

PRESS FREEDOM IN 2007

- 86 journalists killed in 2007 – up 244% over five years

Iraq, Somalia and Pakistan the most deadly countries

- At least two journalists arrested each day in 2007

- More than 2,600 websites and blogs shut down in a year

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In 2007:

86 journalists
and **20** media assistants were killed
887 arrested
1,511 physically attacked or threatened
67 journalists kidnapped
528 media outlets censored

Online:

37 bloggers were arrested
21 physically attacked
2,676 websites shut down or suspended

In 2006

- 85 journalists and 32 media assistants were killed
- 871 arrested
- 1,472 physically attacked or threatened
- 56 journalists kidnapped
- 912 media outlets censored

2007	Killed	Arrested	Physically attacked or threatened	Media outlets censored	Kidnapped
Africa	12	162	145	61	1
The Americas	7	86	626	91	11
Asia	17	430	562	273	23
Europe + ex-Soviet bloc	2	77	83	60	3
North Africa + Middle East	48	132	95	43	29
Total	86	887	1511	528	67

The number of journalists killed has risen 244% in five years

At least 86 journalists were killed around the world in 2007. The figure has risen steadily since 2002 – from 25 to 86 (+ 244%) – and is the highest since 1994, when 103 journalists were killed, nearly half of them in the Rwanda genocide, about 20 in Algeria’s civil war and a dozen in the former Yugoslavia.

More than half those killed in 2007 died in Iraq.

Response of Reporters Without Borders

“No country has ever seen more journalists killed than Iraq, with at least 207 media workers dying there since the March 2003 US invasion – more than in the Vietnam War, the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia, the massacres in Algeria or the Rwanda genocide.

“The Iraqi and US authorities – themselves guilty of serious violence against journalists – must take firm steps to end these attacks. Iraqi journalists are deliberately targeted by armed groups and are not simply the victims of stray bullets. The Iraqi government cannot immediately stop the violence but it can send a strong signal to the killers by doing all it can to seek them out and punish them.

“Somalia and Pakistan saw more journalists killed than they have for several years. Somalia is still very much a country of outlaws where the strongest rule and the media are easy targets. Journalists in Pakistan are caught in the crossfire between the army, Islamist militants and criminal gangs. The only good news of the past year is that for the first time in 15 years no journalists were killed in Colombia because of their work.”

All 47 journalists killed in **Iraq** were, except for a Russian reporter, Iraqis who mostly worked for the local media and were deliberately targeted. The motive was often hard to pinpoint but was always linked to their work or the media outlet that employed them. Armed groups targeted journalists sympathising with their religious rivals and those working for organs connected with foreign media or funded by foreigners. The government displayed alarming inertia and has not yet found a way to stop the violence, except for allowing journalists to carry arms to defend themselves.

Eight journalists were killed in **Somalia** in a wave of attacks in one of the country’s deadliest years in a decade, when Islamist militants fought transitional government troops and their ally Ethiopia. Foreign media mostly avoid Somalia and local journalists are thus in the front line facing violence and anarchy.

Four of the eight killed in 2007 were murdered by hitmen and three of the four were major media figures, including the co-founder of *Radio HornAfrik*, a well-known commentator and the head of the *Shabelle Media* press group. Most independent media figures have since fled the country and journalists in Mogadishu fear the city will soon be known as “Little Baghdad.”

Six journalists were killed in **Pakistan**, where suicide attacks and heavy fighting between the army and Islamist militants partly accounted for 2007’s higher toll. Muhammad Arif, of TV station *Ary One World*, was among 133 people killed in the suicide attack on opposition leader Benazir Bhutto’s motorcade in Karachi in October. Another such attack aimed at a government minister in April killed 28 people, including young freelance photographer Mehboob Khan.

Noor Hakim, of the Urdu daily *Pakistan* and vice-president of the Tribal Union of Journalists (TUJ), was killed in June in the northwestern Bajaur Agency tribal area. Javed Khan, a cameraman with *DM Digital TV*, was killed while covering an attack in July on Islamabad's Red Mosque by security forces.



Three journalists were killed in **Sri Lanka**, where fighting increased between security forces and Tamil Tiger rebels. Troops and paramilitary forces waged a dirty war on Tamil journalists, especially in Jaffna. The daily paper *Uthayan* was once again a special target in 2007, with a young journalist murdered and a sub-editor kidnapped. Two other journalists were killed in government-controlled areas.

Two journalists were killed in **Eritrea**, which is at the very bottom of the current Reporters Without Borders worldwide press freedom index. One was Fessehaye Yohannes ("Joshua"), one of the country's leading intellectuals, who died in prison at the beginning of the year, probably because of very harsh prison conditions. A few months later, another journalist, Paulos Kidane, died of exhaustion a few kilometres from the Sudanese border while trying to flee the country. He had been imprisoned and tortured a year earlier.

Fewer media assistants (fixers, drivers, interpreters, technicians, security staff) were killed in 2007 (20) than in 2006 (32).

