

# ANNUAL REPORT



2020

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## PHOTO CAPTION



AFP photographer Sajjad Hussain in front of India Gate in New Delhi during the lockdown decreed by the Indian government to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. New Delhi, India, 9 April 2020.

Cover photo: © AFP

# FOREWORD BY RSF PRESIDENT

**Pierre Haski**  
RSF President



© Alexander Klein / AFP

## All continents hit by crackdowns in 2020

What will history remember of 2020? The human, economic and social devastation wrought by the spread of Covid-19? The successive lockdowns and stunned reactions that the pandemic provoked in both leaders and public? The protests in all corners of the world denouncing injustice and demanding equal rights? The natural disasters and the major geopolitical changes?

A look at the year in the rear-view mirror will undoubtedly show press freedom's central role. Its role when we debated the different views and analyses of the public health challenges. Its role when we were trying to get access to the facts at a time when two thirds of humanity was under lockdown at home. And its role when press freedom was subjected to

major crackdowns in all continents – in China, Belarus, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia and elsewhere.

Taking advantage of the fact that the public's attention was otherwise engaged, authoritarian regimes jailed, beat and tried to gag journalists. Some governments, even in democracies, used the need to combat fake news as a pretext to step up restrictions on the right to inform. In dictatorships and in democracies, under authoritarian regimes and more liberal ones, the vice tightened around press freedom, although it is one of the cornerstones of a vibrant democracy.

Let's hope that 2020 also prompted citizens to be more vigilant and demanding as regards news and information.

# 2020 THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

## JANUARY

### CHARLIE, FIVE YEARS LATER

At a press conference organised by RSF on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the attack on the Paris headquarters of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, Ahmed Shaheed, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and David Kaye, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion, urged governments and international organisations to protect journalists against religious intolerance.



### #FREEIGNACE

Just days after *Bénin Web TV* investigative journalist Ignace Sossou was sentenced to 18 months in prison in late December for tweeting a prosecutor's comments at a workshop about disinformation, RSF launched a major campaign that led to his release in June.

### FOR PRESS FREEDOM IN TURKEY

Turkey's Universal Period Review (UPR) by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 28 January was used by RSF and nine other free speech organisations to denounce its judicial harassment and arbitrary imprisonment of journalists since the abortive coup in July 2016.



## FEBRUARY

### HEADLINE: NO MORE SLAPPS

In a joint letter, RSF and 26 other NGOs urged European Commission Vice President for Values and Transparency Věra Jourová to take action to deter “strategic lawsuits against public participation” (SLAPPs) – lawsuits brought by the rich and powerful to tie journalists and other critics up in expensive legal proceedings and ultimately to silence them.



### SUPPORT VAMOUKÉ

On the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Amadou Vamouké, the former head of Cameroon's state radio and TV broadcaster, who has been jailed since 2016, RSF staged a protest outside the Cameroonian embassy in Paris to press President Paul Biya to intercede so that he can be released and receive the medical care he badly needs.



### #FREEASSANGE – 100,000 SIGNATURES

Just days before the start of hearings in London in the US extradition case against Wikileaks publisher Julian Assange, RSF launched a petition opposing his extradition that gathered more than 100,00 signatures and was emailed to the British authorities shortly before the final decision in January 2021. 10 Downing Street refused to accept the petition when RSF and Assange's partner, Stella Moris, tried to deliver it and never acknowledged the subsequent email submission.



### NEW LOGO

RSF unveiled a new logo and graphic identity, created and produced by the advertising agency BETC. They were redesigned in order to better convey the strategic vision of an organisation now known throughout the world by the initials “RSF”.

# 2020 THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

## VOTRE MARCHAND DE JOURNAUX N'EST PAS LE MEILLEUR AMI DE KIM JONG-UN

Merci à celles et ceux qui soutiennent la liberté de la presse en vendant nos albums.



## #TRACKER\_19

RSF launched Tracker\_19 on 31 March to monitor and evaluate the coronavirus pandemic's impact on journalism, state censorship, deliberate disinformation and the right to reliable information, and to offer recommendations on how to defend journalism. Tracker\_19's name alludes to both Covid-19 and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## MARCH

### (FREEDOM OF THE) PRESS RETAILERS

At the same time as it launched a new formula for its books of "photos for press freedom," RSF joined the French trade group Culture Presse in launching a nationwide celebration of France's newspaper and magazine vendors.



## RSF ENTERS MINECRAFT

RSF created an online uncensored library that circumvents censorship and is safe haven for press freedom. Where? Within one of the world's most successful video games, Minecraft.



## APRIL

### JIMMY LAI JAILED

When a Hong Kong court sentenced Apple Daily founder and RSF press freedom laureate Jimmy Lai to 14 months in prison on 16 April on two counts of "unauthorised assembly," RSF quickly called for his immediate release and an end to the judicial harassment against him.



# CLASSEMENT MONDIAL DE LA LIBERTÉ DE LA PRESSE 2020

#RSFINDEX 2020

**APRIL**

## 2020 RSF INDEX

RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index shows that the coming decade will be decisive for the future of journalism, with the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting and amplifying the many crises that threaten the right to freely reported, independent, diverse and reliable information.



## BOLSONARO SYSTEM EXPOSED

RSF begins a series of quarterly assessments of press freedom violations in Brazil in which it examines President Jair Bolsonaro's strategy for smearing and undermining the journalists and media outlets that annoy him.

**MAY**

## #RSFTALKS

To mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, RSF publishes exclusive interviews by Philippine journalist Maria Ressa with Washington Post columnist Rana Ayyub, whistleblower Edward Snowden and Nobel economy laureate Joseph Stiglitz on the subject of "Journalism in crisis: a decisive decade" – the theme of the World Press Freedom Index released on 21 April.



# 2020 THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

## MAY

### OP-ED IN *LE MONDE*

"We call for decisive transformation by the tech giants for the sake of the right to reliable information." In a joint op-ed in *Le Monde*, members of the International Commission on Information and Democracy and its co-presidents, Christophe Deloire and Shirin Ebadi, appealed to those who run the leading digital platforms and social media to do everything possible to combat disinformation.



© Robin Grassi / RSF



## JUNE

### CROWDFUNDING

From 2 to 30 June, RSF crowdfunded the publication of its "Oceans Special" book of photos for press freedom using the French platform HelloAsso. The goal was to raise 15,000 euros but the operation ended up raising more than 20,000 euros from nearly 500 donors.

## #HOLDTHELINE

Philippine journalist Maria Ressa, the director of the independent news website *Rappler*, and former *Rappler* journalist Reynaldo Santos Jr were convicted of cyber-libel on 15 June.

*Rappler* has been subjected to judicial persecution for years and is the target of at least six other prosecutions by government agencies. RSF, the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Center for Journalists responded by coming together in the #HoldTheLine campaign in support of Ressa and independent media in the Philippines.



## JUIN

### INFORMATION HEROES – COVID SPECIAL

RSF compiled a list of 30 coronavirus “information heroes” – 30 journalists, whistleblowers and media outlets whose courage, perseverance or capacity to innovate has helped to circulate reliable and vital information during the Covid-19 pandemic.



## JULY

### KHASHOGGI MURDER TRIAL

RSF attended the opening hearing in Jamal Khashoggi's murder trial in Istanbul, at which eight people testified against the 20 Saudi citizens charged in connection with the journalist's murder in Istanbul in 2018.

### PETITION FOR MARIA RESSA

A few days after Philippine journalist Maria Ressa's conviction, RSF and the #HoldTheLine coalition launched a petition for the withdrawal of all the spurious charges against her, her colleague Reynaldo Santos Jr and the *Rappler* website.



## AUGUST

### #FREEKHALED

After Khaled Drareni, the Algeria correspondent of RSF and the French TV channel *TV5 Monde*, was given a long jail sentence by an Algiers court on 10 August, a major solidarity campaign was launched by his RSF-steered international support committee. This would eventually include hanging a 324-square-metre portrait of Drareni by Parisian street artist C215 on the side of a building overlooking Paris's ring road, with C215 and Algerian singer Souad Massi attending the installation.



### GREEN JOURNALISM IN DANGER

To mark “Earth Overshoot Day,” which fell on 22 August in 2020, RSF published alarming statistics about journalists who cover environmental stories. At least ten have been killed in the past five years, while more than 50 press freedom violations linked to environmental journalism have been registered during the same period.

# 2020 THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



© Ozan Kose / AFP

## SEPTEMBER

### AGAINST RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

After violent reactions and threats following the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo's* decision to republish the Mohamed cartoons on its cover, RSF appealed to world leaders who took part in the historic march in Paris in January 2015 (or their successors) to avoid a new tragedy by ensuring that issues related to religious intolerance are included in legislative and prescriptive initiatives and international actions for the protection of journalists. Charlie Hebdo republished the cartoons at the start of the trial in Paris of those accused of complicity in the 2015 attack on the weekly.



## #PRESSFREEDOMPACT

As the first 2020 presidential debate opened in the United States, RSF launched the "#PressFreedomPact," a campaign challenging candidates running for office in November's elections to publicly commit to upholding the principles of press freedom.



DEAR CANDIDATES,  
BECAUSE WE CANNOT  
HAVE AN HONEST  
DEBATE WITHOUT A FREE  
PRESS, SIGN THE  
**#PressFreedomPact.**



## OCTOBER

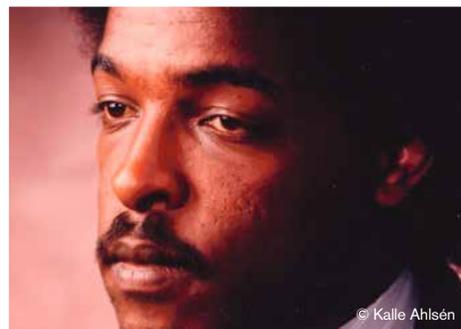
### 50-DAY COUNTDOWN TO RIYADH G20

On the second anniversary of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi's murder and with 50 days left until a G20 summit in Riyadh in November, RSF started a 50-day countdown clock and launched a petition urging G20 capitals to press for concrete press freedom improvements in Saudi Arabia, starting with the release of the country's 34 jailed journalists.

## OCTOBER

### CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY CASE BROUGHT IN SWEDEN

RSF filed a complaint with the office of the Swedish prosecutor for international crimes accusing Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki and seven other senior Eritrean officials of a crime against humanity by holding Dawit Isaak – a journalist with Swedish and Eritrean dual nationality – incommunicado since 2001. He is the world's longest held journalist.



© Kalle Ahlsén



© Sayid Ali Taatiko

### SOMALIA VISIT

During an unprecedented visit to Mogadishu, RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire met with Somali President Mohamed Farmaajo, who undertook to press ahead with combatting impunity for crimes against journalists and said he agreed on the principle of a moratorium on arrests and detention of journalists in connection with their work.



### NARGES MOHAMMADI FREED

After being unjustly jailed for five years, Iranian journalist and human rights defender Narges Mohammadi was released in October although due to serve another five years in prison. RSF, which had campaigned for her release, welcomed this development while continuing to deplore the plight of other journalists, including women, who are still imprisoned in Iran in terrible conditions.



© Stringer / AFP

## NOVEMBER

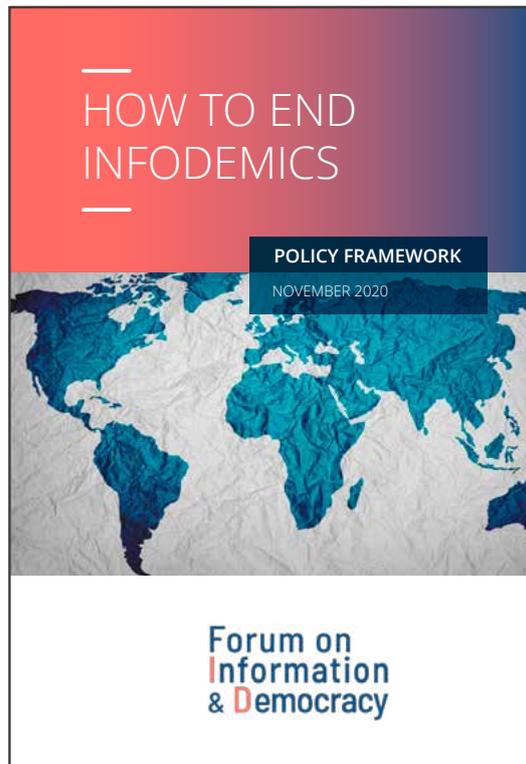
### CRACKDOWN IN BELARUS

RSF published figures for the unprecedented crackdown on press freedom and journalists in Belarus during the three months since the presidential election on 9 August. Hundreds of journalists had been harassed, arrested and even tortured to prevent coverage of the continuing protests.

