



Women
Journalists
Without
Chains

Press Freedom Report 2024

Middle East & North Africa 2024: Uncertain Fate of Press Freedom



Methodology

Women Journalists Without Chains defines journalists as individuals engaged in the profession of journalism or commentary on political and public affairs in any national or international media, including print, visual, audio, and electronic media. According to its definition, violations encompass actions and attacks that cause harm to journalists because of their work, limit their ability to freely practice their professional work, or restrict their personal freedom. This report focuses primarily on violations committed by government authorities and by other responsible local actors.

The Rights and Freedoms Unit relies on diverse sources to acquire information, including:

- Open sources such as news websites, newspapers, official government bulletins, television broadcasts, journalists' official pages, reports, and statements from unions and national organizations in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Digital platforms maintained by international organizations dedicated to documenting and monitoring press freedom violations globally.
- Direct communication between the Rights and Freedoms Unit and journalists or their families.

In the report, the term "journalists" is employed inclusively to encompass both male and female journalists.

Executive Summary

Most countries in the Middle East and North Africa have long been considered highly dangerous for journalists, a reputation that has persisted since the 1990s. However, in 2023-2024, the danger reached an unprecedented level, marking it as the most perilous period for journalists in the region's recent history.

The escalation of civil and cross-border wars and political crises during 2023-2024 had a profound impact on the work of male and female journalists in the Middle East and North Africa region. Governments and armed groups have resorted to killing as a means to hide the facts and punish a free press. In this period, 141 journalists were killed, compared to 11 cases the previous year—a number unprecedented in modern history for a single year. The ongoing



Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, which began in October 2023, has been particularly devastating, resulting in the deaths of 130 journalists in Palestine alone. This is a stark increase from the 3 journalists killed in the previous year.

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In Sudan, the number of journalists killed in 2023-2024 stood at 5, slightly lower than the previous year's count of 6, despite the ongoing civil war since April 2023. However, this does not indicate a decline in fatalities but rather reflects challenges in monitoring violations and a significant number of journalists leaving the profession due to the associated risks. In Lebanon, 3 journalists lost their lives in Israeli attacks, while in Syria, 3 journalists were killed due to the persistent civil war since 2011 and conflicts among various factions. This marks a decrease compared to the 6 journalists killed in Syria the previous year.

2023-2024 was profoundly hazardous for female journalists in the Middle East and North Africa, with 18 fatalities recorded. Out of these, 15 occurred in the Gaza Strip, 2 in Sudan, and 1 in Lebanon. This marks a significant increase compared to the two cases of female journalist killings in Palestine the previous year (2022-2023). These perilous circumstances not only threaten lives directly but also diminish the profession's appeal for women.

In the meanwhile, the global community notably fell short in upholding journalist protection principles, including Security Council Resolution 2222 (2015). The Israeli attack on Gaza resulted in numerous journalist fatalities and injuries. Major countries lacked sufficient pressure on Israel to halt violations against Palestinian journalists, revealing a troubling gap in international advocacy.

Governments and armed groups persistently suppressed press freedom, targeting and monitoring (1,065) male and female journalists (compared to (1,140) previously). The decline in reported cases doesn't indicate reduced violations, rather it reflects increased censorship and fears of reprisals against journalists. Female journalists, a minority in the region, faced



alarming levels of violations, with (260) cases reported. Tunisia led with (91) incidents, followed by Iran (56), and Palestine (48). These figures only scratch the surface of the challenges faced by women journalists due to societal norms, conflicts, and threats hindering their participation. In Palestine, discussing violations faced by female journalists is deemed a luxury amidst widespread killings and injuries.

Countries in the region witnessed a concerning escalation in the arrest of journalists and stricter press constraints. Iran saw a significant rise in detained female journalists, with 44 cases compared to 20 the previous year, primarily linked to protest coverage. Tunisia experienced an uptick in violations tied to press reporting on elections. In Lebanon, female journalist Dima Sadiq received a one-year prison sentence and a hefty fine of 110 million Lebanese pounds on charges of "inciting sectarian strife, slander, and defamation," marking a disturbing turn in the targeting of women journalists.

The weak judicial independence poses a major challenge to press freedom, with courts used to suppress journalists. Many journalists faced trials across the region. UAE and Egypt rotate detained journalists through political trials, while Cairo prolongs imprisonments and Abu Dhabi initiates new trials. In Saudi Arabia, Loujain Al-Hathloul and her family face travel bans despite the legal ban ending in May 2023.

Some countries have also intensified efforts to curtail press freedom by enacting or amending laws to impose harsher penalties on journalists. Jordan's Cybercrime Law was amended to criminalize "fake news." The UAE introduced the "Combating Rumors and Cybercrimes Law," imposing stricter penalties on journalists and sources and criminalizing the dissemination of accurate information. Kuwait proposed a draft law criminalizing the disclosure of public interest information. Mauritania implemented the law "Protecting National Symbols and Criminalizing Attacks on the Prestige of the State and the Honor of the Citizen," stifling journalists' ability to criticize government officials.

Governments in the region are tightening their grip on journalism, often using press pluralism as a facade to enhance their reputations. Morocco amended the National Press Council Law to allow authorities to appoint council members, eliminating elections. Algeria's new laws grant authorities power to appoint officials and ban newspapers without judicial oversight. Tunisia's President extended the state of emergency, imposing restrictions that curb media freedom and criminalize press and expression. In conflict-ridden countries like Sudan, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, warring parties exploit journalists, coercing cooperation and distorting facts. Iran has



escalated efforts by targeting opposition journalists abroad, calling for their arrest or assassination, with reports of assassination attempts on several journalists perceived as collaborating with "enemies."

The table below outlines the incidence of killings in the region:

Country	Female Journalists	Male Journalists	Total
Palestine	15	115	130
Sudan	2	3	5
Syria	0	3	3
Lebanon	1	2	3
Total	18	123	141

Table 1: Journalists killed during 2023-2024

Country Overviews

1-Palestine

Since October 7, the Israeli government has systematically and deliberately killed journalists and targeted their families, and exhibited internet disruptions to further limit already restricted access to news coverage. The alarming levels of hostility towards press and media professionals operating within its jurisdiction, particularly in the Gaza Strip, require immediate investigation. Journalists, both male and female, are facing unprecedented challenges and threats to their safety.

Among the female journalists targeted:

October 10: Journalist **Salam Khalil Mohammed Mima** (33 years old), an independent journalist and head of the Women Journalists Committee in the Palestinian Media Gathering, was killed along with her husband and three children in an airstrike by the occupying forces in Jabalia camp, northeastern Gaza. Their bodies were recovered from the rubble three days later.



October 25: **Salma Hamada Misbah Mkhaimer** (34 years old), an independent journalist working for several media outlets, was killed along with her infant child, father, mother, and extended family members during an Israeli raid on Rafah city, southern Gaza Strip. Salma, who resided in Jordan, was visiting her family in Gaza when she and her child were killed.

October 26: **Duaa Sharaf** (31 years old), a journalist for Al-Aqsa Radio, was killed with her infant child in an Israeli airstrike on her home in the Al-Zawaida neighborhood in central Gaza.

November 20: Journalist **Ayat Khadura**, an independent journalist and podcast host, was killed along with several family members when her home in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza, was bombed.

November 20: Journalist **Alaa Taher Al-Hasanat**, a journalist and presenter for the Al-Majdat Media Network, was killed along with several family members when her home in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza was bombed.

November 24: Journalist **Amal Zuhd** and several of her family members were killed in an Israeli warplane bombing her home in Gaza City just hours before the start of a ceasefire.

December 4: **Shaima Ziad Al-Jazzar**, from the Magdat Rafah Media Network, was killed in an Israeli warplane bombing that struck her house east of Rafah city.

December 9: **Ola Atallah**, a former correspondent for the Turkish Anadolu Agency, was killed in an Israeli bombing on the house of one of her relatives in the Daraj neighborhood of Gaza, where she and her family had sought refuge.

December 11: **Nermin Qawwas** (28 years old), a journalist for Russia Today, was killed in a bombing that targeted her home in Gaza.

December 13: **Hanan Bassam Ayyad** (26 years old), an independent journalist, was killed in a bombing that targeted her home in central Gaza.



December 18: **Haneen Ali Al-Qashtan**, a journalist for Sawt Al-Watan Radio, was killed in an Israeli bombing targeting her family's home in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza.

December 30: **Nermin Nasr Haboush** (36 years old), media programs coordinator at the Bialara Foundation, was killed in a bombing that targeted her apartment in a residential building in central Gaza City.

January 9: **Heba Fouad Al-Abadla** (31 years old), a broadcaster on Al-Azhar Radio, was killed in an air raid targeting her family home in Khan Yunis.

February 12, 2024: Two journalists, **Alaa Hassan Al-Hams** from Sanad News Agency and other media outlets, and **Angham Ahmed Adwan** from the Libyan February Channel, were killed in occupation raids.

Sudan

Five journalists in Sudan have been killed since the war began in April 2023:

June: **Samaher Abdel Shafea** from Radio Zalingei was killed by a shell in a displacement camp after fleeing to the region with her family.

July: **Essam Hassan Morgan**, a prominent photographer for state television, was killed at his home in Omdurman after refusing to evacuate upon the Rapid Support Forces' demand.

August: **Essam Al-Hajj** was fatally shot by Rapid Support Forces in the Jabra and Al-Shajara area.

October: **Halima Idris Salim** was killed by a Rapid Support Forces vehicle in Omdurman while on duty.

January 2024: **Ahmed Youssef Arabi** was killed in his home in the Abbasiya neighborhood of Omdurman, Khartoum, by gunmen in Rapid Support Forces uniforms.



Lebanon

The Israeli war extended into southern Lebanon, directly targeting male and female journalists covering events.

October: The Israeli army targeted media **crews** in southern Lebanon, resulting in the death of Reuters photographer Issam Al-Abdullah, injuring his colleagues **Thaer Al-Sudani** and **Maher Nazha**, as well as Al Jazeera correspondent **Carmen Joukhdar**, photographer **Eli Brakhia**, and Agence France-Presse photographers **Dylan Collins** and **Christine Assi** who were covering the military escalation in the region.

November: Al-Mayadeen TV crew members, correspondent **Farah Omar** and cameraman **Rabih Maamari**, were killed by Israeli airstrikes shortly after broadcasting live from southern Lebanon.

November: **Issam Mawasi** was injured in a missile strike targeting media crews in Yaroun. Journalist **Samir Ayoub** was injured in Ainata, where his nieces and grandmother were killed during a targeted Israeli car bombing.

December: **Khader Marquez**, a cameraman for Al-Manar TV, was injured when an Israeli shell landed near the channel's team car while covering events with correspondent **Ali Shuaib**.

Syria

Since **2011**, dozens of male and female journalists have lost their lives in targeted attacks. In **2023-2024**, tragedy struck once again with the assassination of Syrian media activist Ahmed Al-Hussein in the Daraa countryside in April, reportedly carried out by militants affiliated with ISIS.



August: **Firas Al-Ahmad**, a correspondent for Sama Channel, was killed by an explosive device in Daraa, while his colleague, cameraman **Ahmed Al-Masalma**, was injured in the same attack.

September: Media activist **Mohammed Al-Daher** was injured in a bombing by the Syrian regime in Idlib, and Hussein Al-Zarai suffered injuries from regime and Syrian Democratic Forces bombings in Aleppo.

November: Media activist **Mohammed Saeed Al-Kafri** was killed by an armed group linked to the Syrian regime in Daraa Governorate's eastern countryside after participating in an anti-regime demonstration.

A Grim Scene:

The targeting of press freedom in countries such as Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Yemen, and the Gulf Cooperation Council nations follows a similar pattern. Governments and armed groups arrest, imprison, and use restrictive laws to suppress journalists, control information, and curtail media independence.

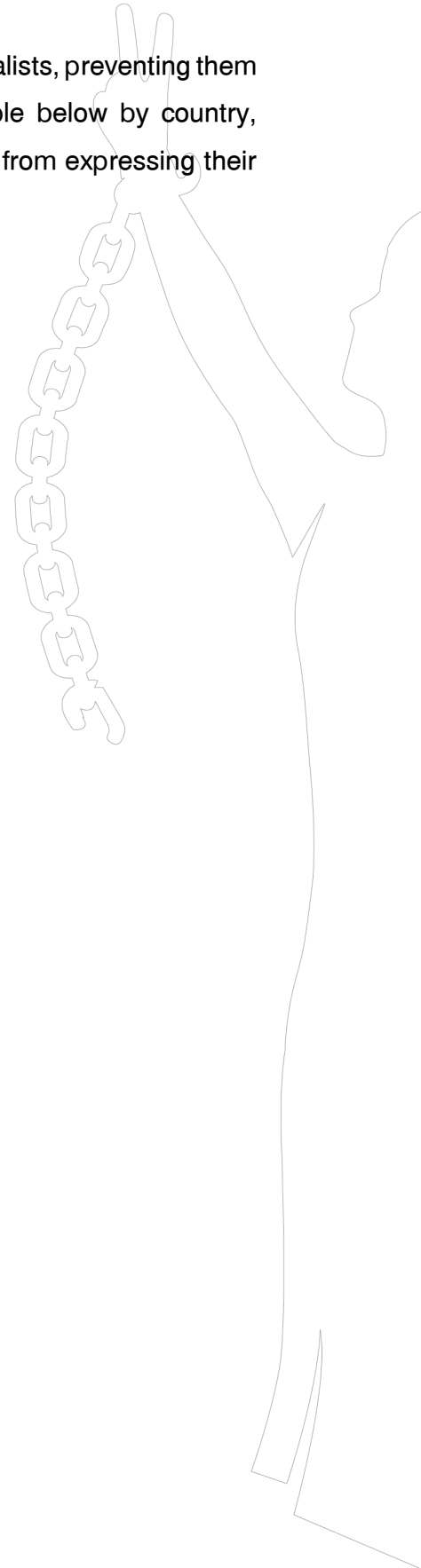
This is one of many tactics employed by authorities to suppress press freedom. The ordeal for journalists often starts with threats, followed by home raids and abduction of their family members. Once detained, journalists endure insults, physical assaults, and torture. They frequently face severe beatings, medical neglect, and denial of medical care while in prison. Many are held without formal charges and are initially denied access to legal counsel. Those who do receive charges often face significant delays before being presented with indictments, sometimes weeks after their arrest.

The compromised independence of the judiciary poses yet another obstacle to press freedom, as courts in Iran, Gulf Cooperation Council nations, Arab Levant countries, and the Maghreb suppress and prosecute journalists. In the UAE, Algeria, and Morocco, new laws have been enacted to control the media and restrict journalists from carrying out their work.

In addition to targeting journalists, many countries have shut down websites and blocked internet access, impeding citizens' access to information. Internet activists speaking out face prosecution. Authorities maintain control over a significant portion of the media, stifling freedom



of expression and diverse opinions. These measures aim to silence journalists, preventing them from discussing public affairs. This broader effort, outlined in the table below by country, promotes a "culture of silence" instilling fear in citizens, deterring them from expressing their opinions for fear of prosecution.





Country	Female Journalists	Male Journalists	Total
Iran	56	70	126
Jordan	4	5	9
UAE	-	82	82
Bahrain	-	-	-
Algeria	-	6	6
Syria	3	38	41
Sudan	28	50	78
Iraq	10	132	142
Kwait	-	-	-
Morocco	4	8	12
Saudi Arabia	16	156	172
Yemen	-	71	71
Tunisia	91	99	200
Oman	-	-	-
Palestine	46	221	267
Qatar	-	-	-
Lebanon	18	40	58
Libya	-	29	29
Egypt	13	84	97
Mauritania	-	1	1

Table (2): Number of journalists (both female and male) subjected to violations during 2023-2024

Press Freedom by Country

Iran: The World's Largest Jailer of Journalists

The Islamic Republic of Iran ranks among the world's worst countries for press freedom. In **2023**, the Iranian regime intensified its assault on the press with widespread arrest campaigns and severe restrictions on freedom of expression.

Iran lacks comprehensive constitutional guarantees of press freedom. The regulation of press and publications is governed by the Constitution, which notably omits explicit protections for "freedom of opinion and expression. Press Law does not specify criteria for determining the country's interests and adherence to Islamic standards. Throughout **2023**, a series of notorious decisions and laws imposed restrictions on press activities, consequently limiting the work of journalists, regardless of gender.

During **2023**, Iranian authorities intensified their crackdown on the press and journalists through intimidation, arrests, trials, severe prison sentences, judicial persecution, and targeting of female journalists covering protests or women's issues. This repression persisted despite a widely condemned incident in September **2022**, where Mahsa Amini (22 years old) was killed in a morality police detention center. The period following Amini's death marked one of the harshest periods for Iranian journalism in the history of the Islamic Republic.

By the end of **2023**, numerous male and female journalists, regardless of age, found themselves confined in prisons like Evin, Qarchak and Fashafouyeh. Meanwhile, those outside of those walls faced the looming threat of imprisonment, a climate of fear and uncertainty. Despite Iran being a signatory to the International Covenant on [Civil and Political Rights](#), which guarantees the right to freedom of expression—including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through various mediums— in **2023**, the regime shut down newspapers reporting on corruption and societal issues. Furthermore, agencies like the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, Intelligence services, and the Electronic Division of the Revolutionary Guard routinely banned or restricted access to websites and satellite signals for both domestic and international citizens.⁽¹⁾

Arrests and Trials

Throughout 2023, Iranian security forces systematically targeted journalists, both male and female, within the country. The regime used lawfare, courts and trials to restrict activities, particularly affecting Iranian female journalists who bear a significant burden in advocating for press freedom within Iran.

Reports indicate that the regime arrested 3,130 individuals for expressing their views, with 44 women facing legal prosecution for their opinions.⁽²⁾ Female journalists covering these events were subjected to arrests and trials as part of a broader campaign by the regime to suppress protests that started in September 2022 following the death of Mahsa Amini. This crackdown led to the imprisonment of over 100 journalists, nearly half of whom were women among the newly arrested.

Throughout the year, 45 female journalists were arrested, a significant number considering the minority status of women in the journalism field in this country. Women Journalists Without Chains asserts that these arrests were not solely related to their reporting but also targeted them based on their gender. These dedicated journalists advocate for the freedoms and rights of Iranian citizens, especially women, and actively participate in ongoing feminist movements that protest within the country. Arrests appear to be linked to their coverage of these protests and their support for broader social and gender-related issues. Several male and female journalists were granted release on bail while awaiting charges or sentencing.

In early September 2023, shortly before the anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death, Iranian authorities sentenced journalist **Nazila Maroufian** to one year in prison for "propaganda against the regime" and "collusion and gathering" charges. Journalists **Negin Bagheri** and **Elnaz Mohammadi** received three-year suspended sentences for "conspiring and gathering to commit crimes" related to their coverage of the "Women, Life, Freedom" protests that ensued after Mahsa Amini's tragic death.

In October 2023, **Nilofar Hamidi** was sentenced to 13 years in prison, and **Elahe Mohammadi** received a 12-year sentence, although they are not expected to serve the full terms. Hamidi was convicted of "cooperating with a government hostile to Iran," resulting in a seven-year prison term. Mohammadi received a six-year sentence for the same charge. Additionally, each was sentenced to five years for "complicity in crimes against the country's security" and one



year for "propaganda against the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran." Both journalists were prohibited from practicing journalism following their release from prison and banned from using social media.

On January 14, 2024, Iran released the two journalists on bail,⁽³⁾ pending further court proceedings that will determine whether they return to prison or remain free. Shortly after their release, new charges were filed against them for publishing photos without hijab.⁽⁴⁾ Despite these challenges, **Nilofer** and **Elahe** received a prestigious award from the United Nations in 2023.⁽⁵⁾

In the weeks leading up to the anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death, Iranian authorities intensified pressure on female journalists. Independent journalist [Nassim Sultan Baiji](#) was arrested on November 21 and sentenced to 3.5 years in prison for spreading propaganda against the regime. She was initially detained at Tehran airport in early 2023 and transferred to an undisclosed location. Baiji was later released on bail after one month of arrest.

In April, Nassim was summoned to Evin Court on charges of "propaganda against the regime." In July, she was sentenced to prison for "assembly" and "collusion," along with additional charges of propaganda against the Islamic Republic. These charges were related to her reporting on the death of Mahsa Amini and the women's demonstrations.

Without knowledge of the accusations against her, reporter [Shaqayeq Moradi](#) from Bukhara Art and Culture magazine was arrested from her home in Tehran on November 12, and detained for several weeks before [being released](#) on bail on November 25, leaving her vulnerable to potential imprisonment after her trial.

On November 19, **Saeeda Shafii** commenced serving a three-year and six-month [prison sentence](#) for her coverage of Mahsa Amini's killing. The following day, on November 20, **Parisa Salehi**, [a correspondent for](#) Donia El-Eqtisad newspaper, was arrested due to a tweet on [the X website](#) that allegedly incited nationalism. **Salehi** was subsequently released on bail but still faces the threat of imprisonment.

In November, Iranian Ministry of Intelligence-affiliated security personnel detained **Mir Qasem Zadeh**, a local reporter from Sowme'eh Sara in Gilan Province, and transferred him to [a](#)



[detention center](#) in Rasht.⁽⁶⁾ Disturbingly, human rights sources have reported that he was [subjected to torture](#) during his detention.

On January 21, **Malika Hashemi** of [Shahr News Agency](#) was arrested by authorities after being summoned for "clarifications." However, according to Reporters Without Borders, there has been [no news of her](#) since she entered prison.

On January 22, [Mehrnoosh Zari Hinzaki](#)⁽⁷⁾ was arrested at her residence in Tehran and taken to Evin Prison. After three weeks, she was released on bail. In April, she was summoned to Evin Court and faced charges of "propaganda" and "National Security." However, on July 31, 2023, **Hinzaki** was acquitted of all the charges brought against her.

Many male and female journalists find themselves imprisoned in the [notorious Evin prison](#), a facility designated for the detention of journalists, activists, and political dissidents. This prison, a black box, is shrouded in secrecy, making it difficult to ascertain what goes on inside.

