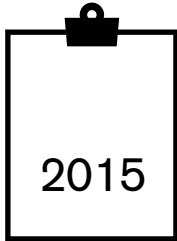


# ROUND-UP

of journalists killed worldwide  
2015

**REPORTERS  
WITHOUT BORDERS**  
FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



## **ROUND-UP OF JOURNALISTS KILLED WORLDWIDE**

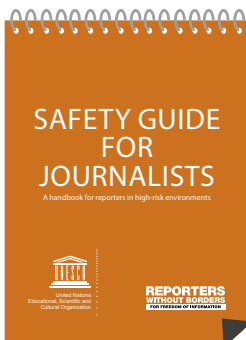
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Round-up at 28 december 2015

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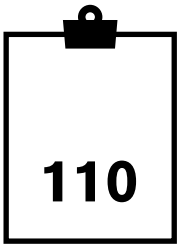
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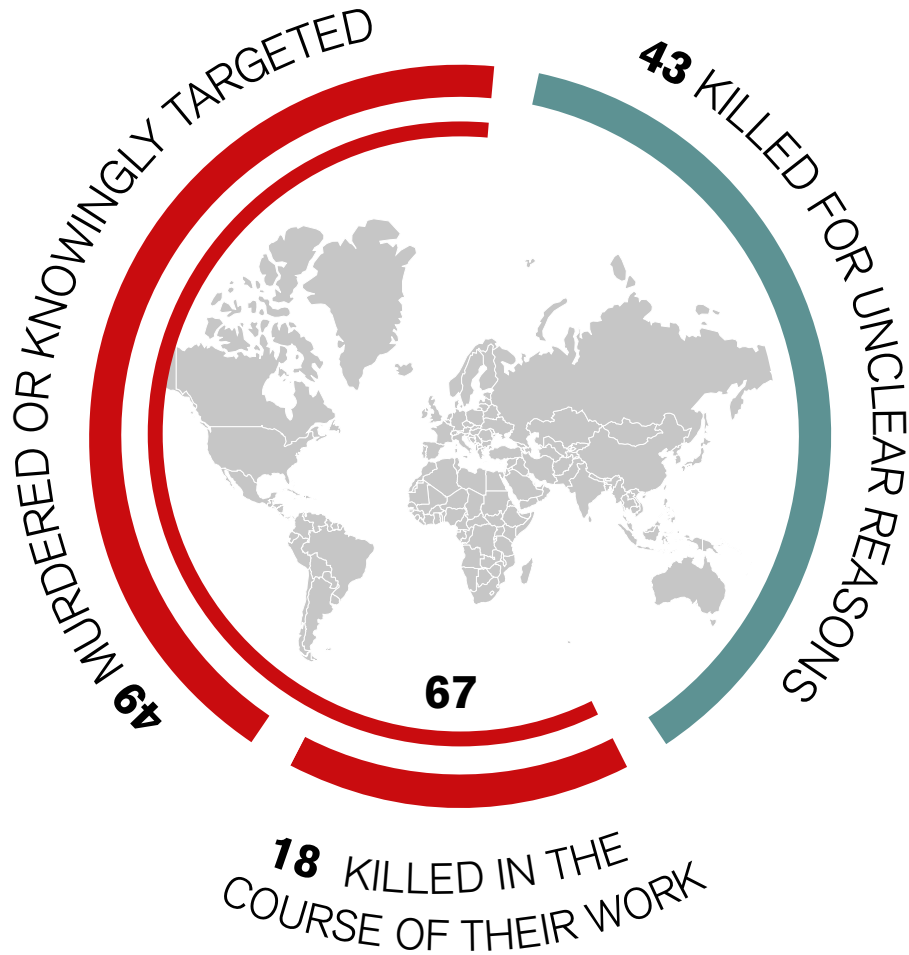
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To help protect journalists,  
RSF launches its new  
Safety Guide in partnership  
with Unesco.

