms; average dwell times and prices for advertising are higher with moving images. Social media algorithms are trimmed accordingly.

Online journalism has what it takes to be the best of all time. Why? Because here there is the chance to choose the best form for the story. When is a continuous text inspiring, when moving images, where are photos or infographics the means of choice, when audio - and how can users be integrated through the direct feedback channel on the Internet?

Channel-appropriate content rather than simply transferring content from one world to another is the foundation. One lever for reporters is also the right timing. Mostly, it's about speed. For years, none of my seminars has been as popular as mobile reporting, the recording, editing and publishing of videos and photos directly on the smartphone.

So why is it that a short video that anyone in downtown Berlin could have made with their cell phone,

from a channel with only a four-digit number of followers, manages to reach nearly a million people and my son in the schoolyard?

Rapping and dancing, the content is predestined for the moving image form. The topic is explosive. The short tweet text appeals to users who don't have the sound or autoplay turned on. The hashtag reaches interested parties outside the company's own community. And quite crucial was the timing: still edited on the spot on the smartphone and published.

Do we "give away" monetizable reach when we publish videos directly to social media before the post is ready for our own platform? Not at all. In this specific example, a six-minute summary that was ready three hours later initially drove high marketed traffic via website and search engines, and later drove double-digit new digital subscriptions. And more than 7,500 users got there via Twitter alone, attracted primarily by the previously shared viral video of the rapping dancing demonstrator. Let's embrace the power of the Internet. ■

*\* Martin Heller, 45, is a journalist, lecturer and founder of Into VR & Video GmbH in Berlin. Heller and his team work for national and regional media houses as well as in education and training for several journalism schools and universities in German-speaking countries.*

## MEDIA IN UGANDA

# THERE IS **NO FREEDOM** EVEN THOUGH DIVERSITY



ESTHER NAKKAZI \*

**T**n 2021, Reuters photojournalist James Akena announced his retirement from journalism after being beaten by a Ugandan soldier while covering the #freeBobiWine protests of August 20, 2018. The award-winning journalist announced his retirement on Twitter as follows: “The Ugandan army has bowed me and forced me to quit journalism.”

Akena put her hands up, just holding her camera, they beat him until someone came and rescued him. He suffered multiple head injuries due to the beatings, a broken finger, and a slipped spine as well as a clot on the back of his head. As a result, he was confined to a wheelchair.

The commander of the Defense Forces, Lt. Gen. David Muhoozi, apologized for the behavior of the soldiers. Akena then sued the government for 27 thousand dollars in damages.

Lucy Ekadu, President of the Uganda Journalists Union (UJU), said, “Uganda has more media outlets than before, but this does not mean that the media is free.” she adds, “Journalists are held accountable for their work, laws are made to block the path of the media, so there is no freedom, even if there is diversity.”

Daily Monitor’s senior photojournalist

Abubaker Lubowa, who is also fighting for the presidency of the Uganda Journalists Association (UJA), notes that it is difficult to be a journalist in Uganda, saying: “Politicians from the government to the local authorities violate the rights of journalists. When you write a negative news about the State Assembly, you expect them to detain you. Politicians and security forces are the biggest violators of media freedom. Then ordinary people don’t want journalists to write stable stories. When they call you for news, they don’t want you to talk to the other party to verify the news. It is also difficult to access information. We should have strong laws that enforce media freedom. Then the security personnel and the general public should be sensitive about how the media operates.”

However, the Ugandan Government says that they consider the media an integral actor in the governance and development of Uganda. That is why the government is acting deliberately not creating an environment that allows for free, vibrant and responsible media.

## THEY CUT FLESH FROM MY TIGHTS WITH PLIERS

In February 2022, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, a Ugandan writer who spent about a month in prison after being arrested for criticizing President Museveni, was tortured while in custody and then left the country. He described the torture he suffered: “They used pliers. They ripped the flesh off my thighs and everywhere. I thought I was dead that day. I had considered renouncing my Ugandan citizenship.”

The cases of Akena and Rukirabashayca sum up the difficult conditions that media workers in Uganda have been subjected to criticizing the government and exposing the truth.





Maria Burnett @MariaHRWAfrica · Aug 21, 2018

These two photos of photojournalist **James Akena** from today in Kampala are a perfect and depressing summary of security forces' blatant contempt for press freedom in #Uganda. #JournalismIsNotACrime



In recent years, many journalists have been targeted by security forces, especially during protests and elections. And many of them do not have the means to seek justice in court like Akena. Instead, they allow themselves to be compromised by their perpetrators.

During the August 13, 2018 by-elections, security forces attacked and assaulted journalists on live TV while reporting on the events in Arua. Journalists Herbert Zziwa and Ronald Muwanga were attacked, detained and later appeared before a judge on charges of inciting violence and damaging property.

Many of them are still dealing with serious health problems as a result of beatings by the police and the military during the #FreeBobiWine protests. During the election period, the government required all journalists to reapply for accreditation.

The chairman of the Ugandan government's Media Council, Paul Ekochu, said that the review is needed to guarantee the safety of journalists.

In an unprecedented move, the Uganda Media Council has revoked the accreditation of all foreign journalists residing in the country, declaring that they must reapply within seven days. A significant number of foreign journalists have either been expelled from the country or banned from entering the country.

Then on December 5, 2020, the government deported CBC journalists Margaret Evans, Lily Martin and cameraman Jean-Francois Bisson. President Museveni and his supporters have claimed that foreign journalists are in favour of the opposition candidate Bobi Wine.