Those who have been released recount tales of humiliation, flogging, torture, and mock executions.⁽⁸⁾ Male and female journalists are frequently charged with national security crimes, a tactic commonly used by authoritarian regimes to evade domestic scrutiny, despite the grave implications this has for press freedom.

There are growing concerns that female journalists could be transferred to remote prisons or have their sentences extended in response to protests against their unfair imprisonment in Evin Prison.⁽⁹⁾ Even after their release, journalists remain at risk of further persecution. For instance, journalist [Sepideh Gholian](#) was re-arrested mere hours [after her release](#) in March from Evin Prison, where she had spent four years behind bars.⁽¹⁰⁾

In January 2023, journalist [Nazila Maroufian](#), a correspondent for [Rouydad 24](#) News Agency, was sentenced to two years in prison and a five-year travel ban in Iran without a court hearing. In June of that year, [she](#) utilized the platform "X" to expose the mistreatment she suffered at the hands of a special unit officer who had arrested her. The officer had berated her, saying, 'What's the story with your hair and appearance? Because you dress like a whore.' Maroufian implied that the pressure and threats drove her to contemplate suicide. Maroufian was arrested again in July during a summons to the prosecutor's office in Evin, Tehran. Her home was raided, and her mobile phone and computer were confiscated.



After spending five weeks in prison, she was released in August, only to be apprehended again just two days later. The cycle repeated when she was released the following day but then arrested for the third time on September 1st.⁽¹¹⁾ She was charged with 'propaganda against the regime' and subsequently convicted, serving a one-year prison sentence. Maroufian began a hunger strike to protest the verdict and was released on bail on September 10. In October, Maroufian again turned to website "X," this time to share photos of her bruised face, revealing that she had endured 13 days of torture in Suleimaniya Prison.⁽¹²⁾

In May, journalist [Maryam Vahidian](#), known for her coverage of labor issues for the [ILNA news agency](#), received a four-year prison sentence⁽¹³⁾ following her arrest in Tehran on November 27, 2022. In April 2023, prominent human rights defender and journalist [Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee](#) was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the state."

These accusations were based on her social media activity and involvement in protests against the detention of protesters and journalists. The court also imposed a two-year travel ban, a residence ban in Tehran, and a two-year prohibition on participating in political and social groups. Iraee firmly believes she was targeted due to her journalistic work and human rights advocacy. She has declined to participate in the appeals court proceedings, citing her lack of faith in the revolutionary court's competence and impartiality.

In June 2023, the acclaimed artist [Atena Farghadani](#) was detained at Evin Prison in Tehran following the posting of a satirical political cartoon on her Instagram account. The specific reasons for her summons and subsequent arrest remain unclear, and it is uncertain whether formal charges have been filed against her.⁽¹⁴⁾

In August 2023, the General Intelligence Office in Gilan Province, affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, issued a statement announcing the arrest of 12 individuals, among them journalists [Golua Javaheri](#) and [Elaheh Askari](#), along with photojournalist [Matin Yazdani](#). The report alleges that the detainees were involved in activities deemed to threaten security and stability.

In December 2023, journalist [Sara Massoumi](#) of the Telegram channel "[Roozarooz](#)" was sentenced to six months in prison and banned from journalism for two years for her coverage of a suspicious death in the Tehran subway. She began appealing the verdict [in February 2024](#).



In December, [Shahrazad Hemati](#), the social service secretary at Shargh newspaper, faced legal action following her Instagram post expressing concern about the death sentences handed down to four Kurdish prisoners. She was accused of "supporting terrorists" in relation to this matter.⁽¹⁵⁾

War on Independent Journalism

Through regulations imposed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Iranian government controls radio and television, allowing only state-sanctioned newspapers and electronic media. Ministry data shows 48 news agencies⁽¹⁶⁾, 3,360 news websites⁽¹⁷⁾, and about 5,000 print media outlets aligned with the regime. In contrast, independent media is extremely scarce, with just a few outlets enduring constant pressure from authorities.

In 2023, authorities exerted tight control over local media to advance their narrative and influence public opinion.⁽¹⁸⁾ Supreme Leader [Ali Khamenei](#) stressed the importance of promoting the government's perspective, warning, "If you don't do it, the enemy will spread lies."⁽¹⁹⁾ Journalists were accused of spreading rumors, with Khamenei noting, "They utilized hundreds and thousands of media outlets to propagate falsehoods, rumors, and distortions."⁽²⁰⁾

Consequently, the mainstream media neglected substantive discussions on the prevailing conditions and instead concentrated exclusively on disseminating the regime's messages. In 2023, there was a modest improvement in independent newspapers, exemplified by the "Etemad" newspaper's publication of a highly confidential circular from the Ministry of Interior pertaining to mandatory hijab and measures targeting women in Iran. "Etemad" also conducted [a poll on the hijab](#), revealing that 85% of Iranians rejected the hijab law.

The newspaper faced legal repercussions, including charges of illegal publication of a top-secret document⁽²¹⁾ and harming society.⁽²²⁾

In another instance, the editor-in-chief of "[Hammihan](#)" was tried for inciting discord among different population sectors.⁽²³⁾ Newspapers reporting on the poisoning of schoolgirls,⁽²⁴⁾ such as "Hammihan," "[Hadath 24](#)," and "Sharq," were accused of endangering mental health and spreading unfounded rumors about the case.⁽²⁵⁾ Schools were instructed not to provide information to the media about the poisoning incident, and journalists like "Pour-Tabatabaie," who exposed the matter, were arrested.



Additionally, the chief editors of [Jahan-e Sanat](#) and [Etemad](#) were summoned by the Public Prosecutor after reporting on Iranians selling body parts abroad, deemed as promoting false information.⁽²⁶⁾ Subsequently,⁽²⁷⁾ authorities imposed a ban on organ sales outside the country.⁽²⁸⁾ "Etemad" also warned of an increase in attacks involving acidic liquids on Iranian women, leading to further summonses and scrutiny.

In 2023, several newspapers, including [Sazandegi](#), were shut down by the authorities. Sazandegi, known as a "[reformist](#)" newspaper, faced temporary closure in February because it continued to publish field reports exposing corruption and issues within Iran. Despite threats, the newspaper bravely published a report criticizing the government's mishandling of the rising meat prices, which had a significant impact within Iran.⁽²⁹⁾

Censorship and Unjust Dismissals

Advocating for a free press and human rights in nations marked by severe repression presents considerable challenges, particularly in Iran, where censorship has evolved beyond arrest and imprisonment. To survive, journalists must self-monitor to ensure their safety, which is an inherently perilous strategy.

Editors and officials hinder journalists from carrying out their duties⁽³⁰⁾ due to the apprehension of being targeted by the authorities. This restriction applies to both male and female journalists working in government-funded media, who may face repercussions if they show solidarity with their colleagues. A journalist from a prominent national newspaper revealed that newspaper managers, driven by the fear of reprimand, increasingly limit journalists' freedom each passing day.⁽³¹⁾ Furthermore, a journalist who was recently terminated from a well-known news agency expressed disbelief, stating that never in their 15-year career did they anticipate a time when ISNA and ILNA news agencies would solely publish advertisements.⁽³²⁾

Journalists are under pressure to conform to the regime's demands, extending to their activities on social media,⁽³³⁾ with the risk of dismissal for non-compliance. [Mohammed Hossein Ajorlou](#), husband of [Nilofer Hamidi](#) and formerly associated with the IRNA agency, was among numerous expelled journalists. He recounted how IRNA barred his entry and terminated their collaboration. Moreover, female journalists in government media outlets have faced dismissals over hijab-related issues. One correspondent shared her experience: despite wearing a hijab



at the office given its affiliation with a government institution, she was spotted without one on the subway by a colleague. Shortly afterward, she received notice of her expulsion. ⁽³⁴⁾

Pressure on both male and female journalists resulted in resignations. [Elnaz Mohammadi](#), a journalist and sister of [Elahe Mohammadi](#), publicly stated that she was compelled to resign from Hammihan newspaper. [Marzieh Mahmoudi](#), the editor of Tejaratnews, similarly highlighted the challenges faced by journalists within this environment. ⁽³⁵⁾

In 2023, the Iranian regime persisted in employing extensive censorship, surveillance, content manipulation, and extrajudicial harassment against Internet users, solidifying Iran's status as one of the world's most restrictive online environments. Authorities initiated a sweeping crackdown, including restricting Internet access, blocking social media and communications platforms, employing surveillance tactics, imprisoning Internet users, and responding violently. Despite these challenges, Iranian netizens defiantly utilized online tools to resist Tehran's repression and satirize the dress code.

In June 2023, Iran's Supreme Leader [targeted](#) journalists and activists on social networks, urging increased judicial intervention. ⁽³⁶⁾ Praising prosecutors' actions against journalists, he highlighted the negative impact of those unsettling the public through digital or non-digital means, which undermines citizens' psychological security and opposes the restoration of public rights. Consequently, independent reports were silenced, opposition stifled, and public confidence in local media eroded. Dependence on foreign media outlets grew, but significant official censorship remains.

Restricted Access

Access to information in Iran heavily relies on external websites and satellite channels. However, numerous restrictions imposed by the authorities hinder access to thousands of websites, including international news services, political opposition platforms, ethnic and religious minority resources, and human rights organizations. Websites that contradict the government's narrative on domestic or international politics are frequently blocked, and news articles discussing tensions within Iran's political institutions often face censorship. ⁽³⁷⁾

In February 2023, the Iranian regime openly issued threats against journalists and media personnel collaborating with perceived "enemies," specifically targeting UK-based journalists associated with [Iran International](#), a leading Persian-language news channel, and their families.



Despite robust security measures implemented by British authorities, counter-terrorism police recommended relocating the news channel to a safer location for the safety of its staff.⁽³⁸⁾

In November 2022, reports emerged of an "Iranian hit team" endangering the lives of two journalists affiliated with Iran International in London.⁽³⁹⁾ Subsequently, law enforcement apprehended a suspect.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Prior to these events, Reporters Without Borders highlighted the Iranian regime's tactics of intimidation and coercion towards the families of more than 100 Iranian journalists operating outside the country, along with obstructing the repatriation of their financial resources and properties.⁽⁴¹⁾

In 2023, male and female journalists outside the country faced a spectrum of violations, including intimidation tactics targeting their family members, online harassment, smear campaigns by governments to suppress factual information, deliberate censorship, restrictions on resource access, and, alarmingly, the potential arrest of family members residing in Iran due to pressure exerted on foreign journalists.

On May 3, 2023, journalist [Sajjad Shahrabi](#) of the state-owned Radio Republic of Iran was arrested at his father's house, with his phone and laptop confiscated. The charges against him remain unknown. This incident aimed to intimidate his sister, exiled journalist [Shima Shahrabi](#), the editor-in-chief of Iran Wire.⁽⁴²⁾

Toughest Years in Iran

Amid heightened restrictions, 2023 and the last four months of 2022 stood out as dire years for journalism in Iran. The regime's longstanding policy of stifling information flow through censorship and journalist arrests worsened amid rising public dissatisfaction. This crackdown only fueled distrust in local media, pushing people towards Persian-speaking outlets beyond Iran.

By targeting journalists, Iran has earned a dubious distinction in the region, ranking among the worst for press freedom and journalist safety.



Iran..

January 2023 - February 2024

Arrests

3,000+ individuals arrested for exercising freedom of speech and expression.

100+ journalists behind bars

45 female journalists arrested while conducting journalism work

Press Independence

Failure of public media to discuss the country's situation.

Strict authority control over local media to push official narratives.

Editors and journalists facing trials for "inciting sedition" and spreading misinformation.

Newspapers like Sazandehi shut down for reporting on rising prices.

Journalists hindered from work by editors and officials fearing government reprisals.

Journalists risk dismissal for not complying with regime demands, including social media posts.

Regime implements broad censorship, online content manipulation, and extralegal harassment of internet users.

Journalists Abroad

Regime's public call for arrest and killing of Persian-language journalists abroad.

Reports of regime sending "assassination team" to London to target Iranian journalists.

Journalists abroad subjected to intimidation by family members, online harassment, and smear campaigns.



Jordan: Escalating Restrictions

In Jordan during 2023, press freedom faced heightened restrictions with journalists being tried and imprisoned. Incidents of assault, coverage denial, closures, and bans were reported. Surveillance and restrictions increased significantly into 2024 with the implementation of new laws. Despite political stability, the press in Jordan operated under self-censorship and government-imposed limits during this period.

Under the "[Crime Prevention](#)" Law, Jordanian authorities wield expansive powers allowing them to detain journalists and activists indefinitely. They also leverage the "[Electronic Crimes](#)" Law, utilizing its broad provisions to restrict journalists and writers from expressing opinions in newspapers or on social media platforms.

Judicial Abuse

The Jordanian authorities leverage the judiciary as a tool of pressure against journalists, exemplified by several recent cases. In August, journalist [Ahmed Hassan Al-Zo'bi](#) was sentenced to a year in prison and fined by the Court of First Instance in Amman. Similarly, journalist [Heba Abu Taha](#) was arrested following a three-month prison sentence for "insulting an official body" due to a social media post criticizing normalization with Israel. Meanwhile, journalist [Khaled Al-Majali](#) was arrested in July after an appeal court sentenced him to three months in prison and a fine, despite being acquitted by a magistrate court four months earlier. The authorities frequently employ broad laws like cybercrime statutes, the Penal Code, and anti-terrorism laws to restrict press freedom, often resorting to [administrative detention](#) to detain and abuse journalists.

Curbing Journalists' Work

Security forces in the country obstructed journalists from covering events, notably preventing access to the American and Israeli Embassies during demonstrations for "security reasons." Journalists from Al-Ghad newspaper, [Sarah Zayed](#) and [Ghada Al-Sheikh](#), were among those barred from the Israeli embassy sit-in.

In May, the Speaker of the Jordanian House of Representatives banned media coverage of a session concerning Representative Imad Al-Adwan's case, forcing the press out. Earlier, in January, media was prohibited from attending sessions discussing the general budget. Human rights defender [Hala Ahed](#) faced an online defamation campaign in June, labeled a "defender



of feminism." In July, the Jordanian Media Commission blocked the satirical news website Al Hudood Network without explanation.

Also in July, the Journalists Syndicate Council expelled [Ibrahim Qubailat](#) and [Adnan Bariya](#) from the Jordanian Journalists Syndicate, despite their elected positions in the syndicate's administrative body. In October, an Israeli artist plagiarized and distorted a drawing by Jordanian artist [Imad Hajjaj](#) to serve the Israeli narrative. In November, the government-owned [Al-Mamlaka TV](#) suffered a cyber-attack coinciding with its coverage of Israeli aggression on Gaza.

Crackdown with Cybercrime Law

In the course of the year, the Jordanian House of Representatives endorsed proposed amendments to [the Cybercrime Law](#), viewed by journalists, human rights activists, and advocates as a threat to public and individual freedoms, directly impacting independent and unrestricted journalism, and contradicting Jordanian laws safeguarding freedom of opinion and expression.

The law imposes severe penalties for spreading "false news" or information deemed defamatory, slanderous, or humiliating (Article 15), as well as for damaging reputations (Article 16) and undermining national unity (Article 17). It also targets those who use online platforms to incite discord, promote hatred, or advocate violence or religious contempt. These broad provisions lend themselves to wide interpretations, facilitating authorities' targeting of journalists, with penalties including up to three years in prison and hefty fines ranging from \$27,000 to \$65,000.

The law was expected to have precise terms rather than broad provisions. Its approval in 2023, after being delayed since 2015, signifies a punitive shift that threatens press freedom in Jordan, enabling increased internet monitoring by public prosecution and police authorities and promoting self-censorship among journalists to avoid penalties.



Jordan..

2023-2024

Press Situation

- Growing surveillance and restrictions hindering journalists' work freedom.
- Press caught between self-censorship and state-imposed boundaries.
- Authorities used the judiciary to pressure male and female journalists.
- Eight journalists, including four females, were arrested, imprisoned, and had restricted movements.

New Law

- In 2023, Jordanian Parliament approved amendments to the Cybercrime Law.
- The law's broad language, including terms like
 - Fake news
 - Harming reputation
 - Defamation
 - Slander
 - Contempt
 - Harming national unity
 - Inciting hatred
 - Inciting strife
- The law poses a threat to public and individual freedoms, especially impacting the independent press.

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Algeria: Suppressing Independent Journalism

Amidst Algeria's tumultuous years, 2023 was marked by the government's growing determination to stifle the remaining independent media. Journalists faced arbitrary arrests, death threats, and reprisals from authorities when shedding light on corruption or politically sensitive issues.



Press freedom has eroded since 2019 with [Abdelmadjid Tebboune](#) in the presidential office. The closure of "[Liberty](#)," the largest French-language newspaper, and shutdown of numerous news sites have further limited independent voices. Financial pressures led to the closure of many independent media outlets, as [government subsidies](#) only benefit state-owned or regime-aligned platforms, worsening the situation.

On July 18, 2023, the Criminal Chamber of the Algiers Judicial Council handed down a verdict against independent journalist [Ihssan Al-Qadhi](#), who manages Interface Médias, the parent company of Radio M and [Maghreb Emergent](#). Five years of the sentence are to be served immediately due to charges related to Al-Qadhi's social media posts deemed detrimental to public interest. Furthermore, he was accused of accepting foreign funds, an offense subject to Article 95 bis of the [Algerian Penal Code](#), carrying a potential prison sentence of five to seven years for actions perceived as jeopardizing national security, institutional stability, and territorial integrity through financial contributions or gifts.

In a court ruling on February 7, 2023, journalist [Farid Harbi](#), the creator of the media outlet "[All About Boumerdes](#)" (Tout sur Boumerdes), was sentenced to three years in prison and fined by a court in Boumerdes, eastern Algeria. He was convicted of spreading false information that could incite public disorder. Harbi's critical reporting on the government's handling of development projects in Boumerdes was cited as the reason for his prosecution.

On February 4, 2023, journalist **Saad Bou Akba** (77 years old) was arrested and detained for two days in Algiers, Algeria. He was subsequently released temporarily by a court in Algiers, which placed him under judicial supervision, imposed a travel ban, and required him to appear in court every two weeks under [anti-discrimination and hate speech prevention laws](#). This followed the publication of a satirical article on Facebook criticizing local government projects. Bou Akba later clarified that the criticisms he faced due to the article were the result of "misunderstanding," emphasizing that he did not intend to harm or offend anyone.

[Khaled Drareni](#), an editor at the Casbah Tribune news site and correspondent for French-language channel [TV5 Monde](#), continued to face travel restrictions following his six-month suspended sentence in 2022 for charges of "inciting an unarmed gathering" and "harming national unity."



In February 2023, [authorities arrested](#) Raouf Farrah, a senior analyst at [the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime](#), and his father on charges of receiving funds to disrupt public peace. Subsequently, in August 2023, Farrah was sentenced to two years in prison.

New Enactment

The recent enactment of [new media laws](#) in Algeria, as disclosed in the Official Gazette (Issue 77, December 2, 2023), is a concerning expansion of regulatory control over press and media activities within the country.

One troubling aspect of these laws is the increased authority granted to the "Independent National Authority to Control Audiovisual Content." Established in 2014 and primarily appointed by the President of the Republic, [this authority](#) now possesses augmented oversight capabilities, purportedly to monitor audiovisual programs for compliance with national laws. However, this expanded scope raises apprehensions about potential censorship and repression of media content under the guise of regulatory oversight.

Furthermore, the "Audiovisual Authority" has been empowered under the revised legislation to regulate and monitor online audiovisual communication services, ostensibly to uphold professional media standards. This move appears to prioritize control over journalistic freedom, potentially stifling independent voices and critical reporting.

The recent developments in Algerian media regulation, particularly the expansion of powers granted to the "Audiovisual Control Authority" and the establishment of a "Supreme Council for the Ethics of the Journalism Profession," signal a troubling trend towards increased government interference in press freedom and media ethics. The fact that half of the council's members are appointed by the President raises serious concerns about the potential for political influence to shape professional standards and ethical guidelines within the journalism sector. This composition undermines the council's independence and may compromise its ability to act impartially.

Moreover, the broadening scope of the Algerian laws on written and electronic press encompasses all forms of news dissemination, including citizen journalism, through various mediums like social media, represents a significant expansion of state control over information flow. By extending censorship to social media networks and imposing regulations on content creators, the government risks suppressing critical voices and dissenting opinions under the



guise of regulating media activity. This approach not only stifles press freedom but threatens the diversity of perspectives essential to a vibrant, democratic media landscape.

The ambiguity in the language of the new laws, such as the vague definition of "tendentious news" and the punitive measures against criticisms of foreign leaders, underscores a worrying trend towards curtailing investigative journalism and stifling freedom of expression. In conclusion, while these laws claim to uphold journalistic ethics and guarantee access to information, the reality appears to be a consolidation of state control over the media landscape, posing serious threats to press freedom and independent journalism in Algeria.

Algeria... 2023-2024


Press Situation

- Algeria faces severe challenges as authorities attempt to silence remaining independent media post-2019.
- Male and female journalists critical of the government are subjected to travel bans.
- Journalist Ihsan Al-Qadi was imprisoned for allegedly harming public interest and receiving foreign funds. Farid Harbi received a three-year sentence for spreading false news on an online outlet.

New Press Laws

- Laws enacted for written press, electronic press, and audiovisual activity expand the authority of the "Independent National Authority to Control Audiovisual Content," predominantly appointed by the President, as a regulatory body instead of the judiciary.
- The law broadens journalist targeting to encompass citizen journalism, defining media activity to include social media networks, and forming units to monitor and suppress critics.
- The law mandates the establishment of a Supreme Council for Journalism Ethics, with half of its members appointed by the president.

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Women
Journalists
Without
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Syria: Absence of Journalism

In Syria, the concept of a free and independent press remains elusive, overshadowed by the country's tumultuous political landscape. Since 2011, Syria has been trapped in a devastating conflict, with power split between Bashar al-Assad's regime and various opposition factions. This volatile environment has resulted in dire consequences for journalists and media professionals, who face relentless threats and violence from all sides.