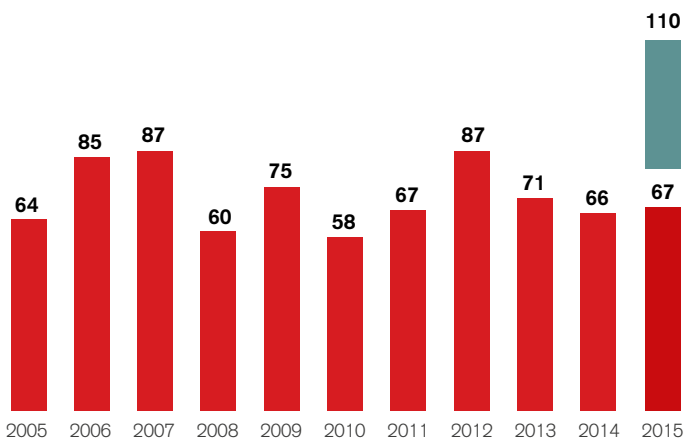


110

## PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS KILLED



At least 787 journalists have been killed in connection with their work since 2005



**MURDERED OR KNOWINGLY TARGETED:**

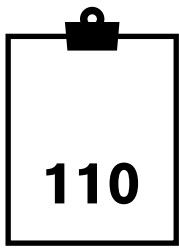
deliberately killed because of their work

**KILLED IN THE COURSE OF THEIR WORK:**

killed while reporting without being targeted as journalists

**KILLED FOR UNCLEAR REASONS:**

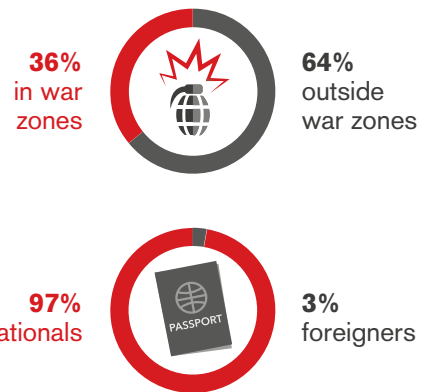
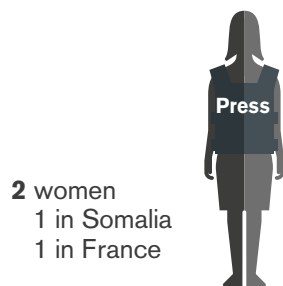
RSF has not been able to establish with certainty that they were targeted as journalists



## JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2015

- + 27 citizen-journalists
- + 7 media workers

Journalists knowingly targeted or killed while reporting

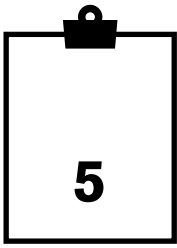


The very high number of journalists killed in 2015 (bringing to 787 the total killed since 2005 in the course of their work or in connection with it) is attributable to the increasingly deliberate use of violence against journalists. It is also indicative of the failure of initiatives designed to protect journalists. United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon said on 6 August 2015 in his annual report on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity: “I am deeply concerned about the failure to reduce the frequency and scale of targeted violence that journalists face and the near absolute impunity for such crimes.”

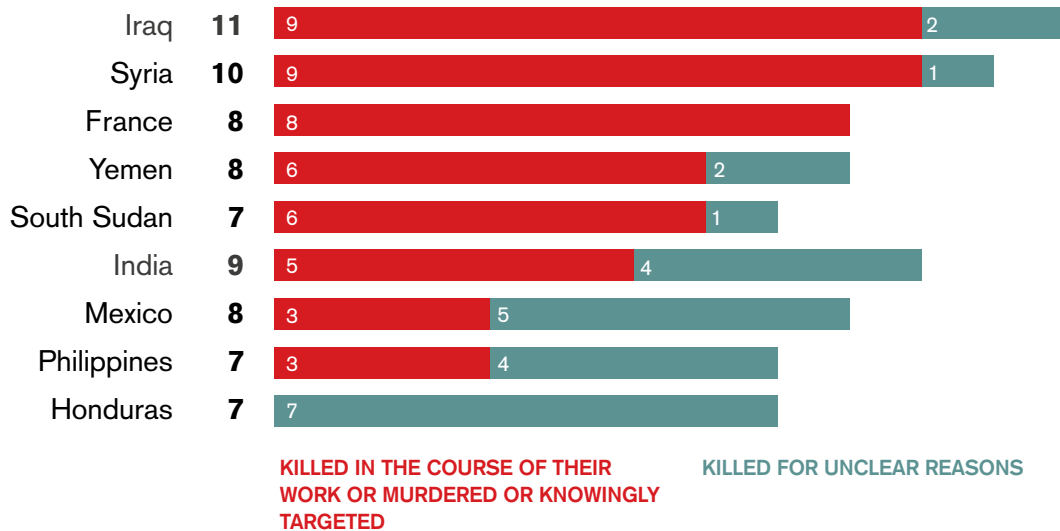
Non-state groups perpetrate targeted atrocities while too many governments do not comply with their obligations under international law. Addressing the UN Security Council on 27 May 2015, RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire called for the creation of a specific mechanism for enforcing international law on the protection of journalists, without which Resolution 2222, like Resolution 1738 in 2006, could end up being a good resolution and nothing more.

