The coronavirus that emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan flourished thanks to censorship. No one can say with certainty what would have happened if the medical whistleblowers in Wuhan had been able to speak freely and if China’s media and social media had been able to report their appeals. Having information in time does not necessarily mean making the right public health decisions. What we can say with certainty is that when information is subordinate to higher interests, in this case political stability and state secrecy, the pandemic flourished and spread.

Although journalism is regarded with mistrust in western societies, the coronavirus crisis has led citizens to wonder where they can find news and information of quality, which are essential for distinguishing true from false, for questioning the official version, and for making decisions that affect their lives.

In an epidemic, we need good medical care, that’s obvious. But let’s not forget that we also need reliable news and information. Now more than ever, RSF’s fight for journalistic freedom, pluralism and independence have demonstrated their vital importance not only for democracies to function properly but also for everyone’s personal health.
APRIL
International
CYCLE OF INTIMIDATION
The latest World Press Freedom Index, which RSF publishes every year in April, showed that hatred against journalists has degenerated into violence, increasing the level of intimidation to which they are subjected. The number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes are tightening their grip on the media.

JUNE
International
RESOLUTION ON IMPUNITY FOR DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA’S MURDER IN MALTA
On 26 June, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution condemning the continued impunity for Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia’s murder and systemic rule of law shortcomings in Malta. Entitled ‘Daphne Caruana Galizia’s assassination, the rule of law in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges,’ the resolution accompanied a report by Dutch MP Pieter Omtzigt in his capacity as PACE special rapporteur on this case. Representations from RSF, IFEX and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom attended the PACE session, urging support for the report and resolution.

2019 THE YEAR’S HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY
France
#FREEDINFORM

Journalists were the targets of increasing violence by both police and protesters while covering the growing Yellow Vest protests. They were subjected to insults and death threats, they were beaten, flashball rounds were fired at them, and their equipment and material was confiscated. RSF responded by launching a petition and a campaign for reporters to continue to be #LibresDinformer (Freetoinform).

FEBRUARY
Iran
RSF EXPOSES DECADES OF STATE LIES
RSF held a press conference to announce that it had obtained a leaked Iranian justice department digital archive containing hundreds of thousands of files proving that the Iranian state was guilty of an enormous historic lie. The leaked archive showed that 860 journalists and citizen-journalists were prosecuted, arrested, imprisoned and in some cases executed by the Iranian regime between 1979 and 2009.

MARCH
Egypt
PARTIAL VICTORY

After campaigning constantly for Mahmoud Abou Zeid, the Egyptian photojournalist also known as Shawkan, RSF hailed his release in March after more than five and a half years in prison, but deplored the fact that he was still only half free because a court had ruled that he would remain under a severe form of judicial control that meant he would have to spend 12 out of every 24 hours in a police station for the next five years.

MAY
Myanmar
FREE!

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, two Reuters news agency journalists who had spent more than 500 days in prison for investigating a massacre of Rohingyas in Inn Din, a village in the northern state of Rakhine, were finally released. RSF had campaigned hard to maintain international pressure on the government led by Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

JUNE
International
RESOLUTION ON IMPUNITY FOR DAPHNE CARUANA GALIZIA’S MURDER IN MALTA
On 26 June, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution condemning the continued impunity for Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia’s murder and systemic rule of law shortcomings in Malta. Entitled ‘Daphne Caruana Galizia’s assassination, the rule of law in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges,’ the resolution accompanied a report by Dutch MP Pieter Omtzigt in his capacity as PACE special rapporteur on this case. Representations from RSF, IFEX and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom attended the PACE session, urging support for the report and resolution.
2019 THE YEAR’S HIGHLIGHTS

OCTOBER
Saudi Arabia
PROTEST OUTSIDE SAUDI EMBASSY IN PARIS
RSF placed dozens of dismembered shop window models wearing “press” armbands outside Saudi Arabia’s embassy in Paris on the first anniversary of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi’s murder inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, on 2 October 2018. The models were dismembered in allusion to the way Khashoggi’s body was dismembered and to the regime’s violations of media rights, which give it such a terrible image.

JULY
Mauritania
END OF BLOGGER’S NEARLY SIX-YEAR ORDEAL
With a great deal of emotion, RSF was able to announce the fruit of years of behind-the-scenes advocacy at noon on 29 July: Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaïtir, a Mauritanian blogger who had initially been sentenced to death for apostasy, was finally released more than five and a half years after his arrest. Through RSF, he thanked all the organizations that had campaigned for his release.

AUGUST
International
UNANIMOUS G7 SUPPORT
In a session on digital issues during the G7 summit in the French city of Biarritz, the G7’s leaders expressed “unanimous support” for the Partnership for Information and Democracy, which is based on the Information and Democracy Initiative launched by RSF.
Twenty countries signed up to the Partnership during the UN General Assembly a month later in New York.

SEPTEMBER
International
RSF’S 2019 PRESS FREEDOM PRIZE GOES TO THREE WOMEN
At a ceremony in Berlin, RSF’s annual Press Freedom Prize was awarded to three women journalists for the first time ever. The three women – Saudi Arabia’s Eman al Nafjan, Vietnam’s Pham Doan Trang and Malta’s Caroline Muscat – received the RSF Prizes for Courage, Independence and Impact respectively.

NOVEMBER
International
A SOLUTION TO ONLINE INFORMATION CHAOS
In the wake of the signature of the Partnership for Information and Democracy by a total of 31 countries at the UN since late September, ten civil society entities joined RSF in creating the Forum on Information and Democracy in order to implement the partnership’s principles. It was the latest step in a process launched by RSF in September 2018, which had received the G7 summit’s support in August.

DECEMBER
International
BIG FALL IN OVERALL NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS KILLED
RSF’s yearly round-up revealed that the overall number of journalists killed in 2019 was the lowest in 16 years, but the number killed in countries at peace had not fallen. These countries have become as dangerous as those at war. Also, more journalists are being jailed: a total of 386 were in prison at the end of 2019, 12% more than at the end of 2018.
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 2019, RSF:
- issued 1,836 press releases in six languages, plus seven reports
- received 4,743,920 views on its website
- had a 26% mailing opening rate
- obtained 970 media mentions and pickups for its annual round-up
- obtained 700 media pickups and gave 124 media interviews for the Press Freedom Index

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 organize activities designed to press for their release.

In 2019, RSF:
- launched 4 petitions that received 195,601 signatures
- organized more than 15 major communication campaigns and events
- received 1,166,432 visitors to its website, 20% more than in 2018
- had 120,668 Twitter followers
- had 261,204 Facebook fans
- had more than 100,000 newsletter subscribers

RSF has more than 30 years of experience defending and promoting journalistic freedom, pluralism and independence. RSF uses its regional bureaus, 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 organizations. RSF advocates, mobilizes networks, 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. RSF also supports local partner organizations that defend media freedom, helping them to increase their influence and capacity of action.

