

2024 ASSISTANCE REPORT

Protecting exiled journalists is crucial
for press freedom



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FOREWORD

SUPPORTING EXILED JOURNALISTS IS ESSENTIAL TO PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION

by **Victoria Lavenue**
RSF Head of Assistance

In 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to supporting journalists worldwide. Our [annual round-up](#) highlighted the increasing dangers facing reporters in conflict zones, and this Assistance Report reveals the magnitude of the forced exodus of media professionals.

More than 700 journalists received emergency support from RSF in 2024. The majority (over 70 per cent) of funds were allocated to both temporary and permanent relocations of professionals forced to flee due to imminent threats, such as death threats, imprisonment, or the closure of their newsrooms. Exile is often the only option for those who seek to continue providing the public with free, independent information.

We were particularly solicited to help journalists from Afghanistan, a country where press freedom is increasingly under siege, with dozens of media outlets closing in 2024 alone. We were also active in Russia and Kyrgyzstan, where independent media outlets are silenced and media professionals are forced into exile to avoid incarceration. The same applies to Iran, Syria, and Myanmar – which remains one of the world's three largest prisons for journalists. In Sudan, the ongoing civil war has made reporting one of the most dangerous professions.

The remaining RSF emergency financial aid helped journalists facing repression in their home or transit countries by covering essential costs such as legal fees, medical care, and the replacement of stolen or damaged professional equipment.

Additionally, over 400 journalists received vital administrative support from RSF in their visa and asylum applications, primarily to Germany and France. Each journalist brought to safety represents a victory against persecution and attempts to silence the press.

However, serious challenges remain. Many journalists are still awaiting visas in transit countries, where they are exposed to the risk of retaliation or deportation to hostile territories. This is the case for Sudanese journalists in Egypt, Afghan media professionals in Pakistan, and Myanmar reporters in Thailand. RSF repeats: informing is not a crime – repressing those who inform is.

KEY FACTS

THE RSF ASSISTANCE OFFICE: A VITAL EMERGENCY SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA OUTLETS IN DANGER

The RSF Assistance Office, headquartered in Paris with an active team in Berlin, implements a range of concrete measures to support journalists and media outlets facing emergencies worldwide. This support is primarily delivered through financial and administrative assistance. Needs assessments and information verification are conducted with the support of the RSF bureaus in Dakar, Rio de Janeiro, Taipei and Tunis.

The primary goal of the Assistance Office is to provide immediate, direct help to journalists of all nationalities who face serious threats due to their work. This emergency support takes the form of grants ranging from 500 EUR to 2,500 EUR (around 500 USD to 2,500 USD). These grants are intended to cover emergency relocations, legal and medical expenses, psychological support and the replacement of destroyed or stolen equipment. Administrative assistance is also available, such as guidance with visa or asylum application procedures.

The support provided by the RSF Assistance Office is not solely aimed at persecuted journalists; it can also be directed towards media outlets facing security or financial crises. Media teams often face imprisonment, physical violence, legal harassment, cyberattacks, and political and economic pressure. RSF responds by implementing emergency measures to support these outlets, including replacing destroyed or stolen equipment, securing newsroom facilities, and funding salaries and operational costs. This swift, targeted response enables newsrooms – often on the brink of collapse – to continue informing the public in destabilised regions.

In 2024, RSF provided emergency assistance to 42 media outlets in 16 countries, 21 of which are currently operating in exile. This aid, which draws on a budget of 363,000 EUR (around 376,000 USD), seeks to secure the survival of independent media outlets, whose existence is essential to maintaining the right to information and the diversity of the media landscape.