# 2020 THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS



© Anne-Christine POUJOLAT / AFP



## END INFODEMICS

As false or manipulated information continued to proliferate online during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Forum on Information and Democracy – which was created on RSF's initiative – published a report on "How to end infodemics." Based on more than 100 contributions from international experts, it offered 250 recommendations on how to rein in a phenomenon that threatens democracies and human rights, including the right to health.

## NOVEMBER

### GLOBAL SECURITY BILL

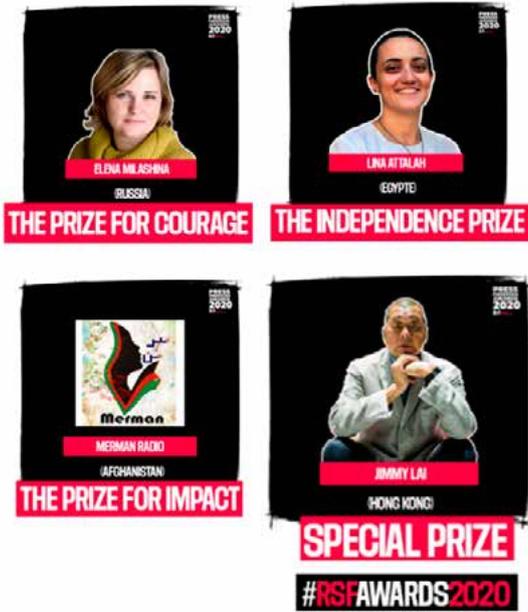
RSF issued a call for France's deputies to eliminate a controversial ban on photographing or filming police "with intent to cause harm" from the government's "global security" bill when the National Assembly examined the bill in plenary session a few days later. Thereafter, RSF continued to campaign for the withdrawal of this proposed ban, which would threaten press freedom.



## DECEMBER

### 2020 ROUND-UP

Releasing its 2020 Round-up, RSF reported that 50 journalists were killed in 2020, most of them in countries at peace, that nearly 400 journalists were in prison at the end of the year, and that serious violations of the right to information had taken place.



## DECEMBRER

### 2020 RSF PRESS FREEDOM PRIZE

Held in Taipei on 8 December, the 2020 RSF Press Freedom Awards ceremony awarded the Prize for Courage to Russian journalist Elena Milashina, the Prize for Impact to Afghan radio station *Merman* and the Prize for Independence to Egyptian news website editor Lina Attalah. A special prize was also given to Hong Kong's *Apple Daily* founder, Jimmy Lai.



## #FIGHTFORFACTS

RSF unveiled its new international awareness-raising campaign video entitled #FightForFacts. Produced by the French advertising agency BETC and carried free of charge by many TV channels around the world, it aims to promote understanding of journalism's importance in helping people to understand issues that are decisive for their future.

# | EDITORIAL |

**Christophe Deloire**  
RSF secretary-general



© Joel Saget / AFP

The coronavirus pandemic has shown the vital importance of reliable news and information (if any demonstration were still necessary). This crisis is irrefutable proof of what RSF has constantly been saying for years, that censorship is not just a domestic issue. The control of information in certain countries has consequences throughout the world and we are suffering the effects today. Disinformation and rumour lead people to take bad decisions, they restrict free will and they sap intelligence.

In 2020, the fight we wage to defend information that is freely and independently reported, information that can be trusted, emerged as one of the most important battles for humankind in its entirety in the face of infodemics. This was undeniable, and yet we saw attempts to silence independent voices redouble in ferocity, with draconian laws, crackdowns, journalists imprisoned, media outlets closed and access to the field (and sources) hampered and often blocked.

Although successive lockdowns made conditions more difficult, RSF's staff redoubled their efforts to support journalists, defend independent media, draw attention to abuses and lobby governments.

2020 began a decisive decade. The future of journalism is threatened by multiple crises – a geopolitical crisis (due to the aggressiveness of authoritarian regimes), a technological crisis (due to a lack of democratic guarantees), a democratic crisis (due to polarisation and repressive policies), a crisis of trust (due to suspicion and even hatred of the news media) and an economic crisis (impoverishing quality journalism). The coronavirus pandemic has provided an illustration of the negative factors for the right to reliable information and is itself an exacerbating factor. What will information freedom, pluralism and reliability be like in 2030? The answer to that question is being played out today. Aware of the critical importance of this challenge, RSF's staff is working to ensure that journalists can play their role as society's trusted third parties.

# 2020 IN FIGURES

The freedom to inform and be informed is the cornerstone of all democracies. In response to the complexity of the challenges to this freedom, RSF uses a varied toolbox to mobilise as many people as possible and bases its strategy on the quest for impact.

RSF'S APPROACH TO INTERVENTION IS TO FOCUS ITS ACTIONS ON FIVE MAJOR DOMAINS:

- Research and publication
- Communication campaigns
- Advocacy
- Assistance
- Training, support and capacity-building



RSF INFORMS



RSF CAMPAIGNS



RSF ADVOCATES



RSF PROTECTS



RSF TRAINS  
AND SUPPORTS

## RSF INFORMS

RSF provides information about media freedom throughout the world by posting press releases in French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Farsi on its website. After carefully verifying its research and information, RSF issues press releases every day about abuses against journalists and media and all the various forms of censorship.

Every year, RSF publishes its World Press Freedom Index, which has become the key measure of the level of media freedom in 180 countries. RSF also publishes regular round-ups and reports on a wide range of topical issues.

### In 2020, RSF:

- issued **1,891** press releases in **6** languages, plus **5** reports
- received **4,264,116** views on its website
- had a **29%** press release opening rate
- obtained **722** media mentions and pickups for its two-part annual round-up
- obtained **2,544** media pickups and gave **142** media interviews for the Press Freedom Index

## RSF CAMPAIGNS

RSF engages the public by means of snappy awareness campaigns, petitions and protests designed to attract media coverage. RSF draws the public's attention to press freedom violations and tries to deter leaders from acting as press freedom predators. When journalists are taken hostage, RSF sets up support committees and helps organise activities designed to press for their release.

### In 2020, RSF:

- launched **5** petitions that received **126,780** signatures
- organised **20** major communication campaigns and events



**1,426,734** unique visitors to its website



**167,668** Twitter followers



**265,300** Facebook fans



**13,500** Instagram subscribers



**4,564** new newsletter subscribers



Training in Mogadishu, Somalia on covering elections. Organised jointly with the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ).

## RSF ADVOCATES



RSF has more than 30 years of experience in defending and promoting journalistic freedom, pluralism and independence. RSF uses its regional bureaux, local partners and correspondents around the world to pursue and reinforce its work of drawing press freedom violations and abuses against journalists to the attention of governments and international organisations. RSF activates and mobilises networks, proposes legislation, makes recommendations and lobbies for the adoption of standards that provide media freedom and journalists with more protection.



"A Safer World For The Truth" is an initiative by Free Press Unlimited, the Committee to Protect Journalists and RSF, and is funded by the Nationale Postcode Loterij (a Dutch charity lottery).

A Safer World For The Truth seeks justice for crimes of violence against journalists, investigating cases in which journalists were murdered because of their work. These investigations aim to bring new facts and information about the murders to light and open the way to prosecutions. The information will also be used to tell the stories of these journalists in a variety of journalistic forms.

### In 2020, RSF:

- analysed **23 media laws and bills**
- initiated a dialogue with **43 countries**
- made **25 case referrals**, 2 of them to the International Criminal Court
- observed nearly **150 trials**
- sent nearly **40 letters** to political authorities

## RSF PROTECTS



Every year, persecution and crises of various kinds put many journalists and media outlets in danger. In order to help them, RSF provides legal and financial support, and assistance with physical protection (loans of helmets and bullet-proof vests). RSF carefully documents the history of these journalists and media outlets in order to support their various requests (for help with visas, lawyers' fees, and so on). RSF helps with asylum applications and provides financial grants and other forms of support to journalists and media outlets that are being threatened.

### In 2020, RSF's assistance desk:

- received **594 requests** for assistance
- disbursed **93 individual assistance grants**, helping a **115 journalists** (from 38 countries)
- provided administrative assistance to **206 journalists** (from 24 countries)
- assisted **22 media outlets in danger** in **14 countries**
- RSF is also a member of three consortiums providing grants to human rights defenders and is one of the founder members of the Protect Defenders consortium, which is funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.



## RSF TRAINS AND SUPPORTS



RSF organises training for journalists on various subjects including physical and digital security, covering elections and fact checking. It publishes handbooks for journalists, including one on journalists' safety, one for journalists who have to flee their country, one on international law governing media freedom and one on covering elections. And it supports local partner organisations that defend media freedom, helping them to increase their influence and capacity of action.

After hosting and managing Radio Erena, the last bastion of independent news about Eritrea, since 2009, RSF is proud of the fact this radio station became autonomous in 2020. Radio Erena now has its own governance bodies and a long-term funding plan, while RSF continues to be a member of its board of governors.

### In 2020, RSF:

- worked closely with **9 partner organisations**
- organised **9 trainings** for 200 journalists (48% of them women)
- made **32 censored websites** accessible by means of "Operation Collateral Freedom"

## CONTEXT

# CRISES ENDANGERING JOURNALISM'S FUTURE

THE 2020 EDITION OF THE WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX, WHICH EVALUATES THE SITUATION OF THE MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS EVERY YEAR IN 180 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES, SHOWED THAT THE NEXT TEN YEARS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE "A DECISIVE DECADE" FOR PRESS FREEDOM BECAUSE OF CRISES AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM.

## GEOPOLITICAL CRISIS



A Chinese TV virtual anchor, at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Internet Conference in Wuzhen (eastern China's Zhejiang province), Nov. 7, 2019. © STR / AFP

One of the most salient crises is the geopolitical one caused by leaders of dictatorial, authoritarian or populist regimes making every effort to suppress information and impose their vision of a world without pluralism and independent journalism. China, which is trying to establish a "new world media order," maintains its system of information hyper-control. Saudi Arabia and Egypt follow China as the world's biggest jailers of journalists. Russia is deploying increasingly sophisticated resources to control online information, while India has imposed the longest electronic curfew in history on Kashmir. In Egypt, "fake news" is used as grounds for blocking access to websites and webpages and for withdrawing accreditation.

## TECHNOLOGICAL CRISIS



The absence of appropriate regulation in the era of digitalised and globalised communication has created an information chaos. Propaganda, advertising and rumour compete directly with journalism. The growing confusion between commercial, political and journalistic content has destabilised the democratic guarantees for freedom of opinion and expression. This encourages the adoption of dangerous laws which, on the pretext of restricting the spread of fake news, facilitate

tougher crackdowns on independent and critical journalism. Like Singapore, Benin has established a new law that is supposedly intended to combat disinformation and cyber-crime but is liable to be used to arbitrarily restrict the freedom to inform. The pandemic has amplified the spread of rumours and fake news as quickly as the virus itself. State troll armies in Russia, China, India, Philippines and Vietnam use the weapon of disinformation on social media.

