

ROUND-UP 2020

**journalists detained,
held hostage and missing**

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Founded in 1985, **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 globe and correspondents in 130 countries, it has consultative status with the United Nations and UNESCO. It provides specific support to journalists in the field by means of campaigns, legal and material assistance, physical safety equipment and aids (bullet-proof vests, helmets, manuals and insurance) and digital protection (digital security workshops). Nowadays a key interlocutor for governments and international institutions, RSF publishes an annual World Press Freedom Index that is widely consulted and quoted.

OVERVIEW






HOW WE CALCULATE THESE FIGURES



The 2020 round-up figures compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) include professional journalists, non-professional journalists and media workers. The round-up distinguishes these categories in its breakdowns, in order to facilitate comparison with previous years.

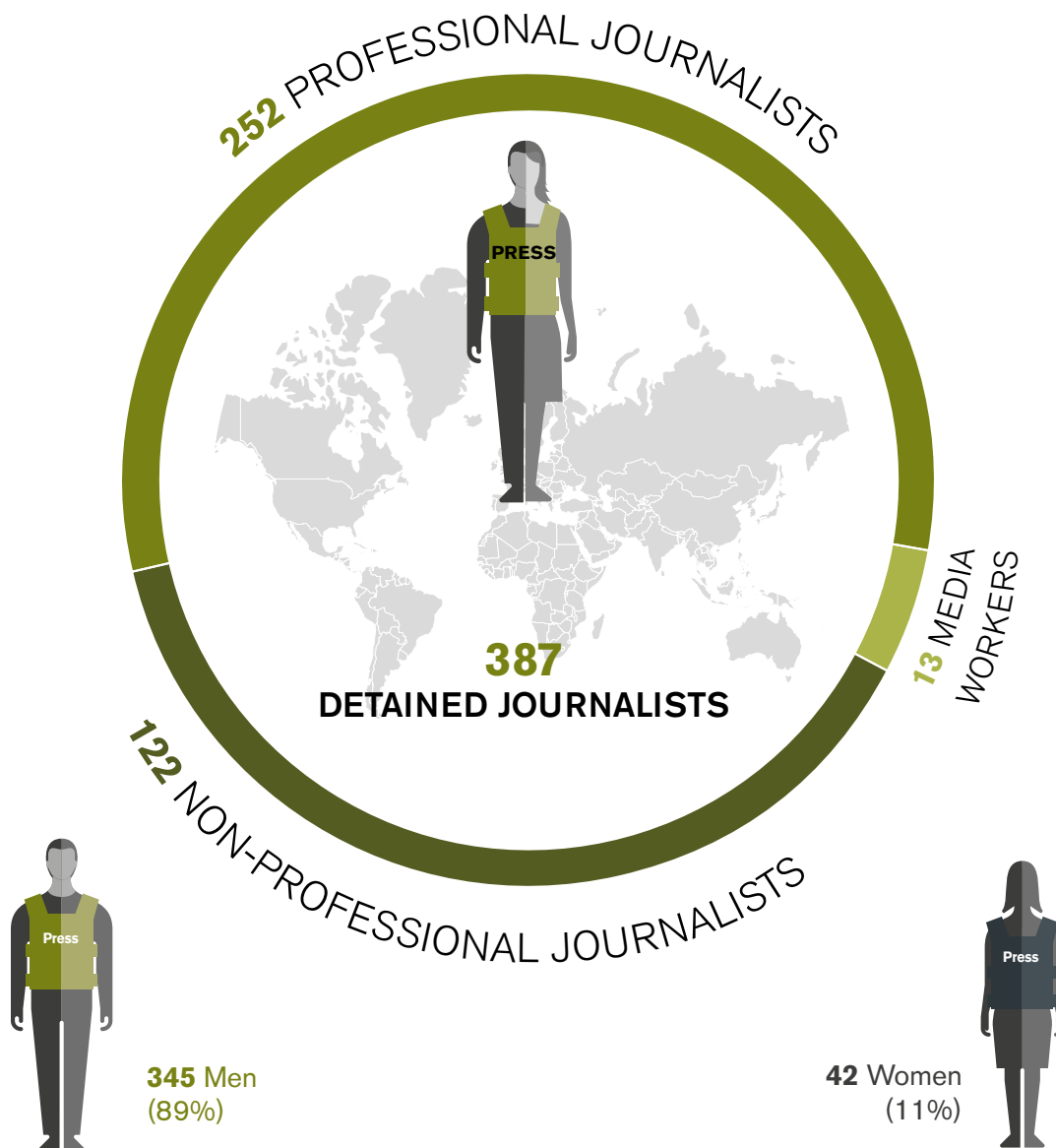
Compiled by RSF every year since 1995, the annual round-up of abusive treatment of journalists is based on data gathered throughout the year. We gather detailed information that allows us to affirm with certainty or a great deal of confidence that the detention or abduction of each journalist was a direct result of their journalistic work.

