

2023 ROUND-UP

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

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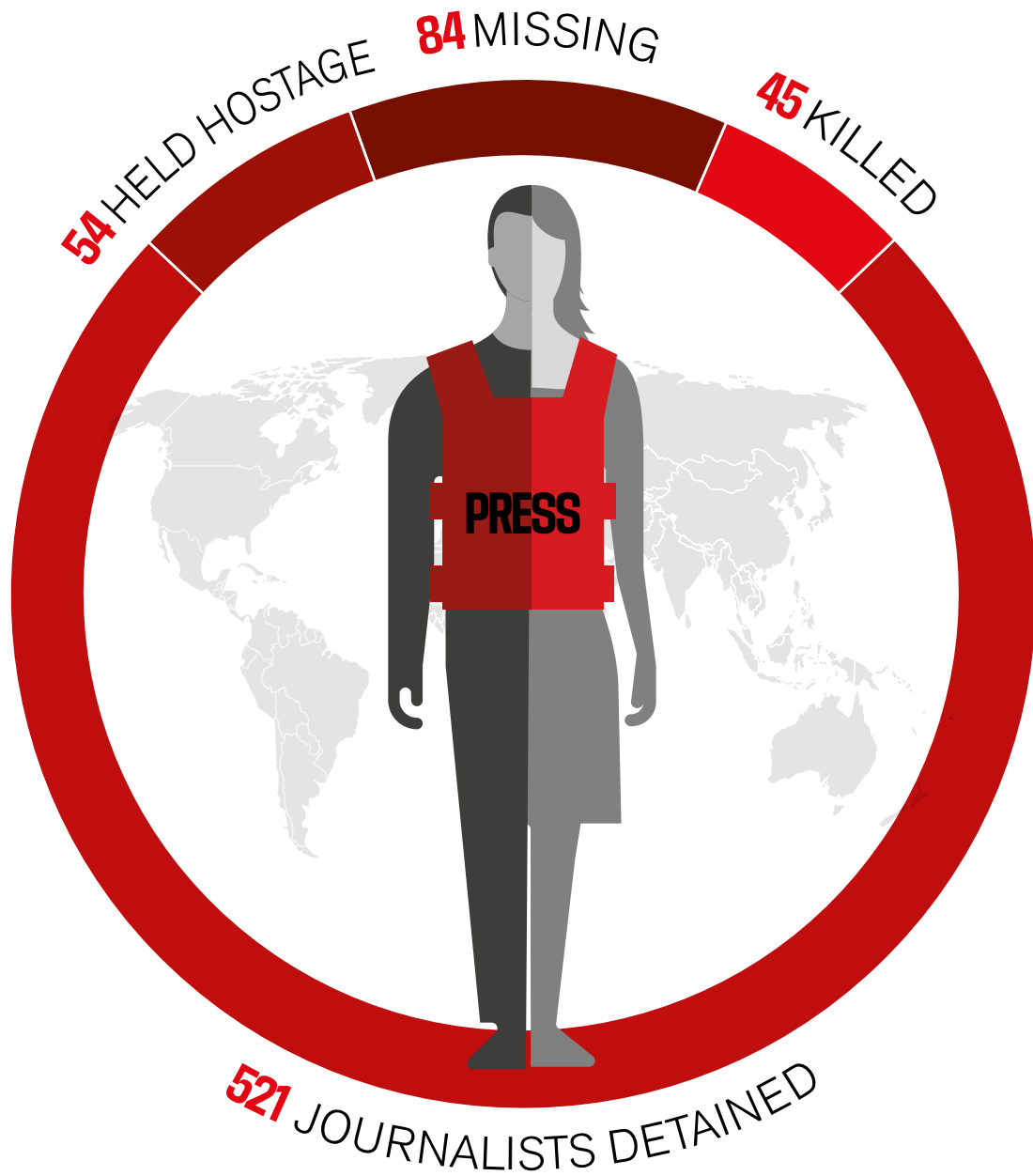
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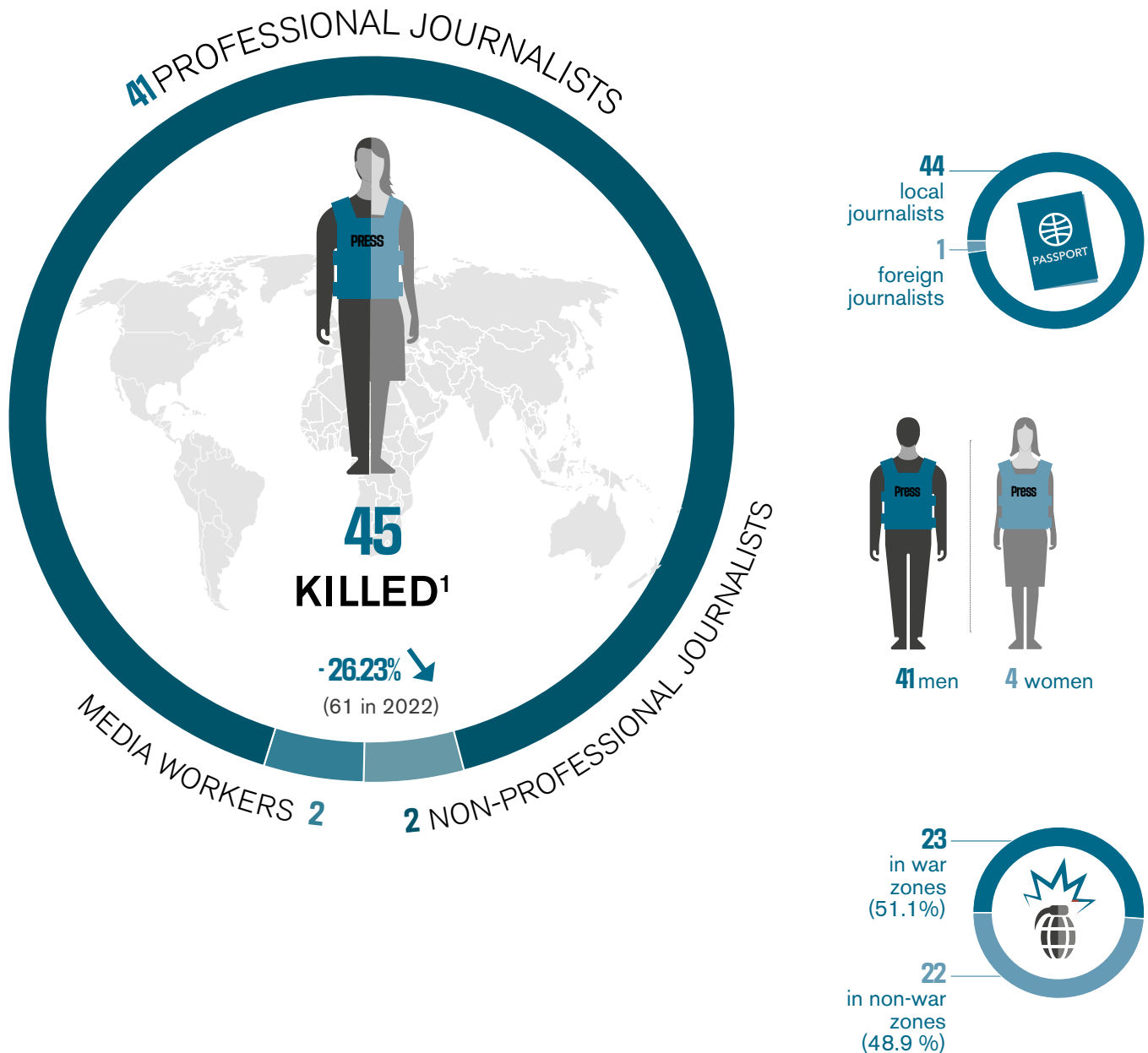
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ROUND-UP OVERVIEW



JOURNALISTS KILLED

The figures



Journalist killed: RSF logs a journalist's death in its press freedom barometer when they are killed in the exercise of their duties or in connection with their status as a journalist.

1. In the course of their work or in connection with journalism

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Fall in the number of journalists killed worldwide in connection with their work, despite the tragedy in Gaza

Though the total number of journalists killed in connection with their work in 2023 (45) reached its lowest level since 2002 (33), with every war, journalists pay a heavy price for their reporting.

War zones: grim toll of journalists killed in Gaza in 2023

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, in just two months, **17** journalists have lost their lives in the exercise of their duties in Gaza (13), Lebanon (3) and Israel (1), a toll that brings to **23** the number of journalists killed in war zones this year, versus 20 in 2022. Journalists have also died while covering armed clashes in northern Cameroon, northern Mali, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine.

