



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Protect Journalists, Protect the Truth,

A brochure for the International Day  
to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists



including  
highlights of the UNESCO  
Director-General's Report  
on the Safety of Journalists  
and the Danger of Impunity

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2018–2019, UNESCO recorded a total of 156 killings of journalists worldwide.

Overall, over the past decade, a journalist has been killed on average every four days. The year 2019 shows the lowest death toll recorded by UNESCO in the last decade with 57 deaths.

Despite these positive developments, journalism remains a dangerous profession: the threats faced by journalists are many and wide-ranging. Casualties related to countries experiencing armed conflict have declined. Fatal attacks against journalists covering stories related to corruption, human rights violations, environmental crimes, trafficking, and political wrongdoing have risen in a number of other countries.

In the past two years, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Asia and the Pacific regions have seen particularly high numbers of killings of journalists.

In 2019, the highest number of fatal attacks occurred in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, representing 40% of the total killings registered worldwide, followed by the Asia and the Pacific region with 26% of killings.

While there are significantly fewer women journalists among the victims of fatal attacks, they are particularly targeted by offline and online gender-based attacks putting their safety at risk – these attacks can range from harassment, trolling and doxxing<sup>1</sup> to physical and sexual assault.



Impunity for crimes against journalists continues to prevail.

There has been however a slight decrease in the rate of impunity with 13% of cases worldwide reported as resolved in comparison to 12% in 2019, and 11% in 2018.

In 2020 compared to 2019, a higher number of States responded to UNESCO's request for information on the status of judicial enquiries into the killings of journalists, with a reaction rate of 71%. Extensive information supplied by States shows a range of initiatives, systems and activities in place to address the issues of safety and impunity. These cover monitoring and reporting; prevention of crimes against journalists; protection of journalists against attacks; prosecution of crimes against journalists; legal reforms and other measures, including in tackling the gender dimension of journalists' safety.

For more information, please visit UNESCO's Observatory of killed journalists:  
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory>

<sup>1</sup>Trolling usually designates the range of acts of online abuse, and doxxing is the practice of obtaining and publishing private and identifiable information about individuals, usually with malicious intent.



# 2 JOURNALISTS' KILLINGS IN 2018 AND 2019: KEY FINDINGS

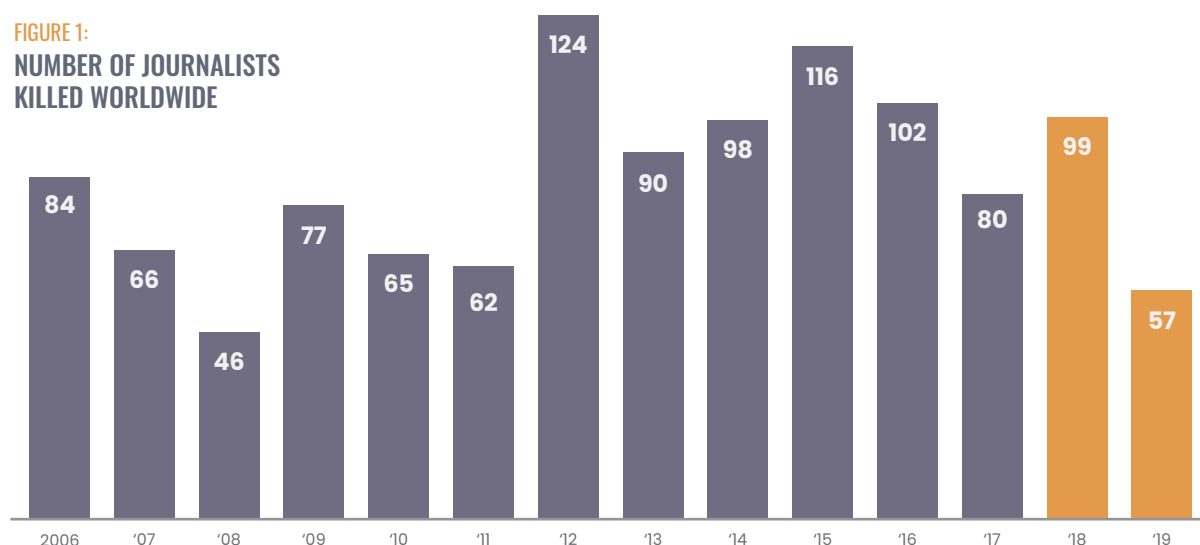
**Fewer journalists killed in 2019 than in any other year of the past decade.**

In 2018 and 2019, UNESCO recorded a total of 156 killings of journalists and media workers worldwide. In 2018, 99 killings were recorded, while in 2019 that number declined to 57 killings, the lowest death toll in the last decade.

At the time of drafting this report at the end of September 2020, 39 journalists had been killed in the earlier months of the year – 16 in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, 11 in the Asia and the Pacific region, 7 in the Arab States region, and 5 in Africa – including 3 women journalists.



