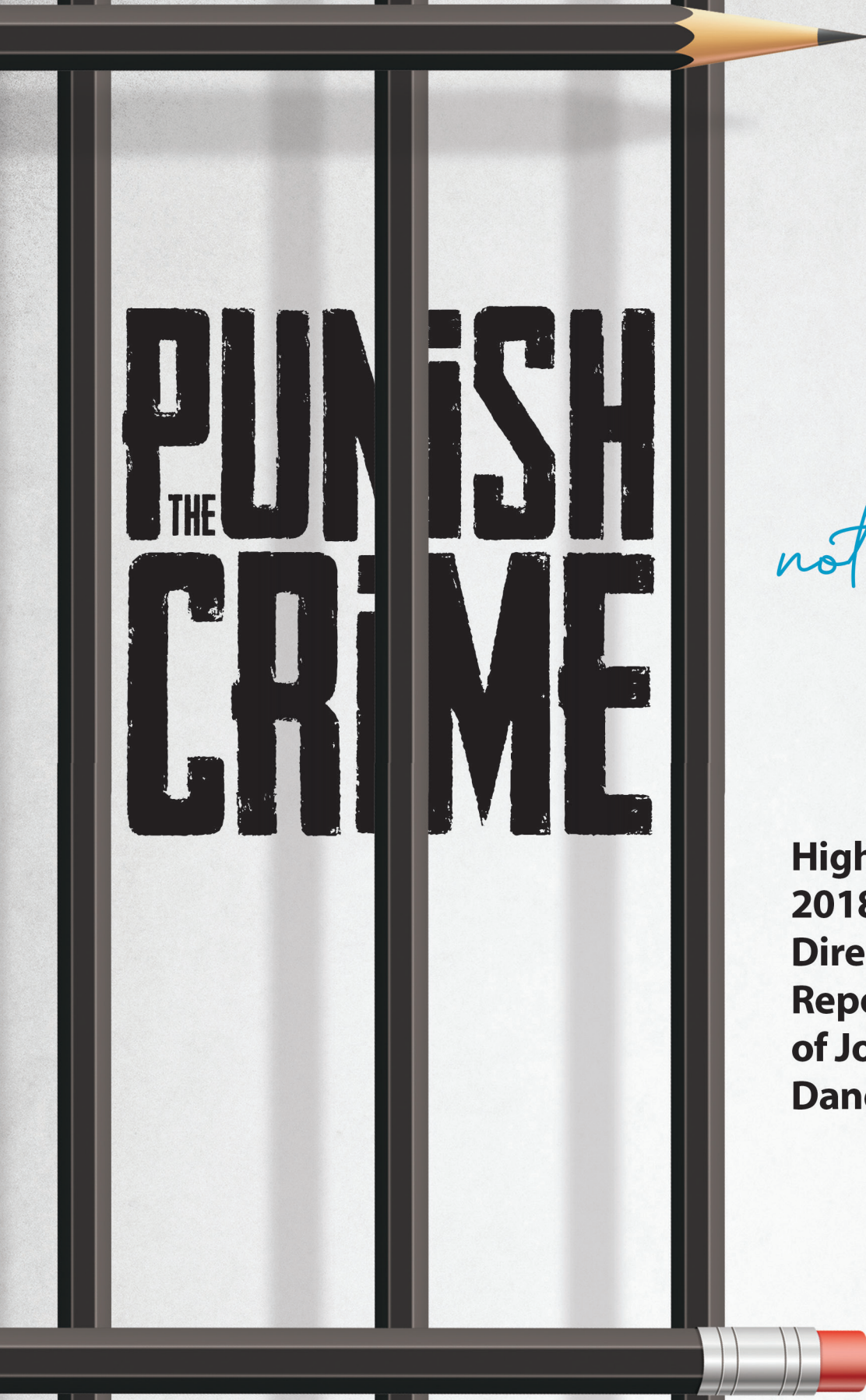




United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

IPDC THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME  
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION



# THE PUNISH CRIME

*not the truth.*

**Highlights from the  
2018 UNESCO  
Director-General's  
Report on the Safety  
of Journalists and the  
Danger of Impunity**



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016-2017, a journalist was killed every four days. One witness silenced every four days. The total number of victims reached 182, with killings taking place in every region. These deaths shine a light on the extreme risks that can be faced by the individuals in this profession.

Some of these fatal attacks occurred in countries previously unaffected by such extreme acts of violence against journalists. However, not all regions were affected to the same degree. In 2017, the largest number of killings took place in the Asia and the Pacific region (34% of all killings), while in 2016, the largest number of killings occurred in the Arab States (31%).

**In 2016-2017,  
a journalist was killed  
every four days.**

An increase in the number of journalists killed outside of armed conflict zones can be noted in the last few years, with a majority of journalists (55%) in 2017 killed in countries not experiencing armed conflict. Many of these journalists were reporting on topics related to corruption, trafficking, and political wrongdoing. In line with observations of previous years, local journalists remain the vast majority among victims.

A rise in the percentage of women journalists among those killed in 2017 (14%) marks the continuation of a trend that has become apparent over the last years. However, while the proportion of women among fatalities has risen, a clear majority of killed journalists are men.