Unlike other organisations, Reporters Without Borders only counts media workers it is sure have been killed because of their work. Several deaths have not been included, either because they are still being investigated or because they were not connected with press freedom (such as accidents or other circumstances).

Two key trials in 2008

About 90% of murders of journalists go entirely or partly unpunished. Governments often play for time and count on fading public memory to protect the killers. Reporters Without Borders is fighting against such impunity year after year with constant campaigns focusing on old cases.

In 2007, the organisation condemned the authorities in Burkina Faso, nine years after the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo, for abandoning the investigation of his death while there was clear evidence involving members of the presidential guard. It also strongly condemned obstacles put in the way of

the enquiry into the December 2004 murder in Gambia of journalist Deyda Hydera, its correspondent there, whose death has also been linked to the president.

Reporters Without Borders also called for the mandate of the future international tribunal for Lebanon to be expanded to cover all the killings in the country since 2004, including those of journalists Gebran Tueni and Samir Kassir, who were murdered in 2005.

Response of Reporters Without Borders

“The battle to punish those who kill journalists is vital and two key trials will be held in 2008 – of the suspected killers of Hrant Dink in Turkey and Anna Politkovskaya in Russia. The two murders, committed on the fringes of Europe, must be conducted in an exemplary manner and both the hitmen and those who ordered the crime must be severely punished. The outcome of these trials will partly affect the future of not just Turkish and Russian journalists but also all those who make sensitive investigations in dangerous countries.”

Hrant Dink, editor of the Turkish-Armenian magazine *Agos*, was killed on 19 January 2007 in the street in Istanbul. His killers were probably Turkish ultra-nationalists and the trial of the presumed hitmen which will resume on 11 February 2008 may identify all those responsible and expose their suspected links with the security forces.

The trial of those who murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya is also expected and the government must end the failure to punish the killers of a long list of journalists. Eighteen have been murdered since President Vladimir Putin was elected in 2000 and Politkovskaya was the most recent one. Only one of the 18 cases has been solved and those responsible put on trial..

At least two journalists arrested each day in 2007

135 journalists were in prison around the world on 1 January 2008 and the figure has hardly shrunk for several years. Those freed are immediately replaced by new journalist prisoners. At least 887 were arrested in 2007, mostly in Pakistan (195), Cuba (55) and Iran (54).

Response of Reporters Without Borders

“About 30 governments continue to imprison journalists they dislike and rulers who belong to a past era still see this as the only answer to media criticism. We call for the immediate release of the 135 journalists in prison around the world.

“Kidnappings of journalists also increased in 2007 and became very common in Iraq and Afghanistan, where several victims were executed by their captors. Governments must fight these crimes by trying those responsible.”

China (with 33 in jail) and Cuba (24) have been the world’s two biggest prisons for journalists over the past four years. Their governments free one every now and then, at the end of their sentences, but others replace them immediately.

Seven more journalists were arrested in Azerbaijan in 2007, to make a total of eight in prison, showing how far press freedom has been eroded there and how the regime has cracked down on the most critical journalists.

65 cyber-dissidents are also in prison for speaking out on the Internet, with China the main culprit (50 imprisoned). Eight are in jail in Vietnam, and in Egypt, young Internet user Kareem Amer was given a four-year prison sentence for criticising President Hosni Mubarak on his blog and criticising the hold of Islamists on the country's universities.

Imprisonment is not the only way to gag a journalist and at least **67 media workers were kidnapped** in 15 countries in 2007. The worst place to be was still Iraq, where 25 were seized. Ten were executed by their kidnappers. In Afghanistan, two assistants of Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiacomo, who was kidnapped in March, were killed by their captors. Five journalists were kidnapped in Pakistan, some by security forces, but were later freed unharmed.

At least **14 journalists are still being held as hostages**, all of them in Iraq.

More than 2,600 websites and blogs shut down

The governments of China, Burma and Syria are trying to turn the Internet into an Intranet – a network limited to traffic inside the country between people authorised to participate. At least 2,676 websites were shut down or suspended around the world in 2007, most of them discussion forums.

The fiercest censorship was in China before and during the 17th Communist Party congress when about 2,500 websites, blogs and forums were closed in the space of a few weeks. Syria also blocked access to more than 100 sites and online services at the end of 2007, including the social networking site Facebook, Hotmail and the telephone service Skype, all of them accused by the government of being infiltrated by the Israeli secret police.

During the October 2007 demonstrations by Buddhist monks in Burma, the country's military rulers tried to block the flow of news being e-mailed out of the country by cutting off Internet access. Censorship ranged from anti-government sites to all means of communication, including film cameras, ordinary cameras and mobile phones.

Response of Reporters Without Borders :

“Some countries censor the Internet as much as they do the traditional media and China is the world champion here. Its cyber-police have been very active before every major political occasion, notably in the months before the 2007 Communist Party congress when about 2,500 websites and blogs, many of them political, were blocked.