



FEINDE DER PRESSEFREIHEIT

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Pierre NKURUNZIZA

President of Burundi

Aged 52

Predator since **2015**

Burundi's president since 2005, Pierre Nkurunziza began cracking down on the media in 2015, starting with those that covered an attempted coup d'état by opponents of his plan to run for an unconstitutional third term.

Attack technique: **multiform persecution**

Persecution of the media has taken many forms since 2015, including judicial harassment, arbitrary imprisonment, broadcasting and publication bans, beatings, torture and disappearances. Radio stations in the capital, Bujumbura, were attacked with heavy weapons during a coup attempt by moderate generals on 13 May 2015. Since then, they have remained closed "for the purpose of investigation." They are accused of complicity in the coup attempt because they covered the events of 13 May and/or broadcast the message put out by the putschists. Warrants have been issued for the arrest of the heads of Burundi's five most important independent media outlets (*Radio Publique Africaine*, *Bonesha FM*, *Radio Isanganiro*, *Radio-Télévision Renaissance* and the newspaper *Iwacu*), who all fled the country. Journalists who have been the targets of threats, physical violence or intimidation have for the most part fled abroad. Those that have remained find it very difficult to work. Government information sources refuse to talk to them and the security forces often target them because they are journalists, in some cases physically attacking them in the street. Many Burundian journalists are now living in exile in Rwanda, where they are unable to earn a living.

Kill tally:

- **Around 100 journalists in exile**
- **1 journalist missing: Jean Bigirimana**, since July 2016 (online petition)
- **All independent media banned**
- **4 journalists** charged with being the "intellectual authors" of the coup attempt. They have all fled to Rwanda

Enforcer: **National Intelligence Agency** (SNR)

Favourite targets: **all media outlets, especially radio stations**, that criticize the government

Official discourse: **smear campaign**

"I very firmly believe that the case of the journalist Jean Bigirimana is being used with the aim of creating terror at little cost and getting the government ostracized, with the ultimate goal of regime change." (Presidential spokesman Willy Nyamitwe on Facebook on 5 August 2016)

Country score: Ranked **156th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Burundi is in free fall. It was ranked 73rd in 2004.



Joseph KABILA

President of the Democratic Republic of Congo
Aged 45

Predator since **2001**

Joseph Kabila succeeded his father, a rebel leader who became president by overthrowing Mobutu Sese Seko. He is constitutionally banned from serving a third term when his second one expires, in theory on 19 December 2016, but he has managed to have the presidential election postponed. The national electoral commission is now talking of organizing one in December 2018, two years later than planned under the original timetable

Attack technique: **terror by means of chaos**

Kabila gives his soldiers, police and security services a free hand to harass the media. If they are lucky, journalists are just threatened or roughed up. If they are not, they are arrested or murdered. Kabila's method of maintaining this system is to guarantee complete impunity for those who persecute the media. No justice has ever been rendered in the cases of journalists who have been murdered since Kabila became president. Either the investigations have been botched, failing to identify the instigators, or there has been no investigation at all. In one on the murders, two individuals were arrested, forced to confess, convicted and jailed, only to escape mysteriously from prison. No one has ever been arrested for ordering the murder of this journalist.

Kill tally: **at least 8 journalists killed** by forces linked to the state (by soldiers or by political instigators).

Enforcers:

- **National Intelligence Agency (ANR)**
- **Armed Forces**

Favourite targets: **independent journalists**

Journalists who take too much interest in financial conflicts of interest or in collusion between the government and illegal armed groups.

Official discourse: **blatant lies**

"I would like to affirm here the Congolese government's determination to ensure that no crime – whether against journalists or against the population in Kinshasa, in the east or throughout the national territory – goes unpunished." (At the end of the Francophonie Summit in Montreux in October 2010)

Country score: The DRC has been falling steadily in RSF's World Press Freedom Index since 2004 and is ranked **152nd** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



Teodoro OBIANG NGUEMA

President of Equatorial Guinea

Age 74

Predator since **1979**

Teodoro Obiang Nguema seized power in Equatorial Guinea in 1979 by ousting his uncle in a coup.

Attack technique: **totalitarian dictatorship**

For the past 37 years, Obiang has exercised absolute control over Equatorial Guinea, a small oil-rich country in the Gulf of Guinea sometimes referred to as “Africa’s Kuwait.” The privately-owned media consist of just a few newspapers, while the state-owned media are subject to very strict political censorship. The country has no journalists’ union or press freedom organization, and the law provides for prior censorship. So in practice it is impossible to criticize the president, police or armed forces. Coverage of the Arab Spring, the fighting in Mali and Syria and President Blaise Compaoré’s removal in Burkina Faso were all banned.

Journalists can be dismissed and arrested, their broadcasts can be suspended and their equipment can be seized, so they routinely censor themselves instead of reporting the news. The authorities do not recognize media independence. Journalists are state employees who take orders from the information ministry, are closely watched and just relay ruling party propaganda. The few journalists who dare to work independently are liable to be arrested.

Kill tally: RSF has documented **17 acts of censorship**, including the blocking of social networks. In the past 12 years, **6 journalists have been deported** and **15 have been arrested**.