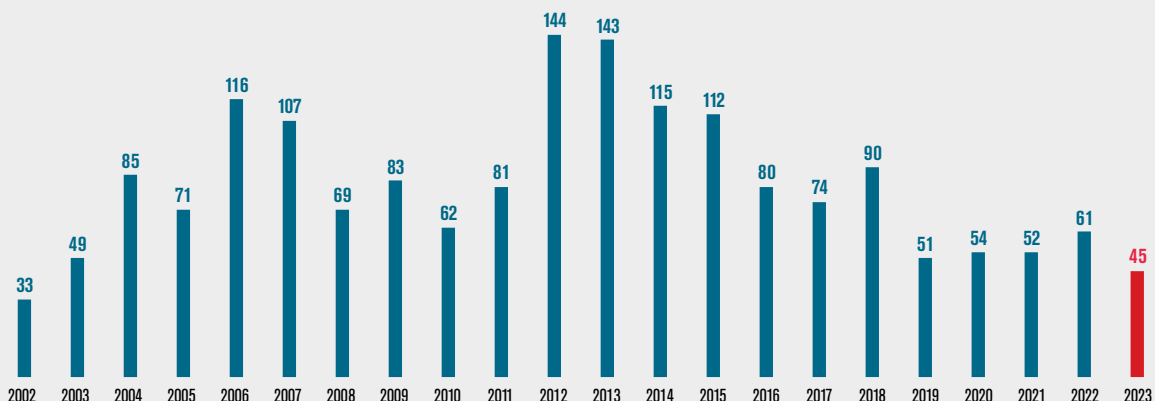
Global toll of journalists killed in the exercise of their duties lower than in previous years

RSF has seen a **gradual decrease in the number of journalists killed** in connection with their work. In total, **45** journalists were killed in 2023, 16 fewer than in 2022 (61). This is the lowest figure since 2002 (33). **More than 140 journalists lost their lives in 2012, as well as in 2013**, mainly due to the wars in Syria and Iraq.

The drop in the number of journalists killed can be explained, in part and in certain areas, by an **increase in journalists' security**. In armed conflicts, media professionals are now usually better prepared (better trained and equipped).

In peace zones, journalists are also better protected, thanks to the creation of regulatory frameworks to guarantee their security, and the strengthening of mechanisms to combat impunity. But in some regions, it is self-censorship in the face of an increase in risks that may also account for less exposure to physical risks.

NUMBER OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS KILLED IN THE COURSE OF THEIR WORK SINCE 2002



JOURNALISTS KILLED

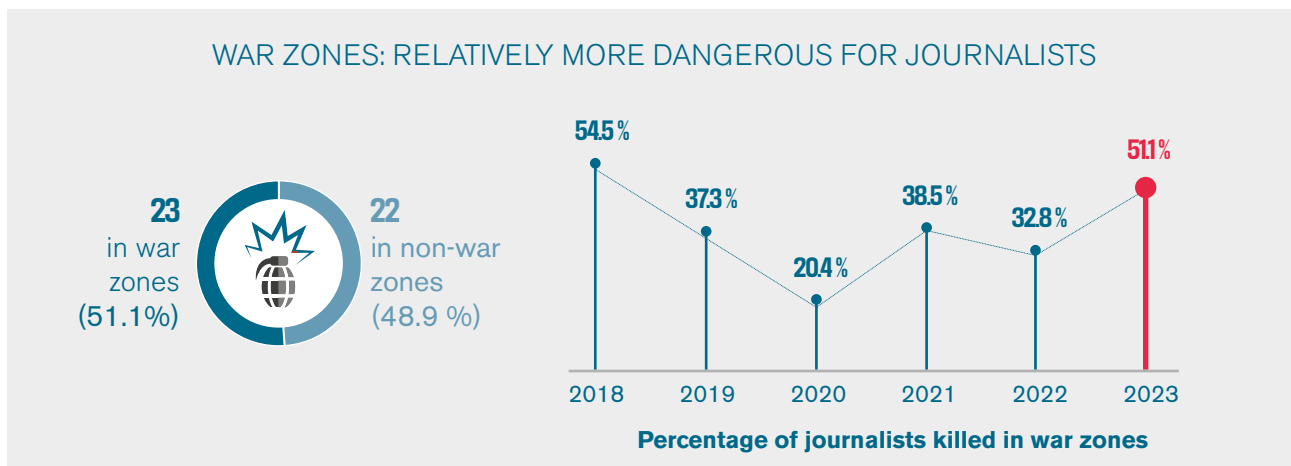
A remarkable drop in the number of journalists killed in Latin America

Although the number of journalists killed in the line of duty in Latin America has fallen significantly, **from 26 in 2022 to six in 2023**, it is not possible to speak of a structural improvement in security conditions in the region.

In **Mexico**, for example, four deaths were recorded in 2023, less than half the number recorded in 2022 (11). However, this does not mean that security has improved for journalists there, as demonstrated by the [kidnappings of three reporters and the armed attacks against four journalists](#) towards the end of 2023. Given the record number of cases of violence in 2022, some journalists have been more systematic in calculating the risks to which they are exposed, which implies more self-censorship and the spread of information black holes.

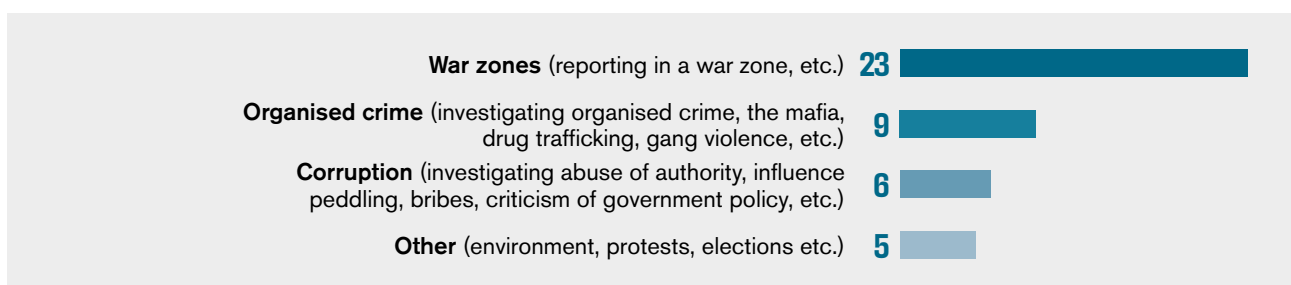
More than half of journalists killed were in war zones in 2023

For the first time since 2018, the number of journalists killed in war zones was proportionally higher than the number killed in peace zones.



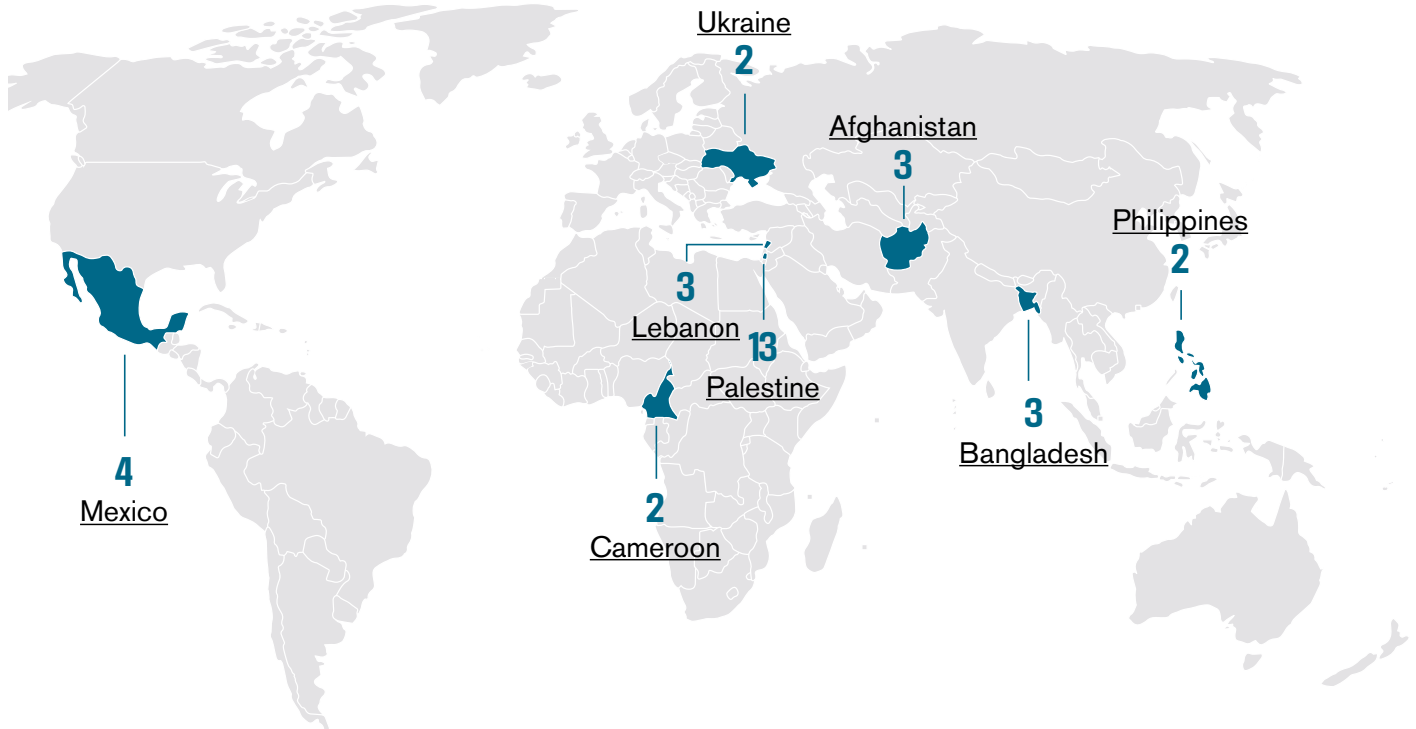
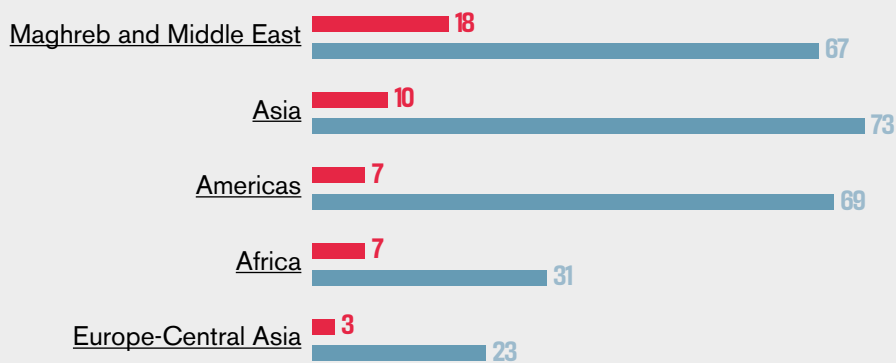
Most dangerous stories to cover

If covering war zones was the most dangerous reporting activity in 2023 (with 23 journalists killed), **covering organised crime and corruption** also continues to be extremely risky, with 15 journalists killed for investigating these stories in 2023, especially in Latin America and Africa.