In 2019, RSF:
- analyzed 22 media laws and bills
- initiated a dialogue with 41 countries
- wrote 40 memos
- made 19 referrals on 22 individual cases, one of them received by the International Criminal Court
- Observed nearly 150 trials
- Sent more than 20 letters to political authorities

RSF trains and supports

RSF organizes training in physical and digital security for journalists, and 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. RSF also supports local partner organizations that defend media freedom, helping them to increase their influence and capacity of action.

In 2019, RSF:
- worked closely with 8 partner organizations
- organized 15 trainings for 289 journalists (38% of them women)
- trained 48 media outlets

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 or 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 2019, RSF’s assistance desk:
- helped 289 journalists in 55 countries (15% of them women)
- wrote 211 support letters and disbursed 110 individual grants
- supported 29 media outlets in danger
- was a member of 3 consortiums providing grants to human rights defenders

RSF defends and promotes media independence and pluralism and the freedom to inform throughout the world. By combating censorship and defending journalists and media that are in difficulty or are persecuted in connection with their reporting, RSF supports one of the foundations of democracy.

RSF’s approach to intervention is to focus its actions on five major domains that complement and reinforce it each other:

- Research and publication
- Communication campaigns
- Advocacy
- Assistance
- Training and support

RSF INFORMS

RSF CAMPAIGNS

RSF ADVOCATES

RSF PROTECTS

RSF TRAINS

AND SUPPORTS

THE YEAR’S KEY STATISTICS

RSF defends and promotes media independence and pluralism and the freedom to inform throughout the world. By combating censorship and defending journalists and media that are in difficulty or are persecuted in connection with their reporting, RSF supports one of the foundations of democracy.
2019 concluded a terrible decade for journalism. The traditional threats – violations of journalists’ rights by states or by groups within society, religious extremists, criminal organizations and others – were compounded by what the Chinese blogger Hu Jia calls “invisible prisons,” such as the economic throttling of media outlets, draconian media laws and algorithms favoring sensationalist content. The explosive growth of the Internet and social media has plunged us ever deeper into an information jungle in which the previous guarantees for journalistic independence, pluralism and freedom have been replaced by the laws of global digital trade.

In response to the new order, RSF has adapted the way it fights. We have of course continued to fight with fervour and determination for journalists’ safety and freedom, obtaining the release of several journalists and significant progress in countries considered hostile to press freedom.

We have also launched innovative initiatives aimed at creating guarantees for information and democracy in the global online domain, taking into account that domain’s reality. RSF is campaigning, proposing innovative solutions, adapting its strategy and reinventing its methods of action and intervention, without ever lowering its guard. In 2019, the commitment of RSF’s teams all over the world were equal to the challenges they faced. I take advantage of this activities report to express my deep gratitude to all of our colleagues, correspondents and partners. Together they have ensured that RSF is a creative, combative, bold and exceptional organization.

GUARANTEE THE FUTURE OF INVESTIGATIVE AND REPORTAGE JOURNALISM

In investigative and reportage journalism, information is gathered, cross-checked and presented. Guaranteeing its future is therefore essential. This is why it is RSF’s duty to defend the freedom of reporters and to try to protect them when they are exposed to dangers in the course of their work.

- RSF’s work must draw attention to examples that demonstrate journalism’s social utility in various forms.
- RSF must ensure that it puts “journalism in the service of journalism” by developing its capacity to do investigative reporting on subjects related to press freedom.

GUARANTEE TRUSTWORTHY JOURNALISM BY PROTECTING ITS INDEPENDENCE

Several phenomena undermine journalism’s independence and the trust it should inspire. They include the confusion of news with PR material, the development of propaganda, interference by media owners, and conflicts of interest with political and business actors. In its actions, RSF seeks to guarantee journalistic independence.

- RSF must develop expertise in shedding light on the “invisible prisons” and in mobilizing support for these issues.
- RSF must offer tools that enable journalists to effectively demand their independence from all forms of pressure and interference.
- RSF must participate in defining international standards for use as a guide in the production of independent and quality reporting.

A STRATEGY BASED ON THE SEARCH FOR IMPACT

STRATEGIC COURSE CHOICES

COMBAT TECHNOLOGICAL THREATS TO JOURNALISTIC FREEDOM AND PLURALISM

New technologies are inevitably used in journalism. They facilitate the gathering, processing and dissemination of news and information, with the concomitant dangers of censorship and manipulation (distortion, filtering, surveillance, etc). RSF combats harmful use of new technologies and tries to ensure that algorithms – search engine, social media and artificial intelligence algorithms – serve journalistic freedom and pluralism.

- RSF lobbies the new technology giants, which need to be influenced and/or regulated.
- RSF is developing capacities for responding to the current and future challenges posed by artificial intelligence and bots.

THWART GLOBAL OFFENSIVES AIMED AT REDUCING THE SPACE FOR JOURNALISM

While powerful regimes with political and religious ideologies try to impose their alternative media models in the international arena, RSF defends a political model of free, independent and pluralistic journalism both in international forums and at the country level.

- RSF exposes the strategies of authoritarian governments that try to promote alternative, undemocratic models.
- RSF wages a fight in all the key multilateral forums to denounce and prevent these attempts to reduce the space for journalism.

A STRATEGY BASED ON THE SEARCH FOR IMPACT

GUARANTEE THE FUTURE OF INVESTIGATIVE AND REPORTAGE JOURNALISM

In investigative and reportage journalism, information is gathered, cross-checked and presented. Guaranteeing its future is therefore essential. This is why it is RSF’s duty to defend the freedom of reporters and to try to protect them when they are exposed to dangers in the course of their work.

- RSF’s work must draw attention to examples that demonstrate journalism’s social utility in various forms.
- RSF must ensure that it puts “journalism in the service of journalism” by developing its capacity to do investigative reporting on subjects related to press freedom.

GUARANTEE TRUSTWORTHY JOURNALISM BY PROTECTING ITS INDEPENDENCE

Several phenomena undermine journalism’s independence and the trust it should inspire. They include the confusion of news with PR material, the development of propaganda, interference by media owners, and conflicts of interest with political and business actors. In its actions, RSF seeks to guarantee journalistic independence.

- RSF must develop expertise in shedding light on the “invisible prisons” and in mobilizing support for these issues.
- RSF must offer tools that enable journalists to effectively demand their independence from all forms of pressure and interference.
- RSF must participate in defining international standards for use as a guide in the production of independent and quality reporting.
REPORTING.

Producing reports allows RSF not only to denounce specific aspects of press freedom violations but also to undertake major investigative initiatives with governments. RSF relies to a great extent on the publication of its World Press Freedom Index and its major reports, using them as advocacy tools. The Index is a credible and recognized tool, thanks to the quality of its data, which is improved every year. Its international visibility can be used to challenge governments about their country’s ranking, to identify why countries have fallen in the rankings and to make specific recommendations.

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.

RSF is therefore extending its range of action:

A CLEAR STAND AGAINST PRESS FREEDOM’S PREDATORS

RSF relies to a great extent on the publication of its World Press Freedom Index and its major reports, using them as advocacy tools. The Index is a credible and recognized tool, thanks to the quality of its data, which is improved every year. Its international visibility can be used to challenge governments about their country’s ranking, to identify why countries have fallen in the rankings and to make specific recommendations.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF is determined to offer solutions. It is with this positive attitude that RSF embarked on the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI), while the subject of “fake news” continued to be a focus of public and political debate. RSF developed this collaborative initiative with the aim of compiling an agreed set of journalistic standards that could be used by all news and information providers and incorporated into the algorithms used by digital platforms.

