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PHOTO Voice of America Spanish Service

Nicaragua: psychological support for Confidential’s journalists

In 2018, a social and political crisis broke out in Nicaragua, the worst since its civil war. Amid a crackdown on the free press, Confidential, one of the country’s main independent media outlets, kept up its courageous reporting on human rights violations. Free Press Unlimited helped the outlet build a psychological support system for its journalists, who faced threats, harassment and attacks.

[Read more on page 2](#)

Gender-based violence against female journalists: A “double attack”

Each year, journalists face threats, intimidation and even murder for bringing the truth. Female journalists are doubly at risk: for many, physical, sexual and online abuse are a daily reality.

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Ruth Kronenburg
Director of Free Press Unlimited

All over the world, press freedom is under threat. The brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi shocked the world in late 2018. He is just one in a long, macabre list of journalists who have paid the ultimate price for their work. It goes without saying that we condemn such violence against journalists to the highest degree. Ensuring journalists' safety is one of our top priorities. We also look at the more insidious ways in which press freedom is under pressure.

Recently, we met up with our partners in Prague, Czech Republic, at our quadrennial partner meeting. It was an opportunity to learn from media professionals from more than two-dozen countries about the challenges they face. Many of our partners spoke about the difficulties of making independent media financially sustainable. Others told us how the legal framework required to protect journalism is missing in their country, or how authorities abuse the law to silence journalists through legal harassment. It is our job to find ways to help independent journalism thrive in the face of these challenges.

For example, by helping independent media organisations develop new business models. This is crucial in countries like Nicaragua, where political unrest has resulted in a crackdown on press freedom, as well as an economic crisis. And Ukraine, where political and corporate interests dominate the media landscape.

We also believe it's important to build resilience against legal harassment. We helped Nigerian journalist Jones Abiri when he was held in detention without charges for two years. And we supported legal training for journalists and photographers from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras.

Our partners also see opportunities for independent journalism. Many of the countries in which we work have young populations, but their media are primarily aimed at older audiences. Our partners are getting the youth involved in media. For example, with a rap news bulletin in Mali, and journalism training for young citizen journalists in Tunisia. There is still great potential for women to be more visible in media. In Nepal, our partner Freedom Forum's gender media monitoring has led to an increase in female by-lines.

We continue to keep pushing against those who try to push down press freedom. A free media is crucial for people to make the well-informed decisions that shape their lives. We hope we can count on your support. Because people deserve to know.



Free Press Unlimited partner Fundación Latitudes offers safety training to journalists in Central America.

Continued from page 1

Nicaragua: psychological support for Confidencial's journalists

LOES WITSCHGE

Nicaragua's political crisis has put journalists like Miguel*, 21, under enormous pressure. After the crisis broke out, Miguel started receiving threats on social media. The long hours and tough interviews were often emotionally taxing. Soon, his well-being was affected. "I became moody. I slept badly, also because I could hear shots outside my house at night," Miguel says.

The crisis started on April 18, 2018, when demonstrations against a pension reform were violently repressed by police and pro-government armed groups. Thousands of Nicaraguans took to the streets to protest the violence. In the months that followed, hundreds of people lost their lives in the unrest. Meanwhile, the government cracked down on press freedom. Journalists who expose human rights violations and criticise the government are threatened, harassed, beaten up, and in some cases, arrested.

Psychotherapy and yoga

Confidencial has been reporting extensively on the repression and human rights violations. It cost the media house dearly. Police raided their editorial office and TV set, seized hard drives, computers and documents and eventually confiscated the building.

The psychological support system co-created by Free Press Unlimited and Confidencial has helped Miguel and other journalists cope. Psychotherapy and yoga have helped them process the traumatic events they cover and deal with stress.

Psychotherapist Maria* treated the Confidencial staff members. "Some of the journalists were isolating themselves, others were having trouble eating, or they were sleeping way too much or too little. Therapy helped them talk about things they don't discuss with anyone else. They could freely express emotions like shame or anger,"

Continued from page 1

Gender-based violence against female journalists: A "double attack"

LOES WITSCHGE

Brisseyda* from El Salvador is all too familiar with the challenges of being a female reporter. She believes that abuse can result because some men perceive women as more vulnerable. Once, a senior colleague made sexual insinuations. "When you begin in your career, some men think that because they teach you, they have the right to cross those boundaries," she said. Last year, gang members detained Brisseyda at her house and threatened to kill her. Fortunately, she knew how to respond. She had received safety training for journalists from Free Press Unlimited partner Fundación Latitudes. "I managed to use a protocol I had been taught, and I escaped," she said. "It saved my life."

Diversity at stake

Free Press Unlimited believes women should be able to work without risk and fear. We support women through programmes like (digital) security training and networks for female journalists. There's a lot of work to do: UNESCO reported that a record number of female journalists were killed in 2017. Women journalists also face sexual harassment and violence, and they are much more likely to experience online harassment than men.

Former UNESCO director-general Irina Bokova called it a "double attack": women are targeted for being journalists and for being female. Diversity is at stake: a study revealed that more than 33 per cent of those who reported threats, harassment or attacks said they avoided certain stories for that reason. Twenty-nine per cent said threats or attacks had made them consider leaving their profession. When female journalists stop reporting, important stories cease to be told.