## DEMOCRATIC CRISIS

The previous two World Press Freedom Indexes reflected a crisis caused by growing hostility and even hatred towards journalists, and this crisis has increased. It has led to more serious and frequent acts of physical violence and an unprecedented level of fear in some countries. Leading politicians or those close to them continue to openly foment hatred of journalists. In 2020, the democratically elected presidents of two countries, Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, continued to denigrate the media and encourage hatred of journalists. The "hate cabinet" surrounding the Brazilian leader orchestrates large-scale online attacks on journalists who expose government secrets. President Bolsonaro has stepped up his attacks on the media since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, accusing them of spreading "hysteria" and panic.



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in January 2020. © Sergio Lima / AFP.



Journalist Michel Soudais (Politis) covers the May 26 demonstration.  
© Simon Guillemin

## CRISIS OF TRUST

Mistrust of media outlets suspected of broadcasting or publishing news contaminated by unreliable information continues to grow. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, which studies the public's trust in institutions, 57% of the people polled in its latest international survey thought the media they consumed was contaminated with untrustworthy information. Undermined by this crisis of trust, journalists have become the targets of the public's anger during big street protests taking place in many parts of the world, including Iraq, Lebanon, Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador. Some are also the victims of police violence, as in France. In another increasingly visible phenomenon, nationalist or far-right activist groups have openly targeted journalists in Spain, Austria, Italy and Greece, while the Taliban in Afghanistan and some Buddhist fundamentalists in Myanmar have had no qualms about using violence to impose their world vision on the media.

## ECONOMIC CRISIS

The digital transformation has brought the media to their knees in many countries. Falling sales, the collapse in advertising revenue and the increase in production and distribution costs linked above all to increases in the price of raw materials have forced news organisations to restructure and lay off journalists. Half of the jobs in the US press have been lost in the past ten years. This has social consequences and an impact on the editorial freedom of media around the world. Newspapers that are in a much weaker economic situation are naturally less able to resist pressure.

The economic crisis has also accentuated the phenomena of ownership concentration and, even more, conflicts of interest, which threaten journalistic pluralism and independence. The acquisition of Central European Media Enterprises (CME) by the Czech Republic's wealthiest billionaire has alarmed several Eastern European countries where CME controls influential TV channels. The consequences of concentration are also being felt in Argentina and in Asia. In Japan, newsrooms are still heavily influenced by their bosses in the "keiretsu," the media-owning conglomerates that put business interests first. In Taiwan and Tonga, the now all-important profit motive has encouraged the media to become very polarised and sensationalist, helping to discredit them even more and accentuating the public trust crisis.

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## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, EXACERBATING FACTOR

The five kinds of crises afflicting journalism are now compounded by a global public health crisis. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the negative factors for the right to reliable information and is itself an exacerbating factor. There is a clear correlation between suppression of media freedom in response to the coronavirus epidemic and ranking in the Index. The public health crisis has provided authoritarian governments with an opportunity to implement the notorious "shock doctrine" identified by Naomi Klein – to take advantage of the fact that politics are on hold, that the public is stunned and protests are out of the question, in order to impose measures that would be impossible in normal times.

## CONTEXT

# FIGHTING FOR THE FACTS

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC HAS PROVIDED NEW EVIDENCE OF THE RELEVANCE OF THE FIGHT WAGED BY RSF FOR THE FREE FLOW OF NEWS AND INFORMATION. IN OUR GLOBALISED WORLD, VIOLATIONS OF THIS BASIC FREEDOM ARE A MATTER FOR THE ENTIRE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEY OCCUR.

Without the censorship imposed by Beijing, the Chinese media would have informed the public about the seriousness of the epidemic much sooner, sparing thousands of lives and possibly avoiding the pandemic. Withholding information on the grounds of “not spreading panic” is unacceptable and aggravates problems instead of helping to solve them.

Conversely, Taiwan's example showed that the flow of information at a time of crisis does not undermine effectiveness. By opting for transparency, the Taiwanese authorities succeeded in getting the public to comply with the public health measures they were recommending, and many think this helped them to rein in the epidemic. Like the coronavirus, censorship knows no borders and can wreak havoc. News and information manipulation is a major obstacle to human progress. It restricts free will and destroys the ability to discern. By distorting the parameters of the debate, it inevitably leads to bad decisions which, in turn, must be covered up by new lies.

EVER SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC, RSF HAS TAKEN ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES TO COUNTER VIOLATIONS OF THE FREEDOM TO INFORM AND ENSURE THAT, IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD, NEWS AND INFORMATION ARE ABLE TO FLOW FREELY FOR EVERYONE'S BENEFIT.

## TRACKER\_19'S CREATION

At the end of March, RSF created a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating press freedom violations linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. Called Tracker\_19 in allusion to both the virus's name and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has enabled RSF to measure the pandemic's impact on journalism.

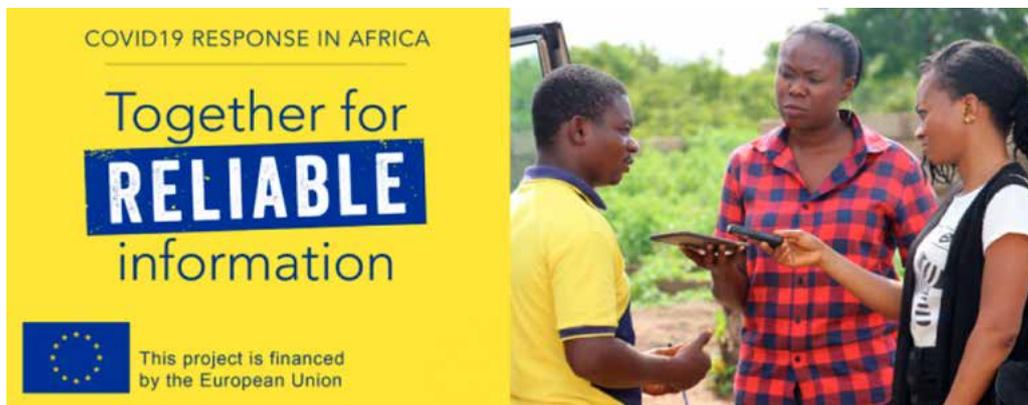
- **An interactive world map** and a real time news feed monitored state censorship, deliberate disinformation and their effects on the right to reliable news and information.
- **Recommendations** on how to defend journalism were compiled and passed to international authorities.
- **Practical advice** was drafted for media professionals on how best to keep working during the pandemic.
- **An emergency contact** was made available to journalists so that they could report attacks, arbitrary detention, withdrawal of accreditation and other press freedom violations.

- + **130 posts** about pandemic-linked press freedom violations in 65 countries
- + **3,500 views** in the space of a week when Tracker\_19 was launched
- + **110,000 views** of #Tracker\_19 on social media
- + **300 press mentions**, including in leading dailies such as Spain's *El País*.

## CONCRETE RESPONSES FOR AFFECTED JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA

In this particularly sensitive environment, RSF quickly realised the importance of carrying out specific projects and activities dedicated to responding to the pandemic, which had demonstrated the vital importance of reliable, independent and quality journalism in a globalised context, and had highlighted issues and challenges linked to RSF's mandate.

RSF therefore launched several projects, including a consortium project in sub-Saharan Africa, and dedicated a large part of its activities to helping the most vulnerable journalists and media.



### LAUNCH OF THE PROJECT "COVID-19 RESPONSE IN AFRICA: TOGETHER FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION"

ARTICLE 19, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Fondation Hironnelle, Free Press Unlimited, International Media Support, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and UNESCO joined forces in this project, which is funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships.

The consortium is carrying out an 18-month project aimed at providing an effective response to the Covid-19 crisis in sub-Saharan Africa by helping media outlets in 17 of the region's countries to continue providing their public with reliable and critical news coverage.

#### It has three specific goals:

- **provide** local media actors with financial assistance that enables them to keep informing their public
- **promote** sharing of good practices among media organisations and journalists, along with capacity-building
- **advocate** effectively for maintaining the right to freedom of expression and information by monitoring and reporting violations and making specific political recommendations

In partnership with Cartooning for Peace, RSF published a report in November 2020 about violations of the freedom to inform in Africa that had been perpetrated in connection with coronavirus pandemic. It found an increase in abuses against journalists, a negative economic impact on media outlets, a lack of transparency and draconian legislation.

RSF called on the continent's governments to learn the lessons of the pandemic in 2020 and to refrain from further undermining the production of independent news and information, which was sorely tested in Africa.

### SUPPORTING MEDIA DURING THE CRISIS: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF ASSISTANCE

RSF adjusted its assistance activities in order to be better able to support media and journalists impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

With the help of its network of correspondents and its regional desk officers, RSF identified:

- Journalists who had caught the virus in the course of their work or, specifically, while covering the pandemic's effects. RSF helped them to cover their medical expenses.
- Journalists who had been harassed by police or government officials in connection with their coverage of the pandemic. RSF provided financial assistance with covering defence costs or the purchase of protective equipment.

In the course of this initiative in 2020, RSF disbursed **three media grants** and **nine individual grants**:

- 4 grants for legal fees
- 3 grants for medical bills
- 1 grant for replacing equipment
- 1 grant for resettlement costs





by **Antoine Bernard**,  
consultant on international litigation  
strategy and advocacy

# Counter-attacking in court when denouncing is not enough

The absence of justice is unacceptable. Worldwide, 98% of murders of journalists go unpunished. Killing a journalist costs nothing, or almost nothing. Some money may have to be paid to the perpetrator. But for instigator and perpetrator, the chances of being charged and prosecuted – and even less, convicted – are extremely remote. Impunity is virtually guaranteed.

So, what can be done? What can be done when denouncing is not enough, when the situation keeps on repeating itself, year after year?

For RSF, “nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Innovation, the search for solutions and counter-attacking are all part of the organisation’s DNA. So, despite the risks and dangers, despite the difficulties, especially for the families, we decided to develop an aggressive litigation strategy.

What does this mean in practice? It takes a long time to prepare a lawsuit. You need to familiarise yourself with all the facts and to gather incriminating evidence. The case must be prepared down to the last detail. Depending on the forms and levels of crime in the country and the persons involved, this can prove extremely difficult. You need to get in information on the suspect and provide enough evidence to convince a prosecutor or judge to take action.

You also have to find an appropriate judicial forum, one with an independent judge. Ideally it would be in the country where the murder was committed. This is the preferred option but it usually proves impossible because the judicial system is too corrupt, too dependent on the government or on organised crime. If it is impossible, you look elsewhere, you look for a judge in another country that has “universal” or “extraterritorial” jurisdiction. Such jurisdiction is very rare and limited. You can also try using international courts such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) or you can explore the possibility of bringing a case based on a related offence, involving the financing of criminal activity, for example. The goal is to get an independent judicial investigation going and to find allies (prosecutors and judges). But you have to help them.

Since this new strategy’s adoption, we have begun studying many cases. And in 2020, we also took very important steps in several of these cases, some of them receiving a great deal of media attention and others remaining confidential.

In the murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, we got the French financial prosecutor’s office to open a preliminary investigation into Jorgen Fenech, a prominent Maltese businessman, and Keith Schembri, a former chief of staff of the Maltese prime minister, on suspicion of giving or taking bribes and complicity in her murder.

We filed a complaint with the German prosecutor general accusing Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and other senior Saudi officials of crimes against humanity in the murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi and the jailing of 34 other Saudi journalists.



**98%** of murders of journalists  
go unpunished

2020 saw:

- **2 complaints** with the ICC concerning Mexico.
- Several dozen experts in the Justice for Journalist Task Force
- **3 complaints** filed in Europe: (Sweden, Germany and France).

## | 2020 IN PERSONAL ACCOUNTS |

We also filed a complaint with the Swedish prosecutor general accusing Eritrea's president and other senior Eritrean officials of a crime against humanity in the case of Dawit Isaak, the world's longest-held journalist, who has Swedish and Eritrean dual citizenship.

And RSF has filed two complaints with the ICC asking it to investigate a total of 136 murders and disappearances of journalists in Mexico, and has registered with the Mexican judicial system as an interested civil party.

We have created a small group, the Justice for Journalists Task Force, with which we set up individual teams for each project, teams consisting of lawyers, country specialists, specialists in online research, investigators with judicial police experience or experience with international crimes, and so on. We address the problems and look for the best line of attack.

