



**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**2023**

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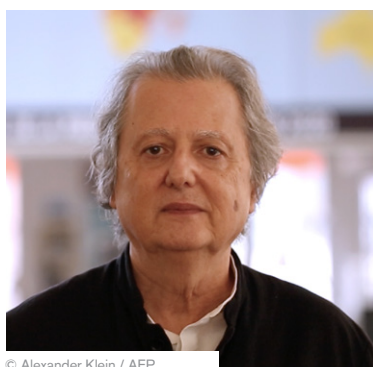


Press conference at RSF headquarters on 10 February 2023, with former Russian TV producer Marina Ovsianikova and RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire.

Cover photo: © Joël Saget / AFP

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

By **Pierre Haski**  
RSF president



© Alexander Klein / AFP

## THE NEW WARS

In an attempt to understand the situation since the attack on 7 October, several media outlets have interviewed me about my time as a Jerusalem-based correspondent. I have often been asked about the roots and resurgences of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. About what has happened during this century of hostilities and violence. About what has endured.

However, this war is not like the previous ones. In the Middle East, as elsewhere, it is now being fought, more than ever, on the information front.

Since the start of the conflict, no international journalist has been able to enter Gaza freely. In terms of access to information, this is unprecedented. In just a few months, dozens of Palestinian journalists were killed, and some of them, we know, were deliberately targeted. We have never seen such bloodshed in such a short period.

But the massive dissemination of disinformation is the most unprecedented aspect. Fake news related to the conflict between Israel and Hamas reportedly grew 34-fold in France between September and November 2023. Unlike the war in Ukraine, where Russian disinformation campaigns are in large part controlled by the Kremlin, those relating to the conflict between Israel and Hamas come from many different actors. The impassioned nature of this conflict has turned disinformation into a strategic tool for directing emotions and is accelerating its spread.

The disinformation that has been deployed since 7 October goes well beyond simple military strategy and anything we have been able to observe until then. It has the capacity to reach audiences as varied as its sources. This constitutes a major challenge that Reporters Without Borders (RSF) strives to respond to every day: by protecting journalists, providing them with assistance, advocating for their access to the field, and conducting investigations to bring them justice. And also by deploying initiatives and tools to combat disinformation. Thank you to all of RSF's teams for their work in the Middle East and the rest of the world.



# EDITORIAL

By **Christophe Deloire**  
RSF secretary-general



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## A 360° APPROACH

The year 2023 began with a bang, without a doubt one of the biggest in the organisation's history: the exfiltration and surprise reappearance of Marina Ovsyannikova, the "presenter with a sign", at RSF headquarters in Paris.

This ability to mobilise around key events is part of the organisation's DNA and even characterises it. The surprise, of course, was the result of the exceptional nature of Marina's escape and return to safety, and much less RSF's capacity to organise it.

What, on the other hand, was unprecedented this year, was the implementation of the organisation's 360° strategy. A strategy that could be summarised as follows: take action, wherever possible and with all available means. From litigation to assisting journalists in the field, from implementing crisis response programmes to unblocking censored websites, from taking part in dialogues with heads of state, including authoritarian ones, to proposing legal standards favourable to journalism, RSF has distinguished itself by its capacity for action and mobilisation.

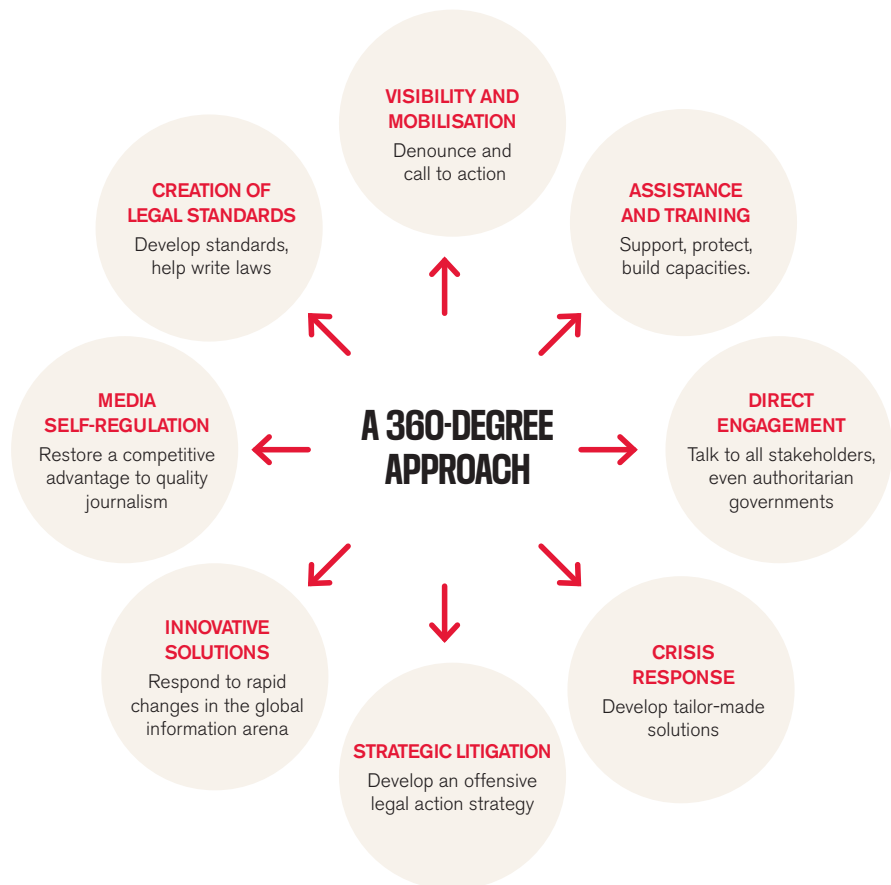
In the face of new dangers, especially technological ones, that weigh on journalism, we have defined four levels of intervention: the protection of journalists, the relationship between the public and the media, the news and information market, and the online information space. At each of these levels, we have taken action by proposing solutions. This is undoubtedly RSF's greatest strength. The organisation never settles for simply observing or denouncing problems, even when they are complex or historic. It tries to respond to them. I would like to pay tribute to the RSF team, who work tirelessly to implement solutions, who never give up in the face of adversity, who mobilise, who face challenges head on. Our strategy would be nothing without the courage and determination of our staff to carry out all our activities.



# AN ORIGINAL AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGY

In 2023, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) implemented a so-called 360° strategy. The organisation uses a **holistic** approach, consisting of mobilising different **resources** to provide **solutions** to previously identified problems.

RSF stands out for its ability to mobilise a **variety of stakeholders**, to provide services even in **challenging terrain**, to influence **decision-makers**, and to carry out actions that have a **global impact**.



## BUILD BRIDGES WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

To develop programmes and campaigns, RSF now engages in dialogue with many stakeholders:

- > With international organisations
- > With government leaders
- > With the most difficult regimes
- > With journalistic communities
- > With media owners
- > With advertisers
- > With online platforms



Governments



International organisations



Platforms, Big Tech



Media and the media ecosystem: advertisers, unions...



General public

# 2023, RSF IN PICTURES

## JANUARY

### SIXTEEN MEDIA LEADERS CALL FOR IHSANE EL KADI'S RELEASE

Brought together by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-chief of *Novaya Gazeta* and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and 15 other media directors and editorial managers joined forces to obtain the release of Ihsane El Kadi and put an end to obstructions against *Radio M* and *Maghreb Émergent*, the two media outlets he runs.



©Joël Saget / AFP

## FEBRUARY

### RUSSIAN "JOURNALIST WITH THE SIGN" RESURFACES AT RSF HEADQUARTERS

During a press conference at RSF headquarters former Russian television news producer Marina Ovsyannikova and RSF's secretary-general Christophe Deloire recounted the incredible operation that allowed her to flee Russia.

## MARCH

### OLIVIER DUBOIS FINALLY FREE!

After being held hostage for 711 days by an armed group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, French journalist Olivier Dubois was released on 20 March 2023. Alongside his family and loved ones, RSF had been fighting to obtain his release for nearly two years.



©Noémie Bonnafous / RSF

## APRIL

### US SECRETARY OF STATE TO ATTEND WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX LAUNCH

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken confirmed that he will attend the launch of the 2023 edition of the World Press Freedom Index, organised in partnership with *The Washington Post*.



## MAY

### 2023 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX: THE DANGERS OF THE FAKE CONTENT INDUSTRY

The 21<sup>st</sup> edition of RSF's World Press Freedom Index reveals major and sometimes radical developments linked to political, social and technological instability.

## JUNE

### RSF ORGANISES A BIG MEETING IN FRANCE TO DEFEND MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

In solidarity with the editorial staff of the *Journal du Dimanche (JDD)*, on strike following the appointment of a new editorial director, RSF organised a meeting in Paris to defend the editorial independence of the media, with, in attendance, the main political and voluntary sector representatives, as well as union leaders. More than 1,000 people attended this meeting.