This round-up gives the tallies of journalists who were detained, held hostage or missing as of 1 December 2020. It does not take account of journalists who have been arrested or released since that date.



DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The figures



The number of detained journalists is still at a historically high level. **Worldwide, a total of 387 journalists were held in connection with the provision of news and information at the start of December 2020**, compared with 389 at the start of December 2019. This lack of variation follows a 12% rise in 2019. Overall, the number of detained (professional and non-professional) journalists has risen 17% in the past five years (from 328 in 2015).

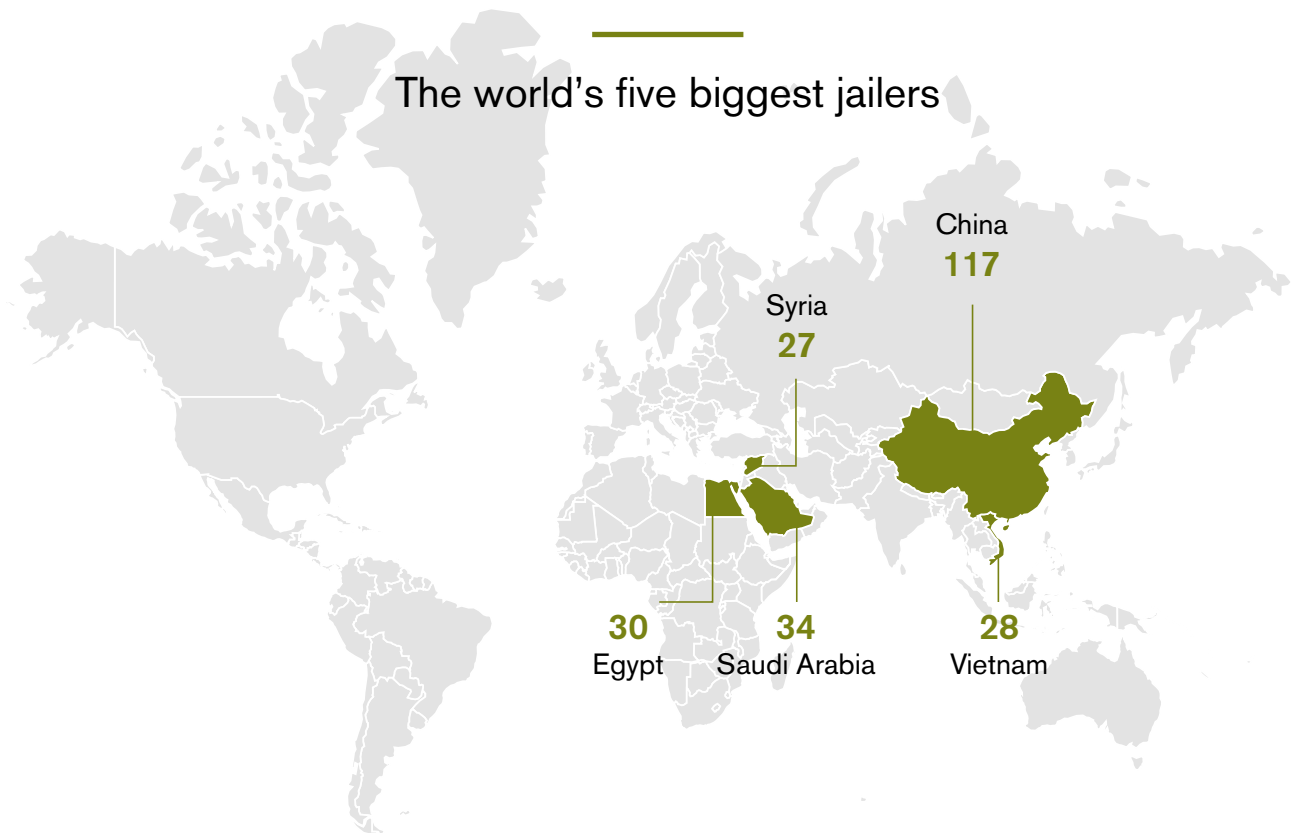
DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The number of detained women journalists has increased 35% in the past year, with 42 currently detained, compared to 31 a year ago. Women now constitute 11% of detained journalists, compared to 8% last year.

While 2020 saw the [release](#) of such emblematic women detainees as well-known Iranian journalist and human rights defender **Narges Mohammadi** (freed on 1 December), there were 17 new cases of women journalists held as of the start of December: 4 in Belarus, which has experienced an unprecedented crackdown since the controversial presidential election in August; 4 in Iran and 2 in China (countries where repression has increased with the coronavirus crisis); as well as 3 in Egypt, 2 in Cambodia and 1 each in Vietnam and Guatemala.