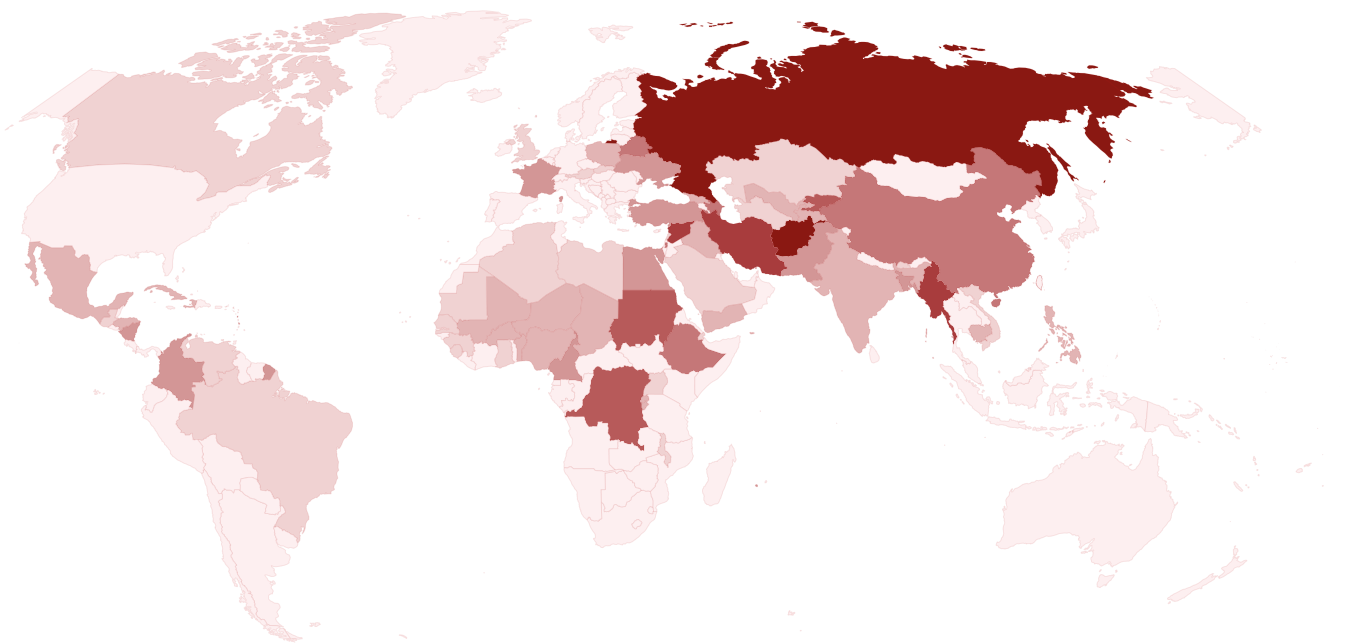
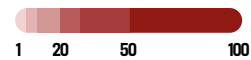
HOW THE RSF ASSISTANCE OFFICE SUPPORTS JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA OUTLETS WORLDWIDE

RSF provides emergency support to media professionals facing threats due to their work. In 2024, through actions ranging from medical and legal assistance to aid in obtaining exile, RSF continued to defend the right to information and protect independent voices.

716 journalists were supported by the Assistance Office in 2024

Over half of the journalists who benefitted from RSF support came from Afghanistan, Russia, Myanmar, Iran and Syria.

Number of journalists supported by RSF as of 31 December 2024



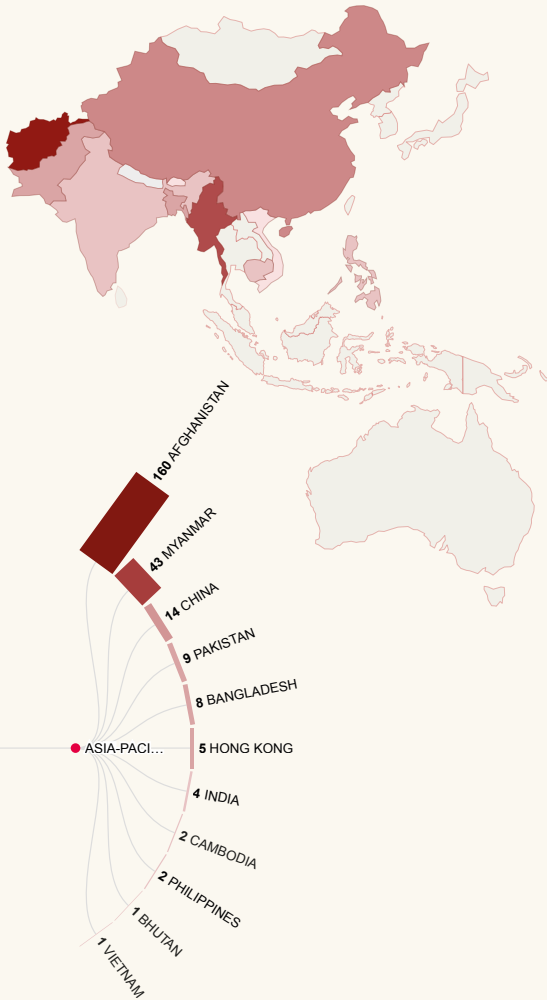
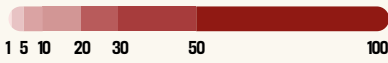
How do RSF grants help journalists?

in 2024, 367 grants helped relocate journalists and media outlets



249 Journalists from the Asia-Pacific region were supported by RSF in 2024

Number of journalists that received aid



Afghanistan remains a priority for the Assistance Office, with 160 journalists supported in 2024.