Impunity for these crimes remains a key challenge. Out of the 1010 killings recorded by UNESCO in the last 12 years, only 115 were followed by a judicial procedure that led to the conviction of one or multiple perpetrators. This means that 89% of cases remain unresolved. Impunity for crimes against journalists emboldens attackers and leads to self-censorship in the profession and among the public.

The overall effect is to impede progress towards “public access to information and fundamental freedoms” which is an agreed target for the world in Sustainable Development Goal 16.10.

This report focuses on the killing of journalists, the ultimate form of censorship. But it is just the tip of an iceberg of attacks against journalists, which range from non-lethal physical attacks, kidnapping, illegal detention, threats, harassment offline and online, to retaliations on family members.

Increasing the safety of journalists worldwide and combating impunity for crimes committed against them requires a concerted effort of all stakeholders.



For more information, please visit UNESCO's new, interactive observatory of killed journalists:

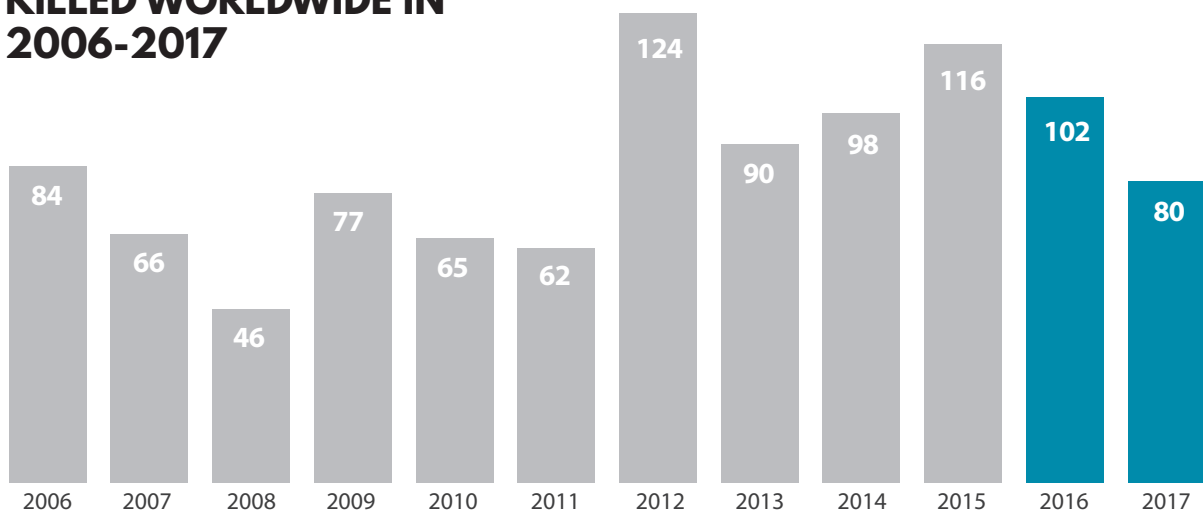
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory>

# 2. JOURNALISTS' KILLINGS IN 2016 AND 2017: KEY FINDINGS



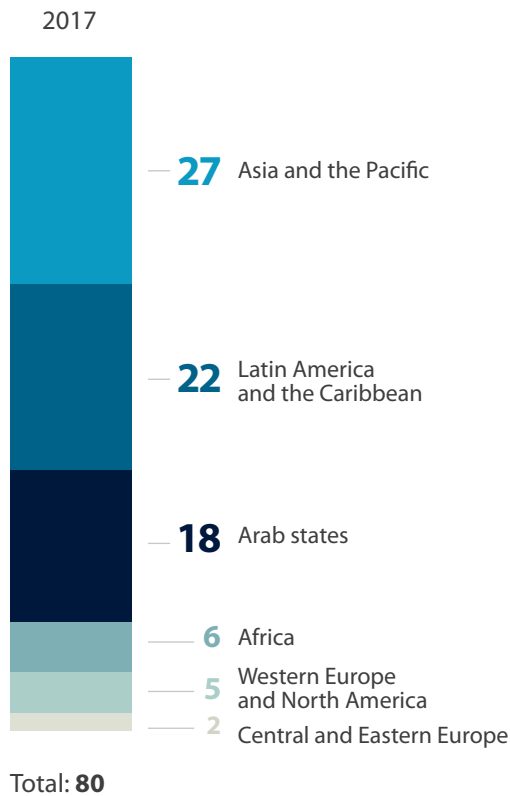
In 2016 and 2017, UNESCO recorded 182 killings of journalists worldwide. In 2016, 102 killings were recorded, while 2017 showed a decrease with the number of fatalities falling to 80, the lowest number since 2011. Overall, the number of killings in 2016-2017 is lower than that in the previous two-year period, when 213 killings were recorded. However, this trend does not appear to be confirmed in 2018, with 80 killings already condemned by the Director-General of UNESCO as of 09 October 2018.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS KILLED WORLDWIDE IN 2006-2017**