The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the number of journalists who were jailed over the course of the year. Despite many calls for the urgent release of prisoners of conscience, including journalists -in order to spare them from the increased danger of catching the virus in crowded jails -the pandemic led to **additional arrests, with the result that 14 journalists who had been arrested in connection with their coverage of the coronavirus crisis are still being held.**

DETAINED JOURNALISTS



More than half of the world's imprisoned journalists (61%) are being held in just five countries. For the second year running, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Syria are the world's five biggest jailers of journalists.

China has retained the No. 1 ranking with a total of 117 imprisoned journalists, of whom nearly a third (45) are non-professional. The regime's persecution does not solely target Chinese journalists. [Cheng Lei](#), a Chinese-born Australian journalist working for a Chinese state TV broadcaster, has been held incommunicado since 14 August 2020. [Gui Minhaj](#), a Chinese-born Swedish citizen who lived in Hong Kong and published books based on investigative reporting, was kidnapped during a visit to Thailand in 2015 and was taken to China, where he was sentenced to ten years in prison in February 2020 for "illegally providing intelligence to foreign countries."

Three of the top five jailers are in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is currently holding 34 journalists and bloggers, for whom RSF issued a [call for international public support](#) on the eve of the Riyadh-hosted G20 summit in November. Although some of them have been held since 2012, the Saudi authorities have postponed all trials – usually held in a completely opaque manner – since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Egypt, most of the journalists who were imprisoned during a wave of arrests in September 2019 have not been released. Others have since been jailed, always on the alleged grounds of "membership of a terrorist group" and "disseminating false news." They include [Hany Grisha](#) and [Sayed Shehta](#), who work for the newspaper *Youm 7*, and [Shimaa Samy](#) and [Islam Al-Kalhy](#), who report for the independent news site *Darab*.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

In Syria, where most of the detentions date back to the first few years after the start of the civil war in 2011, the list of imprisoned journalists is unchanged and few families have obtained any news. If they learn anything, it is usually about the death of a loved one. This was the case in early 2020 for the former wife of **Jehad Jamal**, a blogger jailed in 2012. She obtained access to a death certificate confirming her fears that he died in detention, probably under torture. The certificate, which said he died in 2016, did not give the cause of death.

In Vietnam, where seven professional journalists and 21 bloggers are currently detained, authorities carried out a new wave of arrests in May and June, likely triggered by the approaching Communist Party congress in January 2021. Several members of the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAVN) were jailed, including its president, **Pham Chi Dung**. The arrest in October of **Pham Doan Trang**, the recipient of RSF's Press Freedom Prize for Impact in 2019, confirmed the adoption of a much harsher policy.

Belarus, an unprecedented crackdown

Eight Belarusian journalists were still in prison at the start of December. At least [370 journalists have been arrested](#) since the controversial presidential election on 9 August and have been held for varying periods totalling more than 880 days.

Independent media have long been targeted by President Alexander Lukashenko's regime, but the harassment and violence against them [increased tenfold](#) after the August election and the start of major peaceful protests. The state apparatus seemed ready to do anything to [prevent](#) coverage of the demonstrations. [On the day after the election](#), 23 journalists were arrested. Some were quickly released but others were subjected to [appalling mistreatment](#) including arbitrary beatings, being forced to undress,

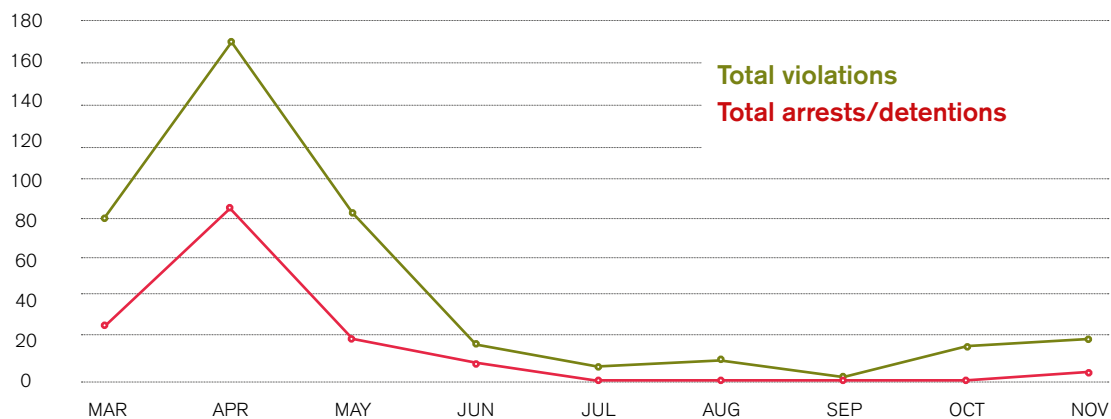
being denied medical attention, food or access to toilets, and being kept in uncomfortable positions in overcrowded cells. Around [60 reporters](#) were rounded up during the last weekend of August,