ASIA-PACIFIC

THE PERSISTENT DANGER FACING JOURNALISTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND MYANMAR

A/ Afghanistan: a muzzled press and the exodus to Pakistan

Three years after the regime change in Kabul and the Taliban's return to power, Afghanistan remains a priority for the Assistance Office, with support provided to 160 journalists in 2024. Over a hundred of these media professionals are currently stranded in Pakistan awaiting humanitarian visas. This high number of journalists in exile reflects the severity of the assaults on press freedom, which has severely eroded due to the closure of media outlets, laws excluding women from the media landscape, arbitrary arrests of journalists, and other such attacks.

Many of the journalists seeking help from the Assistance Office left Afghanistan after being detained for periods ranging from one day to several weeks. It is not uncommon for them to have been subjected to torture or other types of cruel, degrading treatment. Women journalists have been forced to watch their fathers or male family members suffer beatings by the Taliban, who target the journalists' *mahram* (male guardian) in attempts to force them to abandon their work. It is often after these attacks that women journalists decide to leave the country.

Most media professionals forced to leave the country often find or permanent refuge in Iran and Pakistan. While exile has allowed some media outlets to bypass the restrictions imposed by the Taliban, leading to a degree of renewal in the number of media outlets covering Afghanistan, the situation for Afghan journalists in exile in both Iran and Pakistan remains precarious and extremely dangerous. In addition to rarely having the opportunity to continue their work and facing challenges keeping up with the cost of living, these journalists are also exposed to police harassment, racist campaigns, and segregationist policies implemented by the authorities. Moreover, many remain at risk of forced repatriation to Afghanistan, especially those who have sought refuge in Pakistan, where they are still exposed to the Taliban's threats.

The majority of European embassies refuse to consider Afghan visa applications made from Iran and Pakistan, only accepting asylum applications if the applicants are already on their territory. The German humanitarian visa programme, set up in 2022, was closed in December 2024. As a result, Afghan journalists have very few opportunities to leave the transit countries of Pakistan and Iran, where they are constantly threatened with deportation.



B/ Myanmar: the journalists operating in secrecy

Nearly four years after the coup that drove much of the media community into exile, Myanmar's journalists continue to flee. Under the repression of the military junta in power, Myanmar – ranked 171st in the RSF [World Press Freedom Index](#) – is one of the largest prisons in the world for media professionals, with at least 61 journalists currently incarcerated.

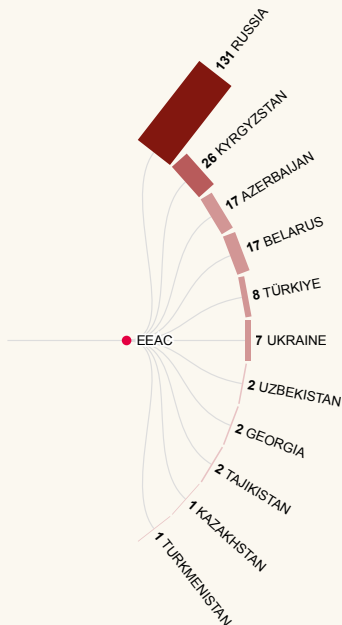
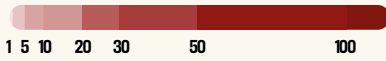
In 2024, the RSF Assistance Office provided financial support to 43 Myanmar journalists. Five of them are still in Myanmar, forced to live in secrecy. RSF support has allowed them to travel within the country to escape repression, cover their medical expenses, and better equip themselves against risks. The NGO has also provided emergency grants to nearly 40 journalists in exile in Thailand and Bangladesh, allowing them to resettle. Most of them do not have permanent residency and are in irregular situations, which exposes them to arrests, extortion by local authorities, and deportation back to Myanmar. Nevertheless, many of these journalists regularly cross the border illegally to continue reporting on events in their home country. In doing so, they take immense risks to inform the public about the atrocities committed by the junta and to ensure that their country does not become an information desert.

In October 2024, RSF launched the [Myanmar Press Freedom Project](#) in Chiang Mai, a city in northwest Thailand. This programme, developed in partnership with Exile Hub, aims to provide Myanmar journalists – both in exile and within Myanmar – with equipment such as laptops, phones, solar-powered batteries, and digital security tools. It also plans to organise training sessions to strengthen the journalists' skills.



214 Journalists from the Eastern Europe - Central Asia region were supported by RSF in 2024

Number of journalists that received aid



In 2024, the Assistance Office supported

72

Russian journalists in exile.



EASTERN EUROPE CENTRAL ASIA

THE JOURNALISTS CONFRONTING CENSORSHIP

A/ Russia: countering the Kremlin's propaganda from exile

In 2024, the RSF Assistance Office provided financial support to 63 Russian journalists, enabling them to resettle outside their country and continue their work – which helps counter Kremlin propaganda – from exile.