#### VIOLENCE AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Journalists also faced difficult conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the Covid-19 bans, various incidents occurred that the police also assaulted journalists.

On July 30, 2021, police attacked Iceta Scovin Metedio, a reporter for the Daily Monitor newspaper and NTV Uganda, who was taking photos of police us-

ing force to disperse people after the curfew began. Iceta was attacked despite wearing a vest that showed him that he is a journalist. In addition, police officers confiscated his camera and deleted the photos he took.

In another incident, police officers punched Radio Mityana reporter Patrick Bukenya for violating the curfew.

Journalists who follow the parliament claim that they are living under threats from the parliament because they are doing negative news about the legislature. Some apply self-censorship to survive.

A senior manager of the Ugandan Parliamentary Press Association, who did not want to be named, said: "We have decided to censor our own articles, otherwise we cannot escape the wrath of the speaker," he says that the 'carrot and stick' approach is used, which means rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior.

In late January 2023, veteran journalist Simon Muyanga Lutaaya and two colleagues Adam Mahad Kungu and Lukia Mpoza were fired from BABA TV, where they worked, because of their reporting on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

While the state restricts media freedom and a freedom of expression, internal strife in the media world has made the situation worse. The government allowed the media to make decisions on the amendment to the Press and Journalists Act of 1995. However, the struggle between the press organizations is making the process in vain.

While journalists continue to fight each other, the government continues to get ahead of the media in bringing the sector to its knees. The government has made new decisions under the name of the 'Computer Misuse' law to silence online media, which it considers the greatest threat. ■

*\* Esther Naqqazi is a freelance science and technology journalist. Uganda ScieGirl blogger; media trainer; founder of Uganda Health Journalists Association (HEJNU).*

Some journalists could not hold back their tears when the police cancelled the Cambodian Independent Media Centre's licence to operate.



# THE GAP IN CAMBODIA'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE

NALY PILORGE \*

**S**ocial media users face surveillance, harassment and arrest for online posts and private messages. The slightest criticism of the current government or expression of support for an opposition party, including “liking” certain Facebook pages, can result in criminal charges accompanied by lengthy prison sentences.

Independent journalism outlet Voice of Democracy (VOD), one of the last remaining critical media voices, was effectively shuttered in early February after Prime Minister Hun Sen disputed one of its stories that quoted the government's own spokesman.

Flagrantly disregarding the Press Law, which has existing provisions for demanding retractions or suing over media articles, the prime minister instead ordered the arbitrary revocation of the media licence of VOD's parent organisation, the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM). The revocation came just days after the story was published, and after the organi-

sation had issued multiple apologies.

The closure – labeled as a “lesson” for other media outlets by the information minister – is a culmination of a long-running media crackdown ahead of the 2023 National Election. VOD had for several years published bilingual investigations and fearless coverage of politics, corruption, and human rights issues.

Over the previous year, its reporters had been repeatedly detained by authorities, with one reporter also struck in the face by a member of the prime minister's bodyguard unit.

An open society, democracy, and accountability all rely on a free press. Voice of Democracy (VOD) has been one of the strongest voices and an invaluable source of critical reporting in recent years. If VOD are permanently shut, it will leave a gaping hole in Cambodia's media landscape, which has already been decimated by systematic government attacks over the past years, and is facing increasing repression ahead of the July National Election.



VOD Military police and other authorities abandoned the office of the Cambodian Centre for Independent Media (CCIM) after revoking its media operating licence.



### PRESS FREEDOM IN CAMBODIA

Cambodia is a country in Southeast Asia. The country has a history of political instability, civil war, and human rights abuses, including restrictions on press freedom.

However, in Cambodia, the media has faced numerous challenges, including censorship, intimidation, and legal action, which have limited its ability to report on important issues.

The constitution of Cambodia guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom, but in practice, the media operates in a highly restrictive environment. Journalists who are critical of the government or who report on sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights abuses, or land disputes face threats, harassment, and violence.

The government of Cambodia has been accused of using its power to silence critical voices in the media. For example, in 2017, the government forced the closure of The Cambodia Daily, an English-language newspaper that had been operating in the country since 1993. The government claimed that the paper had failed to pay a large tax bill, but many saw this as an attempt to silence an independent voice.

In addition to government pressure, the media in Cambodia also faces economic challenges. Many media outlets are owned by individuals or groups with political connections, and they use their media platforms to further their own interests.

Despite these challenges, some journalists and media outlets continue to report on sensitive issues and

hold those in power accountable. However, they often do so at great personal risk.

In recent years, there have been some positive developments in Cambodia's media landscape. In 2020, the government abolished a repressive law that had been used to target journalists and human rights defenders. The new law also includes provisions that protect journalists and their sources.

The Cambodian government has faced criticism in recent years for its actions towards press freedom. In recent, the government passed a controversial new law that imposes severe restrictions on journalists and media outlets, requiring them to register with the government and submit to surveillance and censorship. The law also empowers the government to fine or imprison journalists who are deemed to have spread "fake news" or to have threatened national security.

Cambodia's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has declined in recent years, and it is now ranked 144th out of 180 countries. International human rights organizations and press freedom advocates continue to call on the Cambodian government to respect the right to free expression and to take steps to protect journalists and media outlets from persecution and harassment. ■

*\*LICADHO's Outreach Director. LICADHO is a national Cambodian human rights organization. LICADHO has been at the forefront of efforts to protect civil, political, economic and social rights in Cambodia and to promote respect for them by the Cambodian government and institutions.*





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