JOURNALISTS KILLED

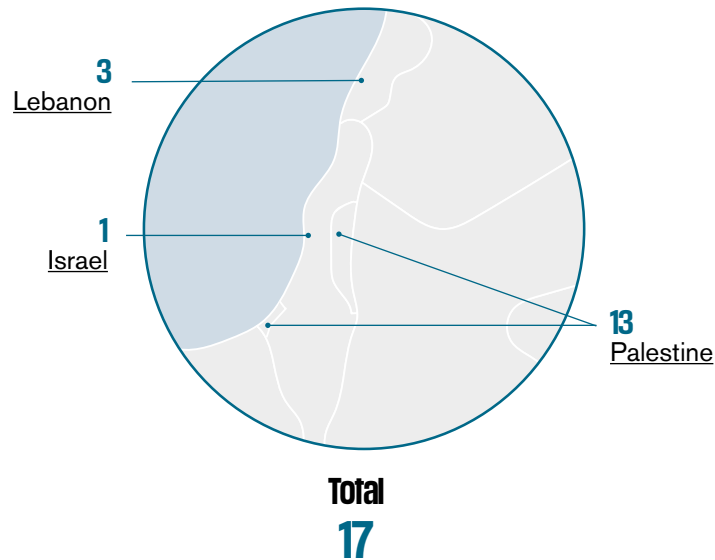
The most dangerous countries in 2023

NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS KILLED IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR WORK IN 2023
BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION

■ In 2023
■ Since 2019 (over 5 years)

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Journalists killed in the Middle East in the course of their work

**Israel-Hamas war: At least 17 journalists killed in connection with their work**

At least 17 media professionals have been killed in the exercise of their duties or in connection with their work since 7 October in Gaza (Palestine), Israel and Lebanon. This figure does not include journalists killed in circumstances unrelated to their work, those who were not killed as such, nor those whose circumstances of death remain unknown. This is why, out of the total of 63 journalists killed in the region under various circumstances, RSF counted 17 journalists as the number of those for whom it was able to establish with a sufficient degree of certainty that their death was indeed linked to their journalistic work, after checking the facts and on the basis of conclusive evidence. A complex investigation, that can result in RSF to including the names of the victims in its [press freedom barometer](#) some time after their deaths.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

From Ukraine to the Middle East: wars against journalism

War in Middle East, a tragedy for journalism in 2023

Palestine



Ibrahim Lafi
© Facebook

In Palestine, [13 journalists have been killed](#) in the exercise of their duties or in connection with their work since the start of the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas on 7 October. All died under Israeli fire in **the Gaza Strip**, like **Ibrahim Lafi**, a 21-year-old photojournalist from the Palestinian production company Ain Media, who was killed on the morning of 7 October while holding his camera.

Israel

In Israel, on the first day of the conflict, on 7 October, [Roei Idan](#), an Israeli photojournalist working for the news website *Ynet*, was killed by Hamas outside his house while he was documenting the atrocities committed by Hamas in the southwest of the country.

Southern Lebanon



Issam Abdallah
© Facebook

In southern Lebanon, near the Israeli border, [Issam Abdallah](#), a Lebanese photojournalist working for the *Reuters* news agency, was killed while reporting on 13 October. [According to an RSF investigation](#), the place where he was located, along with six of his colleagues from *Reuters*, *Agence France-Presse* and *Al Jazeera*, was targeted by two consecutive strikes. Two other Lebanese journalists **with the conservative media outlet *Al-Mayadeen***, **Farah Omar and Rabih al-Maamari**, were killed on 21 November by an Israeli bombing of the town of Tayr Harfa, in southern Lebanon, while they were covering the violence along the border with Israel.

11 journalists killed since start of war in Ukraine, including two this year



Arman Soldin
© Yasuyoshi CHIBA/AFP

In Ukraine, **two journalists were killed in 2023**, in addition to the nine previously killed since the start of the war on 24 February 2022. Franco-Bosnian *Agence France-Presse* war reporter [Arman Soldin](#) was killed by rocket fire while covering the fighting near the eastern city of Bakhmut early May 2023. He was the only journalist to lose his life in a country other than his own in 2023.



Bohdan Bitik
© Capture d'écran RaiNews

Two weeks earlier, **Ukrainian video reporter Bohdan Bitik**, clearly identifiable by clothing bearing the inscription "PRESS", was killed by a sniper on the Antonivsky bridge near the city of Kherson.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

In Africa, deadly conflicts in 2023

Sudan

In **Sudan**, journalist [Halima Idris Salim](#) was fatally hit by a Rapid Support Forces militia vehicle on 10 October, while she was covering clashes in Khartoum, the capital, for the independent media outlet *Sudan Bukra*. [Journalists have often been the targets](#) of physical attacks and arbitrary arrests since the start of the conflict between two Sudanese military factions in April 2023.

Mali



Abdoul Aziz Djibrilla
© DR

In the north of the country, [Abdoul Aziz Djibrilla](#), a journalist working for the community radio station *Naata*, was killed in an attack by an armed gang on 7 November. While on his way to Gao for a training workshop, the gang opened fire on his vehicle and he was killed instantly. [He was 28 years old](#). Local journalists are bearing the brunt of the deterioration of security conditions in northern Mali and throughout the Sahel region, as shown in RSF's [report, "What it's like to be a journalist in the Sahel."](#)

Cameroon



Anye Nde Nsoh
© DR

The death of the regional manager of the *Advocate* newspaper, [Anye Nde Nsoh](#), on 7 May in the city of Bamenda, illustrates the dangers of covering the news in the border areas of Cameroon, such as in the northwest of the country. The armed separatist group operating there acknowledged its responsibility, but said it was an "error" and that the journalist was not targeted.

Asia and Latin America: the most dangerous peace zones for journalists in 2023

Latin America

Mexico: world record number of journalists killed in the past five years

With **four journalists killed this year**, Mexico maintains, despite the drastic drop in reporters who died in the exercise of their duties, its place on the podium of the [world's deadliest countries](#) for journalists, second only to Palestine this year. Killed between May and July 2023, the four Mexican journalists were all investigating **organised crime**. Two media directors, [Gerardo Torres Rentería](#) (*Agencia Red Noticias*) and [Nelson Matus Peña](#) (*Lo Real de Guerrero*), were killed in Acapulco, in the southern state of Guerrero, on 11 May and 15 July respectively. *La Jornada* correspondent [Luis Martín Sánchez](#) was found dead in Nayarit state on 8 July. Radio *Stereo Luz FM* editorialist [Marco Aurelio Ramírez Hernández](#) was murdered on 23 May.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

A total of **six journalists were killed in Latin America in 2023**. In addition to the four media professionals killed in Mexico, [Luis Gabriel Pereira](#), the administrator of the *Notiorensense* Facebook page that mainly covers news stories and criminal cases, was killed in Colombia in February, and **Alexánder Álvarez Ramírez**, host of *Radio Urunday FM*, was killed in Paraguay, also in February.

Asia

Bangladesh: resurgence of violence in pre-election period



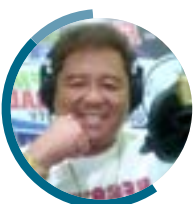
Mossamat Sahara
© DR

The [situation in Bangladesh](#) is continuing to deteriorate in the run-up to elections in January 2024. **Three journalists were murdered in 2023**. *Daily Monitor* correspondent and reporter for the local daily *Brahmanbaria Patrika*, **Ashiqul Islam**, was stabbed to death on 9 January. *Banglanews24* correspondent [Golam Rabbani Nadeem](#) was killed on 15 July after publishing a series of articles about a local village official's secret marriage scandal. And a photographer for the daily *Alor Jagat*, **Mossamat Sahara**, was hit on a motorbike on 20 September while she was covering a case of smuggling in which local potentates may have been involved.