Since the large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian government, through its media regulator, Roskomnadzor, has intensified its attacks on independent media outlets. In March 2022, an amendment was passed to sentence journalists to up to 15 years in prison for publishing what the authorities consider “false information” about the Russian armed forces. Since then, the future of the remaining representatives of the independent press has darkened, prompting hundreds of media professionals to flee Russia. Today, nearly twenty media outlets have been declared “undesirable” by the Russian authorities, while more than 320 media outlets and journalists have been labelled as foreign agents, according to the Russian NGO OVD-Info.

Most Russian journalists seek to resettle in Georgia and European Union countries (the Baltic states, Poland and Germany), where dozens of Russian editorial offices have re-formed and continue to document the atrocities committed in Ukraine. However, the administrative status of many of these entities remains unstable, and their owners and employees fear a forced return to Russia.

In 2024, the RSF Berlin section helped 63 Russian journalists relocate to Germany, while the Paris-based Assistance Office helped 12 resettle in France. The RSF Paris team also partnered with the non-profit Russia-Libertés to open a professional studio for Russian journalists and media outlets, enabling them to produce journalistic content for the Russian-speaking public and provide an alternative to Kremlin propaganda. “RSF’s support was unfailing. We were able to buy the necessary equipment and quickly open the studio to Russian-speaking journalists and media,” says Olga Kokorina, director of Espace Libertés. “The support from RSF has been valuable in advancing our objectives, particularly in enhancing our data investigation capabilities and expanding our production,” says Arnold Khachaturov, editor of the data desk at *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, which also benefitted from financial aid from RSF.

Yet the process of regularising the administrative status of these journalists in France can involve substantial obstacles. Despite arriving at the start of the war in early 2022, some of these refugees still encounter difficulties when renewing their residency permits. In these cases, the RSF Assistance Office works with an immigration lawyer who provides legal assistance to Russian journalists, helping them secure their residency status over the long term.

FRANCE: IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR EXILED JOURNALISTS WITH THE VOIX EN EXIL PROGRAMME

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), SINGA, the Maison des Journalistes (MDJ), and the French public agency CFI launched the Voix en Exil (“Voices in Exile”) program in September 2024, a new initiative to assist exiled journalists and media outlets. Backed by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the programme is based in Paris and aims to provide exiled journalists with humanitarian, professional, and logistical support, enabling them to continue practising journalism in a safe environment. Each year, 18 journalists will be received under this three-year programme. Participants are housed in the Île-de-France region and integrated into a media incubator hosted by the socio-cultural centre La Gaité Lyrique.

The Voix en Exil programme has a three-fold approach:

- **Welcoming journalists and providing a secure environment:** ensuring exiled journalists have administrative, social and cultural support.
- **Strengthening professional skills:** helping these journalists produce independent, reliable content.
- **Boosting visibility:** providing platforms where exiled journalists can express themselves and fostering collaborations with other professionals.

The first group of exiled journalists supported by Voix en Exile includes:

Abdoulaye Oumou Sow (Guinea), Ahmed Abdeen (Egypt), Ahmed Bizhan Aryan (Afghanistan), Asal Abasian (Iran), Farshad Fattahi (Afghanistan), Halima Karimi (Afghanistan), Hanna Shpakava (Belarus), Jean Samuel Mentor (Haiti), Mohammad Mohammad (Syria), Mohamed Maher Akl (Egypt), Naama Al Alwani (Syria), Noorwali Khpalwak (Afghanistan), Sayas Mursal (Afghanistan), Sharareh Mehboudi (Iran), Shadi Matar (Syria), Solafa Magdy (Egypt), Walid Bourouis (Tunisia).



B/ Kyrgyzstan: a dark year for press freedom

2024 was a challenging year for Kyrgyzstan: a dozen journalists were arrested, with some receiving heavy prison sentences. The government rolled out repressive laws aimed at silencing aimed at silencing dissenting independent voices in the country.

In early January 2024, following the arrest of 11 journalists investigating corruption, the RSF Assistance Office experienced a significant increase in aid requests from Kyrgyz journalists. Fearing for their safety – and, more specifically, fearing the arbitrary arrest their colleagues had been subjected to – 16 media professionals received financial support from the Assistance Office between January and June, enabling them to leave Kyrgyzstan for a safer location. Most of them relocated to Georgia and are striving to continue informing the Kyrgyz population from exile, despite Georgia’s politically hostile environment.

For the journalists who were unable to leave and who were subsequently arrested, the Assistance Office offers financial aid to cover part of their legal expenses. As these fees can often reach thousands of euros, RSF coordinates with partner organisations to cover these costs.