A self-regulatory mechanism

The JTI’s goal was the creation of a “trusted third party” mechanism that would reinforce journalistic quality and ethics. It is meant to serve as a tool that gives advantages to media outlets that demonstrate respect for journalism’s highest standards regarding methods, ethics and independence, at a time when they are being handicapped by the cost of quality journalism, falling revenues and the way the digital platforms function. The JTI consists of a set of indicators for media transparency, editorial independence, journalistic methods and professional ethics.

INFLUENCE MEDIA, LEGISLATION AND INTERNET STANDARDS.

RSF has renewed its advocacy methods, going beyond just public denunciation. RSF now offers a direct engagement with governments, including the most authoritarian and repressive regimes in regards to press freedom. RSF offers them proposals and negotiates with them about specific solutions for the future.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF has renewed its advocacy methods, going beyond just public denunciation. RSF now offers a direct engagement with governments, including the most authoritarian and repressive regimes in regards to press freedom. RSF offers them proposals and negotiates with them about specific solutions for the future.

EXTENDING LITIGATION

Producing reports allows RSF not only to denounce specific aspects of press freedom violations but also to undertake major investigative reporting.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

RSF actively combats impunity for murders of journalists. Ninety percent of the 1,200 murders of journalists during the past 15 years are unpunished. RSF intervenes with relevant organizations in order to go beyond a purely defensive approach and begin to defend journalists by ensuring that those responsible for murders are prosecuted.
In an era of technological disruptions, democracies are facing historic challenges due to the information disorder. Led by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the International Initiative on Information & Democracy aims to bring democratic safeguards to the global space of information and communication.

A CALL FROM CIVIL SOCIETY FOR NEW DEMOCRATIC SAFEGUARDS

SEPTEMBER 2018

1. RSF gathered the International Commission on Information & Democracy

The International Commission on Information & Democracy is composed of 25 prominent figures from 18 different countries. It is chaired by Christoph Deloire, RSF Secretary General, and Shirin Ebadi, laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize.

- Other members include Nobel laureates Amartya Sen, Joseph E. Stiglitz and Mario Vargas Llosa, Sakharov Prize laureate Hauwa Ibrahim, journalists Maria Resa, Can Dündar, Uluk Haşerül, Adam Michnik, academica Emily Bell, Yochai Benkler, Francis Fukuyama, activists and public figures Ela Bhatt, Wangari Maathai, Aliou Sall, Samira Boulaghid, Najat Rochdi, Aziza El Gharbawy, and WHO Director-General Margaret Chan.

5 NOVEMBER 2018

2. The Commission published the International Declaration on Information & Democracy

- The International Declaration on Information & Democracy is a non-binding intergovernmental agreement based on the Declaration on Information & Democracy gathering more than 30 States around the world.
- It was signed on 26 September 2019, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.
- It outlines democratic principles for the governance of the digitalized space.
- The declaration outlines democratic principles for the governance of this space.
- It is a new democratic order and a common good for humankind.

NOVEMBER 2018 – JUNE 2019

3. Democratic States around the world support the initiative

- Democratic States around the world have already shown their commitment to implementing the principles from the Declaration.
- Leaders of Burkina Faso, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Norway, Senegal, Switzerland and Tunisia committed to launching a political process aimed at implementing the principles from the Declaration.
- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Council of Europe Secretary-General Thorbjørn Jagland and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay also expressed their support on this occasion.

TWO HISTORICAL OUTCOMES

Calls for the creation of

The Partnership on I&D

- The International Partnership on Information and Democracy is a non-binding intergovernmental agreement based on the Declaration on Information & Democracy gathering more than 30 States around the world.
- It was signed on 26 September 2019, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.
- It outlines democratic principles for the governance of the digitalized and globalized space of information and communication.
- It is also a major tool for democracies to balance the power of private entities that structure the space of information and communication.

The Forum on I&D

- The Forum was created on 11 November 2019 by 11 independent organizations from civil society and academia.
- The Forum is the implementation body of the Partnership. It assembles working groups of international experts from different fields and regions to develop recommendations of regulation and self-regulation.
- Recommendations will be addressed to different categories of stakeholders (States, structuring platforms, media outlets, civil society, etc.)
- It implements the principles of

Implement the principles of

Calls for the creation of

The Partnership on I&D

- The International Partnership on Information and Democracy is a non-binding intergovernmental agreement based on the Declaration on Information & Democracy gathering more than 30 States around the world.
- It was signed on 26 September 2019, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.
- It outlines democratic principles for the governance of the digitalized and globalized space of information and communication.
- It is also a major tool for democracies to balance the power of private entities that structure the space of information and communication.

The Forum on I&D

- The Forum was created on 11 November 2019 by 11 independent organizations from civil society and academia.
- The Forum is the implementation body of the Partnership. It assembles working groups of international experts from different fields and regions to develop recommendations of regulation and self-regulation.
- Recommendations will be addressed to different categories of stakeholders (States, structuring platforms, media outlets, civil society, etc.)

IN 2019, THREE RSF BUREAUS (DAKAR, RIO DE JANEIRO AND TUNIS) PARTICIPATED IN THE TRAINING OF:

- 186 journalists, including 55 women (30%)
- From 7 countries: Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Togo, Senegal and Brazil
- Journalists working for print media, community radio, and TV
- Trainings organized in 5 countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Togo, Senegal and Brazil

On four main subjects:

- investigative journalism, data analysis and fake news
- digital security and cyber-harassment
- gender approach in journalism
- covering elections

2019 IN STORIES

by Samir Bouaziz, project officer, Tunis Office

Trust partner

Trust is above all the word that stays with me after the training that RSF’s Tunis bureau provided in 2019, when we organized several training sessions. The first one was about covering elections. The beneficiaries, who were from Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, either attended a training in Tunis or one in Rabat, which was for Moroccan journalists. As well as reporters, they also consisted of editors and media administrators, and they came from different kinds of media outlets – state-owned, privately-owned and non-profit. For the first part of the training, which was more theoretic (legislation, ethics and so on), we brought in some of the region’s leading experts, university professors and big media editors.

But what most impressed me was the practical part of the training, organized in the form of a regional session in Tunis. It was held during the campaign for the Tunisian presidential and parliamentary elections. We decided to work in a very concrete way with the state-owned radio and TV broadcasters, which consist of two TV channels and nine radio stations and have a very large share of the audience. We knew we could have a big potential impact by working with these media because they were keen to become more professional in their way of working and adoption of journalistic ethics. In the course of this training, we managed to produce a practical guide on election coverage, one specially tailored for state radio and TV journalists. We also worked on a program schedule for all the state radio stations and TV channels that ensured that those speaking on the air reflected a diversity of opinion and ensured respect for the rules of the electoral process.