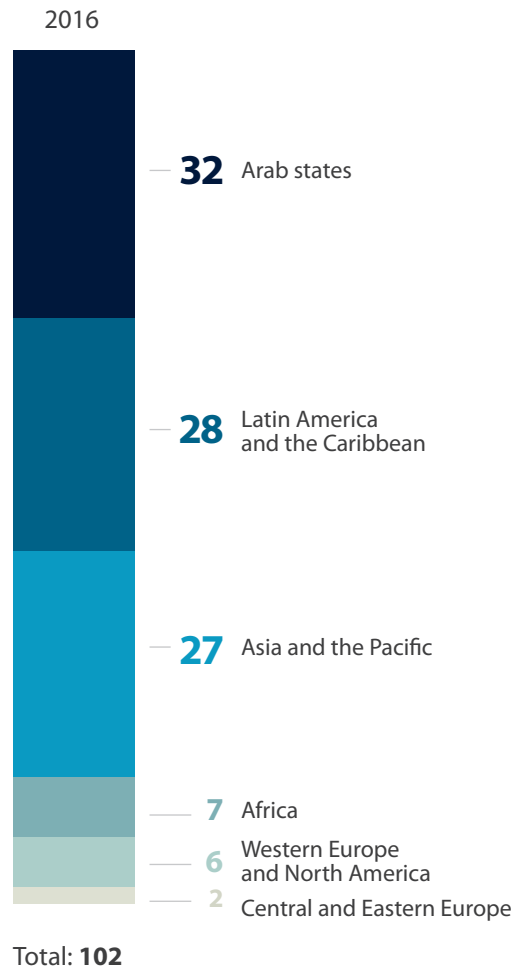
## 2.1 MOST DANGEROUS REGIONS

**FIGURE 2:**  
**NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS  
KILLED BY REGION IN 2017**



In 2017, the largest number of fatal attacks (27 killings) took place in the Asia and the Pacific region, representing 34% of the total, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 28% of killings (22 killings). In the Arab States region, UNESCO documented 18 killings, representing 22% of killings of journalists registered worldwide.

























**FIGURE 3:**  
**NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS  
KILLED BY REGION IN 2016**






























In 2016, the same three regions recorded the highest numbers of killings; however the highest number of fatalities, namely 31% of the cases documented by UNESCO, was then recorded in the Arab States (32 killings). The second deadliest region in 2016 was Latin America and the Caribbean with 27% of the total (28 killings) followed by the Asia and the Pacific region with 27 killings.

In both years, less than 10% of overall killings took place in Africa, Western Europe and North America, and Central and Eastern Europe, respectively.

## THE COUNTRIES WHERE KILLINGS OCCURED IN 2017 WERE:

Mexico		13
Afghanistan		11
Iraq		8
Syrian Arab Republic		7
India		5
Pakistan		4
the Philippines		4
Honduras		3
Somalia		3
Turkey		3
Yemen		3
Dominican Republic		2
Nigeria		2
Russian Federation		2
Bangladesh		1
Brazil		1
Colombia		1
Denmark		1
Guatemala		1
Maldives		1
Malta		1
Myanmar		1
Peru		1
South Sudan		1

## THE COUNTRIES WHERE KILLINGS OCCURED IN 2016 WERE:

Afghanistan		13
Mexico		13
Yemen		11
Iraq		9
Syrian Arab Republic		8
Guatemala		7
Brazil		5
India		5
Pakistan		4
Libya		3
Somalia		3
Turkey		3
Bangladesh		2
Finland		2
the Philippines		2
Burkina Faso		1
Democratic Republic of Congo		1
El Salvador		1
Guinea		1
Honduras		1
Jordan		1
Myanmar		1
Peru		1
Serbia		1
South Sudan		1
Ukraine		1
the United States of America		1

In 2016 and 2017, the two countries with the highest number of fatalities were Afghanistan and Mexico. In 2017, 13 journalists were killed in Mexico and 11 lost their lives in Afghanistan, while in 2016, both countries each suffered the loss of 13 journalists.

## 2.2 RISE IN NUMBER OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS AMONG FATALITIES

A trend already noticeable in previous years, namely the rising number of women journalists among killed media personnel, has continued. In 2017, UNESCO recorded the highest number of killed women journalists (11 victims) since the IPDC started reporting on killings of journalists in 2006. In 2016, there were 10 female victims compared to five in 2012. The percentage of women among the fatalities represented 14% in 2017, compared to 10% in 2016 and 4% in 2012.

Killings of women journalists occurred in 2016-2017 in all regions with the exception of Central and Eastern Europe.