Journalists now run the risk of [criminal prosecution](#) and much heavier sentences. Arbitrary arrests of journalists designed to have a chilling effect on the media are now increasingly likely to lead to criminal convictions at the end of unfair trials. They are accompanied by acts of serious violence, withdrawal of accreditation, deportation for foreign journalists, and censorship of the Internet and print media, while state media propaganda has been stepped up.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

The Covid-19 effect

Although not exhaustive, the data gathered by RSF's staff for [Tracker 19](#), a tool specifically created for the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, shows a **significant surge in press freedom violations during the northern hemisphere's 2020 spring**, as Covid-19 began to spread around the world. Of more than 300 incidents directly linked to journalistic coverage of the pandemic from 1 February to 30 November 2020 (involving nearly 450 journalists), **arbitrary arrests alone constituted 35% of the logged abuses** (while physical or psychological violence constituted 30%).



The number of arrests quadrupled from March to May 2020. State of exception laws and emergency measures adopted in much of the world to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic visibly contributed to a “news and information lockdown” and resulted in journalists being arrested and sometimes jailed. In India, for example, judicial investigations were opened against no fewer than 48 journalists, and 15 of them were arrested and held for between one and four weeks before being released on bail.

Another increase in the number of incidents has been perceptible since the start of the northern hemisphere's autumn, which saw the start of a second wave of Covid-19 infections, especially in Europe. The phenomenon has not been on the same scale and mainly concerns cases of violence and attacks. The crackdown seen in the first half of 2020 has nonetheless had lasting effects. While most journalists were released within a few hours or, in some cases, within a few days or weeks of their arrest, **14 are still being held** in three regions: Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Asia

The worst persecutors

It's in Asia, the continent where Covid-19 emerged and where the most press freedom violations have been tallied in connection with the pandemic, that the most coronavirus detainees are located (10).



Zhang Zhan
© Handout

In China, social media criticism of the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis was heavily censored and at least seven journalists, whistleblowers or influential political commentators, who were arrested in connection with the provision of information about the Covid-19 pandemic, are still being held. They include [Cai Wei](#) (蔡伟) and [Chen Mei](#) (陈玫), two non-professional journalists who were charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after helping to republish censored online media reports and interviews on Covid-19 issues on the open-source platform Github. [Zhang Zhan](#) (張展), a lawyer and non-professional journalist who was arrested on the same charge because of her tweets and live-streaming on YouTube from Wuhan in early February, is currently detained pending trial in Shanghai, where she has begun a hunger strike after being forced to admit her guilt.



Ren Zhiqiang
© DR

When trials are held, the sentences may be extremely harsh. [Ren Zhiqiang](#), (任志强) a political commentator and Chinese Communist Party member who disappeared in mid-March after criticising shortcomings in the regime's handling of the coronavirus crisis, was sentenced in September to 18 years in prison and a fine of 4.2 million yuan (535,000 euros) for allegedly taking bribes and misusing public funds.

Press freedom violations have also increased during the pandemic in Myanmar, where [Zaw Ye Htet](#), the editor of the online news agency *Dae Pyaw*, was summarily tried and [sentenced to two years in prison on 20 May](#), just five weeks after being arrested for publishing a report that a person had died from the coronavirus in the eastern state of Karen.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS



