

2003 ROUND-UP REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS



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2003, A BLACK YEAR

42 journalists killed and a steep increase in other press freedom violations

In 2003:

- 42 journalists killed
- at least 766 arrested
- at least 1,460 physically attacked or threatened
- at least 501 media censored

By contrast with 2002 when:

- 25 journalists were killed
- at least 692 arrested
- at least 1,420 physically attacked or threatened
- at least 389 media censored

At 1 January 2004,

- 124 journalists were in prison around the world
- 61 cyberdissidents were in prison around the world

General Trends

Every gauge of press freedom violations in 2003 stood at red alert. Although the number of physical attacks and threats has remained almost stable since last year, other press freedom violations have increased dramatically compared to 2002 and overall since 2001.

The number of journalists killed (42) is the highest since 1995 (49 journalists killed, 22 of them in Algeria). The massive military deployment and the unprecedented scale of media coverage of the war in Iraq have a lot to do with it. But a more global and particularly worrying fact emerges: covering a war is becoming more and more dangerous for journalists. Added to the traditional dangers of war, are the unpredictable hazards of bomb attacks, the use of more sophisticated weapons - against which even the training and protection of journalists is ineffective - and belligerents who care more about winning the war of images than respecting the safety of media staff. So many factors increase the risks of war reporting. As a result of the violence of conflicts, but not only because of that, the number of journalists physically attacked and threatened has stabilised at a very high level and slightly up on 2002.

Arrests of journalists and censorship of media reached a record high in 2003. The relentless growth in violations of press freedom since 2001, is, undoubtedly linked to the fight against terrorism and to anti-terror laws adopted by some countries since the 11 September attacks. This new geo-political factor broke the downward trend registered in 1999 and 2000.

Seat of international tension and terrorist violence, the **Middle East** is the worst case region for press freedom this year. With the war in Iraq and the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is the Middle East that has seen the largest number of journalists killed (16) equal with **Asia**, which however has a far larger population. The Arabic-language press continues to groan under the weight of repressive and sclerotic regimes (Saudi Arabia, Syria) or sham democracies (Jordan, Yemen, the Palestinian Authority), while Lebanon, for so long a haven of media freedom, is displaying an ever more worrying contempt for the rule of law. In the **Maghreb** and **Iran**, expressing an opinion or publishing a cartoon can lead to prison.

In **Asia**, the press is still beset by the same ills: endemic violence (in Bangladesh), large numbers of arrests (Nepal) and censorship (China and Burma). Asia remains a continent where it was outstandingly dangerous to work as a journalist in 2003 (16 killed). It is also the world's largest prison for journalists, cyberdissidents and Internet-users.

In **Latin America**, press freedom violations remained relatively stable in contrast with 2002, with the notorious exception of Cuba where the leading figures of the independent press have been imprisoned. On the other hand there has been a marked deterioration in the press freedom situation in **Central Asia**. The general trend on the **African continent** has been a worsening of working conditions for journalists, including in countries until recently held up as good examples such as Niger and Senegal. The deterioration that has affected the local and international press is linked to wars and civil conflicts, but also the fossilisation of some authoritarian regimes such as Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

Finally, things are satisfactory within the **European Union**, with the notable exception of Italy, where the conflicts of interest of Silvio Berlusconi, both prime minister and owner of a media empire, still poses a threat to pluralism of news and information. In most central and eastern European countries, journalists have had to contend with harsh and archaic defamation laws. Despite this, the ten countries set to join the EU on 1 May 2004 have respected press freedom. Things remain unstable in Serbia-Montenegro, where censorship was slapped on after the assassination of the prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, and in Romania, where journalists investigating corruption or criticising the party in power encounter growing problems.

2003, a deadly year for press freedom

The **Middle East** was the deadliest part of the world for journalists in 2003. Fourteen journalists and media workers were killed and about 15 injured covering the war and the period after the war in Iraq. The US military could be blamed for the death of at least five journalists, but in no case did they hold any investigation worthy of the name. On the third day of the conflict two journalists working for British *ITN* television, French cameraman Frédéric Nérac and a Lebanese interpreter Hussain Othman, mysteriously disappeared.

In total, six journalists disappeared in 2003 (in Iraq, Russia, India, Democratic Republic of Congo and Mexico).

In the occupied **Palestinian territories**, the Israeli army killed two cameramen. To date no action has been taken against those who did the shooting, even if for the first time, the Israeli army was forced to open an investigation into the death of the British documentary film-maker James Miller.

