

ReliefWeb

Briefing Kit for Reporters sans Frontières

Compiled on 23 May 2012

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Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): Deux semaines dans l'est de la RDC : l'information en danger / Two dangerous weeks for media in eastern provinces

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Reporters sans frontières s'inquiète de la multiplication des cas d'entraves à la liberté d'informer recensés dans les régions à l'est de la République démocratique du Congo, au cours des deux semaines. En quinze jours, une radio a été fermée manu militari, onze journalistes ont été interpellés, dont trois sont toujours détenus, et des menaces ont été proférées à l'encontre de deux journalistes.

Au Nord-Kivu, des autorités locales hostiles aux médias

Le 13 mai 2012 au matin, la radio Liberté, située à Butembo dans la province du Nord-Kivu, a été fermée pour trois mois, sur ordre du maire de la ville. Les neuf journalistes présents sur les lieux ont été arrêtés par l'Agence nationale de renseignement (ANR), tandis que l'animateur Kashigwe Binjamin Pili Pili avait été arrêté plus tôt à son domicile.

"Nous sommes choqués par cette décision arbitraire de fermer la station, alors que les habitants ont un besoin vital d'informations en ces temps de grande insécurité. De quel droit se prévaut une autorité exécutive locale pour se substituer à la justice et imposer le verrouillage d'une radio ? Au nom de quelle procédure, cette même autorité procède-t-elle à l'interpellation de l'ensemble des journalistes qui y travaillent ? Depuis quand les agents de l'ANR opèrent-ils à des fins privées et partisans, au mépris des lois ? Consternés par ces abus de pouvoir, nous demandons la libération de l'animateur encore détenu, et la réouverture immédiate de la radio", a réagi Reporters sans frontières.

Il est aux alentours de sept heures, lorsque des agents de l'ANR ainsi que des forces de police et de l'armée (FARDC) pénètrent dans les locaux de la station Liberté, propriété de Jean-Pierre Bemba. Ils viennent exécuter l'ordre du maire d'arrêter les émissions. Les forces de sécurité agressent les journalistes présents avant de les emmener de force dans les locaux de l'ANR, dans le quartier de Furu. L'émetteur de la radio, le groupe électrogène ainsi que les téléphones portables sont confisqués.

En début d'après midi, les habitants du quartier de Furu, informés par les médias locaux, se rassemblent devant les bâtiments de l'ANR pour protester contre l'interpellation des journalistes. Ceux-ci sont finalement relâchés, à l'exception de l'animateur Kashigwe Binjamin, qui est gardé à vue par la police criminelle.

L'affaire fait suite à l'émission matinale "Animation Volcan" du 7 mai 2012, présentée par Kashigwe Binjamin, lequel interviewe, par téléphone, le général La Fontaine et le colonel déserteur Kahasha, qui combattent l'armée régulière dans les territoires de Lubero et Rutshuru, au sud de Butembo.

Par un arrêté en date du 12 mai 2012, le maire de Butembo juge que les deux entretiens constituent "une campagne de dénigrement du gouvernement de la RDC et de démoralisation des troupes loyalistes ; ce qui constitue une infraction d'atteinte à la sûreté de l'Etat". Il exige alors la suspension temporaire de la station pour une durée de trois mois.

Selon les sources de Reporters sans frontières, l'ordre de fermer la station pourrait émaner du gouverneur de la province Nord-Kivu, Julien Paluku, farouche adversaire des médias. Dix jours plus tôt, le gouverneur avait adressé plusieurs menaces à l'égard de la journaliste de Radio Okapi, Gisèle Kaj Kaung, l'accusant d'accointances avec les mouvements rebelles. Suite à un reportage diffusé le 30 avril 2012, pour lequel la journaliste avait recueilli des témoignages des populations locales et de l'ANR indiquant le contrôle de certaines localités par des soldats mutins et la fuite d'habitants vers la frontière rwandaise, le gouverneur avait accusé la journaliste de partialité.

"Dans une région en proie à la violence généralisée, où agit une rébellion armée, nous appelons le gouverneur à la retenue. Les responsabilités que lui confère ses fonctions imposent à M. Paluku de protéger les journalistes dans l'exercice de leur

métier, non d'entretenir la situation d'insécurité dans laquelle ils sont contraints d'évoluer, en calomniant tel ou tel professionnel de l'information", a déclaré Reporters sans frontières.

Selon Journalistes en danger, organisation partenaire de Reporters sans frontières, le discours de M. Paluku, dans le climat de violence actuel, équivaut "à un appel au meurtre" de la journaliste Gisèle Kaj Kaung. C'est la deuxième fois que cette journaliste est menacée directement par Julien Paluku, qui, en 2008, avait accusé la reporter d'être la concubine d'un ancien leader de la rébellion, Laurent Nkunda.

Dans la Province-orientale, arrestation de deux journalistes accusés de diffamation

Dans la Province-orientale, à Kisangani, le 9 mai 2012, Sébastien Mulamba et Mbuyi Mukadi, respectivement éditeur et directeur de publication du journal Kisangani News, ont été arrêtés par les services de renseignement de la police, alors qu'ils se rendaient à un rendez-vous avec le député Alphonse Awenze. Après 48 heures passées dans les locaux de la police, ils ont été écroués à la prison centrale de Kisangani.

"Sans juger le fond de l'affaire, nous regrettons amèrement que deux journalistes soient incarcérés pour avoir exercé leur profession. Nous condamnons cette détention qu'aucune procédure légale et judiciaire n'autorise. Nous demandons la remise en liberté immédiate des deux journalistes, afin qu'ils puissent préparer leur défense dans le cadre d'un procès impartial", a déclaré Reporters sans frontières, qui poursuit son engagement en faveur de la dépenalisation des délits de presse.

Il est reproché aux deux journalistes la publication le 15 avril 2012 d'un article intitulé, "Folie du pouvoir : l'honorable Awenze dépouille M. Lokadi de sa femme Ekodi Liliane" dans lequel M. Mulamba évoquait la relation extra-conjugale du député Alphonse Awenze et de Mme Ekodi. Le député a porté plainte pour "diffamation" et "dénonciation calomnieuse" contre les deux journalistes. Or, paradoxalement, avant leur arrestation, les deux journalistes avaient accordé à M. Awenze la publication d'un droit de réponse à l'article contesté, et ce avant le 15 mai 2012. Si les deux journalistes sont déférés devant le Parquet, ils risquent jusqu'à trois ans de prison.

Au Sud-Kivu, agression d'un journaliste par des individus armés

Après avoir reçu des menaces de mort par téléphone pour des informations qu'il aurait divulguées, David Mambo Munyaga, directeur de la radio rurale Ondese FM, à Kiliba (Sud-Kivu), a été agressé, le 30 avril 2012, dans une embuscade tendue par trois individus armés et masqués alors qu'il rentrait d'un reportage, avec son confrère Malega Muyuku. Les deux journalistes ont réussi à s'enfuir en moto. M. Munyaga a porté plainte afin que soient identifiés l'auteur des menaces téléphoniques ainsi que ses trois agresseurs. Craignant pour sa vie, il est contraint de vivre dans la clandestinité.

Reporters sans frontières dénonce le climat d'insécurité qui règne dans cette région, et demande aux autorités locales de tout mettre en œuvre pour que cessent rapidement menaces et agressions à l'égard des journalistes.

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Reporters Without Borders is disturbed by a spate of freedom of information violations in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Orientale in the past two weeks, including the forced closure of a radio station, arrests of 11 journalists (three of whom are still detained) and threats against two journalists.

Officials hostile to media in North Kivu

Radio Liberté, a station located in Butembo, in North Kivu province, was shut down on 13 May on the mayor's orders by members of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR), who arrested the nine journalists at the station when they arrived. Presenter Kashigwe Benjamin Pili Pili was arrested earlier the same day at his home.

"We are shocked by Radio Liberté's arbitrary closure although residents badly need the information it provides at a time of considerable violence," Reporters Without Borders said. "By what right does a local government official usurp the power of the courts to close a radio station? Since when do members of the ANR break the law by acting on behalf of private and partisan interests?"

Reporters Without Borders added: "This is an appalling abuse of power. We urge the authorities to release the presenter, who is still held, and to allow the radio station to resume operating at once."

The raid on Radio Liberté, owned by wealthy opposition politician Jean-Pierre Bemba, began at around 7 a.m. when ANR members accompanied by police and soldiers stormed into the station, grabbed all the journalists present and took them to the ANR's local headquarters in the Butembo district of Furu. The station's transmitter, generator and mobile phones were confiscated.

After learning about the raid from reports by other local media, Furu residents gathered outside ANR headquarters in the early afternoon to protest against the detention of the journalists, who were all finally released except the presenter, Benjamin, who is being held by the criminal investigation police.

The raid was prompted by Benjamin's telephone interviews during his morning "Animation Volcan" programme on 7 May with a rebel general identified as La Fontaine and a renegade army colonel identified as Kahasha who lead rebel forces fighting the regular army in the Lubero and Rutshuru regions south of Butembo.

Butembo's mayor reacted by issuing an order on 12 May closing the station for three months on the grounds that it was conducting "a campaign to denigrate the DRC government and demoralize loyalist groups, which constitutes an attack on state security."

Local sources told Reporters Without Borders the closure order may have come from North Kivu governor Julien Paluku, who is known for his hostility to the media and who, on 2 May, threatened Radio Okapi journalist Gisèle Kaj Kaung, accusing her of bias and fraternizing with the rebels for broadcasting interviews with residents and ANR members on 30 April indicating that mutinous soldiers controlled certain areas and people were fleeing towards the Rwandan border.

"In a region that is prey to widespread violence and an armed rebellion, we urge the governor to act with restraint," Reporters Without Borders said. "The responsibilities of his public office include a duty to protect media personnel who are just doing their job, not to expose individual journalists to even more danger by slandering them."

Journalist in Danger (JED), a Reporters Without Borders partner organization, said Governor Paluku's comments about Kaung, coming in the current violent climate, were tantamount to "calling for her murder." This is the second time Paluku has directly threatened her. In 2008, he accused her of being former rebel leader Laurent Nkunda's concubine.

Two journalists held on libel charge in Orientale province

Kisangani News editor Sébastien Mulamba and Mbuyi Mukadi, the newspaper's publisher, were arrested by intelligence officials and police on 9 May in Kisangani, the capital of Orientale province, for allegedly libelling local parliamentary representative Alphonse Awenze in a 15 April article accusing him of having an affair with another man's wife.

After 48 hours at police headquarters, they were transferred to Kisangani's main prison. If prosecutors decide to bring criminal libel charges against them, they could be facing a three-year jail sentence. Paradoxically, they had agreed prior to their arrest to publish Awenze's response in the newspaper by 15 May, and had been on their way to meet him when they were arrested.

"Without taking a position on the substance of the case, we deeply regret that these two journalists have been jailed in connection with their work," Reporters Without Borders said. "We condemn their detention, for which the required legal and judicial procedures were not followed, and we call for their immediate release, so that they can prepare their defence at what we hope will be a fair trial."

Reporters Without Borders continues to campaign for the decriminalization of media offences in the DRC.

Radio journalist ambushed by gunmen in South Kivu

David Mambo Munyaga, the manager of rural radio station Ondese FM in Kiliba, in South Kivu province, and fellow journalist Malega Muyuku were returning from a reporting trip on 30 April when they were ambushed by three masked gunmen but managed to escape on their motorcycle.

Munyaga, who had already reported receiving telephone threats in connection with his reporting, filed a complaint about both the threats and the ambush in the hope that the authorities will identify those responsible. Fearing for his life, he is now in hiding.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the dangerous climate prevailing in this region and urges the local authorities to do everything possible to put a quick end to the threats and attacks on journalists.

15 May 2012

World: A journalist killed every five days, six new “predators” brings total to 41

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Today, World Press Freedom Day 2012, Reporters Without Borders condemns the furious pace of physical attacks on news providers and reports that a total of 21 journalists, and 6 netizens and citizen journalists have been killed since the start of 2012, many of them in war zones such as Somalia and Syria. This is a rate of one news provider killed every five days.

Reporters Without Borders is today also releasing an updated list of its “predators of the freedom to inform,” a list that has grown in size and now has 41 members.

“Let there be no witness to our crimes” and “let there be no voice but ours” – these are the watchwords of authoritarian regimes and armed groups that are hostile to freedom of information. What with crackdowns on protest in Arab countries, and suppression of political opposition, criticism and reporting in other parts of the world, the first four months of 2012 were especially violent for those who try to provide news and information.

New predators of the freedom to inform

The first quarter of 2012 has clearly shown that the world’s predators of the freedom to inform, led by Syria’s Bashar Al-Assad and Somalia’s Islamist militias, are capable of behaving like outright butchers.

The 2011 revolts toppled several despots who were on the predators list such as Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi and Yemen’s Ali Abdallah Saleh but they unfortunately did not reduce the overall number of these enemies of information.

Six new predators have joined this evil “club” in 2012: Boko Haram, an Islamist group that spreads terror in Nigeria; Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which has regrettably taken over from deposed dictator Hosni Mubarak as regards violating freedom of information; the Somali federal government’s information minister, who is responsible for harassment and intimidation of the media; Vasif Talibov, the all-powerful leader of Azerbaijan’s “Autonomous Republic” of Nakhchivan; Pakistan’s intelligence agencies; and Kim Jong-un, who perpetuated North Korea’s predatory dictatorship on the death of his father, King Jong-il.

There is a growing trend for countries to have more than one predator. Six countries now have two. Somalia has as the Islamist militia Al-Shabaab as well as the information minister. Pakistan has the Taliban as well as the intelligence agencies. Azerbaijan has President Ilham Aliiev as well as Nakhchivan’s strongman, Talibov, who has turned his fiefdom into a laboratory for the repressive methods that Aliiev applies in the rest of the country.

Russia not only has Vladimir Putin but also his Chechen “guard-dog,” Ramzan Kadyrov, who shares his master’s taste for forceful words and gestures. The Palestinian Territories have both the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, both of which use their security forces to harass journalists. And finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran has both Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad, who – despite their rivalry – agree on gagging the media. Iran still ranks with Eritrea, China, Turkey and Syria as one of the world’s biggest prisons for journalists.

Other presidents, such as Djibouti’s Ismail Omar Guelleh, Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir and Uganda’s Yoweri Museveni, could be added to the predators list soon. Yemen, which had a particularly trying 2011, continues to be under close scrutiny since President Saleh’s departure. Burmese President Thein Sein, on the other hand, could be removed from the list if he proves to be the president of reform and democratization in 2012.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were on the list for many years, like Colombia’s paramilitary groups, which are still on it. The FARC guerrillas were dropped from the list some time ago because they cut back targeted actions against journalists. But now the FARC are being blamed for French freelance journalist Roméo Langlois’ disappearance since 28 April, when FARC guerrillas attacked a military anti-drug operation that Langlois was covering.

Reporters Without Borders is following the case closely, and with the appropriate caution. The organization intends to use World Press Freedom Day to pay tribute to his professional courage and to voice its support for his family and colleagues.

See the complete list of predators

Vulnerability of cameramen, news photographers and citizen journalists

Freelance journalists, a growing number of whom are covering wars, have paid a high price in the past four months. Reporters Without Borders pays particular tribute to citizen journalists, the last bastion of the freedom to inform when governments want to crush opposition without the outside world looking on. Cameramen and news photographers are also favourite targets for repressive regimes that understand only too well the impact of images and their power of providing information.

In view of the turmoil resulting from the Arab springs, Reporters Without Borders has decided to accompany the region's new governments during their progress towards democracy. After opening an office in Tunisia, Reporters Without Borders is now about to open one in Libya to encourage the government's efforts to build a free and pluralist press. However, the Arab springs have fallen far short of keeping all their promises and we must remain on our guard, on the one hand, for manipulative attempts by new governments to brand protest movements as "terrorist" and, on the other, for the anti-freedom tendencies of certain protest groups.

Journalists' safety and international agreements

Because of the growing dangers to which journalists are exposed, Reporters Without Borders:

- Urges the news media to begin a debate about the protection of the stringers, fixers and local journalists they use, and about the protection of their sources and the people they interview.
- Calls on governments to implement international provisions on the protection of journalists in an effective manner. Five years after the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1738, a status report is urgently needed on the specific steps taken to implement it. Governments must accept their responsibilities and obligations under paragraphs 6 and 7 to do their utmost to prevent violations of international humanitarian law against journalists and to end impunity for such violations.
- Requests a revision of the International Criminal Court's statutes in order to provide specific protection for journalists, as a special civilian category, similar to the specific protection they provide for humanitarian workers.
- Urges governments to quickly adopt the Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Decision on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity that were drafted by UNESCO in March.

03 May 2012

Myanmar: The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration: Drafts must be published and subject to meaningful consultations with local, national and regional civil society and human rights defenders

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Source: Amnesty, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Back Pack Health Worker Team, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, Protection International, Reporters sans Frontières, World Organisation Against Torture

We, the undersigned international human rights organizations, are concerned that the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) has yet to take the necessary steps to ensure that the process of drafting the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) is transparent and fully consultative with civil society organizations in the ASEAN region.

In a joint statement released on April 8th (full text below), over 130 local, national and regional civil society organizations across the ASEAN region called on AICHR to implement the following steps:

- 1) To immediately publicize the draft AHRD so that the public can meaningfully participate in the drafting process. Consultations will remain meaningless if the draft declaration is kept confidential and out of reach of the peoples.
- 2) AICHR representatives who are already conducting national consultations in their respective countries must continue to do so, and ensure that these consultations are held nation-wide and in an inclusive and more regular manner. They should further encourage other AICHR representatives that have not taken such initiatives to do the same. The AICHR should also conduct consultations both at national and regional levels, especially if national consultations are not applicable yet in particular places.
- 3) To translate the draft AHRD into national languages and other local languages of the ASEAN countries in order to encourage broader public participation in the region.
- 4) To ensure that consultation meetings of the AICHR will be inclusive of all stakeholders, especially civil society organizations and national human rights institutions.*

On 12 April, AICHR announced that it would finalize the draft of the AHRD by July 2012 and hold one consultation with civil society organizations in late June 2012. A single consultation, conducted not at the outset but rather towards the very end of the drafting process, cannot be considered consultative and transparent. In addition to being non-transparent and non-consultative, this process has been clearly rushed with little thought provided on some of the key elements that have been articulated by ASEAN civil society for decades. An instrument of this importance and magnitude needs more time for adequate deliberation and discussion.