Two thirds of the journalists killed worldwide in 2014 were killed in war zones. In 2015, it was the exact opposite. Two thirds were killed in countries “at peace.” Journalists can even be killed in capitals far from armed conflicts, as we saw in the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris on 7 January. *Charlie Hebdo* publisher Riss said on 8 October: “We almost never sent journalists to war zones (...) On 7 January, war came to us.”

Killed in connection with their work as journalists? In the cases of 43 of the journalists killed in 2015, the motives or reasons for their deaths remain unclear because of the lack of thorough and impartial official investigations, the lack of good faith on the part of governments, or the difficulty of investigating in unstable or lawless regions. These “unclear reasons” reflect the problem of impunity for crimes of violence against journalists in many regions of the world (Latin America, Asia-Pacific, Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa).



## DEADLIEST PLACES FOR JOURNALISTS



The *Charlie Hebdo* attack made France the third deadliest country for journalists in 2015. It was an unprecedented tragedy. A western country had never suffered a massacre of this kind in the past. *Charlie Hebdo's* journalists and employees have been living under close protection ever since. Some of them still have to keep changing their place of residence. In May, the *Charlie Hebdo* journalist who covers religious issues and Islamism said she lived part of the time in hotels and the rest of the time with relatives. She said it was very hard to work while facing threats of this kind, and that it was impossible to do reporting with a police escort.



### In Aleppo (northern Syria), journalists caught in crossfire

What with Bashar al-Assad's forces, militant groups, Kurdish groups and coalition air strikes, the Syrian city of Aleppo is a minefield for professional and citizen-journalists. Caught between the various parties to the conflict since 2011, journalists are liable to end up as collateral victims, being taken hostage by a non-state group (such as Islamic State, the Al-Nusra Front or the Free Syrian Army) or being arrested by the Assad regime.



### Mosul, city controlled by Islamic State

Under the control of Islamic State (Daesh) since June 2014, the northern Iraqi city of Mosul is an "information black hole." In this city alone, the Jihadi group has been responsible for 48 abductions and 13 executions of journalists and citizen-journalists in the past 18 months. Around 60 professional and non-professional journalists and media workers have fled the city, while those that are still there cannot work for fear of reprisals. Disinformation reigns in this environment. Contact with the outside world is banned or restricted by IS, which also controls communications and the Internet.



### **Yemen: Houthi militias sow terror in Sanaa**

After a rapid advance through northern Yemen, Houthi rebel militias seized control of the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014. Thereafter they attacked media outlets with heavy weapons and abducted journalists affiliated to Al-Islah (a Sunni Islamist coalition opposed to the Zaydi-Shia Houthis). More than a year later, the only journalists still working in Sanaa are those that support the Houthi rebel militias. Six journalists and three media workers were murdered or killed in the course of their work in Yemen in 2015. At least 15 professional journalists, citizen-journalists and media workers are currently believed to be held by the Houthis, who are continuing their southward advance. Those not being targeted by the Houthis are exposed to air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition that is trying to halt the Houthi advance.



### **India: mounting violence from organized crime**

Indian journalists daring to cover organized crime and its links with politicians have been exposed to a surge in violence, especially violence of criminal origin, since the start of 2015. Nine journalists have been murdered in the past year (four of them for still undetermined reasons). Their deaths confirm India's position as Asia's deadliest country for media personnel, ahead of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Two of the murders monitored by RSF were linked to illegal mining, a sensitive environmental subject in India. The inadequacy of the Indian authorities' response is reinforcing the climate of impunity for violence against journalists. After the murder of Sandeep Kothari (the eighth journalist to be killed for work-related reasons in two years), RSF urged the government to establish a national plan for protecting journalists. A response that matches the scale of the threats to journalists is now essential.