When I mentioned trust, it was above all to this that I was referring: these state media reporters, presenters and editors accepted RSF’s advice enthusiastically and worked to implement them with determination. Elections are a sensitive subject at the national level and it could be difficult for an international NGO to try to play a role with regard to them. But we found, especially during the evaluation session organized after the elections, that all the participants did what they were supposed to. The impact of these trainings was directly perceptible. Concrete measures were implemented within the Tunisian state media. With the benefit of this experience, we went on to work with the Libyan, Algerian and Moroccan state media through our partner network. These countries don’t have the same democratic maturity and the road will sometimes be longer. But we know that we can count on the trust of journalists and this is an extremely valuable asset when it comes to promoting press freedom in the region.
The first gig of the 2019 tour

For RSF, the release of the World Press Freedom Index is a bit like the first gig of a concert tour for a rock star: it’s the culmination of meticulous, methodical, coordinated work for nearly a year involving hundreds of people all over the world. The Index is partly based on an online questionnaire with 87 questions translated into 20 languages that is sent to specialists in 130 countries. It’s also based on the work of RSF’s own team of regional specialists who carefully monitor abuses against journalists and media outlets all over the world throughout the year. In the final weeks before release, the editorial department intervenes to propose thematic and regional analyses in order to highlight trends. Then the comms people step in and draw up an action plan to give the Index as much impact as possible all over world. Often as late as the night prior to release, the digital team executes the digital design and layout of the hundreds of individual pieces of content, secures the servers and adapts the content to the different online mediums.

The release of the Index is the moment when RSF is in the spotlight, facing its public. For the 2019 release, nine press conferences were organized in major capitals in each continent. The press conferences were attended by hundreds of journalists who wrote nearly 700 articles in ten different languages. RSF’s website and social media accounts also drew record audiences that day: more than 170,000 website views on 18 April, publication day, and more than 920,000 clicks on our social media messages. 2018 was already a success but 2019 went beyond our audience expectations.

The release of the Index is also the moment when we can invite our friends to join us on the stage to speak, debate and comment on our findings. In 2019, we had the privilege of being joined at our press conferences by Véronique de Viguerie and David Dufresne in Paris, Caroline Muscal in London and Jessika Ato in Washington, where we partnered with the Washington Post. And it is the moment when the press freedom predators, on discovering their ranking, try to deny and denigrate, but also sometimes to understand in order to improve.

After the last curtain call on a concert tour’s first night, I imagine that rock stars want only one thing: to start the next one. I think the same desire drives RSF’s staff, who know how essential the Index is for the cause we defend and who measure each year by the progress made in terms of its impact.
Saudi consulate protest

We wanted to organize a protest outside the Saudi consulate in Paris on 1 October 2019, the first anniversary of Saudi editorialist Jamal Khashoggi’s death in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, where he was murdered and his body was then dismembered to facilitate its removal. To get the attention of the media and public, we wanted to stage something disconcerting.

The idea came to us a few weeks before the anniversary. We decided to create a pile of dismembered shop window models in the small square immediately in front of the consulate – a simple and effective shock action to demand justice and an investigation into Khashoggi’s barbaric murder.

Simple … that’s what I thought when I began the search for shop window models. Textile wholesalers, retail outlets closing down, fashion industry brands. I tried in vain to find a batch of shop window models that could be taken apart. After several days of research, I finally found what I wanted on a website selling second-hand items. And off I went at the wheel of a large truck, driving around the outermost suburbs of Paris to collect them from various locations.

My colleagues began contacting the press. We had to be discreet to avoid being stopped by the police before we got there. So the logistics had to be organized with the utmost secrecy. Each member of the team had a different job: deliver the models to the location, prepare and deliver the placards, organize transport and security, and organize live video coverage on social media. When the doors of the truck opened, around 30 journalists would be on hand to film it. The operation could begin.

RSF’s secretary-general gave a press conference standing next to the pile of shop window models while we were photographed and filmed by Saudi agents from behind the consulate’s windows. A few minutes later, images of the dismembered models in press vests in front of the consulate began going around the world. The sharing process went into operation on social media. The news agencies were sometimes spectacular. In Congo-Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea, newsstand managers still remember how police seized entire newspaper displays and therefore not bought.

The obstruction may be carried out more discreetly, as in Madagascar where, in the early hours of the morning, government representatives bought up almost an entire issue of correspondents, we were able to research the story in more than 90 countries and expose practices that had not been documented until then.

The methods deployed to prevent newspapers reaching their readers are sometimes spectacular. In Congo-Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea, newstand managers still remember how police seized entire newspaper issues in order to put them to the torch and destroy them forever.

Finally, censorship may be exercised in a radical and brutal manner as in Mexico, where “voceadores” – newspaper vendors who roam the streets shouting the headlines – are liable to be threatened or even gunned down by readers who don’t like the content of their newspapers. In other words, until it reaches the reader’s hands, a newspaper is vulnerable and liable to be threatened or even gunned down by readers who don’t like the content of their newspapers. In other words, until it reaches the reader’s hands, a newspaper is vulnerable and the predatory imagination knows no bounds.

This report, together with the one we published in March entitled “China’s pursuit of a new world media order,” the analyses we published with the Index in April, and our annual round-up in December, all helped draw attention to significant and previously little known obstacles to the freedom to inform.
CHINA

INDEX RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Ranking</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>177th</td>
<td>180th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>77th</td>
<td>72nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTEXT

By relying on massive use of new technology, President Xi Jinping has succeeded in imposing a social and political model in China based on control of news and information and electronic surveillance of its citizens. At the same time, he has been trying to export this oppressive model by promoting a “new world media order” under China’s influence. China’s state and privately-owned media are now under the Communist Party’s close control while foreign reporters trying to work in China are encountering more and more obstacles in the field. More than 65 Chinese journalists and bloggers are currently detained in conditions that pose a threat to their lives. Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel peace laureate and winner of the RSF Press Freedom Prize, and Yang Tongyan, a dissident blogger, both died in 2017 from cancers that were left untreated while they were detained. Under tougher Internet regulations, members of the public can now be jailed for comments on news items that they post on social media or messaging services or even just for sharing content.

Hong Kong saw many cases of violence against the media, mainly by the police and pro-Beijing criminal gangs, during the pro-democracy demonstrations in the summer and autumn of 2019. The territory is supposed to enjoy separate status as a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China but in 2019, press freedom is already in retreat as a result of pressure from Beijing.

AFGHANISTAN

CONTEXT

The war imposed by the Taliban and Islamic State and constant abuses by warlords and political officials constitute a permanent threat to journalists, the media and press freedom. Concern is growing that basic freedoms, including press freedom, could be sacrificed over the course of the international efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan.

STRATEGY

In 2019, RSF’s activities had three main goals:

- Protect journalists.
- Strengthen legislation and regulations protecting women journalists.
- Develop and support the Centre for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists.

RESULTS

Together with this strong partner, RSF carried out:

- Four trainings in a very delicate pre-election environment in Herat and Kabul for 65 journalists (including 29 women) from 19 provinces and 48 different independent media outlets.
- Advocacy actions in support of CPAWJ’s campaign for the law banning violence against women to be amended so as to provide women with better protection against psychological and sexual harassment.
- A campaign to get the participants in the peace talks to guarantee press freedom as an “essential part of any just and lasting peace.”