The year 2003 was the most dangerous for journalists in the **Philippines** since 1987. A total of seven were killed after condemning corruption and local criminal gangs. Two journalists were killed in **Nepal** and **Indonesia**. Three were murdered in **India**, among them the boss of a local press agency killed in his Kashmir office.

In **Iran**, the Iranian-Canadian photographer Zahra Kazemi was murdered in July. She was arrested while working on a report on students detained in the sinister Evin prison in Teheran after major demonstrations in June. Kazemi died while in detention. After initially trying to cover up the case, the authorities are now trying to obstruct the trial.

Two journalists were killed in **Côte d'Ivoire** this year. Both foreign and local journalists have been working in very hazardous conditions since the start of the civil war in September 2002. Many have been accused of being in league with rebels and exposed to the wrath of the mob by pro-government media. An Ivorian journalist and a foreign journalist, Jean Hélène, correspondent for *Radio France Internationale (RFI)* in Abidjan, were killed in 2003.

Country	Journalists killed in 2003
Burma	1
Brasil	2
Cambodia	1
Colombia	4
Côte d'Ivoire	2
Guatemala	1
India	3
Indonesia	2
Iraq	14
Iran	1
Nepal	2
Philippines	7
Palestinian Authority	2
Total	42

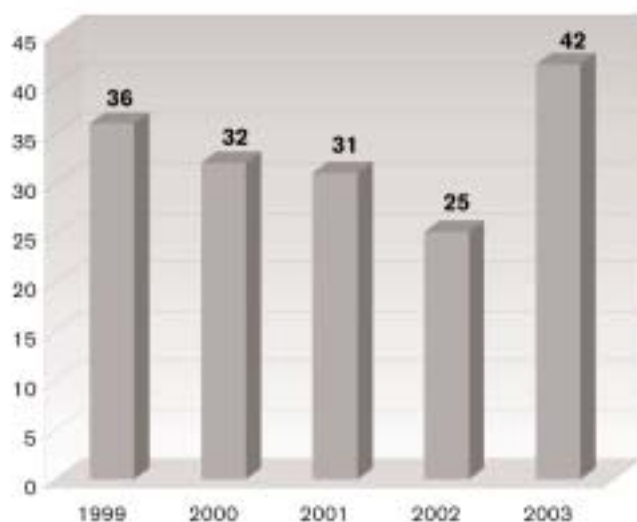
More and more journalists arrested

As at 1 January 2004, there were at least 124 journalists in prison worldwide either for their opinions or their work. This figure has continued to rise since 2001 (489 journalists arrested in 2001, 692 in 2002, 766 in 2003). The countries that hold most journalists in jail are **Cuba** (30), **Burma** (17), **Eritrea** (14) and **Iran** (11).

In **Cuba**, Fidel Castro took advantage of the world's focus on events in Iraq to open a new chapter of repression, jailing the island's leading figures in the independent press. In March, 27 journalists were arrested in a roundup within the ranks of dissidents then sentenced in Stalinist-type trials to jail terms ranging from 14 to 27 years. Among them were Ricardo González, publisher of the magazine *De Cuba* and correspondent for Reporters Without Borders and head of Cuba Press, Raúl Rivero, sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. These arrests brought to 30 the number of journalists in jail in Cuba.

Burma has been for many years the Asian country holding the largest number of journalists in its jails (17) for writing in support of democracy. A sports journalist who was arrested in 2003 was condemned to death. The UN special rapporteur for Burma spoke out against the "hell" of Burmese detention centres after visiting Insein jail in Rangoon. In **Nepal**, the end of the cease-fire in August triggered a new wave of arrests of pro-Maoist journalists or those suspected of being so. More than 40 of them were detained during 2003, often in secret custody and ill treated by security forces.

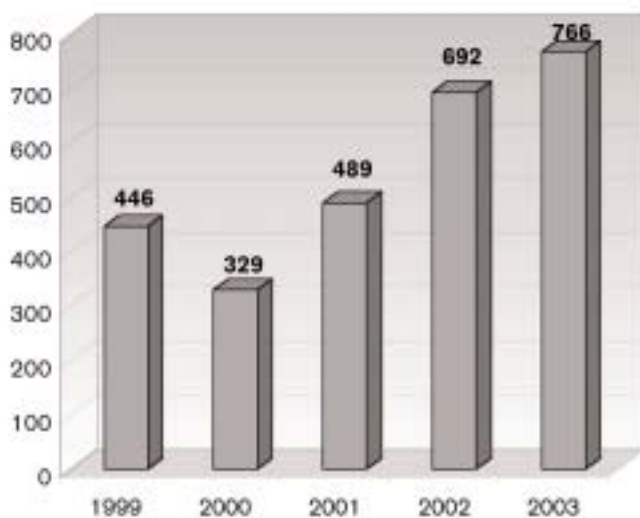
Journalists killed



In **Colombia**, torn by civil war for 40 years, four journalists have been killed for condemning corruption among deputies and even their collusion with armed groups. With an average of four journalists killed each year over the past ten years, Colombia could be considered one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists. This extreme state of affairs can be explained by the fact that killers of journalists enjoy total impunity. In some regions in which armed groups hold sway (Arauca, Nariño and Santander departments), the people no longer have access to any free and reliable news.

