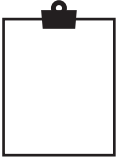


WORLDWIDE ROUND-UP

of journalists who are detained,
held hostage or missing
2016

**REPORTERS
WITHOUT BORDERS**
FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



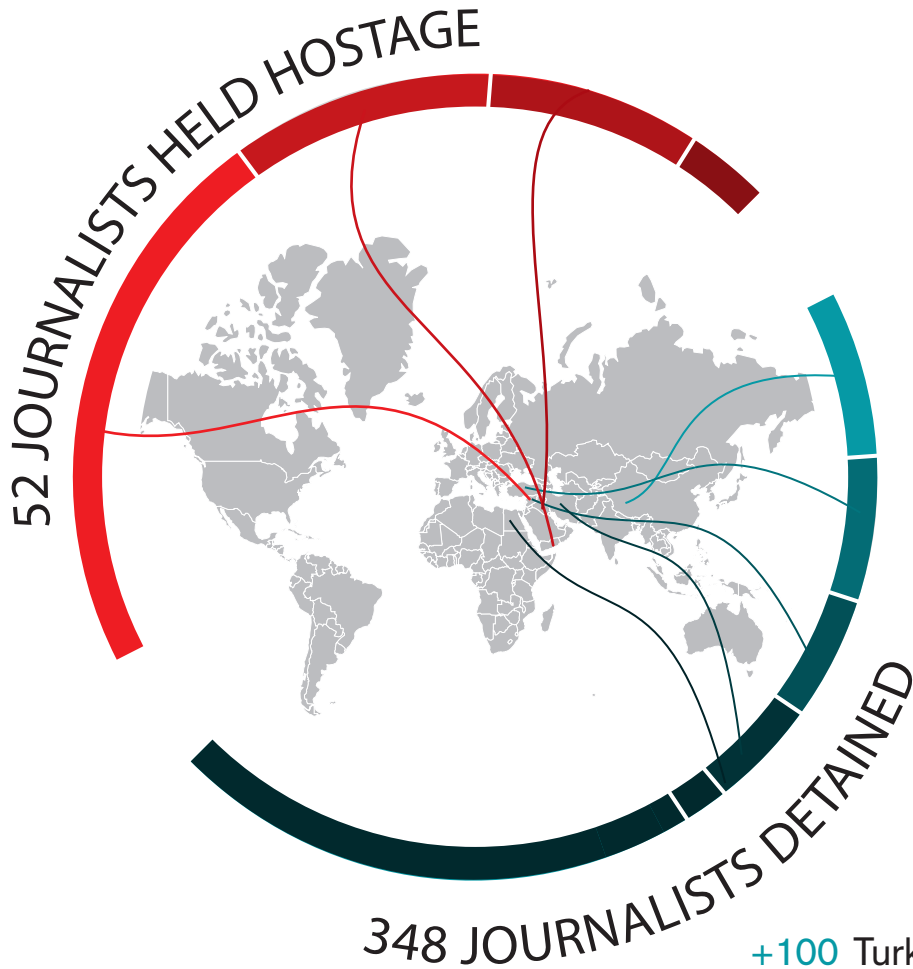
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ROUND-UP OF JOURNALISTS WHO ARE
DETAINED, HELD HOSTAGE OR MISSING

- 26 Syria
- 16 Yemen
- 10 Iraq



+100 Turkey
of which 41 cases confirmed


103 China

28 Syria

24 Iran

27 Egypt

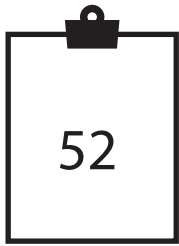
125 Rest of the world

1 JOURNALIST
MISSING 
(AS AGAINST 8 IN 2015)

*Figures for the period from 1 January to 1 December 2016.

How we calculate these figures

As well as professional journalists, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has included citizen journalists and media contributors in its annual round-up for the first time this year because their role in the production of news and information is growing, especially in countries with oppressive regimes and countries at war, where it is hard for professional journalists to operate. This round-up nonetheless tries to distinguish professional journalists from the other kinds, in order to facilitate comparison with previous years.