©Hans Lucas



# 2023, RSF IN PICTURES

## JULY

### RSF LAUNCHES PETITION FOR GUATEMALAN NEWSPAPER OWNER'S RELEASE

A year after the incarceration of journalist Jose Rubén Zamora, victim of judicial harassment, RSF launched a petition calling for the release of the head of *elPeriódico*. This case exemplifies the persecution of journalists in Guatemala, where democracy is in greater danger than ever before.



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## AUGUST

### SHOWING SOLIDARITY WITH AFGHAN JOURNALISTS

On the eve of the second anniversary of the Taliban takeover in the Afghan capital, Kabul, RSF interviewed journalists who, both within the country and abroad, are fighting to keep Afghan journalism alive despite the Taliban government's crackdown on the media.

## SEPTEMBER

### "SCORCHED LANDS OF JOURNALISM IN THE AMAZON" - RSF REPORT

RSF released a report entitled "Scorched lands of journalism in the Amazon", containing previously unpublished data on the obstacles to press freedom, particularly for local journalists, in the Brazilian Amazon, a region at the heart of the global climate challenge.





## OCTOBER

### NARGES MOHAMMADI AWARDED THE 2023 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

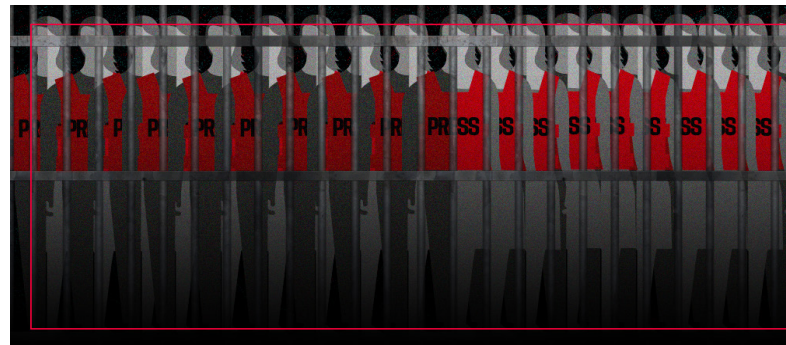
At a press conference organised by RSF in Paris, Narges Mohammadi's husband and their son expressed their pride at the news that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the journalist and women's rights activist. Imprisoned since November 2021 in Tehran's Evin prison, she has continued to report on the abuses committed by the Iranian regime.

©RSF

## NOVEMBER

### RSF AND 16 PARTNERS UNVEIL PARIS CHARTER ON AI AND JOURNALISM

On 10 November 2023, RSF and 16 partner organisations presented the Paris Charter on AI and Journalism, a pioneering document that defines ethical standards for journalists, editorial staff, and media outlets around the world to adopt and apply in their work in the era of artificial intelligence. The charter was written by a commission set up by RSF and chaired by journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa.



## DECEMBER

### 779 JOURNALISTS WERE JAILED IN 2023, RSF ROUND-UP REVEALS

In its annual report, RSF revealed that nearly 800 journalists were imprisoned in 2023 and that nearly 550 will still be there at the start of 2024. Nearly half of them are detained in just four countries – China, Myanmar, Belarus and Vietnam. The arbitrary imprisonment of journalists continues to be common practice in many countries, as a means of repressing the right to information.

## RSF IN ACTION

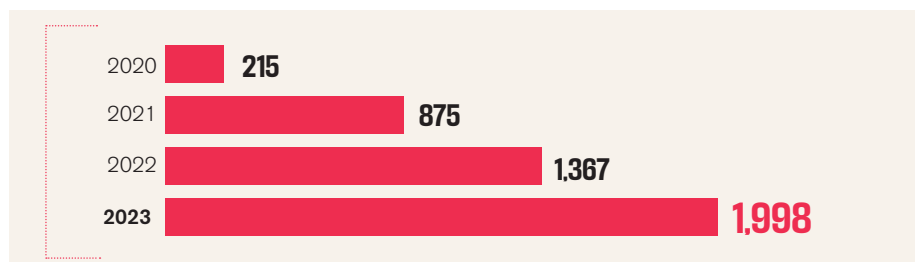
# NEARLY 2,000 JOURNALISTS TRAINED IN 37 COUNTRIES

IN 2023, REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) TRAINED NEARLY 2,000 JOURNALISTS IN 37 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, TEN TIMES MORE THAN IN 2020.

The organisation is thus responding to a growing demand from journalists to be better equipped to deal with geopolitical crises and disinformation. With its network of local actors, RSF addressed the growing needs of information professionals with regard to safety, election coverage and the fight against disinformation.

### 4,455 JOURNALISTS TRAINED BY RSF IN FOUR YEARS

A constant evolution from year to year



### JOURNALISTS TRAINED IN 37 COUNTRIES

With a network of local partners, RSF intervened mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (40% of journalists trained), East Asia (19%), and Ukraine (12%).

### TRAINING ON SAFETY, ELECTIONS AND MEDIA TRANSPARENCY

Nearly half of the training sessions provided by RSF in 2023 focused on journalists' safety, particularly in war zones.

### NEARLY 2 000 JOURNALISTS TRAINED BY RSF IN 2023 ON EIGHT THEMES

Half of RSF training focused on the safety of journalists in 2023





## RSF IN ACTION

# NEARLY 500 JOURNALISTS SUPPORTED IN 62 COUNTRIES

RSF PROVIDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO 460 JOURNALISTS FROM 62 COUNTRIES IN 2023 (TWICE AS MANY AS IN 2022). A TOTAL OF 998,302 EUROS WERE DISBURSED TO ASSIST JOURNALISTS IN DANGER. THE AVERAGE GRANT SIZE WAS 2,000 EUROS.

### SUPPORTING JOURNALISTS FORCED INTO EXILE

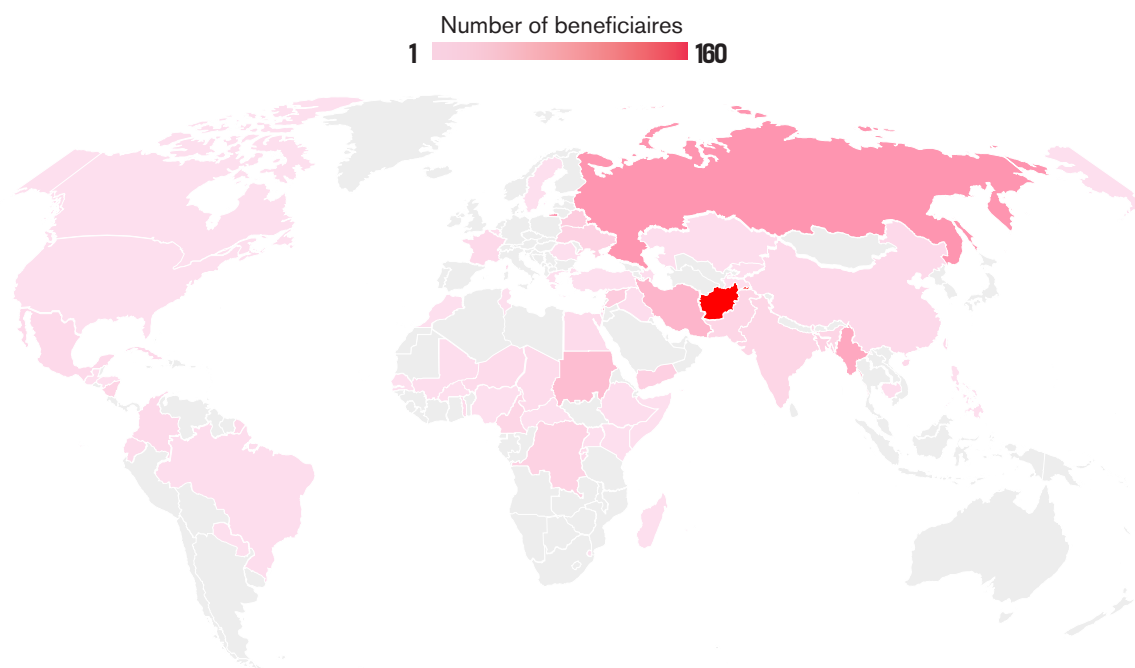
In 2023, 66% of the financial assistance provided was used to cover security and relocation costs of journalists forced into exile. This distribution of grant requests has been constant in recent years, highlighting the persistent insecurity faced by journalists.

RSF grants were also used to cover legal, medical and professional equipment expenses. Each grant application is thoroughly examined to verify journalists' professional background and the threats they face as a result of their work.

### HELPING JOURNALISTS IN CRISIS-TORN COUNTRIES

While RSF supports journalists under threat all over the world, the map of grants disbursed in 2023 and that of the major geopolitical crises of the last two years somewhat overlap. The countries where RSF most intervened in 2023 were Afghanistan (156 grants issued), Russia (40), Myanmar (30), Palestine (27), Iran (23) and Sudan (19).