**FIGURE 1:**  
NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS  
KILLED WORLDWIDE

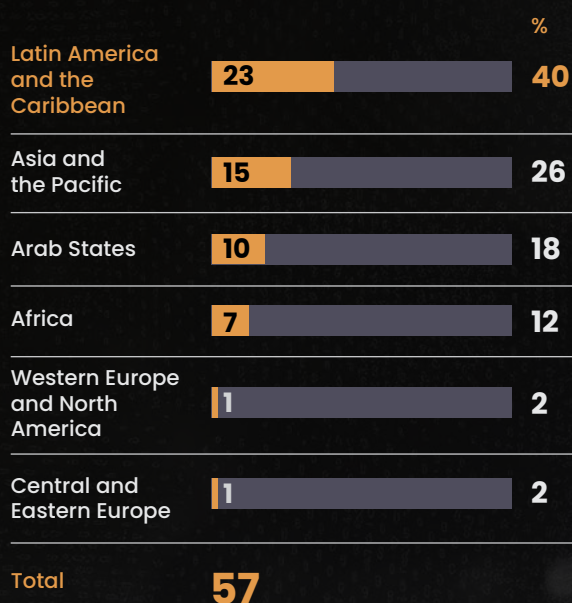


## POTENTIAL REASONS FOR LOWER NUMBERS OF KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS IN 2018-2019 THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS:

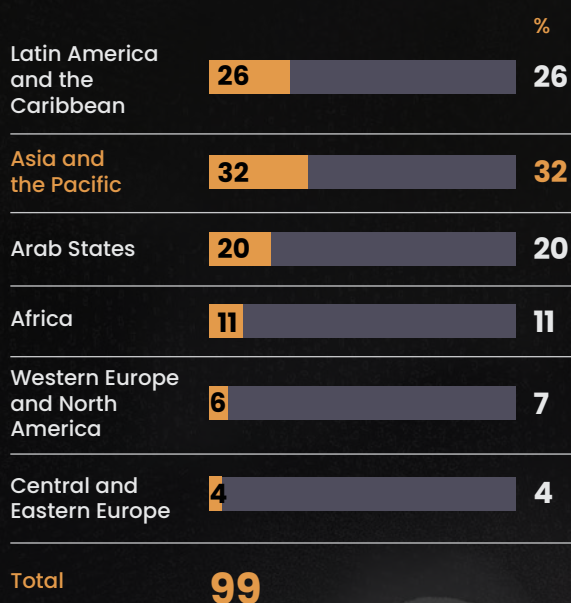
- The decline in those that were registered as occurring in countries in conflict.
- Unprecedented global attention and mobilization following high-profile cases.
- Increased number of national mechanisms for journalistic safety focused on prevention, protection, prosecution, and/or monitoring and reporting.
- Journalists practicing self-censorship in reaction to widespread threats.

## 2.1 KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS OCCUR IN ALL REGIONS, BUT NUMBERS VARY SIGNIFICANTLY

**FIGURE 2:**  
NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS  
KILLED BY REGION IN 2019



**FIGURE 3:**  
NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS  
KILLED BY REGION IN 2018



According to UNESCO data, in 2019, the largest number of fatal attacks (23 killings) occurred in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, representing 40% of the total killings registered worldwide, followed by the Asia and the Pacific region with 26% of killings (15 killings). The third deadliest region was the Arab States with 18% of killings (10 killings).

In 2018, the largest number of fatal attacks (32 killings) occurred in the Asia and the Pacific region, representing 32% of killings registered worldwide, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 26% of killings (26 killings). In the Arab States region, UNESCO recorded 20 killings, representing 20% of killings.

In both years, the regions of Africa, Western Europe and North America, and Central and Eastern Europe each account for less than 15% of overall killings.

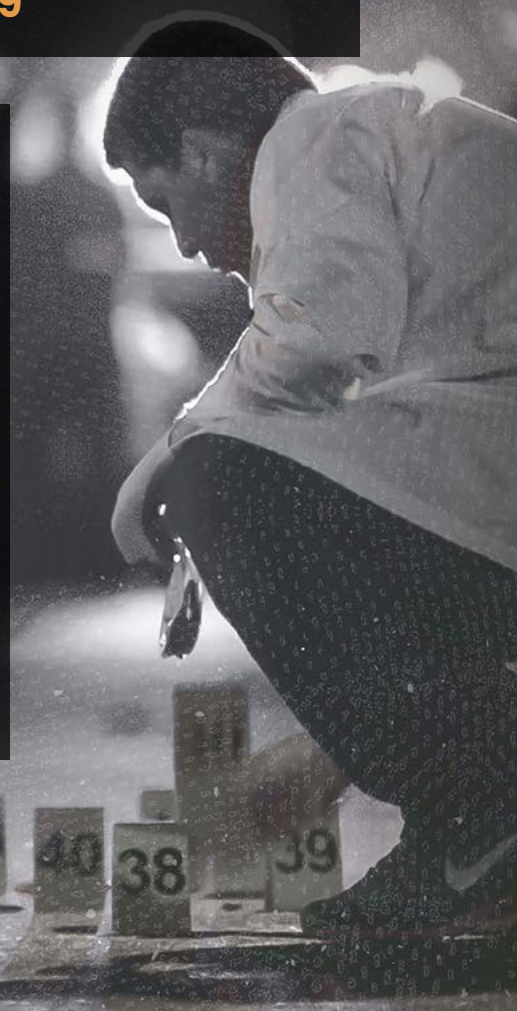











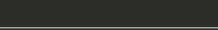




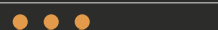
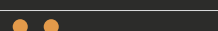
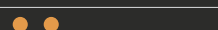
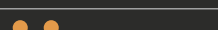
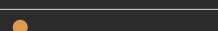
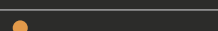
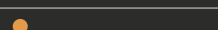
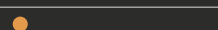
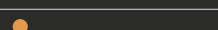
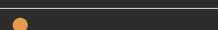
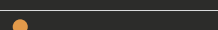
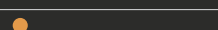
FIGURE 4:

