

***New York, December 22 (Infosplusgabon) - The number of journalists singled out for murder in reprisal for their work more than doubled this year, leading to a rise in overall work-related killings, CPJ found in a report released today.***

Globally, at least 30 journalists were killed on duty in 2020, including 21 reprisal murders, up from 10 murders last year. The number of deaths in combat or crossfire fell to a 20-year low.

“It’s appalling that the murders of journalists have more than doubled in the last year, and this escalation represents a failure of the international community to confront the scourge of impunity,” said CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon.

Countries with significant numbers of murders included Mexico and Afghanistan.

Mexico has long been the most dangerous country for journalists in the Western hemisphere. This year, at least five journalists were killed there, including four retaliatory murders. Journalists covering Mexico work in an environment of violent drug traffickers and entrenched corruption, and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has not shown the political will to combat impunity. Most recently, a murder and a series of threats to the media by a suspected criminal gang have decimated reporting in the city of Iguala, in Guerrero state.

Worldwide, criminal groups were the most frequently suspected killers of journalists. However in one particularly appalling case, government officials in Iran executed journalist Roohallah Zam on December 12 after he was sentenced to death for his reporting on 2017 anti-government protests. Because he was jailed as of December 1, Zam was also listed on CPJ's annual census of imprisoned journalists, which is a global snapshot of those behind bars on that date (and which this year hit a record high).

"It is outrageous that Roohallah Zam appears in CPJ's census of journalists imprisoned around the world and also the list of those killed in the same year," Simon added. "His inclusion on both lists is testament to the abject cruelty of the Iranian regime, which cloaks itself in the veneer of legality. Zam's killing is nothing but state-sponsored murder."

While the U.S. spoke out in protest of Zam's killing, the Trump administration takes an opportunistic approach to defending press freedom, as shown by its failure to condemn Saudi Arabian officials for the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Last month, CPJ published a proposal to the incoming Biden administration on restoring U.S. leadership on press freedom, including appointment of a special envoy.

Globally, three journalists were killed in combat or crossfire this year, the fewest since 2000, as the COVID-19 pandemic dominated media attention and restricted travel. All three were killed in Syria by suspected Russian airstrikes. The remaining journalists were killed on other dangerous assignments that turned violent, such as civil unrest in Iraq and Nigeria.

CPJ is still investigating the deaths of at least 15 other journalists this year to determine whether journalism was the motive. CPJ's analysis of journalists killed for their work is based on data as of December 15, 2020. CPJ is investigating reports of journalists killed in Afghanistan and Honduras since that date; CPJ's website is continually updated at [cpj.org/data/killed/](https://cpj.org/data/killed/). CPJ's methodology is detailed [here](#).

CPJ spearheads the Global Campaign Against Impunity and is a partner in the initiative A Safer World For Truth, which pursues justice for murdered journalists and helps keep their stories alive.

"The fact that murder is on the rise and the number of journalists imprisoned around the world hit a record is a clear demonstration that press freedom is under unprecedented assault in the midst of a global pandemic, in which information is essential," Simon concluded. "We must come together to reverse this terrible trend."

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