### MORE THAN 30% OF BENEFICIARIES WERE AFGHAN JOURNALISTS



**RSF IN ACTION**

# **ADVANCES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

RSF'S LITIGATION STRATEGY HAS MADE WAY FOR TRUE ADVANCES IN THE TREATMENT OF CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST JOURNALISTS BY INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITIES AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

## **UKRAINE: TEN INVESTIGATIONS OPENED IN UKRAINE, THREE IN FRANCE**

The Ukrainian prosecutor's office, with which RSF is in close contact, announced the opening of ten preliminary investigations in response to RSF complaints. These complaints document more than 50 attacks against more than 100 journalists who were killed, injured, abducted, taken hostage, tortured or caught in bombings. Three criminal investigations have also been opened in France, concerning the deaths in Ukraine of French journalists Pierre Zakrzewski, Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff and Arman Soldin.

## **PALESTINE: CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ICC INVESTIGATION THANKS TO RSF COMPLAINTS**

Since the start of the conflict in Gaza, RSF has filed two complaints with the International Criminal Court (ICC), in addition to those it had previously filed in 2018 and 2021. In January 2024, the ICC prosecutor's office confirmed, for the first time since the start of the war, that crimes against journalists were included in its investigation into the situation in Palestine.

## **GERMANY: MAN CONVICTED FOR ROLE IN MURDER OF RSF CORRESPONDENT IN THE GAMBIA IN 2004**

On 30 November 2023, the Higher Regional Court in Celle, Germany, sentenced a former member of the death squads of the Yahya Jammeh regime in The Gambia to life imprisonment. This individual, who was being prosecuted for his involvement in the 2004 assassination of journalist and RSF correspondent Deyda Hydara, was convicted of crimes against humanity, murder and attempted murder.

## **FRANCE: POLICE OFFICER CONVICTED FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST A REPORTER, FOLLOWING RSF'S COMPLAINT**

Judicial progress has also been made in France. The police officer responsible for violence against a journalist in Toulouse in April 2019 – a case in which RSF became a plaintiff – was tried and convicted in February 2023.

RSF IN ACTION

# RECOGNITION BY INTERNATIONAL BODIES

RSF'S LITIGATION STRATEGY HAS ALSO LED TO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES. AT THIS TIME, NINE OUT OF TEN CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST JOURNALISTS GO UNPUNISHED. MOBILISING INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS AND BODIES IS ESSENTIAL TO MAKE HEADWAY IN COMBATING IMPUNITY.

## **ERITREA: UN RECOGNISES ARBITRARY NATURE OF DAWIT ISAAC'S DETENTION.**

On 26 July 2023, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention formally recognised the arbitrary nature of the detention of Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaac, held incommunicado since September 2001. This recognition was the result of a complaint filed by a coalition of international NGOs, including RSF, in July 2022.

## **BRAZIL: WORKING GROUP CREATED TO INVESTIGATE THE MURDERS OF DOM PHILLIPS AND BRUNO ARAÚJO PEREIRA**

At the request of RSF and other civil society organisations, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) announced on 11 August 2023 the creation of a working group to investigate the dual murder of journalist Dom Phillips and indigenous peoples specialist Bruno Araújo Pereira.

“

*Beyond the litigation strategy deployed at the national and international level to obtain justice and improve security, RSF conducts substantive work to put in place legislative and regulatory frameworks that favour journalistic freedom and pluralism.*

**IN FRANCE IN 2023.** RSF, for example, persuaded the Council of State to require the Audiovisual and Digital Communication Regulatory Authority (ARCOM) to require the French company Eutelsat to stop broadcasting Russian propaganda TV channels to its subscribers in Russia.

**RSF was also recognised as a “party to be heard” in a European Commission investigation into concentration of ownership in the media (the acquisition of the Lagardère group by Vivendi),** following a request by the organisation. RSF, which has documents that allegedly show that this takeover had been underway for a long time, was thus able to provide the Commission, whose investigation is still ongoing, with its information and to produce witnesses.





## Marina Ovsyannikova resurfaces

By Emilie Poirrier,  
RSF communications and marketing director (until March 2024)

### In 2023,

- **0 independent media** in Russia since Russia's invasion of Ukraine
- **28 journalists** detained in Russia at the end of 2023

When Christophe Deloire told me in confidence, I couldn't believe it. Marina Ovsyannikova, the “presenter with a sign”, famous for brandishing a “no war” sign during a news show on Russia's biggest propaganda TV channel, *Pervy Kanal*, just days after the start of the invasion of Ukraine, was secretly coming to France with RSF's help.

Her escape from Russia could only succeed if everyone kept quiet about what they knew. We therefore worked in a very small group with the utmost secrecy on her case. After arriving safely in France, we made the decision, with her, to make the news public. The goal was to make a splash, and show other players of Russian propaganda that another path was possible. A few months earlier, we had already provided a platform for Zhanna Agalakova to break her silence about the Russian propaganda machine. Marina was going to have an even bigger impact.

She was going to reveal the inner workings of the Kremlin's disinformation machine, particularly in regards to Ukraine. She was going to talk about the oppression, the fear, the surveillance, the house arrest, and the trials, as well as her escape. Hundreds of media outlets around the world covered the press conference we organised for her on 10 February.

Since then, she has published a book and given several interviews. She now lives in a secure location in Paris. “RSF saved my life”, she often says. We too owe her a lot. Thanks to her courage, we scored a point against Putin and his oppressive regime, by showing that it is possible to resist the propaganda machines, to shake them from within, to say no, that it is possible to get out, to defect, to oppose the falsification of history and current events, and to resist manipulation.



## Behind the scenes of the Ukraine documentary

By Robin Grassi,  
RSF Studio head

### In 2023,

- **144 videos** produced, an average of 3 per week
- **318 social media** posts
- **500+** visuals published on rsf.org
- Over **600 attendees** at the documentary film premieres
- The documentary “War fixers, the invisible reporters” is available on the Arte TV website and app for 3 years

Seeing this packed Parisian cinema, with, on one side, the audience's eyes reddened with emotion and their palpable admiration towards the three Ukrainian fixers, whose story is told in the film, and, on the other, the pride of the central characters of the film, who had made the trip from Ukraine for this premiere, I thought about how far we had come since the creation of RSF Studio in 2022.

At the time, we had envisioned being able to produce this type of documentary one day, making it possible to raise public awareness using narrative forms other than our usual press releases and reports. But it went much faster than I had imagined! In addition to the shorts that we produce several times a week and post on social media, we had considered long formats from the start.

A first film was produced at the end of 2021, presenting a number of testimonies about “System B”, the Bolloré system. In 2022, we produced our first movie on the RSF investigation about the death of photojournalist Maks Levin in Ukraine. In 2023, we produced our first video investigation into the death of journalist Issam Abdallah on the Israel-Lebanon border. The documentary “*War fixers, the invisible reporters*”, telling the story of Andrii, Oleksandra and Kyrylo, three young Ukrainians who took tremendous risks to inform the world, was produced that same year and released to coincide with the two-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine.

During filming, we travelled to the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine, where RSF and its partners organise retreats for journalists and fixers, where they are given a chance to catch their breath in the countryside, to escape for a few days from an extremely dangerous and difficult daily life. We also followed them in Kyiv, when they returned from field work, and where we met their families. In the course of our discussions, I measured their mental strength. We wanted to shadow them and interview them to highlight the little-known work of these information heroes and heroines, and the impact that work has on their lives. In turn interpreters, drivers, guides, intermediaries and negotiations between journalists and their contacts (sometimes even reporters themselves), they help reporters to reach the most dangerous and isolated parts of Ukraine.

Without showing any fear in the face of danger.

Without ever giving up.

I am proud and happy to have played a part in drawing attention to their work, too often unknown to the public. These news heroes and heroines make media coverage of the war in Ukraine possible.



## Our investigation into Issam Abdallah's death

By Anne Bocandé,  
RSF editorial director

### In 2023,

- At least **56 journalists** were killed, **including 13** in the course of their work
- RSF filed **one complaint** with the ICC

What happened on the border between Israel and Lebanon on Friday, 13 October 2023, when an explosion killed *Reuters* reporter Issam Abdallah? This is what we tried to find out as soon as we heard the terrible news.

Two explosions of different intensities, spaced about 30 seconds apart, hit the exact location where seven journalists were that day. They had chosen that spot in order to cover the exchanges of fire between Hezbollah forces and the Israeli army. The first strike killed *Reuters* photojournalist Issam Abdallah and seriously injured *Agence France-Presse* correspondent Christina Assi. The second explosion blew up the *Al Jazeera* vehicle parked in the immediate vicinity, injuring several journalists.

During the days following this tragedy, we worked hard to reconstruct the scene and understand the sequence of events that took place between 4:45 p.m., the time of the first images collected, and 6 p.m., the time of Issam Abdallah's death. We collected and cross-referenced evidence from dozens of sources, including video footage filmed at the very moment of the tragedy. We also ordered ballistic analyses.