Eritrea is the African continent's biggest jail for journalists: fourteen are still being held and no information has been forthcoming about the place or conditions of their detention. Only the official press has been permitted to operate since 2001.

Journalists detained



In **Iran**, where the court system is in the hands of the conservatives, journalists are jailed without restraint, particularly those working in the very active reformist press. At least 50 were arrested, more than the previous year. Most of them were tried in secret and some spent several months in solitary confinement. In **Syria**, in a move demonstrating the problem of achieving reform, the correspondent for the pan-Arab *Al-Hayat* newspaper was detained for several months for writing about preparations for the war in Iraq. This "preventive" detention was seen as a warning to all Syrian journalists, who are closely watched by the government.

A journalist was jailed in **Algeria** for the first time since 1995, although the sentence was eventually commuted to a heavy fine. **Morocco** jailed two journalists in 2003 setting back press freedom in the country by several years. The publisher Ali Lmrabet was sentenced to three years in jail for his cartoons and for an interview on the Western Sahara that displeased King Mohammed VI. Another journalist was jailed under anti-terror legislation passed in 2003.

In **Russia**, a journalist was sentenced to one year of forced labour in a defamation case, for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The year 2003 was particularly tough for journalists in **Belarus**, where three were still serving prison sentences with forced labour for having "insulted the president". In **Kazakhstan** and **Uzbekistan**, two

journalists and human rights activists were jailed and subjected to campaigns of vilification by the authorities.

Despite far-reaching reforms adopted in **Turkey** with an eye to its bid for membership of the European Union, in practice pro-Kurdish journalists or those critical of the government were still subjected to abusive legal action. Fourteen were arrested during the year and at least five are currently in prison for expressing opinions in the course of their work.

A high level of physical attacks and threats

The number of journalists physically attacked and threatened remained stable compared with 2002 but at a very high level.

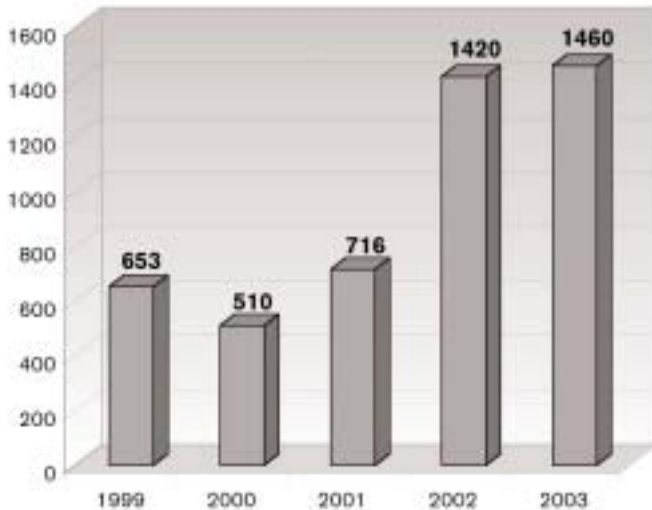
In **Bangladesh** things were as bad as ever. More than 200 journalists were physically attacked or received death threats from political activists, religious extremists or local criminal gangs. Complete inaction by the authorities only served to consolidate the endemic violence. In **Afghanistan**, two journalists condemned to death by fatwa following the publication of an article on secularism had to flee abroad.

Journalists were victims of repeated attacks and threats in **Haiti** from supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The perpetrators were protected by the government, which is often enough the instigator of the violence itself. Nor does impunity look like ending: the investigations into the murder of Brignol Lindor (killed on 3 December 2001) and that into the murder of Jean Dominique (killed on 3 April 2000) concluded this year without uncovering who ordered the killings. Haitian journalists continue to go into exile.

In **Venezuela**, 93 physical attacks were recorded against journalists, mainly during the end of the big strike against President Hugo Chávez, in January and February. Most attacks were believed to be the work of the president's supporters who viewed the major media as anti-Chavez. The presidential election campaign in **Guatemala** was marred by many attacks against the press, most of them linked to the controversial candidacy of the former dictator Ríos Montt. In **Bolivia** and to a lesser extent in **Peru**, the press suffered from a climate of conflict. Several media and journalists were threatened or came under attack during a crackdown on rioting that led to the departure of Bolivian President Sánchez de Lozada.

