

International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

Today, 2 November 2021, is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. As the [United Nations has reported](#), 62 journalists have been killed for their work in 2020 alone, and "between 2006 and 2020, over 1,200 professionals lost their lives in the same way. In nine out of ten cases the killers go unpunished." In observance of this Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, Jubilee Campaign would like to raise our concerns with regards to the safety of journalists in a few different countries, as well as some specific cases.

China

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Both national and foreign journalists operating in China face tremendous obstacles to their free reporting and are often subjected to backlash by state actors. In February 2020, following the publication of Wall Street Journal opinion article titled "[China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia](#)" which discussed the effects of the outbreak of COVID-19 in China



and the secondary economic downturn, the Chinese Foreign Ministry [revoked the press credentials of and expelled](#) three Wall Street Journal reporters based in Beijing. None of the three expelled journalists, however, had participated in the aforementioned opinion piece. This marked the "first time the Chinese government has expelled multiple journalists simultaneously from one international news organization since the country began re-engaging with the world in the post-Mao era". Earlier, in August 2019, the Foreign Ministry similarly expelled another Wall Street Journal reporter who authored a piece on one of President Xi's cousins whose activities were being investigated by the Australian intelligence agencies.

One of the most current and relevant cases in which the Chinese government cracked down on journalism is the arrest and imprisonment of [Zhang Zhan](#), a practicing Christian. Zhang had been reporting on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan in the very early stages of the pandemic when she was [promptly arrested by authorities](#) and sentenced to four years of imprisonment for "picking fights and provoking trouble" in December of last year. As recently as

August 2021, however, it was reported that Zhang is in poor health condition after participating in a hunger-strike against her unlawful imprisonment. Zhang is just one of the [six high-profile Chinese journalists](#) who are detained for their reporting on the COVID-19 crisis; and though he is not a journalist, [we would like to recognize Dr. Li Wenliang](#), the ophthalmologist and whistleblower who first raised the flags regarding the outbreak of the SARS-like virus among his patients and who was subsequently silenced by the Chinese government.

Afghanistan

Jubilee Campaign has already expressed our concern regarding the fate of journalists in Afghanistan following the swift and unimpeded takeover of the nation by the Taliban. Regrettably, the past two decades in Afghanistan have been a safe time for free reporting on social issues, however journalists have pointed out that "everything changed overnight." The Taliban has already instructed Afghan media outlets to restructure their reporting around "Islamic laws and national interests", and journalists who have focused on other issues have been dealt with harshly. A United Nations spokeswoman recently reported that one journalist who had been detained by the Taliban was kicked in the head before being told "you're lucky you have not been beheaded". Etilaat e Roz [reporters reflected on being arrested](#) for their coverage of anti-Taliban protests and being tied up, flogged, kicked, stricken with cables, and beaten until unconsciousness.

In particular, US-funded journalists and US-funded media reporters are at extreme risk of becoming the Taliban's foremost targets. In early September 2021, NPR estimated that approximately [600 of such workers remain stranded](#) in Afghanistan following the American troops' withdrawal. Another extremely vulnerable subgroup of journalists are women reporters, whose involvement in public and educated careers is rejected by the Taliban's extremist ideology. Despite that the Taliban has repeatedly assured female journalists that they would be able to safely continue their work, [fewer than 100 out of the prior 700 female journalists](#) in Afghanistan have continued their work and many have relegated themselves to their homes out of fear of reprisal. Moreover, the Taliban's assurances seem disingenuous when considering they have already [prohibited two female news anchors](#) with Radio Television Afghanistan from working. [One female journalist](#), Sama, lamented that when she attempted to continue her broadcasting job, she was questioned by Taliban officers and told to return home; she explains, "if I can't do my job, then I am nothing."

Nigeria

Jubilee Campaign and our partner organizations have been focused on the case of Nigerian journalist Omoyele Sowore. Sowore, a human rights activist and the founder of online news agency [Sahara Reporters](#) which is focused on exposing corruption within Nigerian governance, was originally arrested in August 2019 on false charges of "treason" and calling for a "revolution". With the advocacy of international human rights organization as well as United States Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Sowore was [released on bail](#) before being re-arrested in December 2020 for his participation in a pro-democracy demonstration and a protest against police brutality; he was once again released on bail. Regardless of his current status as a free man, we remain concerned that Sowore will continue to be targeted for arbitrary detention on account of his political activism and the work of his news agency.

The current atmosphere for independent journalism in Nigeria continues to remain fraught with threats of imprisonment. In October of 2020, Nigerian police authorities verbally harassed, physically assaulted, and **arrested numerous journalists** who covered the police brutality towards Lekki Toll Gate protesters. *Daily Post* reporter Sikiru Obarayese was shoved into a police vehicle, beaten with guns, and even threatened with death; *Legit* video editor and digital producer Abisola Alawode was detained by authorities for a total of five hours; Adefemi Akinsanya was yanked from side to side by officers as they tried to seize the drone she was using to film the protest.

Other News



Fifth birthday with no news - Where is Pastor Raymond Koh?

2 November 2021 | Today marks Pastor Raymond Koh's 67th Birthday. This will be the fifth birthday Pastor Raymond Koh is separated from his family since the Special Branch of Malaysia's Police force abducted him in February 2017.

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