"Somewhere to go"

Niga Salam is a photojournalist in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. As a woman, she believes she is better suited to cover certain topics. "I've been to a women's prison and [the inmates] could open up to me about what they've been through," she said. But Salam is not free from fear. "Being a female is dangerous, and being a female journalist is even more dangerous. At work, I feel scared something may go wrong. If I felt more confident, I could focus more on my subject," she said. Salam says working with Free Press Unlimited partner Metrography has improved things. "Now, I have somewhere to go and ask for help."

* Name has been changed for security reasons.



A TV crew reporting the news in Somaliland.

Peace Councils increase Somali journalists' safety

LOES WITSCHGE

Journalists in Somalia run the risk of being wrongfully arrested, or even murdered. Media, civil society organisations, the judiciary and police are working together in three regional peace councils to improve journalists' safety.

Ibrahim Mohamed, project officer with our partner Media Association of Puntland (MAP), paints a grim picture: "Our media laws exist only on paper. A politician who disagrees with a news report can easily order an arrest warrant. The police then arrest the journalist and throw him or her in jail without trial." Unlawful arrest is not the only risk journalists face in Somalia. In the past ten years, 45 journalists have been killed there. Murderers are not prosecuted. Moreover, underpaid journalists in Somalia often accept payments for reporting, resulting in a deep-rooted mutual mistrust between journalists, politicians and police.

"No one is above the law"

That is why Free Press Unlimited, together with three journalists' associations, organised so-called 'peace councils'. In Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland, the parties discuss a safer working environment for journalists.

Mohamed organised two sessions in Puntland. Using case studies, the participants discussed the importance of safety, and the challenges journalists face in the autonomous region of Somalia. Mohamed is happy with the outcome: "We now have more friends fighting for freedom of expression, also within the police force." The meetings in Puntland brought significant results: participants established a committee for the protection of journalists, with representatives from media, police and civil society organisations, like the Puntland Women Lawyers Association. They also set up two helplines for journalists in danger, one of them specifically for women. Outside the sessions, Mohamed witnessed a change in the police's attitude. In six cases, the police commissioner, who had been ordered by a politician to arrest a journalist, called MAP first. "The police understood that these arrest warrants were unlawful. We managed to resolve the issues with dialogue," he says.

These successes are reason for MAP to continue with the peace councils. Mohamed: "Police and journalists agree that no one is above the law. The peace councils give us the chance to make parties aware of that law - and how to preserve it. It is important to remain in dialogue with each other."



A vigil for slain Nicaraguan journalist Ángel Gahona.

she says. Miguel was among the journalists who worked with Maria. He says the sessions have helped him: "Help from a professional is extremely important to be able to continue." One year after the crisis broke out, many in the country still live in fear. Journalists face arbitrary

detention and prosecution, simply for doing their job. "No journalist in Nicaragua now feels 100 per cent safe. The threat is always there," says Miguel.

* Names have been changed for security reasons.

“This is a perilous time for journalists”



Mark Nelson, senior director at the Centre for International Media Assistance, is a media development specialist and former journalist. He talked to Free Press Unlimited about the unprecedented dangers journalists are facing, and the important role the media play at this crucial junction in history.

LOES WITSCHGE

Are crimes against journalists becoming more frequent?

“This is a perilous time for journalists. The statistics clearly show unprecedented numbers of journalists are being killed or imprisoned. Meanwhile, newspapers, websites, radio and television stations are being closed down. This is not a peril to journalists only, but also to our freedom as human beings.”

Why is this happening now?

“We’re in a political climate similar to the 1930s. Cynical politicians are manipulating and exaggerating existing grievances to gain power. Journalists become targets of these populist politicians and their supporters, because journalists point out their lies and false promises.”

“Right now, we still have access to information in most countries. Yet attempts by state actors to drown out free voices are increasingly successful. We need independent voices to enter the debate and to be visible in our media.”

What is the role media play in turning the tide?

“The news media are essential at times like this. Yet they are facing difficulties in checking facts and holding politicians accountable for their actions. Traditional news business models are failing, which is making it hard to produce high-quality journalism. Still, there are some promising signs. Organisations are cooperating across borders and providing invaluable investigative and enterprising journalism, such as the *Panama Papers*. We will have to work hard to preserve and invest in that kind of work.”

What can media development organisations like Free Press Unlimited do to help?

“Organisations like Free Press Unlimited bring knowledge, contacts and ideas. They can connect media organisations within and across countries and facilitate exchanges on how to deal with these trying circumstances.”

As a former journalist, what does this time of decreasing press freedom mean to you?

“As a journalist, I saw a lot of really bad things. This is one of those periods in which we have to realise that if we don’t change, we can really have a bad outcome. Already the number of countries designated as ‘Not Free’ in the global press indices has been growing for the past 15 years.”

“What’s really worrying is that it is also happening in Europe and the Americas, which have traditionally led the world in expanding democracy and freedom. I nevertheless see cause for optimism. People are starting to see that if we work on preserving independent voices, it will improve our chances of ending up in a good place.”

Three journalists tell us why they are concerned about press freedom in Europe.



Marilù Mastrogiovanni

Editor of *Il Tacco d'Italia* newspaper, Italy

“In Italy, reporting on the mafia is very risky. This danger is increasing in the rest of Europe. If Europe is the cradle of democracy, and democracy is based on freedom of thought, then Europe must support the free press.”



Jean-Paul Marthoz

Columnist *Le Soir* and visiting professor at *Université Catholique de Louvain*, Belgium

“The murders of journalists in Malta and Slovakia are an indication that something is wrong in Europe. I believe there is a link between the dangers that journalists are facing and the fact that, even in the most established democracies, the systems of checks and balances and judicial control are infected.”