Finally attacks on journalists continued to increase alarmingly in **Ukraine**. They remained very high in **Russia** with 18 such incidents. Most of those targeted were journalists working in the provinces who investigated corruption in which local authorities were implicated.

Journalists physically attacked



Censorship, a going concern

The year 2003 saw a strong increase in censorship around the world. Once again it was in Asia that the greatest number of media were gagged

In **China**, the media landscape is evolving at huge speed with the government closing indebted newspapers and new press groups being founded. But censorship is ever alert to sensitive topics: dissidence, corruption, the SARS and AIDS epidemics are among subjects on which the authorities will only tolerate official lies. **Burma** has the sorry privilege of being one of the very few countries in the world to practise advance censorship. The military junta ratcheted up its control of the media after the arrest of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. No media was able to refer to it, nor the banking crisis that engulfed the country. In the Pacific, the king of the **Tonga** islands distinguished himself by banning the sole bi-weekly independent *Tami o' Tonga*.

There was an upsurge of censorship on the African continent. Several countries resumed the practice of seizing newspapers, banning radios and other outlets. In **Zimbabwe**, the *Daily News*, the country's sole independent daily paper, was closed in mid-September. The ageing regime of Robert Mugabe expelled the last foreign correspondent in 2003, leaving the country inaccessible to international media.

In **Gabon**, President Omar Bongo, who has been in power since 1967, tightened his grip on the independent press. The presidential clan's systematic purchasing of independent titles was going a long way towards creating a monolithic Gabonese press. In **Rwanda**, the only independent newspaper was seized three times in 2003. There has been no private press since 2001 in **Eritrea** where the authorities are unmoved by pressure from the international community. Finally, in **Swaziland**, journalists are regularly suspended for criticising the king and the government tightly controls all news and information, public and private.

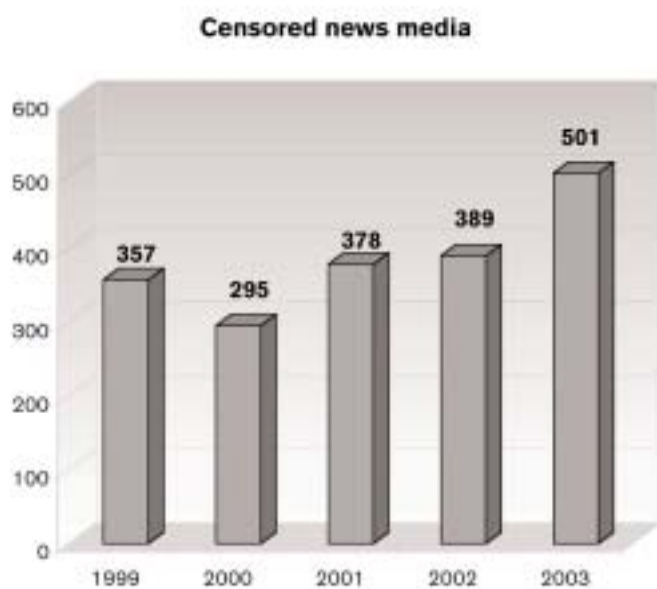
Censorship is severe in **Iran**. The reformist press is rapped when it raises subjects such as the Kazemi case or the signing of the nuclear protocol. Thirteen newspapers were suspended for periods of up to five years by the judge Said Mortazavi in Teheran, major censor of the Iranian press. The authorities have harassed independent newspapers in **Algeria**, preventing them from appearing for several weeks. As the April 2004 presidential election campaign got off to a very early start, the authorities had no hesitation in expelling several correspondents from the French press in the hope of preventing them from covering the release of the historic leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

In the **Middle East**, a high level of censorship, but also self-censorship, attended the coverage of the war in Iraq. In **Yemen**, **Syria** and **Palestine**, the capture of Saddam Hussein, for example, was only very cautiously and partially reported by the government press agencies. In **Syria**, the sole independent weekly satirical newspaper *Addomari* was indefinitely suspended after months of administrative harassment. Despite the appearance of debate in the local press that would have been unthinkable a few years earlier, **Saudi Arabia** remains the kingdom of censorship. In **Jordan**, government investment in the media and a frequent close watch, at the printers, of the content of newspapers gainsay official statements supporting press freedom. In **Lebanon**, where political and media interests dovetail, the private television channel *New Television (NTV)*, known for its criticism of the government, has had several of its programmes banned.