The outcome of RSF vs. MBS may appear to be a foregone conclusion. And yet the mere fact of filing this complaint is a victory for persistence over impunity.



by Solène Guyard,  
member of the ERP steering committee

## Behind the scenes of the ERP deployment

An ERP is an integrated management software package. A mysterious name that conceals an ergonomic tool that has become essential in an international organisation such as RSF. It has been a little more than two years since its adoption was initiated, and we are currently in the deployment phase throughout our various departments. This deployment involves both our staff in Paris and our bureaux around the world.

This ERP offers a vast and secure digital space for centralising and sharing data between our departments, which significantly strengthens our monitoring, evaluation and capitalisation capacities. As well as this highly functional and contractual database, it includes processes for validating financial commitments, monitoring financing contracts, and fundraising initiatives with institutions and foundations. The operational implementation of all of these functionalities will facilitate the fluidity of internal processes. Its progressive deployment, which should be completed in 2021, is therefore a task of enormous importance.

An ERP is a transversal tool that is constantly evolving. Identifying the best way to reconcile working methods, the needs of different stakeholders and the technical constraints of such a tool is important to create real synergy. A



## | 2020 IN PERSONAL ACCOUNTS |

- Project initiation in **January 2019**
- **1 year of discussion** and joint construction with our service provider
- **9 months** of testing within a small group
- Launch of the final version in **September**  
Staff can finally use the software

large part of my work therefore consists of acting as an intermediary between the various teams, management and Aidimpact, the service provider that developed this ERP and is providing RSF with long-term support.

Advocacy, journalism, communication, assistance, international coordination... The diversity of activities is great at RSF. I meet with the teams on a daily basis, gather feedback and transcribe their needs into "ERP language." I then present the issues to the steering committee and recommend solutions when decisions have to be taken that involve everyone. Or I speak directly with our service provider when a problem encountered is purely technical. There are many connections between each issue, so detailed crafting is required to make the ERP ever more in tune with the functioning and needs of the different teams.

At the same time, I support the teams by providing them with individual training and by being at their disposal if they encounter any difficulties. Deploying an ERP within an organisation is tantamount to a small revolution and it can disrupt certain work habits. Listening and being supportive are therefore the keys to the process of helping people to change practices.

By the end of 2020, the ERP was already fully operational in certain areas and bringing real benefits. For example, within the assistance department, it not only makes it possible to reduce file processing times and therefore speed up the effective implementation of support for journalists, but also to simplify archiving and to produce statistics and monitoring indicators in real time.

Leading this project is extremely exciting and rewarding. This is a shared project, which demonstrates a real desire on the part of RSF to do everything possible to maximise its effectiveness and best meet its mandate. In the era of digitisation and in the particular context of the pandemic, RSF is pleased to have made the strategic decision to acquire a tool of this kind.

## | 2020 IN PERSONAL ACCOUNTS |



## #FreeAssange

Throughout 2020, RSF was present for the hearings in London in the US government's extradition case against Wikileaks published Julian Assange, and also monitored and reported on the hearings. RSF teams from London, and sometimes from Paris and Berlin, demonstrated outside Belmarsh prison and joined the demonstration outside the court.

RSF was the only NGO at London's Central Criminal Court from 7 September to 1 October 2020.



by Rebecca Vincent,  
director of international campaigns  
and UK bureau director

# #HoldTheLine: Organising and coordinating an international campaign

The international campaign in support of Philippine journalist Maria Ressa was definitely one of the biggest of the year. It began with around 60 press freedom groups, civil society organisations, journalists' associations and activist groups banding together in a coalition to support Maria and independent media in the Philippines. As Maria herself and her defence team were already urging Filipinos to "hold the line" against the threats to free speech and media freedom, #HoldTheLine was adopted as the campaign name.

How the campaign was structured quickly became fundamental as we moved into action. It was decided that RSF, the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) would act as a steering committee. The aim was to coordinate the campaign, channel ideas and initiatives, develop a calendar, raise funds together with dozens of partners, and work with the internal teams responsible for operational implementation. With patience and determination, by listening to people, and motivated by the courage displayed by Maria in the face of relentless judicial harassment, we succeeded in structuring and coordinating our campaign. An international petition was launched in the media and on social media, and support for Maria began to grow. A few months later, an ambitious solidarity campaign involving several hundred well-known figures saw the light of day.

Combining expertise, viewpoints, cultural environments and means of action – this is the strength of an international campaign. Even if coordinating and organising it often proves complex, its impact is much stronger. RSF understood this when it decided to prioritise certain campaigns in its annual plan of action. And when it decided to create the position of international campaigns director – the position I've had the honour of holding since the summer of 2020.

- + **80 partner organisations**
- **3 NGOs** leading the #HoldTheLine coalition
- **15,000 signatures** on the Maria Ressa petition
- **1 new position** in RSF's organisation chart



by **Émilie Poirrier**,  
director of communication  
and fund-raising

# #FreeKhaled

*“Khaled has just been arrested.”* This message from our colleagues in the RSF bureau in Tunis on 2 March will remain engraved in our memories. Khaled Drareni, an Algerian journalist who is RSF’s and TV5 Monde’s Algiers correspondent, had already been questioned several times and had been briefly detained while covering one of the regular “Hirak” anti-government protests a few days earlier. We immediately reported his arrest and then decided to wait, expecting him to be freed a few days later. But we soon realised this was not going to happen. On 29 March, he was transferred to prison on charges on *“inciting an unarmed demonstration”* and *“endangering the national territory’s integrity.”*

A few days later, we and around 20 other international NGOs and Algerian journalists’ associations issued a joint call for the immediate release of all journalists imprisoned in Algeria and for the withdrawal of the arbitrary judicial proceedings against them. We activated our international contacts, especially the diplomatic ones, in an attempt to get a quick result. Then, in response to the Algerian government’s inertia, we decided to create a Khaled Drareni international support committee, to bring journalists, well-known people from the world of arts and letters, and friends of Khaled together to decide on the first steps to be taken. In all, around 30 prominent figures responded

The goal was to make public opinion and politicians in France and elsewhere in the world aware of Khaled and to get them to take up his cause. Only international pressure would have any impact on the Algerian authorities.

In mid-August, we were stunned and outraged by the news that Khaled had been sentenced on appeal to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 Algerian dinars. We held an emergency support committee meeting and the next day we announced a major international solidarity campaign entitled #WeAreKhaled.

*“Khaled was an irritation? Now he’s a thorn in the regime’s side.”* This comment by RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire in a tweet summed up our approach. Faced by an Algerian judicial system that did the government’s bidding, we started organising activities in support of Khaled. We put up big campaign posters outside city halls all across France, including in Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand, Paris and Nancy. In September, we brought France’s most famous TV anchors together for a special protest outside the Algerian embassy in Paris. In late October, a gigantic 324-square-metre portrait of Khaled by Paris street artist C125 was hung on the side of a building overlooking the Paris ring road in the presence of the artist and Algerian singer Souad Massi.

The support committee’s members and RSF’s staff and members, not only in Paris but also in our bureaux and sections around the world, continued to plan and organise activities with ever-increasing imagination and combativeness. Khaled was finally released at the end of February 2021. And went back to work as soon as he got out of prison. It was the best possible reward for all the support he had been given.

- A gigantic, 324-square-metre portrait of Khaled overlooking one of the main access points to the Paris ring road.

.....

- + **10 000 media references** to #WeAreKhaled and #FreeKhaled.

- + **200 000 views** of the RSF video of the gigantic portrait being installed.

.....

- Several dozen support committee meetings.



by **Arnaud Froger**,  
head of the Africa desk

## Somalia visit

**More than 50 journalists** killed  
in the past 10 years

- **32 cases** of journalists arbitrarily detained in 2020
- Half of the journalists killed in Africa are killed in Somalia
- **Ranked 163<sup>rd</sup>** in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index

RSF's visit to Somalia was the fruit of years of work. It is hard to identify local actors in such a politically turbulent country and work with them on a lasting basis. We succeeded in establishing, and then maintaining, very close links with the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), which has become our partner. The first meeting took place in 2019 in Ethiopia. The idea of an RSF visit developed as the months went by. At first it seemed a bit crazy, because the security situation was so dangerous and the political situation was unstable. But the links between RSF and NUSOJ gradually strengthened. At the same time, our contacts with the authorities became more regular and we acquired more and more diplomatic support for our efforts to achieve more press freedom for Somalia.

### Organising the trip...

We were ready to go at the end of the first quarter of 2020 but the pandemic scotched our plans. We should originally have set off in April but it was impossible during the first wave. Meanwhile, the situation was very volatile in Somalia and a delay of just a few weeks could torpedo two years of work. A new window opened in the autumn and we decided to go. Just in time, because France announced a second lockdown while we were there.

We began the visit by meeting with 20 journalists. We were very impressed: despite the hostile environment and their lack of training (almost all were self-taught), they were determined to do their job. One of them had become a journalist because his journalist brother had been killed by Al-Shabaab. He decided to take up the torch.

The next day was political. We headed to Villa Somalia, the seat of government, where our first meeting was with the president. He seemed favourable to the idea of a moratorium on arrests of journalists but did not want to commit himself immediately. We had hoped to harvest the fruit of many months of negotiations but it was not yet ripe. Not completely, at least. We then met with the communication minister and prime minister, who had just been appointed. He seemed very convinced. Then we discovered that the president's office had called him to say the president had agreed to the moratorium. The prime minister was ready to give a public undertaking. Success!

We prepared a press release with our partner NUSOJ. And we organised a press conference to announce the news. Around 30 journalists are arbitrarily arrested every year in Somalia. Making these arbitrary arrests illegal represented an important advance for press freedom even if many other problems still need addressing. Before leaving, we gave a training on security and covering elections to 30 journalists, and we met with diplomats who supported our initiative.

This visit was complicated in many ways but, despite the context (including the pandemic), it was crowned with success. Unfortunately, the major political crisis that erupted a few days after our departure, which is still unresolved (the planned elections did not take place), has for the time being prevented implementation of the moratorium. The work goes on. Despite the difficulties, RSF and NUSOJ remain ready to ensure that the public undertaking obtained becomes the new reality for Somali journalists.

# INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY RSF

## # Journalism Trust Initiative

RSF IS DETERMINED TO OFFER SOLUTIONS. IT WAS WITH THIS POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE THAT IT EMBARKED ON THE JOURNALISM TRUST INITIATIVE (JTI). WHILE THE ISSUE OF “FAKE NEWS” CONTINUED TO BE THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL DEBATE, RSF DEVELOPED A COLLABORATIVE STRATEGY FOR COMPILING A DIGITAL BENCHMARK FOR QUALITY JOURNALISM.

### A self-regulatory mechanism

The Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) is creating a “trusted third party” mechanism designed to reinforce quality and ethical journalism. By creating a set of machine-readable indicators for media transparency, editorial independence, journalistic methods and professional ethics that can be used by platforms, search engines and other online, it aims to give advantages to media outlets that demonstrate respect for journalism’s highest standards, at a time when they are being handicapped by the cost of quality journalism, falling revenues and the way that digital platforms and online media currently function.

In 2020, the JTI received a grant of 422,179 euros from the European Commission that enabled it to make a self-evaluation portal available online in mid-2021 to media outlets and to other stakeholders such as advertisers, platforms, distributors and regulators. Tutorials and other tools necessary to support its implementation have also been created.

A pilot version of the JTI was also deployed in Africa with the support of the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF), with the goal of assisting African media outlets with the certification process. The six media chosen to participate in the project – Iwacu (Burundi), Flambeau des Démocrates (Togo), EMedia (Senegal), OuestafNews (Senegal), Kalangou (Niger) and IGF (Senegal) – worked actively with RSF on how to approach the self-evaluation questionnaire developed for the JTI.



### DEVELOPMENT

JTI is a collaborative standard setting process according to the guidelines of CEN, the European Committee for Standardization. More than 120 experts have contributed to a draft CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA) that has been released for public consultation in July of 2019. The final version was published at the end of the year.