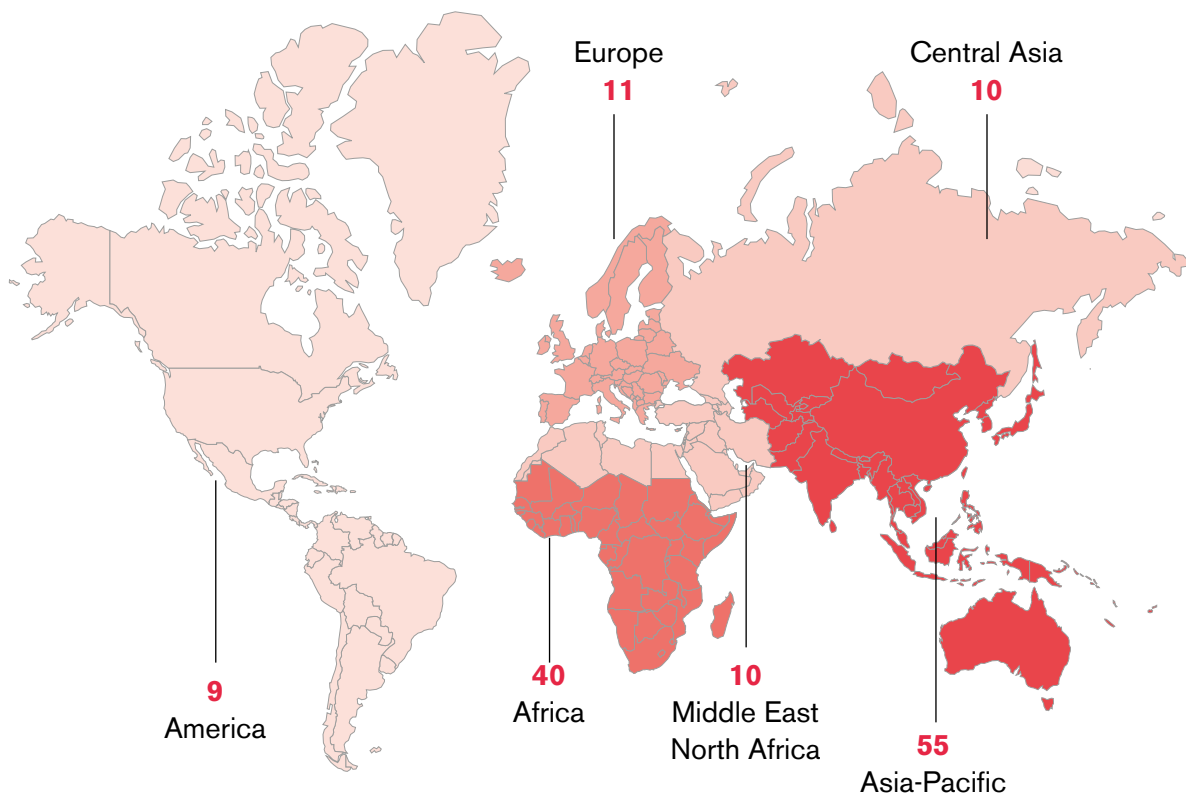
Ahmed Kabir Kishore
© Netra News



Mushtaq Ahmed
© New Age Photo

In Bangladesh, [famous cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore](#) and [writer and blogger Mushtaq Ahmed](#) have remained in pre-trial detention ever since May when, along with a number of other well-known individuals, he was arrested for “[spreading rumours and misinformation on Facebook about the coronavirus situation](#).” The writer’s crime was to have [posted an article](#) about the lack of personal protective equipment for doctors, while the cartoonist’s crime was keeping a [cartoon journal](#) about politics during the crisis titled “Life in the Time of Corona.”

Number of Covid-linked arrests by geographic region*



* Non-exhaustive data

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Middle East

No room to criticise handling of the coronavirus crisi

In the Middle East, where several countries have taken advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to step up control over the media and news reporting, three journalists are still being held for articles linked to the pandemic.

In Jordan, the Amman-based Bangladeshi journalist [Salim Akash](#) has been held in Al-Salt prison ever since his arrest on 14 April after investigating the fate of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Jordan who were no longer able to work because of the lockdown and had been left to their fate by the Jordanian authorities. All he has been told is that he “broke an important law.”



Roghieh (Ashraf) Nafari
© DR

In Iran, where journalists trying to cover the real scale of the pandemic's impact have been subjected to a great deal of harassment, [Hamid Haghjoo](#), the manager of the *Iran Labour News Agency's* Telegram channel, has been detained since April for publishing a cartoon making fun of Iranian clerics who recommend traditional remedies to treat Covid-19. [Roghieh \(Ashraf\) Nafari](#), a student and citizen-journalist, is also still being held over her [tweets](#) criticising the government's handling of the public health crisis.

Africa

Three times as many arrests during three months

The Rwandan journalist [Dieudonne Niyonsenga](#) is the only African journalist still being held for supposedly violating lockdown regulations. Director of the Rwandan Web TV *Ishema*, he was arrested in April while covering the lockdown's impact on the public and while investigating allegations of rape by soldiers responsible for enforcing a curfew.