Over the past decade, more than 300 journalists and media activists have lost their lives, while countless others endure torture, imprisonment, and abduction. The very act of reporting truthfully has become a perilous endeavor, as journalists are pressured to either toe the official narrative or risk facing severe repercussions.

Amidst this chaos, the international community must exert meaningful pressure on Syrian authorities, including those in de facto control, to respect press freedom and human rights. Immediate actions should include the unconditional release of all detained journalists, followed by comprehensive investigations into acts of violence against media personnel.

Organizations advocating for press freedom and human rights within Syria desperately need support. Legal assistance should be provided to journalists facing intimidation or harassment, while sanctions must be considered against entities responsible for egregious human rights abuses, including those targeting press freedom.

Engaging directly with Syrian authorities is imperative, urging them to uphold basic freedoms and protect journalists from harm. This engagement should also focus on empowering Syrian journalists through safety training, skill development, and access to necessary resources for independent reporting.

Solidarity with Syrian journalists is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity. By standing with them, condemning violations, and raising global awareness about the dire state of press freedom in Syria, we can contribute to a future where journalists are free to report without fear and the voices of the Syrian people are heard, loud and clear, on the world stage.

Killing of Journalists

In April 2024, Syrian media activist [Ahmed Al-Hussein](#) was brutally murdered in rural Daraa, with armed militants affiliated with ISIS allegedly implicated in his assassination. On August 9,



2024, [Feras Al-Ahmad](#), a correspondent for Sama TV, fell victim to a car bomb explosion in rural Daraa, which was intended to silence his reporting. The attack also left Sama TV photographer [Ahmed Al-Maslama](#) injured, highlighting the dangers faced by journalists simply for doing their job.

The targeting of media activists continued on September 7, 2024, when [Mohammed Al-Dhaheer](#) was wounded in a Syrian regime airstrike in Idlib, and [Hussein Al-Zarai](#) was injured in a strike by Syrian regime and Syrian Democratic Forces in Aleppo's countryside. On November 15, 2024, [Mohammed Saeed Al-Kafari](#), another media activist, was brutally murdered by an armed group loyal to the Syrian regime in the eastern countryside of Daraa, shortly after participating in an anti-regime demonstration.

Arrests, Imprisonment, and Assault

Throughout 2023 in Syria, a series of alarming incidents underscored the severe risks faced by journalists, activists, and individuals critical of the government or various factions. In January, Syrian TV correspondent **Shadi Hilweh** was sentenced to six months in prison by the Aleppo Criminal Court. This pattern of targeting individuals for their work continued with [the arrest of two German photojournalists](#), including **Sebastian Backhaus**, in Qamishli by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in January, allegedly for photographing military sites. In April, **Omar Abdullah** was arrested by Syrian regime forces in the Hama countryside for criticizing economic and service conditions.

In May, "**Muhannad Hassan**," a regime supporter, faced [a brief detention](#) for criticizing the Electricity Directorate in Latakia, highlighting the complexities of dissent even within loyalist circles. The same month saw the arrest of media activist "**Ali Aloulo**" by [the General Security](#) of the "Salvation Government" in Idlib for covering demonstrations against the "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham" organization, demonstrating risks faced by those critical of non-governmental entities.

June brought further tensions as police from the Syrian National Army attacked journalists in Azaz, including **Abu Bakr al-Saqqa** and **Ahmed al-Khatib**. The security situation persisted in Idlib, where journalists like **Omar Nazhat** and **Ali Nasrallah** were targeted by [the Salvation Government](#). Meanwhile, **Lama Abbas**, a writer, faced a regime raid on her home in Damascus, culminating in her subsequent arrest in September on charges of "weakening the nation's psyche."



The crackdown intensified in August with the arrest of media activist **Youssef Al-Muezzin** by the Salvation Government in Idlib and "**Barzan Layani**" by Kurdish Democratic Union forces in Hasakah. Regime actions in the same month included the arrests of "**Ahmed Orabi**" from Homs and "**Ahmed Ismail**" from the Latakia countryside over their publications.

By October, the situation remained precarious as **Saleh Al-Fares** was arrested by Syrian opposition in Afrin on defamation charges, while former journalist **Bashar Najla** faced arrest from Tartus countryside for insulting President Bashar al-Assad. Concurrently, the Salvation Government detained media activist "**Adnan Al-Imam**," coercing him to renounce journalism upon release, reflecting a broadening scope of suppression across ideological and factional lines.

Incidents of assault

Ayham Hilal was attacked and beaten by Syrian opposition police in Azaz, located in the Aleppo countryside, in October. In December, journalists and media activists including **Fares Zein**, **Mohammed Haroun**, **Malaz Al-Homs**, **Nizar Abu Ayman**, **Hamam Al-Zein**, and **Amin Al-Ali** were assaulted by Syrian opposition security personnel in the city of Al-Rai, situated in northern Aleppo.

Other Violations

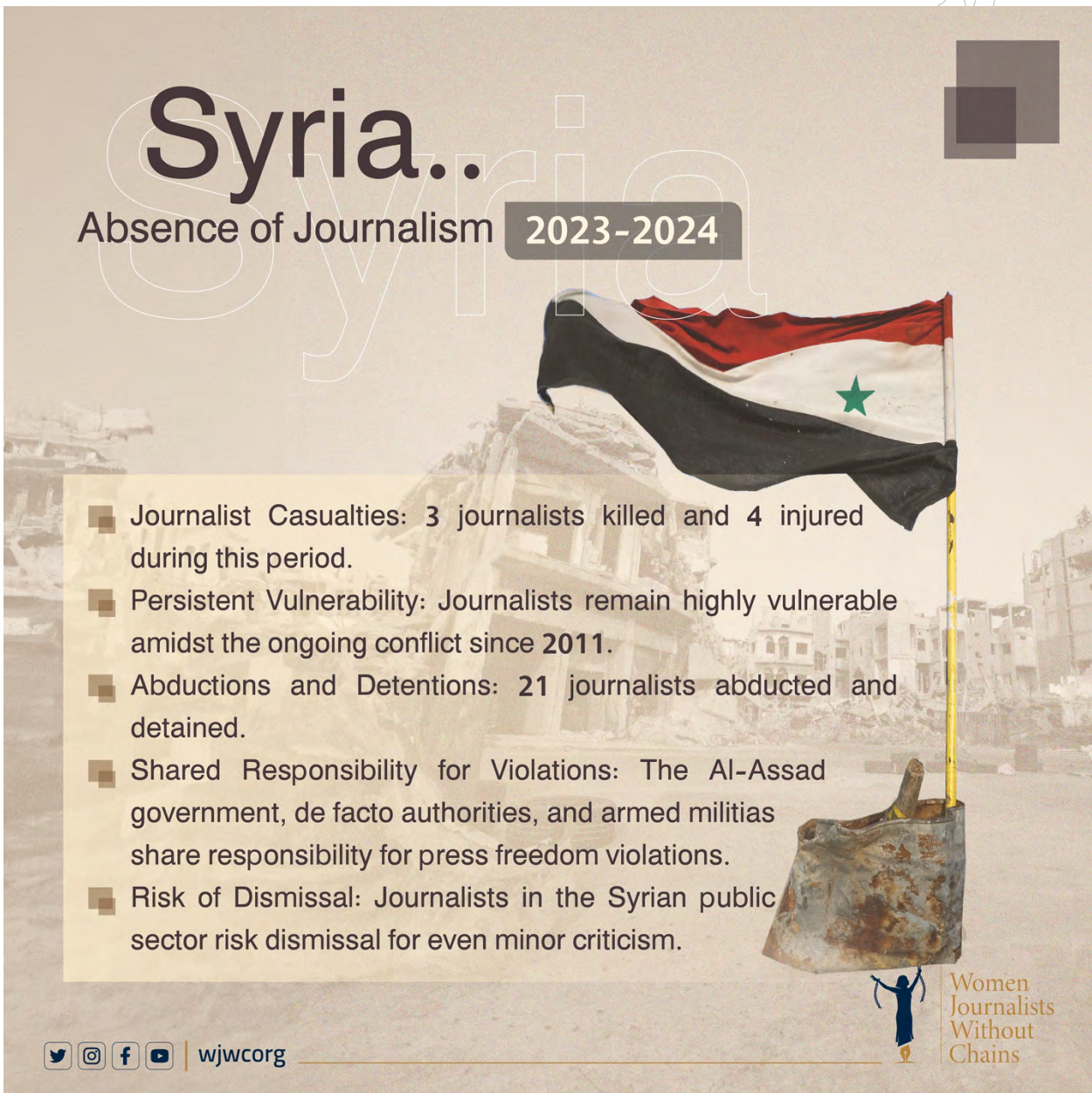
Syrian journalist [Roger Asfar](#) faced a lawsuit in Syria, accused of defamation, slander, violating privacy, propaganda for an unlicensed organization, insulting a religion, and inciting hatred. Roger, who resides outside Syria and was a recipient of the [Samir Kassir Award](#) in 2019, encountered legal challenges in his homeland.

On July 8, the Syrian regime [revoked](#) BBC Radio's accreditation following a report on officials' ties to "[Captagon](#)", a stimulant drug. Additionally, the Syrian State Television Authority suspended the "[Captain](#)" program due to a passing reference to Iranian control over government [lands](#). Later, on October 4, [the Syrian regime's Ministry of Education](#) terminated the assignment of [Samaher Danoun](#), a correspondent for the Syrian Educational Satellite Channel, citing her political support for the popular movement in Suwayda as the reason for her dismissal.





Syria..

Absence of Journalism 2023-2024



- Journalist Casualties: 3 journalists killed and 4 injured during this period.
- Persistent Vulnerability: Journalists remain highly vulnerable amidst the ongoing conflict since 2011.
- Abductions and Detentions: 21 journalists abducted and detained.
- Shared Responsibility for Violations: The Al-Assad government, de facto authorities, and armed militias share responsibility for press freedom violations.
- Risk of Dismissal: Journalists in the Syrian public sector risk dismissal for even minor criticism.

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 Women
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Tunisia: Shrinking Press Freedom

Tunisia is at risk of regressing to pre-2011 conditions as constraints on freedom of expression and press freedom increase. Tunisian authorities exercise censorship over the media and restrict freedom of expression, impeding diversity of opinions and critique. Legal restrictions imposed on the press hinder journalists' work and threaten freedom of expression, while many media institutions face financial crises, endangering their survival in the market and undermining their ability to effectively fulfill their role.



Tunisia witnessed a disturbing surge in violations against journalists in **2023**, with **221** recorded incidents targeting over **200** journalists, including **91** female journalists. According to the [National Syndicate of Journalists](#), most attacks on female journalists happened when they were alone or at their workplace, increasing concerns about their safety and work environment. Media coverage of the [Tunisian elections](#) contributed significantly to the severity of violations, with nearly a third of recorded incidents (**63** violations) directly related to the election. These violations included prosecution, assault, prevention of coverage, incitement, and withholding information. Notably, **27** cases of prosecution against male and female journalists were recorded in **2023**, the highest number in over a decade.

Journalists in Tunisia have faced physical attacks while carrying out their duties. Many were denied access to cover electoral activities and experienced harassment and campaigns of incitement and hatred due to their election-related reporting. Additionally, parties imposed restrictions on journalists' access to information, impeding their work and undermining the quality of media coverage.

Judicial Pursuits

[The enactment of Decree No. 54 on September 13, 2022](#), raised significant concerns among journalistic organizations like [the National Syndicate of Journalists](#), the General Union of Media, as well as human rights advocates and labor groups in Tunisia. This decree, if not repealed, potentially criminalizes legitimate reporting and restricts freedom of opinion and expression with penalties of up to **10** years in prison. Seven lawsuits are challenging its legality. Furthermore, authorities have leveraged anti-terrorism laws to target journalists, compelling them to disclose sources and accusing them of undermining state security based on perceived "dangerous" reports.

Additionally, the Public Prosecutor's Office in Tunisia has continued to refer journalists to the judiciary under the provisions of the Criminal Code, imposing strict penalties for defamation and dissemination of "fake news," citing Decree 54 which mandates up to five years in prison for such offenses. Penalties are doubled when public officials are targeted. These legal actions, coupled with prolonged preliminary investigations, subject journalists to psychological pressure and encourage self-censorship in their reporting efforts.



[Decree No. 115 of 2011, which pertains to freedom of the press, printing, and publishing](#), stands as a notable milestone for freedom of expression and press freedom in Tunisia. This decree safeguards journalists, shielding them from imprisonment due to their professional activities. Despite the protections afforded by this decree, Tunisian authorities persist in using outdated and discredited laws to prosecute journalists, thereby disregarding procedural norms and violating Article 55 of the 2022 Tunisian Constitution, which explicitly guarantees the protection of rights and freedoms without undue restrictions or violations.

In 2023, journalists [Shatha Al-Hajj Mubarak](#) and [Khalifa Al-Qasimi](#) remained imprisoned following Shatha's initial arrest in the "[Instalingo case](#)" of 2021, which involved allegations of incitement, attacks on state security, and insulting the head of state against journalists and bloggers. Although Shatha [was released](#) by court order in June 2023, she was re-arrested in July without a final verdict. Authorities conducted ongoing investigations into Instalingo, suspected to be her employer. The accusations against Shatha Al-Hajj Mubarak do not align with international legal standards.

Khalifa Al-Qasimi, in an ongoing case since 2022, was sentenced to five years in prison for publishing news about the thwarted terrorist operation in Kairouan Governorate on the website of the private radio station "[Mosaïque FM](#)." He was referred to the judiciary [under the Anti-Terrorism Law](#) after he refused to disclose the sources of his report on the arrest of a group of terrorism suspects, which was published on the website of Radio Mosaïque FM. In May 2023, Al-Qasimi was sentenced to five years in prison by the Tunisian Court of Appeal, but the ruling [was overturned](#) by the Court of Cassation, leading to another round of appeal, and he [was ultimately released](#) on March 6, 2024, yet he continues to face ongoing prosecution in the same case.

On December 28, 2023, [Ziad Al-Hani](#), a prominent journalist and political commentator on independent radio station IFM, was summoned by police shortly after criticizing the Minister of Trade on air. The Court of First Instance in Tunis ordered his detention under Decree 54 for 'insulting the minister.' On January 1, 2024, the Prosecutor General accused Al-Hani of 'using telecommunications to insult others,' leading to his pretrial detention. On January 10, the Prosecutor General at the Court of First Instance in Tunis sentenced Ziad Al-Hani to six months in prison with a suspended sentence, after which he was released. Journalists **Monia Al-Arfawi** and **Mohammed Bouglab** underwent interrogations and investigations in 2023 under Decree



54 due to their journalistic reports. Al-Arfawi described her repeated summonses by the Minister of Religious Affairs as 'a serious attempt to undermine freedom of opinion and expression.' These cases raise concerns over criticism of state policies and officials' conduct.

Restricting Work of Media Institutions

In addition to intimidating laws, [the Press Council](#), an independent self-regulatory body for the media sector, issued a statement warning of judicial control over media institutions' editorial lines and a growing culture of self-censorship.

Throughout 2023, government authorities continued to exert control over public media and sought to limit the independent press, with President Kais Saied extending the state of emergency [until year-end](#). This state of emergency imposes restrictions that criminalize freedom of the press and expression, allowing authorities to access journalists' electronic devices without court orders. Additionally, authorities and other entities attempted to remove online content.

In February 2023, the National Counter-Terrorism Unit [raided](#) the headquarters of One TN news website, arresting technicians and journalists and confiscating their equipment. Employees [were interrogated](#) about the outlet's editorial stance and detained for one day before release, with personal devices seized for inspection.

Journalist Nouredine Boutar [was arrested](#) in February 2023 on trumped-up money laundering charges, detained for over three months, released on bail, and banned from traveling. He [was questioned](#) about the editorial stance of his website and radio station, Mosaique FM.

In March 2023, the heads of public media institutions in Tunisia, including the [Tunisia Africa News Agency](#), Tunisian Radio, and Tunisian Television, [were replaced](#) with individuals close to the Tunisian president, leading to concerns about government propaganda and the exclusion of independent journalists, as reported by the Tunisian Journalists Syndicate. During the same month, access to six online articles on Tunis Africa Press (TAP), a public media organization, was restricted by the editorial board, citing bias. The articles remained available only to the agency's clients, raising transparency concerns. In April 2023, journalist **Bahija Ben Mabrouk**, acting editor-in-chief, revealed pressure from the assistant director-general to remove an article on sub-Saharan migrants following controversial statements by President Saied. The article was taken down and republished exclusively for the agency's subscribers, not accessible



to the general public. Additionally, prior to the 2023 legislative elections, the Independent High Authority for Elections issued a notice to the online news website Business News after it published an article critical of the electoral body's mandate. The [notice](#) accused the website of spreading fake news and implied potential legal consequences based on Decree 54.

Erosion of Journalism

In 2023, male and female journalists expressed increasing concerns over the decline of journalism amid the economic and financial crisis affecting Tunisian press institutions, coupled with political restrictions that offer little hope for hundreds of unemployed journalists. Tunisia's National Union of Journalists warns that the country is facing its most perilous period in history, characterized by a deep structural crisis jeopardizing the profession's existence. The union has raised the alarm about the potential extinction of journalism, citing the dual economic and financial crisis alongside political challenges that reflect the authority's intentions to significantly limit critical journalism.

[The union is grappling with a dilemma](#) in negotiating with the government over the state of the journalism sector. Since President Kais Saied overthrew the political system in 2021, the government has not appointed officials or spokespersons to engage in negotiations with the union or address the public. Instead, the presidency, government, and ministries opt to disseminate statements and videos via social media platforms, leading to a decline in widespread information and news circulation.

In 2023, there were distressing incidents of defamation and intimidation campaigns specifically targeting female journalists. **Khawla Bukarim**, the editor-in-chief of Kashf Media, experienced a series of threatening emails and social media messages directed at her and her family in March. Similarly, Mounia Arfaoui received numerous insulting and threatening messages from anonymous social media accounts after posting critical content about the government. The harassment faced by female journalists is deeply concerning.

Palestine & Occupied Territories: Extermination of Journalists

Over the past few years, Palestinian press freedom landscape has been riddled with challenge, but this past year marked a particularly tragic chapter in Palestinian journalism.

Since October 7th 2023, Palestinian journalists encountered significant risks while reporting on events in the occupied territories and Gaza Strip, as Israel's ground offensive escalated



alongside deadly airstrikes, power outages, communication disruptions, restricted movement, and humanitarian access challenges under the Israeli authorities' refusal to permit the entry of essential supplies.

Between October 2023 and April 2024, "Women Journalists Without Chains" documented 130 journalists' killings in the State of Palestine and Occupied Territories. Most were targeted by Israeli occupation aircraft, which also destroyed over 75 press, radio, and television institutions. Among the victims, 15 Palestinian journalists were killed, some alongside their families. Others lost their lives while reporting. This includes: Alaa Hassan Al-Hams, Heba Fouad Al-Abadla, Angham Ahmed Adwan, Nermin Nasr Haboush, Hanin Ali Al-Qashtan, Hanan Bassam Ayad, Nermin Qawwas, Ola Atallah, Shaima Ziyad Al-Jazzar, Amal Zuhd, Ayat Khadoura, Alaa Taher Al-Hasanat, Salam Khalil Mohammed Mayma, Salma Hamada Misbah Mukhaymar, and Doaa Sharaf.

The Benjamin Netanyahu government has implemented new measures to restrict independent media covering events, citing a state of "emergency". This declaration, [ratified](#) on October 8, invoked Section 40 of the Basic Law of the Government to declare a state of war against Gaza, exacerbating the challenges faced by journalists and media personnel.

Gaza Strip

Journalist Fatalities in Gaza During Israeli Attack: October 7 to March 20:

October 10: Salam Khalil Mohammed Mima, a 33-year-old independent journalist and head of the Women Journalists Committee in the Palestinian Media Gathering, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Jabalia Camp, northeast Gaza, along with her family, including her husband and three children. Their bodies were recovered from the rubble three days later.

October 25: [Salma Hamada Misbah Mukhaimer](#), a 34-year-old journalist working for multiple media outlets, was killed on October 25 along with her infant child, father, mother, and other family members during an Israeli raid on the city of Rafah, south of Gaza. Salma, who lived in Jordan, was visiting her family in Gaza when the tragic attack occurred.

October 26: [Duaa Sharaf \(31 years old\)](#), a journalist for Al-Aqsa Radio, and her infant child were tragically killed in an Israeli air strike on their home in Gaza's Al Zawayda neighborhood.



October 9: [Saeed Radwan Saeed Al-Taweel](#) (37 years old), editor-in-chief of the fifth News Network, lost his life in an Israeli air strike targeting media outlets in Gaza's Al-Rimal neighborhood.

October 9: [Mohammed Rizq Mahmoud Sobh](#) (35 years old), a photojournalist from Khabar News Agency, was killed in an Israeli air strike on media installations in Gaza's Al-Rimal neighborhood.

October 9: [Hisham Muohammed Fakhri Al-Nawajha](#) (27 years old), a journalist at Khabar News Agency, also fell victim to the same Israeli air strike that claimed the lives of Al-Taweel and Sobh.

October 16: [Abdul Hadi Saadallah Rashad Habib](#) (37 years old), a journalist working for UNRWA Educational Television, was killed in a bombing that targeted a residential apartment in Gaza's Al-Zaytoun neighborhood, along with his mother-in-law and other family members.

October 23: [Rushdi Yahya Rushdi al-Sarraj](#) (31 years old), the director and founder of Ain Media, was killed in a missile strike on a house in western Gaza.

October 7: [Mohammed Tahami Abdel Salam Al-Salhi](#) (29 years old), a photojournalist at the Fourth Authority Agency, lost his life to occupation bullets while covering events on the border fence in southern Gaza's Al-Bureij.

October 12: [Ahmed Abdel Rahman Shehab](#) (42 years old), a journalist and programmer on Prisoners Radio, was killed, along with his wife, children, and numerous family members, in an air strike in Gaza's Jabalia camp.

October 7: [Omar Fares Omar Abu Shawish](#) (36 years old), a journalist, novelist, and writer, was killed by occupation bombing while reporting on events in Gaza.