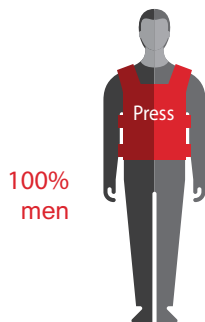
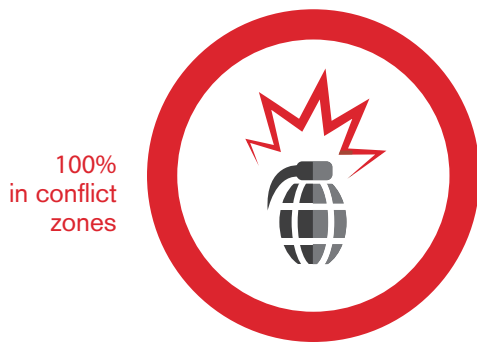


JOURNALISTS CURRENTLY HELD HOSTAGE

-15% ↘

They include

- 44 professional journalists
- 3 citizen journalists
- 5 media contributors



A total of 52 journalists, all men, are currently held hostage worldwide, as against 61 on the same date last year. It should nonetheless be noted that the number of hostages in 2015 was exceptionally high, 35% more than the year before. This year, all the hostages are in the Middle East, in three war-torn countries. The immense majority are local journalists, often freelancers working for little money in extremely dangerous conditions.

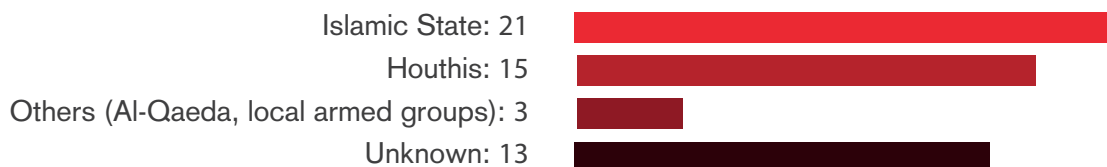
Concentration in three countries



Unsurprisingly, Syria still tops the list of most dangerous countries. Islamic State's jihadi fighters abduct journalists in order to gag criticism, impose a reign of terror and demand ransoms to fund their war machine. Yemen follows: ever since the Houthi Shia militias seized control of the capital Sanaa in September 2014, many journalists and media contributors have been kidnapped or have disappeared.

In Iraq, Islamic State militants have been holding 10 journalists and media contributors – all Iraqis – for nearly two years in their Mosul stronghold. IS seized all of Mosul's media in 2014, turning the city into a black hole for news and information until the Iraqi army and its allies launched their offensive on 17 October of this year.

The leading abductors of journalists

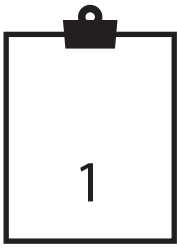


Islamic State – news exterminator

The Islamic State targets journalists who do not swear allegiance to its fundamentalist ideology and those sending news reports from within IS-controlled territory, who are regarded as traitors or spies. Journalists who are taken hostage by IS face a terrible fate: a barbaric execution that is videoed and posted on social networks, or being forced to make IS propaganda videos. John Cantlie, a British journalist captured at the same time as James Foley in November 2012, has been used by IS for its propaganda. He appeared very emaciated in an IS video posted online in July of this year. RSF condemns the cowardly manner in which a journalist visibly weakened by his years as a hostage is being exploited for jihadi propaganda purposes.

Houthis: critical journalists treated as enemies

In Yemen, many journalists have stopped working or have fled the country since Houthi Shia rebels led by Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi seized control of the capital Sanaa in September 2014 and declared an open war on media professionals. Tolerating no criticism, the Houthis are currently holding at least 15 Yemeni journalists and media contributors. Two journalists were kidnapped this year. One was Youssef Ajlane, who worked for the *Al-Masdar Online* news site. After Houthi fighters stormed the website's offices in March, he had decided to stop working as a journalist because it was too dangerous. He was nonetheless abducted outside his home by Houthis on 13 October and has been held in a Houthi-controlled prison ever since, without being able to contact his family or colleagues.



JOURNALIST CURRENTLY REPORTED MISSING

2016

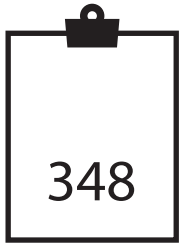
According to our information, RSF has identified **only one disappeared journalist in 2016 who is still missing as of this day, as against eight this time last year.** RSF regards journalists as missing when there is not enough evidence of their death or abduction and no credible claim of responsibility for their death or abduction has been issued.

The journalist Jean Bigirimana has been missing since 22 July in Burundi, a country embroiled in a political crisis that has led to the closure of media outlets and attacks on many journalists. A reporter for the *Iwacu* newspaper and the *Infos Grands Lacs* news website, Bigirimana was seen for the last time in the custody of intelligence officers in Muramvya, a small town 50 km east of Bujumbura. The authorities initially said they were holding Bigirimana but subsequently retracted the claim.