### **In Mexico, no refuge possible for journalists**

Mexico continues to be Latin America's deadliest country for journalists, with eight killed in 2015 (five of them for still unclear reasons). The most dangerous regions are the southern states of Veracruz and Oaxaca, where organized crime and local politicians target reporters as soon as they start covering corruption. Journalists used to be able to flee these states and seek refuge in calmer parts of the country but Rubén Espinosa's murder in Mexico City on 31 July after fleeing from Veracruz showed that there is no longer any safe place in Mexico for threatened journalists.



# 5

## ATROCITIES THAT MARKED 2015

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### 2015

#### **Attack on *Charlie Hebdo* (France)**

Two heavily-armed masked men, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, marched into *Charlie Hebdo*'s headquarters in Paris on 7 January and gunned down 12 people, including eight journalists – cartoonists Charb, Cabu, Tignous, Wolinski and Honoré and reporters Elsa Cayat, Mustapha Ourad and Bernard Maris. Two days later, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) said it carried out the attack to “avenge” the Prophet Mohamed, often the subject of *Charlie Hebdo*'s satirical cartoons. Instigated by an extremist ideology that does not tolerate blasphemy, the attack underscored the need to combat the concept of “defamation of religion.”



Charb



Cabu



Tignous



Wolinski



Honoré



Elsa Cayat



Mustapha Ourad



Bernard Maris



#### **Staged murder of Kenji Goto (Syria)**

On 31 January, Islamic State released a video of Japanese freelance reporter Kenji Goto's execution. Goto had been captured in late October 2014 while trying to cover the fighting in Syria and locate Haruna Yukawa, a Japanese journalist who was executed a week before Goto. In a macabre performance similar to previous executions of foreign journalists, the video showed a masked executioner address the Japanese prime minister directly, announcing that Goto's execution was a reprisal for Japan's participation in the international coalition against Islamic State. Non-state groups are currently holding ten foreign journalists (journalists who are not citizens of the country where they were captured).

### **Shocking massacre of bloggers (Bangladesh)**

Four bloggers were hacked to death in Bangladesh in 2015. The victims – Avijit Roy on 26 February, Ananta Bijoy Das on 30 March, Washiqur Rahman on 12 May and Niloy Chakrabarti on 7 August – were all secularists who advocated tolerance, free speech and freedom of thought in their blogs. Responsibility for their murders was claimed by Ansar al-Islam (a branch of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent) and Ansarullah Bangla Team, another militant group. The passivity of the Bangladeshi authorities in the face of this bloodbath has fostered a climate of impunity that is extremely dangerous for citizen-journalists. The perpetrators and instigators of these appalling crimes have yet to be arrested and brought to justice.



Avijit Roy



Ananta Bijoy Das



Washiqur Rahman



Niloy Chakrabarti



### **Fugitive journalist Rubén Espinosa's murder (Mexico)**

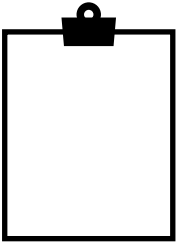
Photojournalist Rubén Espinosa and four women were found dead on 31 July in an apartment in Mexico City, to which Espinosa had fled after receiving death threats in the southern state of Veracruz. His body bore the apparent marks of torture. His murder prompted outrage and realization of the almost complete absence of effective protection for journalists. A law on the protection of journalists took effect ten days later (on 10 August) in Mexico City. It was the result of several years of consultation with civil society but will have little impact until it is extended to other parts of the country and adequate resources are assigned to its implementation.