October 11: [Mohammed Fayez Yousef Abu Matar](#) (28 years old), an independent photojournalist, was a casualty of an Israeli air strike in the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

October 7: [Ibrahim Lafi](#), a photojournalist at Ain Media, was killed by Israeli occupation bullets while covering events in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza.

October 7: [Mohammed Sami Abdullah Jarghoun](#), a 28-year-old journalist for Smart Media, was killed while covering the aftermath of a bombing in Rafah, southern Gaza.



October 8: [Asaad Abdel Nasser Asaad Shamlikh](#), a 20-year-old independent journalist, was killed along with nine members of his family in an air strike in southern Gaza.

October 13: [Hossam Mahmoud Hassan Mubarak](#), a 41-year-old journalist from Al-Aqsa Radio, was killed in an Israeli raid in northern Gaza.

October 14: [Yousef Maher Dawas](#), a 20-year-old contributing writer for Palestine Chronicle and We Are Not Numbers (WANN), was killed in an Israeli missile strike on his family's home in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza.

October 17: [Issam Mohammed Subhi Bahar](#), a 39-year-old journalist with Al-Aqsa TV, was killed alongside his wife and several family members during an Israeli raid on their home in northern Gaza. On the same day, [Mohammed Baalousha](#), Mohammed Baalousha, the administrative and financial director of Palestine Today channel, along with his young daughter and a number of his family members, was killed during an Israeli raid in the Al-Safawi neighborhood in northern Gaza.

October 18: [Samih Abdel Razzaq Khamis Al-Nadi](#), a 55-year-old director of Al-Aqsa TV, was killed during an Israeli raid on Gaza.

October 19: [Khalil Ibrahim Ali Abu Athra](#), a 40-year-old cameraman working for Al-Aqsa TV, along with his brother, was killed in an Israeli raid on the city of Rafah in southern Gaza.

October 20: [Mohammed Abu Ali](#), a journalist affiliated with Al-Shabab Radio, was killed during an Israeli raid in northern Gaza.

October 23: [Mohammed Imad Labad](#), a journalist with Al-Resala news website, was killed in an Israeli raid in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.

October 25: [Saed Samir Mahmoud Al-Halabi](#), a 42-year-old journalist with Al-Aqsa Satellite Network, was killed in an Israeli bombing that targeted his house in Jabalia refugee camp, northern Gaza.

October 25: [Ahmed Jamil Mahmoud Abu Mahdi](#), a 58-year-old journalist associated with Al-Aqsa Network, was killed in an Israeli bombing that targeted his house in central Gaza.



October 25: Jamal Arif Salem Al-Faqawi, a 28-year-old journalist working at Al-Mithaq Media Foundation, tragically lost his life when an Israeli bombing targeted his house in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza

October 25: [Mohammed Fayez Al-Hassani](#), a 34-year-old journalist and director of the Rawasy Palestine Foundation, was killed along with members of his family in an Israeli bombing that targeted his home in Gaza.

October 11: [Mustafa Al-Naqeeb](#), a Palestinian journalist and researcher, was killed along with his family, including his daughter, during Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

October 24: [Iman Jamal Ahmed Al-Aqili](#), a 29-year-old journalist, was killed in an Israeli bombing that targeted her home in Gaza.

October 24: [Mahmoud Abu Zarifa](#), a journalist associated with the Saudi Cultural Center in Gaza, was killed by the bombing of his house in the Gaza Strip.

October 25: [Zaher Al-Afghani](#), a journalist and photographer, was killed when the occupation forces bombed his house in Gaza.

October 27: [Yasser Abu Namous](#), a journalist at the Al-Sahel Media Foundation, was killed along with his mother in an air strike on his family's home in Khan Yunis, Gaza.

October 28: [Hudhayfah Tayseer Al-Najjar](#) was killed in a raid that targeted his home in Khan Yunis, south of Gaza.

October 30: [Nazmi Al-Nadim](#), an administrator at Palestine TV, was killed along with several family members in an air strike on his home in the Al-Zaytoun area, east of Gaza. A female colleague at Palestine TV mourned, saying, "Who will press olives for us... Why didn't you wait? Maybe you could perform Hajj this year as you had hoped."

October 31: [Majed Kashko](#), director of the Palestine TV office, was killed along with several family members in an Israeli air strike in the Gaza Strip.

October 31: [Imad Al-Wahidi](#), an administrator at Palestine TV, was killed along with several family members in an Israeli air strike on Gaza. A colleague mourned him, commenting, "May God have mercy on you, Imad. You lived a good life and died a good death."



November 1: [Majd Fadl Arandas](#), a journalist for the Al-Jamahir News website, was killed in an Israeli air strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza. His mother, Amal Arandas, mourned him on Facebook, saying: "May God be pleased with you from the heights of heaven, my son. The angels of heaven and earth may be pleased with you. The meeting place is Paradise, God willing."

November 1: [Iyad Matar](#), a journalist for Al-Aqsa TV, was killed along with his mother in an Israeli air strike on Gaza.

November 2: [Mohammed Abu Hatab](#), a TV correspondent, was killed along with 11 family members in an Israeli air strike on their home in Khan Yunis, south of Gaza. He was reporting on conditions at Nasser Medical Hospital just one hour before his death, according to the Palestinian News Agency (Wafa).

November 2: [Mohammed Al-Bayari](#), a journalist working for Al-Aqsa Channel, was killed as a result of Israeli bombing in Gaza City.

November 3: [Haitham Harara](#), a journalist in the government media office in the Gaza Strip, was killed in an Israeli bombing that targeted the gate of the Shifa Medical Complex.

November 5: Mohammed Al-Jaja, a journalist and consultant at the Press House Organization, was killed along with his wife and two daughters in an Israeli air strike on their home in the Al-Nasr neighborhood in the northern Gaza Strip.

November 7: [Yahya Abu Muneer](#), a journalist at Al-Aqsa Radio, was killed in an airstrike on Gaza.

November 7: [Mohammed Abu Hasira](#), a journalist with the Palestinian news agency Wafa, along with 42 family members, was killed in an airstrike on his home in Gaza.

November 10: [Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Qura](#), a photographer and multimedia lecturer at Al-Aqsa University, was killed in an airstrike at the entrance of Khuza'a town east of Khan Yunis in Gaza.

November 13: [Ahmed Fateema](#), a photographer for Cairo News Channel and member of Beit Al-Sahafa organization, was killed in an airstrike on Gaza.

November 13: [Ya'qoub Al-Barsh](#), the executive director of "Nawaa" radio, succumbed to injuries sustained in an Israeli airstrike on his home in northern Gaza, a day before his death.



November 15: [Journalist Mahmoud Matar](#) was killed in an Israeli bombardment on his family's home in Gaza.

November 18: [Mustafa Al-Sawaf](#), a journalist and political analyst, along with family members, was killed in an Israeli strike targeting his home; his sons Montaser (a photographer with Anadolu Agency) and Mohammed (a multimedia producer) were injured.

November 18: [Amro Abu Haya](#), a photojournalist working as an engineer at Al-Aqsa TV, was killed in a bombing of his home in Gaza.

November 18: [Musab Ashour](#), a journalist working at the University of Applied Sciences, was killed in the massacre of the Nusseirat market (in central Gaza, claimed by Israel as a safe area, being south of Wadi Gaza), with his body recently discovered.

November 18: [Abdul Haleem Awad](#), an employee at Al-Aqsa TV, was killed in an airstrike on his home in Gaza.

November 18: [Sari Mansour](#), General Manager of Quds Agency, was killed while wearing a journalist's protective vest [during an Israeli raid on his home](#) in the Al-Bureij camp in central Gaza.

November 18: [Hasoona Asleem](#), a photographer, was killed in the bombing of Al-Bureij camp along with **Sari Mansour**.

November 19: [Bilal Jadallah](#), Chairman of the Board of "Press House," was killed in Gaza City while in his car, reportedly hit by an Israeli tank shell.

November 20: [Alaa Taher Al-Hasanat](#), a program presenter at Majdah Media Network, was killed along with several family members in a strike on her home in Al-Bureij refugee camp.

November 20: [Ayat Khadourah](#), an independent journalist and podcaster, was killed along with family members in a strike on her home in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza.

November 20: [Alaa Al-Nimr](#), an independent journalist, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on his home in central Gaza.

November 22: [Mohammed Nabil Al-Razak](#) of "Quds" network was killed in an Israeli raid on his home in Gaza.



November 22: [Asim Al-Birsh](#), a broadcaster at Palestinian Opinion Radio in Gaza, died from sniper fire by the occupation forces in the Safatawi area north of Gaza.

November 23: [Mohammed Mu'in Ayyash](#), a photojournalist, and several family members were killed due to an occupation bombardment of their home in Nuseirat, central Gaza.

November 24: [Amal Zuhd](#), a journalist, and several family members were killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting her home in Gaza City shortly before the ceasefire began.

November 24: [Mustafa Bukair](#), a photojournalist, died from injuries sustained two days earlier in an Israeli airstrike on his home.

December 1: [Abdullah Darwish](#), a photojournalist from Al-Aqsa TV, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Gaza City.

December 1: [Montaser al-Sawaf](#), a journalist and photographer for the Turkish Anadolu Agency, was killed along with his brother Marwan and other relatives in an Israeli strike on the Shawa Square in the Daraj neighborhood south of Gaza City.

December 1: [Adham Hassouna](#), a media professor at Gaza University and a director at Palestine TV, lost his life in a bombing that struck his home in Gaza.

December 3: [Hassan Faraj Allah](#), a presenter on Al-Quds Al-Youm channel, was killed in an artillery shelling attack on Jabalia camp.

December 4: [Mahmoud Salem](#), a photographer working with civil defense, lost his life when Israeli occupation aircraft targeted civil defense teams.

December 4: [Shaima Ziad Al-Jazzar](#), from Majidat Rafah Media Network, was killed in an Israeli warplane bombing that hit her house east of Rafah city.

December 4: [Abdel Hamid Al-Qarnawi](#), a freelance sports photographer, was killed in Israeli airstrikes targeting his home in Deir Al-Balah.

December 8: [Hussam Omar Ammar](#), an independent journalist, was killed his house in Khan Yunis bombed by occupation aircraft.



December 9: [Ola Atallah](#), a former correspondent for the Turkish Anadolu Agency, lost her life in an Israeli bombing on the house of relatives where she and her family sought refuge in the Daraj neighborhood of Gaza.

December 10: [Mohammed Arif Abu Samra](#), a freelance sports photographer, was fatally shot in the head by Israeli occupation soldiers while taking shelter in Beit Lahia.

December 11: [Nermin Qawwas](#) (28 years old), a journalist who had begun training with Russia Today, was killed in a bombing targeting her home in Gaza.

December 13: [Hanan Bassam Ayad](#) (26 years old), an independent journalist, was killed in a bombing that struck her home in central Gaza.

December 13: [Abdel Karim Mohammed Odeh](#) (30 years old), a former correspondent for Al-Mayadeen, was killed in a bombing targeting Nuseirat camp.

December 13: [Ahmed Hamdi Abu Absa](#) (41 years old), a writer and media professor at Palestine University, was assassinated by Israeli occupation forces with a shell after being released following arrest from Holy Family School.

December 15: [Samer Khalil Abu Daqqa](#), a 45-year-old Al Jazeera cameraman, was killed in a drone bombing on a school in Khan Yunis, while his colleague and reporter, Wael Al-Dahdouh, was injured attempting to record a report in coordination with the Civil Defense.

December 18: [Haneen Ali Al-Qashtan](#), a journalist with Sawt Al-Watan Radio, was killed in an Israeli airstrike that struck her family's home in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza.

December 4: [Hamada Al-Yazji](#), a 29-year-old editor and news reviewer at Kanaan Agency, was killed when Israeli warplanes bombed his house in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City.

December 9: [Duaa al-Jabour](#), a journalist for the Oyoun Media Network, was killed when occupation aircraft bombed her home in Khan Yunis.

December 14: [Ali Fadl Khaled Ashour](#), an independent journalist, was killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting his home in central Gaza.



December 15: [Rami Hisham Badir](#), a journalist serving in the Civil Defense Service, was fatally injured in an airstrike on his home in Khan Yunis.

December 16: [Mishal Ayman Shahwan](#), a 26-year-old independent journalist, was killed when his house in Khan Yunis was bombed by the occupation forces.

December 16: [Asim Kamal Musa](#), a 34-year-old journalist of Palestine Now Agency, lost his life in an airstrike targeting his residence in Khan Yunis.

December 18: [Abdullah Alwan](#), a 41-year-old journalist for Maidan - Al Jazeera, was killed in a bombing that struck his house in central Gaza.

December 19: [Adel Zorob](#), a 50-year-old independent journalist, was killed in a bombing that targeted his family's home in the Rafah area.

December 21: [Alaa Suleiman Abu Muammar](#), a 40-year-old independent journalist, was killed when occupation forces bombed his relatives' house in the European area, east of Khan Yunis.

December 22: [Mohammed Ramadan Khalifa](#), a 42-year-old from Al-Aqsa Canal, lost his life in an Israeli airstrike that targeted their house in the Nuseirat camp.

December 23: [Mohammed Nasr Abu Huwaidi](#), a 29-year-old photographer for Al-Istiqlal newspaper, was killed in an Israeli bombing that struck the family's home in the Al-Shuja'iya neighborhood of Gaza.

December 23: [Ahmed Jamal Al-Madhoun](#), a 34-year-old deputy director of the Palestinian Al-Rai Agency, was killed in an occupation air strike on his home in central Gaza.

December 24: [Mohammed Abdel Khaleq Al-Af](#), a photographer for Al-Rai Agency, was killed due to an Israeli airstrike targeting the Al-Zaytouniyah family's house in Gaza.

December 24: [Mohammed Younis Al-Zaytouna](#), a 26-year-old sound engineer for Al-Rai Radio, tragically lost his life in an Israeli bombing that targeted the Al-Zaytouna family's house in Gaza.

December 28: [Ahmed Maher Khair al-Din](#), a 30-year-old cameraman for the "Al-Quds Today" channel, was killed in an air strike that targeted his house in Beit Lahia.



December 28: [Mohammed Ahmed Khair al-Din](#), a 45-year-old journalist for Al-Aqsa TV, was killed in a bombing that targeted journalist Ahmed Maher's house in Beit Lahia.

December 29: [Abdullah Hammad](#), a photojournalist, was killed in his house in Deir al-Balah due to a bombing.

December 30: [Nermin Nasr Haboush](#), a 36-year-old journalist and media programs coordinator at the Bialara Foundation, lost her life in the bombing of her apartment in a residential building in central Gaza City.

December 30: [Jabr Abu Hadros](#), a 36-year-old correspondent for Al-Quds Al-Youm TV, was killed in an occupation aircraft strike on his house in the Nuseirat camp.

January 7: [Ali Salem Abu Ajwa](#), a 23-year-old photographer working for the Fourth Estate Agency, was killed by Israeli occupation bombing while documenting the human tragedy in Gaza City.

January 7: [Hamza Wael Al-Dahdouh](#), a 27-year-old independent journalist and son of Al-Jazeera correspondent **Wael Al-Dahdouh**, was killed in a car bombing west of Khan Yunis, south of Gaza.

January 7: [Mustafa Saeed Thuraya](#), a 29-year-old independent journalist, lost his life alongside Hamza when their car was bombed west of Khan Yunis.

January 5: [Akram Al-Shafi'iq](#), a 53-year-old editor at "Safa" news agency, was fatally shot by occupation forces while inspecting his bombed house in Gaza City.

January 8: [Mohammed Musbah Abu Dayer](#), a 36-year-old photojournalist, was killed in an occupation air strike on his house in Jabalia camp.

January 8: [Abdullah Iyad Baris](#), a 26-year-old journalist and head of the photography department at Rawafed Educational Channel, was killed in a bombing that targeted his house in Khan Yunis camp.

January 9: [Heba Fouad Al-Abadla](#), a 31-year-old broadcaster of Al-Azhar Radio, was killed in an occupation air strike that targeted her family's home in Khan Yunis.



January 10: [Ahmed Naeem Badir](#), a 30-year-old journalist at Al-Hadaf Gate Media Foundation, was killed by occupation bombing of his home in Deir Al-Balah.

January 10: [Sharif Nafeth Okasha](#), a 26-year-old freelance photojournalist, tragically lost his life when occupation aircraft bombed his house in the central Gaza Strip.

January 10: [Fouad Abu Khammash](#), a 26-year-old photojournalist, was killed in an occupation air strike targeting his house on Salah al-Din Street in central Gaza.

January 11: [Mohammed Jamal Al-Thalathini](#), a 23-year-old journalist for Al-Quds Al-Youm satellite channel, was killed in an occupation air strike that targeted his family's home in the south of Gaza City.

January 14: [Yazan Imad Al-Zwaidi](#), a 27-year-old cameraman for Al-Ghad TV, lost his life when Israeli occupation aircraft bombed his family's home in northern Gaza.

January 18: [Wael Rajab Abu Fununa](#), a 33-year-old general director of Al-Quds Al-Youm satellite channel, was killed in an occupation air strike targeting his house in Gaza City.

January 27: [Karam Abu Ajiram](#), a 26-year-old independent journalist, was killed by occupation bombing of his family home in Abasan al-Kabira, east of Khan Yunis.

January 27: [Iyad Ahmed Al-Rawagh](#), a 42-year-old journalist for Al-Aqsa TV, lost his life alongside four of his children in an occupation bombing targeting his house in Al-Hasayna in the Nuseirat camp.

January 29: [Issam Al-Lulu](#), along with his wife and two sons, was killed by Israeli occupation bombing of their house in Al-Zawaida town in central Gaza.

January 29: [Mohammed Abdel Fattah Atallah](#), a 24-year-old, lost his life alongside his wife and his wife's family in an Israeli occupation that targeted Al-Shati' camp.

February 6: [Rizq Mohammed Ghazi Al-Gharabli](#), aged 40, was killed during an Israeli raid in Khan Yunis.

February 7: [Nafez Muhareb Mahmoud Hamdan](#), aged 58, along with Palestine TV journalist Nafez Abdel Jawad and his only son, was killed when their house was targeted by an Israeli raid in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.



February 11: [Yasser Mamdouh Youssef Al-Fadhi](#), aged 40, was killed by occupation snipers while carrying out his work at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis.

February 12: [Alaa Hassan Al-Hams](#), aged 35, a journalist at Sanad News Agency, was killed in Rafah during her work due to an Israeli bombing.

February 12: [Angham Ahmed Adwan](#), aged 33, a journalist for the February Channel, was killed in Rafah during her work due to an Israeli bombing.

February 15: [Zaid Mohammed Zayed Abu Zayed](#), aged 35, along with his wife and children, was killed in a house bombing by Israeli forces in the Nuseirat camp.

February 15: [Musab Mohammed Abu Zayed](#), aged 31, was killed along with several family members in a bombing targeting a house in the Nuseirat camp.

February 15: [Mohammed Raslan Rashad Shanioura](#), aged 24, died from wounds sustained in an Israeli bombing targeting his home in Tal al-Hawa.

February 23: [Mohammed Tishreen Sobhi Yaghi](#), aged 29, along with his daughter and wife, was killed in an Israeli bombing targeting a house in Deir al-Balah, where he worked as a photographer for various media outlets.

February 29: [Ibrahim Mohammed Ali Mohaimed](#), aged 59, succumbed to wounds sustained from occupation bullets in Tulkarm while attempting to rescue his son, who was wounded and later killed in Nour Shams camp in October 2023.

March 5: [Mohammed Khader Ahmed Salama](#), aged 37, a broadcaster for Al-Aqsa Channel, was killed in an Israeli bombing targeting a house in Deir al-Balah.

March 15: [Abdul Rahman Ali Mohammed Saima](#), aged 37, was killed in an Israeli bombing targeting a house in the Bureij camp.

March 15: [Mohammed Rashad Rushdi Al-Rifi](#), aged 33, succumbed to wounds from Israeli occupation bullets sustained at the Kuwait Roundabout two days earlier, east of Gaza City, while covering events there.



March 20: [Mahmoud Imad Atiya Issa](#), aged 34, a presenter for religious programs on the "Al-Quds Today" channel, was killed along with several family members in an Israeli bombing targeting his house in Rafah.

Injuries and Threats

Israel violently targeted the families of journalists in Gaza through various means, including killings and property destruction. The monitoring unit of Women Journalists Without Chains observed Israel's reprisals against journalists, which extended to include their families. During the first month of aggression, the Israeli occupation forces destroyed 39 homes of male and female journalists in Gaza.

Most journalists in Gaza, numbering over 1000, suffered injuries of varying degrees. Among those severely affected were Wael Al-Dahdouh, the Gaza bureau chief for Al Jazeera, and Ashraf Harara, a television director at Palestine TV, both injured in December. The same month saw injuries to Hamza Hamad of Al Ghad TV, Ashraf Ramadan of Al Aqsa TV, Islam Badr of Al Aqsa TV, Mohammad Ahmed of Event Media Productions, Muath Al-Hams of Al-Manarah TV Productions, and Hussein Jaber. In November, Ismail Abu Hatab, Khaled Sultan, Saeed Al-Majlawi, and Mohammed Al-Soufi (later killed) were injured, along with Amr Tabsh from Al-Kofiya TV, Fadi Shana'a from Reuters, Fatima Shbair from AP, Samid Abu Zureifah from Russia Today, and independent photographers Amer Sultan, Haitham Nur Al-Din, and Mohammad Al-Haddad. In October, journalists injured included Ibrahim Qanan from Al Ghad TV, Maha Abu Al-Kas from France 24, Riad Shahin of Palestine TV, Mu'men Al-Tala', Rita Abu Seido, and Fadi Al-Wahidi.

Israeli authorities detained several individuals, including Alaa al-Sarraj from Al-Rai agency, Daa Al-Kahlout of Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, freelance journalist Sa'id Hassouna, and sports photographer Saeed al-Kilani. These individuals endured torture and physical abuse.

Daa Al-Kahlout was released after weeks of torture. In released photos, his body was exposed alongside other Palestinians. Israel threatened to kill Al-Jazeera correspondent Anas al-Sharif, leading to airstrikes that killed his father and other family members. Additionally, the Israeli army threatened to bomb the home of English-language journalist Yumna Al-Sayed from Al-Jazeera.