Dragana Pećo

Investigative journalist at *Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK)*, Serbia

“In public, politicians [in Serbia] will say the media are free to ask any questions. But at the same time, they use the same words as the social media critics, saying we’re foreign agents who want to bring down the government. That shows they’re not willing to protect journalists.”

Radio Tamazuj: Part of the solution

ILAYDA HAGENS

In 2015, a horrific civil war and crackdown on independent media forced the entire editorial staff of Radio Tamazuj to flee South Sudan. Today, the exiled radio station plays a vital role in the daily lives of South Sudanese people.

From a neighbouring country, Radio Tamazuj delivers independent news to approximately 500,000 South Sudanese listeners every day. “[It became] impossible for us to work in South Sudan without government interference,” the editor-in-chief* explains. “When we left in 2015 and continued reporting from exile, we knew [there might be] no way back. Back home, we have no guarantee of our safety.” Today, Radio Tamazuj is the only independent South Sudanese media outlet, and the many calls from listeners remind them exactly how vital their work is.

“Most people in South Sudan are too poor to afford food. Yet they buy credit and call us to share their stories. Their need to share and receive reliable information is what keeps us going,” says the editor-in-chief.

Journalists who refuse to keep in line with the government agenda risk harassment, detention, torture and even murder. Radio Tamazuj staff left their country and families behind, but when asked if he ever regrets it, the editor-in-chief’s answer is very clear: “Not one day.”

Free Press Unlimited supports Radio Tamazuj both financially and operationally. Together, we are working towards a professional, independent Radio Tamazuj that can continue to provide the South Sudanese population with reliable, uncensored information.

*The editor-in-chief is not named for security reasons.



Radio Tamazuj is the only independent South Sudanese media outlet.

Independent reporting in northern Syria



Arta FM addresses issues the local government ignores.

For many years, there has been little room for independent media in war-torn Syria. Nevertheless, for six years, radio station Arta FM has been working for more peace and justice in the Kurdish part of northern Syria through independent reporting.

ILAYDA HAGENS

Free Press Unlimited gives journalism and organisational training to the radio station’s editing team and management. We also provide regular feedback that helps Arta FM safeguard the quality of its programmes.

Arta FM offers local news and addresses issues the local government ignores. Arta FM’s importance is

illustrated in its reporting on the lax attitude of the local government when heavy rainfall and flooding caused damage to infrastructure and homes in Jazira region in December 2018. Arta FM received reports from local residents about the negligence and inaccessibility of the local government during this emergency. The radio station gave their complaints attention during various programmes. In one broadcast, they gave the floor to several victims who confirmed that no one who called the municipal emergency number after the flooding actually got a response.

The municipality initially denied the allegations, but thanks in part to the continued pressure from Arta FM, the responsible official admitted that insufficient action was taken. Local emergency committees were established so that in future, the municipality can take better action in case of an emergency. The deputy mayor also announced that two responsible officials had been fired on the spot.

Helping women in media to the top

Even though women make up half the population, they occupy just over a quarter of top management jobs in media companies. Our partner organisations are working to bridge the gap. The two examples below demonstrate what it takes.

LOES WITSCHGE



Motunrayo Alaka

Coordinator of *Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ)*, Nigeria

Motunrayo Alaka is on a mission to have more female editors-in-chief in Nigeria. “A few years ago, we had only two female editors-in-chief in the whole country,” Alaka said. “Nobody was saying females shouldn’t be leaders, but nobody was saying that they should be, either.”

With support from Free Press Unlimited, WSCIJ launched the Female Reporters Leadership Programme. Cultural expectations for women in Nigeria to run the household can get in the way of leadership ambitions, Alaka explained. But in many cases, the ambition is lacking altogether: “It doesn’t even occur to them. They take for granted that they will be second-class citizens. We train women to know that they can be leaders if they want to,” she said.

Excellence in reporting

In a six-month programme, women journalists receive training and mentorship. They are expected to not just develop their leadership skills, but also excellence in reporting. “We’re



A 2017 survey concluded there were two women in management positions in Nigerian media for every ten men.

not just saying, ‘you’re a female, be there’, we’re saying, ‘you’re a female, be good’. If you want to lead a newsroom, you should be a great reporter,” Alaka said. She continued: “Women don’t just have children and cook meals. We lead organisations, we are change makers, we sustain families, we lead in the oil sector, aviation and engineering. We’re here and we should be confident.”



Tidiani Togola

CEO of *media development organisation Tuwindi*, Mali

In Mali, women are barely visible in the media. Of all the people appearing in TV news bulletins and newspaper columns - as journalists, presenters, and experts and interviewees - only 14 per cent is female. In leadership positions, too, women are conspicuous in their absence. The statistics shocked Tidiani Togola. His organisation, Tuwindi, carried out the study. With Free Press Unlimited’s support, Tuwindi launched the Gender, Independence and Professionalism (GIP) label, a quality standard for media companies with a proven commitment to gender equality. “For decades in Mali, people have been signing

documents and making commitments to improve gender balance, but they never fulfil them. We decided to ask for proof that they are working to improve gender sensitivity,” Togola said.