We fully endorse the April 8th statement made by national and regional civil society organizations and strongly urge all representatives of the AICHR to fully and immediately implement these recommendations. This would ensure that the AHRD reflects the legitimate concerns of civil society and human rights defenders in ASEAN and reflects existing international human rights standards.

The drafting of the AHRD is a litmus test of AICHR's willingness to constitute a credible, respected, and effective regional human rights body. Principles of transparency, accountability, and consultation are applied by the United Nations and all other regional bodies when they engage in human rights standard-setting and the ASEAN must not fall below well established international standards and practice.

This joint statement is endorsed by (in alphabetical order):

1. Amnesty International
2. Asian Legal Resource Centre

3. Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)
4. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
5. Civil Rights Defenders
6. Freedom House
7. Human Rights Now
8. Human Rights Watch
9. International Commission of Jurists
10. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
11. International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)
12. Protection International
13. Reporters Without Borders
14. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Statement released on 8 April by national and regional NGOs:

Joint Statement on Calling AICHR to release ASEAN Human Rights Declaration

8th April 2012

We, the undersigned civil society organizations and networks from Southeast Asia, express our grave concern and disappointment over the continuing secrecy in the drafting process of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD).

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) is mandated under Article 4.2 of its Terms of Reference to develop an ASEAN Human Right Declaration with a view to establishing a framework for human rights cooperation through various ASEAN conventions and other instruments dealing with human rights. At the 6th meeting of the AICHR in Vientiane on 28 June – 2 July 2011, a Drafting Group was officially established by the AICHR to prepare a draft of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. In January 2012, the Drafting Group submitted to the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) a draft AHRD for deliberation and debate.

To this date, the draft AHRD remains confidential while the public has been excluded from any meaningful participation in the drafting process. There has not been any substantive and broad-based regional consultation with the peoples in the region on the draft AHRD.

While we commend the representatives of the AICHR from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines for holding consultation with their civil society at national level, we are disturbed that no such initiative has taken place in the rest of the ASEAN countries.

If ASEAN's aspiration to be "People-Oriented" is to be achieved, the AICHR that is tasked to defend the fundamental freedoms of the peoples in the region must set a good example in ensuring meaningful and substantive consultation and people's participation in the drafting of the historic AHRD.

We therefore strongly urge the AICHR to heed the recommendation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, that "no discussion of human rights can be complete or credible without significant input from civil society and national human rights institutions" and immediately begin dialogues and consultations with civil society organizations on the AHRD.

We further call upon AICHR to implement the following steps to ensure that the drafting process of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration will be credible, inclusive, transparent, reflective and consistent with universal human rights standards:

- 1) To immediately publicize the draft AHRD so that the public can meaningfully participate in the drafting process. Consultations will remain meaningless if the draft declaration is kept confidential and out of reach of the peoples.
- 2) AICHR representatives who are already conducting national consultations in their respective countries must continue to do so, and ensure that these consultations are held nation-wide and in an inclusive and more regular manner. They should further encourage other AICHR representatives that have not taken such initiatives to do the same. The AICHR should also conduct consultations both at national and regional levels, especially if national consultations are not applicable yet in particular places.
- 3) To translate the draft AHRD into national languages and other local languages of the ASEAN countries in order to encourage broader public participation in the region.
- 4) To ensure that consultation meetings of the AICHR will be inclusive of all stakeholders, especially civil society organizations and national human rights institutions.

Until and unless the AICHR consults and engages with all stakeholders in a transparent, meaningful and substantive manner, the AICHR should postpone its submission of the final draft of AHRD to the AESAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), which is scheduled to take place in July 2012.

This call is made to public as wide as possible in the ten countries of ASEAN and is endorsed by different sectors of civil society organizations such as youth organizations, women's organizations, child rights organizations, LGBT organizations, migrant workers network organizations, labour unions, farmers organizations, environmental organizations, human rights organizations, development organizations and some academic institutions. The joint statement is also translated into ASEAN major languages, Burmese, Bahasa-Indonesian, Bahasa-Malay, Khmer, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese to indicate our commitment to promote the basic human rights of the people that they are entitled to receive information and awareness about ASEAN and its works.

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List of endorsers:

1. Aceh Human Rights Coalition of NGO, Indonesia
2. Action for Environment and Community (AEC), Cambodia
3. All Arakan Students and Youth Congress (AASYC), Burma
4. All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), Burma
5. All Burma Students League (ABSL), Burma
6. All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU), Burma
7. All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Malaysia
8. Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean Burma)
9. Arakan League for Democracy (Exile) Youth (ALD-Youth), Burma
10. ASEAN WATCH, Thailand
11. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
12. Asian Indigenous People's Pact
13. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners - Burma
14. Back Pack Health Worker Team
15. Banteay Srei, Cambodia
16. Boat People SOS
17. Building Community Voice (BCV), Cambodia
18. Burma Issues, Burma
19. Burma Medical Association, Burma
20. Burma Partnership, Burma
21. Burmese Women Union, Burma
22. Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), Cambodia
23. Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR), Cambodia
24. Cambodian Confederation of Unions (CCU), Cambodia
25. Cambodian Food Service Workers Federation (CFSWF), Cambodia
26. Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA), Cambodia
27. Cambodian League for the promotion and defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), Cambodia
28. Cambodian Watchdog Council (CWC), Cambodia
29. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN), Cambodia
30. Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines
31. Child Rights Coalition-Asia
32. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), Burma
33. Chin Students Union (CSU), Burma
34. Christians for Social Justice (CJS), Cambodia
35. Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Cambodia
36. Commission for Disappeared and Victims of Violence (Kontras), Indonesia
37. Community Action Network, Malaysia
38. Community Resource Centre (CRC), Thailand
39. Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), Burma
40. Dignity International, Malaysia
41. EarthRights International, Burma
42. Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH), Thailand

43. Education and Research Association for Consumers (ERA Consumer), Malaysia
44. EMPOWER Foundation, Thailand
45. Empowering Youth in Cambodia (EYC), Cambodia
46. Ethnic Community Development Forum (ECDF-Burma)
47. FOKER LSM, Papua
48. Foundation for Consumers (FFC), Thailand
49. Foundation for Ecological Recovery, Thailand
50. Foundation for Sustainable Development, Thailand
51. Foundation for Women, Law and Rural Development (FORWARD), Thailand
52. Foundation for Women, Thailand
53. EMPOWER Foundation, Thailand
54. Highland Peoples Task force (HPT), Thailand
55. Homenet, Thailand
56. Housing Rights Task Force, Cambodia
57. Human Rights Documentation Unit, Burma
58. Human Rights Education Institute of Burma
59. Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Burma
60. Human Rights Lawyers Association, Thailand
61. Humanum, Indonesia
62. Independent Democracy of Informal Economic Association (IDEA), Cambodia
63. Indigenous People Task Force on ASEAN
64. Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), Indonesia
65. International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)
66. JATAM, Indonesia
67. Kachin Women's Association – Thailand (KWAT), Burma
68. Karen Youth Organization (KYO), Burma
69. Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY), Burma
70. Khmer Ahimsa Organisation, Cambodia
71. KIARA, Indonesia
72. KontraS (National Office, Jakarta, Indonesia)
73. Kuki Students Democratic Front (KSDF), Burma
74. Lahu Women's Organization, Burma
75. Lao Movement for Human Rights (MLDH)
76. LPSHAM, Indonesia
77. M Plus Foundation, Thailand
78. Messenger Band (MB), Cambodia
79. Migrant Forum in Asia
80. Migrante International, Philippines
81. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO), Burma
82. My Village Organization (MVi), Cambodia
83. Naga Youth Organization (NYO), Burma
84. National League for Democracy-Liberated Area (Youth), Burma
85. Network for Democracy and Development (NDD), Burma
86. Network for Human Rights Documentation in Burma
87. Network of Eastern Democracy, Thailand
88. NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-COD), Thailand
89. Northern Development Foundation, Thailand
90. One-2-One, Cambodia
91. Pa O Youth Organization (PYO), Burma
92. Palang Thai, Thailand
93. Palaung Women's Organization, Burma
94. People's Action for Change (PAC), Cambodia
95. People's Defense Force (Burma)
96. People's Empowerment Foundation
97. Persatuan Masyarakat Selangor & Wilayah Persekutuan (PERMAS), Malaysia
98. Pokja 30, Indonesia
99. Project for Ecological Awareness Building (EAB), Thailand
100. Pro Rights Foundation, Thailand
101. Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat (PUSAT KOMAS), Malaysia
102. Quê Me: Action for Democracy in Vietnam
103. Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK), Cambodia
104. Sahakum Teang Tnaut (STT), Cambodia
105. Sex Workers Organization, Thailand

106. Shwe Gas movement
107. SILAKA, Cambodia
108. Social Action for Change (SAC), Cambodia
109. Social Agenda Working Group, Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
110. Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines (STRAP), Philippines
111. South East Asia Working Group/ Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network
112. South East Asian Committee for Advocacy (SEACA)
113. Southeast Asia Coalition to stop Child Soldiers
114. Southeast Asia Popular Communications Programme (SEAPCP)
115. Students and Youth Congress of Burma
116. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Malaysia
117. Sustainable Agriculture Foundation, Thailand
118. Sustainable Development Foundation, Thailand
119. Ta'ang Students and Youth Organization (TSYO), Burma
120. Tavoy Youth Organization (TYO), Burma
121. Thai Committee for Refugees Foundation, Thailand
122. Thai Working Group for Climate Justice (TCJ), Thailand
123. The Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Cambodia
124. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodian
125. The Northeastern Women's Network, Thailand
126. Think Centre, Singapore
127. Union for Civil Liberty (UCL), Thailand
128. United Lahu Youth Organization, Burma
129. Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
130. Volunteers for Sustainable Development (VSD), Cambodia
131. Women and Children Protection Foundation, Thailand
132. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)
133. YLBHI, Indonesia
134. Yoma3 News Service, Burma
135. Youth for Social Change, Myanmar
136. Zomi Students and Youth Organization (ZSYO), Burma

- These four demands are as they appear in the 8 April 2012 statement of national and regional NGOs, "Joint Statement Calling AICHR to Release ASEAN Human Rights Declaration"

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02 May 2012

Nigeria: Government urged to protect media after two carbomb attacks on newspapers

Original published date: 27 Apr 2012

Country: Nigeria

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/nigeria-government-urged-to-protect-media-27-04-2012,42384.html>

Reporters Without Borders is dismayed by yesterday's bombings targeting newspapers in the capital, Abuja, and the northern city of Kaduna and calls on the Nigerian authorities to reinforce security for news media, journalists and other media personnel.

Reacting to the two bombings, which killed at least nine people, President Goodluck Jonathan issued a statement stressing the government's commitment "to uphold citizens' constitutional rights to freedom of expression and press freedom in particular."

"While hailing President Jonathan's pledge to defend press freedom, we urge him to take full stock of the terrible dangers to which journalists are exposed," Reporters Without Borders said. "After yesterday's tragedies and the cold-blooded killings of at least two media personnel in recent months, there is no longer any doubt that the media and journalists are among the targets of those who carry out attacks and bombings in Nigeria." "In consultation with media owners and executives, the authorities should adopt concrete measures to ensure that journalists are protected and to reinforce security around news media buildings and offices."

In Abuja, a suicide bomber drove a jeep carrying explosives into the building housing the printing press of ThisDay, one of the country's most influential, privately-owned newspapers, killing himself and four other people and wounding dozens of others. ThisDay nonetheless said it had reinforced security around its premises in response to the violence that has killed at least 400 people since the start of the year.

At the same time, a car laden with explosives was stopped as it approached a building in Kaduna that houses the regional offices of ThisDay, The Moment and The Daily Sun. One of the two men in the car got out and detonated a bomb that killed at least four people and wounded around 20 others.

While the bombings were not immediately claimed, they bore the hallmarks of the Islamist group Boko Haram, which accused the national media a few weeks ago of reporting falsehoods about it. One of the two men involved in the Kaduna bombing, who was detained by witnesses and handed over to the police, reportedly identified himself as a Boko Haram member.

27 Apr 2012

Somalia: Seven journalists wounded in suicide bombing at Mogadishu theatre

Original published date: 04 Apr 2012
Country: Somalia
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Disaster type: Drought, Other
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/somalia-seven-journalists-wounded-in-04-04-2012,42255.html>

Reporters Without Borders is deeply shocked by the suicide bombing that killed several people and wounded many others at a ceremony in Somalia's national theatre in Mogadishu marking the first anniversary of the country's national television station reopening.

At least seven journalists covering the event were seriously wounded.

"We condemn this despicable attack in the strongest possible terms and our thoughts are with the many victims," the press freedom organization said.

"As it is often the case when the perpetrators want to strike at the heart of the transitional government, the attack was carried out at a public event covered by the media and attended by many people, including officials."

Reporters Without Borders is ready to offer material and financial assistance to the injured journalists.

A journalist with Radio Ergo said: "I am in a shocked mood, sitting 50 metres away from the spot. The whole area has been damaged, there are windows blown out." He said the area was littered with bodies.

According to reports received by Reporters Without Borders, a woman carrying a concealed device blew herself up as she mingled with the crowd.

The injured journalists were named as:

Mohamed Shariif of the radio station Bar-Kulan

Ahmed Ali Kahiye of Radio Kulmiye

Ayaan Abdi (female) of the television station Somalie 24

Deeqo Mohamed Ahmed (female) of Radio Mogadiscio

Hamdi Mohammed Hassan Hiis (female) of Somali Channel TV

Said Shire Warsame of Shabelle TV

Mulki Hassan Hayle (female) of Royal TV

The method of the attack — a suicide bombing in Mogadishu at an event attended by many figures from the transitional federal government — appeared to point to the al-Shabaab militia.

05 Apr 2012

Mali: Whether staging mutiny or coup, soldiers shut down news media

Original published date: 22 Mar 2012
Country: Mali
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Disaster type: Drought, Other
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/mali-whether-staging-mutiny-or-coup-22-03-2012,42176.html>

Reporters Without Borders condemns the occupation of the headquarters of the state radio and TV broadcaster ORTM by renegade soldiers since yesterday and the interruption of broadcasting by many other radio and TV stations as a result of an apparent military coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré.

“Whether this is a real coup or just a mutiny, we are appalled that soldiers have occupied the state broadcaster and taken control of its broadcasts,” Reporters Without Borders said. “As it is often the case in such circumstances, control of news and information is primordial and the media are among the mutineers’ first targets.

“The state media are now broadcasting the same message over and over, while the privately-owned broadcast media were suspended to prevent independent coverage of what is going on. All the journalists who cannot go to work have our support, and our thoughts go out to the people of Mali, who have been deprived of so many sources of information.”

Soldiers overran ORTM at around 4 p.m. yesterday, firing into the air inside the complex and forcing all the personnel to leave. At around 4 a.m. today, they broadcast a communiqué announcing a curfew and the dissolution of state institutions. This communiqué has been broadcast repeatedly on state radio and TV ever since.

22 Mar 2012

Syrian Arab Republic (the): Authorities threaten foreign media, continue to arrest Syrian journalists and bloggers

Original published date: 13 Mar 2012
Country: Syrian Arab Republic (the)
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/syria-authorities-threaten-foreign-media-13-03-2012,42099.html>

The information ministry has threatened Arab and foreign media that are “illegally” in Syria, while Syrian journalists and bloggers continue to be arrested.

In a 9 March communiqué, the information ministry threatened to take measures against Arab and foreign journalists who have entered the country “illegally” and against anyone cooperating with them. The minister accused the foreign media of complicity with the “terrorists” and, by covering their activities” of “justifying their crimes.” He also accused them of “fabricating” reports.

The minister reiterated the view that, if news media allow their reporters to enter Syria illegally, they are morally and legally responsible for what happens to them. This is similar to the position that the government took after the bombardment of the Media Centre in the Homs district of Baba Amr in which Rémi Ochlik and Marie Colvin were killed, Paul Conroy and Edith Bouvier were injured and two other journalists, William Daniels and Javier Espinosa were trapped.

The Syrian authorities have boasted of giving permission to 365 Arab and foreign media to enter the country since the start of the uprising in March 2011. Reporters Without Borders nonetheless receives reports every day of Syrian consulates refusing to issue visas to news media or freelance journalists. And those that receive permission are not necessarily able to work freely and independently, without risking arrest or death.

And while the minister openly threatens foreign reporters, Syrian journalists and bloggers continue to be arrested.

In one of the latest incidents, Othman Matar, the father of the journalist Gheith Matar, was arrested on 8 March.

The 12 young people arrested on the evening of 7 March in the restaurant Niniar, in the Damascus neighbourhood of Bab Sharqi, included Yara Michael Shamas, 20, an information technology specialist who is the daughter of a human rights lawyer active in Facebook, Jihad Jamal, a blogger known by the name of Milan, who had been released on 29 December after two and a half months in detention and Etab Labbad, a 20-year-old journalism student who has worked with various newspapers and websites such as Kassioum and Baladna.

Reporters Without Borders reiterates its call for the release of Mazen Darwish, the head of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, and eight other people held since the 16 February raid on the centre – Hussein Gharir, Hani Zitani, Joan Fersso, Bassam Al-Ahmed, Mansour Al-Omari, Abdel Rahman Hamada, Ayham Ghazzoul and Shady Yazbek.

Syria is one of the countries on the “Enemies of the Internet” list that Reporters Without Borders released yesterday. The Media Centres created by the Local Coordination Committees in Syria were awarded the 2012 Netizen Prize. Syria is ranked 176th out of 179 countries in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

Many journalists and netizens are meanwhile still detained without any information being available about their current status. This partial list was prepared with help from the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression:

- Said Dairky, an engineer employed by the national TV station who was arrested on 14 January.
- Alaa Shueiti, a cyber-activist arrested on 15 October in Homs.
- Mos’ab Massoud, a journalist with Addounia, who was arrested on 1 October after posting an article on Elaph headlined “The ministry of media and information and the question of sectarianism.”
- Firas Fayyad, a filmmaker who was arrested on 1 December at Damascus airport as he was about to fly to Dubai.