Our investigation established that the reporters were not the collateral damage of shelling or rocket fire. One of their vehicles, marked "Press", was targeted and it was clear that the group near the vehicle were journalists.

Other investigations (five in all) followed ours and made it possible to clearly establish the responsibility of the Israeli authorities. Investigative work is essential to promote justice. Since the publication of our investigation, we have called on the international community to put pressure on the Israeli army to answer for this crime. This impunity endangers journalists the world over. We will continue to support the journalists who survived this atrocity, as well as Abdallah's family and colleagues, in their efforts to obtain justice.





## The historic opening of Jimmy Lai's trial

By Aleksandra Bielakowska,  
RSF head of advocacy, Asia-Pacific bureau

- Imprisoned since 2020, Jimmy Lai was sentenced to **five years** and **nine months** in prison
- In 2023, he celebrated his **76<sup>th</sup> birthday** in prison

It was noon on 18 December 2023 in Hong Kong. Alongside my colleague Shataakshi Verma, project manager at the RSF office in Taipei, I was about to attend the opening of the trial of Jimmy Lai, the founder of the independent newspaper *Apple Daily*, who was facing a possible life sentence on a charge of “colluding with foreign forces” under the draconian National Security Law (NSL).

This was a historic trial. About 100 people were waiting, like us, outside the West Kowloon court. They included diplomats from the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, as well as members of Jimmy Lai's family.

We entered the courtroom.

Held behind bars for three long years, the press mogul asked the court to drop one of the sedition charges against him. The motion was rejected and the trial was adjourned. We were dismayed, but more determined than ever to continue the fight to obtain his release.

This was my second work trip to Hong Kong. In June 2023, I was part of the delegation tasked with assessing the security needs of journalists three years after the National Security Law – adopted by Beijing to silence independent voices – took effect in the former British colony.

All things come in threes, as the saying goes. As I was entering Hong Kong for my third visit a few months later, on 10 April 2024, to attend a new hearing in Jimmy Lai's trial, I was arrested on arrival at Hong Kong international airport. I was detained, searched and questioned for six hours before being expelled from the territory. This ordeal illustrates the extent to which the Hong Kong authorities fear NGOs and human rights defenders who seek to report on the authoritarian climate that has taken hold of the territory, once a bastion of press freedom.

Despite the pressure, we will continue to campaign for Jimmy Lai's release.



## Mortaza Behboudi's release

By Antoine Bernard,  
RSF advocacy and assistance director

### In 2023,

- Mortaza Behboudi was **detained for 284 days**
- More than **1,200 political prisoners** are held in Shash-Darak prison, where he was held

We had believed in it and been disappointed so many times that when I received the call on Wednesday, 18 October from the Afghan lawyers we had hired to defend Mortaza, I initially found it difficult to celebrate.

It had been months, 284 days to be exact, since Mortaza Behboudi, a French-Afghan journalist, had been detained in Afghanistan. The RSF team, together with his wife, Aleksandra Mostovaja, and her friends, Solène Chalvon-Fioriti and Rachida El Azzouzi, have been fighting tirelessly to obtain his release.

On several occasions, we had received positive signals from the Taliban authorities, suggesting that Mortaza would be released from prison. We were also able to speak to them directly, to plead for his release. But each time, our optimism was confronted with reality, the terrible reality that Mortaza endured throughout his detention and which he would describe to us in detail upon his return – mistreatment, torture, postponed hearings, and the uncertainties of the investigation and the proceedings.

But in the face of adversity, we never became discouraged. On the contrary, with an open letter, the launch of a support committee and a petition, the mobilisation grew day after day. Banners at town halls, rallies, concerts... we even installed a giant stopwatch in the heart of Paris so that all passers-by could see in real time the number of days, minutes, seconds that Mortaza had been unjustly detained. At the same time, we contacted the United Nations, we communicated with the Quai d'Orsay (the French foreign ministry) and the European Union, we lobbied governments, and above all we continued the discussions that we had managed to set up with the Taliban authorities, showing our determination and trying to make them hear reason.

So finally, at 10:15 a.m. on Wednesday, 18 October, when the judges of the Kabul criminal court pronounced his acquittal on all charges – including espionage, “illegal support for foreigners” and assistance in crossing Afghanistan's borders – after a moment of disbelief, we felt immense relief.

But we continued to hold our breath until he reached the airport tarmac two days later. I will forever remember his face when he got off the plane that day, as well as the faces of Aleksandra, his wife, and his friends, who had been waiting for him, full of anguish and hope, for nine months. And I'll remember when Mortaza quickly announced to us that, of course, he would continue to work as a journalist! This was the greatest reward for our efforts that we could have hoped for.



## Campaigning to free Julian Assange

By Rebecca Vincent,  
RSF director of international campaigns

- RSF is the only NGO that has monitored all **four years of extradition proceedings** in London courts
- RSF is the only NGO that has fought for access to visit Assange in prison
- Assange has been deprived of his liberty for **13 years**, including **five years of detention** at Belmarsh prison
- If extradited to the US, Assange faces up to **175 years in prison**

It has been a long and winding road, but 2023 has proven to be an eventful year in RSF's campaign for the release of *WikiLeaks* publisher Julian Assange. We've fought battles on many fronts as the legal case against Assange brought him dangerously close to extradition. We've been to court, to prison, and to the heart of the government that persists in its unprecedented prosecution of a publisher for revealing uncomfortable truths.

RSF has long defended Assange because of his contributions to journalism. The publication by *WikiLeaks* in 2010 of more than 250,000 leaked classified military and diplomatic documents informed extensive public interest reporting around the world. If extradited, Assange would be the first publisher prosecuted under the Espionage Act, setting a dangerous precedent for journalism and posing a serious threat to global press freedom.

More than three years into UK proceedings in the US extradition case against Assange, in June a single judge issued a three-page decision that represented perhaps the most damning blow yet in the legal case, rejecting his application to appeal the order for his extradition. He was allowed one final chance to appeal this rejection, and at the end of the year we were waiting to be summoned back to court for that all-important decision.

Although legal proceedings are ongoing in the UK, the case ultimately remains in the hands of the US government. Over the summer we embarked on an urgent advocacy week in Washington, DC, where we deployed a truck playing a clip of the infamous Collateral Murder video exposed by *WikiLeaks*, showing a US helicopter gunning down a group of civilians including two *Reuters* journalists. We met with officials at the White House, the State Department, and the Department of Justice, as well as members of Congress, repeating our urgent message everywhere we went: it's time to drop the charges, close the case, and free Assange!

Following our longstanding battle for access to monitor court hearings in this case, we also found ourselves having to fight for access to visit Assange in Belmarsh prison, where he has been held on remand since April 2019. Our persistence again paid off, and we were finally able to visit him for the first time in August, with further visits to follow.

As the year came to a close, we launched a solidarity campaign with media around the world, showing that Assange's prosecution impacts all media as well as the public's right to information. That is precisely why we continue to campaign so vigorously to free Assange as one of our top global priorities: for journalism, for press freedom, and for all of our right to know.

# RSF'S LEADING CAMPAIGNS

#FREEING  
JOURNALISTS

THROUGH THIS CAMPAIGN, RSF SEEKS TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE AND WITHDRAWAL OF ALL CHARGES AGAINST PERSONS WHO EMBODY THE FIGHT FOR PRESS FREEDOM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. TO THIS END, RSF MONITORED TRIALS, CARRIED OUT ADVOCACY MISSIONS, AND DEPLOYED ITS COMMUNICATION RESOURCES.

## FREE BELARUSIAN JOURNALISTS

BELARUS  157<sup>th</sup>/180\*



### WHY?

The vast campaign of repression launched by the Belarusian authorities following the fraudulent reelection of Alexander Lukashenko in August 2020, which has largely affected journalists in Belarus, continues to intensify. The government continues to tighten its grip on censorship and is now working to clean up its own media teams at the slightest hint of lack of allegiance.

### HOW?

- **RSF strengthened its relations with the Belarusian Association of Journalists** and the family of Belarusian journalist Maryna Zolatava, the former editor-in-chief of the *TUT.BY* news site, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison on 18 May 2021.
- **RSF increased the frequency of its publications** on the status of press freedom and journalists in Belarus, thus attracting the attention of the media and general public on the subject.
- To show support for Maryna Zolatava, RSF invited supporters all over the world to send postcards with messages expressing solidarity with the journalist. These were handed in to several Belarusian embassies on 6 November 2023, Maryna Zolatava's 46<sup>th</sup> birthday.



©RSF



## I RSF'S LEADING CAMPAIGNS I

#FREEING  
JOURNALISTS

### FREE ALGERIAN JOURNALIST IHSANE EL KADI

ALGERIA  136<sup>th</sup>/180\*



#### WHY?

Far from marking a break from the Bouteflika regime, Abdelmadjid Tebboune's election as Algeria's president amid record voter abstention was followed by a crackdown on security and civil liberties, taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Hirak protest movement's loss of momentum to harass independent journalists. Now faced with the arbitrary use of the legislative arsenal, the media has to compromise between censorship and risk of imprisonment. The detention of Ihsane El Kai is symptomatic of this growing repression. In June 2023, the head of *Radio M* and *Maghreb Émergent* was sentenced, on appeal, to seven years in prison for allegedly receiving funding from abroad. Ever since his arrest in December 2022, RSF has tirelessly waged an international campaign for his release.