Proving commitment

Obtaining the label isn’t easy. Media organisations need to fulfil at least 21 of the 30 requirements. A number of them are aimed specifically at getting women into management. For instance, women must represent at least 30 per cent of a media company’s leadership. They also need to have the same income as men in similar positions. In January, the first batch of GIP labels was awarded to six media organisations that were among 14 initial applicants. Each of them had to make changes to get the label. Four had to first sign contracts with female employees. “In many cases, women don’t get a work contract, while men do. It is such a shame,” explained Togola. In two cases, women were promoted to leadership positions to fulfil the GIP obligations. Togola is proud of these initial accomplishments, achieved in the first year of the label’s existence. “For a decade, we talked about gender equality, but nothing changed. GIP shows that change isn’t about talking. It’s about proving commitment.”

In pictures

Crime scene investigation training for Central American journalists

Organised crime, corruption and state crackdowns on the media make Central America a dangerous region in which to be a journalist. Free Press Unlimited partner Fundación Latitudes offers safety training to photographers and journalists from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In July 2019, the organisation partnered with El Salvador's prosecutors' school for a legal training for journalists.

LOES WITSCHGE

"Since we started with the Riesgo Cruzado programme, we've looked at what the risks for journalists are. Then we built the training modules around them," says Edgar Romero, a co-founder of Fundación Latitudes. "We realised that due to new dynamics in the region, journalists were increasingly being attacked through legal means." In the legal training, journalists learn about the laws that protect them and the legal limitations they face. The collaboration between the prosecutors' school and Fundación Latitudes is the first of its kind in the region. Prosecutors teach journalists about topics including media law and victims' rights. They also stage a series of simulations to demonstrate the delicate nature of crime scene investigations. The journalists take on the role of police officers, investigators and prosecutors to become more aware of how they can report on crime scenes in a legal and ethical way.



▲ The Riesgo Cruzado programme prepares journalists from Central America for a variety of risks they face. On the first day of the training, participants are given a refresher on some of the skills they learned in previous modules, including self-defence and how to advance safely with a camera in a crossfire.



▶ With the help of a forensics expert, journalists look for bones in a simulated illegal grave. Crime scenes are "delicate", explains Edgar Romero. If journalists get too close and accidentally tamper with evidence, they could be prosecuted. Romero: "We wanted to demonstrate situations where certain mistakes can end in journalists being restricted in their profession."



▲ Journalists investigate a simulated crime scene. Learning about how investigations work can contribute to more ethical reporting, says Zenaida Rivera, the director of El Salvador's prosecutors' school. Photographers often take graphic images of victims. "Imagine the psychological damage such an image could do to the victim's relatives," Rivera says.



▲ Daniela Ruiz (r) works for Nicaraguan radio station *La Primerísima*. Reporting on crime scenes is part of her daily job, but this is the first time she receives training on how they work. "I didn't know about the complex protocols in place. [With this training] we as journalists can be more professional, more ethical and understand that while we play an important role in society, it's also important to recognise the work [on crime scenes] by authorities."



▲ Guatemalan photojournalist Alex Cruz receives his diploma at the end of the training. "Every time we have come to do a part of this course, we've taken away new tools that have served to protect our lives and help us work more professionally," he says.

Jones Abiri: tortured and imprisoned for two years

In May 2019, journalist Jones Abiri was charged under Nigeria's cybercrime and terrorism prevention acts. Abiri had already spent two years in jail for similar allegations, until a court dismissed the case. He received judicial support from Free Press Unlimited's Reporters Respond Fund.

ANDRÉ VAN DER VLUGT



Jones Abiri is the editor-in-chief of regional newspaper *Weekly Source*. He is just one of numerous journalists in Nigeria who have been harassed, abused, intimidated, jailed and gagged for reporting on sensitive issues that expose powerful figures. On July 21, 2016, police arrested Abiri. The State Security Service (SSS) claimed that he was the leader of a militant group, the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF). The SSS also stated that Abiri confessed to crimes, including extorting oil companies and threatening to attack targets, including the presidential villa. Despite his strong denial, Abiri was transported to Nigeria's capital, Abuja, a month after his arrest. There, he was put in an unofficial prison where he shared a cell with suspected secessionists, rebels and Boko Haram extremists. Abiri was denied any contact with his family, friends or lawyer. He has also claimed he was tortured while in detention. Speaking to *Premium Times* about the day of his arrest, Abiri said: "My eyes were blindfolded

... The next thing I heard was something that struck my back and I fell down."

Free again

In July 2018, Abiri was finally arraigned and saw his wife and children for the first time in two years. After court, he was sent to a normal prison. He was later released on bail. Eventually, the court dismissed the case, citing a lack of jurisdiction. Through the Reporters Respond programme, Free Press Unlimited facilitated legal support for Abiri, and arranged travel costs for his family to see him in Abuja. After his detention, Abiri sued the federal government and was awarded 10 million Naira (€24,300) by the Federal High Court. But in March 2019, Abiri was detained again. In May, he was formally charged. As this publication went to press, he was still in jail awaiting trial. Abiri himself has said he is being targeted because of his media work. The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists has called for the charges to be dropped.



Radio Dabanga circumvents repression by broadcasting over shortwave frequencies from undisclosed countries.

Reporting on the Sudanese protests from the heart of Amsterdam

In April 2019, Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir was overthrown after months of mass protests. Radio Dabanga worked tirelessly to bring independent news to the people of Sudan from their studio in Amsterdam.

LAYDA HAGENS

Radio Dabanga is the only source of independent news for people in Sudan listening via shortwave radio. The newsroom is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, because Sudan's repressive media climate does not allow for independent reporting inside the country.