AFGHANISTAN

INDEX RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Ranking</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>173rd</td>
<td>180th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>177th</td>
<td>180th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>77th</td>
<td>72nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AFGHANISTAN

CONTEXT

In 2019, Afghanistan saw many cases of violence against the media, mainly by the police and pro-Beijing criminal gangs, during the pro-democracy demonstrations in the summer and autumn of 2019. The territory is supposed to enjoy separate status as a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China but in 2019, press freedom is already in retreat as a result of pressure from Beijing.

STRATEGY

In 2019, RSF’s activities had three main goals:

- Protect journalists.
- Strengthen legislation and regulations protecting women journalists.
- Develop and support the Centre for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists.

RESULTS

Together with this strong partner, RSF carried out:

- Four trainings in a very delicate pre-election environment in Herat and Kabul for 65 journalists (including 29 women) from 19 provinces and 48 different independent media outlets.
- Advocacy actions in support of CPAWJ’s campaign for the law banning violence against women to be amended so as to provide women with better protection against psychological and sexual harassment.
- A campaign to get the participants in the peace talks to guarantee press freedom as an “essential part of any just and lasting peace.”

EUROPE

INDEX RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Ranking</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>16th</td>
<td>16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Europe’s worsening media freedom

A new World Press Freedom Index shows that 2019 did not mark an improvement in press freedom in Europe. The region moved from 16th to 16th overall.

The European Union, Europe’s media freedom champion, saw six countries fall in the press freedom ranking, with two in the top five.

Among the Nordic countries, Finland saw a deterioration. Sweden’s press freedom score remains stable at 13th while the UK, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland recorded a decrease from 16th to 18th.

RSF therefore calls on EU governments to support media freedom in Europe by strengthening rights rather than allowing them to be undermined by public service media and online platforms.

INDEX RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Ranking</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>16th</td>
<td>16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Europe’s worsening media freedom

A new World Press Freedom Index shows that 2019 did not mark an improvement in press freedom in Europe. The region moved from 16th to 16th overall.

The European Union, Europe’s media freedom champion, saw six countries fall in the press freedom ranking, with two in the top five.

Among the Nordic countries, Finland saw a deterioration. Sweden’s press freedom score remains stable at 13th while the UK, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland recorded a decrease from 16th to 18th.

RSF therefore calls on EU governments to support media freedom in Europe by strengthening rights rather than allowing them to be undermined by public service media and online platforms.

INDEX RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Ranking</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>16th</td>
<td>16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Europe’s worsening media freedom

A new World Press Freedom Index shows that 2019 did not mark an improvement in press freedom in Europe. The region moved from 16th to 16th overall.

The European Union, Europe’s media freedom champion, saw six countries fall in the press freedom ranking, with two in the top five.

Among the Nordic countries, Finland saw a deterioration. Sweden’s press freedom score remains stable at 13th while the UK, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland recorded a decrease from 16th to 18th.

RSF therefore calls on EU governments to support media freedom in Europe by strengthening rights rather than allowing them to be undermined by public service media and online platforms.
REGIONAL PRIORITIES

SYRIA

CONTEXT
Reporters continue to be exposed to a range of dangers including bombardment, abduction, being held hostage, and arbitrary detention by either government forces or Jihadist armed groups. The number of journalists killed has fallen but the government arrested hundreds in 2019 and 30 journalists are still held hostage. There is no free press in the government-controlled regions, where the media only report what they receive from the government’s news agency. Any criticism is subject to reprisals by the intelligence services, which torture and extract confessions. Of the free and independent media outlets that citizen-journalists created in rebel-controlled areas in the early years of the uprising, few now survive.

STRATEGY
In 2019, RSF’s activities had three main goals:

- Cover the situation of journalism in Syria and ensure it is not forgotten.
- Keep press freedom in Syria on the international agenda.
- Support journalists and media outlets.

RESULTS
In 2019, RSF:

- Helped to exfiltrate 30 journalists from the city of Deraa, where they were threatened with being imprisoned, tortured, or murdered, and to relocate them with their families in Europe.
- Provided funding to 137 journalists through its assistance desk.

SAUDI ARABIA

CONTEXT
Saudi Arabia is seen as a stable country and reliable ally of the West in the Middle East, but it is the world’s biggest jailer of journalists after China. It keeps news and information under close control, and it keeps a close watch on media personnel, using sophisticated hacking and espionage methods. The Saudi government acquired personal information from the Twitter accounts of thousands of people regarded as its critics and even hacked into the phone of Jeff Bezos, the owner of the Washington Post newspaper, which had employed the murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi as a columnist.

STRATEGY
In 2019, RSF’s activities had three main goals:

- Increase awareness of the cases of imprisoned journalists.
- Support journalists and press for their release. For the first time, RSF engaged in direct talks with government officials on the urgent need for press freedom reforms.
- Helped to exfiltrate 30 journalists from the city of Deraa, where they were threatened with being imprisoned, tortured, or murdered, and to relocate them with their families in Europe.
- Provided funding to 137 journalists through its assistance desk.

RESULTS
In 2019, RSF:

- Conducted an unprecedented visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss the continuing detention of 30 journalists and citizen-journalists and press for their release. For the first time, RSF engaged in direct talks with government officials on the urgent need for press freedom reforms.
- Helped to obtain the release of journalists Eman al-Nafjan and Hatoum al-Fassi and to obtain information about two foreign journalists who have been missing for years.
- Denounced the impunity for Jamal Khashoggi’s murder and heightened awareness of the treatment of Saudi journalists by means of its “dismembered remains” protest outside the Saudi consulate in Paris and similar protests in other cities including Berlin.

TURKEY

CONTEXT
The witch-hunt waged by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government against its media critics came to a head after an abortive coup in July 2016. After eliminating dozens of media outlets, the authorities are now tightening the vice on what little is left of pluralism – a handful of media outlets that are being harassed and marginalized. Censorship of websites and social media has reached unprecedented levels and the authorities are now trying to bring online video services under control. Although the number of imprisoned journalists fell for the second year running, Turkey continues to be one of the world’s biggest jailers of journalists and subjects 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 organization” and “membership of an illegal organization,” journalists can now also be charged with “insulting the president.”

STRATEGY
- Maintain pressure on Turkey by constantly lobbying international bodies (together with human rights and media rights defense organizations) and by documenting press freedom violations.
- Support journalists in danger by conducting advocacy campaigns and observing trials.
- Support media rights defenders by granting institutional support funding and by strengthening national and international networks.

RESULTS
Among its many activities in this sensitive environment, RSF:

- Observed more than 140 trials of journalists and human rights defenders including RSF’s own representative Erol Önderoğlu, who was finally acquitted in July, and Ahmet Atlan and Nazlı Ilicak, who were acquitted in November. The prosecutors unfortunately appealed against their acquittal.
- Conducted 11 advocacy visits to EU member states and coordinated two advocacy initiatives with media rights defenders to draw attention to the press freedom situation in Turkey.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

#FREETURKEYMEDIA

BIANET IPS COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION

Bianet IPS Communication Foundation is the most visible IPS operation, with daily news production in three languages (Turkish, Kurdish and English) and periodic reports on freedom of expression and violence in Turkey.