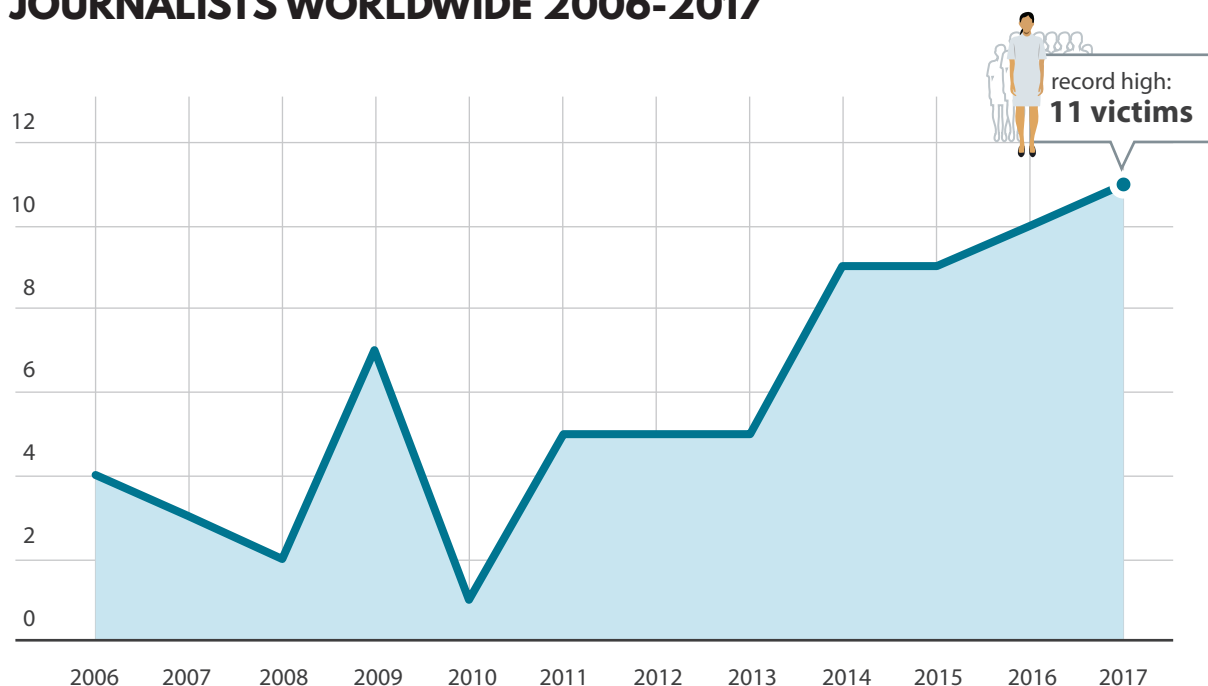
Apart from killings, women journalists are also affected by gender-specific safety risks such as sexual harassment, sexual violence and threats of violence. Recent studies have shown that women journalists are particularly affected by online harassment.<sup>1</sup>

In a report published in 2018 by Trollbusters and the International Women's Media Foundation, a survey conducted among 597 women journalists and media workers revealed that nearly two out of three respondents stated that they had been threatened or harassed online at least once.

Among them, around 40 percent said they avoided reporting certain stories as a consequence of online harassment. Fifty-eight percent of the women journalists surveyed stated that they already been threatened or harassed in person, while 26% indicated that they had been physically attacked.<sup>2</sup>

Harassment against women journalists often takes the form of personal attacks, which tend not to focus on the content of the journalist's article or broadcast, but rather on the woman's character or body parts, and in the more extreme cases include threats of sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>

**FIGURE 4:**  
**NUMBER OF KILLED WOMEN JOURNALISTS WORLDWIDE 2006-2017**



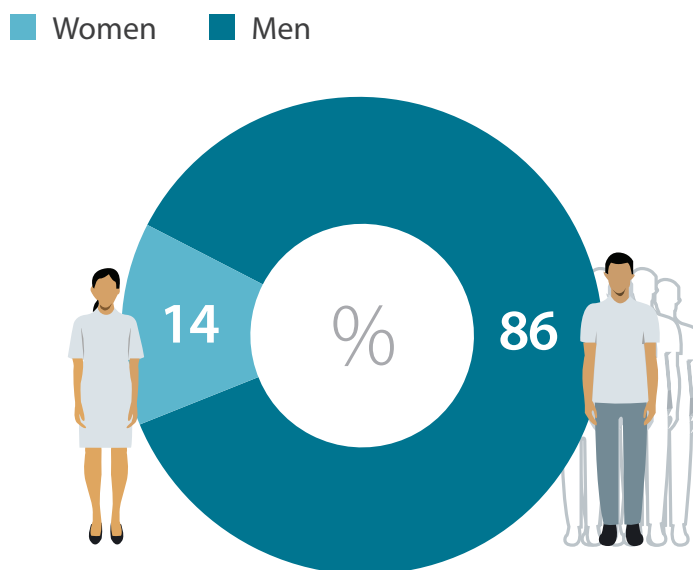
<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see studies by the [International Federation of Journalists](#) (2017), the [International Women's Media Foundation](#) (2018), [Reporters without Borders](#) (2018) and [Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe](#) (2016) (among others).

<sup>2</sup> See ['Attacks and Harassment: The Impact on Female Journalists and Their Reporting'](#), Trollbusters and the International Women's Media Foundation, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> ['Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists'](#), Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, 2016.

Men continue to represent an overwhelming majority (86% in 2017) of victims of fatal attacks against journalists. The percentage of female journalists killed is significantly lower than women's overall representation among journalists. This may be due to the fact that fewer women journalists are working in dangerous areas and, at least in some regions, covering sensitive topics such as political corruption or organized crime. Recent research has suggested that prevailing stereotypes can sometimes prevent women journalists from being sent on assignments in high-risk areas, which might contribute to this gap.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 5:**  
**PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN AMONG JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2017**



<sup>4</sup> Elaborated in the UNESCO [Report on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development](#), page 154.

## 2.3 HIGHEST NUMBER OF KILLINGS AMONG TV JOURNALISTS

Like in the preceding two-year period, TV journalists constituted the largest group among the victims. In 2017, almost half of the killed journalists (45%) were working in television outlets while in 2016, those working in this sector represented 34% of all victims. Among the TV journalists killed in 2016-2017, the majority were killed in countries currently experiencing conflict (55 out of 71 killed TV journalists).

19 TV journalists were killed in Afghanistan, 15 were killed in Iraq, six died in Syria and eight in Yemen. TV journalists, camera operators and support staff such as drivers and technicians regularly work from the frontlines and are therefore under high risk of being killed in crossfire or being targeted directly by parties to the conflict.