#### HOW?

- In response to Ihsane El Kadi's imprisonment on 29 December 2022, **RSF reached out to the United Nations** to warn of the judicial harassment the journalist had been subjected to for three years and to denounce this latest attempt to silence the last independent media outlets in Algeria. RSF also formally contacted the Media Freedom Coalition, an alliance of 50 governments.
- **At RSF's request**, Nobel peace laureate Dmitry Muratov, the editor of *Novaya Gazeta*, and 15 other international media publishers and editors issued a joint call for "Freedom for Ihsane El Kadi, freedom for *Radio M* and *Maghreb Émergent*, and freedom for Algerian journalists."
- **On 27 January 2023, RSF launched a petition** calling on the Algerian authorities to release Ihsane El Kadi. On 30 March 2023, RSF organised an event to hand over 13,000 envelopes outside the Algerian embassy in Paris to symbolise the signatures collected by the petition.



RSF advocacy and assistance director Antoine Bernard during a press conference outside the Algerian embassy in Paris on 30 March 2023.  
© Robin Grassi / RSF

#FREEING  
JOURNALISTS

### FREE GUATAMALAN JOURNALIST JOSÉ RUBÉN ZAMORA

GUATEMALA  127<sup>th</sup>/180\*



#### WHY?

Guatemala has been going through a socio-political crisis for more than five years, leading to an increase in attacks against journalists who criticise the state and a serious problem of muzzling of the press. Reporters who investigate corruption, human rights violations or illegal practices by private sector companies are subjected to smear campaigns on social media, state surveillance and police and judicial harassment – all with the consent of the public prosecutor and Supreme Court. The imprisonment of José Rubén Zamora, the founder of the daily *elPeriódico*, since July 2022, is symptomatic of the persecution suffered by journalists in Guatemala, where democracy is in greater danger than ever.

#### HOW?



© Johan Ordóñez / AFP

- **RSF launched a petition** for José Rubén Zamora's release in July 2023.
- José Rubén Zamora was awarded **the prize for "Independence" at the RSF Press Freedom Awards ceremony** in Brussels on 28 November 2023.
- Alongside partner organisations that defend journalism, **RSF launched several initiatives calling for Zamora's release**. This included participating in a meeting in November 2023 with President-elect Bernardo Arévalo's transition team, during which RSF voiced concern about the growing risks for journalists against the backdrop of democratic destabilisation. RSF also recommended measures to improve the environment for journalism and press freedom in Guatemala.

#FREEING  
JOURNALISTS

## FREE AFGHAN JOURNALIST MORTAZA BEHBODI

AFGHANISTAN  152<sup>nd</sup>/180\*



### WHY?

The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 had serious repercussions for press freedom and the safety of journalists, particularly women. In the space of three months, 43% of Afghan media outlets disappeared. On 5 January 2023, Franco-Afghan journalist Mortaza Behboudi, flew to Kabul for a reporting assignment. About 48 hours later, he was arrested and detained in a Kabul prison. From the first few days of his arrest, RSF opened a channel of communication with the Taliban authorities.

### HOW?

- On 6 February 2023, **RSF launched a public support campaign** by coordinating the drafting and publication of an open letter denouncing the aberrant incarceration of the journalist. RSF then coordinated the creation of a support committee of colleagues and friends of Mortaza Behboudi. The committee initiated and supported numerous actions: a complaint filed on 24 February 2023 by RSF with the United Nations special rapporteurs, the organisation and sponsorship of multiple events (such as a solidarity concert in Paris to mark 100 days of his captivity), the launch of a petition and, when he completed six months in detention, the unveiling of a giant counter on the facade of the Paris town hall.
- From the first days of Mortaza Behboudi's arrest, **RSF started "behind the scenes" initiatives**, such as launching an investigation to establish who was detaining the journalist, under what conditions and for what reasons; maintaining constant contact with government officials in Kabul; and sending lots of documentary evidence to the judges to prove Mortaza Behboudi really was a journalist.
- On 18 October 2023, after 284 days of imprisonment, **RSF announced the release of Mortaza Behboudi.**



During a press conference at RSF headquarters on 23 October 2023, journalist Mortaza Behboudi talked to the media about the nine months he had just spent in prison in Afghanistan.

© Robin Grassi / RSF

# PROTECTING JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALISM

SEEKING THE RELEASE OF  
**NARGES MOHAMMADI, NILOOFAR HAMEDI AND ELAHEH MOHAMMADI,**  
AND PROTECTING JOURNALISTS WORKING IN IRAN

IRAN  177<sup>th</sup>/180\*

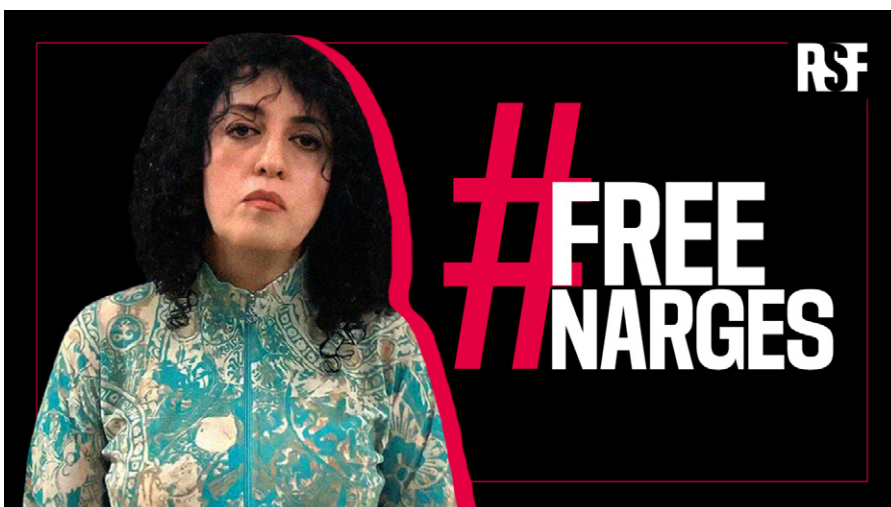


## WHY?

Iran has strengthened its position among the world's most oppressive countries in terms of press freedom since the start of the protests in response to the death of student Mahsa Amini on 16 September 2022. More than 70 journalists – many of them women – were arrested. Three women journalists – Narges Mohammadi, Niloofer Hamedei and Elaheh Mohammadi – are emblematic figures of the Iranian protest movement, popularised around the world by the slogan "Woman, life, freedom".

## HOW?

- On 7 June 2023, RSF asked the UN special rapporteurs responsible for human rights to alert them to the deterioration of the detention conditions of the Iranian journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, detained since November 2021 in Evin prison, where she is serving a sentence of ten years and nine months, along with hundreds of floggings.
- On 8 November 2023, RSF and the Iran Justice lawyers collective submitted a complaint against the Iranian authorities to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.
- On 10 December 2023, on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, RSF asked the Media Freedom Coalition, a partnership of 50 countries working together to promote media freedom, to take action to end Narges Mohammadi's arbitrary detention.
- On 14 January 2024, journalists Niloofer Hamedei and Elaheh Mohammadi were released on bail after 15 months of detention.



© RSF



## DEVELOPING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRESS FREEDOM CENTERS IN UKRAINE

UKRAINE  79<sup>th</sup>/180\*



### WHY?

From the onset of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Ukrainian journalists and media outlets have paid a heavy price. They have not only been subjected to targeted abuses by the Russian armed forces throughout the country, but they have also been direct victims of the consequences of the war, with the closure of media outlets due to economic reasons, relocations (including abroad), and exile, as well as conscription into the army. In this "information war", Ukraine is on the front line to resist the expansion of the Kremlin's propaganda system. To respond to needs and defend the right to information in the country, RSF quickly produced an emergency response. In March 2022, RSF opened its first Press Freedom Center in Lviv, which has served as a hub for journalists seeking protective equipment and information about the financial or psychological assistance offered by RSF. In May 2022, a second Press Freedom Center was opened in Kyiv.

### HOW?

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, RSF has assisted 1,500 journalists (including 1,150 Ukrainian journalists) and 150 media outlets financially, logistically (by supplying energy equipment) and even psychologically. Through the Press Freedom Centers, RSF and its local partners provide international and Ukrainian journalists and media outlets with protective and professional equipment, financial assistance grants, training in security and first aid, and access to psychological assistance.



*Delivery of helmets and bulletproof vests to the RSF Press Freedom Center in Lviv.*  
© Robin Grassi / RSF

## SUPPORTING **SAHEL JOURNALISTS**

### **WHY?**

The Sahel is an extremely dangerous region for journalists. The risk of being kidnapped is very high, as evidenced by the abduction in Gao on 8 April 2021 of French journalist Olivier Dubois, who spent 711 days in captivity until his release on 20 March 2023. In addition to direct threats to their physical safety, journalists are subjected to excessive administrative restrictions by some of the region's governments, which have expanded the areas where journalists' access is banned or restricted.