In 2019, RSF contributed to the development and translation into Turkish and English of annual and quarterly reports on the free speech and press freedom situation in Turkey, which included cases of prominent human rights defenders.
REGIONAL PRIORITIES

EUROPEAN UNION

CONTEXT
The European Union and its European neighbours are very disparate in their Press Freedom Index rankings. Most of the top ten in 2019 were European countries: Norway, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland and Belgium. But some European countries, such as Hungary (87th), Serbia (90th), Montenegro (104th) and Bulgaria (111th), were poor performers. Overall, Europe has seen a decline in press freedom. The decline is particularly marked in several Central European countries. In Hungary, the government continues a well-established strategy of silencing critical media by intervening in the media market, and waging campaigns to delegitimize independent journalists. Despite growing international pressures, Bulgaria is characterized by corruption and collusion between media, politicians and oligarchs, and the situation of its media did not improve in 2019. In countries such as Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Malta, Serbia and Montenegro, governments undermine independent media economically and judicially to the benefit of pro-government media. The lack of pluralism and the high levels of corruption pose permanent threats to journalists and press freedom. In these countries, much of the media is controlled and dominated by pro-government oligarchs and businessmen. Press freedom in Europe is also threatened by a surge in violence against journalists, marked by a loss of public trust in journalism. In France, the “Yellow Vest” protests led to violence by both police and protesters against journalists, some of whom were injured by flashball rounds. Austria, Spain, Italy and Greece have seen frequent attacks by separatists or nationalists against a backdrop of tension about migrants. Finally, the undermining of the rule of law, “Vest” protests led to violence by both police and protesters against journalists, some of whom were injured by flashball rounds. Austria, Spain, Italy and Greece have seen frequent attacks by separatists or nationalists against a backdrop of tension about migrants. Finally, the undermining of the rule of law, to the benefit of pro-government media. The lack of pluralism and the high levels of corruption pose permanent threats to journalists and press freedom. In these countries, much of the media is controlled and dominated by pro-government oligarchs and businessmen.

RESULTS
In 2019, RSF:

- Submitted 10 recommendations to the new MEPs and new EU commissioners on ways to promote journalistic freedom and independence.
- Conducted several investigations and followed the enquiries into the murders of Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta and Ján Kuciak in Slovakia.
- Monitored the populist excesses and threats to local media in Hungary, Poland and Austria.
- Met with the Bulgarian prime minister in December and proposed a road map for improving press freedom. This followed protests in October calling on the authorities to take steps to address Bulgaria’s poor ranking in the 2019 Index.

MOROCCO

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 have been initiated and heavy sentences have been passed. Many journalists and citizen-journalists continue to be imprisoned. The abolition of the Ministry of Communications and creation of a press council have not helped to make the environment for media and journalists any less stressful.

RESULTS
In 2019, RSF:

- Launched a petition and called for the immediate and unconditional release of Hajar Raissouni, a journalist arrested on August 30th on charges of “sexual relations outside marriage” and having an “illegal abortion.” She was finally released on October 16th.
- Conducted several advocacy visits to observe the drawn-out trials of seven journalists and to meet the families of imprisoned journalists.
- Continued to advocate for amendments to the press code and penal code that would provide journalists and press freedom with more protection.

ETHIOPIA

CONTEXT
Abiy Ahmed Ali allowed the many detained journalists and bloggers to be released as soon as he became prime minister in 2018. The new authorities also restored access to more than 200 news websites, and Ethiopian TV stations that are based abroad are now able to work freely. But this initial progress has not yet been institutionalized and journalists are concerned that the winds of freedom could end up being no more than a passing breeze. Draconian laws that affect the press, including the 2009 terrorism law, which was widely used to detain journalists, have still not been amended. Concern about a return to the past has been boosted by brief arrests of journalists, several Internet cuts and cases of intimidation.

RESULTS
In 2019, RSF’s activities had two main goals:

- Encourage improvements in press freedom, especially in connection with the situation of women journalists.
- Increase RSF’s ability to take action in Ethiopia in defense of press freedom and increase the impact of its actions.

- Visited Addis Ababa in May, where it directly and publicly lobbied government officials, including one of the prime minister’s leading advisers, to institutionalize the improvements in press freedom, above all by overhauling the draconian laws that were used to restrict free speech and the freedom to inform.
- Reinforced RSF’s network of local information sources.
- Identified a potential partner for conducting possible future trainings.

In 2019, RSF’s activities had two main goals:

- Encourage improvements in press freedom, especially in connection with the situation of women journalists.
- Increase RSF’s ability to take action in Ethiopia in defense of press freedom and increase the impact of its actions.

- Visited Addis Ababa in May, where it directly and publicly lobbied government officials, including one of the prime minister’s leading advisers, to institutionalize the improvements in press freedom, above all by overhauling the draconian laws that were used to restrict free speech and the freedom to inform.
- Reinforced RSF’s network of local information sources.
- Identified a potential partner for conducting possible future trainings.
REGIONAL PRIORITIES

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

CONTEXT
The DRC underwent big changes and major crises in 2019. Felix Tshisekedi’s inauguration as president in January opened a door for the media and for press freedom. During his inaugural speech, he said he wanted to turn the media into a real fourth estate. But the Ebola epidemic triggered a battle over media coverage that peaked with the murder of a radio journalist who hosted a program on measures to combat the epidemic. RSF registered dozens of acts of intimidation against journalists covering Ebola. As in 2019, RSF registered more press freedom violations in the DRC than in any other African country. The DRC continues to undergo major crises and has made multiple attempts to deny specific journalists and news outlets access to other opportunities for press engagement.

RESULTS
- RSF lobbied intensively for reform of the DRC’s repressive and obsolete media freedom legislation to be a priority for the authorities. Together with JED, its partner, RSF persuaded a number of members of parliament to form a press freedom friendship group, hold a press conference in Kinshasa, and directly lobbied both the communication and media minister and the president. The government added press legislation reform to the list of the projects to be carried out.
- Two journalists who had been imprisoned, Steeve Mwanyo Iwewe and Achiko Ngaya, were freed after lobbying by RSF.
- After the authorities knowingly disconnected opposition TV channel RTVS1’s signal, RSF issued a joint press release with JED and published tweets calling for it to be reconnected at once. RSF also got in direct contact with the president’s media adviser, the communication and media minister and the general secretary of the High Council for Broadcasting and Communication (CSAC). And RSF initiated the idea of a demonstration by the channel’s journalists in Kinshasa. RTVS1 was finally allowed to resume broadcasting.

JOURNALISTS IN DANGER (JED)

JED One of RSF’s long-standing partners, JED is an independent NGO that promotes and defends press freedom. Created in 1998, it is the DRC’s only press freedom organization.

RSF often condemns the Trump administration’s hostile attitude to journalists and press freedom, including its failure to hold a press briefing since March 2019.