Afghanistan: attack against youth, three journalists killed

They were all in their 20s. On 11 March 2023, an Islamic State [bomb attack](#) hit a ceremony honouring media personnel in Mazar-i-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, injuring around 20 media workers and killing three young journalists. **Sayed Hussain Naderi**, a reporter for the *Afghan Voice Agency*, and **Akmal Tabian**, a journalism student working for *Rah Farda Radio*, were killed instantly. **Soheil Seddiqi**, also a journalism student, died from his injuries ten days later.

Philippines: two journalists join 100 killed in the past 20 years



Juan Jumalon
© Facebook

In the Philippines, the murder of radio show host [Juan Jumalon](#) on 5 November while he was broadcasting live on the island of Mindanao, was a cruel reminder of the serious criminal threat weighing on journalists in the archipelago. Earlier this year, on 31 May, host of the show "Batita at Talakayan", broadcast, among others, on the radio station *DWXR 101.7FM*, [Cresencio Bundoquin](#) was killed by armed assailants as he was leaving his home. Known by the nickname "Cris", he had received several death threats. Since 2004, 102 journalists have been killed in the **Philippines, making the archipelago the most dangerous country in Asia during this period**.

Asia was the second most dangerous region for journalists in 2023, after the Middle East.

In the past five years, Asia has seen more journalists killed in the exercise of their duties than any other region, totaling 73 journalists killed: 22 in Afghanistan, 14 in Pakistan, 12 in the Philippines, 11 in India, seven in Bangladesh, four in Myanmar, and three in China.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Combating impunity for crimes against journalists

Brazil: shedding light on the murder of Dom Phillips



Dom Phillips
© Joao Laet_AFP

Journalist [Dom Phillips](#) and Indigenous peoples specialist Bruno Araújo Pereira were murdered in June 2022 while investigating illegal fishing in the Amazon. On 11 August 2023, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights announced the [creation of a working group](#), in which RSF is a participant, for journalist organisations to develop, with the government, measures for the security of journalists and for justice to be carried out. **This is the first time that Brazil has made such a commitment.**

South Sudan: the long quest for justice in the Christopher Allen case



Christopher Allen
© Fally photo

The Republic of South Sudan announced, in October 2023, the [creation of a committee to investigate the death of Christopher Allen](#). After six years of [advocacy](#), RSF welcomed the initiative but urged the authorities to conduct a solid, independent and transparent investigation in line with international standards. An American-British freelance journalist, Christopher Allen, was shot dead while covering a clash in Kaya, near the South Sudan-Uganda border on 26 August 2017.

In Malta, a conviction for the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia



Daphne Caruana Galizia
© AFP

In November 2023, the Malta Court of Appeal [confirmed](#) the 40-year prison sentences of George and Alfred Degiorgio, found guilty of the assassination of Maltese journalist [Daphne Caruana Galizia](#) in 2017. Three other suspects have yet to be prosecuted, including Yorgen Fenech, the businessman accused of ordering her murder.

The Gambia: historic verdict in the murder of RSF's Gambian correspondent



Deyda Hydara
© Seyliou AFP

On 30 November 2023, the Higher Regional Court in Celle, Germany, sentenced a former member of the “*Junglers*”, a paramilitary unit established by former President Yahya Jammeh, to life in prison for his involvement in the murder, on 16 December 2004, of renowned journalist [Deyda Hydara](#), co-founder of *The Point* newspaper and RSF's correspondent in The Gambia.

JOURNALISTS KILLED

Cameroon: Investigation of an assassination at the heart of state affairs

Martinez Zogo
© RS

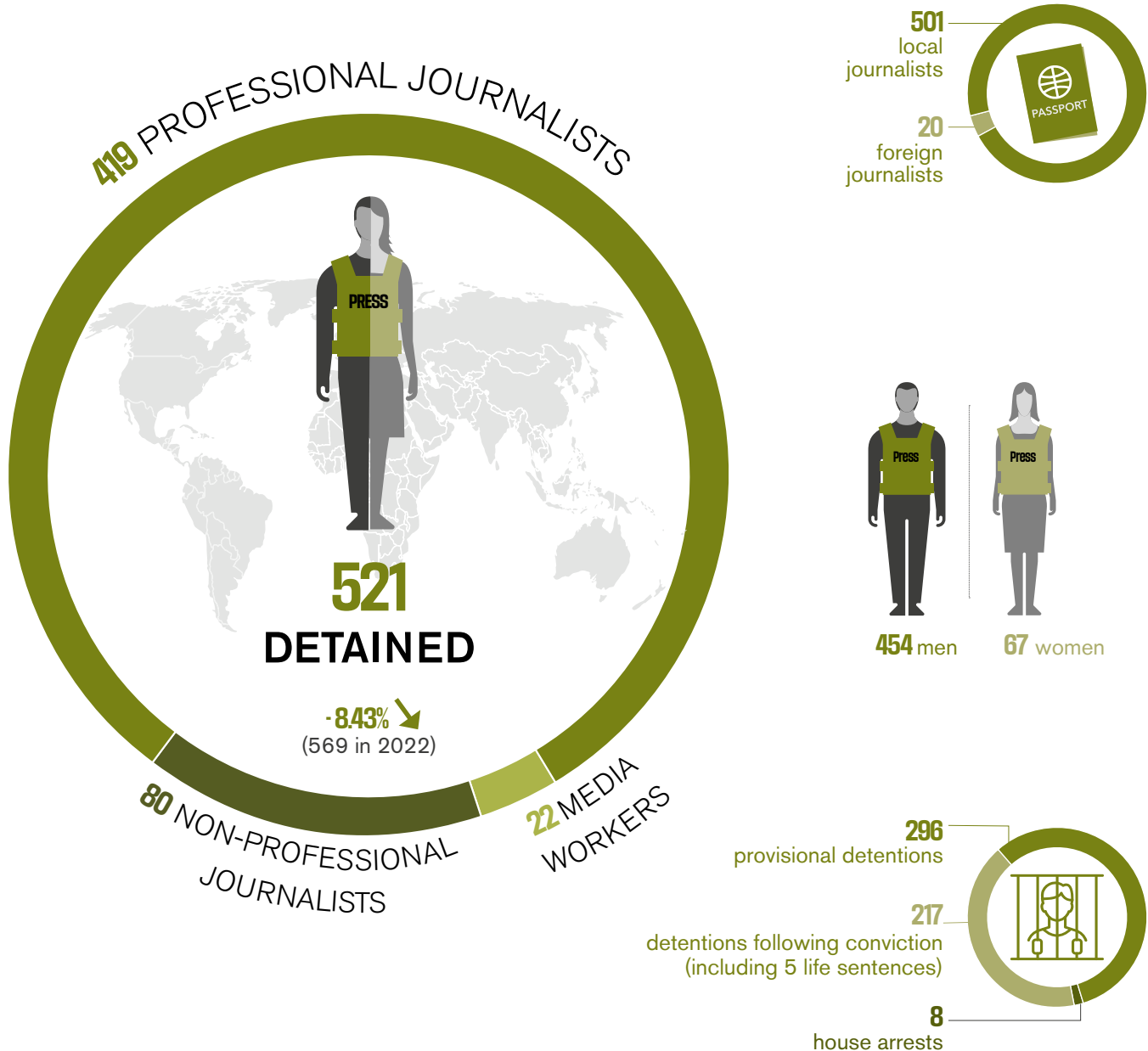
In January 2023, the general director of privately owned radio *Amplitude FM*, [Martinez Zogo](#), was abducted in Cameroon. The discovery of his mutilated body five days later has **shaken the government**. An RSF investigation revealed the details of the plot to silence this journalist and the role played by a powerful businessman in cooperation with intelligence services. In the wake of these revelations, the businessman was arrested and charged with masterminding the murder and ten members of the intelligence agency were accused of carrying it out. With all the **pressure surrounding the case, which is being closely followed by President Paul Biya**, a trial is expected to start before the end of 2024.

RSF files complaints with International Criminal Court (ICC)

In 2023, RSF filed a [complaint](#) with the International Criminal Court for war crimes against **Palestinian journalists in Gaza and against an Israeli journalist**. This was the third time that RSF filed a complaint with the ICC prosecutor about war crimes committed against Palestinian journalists in Gaza since 2018. RSF also filed, in 2023, an [eighth complaint with the ICC prosecutor about war crimes committed against journalists in Ukraine](#) – complementing the [seven others filed in 2022](#). These complaints, forwarded to the Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office, identify more than 50 abuses committed on Ukrainian territory against nearly 150 journalists and 17 TV/radio towers and media buildings.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The figures



RSF distinguishes three categories of detention of journalists in the exercise of their functions or in connection with their work:

- **Provisional detention:** Any deprivation of freedom for more than 48 hours of a person who has not yet been tried.
- **Detention following a conviction:** deprivation of freedom of a journalist after conviction.
- **House arrest:** Requiring a journalist to remain in a specific location, determined by the authority ordering it – often in their home – possibly under electronic surveillance, and/or with a requirement to report regularly to the police and/or to remain in this place at specific times. It can be imposed as an alternative to imprisonment for those convicted, or as a surveillance measure for those being prosecuted.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

China, Myanmar, Belarus and Vietnam: more than half of world's imprisoned journalists in four countries

Despite a decrease of nearly 9% in the number of journalists arbitrarily detained around the world between 2022 and 2023, **521 journalists will start 2024 behind bars** – there were 569 in 2022.