### **HOW?**

- On 3 April 2023, **RSF published an investigative report, entitled "What it's like to be a journalist in the Sahel"**, about the dangers that threaten journalism in this region of Africa. RSF made extensive use of this report in its advocacy work.
- After campaigning for nearly two years, **RSF welcomed the release of French journalist Olivier Dubois on 20 March 2023**. Since his abduction, RSF had taken many different initiatives to obtain his release, including creating a coordinating body, organising support rallies, unveiling banners in more than 20 French cities, projecting the journalist's image on the Pantheon, and conducting solidarity operations with TV channels and radio stations.
- In 2023, 30 journalists from all regions of Niger were trained and given equipment to be able to work in complete safety and understand the legal framework governing their profession, thanks to support from RSF to the Niger section of the Association of African Communication Professionals.



Cover of the report "What it's like to be a journalist in the Sahel".



Olivier Dubois's visit to RSF headquarters in March 2023, a few days after his release.

© Noémie Bonnafous / RSF



## NATIONAL SECURITY V JOURNALISM, ESPECIALLY **JULIAN ASSANGE (USA)**

### WHY?

Since 2020, WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange has been threatened with extradition from the United Kingdom to the United States, where he faces up to 175 years in prison on charges related to the publication of information deemed of public interest. He could be convicted under the Espionage Act, which would set an alarming precedent, leaving the door open for future similar cases against journalists, news editors, and sources. On 26 March 2024, the UK High Court decided to allow Julian Assange to appeal his extradition on three grounds. This last chance for the UK courts to block his transfer to the US could be rejected, however, if the US government provides "satisfactory assurances" that address those three grounds. RSF has been the only NGO to monitor all four years of extradition proceedings against Assange before the London courts.

### HOW?

- **RSF representatives obtained rare permission to visit him in Belmarsh prison**, which they have been able to do five times since August 2023.
- **RSF has advocated directly with the US government** and continues to urge the Biden administration to find a political solution to the case to prevent Julian Assange's extradition and allow his release. On 17 July 2023, at the initiative of RSF, a truck drove around Washington, DC displaying a message urging the public to back the call to #FreeAssange.
- On 18 October 2023, **RSF launched a new global communications campaign for Julian Assange's release**. Print and online media outlets around the world ran RSF's campaign visuals highlighting the danger that the US government's prosecution of Assange poses to all media and to the public's right to information.



Stella Assange and supporters of Julian Assange leaving the UK High Court on 26 March 2024.  
© Lizzie Jenkins

# A "NEW DEAL" FOR JOURNALISM

## DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN MEDIA FREEDOM ACT'S CONTENT



© RSF

### WHY?

At the European Union level, 2023 was marked by the drafting of the first European legislation on media freedom, the European Media Freedom Act, or EMFA, which was definitively adopted by the European Parliament on 13 March 2024. RSF welcomed the EMFA's adoption and was pleased that many of its proposals inspired provisions to effectively guarantee the right to information and the independence of the media.

### HOW?

- **RSF was deeply committed** to developing the European Media Freedom Act and attended around 50 advocacy meetings with EU member states, European Commission representatives, European parliamentarians, and organisations that were either potential partners or adversaries. Many of these stakeholders were responsive to RSF's proposals.
- This unprecedented legislation establishes the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) – an RSF-initiated certification mechanism aimed at positively distinguishing reliable journalism within the information ecosystem – as a reference for identifying news media outlets.
- The EMFA also includes safeguards to preserve the editorial independence of journalists, avoid political interference, limit the risks linked to media concentration, and prevent intrusive surveillance of journalists – safeguards that RSF had called for.



## EXPANDING THE USE OF THE JOURNALISM TRUST INITIATIVE (JTI)



### WHY?

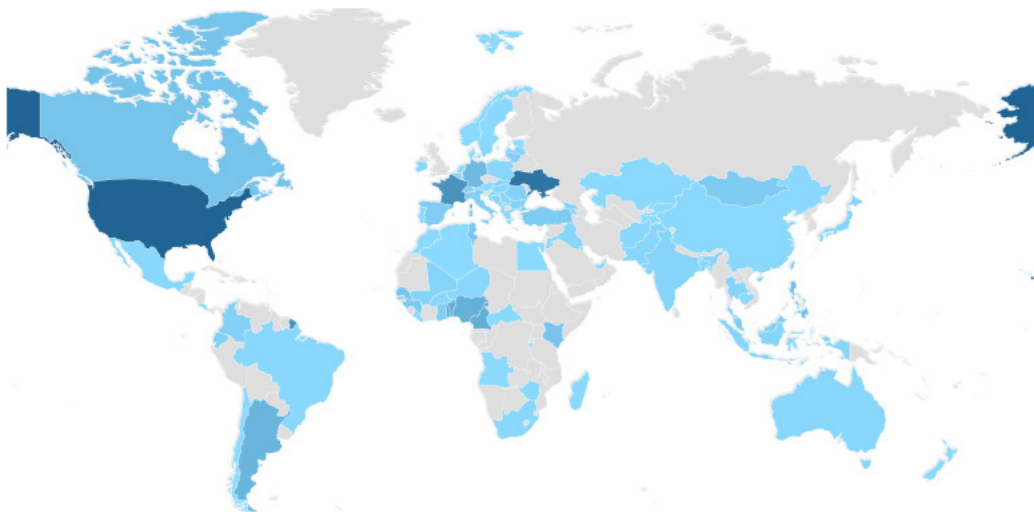
Journalism is exposed to direct competition from manipulative content that proliferates in the digital arena. Over the years, this has resulted in an erosion of the audience, mistrust of the media, and a fall in advertising and sales revenue. The Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI), initiated and deployed by RSF, is the first and only international ISO-type standard for reliable news and information. The JTI provides a transparent mechanism for combatting disinformation and concretely rewarding respect for ethical and professional journalism. The year 2023 saw a significant increase in the number of media outlets publishing a transparency report, the result of a self-assessment against the JTI standard.

### HOW?

- More than **1,200 media outlets in 80 countries** have engaged with the JTI by evaluating their practices, particularly their editorial processes, using the JTI app. Among them, 250 have already published their transparency reports.
- A third of the media involved in the JTI are located in Africa, mainly in Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another third are in Europe, with a high proportion of Ukrainian and French media outlets. In France, the *EBRA* and *TF1* media groups obtained their certifications in December 2023, joining *France Médias Monde* and *France Télévisions*. JTI development continues in the United States and is growing rapidly in Latin America and Southeast Asia.
- **At the legislative level, 11 countries have committed to supporting the JTI**, which is also mentioned in the code of practice of the European Union's Digital Services Act and in the European Media Freedom Act.
- In partnership with NewsGuard, **RSF launched a JTI emergency protocol in Ukraine**. Thanks to the results seen with Ukrainian media outlets, this programme was replicated in 11 countries in Africa and Latin America, accelerating JTI access in these regions.
- Microsoft uses the JTI benchmark to promote a healthier information ecosystem.

### More than 1,200 media outlets in 80 countries have engaged with the JTI

Number of media by country



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOURNALISM

### WHY?

Technologies based on artificial intelligence (AI) open up new perspectives but also pose unprecedented challenges for journalism. At a time when deepfakes could amplify disinformation and undermine public trust in all audiovisual content, and language models promise to increase productivity at the expense of information integrity, RSF developed initiatives in 2023 aimed at putting AI at the service of journalism.



© RSF

### HOW?

- On 10 November 2023, at the Paris Peace Forum, **RSF and 16 partner organisations unveiled the Paris Charter on AI and Journalism**. A pioneer in its field, the charter defines ethical principles that journalists, editorial staff, and media outlets throughout the world can adopt and apply in their work in the AI era. The charter was created by a commission initiated by RSF and chaired by journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa.
- RSF announced in November 2023, in partnership with the General News Press Alliance, the development of an AI tool by and for journalists to safeguard the media's intellectual property over what they publish. The initial phase of the **Spinoza Project**, at the end of 2023, consisted of the production of a prototype AI tool for journalists.



# INTERNET GOVERNANCE

## IMPLEMENTING THE PARTNERSHIP FOR INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

### Forum on Information & Democracy



Catherine Colonna, French minister of Europe and foreign affairs, Nicu Popescu, Moldovan minister of foreign affairs, and Christophe Deloire, RSF secretary-general.  
© Manon Leviet

#### WHY?

The RSF-initiated Partnership for Information and Democracy has so far been endorsed by 52 countries, including 25 members of the European Union, as well as the United States, Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, South Africa and Senegal. It aims to develop democratic safeguards in the digital arena in order to combat information chaos and develop a systemic response to disinformation.