UNITED STATES

CONTEXT
Press freedom in the United States continued to suffer during President Donald Trump’s third year in office. Arrests, physical assaults, public denigration and the harassment of journalists continued in 2019, though the numbers of journalists arrested and assaulted were slightly lower than the year before. Much of that has come from President Trump and his associates in the federal government, who have demonstrated that the United States is no longer a champion of press freedom at home or abroad.

This dangerous anti-press sentiment has trickled down to local governments, institutions and the American public. In March 2019, a leaked document revealed that the US government was using a secret database track journalists, activists and others whom Customs and Border Patrol authorities believed should be stopped for questioning when crossing certain checkpoints along the US-Mexico border. A couple of months later, the Justice Department charged WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange with 17 counts under the WWI-era Espionage Act. If he is convicted, this would set a dangerous precedent for journalists who publish classified US government information of public interest.

Under President Trump, the White House has replaced traditional forms of press access with those that limit the ability of journalists to ask questions of the administration. The last daily, televised White House press briefing led by a press secretary took place in March 2019, and since then the federal government has made multiple attempts to deny specific journalists and news outlets access to other opportunities for press engagement.

RESULTS
- RSF, the National Press Club, the University of Georgetown and other press freedom organizations sponsored a “Night Out for Austin Tice” on May 2nd with the aim of increasing awareness and raising funds for the campaign for the release of this US journalist detained in Syria.
- On August 26th, the second anniversary of US journalist Christopher Allen’s death in South Sudan, RSF held a vigil outside South Sudan’s embassy in Washington to demand justice. As a result, RSF was able to meet with the South Sudanese ambassador to the United States about the lack of an investigation into Allen’s killing.
- RSF often condemned the Trump administration’s hostile attitude to journalists and press freedom, including its failure to hold a press briefing since March 2019.

JOURNALISTS IN DANGER (JED)

JED One of RSF’s long-standing partners, JED is an independent NGO that promotes and defends press freedom. Created in 1998, it is the DRC’s only press freedom organization.

RSF often joins JED in denouncing arrests of journalists and other press freedom violations. This partnership enables both to have better visibility in the region. In 2019, the two organizations worked together to call for better legislative protection for journalists and respect for media rights. RSF also worked with JED to help reinforce its capacities with regard to fund-raising so that it would be able to guarantee long-term funding.

UNITED STATES
BRAZIL

CONTEXT

Brazil continues to be an especially violent country for the media, and many journalists have been killed in connection with their work. In most cases, these reporters, radio hosts, bloggers or information providers of other kinds were covering stories linked to corruption, public policy or organized crime in small or mid-sized cities, where they are more vulnerable. Jair Bolsonaro’s election as president in October 2018 after a campaign marked by hate speech, disinformation, violence against journalists and contempt for human rights has ushered in a particularly dark era for democracy and press freedom. Media ownership continues to be very concentrated, especially in the hands of big business families that are often closely linked to the political class. The confidentiality of journalists’ sources is under constant attack and many investigative reporters have been subjected to abusive judicial proceedings.

STRATEGY

- Reinforce and use national and international mechanisms (OAS and UN) for protecting media and journalists, especially women journalists.
- Directly support media and journalists, coordinate with the national network of actors involved in defending journalists, and help coordinate this network.
- Denounce the hate speech coming from President Bolsonaro and his close allies and the abuses against journalists and media.
- Organize one or several series of trainings in cyber-security for vulnerable community media and independent journalists, especially women journalists.

RESULTS

RSF is now a permanent member of the commission for freedom of expression of the National Human Rights Council (NHRC). It was directly involved in the drafting and adoption of NHRC Recommendation 7/2019: “Public officials and state representatives must respect international standards on freedom of expression in official discourse.”

In late 2019, RSF helped organize and participate in an NGO coalition aimed at getting the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to hold a hearing with the aim of condemning President Bolsonaro’s actions. As a result of effective organization and in a sign of the coalition’s influence, this hearing was held in March 2020.

ASSISTANCE WITH CYBER-HARASSMENT CASES

- Cases of cyber-harassment: RSF comes to the aid of journalists who are harassed on social media; the tech desk documents harassment cases and reports them to the digital platforms.
- The desk documents cases of journalistic content that has been wrongfully suppressed and cases of journalists’ accounts that have been blocked or suppressed, and reports them to platforms so that they can be restored.

ADVOCACY

In 2019, RSF participated in many influential international events and advocacy events:

- Played an active role in two events at the Internet Freedom Festival:
  - Organizing a session on troll armies, in partnership with Viet Nen.
  - Participating in a roundtable on “How to tackle the issue of disinformation? We’ll discuss how to better connect journalistic standards and web standards.”
- At RightsCon in Tunis:
  - Spoke about the M&D initiative during a roundtable organized by France on “Fighting for human rights and democracy in the digital world: new tools, new actors – how to be more effective?”
  - Organized a panel on “Big tech and the future of journalism: reinventing news and information in the age of Google and Facebook”.
- Spoke about online security for women journalists at a conference organized by the OSCE in Vienna
- Participated in the conference on “Interaction between Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights” that Finland organized while holding the EU’s rotating presidency.
- Participated in the 2019 Internet Governance Forum in Berlin.

#COLLATERALFREEDOM

2019 COLLATERAL FREEDOM

Every year on March 12th, World Day Against Cyber-Censorship, RSF launches the latest round of Operation #CollateralFreedom, which aims to restore access to online media that have been blocked in their own countries. Blocking access to the websites of independent media outlets is often used by press freedom’s predators as a censorship method. RSF has been combating this practice since 2015 by creating exact copies, or “mirrors,” of the censored sites on the international servers of tech giants. If the predators want to block access to the mirrors, they must also deny themselves access to all the sites and services hosted on these servers, which would inflict significant #CollateralDamage on their own economies.

In all, RSF has restored access to 22 NEWS SITES BY CREATING MIRRORS

The original blocked sites are located in a total of 12 countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Vietnam.

The founder of one of these unblocked media outlets said:

“Our site allows Internet users to access honest and independent information that the authorities don’t want them to read. It was blocked for no reason. But thanks to this operation, we will again be able to inform people who thirst for the truth. And there are many of them. The number of people visiting the site before it was blocked attest to this.”

In 2019, RSF helped organize and participate in an NGO coalition aimed at getting the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to hold a hearing with the aim of condemning President Bolsonaro’s actions. As a result of effective organization and in a sign of the coalition’s influence, this hearing was held in March 2020.

RSF’S DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY DESK PROVIDES RSF WITH THE EXPERTISE IT NEEDS IN A WORLD IN WHICH PRESS FREEDOM’S PREDATORS HAVE ADAPTED THEIR CENSORSHIP METHODS TO THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY.
RSF made a very eclectic choice of subjects for the three books of photos it published in 2019 in its famous series of “100 photos for press freedom.”

For its first 2019 book, published on March 8th, International Women’s Day, RSF invited Véronique de Viguerie, a Visa d’or Paris Match News Award laureate and the 2018 ICRC Humanitarian Visa d’or Award. In the course of her reporting, often accompanied by writer Marion Quérouil-Bruneel, this courageous reporter has lived with the Taliban in the Swat Valley, tried to buy rare earth in Inner Mongolia and hung out in a Damascus brothel. From these intense experiences, she has brought back powerful and moving images and a particular affection for those who refuse to accept their fate.