A total of 264 journalists are imprisoned in China (including Hong Kong), Myanmar, Belarus and Vietnam in 2023.

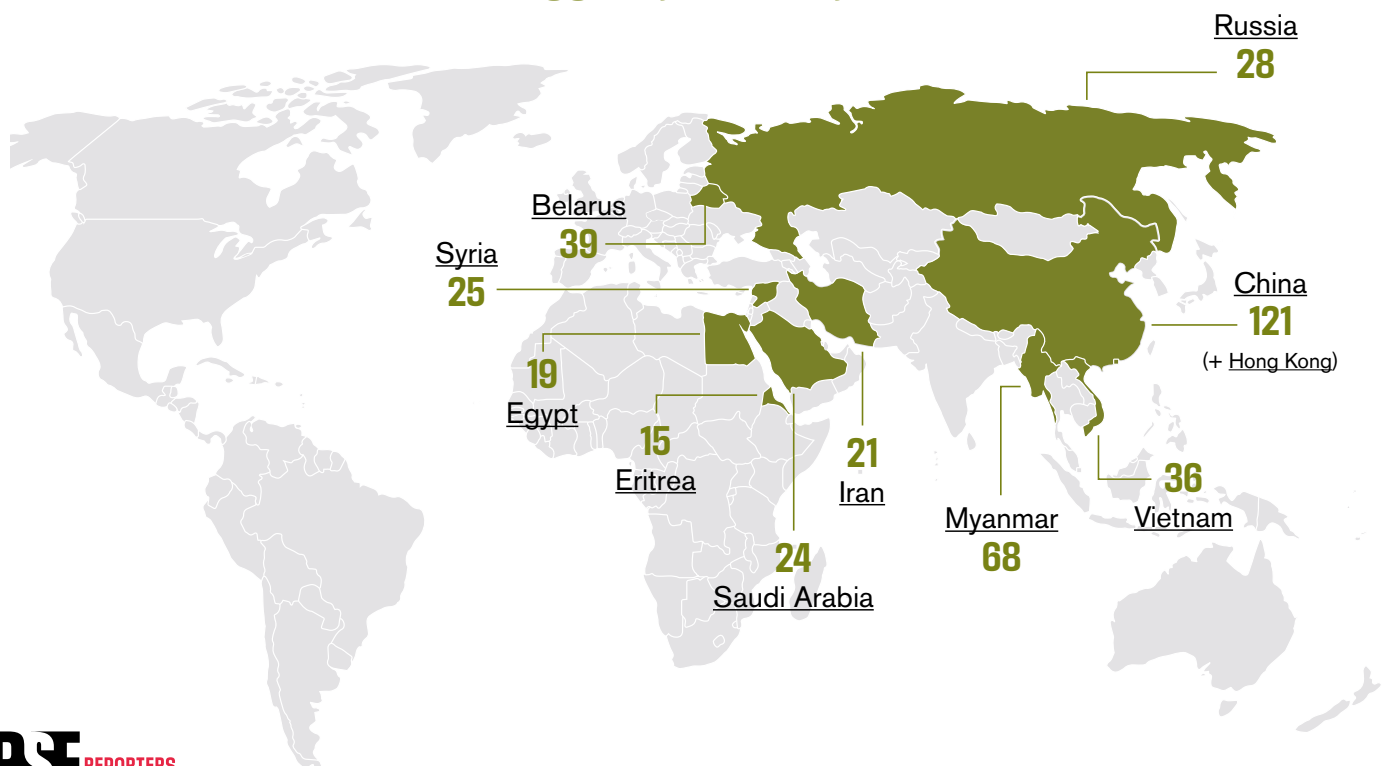
China is again **the world's largest prison for journalists**, with 121 media professionals behind bars on its soil (including 12 in Hong Kong). Nearly **a quarter (23%) of the journalists detained worldwide are now in Chinese jails**.

In **Myanmar**, **68 journalists are still imprisoned in 2023**, compared to 78 in 2022. Half of them are awaiting trial.

In 2023, Alexander Lukashenko's **Belarus** joins the top three regimes that lock up journalists the most: **39** are behind bars (seven more than in 2022). Belarus is **the country with the highest number of detained female journalists (10) after China (14)**. Total, in 2023, more **than one in ten imprisoned journalists was a woman (67)**.

Finally, of the **521 journalists detained** worldwide, more than half (296) are still awaiting trial.

The ten biggest jailers of journalists



DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Five high-risk countries

China: Xinjiang, a vast prison

Nearly 8% of journalists detained worldwide, or 42 media professionals, are held in the **Xinjiang** autonomous region, where the [Chinese government](#) has been waging a violent campaign of repression against the **Uyghurs**, a mainly Muslim Turkic ethnic minority, since 2016. Also facing persecution beyond the region, **Uyghur journalists account for 64% (77) of the journalists imprisoned in China**. Among them are the iconic journalists [Ilham Tohti](#), founder of the *Uyghur Online* news site, and [Gulmira Imin](#), of the *Salkin* news site.



Jimmy Lai
© AFP-RSF-APR-680wide

Twelve journalists are also detained in the **Hong Kong** Special Administrative Region. They include [Jimmy Lai](#), the founder of the *Apple Daily* newspaper, who is facing the possibility of a life sentence under Hong Kong's draconian national security law in a trial due to start on 18 December 2023.

The Chinese authorities also do not hesitate to **prosecute foreign journalists or those with dual nationality**. The Swedish journalist and publisher [Gui Minhai](#) was sentenced to ten years in prison in 2020, while the Chinese-Australian political commentator [Yang Hengjun](#) has been detained for “espionage” since 2019.



Li Yanhe
© RTI

Seven more journalists were arrested by Xi Jinping's government in 2023. One of them, still behind bars, is [Li Yanhe](#), the Taiwan-based host of a programme on *Radio Taiwan International*, who was arrested when he went to China to renounce his Chinese citizenship. He has been held incommunicado in Shanghai since March 2023.

Myanmar: 68 detained, three new convictions

Sai Zaw Thaike
© Kon Blai_Myanmar Now

Sixty-eight Burmese journalists are imprisoned in Myanmar, 34 of whom are still awaiting trial. Those who have been tried have been handed heavy sentences, generally on spurious charges such as “sedition” or “spreading fake news.” As such, in September 2023, the Burmese [military junta](#) handed down the **heaviest sentence against a journalist** since taking power in 2021: **20 years in prison** for photojournalist [Sai Zaw Thaike](#).

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Belarus: persecution of the media and journalists

In 2023, Belarus took third place on the podium of the world's biggest jailers of journalists while continuing to fall in RSF's World Press Freedom Index, ranking 157th out of 180 countries, as a result of dictator Alexander Lukashenko's persecution of independent media. In July 2023, the Supreme Court rejected the appeals of **Maryna Zolatava**, the editor of *Tut.by*, the country's most widely read media outlet until its closure in 2021, and **Liudmila Chekina**, its director. Listed as "terrorists" by the government, these two journalists' [12-year prison sentences](#), handed down on 17 March 2023, were upheld.

Vietnam: muzzled journalists



Nguyen Lan Thang
© Facebook

As the only sources of freely reported information in a country where the press is under the orders of the single party, **independent journalists and bloggers** are regularly targeted by the authorities. Thirty-six journalists are detained in Vietnam, including 20 bloggers, such as [Nguyen Lan Thang](#), who was sentenced to **eight years in prison** for "anti-state propaganda" in April 2023.

The ruling party's **repression also reaches beyond its borders**. After being kidnapped in Thailand in April 2023, investigative reporter [Duong Van Thai](#) resurfaced three months later in detention in Vietnam, where he now awaits a trial on a charge of "[anti-state propaganda](#)," which carries a possible 20-year sentence.

Journalists imprisoned in Vietnam are almost systematically subjected to **degrading treatment** and denied access to medical care. Two independent journalists, [Pham Chi Dung](#) and [Le Trong Hung](#), began a **hunger strike** mid-2023 in [protest](#) against the conditions in which they were being held.

Imprisoned by Russia's repressive machine



Alsu Kurmasheva
© RFERL

Twenty-eight journalists are detained in Russia, including two US citizens. One is *Wall Street Journal* correspondent [Evan Gershkovich](#), being held for "espionage" since 29 March 2023. The other is [Alsu Kurmasheva](#), an American-Russian journalist who works for *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in Prague (Czech Republic). Since 18 October 2023, she has been languishing in a prison in Tatarstan, her region of origin, where she had gone to visit her ailing mother. She is accused of failing to declare herself a "foreign agent" and is facing a **possible five-year sentence**.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Other prisons around the world

In India, Jammu and Kashmir now independent journalism's prison

Since 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir region has lost its political autonomy and is now administered by the central government's Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, [hostile to criticism from journalists](#). Laws meant to combat terrorism are regularly used to silence criticism, with **five journalists currently imprisoned in this territory of the union**. The latest is independent journalist [Majid Hyderi](#), jailed under the **Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act** on 15 September 2023.