In December 2018, mass demonstrations swept across the country. Protesters who demanded an end to al-Bashir's 29-year-long, repressive rule were met with violence. Al-Bashir was unseated in April, but the crackdown didn't end. In June, soldiers and paramilitary forces killed at least 128 protesters,

according to doctors. Throughout these turbulent times, Dabanga's producers and editors were working overtime. "This has changed our work and it has changed our lives, completely," deputy editor-in-chief Hamid* says. "Everyone called us because they knew that we are the only ones who could report the truth on the protests, since the government cannot interfere with our broadcast."

Press freedom in Sudan was already virtually non-existent before the protests prompted the government's further crackdown on the media. In early June, the military rulers issued a near-total internet blackout, which lasted for more than a month. Radio Dabanga circumvents repression by broadcasting over shortwave frequencies from undisclosed countries and maintains a satellite channel, also broadcasting from abroad. As a result, only its website and social media platforms were inaccessible during the blackout. This way, Sudanese citizens were still able to receive Radio

Dabanga's independent news. "During the internet blackout, [people] in rural areas and remote areas and poor people were depending completely on Radio Dabanga," says Dr Jamal Mohammed Abdalmula, a humanitarian activist based in the Darfur region in western Sudan.

In early August, Sudan took steps towards a democratic future when the military and the opposition reached an agreement about a transitional government. Long-term peace and stability are still a long way off for Sudan. But Radio Dabanga is committed to bringing Sudanese people the information they need and deserve. Says Hamid: "I am ready to work 24 hours [a day] if I have to. This is the moment to do something for my people."

* Name changed for security reasons.



Sudanese ex-president al-Bashir during his trial.

Rap news engages Malian youth

Seventy per cent of the population in Mali is under 35 years old. Yet in the media, there's little coverage of themes that concern young people. Our partner, Kunafoni, is changing that: young rappers deliver the news in a way that engages Malian youth.

BIRGITTA VAN DER LINDEN

In Mali, youth unemployment is high, the country has one of the highest percentages of child marriages and the north is suffering under extremist violence. Unsurprisingly, many young people in Mali are pessimistic about their futures. Disadvantaged young people are an easy target for radicalisation.

"The future of Mali is in the hands of the youth, but an increasing number of young Malians want to leave the country," says journalist Togola Hawa Séméga. "They feel they have no opportunities and no voice. With Kunafoni WebTV, I want to show young people

that they can innovate, create, dream, but even better: that they can actually realise their dreams."

Objective reporting

Inspired by a rapping weatherman in the United States, Séméga decided to use rap to appeal to young people. Free Press Unlimited believed in Séméga's plan. Together, we worked out a distinctive format: unlike other rap news in West Africa, Kunafoni WebTV is based on objective reporting. Free Press Unlimited trained Kunafoni's team – now five rappers, three video journalists and a beatmaker – in journalistic techniques like right of reply and storytelling.

Accompanied by a rousing beat, young rappers in *Kunafoni Rappou's* online news bulletins talk about hot issues, like the presidential elections in 2018. Video journalists interview young Malians at demonstrations for the opposition and the rappers report the official results, as well as allegations of fraud.

An increasing number of Malians are getting hooked on Kunafoni's creative mix of journalism, rap and humour. Its Facebook following has grown from 26,500 to almost 60,000. In 2018, Kunafoni came second in *Le Prix francophone de l'innovation dans les médias*, a prize for innovative media formats in the French-speaking world. The bulletins have also reached Malian television: *Renouveau TV* broadcasts the rap news twice a week.



The recording of Kunafoni WebTV, a rap newschannel for youth in Mali.

Giving youth a voice in Tunisia

Young people in Tunisia hardly participate in society and have very little control over their own futures. Together with local partner Al Khatt, Free Press Unlimited gives young people a say in the media.

JANNEKE VAN RIEL

Despite the revolution in Tunisia, the situation for many young people is still hopeless. They are not taken seriously and feel socially excluded. Self-immolation protests against the social and economic situation in the country are alarmingly regular and could turn into larger unrest. In 2011, Tunisian organisation Al Khatt launched *Jaridaty.net*, where young people can post videos and shape their own futures.

Fact-checking and fake news

Together with Al Khatt, Free Press Unlimited is training young people from underrepresented cities. They learn journalism skills such as

storytelling, fact-checking and journalistic ethics. This enables them to actively participate in the public debate and demand a voice in decision-making through their own high-quality videos. By creating their own stories in this project, the young people also learn about the rules of journalism and fake news, and become more resilient against inflammatory reporting. For information and news about Tunisia, young people mainly turn to the internet. Here, they often find incorrect or heavily biased information, including from radical groups.