Although impacted less and later on by the pandemic, sub-Saharan Africa has been swept by a wave of abuses against media professionals. In a [survey published jointly with Cartooning for Peace](#), RSF reported that three times as many journalists were arrested in sub-Saharan Africa from 15 March to 15 May as during the same period in 2019. A total of 40 arrests in connection with Covid-19 coverage were registered from the start of March and to the end of November. One of the victims, [Hopewell Chin'ono](#), a Zimbabwean investigative journalist who had helped to expose a case of overbilling for medical supplies to combat the pandemic, was held for a month and a half after his arrest in July.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Latin America

Persecution of critical journalists stepped up

At the time of writing, there were no more “Covid-19 detainees” in other parts of the world including the Americas, but the environment for the media has worsened considerably since the start of the pandemic in Central and South America. Physical and verbal attacks, harassment campaigns and arbitrary prosecutions are all on the rise. For the authoritarian governments led by Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Juan Orlando Hernández in Honduras, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Miguel Díaz-Canel in Cuba, the coronavirus crisis has provided an opportunity to step up the persecution of critical, independent and dissident journalists. Many journalists in these countries who published reports about the spread of the virus or questioned the official response have been arbitrarily detained and interrogated. They include [Darvinson Rojas](#), a Venezuelan freelance journalist and one of RSF's [2020 information heroes](#), who was jailed for 12 days for a tweet questioning the reliability of the government's coronavirus figures.

Europe and Central Asia

Virus used to reinforce harassment

The coronavirus pandemic has been used to reduce press freedom even more in almost all of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Arbitrary legislation on spreading false information and accusations of violating social distancing regulations have provided excellent grounds for arresting journalists and stifling independent media, especially during the spring. This was the case especially in [Azerbaijan](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Tajikistan](#) and Russia, where **Tatiana Voltskaya**, a reporter for *Sever.Realii* (a news website affiliated to US-funded *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*), was questioned by police and charged with “false information” after publishing an [interview with an anonymous doctor](#) about the lack of ventilators in hospitals. In Belarus, **Sergei Satsuk**, an investigative journalist who specialises in covering the health system, was arrested on a charge of “receiving a bribe” after an [editorial](#) raising questions about the country's official Covid-19 infection figures and President Alexander Lukashenko's handling of the pandemic. He was released after international pressure but is still facing a possible 10-year jail sentence.

In Central Europe and the Balkans, the authorities have also taken advantage of the pandemic to step up harassment of critical media, whether by means of draconian laws, as in [Hungary](#) and [Serbia](#), or by arresting journalists, as in [Serbia](#), [Kosovo](#), [Poland](#) and even [Aruba](#), a Dutch island in the Caribbean.

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

New emblematic detainees



Khaled Drareni
© RSF

One of the developments marking 2020 has been the imprisonment of **Khaled Drareni**, an Algerian correspondent of RSF and *TV5 Monde* and editor of the *Casbah Tribune*, an Algiers-based news website. Held since March, he was sentenced to two years in prison on appeal in September on a charge of threatening Algeria's territorial integrity, above all on the basis of two social media posts, one of which ended with the phrase "Long live press freedom!" He had been the target of harassment and bribery attempts since 2019 because of his coverage of the Hirak protest movement. His integrity and his persecution by the Algerian authorities have turned him into a symbol of press freedom in Algeria. [National and international committees](#) have been created to press for his release.



Omar Radi
© DR

Omar Radi, a journalist in neighbouring Morocco who has been investigating sensitive subjects for more than a decade and who is the co-creator of the *Le Desk* news website, was the target of judicial harassment. Just 48 hours after it was reported in June that a spyware app that the Israeli company NSO only sells to governments was used to hack into Radi's phone, Radi was summoned for questioning [on suspicion of spying](#) and was finally jailed on 29 July on charges of espionage and sexual assault.



Pham Doan Trang
© Liberal publishing House

One of this year's highest-profile detainees is **Pham Doan Trang**, a Vietnamese journalist who was awarded the [RSF Press Freedom Prize for Impact](#) in 2019. She was arrested at her Ho Chi Minh City home on 6 October for "anti-government propaganda," a charge alluding to the fact that she founded [Luat Khoa](#), an online magazine providing information about legal issues, and edits [The Vietnamese](#), another publication that helps Vietnamese citizens to understand the country's laws, defend their rights and resist the Communist Party's arbitrary rule. A month before her arrest, she published the findings of her [investigation into a massacre in Dong Tam](#), a village on the outskirts of Hanoi that was the target of a violent raid by police in January with the aim of suppressing resistance by residents contesting the seizure of their land by the authorities. In a letter for publication in the event of her arrest, she had written that she didn't want freedom just for herself but "something greater – freedom for Vietnam."