## THE COUNTRIES WHERE KILLINGS OCCURRED IN 2019:

Mexico		12
The Syrian Arab Republic		6
Afghanistan		5
Pakistan		5
Colombia		3
Honduras		3
The Philippines		3
Somalia		3
Brazil		2
Haiti		2
Indonesia		2
Iraq		2
Chad		1
Chile		1
Democratic Republic of Congo		1
Ghana		1
Ukraine		1
Libya		1
Nigeria		1
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		1
Yemen		1

FIGURE 5:

## THE COUNTRIES WHERE KILLINGS OCCURRED IN 2018:

Afghanistan		16
Mexico		13
the Syrian Arab Republic		9
Somalia		7
Yemen		7
India		6
the United States of America		6
Colombia		5
Pakistan		5
Brazil		4
the Central African Republic		3
the Philippines		3
Guatemala		2
Palestine		2
the Russian Federation		2
Bangladesh		1
Bulgaria		1
El Salvador		1
Indonesia		1
Liberia		1
Libya		1
Nicaragua		1
Saudi Arabia		1
Slovakia		1

## 2.2 TYPES OF ATTACKS

Among the 156 journalists killed in 2018–2019, just over half (79 or 51%) were killed while on duty. The remaining 77 (49%) were killed outside of their immediate work context.

### 2.2.1 JOURNALISTS KILLED “ON DUTY”

The 79 journalists that were killed in 2018–2019 while on duty died in the following circumstances:

#### Journalists killed while covering armed conflicts

13 journalists in 2018 and 10 journalists in 2019 were killed while they were covering armed conflicts.

#### Journalists killed in terror attacks

Journalists and media workers in the past biennium have fallen victim to attacks by groups engaged in violent extremism as well as terrorism. These attacks include suicide attacks and bombings. In 2018, 20 journalists were killed in such types of attacks while in 2019, 3 journalists were killed in such armed attacks.

#### Journalists killed at their offices

7 journalists and media workers in 2018 and 6 in 2019 were killed in or close to their offices. The bloodiest attack perpetrated on a media outlet in 2018–2019 was the one at the Capitol Gazette in Maryland, in the United States of America, which claimed 5 lives.

#### Journalists killed while working on specific assignments

12 journalists in 2018 and 1 journalist in 2019 died while they were working on specific assignments such as field reports, documentary filmmaking, or conducting interviews.

#### Journalists killed while covering protests

Three journalists died while covering protests or riots in both 2018 and 2019.

### 2.2.2 JOURNALISTS WHO DIED IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

77 journalists killed in 2018–2019 were killed outside of their immediate work context. A significant number of them were killed in their home or in front of it: 11 in 2018 and 10 in 2019. In 2018, 2 journalists died while they were in detention.

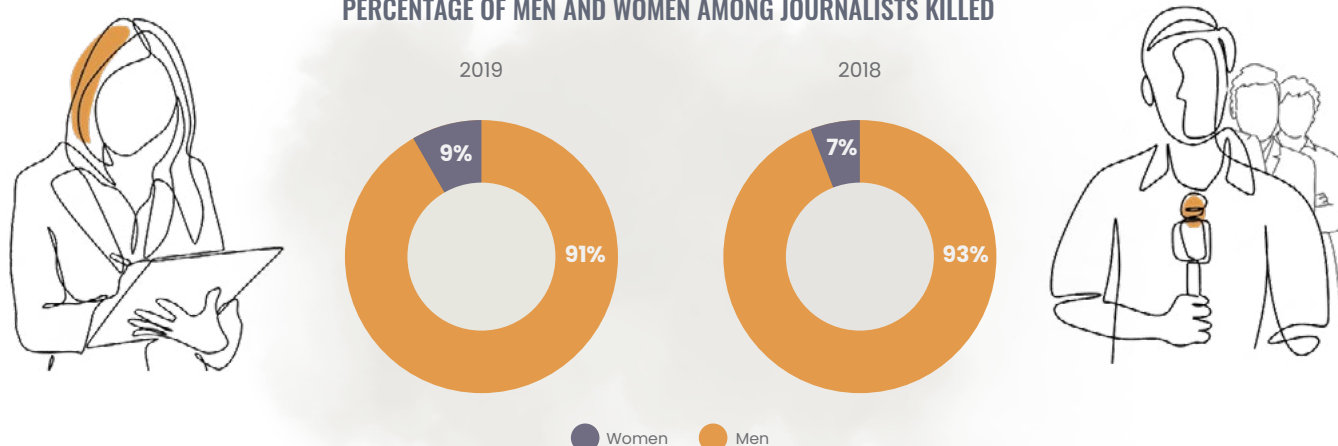
## 2.3 ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS ARE GENDERED

Gender factors play a role in violence against journalists: in 2018–2019, men continue to represent the majority of the victims of fatal attacks against journalists, 91% of the victims in 2019 and 93% in 2018.