- Bilal Ahmed Bilal, a Falesteen TV producer who was arrested in the Damascus suburb of Mo'adamieh on 13 September.
- Abdelmajid Rashed Al-Rahmoun, who was arrested on 23 August in Hama.
- Tarek Said Balsha, a photographer arrested in Latakia on 19 August. There has been no news of him since then.
- Mohamed Nihad Kurdiyya, a mechanical engineer who was arrested in Latakia on 18 August as he was about to be interviewed by Al-Jazeera.
- Abdelwalid Kharsah, a reporter who was arrested while covering demonstrations in Deraa on 17 August.
- Olwan Zouaiter, a journalist who has written for many Lebanese dailies. He was arrested by intelligence officials in the northern city of Raqqah on 16 March after returning from Libya. He was initially sentenced to five years in prison for allegedly contacting the Syrian opposition while abroad. The sentence was subsequently reduced to 13 months. He is serving it in Raqqah prison.

According to rumours circulating since 10 February, the detained writer and opposition activist Hussein Issou died in detention and his body was taken to the morgue of the military hospital in Damascus. A war of information or disinformation about his fate has been waged since then. Issou was originally arrested on 3 September in the northeastern city of Al-Hassakah. Reporters Without Borders has urged the Syrian authorities to shed light on the status. His family does not know if he is alive or dead.

The status of these two persons is also of concern:

- Moheeb Al-Nawathy, a Palestinian journalist who had lived in Norway since 2007. He went missing on 5 January 2011, nine days after arriving in Damascus. He is a Fatah member and used to work for the website of the satellite TV station Al-Arabiya.
- Tal Al-Mallouhi, a 19-year-old student and blogger who has been detained since December 2009. She was brought before a state security court in Damascus for the second time on 17 January 2011. Reportedly accused of spying for the United States, she is being held in Duma prison, near Damascus. Internet users all over the world have been calling for her release.

14 Mar 2012

Myanmar: Will media freedom continue to progress in Burma?

Original published date: 13 Mar 2012
Country: Myanmar
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/birmanie-will-media-freedom-continue-to-13-03-2012,42104.html>

Reporters Without Borders and its partner organization, the Burma Media Association (BMA), condemn the criminal libel suit that a construction ministry engineer has brought against the Modern Weekly newspaper and one of its reporters, Thet Su Aung, over a report last November criticising the state of roads in the central region of Mandalay.

The two organizations are also concerned about other recent restrictions on media freedom reported by the exile media, which continue to demonstrate the importance of their role in covering developments inside Burma.

“The libel action against Thet Su Aung is marring the reform process that the government has initiated with respect to the media and we call for its withdrawal,” Reporters Without Borders said. “Furthermore, while we hail the steps taken by the authorities to protect journalists in their work, the censorship of an opposition campaign speech contradicts their claims to be sincere about democratization.

“The same goes for the media law that is currently being drafted. As it stands, it will not allow the authorities to make good on their promises to guarantee media freedom. A complete overhaul of the relevant legislation, which dates back to the 1920s and 1960s, much be envisaged.”

Reporters Without Borders added: “The international community continues to be informed about these violations thanks to the remarkable work of news media based outside Burma such as Democratic Voice of Burma, Mizzima News, The Irrawaddy and Radio Free Asia. As long as violations of freedom of information continue and these media are the only ones, or first ones to report them, we will regard Burma’s democratization as still incomplete.

Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi told Radio Free Asia on 8 March that the authorities had censored part of a speech she was to record for broadcasting on state TV ahead of the first round of partial parliamentary elections on 1 April. The censored paragraph accused the former military government of abuse of authority, abusing its own legislation and not respecting the rule of law.

It was not the first time that Suu Kyi has been obstructed in the course of her election campaign, despite the government’s promises. Although the government has adopted a number of reforms, Suu Kyi has urged the international community to follow the elections closely in order to reach an informed position on the democratic process in Burma.

Thet Su Aung, who appeared in court on 6 March, is being sued in connection with an article about the poor condition of several roads and bridges in the town of Thabeikkyin and, in particular, on the road from Thabeikkyin to Taguang. The article also said that the engineer Nwe Nwe Yi had allowed the Su Htoo Pan company to charge high tolls to travellers along this stretch of road.

Htun Win, the editor of the newspaper Shwe Mandalay, pointed out that Thet Su Aung was not the only reporter to write about the poor condition of the Thabeikkyin-Taguang road but she was the only one to be sued.

Sources close to the Press Scrutinization and Registration Department have meanwhile reported that the department in the process of drafting the first new media law, and that it is be a modified version of the Printers and Publishers Registration Act, a law adopted after the 1962 coup. The sources also said that, as it stands, this new law will concern only the print media and will completely ignore other kinds of media.

Burma is ranked 169th out of 179 countries in the 2011-2012 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. At least four journalists (Zaw Tun, Win Saing, Ne Min and Aung Htun) and one blogger (Kaung Myat Hlaing, also known as Nat Soe) are still detained as they were not included in the 14 January amnesty.

14 Mar 2012

Sri Lanka: RSF calls on UNHRC to condemn violations of freedom of information

Original published date: 28 Feb 2012
Country: Sri Lanka
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - 28 February 2012 - Reporters Without Borders calls on all members of the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Council, which began its 19th session yesterday, to pass a resolution condemning the Sri Lankan government's violations of freedom of information and to demand an end to threats and violence against news media and human rights defenders in Sri Lanka.

"For more than a year we have been seeing new forms of censorship and a deterioration in journalists' ability to work although the war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) officially ended in 2009," Reporters Without Borders said. "Rather than wait until the Universal Periodic Review to make recommendations, the Human Rights Council's members should adopt a resolution now urging the government to take measures to improve freedom of information.

"The number of cases of physical attacks, death threats and imprisonment may have fallen in 2010 and 2011, but the authorities continue to prevent the media from enjoying real editorial freedom and many journalists are still in exile. Sri Lankan and foreign media are still unable to cover the issue of war crimes, which will be at the centre of the Human Rights Council's discussions during the 19th session.

"An immediate reaction is needed to the obstruction of journalists who want to cover the activities of the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and to self-censorship on this subject for fear of reprisals. The Human Rights Council must remind the Sri Lankan government of the importance of the media's role as a critic and urge it to respect freedom of information. We call on the government to accept constructive questions from civil society and to stop branding its critics as 'conspirators' and 'LTTE accomplices'."

January - February 2012 timeline

Journalists and media defenders have been constant targets of violence, threats and propaganda. The censorship of websites, especially those based abroad, has increased since the beginning of 2011. The events of the past two months amply illustrate the way the government is treating journalists.

Since 25 February: Distributed Denial-of-Service Attacks (DDoS) have been disrupting web traffic of TamilNet.com. The service provider is struggling to keep the website online.

23 February: The supreme court held its third hearing on the blocking of news websites. Access to four leading independent news websites - SriLankaMirror, SriLankaGuardian, Papparacigossip9 and LankaWayNews - has been blocked since 6 November on the orders of the information ministry, which announced on 5 November that all news websites with "any content relating to Sri Lanka" needed to register with the ministry.

16 February: The defence ministry posted an article on its website accusing Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS), an exile organization, of "treachery and conspiracy" against the government and security forces on the eve of the Human Rights Council's 19th session.

15 February: Prasad Purnimal Jayamanne, a freelance journalist working for the BBC's Sinhalese service and a member of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), was attacked and badly beaten while filming a demonstration by fishermen in Chilaw, 100 km north of Colombo, in protest against the death of a fisherman at the hands of the police and the injuries sustained by others. Jayamanne had to be hospitalized.

8 February: The state-owned daily Dinamina accused the Free Media Movement of obstructing democracy and freedom in Sri Lanka, giving the country a bad image, and inciting separatism and terrorism.

26-27 January: Media minister Keheliya Rambukwella accused journalists of collaborating with the LTTE and with foreign

media and NGOs in order to smear Sri Lanka's image. He said he had a list of journalists working against the government, including the organisers of the "Black January" campaign, which was based on the fact that there were major press freedom violations every January during the past three years. They included Sunday Leader editor Lasantha Wickrematunge's murder in January 2009 and political cartoonist Prageeth Ekneligoda's disappearance in January 2010, which have become symbols of violence against the media and the impunity enjoyed by those responsible.

25 January (and following days): After the Alliance of Media Organizations in Sri Lanka held a "Black January" demonstration (which had to be moved to a different location because of a counter-demonstration by government supporters), some of the demonstration's organizers were followed by unidentified individuals for several days.

10 January: The government accused the Free Media Movement of collaborating with the political opposition and organizing a campaign to get the European Union to suspend Sri Lanka's preferential trade status under the GSP+ accord.

5 January: The start of the trial of a man accused of the April 2005 murder of journalist Dharmeratnam Sivaram was postponed by Colombo high court judge P. Surasena after the prosecutor said he was unable to proceed because six prosecution witnesses, including two policemen, had failed to show up. The judge also dissolved the jury. Sivaram was kidnapped in Colombo and his body was found near the parliament building the next day.

January (start of the month): When state-controlled Independent Television Network (ITN) broadcast footage of media freedom activists demonstrating during the September 2011 session of the UN Human Rights Council, it accused them of being LTTE members.

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28 Feb 2012

Syrian Arab Republic (the): Free Human Rights Defenders

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Country: Syrian Arab Republic (the)
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Amnesty, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, IKV Pax Christi, International Commission of Jurists, Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/22/syria-free-human-rights-defenders>

Joint NGO Statement

(New York) – Human Rights Watch joined more than 30 other organizations today in calling on Syrian authorities to release Mazen Darwish, a prominent human rights defender and director of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), as well as seven of his colleagues and a visitor to SCM, all detained on February 16. The statement follows:

Syrian Authorities Must Immediately and Unconditionally Release Mazen Darwish and Other Detained Activists

The undersigned Organizations call on the Syrian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mazen Darwish, a prominent Syrian human rights defender and director of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) – an organization that enjoys UN ECOSOC consultative status -, as well as seven of his colleagues and a visitor, who were arrested on February 16, 2012 during a raid on their Damascus offices.

In total 16 people were arrested during the raid at SCM offices in Damascus, which was carried out by officers from Air Force Intelligence (AFI) who were assisted by a group of plain-clothed armed men, according to a statement from the SCM. Seven people have been conditionally released and have to report to the detention center every day for further interrogations.

SCM has played a key role in getting out information about daily developments in Syria as international journalists have only limited access to the country. Mazen Darwish has previously been repeatedly subjected to interrogation by Syrian security services regarding his human rights related activities, including his work with SCM. The arrest of Mazen Darwish and his co-workers is apparently related to their peaceful activities as human right defenders, bloggers and journalists.

“The raid on SCM offices and the detention of Mazen Darwish and his colleagues is a further attack by Syrian security services on Syrian human rights defenders and their rights to freedom of association and expression. This represents the latest attempt to silence those who have been witnessing, documenting and reporting on the ongoing gross human rights violations committed by the Syrian security forces in Syria,” the Organizations said. “The Syrian authorities should immediately and unconditionally release these individuals.”

Individuals following the case inside Syria reported that they believed the detainees are being held incommunicado at an AFI detention facility in El Mezze, Damascus. The use of torture and other ill treatment has been widespread and systematic in Syrian detention facilities, including in the facilities of the AFI.

“It is the responsibility of the Syrian authorities to protect Mazen Darwish and his colleagues from any form of ill-treatment or torture and to ensure that, as long as they remain in detention, their rights of access to lawyers, family members and independent medical personnel are fully guaranteed,” the Organizations said.

Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation

Alkarama Foundation

Amnesty International

Arab Network for human rights information

Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring

ARTICLE 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression

Association For Women's Rights in Development

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Committee to Protect Journalists

Community Media network

Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies

Doha Centre for Media Freedom

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

Free Press Unlimited

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS

Gulf Centre for Human Rights

Human Rights Watch

Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation - Hivos

IKV Pax Christi

Index on Censorship

International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran

International Commission of Jurists

International Media Support

International Press Institute

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Iraqi Journalists' Rights' Defense association

Justice for Iran

Maharat Foundation

Observatory for the protection of Human Rights Defenders, joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Reporters Without Borders

Samir Kassir Foundation

Syrian Organization for Human Rights - Sawasiah

Human Rights Watch:

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24 Feb 2012

Somalia: Shabelle Media Network director gunned down outside home in Mogadishu

Original published date: 28 Jan 2012

Country: Somalia

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/somalia-shabelle-media-network-director-28-01-2012,41781.html>

Shabelle Media Network director Hassan Osman Abdi, better known locally as “Hassan Fantastic,” was gunned down outside his Mogadishu home at 6:30 p.m. today, Reporters Without Borders has learned from its partner organization in Somalia, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ).

“Abdi is the first journalist to be killed in 2012 in Somalia, Africa’s deadliest country for media personnel,” Reporters Without Borders said. “Our thoughts go out to his family and fellow journalists, who are yet again mourning a colleague’s death. He is the third Shabelle Media Network director to be murdered, following Bashir Nur Gedi in 2007 and Mukhtar Mohamed Hirabe in 2009.”

The press freedom organization added: “Violence against journalists in Somalia is sustained by impunity for those responsible. It is quite clear that Abdi was deliberately targeted. We call for a serious and impartial investigation that leads to the identification of his murderers.”

Abdi was slain as he returned home from work. Witnesses said five gunmen shot him outside his home after following from his office. Radio Shabelle – a part of the Shabelle Media Network, along with a TV station and a news website – had recently covered cases of government corruption.

Born in 1982 in the far-south Lower Juba Region, Abdi was 29 and was the father of three children. He was Branch Secretary of NUSOJ in Banadir (the region that includes Mogadishu) and had worked for Radio Shabelle for three years before taking over as head of Shabelle Media Network on 20 October 2011.

Radio Shabelle is Somalia’s most renowned privately-owned radio station and the one that is most exposed to violence. It was awarded the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Prize in the “Media” category in December 2010.

Somalia is ranked 164th out of 179 countries in the annual press freedom index that Reporters Without Borders published on 25 January. In its 2011 annual overview, Reporters Without Borders ranked Mogadishu as one of the world’s 10 most dangerous places for journalists.

28 Jan 2012

Somalia: NUSOJ annual report says 2011 even worse for journalists

Original published date: 19 Jan 2012
Country: Somalia
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=41703

The annual report of the National Union of Somali Journalists, a partner organization of Reporters Without Borders, paints a worrying picture of abuses suffered by the media in 2011 and condemns the silence and impunity that surround crimes against journalists.

The report on the state of press freedom, published yesterday, said 2011 was worse than 2010 and lists four journalists killed, seven wounded and 19 arbitrarily arrested, as well as seven attacks on media organizations and at least five prosecutions for criminal defamation.

The organization deplores the fact that journalists were targeted by the authorities and the security forces, and also by militias and individuals. It says attacks were not only politically motivated and systematic but also institutionalized, depriving journalists of the ability to carry out their work without fear.

The report, entitled “Lives and Rights of Journalists Under Threat”, notes an increase in prosecutions of journalists in the semi-autonomous north-eastern region of Puntland and the self-proclaimed state of Somaliland in the north, as a new means of clamping down on the media and restricting the flow of information.

The Mogadishu region, which is in the hands of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was the most dangerous part of the country for freedom of information, it said. It was followed by Somaliland, where the number of prosecutions for criminal defamation, slander and false news has escalated.

In third place was Puntland, where there were closures of media organizations, criminal prosecutions and other mistreatment of journalists.

The report says the NUSOJ considers impunity “the foremost, albeit silent, enemy of journalists and press freedom”.

It appeals to the TFG, Somaliland and Puntland authorities:

- To adopt and implement a consistent policy of zero-tolerance for crimes against journalists and media organizations as the only way to ensure reliable practice to respect, protect, defend and promote press freedom.
- To bring police and other security forces under control by immediately stopping the harassment, brutality, arbitrary arrests, and even killing, regularly perpetrated against journalists and media organisations and to ensure full accountability for previous violations.
- To promptly cease violations of journalists’ right to freedom of association and to stop threats of criminal prosecution against journalists, including their organisations and leaders.

The NUSOJ calls on the international community to make their support of, and cooperation with, Somali authorities conditional on respect and protection of the fundamental rights of journalists, and of the people of Somalia in general.

Download a PDF of the NUSOJ annual report

Myanmar: All DVB journalists, freelancers and blogger freed under amnesty

Original published date: 13 Jan 2012
Country: Myanmar
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/burma-dvb-journalists-freelancers-and-13-01-2012,41675.html>

Reporters Without Borders and its partner organization, the Burma Media Association, hail the release of a number of journalists and bloggers under an amnesty announced today.

Journalists working for the Burmese exile radio and TV station Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) have confirmed that all DVB journalists, including Hla Hla Win, Ngwe Soe Lin, Win Maw, Sithu Zeya and his father U Zeya, two freelance journalists (Thant Zin Aung and Zaw Thet Htwe) and the blogger Nay Phone Latt are among those who have been released.

“We are pleased to see the government continuing to advance in the right direction and we urge it to release all the other detained journalists and Internet users. Once all the detainees have been freed, we hope the government will also address the need for reforms and the need to end censorship in Burma.”

According to DVB, today’s amnesty was carried out under article 401 (1) of the code of criminal procedure, unlike previous amnesties, which were issued under article 204 de la constitution. This suggested that today’s amnesty did not have the approval of the influential National Defence and Security Council, DVB said.

The freelance journalist Thant Zin Aung and the blogger Nay Phone Latt were released from Hpa-an prison in Karen state. As regards the released DVB journalists, Win Maw was being held in Kyaukphyu prison in the western state of Arakan, Hla Hla Win was in Kathar prison in the north of the country, Sithu Zeya was in Henzada prison in the southwest, Ngwe Soe Lin was in Lashio prison in the northeast and U Zeya was in Hsipaw prison in the northeast. The freelance journalist Zaw Thet Htwe was released from Taunggyi prison.

Myint Hlaing, a media assistant who had help Hla Hla Win on many occasions and was arrested with her in 2009, was also freed.

After leaving prison today, Sithu Zeya said: “As for the president, I think he’s pretty decent as he is [enacting reforms] under a lot of pressure. But also it depends a lot on the men behind him – just one decent person won’t make the change happen. We need all-inclusive cooperation from both sides to build a democratic system.”