## 2.4 MAJORITY OF VICTIMS ARE LOCAL JOURNALISTS

A long-standing trend has been that local journalists covering local stories constitute by far the greatest number of victims. Attacks against international reporters tend to receive greater coverage in the media, but statistics show that in 2016-2017 less than one in 10 of the journalists killed was an international reporter. In 2017, local journalists represented 90% of all killed journalists and in 2016, 94%. Of the 14 foreign victims in 2016-2017, half were killed in countries experiencing conflict.

LESS THAN

**1<sup>IN</sup> 10**

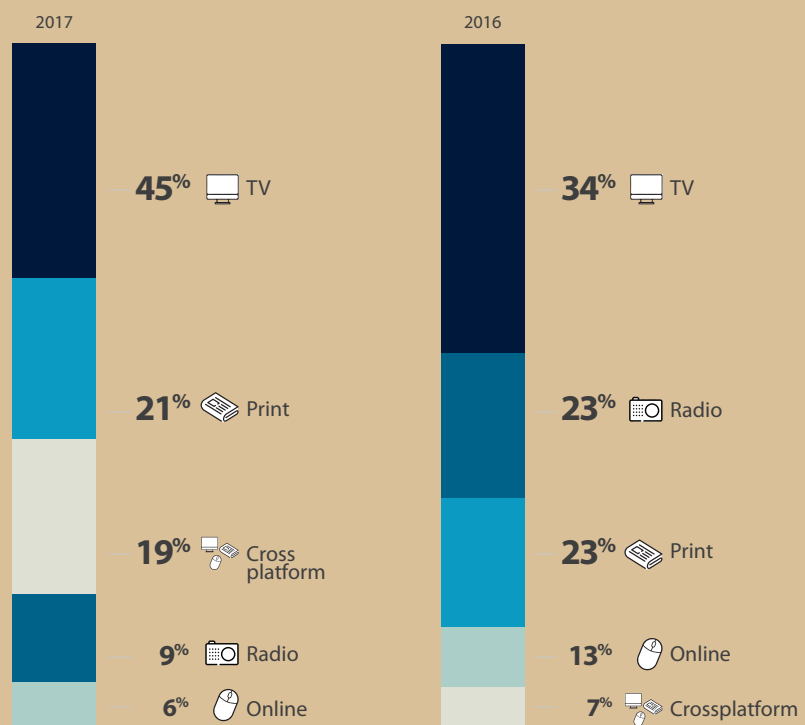
JOURNALISTS KILLED WAS INTERNATIONAL

## 2.5 FREELANCE AND STAFF JOURNALISTS

In 2017, 21% of all killed journalists were freelancers. In 2016, this percentage was slightly lower, of 17%. Over the two-year period, 34 out of 182 journalists killed were freelancers, accounting for 19% of all fatalities -- the same percentage as in the previous two-year period.

Compared to media staff, freelance journalists are widely considered more vulnerable since they often lack adequate protection and support from the media organization(s) with which they are working. Freelance journalists frequently work alone and have more limited access to security training, insurance and equipment.

**FIGURE 6:**  
**JOURNALISTS KILLED BY MEDIA TYPE IN 2016-2017**



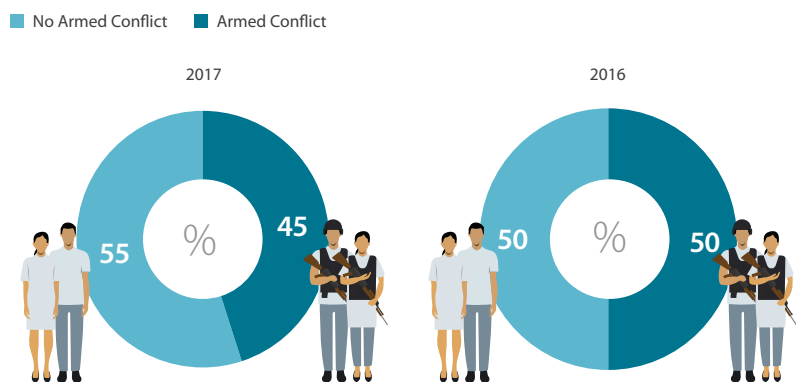
## 2.6 MORE KILLINGS OCCURRING IN COUNTRIES WITH NO ARMED CONFLICT

Since 2014, UNESCO has observed a steady increase in the proportion of killings of journalists in countries not currently experiencing armed conflict, and in 2017 for the first time in recent years, more journalists (55%) were killed in these countries than in countries experiencing armed conflict. In 2016, the proportion of journalists that were killed in countries experiencing armed conflict and in countries not experiencing armed conflict was the same (50%).<sup>5</sup>

This trend may possibly be explained by the absence of new armed conflicts around the world and the decrease in the number of journalists reporting from long-running conflict areas.

