

# ROUND-UP 2016

of journalists killed worldwide

**REPORTERS  
WITHOUT BORDERS**  
FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



## ROUND-UP OF JOURNALISTS KILLED WORLDWIDE

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Round-up for the period 1 January to 10 December 2016

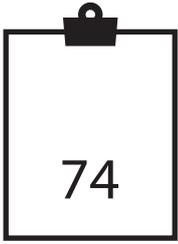
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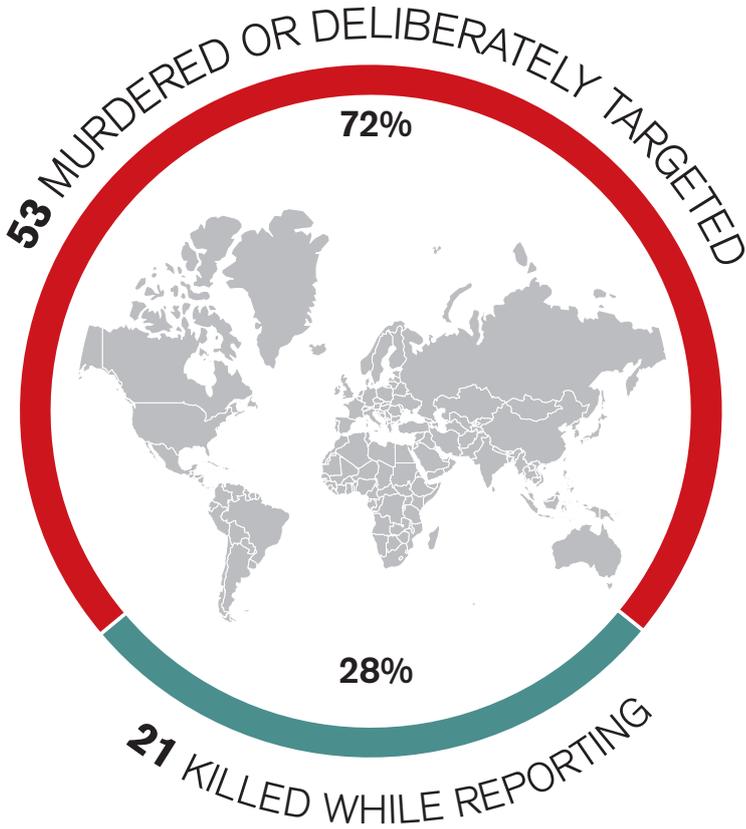
#### **About RSF**

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) promotes and defends freedom of information throughout the world. Based in Paris, it has bureaux in Berlin, London, Brussels, Geneva, Helsinki, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Stockholm, Tunis, Vienna and Washington, and has correspondents in 130 countries. It has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).



# JOURNALISTS KILLED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROVISION OF NEWS AND INFORMATION

-27% ↘

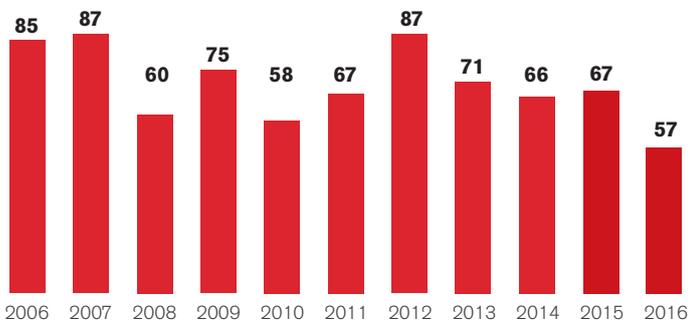


### MURDERED OR DELIBERATELY TARGETED:

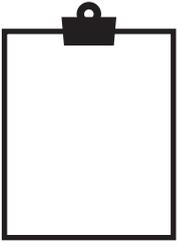
Journalists who were deliberately killed because of their work.

### KILLED WHILE REPORTING:

Journalists killed while out reporting, without being deliberately targeted as journalists.



At least 780 professional journalists have been killed in connection with their work since 2006.

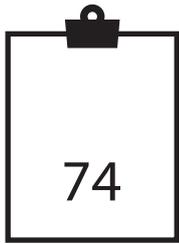


## HOW WE CALCULATE THESE FIGURES

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For the first time, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has included not only professional journalists but also citizen journalists and media contributors in the annual round-up's overall figures. Until now the three categories were counted separately. The change is due to the fact that citizen journalists and media contributors are playing a growing role in the production of news and information, especially in countries with oppressive regimes and countries at war, where it is hard for professional journalists to operate. As much as possible, the round-up nonetheless distinguishes professional journalists from the other categories in its breakdowns, in order to facilitate comparison with previous years.