The higher number of male victims may be explained by the fact that there are fewer women journalists working in dangerous areas and, at least in some regions, fewer who are assigned to cover sensitive topics such as political corruption or organized crime. This gap

can be partly explained by the existence of prevailing stereotypes which sometimes prevent women journalists from being sent on assignments in high-risk areas or covering certain beats.<sup>2</sup> However, while there are fewer women journalists among fatalities, women journalists and female media workers continue to face offline and online attacks putting their safety at risk. These attacks can range from harassment, trolling, doxxing to physical and sexual assaults.

FIGURE 6:  
PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN AMONG JOURNALISTS KILLED

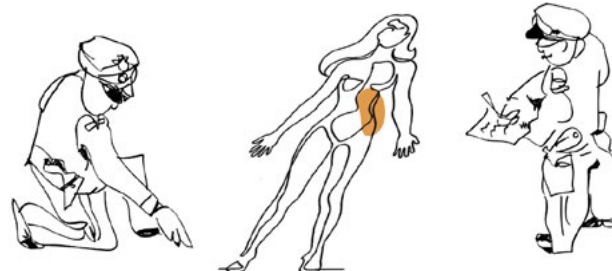


<sup>2</sup>See [UNESCO Report on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#), page 154.

## Types of fatal attacks suffered by women journalists in 2018-2019

Among the 12 women journalists and media workers killed over the 2018-2019 period, 5 were murdered in or in front of their homes; 2 died as a result of terrorist attacks; 2 died during a mass shooting in their office; 1 while covering a riot; and 2 were found dead in a street.

For the 2018-2019 period, gender appears to have been a contributing factor in at least 2 killings of women journalists: in April 2018<sup>3</sup> and in October 2019.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup>Killing of [Karla Turcios](#).

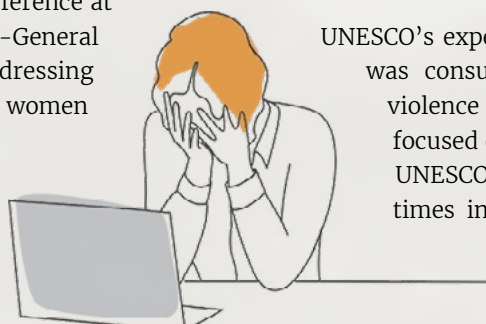
<sup>4</sup>Killing of [Victoria Marinova](#).



## GENDER DIMENSIONS OF SAFETY

The need to address specific threats faced by women journalists is increasingly being recognized by UN agencies and their Member States, as well as other international and regional institutions. Resolution (A/RES/74/157) by the UN General Assembly expresses concern about specific threats faced by women journalists and reiterates the need to employ a gender-sensitive approach when addressing safety of journalists. UNESCO's General Conference at its 39th session invited the Director-General to reinforce activities aimed at addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists, both online and offline.

UNESCO has launched a global study on effective measures to combat online harassment which will be published in 2021.



Complementary to the global research project, UNESCO is currently implementing an extrabudgetary capacity-building project, which includes activities in four countries (India, Mali, Senegal and Sri Lanka). Through baseline studies, local realities and needs were identified which later allowed for a targeted approach in conducting trainings for women journalists, media managers and security forces.

UNESCO's expertise on safety of women journalists was consulted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women whose annual report focused on attacks against women journalists. UNESCO and its activities were mentioned 13 times in the report which was presented at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council.



For more information, visit:

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/women-journalists>

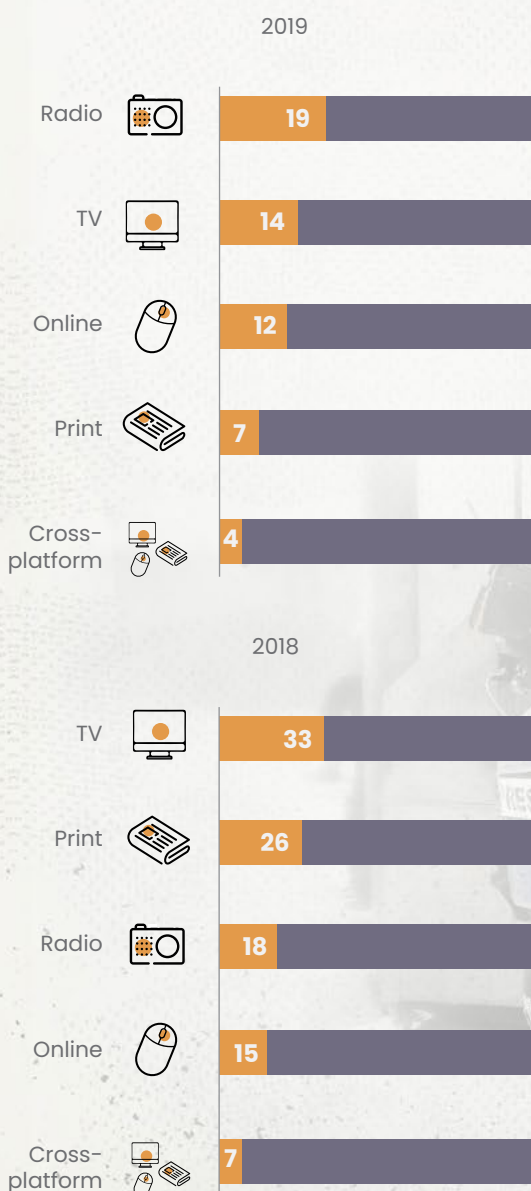


## 2.4 TV JOURNALISTS ARE MOST VULNERABLE TO FATAL ATTACKS

Like in previous years, TV journalists constitute the largest group among the victims. Over 2018 and 2019, TV journalists constitute 30% of the journalists killed with 47 fatalities, followed by radio with 24% of the killings, and print media with 21% of the killings.