Founded in 2019 by RSF and ten civil society organisations and research centres, the Forum on Information and Democracy is the implementing arm of the International Partnership for Information and Democracy. Drawing its mandate from this inter-governmental agreement, the Forum provides governments, civil society and digital platforms with concrete policy recommendations designed to protect public debate from information chaos.

#### HOW?

- As part of **the campaign to develop the content of the European Media Freedom Act**, the final version included recommendations of the Partnership on Information and Democracy.
- In 2023, RSF and the Forum on Information and Democracy conducted **a major campaign to remobilise the signatory states of the Partnership** and, in particular, to identify a liaison officer for each state.
- In February 2023, the secretary-general of RSF and president of the Forum on Information and Democracy spoke at **the opening of the UNESCO summit**, "Internet For Trust".
- At the closing of the G7 Summit held in Hiroshima, Japan on 21 May 2023, leaders urged online platforms to commit to promoting the reliability of information in the digital space and voiced their support for the Partnership for Information and Democracy initiated by RSF.
- In September 2023, Brazil and Moldova became the 51<sup>st</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> signatory states of the Partnership.

## RESISTING PROPAGANDA

### GET GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS TO ADOPT THE SYSTEM FOR PROTECTING DEMOCRATIC DIGITAL SPACES

#### WHY?

The globalisation of information has led to an asymmetry between countries that are oppressive and “closed” and control their digital space, and democratic countries where the digital space remains open, including to foreign destabilisation companies. In this context, RSF has, since 2021, recommended that democratic countries create a system for protecting democratic information spaces by means of legislation designed to reduce asymmetries and encourage mutual openness, avoiding political decisions.

#### HOW?

- In June 2023, two European Parliament reports called for the creation of a European system for protecting democratic information spaces designed and advocated by RSF – the report of the special committee on foreign interference in the EU and the report on the protection of journalists worldwide.
- Advocacy efforts have continued, primarily targeting the EU, France, Slovakia and the United States.

### PREVENTING CHINA FROM IMPLEMENTING A NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER, ESPECIALLY IN HONG KONG

#### WHY?

The People's Republic of China is the world's biggest jailer of journalists, and its government is waging a campaign of repression against journalism and the right to information around the world. China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, once a bastion of press freedom, has suffered an unprecedented setback since Beijing adopted a national security law in 2020 aimed at silencing independent voices. Through this campaign, RSF seeks to provide better democratic counterweights to China's influence and information-control strategy, as well as to address attacks on press freedom.

#### HOW?

- In May 2023, **RSF coordinated a joint statement with 116 media leaders** in 42 countries expressing support for Jimmy Lai and calling for his immediate release.
- On 15 June 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution by an overwhelming majority calling on the Hong Kong government to release Jimmy Lai.
- RSF called on the United Nations General Assembly to vote against China's reelection to the UN Human Rights Council.
- In June 2023, an RSF delegation went to Hong Kong to evaluate the security needs of journalists three years after the draconian National Security Law took effect.
- A delegation from RSF's Asia-Pacific bureau went to Hong Kong to attend the opening of Jimmy Lai's trial on 18 December 2023.
- **RSF continued to strengthen its assistance and support for journalists** in the region through an ambitious training programme developed over the last three years.



© RSF

## CURBING RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

PARTICULARLY VIA SATELLITE TO OFFER INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM  
TO RUSSIAN-SPEAKING POPULATIONS

### WHY?

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, almost all independent media outlets in Russia have been banned, blocked and/or declared "foreign agents" or "undesirable organisations". All other media outlets are subject to military censorship. All privately owned independent TV channels are banned, with the exception of cable entertainment channels. Many western media, such as *Euronews*, *France 24* and the *BBC*, are no longer accessible in the country. Those that are still operating have belonged for several years to people close to the Kremlin, or face strict self-censorship due to banned subjects and words.

Determined to provide Russian-speaking populations with the tools they need to preserve their freedom of opinion, and aware that the readership and audience of independent Russian media outlets total 6 to 9% of the adult population, RSF wanted to increase that percentage and invert the logic of propaganda.

### HOW?

On 7 November 2023, RSF announced that it had signed a contract with Eutelsat, one of the world's biggest TV satellite operators, a prelude to the launch on 5 March 2024 of the Svoboda (meaning "freedom" in Russian) satellite package, to offer independent journalism to Russian-speaking populations. Ten Russian-language TV channels and radio stations are now broadcast by Eutelsat's Hotbird satellite to territories including Russia, Belarus, the occupied territories of Ukraine and the Baltics. This satellite package, accessible to 4.5 million households in the Russian Federation and around 800,000 households in Ukraine's occupied territories, will include up to 25 independent Russian-language TV channels and radio stations.

**SVOBODA**



© RSF

# OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

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## AMPLIFYING OUR MOBILISATION CAMPAIGNS

The aim of the campaigns is to increase RSF's impact and focus its energies. A campaign aims for a specific and concerted result and involves the entire organisation.

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## CREATING A CRISIS RESPONSE MECHANISM

Drawing on its experience and in order to react quickly and with agility to protect journalists in danger when a crisis breaks out, RSF is launching a crisis response mechanism. This has two major objectives: on the one hand, to ensure the protection and resilience of journalists and media outlets, and, on the other, to expose and fight against impunity for crimes committed against media professionals.

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## DEVELOPING INVESTIGATIVE SKILLS ON MEDIA AND TECH

RSF aims to develop its capacity to investigate practices that threaten media independence (including circumvention of media regulations and hostile media takeovers). This will involve carrying out journalistic investigations to expose and bring to light practices and players that threaten media independence.

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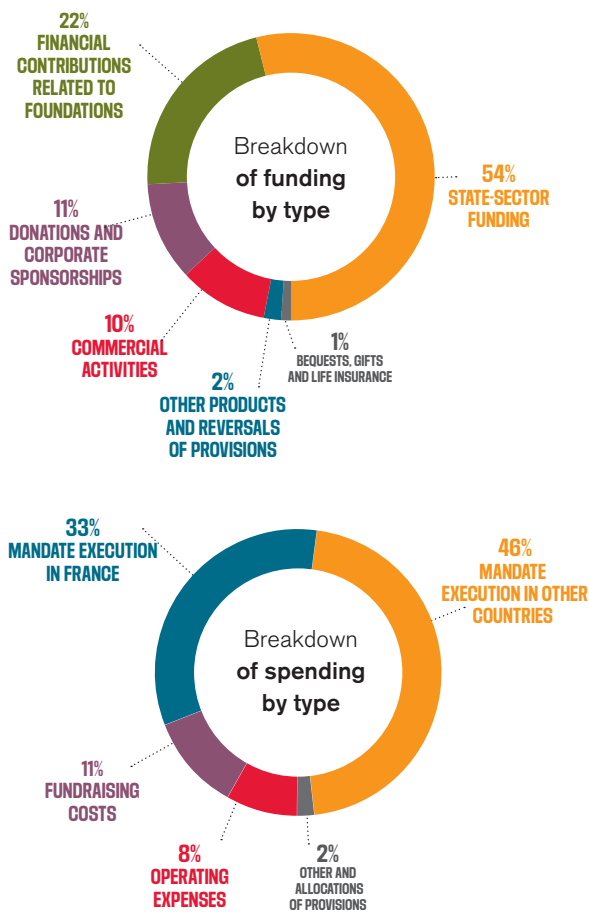
## CONTINUING TO DEPLOY THE JOURNALISM TRUST INITIATIVE (JTI)

The next step is to develop the JTI's adoption by the media and the provision of incentives by other players. RSF intends to develop a network of JTI representatives at the national and regional levels and to negotiate benefits for certified media (use of JTI certification for promotional purposes, algorithm indexing, advertising revenue, audience, etc).

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# A GROWING BUDGET AND DIVERSIFIED FUNDING



AFTER AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR IN 2022, DURING WHICH RSF SUCCESSFULLY MOBILISED SUPPORT FOR JOURNALISTS IN UKRAINE, THE ORGANISATION MAINTAINED A HIGH LEVEL OF OPERATIONS, RESULTING IN A 10% INCREASE IN THE BUDGET (TOTAL EXPENSES)

RSF ensures diversity in its financing methods, which break down as follows in 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>:

- **public funds** (54%) <sup>(2)</sup>, including from the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and the European Union (EU)
- **private funds** from foundations (22%)
- **commercial activities** (10%), mainly from the sale of photo books (3 published each year)
- **sponsorships** and **donations** from the general public (11%).

RSF's annual accounts are certified by Deloitte. In addition to the annual statutory audit, there are specific audits related to some financing contracts.

<sup>1</sup> Breakdown by origin and destination as per the income statement presented in the auditor's report.

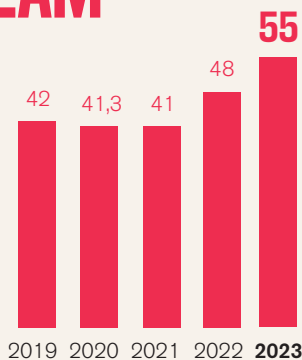
<sup>2</sup> Including 29.7% from subsidies and other French public assistance, i.e., 16% of total financial resources.