In calculating our figures for journalists killed, we gather detailed information that allows us to confirm with certainty or a great deal of confidence that they were deliberately targeted as journalists or were killed while reporting in the field.



## JOURNALISTS KILLED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROVISION OF NEWS AND INFORMATION

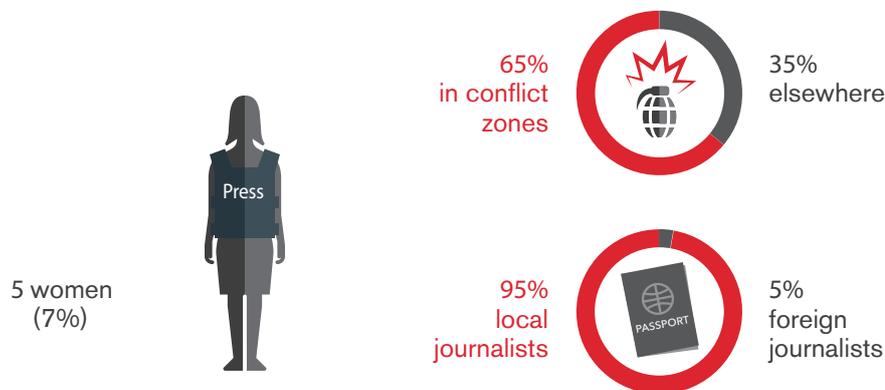
Comprising

57 professional journalists

(compared with 67 last year, a 15% decrease)

9 citizen journalists

8 media contributors



**A total of 74 journalists were murdered or killed in connection with their work in 2016, compared with 101 last year.** This significant fall is due in part to the fact that more and more journalists are fleeing countries that have become too dangerous: not only Syria, Iraq, and Libya, but also Yemen, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Burundi, which have now also become, to varying degrees, news and information black holes where impunity reigns. Another reason for the drop is the terror imposed by [press freedom predators](#), who close media outlets arbitrarily and impose censorship. Regardless of their courage, journalists in countries such as Mexico or South Sudan have no choice but to censor themselves to avoid being murdered.

**Almost three quarters of the journalists killed this year were knowingly targeted as such.** This was, for example, the case in Afghanistan, with ten journalists killed, and in Mexico, with nine killed. These alarming figures reflect the increasingly deliberate use of violence and the failure of international initiatives aimed at helping to protect journalists..

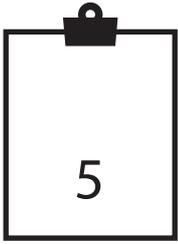
At least 780 professional journalists have been killed in connection with their work since 2006

**Two thirds of the journalists killed this year were in conflict zones**, unlike 2015, when many journalists were killed in countries at peace, like the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. Some countries at peace such as Mexico have nonetheless continued to be a hell for journalists. This year, Mexico has been the world's deadliest country for professional journalists, who were the victims of violence by not only criminal cartels but also by police and government officials, among whom corruption is widespread.

## **Four reporters lost their lives in a foreign country.**

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Almost all of the journalists killed in 2016 were in their own country. Four journalists were killed while in a foreign country. **Syrian journalist Mohammed Zaher al-Shurqat**, a virulent critic of Islamic State and host of a moderate religious programme on Aleppo Today TV, was fatally shot in the head on a street in Gaziantep, a Turkish city near the Syrian border, in April. Islamic State claimed responsibility within hours of the shooting, before he had died of his gunshot wound. **David Gilkey, an American photojournalist** working for America's National Public Radio, was killed in June in Afghanistan when the Taliban ambushed the army convoy with which he was embedded. **Jeroen Oerlemans, a Dutch freelance photojournalist** working for various media including the Belgian weekly Knack, was gunned down by an Islamic State sniper while covering fighting between IS and Government of National Accord forces in the Syrian libyan city of Syrte in early October. **Mohsen Khazai, a 44-year-old Iranian reporter** with state-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), was killed by a shell in November while embedded with pro-Assad Iranian fighters in the Syrian city of Aleppo.