Tightening of the situation in North Africa

Press freedom has deteriorated in North Africa. Since Kais Saied became president **in Tunisia** in 2019, dozens of journalists have been arrested for criticising him and two are still being held. One is **Chadha Hadj Mbarek**, a reporter for the daily *Le Maghreb*, who has been jailed since 22 July 2023. The other is [Khalifa Guesmi](#), a journalist with the privately owned *Radio Mosaïque*, who was sentenced to five years in prison on 16 May 2023.



Ihsane El Kadi
© RADIO M

In Algeria, two journalists are currently behind bars: [Mustapha Bendjama](#), a journalist and editor-in-chief of the *Le Provinciale* newspaper and [Ihsane El Kadi](#), the founder and director of independent media outlets *Maghreb Émergent* and *Radio M*. The latter was sentenced on appeal in June 2023 to five years in prison with another two years suspended.

In Morocco, three journalists are still in prison, having been sentenced to long prison terms: [Taoufik Bouachrine](#), the former publisher of the daily *Akhbar El Youm*, investigative reporter [Omar Radi](#), and journalist [Soulaïmane Raïssouni](#). As their appeals to the court of cassation, the highest appeals court, were rejected – in 2021 for Bouachrine and in 2023 for his two colleagues – their only hope of an early release lies in a **royal pardon**.

Detention as a means of intimidation of Turkish journalists



In Türkiye, **43 journalists were jailed in 2023**, a number that demonstrates the extent with which detention is used as a method of intimidation. **Seven of these journalists are still behind bars**. They include **four Kurdish journalists** who are being detained provisionally in investigations targeting about ten employees of pro-Kurdish media. **Kurdish journalists** are particularly targeted by the Turkish authorities. During a [wave of arrests](#) in April 2023, 13 Kurdish journalists were jailed **on the eve of the presidential elections**.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Women harshly repressed

As of 1 December 2023, **67 female journalists were being detained, 8 of whom were imprisoned in 2023**. **China, Belarus and Myanmar** are the three biggest jailers of female journalists (as they are for their male counterparts), as well as being the countries that hand down the longest sentences. In the Middle East, it is especially in **Iran** that women face the greatest pressure.

Six of the eight heaviest sentences are handed down to women

	20 years	Sai Zaw Thaike	Myanmar
	14 years	Xu Zhiyong	China
	13 years	Niloofar Hamedi	Iran
	12 years	Maryna Zolatava	Belarus
	12 years	Liudmila Tchekina	Belarus
	12 years	Elaheh Mohammadi	Iran
	10 years	Floriane Irangabiye	Burundi
	10 years	Valeriya Kastsiuhova	Belarus

In Belarus, nearly one in four imprisoned journalists is a woman

Belarus, the world's third biggest jailer of journalists in 2023, is also **the country holding the most women journalists (10) after China (14)**.

In 2023, the prison sentences handed down to women journalists were particularly heavy. **Maryna Zolatava**, the editor-in-chief of the *Tut.by* news site, and **Liudmila Chekina**, its director, were each sentenced to [12 years in prison](#) on 17 March 2023. *Belarussian Yearbook* editor [Valeriya Kastsiuhova](#) was sentenced to ten years in prison.

Women jailed in Iran for their coverage of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement

Five of the **31 women journalists imprisoned** for their coverage of the “**Woman, Life, Freedom**” movement, which followed **Mahsa Amini’s death on 16 September 2022**, are still in prison. They include [Niloofar Hamedi](#) and [Elaheh Mohammadi](#), reporters with *Shargh Daily* and *Han Mihan*, respectively, who covered the story.

In addition to these five journalists, [Narges Mohammadi](#), who has been [detained](#) since 16 November 2021, has continued to inform the world about the violence inflicted on women in prison. She was awarded the [2023 Nobel Peace Prize](#) on 6 November 2023.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Floriane Irangabiye sentenced to ten years in prison in Burundi



Floriane Irangabiye
© xxxxx

While visiting her family in Burundi, the host of a debate programme on Burundian politics and culture on the Rwanda-based *Radio Igicaniir*, [Floriane Irangabiye](#), was arrested by the National Intelligence Service on 20 August 2022. Accused of having “endangered the integrity of the national territory”, she was sentenced on 3 January 2023 to ten years in prison – **one of the heaviest sentences handed down to any journalist in 2023.**

Symbolic imprisonments

Stanis Bujakera Tshimala: wrongly accused of being a “counterfeiter”



Stanis Bujakera
Tshimala
© 2023 Agence Afrique

The Congolese journalist with the most social media followers, [Stanis Bujakera Tshimala](#), correspondent of, among others, *Jeune Afrique*, has been languishing in prison since 8 September 2023 for allegedly fabricating and circulating a Congolese intelligence agency memo about the death of a political opponent. RSF investigated the circumstances of the arrest and determined that he could not have been the memo’s author. Nonetheless, despite the absence of incriminating evidence, a trial is underway, and **Stanis Bujakera is facing up to ten years in prison.**

Jose Rubén Zamora: victim of psychological torture



Jose Rubén Zamora
© EFE

In Guatemala, the **founder of the daily *elPeriódico***, [Jose Rubén Zamora](#), was arrested on 29 July 2022, five days after publishing an investigation into alleged cases of corruption involving persons close to President Alejandro Giammattei. When **RSF visited him in Guatemala City’s Mariscal Zavala prison** in May 2023, Zamora said he had been subjected to psychological torture. Despite [an appeals court overturning](#) his six-year prison sentence in October 2023, the [winner of the 2023 RSF Prize for Independence](#) remains in prison pending a retrial scheduled to begin on 5 February 2024.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Mohamed “Oxygen”: in solitary confinement for 6 months

The creator of the blog *Oxygen Misr* (“Egypt’s Oxygen”), [Mohamed Ibrahim Radwan](#), known under the pseudonym **Mohamed “Oxygen”, winner of the 2023 RSF Prize for Courage**, has faced inhumane detention conditions. Imprisoned since 2019 for his coverage of protests in Egypt, he has been held **in solitary confinement in Cairo’s Badr prison since May 2023** for trying to defend one of his fellow prisoners.

Xu Zhiyong: 14-year sentence in 2023 for revelations about Covid-19



Xu Zhiyong
© China Change

Six journalists are still being detained in China, Bangladesh and Vietnam for criticising their governments’ handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. They include Chinese journalist [Xu Zhiyong](#), who was sentenced to 14 years in prison in April 2023 for “subversion.” Detained for the past three years, he is often subjected to torture.

Endless extradition proceedings for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

The founder of **WikiLeaks**, [Julian Assange](#), faces 18 charges in the United States for publishing classified documents **revealing information of public interest** in 2010. If the US government succeeds in obtaining his extradition from the United Kingdom, he faces an exorbitant **175-year prison sentence** for his contribution to journalism. A **final hearing before the UK High Court** could be convened soon and could prove decisive.



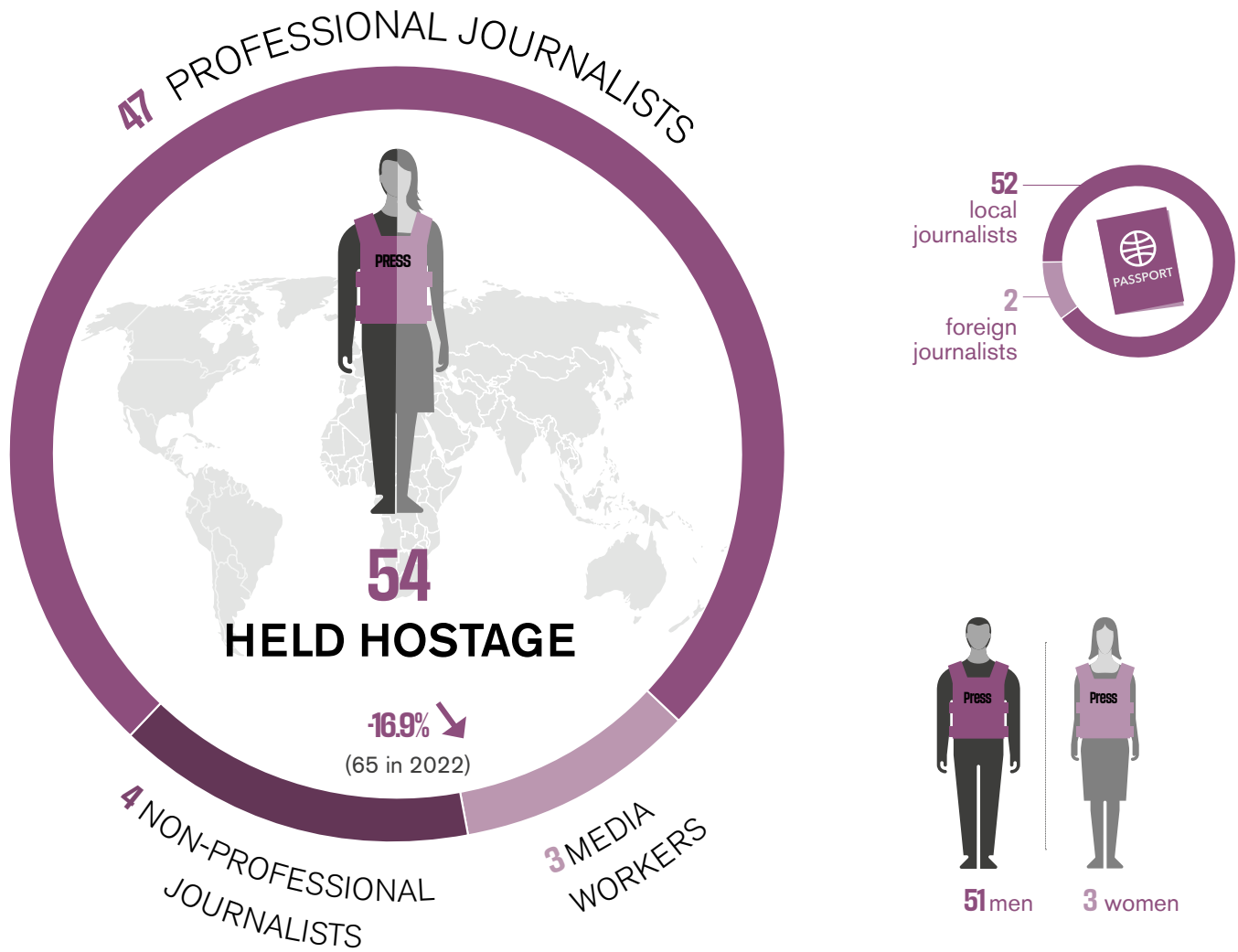
Mortaza Behboudi
©Julien de Rosa _ AFP

Mortaza Behboudi free at last!