DETAINED JOURNALISTS

When the worst must be feared

The news about three other detained RSF Press Freedom Prize laureates is alarming. One is [Huang Qi](#), the winner of the 2004 RSF Press Freedom Prize and founder of the human rights website *64 Tianwang* (itself a recipient of the RSF prize in 2016). Sentenced to 12 years in prison in China in 2019, he is now 57 and has serious health problems. [Raif Badawi](#), who was awarded RSF's "Netizen" Prize in 2014, has spent his eighth year in detention in Saudi Arabia and has gone on several hunger strikes in protest against prison conditions. The latest information about him is as patchy as it is worrying. Finally, [Soheil Arabi](#), an Iranian photographer who was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison in 2015 and who won the Citizen-Journalism Prize in 2017, also went on hunger strike in protest against prison conditions and is now in solitary confinement, his mother says. His mother was herself [sentenced to 18 months in prison](#) in October on various charges including anti-government propaganda. She is appealing the charges.

This year has also been marked by the announcement in Iran on 30 June that [Rouhollah Zam](#), the editor of the *AmadNews* website and Telegram channel, had been [sentenced to death](#). A well-known critic of the Iranian regime, Zam is a controversial figure, in part because of his links with foreign intelligence agencies. He had been living for years in self-imposed exile in France but, during a visit to Iraq in October 2019, he was kidnapped by Revolutionary Guards and forcibly returned to Iran, where he was convicted on no fewer than 13 charges at the end of an unfair trial.

The conditions in which WikiLeaks publisher [Julian Assange](#) continues to be held in high-security Belmarsh prison in the United Kingdom – pending the outcome of ongoing US extradition proceedings against him – worsened significantly during coronavirus lockdown periods, and he missed several administrative hearings due to the health risks involved with accessing the prison's video conference room. As of 1 December, Covid-19 infections were dangerously on the rise in Assange's block of Belmarsh prison, resulting in his [de facto solitary confinement](#) in his cell and posing serious risks to his already fragile physical and mental health.



Dawit Isaak
© Kalle Ahlsén

The fate of [Dawit Isaak](#), the world's longest-held journalist, is also a matter of great concern. This Eritrean journalist, who acquired Swedish citizenship while living in Sweden before being arrested in his country of origin in 2001, crossed the threshold of 7,000 days in prison in 2020. Held incommunicado ever since his arrest on no apparent charge, he has never been tried and his family has had no proof of life since 2005. In October 2020, RSF filed a [complaint](#) with the office of the Swedish prosecutor for international crimes accusing Isaias Afwerki, Eritrea's President since 1993, and seven other senior Eritrean officials of a crime against humanity.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

The figures



50
National
hostages
(93%)

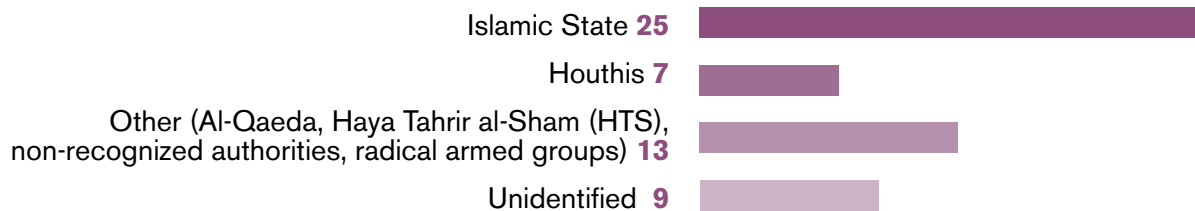


4
Foreign
hostages
(7%)

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE



The biggest hostage takers



Worldwide, at least 54 journalists are currently held hostage, 5% fewer than last year. The hostages are now concentrated in three Middle Eastern countries (Syria, Yemen and Iraq).

Hostages: RSF regards journalists as hostages when they are being held by non-state actors who threaten to kill or injure them or continue to hold them as means of pressure on a third party (a government, organisation or group) with the aim of forcing the third party to take a particular action. Hostages may be taken for political reasons or for economic reasons (for ransom) or both.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE

A few releases, stalled negotiations

After being held for two and a half years, Ukrainian journalist [Stanislav Aseyev](#) was released on 29 December 2019 in an [exchange of around 200 prisoners](#) between the Ukrainian authorities and the pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Donbass region. This left Syria, Iraq and Yemen as the only countries where journalists are still held hostage.

It was thanks to another prisoner swap that five Yemeni journalists held by Houthi rebels were released in 2020. But journalists are used as bargaining chips and another seven are still being held by the Houthis. They include four – [Abdulkhaleq Amran](#), [Akram Al-Walidi](#), [Hareth Humaid](#) and [Tawfiq Al-Mansouri](#) – who have been sentenced to death. They worked for media outlets linked to Al-Islah, the ruling party in areas controlled by the official government when they were abducted by the Houthis in 2015. They were finally tried and convicted in April 2020 of spying for Saudi Arabia. Their death sentences could be carried out at any time.