Israeli bombing and threats resulted in 14 out of 15 radio stations ceasing broadcasts. The remaining station, "Voice of Palestine," was hacked by Israel to broadcast threatening messages to Gaza residents. Additionally, the French company "Eutelsat" abruptly halted transmission of the "Al-Aqsa" satellite channel. The remaining 10 stations stopped broadcasting due to Israel's ban on fuel access to Gaza.

The Israeli occupation army demolished the headquarters of several media outlets in the Gaza Strip, including: Ayyam Theaters Foundation, Al Jazeera, Palestine Today, Al-Manar, Al-Kawthar, Al-Istiqlal, Safaa, Al-Quds Radio, Al-Assra, Al-Rai, Al-Aqsa Live, Sawt Al-Aqsa, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Sawa Agency, Arab News Agency, Makt Real Media, Shihab Agency, Radio Baladan, Khabar Agency, National Agency, Al-Quds Al-Youm Channel, Al-Aqsa Network, Journalist Support Committee, Al-Waha Media Company, Al-Sharq Channel, New Scene Production Company, Al-Najah News Website, Fadl Shanaa Foundation, Holy Quran Radio, and Shams News Agency.

Occupied Territories

During its aggression on Gaza, Israel violated the rights of Palestinian journalists in areas nominally under Palestinian Authority control but occupied by Israel. Women Journalists Without Chains' Rights and Freedoms Unit documented 36 cases of arrest and detention by Israeli forces in the West Bank during the first six months. The detained individuals included Lamia Al-Khatib, Musab Qufisha, Thaer Al-Fakhouri, Radwan Qatanani, Mohammed Atta, Akram Alan Daribeh, Alaa Al-Rimawi, Imad Abu Awad, Osama Shahi, Alaa Al-Rbai, Maaz Amarna, Mustafa Al-Khoja, Abdel Nasser Al-Lahham, Sabri Jibril, Mohammed Namr Assayida, Ayman Rabai'a, Hatem Hamdan, Mohammed Al-Rimawi, Adib Barakat, Hamad Taqqaqa, Samia Jawabra, Amir Abu Aram, Abdulmohsen Shalalkeh, Mohammed Al-Atarsh, Amer Abu Arfa, Tareq Al-Shareef, Mohammed Fathi, Jafar Sadaqa, Omar Abu Awad, Mohammed Al-Zaghab, and Samer Saad Abu Suleiman. Additionally, journalist Ikhlas Sawalha was sentenced to 6 months of administrative detention by the Ofer court on December 19th.

Israeli forces' tactics include the arrest of journalists' relatives to coerce them to surrender. For instance, [Alaa Al-Rimawi](#) surrendered after his son was arrested, and journalist Mohammed Badr's wife, Sujood Assi, was detained and subjected to intimidation and verbal abuse. She was later released from Ofer Prison after surrendering herself, along with her brothers and father who were also arrested. In October, journalists Nidal Al-Wahidi (photographer for Al-Najah TV)



and Haitham Abdel-Wahed (from Ain Media Agency) went missing while covering events near the Beit Hanoun checkpoint. The Israeli Supreme Court declined to disclose their whereabouts or fate.

Prior to the October 7 events, violations persisted. In June, occupation forces targeted both male and female journalists with live bullets during coverage of events. Eight journalists from various media outlets were affected. Additionally, during the occupation's storming of Jenin on June 19, Muhammad Mona from Nablus was arrested, and photographer Ishaq Al-Kasba was assaulted with sticks near Ramallah.

In January 2024, Palestinian journalists were assaulted by occupation forces during event coverage, with 10 journalists—both male and female—being targeted. On January 16, in a disturbing incident, [a settler attempted to run over](#) photographer Abdullah Bahash, Palestine Post Agency correspondent Mujahid Tabanja, and freelance photographer Jihad Badawi. In February 2024, the situation escalated as occupation forces targeted 13 journalists—both male and female—during event coverage, hindering the work of three reporters. Additionally, one Palestinian journalist was summoned by Israeli intelligence, while four journalists were investigated by the Palestinian intelligence service.

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Israeli forces continued to target Palestinian journalists last year, particularly after the increased Israeli aggression on Gaza. In Jerusalem, numerous press and television crews, particularly those speaking Arabic, faced attacks or obstruction from settlers or Israeli forces, sometimes during live broadcasts. [Dalia Al-Nimri](#), a correspondent for [Russia Today](#) (RT), was among those expelled by Israeli police from the Damascus Gate area, with threats of arrest and no explanation given. Cairo News TV [reported](#) an attack on its crew by Israeli forces while covering events in Jerusalem. The [British BBC](#) team was detained at gunpoint after being stopped by police in Tel Aviv. Additionally, the Sky News Arabia crew in Ashkelon was physically assaulted and their equipment destroyed, while reporters ([Elias Karam](#) & [Ahmed Darawsha](#)) from Al-Jazeera and Al-Araby TV were also targeted. In Sderot, journalists from Reuters had shots fired at their vehicle.

Journalists faced severe beatings and deliberate detentions aimed at obstructing their coverage. [Mustafa Al-Kharouf](#), a photographer with Anatolia, was among those assaulted. Al-



Ghad channel's correspondent Iman Jabour and cameraman Muhammad Asho were detained. Freelance journalist Rama Youssef was barred from entering the Old City, and [Diala Jweihan](#) was prevented from covering Jerusalem after her home was raided in August. Yasmine Asaad, a correspondent for Al-Sharq Channel, was attacked by an Israeli female soldier while reporting on the release of female prisoners. Police detained and interrogated reporters like Ramzi Al-Abbasi and arrested Hudhayfah Jamous, Mervat Al-Azza, Hamza Al-Naaji, and Abdul Afo Zaghir. Media outlets like Al-Mayadeen TV were prohibited from reporting on the issue.

The Israeli government not only harasses media and journalists within its areas of control but also fails to provide protection when journalists are attacked by settlers in Jerusalem or the West Bank. In March 2023, a settler attempted to strangle a reporter from Al-Mashhad channel. Journalist Ahlam Othman tragically died with an Israeli flag wrapped around her neck, and several press crews were targeted in attacks.

Lebanon: Grim Realities

2023 marked a tragic chapter for Lebanese journalists. Overshadowed by a climate of fear and violence amidst the Israeli war on Gaza and border clashes, the state of press freedom deteriorated significantly marked by distressing incidents including death, imprisonment, legal actions, physical assaults, legislative challenges, and ongoing persecution affecting Lebanon's press corps.

Grave violations against press freedom include the deaths of three journalists, including a woman, and injuries to several others. Attacks extended to journalists' families, and media facilities were targeted. Women Journalists Without Chains reported 58 documented violations against Lebanese journalists in 2023, including 18 female journalists. These offenses included killings, assaults, threats, detentions, coverage restrictions, and intimidation tactics.

Horrifying Deaths and Injuries

Throughout the year, tragic incidents maimed and claimed the lives of journalists. On October 13th, an Israeli shelling targeting press crews in southern Lebanon resulted in the death of [Essam Abdullah](#), a Reuters photographer. Thaer Al-Sudani, Maher Nazha, Carmen Jokhdar (Al Jazeera correspondent), and Eli Barakat (photographer) were among those injured. Similarly, on November 21st, [Al-Mayadeen TV's crew](#), including correspondent [Farah Omar](#)



and photographer [Rabih Maamari](#), lost their lives in an Israeli airstrike shortly after a live broadcast.

Press injuries extended beyond those noted above. [Essam Mawassi](#) was wounded in a missile strike on media crews in Yaroun on November 13th. Journalist Samir Ayoub was injured in Aynata when his vehicle was targeted, resulting in the tragic deaths of his grandmother and his sister's daughters. On December 23rd, photographer Khodr Markis from Al-Manar TV was injured when an Israeli shell landed near their reporting vehicle, where journalist Ali Shaheeb was also present.

Intimidation, Detention and Judicial Rulings

In 2023, Lebanese journalists endured a severe crackdown marked by intimidation and unlawful detention, exemplified by the case of journalist Dima Sadek. Sadek was sentenced to one year in prison and fined 110 million Lebanese pounds for "inciting sectarianism and defamation" after defending a citizen assaulted by supporters of the "Free Patriotic Movement" in a tweet. This ruling sets a dangerous precedent, sending a chilling message to journalists about the risk of free speech.

Journalists were also intimidated during clashes on the Lebanese-Israeli border at the hand of the Israeli forces. On October 15, [an Israeli tank](#) fired a shell near reporters Samer Al-Hajj and Ali Zein from Al-Manar TV, with Israeli soldiers also surrounding six foreign journalists in Houla. On November 25, [the Israeli army fired](#) at NBN channel journalists, including reporter Rasha Zein and photographer Ahmed Soufan, during their coverage in southern Lebanon.

The Israeli occupation's aggression towards journalists predates the military escalation on October 7. [On July 15, occupation soldiers fired](#) sound bombs and bullets near NBN correspondent Hassan Fakih, and the following day, they continued their assault by launching tear gas bombs and throwing sound bombs at journalists, including Muhammad Farhat from Al-Jadeed TV and Ali Shuaib from Al-Manar.

Hezbollah was party to harassing and attacking journalists as well. On October 11, [Hezbollah members detained](#) journalist Maya Hashem and her photographer in Al-Qulayla, interrogating and preventing them from continuing their coverage. [Journalist Mahmoud Shukur](#) from Al-Hadath channel was also assaulted by individuals while reporting events in southern Lebanon on August 10.



Furthermore, Hezbollah's interference with press coverage persisted throughout the year, with [incidents such as preventing journalists Sara Matar](#) from Al-Araby Al-Jadeed and Huda Zbiba from the Legal Agenda from covering protests, and incitement against MTV channel due to its coverage of events. Additionally, Hezbollah lawyers filed complaints against several journalists accusing the party of involvement in the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Rafahi.

Hezbollah lawyers filed complaints with the public prosecution in February 2023 against Joanna Farhat from Al-Markazia website, Mariam Majdouline Lahham from Kabsat Zirr, and journalists Ziad Al-Masri, Tony Boulos, and Ibrahim Fatfat for their social media posts accusing the party of being responsible for the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Rafahi.

Furthermore, journalists in Lebanon have faced escalating risks and threats from multiple parties, extending beyond the Israeli occupation and Hezbollah. Over the past year, other groups have emerged that have contributed to the intimidation and targeting of journalists.

Parties Responsible for Targeting Journalists

Journalists in Lebanon face escalating risks and threats from multiple parties beyond the Israeli occupation and Hezbollah. Over the past year, groups noted below have contributed to the intimidation and targeting of journalists:

Security Forces

On January 27, 2023, journalist [Ghady Bou Moussa](#), a correspondent for MTV channel, was assaulted by security forces in front of the Parliament.

Unknown Parties

On August 1, a group of journalists, including Ihab Al-Akkadi from Al-Jazeera, Joyce El-Hajj from Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Mahmoud Shukr from Al-Hadath, Mohammed Farhat from Al-Jadeed, and Sobhi Qablawi from MTV, were targeted by a mortar shell during their coverage of clashes in Ain al-Hilweh camp in Sidon.

Armed Militias

On August 1, a group of journalists, including Ihab Al-Akkadi from Al-Jazeera, Joyce El-Hajj from Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Mahmoud Shukr from Al-Hadath, Mohammed Farhat from Al-Jadeed, and Sobhi Qablawi from MTV, were targeted by a mortar shell during their coverage of clashes in Ain al-Hilweh camp in Sidon.



Another Parties

On March 28, intimidation of journalists also occurred, like the prevention of [Nada Andraos](#) from [covering an incident](#).

On March 6, 2023, [Hala Nasr El-Din](#) received a written warning from Marwan Khair al-Din of the Daraj platform, related to an investigation published a year and a half earlier.

In March, the LBC building was attacked with a grenade by unknown individuals.

On July 20, [Simon Abu Fadel](#), editor-in-chief of the "[Al-Kalima Online](#)" website, [was physically assaulted and verbally abused live](#) on the MTV channel by a former minister and his companions

Libya: Muzzling Political Discourse

Libya briefly glimpsed press freedom during the 2011 revolution that ousted Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Regrettably, it has plunged yet again into a dark era. Aspirations for a free and independent media have been shattered as Libya's path toward democracy is marred by restrictions to freedom of expression and the suppression of independent journalism.

This year's systematic campaign to suppress freedom of expression has seen journalists barred from questioning or criticizing official narratives of various parties. This troubling trend echoes the repressive tactics of the Gaddafi regime, which weaponized media outlets for propaganda and manipulation to control public opinion.

Different factions in Libya have adopted similar methods, seeking to assert dominance while concealing corruption and human rights violations. The media landscape remains divided, with journalists often reliant on specific conflict parties for protection to ensure their safety. This division mirrors the broader fragmentation within the country.

Dissenting voices are met with arrests and violations, targeting journalists who challenge prevailing narratives in their respective regions. Unlawful detentions and abductions have become rampant. In 2023 alone, Women Journalists Without Chains documented nearly 30 such violations.

Unlawful Arrests

The conflict parties in Libya have intensified arrests of journalists and media activists, particularly on social media platforms. In March 2023, the Internal Security Service in Benghazi



detained "Ahmed Al-Tawati," releasing him a week later without specifying any charges. The same agency targeted [Maher Al-Gharyani](#) twice in April within the same month.

[Khaled Al-Mergini](#), the Director of Media and Communications at the National Committee for Human Rights, was abducted in Benghazi after criticizing the country's wave of abductions on the "Clubhouse" platform. His family lost contact with him, and they were unable to visit him during his captivity.

On October 1 in Benghazi, [Fathi Al-Baaja](#), Tarek Al-Bashari, Saraj Daghman, and Salem Abaiss were arrested for discussing Libya's political situation in private meetings or on social media. Following their arrests, **Salem Abaiss** was also detained. Journalist [Nasser Addaissi](#) was arrested on October 29th by the Internal Security Agency in Benghazi as part of a campaign to target critics and media activists. In December, Abdel Mawla Ramadan Antishah, President of the National Council for Public Freedoms and Human Rights, was also arrested.

In Sirte on May 10, 2023, Professor of International Law and writer [Miftah Drabash](#) was abducted by unidentified armed individuals following the kidnapping of five politicians from the "Together for the Nation" party while attempting to obtain security clearance for organizing a seminar on Elections. In Tripoli on August 30th, 2023, [Saleem Salim Al-Shibel](#) was arrested by the Internal Security Agency after his vehicle was intercepted in the city streets. He was taken to an unknown location. In Misrata, Abdulmalik Al-Madani was abducted in September and released after more than 10 days in captivity.

Censorship and Control

In 2023, authorities imposed media blackouts coverage of the Derna dam collapses, under the guise of calling it "fake news"—a charge easily be politicized to stifle journalists and thinkers, and undermining their ability to share opinions.

For instance, on September 14th in Shuhuda Green Mountain Province, Jamal al-Qamati's detention was detained after he released a video exposing the devastation and human toll of the dam collapse, implicating officials in corruption. His release a week later followed intervention by a prominent army leader.

Four days after al-Qamati's arrest, authorities detained five media activists on September 18th for protesting accountability over the dam collapse that claimed 3,000 Libyan lives and left



hundreds missing. They were released after 10 days. These arrests aimed to control the narrative and prevent media coverage of the incident.

Military authorities in Derna have since tightened security measures, isolating areas, restricting journalist movements, and cutting internet access. During that time, Women Journalists Without Chains received reports from journalists that military authorities were demanding security permits for journalists and media to access the rescue areas.

At least six journalists were detained and questioned on September 15 before being expelled by military forces. Furthermore, authorities instructed all journalists to leave the area on September 18, only to retract this order the next day. Nevertheless, they continued monitoring journalists and limiting statements from rescue teams and officials to select media outlets.

Egypt: Journalism as Adventure

The Egyptian authorities are actively antagonizing journalists within the country, through imprisonments, trials, and threats of incarceration, along with strict control and absolute censorship over newspapers and media outlets.

In 2023, Women Journalists Without Chains documented 371 violations against journalists in Egypt. Almost half of these cases (141) led to trials and journalists being imprisoned. Furthermore, authorities accused journalists working abroad with high treason, resulting in severe sentences including death penalties and life imprisonment. Dozens of journalists were unjustly labeled as terrorists, all for exercising their fundamental rights of freedom of opinion and expression.



Blatant Contradiction between Constitution and Reality

Journalists in Egypt confront a stark contradiction between the freedoms promised in the **2014** Egyptian Constitution and the oppressive realities enforced by authorities.

Despite Article 65 of the Constitution guaranteeing "freedom of thought and opinion" and the absolute right to express oneself, the Egyptian authorities tightly control the press and media, thereby restricting freedom of expression.



These authorities routinely disregard constitutional provisions and protections and instead enact laws that stifle journalistic work and undermine the Constitution's spirit. Journalists often self-censor for fear of prosecution or reprisal, leading to the dissemination of misleading information and obstructing the public's access to accurate news.

Journalists who challenge or criticize authorities face disproportionate violence, an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that obstructs their professional duties.

In 2023, repression continued unabated, resulting in the erosion of journalism in Egypt. This alarming trend has raised concerns for Women Journalists Without Chains. Approximately 45 journalists, including five women—Manal Ajramah, Safa Al-Korbagi, Hala Fahmi, Donia Samir, and Alia Awad—remain imprisoned, with some held for years without trial. Most of these journalists' detentions are routinely extended under the pretext of "pretrial detention."

Arrests and Other Forms of Mistreatment

They are isolated from their families and lawyers for extended periods, leading to profound feelings of loneliness and abandonment. Throughout 2023, most have not received any visits.

Detained journalists are denied access to exercise and sunlight, impacting their physical and mental well-being. Inadequate nutrition exacerbates their hardships, with minimal food provided. Privacy violations compound their distress, as surveillance cameras in cells heighten anxiety. Bright lights constantly disrupt their sleep patterns, jeopardizing mental health. Repetitive and degrading searches strip away human dignity. Access to pens and paper is denied, and some endure prolonged solitary confinement.

Basic personal hygiene items are withheld, and medical neglect persists, denying vital medications and treatment. For instance, journalist Hala Fahmy's requests for neurological and orthopedic examinations since November 12 have gone unanswered. Similarly, neglect affects journalists Manal Ajramah (61 years old), Mohamed Saad Khatib (71 years old), and Tawfik Ghanem (69 years old). Mohsen Radi and Badr Mohamed Badr are denied visits, exercise, and medical care.

Journalists have struck to demand improved prison conditions, such as those in Badr 3 prison, including Ahmed Sabie. Sabie developed heart and joint issues after imprisonment for allegedly

spreading false news since February 28, 2020. Journalists Hala Fahmy and Manal Ajramah faced mistreatment in Qanater Women's Prison.

Journalists and social media activists that have faced arrests over criticism of the Egyptian authorities include:

[Hassan Al-Qabbani: Arrested on May 3, 2023](#), from his home on charges of terrorist organization links.

[Karim Saad: Arrested on August 19](#) after a raid on his home, where he and his family were physically assaulted. His social media account of Matsda2sh platform was accessed, resulting in the deletion of posts regarding the seizure of millions of dollars, weapons, ammunition, and gold from a private plane traveling between Egypt and Zambia, with Saad alleging that his platform's page had been hacked; he was released the following day.

[Hisham Qassem: Arrested on August 20](#) and sentenced to 6 months in prison based on accusations of insulting and defaming former Minister of Manpower Kamal Abu Aita. Qasim was questioned for blog posts responding to accusations made by Abu Aita.

[Jamal Abdelhamid Zyada: Arrested](#) on September 20 on charges including state security offenses, misuse of social media, spreading false news, and joining a banned group. He was later released on bail.

Content creators have also been targeted. For example, **Ahmed Tarek Hassanein** and **Basma Hegazy** were arrested after posting a critical video about authorities. They were charged with affiliating with a terrorist group, financing terrorism, spreading false information, and disseminating fake news. Both individuals were released on September 20.

On July 31, 2023, the Egyptian authorities denied the Egyptian Journalists Syndicate's request to the Presidential Pardon Committee. The request sought the release of detained members involved in cases of opinion, the permanent cessation of pretrial detention, and the release of all those convicted in opinion-related cases.

Several journalists and opinion makers residing abroad have been placed on terrorist lists and are facing potential death penalty cases. In April 2023, 33 journalists, including Ayman Nour, Moutaz Matar, Mohammed Nasser, Hamza Zawbaa, Osama Jawish, Imad Behairy, Hossam Al-Ghamri, Youssef Hussein, Ashraf Al-Balqini, Haitham Saad, Ali Hassan Mahdi, Shorouk



Amjad, Amr Al-Qazzaz, Anas Zaki, and Abdul Rahman Aboul Gheit from Al-Jazeera Network, as well as individuals from Al-Sharq Channel, Rasd network, and Watan Channel, [were added to terrorism lists](#). Additional individuals added in July include Qutb Al-Arabi, Mohammed Al-Qudousi, Ayman Azzam, Rabie Al-Sheikh, Bahaa Neamatallah, Mohammed Maher Aql, YouTuber Yasser Al-Omda, Salama Abdel-Qawi, and Issam Talima.

Assaults & Prosecution

Journalism in Egypt has significantly declined, [with most media outlets operating under strict control by authorities](#). Violations such as publishing restrictions, arbitrary dismissals of journalists, program suspensions, and article bans persist.

On March 8, 2023, female journalists [Bisan Kassab, Rana Mamdouh, and Sarah Seif El-Din from "Mada Masr" were referred to](#) the Economic Court. They were accused of insulting representatives of "Mostaqbal Watan" and misusing social media. Editor-in-chief Lina Atallah also faced charges for operating a website without a license, despite several license requests, which were rejected by the Supreme Council for Media Regulation.

On June 17, 2023, [broadcaster Mohib Abdel Hadi, host of the Al-Laib program on MBC](#), was investigated. Additionally, Al-Nahar TV suspended broadcaster Mona Al-Omda from the Al-Jumhuriya program.