## 5 WOMEN JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2016

### **Mariam Ebrahimi, Mehri Azizi and Zainab Mirzaee (Afghanistan)**

These three women, all employees of privately-owned *Tolo TV*, were killed when the minibus in which they were travelling was the target of a suicide bombing in downtown Kabul on 20 January. Four other employees of the TV channel were killed in the same attack, which came a few months after the Taliban announced that it regarded Tolo TV and Afghanistan's other biggest TV channel, *1 TV*, as "military targets."



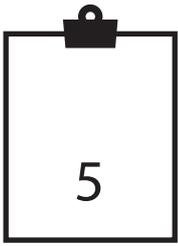
### **Anabel Flores Salazar (Mexico)**

Anabel Flores Salazar, 32, a reporter who covered organized crime for the *El Sol de Orizaba* newspaper in the eastern state of Veracruz, was kidnapped on 8 February. Her semi-naked body, with her hands tied and a plastic bag over her head, was found the next day at a roadside in the neighbouring state Puebla.

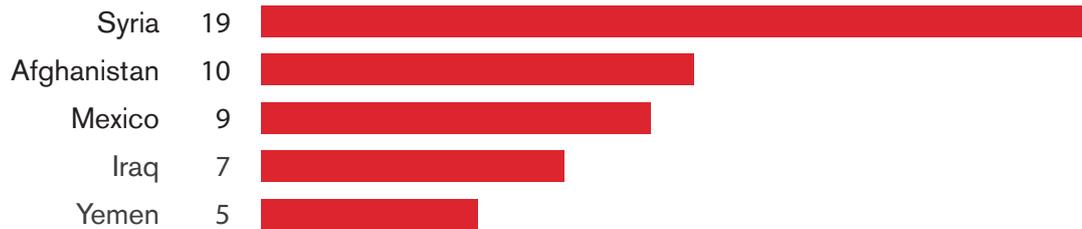


### **Salad Osman Sagal (Somalia)**

A producer and presenter for state-owned *Radio Mogadishu*, this 24-year-old Somali journalist was gunned down in Mogadishu on 5 June. She was also a student at the university, which is where her killers shot her and then fled. No organization claimed her murder, but it had all the hallmarks of yet another targeted killing by Al-Shabaab, an Islamist rebel militia that has slain many journalists in Somalia.



## 5 DEADLIEST COUNTRIES



**JOURNALISTS DELIBERATELY TARGETED OR KILLED  
IN THE COURSE OF THEIR WORK**



### Syria, hell for journalists

A war without end has turned Syria into the world's deadliest country for journalists, with 19 killed in 2016. They include **Osama Jumaa**, a 19-year-old photoreporter for Britain's *Images Live* agency, who was killed on 5 June while covering a rescue operation in a residential district of Aleppo that had just been bombed. It was an everyday war crime in a war-torn country where media freedom is assailed on all sides and where journalists may at any time fall victim to bombing or shelling, get arrested by the regime's operatives or be taken hostage by jihadi rebel groups.



### Targeted by Islamic State in the Iraqi city of Mosul

Journalists have been risking their lives again to cover the military offensive launched in mid-October with the aim of recovering Mosul, a city in northern Iraq that has been under Islamic State control since June 2014. Embedded with Iraqi government forces and Kurdish units, reporters, cameramen, photographers and other media personnel have been targeted by Islamic State's snipers and suicide bombers. **Ali Raysan**, 33, a cameraman with Iraq's *Al-Sumaria TV*, was killed by an IS sniper while filming fighting near Al-Shura, a village south of Mosul, on 22 October. The day before, Ahmed Hajer Oglu, 30, a reporter for *Turkmeneli TV*, was fatally shot by an IS sniper while covering clashes between Peshmerga forces and IS fighters in the city of Kirkuk (170 km southeast of Mosul), where IS launched a counter-offensive. At least 14 journalists were also wounded during the first week of the offensive.



### Crime cartel terror and impunity in Mexico

Mexico continues to be Latin America's deadliest country for the media, with nine professional journalists murdered in 2016. It is also by far the world's deadliest country at peace for journalists. Its criminal cartels, above all Los Zetas, use murder, abduction and the most barbaric forms of violence to impose a reign of terror in the states of the northeast and Gulf of Mexico and thereby deter the media from covering their affairs. The corrupt police and judicial systems look the other way as journalists are targeted. The murder of **Pedro Tamayo Rosas**, 43, a reporter for the *Al Calor Politico* and *Piñero de la Cuenca* newspapers in the eastern state of Veracruz, is a sad example of this impunity. Although under state protection after receiving death threats, he was gunned down outside his home in front of his wife and two children on 20 July. The two gunmen had no problem getting away although there was a police car just ten metres from his home at the time. The police made no attempt to stop them.