Abdulkhaleq Amran
© DR



Akram Al-Walidi
© DR



Hareth Humaid
© DR



Tawfiq Al-Mansouri
© DR

In Iraq and Syria, most of the abductions date back to 2014 and 2015, when the then all-powerful Islamic State controlled areas in both of these countries. Although most of this territory has since been reconquered by the official governments, there has been no news of most of the abducted journalists. Only one was freed at the very end of 2019 after nearly three years in captivity. It was [Shiraz Mohamed](#), a South African photojournalist who was abducted in January 2017 in Darkush, a town in northeastern Syria that is very near the Turkish border and 35 km east of Idlib. Gift of the Givers, the South African NGO for which he was working at the time of his abduction, said he had managed to “escape” his captors and that “friendly” people had helped him cross the border into Turkey. No information emerged about the identity of his abductors although Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a Jihadi group that controls the Idlib region, has often been mentioned.

It was HTS, which is the successor to Jabhat al-Nusra (Al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch) and which now controls what is the last rebel enclave in northeastern Syria, that was also mentioned in a new abduction in 2020. The victim is [Bilal Abdul Kareem](#), a US citizen based in the region who presented a social media information channel called *On the Ground News*. He had a good relationship with HTS until he posted an interview with the wife of a humanitarian worker who was reportedly abducted and tortured by HTS. Kareem has been held in an unknown location since August.

JOURNALISTS HELD HOSTAGE



Austin Tice
© DR

Syria also saw a renewed attempt to locate the US journalist [Austin Tice](#), of whom there has been no news since shortly after he was captured at a checkpoint near Damascus in August 2012. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo confirmed that a US official travelled to Damascus in 2020 to seek Tice's release in direct talks with Syrian government officials, but the Syrians refused to provide any information about what had become of him. Tice has not been seen since a month after he was taken prisoner, when he appeared in a video that did not identify his captors. The attempt to negotiate with Bashar al-Assad's government has revived hopes that he is still alive and held in a Syrian government prison.

MISSING JOURNALISTS

Four journalists were reported missing in 2020

Contrary to 2019, when no journalist was reported missing, four journalists (in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) were reported missing in 2020.

RSF regards journalists as missing when there is not sufficient evidence of their death or abduction and no credible claim of responsibility for their death or abduction has been made.



Tawfik Al-Tamimi
© DR

Tawfik Al-Tamimi, the editor of the newspaper *Al-Sabah*, was kidnapped on a street in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, as he was leaving home to go to work on 9 March 2020. No group claimed responsibility and no ransom demand was made. Just before his abduction, he posted a message on Facebook expressing concern about the fate of the owner of a publishing house who had recently been kidnapped. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi said the authorities would do “everything possible to follow the case” and ensure that those responsible were “brought to justice.” But Tamimi’s family has learned nothing of his fate in the nine months since his abduction.



Bwira Bwalitse
© DR

Bwira Bwalitse, the manager of *Bakumbule* community radio in Nord-Kivu province, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, was abducted by gunmen while on his way to the radio station on 16 June 2020. His kidnappers used his phone to demand a ransom of 5,000 US dollars (4,000 euros), which his family was unable to raise. Three days later, the kidnappers told the family they had executed him. Thereafter, all attempts to contact them were unsuccessful and Bwalitse was never found, despite the alerts issued by RSF and its Congolese partner NGO, Journalist in Danger (JED), which wrote to the provincial governor asking him to organise a major search.



Daysi Lizeth
Mina Huamán
© DR

Daysi Lizeth Mina Huamán, a reporter for the regional cable TV station *VRAEM TV* in Ayacucho, in central Peru, disappeared on 26 January 2020 after covering that day’s municipal elections in the city. The 21-year-old reporter was assigned to general news and she had not been threatened in connection with her work. Her last known location was on the road to the nearby town of San Francisco, where she was to meet her boyfriend, who was initially suspected. But the investigation has drawn a blank since then. *VRAEM TV*’s initials refer to the name of the region with three rivers (Valley of the Rivers Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro) in which Ayacucho is located, which produces more cocaine than any other Peruvian region.

MISSING JOURNALISTS



Ibraimo Mbaruco

© Ibraimo Mbaruco. Source : Facebook

Ibraimo Mbaruco, a reporter for *Rádio Comunitária de Palma*, a community radio station in Palma, a remote coastal town in northeastern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, has been missing since 7 April 2020. In his last [message](#), he said he was “surrounded by military.” His family has not seen or heard from him since then and nothing has been said by the Mozambican authorities, who try to prevent any media coverage of the attacks by Islamist insurgents that are common in that part of the province. The president recently complained of media “disinformation” about the situation there. Journalists are all the more concerned about Mbaruco's disappearance because the army [detained](#) two reporters in Cabo Delgado in a completely illegal manner for several months in 2019.