Eleven journalists from "Al-Masry" newspaper filed complaints after being arbitrarily removed from social security coverage without prior notification. Similarly, [in October, around 50 journalists](#) from "Al-Tareeq" website and newspaper were also unexpectedly dismissed without reason..

In 2023, [a considerable number of journalists](#) lodged complaints about [their media organizations ignoring](#) the government-approved increase of the minimum wage to 3,000 Egyptian pounds, effective from July 2023. This adjustment was meant to be accompanied by corresponding salary increments based on professional experience for all colleagues in newspapers and institutions. Furthermore, there was a significant currency devaluation, with the value of the dollar in the Egyptian black market reaching 59 Egyptian pounds.

Website Blocking and Publication Bans

During 2023, Egyptian authorities intensified censorship efforts by blocking websites of human rights organizations and news outlets, reflecting a broader pattern aimed at stifling dissent and criticism. In this context, prominent platforms such as [the Cairo Center for Human Rights Studies](#), the Egyptian [Coordination for Rights and Freedoms](#), the [Fourth Authority](#), [Mada Masr](#), and [Masr 360](#) have been blocked, adding to the [hundreds of news and human rights websites](#) banned in Egypt. Despite journalist advocacy for freedom of information laws, existing legislation allows censorship, criminalizes disclosure, and imposes severe restrictions on news websites, posing threats to publishers.

Several instances underscore the suppression of freedom of expression and publication bans in Egypt. For instance, [Al-Ahram newspaper censored an article by its editor-in-chief, Ayman El-Mahdi](#), criticizing the government's lack of feasibility studies for national projects. Zatmiser website faced pressures and deleted an article by engineer Yahya Hussein Abdel Hadi titled "Who Speaks on Behalf of Egypt?" Journalist Mohammed Hammad was banned from writing for Egyptian newspapers and websites, leading him to publish articles on his personal Facebook account. [Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed's article](#), "The Smart Citizen's Guide to the upcoming presidential elections in Egypt," was prohibited from being published. Zatmiser website also encountered restrictions, including the deletion of an interview with politician Munir Fakhry Abdel Nour.

Censorship extends beyond online platforms to the banning of books and interference in journalistic coverage during significant events like presidential elections. [Authorities banned books by journalists](#), including Mohammed Medhat's "The History and Organization of the Zionist Movement," and two books by journalist Anwar Al-Hawari, "Taming Tyranny" and "The New Dictatorship." These actions highlight a troubling trend of expanding censorship beyond online platforms to interfere with journalistic coverage during critical events.

During the presidential elections, the [Journalists Syndicate documented numerous violations](#), including preventing journalists from working despite having valid press permits, prohibiting photography in multiple polling stations, withholding information about the operations of certain committees, and restricting photography to specific five committees per governorate. Additionally, a complaint was filed against a citizen for assaulting a female journalist in a



committee, and a journalist lodged a complaint due to the absence of a partition during voting in one of the committees.

Mauritania: Fragile State of Freedom

Following the decriminalization of press offenses 11 years ago, Mauritania's press freedom is relatively better than those outlined above. Journalists operate in a less repressive environment, although the situation remains fragile. In May 2023, President Mohammed Ould Ghazouani announced plans to strengthen press freedom; however, concerns persist about a proposed law that could exploit a "national security" provision against journalists.

Most Mauritanian media outlets face severe economic challenges, resulting in the gradual disappearance of French-language print newspapers due to funding shortages. Radio remains the most popular media platform in the country. Media regulation falls under the Higher Authority for Press and Audiovisual Media, whose president is appointed by presidential decree. Instead of prioritizing professional ethics and pluralism, the authority tends to serve sectional interests, allowing business elites to control television and radio stations to shape public opinion. Currently, journalists are facing prosecution under a new law known as the "Symbols Law, the first case of which was brought forward in 2023.

Protection for Symbols

In 2022, the implementation of the law "[Protecting national symbols and criminalizing attacks on the prestige of the state and the honor of the citizen](#)" aimed to undermine threats to national unity and sovereignty through social media misuse. The law imposes vague restrictions that inhibit journalistic work.

It employs broad terms like "constants," "insulting and defamation," and "undermining loyalty," which are open to ambiguous interpretation, as detailed in its second and third articles. It further criminalizes what it considers "defamation" and "inciting hatred between different components of the country".

In a notable case on December 7, the law was used to sentence political activist [Mohammed Fall Ould Abdallah](#) to one year imprisonment and a significant fine for a Facebook post deemed to undermine national symbols. Article 3 specifies that any dissemination of textual, audio, or visual materials through digital media and social platforms that aim to undermine the morale of



armed forces and security personnel, or weaken their loyalty to the Republic, is considered a threat to national security.

On April 22, 2023, investigative journalist Salek Zaid [was arrested](#) in Nouakchott after reporting on crimes in the country via Facebook. Although released four days later, Zaid faced subsequent physical assault at Nouakchott airport in June, underscoring the ongoing challenges faced by journalists in Mauritania.

Economic Vulnerability of Journalism

Despite government assurances to improve conditions for journalists, many still rely on meager "production allowances" for their work, insufficient compensation for journalistic content production and writing. [Private newspapers remain deprived](#) of public sector advertising, leading to closures for many. Those continuing operations with subsidies face an uncertain future due to management challenges and [lack of continuity assurances](#).

The government's control over the advertising market, critical for newspaper sustainability, results in deprivation for [those opposing the state's views](#). The government, as the primary advertiser, dictates directives and awareness campaigns in newspapers and media, often with standards conflicting with journalistic integrity. These factors contribute significantly to the economic fragility of newspapers.

Sudan: Systematic Targeting of Journalists

Since the outbreak of conflict between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces on April 15, 2023, journalists in Sudan have faced unprecedented violations, reaching the highest in at least a decade. The risk to journalists' lives has escalated, with deliberate targeting and killings as they cover the widening conflict zones beyond Khartoum, including Kordofan and Darfur. Physical attacks, equipment confiscation, arbitrary arrests, and airstrikes targeting identifiable media convoys persist at an alarming rate.

Strict movement restrictions imposed by authorities pose a significant challenge to journalists in Sudan, limiting their access to information and event coverage. They are subject to arbitrary detentions, harassment, and intimidation from both governmental and non-governmental entities. As a result, many journalists avoid covering sensitive issues or flee. Furthermore, physical assaults against journalists have occurred during protests and other events.



In addition to these challenges, journalists in Sudan face immense pressure from the parties involved in the conflict, further hindering their work and jeopardizing their safety. This includes arbitrary arrests, detentions without fair accusation or trial, travel bans, and house arrest. Parties to the conflict impose strict restrictions on critical journalists or condemn their actions. Journalists are prevented from covering protests, visiting shelters, or speaking with victims. Their ability to report live is limited, as they are restricted from broadcasting from streets, public places, markets, or gathering points for displaced persons.

The conflicting parties seek to manipulate journalists to propagate their official narrative and advance their agendas. Some journalists are offered incentives or face threats of violence if they do not cooperate. These parties conceal or distort facts related to the conflict and impede journalists' access to neutral and reliable information.

These pressures severely hinder press freedom, leading to self-censorship among journalists out of fear of retaliation or violence. They are influenced by the conflicting parties and may adopt official narratives over facts, resulting in the misleading audiences through the dissemination of misinformation which undermines public confidence in the media which further impedes access to reliable news.

Sudanese authorities, including de facto authorities, must take decisive actions to enhance freedom of expression and protect the right to access information. Journalists must prioritize disseminating accurate and reliable information, and adhere to professional safety protocols. The international community should provide support to Sudanese journalists by offering protection and holding accountable those responsible for violations. Thousands of Sudanese journalists have experienced profound violations that have deeply impacted their lives and work. Both local and foreign media outlets and crews have been affected. Women Journalists Without Chains documented **78** violations, including five journalist killings, with **28** cases involving female journalists and resulting in two fatalities.

According to the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate, approximately **153** male and female collaborators were affected as the salaries of **1,166** workers at the Sudanese General Authority for Radio and TV broadcasting went unpaid.

The international community must fulfill its responsibility to protect journalists working under challenging circumstances.

Systematic Targeting of Journalists

The warring factions in Sudan are deliberately silencing journalists, instructing their soldiers to run over and shoot journalists on sight. The significant number of journalist deaths is not justifiable through war alone, but is instead systematic targeting to conceal the truth. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces are implicated in most of these killings.

On June 30, journalist [Samaher Abdel Shafee](#) of Radio Zalingei was fatally struck by a shell in a displacement camp where she sought refuge with her family at the war's onset.

Journalist [Halima Idris Saleem](#) met her death on October 10 when she was run over by a Rapid Support Forces vehicle while working in Omdurman.

[Essam Hassan Morgan](#), a prominent state television photographer, was killed in his Omdurman home on July 24 after refusing to vacate the premises upon the Rapid Support Forces' demand, and was buried there.

On August 20, journalist [Essam Al-Hajj](#) was fatally shot by Rapid Support Forces in Jabra area.

Journalist [Ahmed Youssef Arabi](#) lost his life on January 12, 2024, in his home in the Abbasiya neighborhood of Omdurman during clashes between army forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

Tragically, relatives of journalists were also victims of violence. In July 2023, journalist **Etemad Al-Mirawi** lost her mother and two brothers to Rapid Support Forces gunfire. The following month, three sons of journalist Arafa Khawaja were killed, and in August, photographer Ali Jinn's wife and son were also slain. In September, journalist Abu Dhar Masoud, the brother of another journalist, was killed.

In May, journalist Mohammed Nour and his family were assaulted by Rapid Support Forces who opened fire on their car, stole their phones and money on the highway. Similarly, in Nyala, journalist Issa Dafallah was beaten and had his phone stolen while documenting looting of shops due to the fighting. Ahmed Fadl and other journalists were attacked by the Rapid Support Forces, who raided their residence, looted their money and furniture.

In June, Khaled Sharaf Al-Din sustained an arm injury in West Darfur, while Hussein Dauldum was injured in his hand and leg in Nyala. In July, Ali Shatta was shot, and during the same month, journalists Osama Sayed Ahmed and Ahmed Al-Busaili were shot in an area under



Rapid Support control. Additionally, Ahmed Al-Nashader was struck by missile shrapnel in Khartoum in July.

On August 28, journalist Abather Masoud in Nyala, South Darfur, was injured when a tree collapsed onto his residence. Simultaneously, journalist Walid Shihlabi sustained injuries while reporting on a protest. The violence continued into September, with Fatima Saeed being attacked at her residence in Omdurman, where she also reported incidents of sexual harassment by Rapid Support Forces. Likewise, journalist Inaam Ali Adam faced an attack at her home in South Darfur, along with journalist Wijdan Abu Quron in Omdurman.

Arrests and Detentions

In April, photojournalist Saad Abdel Salam al-Tani was detained at his home in Khartoum and released two weeks later. In May, journalist Mohamed Hussein was arrested in Omdurman and held incommunicado until September, when his detention by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was revealed. Similarly, journalist Mughira Harbiya disappeared on September 10 and was later found in a military intelligence prison in Karari before being released.

Female journalists were not spared from this campaign of intimidation. In September, journalist Zamzam Khatir was arrested by the RSF in North Darfur and released after a few days. In the same month, journalists Khalda al-Laqani and Arwa Mohammed were detained for several hours by an intelligence unit while reporting on stranded individuals at the Egypt-Sudan border, according to the Sudanese Journalists' Syndicate.

In September, Nader Shalkawy was arrested and held in an RSF prison camp. Shuqi Abdel Azim, a member of the Sudanese Journalists' Syndicate, was arrested by military intelligence and released with restrictions on his movement. Journalists Ahmed Fadl and Rashed Jubail were detained for a day by the RSF and subjected to torture. Additionally, journalist Nasser al-Nour was arrested by the RSF, and Ismail Wad Karbous and Hussein Sahri were arrested and later released.

In August, the RSF detained journalists Ahmed Fadl and Rashed Jubail for one day at an intelligence prison in Khartoum Bahri, where they were subjected to severe torture, according to the Journalists' Syndicate. In the same month, the RSF arrested journalist Nasser al-Nour. On August 17, Ismail Wad Karbous was arrested for several days by the RSF, which also arrested Hussein Sahri the following day. Sahri was released a few days later.



On August 15, the General Intelligence Service in Sennar arrested journalist [Ali Tariq al-Arsh](#) for a news report about the security forces harassing displaced people. In the same month, Mohammed Nour al-Din was arrested by the RSF and released a few weeks later.

Journalists were also targeted because of their ethnicity and affiliation. On July 10, journalist [Abu Ubaida Awad](#) was arrested and interrogated by security forces in Wad Madani. He was accused of belonging to the RSF on the basis of his ethnicity. In the same month, journalist [Ramadan Mahjoub](#) was kidnapped by the RSF and threatened with death, along with his son and a relative.

In September, journalist Abdul Rahman Warab and Al-Ghad TV correspondent Mohamed Ibrahim al-Haj were arrested by [the RSF](#). In December, Mohamed Ibrahim Kaboutch, editor-in-chief of Al-Jawhara newspaper, was arrested by military intelligence. The RSF reportedly converted the General Authority for Radio and Television building in Omdurman into a detention center in December.

Intimidation of Journalists

The conflict in Sudan has unleashed a campaign of intimidation and abuse against journalists, aimed at silencing their voices and limiting accurate news and information.

Numerous journalists from various media outlets, including Sudan News Agency, Russia Today, Al-Hurra, Tana4Media, Al-Arabi TV, state radio and television channels, Al-Jazeera TV, and BBC, were detained in their workplaces in Khartoum for up to five days. They were subjected to harsh conditions, deprived of food and water, and faced direct targeting if they attempted to leave.

During the early days of the war, media channels and outlets such as Sudania 24 and Al-Balad TV in Khartoum were vandalized and looted. Furthermore, the BBC office was looted. Armed individuals from the Rapid Support Forces [were seen selling Blue Nile channel equipment](#) in the Libyan market in Omdurman. In June, the headquarters of the [Al-Akhbar newspaper](#) were entirely looted and robbed.

Al-Sharq TV correspondent Ahmed Al-Arabi and his cameraman, along with an Al-Jazeera TV crew, were arrested on April 15. BBC Arabic correspondent Mohammed Mohammed Othman was beaten by armed forces soldiers on the same day.



Journalist [Inaam Al-Nour](#) was kidnapped and tortured by unknown individuals (affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces) on May 23rd, and 11 members of her family were killed. She [was held for seven days](#) before being found at her family's home.

In May, Ahmed Al-Mustafa, a photographer, was shot by the Rapid Support Forces, and his camera and live broadcast equipment were confiscated; journalist Ali Joudah was attacked by military intelligence; Islam Abdel Rahman, a Monte Carlo and France 24 correspondent, was attacked and assaulted by the Rapid Support Forces in Omdurman; his house was stormed, and his family was threatened.

Iman Abdel Baqi was attacked by unknown assailants while covering a Rapid Support press conference in Geneva in June. Journalist [Afraa Fath al-Rahman](#) was attacked by the Rapid Support Forces in Al-Kadro in July after her office was occupied and television equipment and documents were stolen.

In June, the RSF robbed and harassed journalist [Salah Damba](#) before confiscating his passport in the Jabalain district of White Nile State. He was eventually freed. The Rapid Support Forces assaulted and occupied many journalists' homes [in June](#), including those of Afraa Fatah al-Rahman, Iman Habibullah, Noha Younis, Sumaya Elias, Iman Fadl Al-Sayyid, May Ali Adam, and Abdul Rahman Farouk.

On April 16, [a RSF force](#) stormed Khaled Abdel Aziz's family home in Khartoum and converted it into a military barracks. The intimidation of journalists is not limited to direct violations. Instead, [the parties to the conflict wage](#) online campaigns of incitement, accusations, and threats against journalists. They [publish lists and posters](#) with names, linking journalists to specific sides, falsely accusing them of being agents, and inciting violence against them.



Sudan..

Systematic Targeting of Journalists 2023-2024

- **Dire Conditions Amid Civil War:** Sudanese press faces severe challenges amidst the civil war since April 2023.
- **Multiple Violators:** RSF, Sudanese army, and unidentified groups commit violations, with RSF playing a primary role.
- **Journalist Casualties:** 5 journalists, including 2 women, killed; many others injured.
- **Arrests and Abductions:** Dozens of journalists arrested by conflict parties.
- **Targeting of Female Journalists:** Female journalists subjected to abductions, rape threats, and attacks on their families.
- **Exodus of Journalists:** Many journalists forced to flee to neighboring countries.
- **Government Media Misuse:** Government media looted and repurposed as military facilities; local and international media offices raided.
- **Propaganda Exploitation:** Conflict parties exploit journalists to push their narratives and agendas.
- **Intimidation Tactics:** Intimidation used to obstruct journalists from reporting the truth.

    | [wjwc.org](https://www.wjwc.org)



Iraq: Press Under Fire - Threats from Every Direction

Iraqi journalists operate in a perilous environment marked by a lack of state protection and pervasive threats. The ongoing crises in Iraq, stemming from the US occupation and



subsequent political instability, violence, and armed groups have exacerbated the climate of fear and intimidation for journalists.

Numerous journalists have been killed while carrying out their duties, and many others have been abducted and held captive. Journalists are frequently subject to physical and verbal assaults, particularly during protests. They face intimidation and extortion from various actors, forcing them to self-censor or abandon critical coverage. Some have faced legal repercussions for their work.

Political control over media outlets remains a significant challenge. Many major media outlets are owned by political parties and entities, using them as tools for propaganda and promoting specific political agendas. This has made it difficult for independent journalists to secure funding, forcing them to rely on sources with potential biases.

Journalists have been targeted through physical violence, shootings, assaults, home and office raids, and obstruction of their work. These challenges significantly hinder journalists' ability to expose corruption and hold authorities accountable.



According to Women Journalists Without Chains, (232) violations were recorded in Iraq during 2023, as follows:





In Iraq, despite constitutional guarantees of press freedom, the reality reveals a starkly different picture. Laws are continually enacted and amended, ostensibly to safeguard this right, yet in practice, they often serve to target and curtail the work of journalists, posing serious threats to their safety and freedom. For instance, the misuse of defamation laws allows public figures to silence critical voices, while the expansive scope of electronic crimes legislation imposes severe penalties, including life imprisonment, on independent journalists.

Moreover, certain religious institutions and figures are considered sacrosanct, rendering criticism or disclosure of information a precarious endeavor, with the risk of prosecution under laws pertaining to insulting religious symbols. Compounding these challenges is the government's failure to furnish adequate protection for journalists, leaving them vulnerable to threats and attacks from various quarters.

Female journalists in Iraq encounter additional hurdles, with gender-based discrimination permeating every aspect of their professional lives. From workplace harassment to restricted access to opportunities and information, they contend with a hostile environment that undermines their ability to carry out their duties effectively. Tragically, many female journalists face not only threats and physical violence but also online harassment, exacerbating their psychological distress and impeding their freedom of expression.

These obstacles contribute to a decline in women's representation in journalism, depriving society of diverse perspectives and hindering the public's access to accurate information. Discrimination against female journalists not only stifles their voices but also undermines the fundamental right to freedom of expression, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and censorship in Iraqi media landscape.

Specific Examples of Injuries and Attacks

April: Ahmed Mustafa and cameraman Omar Hassan from KNN were injured by bullets from unknown assailants while covering Souk al-Qalaa.

September 3: Haider Odeh, a correspondent for Syria Today, Rakan Jaff, a correspondent for Ava News channel, Iskandar Abdel Khaleq, a correspondent for Kirkuk News, and the site's photographer Firas Abdullah, were injured.

July 20: German press photographer Amir al-Muhammadawi was severely beaten and his camera confiscated [by security forces](#) while covering the burning of the Swedish embassy. Photographer Maher al-Mashhadani was also severely beaten by riot forces during the same event

March 25: Armed men [targeted](#) the Al-Baghdadiya TV building in Baghdad, causing damage.

February 18: [Unknown gunmen threw](#) a bomb at the UTV building in Baghdad after Adnan Al-Taie received threats for his reporting.

December 19: Unidentified gunmen [set fire to the](#) NRT headquarters in Crook, causing severe damage.

[Arrests and Other Forms of Ill-Treatment](#)

Throughout the year, numerous incidents of arrests and mistreatment of journalists occurred in various regions of Iraq. These include:

January 23: [Suma Khaled](#), a program presenter on KNN TV, was arrested in Sulaymaniyah after being summoned to a police station due to a lawsuit filed by a hospital regarding critical remarks about its services. She was released the next day.

February 16: [security forces in Anbar arrested](#) Nour Thamer, the cameraman of Al-Baghdadiya TV, and his assistant Munir Al-Hassani, possibly for hosting a political figure critical of the authorities.

March 26: Ali Abdul Karim, a correspondent for Fallujah TV, was detained for several hours following a report on medical errors.

March 11: [Security forces detained four journalists](#), namely Marcus John, Jeremy Nicky, Carl Lewis, and Franco Robert, for working without proper permits.

April 9: The police director in Iraqi Kurdistan Region attacked NRTV correspondent Hersh Qadir in Erbil, preventing coverage of a conference.

April 9: Security forces in Erbil detained Kurdsat-TV reporter [Sirwan Hussein](#) and photographer Farman Abdul Qadir to prevent coverage of a village demonstration, confiscating their equipment.



April 17: Security forces in Dohuk arrested the human rights activist Omid Broshki, interrogating him and pressuring him to alter the organization's policies in favor of authorities in exchange for increased funding. He was later released but [was arrested again](#) on February 22, 2024.

April 20: [Hirsh Qadir](#) and photographer Namo Muhammad were detained by security forces in Erbil during coverage of retirees at a bank.

May 5: NRT reporter [Karim Kifi](#) was detained by security forces in Shaqlawa and forced to sign an agreement not to return to the area.

May 16: [The Basra Court detained Haider Al-Hamdani](#), a program presenter, over lawsuits related to corruption allegations, which drew criticism from the [Iraq Association for Defending Press Freedom](#), accusing authorities of using legal actions to intimidate journalists.