C/ Azerbaijan: a wave of arrests and forced exiles

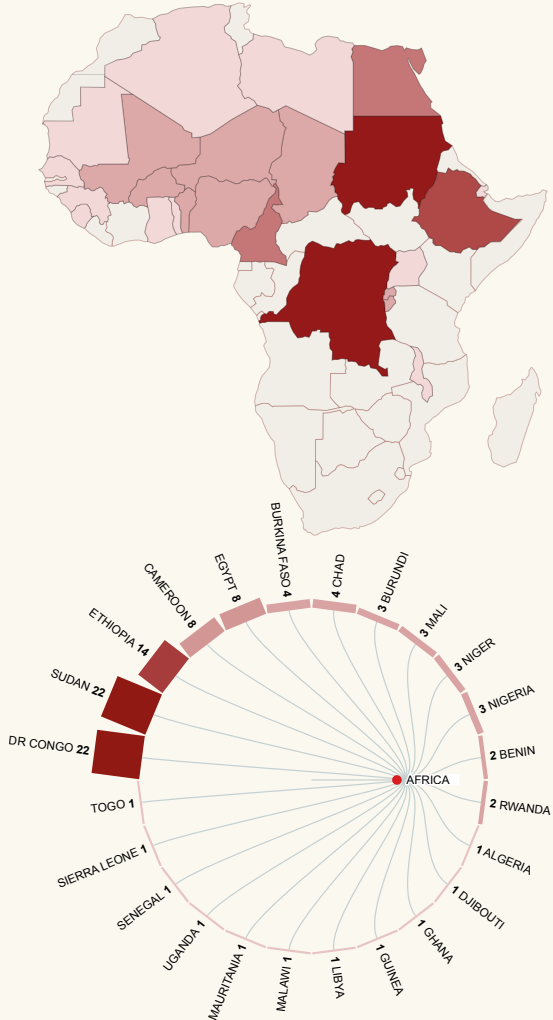
In 2024, the media landscape in Azerbaijan was marked by several waves of arrests that specifically targeted investigative journalists. During the most recent crackdown on 8 December, six journalists from the independent news channel *Meydan TV*, headquartered in Germany, were placed in pretrial detention. They face up to eight years in prison for practising their profession.

In 2024, the RSF Assistance Office provided financial support to 12 media professionals, including eight who were in prison at the time they received aid from RSF. These grants helped cover part of their legal expenses and support their families’ needs.

Fearing arrest, several other journalists urgently left the country in 2024. Four of them received financial support from the Assistance Office to cover their relocation expenses. Two recently arrived in France, where they intend to apply for asylum to continue their work in safety.

109 Journalists from the Africa region were supported by RSF in 2024

Number of journalists that received aid



In 2024, the Assistance Office provided emergency aid to ensure the safety of **22** Congolese journalists.



AFRICA

THE ARMED CONFLICTS FORCING JOURNALISTS INTO EXILE

A/ Democratic Republic of Congo: the impunity, insecurity, and armed conflicts forcing journalists to relocate

While there is some media pluralism in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), journalists operate in a particularly hostile environment where they face daily threats, violence, arbitrary arrest, and sometimes even assassination. Crimes against media professionals continue to go unpunished. While the situation is certainly concerning in the capital Kinshasa and rural areas, the regions of Maï-Ndombe in the west and South Kivu and North Kivu in the east are particularly affected by conflicts between government forces and armed groups.

In 2024, the RSF Assistance Office provided emergency support to 22 Congolese journalists to ensure their safety and allow them to continue their work. Four journalists who were violently assaulted while filming reports received medical assistance, while five others were given funds to replace equipment that had been intentionally destroyed or stolen during attacks aimed at obstructing their journalism. RSF also covered legal fees for two journalists accused of “spreading false rumours” and “disseminating false information,” charges that often follow investigative reporting critical of the government or its affiliates.

RSF efforts were primarily focused on the emergency relocation of journalists whose safety was threatened. RSF support enabled ten journalists to leave conflict zones, primarily in North Kivu and Maï-Ndombe, for safer areas. In the DRC, internal relocation is often preferred, which allows journalists to resume their activities after time spent in hiding. Given the scale of these journalists’ needs, RSF and the Congolese National Press Union (UNPC) opened a residence in Goma, a major city in the east, in September 2024. The facility provides temporary housing for displaced journalists from North Kivu. Despite these challenges, many journalists continue to risk their lives documenting abuses across the country.

B/ Sudan: the painful choice of fleeing home or risking death to report on war

Due to the war between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which began on 15 April 2023, Sudan has become one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. In 2024, six Sudanese journalists were killed while working, and 12 others were arrested or detained. The Sudanese media outlet *Sudania 24* was forced to cease broadcasting within the country, while *Sudan Bokra*, which aired from Egypt, was forced to limit its activities to YouTube due to pressure.

