

MOTIVATIONAL

REPORT



Reliable news and information

What if the whistleblowing doctors in Wuhan had not been gagged? And the Chinese press and social media users had been free to relay what the whistleblowers were saying? The coronavirus that emerged in early December 2019 in Wuhan flourished under censorship.

Timely information doesn't necessarily result in the right public health decisions but we can say with certainty that when information is subject to superior interests, in this case state secrecy, the epidemic flourishes and spreads.

Journalism is regarded with mistrust in western societies, but the public health crisis has given citizens a reason to ask themselves where they can find the quality news and information they need to distinguish the true from the false, to question official truths and to take decisions that affect their lives. In an epidemic, we need healthcare, that's obvious, but let's not forget that we also need trustworthy news and information.

In this context, more than ever, the fight that Reporters Without Borders wages for journalistic freedom, pluralism and independence has demonstrated its paramount importance not only for democracy but also for everyone's health. In 2019, RSF continued to stand shoulder to shoulder with all those who embody journalism that helps societies and individuals to develop.

RSF's pledges

RSF can take pride in having contributed in 2019 to the release of journalists who had become symbols of the persecution orchestrated against the media and civil society in general under authoritarian regimes: Mahmoud Abou Zeid (also known as Shawkan) in Egypt, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Myanmar, and Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir in Mauritania. The three RSF prizes awarded in September served as a reminder of the courage of these journalism heroes.

The information about press freedom violations that RSF collects and publishes throughout the year continues to be an essential barometer and guide. The World Press Freedom Index unveiled in April showed that hatred against journalists has

degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear. At the same time, as RSF tirelessly continued its work, informing, campaigning, advocating and protecting, the annual round-up revealed a historically low number of journalists killed in the course of their work in 2019.

In this constantly evolving environment, RSF is rethinking its methods of actions and I believe it's important to note the development in 2019 of advocacy that goes beyond public denunciation and includes direct engagement with governments, even the most repressive ones. The increase in referrals illustrates the growing use of legal leverage to advocate for journalism and, in particular, to combat impunity for crimes of violence against journalists.

Finally, I hail the signing of the Partnership for Information and Democracy by more than 30 governments; the creation – on the initiative of RSF and ten partner and friendly organizations – of the Forum on Information and Democracy, continuing the process begun in 2018 and supported by the G7 in August 2019; and the finalization of the Journalism Trust Initiative standards by means of a process of workshops and consultations.

A big thank you

I would like to thank all those who “make” RSF what it is – its staff, correspondents, administrators, supporters and donors. The RSF community is based on values and a commitment that is reaffirmed every day by its staff and at key moments in its life as an association, such as this general assembly

I have a special thought for Khaled Drareni – RSF's correspondent in Algeria, the editor of the Casbah Tribune news website, and the correspondent of the French television channel TV5 Monde – who has been jailed since last March. I fervently hope that he will be with us at RSF's next general assembly in 2021.

Pierre Haski - President of Reporters Without Borders