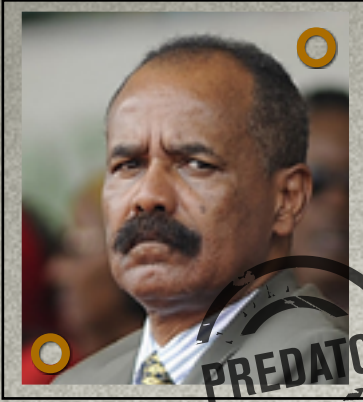
Enforcers: **Information ministry**

Favourite targets: **independent journalists**

Official discourse: **waffle**

“In other countries, they say there is no media freedom in Equatorial Guinea. I say that’s not true, because all the world’s newspapers arrive in our country and you can get all of the world’s TV and radio stations without restriction, not to speak of the growing quality of our society’s journalistic and literary production. But young people read little and don’t follow the news very much.” (Agustin Nzé Nfumu, minister of information, press and radio, La Gaceta de Guinea Ecuatorial, May 2016)

Country score: Equatorial Guinea has been falling for years in RSF’s World Press Freedom Index and is ranked **168th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



Issaias AFEWORKI

President of Eritrea

Aged 70

Predator since **2001**

Eritrea's president since 1993, Issaias Afewerki brutally eliminated his political rivals and has jailed all independent media journalists since 2001

Attack technique: soviet-style totalitarianism

The least protest is regarded as a threat to "national security." There are no more privately-owned media, only state media with Stalinist editorial policies. All the editorial staff of an education ministry radio station were arrested in 2008. Some journalists have spent more than five years in prison before being released without explanation, while others remain in prison and some may have died there.

Kill tally: dozens of **journalists have died in detention, taken their own lives, disappeared or fled into exile.**

Enforcer: Yemane Ghebreab, presidential adviser

Favourite targets: all the media

Official discourse: complete denial

"There have never been any imprisoned journalists. There aren't any. You are misinformed."
(Al-Jazeera interview, May 2008)

Country score: Eritrea has been ranked **last (180th)** in RSF's World Press Freedom Index since 2007.



Yahya JAMMEH

President of Gambia

Aged 51

Predator since **1994**

Yahya Jammeh seized power
in a coup d'état on 22 July 1994

Attack technique: **megalomaniac dictatorship**

A self-styled healer and “doctor” who claims to have solved the mysteries of AIDS, obesity and erectile dysfunction, Gambia’s undisputed master is determined to perpetuate his dictatorial rule until his death. There is little doubt that he ordered the 2004 murder of Deyda Hydera, Agence France-Presse’s Gambia correspondent and editor of *The Point*, a tri-weekly newspaper, after Hydera wrote a very critical column entitled, “Good morning Mister President.” Another journalist, the *Daily Observer*’s Chief Ebrima Manneh, was arrested in 2006 and was never seen again. The authorities deny holding him and claim that he is still alive.

Kill tally:

- **Disappearances of journalists** (including the *Daily Observer*’s Chief Ebrima Manneh on 7 July 2006)
- **Imprisonment**
- **Closure of media outlets**
- **Drawn-out trials of journalists on trumped-up charges**
- **Widespread self-censorship**

Enforcer: **The feared National Intelligence Agency** (NIA)

Official discourse: **Threat-tinged contempt**

“The journalists are less than 1 percent of the population, and if anybody expects me to allow less than 1 percent of the population to destroy 99 percent of the population, you are in the wrong place.”
(During the November 2011 presidential election)

Country score: Gambia is ranked **145th** out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2016 World Press Freedom Index.



Paul KAGAME

President of Rwanda

Aged 58

Predator since **2000**

Appointed vice-president in 1994, after the genocide, Paul Kagame took over as president when Pasteur Bizimungu resigned in 2000. Kagame had the constitution amended in December 2015 so that he can run for another seven-year term in 2017 and potentially remain in power until 2034.

Attack technique: **totalitarian-leaning authoritarianism**

Since taking power Kagame has used the 1994 genocide, in which media outlets such as Radio Mille Collines incited racial hatred, as grounds for keeping a tight grip on journalists. Censorship is still ubiquitous 20 years later. His information ministry and the Media High Council are his diligent censors, often charging journalists with “insulting the President of the Republic.”

Newspaper editor Agnès Uwimana Nkusi and one of her reporters, Saidat Mukakibibi, were sentenced to 17 and 7 years in prison respectively in 2011 for daring to criticize the president. Kagame is also suspected in connection with the 2010 murder of Jean-Léonard Rugambage, the deputy editor of the weekly Umuvugizi, who was investigating the role of Rwandan intelligence officers in an attempt to murder a fugitive Rwandan general in South Africa.

Kill tally: According to RSF's count, **8 journalists have been killed or gone missing, 8 journalists have been physically attacked, 11 journalists have been given long jail terms and 33 journalists have had to flee the country** since 1996.

Enforcers: **The intelligence services**, which have informants everywhere.

Favourite targets: **all journalists who pose a “serious threat” to the government, president or nation**, in particular, those who:

- Question Rwanda's development record
- Talk about poverty
- Refer to the massacre of Hutus by the (now ruling) Rwandan Patriotic Front during the 1994 genocide
- Make unflattering comments about the president

Official discourse: **feigned indifference**

“Free speech? Freedom of the press? People are insulted every day. They insult me every day. In cartoons, they call me Hitler. I am not bothered at all. I despise them all.” (Speech delivered at a ceremony on 8 April 2010, marking the 16th anniversary of the genocide)

Country score: Rwanda is ranked **161st** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index. Freedom of information has been declining steadily for years.