Since the April 2023 outbreak of the fourth Sudanese civil war, the RSF Assistance Office has supported 38 Sudanese journalists who were directly targeted due to their work, including 22 journalists in 2024 alone. Most of this aid consisted of financial support for essential needs following their hurried exile, primarily to Kenya, Uganda, and Egypt, where they struggle to legalise their residency status. Some grants were also aimed at helping journalists escape Sudan or relocate internally for their safety. Additionally, two journalists received grants to replace professional equipment, enabling them to resume their reporting and cover events in their home country.

RSF's two main goals for 2024 – identifying at-risk journalists and having them recognise RSF as a resource – were successfully addressed in Sudan, where large parts of the territory have teetered on the edge of falling into information blackouts since the war began.

C/ Ethiopia: the flight of journalists trapped in endless conflict

More than four years after the start of the Tigray war – and with renewed violence between the government and rebel factions in the Amhara region – journalists remain on the frontlines. While authorities intensify propaganda efforts to push their narrative of the conflict, the rebel group Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) also spreads disinformation to support its cause. Journalists often find themselves targeted by the government and intimidated by its opponents when reporting on sensitive topics or exposing human rights violations.

While 2024 brought some signs of improvement with the release of arbitrarily detained journalists, the crackdown enforced by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's regime largely continued. Accusations of "promoting terrorism," systematic harassment, and arbitrary arrests persist against both local and foreign journalists, exemplified by the arrest of French reporter Antoine Galindo from *Africa Intelligence* in early 2024. He was since released and expelled.

Many journalists covering conflict-related topics or criticising the government – often already facing legal charges – are forced into exile. This year, of the 11 journalists financially supported by the RSF Assistance Office, seven sought refuge in Uganda. RSF also supported four other journalists still active on the ground, helping them replace equipment and continue their work.

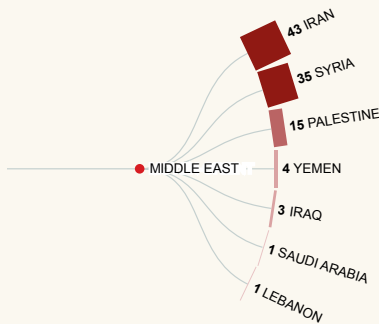
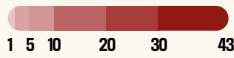
In Kampala, Uganda's capital, exiled journalists face insecurity exacerbated by tensions among Ethiopian exile communities. Access to asylum procedures remains complicated, as does the possibility of resettling in a safer country. In this context, reporting becomes almost impossible.

Inauguration of a residence in Goma



102 journalists from the Middle East region were supported by RSF in 2024

Number of journalists that received aid



In 2024, the Assistance Office supported

43

Iranian journalists in exile.

THE MIDDLE EAST

THE WAR ON PRESS FREEDOM IN IRAN, SYRIA AND PALESTINE

A/ Iran: the journalists surveilled in exile, victims of transnational repression

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains one of the most repressive regimes for journalists. In 2024, the RSF Assistance Office supported 43 Iranian journalists in exile, forced to leave Iran due to constant threats of imprisonment and threats to their lives.

Yet even in exile they are not safe. Many now live in Türkiye or Iraq Kurdistan, regions that are geographically close to Iran where repression by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) can still reach them.

These journalists are constantly under threat of violent reprisals, and their families remaining in Iran are held hostage. Iranian authorities target their relatives physically and psychologically, summoning them regularly to coerce exiled journalists into abandoning their work. The precariousness of these exiled journalists' situations is further exacerbated in countries like Iraq, which have extradition agreements with Iran, increasing the risk of deportation to the nation criminalising their freedom of expression.

The repression intensifies as these journalists continue to report on the reality in Iran, despite the dangers. They serve as vital witnesses to what is happening in their country, but their commitment to informing the world and exposing human rights violations endangers both their lives and the safety of their families. To highlight the issue, RSF published a report on the [transnational repression of Iranian journalists in the United Kingdom](#).

B/ Palestine: over 150 journalists killed by the Israeli army in blockaded Gaza

Palestine has become the world's most dangerous country for media professionals, with over 150 journalists killed by the Israeli army since October 2023, including at least 41 who were specifically targeted or killed because of their work. Alongside the [distribution](#) of professional equipment inside Gaza through our local partner, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), the RSF Assistance Office mobilised support for Palestinian journalists who managed to leave the enclave before the Israeli military operation, which led to the closure of the Rafah border crossing in May 2024.

The Assistance Office provided financial support to 15 Gaza-based journalists who sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including Egypt, Qatar, and Türkiye, to cover their immediate needs and help them help them resettle in these countries.

In addition to providing financial aid, the RSF Assistance Office played a crucial role in the administrative processes of some journalists, facilitating visa applications. RSF helped two journalists obtain visas from the French consulate in Cairo, allowing them to leave the region and continue their work in safety and freedom in France.