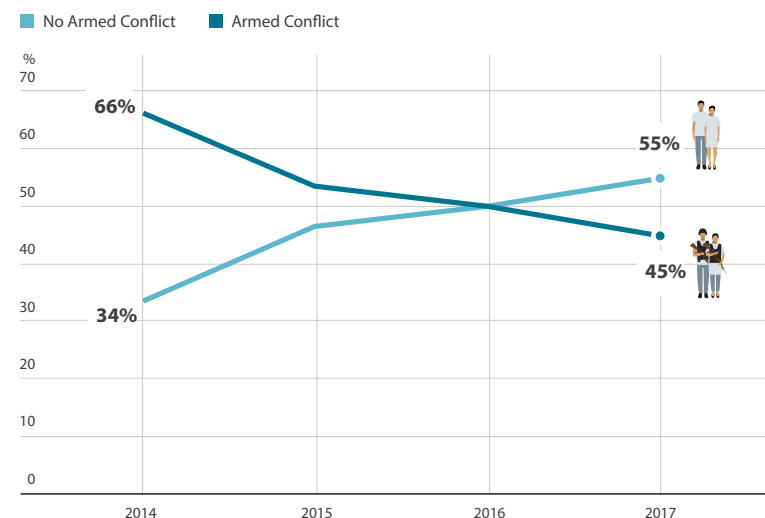
**FIGURE 7:**

### PERCENTAGE OF JOURNALISTS WHO WERE KILLED IN COUNTRIES CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT VS COUNTRIES NOT CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT IN 2016-2017



**FIGURE 8:**

### PERCENTAGE OF JOURNALISTS WHO WERE KILLED IN COUNTRIES CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT VS COUNTRIES NOT CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ARMED CONFLICT IN 2014-2017



<sup>5</sup> This takes into account countries covered by the 13th and 14th reports of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The countries are: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen (reports presented to the UN Security Council in [May 2017](#) and [May 2018](#)).

# **3. MEMBER STATES' RESPONSES: STATUS OF THE JUDICIAL ENQUIRIES ON CASES OF JOURNALISTS KILLED FROM 2006 TO END 2017**



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

In 2018, UNESCO sent a request for information to the 56 Member States in which UNESCO has recorded killings of journalists between 2006 and 2017, and for which UNESCO records showed no information that the judicial cases had been resolved.

The request concerned 893 out of the 1010 killings that UNESCO recorded between 2006 and 2017. The remaining cases are those that UNESCO had already categorized as “resolved” or “archived”, based on the information submitted by Member States in previous years.

## OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL’S REQUEST IN 2018<sup>6 7</sup>

Afghanistan	✓	Kenya	✓
Angola		Kyrgyzstan	✓
Bahrain		Libya	
Bangladesh	✓	Mali	
Brazil	✓	Malta	✓
Burkina Faso		Mexico	✓
Burundi	●	Mozambique	●
Cambodia	✓	Myanmar	✓
Central Africa Republic		Nepal	
Colombia	✓	Nigeria	✓
Congo, Republic		Pakistan <sup>8</sup>	●
Democratic Republic of Congo		Palestine	●
Denmark	✓	Paraguay	✓
Dominican Republic	●	Peru	✓
Ecuador	✓	Philippines	✓
Egypt		Russian Federation	✓
El Salvador	✓	Somalia	✓
Eritrea		South Sudan	
Georgia	✓	Sri Lanka	
Greece	✓	Syria	
Guatemala	✓	Tanzania	✓
Guinea		Thailand	
Guyana, Republic of		Turkey	✓
Haiti		Uganda	✓
Honduras	✓	Ukraine	✓
India		United States of America	✓
Indonesia	✓	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	✓
Iraq	●	Yemen	

✓ Response received      ● Acknowledgement

<sup>6</sup> The letters sent out in 2017 concerned cases of killings of journalists that occurred in 2006-2016, while the 2018 letters concerned killings that took place in 2006-2017.  
<sup>7</sup> This report analyzes responses that were received at the latest on 14 September 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Pakistan did not submit information on specific cases of killings of journalist, but did submit detailed information on concrete measures targeted at improving safety of journalists and combating impunity.

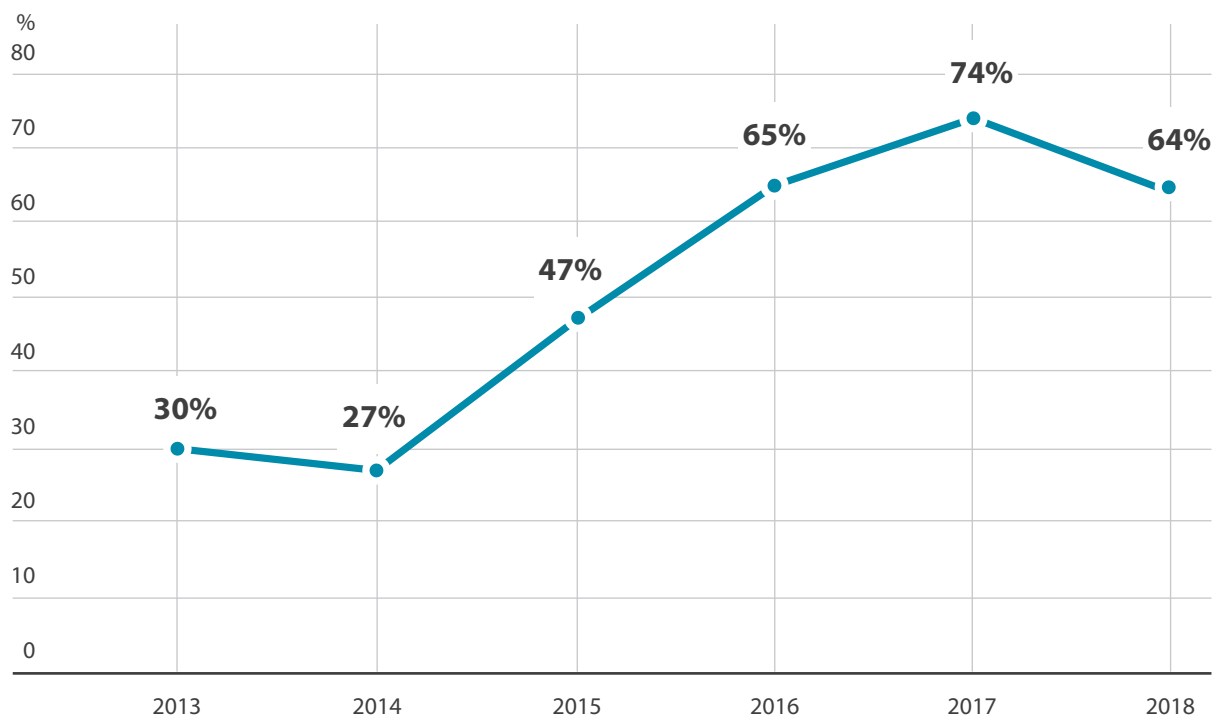
## 3.1 DECREASE IN MEMBER STATE RESPONSE RATE TO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REQUEST