Nationwide reach

To further boost the dialogue between young and old, Al Khatt organises public meetings. Together with the young journalists, neighbours and local policy-makers watch videos on work opportunities, the future of young people in the community and cultural development. Afterwards, they discuss the issues and ways to drive change. One of the largest national television channels in Tunisia, *EI Wataniya 2*, has joined the project. Al Khatt will teach the channel's producers how to

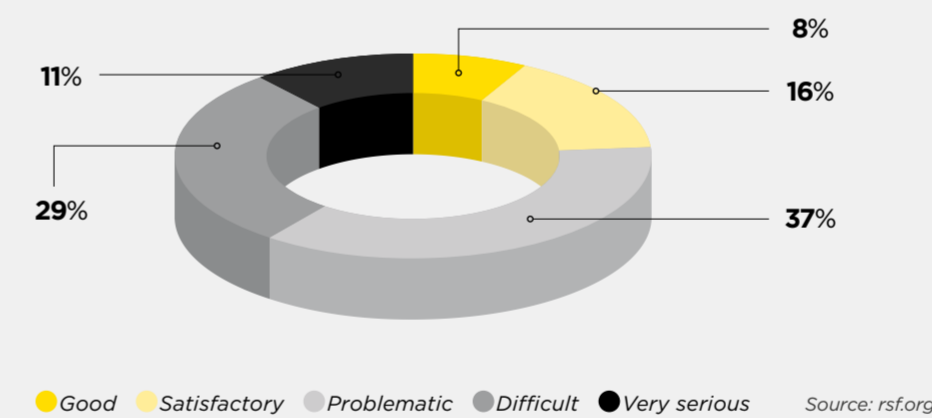


make programmes for and about young people. Together, they are setting up a new weekly programming, to showcase the videos made by the young participants. This way, locally produced stories get a nationwide reach, and the voices of young people penetrate all corners of the country, including the capital.

In numbers: Press freedom worldwide

Press freedom is on the decline worldwide. Over the past decade, journalism has become more dangerous. We've compiled some key figures.

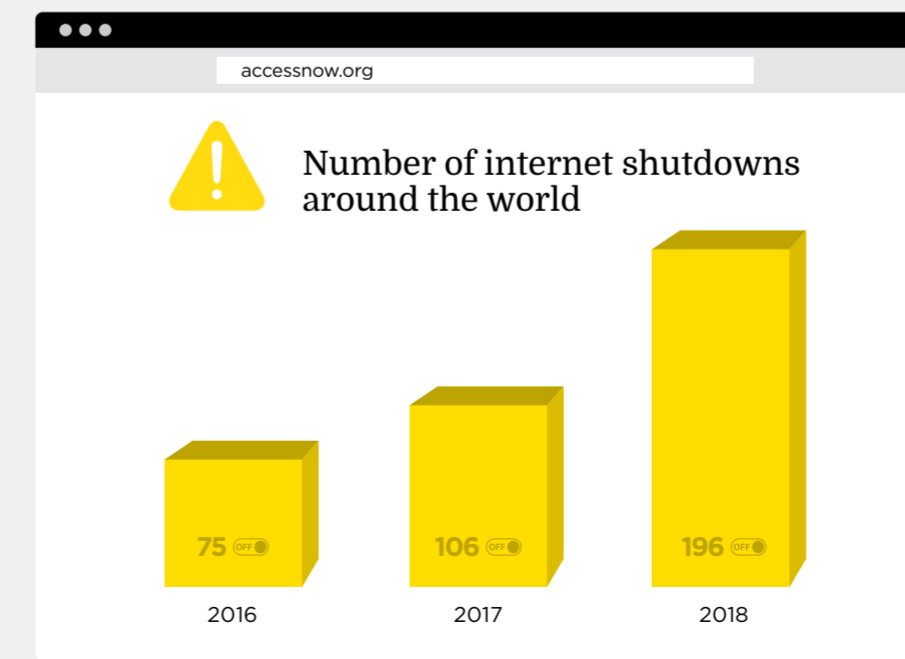
In 2019, more than three quarters of countries had a media climate that was problematic or worse, according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF).



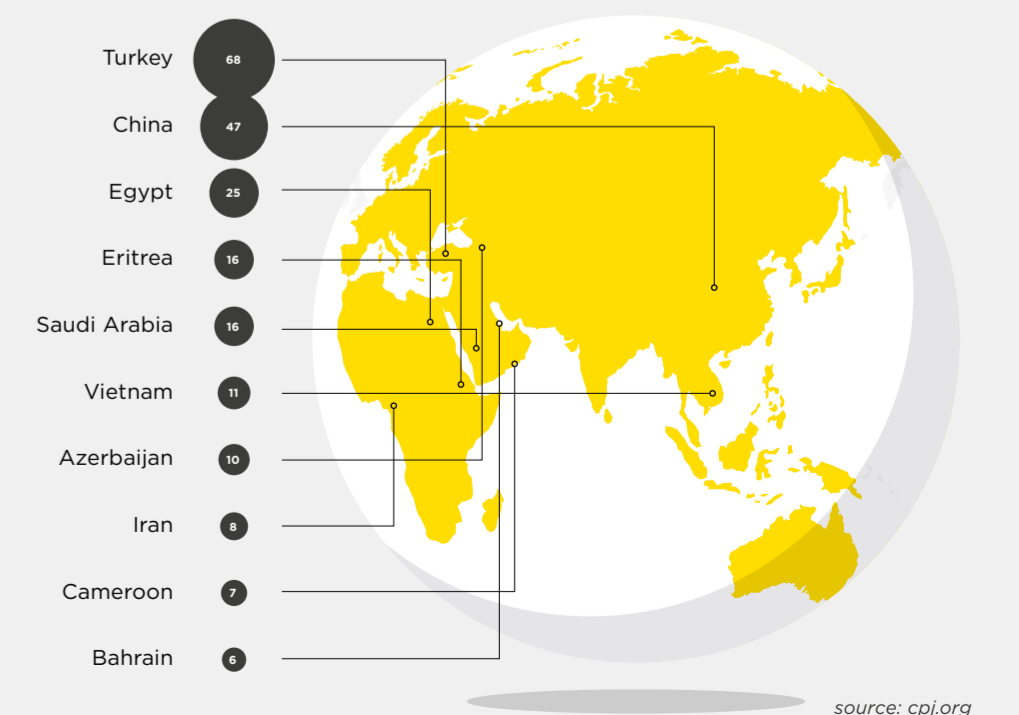
More than 280 journalists were killed over the past five years, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).