The blogger and comedian Zarganar was freed from Myitkyina prison in the northern state of Kachin on 12 October under an earlier “general amnesty.” Three other DVB journalists were released in late December.

Reporters Without Borders congratulates DVB’s “Free Burma VJ” campaign for the release of all of the DVB video-journalists arrested after covering the 2007 Saffron Revolution and the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

Reporters Without Borders is still awaiting news about the blogger Kaung Myat Hlaing (also known as Nat Soe), who has been imprisoned since April 2010, and the following journalists:

- Detained since 13 October 2009 - Nyi Nyi Tun - Kantarawaddy News Journal * Detained since 18 June 2009 - Zaw Tun - freelance * Detained since 28 August 2007 - Win Saing - photo-journalist * Detained since 24 March 2006 - U Thauang Sein – freelance photo-journalist * Detained since 24 March 2006 - Ko Moe Htun - Dhamah-Yate * Detained since February 2004 - Ne Min - freelance * Detained since 17 February 1998 - Aung Htun - freelance

Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): RFI returns to the airwaves after a week of radio silence

Original published date: 09 Jan 2012
Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/drc-regulators-to-decide-rfi-s-future-06-01-2012,41640.html>

Reporters Without borders is relieved to learn that the broadcast signal of the French public radio station Radio France Internationale, switched off on 31 December on the orders of the Congolese communications minister, Lambert Mende, was restored today.

The suspension of broadcasts by the station, which was criticised for its coverage of the events since the disputed presidential election last month, had aroused international protests, notably from France and the United States.

The news is tempered, however, by a 45-day closure order issued three days ago against the radio station Radio Communautaire du Katanga by Mukanya Ilunga, head of communications in Katanga province.

The station was criticised for re-broadcasting RFI programmes in defiance of government orders. Reporters Without Borders deplores this illegal action and calls on the appropriate authorities to restore RCK's broadcasts immediately.

09 Jan 2012

Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): Regulators to decide RFI's future after government orders it off the air

Original published date: 06 Jan 2012
Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/drc-regulators-to-decide-rfi-s-future-06-01-2012,41640.html>

Reporters Without Borders condemns the shutdown of broadcasts by the French public radio station Radio France Internationale ordered by the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo and calls for their immediate restoration.

The press freedom organization also condemned the government's failure to follow correct procedures and the methods used to take the station off the air.

It is the official responsibility of the Higher Council for Broadcasting and Communications (CSAC) to inform the political authorities of any decision to halt broadcasts by any media outlet. In the event, it was the authorities themselves who took the first step before asking the regulatory body to take up the case.

"Switching off the RFI signal demonstrates once again the unease and tension on the part of the Congolese authorities over how the international media treat current events in their country," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The latter are all too often pilloried for merely doing their job of informing the public.

"The switch-off also raises serious questions about the independence of the CSAC. How are we to interpret this precautionary measure taken by the information minister, followed by the transfer of the case to the Higher Council, when the CSAC itself is the only body competent to take up such a case and order a closure?" asked the organization, which recalled that its partner in the DRC, Journalist in Danger, had recommended the abolition of the CSAC in its report published on 28 December.

On 2 January, communications minister Lambert Mende announced he had ordered the temporary suspension of RFI's frequencies as a "precautionary measure" until the CSAC ruled on the case.

The shutdown is linked directly to the radio station's coverage of the disputed results of the presidential election last November. The government accused RFI of trying to "trivialize the anti-constitutional comedy of Mr. Tshisekedi", a reference to opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi who stood against President Joseph Kabila in the election.

The French minister for co-operation, Henri de Raincourt, reaffirmed France's "commitment to freedom of the press and freedom of information" at talks with his Congolese counterpart.

Two days ago, the United States called for the immediate restoration of RFI broadcasts in the country.

The Congolese authorities suspended RFI transmissions between July 2009 and October 2010, when they accused the radio station of conducting a campaign to demoralize the country's armed forces.

At the instigation of Journalist In Danger, a campaign and a petition were launched in February 2010 for the resumption of RFI broadcasts. It returned to the airwaves after intense negotiations between the government and the station's managers.

06 Jan 2012

Yemen: Despite Saleh departure plan, supporters and security forces still targeting journalists

Original published date: 05 Jan 2012
Country: Yemen
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/yemen-despite-saleh-departure-plan-05-01-2012,41632.html>

December was a particularly black month for media freedom violations in Yemen although President Ali Abdallah Saleh agreed to a plan proposed by Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh on 23 November under which he is to stand down as president in February.

Reporters Without Borders firmly condemns the continuing violations and urges the international community to intercede. December was above all marked by violence by government troops and Saleh supporters against journalists covering the “March for Life,” which set off from Taiz, a city 270 km south of the capital, on 20 December.

There were many attacks on the marchers on 24 and 25 December as they arrived at the Sanaa district of Dar Salm. Security forces opened fire on the crowd. At least 13 demonstrators were killed and 50 were wounded. Journalists were among the victims. Among other demands, the protesters had been calling for President Saleh to be prosecuted for his use of violence against earlier demonstrations.

On 24 December, Ahmed Al-Mussibli, a journalist with the opposition TV station Suhail TV, was beaten and arrested by security forces, and was held overnight. BBC correspondent Abdallah Ghorab narrowly avoided being arrested. Suhail TV cameraman Kamal Al-Mahfadi and reporter Walid Ablan sustained serious head injuries.

Ahmed Al-Jabar, a member of the Yemeni Journalists’ Syndicate and reporter for the state-owned Saba News Agency, was hit in the face with a rifle butt by a Saleh supporter, sustaining an injuries below one eye. Soldiers also broke the windows of the car that members of the Journalists’ Syndicate were using to cover the march.

Three journalists – Samia Al-Aghbary, Arwa Abdu Othman (a writer) and Marwan Ismail, who works for the Imanate news website – were accosted and arrested by members of the Republican Guard at a checkpoint on Sanaa’s 50th Street while accompanying the March for Life on 24 December. Two activists who were with them, Marwan Al-Wajih and Nabil Soua’i, were also arrested. The soldiers searched their car and took their mobile phones and three cameras. All five were released that evening.

Earlier this week, a group of gunmen tried to storm the Press Foundation in Taiz for the third time in three days on 2 January in defiance of clear instructions from the province’s governor. The foundation’s headquarters is located near the military police building and just a few metres from the provincial security directorate.

Nasser Taha Mustafa, a former head of the Journalists’ Syndicate, was threatened in late December by Tarek Mohamed Abdallah Saleh, President Saleh’s nephew and commander of his personal guard, over his articles in support of the revolutionary movement.

Two journalists with the 26 September newspaper, Ali Ghaleb Al-Harazi and Yahiya Al-Sadmi, were threatened for calling for the resignation of the newspaper’s editor, Ali Hassan Al-Chatr, who has a reputation for high-handed treatment of his employees and has had some of them thrown in prison in the past. The journalists began a sit-in at the newspaper to demand Chatr’s departure.

Firing in the air, gunmen in civilian dress attacked an Al-Alam TV crew at around 2:15 p.m. on 23 December in Al-Qaedi, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the capital. They grabbed cameraman Mohamed Hamran’s camera, hit him, took his identity card and, threatening to shoot the tyres of their car, forced the journalists to return to the city centre.

Armed baltajiyas (pro-Saleh thugs) stormed the headquarters of the government newspaper in Sanaa on 20 December, threatening journalists at gunpoint and stopping the next day’s issue from coming out. The raid was prompted by new information minister Ali Al-Umrani’s decision to rename Hassan Abdel Warath as the editor of the newspaper, which is

published by the “Revolution for the Press” foundation. Warath had resigned at the height of the anti-Saleh protests.

Gunmen burst into the office of the Arab Information Agency in Sanaa on the night of 13 December, pointing their firearms at its director, Issam Al-Khaled, and his employees. The office houses more than a dozen Arab and international TV stations and news agencies.

The prosecutor’s office ordered the journalist Omar Al-Amuqi’s release on 8 December on the grounds that there had been no justification for his arrest two days before.

The journalist Abdelhakim Thi’il was freed at the end of December after being kidnapped in October and held incommunicado for two months in a national security prison operated by the intelligence services. His whereabouts were unknown until 12 December, when he was transferred to a regular prison centre and the head of the Journalists’ Syndicate, Marwan Damaj, was able to visit him.

The precise reasons for his abduction and detention are still unknown. The authorities examined his computer and found photos and videos of baltajiyas and gunmen attacking and killing demonstrators in Sanaa’s Change Square.

05 Jan 2012

Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): After disputed election, SMS messaging suspended until further notice

Original published date: 22 Dec 2011

Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)

Theme: Logistics and Telecommunications, Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/democratic-republic-of-congo-after-disputed-election-sms-22-12-2011,41597.html>

Reporters Without Borders deplores the still poisonous climate for the media in the Democratic Republic of Congo nearly a month after the 28 November general elections. In addition to security problems when covering campaign meetings before the elections and protest meetings since, journalists are now being detained and questioned and media are being suspended.

In Kinshasa, two opposition TV stations – Canal Futur Télévision (CFTV) and Radio Lisanga Télévision (RLTV) – have had their broadcast signals disconnected while several provincial governors have banned local radio stations from retransmitting the programmes of international radio stations.

Reporters Without Borders also regrets that telephone texting has been blocked since early December “until further notice” and wrote today to Deputy Prime Minister Adolphe Lumanu Mulenda Buana N’sefu, who is also minister of interior and security, asking him to rescind this measure. Here is the text of the letter:

Mr. Adolphe Lumanu Mulenda Buana N’sefu
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and Security
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Paris, 22 December 2011

Dear Minister,

Reporters Without Borders, an international NGO that defends media freedom, urges you to restore telephone texting services, which have been blocked throughout the country since the start of December.

Your ministry ordered the Democratic Republic of Congo’s mobile phone operators to suspend SMS services on 3 December “until further notice” in order “to maintain public order and protect the safety of property and people.”

We are aware of your responsibilities and your ministry’s role as guarantor of public order and the safety of your country’s citizens, especially in this troubled and often violent electoral period. We would nonetheless like to draw your attention to the repressive and arbitrary nature of this measure.

By blocking all telephone text messaging, your ministry has reacted in a disproportionate manner reminiscent of the behaviour of certain repressive regimes. By adopting this measure, you have added the DRC to the list of countries such as Egypt, Syria and Kazakhstan that have suspended telecommunications in an attempt to silence protests. The current situation in the DRC is nonetheless unprecedented, as the disruption of communication networks in these other countries never lasted more than a few days.

The blocking of telephone messaging is a serious violation of rights guaranteed by your country’s constitution and international human rights treaties ratified by the DRC. The fundamental rights to freedom of communication and the free flow of information are being flouted by this measure, the impact of which is all the greater because SMS messaging is a dominant form of communication in a country where Internet penetration rate is only 1 per cent.

The blocking has hampered the work of those who are observing the election process. We remind you that the SMS network plays an indispensable if not vital role for all those in your country with a hearing impairment. It is also used by human right activists as a tool for issuing alerts.

The financial repercussions for the DRC’s mobile phone operators are not insignificant either. They are suffering daily losses of around 150,000 US dollars. Their representatives wrote on 15 December to Mr. Louis Koyagiabo, Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Posts, Transport and Telecommunications, asking him to end the suspension of SMS messaging. Their request has so far been in vain.

In the name of freedom of expression and the right to information, our organization asks you to do what is necessary to restore telephone texting services as soon as possible.

We thank you in advance for the attention you give to this request.

Sincerely,

Jean-François Julliard
Reporters Without Borders secretary-general

22 Dec 2011

Bahrain: The 10 most dangerous places for journalists

Original published date: 21 Dec 2011

Country: Bahrain, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines (the), Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic (the), Yemen

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/the-10-most-dangerous-places-for-21-12-2011,41582.html>

2011 in figures:

66 journalists killed (16% more than in 2010)

1,044 journalists arrested

1,959 journalists physically attacked or threatened

499 media censored

71 journalists kidnapped

73 journalists fled their country

5 netizens killed

199 bloggers and netizens arrested

62 bloggers and netizens physically attacked

68 countries subject to Internet censorship

Reporters Without Borders has this year, for the first time, compiled a list of the world's 10 most dangerous places for the media – the 10 cities, districts, squares, provinces or regions where journalists and netizens were particularly exposed to violence and where freedom of information was flouted.

Overall, 2011 took a heavy toll on media freedom. The Arab Spring was at the centre of the news. Of the total of 66 journalists killed in 2011, 20 were killed in the Middle East (twice as many as in 2010). A similar number were killed in Latin America, which is very exposed to the threat of criminal violence. For the second year running, Pakistan was the single deadliest country with a total of 10 journalists killed, most of them murdered. China, Iran and Eritrea continue to be the world's biggest prisons for the media.

22 Dec 2011

Reporters Without Borders

http://www.rsf.org/the-10-most-dangerous-places-for-21-12-2011_41582.html

- International

2011 Annual Overview

The 10 most dangerous places for journalists

21 December 2011

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	Killed	Arrested / Briefly detained	Attacked / Threatened	Censored	Kidnapped
AMERICAS	18	121	513	154	2
MIDDLE EAST	20	252	553	79	30
AFRICA	9	253	245	95	3
ASIA	17	119	347	93	34
EUROPE	2	299	301	78	2
TOTAL	66	1044	1959	499	71

The Arab Spring, the protest movements it inspired in nearby countries such as Sudan and Azerbaijan, and the street protests in other countries such as Greece, Belarus, Uganda, Chile and the United States were responsible for the dramatic surge in the number of arrests, from 535 in 2010 to 1,044 in 2011. There were many cases of journalists being physically obstructed in the course of their work (by being detained for short periods or being summoned for interrogation), and for the most part they represented attempts by governments to suppress information they found threatening.

The 43 per cent increase in physical attacks on journalists and the 31 per cent increase in arrests of netizens – who are leading targets when they provide information about street demonstrations during media blackouts – were also significant developments in a year of protest. Five netizens were killed in 2011, three of them in Mexico alone.

	2010	2011	Evolution
Journalists killed	57	66	+16%
Journalists arrested	535	1044	+95%
Journalists attacked or threatened	1374	1959	+43%
Media censored	504	499	-1%
Journalists kidnapped	51	71	+39%
Netizens killed	1	5	
Bloggers and netizens arrested	152	199	+31%
Bloggers physically attacked	52	62	+19%
Countries affected by censorship	62	68	+10%

From Cairo's Tahrir Square to Khuzdar in southwestern Pakistan, from Mogadishu to the cities of the Philippines, the risks of working as a journalist at times of political instability were highlighted more than ever in 2011. The street was where danger was to be found in 2011, often during demonstrations that led to violent clashes with the security forces or degenerated into open conflict. The 10 places listed by Reporters Without Borders represent extreme cases of censorship of the media and violence against those who tried to provide freely and independently reported news and information.

(Listed by alphabetical order of country)

Manama, Bahrain

The Bahraini authorities did everything possible to prevent international coverage of the pro-democracy demonstrations in the capital, Manama, denying entry to some foreign reporters, and threatening or attacking other foreign reporters or their local contacts. Bahraini journalists, especially photographers, were detained for periods ranging from several hours to several weeks. Many were tried before military tribunals until the state of emergency imposed on 15 March was lifted. After months of demonstrations, order was finally restored thanks to systematic repression. A blogger jailed by a military court is still in prison and no civilian court ever reviewed his conviction. Bahrain is an example of news censorship that succeeded with the complicity of the international community, which said nothing. A newspaper executive and a netizen paid for this censorship with their lives.

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Abobo, Adjamé, Plateau, Koumassi, Cocody, Yopougon... all of these Abidjan neighbourhoods were dangerous places for the media at one stage or another during the first half of 2011. Journalists were stopped at checkpoints, subjected to heavy-handed interrogation or physically attacked. The headquarters of the national TV station, RTI, was the target of airstrikes. A newspaper employee was beaten and hacked to death at the end of February. A Radio Yopougon presenter was the victim of an execution-style killing by members of the Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) in May. The post-election crisis that led to open war between the supporters of the rival presidential contenders, Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara, had a dramatic impact on the safety of journalists. During the Battle of Abidjan, the country's business capital, at the start of April, it was completely impossible for journalists to move about the city.

Cairo's Tahrir Square, Egypt

The pro-democracy demonstrations that finally forced Hosni Mubarak to stand down as president on 20 February began at the end of January in Tahrir Square, now the emblem of the Arab Spring uprisings. Foreign journalists were systematically attacked during the incredibly violent first week of February, when an all-out hate campaign was waged against the international media from 2 to 5 February. More than 200 violations were reported. Local journalists were also targeted. The scenario was similar six months later – from 19 to 28 November, in the run-up to parliamentary elections, and during the weekend of 17-18 December – during the crackdown on new demonstrations to demand the departure of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Misrata, Libya

After liberating Benghazi, the anti-Gaddafi rebels took Misrata, Libya's third largest city and a strategic point for launching an offensive on Tripoli. But the regular army staged a counter-offensive and laid siege to the city, cutting it off from the rest of the world and imposing a news and information blockade lasting many weeks, during which its main road, Tripoli Street,

was repeatedly the scene of particularly intense fighting. The Battle of Misrata highlighted the risks that reporters take in war zones. Two of the five journalists killed in Libya in 2011 lost their lives in this city.

Veracruz state, Mexico

Located on the Gulf of Mexico and long dominated by the cartel of the same name, Veracruz state is a hub of all kinds of criminal trade, from drug trafficking to contraband in petroleum products. In 2011, it became the new epicentre of the federal offensive against the cartels and three journalists were killed there in the course of the year. Around 10 others fled the state as a result of the growing threats to freedom of information and because of the inaction or complicity of the authorities in the face of this threat.

Khuzdar, Pakistan

The many cases of journalists who have been threatened or murdered in Khuzdar district, in the southwestern province of Balochistan, is typical of the extreme violence that prevails in this part of Pakistan. The province's media are caught in the crossfire between the security forces and armed separatists. The murder of Javed Naseer Rind, a former assistant editor of the Daily Tawar newspaper, was the latest example. His body was found on 5 November, nearly three months after he was abducted. An anti-separatist group calling itself the Baloch Musallah Defa Army issued a hit-list at the end of November naming four journalists as earmarked for assassination.