Al-Shabaab

Somali Islamist group

Predator since **2008**

Al-Shabaab controlled all of southern Somalia, including the capital Mogadishu, until 2011, when it was driven back by Somali, Kenyan and other African forces. It continues to occupy territory in the south and to strike elsewhere, including the capital

Attack technique: terror

Journalists put their lives at risk when they criticize Al-Shabaab. A bomb placed in her car killed TV journalist Hindiya Mohamed in December 2015. Yusuf Keynan, a reporter for Radio Ergo and Mustaqbal Radio, was killed on 21 June 2014 by a bomb left under the hood of his car. In 2010, Al-Shabaab seized control of ten radio stations to ensure that their broadcasts were “religiously correct.” In another radical measure, Al-Shabaab has banned journalists from territory under its control, thereby reducing vast swathes of the country to silence. No one knows what is happening there.

Kill tally: several dozen journalists murdered

Al-Shabaab does not always claim its attacks, but its modus operandi often gives it away.

Favourite targets: all journalists who dare to refer to its activities in a negative light or refuse to broadcast their propaganda

Official discourse: reference to the Sharia

“Any company or individual ignoring this order [to all Internet Services Providers to terminate their services within 15 days] will be regarded as working for the enemy and will be dealt with in accordance with the Sharia.” (Communiqué released on 8 January 2014)

Country score: Somalia is ranked **167th** out of 180 countries in in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index. Al-Shabaab alone is not responsible for this disastrous ranking. The government also persecutes journalists, by neutralizing those it regards as a nuisance or by failing to prosecute their attackers.



Salva KIIR

President of South Sudan

Aged 65

Predator since **2011**

Salva Kiir has been South Sudan's president since the country became independent in 2011

Attack technique: **criminal tyranny**

What with censorship, seizure of newspapers, threats, harassment, arbitrary detention, mistreatment and murders, media freedom is in appalling shape in South Sudan especially since the conflict resumed in December 2013. The president makes no bones about his desire to rule in an extremely authoritarian manner and his tyrannical tendencies have been exacerbated by the conflict with former Vice-President Riek Machar since 2013.

Kill tally: **7 journalists killed** since 2011

Enforcers:

- **National Security Service** (NSS)
- **Sudanese People's Liberation Army** (SPLA)

Favourite targets: **any journalist referring to**

- the conflict with his rival Riek Machar
- politics in general
- the country's economic situation

Official discourse: **direct threats**

"Freedom of press does not mean that you work against your country. And if anybody among them does not know this country has killed people, we will demonstrate it one day on them." (News conference on 16 August 2015)

Country score: Ranked 111th in RSF's World Press Freedom Index when it became independent five years ago, South Sudan is **140th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



Omar AL-BASHIR

President of Sudan

Aged 72

Predator since **1989**

Omar al-Bashir seized power in a coup d'état on 30 June 1989

Attack technique: brutal Islamist dictatorship

In his 27 years as president, Omar al-Bashir has never changed his policy towards journalists: they have to submit. The media are closely watched and can pay a high price for any deviation. Journalists are hounded, threatened, arrested, convicted or forced to flee the country. The Khartoum autocrat's preferred weapons are the (temporary or permanent) closure of newspapers or the seizure of entire newspaper issues. As well as terror, the authorities often use drawn-out judicial proceedings to throttle media outlets and journalists economically.

Kill tally: according to RSF's count, more than **165 newspaper issues have been seized** and more than **139 journalists have been arrested, jailed or prosecuted** arbitrarily since 2010.

Enforcers: national Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)

The NISS has enjoyed immunity for all of its actions by law since 2010 and is empowered to seize any publication that is deemed to threaten national security, incite hatred, sow discord or spread rumours.

Favourite targets: journalists who refer to the conflicts in Darfur or South Kordofan, the International Criminal Court (which issued warrants for Omar al-Bashir's arrest in 2009 and 2010), human rights violations or corruption.

Official discourse: menacing contempt

"The president defends the confiscation of media, because newspapers must not overstep the limits. The issue of journalists is of no importance and the press does not interest me either." (Information minister, 17 February 2015).

Country score: Sudan is ranked **174th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index. Freedom of information is declining steadily in Sudan. The regime is one of the worst in the world for journalists.



Robert MUGABE

President of Zimbabwe

Aged 92

Predator since **1980**

Prime minister until 1987, thereafter president

Attack technique: **orwellian dictatorship**

Robert Mugabe has kept a tight grip on the reins of power in Zimbabwe for 36 years and is now the world's oldest head of state. The media enjoy no freedom of information: TV broadcasting is still a state monopoly, the privately-owned print media are constantly harassed and foreign reporters are not welcome. The dictator has imposed extremely repressive legislation: the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) is designed to neutralize independent journalism, while an Orwellian law has allowed the authorities to intercept electronic communications without reference to a judge since 2007.

Kill tally: According to RSF's count, there have been **45 acts of censorship, 38 physical attacks on journalists by state agents** and **97 cases of journalists being detained** since 2008 as a result of Mugabe's increasing authoritarianism. These figures are not exhaustive.

Enforcers: **ZANU-PF security units** and youth groups

Favourite targets: **any journalist** who questions the president's legitimacy or longevity.