### **Hindiya Mohamed, latest media victim (Somalia)**

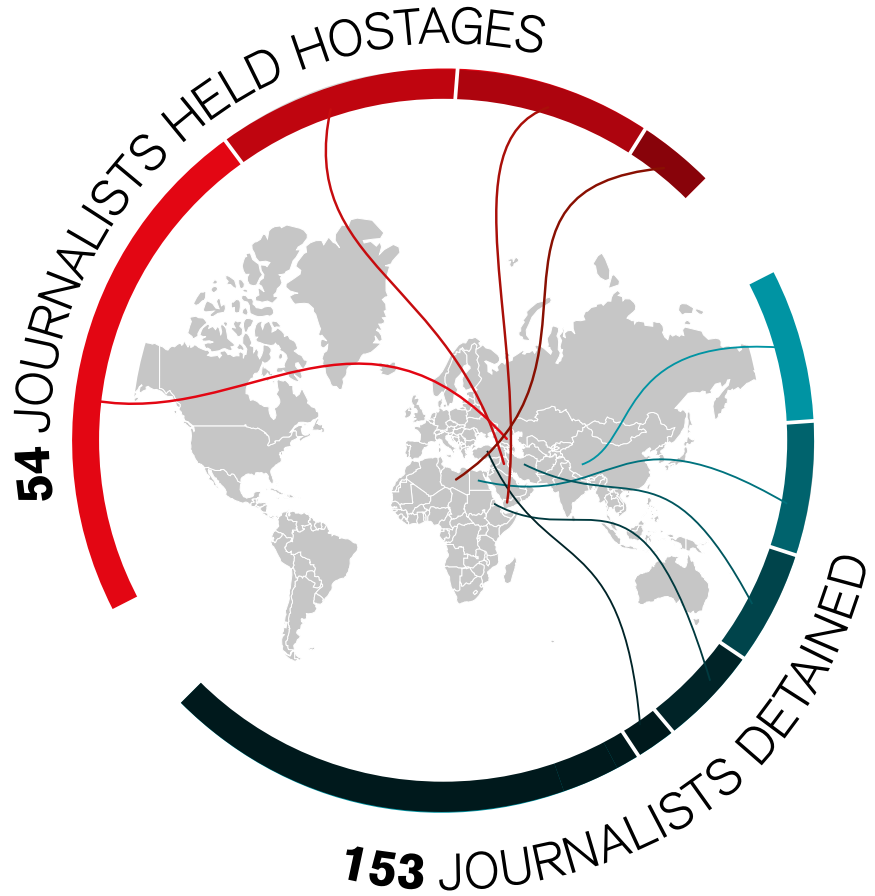
A Somali national radio and TV journalist, Hindiya Mohamed was one of the two women to be killed this year because of their media work. She was fatally injured by a bomb planted in her car in Mogadishu on 3 December. Her death bore the hallmarks of an operation by the Islamist rebel militia Al Shabaab. Her husband, fellow journalist Liban Ali Nur, was killed in a September 2012 bombing claimed by Al Shabaab. The impunity for crimes of violence against journalists in Somalia just encourages more murders of this kind. RSF has repeatedly urged the Somali authorities to ensure that these attacks are investigated in a thorough and independent manner so that those responsible are brought to justice. But journalists' safety is still not a priority for the government.





# JOURNALISTS IN PRISON OR HELD HOSTAGE

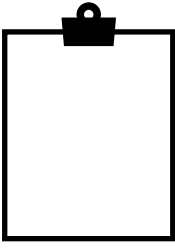
2015



- 26 Syria
- 13 Yemen
- 10 Iraq
- 5 Libya
  
- 23 China
- 22 Egypt
- 18 Iran
- 15 Eritrea
- 9 Turkey
- 66 Rest of the world



For more information about violence against journalists, see the round-up of journalists held hostage, detained or reported missing in 2015



## GIVING JOURNALISTS BETTER PROTECTION

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**RSF has addressed several recommendations to the UN secretary-general, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly for improving the mechanisms for protecting journalists throughout the world.**



**The UN should create the position of special representative of the secretary-general for the safety of journalists.** Tasked above all with monitoring compliance by UN member states with their obligations under international law, the special representative would have the political weight and early warning capability that are necessary to protect journalists effectively. With the aim of quickly obtaining a resolution creating this position, RSF has been waging an active international campaign for several months to gather support within the UN system and from member states.

**The UN Security Council should refer war crimes against journalists to the International Criminal Court (ICC).** On 27 April 2015, RSF asked the Security Council to do everything possible to ensure that the situation of journalists in Syria and Iraq is referred to the ICC prosecutor. Only the Security Council, under its authority for maintaining international peace and security, can get the ICC to investigate war crimes against journalists in countries that are not parties to the ICC statute, and to prosecute those responsible.

### About RSF

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