His *Iwacu* colleagues began a search that led to the discovery of two bodies in a river downstream from Muramvya but their condition was such that identification was difficult. When shown the two bodies, Bigirimana's wife was unable to say whether either was her husband. No autopsies or DNA analyses were carried out and the local authorities quickly buried the bodies before they could be identified.

Where is Bigirimana now? Is he being held by the intelligence services? Has he been killed? These unanswered questions prey on the minds of his family and colleagues. **RSF launched a petition in September calling on the Burundian authorities to order an independent investigation into his disappearance.** It has so far been signed by 11,000 people.



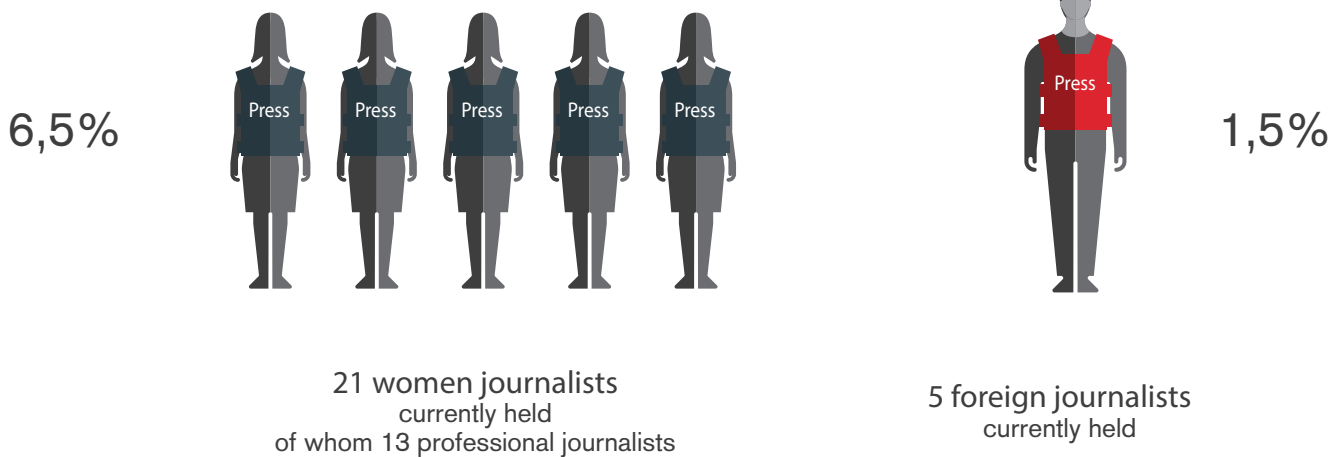
348

JOURNALISTS DETAINED

+6% ↗

Comprising

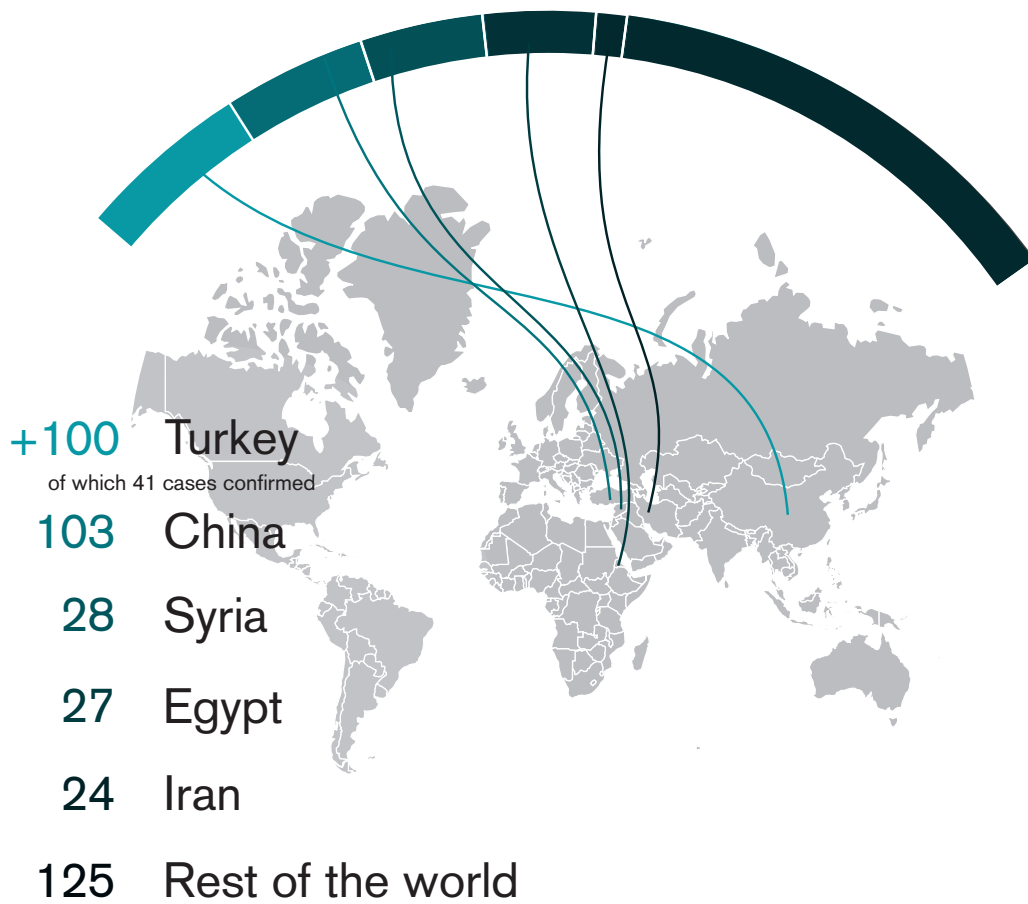
- **187** professional journalists
- **146** citizen journalists
- **15** media contributors