On 18 October 2023, the Franco-Afghan journalist [Mortaza Behboudi](#) was released after being held for 284 days in Afghanistan. RSF had been [working tirelessly](#) for his release ever since his arrest by the Taliban in Kabul on 7 January 2023.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

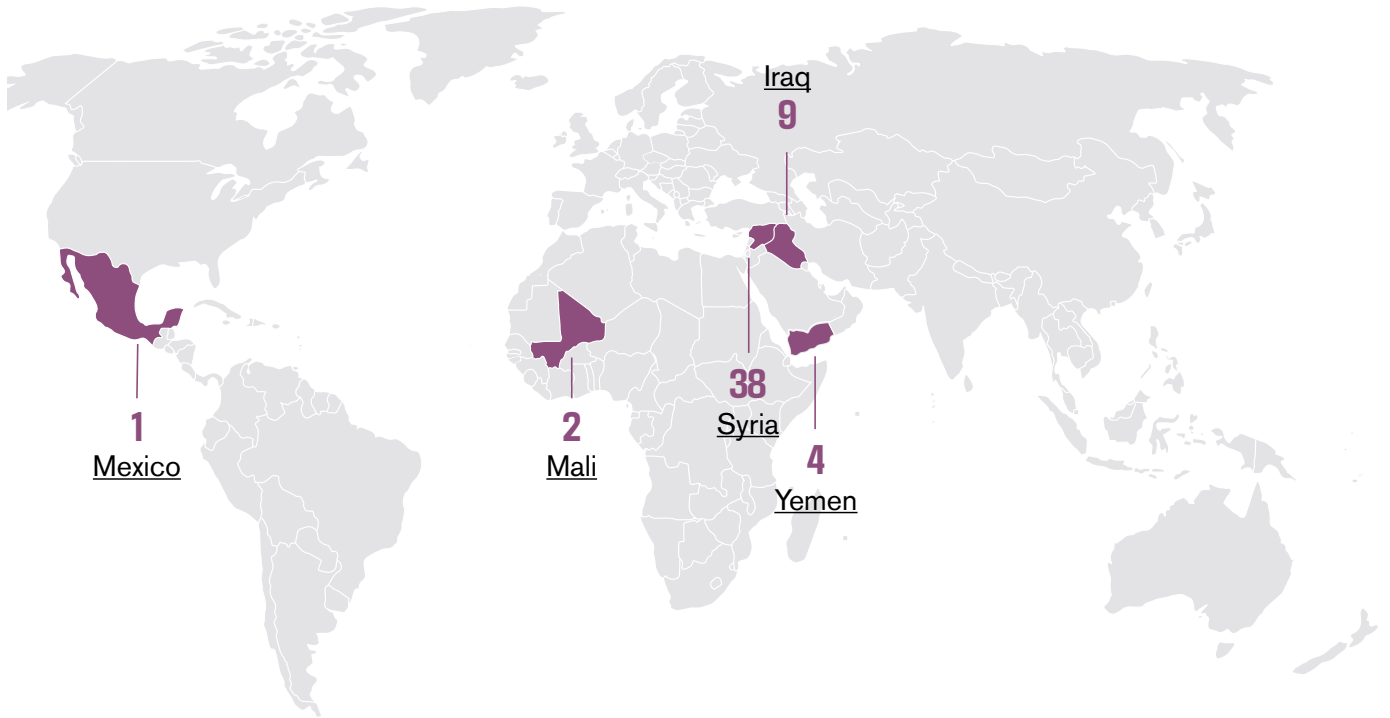
The figures



Hostage: RSF considers that a journalist is a hostage from the moment they are being deprived of their freedom by a non-state actor who combines this deprivation of liberty with threats to kill or injure them, or continue to detain them with the aim of coercing a third party to perform or refrain from performing an act as an explicit or implicit condition for the hostage's release, safety or well-being.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

High risk countries



54 journalists held hostage in five countries

At least **54 media professionals are currently being held hostage** in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Mexico and Mali. Nearly half of these journalists (25) were kidnapped by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq or Syria between 2013 and 2015.

The recorded number of journalists held hostage in 2023 is the lowest among those recorded since 2017. **Of the seven journalists abducted in 2023 (Mexico, Haiti, Yemen, Mali), two are still in captivity in Mali.**

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

Seven releases in Yemen: journalists as bargaining chips

[On 16 April 2023](#), four Yemeni journalists who had been held hostage for eight years and sentenced to death for “espionage” by the Houthi rebels in Yemen breathed a sigh of relief. The journalists **Hareth Homaid**, **Tawfik al-Mansouri** and **Abdul Khaleq Amran** – who worked for the *Yemen Revolution Press* agency – and **Akram al-Walidi** – who worked for *Alrabie-ye.net* and the *SABA* agency – were released as part of a prisoner swap between the Houthi rebel and Yemen’s internationally recognised government. Three other journalists, **Muhammad Ali Al-Junaid**, **Mohamed Abdo Al-Salahi** and **Fahed Al-Arhabi**, were released later in the year. Of the 11 journalists recorded as hostages in Yemen at the end of 2022, **four are still being held**.

In Mali, Olivier Dubois released, two other journalists abducted



Olivier Dubois
© Souleymane AG ANARA_AFP

Two years of campaigning for the [release of Olivier Dubois](#), a French journalist held hostage in Mali, ended successfully on **20 March 2023**, when he was finally freed after being held hostage for 711 days in Mali. He had been kidnapped by the Support Group for Islam and Muslims (JNIM) on **8 April 2021 in Gao**, a city in northeastern Mali that is 200 km from the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. **No French journalist had been a captive for such a long time since 1980 in Lebanon**.

The relief resulting from Dubois’ release was short-lived. Two Malian journalists – *Radio Coton FM* director **Saleck Ag Jiddou** and *Radio Coton FM* presenter **Moustapha Koné** – were on their way to a workshop in Gao on 7 November 2023 when they were [abducted](#) by an armed group that initially opened fire on their car, killing [Abdoul Aziz Djibrilla](#), a community radio journalist travelling with them.

Mexico: media outlet editor still held hostage



Alán García Aguilar
© Facebook

Alán García Aguilar, the founder and editor of *Escenario Calentano*, a media outlet known for its coverage of criminal gangs and corruption in the Tierra Caliente region of southern Mexico’s Guerrero state, was [kidnapped](#) at the end of December 2022 along with two people believed to have contributed to this local news page, Jesús Pintor Alegre and Fernando Moreno Villegas. Only the latter were released on 11 January 2023.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

Iraq: no news of nine journalists held hostage since the fall of the Islamic State

There has been no recent proof of life of the nine journalists currently held hostage in Iraq. *Sumariya TV* journalists [Rim Zeid](#) and [Marouane Khazaal](#) were abducted by unidentified gunmen in Baghdad in 2006. The seven other journalists were kidnapped by the Islamic State (ISIS) between 2014 and 2015 in Mosul, which the Iraqi armed forces retook in 2017.

No recent proof of life of the 38 hostages held in Syria

Six years after Islamic State's defeat, RSF has no news of 38 journalists who were kidnapped in Syria between 2012 and 2021. They include **three Syrian employees** of Istanbul-based [Orient TV](#) – reporter **Obeida Batal**, technician **Aboud Al-Atik** and soundman **Hosam Nizam Al-Dine** – who were kidnapped 40 km north of Aleppo in July 2013.

In addition to holding **two of the world's only three female journalists hostage**, Syria is also the only country where **foreign journalists** are being held captive. They are the Mauritanian reporter [Ishak Mokhtar](#) and Lebanese cameraman [Samir Kassab](#), who were working for the Emirati TV channel *Sky News Arabia* when they were abducted, together with their Syrian driver, whose anonymity has been requested by his family, near Aleppo in October 2013.