### TESTING & FEEDBACK

During the consultation phase, both the general public and professional communities are invited to comment on the proposed JTI indicators. Workability in real life is key. Therefore targeted pilot projects were launched to test the JTI set of standards in different environments. By design, every standard is being frequently reviewed after publication.

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Media outlets** can self-assess compliance with the JTI standard and get independently certified.
- Social media and search platforms** can use JTI data to promote conforming sources.
- Every citizen** can use JTI indicators for an informed choice of his or her news diet.
- Advertisers** can use JTI to align their spending and thus, enhance brand safety.
- Regulators** can use JTI as an independent, self-regulatory mechanism to allocate subsidies and benefits to media outlets.
- Media Development** actors can use JTI as a means to select and evaluate projects.

# INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY RSF

## THE FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

Founded by 11 independent civil society organisations at RSF's initiative in 2019, the Forum on Information and Democracy provides governments, digital platforms, civil society and media outlets with regulatory and self-regulatory recommendation designed to safeguard respect for democratic principles in the digital era. It derives its mandate from the founding document of the Partnership for Information and Democracy, which has been endorsed by 42 countries.



## RESULTS IN 2020

WITH RSF'S SUPPORT, THE FORUM ACHIEVED ITS INITIAL OBJECTIVES IN 2020:

- 1** It promoted a structural approach to the information chaos and the need for democratic safeguards
  - Participating in international events, including RightsCon, the Paris Forum, UNESCO's World Press Freedom Conference and two meetings of the Alliance for Multilateralism, which brought together more than 50 foreign ministers.
- 2** It raised awareness of these challenges, above all by:
  - launching the Forum website,
  - publishing an op-ed in the name of the International Commission on Information and Democracy that was signed, among others by Nobel laureates Shirin Ebadi, Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Mario Vargas Llosa,
  - obtaining many press pickups.
- 3** **Publication**

It published its first report, offering **250 recommendations on how to combat infodemics**, and launched a second working group on sustainable journalism.

Forum on  
Information  
& Democracy

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES

**BRAZIL**  **107<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

The Bolsonaro system is to discredit journalists. Insults, public humiliation and harassment, often of a sexist nature, fuel the climate of hate towards those who work in the media. In 2020, RSF recorded 580 attacks on the press in Brazil, of which 85% were carried out by Jair Bolsonaro and his sons. At the same time as a flood of disinformation sustained by government supporters, a protest movement has mushroomed and more than 40 applications to have Bolsonaro impeached were submitted to the speaker of parliament.

Faced with overt corruption on the part of the government and the accusations against them, the country's main news organisations formed a coalition and published their own report on the health crisis.

## STRATEGY

- › **Analyse and expose** the Bolsonaro system and its violations of freedom of the press.
- › **Brief** international organisations on the safety of journalists in the country.
- › **Support and train** media staff in the field.
- › **Recommend** alternatives to local authorities.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Quarterly reports analysing the elements of the so-called "Bolsonaro system" against the media, in partnership with Volt Data Lab, a data journalism agency and consultancy,**
- **Recommendations for new mayors and municipal councillors after the November local elections**
- **Legal proceedings by RSF and its partners to seek improvements to the safety of journalists covering speeches by the presidents.**
- **Organisation of a public hearing by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Organization of American States thanks to the action of the coalition of which RSF is a member.**



Jair Bolsonaro outside his official residence, the Alvorada Palace. He is accompanied by a comedian disguised as the president who hands out bananas to journalists. In Brazil this signifies "giving the finger".

© Dida Sampaio/Estadão Conteúdo.

**CHINA**



## CLASSEMENT

 **177<sup>th</sup>/180\*** **China**

 **80<sup>th</sup>/180\*** **Hong Kong**

## CONTEXT

New technology has provided China with a formidable weapon for censorship and surveillance so that it remains the country with the most journalists in prison. Ordinary citizens can be convicted for merely expressing disagreement with the official line dictated by the communist party. The threat of harassment and imprisonment creates a climate of fear, leading to self-censorship on the part of news organisations and citizens. Foreign correspondents, for their part, are widely spied on and often expelled.

China's media strategy goes far beyond its borders. It promotes its model of society by infiltrating foreign news organisations and exporting its surveillance technology internationally.

In Hong Kong, freedom of the press has been in serious decline for several years. China has reinforced its stranglehold on the special administrative region and has orchestrated a campaign of intimidation against its sole state broadcaster. Also, a new national security law approved by the Beijing government allows it to impose harsh penalties, including capital punishment, on any journalist who writes about Hong Kong.

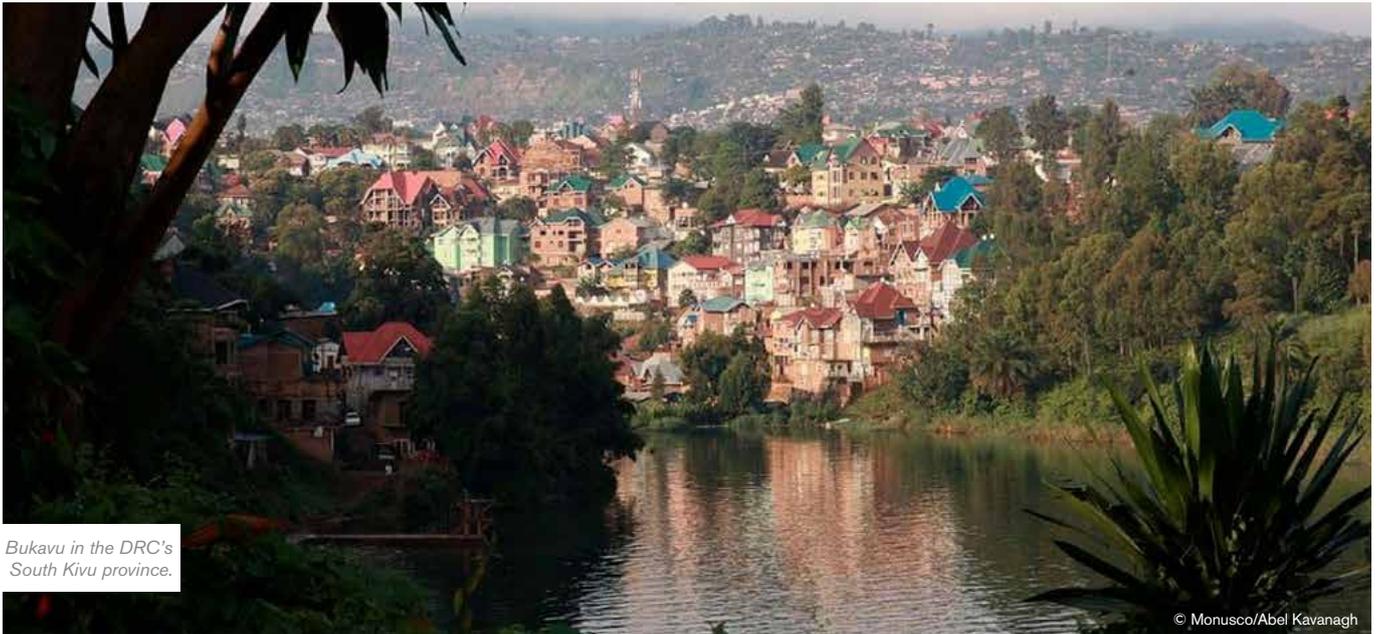
## STRATEGY

- › **Highlight** China's media strategy and the dangers it represents beyond its own borders.
- › **Help** news organisations to publish reliable news and information.
- › **Alert** the international community to the dangers of the national security law.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Launch of the #FreeJimmyLai campaign to demand the release of the Hong Kong media mogul, recipient of a special RSF Press Freedom Award, and call for the charges against him to be dropped.**
- **Publication of a joint letter with 12 other NGOs calling on President Xi Jinping to pardon ailing jailed journalist Huang Qi, 58, who may die in prison.**
- **Provision of grants for Chinese journalists.**

# I REGIONAL PRIORITIES I



Bukavu in the DRC's South Kivu province.

© Monusco/Abel Kavanagh

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



### CONTEXT

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has undergone major changes and crises since 2019. The election in January of Félix Tshisekedi, who promised to turn the media into a “real fourth estate”, opened the door for media organisations and freedom of the press. However, RSF has recorded dozens of acts of intimidation towards journalists and media organisations covering the Ebola outbreak. Additionally, there has been a steep rise in violence towards journalists and media outlets linked to coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The negative impact of this new health – and social – crisis on the work of the media is an indication of the urgent need for a moratorium on journalists’ arrests, the introduction of a new legal framework to the 1996 act, and the establishment of a mechanism to protect, and ensure the safety of, the country’s journalists.

### STRATEGY

- › **Advocacy** in support of reform of the legal framework and the establishment of a protection mechanism
- › **Capacity building** and support for our partner organisation Journalist in Danger (JED)

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Monitored press freedom violations as a basis for its advocacy work. A total of 28 website postings documented cases of journalists being threatened and arbitrarily arrested;**
- **Carried out public and direct advocacy with the authorities to follow up the implementation of recommendations by RSF and JED for reform of the legal framework and the establishment of a mechanism to protect journalists;**
- **Provided financial support for JED to enable it to carry out joint activities, including the creation of an advocacy group to lobby for the speedy introduction of a legal framework that will underpin freedom of the press.**



#### JOURNALIST IN DANGER (JED)

Journalist in Danger (JED) is a long-standing partner of RSF and the two organisations work closely together on monitoring activities in order to raise awareness and highlight abuses of press freedom and violence towards journalists.

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

## SOMALIA

★ 163<sup>th</sup>/180<sup>+</sup>



### CONTEXT

With more than 50 media workers killed since 2010, Somalia remains the most dangerous country in Africa for journalists. A large part of its territory is controlled by non-state entities or federal states that do not recognize, or only barely, the authority of the central government, meaning journalists face pressure from all sides. Those that do not exercise self-censorship are attacked by the Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, responsible for most journalist deaths, or are arrested, detained arbitrarily – 32 in 2020 alone – tortured, or their organisation is closed down. The authorities in Somaliland and Puntland are particularly harsh and put enormous pressure on local news organisations. Journalists are often tried by military tribunals in an attempt to justify their lengthy detention, or civilian courts that rely on laws dating from the era of military dictatorship.

### STRATEGY

- › An **advocacy campaign** in favour of a moratorium on arbitrary arrests;
- › **Lobbying** the authorities for the creation of a national mechanism for the safety of journalists and a protective legal framework.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- An **unprecedented joint mission with the National Union of Somali Journalists in October to inform the president and prime minister of their concerns. The premier promised to introduce a moratorium on the arrest of journalists;**
- **Monitoring of attacks on freedom of the press on which to base its advocacy work. Twenty-six website postings documented cases of journalists being threatened or arbitrarily arrested;**
- **An analysis of the legal framework and a list of specific recommendations for the creation of procedures and legislation to support the fight against impunity;**
- **Training in election reporting for 30 journalists, 12 of them women.**



© Sayid Ali Taatiko.

Joint press conference by RSF and the National Union of Somali Journalists, Mogadishu 27 October 2020.

## MALTA

81<sup>th</sup>/180<sup>+</sup>



Murdered Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.



© Matthew Mirabelli/AFP

### CONTEXT

Nearly four years after the murder of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, justice was still not served. She was the target of a violent harassment campaign while she was investigating corruption involving high-level institutions of state. It is well established that the investigation and the trial of those involved have been subjected to political interference and collusion with the perpetrators, of whom the businessman Yorgen Fenech is the alleged ringleader. The case has highlighted the shortcomings of the Maltese government and its inability to ensure journalists can work in a safe and independent environment which is essential for their task of keeping the public informed. There has been a clear deterioration in press freedom, to which growing interference in the media during the health crisis is testament.