Official discourse: **insults and humiliation**

"Stop asking stupid questions. You are an idiot." (At a press conference during an African Union summit in Cairo in 2010)

Country score: Zimbabwe is ranked **124th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index.



Raúl CASTRO

Cuban president

Aged 85

Predator since **2008**

Raúl Castro succeeded his brother Fidel as President of the Council of State and President of the Council of Ministers in 2008. Since 2011, he has also been First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Attack technique: **soviet-style totalitarianism**

The media have no freedom in Cuba. The state keeps a tight grip on TV channels, radio stations and newspapers. When bloggers and citizen journalists try to use the very limited freedom that exists online, they do so at their own risk. Independent journalists who want to practice their profession have to choose between prison and exile.

Kill tally: There were **428 attacks against the media from June 2015 to August 2016**, according to the Cuban Institute for Free Speech and Press Freedom (ICLEP)

- 249 arbitrary arrests
- 85 threats and acts of psychological aggression
- 33 cases of confiscation of journalistic material
- 2 journalists are currently detained: **Yoeni de Jesús Guerra García** (*Yayabo Press*), since 13 March 2014, and **José Antonio Torres** (a Santiago de Cuba-based reporter for the government daily *Granma*), since 1 May 2011.

Enforcers: **Cuban State Security officers**

Favourite targets:

- **Independent media, opposition media, all dissidents**
- **Journalists and bloggers** who were prevented from operating during the recent visits by Barack Obama and the pope
- **Journalists who try to cover the street protests every Sunday in Havana by the “Ladies in White”** (a movement launched by the relatives of political prisoners and former political prisoners)

Official discourse: **Illiberal communism**

“We cannot allow misunderstandings of any kind to obstruct the gigantic task we are facing and for this reason freedom of expression is needed in our party and in Cuba. (Referring to Cuba’s ruling Communist Party in a speech to the first annual ordinary session of Cuba’s National Assembly in 2011)

Country score: Ranked **171st** out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Cuba is by far the western hemisphere’s most hostile country towards media freedom.



Los Zetas

Mexican criminal cartel

Predator since **1999**

Attack technique: Criminal barbarity

Based in the states of the northeast and Gulf of Mexico, this criminal cartel stops at nothing to impose its law, including threats, intimidation, murder, abduction and the most barbaric forms of violence. Its operatives carry out crime after crime but are guaranteed complete impunity by the widespread corruption within the police and judicial system.

Los Zetas and the other cartels have turned Mexico into the western hemisphere's most dangerous country for journalists. The number of murders and disappearances of media workers since 2000 is horrifying. The climate of terror has had the desired effect: self-censorship is practiced throughout the Mexican media. Those who do not censor themselves pay with their lives or end up having to flee abroad.

Kill tally: dozens of journalists killed or missing

Favourite targets: Politics, business and crime reporters and human rights defenders whose work has some degree of impact on the cartel's interests

Official discourse: intimidation

"This is what happens to traitors and those who think they're so clever. With greetings from Los Zetas." (Message left near the body of Víctor Báez Chino, whose mutilated body was found in downtown Xalapa, the capital of the eastern state of Veracruz, on 14 June 2012.)

Country score: Mexico is in free fall in RSF's World Press Freedom Index. It was ranked 96th in 2004. Now it is ranked **149th** out of 180 countries.



Nicolás MADURO

President of Venezuela

Aged 53

Before being elected president in 2013, Nicolás Maduro was Hugo Chávez's vice-president and foreign minister

Attack technique: Carefully orchestrated censorship and economic asphyxiation

Nicolás Maduro does not like independent media outlets and uses various methods to silence them. He got friends to buy the national daily *El Universal* and the TV channel *Globovisión*, thereby triggering a wave of dismissals and resignations. He uses a law adopted in 2010 under Hugo Chávez that criminalizes any content that may "call into question legitimately constituted authority." And he uses newsprint shortages to silence the print media.

Kill tally: 22 newspapers have had to suspend operations since 2013 because of government-orchestrated newsprint shortages. There have been **many arrests of journalists** and several **foreign reporters have been denied entry to Venezuela**, according to the NGO *Expresión Libre*. One journalist, **Braulio Jatar**, the editor of the *Reporte Confidencial* news website, has been in detention since 3 September 2016.

Enforcers:

- **Bolivarian National Intelligence Service** (SEBIN)
- **Bolivarian National Guard** (GNB)
- **Department for Forensic, Penal and Criminal Investigations** (CICPC)

Favourite targets: opposition and independent media

Official discourse: paranoid denigration

"I condemn the international campaign waged by CNN en Español, this laboratory of lies, psychological warfare and trash against our country, against Venezuela. A campaign that is also being organized by NTN24, a trash TV station funded by the paramilitary Alvaro Uribe, and by the Miami Herald, a newspaper purveying every kind of lie against Venezuela (...) [Media] that are full of hate, rage and madness, [media] that tried to poison and dump their poison on Venezuela and elsewhere in the world." (Speech delivered at the inauguration of 80 homes in Caricuao, Caracas, on 18 September 2014)

Country score: Venezuela was 117th in RSF's 2013 World Press Freedom Index but has fallen to **139th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



The Taliban

Muslim fundamentalist militants
in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Predators since **1994**

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001

Attack technique: **medieval barbarity**

The barbaric way the Taliban treat civilians is well known. They have also always pursued an aggressive strategy towards journalists, tolerating them only if they relay Taliban propaganda. The Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan are information black holes where practicing journalism is impossible. But their influence extends beyond these areas. Journalists and their families are constantly threatened and pressured to practice stricter self-censorship. Many Afghan and foreign journalists have been the victims of Taliban abductions, executions and targeted bombings. The climate of terror they try to impose is the main obstacle to perpetuating the media freedom and independence that emerged in Afghanistan after US troops chased the Taliban out of Kabul in 2001.