## MAIN PARTNERS



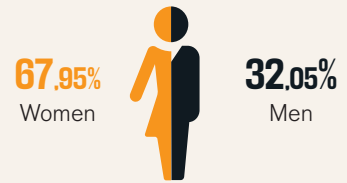
With the support of: Alan Wilson MD ; Ambassade de Suisse à Dakar ; Bioport ; Bloomberg LP ; Bruce Blackie ; Charles C. Cahn, Jr. and Nancy Maruyama ; Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development of Canada ; Dupage Community Foundation ; Fritt Ord ; King Baudoin Foundation USA ; Linda Kulhanek ; Poynter Institute ; The LuLu Foundation

# A COMMITTED TEAM



Average number of RSF employees (full-time equivalent)

## A GROWING TEAM



# THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The General Assembly of Reporters Without Borders elects the members of the Board of Directors for two years. The Board elects the Executive Board from among its members.

The Board meets at least four times a year and makes strategic decisions for the organisation.

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

**President**  
**PIERRE HASKI**  
*Journalist at France Inter*

**Treasurer**  
**GÉRARD TSCHOPP**  
*Former President of RSF Switzerland*

### OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**ANTOINE KABURAHÉ**  
*Founder of the Burundian newspaper Iwacu*

**PAOLA SANDOVAL**  
*Journalist, Honorary President of the Foreign Press Association*

**ELAINE SCIOLINO**  
*Journalist, former New York Times Paris Bureau Chief*

**DAN SHEFET**  
*Human Rights Lawyer*

### OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**MICHAEL BERGMEIJER**  
*Former General Manager of Reuters Europe*

**ANGELA CHARLTON**  
*Associated Press Paris Bureau Chief*

**PHIL CHETWYND**  
*Global News Director at Agence France Presse*

**ELAINE COBBE**  
*CBS Correspondent in Paris and Dart Center representative*

**MICHEL CORMIER**  
*Former Director General of Information of Radio-Canada*

**LOUIS DREYFUS**  
*Chairman of the Board of Directors of Le Monde*

**PIERRE-OLIVIER FRANÇOIS**  
*Journalist and Filmmaker*

**FACELY KONATE**  
*Regional Director of Hadafo Médias*

**TARIQ KRIM**  
*Entrepreneur, founder of NETVIBES, Jolicloud and Polite*

**PATRICE LORTON**  
*Producer, Deputy Editorial Director of Capa TV*

**CÉCILE MÉGIE**  
*Editorial Strategy Director, France Medias Monde*

**PAUL MOREIRA**  
*Founder of Premières Lignes*

**MARTINE OSTROVSKY**  
*Lawyer and Lecturer in Media Law*

**MICHAEL REDISKE**  
*President of RSF International and RSF Germany*

**EDITH RODRÍGUEZ CACHERA**  
*Vice President of RSF Spain*

**ABDOULAYE TRAORÉ**  
*Journalist at Romainville Web Radio*

# AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

RSF has an extensive network, allowing it to have a strong foothold with a presence in **more than 90% of the world's countries**. Thus, in 169 of the 180 countries covered by RSF, the organisation has at least one actor at the local level – correspondent, representative, local partner or an office or bureau. RSF's global presence is evenly distributed across the different geographic areas.



In 2023, RSF worked with **27 local organisations in 20 countries** around the world. Collaborating with these organisations has made it possible to implement projects that promote the safety of female journalists in Niger, Senegal and India.

Through its partner network, RSF was able to respond in an agile manner to various crises, in particular by supporting, through its partner Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), more than 90 journalists in Gaza with the creation of a reception area for female journalists, with the opening of secure and equipped work areas, and with the provision of professional equipment and basic necessities.

In 2023, RSF organised **two meetings of correspondents from its network**. The first brought together **12 correspondents from the Eastern Europe - Central Asia** region in Paris while the second brought together **13 correspondents from Latin America**, also in Paris. These meetings allowed the correspondents to discuss press freedom issues in their regions and discuss ways to improve collective action in the face of the challenges faced by different countries. They also had the opportunity to share experiences and improve work practices through training and thematic workshops.

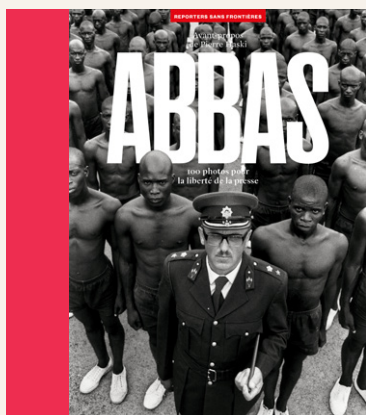
Collaboration with different local organisations within its network has enabled RSF to set up numerous training courses. In 2023, **RSF provided training to nearly 2,000 journalists** around the world, ten times more than in 2020, thereby responding to a growing demand from journalists to be better equipped to deal with geopolitical crises and disinformation. Thus in 2023, the organisation intervened with a network of local partners, in 37 countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (40% of trained journalists), East Asia (19%) and Ukraine (12%).



RSF's international team at a seminar in Paris in January 2024  
@Noemie Bonnafous, RSF

# REACHING A NEW AUDIENCE

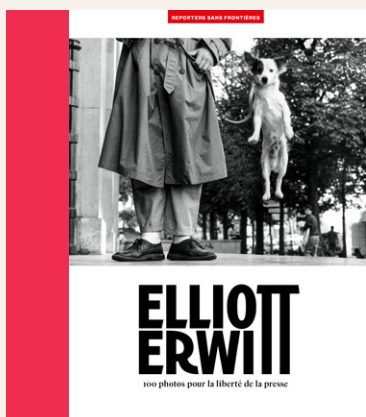
IN 2023, RSF'S PHOTO BOOKS  
GAVE PRIDE OF PLACE TO  
BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHERS.



After Robert Capa, Don McCullin and Raymond Depardon, RSF paid tribute to **Abbas** (1944–2018), an Iranian photographer who was said to “write with light”, in its first book of the year. On the ground in Iran, South Africa, Biafra, Northern Ireland and even Afghanistan, the man who wanted to bring order to chaos in images also bore witness for several decades to man's relationship with the divine. His death in 2018 left the world of photography without one of its greatest storytellers. For the first time, his black-and-white images have been collected in a single book.



Readers of RSF's photo books were then transported with a special issue, “**Sea**”, an ode to the beauty and fragility of the sea as seen by the greatest photographers, past and present. Wild and powerful, threatened and fragile, a source of subsistence and pleasure for humans and a refuge for biodiversity, the multiple facets of the sea were revealed through the lenses of Brassai, Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Anita Conti, Robert Doisneau, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Steve McCurry, Sarah Moon, Vincent Munier, Paul Nicklen, Sebastião Salgado and many others.



The year ended with a book dedicated to **Elliott Erwitt**, the best observer of canines (and humans), with an unmistakable style. A few weeks after the book went on sale, the Franco-American photographer, member of the illustrious Magnum Photos agency, died at the age of 95. RSF paid tribute to him and expressed its immense gratitude to this master of photographic humour, who had just offered RSF an anthology of his work.



# RSF'S NEW CAMPAIGN

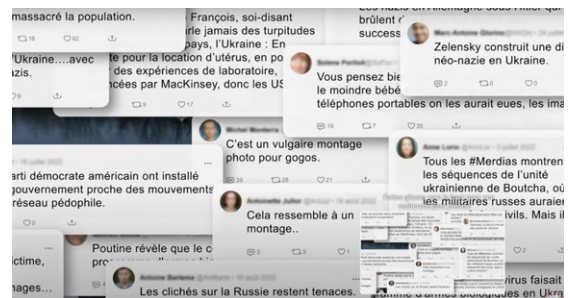
At the end of 2023, as social media continued to seethe with fake news about the conflict between Israel and Hamas and millions of accounts continued to share Russian propaganda, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) unveiled its latest campaign, conceptualised and developed by the BETC agency.

The new film denounces, through images, Russian propaganda messages denying the facts about the invasion of Ukraine, posted and shared on social media, sometimes tens of thousands of times. The film's message: only the work of journalists on the ground can help us thwart disinformation, manipulation and propaganda.

Following on from the film released at the end of 2022 about the propaganda speeches delivered by Vladimir Putin on Russian television, the new film aims to get viewers to appreciate journalism's importance in raising awareness and mobilising the public about issues that determine their future.

This end-of-year campaign helped RSF to raise part of the funds it needs to continue its work in Ukraine and the rest of the world. Intended for the general public, it was broadcast by a dozen TV channels in France and around the world, as well as on social media and several partner and support media websites.

The film was made by and with the support of BETC. It was directed by Chloé Dupeyrat.





REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) works for journalistic freedom, independence and pluralism all over the world. Headquartered in Paris, with 13 bureaux and sections and 150 correspondents around the world, it has consultative status with the United Nations and UNESCO.