### STRATEGY

- › **To study** the Maltese media environment.
- › **Achieve** justice for the unpunished killing of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the misuse of power by the authorities in general.
- › **Lobby** for an improvement in press freedom.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

- **RSF and eight other press freedom organisations signed a joint letter to the Valetta public prosecutor asking him to seek assistance from Europol to bring the investigation into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia to a conclusion.**
- **RSF closely followed the investigation into Caruana Galizia's murder and its editor-in-chief was called to give evidence in the case, describing conditions for Maltese journalists in the period leading up to the murder.**
- **Vigils in honour of the murdered journalist were organized in London, Berlin and online.**

# I REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

INDIA  142<sup>th</sup>/180<sup>+</sup>



Members of the New Delhi police on guard at one of the city's gates.

© Sajjad Hussain/AFP

## CONTEXT

With four journalists killed in connection with their work in 2020, India is among the most dangerous countries for reporters. They are targets of all types of attack: police violence, ambushes fomented by political activists, reprisals instigated by shady groups or corrupt local potentates. Also, horrifying hate campaigns and calls for murder have been carried out through social media against journalists, including women, who dare to speak or write about touchy subjects. On the legal front, prosecution is often used to muzzle journalists seen as too critical of the authorities. In 2020 the government used the coronavirus crisis to strengthen its control over news and information by prosecuting journalists who report information that differs from the official version. The Kashmir situation remains a source of concern. Reporters are often the targets of harassment by police and paramilitary forces. They are forced to cope with Orwellian content regulations and even the closure of their media outlet.

## STRATEGY

- › **Lobbying** for the establishment of machinery to protect journalists.
- › **Highlighting abuses of freedom** of the press, especially in Kashmir.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Monitored and exposed via the website attacks on journalists and independent media organisations;**
- **Analysed the legal framework and produced recommendations for federal states on the need for legislation to protect journalists.**
- **Provided financial support for two media organisations and the forum Network of Women in Media, India to help it organize its annual meeting of the country's female journalists.**

**The Network of Women in Media, India (NWMi)** aims

to provide a forum for women in media professions to share information, exchange ideas, express solidarity and support, uphold standards and ethics in the media and to promote gender equality in the media and society.



# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

## AFGHANISTAN



122<sup>th</sup>/180\*



### CONTEXT

Peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, which began in September, raised hopes for a respite, but violence against journalists and media organisations increased considerably in the country. A total of six journalists and media workers were murdered in targeted attacks in 2020. To this can be added the spread of Covid-19, which caused the deaths of at least seven journalists and led to economic problems that forced many media outlets to shed staff or place them on short hours without financial compensation. Female journalists were often the first victims. Steps taken by the government and the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee as well as news organisations that support freedom of information were boosted.

### STRATEGY

In 2020, RSF focused on providing guidance and financial support to the Center for Protection of Afghan Women Journalists (CPAWJ) in order to:

- › **Enable** it to have direct influence on the government
- › **Contribute** to the protection of journalists

### ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2020, RSF:

- Followed up and highlighted attacks on journalists and media organisations in 27 postings on its website;
- Carried out a joint advocacy mission with the CPAWJ to ensure that the peace talks did not represent a danger for journalists by:
  - Speaking during debates;
  - Analysing legislation;
  - Making recommendations to members of parliament.
- Supported the CPAWJ to continue the training of female journalists.



**The Center for Protection of Afghan Women Journalists** is the first organisation in the country created by and for female journalists. Opened in March 2017 with support from RSF, the CPAWJ closely monitors the position of female journalists to encourage women to join the profession and support their protection, safety and defence. Its

goals are to extend its network throughout the country to monitor abuses towards women journalists, to draw up recommendations for the government and for media organisations to facilitate the work of female journalists and to help strengthen freedom of information in Afghanistan.



© Source : CPAWJ

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

**BULGARIA**  111<sup>th</sup>/180<sup>+</sup>



## CONTEXT

Bulgaria is in last place in the EU/Balkans zone of the World Press Freedom Index. Most of its news organisations remain in the hands of a few oligarchs, with corruption-tainted links with politics. The selective and murky allocation of government and EU funds allows the government to favour sympathetic media organisations to the detriment of trustworthiness and objectivity in news and information. A few independent and critical voices still survive despite smear campaigns and violent attempts to intimidate them. However, they are often targeted by judicial harassment while those behind attacks on journalists go unpunished.



Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov gives a press conference.

© Nikolay Doychinov/AFP

## STRATEGY

- › **Analyse** the Bulgarian legal framework.
- › **Alert** the international community to the shortcomings of the Bulgarian government.
- › **Promote** alternatives with the government.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Recommendations to the government to enhance freedom of the press, in particular the creation of an independent and diverse national committee.**
- **Directing criticism at European institutions over violence suffered by journalists.**

**HUNGARY**  89<sup>th</sup>/180<sup>+</sup>



## CONTEXT

Press freedom, already seriously impeded before the pandemic, declined further in 2020. The so-called “coronavirus law”, part of a state of emergency of indefinite duration, provides the Hungarian government with a “legal” tool allowing it to crack down on the media. In the guise of health and safety, the legal framework put in place by Viktor Orbán makes him the judge and jury of information. Criticism of the government is branded “fake news” punishable by a five-year prison sentence. Meanwhile, the government is free to dispense its own false information to try to justify its policies, for example by accusing migrants of having brought the virus into the country. Pro-government media outlets fuel a strategy of vilifying independent journalists by accusing them of being “coronavirus collaborators” and describing them as “poor fools”. The Media Council, which is patently politicised, has abrogated its function of information watchdog, a fundamental role in a democratic European Union member state.

## STRATEGY

- › **Support** independent media outlets in the face of government pressure.
- › **Alert** European institutions to the dangers to press freedom inherent in Hungary’s legal framework.
- › **Support** the improvement of press freedom in European democracies.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Publication of an open letter expressing support for Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, following attacks on her by Viktor Orbán.**
- **Criticism directed at European institutions over the need for firm action to resolve the deterioration of the rule of law and media diversity in Hungary, as well as to protect the free flow of news and information as part of the battle against Covid-19.**



© János Bodey/Index.hu.

Almost all the journalists at Index.hu, the country’s leading independent news site, resigned rather than accept mounting pressure from the government.

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

**POLAND**  **62<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

The strategy adopted by the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, in power since 2015, dubbed “repolonisation” or “decentralisation”, saw the transformation of the state broadcast media into a propaganda weapon. The state-owned public broadcaster TVP has become a promotional tool for President Andrzej Duda, which was evident on the eve of his re-election in July last year. The reorganization of domestic policies has the sole objective of getting rid of journalists and presenters who try to put out trustworthy news free from political compliance. In parallel, judicial harassment and financial pressures – against an economic background that was already tough – made media organisations more vulnerable to government censorship. As heavy-handed arrests of journalists increased, many of them sought refuge in cyberspace.

## STRATEGY

- › **Highlight** the manipulation of the media by the Polish government
- › **Direct** criticism at Polish and European institutions.
- › **Support** journalists questioned in the course of their work.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- After RSF published the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, it wrote to Andrzej Duda in an effort to break the deadlock in the country's media.
- An appeal was made to the EU to ensure that obstacles to press freedom are taken into account when sanctions are carried out against Poland for breaching European values.

**MOROCCO**  **133<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

Morocco's media continue to be subjected to judicial harassment. In addition to the trials of a number of media figures that have dragged on for several years, several new prosecutions of journalists have been initiated, implicating them in various sex scandals. Women's evidence in these cases is often manipulated. The conduct of the trials, the excessive media coverage and the smears that accompany them deprive the victim and the alleged perpetrator of their rights. Heavy sentences of been pronounced and many journalists and citizen-journalists continue to be imprisoned.

## STRATEGY

- › **Advocacy work** for reform of the legal framework
- › **An integrated approach** to the protection of journalists.

## RESULTS

In 2020, RSF:

- **Monitored and highlighted attacks on press freedom on which to base its advocacy activities. A total of 14 posting on the website documented cases of journalists frequently subjected to arbitrary justice;**
- **Conducted an analysis of the legal framework, in particular the 2016 press code, for use in lobbying the authorities to abolish press offences.**
- **Advocacy work designed to retain direct links with the human rights ministry, parliament and the Moroccan journalists' union.**
- **Issued a call to the United Nations to issue a public statement against the manipulation of sex scandals by the Moroccan authorities to silence critical journalists.**

**TUNISIA**  **72<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

The improvement in press freedom, which began with the 2011 revolution, has been seriously threatened since the election of President Kais Saied in 2019. Public attacks on journalists and media organisations by far-right members of parliament have increased in frequency. The High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication has been the target of verbal attacks. After it refused to grant accreditation to the pirate radio station Quran Karim, its offices were surrounded by supporters of its founder, populist far-right MP Saïd Jaziri. Meanwhile the station continues to broadcast its message of hate covertly throughout the country.

## STRATEGY

- › **Provide** training in investigative journalism for those involved locally in news and information.
- › **Highlight** threats to freedom of the press.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Implementing and providing facilities for groups on infodemics.**
- **Monitoring of the parliamentary group on freedom of the press (GPLP)**

*Dozens of journalists were assaulted and harassed during a demonstration in Tunis.*



# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

**SYRIA**  **174<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

Syrian journalists remain particularly at risk since they are in the front line of coverage of the bombardment of rebel strongholds. Kidnappings are commonplace, carried out by Jihadist forces which behave like state authorities and rule with a rod of iron. In these areas free and independent media outlets took root, created by citizen journalists soon after the uprising against the government began, but few have survived. For several years, dozens of journalists have attempted to flee insecurity and the advance of government troops in the Ghouta, Deraa and Idlib areas, fearing they would be arrested. There is no such thing as a free press in areas controlled by the Damascus government. Any hint of criticism or any subject regarded as sensitive leads to reprisals by the intelligence service, which has a free rein. Dozens of journalists have been imprisoned by government forces while others have been abducted by the various groups that have emerged, such as Islamic State, Jaysh Al-Islam and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. Hundreds of journalists are likely to have died under torture. In the Kurdish-controlled north, local reporters have been the first casualties of clashes between pro-government forces and groups supported by Turkey.

## STRATEGY

› In 2020 RSF focused on an integrated approach to **monitoring, advocacy** and **assistance** to protect journalists threatened by the advance of government troops.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2020, RSF:

- **Monitored cases of journalists at risk, in collaboration with its partner organisation, the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM);**
- **Lobbied the European Union and members states to raise awareness of the plight of Syrian journalists in Idlib;**
- **Provided financial support to three Syrian news outlets and 19 Syrian journalists in difficulty, including journalists in exile in Turkey, as well as administrative support to 22 journalists applying for visas in Europe.**

### THE SYRIAN CENTRE FOR MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (SCM)



The Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) is a Syrian civil society organisation that works to promote democracy and basic rights, as well as transitional justice, in Syria. The SCM was formed in 2004 by Mazen

Darwish, a lawyer and free speech campaigner who was awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize in 2015.

**EGYPT**  **166<sup>th</sup>/180\***



## CONTEXT

Freedom of the press in Egypt, where waves of arrests and raids are a regular occurrence, is a growing source of concern. Since President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi came to power, journalists have witnessed a "Sisi-isation" of the media. The government gets rid of any journalists suspected of being close to the Muslim Brotherhood and has set about buying up the major media groups. The Internet is the last area where independent news and information can circulate, but more than 500 sites have been blocked since mid-2017 and arrests for posting on social media have escalated. The harsh judicial armoury also presents a threat to press freedom with the approval of a new anti-terrorism law, a new framework law on the media and a cybercrime bill. During the coronavirus crisis, the authorities have made the fight against "fake news" a rallying cry and at least a dozen new sites have been blocked on such grounds. Despite the lack of transparency surrounding the blocking of these sites, it seems that the offending content frequently questions the extent of the pandemic or casts doubt on the health system's ability to cope with it.