The Manila, Cebu and Cagayan de Oro metropolitan areas on the islands of Luzon and Mindanao, Philippines

Most of the murders and physical attacks on journalists in the Philippines take place in these three metropolitan areas. The paramilitary groups and private militias responsible were classified as "Predators of Press Freedom" in 2011. The government that took office in July has still not come up with a satisfactory response, so these groups continue to enjoy a total impunity that is the result of corruption, links between certain politicians and organized crime, and an insufficiently independent judicial system.

Mogadishu, Somalia

Mogadishu is a deadly capital where journalists are exposed to terrible dangers, including being killed by a bomb or a stray bullet or being deliberately targeted by militias hostile to the news media. Although the Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabaab withdrew from the capital, fighting continues and makes reporting very dangerous. Three Somali journalists were killed in Mogadishu this year, in August, October and December. And a visiting Malaysian cameraman sustained a fatal gunshot injury to the chest in September while accompanying a Malaysian NGO as it was delivering humanitarian assistance.

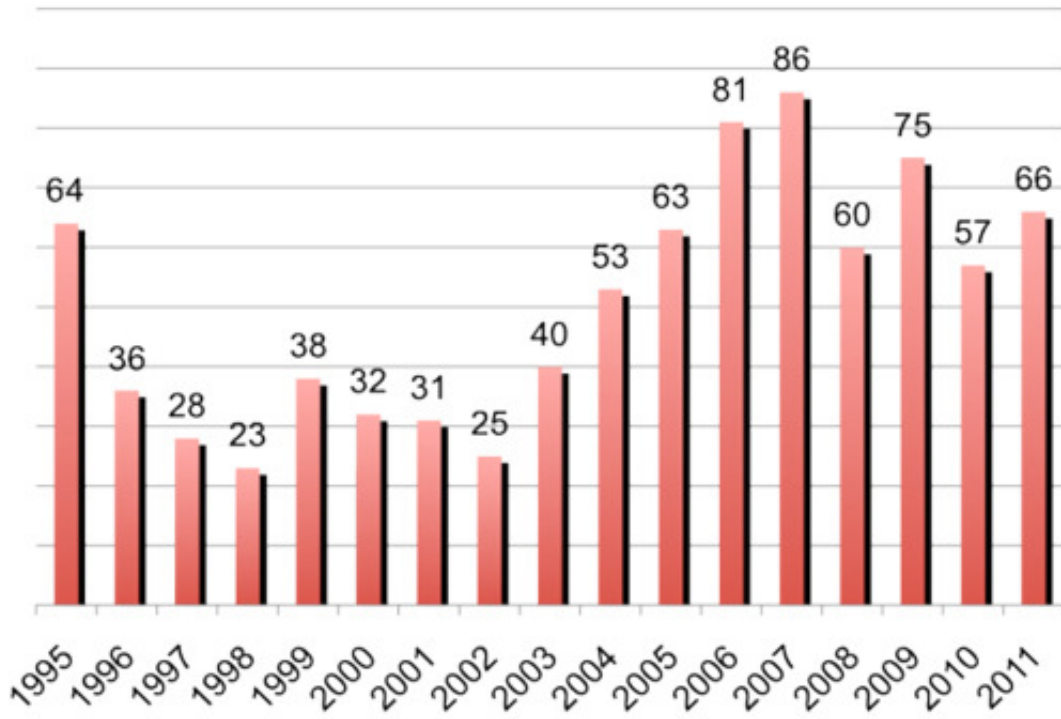
Deraa, Homs and Damascus, Syria

Deraa and Homs, the two epicentres of the protests against Bashar al-Assad's regime, have been completely isolated. They and Damascus were especially dangerous for journalists in 2011. The regime has imposed a complete media blackout, refusing to grant visas to foreign reporters and deporting those already in the country. The occasional video footage of the pro-democracy demonstrations that began in March has been filmed by ordinary citizens, who risk their lives to do so. Many have been the victims of arrest, abduction, beatings and torture for transmitting video footage or information about the repression. The mukhabarat (intelligence services), shabihas (militias) and their cyber-army have been used by the regime to identify and harass journalists. Physical violence is very common. Many bloggers and journalists have fled the country. Around 30 journalists are currently believed to be detained.

Sanaa's Change Square, Yemen

Change Square in Sanaa was the centre of the protests against President Ali Abdallah Saleh and it is there that much of the violence and abuses against journalists took place. Covering the demonstrations and the many bloody clashes with the security forces was dangerous for the media, which were directly targeted by a regime bent on crushing the pro-democracy movement and suppressing coverage of it. Two journalists were killed while covering these demonstrations. Pro-government militiamen known as baltajiyas also carried out punitive raids on the media. Physical violence, destruction of equipment, kidnappings, seizure and destruction of newspapers, and attacks on media offices were all used as part of a policy of systematic violence against media personnel.

Yearly total of journalists killed since 1995



You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 162.8 kb)
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Ethiopia: In disgraceful verdict, court convicts Swedish journalists of supporting terrorism

Original published date: 21 Dec 2011
Country: Ethiopia
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/ethiopia-in-disgraceful-verdict-court-21-12-2011,41586.html>

Reporters Without Borders is outraged that an Addis Ababa court today found Swedish journalists Johan Persson and Martin Schibbye guilty of supporting terrorism, a charge for which the prosecution has requested a 13-year jail sentence. They are also facing an additional sentence of five and a half years in prison on a charge of entering the country illegally, to which they pleaded guilty. The court is expected to issue a sentence next week.

The presiding judge, Shemsu Sirgaga, said: “They have shown that they are esteemed journalists, but we cannot conclude that someone with a good reputation does not engage in criminal acts. They have not been able to prove that they did not support terrorism.”

“This verdict is absurd and demonstrates the stubbornness of the Ethiopian authorities,” Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Jean-François Julliard said. “Instead of proving their guilt, the judge accuses them of failing to prove their innocence. This is back-to-front. Since the first day of the trial, the defence position has been very clear: Persson and Schibbye entered the Ogaden illegally for the purposes of reporting, but they never supported terrorism.”

Jesper Bengtsson, the president of the Swedish section of Reporters Without Borders, said: “The Swedish government must step up its efforts on behalf of Johan and Martin. The quiet diplomacy that foreign minister Carl Bildt has been relying on until now has not worked. Bildt must demand their immediate release.”

Reporters Without Borders wrote yesterday to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Ben Emmerson, to condemn the misuse of counter-terrorism in Ethiopia and to urge him to meet with representatives of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi’s government to convince them to stop using counter-terrorism as grounds for suppressing freedom of expression. [More information here.](#)

Reporters Without Borders also joined three other NGOs and the “Free Johan Persson and Martin Schibbye” campaign in issuing a combined appeal yesterday to the European Union to be more active and determined in defending media freedom in Ethiopia.

Persson, a photographer, and Schibbye, a reporter, were arrested on 1 July after entering Ethiopia’s southeastern Ogaden region from Somalia with members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), an armed separatist group, with the aim of covering human rights abuses in the region for the Kontinent news agency. Shortly before their arrest, they were injured in a clash between government forces and the ONLF in which 15 ONLF members were killed.

When they appeared in court for the first time on 6 September, two months after their arrest, they were charged with “terrorist activities (...) supporting terrorists and providing them with professional aid [and] “entering a sovereign country without a valid visa or legal authorization,” government spokesman Shimeles Kemal told Bloomberg.

During the 6 September hearing, the prosecutor screened a propaganda video in support of the charges. The video, which showed the two journalists holding guns, had been posted on the pro-government Caakara News website a few days after their arrest. The defence strongly objected to the fact that sounds of shooting had been added to the soundtrack.

After the trial opened on 18 October, the charge of “participating in terrorism” was dropped on 3 November but the other two charges, supporting a terrorist group and entering the country illegally, were maintained.

Somalia: Reporter shot dead in Mogadishu is fourth journalist killed this year in Somalia

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Country: Somalia
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/somalia-reporter-shot-dead-in-mogadishu-is-19-12-2011,41571.html>

Reporters Without Borders expresses its deepest sympathy to the family and colleagues of the journalist Abdisalan Sheikh Hassan, shot dead yesterday by a man in military uniform in the Hamar Jajab district of Mogadishu.

“We are shocked by this latest tragedy, which demonstrates once again that the enemies of press freedom in Somalia are prepared to shoot and kill journalists,” the international press freedom organization said.

“Abdisalan Sheikh Hassan is the fourth journalist killed in the country this year and the 25th since 2007.

“We condemn this crime in the strongest terms and ask the authorities to do their utmost to ensure it does not go unpunished.

“The perpetrator, who should be easily identified by those who witnessed the incident, must be found, tried and appropriately punished.”

Hassan, a freelance journalist also known as “Xiis”, worked for the radio station Hamar Radio and for the TV station Horn Cable TV. He was gunned down while he was in a car with colleagues near his work place.

A man armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and wearing the military uniform of the federal transitional government pointed his weapon at him and fired without any warning. The reporter, badly wounded in the head, was rushed to the Madina Hospital where he died of his injuries.

In a move widely criticised by other members of parliament and not acknowledged internationally, some Somali parliamentarians met recently to oust the assembly’s spokesman. Hassan was the only journalist to have recorded the gathering and the video was broadcast by Horn Cable TV.

Several people had asked him for a copy of the recording. His killing may be linked to the event.

19 Dec 2011

Afghanistan: For a free, independent and democratic Afghanistan

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Country: Afghanistan
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/afghanistan-for-a-free-independent-and-25-11-2011,41474.html>

Afghan organizations and Reporters Without Borders call for a clear commitment from Bonn conference to support freedom of expression and information.

A decade after the removal of the Taliban government, journalists' unions and organizations that support open media in Afghanistan, together with Reporters Without Borders, call on the Kabul government and international diplomats to give a clear commitment to freedom of speech and information, as delegates prepare for the second international conference on the country's future in Bonn next month.

Afghanistan has never had more news outlets, with 200 print media, 44 television stations, 141 radio stations and at least eight news agencies.

On the other hand, in the past decade it has witnessed growing violence against news organizations and journalists.

Unions and organizations that support open media, and Reporters Without Borders, recorded hundreds of cases of such violence between 2001 and 2011. The largest number – 85 – took place in 2009, most of them in the provinces of Kabul, Herat and Helmand.

Some of provinces in the south and east of the country are no-go areas for journalists since they are controlled by the Taliban who restrict journalistic activities.

We believe, and the experience of the past 10 years has proved, that without a free media and without a climate in which journalists can carry out their work in safety, we cannot protect peace, security and freedom.

Never before in Afghanistan's history have its people had so much free access to information provided by Afghans for Afghans. However, these gains are under daily threat.

Today, the enemies of free speech among the senior ranks of the government in most parts of the country want to abolish this constitutional right that was won by the blood of the people.

A lack of transparency in peace efforts, secret talks with super powers and the concealment of their outcome from the people raise the worrying prospect of a future where democracy and freedom, the cornerstones of permanent peace, are sacrificed for short-term gains based on deals reached behind closed doors.

News organizations are under serious threat, not only from the Taliban who are about to regain power as a result of strategic mistakes by the international military forces and the corruption and incompetence of the government, but also from local and national government officials and some Islamist clerics with ties to the government.

The silence of President Hamid Karzai on the actions of the authorities and organizations that violate freedom of speech and information is a cause of concern.

This is particularly true since Karzai would rather heed the views and advice of fundamentalists and those who do not believe in freedom of speech and information than to listen to journalists' unions and media organizations.

This leads us to believe that the muzzling of the free press that we see in Afghanistan is part of a plan to prepare for the return to power of the Taliban.

The organizations that want a free and diverse media and Reporters Without Borders believe that peace and coexistence will be achieved only with the full participation of society. In the past decade, bureaucratic decisions and efforts have been carried out in defiance of the people as a result of restrictions on media freedom.

How can corruption, growing poverty, prostitution and bribery be effectively combated without media organizations to keep the people informed?

Censorship and self-censorship imposed by the Taliban, warlords, drug traffickers and government institutions have led to the present state of affairs.

In the past 10 years, the independent media have not succeeded in bringing about any change in the system. It would have been more effective and less costly to have given the media the chance to campaign against corruption, the power of the warlords and drug trafficking and for the rule of law, reform of the judicial system and good governance. It is still not too late.

The use of violence and illegal restrictions, as well as the constant threat of being branded as heretics, have been the main weapons used against journalists in recent times. As organizations that support journalists and the media in Afghanistan, we urge the authorities to put an end to the practice of harassing and discriminating against journalists on the basis of religious belief or racial or tribal affiliation.

In the past decade, Afghan journalists have paid a high price for their activities. Sixteen have been killed and so far no-one has been brought to justice in any of these cases.

The killers of Zakia Zaki, the owner of the radio station Radio Peace, BBC reporter Abdul Samad Rohani, who also worked for the Afghan news agency Pajhwok, and Jawed Ahmad, a freelance journalist who worked for the Canadian network CTV, have not been identified and punished.

The failure of the Afghan police and judicial authorities to arrest and punish those responsible for these murders casts doubt on the Kabul government's ability to respect the rule of law.

Sultan Muhammad Munadi and Ahmad Omid Khpalwak were killed by international forces. Although the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force admitted responsibility for Khpalwak's death, the British military and the Afghan interior ministry have not disclosed the results of their criminal investigation into the killing of Munadi. He was shot dead during an attempt to rescue him and a British journalist from Taliban forces who were holding them hostage. Safeguarding the lives of journalists is the responsibility of both sides in any conflict.

Violence against journalists, particularly women, has been encouraged by the failure to prosecute those responsible. In recent years, women journalists have become increasingly the target of threats from various organizations, particularly the Taliban.

In the towns of Kunduz and Ghazni, the Taliban have threatened women journalists and driven female-owned media organizations out of business. In Kabul, security forces have on many occasions beaten women journalists carrying out their professional activities. Many have been forced to quit their jobs because of social pressure and fears for their safety.

Violence against journalists is carried out in many cases by religious groups that have strong support among Afghan authorities. The Council of Religious Scholars, for example, has blamed journalists and media for the violence rather than the Taliban, terrorists, warlords and drug traffickers.

Some provincial officials threaten media organizations daily. Instead of protecting journalists, security forces detain them without authority and accuse them of spying.

Some warlords and countries such as Pakistan and Iran, whose control of some media organizations allows them to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs, are increasingly relaying Taliban propaganda. Free media organizations, faced with the Taliban and the actions of corrupt government officials, are surrounded and forced into silence.

The constitution and media law guarantee freedom of the press but the legislation is not implemented for political reasons. The law should be completed and implemented without delay. Government-owned media organizations should be safe from government interference and their independence observed. Government authorities should respect the right to freedom of information. Drafting a law facilitating access to information should be a priority for the government.

In the past decade, Afghanistan has failed to grasp historic opportunities. Some analysts have predicted Afghanistan's defeat. Fighting is taking place not only on the front line and in zones of conflict. The Afghan people wage a daily battle for peace and against war and they have the right to be informed.

Conference organisers and participants, as well as the international community, should explicitly undertake to protect the freedom, democracy and rights of the people of Afghanistan.

Freedom of speech, the emancipation of women and respect for human rights are the main challenges in Afghanistan. We

must bear in mind that peace cannot be restored without freedom and democracy.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan

Association of Free Journalists in Afghanistan

Afghanistan National Journalists Union

Southern Asia Women's Association in Afghanistan

Reporters Without Borders

28 Nov 2011

Egypt: More media personnel arrested, physically attacked

Original published date: 24 Nov 2011
Country: Egypt
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/egypt-journalists-arrested-physically-23-11-2011,41439.html>

Journalists are still being targeted as clashes continue in the streets around Cairo's Tahrir Square. Although the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has promised to bring forward the handover to a civilian government, the demonstrators are demanding the immediate departure of Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and his transition government.

The chaos prevailing in Cairo and the resulting grave human rights violations are as bad as in the darkest hours of the revolution's earlier phase, in January and February. Journalists are now the unwanted witnesses of the army's desperate attempts to hold on to power and Reporters Without Borders fears that the abuses against media personnel could worsen.

US documentary filmmaker Jehane Noujaim and her cameraman, Magdy Ashour, were arrested near Tahrir Square yesterday and are due to be brought before a military tribunal shortly. Reporters Without Borders calls for their immediate release and the withdrawal of the charges against them.

Timeline

24 November

Arrested during the night of 23 November near Mohamed Mahmoud Street (itself near Tahrir Square), Egyptian-American blogger Mona Eltahawy was released after being held for 12 hours. On Twitter, she reported that interior ministry officials were mistreating detainees and that she personally was manhandled and sexually assaulted (repeatedly "groped") by policemen (<http://twitter.com/#!/monaeltahawy>).

The Egyptian blogger Maged Butter was also released after being arrested during the night of 23 November.

23 November

Police arrested US documentary filmmaker Jehane Noujaim and her cameraman, Magdy Ashour, on Mansour Street at around 6 p.m. and seized their equipment. The two journalists, who were covering clashes near the interior ministry at the time of their arrest, are due to be taken before a military court soon. It is not known what exactly they are charged with (<http://twitter.com/#!/search/FreeJe...>).

22 November

Freelance Spanish photographer Guillem Valle, on assignment for The Wall Street Journal, was attacked and beaten by plainclothes policemen while photographing a building on fire and had to be hospitalized.

Ibrahim Mohamed Shareef, a reporter for the Kurdish news agency PUKmedia, was slightly injured while covering clashes in Tahrir Square.

Reporters Without Borders would like to correct the information it gave in a previous release about Dana Smilie's 22 November arrest. Smilie (<http://www.danasmillie.com/#/bio>), who works for Finnish TV, was arrested by military police in the Cairo district of Moqattam together with the station's Cairo correspondent, their Egyptian interpreter and their taxi driver while filming election posters. After being taken to an army building, they were briefly questioned and then released. Their equipment was returned to them.

Photo: Gaël FAVARI

Journalists arrested, physically attacked by security forces

23/11/2011

Journalists have been among the targets of the security forces during clashes in Cairo and other cities since 19 November as demonstrators demand civilian institutions and the dissolution of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Reporters have been roughed up and briefly detained, and their equipment has been confiscated or destroyed.

Reporters Without Borders condemns the attacks on all civilians including journalists, who are particularly exposed because of the nature of their work. Partial list of attacks and abuses against journalists during past four days

22 NOVEMBER

The photographer Dana Smilie (<http://www.danasmillie.com/#/bio>) was arrested in Cairo, taken to an army building, transferred to another one, and was interrogated for five hours before she was finally released.