Among the 20 radio journalists killed in 2019, at least 5 were community radio journalists. In 2018, among the 18 radio journalists killed, at least 2 were community radio journalists.

FIGURE 7:  
JOURNALISTS KILLED BY MEDIA TYPE



## 2.5 LOCAL JOURNALISTS REMAIN MAIN TARGETS

The previous Director-General's reports have shown that the majority of victims were local journalists covering local stories. The study of the 2018–2019 biennium confirms this trend, with 95 local journalists killed in 2018 on a total of 99 killings, and 56 local journalists killed in 2019 on a total of 57 killings.

All of the four foreign victims in 2018–2019 were killed in countries experiencing armed conflicts.

## 2.6 FREELANCE AND STAFF JOURNALISTS

While more and more media organizations are working with freelance journalists, they usually do not enjoy the same level of assistance and protection as journalists employed as staff. Freelance journalists usually work alone and have less access to security training, insurance and protective equipment.

UNESCO recorded the death of 11 freelance journalists in 2019 (representing 19% of the killings) and of 9 freelance journalists in 2018 (representing 9% of the killings).





## 2.7 MOST JOURNALISTS WERE KILLED IN COUNTRIES WITH NO ARMED CONFLICT<sup>5</sup>

In the biennium covered by this report, the total of journalists killed in countries with no armed conflict amounted to 89 killings (54 in 2018; and 35 in 2019). The numbers killed in countries with conflict were 67 (45 in 2018 and 22 in 2019).

The increase recorded by UNESCO since 2016 in the proportion of killings of journalists in countries with no armed conflict has continued in the 2018–2019 biennium. In 2018 and 2019, respectively 55% and 61% of the killings occurred in countries with no armed conflict, while in 2016 and 2017 the proportion was respectively 50% and 55%.

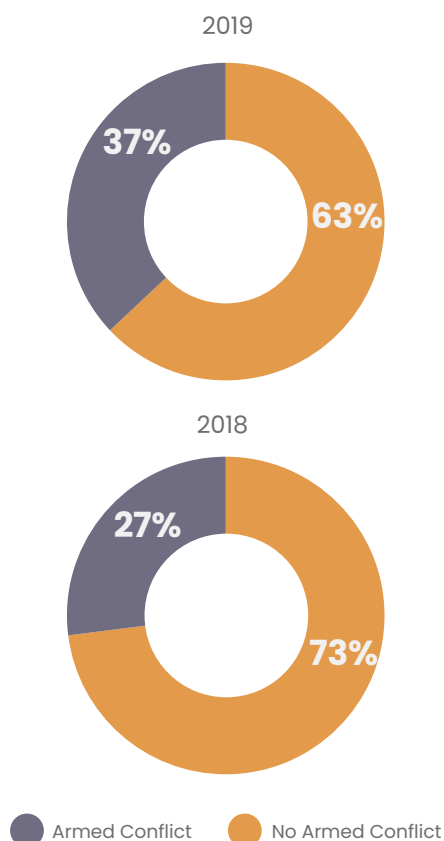
Additional factors affecting certain countries without armed conflict could be increasing intolerance towards reporting, fostered by a climate of endemic anti-press rhetoric, including by political leaders, and the influence of corruption and organized crime.

These figures show the high levels of violence to which journalists are exposed even when working in countries not experiencing armed conflict.

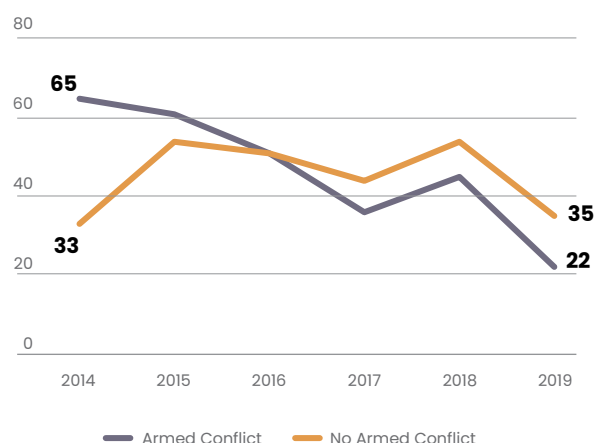


<sup>5</sup>Based on the countries mentioned in the 2020 and 2019 reports of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The countries considered as being in armed conflict are: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan (Darfur), the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, the occupied Palestinian territory (names as mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's reports).

**FIGURE 8:**  
PERCENTAGE OF JOURNALISTS WHO WERE KILLED IN COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT VS COUNTRIES NOT CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT



**FIGURE 9:**  
NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS WHO WERE KILLED IN COUNTRIES WITH ARMED CONFLICT VS COUNTRIES WITH NO ARMED CONFLICT IN 2014-2019



# 3 STATES' RESPONSES: STATUS OF THE JUDICIAL ENQUIRIES ON CASES OF JOURNALISTS KILLED FROM 2006 TO END 2019



Every year, the Director-General of UNESCO requests from States information on the judicial proceedings undertaken in relation to each killing of a journalist that has been registered by the Organization.