Kill tally: **7 journalists killed in 2016**

- Seven *Tolo TV* employees, including **5 journalists, were killed** in a suicide bombing in downtown Kabul on 20 January.
- US photographer **David Gilkey** and his interpreter, Afghan journalist **Zabihullah Tamanna**, were killed in an attack in Marjah, in the southern province of Helmand, on 5 June.

Official discourse: **death threats**

"We henceforth regard Tolo TV and 1TV as military targets, not as news media (...) Nothing is safe from our attacks, neither personnel (presenter, reporters or crews) nor the buildings themselves."
(Press release signed by the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Military Commission," 12 October 2015)

Country score: The black holes for news and information created by the Taliban and their abuses weighed heavily in Afghanistan's ranking in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index (**120th** out of 180 countries), because respect for media freedom is otherwise fairly satisfactory.



Ansarullah Bangla Team

Radical Islamist movement in Bangladesh

Predator since **2013**

Attack technique: **murderous fundamentalism**

In 2013, as a result of a knife attack on the blogger Asif Mohiuddin on 14 January and the murder of the blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, whose throat was cut near his Dhaka home on 15 February, the world learned of the existence Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), an Islamist terrorist group that sows terror in Bangladesh, especially among the ranks of bloggers.

ABT posts lists of alleged blasphemers on Facebook and calls for them to be murdered with the aim of eradicating all criticism of Islamic fundamentalism. It uses cyber-space not only to promote Jihadi ideology but also to identify leading opponents in order to kill them. The attacks on bloggers are carried out in an extremely brutal manner, usually in busy public places, with the apparent aim of increasing the terror effect on the general public. Its main targets are independent secularist bloggers, intellectuals and academics.

The group recruits its members online, preferring those who are familiar with social networks and with the latest information and communications technology. Belatedly acknowledged by the government as a terrorist group, ABT operates in the shadows, both online and on the streets. Blogger Avijit Roy's murder in February 2015 was claimed by the "Ansar Bangla 7" Twitter account.

Kill tally: **at least four bloggers murdered in 2015.**

Four bloggers were hacked to death in the first eight months of 2015. The victims – Avijit Roy on 26 February, Ananta Bijoy Das on 30 March, Washiqur Rahman on 12 May and Niloy Chakrabarti on 7 August – all criticized religious fundamentalism and advocated tolerance, free speech and freedom of thought in their blogs. Many other attacks have been blamed on Ansarullah Bangla Team although not all of them have been claimed. Dozens of bloggers have been forced to leave Bangladesh.

Favourite targets: **secularist, free-thinking bloggers**

Official discourse: **incitement to murder**

A hit list was posted on various websites in September 2015 calling for the murders of dozens of bloggers, including bloggers in Europe.

Country score: Ranked **144th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Bangladesh owes this poor position in part to the fact that the state allows ABT to operate with complete impunity while at the same time it prosecutes and convicts journalists who criticize the constitution or Islam, which is the state religion.



XI Jinping

President of the People's Republic of China
Aged 63

Predator since **2013**

President of China and General Secretary of
the Chinese Communist Party

Attack technique: **decentralized totalitarianism**

The Chinese Communist Party's master tolerates no dissent. China continues to be the world's leading country for censorship, self-censorship and the suppression of freely-reported news and information. The print and broadcast media are forbidden to use unauthorized information from foreign media outlets or websites. The regime's big obsession is controlling the Internet. Xi Jinping himself heads the Central Leading Group for Internet Security and Informatization, which sets Internet censorship and control policies. The Chinese social networks Weibo and QQ are closely monitored and all embarrassing content is quickly deleted. Independent journalists who dare to criticize the authorities are harassed, detained and often convicted on the basis of forced confessions.

Kill tally: more than 100 journalists and bloggers currently jailed. Xi Jinping's China is among the **world's biggest prisons for media personnel.**

Enforcers:

- **Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC)**
- All branches of **the police and judicial systems**

Favourite targets:

- **All journalists and bloggers who report information that is not carried by the state media**
- **All those who take an interest in human rights**, the rule of law and corruption within the party
- **News websites run by citizen journalists based abroad** (which are systematically blocked)

Official discourse: **paternalistic indoctrination**

"They must love the party, protect the party, and closely align themselves with the party leadership in thought, politics and action." (Referring to journalists working for CCTV, the Xinhua news agency and the People's Daily newspaper, February 2016)

Country score: Ranked **176th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, China is one of the world's worst enemies of media freedom.