May 27: Security forces in Sulaymaniyah detained [crews from three TVs](#)—Arkan Ali and Alan Othman from Rudaw TV, Ramyar Othman and Jihad Abdul Rahman from Payam TV, and Kuran Luqman and Kozin Kamran from NRTV—to prevent coverage of a regional demonstration.

On June: The Iraqi government requested the arrest of journalist Hamid Abdullah from Jordanian authorities, following his exposé on Iraqi officials' purchase of luxury real estate in Amman.

On July 20: Baghdad security forces detained Associated Press photographer Hadi Mazban and Reuters photographers Maher Mashhadani and Ahmed Saad. [They held them for several hours](#), aiming to prevent them from covering [the attempted storming of the Swedish embassy by demonstrators](#).

On July: Omid Broschke was arrested in Dohuk for criticizing a prison sentence given to journalist Sherwan Sherwani, and Omid Jumani and Kuran Abdul Khaq from NRT were briefly detained in Erbil while covering a protest over water shortages.

August 10: Security personnel from the Iraqi PM's office detained crews from television channels "iNews, Iraqi News Agency, Al-Furat TV, Tigris TV, Al-Sharqiya TV, Al-Janoub TV," namely Hana Al-Quraishi, Ali Jabbar, Adad Al-Maksousi, Ahmed Al-Sadkhan, Haider Al-Hassani, Aws Al-Anzi, Hassan Issa, Mustafa Al-Baldawi, and Ahlam Al-Aboudi, to prevent them from covering the opening of a hospital



Erbil, Basra and Kirkuk

In August, both Erbil and Basra experienced a surge in journalist arrests targeting individuals from various satellite channels. In Erbil, Murad Ahmed and Shirwan Moloud from NRT, along with Yaser Mohammed from ISTA TV and Diyar Hussein from Walat Media, were detained. Similarly, in Basra, the Al Taghier-TV team consisting of Mustafa Al-Shammari and Ahmed Diao, along with Fouad Al-Halafi, a iNews correspondent, were also detained during this period.

On September 3, Eugene Ramadan and Sherzad Hassan were detained in Kirkuk to prevent them from covering events. Additionally, on October 29, Suleiman Ahmed, a correspondent for [Roj News Agency](#), was arrested while returning from southern Kurdistan after traveling from Aleppo. He was taken to an undisclosed location and has remained detained since then, as of the report written in mid-April 2024.

Morocco: State-Controlled Media

Throughout 2023, Morocco continued its regime-led control over the media landscape, leveraging media for its own gain while presenting press pluralism as a superficial facade to bolster its international image.

In recent years, there has been a notable regression in press freedom within Morocco, despite the implementation of laws designed to protect journalists post-2011.

Journalists in Morocco face significant legal constraints, including restrictions imposed by the Press and Publication Law that limit freedom of expression, the misuse of [the Anti-Terrorism Law](#) to suppress the press, and changes to [the Penal Code](#) that elevate press offenses to public right crimes, leading to the imprisonment and persecution of journalists.

Last year's trials have revealed orchestrated campaigns by authorities to smear independent journalists, leveling baseless accusations to discredit and isolate them, often facilitated by the state's expansive media apparatus engaged in systematic disinformation operations.

A Blow to Freedom of the Press

In June 2023, the Moroccan Parliament passed a new law creating a temporary commission to oversee the press and publishing sector. This law, approved by the House of Councilors on July 18, 2023, removes the right to elect members of the National Press Council and transforms it into an institution tasked with targeting and monitoring journalists.



This law undermines the independence of the National Press Council and threatens the already fragile press freedom in the country. The key changes introduced by the law are as follows:

- **Elimination of the right to elect council members:** Previously, members of the National Press Council were elected by journalists themselves. Under the new law, the government will appoint members, giving it significant control over the press sector.
- **Transformation of the council into a tool for monitoring journalists:** The law empowers the council to monitor journalists' work and impose penalties for perceived violations of the law.

These changes are concerning for journalists and human rights organizations, who view them as a threat to press freedom. They have been met with strong opposition from [the Fédération Marocaine des Éditeurs de Journaux \(FMEJ\)](#) and the [National Union of Press, Media, and Communication](#), affiliated with [the Moroccan Labor Union](#). These organizations accuse the government of attempting to "seize" a self-regulatory institution.

A statement issued by these organizations describes the new law as "extirpative, unconstitutional, and detrimental to the Kingdom's human rights image." They further argue that it represents a "serious setback for press freedom in our country" by allowing the executive branch to interfere in the self-regulation of the profession.¹

In May 2023, Women Journalists Without Chains published an assessment of the new law and the proposed temporary commission, warning against its adoption.²

Despite the initial challenges faced by the council established in 2018, which revealed legal and professional shortcomings along with internal divisions, it is crucial for that government and the council to engage in dialogue with journalists and media professionals. This dialogue should focus on identifying and addressing challenges to enhance the law governing the press and publishing sector and to align this law with the Moroccan constitution, relevant international human rights conventions on freedom of opinion and expression, and global best practices for

¹ Morocco: Political Controversy Following Approval of Law for Managing the Media and Publishing Sector <https://tinyurl.com/2852wt4x>

² Morocco's Press Freedom at Risk: Concerns of Erosion and Bleak Future
Source: <https://wjwc.org/reports/moroccos-press-freedom-at-risk-concerns-of-erosion-and-bleak-future>

self-regulatory bodies in journalism. Rather than eliminating journalists' right to self-regulate through the council, preserving democratic methods for electing council leadership is essential, avoiding their replacement with appointments.

Arbitrary Arrests & Detentions

Moroccan authorities have increasingly resorted to arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions. Independent journalists are often targeted through dubious accusations of rape, abortion, and human trafficking, orchestrated through what is locally termed the "Makhzen" media.

[Rida Ben Othman](#), a writer and member of the [Moroccan Association for Human Rights \(AMDH\)](#), has languished in prolonged solitary confinement at Arjat 1 prison since September 2022. His charges appear to be fabricated, merely stemming from his exercise of the fundamental right to freedom of expression. Throughout his detention, the 46-year-old Ben Othman has been deprived even of basic writing materials like a pen.

Furthermore, prominent figures such as [Taoufik Bouachrine](#), the founder of Al-Akhbar newspaper, investigative journalist [Omar Radi](#), and [Suleiman Raissouni](#), the editor-in-chief of Al-Akhbar, remain incarcerated. Despite their appeals, the Court of Cassation upheld their convictions. Radi and Raissouni have been unjustly accused of rape and sexual assault, directly stemming from their pursuit of independent journalism. Bouachrine received a fifteen-year sentence in 2019, while Raissouni got five years, and Radi received six years in 2022.

In July, the Court of Cassation denied the appeal of Omar Radi and Suleiman Raissouni after their year-and-a-half detention, affirming a "fair and just" trial.

[Abdelmajid Amaji's](#) trial was rescheduled multiple times from October 19, 2023, to March 24, 2024, during which he spent over 24 hours in detention before being released on bail. He faces accusations of defamation against the Eastern Region governor.³

In February, Moroccan blogger [Yassine Benchekroun](#) was [sentenced to two years in prison](#) for "insulting an organized body" and "insulting a constitutional institution" due to his critical Facebook posts about authorities and politicians.

Activist [Saïda El Alami](#) was previously convicted in a similar case in 2022, where she received a three-year prison sentence for charges related to "broadcasting and distributing false

³ <https://tinyurl.com/22rb2xas>



allegations and facts with the intention of defaming individuals," stemming from Facebook posts deemed offensive.

In August, blogger [Fatima Karim](#) (39) received a two-year prison sentence for Facebook posts deemed "offensive to Islam" by the court. In February 2024, journalist [Hanane Bakour](#), former director of the Moroccan website "Al Yaoum 24," was convicted by the Salé Court of First Instance for "broadcasting false information to defame individuals." She received a suspended one-month prison sentence and a 500 Moroccan dirham fine in a case brought by the National Rally of Independents party.⁴

Ban on Foreign Journalists

Independent photojournalist [Thérèse de Campo](#) and her colleague, [Contan Muller](#), deputy editor-in-chief of the French magazine [Marianne](#), were forcibly expelled from Morocco without notice. Around 3:00 AM on September 20th, dozens of men in civilian clothing, wearing masks, raided their hotel and informed them they were no longer welcome in the country. They were taken to Mohammed V Airport, held in the judicial police office for over an hour, and then deported on a flight to Marseille. Muller lives in Paris, while Campo is based in Brussels; they were quickly rebooked on flights to Paris. The journalists received no explanation, though Moroccan journalist [Ali Lamrabet](#) in Spain suggested their expulsion was linked to a meeting with families of political detainees.⁵ Muller hinted at an upcoming investigation into King Mohammed VI and his inner circle, which likely contributed to their expulsion. Campo denounced these tactics as thuggish and intimidating.

⁴ <https://al3omk.com/909244.html>

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/29gaxgwt>



Morocco.co

State-Controlled Media 2023-2024

- **Resistance Against Media Control:** Independent journalists, both male and female, resist efforts by authorities to control and manipulate the media.
- **Setback for Press Freedom:** Morocco's new law abolishes the right to elect the National Press Council, representing a major setback for press freedom.
- **Undermining Press Council Independence:** The new law undermines the independence of the Press Council, posing a threat to press freedom.
- **Unjust Imprisonments:** Journalists and bloggers are unjustly imprisoned on fabricated charges, including insulting government officials.
- **Imprisoned Journalists and Bloggers:** 5 journalists and 2 bloggers are imprisoned, while others face legal action for their work and criticism of officials.





Yemen: Press Erosion

Women Journalists Without Chains has released [a comprehensive report detailing press freedom in Yemen](#) for 2022–2023. According to the organization, 71 documented violations against journalists occurred in Yemen during 2023, including arrests, enforced disappearances, physical and psychological assaults, trials, summonses, threats, and torture. The relatively low number of reported victims is not reflective stability or a decline in violations; rather, it reflects the harsh measures employed by conflicting parties toward any attempt at truth-telling. Private and independent media offices that were operational before the Houthi militia coup in September 2014 have been closed down. A large number of journalists have lost their livelihoods, with many forced to flee and seek refuge. Throughout nine years of conflict, journalists persist in working within an unsafe environment, facing the constant threat of assassination, torture, and enforced disappearance.

In its recent annual report, Women Journalists Without Chains stated that the press is facing significant dangers and unprecedented challenges, with the situation deteriorating year by year. There is a notable decline in media freedoms, and current events represent a major setback for press freedom, pushing us back decades.

In 2023, the recorded violations included:





- 4 cases of preventing visits, communication, and denying healthcare to kidnapped individuals, representing 5.63% of total violations.
- 2 cases of physical assault, accounting for 2.81% of total violations.
- 2 cases of wage suspension, also totaling 2.81% of total violations.
- 1 case of a hunger strike, representing 1.40% of total violations.

Hostile Media Environment

Women Journalists Without Chains highlighted the alarming trend of conflicting parties seeking to assert total control over media outlets within their territories, instrumentalizing them for wartime agendas. This approach involves arbitrarily dismissing, suppressing, and curtailing journalists who dissent from their policies, treating them as adversaries.

Moreover, recent years have witnessed a stark erosion of media freedoms in Yemen, with the country plummeting to one of the lowest positions globally for press freedom, [ranking 168 out of 180 nations in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index](#).

According to Women Journalists Without Chains, annual reports on media freedoms have documented a staggering 1,657 violations since 2014, resulting in 51 fatalities prior to this report. Additionally, numerous journalists have experienced arrests, enforced disappearances, trials, physical assaults, displacement, and the forced closure and looting of newspapers and television channels.

These reports on violations are both awareness raising and advocacy tools aimed at shifting relevant organizations dedicated to freedom of opinion, expression, and press freedoms. It urges these organizations to prioritize efforts to protect journalists, provide assistance, mobilize support, and advocate for solidarity with them.

Impunity Prevails: Escaping Accountability

In recent years, Women Journalists Without Chains has documented 51 targeted killings of journalists during the ongoing conflict. These brave individuals were deliberately attacked while on duty. Regrettably, our nation lacks meaningful investigations and prosecutions for these heinous crimes.



Three years have passed since photojournalist Nabil Al-Qa'iti was assassinated, yet progress towards justice remains elusive. Al-Qa'iti was fatally shot by unidentified gunmen on June 2, 2020, in front of his home in Dar Saad, Aden Governorate. His family has expressed deep disappointment with the authorities' inattention and negligence, particularly citing the Public Prosecution's failure to advance the investigation.

According to Women Journalists Without Chains' [latest annual report](#) on media freedoms, "the Houthi militia was responsible for 35 violations, accounting for 49.29% of total cases. Forces loyal to the internationally recognized government accounted for 20 violations, representing 28.16% of incidents. Additionally, the Security Belt Forces, operating under the Southern Transitional Council, committed 12 violations, amounting to 16.90% of the total. Furthermore, 3 cases, constituting 4.22% of violations, were carried out by unidentified individuals.

Women Journalists Without Chains is warning the international community of the grave impunity for crimes committed against journalists, emphasizing that the perpetuation of this phenomenon only fuels further violations. The tangible consequence of this alarming trend is the deterioration of the journalism profession as a whole, unequivocally depriving the public of their fundamental right to access information.

The organization further points out the international community's silence has contributed to this severity of these violations. The lack of accountability further encourages perpetrators to continue their barbaric acts against journalists, ranging from cold-blooded killings to torture and enforced disappearances.

Expressing profound regret over the deplorable failure of the international community to address this pressing issue, "Women Journalists Without Chains" underscores the imperative need to hold the perpetrators accountable and ensure they face just punishment. These crimes should never be subject to the passage of time, and justice must prevail.

Trial of Journalists

During 2023, the trial and summoning of journalists by different judicial authorities, as outlined in the report from Women Journalists Without Chains, exposed troubling violations. Out of 17 documented cases (23.94%), journalists encountered legal actions orchestrated by conflicting parties, leading to severe penalties, including death sentences.



On June 5, 2023, journalist [Fahd Al-Rahbi](#) was summoned by the Security and Intelligence Service in the Amran Governorate, which is under the control of the Houthi militia, in response to his reporting on corruption cases. Subsequently, on June 9, 2023, the Primary Prosecution in Marib Governorate issued arrest warrants for three journalists to be questioned: Ahmed Ayed, editor-in-chief of the '[Marib Press](#)' website; [Ali Al-Faqih](#), editor-in-chief of '[Al-Masdar Online](#)' website; and [Mohammed Al-Salehi](#), editor-in-chief of the printed newspaper 'Marib Press'.

Furthermore, the report details the unjust treatment of journalist [Nabil Mohammed Al-Sadawi](#) by the Houthi militia. Despite completing his sentence on September 8, 2023, Al-Sadawi was held captive for eight years, subjected to enforced disappearance, and then bizarrely ordered by a Houthi court to be placed under police control upon release. The ruling included directives for his cultural, behavioral, intellectual, and educational rehabilitation in collaboration with the Ministry of Endowments.

Women Journalists Without Chains [strongly condemned the exploitation](#) of legal processes by conflicting parties to intimidate journalists. They denounced the unfair trials conducted by courts lacking specialization in press and publishing cases, highlighting the absence of justice and due process for journalists facing these charges.

Enforced Disappearance

Women Journalists Without Chains has documented 13 cases of kidnapping, arrest, and detention of journalists in 2023, constituting 9.23% of total violations for the year. Currently, five journalists remain detained by various factions. Notably, [Wahid Al-Sufi](#) is "forcibly disappeared" under the Houthi militia, along with Nabil Al-Sadawi of Saba Agency. Additionally, [Ahmed Maher](#) and [Shaker Nasih](#) are held by the Security Belt Forces in Aden, affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council, while journalist [Mohammed Qaid Al-Muqri](#) has been missing since 2015, believed to be held by Al-Qaeda in Hadhramaut.

The cases of Wahid Al-Sufi and Muhammad Qaid Al-Muqri epitomize the grave practice of enforced disappearance of journalists. Al-Sufi, editor-in-chief of Al-Arabiya newspaper, was abducted by Houthi gunmen in Sana'a on April 6, 2015, and remains missing without any information regarding his whereabouts. Similarly, Al-Muqri, a correspondent for Al-Yemen Al-Youm, was kidnapped by Al-Qaeda in Hadhramaut in 2016, and his fate remains unknown.



Meanwhile, Al-Sadawi was subjected to enforced disappearance for nearly four years following his abduction by the Houthi militia on April 6, 2015. His family remained unaware of his whereabouts until July 2019, when he was accused of espionage for the Arab coalition and sentenced to eight years in prison, including time already served. Despite completing his sentence, he remains imprisoned to this day, enduring ongoing injustice.

In light of these injustices, Women Journalists Without Chains calls for the immediate release of all detained journalists and urges the international community to pressure involved parties to end these violations and alleviate the suffering of these individuals.

GCC Countries: Press Manipulation by Authorities

In Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of expression and access to information, the reality is starkly different and characterized by severe limitations, including imprisonment and, in extreme cases, violence.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) [countries remain categorized](#) as having "very poor press freedom" according to international rankings, and 2023 did not see a marked improvement. Governments persistently enforced stringent restrictions on independent press, suppressed the voices of journalists, and exerted control over media content.

Media and press in GCC nations are heavily regulated by authorities, with Kuwait showing comparatively more flexibility. This environment fosters widespread self-censorship among journalists, who feel compelled to align with state narratives propagated by official news agencies or government directives.

Journalists, bloggers, and media outlets across GCC countries encounter myriad challenges, such as restrictive internet laws, rigorous censorship, and increased digital surveillance. Laws concerning freedom of expression, including defamation statutes, subject journalists to legal persecution. Furthermore, governments frequently amend laws to target social media users, summoning and interrogating them on ambiguous charges related to "state security" to stifle dissent.

GCC nations commonly suppress information regarding imprisoned journalists, and acts of torture, degrading treatment, and rights violations against them often go unpunished.



Throughout **2023** and into **2024**, authorities in most GCC countries consistently detained journalists without fair trials, ignoring international appeals for their safety and dignity. These nations reject United Nations efforts to inspect prisons and assess the conditions of detained journalists, raising serious concerns about their welfare and human rights.

Saudi Arabia: Press as a Propaganda Tool!

Saudi Arabia continues to exhibit "very poor press freedom" according to global rankings, with severe restrictions on freedom of expression, consistently placing it near the bottom of press freedom indexes worldwide. Unfortunately, there was no improvement in this situation in **2023**, as the authorities continued to impose restrictions on journalistic work, suppress journalists, and incarcerate them. Saudi Arabia currently ranks 170 out of **180** countries on the Press Freedom Index.

Instead of raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of societal issues, the media in Saudi Arabia has transformed into a propaganda tool, promoting only the government's perspective while concealing facts and important news stories. As a result, the internet has become the sole outlet for journalists and activists to express their opinions and engage in blogging. However, even this space is subjected to repression, as laws

related to "terrorism" and "cybercrime" are utilized to stifle freedom of expression and silence dissenting voices, including those of women human rights activists and writers.

Accurate figures regarding prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia remain elusive, but the Women Journalists Without Chains organization has identified at least **172** such individuals in Saudi prisons, including **16** women. This group comprises academics, economists, clerics, and women activists advocating for women's rights. Notably, Sheikh Salman Al-Awda, a prominent religious figure with a following of more than two million on his official social media account on X platform, is among those detained.

Saudi Arabia periodically launches arrest campaigns, such as those in **2017-2018**, resulting in the detention of over **2,613** prisoners of conscience, including more than **60** academics and clerics, for their tweets on what was then known as Twitter (currently the X platform). During **2023-2024**, **17** bloggers and journalists in Saudi prisons, including **9** women, were arrested and tried. Here are some examples:

Wikipedia Bloggers

Two physicians and volunteer bloggers on Wikipedia, Osama Khaled and Ziad Al-Sufyani, have been detained and arrested by the Saudi regime since 2020. They were detained after posting informational and awareness-raising posts on the well-known blogging site about the COVID-19 outbreak. They were given five-year prison terms, so even after all this time, the authorities still haven't released them. As [volunteer administrators](#), they have full access to all of Wikipedia's private tools, including the ability to modify protected pages.

Since his detention in 2018, the Saudi authorities have not disclosed the whereabouts of [journalist Turki Al-Jasser](#). Not only was his trial not recorded, but he is unaware of the charges against him. Only two calls were placed to his family in 2020 and 2021, and all information about his whereabouts was cut off. According to [media reports](#), he passed away in jail after being tortured. the Monarchy. Utilizing a pseudonym, [Al-Jasser maintained a Twitter account](#) with anti-regime messages. Since reports suggest that the Twitter office in Dubai may have been engaged in releasing his identify, it is unknown how his identity was determined.

[Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Ghamdi](#), an internet activist, was arrested a year ago for criticizing corruption and advocating for detainees through his online writings. Local sources in July 2023 revealed that he had been sentenced to death. Al-Ghamdi perceives this decision as a retaliatory measure due to his vocal opposition to the Saudi government. His brother, [Saeed Al-Ghamdi](#), a writer and academic living in exile, supports these claims. Al-Ghamdi also alleges that his family has faced travel restrictions as a result of past reprisals.

In November, [Sarah Al-Jar was sentenced to 27 years in jail](#) by a Saudi court. Additionally, she has been subjected to a travel ban for the same duration following the completion of her sentence. The court cited Al-Jar's online opinions and her vocal advocacy for women's rights as the grounds for its decision, [as reported locally](#).

[Internet activist Manahil Al-Otaibi's trial](#), scheduled at the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh, was postponed indefinitely. She was arrested in November 2022 and faced charges related to her support for the hashtag (#Society_Ready), advocating for "liberation and the abolition of guardianship laws."

The violations extended to include the Manahil family, and in 2023, [Fawzia and Maryam Al-Otaibi](#) complained about the ongoing travel ban imposed upon them. They also faced threats from Saudi officials due to their Twitter posts supporting the detained women.

In May 2023, [Fatima Al-Shawarbi was sentenced](#) to 30 years in prison by a Saudi court, with an additional travel ban for the same duration after completing her sentence. The charges against her included using a Twitter account to defend prisoners of conscience and address unemployment issues in the country. Her arrest in 2020 was reportedly linked to criticizing the Saudi government through the same account

[Journalist Maha Al-Rafidi remains in detention](#) under the custody of Saudi authorities since September 2019. In October 2022, she received a six-year prison sentence and a corresponding travel ban. The charges against her were related to online publications defending political detainees and opposing normalization. Human rights reports have highlighted these charges, and despite numerous demands for her release in 2023, the authorities have rejected them.