Out of the 56 Member States contacted in 2018 by UNESCO with a request to receive an update on the status of judicial enquiries on the killings of journalists, 36 provided a reply. Among these, 30 provided information on judicial procedures following killings of journalists in the country. Six Member States acknowledged receipt of the Director-General's request and indicated that information would be sought from the capital concerned.

While in the last four years the response rate by affected Member States had been steadily increasing, from 27% in 2014 to a peak of 74% in 2017, 2018 was marked by a drop in the response rate, with only 64% of Member States providing a reply.

Overall, since UNESCO/IP-DC's reporting mechanism on the safety of journalists was launched in 2008, out of the 72 Member States that were contacted at least once by UNESCO on cases that occurred between 2006 and 2017, six Member States have never responded.<sup>9</sup>

**FIGURE 9:**  
**PERCENTAGE OF MEMBER STATES THAT RESPONDED TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REQUEST IN 2013-2018**

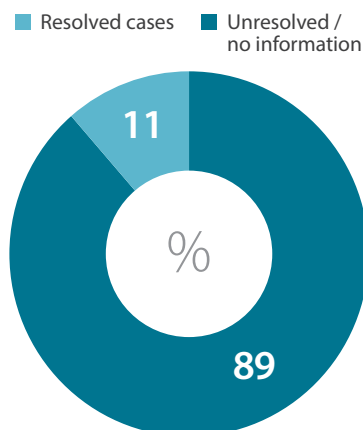


<sup>9</sup> These countries are: Central African Republic, Guyana, Libya, Mali, South Sudan, and Yemen.

## 3.2 SLIGHT REDUCTION IN IMPUNITY RATE, BUT 89% OF CASES REMAIN UNRESOLVED

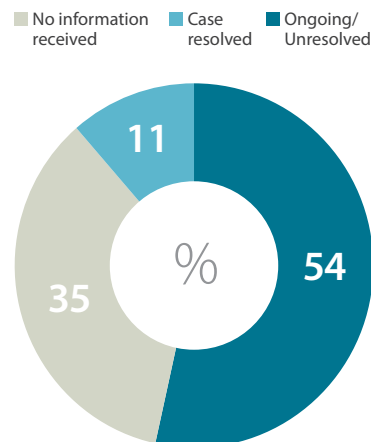
Cumulatively, since UNESCO's reporting mechanism on the safety of journalists was launched, the Organization has received information from Member States on 657 of the 1010 cases condemned by the Director-General between 2006 and 2017. Among these, 115 cases have been judicially resolved according to the information provided by the national authorities of the country, representing an overall resolution rate of 11%.<sup>11</sup>

**FIGURE 10:**  
**PERCENTAGE OF CASES RESOLVED OUT OF ALL CASES CONDEMNED BY THE DG 2006-2017**



In 54% of all cases, Member States reported that a judicial procedure was either still underway or that the case was archived or unresolved. For the remaining 35% of all cases, representing 353 journalists' killings, the affected Member States have never provided information on the judicial follow-up.

**FIGURE 11:**  
**STATUS OF JUDICIAL ENQUIRY INTO KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS 2006-2017**



Based on the information received from Member States, the highest rate of resolution of cases of killings of journalists is in Western Europe and North America, with 56% of cases (or 14 of 25 cases) reported as resolved. In Central and Eastern Europe, the resolution rate is of 43%, with 17 of 40 cases reported as resolved. These two regions with the lowest impunity rate are also those in which the least killings of journalists have been recorded.

<sup>11</sup> If one considers only those cases for which UNESCO received information, the resolution rate amounts to 18%.

The highest rate of impunity appears to be in the Arab States region, which also records the top number of killings worldwide, with only 1,5% of cases reported as resolved. This high rate may be linked to the fact that many of the killings in this region occurred in conflict situations, making it more difficult to identify the perpetrators and to complete a judicial enquiry.