C/ Syria: the journalists stripped of all protection

Although the recent fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime offers a glimmer of hope for the future of the press, Syria has remained one of the worst countries for journalists for more than 13 conflict-ridden years. Groups that rebelled against the regime are also guilty of crimes against media professionals. Syria ranked a grim 179th out of 180 countries in the 2024 RSF World Press Freedom Index.

Hoping to escape the regime's deadly censorship as well as the abuses committed by forces controlling so-called "free" zones, most Syrian journalists have been forced into exile. The majority have sought refuge in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, believing they would be protected there. However, the past year has been marked by mass arrests and expulsions of Syrian nationals in these host countries, leaving journalists at high risk when forcibly returned to

Syria. In Türkiye, the primary host country for displaced Syrians, the revocation of protection cards and the arbitrary deportation of thousands pose a real threat to Syrian journalists documenting crimes committed not only by the regime but also by groups like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the Syrian National Army (SNA).

RSF support for Syrian journalists in 2024 was therefore primarily directed at those displaced in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Iraq who had applied for visas to France from their countries of exile due to fear of deportation. The RSF Assistance Office supported 23 new visa applications from Syrian journalists in exile, providing continuous support and coordination with consulates in these countries. Additionally, 12 grants were awarded to Syrian journalists in 2024 to cover relocation costs and replace equipment.



TIM AL-SIOUFI: RESILIENT JOURNALISM AMID THE HORRORS OF WAR IN SYRIA



Tim Al-Sioufi, the pseudonym of Abdelrahman Al Halbouni, is a photojournalist who has dedicated his life to documenting the atrocities of the Syrian war since 2013. His journey began when he gathered the testimonials of survivors of chemical attacks in Eastern Ghouta, an area northeast of the capital, Damascus. That same year, he collaborated with a group of journalists to establish an office for reporters documenting violations committed in the region by both the regime and opposition factions. However, the office faced multiple attacks from Jaysh al-Islam, the militia that controlled Eastern Ghouta at the time.

On 22 October 2016, while covering a peaceful protest in the city of Ein Tarma, Tim Al-Sioufi was struck by a stray bullet. In March 2017, Jaysh al-Islam posted his photo around the city

of Douma, accusing him of "blasphemy" and calling for his arrest. Despite these threats, Tim Al-Sioufi courageously continued his work, producing a documentary titled *Douma Underground* in 2018, which won several international awards from institutions such as Amnesty International.

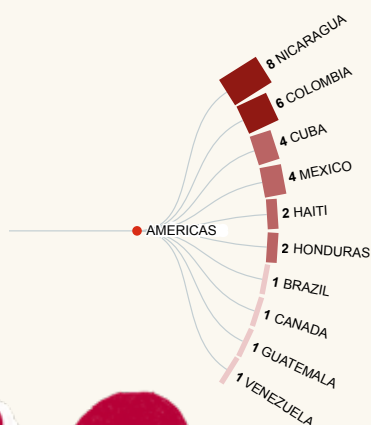
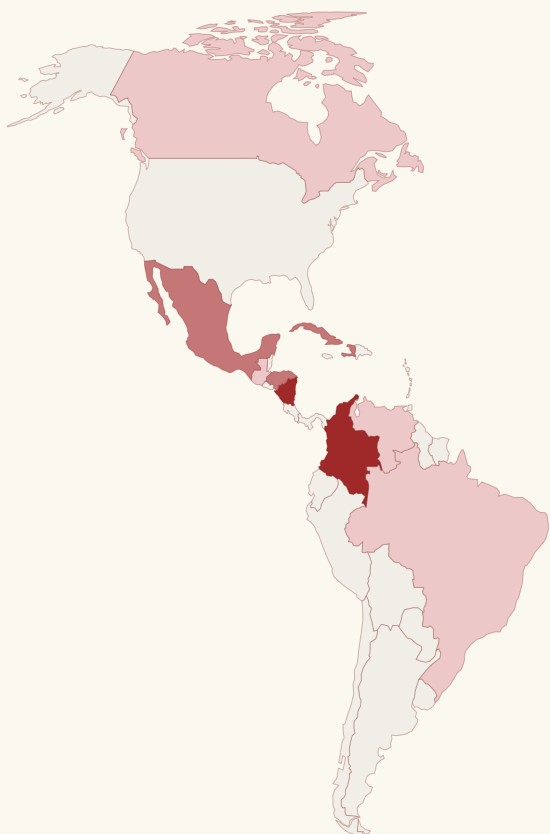
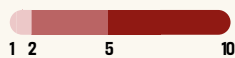
Following the regime's recapture of Douma, Tim Al-Sioufi moved to the Aleppo province, seeking refuge in the town of Maabatli, where he continued documenting civilians' daily lives under harsh conditions. During his time there, he faced threats and pressure from the armed group Hamza Division, the same group that detained his brother, journalist Abdullah Al-Halaboni, in July 2018 due to his reporting. He was released a month later after enduring torture and threats of execution if he continued his work.