A Finnish TV crew was held arrested while doing a report in the Cairo district of Moqattam and was held for five hours. Its equipment was confiscated.

21 NOVEMBER

Malek Mostafa (@malek) sustained an injury to the left eye that had to be operated on.

Maher Iskandar, a photographer with the daily Youm7, was injured in the leg while filming clashes in Tahrir Square.

The Journalists' Syndicate condemns attacks on journalists working for five news media including Al-Akhbar, El-Shorouk, El-Tahrir and the government news agency MENA. The syndicate said: "A journalist was arrested and forced to undress. He was beaten with a stick and insulted. All of his money was stolen."

20 NOVEMBER

Cairo

Ahmed Abdelfatah, a photographer with the independent newspaper Al-Masry Al-Youm, sustained a serious eye injury while covering demonstrations in Mohamed Mahmoud Street, near Tahrir Square. He was taken to the international eye hospital in Giza, where he is to undergo an operation

Mohamed Kamel of Al-Masry Al-Youm also sustained a head injury as a result of being hit by a rubber bullet. An ambulance took him to a hospital. Two other photographers with the same newspaper, Abanub Amad and Tarek Wageeh, were roughed up by the police.

Omar Al-Zuhairi, a photographer with the independent daily Al-Tahrir, sustained a head injury during clashes. Mo'taz Zaki, a photographer with the same newspaper, was briefly detained. Both were covering clashes in Tahrir Square.

Rasha Azab of the independent newspaper Al-Fagr, Mahmoud Al-Hefnaoui of Youm7, Amr Gamal of the Al-Hurriya wa Al-Adala website and freelancer Saad Abid were also harassed or briefly detained. Gamal was held for several hours.

Alexandria

Sarhan Sanara of the government daily Al-Akhbar was arrested while covering a demonstration and was held for seven hours, during which he was mistreated and beaten several times by police officers.

The police also arrested Ahmad Tarek of MENA, Al-Tahrir photographer Ahmad Ramadan, the independent daily Al-Shuruq's editor, Mohamed Fouad, Al-Shuruq reporter Essam Amer and Al-Shuruq photographer Rafi Shaker.

19 NOVEMBER

Yehia Faheem, a cameraman with the CNC production company, and Haitham Gala, his soundman, were both injured by rubber bullets while trying to covering the demonstration in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

Ahmed Feteha, a reporter for the Ahram Online website, was hit while trying to cover clashes.

Internet slowdown – prelude to second Internet blackout?

Rumours are circulating online that the Internet is going to be disconnected again, as it was on 25 January. It is still functioning but Reporters Without Borders has been told that connection speeds have slowed down several times, when demonstrations were taking place. Online access via smartphone services including Vodafone is also reportedly limited.

25 Nov 2011

Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): Concern about political tension and hostility to media on eve of election

Original published date: 24 Nov 2011

Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/democratic-republic-of-congo-concern-about-political-tension-24-11-2011,41451.html>

With attacks on journalists and media continuing in the final run-up to the 28 November presidential and parliamentary elections and an opposition parliamentarian's murder in Kinshasa adding to the tension, Reporters Without Borders appeals again to all parties to do their best to ensure that the elections are not marred by violence and that media freedom is respected.

"The initial results of the media monitoring by Journalist in Danger, our local partner organization, are quite clear," Reporters Without Borders said. "They show beyond any doubt that, as well as attacks on journalists and repeated closures of news outlets, many media are being turned into propaganda tools, thereby heightening the tension in a climate that has already worsened dramatically in recent weeks.

"In the light of this disturbing assessment just a few days before the polls, we reiterate our appeal to all sectors of Congolese society and political life to do their utmost to ensure that the next week passes off as calmly as possible. We remind the authorities that respect for the independence of the media and journalists is essential if proper elections are to be held."

Media closed, journalists targeted

Ernest Miyambo, the administrator of Kabambare (in the east-central province of Maniema) ordered the closure of Radio Communautaire Tujenge Kabambare (RCTK) on 18 November, thereby usurping a prerogative of the High Council for Broadcasting and Communication (CSAC), which alone has the power to take such decisions.

The closure was prompted by the broadcast of an interview with the leader of a former armed self-defence group which Miyambo called an "incitement to revolt." He also ordered the arrest of RCTK manager Kabuana Mukelenge, who has gone into hiding.

The CSAC suspended all broadcasts by Radio Lisanga Télévision (RLTV) from 7 to 15 November for broadcasting controversial statements by opposition presidential candidate Etienne Tshisekedi, who declared himself already president and called on his supporters to "break down the gates of the prisons."

Five radio stations based in the southeastern province of Katanga – Radio Télé Jédidja (RTJ), Radio Fondation Thérèse Lukenge Kapuibwe, Radio Communautaire de Kapolowe, Radio Rocher du Salut and Radio Plein Evangile – were closed without prior warning on 18 November by Brigitte Luta, the administrator of Kambove.

It turned out that the closure order was issued by Mulanya Ilunga, the head of the provincial communications and media department, on the grounds that none of them had paid the required 15,000 US dollars for a broadcasting licence. Representatives of each of the stations had been summoned on 17 November and asked to pay this sum without delay.

Most Congolese community radio stations cannot afford to pay for a licence and continue operating regardless. This does not seem to have been the best moment to close them down in such a summary manner, given the imminence of the elections and the local population's interest in their electoral coverage.

Aside from the closure of local news outlets, some international media may also find themselves prevented from covering the elections because the authorities refuse to give them visas or fail to issue them in time. The regional newsweekly Jeune Afrique reported in an editorial on 20 November that it has been unable to send someone to cover the elections for this reason. The Congolese authorities have denied preventing Jeune Afrique from entering the country.

Attacks and security threats

As well as administrative sanctions violating media freedom, journalists are also exposed to serious security problems.

Antoine Tshiyenge of Jua TV, a station based in the Katangan capital of Lubumbashi, was beaten up by members of the ruling People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) on 14 November when he responded to an invitation to cover a demonstration by several parliamentarians at the party's headquarters. He said they attacked him after identifying him as Jua TV reporter.

The day before, one of his colleagues, Junior Nyembwe, was beaten up by members of UNAFEC, a party allied with the PPRD, while covering a rally at the Vita Club football club. Jua TV cameraman Freddy Kalume had previously been attacked and beaten on 7 November by angry PPRD supporters, who took his camera.

In a response to the decline in security conditions for the media, around 100 vests with the word "PRESS" have been distributed to journalists by Reporters Without Borders and Journalist in Danger (JED). Journalists are often collateral victims when force is used to disperse the demonstrations they are covering, and the vests aim to make them more easily identifiable to the security forces. Examples of the vest were formally presented to the police inspector general at a ceremony today in Kinshasa.

According to the initial findings of JED's media monitoring during the election campaign in Kinshasa, TV coverage is "flagrantly biased" in favour of the candidates of the parties with which the TV stations are variously identified, and is characterized by "frenetic propaganda" and statements bordering on "incitement of hatred and violence."

JED appealed to the CSAC and the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) on 18 November to caution the media against becoming propaganda tools and straying from their core mission to provide information.

25 Nov 2011

Egypt: International community urged to react as situation of free expression worsens in Egypt

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Country: Egypt
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
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Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/egypte-international-community-urged-to-17-11-2011,41407.html>

Reporters Without Borders condemns the accelerating deterioration in the media freedom situation in Egypt in the run-up to the 28 November elections. In the latest development, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces ordered a 15-day extension to blogger and activist Alaa Abdel Fattah's pre-trial detention on 13 November.

The Supreme Council has constantly restricted freedom of information ever since President Hosni Mubarak's removal on 11 February. It has summoned journalists and bloggers before military courts and has convicted and jailed netizens.

Now that the country is about to embark on a series of elections that will continue until March, the Supreme Council is showing less and less ability to tolerate fundamental freedoms. The democratic transition that Egyptians desire will not be possible without media freedom, which is now in grave danger.

Reporters Without Borders would like to remind everyone that a free press and the free flow of information are essential for democratic elections.

The Supreme Council has not only perpetuated Mubarak's methods of controlling news and information but has reinforced them. The trials of civilians before military courts are now the norm. Arrests and convictions on charges of disturbing public order, defamation or spreading false information are being used to censor articles on sensitive subjects such as poverty, women's rights and, especially, the armed forces. Several media were attacked and prevented from broadcasting footage of the violence on 9 and 10 October in the Cairo district of Maspero.

Reporters Without Borders urges the international community to react and to do whatever is necessary to protect freedom of expression in Egypt. To this end, it sent a letter and the attached summary of freedom of information violations in Egypt since Mubarak's ouster to prominent international political figures and representatives of international bodies on 7 November.

The recipients included Navanethem Pillay (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), Frank La Rue (United Nations Human Rights Council special rapporteur for the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression), Catherine Ashton (European Union high representative for foreign affairs and security), Hillary Clinton (US secretary of state) and Sylvie Coudray (UNESCO director for freedom of expression, democracy and peace).

The letter and summary were also sent to the French foreign minister, the Arab League, the Human Rights Committee of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Egyptian embassy in Washington and the French embassy in Cairo.

22 Nov 2011

Syrian Arab Republic (the): NGOs urge UN General Assembly to condemn ongoing grave rights abuses

Original published date: 21 Nov 2011

Country: Syrian Arab Republic (the)

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Amnesty, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Asian Legal Resource Centre, CIVICUS, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Human Rights Watch, International Service for Human Rights, Reporters sans Frontières

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2011

ALRC-OLT-007-2011

A Joint Open Letter produced by NGOs from around the world to the UN General Assembly

November 21, 2011

To: All Member States of the UN General Assembly

Dear Ambassador,

On October 20 a number of our organizations wrote to you to urge the UN General Assembly to demand an end to the government-sponsored violence in Syria. A lot has happened since. On November 2, Syria pledged to abide by the Arab League peace plan and cease the violence, withdraw its troops from cities, release prisoners, and allow in independent journalists and human rights monitors.

These pledges have not been fulfilled. Instead, according to human rights groups, more than 370 Syrians and counting have been killed since November 2 alone. As a result, the Arab League voted to suspend Syria's membership last week, and most recently gave Syria three days to end the "bloody repression" and allow in a monitoring mission.

As you know, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has raised "credible allegations of crimes against humanity in Syria," and according to the UN, since March, more than 3,500 people have been killed, including at least 187 children, while thousands more have been arrested, detained, forcibly disappeared, and tortured.

On November 17 a large and diverse group of countries, including many from the region, answered our call by tabling in the Third Committee of the General Assembly a resolution condemning the systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities. The text calls for an end to the widespread abuses by the Syrian security apparatus and for the implementation of the plan of action of the Arab League, as well as cooperation with the UN commission of inquiry.

We urge you to support this resolution and demonstrate that the world will not simply stand idle while ordinary Syrians are being killed, arbitrarily detained, and tortured.

We are aware that abuses in Syria are also being addressed by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Unfortunately, given the Syrian government's refusal to heed the calls of the HRC and cooperate with the commission of inquiry it established, we are convinced that the UN General Assembly, the parent body of the HRC, needs to step in. This was made all the more necessary by the exercise of their veto rights by two permanent members of the Security Council to block action by a majority.

This resolution provides the General Assembly with a critical opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the midst of a human rights emergency, and support the valuable efforts of the Arab League to finally end the bloodshed.

Regards,

1. African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. African Democracy Forum (ADF)
3. Amnesty International
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

5. Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)
6. Avaaz
7. Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights
8. Cairo Institute of Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
9. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
10. Conectas Direitos Humanos
11. East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
12. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
13. Human Rights & Democracy Media Center “SHAMS” / Palestine
14. Human Rights Watch
15. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
16. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
17. Reporters sans frontières / Reporters Without Borders

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22 Nov 2011

Syrian Arab Republic (the): More arbitrary arrests and disappearances of journalists and bloggers

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Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
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Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/syria-more-arbitrary-arrests-and-03-11-2011,41340.html>

Reporters Without Borders reiterates its concern about the fate of journalists and bloggers who have disappeared or who have been kidnapped of the course of the past nine months of protests against Bashar Al-Assad's government. The list keeps getting longer.

Lina Ibrahim, a reporter for the pro-government newspaper Tishreen, has been missing for the past eight days. A relative said she left her home in the Damascus suburb of Harasta on the morning of 25 October and never returned.

Little is known about the circumstances of her disappearance but it is suspected that she was kidnapped by the security forces. Information obtained by Reporters Without Borders indicates she was taken to a detention centre.

Ibrahim had worked for Tishreen since 2005. Before that, she worked for Syria Today and Syria Times, two English-language newspapers. Some sources think her disappearance is linked to a critical article entitled "Letter to the sun" that was posted on her Facebook page. It can no longer be found online.

Reporters Without Borders is also without any news of the freelance journalist Wael Youssef Abaza, who, like Ibrahim, has been missing since 25 October.

Jehad Jamal, who is known by the blog name of "Milan," was arrested for the third time since the start of the protests on 14 October, just days after being released. He was held for nearly two months after his most recent previous arrest on 8 August. According to a Facebook page created to support Jamal, the last words the blogger posted before his later arrest were: "The people still want the regime to fall."

Reporters Without Borders urges the authorities to stop the arrests and abductions, which are tantamount to enforced disappearances. It also calls on them to provide reliable information about all those being held for using their right to free expression, and to release them without delay.

This is a list of journalists and bloggers currently detained in Syria. It is almost certainly incomplete:

Hossein Ghoureir, a blogger (<http://ghrer.net/blog/>) who has been missing since 24 October. He has health problems.

Qais Abatili, a very active netizen who was arrested on 25 September.

Nizar Al-Baba, an online activist who has been held since 21 September.

Malak Al-Shanawany, a blogger and activist who contributes to many websites. She was arrested on a Damascus street on 22 September. She has been arrested twice before.

Jehad Jamal, a blogger better known by the pseudonym of "Milan," who was arrested on 8 August and then again on 14 October.

Nizar Adleh, a journalist who contributes to many websites. He has been held since 6 September.

Miraal Brouda, a writer and poet who contributes to many websites.

Ahmed Bilal, a producer for Falesteen TV who was arrested in the Damascus suburb of Mo'adamieh on 13 September.

Amer Matar, a journalist with the daily Al-Hayat who was arrested on 4 September. This was his second arrest.

Alwan Zouaiter, a journalist who was written for many Lebanese dailies. He was arrested by intelligence officials in the northern city of Raqqah after returning from Libya. He was initially sentenced to five years in prison for allegedly contacting the Syrian opposition while abroad. The sentence was subsequently reduced to 13 months.

Omar Abdel Salam

Amer Al-As'ad, a first-year information technology student who also writes as a journalist for many Arabic-language dailies. He was arrested on 3 July and arrested again on 4 August. There has been no news of him since then.

Hanadi Zahlout, a freelance journalist who has written many articles for online publications. He was arrested for the second time on 25 July, released four days later and re-arrested on 4 August. He is currently in Adra prison.

Omar Al-As'ad, a journalist who writes for many Arabic-language dailies. He is also a final-year information technology student. He was arrested on 5 July and re-arrested on 4 August. There has been no news of him since then.

Rudy Othman and Asim Hamsho, two bloggers who were arrested at the start of August.

Abd Qabani, a netizen arrested on 8 August.

Ammar Sa'ib, a netizen arrested on 1 August in Damascus.

Mohamed Tahan Jamal, a member of the League of Arab Writers and Union of Journalists, who was arrested on 20 July after signing the "Aleppo Appeal for the Nation."

Abd Al-Majid Tamer and Mahmoud Asem Al-Mohamed, two journalists working for Kurdish news websites who were arrested on 31 May.

Manaf Al Zeitoun, who was arrested on 25 March. There has been no news of him since his arrest.

03 Nov 2011

Liberia: Violence and intimidation against media in run-up to second-round election

Original published date: 20 Oct 2011

Country: Liberia

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/liberia-violence-and-intimidation-against-20-10-2011,41255.html>

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by a dangerous increase in acts of violence and intimidation against radio and TV stations and newspapers since the first round of Liberia's presidential election on 11 October. Election rivalry has exacerbated tension between the media and the candidates' political parties.

"The situation of the media and journalists has worsened significantly since the first round and various journalists have said they are afraid," Reporters Without Borders said. "The climate of violence must stop so that the second round, scheduled for 8 November, can proceed normally. We urge the authorities to ensure that the media are able to operate properly because they play a crucial role during elections, and we call on the candidates to appeal to their activists and supporters to calm down and to respect the opinions of others."

The press freedom organization added: "We also express our support for the agreement that the police and various political parties signed on 17 October banning acts of intimidation and physical attacks on journalists." The main opposition party, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), refused to sign it, describing it as a "trap."

In one of the latest acts of violence, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the Monrovia headquarters of Love FM and Love TV, starting a fire that caused considerable damaged and forcing both the radio and the TV station off the air for several hours. Owned by Love Media, Love FM and Love TV are said to support CDC leader Winston Tubman, who is running against President Sirleaf in the second round.

Love Media news director Jallah Griefield said the station had received several threatening text messages about its pro-CDC position. A suspect has been in police custody since 18 October.

Unidentified persons have tried to intimidate several journalists at Truth FM, a radio station that opposition parties regard as pro-government. Programme host Patrick Honnah, for example, has received several threatening phone calls and text messages.

There were similar incidents during the run-up to the first round. On 12 September, the CDC ordered Boima J.V. Boima, a reporter for the New Democrat daily, to delete photos he had taken of a man who had been run down by a CDC car during a campaign swing through the north. The driver fled, leaving his victim unconscious in the road.

CDC officials also ordered reporter Peter Toby to delete photos showing a man who had been hit over the head with a bottle during the party's primary in Montserrado county. Reporters Without Borders condemns such practices, which are completely unacceptable.

21 Oct 2011

Tunisia: Reporters Without Borders opens bureau in Tunis

Original published date: 14 Oct 2011

Country: Tunisia

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/tunisie-reporters-without-borders-opens-12-10-2011,41171.html>

Reporters Without Borders opened a bureau in Tunis on 12th October. Its staff will have the job of raising media freedom violations with the Tunisian authorities and helping to build and develop stable, professional and independent media in Tunisia.