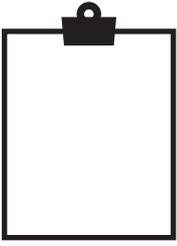
### In Yemen, caught between Houthi militias and Arab coalition air strikes

After a rapid advance from the north, Shia Houthi rebel forces seized control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in September 2014, occupying TV stations and arresting many journalists. The Houthis tolerate no criticism from the media. Houthi leader Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi has even declared open war on media personnel, describing them as more dangerous than the Saudi-led Arab coalition that is fighting the Houthis. Five journalists and media workers were killed in Yemen in 2016, either by Houthi militiamen or Arab coalition air strikes. The victims include **Almigdad Mojalli**, a freelance journalist who was killed in an Arab coalition air strike on Jaref, a Houthi-controlled district on the outskirts of Sanaa, on 17 January. He was injured by shrapnel from an exploding missile and died while being taken to hospital. Aged 34, he worked mainly for foreign media, including *Voice of America*, the London-based *Telegraph* newspaper and the humanitarian news agency IRIN.



### In Afghanistan, the Taliban menace

The war imposed by the Taliban is the main source of the violence in Afghanistan, but the role of the Afghan authorities, armed forces and police in the climate of fear oppressing the media must not be ignored either. Many provincial governors and local officials do not accept media independence. Police and soldiers are often involved in violence against journalists. RSF is particularly concerned for the safety of hundreds of journalists in provinces where attacks by the Taliban and Islamic State are on the rise. These fundamentalist groups try to deprive the population of news and information by imposing a climate of terror that reduces the media to silence. Despite courageous efforts by journalists to do their job, Afghanistan's war zones – the provinces of Helmand, Kunduz, Baghlan, Nangarhar, Takhar, Ghazni and Farah – are turning into news and information “black holes.” The latest victims include **Nematullah Zahir**, a journalist with *Aryana TV*, who was killed in November when his car went over a mine in Sorgur, in the southern province of Helmand, where he had gone to cover the fighting between government forces and Taliban.



## BETTER PROTECTION FOR JOURNALISTS

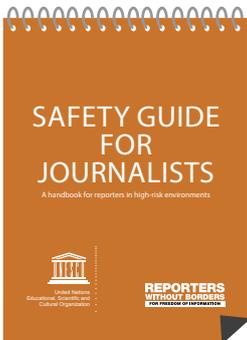
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### A “journalists’ protector”

Media outlets, journalists, NGOs and prominent figures on every continent issued a joint appeal to the United Nations on 29 April for the creation of the position of “journalists’ protector” in line with RSF’s long-standing proposal for the appointment of a special representative to the UN secretary-general for the safety of journalists.

This coalition is urging the UN and its member states to give this position the political weight, capacity for rapid action and legitimacy to effectively coordinate UN efforts for the safety of journalists. The goal is to establish a concrete mechanism that enforces international law and thereby reduces the number of abuses and acts of violence against journalists throughout the world. Until now, the many UN resolutions on protecting journalists and combatting impunity have had no concrete results.

The rights of millions of citizens to news and information are being sacrificed as a result of the failure to take effective action. The world’s major problems, environmental issues and the fight against violent extremism cannot be addressed properly if journalists are not doing their job. The impunity enjoyed by those responsible for crimes of violence against journalists must be ended in order to create a safe environment for the media to operate.



### Safety handbook

In response to the growing dangers for journalists, RSF published an updated version of its [Safety Guide for Journalists](#) in 2015. Produced in partnership with UNESCO and available in French, English, Spanish, Arabic and Farsi, it offers practical advice to journalists going to high-risk areas, where they need the best possible preparation for a wide range of dangers that may include armed conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and street protests.

The handbook has not overlooked the fact that, in the era of Internet communication and smartphones, cyber-security is a challenge for journalists visiting conflict zones or countries with authoritarian governments. It therefore includes many tips on protecting sources, data and communications, along with accounts by foreign correspondents of their experiences in the field.

It also stresses the importance of being physically and psychologically prepared before departure, and the need for debriefing and psychological support if any signs of post-traumatic stress are detected after returning home. And news organizations are reminded that the reporters they send into the field must be well trained and given an opportunity to discuss all their concerns in advance so they are confident they know everything they need.