In 2020, UNESCO sent a request for information to the 63 States in which killings of journalists were registered between 2006 and 2019, for which UNESCO records showed no evidence that the judicial cases had been resolved. The request concerned 992 out of the 1167 killings that UNESCO recorded between 2006 and 2019. The remaining cases are those that UNESCO has categorized as resolved or archived.

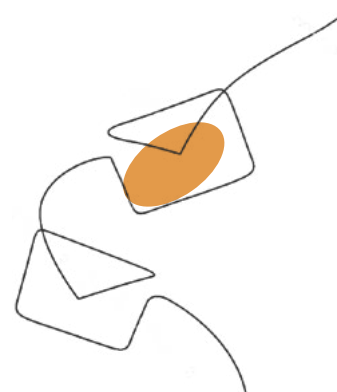


STATES	STATES PROVIDED INFORMATION ON CASES / ACKNOWLEDGED REQUESTS	NUMBER OF KILLINGS PER REQUEST
Afghanistan	✓	65
Angola	●	1
Bahrain	✓	1
Bangladesh	✓	12
Brazil	✓	33
Burkina Faso	●	1
Burundi	●	1
Cambodia	✓	1
Central African Republic		5
Chad		1
Chile	✓	1
Colombia	✓	20
Congo, Republic		1
Democratic Republic of Congo		11
Dominican Republic	✓	3
Ecuador	✓	3
Egypt		8
El Salvador	✓	1
Eritrea		4
Ghana	✓	1
Greece	✓	1
Guatemala	✓	14
Guinea	✓	1
Guyana, Republic of		1
Haiti	✓	4
Honduras	✓	31
India		39
Indonesia	✓	2
Iraq	✓	163
Kenya		2
Kyrgyzstan	✓	1
Liberia		1
Libya	●	23
Maldives	✓	2
Mali		2
Malta	✓	1
Mexico	✓	96
Mozambique		1
Myanmar	✓	2
Nepal	✓	5
Nicaragua	✓	1
Nigeria	●	5
Pakistan	●	67
Palestine	✓	4
Paraguay	●	5
Peru	✓	3
Philippines	✓	72
Russian Federation	✓	7
Saudi Arabia	✓	1
Slovakia	✓	1
Somalia		60
South Sudan		10
Sri Lanka		9
Syrian Arab Republic		109
Tanzania	✓	1
Thailand	●	5
Turkey	✓	8
Uganda		4
Ukraine	✓	11
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	✓	1
United States of America <sup>6</sup>	✓	6
Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic		1
Yemen	●	35

## OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM STATES TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REQUEST IN 2020<sup>6</sup>

**FIGURE 10:**  
RESPONSES RECEIVED  
FROM STATES ON STATUS  
OF JUDICIAL ENQUIRIES

- ✓ Response on cases received (36)
- Acknowledgment of  
Director-General's request (9)
- Did not respond (18)



<sup>6</sup>This report analyzes responses that were received at the latest on 28 September 2020.  
<sup>7</sup>The USA withdrew from UNESCO on 31 December 2018 but have continued supplying information to UNESCO.

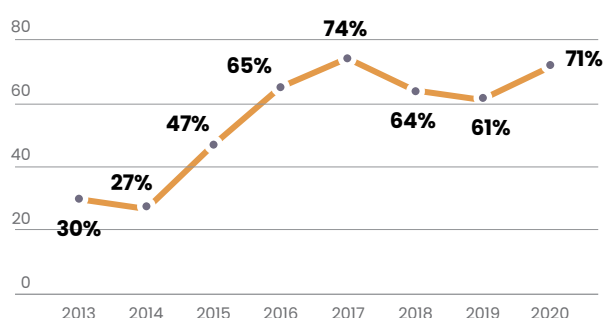
### 3.1 A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN STATES' REACTION RATE TO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REQUEST IN 2020

Out of the 63 countries contacted in 2020 by UNESCO with a request to receive an update on the status of judicial enquiries on the killings of journalists, 45 (or 71%) sent a reaction. Among these, 36<sup>8</sup> provided information on the status of judicial procedures following killings of journalists, 9 Member States acknowledged receipt of the Director-General's request, and, in some cases, indicated that information regarding the judicial follow-up would be provided; however this had not yet been received at the time of drafting this report.<sup>9</sup> 18 Member States did not react to the Director-General's request.<sup>10</sup> Several Member States indicated that due to the current global COVID-19 pandemic, the institutions in charge of providing information on judicial follow-up of these cases are experiencing delay.

Twenty-one<sup>11</sup> of the 45 States that reacted to UNESCO's request in 2020 agreed to make their responses public, and two countries<sup>12</sup> agreed to make their responses partially public.