KIM Jong-un

North Korea's "Supreme Leader"

Aged 33

Predator since **2011**

Son and successor to Kim Jong-il,
who succeeded his own father, Kim Il-sung, in 1994

Attack technique: **paranoid totalitarianism**

There is only one kind of journalism in North Korea. It consists of relaying the regime's propaganda in praise of the party, the army and above all the "supreme leader." Leniency is not part of the regime's approach to its journalists. One step wrong and they are severely punished. One journalist spent three months in a reeducation camp for misspelling Kim Jong-il's name. North Korea is completely isolated from any news from the outside world. No one has access to the Internet and foreign media are banned even though international news agencies such as the *Associated Press* and more recently *Agence France-Presse* have been allowed to have a presence in Pyongyang in recent years. The regime rarely grants visas to foreign media. When they do, it is usually for big cultural events or a visit by a foreign official. Foreign reporters are closely watched to ensure they do not talk to ordinary North Koreans, who live in terror and can be sent to a concentration camp just for listening to a foreign radio station.

Kill tally: **complete absence of independent media**

The few foreign journalists who manage to travel to North Korea do so at their own risk:

- **Rupert Wingfield-Hayes**, a British journalist working for the BBC, was arrested and deported on 9 May 2016 for "attacking the system of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" and practicing "non-objective journalism."
- US journalists **Euna Lee** and **Laura Ling** were sentenced to 12 years of forced labour in June 2009. They were finally released two months later.
- Two North Korean journalists are currently in prison: **Song Keum Chul** (a TV journalist), since 30 November 1995; and **Kim Sing Chul**, since 30 September 2016.

Official discourse: **the only truth is Kim Jong-un's**

"Freedom of thought is a hypocritical slogan aimed at suppressing progressive ideas and spreading the bourgeoisie's reactionary ideas." (North Korean news agency press release)

Country score: North Korea is ranked **179th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index. It used to be ranked last but the last place has been held since 2007 by Eritrea, a Horn of Africa country with a regime as repressive as North Korea's.



Pakistan's intelligence agencies

especially Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)

Predator since **2010**

The year in which Pakistan became the world's deadliest country for journalists

Attack technique: **criminal manipulation**

Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) plays a very important role in Pakistan, to the point that some journalists call it the state within the state. According to RSF's tally, 21 kidnappings were attributed to Pakistan's intelligence agencies from 1999 to 2006. There is no shortage of evidence linking the ISI to terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in a range of cases including US reporter **Daniel Pearl's** abduction and execution in 2002, Pakistani reporter and photographer **Hayatullah Khan's** abduction in December 2005 and subsequent murder, and Pakistani investigative reporter **Syed Saleem Shahzad's** murder in May 2011.

Kill tally: **at least three journalists murdered, and dozens arrested, interrogated or intimidated**

- **Daniel Pearl**, a *Wall Street Journal* correspondent, was kidnapped and then executed in 2002.
- **Hayatullah Khan**, a reporter for the Pakistani dailies *Nation* and *Ausaf* and photographer for the *European Press Photo Agency* (EPA), was abducted on 5 December 2005. His handcuffed body was found on 16 June 2006. He had been shot several times in the head.
- **Syed Saleem Shahzad**, an investigative reporter for *Asia Times* specializing in Al-Qaeda and other militant groups, disappeared on 29 May 2011 and was found dead in his car two days later. Pakistani journalists and several NGOs suspected the ISI. According to close colleagues, he had mentioned getting several warnings from intelligence agencies in connection with his reporting.
- **Hamid Mir**, the well-known presenter of *Geo TV's* *Capital Talk* show, was driving to his office after landing at Karachi airport on 19 April 2014 when, according to the local police, four individuals on motorcycles opened fire on his car. He sustained several gunshot wounds but survived.

Official discourse: **paranoid conspiracy theory**

"Allegations against the Armed Forces of Pakistan and the ISI are part of a bigger game which is aimed at destabilizing the Pakistani state." (Reply to a question by the commission of enquiry into journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad's murder, 2012)

Country score: Pakistan is ranked **147th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index.



LEE Hsien Loong

Prime minister of Singapore

Aged 62

Predator since **2004**

Son of Lee Kuan Yew,
who was prime minister from 1959 to 1990

Attack technique: **recurrent gagging**

Lee Hsien Loong does not hesitate to personally sue bloggers he does not like, in line with the strategy known as SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation). It consists of bringing defamation suits or other legal actions against isolated journalists and bloggers (who cannot easily defend themselves against politically powerful or wealthy plaintiffs) with the aim of deterring them and their colleagues from contributing to the public debate. Defamation suites are common in this flourishing city-state, which – despite its modern, avant-garde image – is an enemy of media freedom.

Kill tally:

- **Several news websites closes**
- **Citizen journalists and bloggers prosecuted** and given exorbitant fines or jail terms

Enforcers: **Media Development Authority (MDA)**

The government-controlled Media Development Authority can censor any journalistic content including online content thanks to various tailor-made laws including the Media Development Authority of Singapore Act, the Films Act and the Broadcasting Act. The MDA ordered the closure of a website called the *The Real Singapore (TRS)* in April 2015 because its content was regarded as overly critical. Two of its alleged contributors were charged with sedition, which is punishable by up to 21 years in prison.

Favourite targets:

- **Citizen journalists and bloggers**
- **Independent news websites**
- **Participative websites**

Official discourse: **righting wrongs**

"You can say and discuss anything you like, but you can't defame anybody you like. If you can't redress defamation, then how can I clear my name when somebody defames me?" (July 2015)

Country score: Singapore has never been higher than 135th in RSF's World Press Freedom Index. It is ranked **154th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



PRAYUT Chan-o-cha

Prime minister of Thailand

Aged 62

Predator since **2014**

Prayut Chan-o-cha is a former commander in chief of the Thai army who led a military coup in May 2014. He now holds the positions of prime minister and head of the National Council for Peace and Order, a military junta.