Turaad Al-Omari has been held in continuous detention since 2016 without any legal justification. Moreover, Saudi authorities persist in arresting numerous women's rights activists who have utilized social media to express their views and advocate for women's rights. Among these activists are [Asmaa Al-Sabai](#), who has been detained since June 2021, Amani Al-Zain since May 2020, [Reina Abdulaziz](#) since May 2021, [Najwa Ahmed Al-Hamid](#) since May 2021, [Yasmin Al-Ghafeeli](#) since May 2021, [Noura Al-Qahtani](#) since July 2021 (sentenced to 45 years for criticizing the Saudi Crown Prince), and [Salma Al-Shihab](#) since January 2021 (received a 34-year prison sentence for her Twitter activities).

Numerous journalists face unjust imprisonment and endure online stalking and harassment campaigns by regime-affiliated "electronic armies" active on social media platforms. Moreover, the authorities employ sophisticated surveillance methods to monitor journalists, even those residing outside the country.

On January 24, 2023, Sudanese journalist Hisham Abbas Omar was [arrested by Saudi authorities](#) for expressing his views on the Sudanese war via Twitter. He was charged with "incitement and stirring up public opinion" and [received a six-month prison sentence, being released](#) after serving his term.



Without providing an explanation, the Saudi authorities detained [Dr. Mohammed Al-Hajji](#), a journalist, on August 1, 2023. Al-Hajji is the owner of several shows, including Radio Eight's Adam podcast. Despite this, Al-Hajji doesn't engage in politics. Fifteen days after his arrest, he was freed.

Sustained Deprivation of Freedoms After Arrest

After serving their prison sentences, journalists face ongoing restrictions that deprive them of a normal life, including house arrest, physical restraints, and the denial of fundamental rights such as freedom of movement and expression.

[Raif Badawi](#), a 40-year-old blogger, completed a ten-year prison term in March 2022. However, the Saudi authorities have imposed further limitations on him by prohibiting him from leaving the country for a similar duration. Additionally, he is not allowed to exercise his right to write and express his opinions. In 2023, the Saudi judiciary demanded that Raif Badawi pay one million Saudi riyals (approximately 250 thousand euros), effectively marking the end of his legal and political life.

Similarly, [Loujain Al-Hathloul](#), despite the expiration of the court ruling banning her, continues to face travel restrictions imposed by the Saudi authorities. These constraints also extend to her family members, preventing them from leaving the country since May 2023.



Saudi Arabia..



Press as a Propaganda Tool 2023 - 2024

- Press in Saudi Arabia continues to serve as a propaganda tool for authorities.
- Freedom of the press shows no signs of improvement.
- Media platforms predominantly promote the government's perspective.
- Journalists encounter imprisonment and online harassment.
- 17 bloggers and journalists are currently detained, including 9 women.

Prisoners in Saudi Arabia

- Bloggers Osama Khaled and Ziad Al-Sufyani were sentenced for raising awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sarah Al-Jar received a 27-year sentence for expressing her opinions and defending women's rights.
- Saudi authorities conceal the fate of journalist Turki Al-Jasser, arrested in 2018 with unknown charges, an unrecorded trial, and limited information available.
- Manahil Al-Otaibi was arrested for advocating against the guardianship law.




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 Women Journalists Without Chains

UAE: Replacing Journalism with Fear

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has often presented itself as a beacon of liberalism, yet it ranks among the world's worst countries for press freedom. In 2023, there was continued



suppression of free speech, with journalists and opinion advocates encountering censorship and persecution. This pervasive climate of fear and repression casts a shadow over the nation.

Although the UAE constitution theoretically guarantees freedom of expression⁶, it is limited by the vague wording of being "within the bounds of the law." In practice, this provision serves as a means to suppress dissent. Similar to other Gulf states, additional laws grant extensive powers to executive authorities, rendering the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression largely ineffective.

In UAE, the practice of journalism is governed by a range of laws related to penalties, [anti-terrorism](#), cybercrime, press, and publishing. These laws use broad language that often depends on authorities' interpretation rather than clear, specific texts. This ambiguity can be used to prosecute individuals for criticisms. Additionally, there is strict surveillance by security agencies in spaces where journalists and residents express their opinions, resulting in the targeting of critics.

Precise statistics on prisoners of conscience in the UAE are unavailable. Nevertheless, estimates suggest that over 84 Emirati citizens and several individuals of other Arab nationalities are detained for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression. They face convictions or accusations under laws considered notorious, with evidence like press statements or online blog posts used against them in legal proceedings.

Second Trial for 84 Citizens

In December, the trial of 84 Emirati citizens commenced for the second time. Among them are prisoners of conscience, journalists, and prominent human rights defenders, many of whom have already spent over 10 years behind bars. They now face fabricated terrorism charges.

Notable individuals on this list include human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor, who was arrested and convicted for his Twitter posts, and academic Nasser bin Ghaith, a prominent writer and researcher who was detained and convicted for his online publications.

The list also includes several journalists, such as Ali Al-Hammadi, the former chairman of "Hayatna" channel, which was shut down upon his arrest in 2011, Dr. Mohammed Al-Mansoori,

⁶ Article 30 of the UAE Constitution of 1971 (amended in 2004) guarantees the freedom to hold and express opinions verbally, in writing, or through any other means of expression, within the constraints of the law.



the head of the Emirates Center for Studies and Media, journalist Rashid Al-Nuaimi, bloggers Mansoor Al-Ahmedi, Khalifa Al-Nuaimi, Imran Al-Radwan, Abdullah Al-Hajri, Nasser Al-Junaidi, Ahmed Abdullah Al-Wahdi, Ali Al-Omari, and others. The trial file includes charges directly linked to their exercise of the right to freedom of expression and press freedom.

On May 9, Emirati dissident [Khalaf Al-Rumaithi](#), previously sentenced to 15 years in 2015 for expressing his views, was transferred from Jordan to the UAE. Since then, his family has lost contact and is unaware of his location. There are serious concerns about his safety, with the risk of an unfair trial and torture.

Illegal Surveillance

The UAE's illegal censorship of communications and internet activities threatens freedom of expression, placing citizens and residents at risk of imprisonment or deportation. This is particularly troubling for the majority of the population, who are non-citizens and more vulnerable to such violations. Fear of prosecution prevents individuals from openly discussing conditions in their home countries.

Abu Dhabi's use of advanced surveillance technologies allows intrusive monitoring of public spaces, electronic activities, and personal devices, violating fundamental rights like freedom of expression, privacy, and association. These measures suppress dissent and limit individual freedoms.

For example, Jordanian blogger [Ahmed Al-Atoum](#) has been detained since 2020 and is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence in the UAE for criticizing the Jordanian authorities and exposing state corruption [on his Facebook page](#). In another case, Sudanese citizen Hamza Muhammad Taher [was instructed](#) by UAE security authorities to leave the country due to his online posts supporting the Sudanese army, which were deemed unfavorable by the authorities.

In 2023, Syrian blogger and human rights activist Abdul Rahman Al-Nahhas experienced severe physical and mental health deterioration, leaving him unable to function normally. Previously, in September 2021, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison by an Emirati court on charges of "insulting the prestige of the state" and "belonging to a terrorist organization." The first charge is often used by the UAE to suppress dissent, despite lacking international legal recognition. The second charge is linked to the UAE's monitoring of Syria-related violations.

These cases highlight the UAE's troubling disregard for human rights and freedom of expression.

All Criticism Criminalized

At the outset of 2023, a revised [law aimed at combating rumors and cybercrimes](#) was introduced, replacing previous legislation that had been notoriously used to target journalists and dissenting voices over the past decade. However, far from addressing past issues, the new law heightened penalties concerning publishing and freedom of expression, particularly targeting journalists.

Under this new law, any form of criticism is deemed illegal. The first article defines illegal content as anything that could harm the state's security, its interests, or its international relations, or that might erode public trust in governmental authorities or institutions. This sweeping definition effectively criminalizes any critique, opinion, or expression that challenges state narratives or authority. Whether shared on social media networks or through private messaging apps, individuals face punishment for disseminating such content.

A report from Women Journalists Without Chains in 2023 titled "[UAE: Suffocating Space for Independent Media](#)" emphasized the significant restrictions on press freedom in the country.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as [COP28](#), in November and December 2023. However, Abu Dhabi imposed limitations on journalists during the event. Despite [holding press credentials to cover](#) the climate conference, the UAE authorities imposed restrictions on taking photos and recording videos outside designated summit areas without explicit permission from the National Media Office.

Journalists were required to provide personal information and detailed specifics about their intended coverage, but this process did not guarantee media accreditation, and no explanations were provided for the denial of media permits.

[Journalists](#) reported that the UAE authorities issued warnings to the United Nations to revoke journalists' badges because they held a press conference on Palestine. An official from the organization mentioned that they were instructed not to use specific language when referring to the Israeli siege and attack on Gaza, including avoiding the phrase "ceasefire now."



Additionally, a journalist said she was detained for hours for photographing her colleague at a conference with a security guard visible in the background. Her phone was seized to delete the photo.

UAE..

Replacing Journalism with Fear

2023 - 2024

- The UAE's claim of liberalism contrasts with its poor press freedom record.
- Journalistic work in the UAE is regulated by extensive laws covering penalties, terrorism, electronic crimes, journalism, and publishing.
- The 2023 law "to combat rumors and electronic crimes" increases penalties and targets journalists, failing to address existing issues.
- Illegal censorship of communications and internet poses risks to freedom of expression, leading to imprisonment or deportation.
- The Abu Dhabi government employs advanced surveillance technologies to monitor journalists and bloggers, including spying on their electronic devices and activities.

Retrial of 84 Emiratis

- 84 UAE nationals, including journalists and human rights defenders, are facing a retrial.
- They were previously imprisoned for over 10 years following an unfair trial in 2013.
- The new charges against them are reportedly linked to terrorism.
- The trial file includes charges related to exercising the right to express opinions and press freedom.

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 Women Journalists Without Chains

Bahrain: Boundless Repression

Bahrain has seen a troubling decline in freedom of expression since the **2011** protests, rendering independent journalism virtually unattainable. Under the ruling family's control, the media landscape has become devoid of platforms for free expression and public discourse.

Throughout **2023**, Bahraini authorities repressed dissenting voices and imposed strict limitations on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. This period was marked by numerous arbitrary arrests targeting journalists and activists, contributing to a pervasive climate of fear and intimidation.

Bahrain's press sector suffers from inadequate modern regulations, leaving it vulnerable to exploitation by authorities. Journalists often face vague charges like "cybercrimes" rather than specific allegations related to freedom of expression. State and family-owned media dominate, openly serving political and business interests, eroding credibility and any hope for independence.

Censorship and Digital Blocking

Bahrain's [monarchy exerts](#) significant control over national regulatory bodies, effectively using them to regulate digital service and technology providers. Operators who resist government-imposed monitoring and filtering systems risk having their licenses revoked, posing a serious threat to internet freedom and privacy within the country.

In a hopeful move in **2021**, Bahraini authorities permitted the broadcasting of Qatari media outlets like Al Jazeera on websites, suggesting a potential improvement in the country's environment for freedom of expression. However, this optimism was short-lived as these sites were swiftly re-blocked in May **2023**. This abrupt reversal underscores Bahrain's persistent approach of restricting access to information, casting doubt on their commitment to press freedom and expression.

The reach of Bahraini authorities' censorship extends beyond websites to social media platforms. In May **2023**, a cleric was arrested by security forces for "spreading false news" and "disturbing civil peace" by sharing his weekly sermon on Twitter, where he advocated against normalization with Israel. The Public Prosecutor alleged the sermon contained "misleading

information" likely to "incite hatred." While the cleric was released after one week, this incident starkly illustrates Bahrain's repression of digital expression, highlighting ongoing challenges to freedom of speech.

International Conference of Parliamentarians

During Bahrain's hosting of the International Conference of Parliamentarians in March, the right to freedom of speech and expression was violated. The night before the conference, security services detained four bloggers:

1. Ibrahim Al Mannai was arrested for posting a news story on Twitter about the Inter-Parliamentary Union, accompanied by a comment urging the Bahraini Parliament to be more effective.
2. Qasim Al-Hujairi was arrested for retweeting Ibrahim Al-Mannai's story.
3. Ali Hassan was arrested for retweeting Ibrahim Al-Mannai's story.
4. Ibrahim Al-Khalil was arrested for retweeting Ibrahim Al-Mannai's story.

These arrests demonstrate a concerning crackdown on online expression and dissent surrounding the conference. Subsequently, all four bloggers faced criminal charges for allegedly "misusing social media programs" by posting content deemed harmful to public order and national security.

Bahrain revoked the entry visas it had previously issued to two Human Rights Watch officials: Michael Page, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department, and Nico Gavrania, a researcher. These officials held oversight status within the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). As a result of Bahrain's action, they were unable to participate in monitoring and oversight efforts related to the 146th IPU conference.

In 2023 authorities continued to commit serious human rights violations, most notably the ongoing ill-treatment of human rights defenders and [other activists in prison](#). Individuals such as Abdul Hadi Al-Khawaja, Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace, and Naji Fateel have been sentenced to prison for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression.

These cumulative violations highlight the extent to which Bahraini authorities are repressing freedom of speech and expression, both domestically and within international contexts. Such



actions undermine efforts to uphold fundamental human rights standards and obstruct international oversight within parliamentary settings.

Bahrain..
Boundless Repression 2023-2024

- Violations in Bahrain continue without relent.
- Journalists and activists are frequently subjected to arbitrary arrests, fostering fear and intimidation.
- The absence of modern laws regulating press work allows authorities to exploit the sector.
- Journalists on trial often face vague charges such as "fake news" and "misuse of social media programs."
- Censorship extends beyond websites to encompass social media platforms, further restricting freedom of expression.

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Kuwait: Escalation against Press Freedom

While Kuwait is often considered the least oppressive state among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, its government exerts significant control over the media landscape, increasingly restricting freedom of expression. In 2023, Kuwait experienced a noticeable escalation in governmental efforts to control the press, alarming human rights organizations and journalists alike.



A key manifestation of this campaign is the restriction of press freedom through broad laws criminalizing opinion expression. Journalists and activists face prosecution based on their opinions and positions. Media censorship, publication confiscation, and website blocking deemed oppositional to the regime are common tactics. Private newspapers are pressured to adopt pro-government editorial lines.

These policies signify a tangible decline in Kuwait's freedom of expression landscape, jeopardizing democratic gains made by Kuwaiti society in recent years. Despite efforts to challenge government media dominance through podcasts and independent digital magazines, government-controlled press and media still dominate Kuwaiti journalism.

Laws prohibiting journalists from criticizing the government and ruling family persist, despite a 2020 law guaranteeing journalists' right to access information in Kuwait.

Here are noteworthy instances that have impacted freedom of expression in Kuwait:

In a verdict issued by the Court of Appeals on January 31, 2024, [Mohammed Al-Barghash](#), a prominent advocate for the rights of the stateless Bidun community, was sentenced to three years in prison with hard labor. He was convicted of charges including spreading false news, damaging the state's reputation, and misusing a telecommunications device. Al-Barghash was arrested in February following the court's ruling.

In January 2023, Kuwaiti authorities arbitrarily deported [Dr. Mona Karim](#), a writer and activist advocating for the rights of the Bidun community, upon her arrival to visit her family in Kuwait. Security authorities at Kuwait International Airport forced her onto a plane destined for Lebanon, denying her entry to the country to reunite with her family. Dr. Karim, an Arab poet, translator, and university professor, currently resides in New York.

New Media Regulation Law

On August 21, 2023, Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Qabas published details of [a new draft law aimed at regulating the media](#) in the country, prepared by the Ministry of Information. This draft law raises concerns as it contradicts Article 36 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, which guarantees freedom of opinion, scientific research, and the right of individuals to express and publish their opinions through speech, writing, or other means.

The new law prohibits criticism of the Amir, Crown Prince, and Deputy Amir, and requires prior approval from the Amir for publishing news about them, despite their status as public figures.

The law also prohibits what it describes as "disclosing news about official secret communications and agreements, as well as revealing decisions made during secret meetings." This prohibition seems unusual, as transparency and freedom of the press are essential principles promised by Kuwaiti authorities to its citizens.

Additionally, the law restricts freedom of expression by prohibiting actions deemed to disparage the country's constitution or violate public morals, using vague terms that can be exploited to curtail journalistic work and discussions on important issues.

Additionally, the law forbids "disparaging and ridiculing the country's constitution" and "violating public morals." These vague phrases are often used by authorities to suppress freedom of expression and limit journalists' work and discussions about their concerns and conditions.

The requirements for establishing a newspaper in Kuwait are stringent, including a substantial capital requirement of **250,000** Kuwaiti dinars, which limits the entry of independent journalism and restricts freedom of expression.

Penalties for violating the law include imprisonment for up to three years and fines of at least **50,000** Kuwaiti dinars for criticizing the Amir, Crown Prince, or Deputy Amir. Additional fines up to **20,000** Kuwaiti dinars apply for other violations related to publishing information or expressing opinions.

These restrictive conditions and penalties create significant obstacles to press freedom in Kuwait, suppressing dissent and discouraging constructive criticism. They undermine the openness and pluralism essential for a democratic media environment, jeopardizing the democratic progress achieved by the Kuwaiti people.



Kuwait.

Escalation against Press Freedom **2023-2024**

- There is an intensified government campaign to control the press.
- Laws restricting criticism of the government and ruling family persist despite the Access to Information Law of 2020.
- A new media law prohibits disclosing news about official secret communications, agreements, and secret decisions from meetings.
- The law forbids offending public morals and violating the private lives of government officials and members of Parliament.
- Stringent licensing conditions for establishing newspapers hinder the emergence of a truly independent press in Kuwait.

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Oman: Self-Censorship or Courts

In 2023, freedom of the press in Oman remains under threat as authorities persist in pressuring journalists to practice self-censorship. The media landscape is dominated by official outlets that exclusively portray a positive image of the country, while dissenting voices and constructive criticism are marginalized and suppressed.



As citizens increasingly turn to the internet to express their opinions, Omani authorities tighten their grip on the digital space, imposing strict restrictions on online freedom of expression. These actions underscore Oman's disregard for the importance of press freedom and free expression, posing a threat to the democratic progress made by the Omani people.

Between 2016 and 2021, Oman saw a severe crackdown on freedom of expression and press freedom. Media institutions were tightly controlled, leading to the closure of most independent outlets. Harsh laws were enacted to criminalize criticism of the government, Sultan, or Crown Prince, reflecting the authoritarian nature of Oman's regime and its intolerance of dissenting voices.

Oman..

Self-Censorship or Courts 2023-2024

Authorities exert pressure on journalists, stifling critical reporting.

State-aligned media marginalizes dissent and suppresses criticism.

Stricter laws criminalize government criticism, posing legal risks for journalists.

Four activists are imprisoned for internet-related religious content deemed harmful.

Books by journalists and writers are banned at the Muscat Fair, limiting diverse perspectives.





Consequently, official media dominates Oman's media landscape, controlling the narrative to align with the government. This limits citizens' access to diverse and unbiased information, obstructing democratic progress in Oman and jeopardizing the gains made by the Omani people in recent years.

Recent events in Oman have raised concerns about freedom of expression. Four internet activists, namely Ali bin Marhoon Abdullah Al-Ghafri, Maryam bint Youssef bin Ali Al-Nuaimi, Ghaith Matar Hamad Al-Shibli, and Abdullah Hassan Jaber Al-Muqbal, faced a trial initiated by the Sohar Court of Appeal on August 21, 2023.

They were convicted by the Court of First Instance and sentenced to three years in prison for allegedly using the internet to produce content deemed harmful to religious values and public order, as well as for allegedly advocating anti-Islamic activities.

Moreover, the Muscat International Book Fair 2024, held from February 21 to March 2, 2024, was marred by censorship. Books authored by Mohammed Al-Farazi, including [the novel "Uncertainty,"](#) were banned without clear justifications. The fair also witnessed a long list of publications being prohibited, further raising concerns about freedom of expression and access to diverse ideas.

In another incident, online activist Majid bin Abdullah Al-Ruhaili was arrested on December 11, 2022, for [tweets](#) advocating comprehensive political reform on a specific website. He was later released.

Qatar: Challenges in Discussing Local Politics

Qatar is home to some of the largest international media outlets that wield significant influence in global political discussions. A noticeable trend over the past year has been the limited coverage and discussion of local political matters by these media outlets.

During the 2023 Asian Nations Cup held in Qatar, there were multiple accusations of Qatar imposing obstacles and restricting freedom of expression. Journalists encountered limitations such as designated filming areas, hindering their ability to freely gather information from various sources. Both local and foreign press largely complied with these restrictions to avoid harassment or penalties, as they were perceived as necessary measures to ensure event organization rather than direct attacks on press freedom.



Qatar's "Cybercrimes" law, enacted in 2014, continues to raise concerns among journalists about legal repercussions for covering sensitive topics, furthering constraints on freedom of expression.

On December 6, 2023, [according to the Human Rights Center](#), human rights defender Abdullah Al-Maliki, currently in Germany, received news of the government's refusal to renew his official documents. In August 2023, he was released after serving a two-year prison sentence for tweets on the X platform calling for protests.

Lawyers [Hazza bin Hazza bin Ali Abu Sherida Al Marri](#) and Rashid bin Ali Abu Sherida Al Marri remain [imprisoned for life](#) following a trial deemed unfair by human rights organizations. They were charged with offenses such as "misusing social media," "spreading false information," and "harming national security" due to their critical posts on government practices.

On March 18, 2023, [Nouf Al-Maadeed](#) reappeared after a year of disappearance, sharing video recordings on social media, including [the X platform](#), that exposed widespread violations of her civil and human rights. In these recordings, she appeared thin, teary-eyed, and tense, exhibiting signs of severe depression.