Worldwide, a total of 348 journalists were detained in connection with their reporting on 1 December 2016. This is 6% more than the same time last year, when 328 journalists (153 professional journalists, 161 citizen journalists and 14 media contributors) were being held. The number of imprisoned professional journalists increased by 22%, having quadrupled in Turkey in the wake of July's abortive coup. The other leading jailers are China, Egypt, Syria and Iran, which alone hold more than half of the world's detained journalists, bloggers and media contributors.

The proportion of detained journalists who are women has more than doubled this year. This reflects in part the growing role of women in journalism but above all the disastrous situation in Turkey, which currently accounts for a third of the world's detained women journalists. More than half are imprisoned in Asia (9 in China and 1 in Vietnam). Four others are held in Iran.

The world's five biggest prisons for journalists



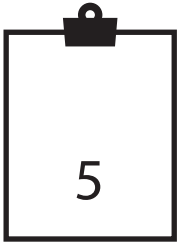
Turkey, the biggest prison for professional journalists

The witch-hunt launched after July's abortive coup d'état has turned Turkey into the world's biggest prison for professional journalists, as it already was in 2012 and 2013. Taking advantage of the state of emergency to put an end to pluralism, the government has issued decrees closing the leading critical media outlets at the same time as it has carried out many arrests. **The number of detained journalists currently stands at around 100, of whom RSF is at this point in a position to say that at least 41 are being held in connection with their work.**

This is a provisional figure based on the RSF Press Freedom Barometer's demanding methodology, in which each case must be examined individually. This is made almost impossible by the summary judicial procedures used under the state of emergency, which include prolonged provisional detention without an indictment and restricted access to a lawyer. Expressing criticism of the government or any degree of sympathy for the Gülen movement or the Kurdish political cause usually suffices for a journalist to be jailed without the justice system feeling the need to prove any involvement in criminal activities. Nine employees of Cumhuriyet, one of the few remaining opposition dailies, were jailed after a raid on the newspaper's headquarters on 31 October. Other well-known journalists such as Sahin Alpay, Aslı Erdogan, Murat Aksoy and Ahmet Altan have suffered the same fate. RSF's Turkey representative, Erol Önderoğlu, spent ten days in prison in June until granted a conditional release. Like around 50 other journalists, he continues to be charged with "terrorist propaganda" for taking part in a campaign of solidarity with the Turkish newspaper Özgür Gündem. His trial is due to resume on 11 January.

China continues to be the world's biggest jailer of journalists and bloggers, with more than 100 detained. Ranked 176th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, China also holds a leading position among the world's worst press freedom predators. In Iran, professional and non-professional journalists are also spied on, hounded, interrogated and often jailed in appalling conditions (see Detainee profiles box).

In **Egypt where 27 journalists are held**, the suppression of news or information has taken a particularly disturbing course and President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's regime is persecuting anyone remotely linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.