Attack technique: **brutal militarism**

Prayut has cracked down hard on those who do not support his policies and who try to exercise the fundamental right to criticize. Since imposing martial law and ousting the civilian government in May 2014, he has gagged not only reporters, bloggers and news outlets, but also performers, intellectuals, academics, opposition politicians and anyone regarded as overly critical of himself and his junta. In the run-up to an August 2016 referendum on a new constitution strengthening the junta's powers, he banned "false," "vulgar" or "inciteful" media coverage of the referendum. A reporter for the *Prachatai* news website paid the price for failing to be intimidated and is currently being prosecuted.

Kill tally:

- **Increase in self-censorship and media polarization**
- **Public threats** against journalists
- **Journalists charged with lèse-majesté and tried by military courts**
- **3 journalists in prison: Somsak Pakdeedech** of *Thai E-News* since 24 November 2014, **Somyot Prueksakasemsuk** of *Voice of Thaksin* since 30 April 2011, and **Kathawut Boonpitak** of *Kon-thai.net* since 1 June 2015

Enforcers: **le Conseil national pour la paix et l'ordre** (National Council for Peace and Order, NCPO)

Official discourse: **terror**

"We'll probably just execute them." (When asked at a news conference in March 2015 what will happen to journalists who fail to toe the line.)

"Don't think I don't know that your writing is pro the previous administration." (Addressing a reporter with the *Matichon* newspaper, accusing it of supporting former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his allies.)

Country score: Thailand has plummeted in RSF's World Press Freedom Index. It was ranked 59th in the 2004 Index and is ranked **136th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



NGUYEN Phu Trong

General Secretary of Vietnam's Communist Party
Aged 72

Predator since **2011**

Before taking over as Communist Party leader in 2011, Nguyen Phu Trong had been chairman of the National Assembly since 2006

Attack technique: **soviet-style totalitarianism**

Nguyen Phu Trong knows about journalism because he was a journalist himself for much of his adult life. He was the editor of *Tap Chi Cong San*, a theoretical review that helps to shape the ruling Communist Party's ideology. In other words, he practiced journalism that complied with Soviet-style totalitarianism, under which the only legitimate media are those that disseminate state propaganda. So when Nguyen Dac Kien, a journalist with *Family and Society*, expressed an opinion in his coverage of a speech by Trong, he was immediately fired for violating the newspaper's ethics.

In Vietnam, pluralism is completely banned and the Internet is subject to close surveillance. By decree, all journalists are required to reveal their sources and are forbidden to use pseudonyms. Bloggers and cyber-dissidents are often given long jail sentences. The Vietnamese media simply execute the Communist Party's orders so bloggers and cyber-citizens are the only source of independently reported news and information.

Kill tally:

- **Journalists** dismissed by the party
- At least **15 citizen journalists and bloggers** imprisoned for "abusing democratic freedoms," "carrying out propaganda activities" or "activities aimed at overthrowing the government."

Favourite targets:

- **Bloggers and cyber-citizens** (Vietnam's only source of independent news and information)
- **News websites run by Vietnamese citizen journalists based abroad** (which are systematically blocked)

Official discourse: **criminalization of pluralism**

Websites with "articles and messages that promote Nazism, violence, a multi-party political system, and ideological pluralism" are regarded as criminal. (Government statement explaining the closure of a critical news website, 2002)

Country score: Ranked **175th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Vietnam is one of the world's most hostile countries to media freedom.



Ilham ALIYEV

President of Azerbaijan

Aged 54

Predator since **2003**

Ilham Aliyev succeeded his father as president

Attack technique: **megalomaniac dictatorship**

Not content with crushing all forms of pluralism, President Ilham Aliyev has waged a relentless war against the few remaining critics since 2014. The security services stop at nothing to discredit or silence journalists, including sex tapes, rumours and smear campaigns. If independent journalists and bloggers resist the pressure, the beatings or the attempts to blackmail or bribe them, they are thrown in prison. Independent media outlets are either throttled economically (like *Zerkalo* and *Azadlig*) or are shut down by force (*Radio Azadlig*). The latest inspired move for dealing with journalists who continue to cover Azerbaijan after fleeing abroad is to arrest and try their relatives still in Azerbaijan, usually on trumped-up drug charges.

Kill tally: in the space of a few years, Ilham Aliyev obliterated what was left of pluralism in Azerbaijan. **The main independent newspapers have been silenced, at least 8 journalists and bloggers are currently in prison and dozens of others have fled the country since 2014.**

Enforcers:

- **The police and courts**, which follow orders
- **The National Security Service** (created in December 2015 to replace the Ministry of National Security)

Favourite targets: **all media, journalists and bloggers critical of the regime**, and by extension, their families.

Official discourse: **barefaced denial**

"We stand for the freedom of the media because freedom of the media means democracy. The media help the government pay attention to the shortcomings. They pave the way for establishing the necessary linkages between the government and society. This is one of the greatest treasures of the modern Azerbaijan." (Tweet on 27 June 2014)

Country score: Ranked **163rd** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Azerbaijan has fallen steadily in the Index since 2004.