“The Arab Spring, which Tunisia began, has brought incredible changes throughout the region but much remains to be done to safeguard what has been won in these revolutions,” Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Jean-François Julliard said. “Free speech, the first victory of these mass movements, must be consolidated. By opening this bureau, Reporters Without Borders wants to be closer to Tunisians in their efforts to achieve democracy. Media freedom is an essential value that must be defended. Everyone must play their part.

“During the Ben Ali years, we were not welcome in Tunisia. All we could do was denounce the censorship and authoritarianism. Now we intend to help the authorities to overhaul the entire media sector. Reforming the media law, regulating radio and TV stations, supporting pluralism and defending the principle of respect for the most diverse opinions – these will be the bureau’s chief tasks. We are convinced that journalists who are professional, free and aware of the role they should play are the first line of defence against a return to dictatorship.”

For the first time in its history, Reporters Without Borders launched a communication campaign in Tunisia on 1 October with the aim of making the public more aware of the importance of media freedom. Produced by JWT Tunis and with “Free until when?” as its message, the campaign is being carried out by means of inserts in the print media and posters.

Supervised from Reporters Without Borders headquarters in Paris, the Tunis bureau will work in close cooperation with local press freedom organizations including the Monitoring Centre for Media Freedom, Publishing and Creation, the Tunis Centre for Media Freedom, the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights and the National Council for Freedoms in Tunisia.

The bureau will reinforce Reporters Without Borders’ international presence, which already includes nine permanent sections and bureaus.

14 Oct 2011

Kyrgyzstan: Election campaign brings return of prior censorship

Original published date: 13 Oct 2011
Country: Kyrgyzstan
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/election-campaign-brings-return-of-13-10-2011,41186.html>

Reporters Without Borders is very worried by the desire being expressed by Kyrgyzstan's parliamentarians to assert their control over the media and, in particular, by the impact of a law banning direct retransmission of all foreign TV stations in the run-up to the 30 October presidential election.

"A series of repressive measures are dashing hopes that Kyrgyzstan would be the post-Soviet world's first parliamentary democracy," Reporters Without Borders said. "The latest measure, more muddle-headed than previous ones, marks the return of prior censorship. Even if applicable only to foreign broadcasts received in Kyrgyzstan, it opens a vast breach in freedom of information.

"Under the pretext of combating foreign interference, parliament is restricting the right of Kyrgyz citizens to diverse news and information, and is creating unprecedented chaos on the airwaves and TV screens. With two and a half weeks to go to the elections, the authorities must scrap this unworkable, unfair and dangerous law."

Implementation of the law "On the election of the president and members of parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic," adopted on 30 June, has completely disrupted retransmission of foreign radio and TV stations for the past two weeks. TV broadcasts have been repeatedly interrupted, some radio stations have had to change frequencies, programmes have been jammed or replaced by "tasteful" images, or broadcasts have been stopped altogether.

Article 22 § 16 of the law stipulates that retransmission of foreign broadcasts must be delayed in order to ensure compliance with another provision in the same paragraph banning retransmission of any electoral propaganda and any content in the foreign broadcast media "attacking the honour, dignity and reputation of candidates." Local broadcasters and cable TV companies are held responsible for any violations.

Recent proposed amendments rescinding or imposing a moratorium on this provision have resulted in stormy debates but have not been adopted. Although the debate is not yet over, the provision took effect on 29 September and is being implemented in utterly chaotic manner.

Foreign TV station blackout

The operators that retransmit foreign broadcasts, including the Russian TV stations that are very popular in Kyrgyzstan, are obliged to go through them with a fine-tooth comb in order to eliminate any problematic content before retransmission. But what are the acceptable limits for criticism of candidates? Who is in charge of editing? The law does not say, which leaves the politicians and judges too much leeway in their interpretation. So the operators play safe by opting for blanket censorship.

The lack of clear directives is not the only problem. The companies that retransmit foreign TV stations do not have the necessary recording and monitoring equipment. And in most cases, the contracts linking them with foreign content producers forbid any modification of content.

As a result, they have ended up just suspending most foreign TV stations for the entire election campaign. Those affected include the BBC, CNN, Euronews, the Russian news station RBK and the independent Central Asian station K+. The very popular Russian TV station 1 Kanal reached a compromise with the Kyrgyz authorities and is itself delaying retransmission to Kyrgyzstan by an hour.

"The implementation of this law is a clear violation of the public's right to information," Reporters Without Borders said. "There is no need to stress the absurd and desperate aspect of this attempt to combat 'interference by foreign media in the country's sovereign news space.' More serious is its reintroduction of official censorship, previously seen as a thing of the past since the overthrow of Kurmanbek Bakiyev's autocratic regime in April 2010."

One of the leading instigators of this article, Ata-Meken party leader Omurbek Tekebayev, made his intentions clear in a

statement to a parliamentary commission on 27 September. “There must be censorship in Kyrgyzstan,” he said. “And it is the editor in chief of every media who must act as censor on behalf of the state.”

Tekebayev added: “If a local media does not have a specialist in charge of monitoring and vetting content, then that media has no right to exist. Because this specialist is the editor in chief.” While recognizing the impossibility of controlling the online versions of foreign media, Tekebayev insisted the Kyrgyz media would be held responsible for the problematic content to which they provided links.

5 Kanal rivalry

The foreign media are unfortunately not the only ones that Kyrgyzstan’s parliamentarians want to control. One of the country’s most popular TV stations, 5 Kanal, is at the centre of a battle for the appropriation of its media resources. Modern and well-equipped, it belonged to former President Bakiyev’s family and was nationalized after his overthrow. Since then it has been turned into a relatively independent public TV station.

Against President Roza Otunbayeva’s advice, parliamentarians confirmed their intention on 22 September to turn 5 Kanal into a parliamentary TV station although they lack the funds to run it and their sessions are not long enough to fill the station’s broadcast time. But at least they would be rid of its often critical coverage of their activities, which has already resulted in the station losing its parliamentary accreditation.

Parliamentary speaker Akhmatbek Keldibekov took another step towards the station’s politicization by publicly calling for its transfer to be speeded up, apparently because he cannot wait for it to start criticizing President Otunbayeva.

This approach to freedom of expression is not new, as parliament already recommended blocking access to the Central Asian independent news website Fergananeews.com. But the election campaign has prompted much more criticism of the media from the political elite in recent weeks.

The Central Electoral Commission also caused an outcry at the end of July by refusing to accredit 11 online news agencies to cover the elections and disseminate election propaganda on the grounds that online media were not explicitly included in the legal definition of “mass media.”

13 Oct 2011

Rwanda: UNHCR urged to review decision to withdraw refugee status from Rwandan refugees

Original published date: 11 Oct 2011

Country: Rwanda

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/rwanda-unhcr-urged-to-review-decision-to-11-10-2011,41158.html>

Reporters Without Borders fails to understand a decision by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to urge countries that have given asylum to Rwandan refugees to withdraw their refugee status by the middle of next year on the grounds that political life in Rwanda is back to normal.

“What normalization is UNCHR talking about?” Reporters Without Borders asked. “President Paul Kagame was reelected with 93 per cent of the vote in 2010 in an election in which his main opponents could not take part. One is in prison and another is in exile and escaped an assassination attempt. The Rwandan authorities do not tolerate criticism. The independent press is harassed.

“Even in exile, some refugees are in danger. Three Rwandan refugee journalists were the victims of a mysterious attack in the Ugandan capital of Kampala at the end of August. Another Rwandan journalist had a similar experience in Kampala a year ago. The assailants in both cases spoke Kinyarwanda. Dozens of people, including many journalists, will be endangered if governments and UNHCR withdraw the refugee status of Rwandan refugees and make them go back to Rwanda.”

A meeting of the governments of asylum countries and other relevant actors is to be held in December to organize what is to be done with Rwandan refugees. UNHCR spokesperson Fatoumata Lejeune-Kaba said the refugee agency intends to recommend cessation of refugee status for Rwandans by 30 June 2012.

A Rwandan journalist who is a refugee in Europe told Reporters Without Borders: “The refugee camps continue to be the main recruiting centres of children and youths by armed groups so dismantling them is the best way to combat the reorganization of these dangerous armed groups in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. But it would be a big mistake, a grave human rights violation, to turn a blind eye to the suppression of free expression in Rwanda and to withdraw the refugee status of government opponents, journalists and human rights activists, who would risk imprisonment or murder.”

Another Rwandan journalist, one who is refugee in southern Africa, said: “Lots of Rwandan refugees live in appalling conditions outside of Rwanda, above all in nearby African countries. If they don’t go back, they must have a reason. We want to return to a country where our rights and freedoms are guaranteed. But in Rwanda, you just have to be unfairly accused of ‘genocide denial’ or ‘revisionism’ and you go to jail. We cannot return to a country where arbitrary justice reigns.”

Reporters Without Borders points out that two women journalists, Agnes Uwimana Nkusi and Saidath Mukakibibi, are serving sentences of 17 and seven years in jail respectively on charges of inciting civil disobedience, causing divisions and denying the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis.

Every year, Reporters Without Borders registers several cases of Rwandan journalists being threatened, harassed and forced to flee the country. Around 10 have fled abroad since the start of 2010. Reporters Without Borders has approved 10 assistance grants for Rwandan journalists or their families during the same period.

Cessation of refugee status would jeopardize the safety of many Rwandan journalists who have been helped by Reporters Without Borders.

In a report released to mark World Refugee Day on 20 June, entitled “Forced to flee but not silenced – exile media fight on,” Reporters Without Borders included a profile of Jean-Bosco Gasasira, the Rwandan editor of the Umuvugizi.com news website, who is a refugee in Sweden. Read the report.

Rwanda is ranked 169th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. This is Africa’s third worst ranking. Only Eritrea and Sudan are below it in the index.

More information on media freedom in Rwanda.

11 Oct 2011

occupied Palestinian territory: Hamas restricts foreign journalists' access to Gaza Strip

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Country: occupied Palestinian territory
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - 6 October 2011 - Reporters Without Borders is worried by the Hamas interior ministry's adoption of new rules that will make it harder for foreign journalists to visit the Gaza Strip.

Under the new rules, adopted on 25 September, every foreigner wanting to enter the Gaza Strip via the Rafah and Erez crossings will have to apply in advance to the interior ministry in Gaza. Processing the application could take several days.

The government says the new measures are needed for security and control purposes. Italian activist Vittorio Arrigoni's murder by an armed group on 15 April has heightened concern about the safety of foreigners in the Gaza Strip.

Journalists submitting applications will have to include ID photos and a photocopy of their passport, and will have to name a "guarantor" in the Gaza Strip.

Members of the Foreign Press Association nonetheless voiced a degree of optimism after a meeting yesterday with the head of Hamas media relations, Hassan Abu Hashish. Some thought the need for initial authorization and the waiting period could mean that journalists would be able to get accreditation valid for a year.

Reporters Without Borders believes the new rules will hamper journalists' freedom of movement and complicate covering the Gaza Strip even more. It therefore urges the authorities to rescind the decision and facilitate the international media's access to the Gaza Strip.

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06 Oct 2011

World: No one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance

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Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/no-one-shall-be-subjected-to-30-08-2011,40875.html>

As the world marks International Day of the Disappeared today, Reporters Without Borders notes that many countries are still violating international law on this matter, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which the UN General Assembly adopted in 2006.

Reporters Without Borders calls for the universal ratification of this convention, which has so far been signed by 91 countries and ratified by 29. Combating enforced disappearance is vital in the struggle against dictatorships and arbitrary rule.

Enforced disappearance includes both secret imprisonment and secret house arrest, in which the families of the victims are denied any information about their fate or where they are being held. It is a form of abduction and sometimes ends in murder.

It is a radical method of oppression in which human rights defenders, opposition activists, free speech activists and independent journalists are removed from society because they are often on the front line of the struggle against authoritarian regimes. As well censoring calls for freedom and justice, dictatorships target those who make the calls.

Enforced disappearances, which contravene international law and often the law of the countries where they take place, must be condemned firmly. Without an effective struggle against this evil, without binding measures that require respect for the basic legal rules on arrest and detention, any improvement in fundamental freedoms is impossible. The widespread or systematic practice of enforced disappearance is a crime against humanity. The prosecution of those responsible should be a priority.

Article 2 of the convention defines “enforced disappearance” as “the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.”

Iran and China have turned enforced disappearance into a favoured method of censoring free speech. The uprisings in Libya and Syria have led to extra-judicial arrests of many journalists. Mexico has many cases of unsolved disappearances of journalists. The inhumane prison conditions in Eritrea, a small country forgotten by the international community, must be condemned. And finally, disappearances are also common in Pakistan, the world’s most dangerous country for journalists. Reporters Without Borders highlights several key cases below.

IRAN

Human rights and pro-democracy activist Pirouz Davani, editor of the paper Pirouz, vanished in late August 1998. The paper Kar-e-Karagar said on 28 November that year he had been executed. Akbar Ganji, of Sobh-é-Emrouz, who was investigating the case, confirmed this in late November 2000 and accused the then prosecutor of the special ecclesiastical court, Mohseni Ejehi, (the current prosecutor-general) of being involved in his death. The judiciary has not investigated.

Journalist Kouhyar Goudarzi has been held in secret since 1 August 2011 for unknown reasons and justice officials have not said where he is being held.

CHINA

Human rights campaigner Govruud Huuchinhuu, of the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance (SMDA), has been missing since she was released on 27 January 2011 from Tongliao hospital (?), Inner Mongolia (northern China), where she was being treated for cancer. She had been under house arrest since November 2010 for urging online that Mongolian dissidents celebrate the release of journalist and cyberdissident Hada, who heads the SDMA and defends China’s Mongolian minority. Officials say he was freed after more than 15 years at the end of his sentence on 10 December 2010 but he is still in prison. There has been no news of him for several weeks.

PAKISTAN

Journalist Rehmatullah Darpakhel was kidnapped in North Waziristan on 11 August 2011.

SRI LANKA

Prageeth Ekneligoda, journalist and cartoonist with Lankaenews, vanished in Colombo on 24 January 2010. No progress has been made in efforts to find him.

ERITREA

Most of the 30 or so journalists in prison are considered to have disappeared because of the problems of finding them and the regime's refusal to give any information about where they are and their state of health. The best known is Dawit Isaac, founder of the now-closed weekly Setit and holding dual Eritrean and Swedish nationality, who since his arrest on 23 September 2001 has alternated between prison and hospital spells in the capital, Asmara. He was transferred in 2009 from a provincial prison in Embatkala to the air force hospital in Asmara, where he was treated for several months. Then he vanished and nobody has been allowed to visit him. He may be in Asmara's Karchelle prison or in the Eiraeiro prison, northeast of the capital.

Other vanished journalists include the editor and co-founder of the fortnightly Meqaleh, Mattewos Habteab, arrested in Asmara on 19 September 2001, and sports writer Temesgen Gebreyesus, of the fortnightly Keste Debena, who was arrested the next day.

MEXICO

Journalist María Esther Aguilar Cansimbe, of the daily papers Diario de Zamora and Cambio de Michoacán (in the southwestern state of Michoacán), disappeared in 2009. Marco Antonio López Ortiz, news editor of the Acapulco paper El Sur (in the southwestern state of Guerrero), vanished in June 2011. No official investigation has produced any results.

VIETNAM

The netizen Paulus Le Son was arrested on 3 August 2011 in Hanoi in the course of a major police operation targeting a dozen Catholics. There has been no news of him since then. It was the second time he was arrested this year.

MIDDLE EAST

Many foreign and Libyan journalists were detained for several days by supporters of the Gaddafi regime with no news of where they were being held or their conditions of detention. Disappearances are also frequent in Syria of journalists, activists and witnesses to the repression by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

31 Aug 2011

Afghanistan: French journalists, interpreter released after being held hostage for 18 months

Original published date: 30 Jun 2011
Country: Afghanistan
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

SOURCE: Reporters Without Borders

(RSF/IFEX) - 29 June 2011 - Reporters Without Borders is delighted by today's release of French journalists Hervé Ghesquière and Stéphane Taponier and their Afghan interpreter Reza Din, who were abducted by a Taliban group on 29 December 2009 in the northeastern province of Kapisa while doing a report for the French TV station France 3.

"We are greatly relieved by this news, which we have constantly awaited throughout the 547 days that the hostages spent in captivity," Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Jean-François Julliard said. "Our recent meetings with the Afghan authorities and the French officials in charge of the case had led us to believe that they would be freed soon.

"We hail all the efforts undertaken by the French and Afghan governments, which led to Ghesquière and Taponier and their interpreter being freed safe and sound as a result of negotiation. We hope they will all be reunited with their families very soon."

Kapisa governor Abdol Hakim Akhonzadeh, who was reached in the town of Tagab, told Reporters Without Borders that the journalists were freed at around 5 p.m. today (local time). The Elysée Palace immediately notified their families, who were participating in a rally in support of the journalists in Igor Stravinski Square in Paris.

Held on the day they would have completed 18 months in captivity, the rally included a display recreating the conditions in which they were being held. It was staged by Reporters Without Borders with the aim of increasing public awareness of their plight and launching a new appeal for their release.

A Reporters Without Borders delegation consisting of Julliard, the organisation's president Dominique Gerbaud and Afghanistan researcher Reza Moini visited Kabul from 20 to 25 June to gather information about the situation of the hostages. They met with information and culture minister Makhdom Raheen, foreign minister Zalmai Rasoul, national security commission chairman Rangin Dadfar Spanta, French ambassador Bernard Bajolet and various journalists' associations.

Afghanistan continues to be one of the world's most dangerous countries for media personal and Afghan journalists pay a high price for working with foreign media. At least 15 journalists have been kidnapped by criminal or insurgent groups in Afghanistan since the start of 2009.

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30 Jun 2011

Sudan (the): More journalists hounded, prosecuted for covering human rights violations

Original published date: 18 Jun 2011
Country: Sudan (the)
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - 18 June 2011 - Reporters Without Borders roundly condemns the disgraceful way the authorities are harassing and prosecuting journalists in Khartoum and the north of the country in an attempt to silence them and stop embarrassing revelations about human rights violations by the security forces.