## STRATEGY

› In 2020, RSF focused on international advocacy and working with local and international partners to spread awareness of what is going on in Egypt.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2020, RSF:

- **Monitored and highlighted attacks on journalists and independent media organisations through 60 reports on its website;**
- **Lobbied the European Union and members states to raise awareness of the press freedom situation in the country by:**
  - **Attending consultation meetings of NGOs and the EU;**
  - **Issuing a joint appeal with 15 other NGOs for a response from the EU to the crackdown on human rights following demonstrations in the country;**
  - **Writing to the EU calling for a comprehensive review of its relations with Egypt given the country's record of human rights violations.**
- **Lobbied the UN to condemn the routine practice of arbitrary detention of journalists in Egypt.**

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

**RUSSIA**  149<sup>th</sup>/180\*



## CONTEXT

Branded “foreign agents”, violently intimidated and arbitrarily sentenced, journalists do not enjoy a secure environment in which to carry out their work. During major protests in the east of the country in 2020, large numbers were arrested, despite clearly showing their press cards. Diversity of news and information has been greatly undermined by the Kremlin’s appropriation of the country’s main media organisations. Investigative journalists are threatened and sometimes attacked, especially when they touch on sensitive issues in Crimea or Chechnya. Roskomnadzor, the federal communications agency, controls all online activity through the “Sovereign Internet” project, while armies of trolls spew pro-Moscow content on to the Web. In the grip of the world-wide pandemic, the Kremlin has increasingly used censorship and disinformation to restrict the circulation of criticism of its handling of the crisis. The journalist Irina Slavina, who took her own life by setting herself on fire after suffering harassment by the authorities in Nizhny Novgorod, has become a powerful symbol of a society that is suffocating.

## STRATEGY

- › **Sound a warning** about cases of brutality towards those working in news and information.
- › **Support** independent media organisations.
- › **Call** for the release of detained journalists, including those in Crimea and Ukraine.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Challenged the Russian authorities and petitioned the United Nations special rapporteurs over the failure to punish those who attacked reporter Elena Milashina, the conviction of radio journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva on a charge of “justifying terrorism” and the arrest of RSF correspondent Ivan Safronov for treason.**
- **Challenged Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin over the blocking of media websites in Crimea.**
- **Together with partner organisations submitted nine alerts on the Council of Europe’s Media Freedom Platform.**
- **Provided aid to media outlets.**



Despite efforts by the Russian authorities to curb the arbitrary detention of journalists, a dozen were held during recent pro-Navalny rallies.

© Olga Maltseva / AFP

**SAUDI ARABIA**  170<sup>th</sup>/180\*



## CONTEXT

Saudi Arabia is one of the world’s worst countries for journalists. Those voicing dissent are regarded as traitors and are convicted on charges of blasphemy, “insulting religion,” “inciting chaos,” “jeopardising national unity,” or “harming the image and reputation of the king and the state.” The number of journalists and bloggers in arbitrary detention has tripled since Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) became crown prince in 2017. The abolition of flogging in April 2020 was a positive step but otherwise the situation continues to be completely unacceptable. While disseminating pro-government comments widely online, especially on Twitter, the authorities spy on and pursue journalists. The journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent critic of MBS, was subjected to close surveillance for months by means of Israeli spyware before being murdered and dismembered in Istanbul in 2018. An Istanbul court began trying 20 Saudi officials in absentia on 3 July 2020 but has yet to render a verdict. Meanwhile, 34 journalists are currently detained in Saudi Arabia.



Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi’s murder trial resumed in Istanbul and then was adjourned until 4 March. RSF representatives were there.

## STRATEGY

- › **Advocate** against impunity for Saudi state crimes
- › **Mobilise** the international community in the run-up to the G20 summit

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Several RSF representatives went to Istanbul to observe the Jamal Khashoggi murder trial.**
- **A major advocacy campaign was conducted in the run-up to the G20 summit in Riyadh. A petition was launched and letters were sent to the leaders of major democracies urging them to press Saudi Arabia to release the 34 journalists it continues to detain.**

# I REGIONAL PRIORITIES I

TURKEY  154<sup>th</sup>/180\*



## CONTEXT

The witch-hunt waged by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government against its media critics came to a head after an abortive coup in July 2016. Censorship of the Internet and social media has reached unprecedented levels and the authorities are now trying to control online video services. Although the number of imprisoned journalists fell for the second year running, Turkey continues to be one of the biggest jailers of journalists and continues to expose them to an arbitrary judicial system. The risk of prosecution has increased because, in addition to the usual charges of "terrorist propaganda," "collaborating with an illegal organisation" and "membership of an illegal organisation," journalists can now also be charged with "insulting the president." The Covid-19 pandemic has also undermined press freedom in Turkey. Official information about the pandemic has proved to be very partial, and only the public health ministry is allowed to provide statistics about the virus. Several journalists were arrested after reporting Covid-19 cases in their region.

## STRATEGY

RSF focused on two major objectives in 2020:

- › **Maintain the pressure** on Turkey by means of joint advocacy with human rights and media rights defence organisations and by documenting press freedom violations
- › **Draw** the international community's attention to the press freedom situation in Turkey



**BIANET IPS COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION**

The Bianet news agency defends media freedom and pluralism, respect for diversity and respect for everyone's rights. It aims to be the mouthpiece of marginalised sectors of the population and to provide them with a place in the public debate by publishing impartial and inclusive reporting.

Bianet's work focuses on:

- producing independent journalism
- monitoring and reporting human violations
- capacity-building of journalists and media outlets

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Among its many activities in this sensitive environment, RSF:

- **Observed more than 130 trials of journalists and human rights defenders including the trial of RSF's own representative and Ahmet Altan and Nazlı Ilıcak. After their acquittal in July 2019, an Istanbul court began retrying them on terrorist propaganda charges.**
- **Conducted a total of seven advocacy visits to EU member states and coordinated three joint advocacy initiatives with media rights defenders to draw attention to the press freedom situation in Turkey.**
- **Provided financial support to the Bianet news agency to improve his database on violations of freedom of expression and to create a rights-based journalism platform accessible to journalists and researchers.**
- **Organised a training on Kurdish-language journalism and the gender approach in journalism to 15 Kurdish journalists.**

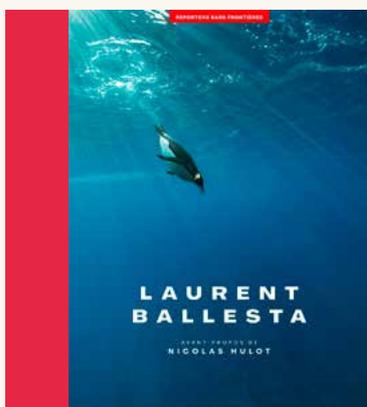
# REACHING A NEW PUBLIC

## NEW FORMULA FOR RSF'S PHOTO BOOKS

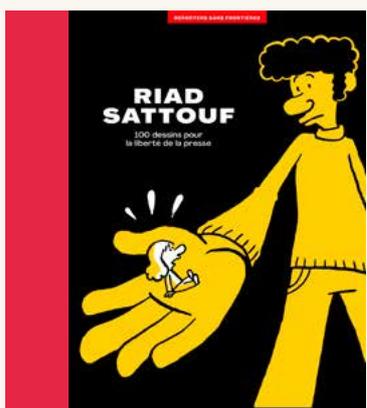
IN 2020, RSF OVERHAULED THE FORMULA OF ITS BOOKS OF PHOTOS FOR PRESS FREEDOM, OFFERING READERS RICHER CONTENT FOCUSED ON DRAMATIC MOMENTS, ENCOUNTERS, MOVING STORIES AND INCISIVE PORTRAITS OF PRESS FREEDOM'S EVER-MORE NUMEROUS ENEMIES – ALL THIS SERVED UP IN A NEW DESIGN FORMAT AIMED AT MAKING OUR ACTIVITIES MORE IMMEDIATE AND READABLE.



For the first issue with the new formula, RSF chose Philippe Halsman, an American portrait photographer who had no fewer than 101 Life magazine covers in the course of a long career. An exceptionally funny story-teller, he provides an explosion of humour and spicy anecdotes about leading celebrities.



For the July issue, RSF partnered with the Nicolas Hulot Foundation for Nature and Mankind to publish photos by Laurent Ballesta, a French underwater photographer who has been diving since the age of 13 and who has been breaking records and garnering praise for years. Whether diving with 100 kilos of equipment in Adélie Land, in Antarctica, or in the middle of a pack of frenetic predatory sharks in Polynesia, Ballesta offers oceanic adventures and profound underwater beauty.



From his childhood cartoons to the worldwide success of his graphic memoir *The Arab of the Future*, Franco-Syrian cartoonist Riad Sattouf reveals the secrets of some of his most remarkable drawings in the book that RSF published at the end of 2020, RSF x Riad Sattouf, which was one of our biggest sales hits.

## RSF TURNS TO THE VIDEO GAME MINECRAFT

IN 2020, RSF CREATED AN ONLINE LIBRARY WITHIN ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR VIDEO GAMES, MINECRAFT – A LIBRARY THAT CIRCUMVENTS CENSORSHIP AND IS A SAFE HAVEN FOR PRESS FREEDOM.



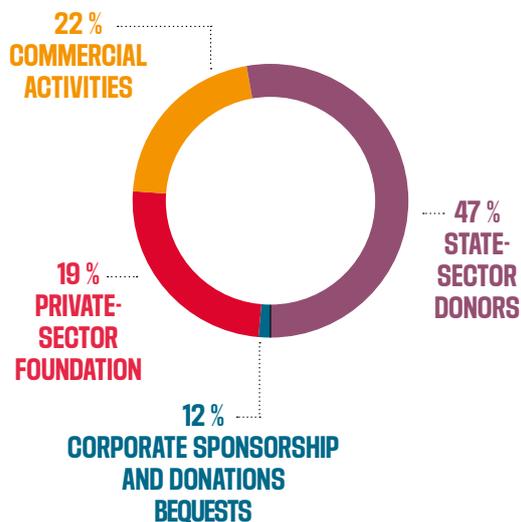
# THE ~~UNCENSORED~~ LIBRARY

There are many countries where it is hard to access freely-reported news and information, where blogs, newspaper and websites are censored, where journalists are arrested and their lives are in danger. As a result of this censorship, many young people grow up in an environment in which they have almost no access to independent media and their opinions are manipulated by government disinformation campaigns.

Even if these young people are very different from the ones we know, they do what young people all over the world do – they play video games, especially one of the most popular ones, Minecraft, which has more than 145 million monthly active users worldwide. In Minecraft's creative mode, you can create your own worlds using construction "blocks" and can experience the freedom of a completely open environment within them. It is often described as "digital Lego."

Minecraft is still accessible in those countries that strictly limit access to websites, blogs and a free press. RSF has used this censorship loophole to create an "Uncensored Library" on a server that can be accessed by Minecraft players anywhere in the world, a library full of books containing articles that are censored in their country of origin. They are now available where government surveillance technology cannot reach them – within a video game. They can be read there, but the content cannot be downloaded. The library is getting bigger all the time, with more and more books overcoming censorship.

# DIVERSIFIED FUNDING



RSF HAS MANY PARTNERS THAT PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WITHOUT WHICH IT COULD NOT FUNCTION AND DEVELOP. RSF ENSURES THAT THAT ITS SOURCES OF FUNDING ARE AS DIVERSE AS POSSIBLE.

RSF ensures that that its sources of funding are as diverse as possible. In 2020, its funding came from:

- **State-sector donors** (47%), especially the European Union, the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA);
- **Private-sector foundations** (19%) such as the Adessium Foundation and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund;
- **Commercial activities** (22%), namely the sale of books of photos, of which RSF publishes three every year;
- **Corporate sponsorship and donations by the public, including bequests** (12%).

RSF's accounts are audited annually by Deloitte.

As well as this statutory annual audit, specific audits are carried out in connection with certain funding contracts.