While in the last two-year period the reaction rate by affected countries had been marked by a drop, with a 64% rate in 2018 and a 61% rate in 2019, in 2020 the figure increased significantly with a 71% rate of contacted States reacting to the request. A number of countries submitted information for the first time, including Libya, the Maldives, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

**FIGURE 11:**  
PERCENTAGE OF STATES THAT REACTED TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REQUEST IN 2013-2020

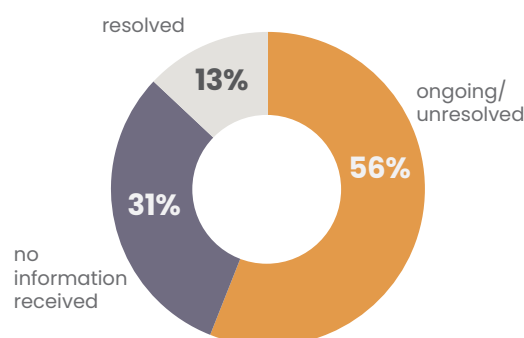


### 3.2 IMPUNITY RATE DROPS SLIGHTLY IN 2020

While impunity for crimes against journalists still prevails, 2020 saw the continuation of a trend that was observed in previous years, namely a slight decrease in the rate of impunity. Based on the information provided by Member States, the percentage of resolved cases worldwide was measured at 13% in 2020<sup>13</sup>, compared to 12% in 2019 and at 11% in 2018.

UNESCO's Director-General has condemned 1167 cases of killings of journalists from 2006 until the end of 2019. On 801 cases, States have informed UNESCO that investigations into the killings have been launched, are ongoing, or that the case has reached a final verdict. On the 366 remaining cases, States have not provided information to UNESCO.

**FIGURE 12:**  
STATUS OF ENQUIRY INTO KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS 2006-2019



<sup>8</sup>Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Palestine, the Philippines, Peru, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Tanzania, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and of Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

<sup>9</sup>Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Thailand and Yemen.

<sup>10</sup>Central Africa Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guyana, India, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

<sup>11</sup>Chile, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Palestine, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Tanzania, Thailand, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine, and Yemen.

<sup>12</sup>Ecuador and Guatemala

<sup>13</sup>Significant progress was made in the case of the 2019 Manguindanao massacre in The Philippines, which attack killed 57 civilians, including 30 journalists, in 2009. On 19 December 2019, 43 individuals were convicted, including the mastermind behind the attack. The case has since been appealed.



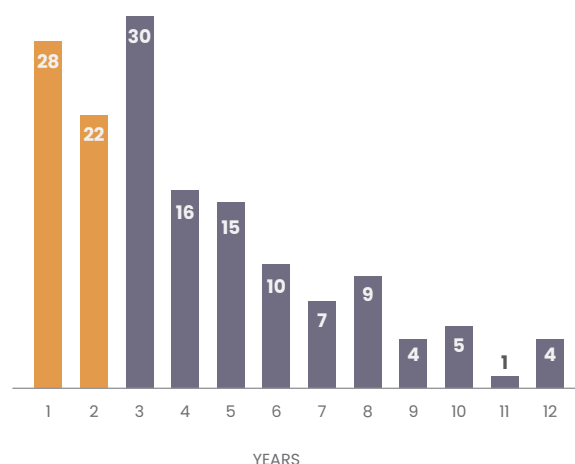
FIGURE 13:  
STATUS OF JUDICIAL ENQUIRY INTO KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS PER REGION (2006-2019)

REGION	CASE RESOLVED	ONGOING/ UNRESOLVED	NO INFORMATION RECEIVED SO FAR	TOTAL CASES	% UNRESOLVED
Central and Eastern Europe	21	24	0	45	53
Western Europe and North America	14	18	0	32	56
Latin America & the Caribbean	61	207	7	275	78
Africa	16	69	50	135	88
Asia & the Pacific	34	166	112	312	89
Arab States	5	166	197	368	99
<b>World</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>87</b>

### Median time of successfully prosecuting cases

Out of cases that are being considered resolved, the longest period of time elapsed between the killing and the categorizing of the case as resolved, was 12 years. However, a third of all resolved cases (50 cases) were resolved within 2 years after the killing, and the median time for all cases currently considered resolved lies at 3 years.

FIGURE 14:  
NUMBER OF CASES RESOLVED WITHIN 1-12 YEARS



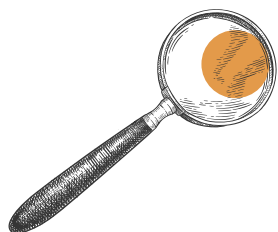
## 3.3 COUNTRIES REPORTING ON MEASURES TO PROMOTE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND TO COMBAT IMPUNITY

Since 2017, UNESCO includes in its letters to States an invitation to report on “actions taken by [the] country to promote the safety of journalists and to combat impunity, as a way to share good practices”.

In 2020, 27 countries included in their reply information on concrete actions taken to improve safety for journalists.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>These countries are Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Palestine, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

### 3.3.1 ACTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES REPORTED BY STATES TO PROMOTE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND TO COMBAT IMPUNITY



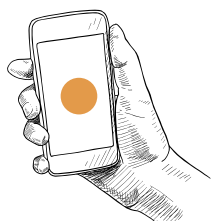
Monitoring  
crimes against  
journalists

Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, the Philippines, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and of Northern Ireland informed UNESCO of the setting up or strengthening of monitoring mechanisms to track attacks against journalists. For example, **Palestine** established a national team, comprised of representatives of relevant ministries and civil society organizations, to report on crimes and violations against journalists in the country.