As the risks escalated, the two brothers decided to leave Syria for Türkiye in 2019. While in Türkiye, Al-Sioufi collaborated with the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), providing videos that documented torture and killings in Syrian prisons. With the support of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Tim Al-Sioufi obtained a visa for France in March 2024, where he was granted refugee status in October of the same year.

“ I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the crucial role you have played in supporting the Syrian people and your unwavering defense of press freedom and human rights, especially during the darkest times we have faced. Your efforts and courage in uncovering the truth and amplifying the voices of Syrians to the world have been a beacon of hope amid the darkness we lived through. Your steadfast support for the Syrian people and your commitment to the values of freedom and democracy make you a true partner in this historic moment we are witnessing today. ”

30 journalists from the Americas region were supported by RSF in 2024

Number of journalists that received aid



AMERICAS

THE RELENTLESS OPPRESSION OF DISSENTING VOICES IN NICARAGUA

The regime of Daniel Ortega continues to *intensify* its crackdown on independent journalists, one of its primary targets. Arrests, harassment, legal action, expulsions, and the revocation of citizenship: every possible means is being deployed to silence critical voices or force them into exile. In 2024, RSF provided financial support to five journalists exiled in Costa Rica and three in the United States, helping them meet their needs. Despite exile, some continue to cover the regime's abuses and report on Nicaraguan news – especially those in neighbouring Costa Rica.

Independent journalists still active in Nicaragua operate in complete secrecy, raising fears of a severe decline in access to information that could transform the country into a real information black hole. In 2024, the Assistance Office also provided a relocation grant to a journalist operating inside the country who sought to relocate to a different region for safety reasons.



FOCUS

La Prensa: a symbol of the crackdown on the press in Nicaragua

Since 2021, the iconic independent newspaper *La Prensa* has been a major target of the regime. Attacks have included raids on their offices, confiscated equipment, and the arrest of General Director **Juan Lorenzo Holmann Chamorro**, and the former director, **Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Barrios**. From 2023 to 2024, the RSF Assistance Office provided emergency relocation grants to eight current and former staff members of the newspaper, permitting them to safely leave the country.

Eduardo Enriquez, RSF correspondent and editor-in-chief of *La Prensa*, shared his story: "Altogether, 17 journalists have left the country for Costa Rica [...]. Thanks to support from the newspaper's directors and organisations like RSF, they were able to reorganise the newsroom [...]. Today, [the newsroom] is virtual, and we work from Costa Rica, Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Continuing to practice journalism remains a real challenge. [...] The economic difficulties faced by *La Prensa* complicate the upkeep of its activities and the support of its team [...]. It is admirable to see how [its] journalists continue to make great sacrifices to inform Nicaraguans, both inside and outside the country, about the abuses of the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship and about Nicaragua. *La Prensa* is the only generalist media outlet that continues to inform."

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

- > **Request** that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights prepare a report on journalists in exile that addresses the reasons for their emigration and their conditions in host countries, and provides recommendations.
- > **Ensure** refugee journalists have better access to individual protective measures, urban shelter programs, resettlement programmes, and emergency resettlement procedures and temporary evacuation mechanisms to safe UN countries.
- > **Protect** exiled journalists from refoulement (forced return) to their countries of origin.

To transit and “first reception” countries:

- > **Allow** journalists to settle outside refugee camps when they face threats inside the camps.
- > **Conduct** systematic, transparent investigations into attacks on refugee journalists occurring within their territory, including instances when local authorities are involved.
- > **Protect** exiled journalists seeking refuge from persecution or retaliation by government agents from their countries of origin.
- > **Commit** to refusing to forcibly return exiled journalists to their countries of origin.

To resettlement and asylum countries:

- > **Increase** national quotas for UN resettlement and expedite cases of exiled journalists.
- > **Introduce** an emergency visa specifically for journalists in danger.
- > In the absence of a dedicated emergency visa for journalists, **commit** to expediting visa applications from journalists facing threats due to their work.
- > **Ensure** that visas are also granted to immediate family members and dependents of threatened journalists who have obtained a visa.
- > **Issue** temporary travel documents for journalists whose passports have been revoked or cancelled by their country of origin.
- > **Clarify** in national legislation that endangered journalists can be considered refugees under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or eligible for international protection.
- > **Fund** the development of support and integration programs – such as the Voix en Exil (Voices in Exile) programme in France – that assist journalists in their daily lives in host countries.
- > **Facilitate** the issuing of residence and work permits for exiled journalists.





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