"While the international community and media have their attention turned to South Sudan's future independence and the fighting in Abyei and South Kordofan, the human rights and media freedom situation continues to be very worrying in the north," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Despite a great deal of prior censorship, the government and security forces now want to force journalists to censor themselves. The recent arrests of journalists and the prosecutions initiated against them are likely to dissuade the media from covering crimes by the security forces. Since the start of this year, any criticism of the security forces has been liable to lead to court proceedings.

"We denounced the harassment of journalists and the way the judicial apparatus was being used against them in March. Since then, the situation has become even worse and could lead to a complete news blackout on human rights violations in the north of the country."

According to a Reporters Without Borders tally, around 10 journalists and media contributors have received court summonses or are subject to judicial investigations that are almost certainly the result of complaints brought by the security forces.

The following journalists were on an unofficial list that the security forces submitted to the justice ministry: Faisal Mohamed Salih, Babikir Omer Al-Garrai, Abdalla Al-Shaik, Mohamed Latif, Faiz Al-Selaik, Amal Habani, Fatima Ghazali, Saadeldin Ibrahim, Mohamed Osman and Dr. Nahid Al-Hassan.

All of them have written or contributed to articles condemning human rights activist Safia Ishag's arrest, torture and gang-rape by members of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) in February.

They are liable to be prosecuted under the 1991 Criminal Code and the 1999 Press Act on charges of defaming and spreading false information about the security forces, which are protected by the National Security Act.

One of the latest cases involves three journalists with the daily Al-Jarida, who appeared before the Press Court on 12 June: Amal Habani, who was already questioned by judicial officials in March, Fatima Ghazali and Saadeldin Ibrahim, the newspaper's editor.

Habani and Ibrahim were summoned to appear again on 16 June, when judge Modather Al-Rasheed, after hearing evidence from NISS representatives and their lawyers, decided to prosecute them under article 66 of the Criminal Code (concerning false information), article 24 of the Press Act (on the duties and obligations of journalists) and article 26 of the Press Act (on the duties of editors). The next hearing will be on 30 June. Ghazali is due to appear in court on 19 June, together with Ibrahim.

Two weeks before that, three journalists appeared before the Press Court in Khartoum in two separate cases on 29 May. They were Faisal Mohamed Salih, a renowned journalist working for the Arabic-language newspaper Al-Akhbar, Babikir Omer Al-Garrai, a writer who contributes to the daily Ajras Alhurriya, and Ajras Alhurriya editor Abdalla Al-Shaik.

Al-Garrai and Al-Shaik are being prosecuted for a 6 March article headlined "Rape...Under Sharia law" which urged the authorities to shed light on the mistreatment of Ishag. They are due to appear in court again on 21 June.

Salih, who is due to appear in court again on 28 June, and his newspaper's editor, Mohamed Latif, are being prosecuted on a libel charge under article of the Press Act over a 1 March story in which Salih said NISS personnel were avoiding prosecution and were enjoying complete impunity under the National Security Act although the head of the security forces had issued no express directive to this effect.

Fellow journalist Abdelazeez Al-Nagar, who went to the Press Court on 29 May in a show of support for his three colleagues, was arrested for distributing articles outside and was held for several hours.

The list of journalists targeted by the security forces grows longer by the day. They include Reporters Without Borders Sudan correspondent Faisal Elbagir, the founder of Journalists for Human Rights, who is currently in exile. Mohamed Osman, the head of the Khartoum bureau of the English-language newspaper The Citizen, and Nahid Al-Hassan, an activist and contributor to Ajras al-Hurriya and Al-Ayaam, are also being investigated and Al-Hassan has received a summons for 6 July.

Finally, Al-Sahafa daily journalist Gafar Al-sabki Ibrahim, who has been detained together with Radio Dabanga contributors since 3 November 2010, appeared before the Khartoum Criminal Central Court on 16 June 2011. The next session, held by the judge Abdelmoniem Salim Mohamed Ali, will take place on 21 June.

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24 Jun 2011

Côte d'Ivoire: La presse d'opposition reprend sa diffusion alors qu'un cadre de société éditrice est interpellé

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Country: Côte d'Ivoire
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
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Language: French
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - Reporters sans frontières vient d'apprendre la réapparition le 23 mai 2011 dans les kiosques d'Abidjan du quotidien "Notre Voie", absent depuis la chute du président sortant Laurent Gbagbo le 11 avril. Les locaux du journal, proche du Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI, parti de Laurent Gbagbo), avaient été saccagés et occupés par des soldats des Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) qui empêchaient les journalistes de travailler. Des responsables du Fonds de Soutien et de Développement à la presse (FSDP), ont récemment visité les rédactions des journaux proches de l'ancien régime qui avaient subi des attaques et des pillages lors de la crise post-électorale. Les autres journaux proches de l'ancien pouvoir tels que "Le Temps", "Le Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan", "Le Quotidien d'Abidjan" et "Prestige Mag", devraient réparaître dans les jours à venir.

Un mois après l'accession au pouvoir du président Alassane Ouattara, Reporters sans frontières avait fait part de son inquiétude de voir les médias d'opposition étouffés et redoutait que ne se développe une pensée unique en Côte d'Ivoire. L'organisation estime que, tout en étant consciente des dérapages dont le quotidien a pu se rendre coupable par le passé, son retour en kiosques est un signe encourageant vers le respect du pluralisme.

Par ailleurs, Reporters sans frontières a appris la libération de Nina Bolou, directrice des ressources humaines de Cyclone, la société éditrice du journal "Le Temps", interpellée et détenue par des éléments incontrôlés des FRCI du Président Alassane Ouattara, le 24 mai au matin. Elle a été libérée le jour même en début de soirée. Nina Bolou a été interrogée sur ses activités professionnelles en raison de ses liens avec le journal "Le Temps", lié au Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), le parti du président sortant Laurent Gbagbo.

Reporters sans frontières accueille avec un sentiment mitigé cette libération. L'organisation est certes soulagée par cette nouvelle, mais il reste que son interpellation, aux allures d'enlèvement, ressemble à une tentative d'intimidation contre la rédaction du journal, qui devrait réparaître dans les jours à venir. Ce règlement de comptes est inacceptable.

Cet épisode survient au lendemain de la nouvelle de la mort de Sylvain Gagnetaud, membre de l'Organisation des journalistes professionnels de Côte d'Ivoire, journaliste et présentateur à la Radio de Yopougon.

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26 May 2011

Côte d'Ivoire: Opposition press resumes publishing; newspaper executive questioned amid reprisals against pro-Gbagbo media

Original published date: 26 May 2011
Country: Côte d'Ivoire
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - "Notre Voie", a daily that supports former President Laurent Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), was on sale on 23 May 2011 in Abidjan for the first time since Gbagbo's ouster on 11 April. The newspaper's offices had been ransacked and occupied by soldiers loyal to the new President, Alassane Ouattara, which prevented its journalists from working.

Officers from the Press Support and Development Fund (FSDP) recently visited the headquarters of pro-Gbagbo newspapers that were attacked and ransacked during the prolonged post-election crisis. Other pro-Gbagbo newspapers such as "Le Temps", "Le Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan", "Le Quotidien d'Abidjan" and "Prestige Mag" are expected to resume publishing in the next few days.

After President Ouattara assumed power, Reporters Without Borders voiced concern that the pro-Gbagbo press would be suppressed at the expense of media diversity. Although "Notre Voie" has been guilty of excesses in the past, Reporters Without Borders regards its reappearance as an encouraging sign of respect for pluralism.

In a more recent development, Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that Nina Bolou, the personnel director of the company that publishes the daily "Le Temps", was freed on the evening of 24 May after being arrested earlier that morning by forces loyal to President Alassane Ouattara and questioned about her work for the newspaper, which supports the FPI.

The press freedom organisation reiterates its condemnation of her arrest, which resembled an abduction and seemed designed to intimidate the staff of a newspaper that is due to resume publishing in the next few days. It is unacceptable that news media should be the target of reprisals because of their support for Gbagbo.

Bolou's arrest coincides with the news that Sylvain Gagnetaud, a pro-Gbagbo presenter on Radio Yopougon and leading member of the Professional Journalists Organisation of Côte d'Ivoire, was murdered in the Abidjan suburb of Yopougon in early May.

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26 May 2011

Uganda: Ten reporters injured by security forces while covering opposition leader's return

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Country: Uganda
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières

SOURCE: Reporters Without Borders

(RSF/IFEX) - At least 10 Ugandan and foreign journalists were physically attacked by soldiers on 12 May 2011 while covering opposition leader Kizza Besigye's return to Uganda from Kenya, where he was treated for injuries received when the security forces used force to disperse an opposition demonstration in Kampala in April.

The violence, which took place as President Yoweri Museveni was being sworn in for a fourth term, was the latest round in a campaign to gag the media that has been waged ever since Museveni's election victory in February and the start of "walk-to-work" demonstrations in April.

"We condemn violence against journalists who are just doing their job as reporters," Reporters Without Borders said. "The opposition leader's return to Kampala was a major political event that had to be covered for the Ugandan public. The security forces should not confuse an event's participants with the journalists who are just observing it. The election campaign in late 2010 and early 2011 was already fraught for reporters. The situation is now worse, with demonstrations that are dangerous to cover."

The press freedom organisation added: "We urge the authorities to see reason. President Museveni's government must put a stop to these press freedom violations. We also call on the international community to take a firmer line with the government and insist that it guarantee the safety of journalists and respect diversity of opinion."

On 12 May, a group of soldiers aboard a vehicle with the licence number H4DF 632 assaulted journalists covering Besigye's arrival, accusing them of photographing soldiers beating up civilians. Several reporters, including Stephen Otage of the "Daily Monitor", had their equipment confiscated. Photos taken by foreign journalists were immediately deleted by the security forces.

One of the victims told Reporters Without Borders that most of the journalists who were attacked by police or soldiers had shown their press ID. That did not stop them from being beaten.

Ten journalists were injured. They were Mercy Nalugo ("Daily Monitor"), Barbra Among (Vision Group), Rogers Kibirige (Vision Group), Kigongo Ssebalamu (Vision Group), Robert Mutebi (Vision Group), Michael Kakumirizi ("Red Pepper"), Peacock Kaweesa ("Red Pepper"), Eddie Ssejjoba (Vision Group), Raymond Ayebare ("The Razor") and Simon Njala Kaggwa (Akaboozi Radio).

Ssejjoba and Mutebi were treated in a private hospital in Kampala. Ayebare was evacuated in an ambulance, bleeding profusely from a blow to the head.

The violence came just two days after President Museveni lambasted some news media at a news conference, accusing them of supporting the demonstrations against food and gasoline price hikes that have been taking place since mid-April.

Journalists who Reporters Without Borders prefers not to identify have been forced to go into hiding in the past month after receiving death threats.

William Ntege, a journalist with Wavah Broadcasting Service (WBS), was briefly detained while covering an opposition parliamentarian's arrest on 2 May. Christine Nabatanzi of Radio Simba was hit in the leg by a rubber bullet fired by riot police while covering an opposition Democratic Party demonstration the same day.

18 May 2011

Côte d'Ivoire: President Ouattara wants to ensure all journalists can work freely, says Côte d'Ivoire ambassador to France

Original published date: 14 Apr 2011
Country: Côte d'Ivoire
Theme: Protection and Human Rights
Content format: News and Press Release
Language: English
Source: International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Reporters sans Frontières

(RSF/IFEX) - 14 April 2011 - A top official of Côte d'Ivoire's new government has assured Reporters Without Borders that it will respect media freedom, after the organisation called for an end to the disruption and abuses of the country's media during the past several months of conflict, for laws decriminalising media offences to be retained and for opposition journalists to be allowed to work freely.

Two representatives of the organisation met Ivorian ambassador to France Ally Coulibaly yesterday with the family of disappeared journalist Guy-André Kieffer.

"We won't make the same mistakes as the previous government," Coulibaly told them. "We know what is expected of us. President Ouattara wants to ensure all journalists can work freely."

Reporters Without Borders said the conflict had very seriously damaged media freedom, with the authorities seizing control of regulatory bodies and using state media for propaganda and with journalists unable to work because of lawlessness, threats and censorship. Both sides had disrupted the reporting of news and the new government's declared reconciliation policy should include respecting media plurality and the expression of all opinions, it said.

Coulibaly said big changes would have to be made in the state broadcaster Radio-Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI), which has become a propaganda organ in recent years putting out hate material and not performing its public service role.

Reporters Without Borders suggested changing RTI's recruitment practices, with candidates required to have professional qualifications and to respect journalistic ethics, and called for the powers and independence of the regulatory bodies, the national press council (CNP) and national broadcasting council (CNCA), to be respected. It said it would closely monitor the overall situation and offered to help the work of ensuring media freedom.

The press freedom organisation said it was still very concerned about the risk of reprisals and score-settling, caused by the sharp polarisation of the country's media, and about the safety of many Ivorian journalists. The director-general of RTI, Brou Amessan, was beaten up on 6 April by members of the pro-Ouattara Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) and received injuries to his foot and hand.

Several journalists of the Olympe press group, which publishes the daily papers Soir Info and L'Inter, have stayed in their Abidjan offices since 31 March for fear of reprisals in some parts of the city. A reporter from L'Inter was beaten at a roadblock by Ouattara supporters in Treichville on 11 April.

Some journalists close to the ousted regime have gone into hiding while others are still being threatened by remnants of ex-President Laurent Gbagbo's Jeunes patriotes militia. Meanwhile, several of the country's daily papers will soon reappear. Local relay transmission of the French TV stations TV5 Monde and France 24 has also resumed. Their broadcasts had been suspended in December 2010 by the CNCA.

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15 Apr 2011

Iraq: EU calls for international observers to probe clashes in Camp Ashraf

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Language: English
Source: Reporters sans Frontières
Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/iraq-journalists-denied-entry-to-camp-09-04-2011,39996.html>

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said on 9 April that the EU was “deeply disturbed at reports of the use of force against Camp Ashraf residents in Iraq, resulting in casualties.” Deploring the loss of life, Ashton called on the Iraqi government “to grant access to Camp Ashraf to independent international observers in order that they can provide a comprehensive picture of the situation.” (Read her statement: http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/fr/article_10934_fr.htm)

According to information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, a young woman who was filming the events in Camp Ashraf, Asieh Rakhshani, and Saba Haftbaradaran, a journalist working for the satellite TV station Iranntv.com, were killed on 8 April. <http://www.youtube.com/user/iranntv?feature=chclk#p/u/69/qhMSiOo3p0M>

The independent international observers who are sent to Iraq to investigate the events in Camp Ashraf must shed light on the circumstances of the deaths of these two young women, along with the deaths of all the other people killed by the Iraqi army in the course of the clashes of the past few days, Reporters Without Borders said. Those responsible must be punished. Impunity must not be the rule in Iraq today.

09.04.2011 - Journalists denied entry to Camp Ashraf after Iraqi army attack

Reporters Without Borders condemns the news blackout imposed by the Iraqi authorities on events at Camp Ashraf, a camp in northern Iraq that houses 3,500 Iranian exiles. An attack by the Iraqi army yesterday reportedly resulted in the deaths of around 30 residents and many wounded.

“This news blackout is unacceptable,” Reporters Without Borders said. “The security forces are denying journalists access to the camp to hide abuses committed against civilians. Anyone trying to take photographs of the clashes is being attacked in a systematic and targeted fashion.”

According to several news organizations, the camp is surrounded by armoured vehicles and army trucks. Journalists have been forced to remain at the camp gates. No media personnel have been allowed inside.

Located 60 km west of the Iranian border and 120 km north of Baghdad, Camp Ashraf was set up in the 1980s to house members of the People’s Mujahideen, a militant Iranian movement opposed to Iran’s Islamic regime.

US forces began disarming them after the 2003 invasion. Since then the camp’s residents have been protected under the Geneva Conventions. After overseeing the camp for six years, the US military handed over control to the Iraqi authorities in January 2009.

The Iraqi authorities have banned journalists from entering the camp since July 2009, following clashes between Iraqi security forces and the camp’s residents (<http://en.rsf.org/iraq-journalists-detained-for-trying-to-05-08-2009,340...>). The residents accuse the Iraqi authorities of trying to please the Iranian government while the Iraqis blame claim the violence on the Mujahideen.

14 Apr 2011

Côte d'Ivoire: Cote d'Ivoire: RTI reportedly broadcasting from mobile truck

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Country: Côte d'Ivoire

Theme: Protection and Human Rights

Content format: News and Press Release

Language: English

Source: Reporters sans Frontières

Origin notes: <http://en.rsf.org/cote-d-ivoire-control-of-news-and-information-01-04-2011,39936.html>

While yesterday's resumption of broadcasting by state-owned Radio-Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI) gave the impression that its headquarters had been recovered by forces loyal to Laurent Gbagbo, various local sources have told Reporters Without Borders that the Gbagbo camp could be broadcasting the RTI signal from an Abidjan house using a mobile broadcast truck.

This is also what Capt. Kouakou Léon Alla, the spokesman of the government of Gbagbo rival Alassane Ouattara, claims in communiqué, a copy of which has been obtained by Reporters Without Borders.

"The Prime Minister and defence minister [Guillaume Soro] assures all Ivoirians and the international community that it is by using a mobile truck that the Gbagbo clan pirates are trying to revive RTI in order to continue their propaganda for the destruction of Côte d'Ivoire," says communiqué No. 030 of 02/04/11/CAB-PM-MD/PP, signed by Alla.

"This vehicle is the target of a search by the [pro-Ouattara] Republican Forces and will be destroyed as soon as possible," the communiqué continues. "RTI's actual installations are no longer functional."

The Gbagbo government's spokesman, Ahoua Don Mello, and its foreign minister, Alcide Djédjé, deny these claims and insist that their camp still has control of RTI.

Several sources who live near the RTI headquarters in the Abidjan neighbourhood of Cocody, told Reporters Without Borders that there was no one currently in the building.

President Gbagbo gave RTI a mobile broadcasting truck worth 1 billion CFA francs in February 2009, along with two Fly-Away mobile TV signal satellite uplinks.

"Propaganda and public appeals to Ivoirians to mobilize are compounding such rumours and mysteries of the past 72 hours as who controls RTI and where Laurent Gbagbo is," Reporters Without Borders said. "The fierce street fighting is being accompanied by an all-out communication and information war. We caution all the forces involved against using the media to issue messages of hate against opposing forces or civilian groups."

03 Apr 2011