Around the world, the number of internet shutdowns is on the rise, Access Now reported.



CPJ reported that 250 journalists were jailed in 2018. These are the biggest jailers.



'Adaptability is in our DNA': making independent journalism pay

All over the world, the media are asking themselves how to make independent journalism financially sustainable. Where press freedom is restricted, this can be even more challenging. We talked to three of our partners about their approach to making journalism pay.

LOES WITSCHGE



Enrique Gasteazoro,
Confidencial, Nicaragua

Sustaining an independent media outlet in Nicaragua was already difficult before the crisis, says Enrique Gasteazoro, CEO of Confidencial. The country's worst political crisis since its civil war saw existing sources of income dwindle and independent journalism become more costly - and risky. "In the past year, we had to change our model several times," says Gasteazoro. "Even before the crisis, we were drilling adaptability into our DNA - we have to be able to respond to disruption. But we didn't expect this kind of disruption so fast." With Free Press Unlimited's support, they developed new digital strategies to overcome censorship and diversify their income. Confidencial is planning on expanding its reach, audience engagement and monetisation on YouTube.



Nataliya Gumenyuk,
Hromadske, Ukraine

Hromadske is a TV channel in Ukraine that provides impartial public interest broadcasting in a media landscape dominated by political and corporate interests. "In Ukraine, you more or less can't have a big business without being in politics," says head of organisation Nataliya Gumenyuk. "The market is broken." Hromadske is among the most innovative media companies in Ukraine, and works hard to generate income independently. In 2018, it experimented with business models including selling rights to its documentaries and organising a charity concert. Free Press Unlimited recently started helping Hromadske develop and try out new business models.



Owais Aslam Ali,
PPF, Pakistan

Owais Aslam Ali is the secretary general of the Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF). He believes that the prevailing business model for media in Pakistan is harming journalism: "the bulk of our journalism is based on press releases or events coverage." PPF's Investigative Journalism Fellowship offers reporters three months to build their investigative journalism skills. A stipend allows them to focus exclusively on large investigative projects, which they complete with help from senior journalist mentors. It may not be a solution for the Pakistani media's broken business model, but at least it is a way to equip the country's journalists with new skills and improve the quality of their work. Aslam Ali is pleased with the results: "We're providing media with stories that they would not have been able to do if not for this fellowship." One fellow, Niaz Ahmad Khan, even won an award for 'Best News Investigation of the Year' from the Pakistan Data Journalism Awards.

Breaking barriers: The first transgender radio host in Pakistan



Despite initial resistance, Khan quickly won the hearts of TNN's listeners.

When Tribal News Network, a long-time Free Press Unlimited partner in the most conservative area of Pakistan, hired Sobia Khan as its new radio host, it made a major impact in a country where transgender people are marginalised.

ILAYDA HAGENS

The first transgender radio host in Pakistan, Khan hosts a weekly programme with around 50,000 views on a Facebook live stream. Her story breaks barriers in a country where most transgender people still deal with inequality, poverty and even violent abuse.

Winning hearts

Khan was determined to work in media: "I want to show the world that transgender people can have respectable jobs. We deserve other options than sex work, begging or being a wedding entertainer." Tribal News Network (TNN) is an inclusive online and radio news agency in northern Pakistan. It strives to represent all minorities, for example by training female journalism students to encourage their careers. Free Press Unlimited has supported TNN since its inception in 2013, providing organisational support and training. Said Nazir, who hired Khan, admits that even though TNN is inclusive, there was resistance to Khan. "Some of the senior staff said it might give TNN a bad name. One staff member even refused to work with her," he says. Audiences resisted, too: "In the beginning, people left a lot of comments making fun of her."

Eight months later, Khan has won the hearts of both listeners and colleagues. "The colleague who refused to work with Khan is now the show's producer, and enjoys it," Nazir says. "Other transgender people look up to her and are happy to be represented in the media."

Transgender rights are slowly improving in Pakistan, and new role models like Khan have a great impact on transgender people's emancipation. There is still a long way to go, but hopefully Khan, and others like her, can pave the way for transgender people in Pakistan.

Gender monitoring puts more women in Nepalese media



Since Freedom Forum started monitoring content, female by-lines have been on the rise.

In Nepal, women are almost invisible in the media. Our partner, Freedom Forum, helps by using a gender media monitoring method provided by Free Press Unlimited.

JOHANNA HILBERT AND IRINA RAIU

In Nepalese media, female journalists often don't get a by-line. Women also rarely appear in the media as experts. So women feel unheard and have no positive role models in the media. If the media wish to stand up for women and girls, they should ensure that their staff and reporting includes women.

Since 2016, Freedom Forum has monitored the content of nine national newspapers, seven provincial newspapers and five opinion websites every week. They scan by-lines, sources and photos.

Every three months, Freedom Forum sends a report to the media organisations. They also organise discussions with chief editors, government officials and civil society organisations about the representation of women, both in the content and on the work floor.