**TABLE 1:**  
**STATUS OF JUDICIAL ENQUIRY PER REGION 2006-2017**

Region	Case resolved	Ongoing/ Unresolved	No information received so far	Total cases
Arab States	5	139	194	338
Asia and the Pacific	22	140	102	264
Latin America and the Caribbean	41	163	22	226
Africa	16	66	35	117
Central and Eastern Europe	17	23	0	40
Western Europe and North America	14	11	0	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>1010</b>

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

Since 2017, UNESCO includes in its letters to Member 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”, and “highlighting the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work”.

In 2018, 15 Member States included in their reply information on concrete actions taken to improve safety of journalists.

Member States reported a wide range of steps taken to monitor, prevent, protect against, and prosecute crimes against journalists:<sup>12</sup>

#### MONITORING CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Afghanistan, Brazil, Guatemala, Pakistan informed of the setting up of monitoring mechanisms to track attacks against journalists.

Guatemala informed of the establishment of an entity to analyse attacks against journalists in order to develop guidelines for a more effective prevention of future attacks.

<sup>12</sup> Please note that the following section includes only examples of measures taken by Member States and does not include the full account given by each Member State. For those Member States that have agreed to make their response public, more details on these measures can be found here: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory>

## PREVENTION OF CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Guatemala also reported the establishment of an emergency call line for journalists and human rights defenders under threat.

Brazil, Honduras, Pakistan notified UNESCO of special programmes, policies or protocols for the protection of journalists and/or human rights defenders.

Kyrgyzstan and the United States of America mentioned awareness-raising campaigns on the safety of journalists.

## PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS AGAINST ATTACKS

Pakistan informed UNESCO on providing training to security guards of media houses and appointing focal points on safety of journalists in different police departments.

Afghanistan reported providing support through national security forces.

Denmark, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and the United States of America reported safety trainings for journalists.

## PROSECUTION OF CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Honduras, Mexico and Pakistan reported the establishment of special investigation and/or prosecution mechanisms dedicated to ensuring prosecution of crimes against journalists.

Guatemala reported on the implementation of training modules for judges and magistrates on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists (in cooperation with UNESCO).

Afghanistan notified on the establishment of a special committee comprising security agencies and the national journalists' federation within the auspices of the Ministry of Information to assess the feasibility of prosecuting cases of violence against journalists Afghanistan.

Malta informed of a €1 million reward offered by the Government for information leading to the capture of the perpetrator(s) of the killing of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

## OTHER MEASURES REPORTED BY MEMBER STATES

Responses from a number of Member States reflected a recognition that the complexity of the issue of journalists' safety requires a holistic, co-ordinated response with the involvement of a range of actors.<sup>13</sup>

## ADDRESSING SAFETY OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS



A small number of Member States reported on concrete measures taken to address the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work, including the development of a dedicated policy for dealing with gender equality issues in the media (Danish Union of Journalists) and specific safety training sessions for women journalists (Kenya).

<sup>13</sup> Please find a more comprehensive account of measures reported by Member States in the full report of the UNESCO Director-General on the Safety of Journalists: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002658/265828e.pdf>



# 4. BACKGROUND

UNESCO is the lead organization within the UN system that deals with press freedom and the safety of journalists. The 2018 UNESCO Director-General's report on the Safety of Journalists was prepared for submission to the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). The report is prepared every two years in line with the Decision on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity adopted by the Council at its 26th session in 2008, and renewed at subsequent sessions in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. In its latest Decision, adopted in November 2016, the IPDC Council urged Member States to "continue to inform the Director-General of UNESCO, on a voluntary basis, on the status of the judicial inquiries conducted on each of the killings condemned by the Director-General".

The report provides an analysis of the cases of killings of journalists and associated media personnel which were condemned by the Director-General in 2016 and 2017. It also takes stock of the status of judicial enquiries conducted on each of the killings recorded by UNESCO between 2006 and 2017, based on information provided by Member States.

The data in this report contributes to:

- *UNESCO's awareness-raising on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on 2 November;*
- *The Organization's contribution to the Universal Periodic Review;*
- *Global monitoring on SDG 16.10 on "public access to information and fundamental freedoms" via the UN approved indicator 16.10.1: "Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months."*

UNESCO plays a leading role in coordinating the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (hereafter referred to as UN Plan of Action), which was endorsed in 2012 by the UN Chief Executives Board.<sup>14</sup>

The Plan is designed as a multi-stakeholder effort to coordinate responses aimed at the prevention of, protection against, and prosecution for attacks against journalists. Its implementing actors include UN agencies, national governmental authorities, regional organizations, human rights bodies, UN country teams, media representatives, national and international NGOs, and academia. The implementation of the Plan revolves around six main pillars: standard setting and policy making, awareness-raising, monitoring and reporting, capacity building, academic research and coalition building.

In 2017, UNESCO, together with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, organized a multi-stakeholder consultation to review ways of strengthening the implementation of the UN Plan of Action.

The Outcome Document from this consultation highlights the need to translate international norms into national policies and practices. It also signals the need to create stronger synergies between the relevant UN agencies; to strengthen mechanisms at the national level that deal with prevention of, protection against and prosecution for crimes against journalists; and to address specific risks faced by women journalists, including online.<sup>15</sup>

Importantly, it encourages Member States to report on the safety of journalists, including within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN human rights bodies and UNESCO's monitoring of judicial follow-up to killings.

<sup>14</sup> The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity can be accessed in all official UN languages here: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists\\_en.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> *Consultation Outcome Document*, 16 August 2017.