The July book saw a shift to a parallel universe with the famous cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempé, who put twinkles in our eyes, broadened our smiles and made us burst out laughing with his tender but relentless humour. His cartoons and his very French outlook have the rare virtue of being understood and savored the world over. With this collection covering a career of more than 60 years, including the creation of Little Nicholas in 1960 and dozens of New Yorker covers, RSF celebrated a living national treasure.

The third and last book of the year was dedicated to Jean-Paul Goude, who has been, in turn, an illustrator, photographer, stage director, film director and choreographer and who has always been a pioneering artist, an image manipulator and storyteller who invents his own style and his own universe.

On “Giving Tuesday,” which fell on December 3rd in 2019, Soledad Bravi, Marc Dubuisson and ten other cartoonists and illustrators posted cartoons on their Instagram accounts reflecting RSF’s fight for journalistic freedom, trustworthiness and independence, thereby helping RSF to reach a very broad and young public.

A few days later, the German illustrator and children’s book author Christoph Niemann announced that he was donating all of the revenue from this latest book to RSF. Entitled The Paper, this book without any words celebrates what the author calls “the joy of reading magazines and newspapers.”

“The world is facing many urgent problems,” he wrote on his website. “I don’t know how to solve them but I am convinced that to find solutions we need media that can ask relevant questions without fear of threats, persecution of other types of violence.”
ETHICS CHARTER
RSF has an ethics charter (available on its website) that spells out the rules – on transparency, independence, respect for its social mission and so on – that guide its relations with its donors.

MONITORING BY EXTERNAL BODIES
RSF is subject to control by the French Government Accounting Office. Its accounts are scrutinized every year by auditors (the EY firms of auditors). Complete audits are also conducted by our national donors (including the French Development Agency - AFD) and international donors (including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the European Union).

PARTNERS

SOUND AND TRANSPARENT
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A WORD BY ELODIE TRUCHON,
resources and development director
At RSF we employ the necessary safeguards to enable those who support us financially to do so with confidence. We are independent of any political tendency, economic interest and religious belief. Our funding is based on the one hand on the public’s generosity, corporate donations, and the sales of our books of photos, and on the other on state funding. We act transparently to provide guarantees to those who support us. In 2019, 64% of RSF activities were funded by its corporate and state partners, 9% by its donor network and 27% by its books of photos and awards. This financial support is an expression of the support of our partners and donors for RSF’s vision, missions and values.

GENDER APPROACH
RSF’S GENDER APPROACH IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF RIGHTS ENSHRINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY. IT IS ALSO BASED ON ALL UN DECISIONS CONCERNING WOMEN JOURNALISTS AND WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS.

RSF’S GENDER STRATEGY IS BASED ON A DUAL APPROACH:

A CROSS-CUTTING APPROACH aiming to take into account gender equality not just in RSF’s internal organization and governance but also in the different stages of its projects and programs around the world (diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation).

A SPECIFIC APPROACH consisting of taking positive measures to draw attention to gender inequality in the media world, provide information, respond to the specific needs of women journalists, help all journalists who want to cover subjects specifically about women, and specifically combat discrimination and gender-specific violence in the media.

On the basis of this approach and aware of the challenges involved, RSF asked the NGO The World According to Women to diagnose the situation within RSF and draw up an action plan to ensure that RSF’s internal functioning and programmes incorporate a gender approach and help prevent gender inequality in the best way possible.

In the course of its work of capacity protection and reinforcing, RSF pays particular attention to women journalists, who are very often in a vulnerable situation, and provides them with assistance.

The next stages in 2020 will consist of:

› Reinforcing integration of the gender approach within RSF’s staff with the help of a special consultant
› Stepping up the work of researching and publishing press releases about the situation of woman journalists and produce an unprecedented report on violence against women journalists
› Improving the Press Freedom Index questionnaire in order to ensure that it includes the gender approach

In 2019, 27 women journalists were detained around the world.

At RSF, we employ the necessary safeguards to enable those who support us financially to do so with confidence. We are independent of any political tendency, economic interest and religious belief. Our funding is based on the one hand on the public’s generosity, corporate donations, and the sales of our books of photos, and on the other on state funding. We act transparently to provide guarantees to those who support us. In 2019, 64% of RSF activities were funded by its corporate and state partners, 9% by its donor network and 27% by its books of photos and awards. This financial support is an expression of the support of our partners and donors for RSF’s vision, missions and values.
A COMMITTED TEAM

**Gender breakdown**
- **63%** women
- **37%** men

**Breakdown by type of contract**
- **21%** CDD (Fixed Duration Contract)
- **79%** CDI (Unlimited Duration Contract)

**Average annual number of staff employees (full-time equivalent) (ETP)**
- **41.5** in 2017
- **43.03** in 2018
- **42** in 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 executive bureau consists of a president, a vice-president and a treasurer. The board of governors meets four times a year and makes overall policy decisions.

**President**
PIERRE HASKI
Co-founder and former director of the Rue89 news website

**Vice-president**
FREDERIC FILLoux
Publisher of the Monday Note newsletter

**Treasurer**
JEAN-MICHEL BOISSIER
Co-founder of Courier International

**EXECUTIVE BUREAU**

MICHAEL BERGMEIJER
Former director-general of Reuters Europe

PASCAL ROUX
Lawyer, vice-president of the International Development Law Organization

PAOLA SANDOVAL
Journalist

ELAINE SCIOLINO
Journalist, former New York Times Paris bureau chief

HADANI DITMARS
Journalist

LOUIS DREYFUS
President of the Le Monde group

PHILIPPE JAHSHAN
President of Coordination SUD and the Mouvement Association

JULIE JOLY
Head of the Journalists Training Centre (CFJ)

ODILE MARQUANT-BERTHOUX
Lecturer in media education

CÉCILE MÉGIE
Head of Radio France Internationale

PAUL MOREIRA
Founder and director of the Premières Lines news agency

DEO NAMUJIMBO
Journalist

EYOUN MOANGUE
Creator of African Journalists in Exile (JAFE)

MARTINE OSTROVSKY
Journalist and lecturer in media law

MICHAEL REDISKE
President of RSF International and RSF Germany

FRANCOISE SIVIGNON
Radiologist and president of Médecins du Monde

ABDOULAYE TRAORE
Journalism student

GÉRARD TSCHOPP
President of RSF Switzerland and member of RSF International’s executive bureau

A PRESENCE AROUND THE WORLD

**7 BUREAUX**
- Brussels
- Geneva
- Dakar
- Istanbul
- Mexico City
- New York
- Tokyo

**6 SECTIONS**
- Madrid
- Mexico
- Vienna
- Dakar
- Tunis
- Tokyo

**3 REPRESENTATIVES**
- London
- Brussels
- Washington, DC

+ **130 CORRESPONDENTS AROUND THE WORLD**

RSF’s staff react to the release of Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Myanmar.
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.