Results have already materialised: slowly but surely, the number of female by-lines is increasing. "We are pleasantly surprised with the changes we see," says Freedom Forum's gender monitoring officer, Nanu Maiya Khadka.

According to Freedom Forum, there was an increase in the number of women appearing as authors and sources in 2018. And the discussions about women in the media had another effect: two newspapers, *Kantipur* and *Republica*, are now providing female employees with transport to and from work. This makes it safer for women to work late shifts. As a result, they can now cover the 'hard' news items, such as politics and the economy, which are often covered in the evening.

There is still a lot of work to do. Between July and September 2018, just 14 per cent of all by-lines monitored by Freedom Forum were female. And only 16 per cent of sources cited were women. One way to fast-track change is to get more women to the top. So Free Press Unlimited is initiating a training programme for female leadership in Nepalese media in 2019.

A press freedom index for Indonesia

With support from Free Press Unlimited, media development organisation PPMN developed its own press freedom index for Indonesia. The index is now used to identify unacceptable media practices and make local governments aware of the importance of a free, independent press.

IRINA RAIU

Press freedom in Indonesia is often lacking. Issues like violence against local journalists and media owners with political interests are commonplace.

A better view of the (lack of) press freedom and its causes across different regions was needed. PPMN and the Press Council of Indonesia initiated the first national and provincial Indonesian press freedom index. Free Press Unlimited provided financial support and coaching. "The index helps us monitor and improve press freedom, and holds a mirror up to our actions," says PPMN Director Eni Mulia.

The index was used in the run-up to the 2019 general elections in workshops in East and West Java. PPMN presented the press freedom index to local politicians, policymakers, academics, journalists and police officers.

Heroes of press freedom

Every year we honour the world's best and most courageous journalists with the Free Press Awards. We asked the winners about their drive, safety of journalists and what press freedom means to them.



"As an independent journalist who has been at the receiving end of the state's excesses, [press freedom] means being able to tell your story however unpopular it is, however critical it is of the establishment, and to be able to tell it without feeling claustrophobic, without worrying about the consequences"

Rana Ayyub, Most Resilient Journalist 2018



"To me as a journalist, press freedom is the right I should enjoy to inform the public without being intimidated by the government or its machinery"

Kemi Busari, Newcomer of the Year 2018



"What determines a news story is the public interest. Even if it involves a senior government official, if it involves senior investigators. It doesn't matter as long as the public deserves to know"

Mwape Kumwenda, Most Resilient Journalist 2017



"Safety of journalists is really important for us. Ukrainian journalists are at risk all the time. Every journalist can [suffer the fate of murdered journalist] Pavel Sheremet. That's why we should protect ourselves"

Marina Ansiforova, Newcomer of the Year 2017



"In the last [of two] assassination attempts I got six bullet wounds, two bullets are still inside my body. I think, why I am doing all this? But when I go out on the street people give me respect and praise for doing a good job as a journalist. I am staying in Pakistan to fight for these people"

Hamid Mir, Most Resilient Journalist 2016

Free Press Unlimited 2019

31 countries **66 partners** **62 projects**



Free Press Unlimited operates in these countries

Free Press Unlimited **People deserve to know**

Our vision is, 'People deserve to know'. If you don't know what's going on around you, how can you make the right decisions? Reporters Without Borders' annual Freedom of the Press Index shows that the number of countries regarded as safe, in which journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes tighten their grip on the media. Just one in seven world citizens has access to independent journalism. The other six are at the mercy of lies, half-truths and, moreover, silence.

It is our mission to ensure that impartial information is available to people everywhere, today and in the future. The programmes run by Free Press Unlimited and its partners help journalists report and broadcast their stories, even in countries with little or no press freedom. If they are imprisoned or sabotaged, we help them get back to their vital work as soon as possible. We also fund local media outlets and train new journalists in countries in which there is a dearth of (local) reporting.

In war zones and conflict areas, reliable news can be a matter of life and death. That is why we helped create a media charter to ensure fair journalism in Syria, and why the Free Press Unlimited offices in Amsterdam host Radio Dabanga, which broadcasts to 3.3 million listeners in Sudan.

To help local media fulfil their vital role in society, Free Press Unlimited vigorously promotes three key goals:

- 1 An enabling environment for the media, conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity.
- 2 Media that serve the interests of the public - both men and women - and act as a watchdog on their behalf.
- 3 Media professionals who work to the highest standards, are effective and sustainable.

We put our heart and soul into these objectives every day. People deserve to know.

To read more about our work, vision and mission, visit our website: www.freepressunlimited.org

Safety

For independent media, safety is a basic need. Journalists can only do their work when they are free from violence, censorship and obstruction.

Our safety programme has four pillars:

- Emergency support for journalists and media organisations in distress
- Legal support for journalists or media professionals who are being prosecuted because of their work
- Training for journalists on physical, digital, psychosocial and legal security
- Active lobbying for a safe work environment for journalists

Gender

Women and girls continue to have unequal access to resources, including information. The media play an important role in addressing and changing this inequality.

Promoting gender equality cuts through all of our work. We focus on three pillars:

- Lobbying and advocacy for the interests of women in the media, in partnership with media outlets and media development organisations
- Demanding inclusive, gender-sensitive content that departs from existing gender stereotypes and empowers women and girls
- Promoting equal participation and decision-making in the media by helping women bolster their leadership skills, expand their professional networks and claim leadership roles in media



Colophon

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