In **Turkmenistan**, the most repressive country of the former Soviet Union, censorship is total and the media's only job is to sing the praises of President Niyazov. In **Uzbekistan**, despite the abolition of official censorship in 2001, the media can only cover permitted subjects. During the war in Iraq, the authorities pulled the plug on Russian television broadcasts that were at odds with the country's pro-American stance. In **Belarus**, the Alexander Lukashenko regime suspended or prevented the appearance of more

than ten independent newspapers and banned Russian *NTV* television from working on its territory.

Press freedom as victim of conflict



Many regimes abuse the legitimate struggle against terrorism to keep its press under close supervision. This is particularly true in **Tunisia**, where the independent press is extremely tame and in **Morocco** where the anti-terror law strictly limits political coverage. In **Iraq**, the provisional government has banned the satellite channel *Al-Arabiya* from operating in the country, accusing it of «incitement to violence» by broadcasting sound recordings said to have been of Saddam Hussein and armed Iraqi groups fighting US troops. In **Colombia**, the anti-terror law adopted in 2003 threatens protection of sources. It empowers the judicial police and the army to carry out phone tapping, searches and to intercept mail without a warrant. Since President Alvaro Uribe Velez took power 2002, the government has become a greater potential threat to the press. In **Spain**, the struggle against the Basque terrorist organisation ETA has eroded press freedom. Closure of the Basque-language newspaper *Euskaldunon Egunkaria* announced as a temporary «preventive measure», in fact lasted almost the whole year.

The war in Iraq was not the only conflict in the world to put press freedom to a harsh test.

Independent coverage of the war in **Chechnya** became virtually impossible for both Russian and foreign reporters, because of obstacles thrown up by the Russian Army and the risk of kidnapping. A correspondent with *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* was abducted in July.

Resumption of hostilities in **Liberia** had serious repercussions for press freedom: two journalists were injured in gunfire and dozens of others attacked or kidnapped. In the **Côte d'Ivoire**, the lurking civil war triggered many press freedom violations. There were dozens of cases reported of journalists arrested threatened or physically attacked.

In **Indonesia**, two journalists have been killed since the declaration of martial law in Aceh, at least five others were arrested and around 20 attacked or targeted in firing. In this separatist province, the military strictly controls information and the work of journalists. Several foreign correspondents, including American William Nessen were expelled from Indonesia for having travelled to the region. In the same way in **Pakistan**, two journalists from the French magazine *L'Express* were arrested for reporting in a border province with Afghanistan. Their Pakistani colleague is detained without trial.

In **Sudan**, despite institutional reform, the security forces control coverage of the civil war. In 2003 they suspended numerous titles including the English-language *Khartoum Monitor*.

The Internet under Surveillance

The year saw several cyberdissidents released, including a young Tunisian, Zouhair Yahyaoui, who spent more than a year in jail for having opened a satirical site taunting President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali. The young Liu Di, who took part in Chinese discussion forums as «stainless steel mouse», was released after a year in solitary confinement.

Despite these releases, **China** remains by far the world's largest prison for Internet-users. Six more cyberdissidents were jailed this year bringing the total, at 1 January 2004, 48 Internet-users imprisoned because of the dreaded efficiency of the Chinese cyber-police (a staff of 30,000). Huang Qi, webmaster of the site www.6-4tianwang.com, is still being held in Sichuan's provincial prison. He was arrested in June 2000, and he is serving five years in harsh conditions for having "attempted to over-

throw the power of the state". China has state of the art technology to monitor the Internet and track down cyberdissidents, technology which is often provided by foreign companies, such as Cisco System.

Vietnam follows the example of its Chinese big brother. Nine cyberdissidents are in jail there. According to Reporters Without Borders' sources the country has set up a computer research department, exclusively devoted to creating «made in Vietnam» Net surveillance software.

Apart from China and Vietnam, other countries to be counted as among the most repressive on the Internet are: The **Maldives** (3 cyberdissidents imprisoned), **Burma, North Korea, Cuba** (references to Internet activity appeared on the charge sheet for most of the journalists who were jailed at the end of March), **Saudi Arabia, Tunisia** and several countries of the former Soviet union, like **Uzbekistan** and **Turkmenistan**.

BILAN 2003	KILLED	PHYSICALLY ATTACKED	DETAINED	CENSORED
North Africa - Iran	1	20	152	81
Middle East	16	92	67	30
Africa	2	149	144	103
Asia	16	609	187	193
Americas	7	364	84	25
Europe	0	226	132	69
Total	42 (25)	1460 (1420)	766 (692)	501 (389)

() Year 2002

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