Ten years later, a French court revives the case of Syrian woman journalist's abduction

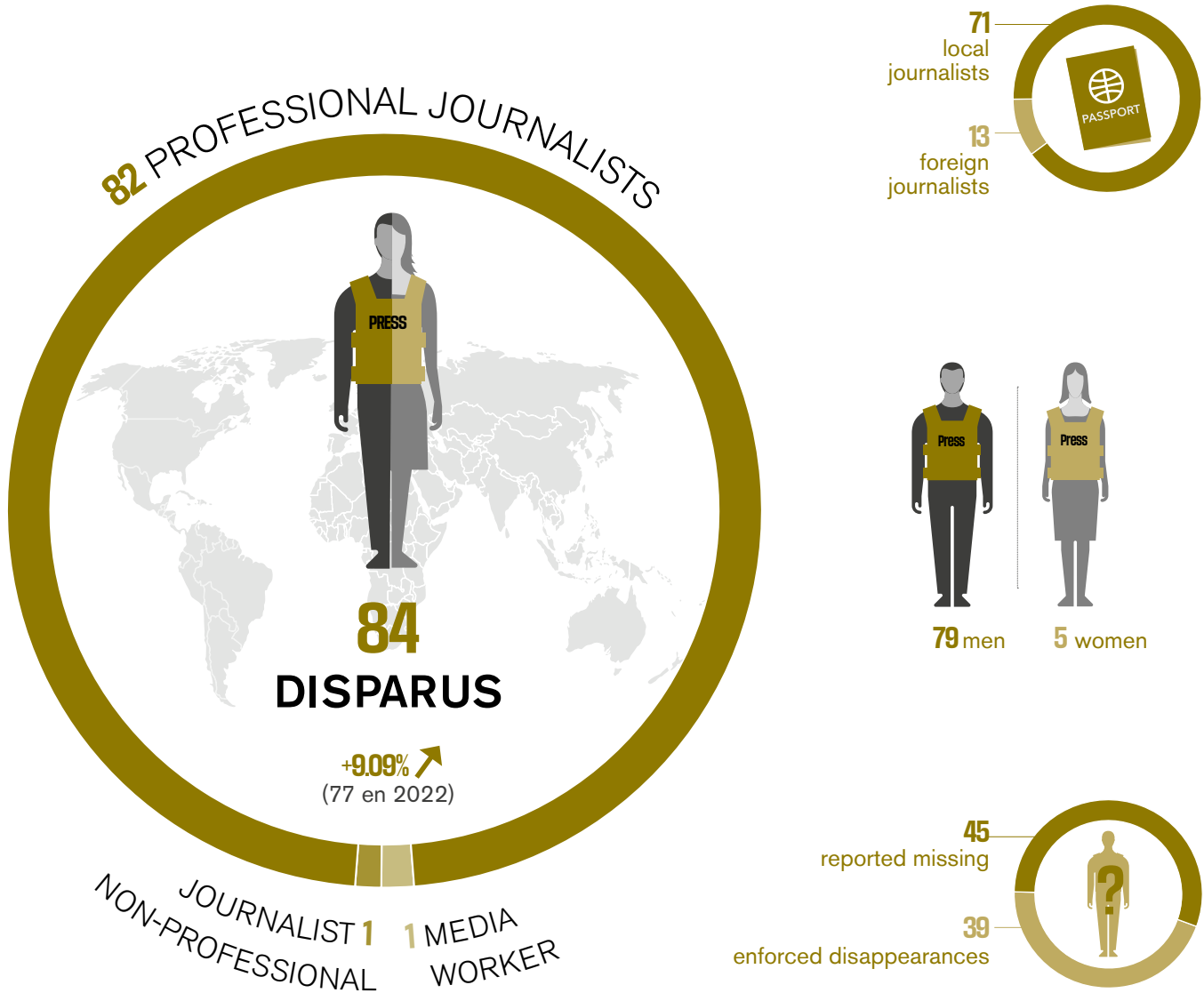


Razan Zaitouneh
© DR

In July 2023, the Judicial Court of Paris ordered the indictment of Majdi Nema, the former leader of the Syrian Islamist rebel group Jaysh al-Islam, for “complicity in war crimes and forced disappearances,” including the disappearance of [Razan Zaitouneh](#), a Syrian woman journalist who was a member of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM). Zaitouneh was kidnapped on 9 December 2013, while documenting crimes committed by the government and rebel groups in Syria.

MISSING JOURNALISTS

The figures



Missing journalist: RSF classifies journalists as missing when there is not enough evidence to determine if they were victims of a homicide or abduction and no credible claim of responsibility has been made.

Reported missing: Default status when a journalist or media worker is missing, when it is not known whether they were taken hostage, are in state custody or were killed, when evidence of death or abduction is non-existent or insufficient, and when no credible claim of responsibility has been made.

Enforced disappearance: Under international law, it is characterised by three essential criteria: deprivation of freedom by an official authority (or a group acting in its name, with its support, or with its consent), combined with the refusal either to recognise this deprivation, or to reveal the fate of the person concerned and their location.

MISSING JOURNALISTS

Countries with the most missing journalists

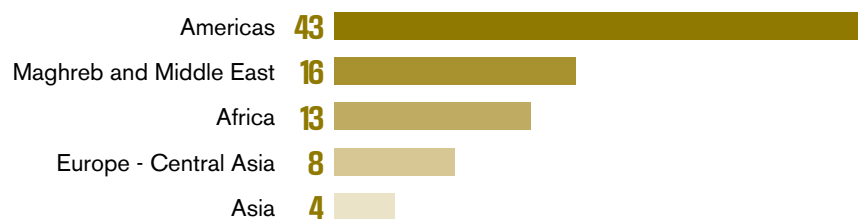


Seven new disappearances in 2023

The long list of missing media professionals (84) continued to grow in 2023: **seven journalists disappeared** in Palestine (2), Sudan (2), Russia (1), Mexico (1) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (1).

To date, of the 84 journalists missing worldwide, **39** are the victims of enforced disappearances – deprivation of freedom involving state agents who deny that the victim has been detained or conceal their fate and place of detention.

High-risk regions



MISSING JOURNALISTS

Number of journalists missing in Mexico now exceeds 30

Juan Carlos Hinojosa Viveros, a photojournalist and editor of the online media outlet *La de 8 News*, has been missing since 6 July 2023. He joins the 30 other Mexican journalists who have disappeared, a figure that testifies to the extent of the threats weighing on the media profession in this country. Of these 31 cases, **eight are regarded as enforced disappearances**, including Mexican journalists **Mauricio Estrada Zamora** (*La Opinión de Apatzingán*) and **Ramón Ángeles Zalpa** (*Cambio de Michoacán*), who disappeared in 2008 and 2010 respectively. These two cases were [referred](#) to the UN Human Rights Committee by RSF and its Mexican partner organisation Propuesta Cívica on 2 November 2022.

More than half of missing journalists are in Latin America

More than half (43) of the missing journalists disappeared in Latin America. Four of the five women journalists currently listed as missing worldwide also disappeared in this region. They include **Sara Cristina Chan Chan Medina**, a photographer who has been missing in El Salvador since 19 August 1989.

Russia: enforced disappearances of two Ukrainian journalists in 2023



Victoria Roshchyna
© Instagram

Victoria Roshchyna, a 26-year-old freelance journalist, disappeared on 3 August 2023 after setting off via Russia to report from Ukraine's illegally occupied territories. According to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), she was captured by Russian occupation forces. In 2023, RSF also revealed the enforced disappearance of **Dmytro Khyliuk**, a Ukrainian journalist working for the *Ukrainian News Agency (UNIAN)*. Arrested on 3 March 2022 in Dymier, a town north of Kyiv, Khyliuk is believed to be incarcerated in Russia, according to an RSF investigation.

DRC: second radio station director missing

The disappearance of radio *Voix de Mikeno* director **Byamungu Garubanda** in February 2023 brings to mind the disappearance of another radio station director, **Bwira Bwalitse**, in June 2020. These **two enforced disappearances in Nord-Kivu province**, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, underscored the dangers that the media face in the DRC and in this province in particular.

Palestine: two journalists disappeared on first day of war

On 7 October 2023, the first day of the war between Israel and Hamas, two Palestinian photojournalists – **Haytham Abdel Wahed** of *Ain Media* and **Nidal al-Wahidi** of *News Press* and *Al Najah* – disappeared while covering clashes at the Erez crossing point in Beit Hanoun.

Imran Riaz Khan: a noteworthy release in 2023

In Pakistan, *BOL News* star TV anchor **Imran Riaz Khan**, who went missing on 11 May 2023 during protests following former Prime Minister Imran Khan's arrest, was released by his kidnappers on 25 September, four months after his abduction.



METHODOLOGY

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

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

The 2023 Round-up figures compiled by RSF include professional journalists, non-professional journalists and media workers. The round-up distinguishes these categories in its breakdowns in order to facilitate comparison with previous years.

The figures in this round-up were compiled on 1 December 2023 and don't take into account arrests, releases, deaths or disappearances that took place after that date. The latest figures appear in RSF's Press Freedom Index, which is updated on a regular basis.

CREDITS

Editorial director: Anne Bocandé

Data journalist: Blanche Marès

Data journalist (intern): Alix Mayence

Translator & editor: Michael Tarr and Pénélope Souquet

Editor: Anne-Laure Chanteloup with Robin Dussenne

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

Layout: Stéphanie Barcelo



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