DETAINEE PROFILES

2016



Aslı Erdoğan (Turkey)

Well-known novelist and columnist Aslı Erdoğan, 49, has been in prison since 16 August 2016, when the newspaper *Özgür Gündem* was forcibly closed for allegedly serving as a mouthpiece of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On the basis of five columns she wrote for the daily, Erdoğan was charged with membership of a "terrorist organization," "terrorist propaganda" and "endangering the state's unity." She suffers from asthma and diabetes but the decline in her health since her arrest has yet to persuade her jailers to free her. On the contrary, the prosecutor's office requested a life sentence for her and eight colleagues on 10 November.

Erdoğan is well known both for her award-winning novels, which have been translated into many languages, and her tireless human rights advocacy. She has defended peace and rights of women and minorities for decades. Her columns and novels have drawn attention to human rights violations, prison conditions and the violence to which the mainly Kurdish civilian population in the southeast is exposed. In a message from her prison cell in November, she urged the international community to wake up to the fact that Turkey "has decided to respect none of its own laws." "The disappearance of democracy in Turkey," she said, "will inevitably shake (...) Europe in its entirety."



Mahmoud Abou Zeid, also known as Shawkan (Egypt)

Also known as Shawkan, Mahmoud Abou Zeid is a 29-year-old Egyptian photojournalist who has been held for more than three years without being convicted. He was arrested on 14 August 2013 while covering the violent dispersal of a demonstration in support of deposed President Mohamed Morsi in Cairo's Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square. The police beat him at the time of his arrest, took his camera and tortured him at a police station. The British photo agency Demotix confirmed that he was on assignment for them that day and that his photos had appeared in the past in such international outlets as *Time Magazine*, *Bild* and *Die Zeit*.

He is nonetheless facing the possibility of life imprisonment or even a death sentence on a range of trumped-up charges that include murder, attempted murder, membership of a banned group (the Muslim Brotherhood), taking part in an illegal protest and possession of weapons. He is now held illegally because his time in provisional detention is well in excess of the maximum allowed by Egyptian law even in exceptional cases. His imprisonment has taken a terrible physical and psychological toll. He is suffering from hepatitis C and anaemia and his condition continues to worsen because he has no access to medical treatment. Ahmed Abu Seif, a friend and founder of the "Free Shawkan" campaign, describes his condition as "critical."



Narges Mohammadi (Iran)

The spokesperson of the Defenders for Human Rights Centre in Iran as well as a journalist, Narges Mohammadi was arrested in May 2015 and was convicted of “actions against national security” and “anti-government publicity” in April of this year at the end of a trial marked by irregularities and influenced by the ministry of intelligence. An appeal court upheld her ten-year jail sentence in September. Her case is typical of Iran’s justice system, which is overseen by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and is enforced by the Revolutionary Guards, the Islamic Revolution’s elite corps, with the aim of suppressing all criticism. A constant target of judicial harassment, Mohammadi has been arrested, convicted, hospitalized and released several times since 2010. Now aged 46, she is currently held in Tehran’s Evin prison without access to the medical care she needs and without being able to contact her husband and children now living in exile in France.



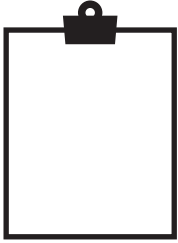
Lu Yuyu and Li Tingyu (China)

The winners of this year’s RSF-TV5 Monde Press Freedom Prize in the citizen journalist category, Chinese couple Lu Yuyu and Li Tingyu were held incommunicado, without being allowed to speak to lawyers, for more than three weeks after their arrest on 15 June 2016. Charged with disturbing public order for systematically documenting strikes and demonstrations throughout China, they are facing the possibility of long jail sentences and mistreatment.



Jovo Martinovic (Montenegro)

Jovo Martinovic is a Montenegrin investigative reporter who has specialized for years in covering organized crime in the western Balkans for such international media outlets as the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, and CAPA news agency. Arrested in October 2015, he has been held ever since along with the 13 other people in an investigation into an alleged drug ring. When their trial opened in Podgorica in October 2016, the alleged leader of this network, a convicted member of the so-called “Pink Panther” gang, testified in court that Martinovic’s only link with them was as a journalist and documentary filmmaker. He nonetheless continues to be detained pending the outcome of the trial, which resumed on 28 November.



BETTER PROTECTION FOR JOURNALISTS

2016

A “journalists’ protector”

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

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

The rights of millions of citizens to news and information are being sacrificed as a result of the failure to take effective action. The world’s major problems, environmental issues and the fight against violent extremism cannot be addressed properly if journalists are not doing their job.

The impunity enjoyed by those responsible for crimes of violence against journalists must be ended in order to create a safe environment for the media to operate.

Safety handbook

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

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

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