Prosecution of  
crimes against  
journalists

Guatemala, the Maldives, Mexico, and the Philippines reported the establishment of specific bodies dedicated to ensuring the prosecution of crimes against journalists. For example, **the Maldives** established a Commission on Investigation of Murders and Enforced Disappearances whose aim is to conduct transparent, impartial and thorough investigations into cases of unresolved murders and enforced disappearances.



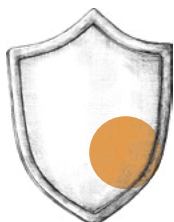
Prevention of  
crimes against  
journalists

Brazil, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, and the Philippines shared with UNESCO details about measures they put in place to prevent crimes against journalists and media workers. For example, **Iraq** established a platform to report on threats, rescue hotlines and a weekly live radio where high-level officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Information and security forces answer questions and address complaints from journalists.



Legal reforms  
aiming at  
fostering freedom  
of expression

Such legal reforms were reported by: **Guinea, the Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, and Slovakia**. **Malta** for example reported that in 2018, the Government reformed libel and defamation laws by making them less stringent towards journalists.



Protection of  
journalists  
against attacks

Several Member States provided information on efforts to protect journalists from attacks: **Colombia, Ecuador, Guinea, the Maldives, Mexico, Myanmar, the Philippines, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.

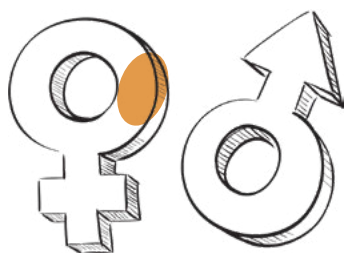


Other measures  
reported by  
countries

**Bangladesh, Guatemala, Myanmar, Tanzania** also reported that they have hosted a range of workshops, seminars, and conferences dedicated to the safety of journalists. Some countries (**the United States of America and Slovakia**) have informed of their involvement at the global level on promoting the safety of journalists and media workers.

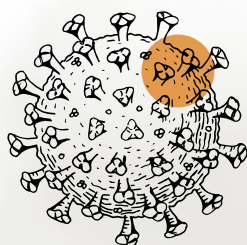


### 3.3.2 ACTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES REPORTED BY STATES IN TACKLING THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF JOURNALISTS' SAFETY



In 2020, 13 Member States provided information on measures taken to address the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work. These countries are **Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, the Maldives, Mexico, Palestine, Slovakia, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**. For example, **the Dominican Republic** and **Haiti** indicated that they established specific bodies dedicated to ensuring the prosecution of crimes against journalists.

## ONGOING ISSUES IN THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS



### Safety of journalists in the COVID-19 context

Deaths of journalists from COVID-19 were deplored in a message by UNESCO's Director-General which expressed solidarity with media workers reporting on the crisis. UNESCO also published a statement stressing the importance of safety of journalists during the COVID-19 crisis which was published in all 6 official UN languages (as well as Portuguese, Italian and Farsi). Aside from alerting to different kinds of safety threats faced by journalists covering the pandemic, UNESCO also called on Member States to ensure that journalists can report on the crisis without interference or undue limitations.

UNESCO's dedicated Resource center of responses to COVID-19 includes references and examples of good practices to ensure the safety of journalists in this context. The health crisis has created new challenges to the safety of journalists and considerably exacerbated existing ones. UNESCO has issued two statements regarding safety of journalists covering the COVID-19 pandemic, expressing solidarity with journalists who passed away, calling for protection of journalists and condemning interference with press freedom in the context of the health crisis.



### Safety of journalists covering protests

In September 2020, UNESCO published an issue brief as part of the UNESCO Series on [World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#), titled [Safety of Journalists Covering Protests – Preserving Freedom of the Press During Times of Civil Unrest](#). In this brief, UNESCO points to a wider upward trend in the use of unlawful force by police and security forces. The report suggests that a troubling new threshold has been crossed, revealing a significant and growing threat to media freedom and freedom of access to information in all regions of the world.

## KEY RECENT TEXTS ADOPTED ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

**UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/157** (December 2019) recognizes the important role of journalism for sustainable development and democratic societies, condemns attacks against journalists and impunity for crimes against journalists and “calls upon States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference, taking into account the gender dimensions.” Additionally, the Resolution requests Member States to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to UNESCO within the framework of the annual request regarding information on judicial follow-up on killings.

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/45/18** on the safety of journalists (October 2020), co-sponsored by over 70 countries, addresses new issues such as extraterritorial threats, overbroad and vague laws, strategic lawsuits against public participation, accreditation regimes, access to information, surveillance and protests, while strengthening language on gender-specific threats against journalists.

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/39/6** on the safety of journalists (October 2018).

**UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/12** on freedom of opinion and expression (July 2020), calls on all States to take active measures to protect the safety of journalists, media workers and human rights defenders so that they can practice their right to freedom of expression.

**UNESCO Executive Board Decision 206 EX/Decision 5.I.B** (2019) acknowledges important steps taken in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action and requests UNESCO to continue heading this process.

The UNESCO IPDC Council Decision on the Director-General’s Report on the safety of journalists and the danger of impunity (November 2018) requested the Director-General to enhance current monitoring of safety of journalists by aligning and reinforcing synergies with the Universal Periodic Review and overall reporting on SDG indicator 16.10.1.

In the last 10 years,  
these are the people who have lost their lives for the truth.

Yet, 9 out of 10 killings  
of journalists remain unsolved.