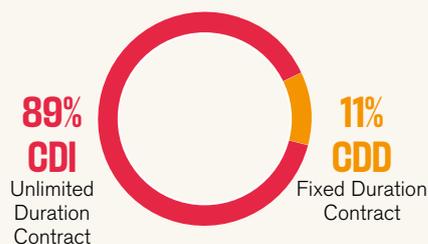
## PARTNERS



# A COMMITTED TEAM

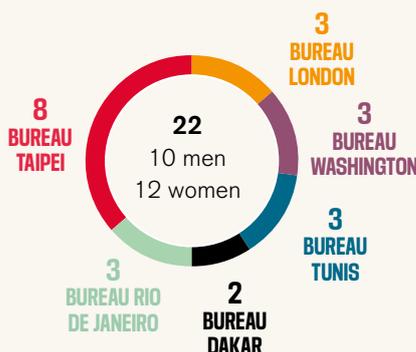
**41,3**  
Average number of staff at RSF headquarters in Paris in 2020 (Full-Time Equivalent / FTE)

## CONSTANT STAFF NUMBER



## NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ON THE RISE IN THE BUREAUX

(on 31 December 2020)



Our international bureaux had a total of 12 staff members on 31 December 2019

# BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The members of the board of governors are elected for two years by the general assembly of RSF's members. The board of governors elects an executive bureau from among its members. The board of governors meets four times a year and takes overall policy decisions.

## EXECUTIVE BUREAU

**President**  
**PIERRE HASKI**  
*Journalist, France Inter columnist and cofounder of the Rue89 news website*

**Vice-president**  
**FRANÇOISE SIVIGNON**  
*Humanitarian doctor, radiologist and former president of Médecins du Monde*

**Treasurer**  
**JEAN-MICHEL BOISSIER**  
*Journalist, cofounder of the weekly *Courrier international**

**MICHAEL BERGMEIJER**  
*Former director-general of Reuters Europe*

**FRÉDÉRIC FILLOUX**  
*Publisher of the Monday Note newsletter*

**PAOLA SANDOVAL**  
*Journalist, Foreign Press Association president*

**ELAINE SCIOLINO**  
*Journalist, former New York Times Paris bureau chief*

## MEMBERS

**ANGELA CHARLTON**  
*Journalist, Associated Press Paris bureau chief*

**PHIL CHETWIND**  
*AFP news director*

**ELAINE COBBE**  
*CBS Paris correspondent and Dart Center representative*

**BERTRAND DELCROS**  
*Member of the Information Ethics Observatory (ODI) and former legal affairs director at Radio France*

**HADANI DITMARS**  
*Journalist*

**LOUIS DREYFUS**  
*President of the Le Monde group*

**PHILIPPE JAHSHAN**  
*Director of Strategy, Forecasting and Institutional Relations at the French Development Agency, former president of the Mouvement Associatif*

**JULIE JOLY**  
*Head of the Journalists Training Centre (CFJ)*

**ODILE MARQUANT-BERTHOUX**  
*Specialist in media education*

**CÉCILE MÉGIE**  
*Head of Radio France International (RFI)*

**PAUL MOREIRA**  
*Founder and director of the Premières Lignes news agency*

**DÉO NAMUJIMBO**  
*Journalist*

**EYOUM NGANGUE**  
*Creator of African Journalists in Exile (JAFE)*

**MARTINE OSTROVSKY**  
*Jurist and lecturer in media law*

**MICHAEL REDISKE**  
*Journalist, president of RSF International and RSF Germany*

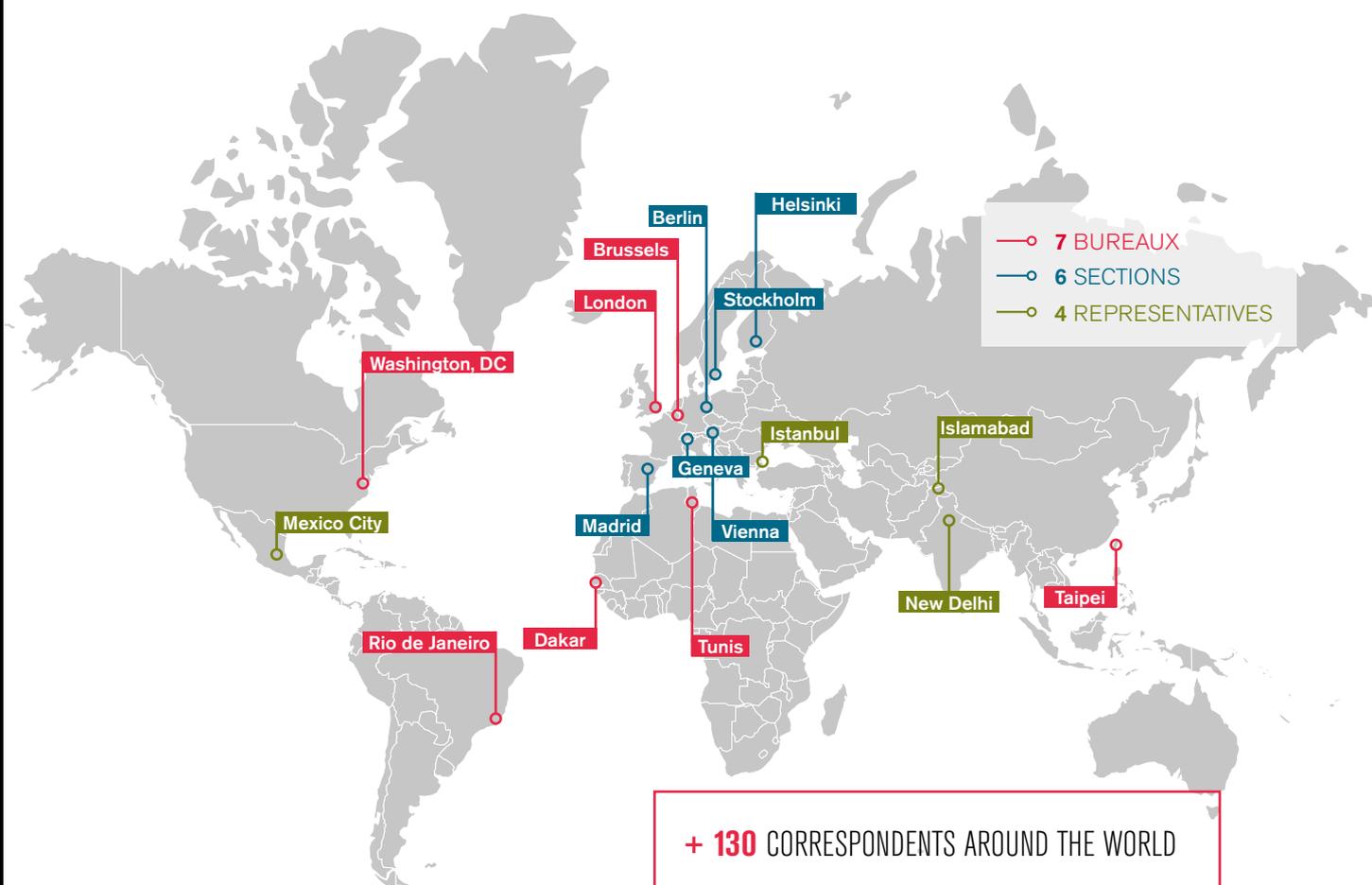
**PASCAL ROUX**  
*Lawyer*

**ABDOULAYE TRAORÉ**  
*Journalism student*

**GÉRARD TSCHOPP**  
*Journalist, former president of RSF Switzerland, member of RSF International's executive bureau*

# INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

RSF has a presence in now fewer than 78% of the world's countries. It has at least one actor – ranging from a local partner or correspondent to a representative, bureau or section – on the ground in 141 of the 180 countries ranked in the World Press Freedom Index. As the following map indicates, this presence is spread across the world. It is strongest in Africa, the Americas, Europe and Central Asia but falls no lower than 68% of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region and 72% in the Middle East.



## RSF NOW HAS A REPRESENTATIVE IN INDIA



© DR

RSF already had representatives in Turkey, Mexico and Pakistan, and now has one in India as well. Based in New Delhi, **Rituparna Chatterjee** had been RSF's correspondent for three years before being promoted to representative. She has also worked for Reuters, *The Independent* and *HuffPost India* in the course of a 20-year career as a journalist. Very committed to women's rights, she oversaw the #MeToo campaign in India when it swept the country two years ago and became the mouth-piece of journalists who have been the victims of sexual attacks.

RSF's representatives are regarded as its spokespersons at the national level. They use all possible means (including media interviews, press conferences and op-eds) to publicly express RSF's viewpoints on press freedom and to inform local stakeholders about RSF's activities. Every opinion expressed by the representative must conform to RSF's opinions as expressed by its international secretariat, or in its published reports and its statements to the media.

## ANOTHER CORRESPONDENTS' MEETING ORGANISED:

RSF has organised meetings of its correspondents in various regions since 2017 – Latin America and Africa (in 2017), Asia (in 2018), and European Union, Balkans and Middle East (in 2019). In 2020, it was the turn of correspondents in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA).

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, a face-to-face meeting could not be held. But a video-conference was organised in November 2020. Jeanne Cavellier, the head of RSF's EECA desk, and Marie Bouilly, RSF's international coordinator, met by video-conference with RSF's correspondents in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Moldova and Uzbekistan, with the chief aim for reinforcing ties between the correspondents and RSF staff in Paris, and among the correspondents themselves.

The meeting included a presentation of RSF's advocacy, research, direct assistance and capacity-building together with a detailed explanation of the role that correspondents are called on to play in these activities. Training was also provided on digital and physical security, gender issues and use of the World Press Freedom Index as an advocacy tool.

Reinforcing RSF's network and its involvement in RSF's activities is one of the international coordination department's leading goals.

## NEW GRAPHIC BRAND IDENTITY



In February 2020, RSF unveiled a new graphic brand identity, created and produced by the advertising agency BETC Design. Its logo and graphic identity guide were redesigned with the aim of better conveying the strategic vision of an organisation now known throughout the world by the initials "RSF".

This was the fourth time since its creation in 1985 that RSF has adopted a new logo. The three colours (red, black and white) at the heart of its visual identity for the past decade were preserved, but the initials RSF were placed at the heart of the logo, which the organisation will use to project itself uniformly throughout the world. The new visual brand identity is intended to project what RSF is today, an international NGO with 14 bureaux and sections and more than 130 correspondents throughout the world, a bold and combative NGO that does not hesitate to challenge the consensus in order to obtain results, an NGO with a demanding vision of journalism and its political, social and cultural utility, a singular NGO at the crossroads of journalism, the defence of rights, and development.

RSF's new visual identity was deployed progressively throughout the organisation's communication material in the course of 2020.

# #FIGHTFORFACTS

## NEW CAMPAIGN VIDEO

RSF unveiled a new international awareness-raising campaign video in December. Entitled #FightForFacts and produced by the French advertising agency BETC, it aims to help people to appreciate journalism's importance in enabling them to understand issues that are decisive for their future.



State violence, human rights violations, public health tragedies, the ordeals of migrants, discrimination against women – they all disappear without free and independent journalists to report the facts. And without their reporting, the people and their representatives cannot organise an appropriate response.

RSF's new campaign video shows several scenes resembling news events, but the critical angle gradually disappears and gives way to superficially similar scenes that are nonetheless lacking in any meaning.

Aimed at the general public, this video was broadcast on TV channels, shared on social media and was made available to all websites that want it. It is available in 10 languages (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Turkish and simplified Chinese).

*The video was produced with support from the French Development Agency (AFD), whose director-general, Rémy Rioux, said: "Associated for the past ten years with RSF's defence of the freedom to inform, AFD is proud to support its #FightsforFacts international campaign video, whose dramatic images forcefully illustrate journalism's key role in making people aware of such issues as governance, inequality and climate change. With ten years left to the Agenda 2030 deadline, this 'fight for facts' can encourage public support for the Sustainable Development Goals with help from free and independent media."*

The production company BIRTH and studio MATHEMATIC collaborated with the advertising agency BETC in producing this video.



Scan the code to  
view the film





REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) works for journalistic freedom, independence and pluralism all over the world. Headquartered in Paris, with 13 bureaux and sections around the world and correspondents in 130 countries, it has consultative status with the United Nations and UNESCO.