Alexander LUKASHENKO

President of Belarus

Aged 62

Predator since **1994**

President Lukashenko organizes his reelection every five years, usually getting about 80% of the vote

Attack technique: **Soviet-style persecution**

Lukashenko is nowadays trying to ingratiate himself with the international community by erasing his image as “Europe’s last dictator” but it is thanks to him that Belarus can claim to be the Jurassic Park of the Soviet era. The 2011 crackdown in which around 100 journalists were arrested is now over and political prisoners have been released, but nothing has really changed. Denied accreditation, journalists working for foreign media are hounded by the judicial authorities. The information ministry has tightened its grip on print media distribution networks. Every effort is made to control the Internet: independent news websites are often blocked, users are monitored, opposition groups on social networks are dismantled and content is vetted by an “analytic centre” directly attached to Lukashenko’s office.

Kill tally:

In 2015 alone, a total of **28 fines** were imposed on journalists for “illegally producing and disseminating media content.” **One journalist is currently jailed: Eduard Palchys** (since 23 January 2016)

Enforcers:

- **KGB** (the only intelligence agency in a former Soviet country not to have changed its name)
- **Public prosecutors and courts**, which take their orders from the government

Official discourse: **radical**

In his eyes, the media are “*our era’s most powerful weapons of mass destruction.*” (2002)

Country score: Belarus is ranked **157th** out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2016 World Press Freedom Index.

This is the lowest ranking in Europe.



Nursultan NAZARBAYEV

President of Kazakhstan

Aged 76

Predator since **1990**

Kazakhstan's president since independence, Nursultan Nazarbayev also headed the Kazakh government during the final years of the Soviet era (1984-1990)

Attack technique: **megalomaniac autocracy**

Media pluralism was never in great shape in Kazakhstan, which has been ruled by Nazarbayev since independence, and is now completely dead. Few independent and opposition media survive in a hostile climate exacerbated by a fight for the aging dictator's succession and a declining economy. Lawsuits, violence and interrogation by the security services are common. In December 2012, the government simply closed down all the leading national opposition media. Every new newspaper is closed within a few months. Under Kazakh law, harming the "honour and dignity" of the president, judges and civil servants in connection with their work is punishable by imprisonment. A special law was even adopted that protects "the Republic of Kazakhstan's first president" forever, even after his death.

The Internet is now closely controlled. A "security council" attached to the president's office keeps a list of "extremist" or "destructive" websites that must be blocked. Internet café users have been closely watched since December 2011. They have to deposit an ID document, they are monitored by video cameras, and Internet café managers have to keep browsing history records and show them to security officials on request. Other draconian laws allow the authorities to cut telecommunications or impose prior censorship whenever they feel the need.

Kill tally: **sudden closure of all the national opposition** media in 2012 for allegedly encouraging a riot the previous year. **Yaroslav Golyshkin**, a journalist who worked for the weekly *Versiya*, has been jailed since 14 May 2015.

Enforcers:

- **The courts and prosecutors** (who follow the government's orders)
- **KNB** (Committee for National Security)

Official discourse: **populist paternalism**

"God known what is said [on the Internet]. Anyone can write anything they want and it is impossible to know who has done what. We must reinforce our own content on the Internet and explain to the people where the good and where the bad is to be found." (April 2012)

Country score: Ranked **160th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Kazakhstan has suffered a steady decline in media freedom for the past five years.



Ramzan KADYROV

President of the Chechen Republic
(part of the Russian Federation)

Aged 40

Predator since **2005**

Initially prime minister, he became Chechnya's president in 2007, a position previously held by his father

Attack technique: **brutal autocracy**

Chechnya's young president, who calls himself "Vladimir Putin's foot-soldier," rules a country that has been traumatized by two bloody wars. Independent journalism has been eradicated, but the regime sustains the illusion of flourishing media by funding newspapers from the republic's budget. With one or two exceptions, they just praise Kadyrov's achievements and devotion to the people, and praise his late father, Akhmad Kadyrov. The impunity enjoyed by those who murdered well-known journalist and human rights defender Natalya Estemirova in 2009 reinforced the prevailing climate of fear. Harassment of critics has not let up. Dissidents are kidnapped just for comments posted on social networks. Even the families of those who fail to share the official consensus and obligatory enthusiasm are harassed and threatened.

Kill tally: Eradication of all independent journalism. 1 journalist is imprisoned: **Zhalaudi Geriyev**, a contributor to the independent news website *Kavkazsky Uzel*. He has been held since 16 April 2016.

Favourite targets: all critics, both in Chechnya and elsewhere. He likes to refer to liberal Russian media outlets as "traitors" and as "enemies of the people."

Official discourse: **thuggish arrogance**

"[Government opponents in Russia] have become so insolent that they use national media to promote [...] the destruction of the Russian state. [Radio] Echo of Moscow, Dozhd [TV], the RBK [media group] and cohorts happily broadcast their mendacious and hypocritical statements, infused with a deep hatred for Russia. [...] We have an excellent psychiatric hospital in a village called Braguny. The enraged reaction of the extra-parliamentary opposition and its supporters can be regarded as a mass psychosis. I can help them to cure this clinical problem and I promise that we won't skimp on injections. When one injection is prescribed, we will give two." (Opinion piece in the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya*, January 2016)

Country score: Media freedom is not faring well in Russia (**148th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index), but Chechnya is nothing less than a black hole for news and information.



Vladimir PUTIN

President of the Russian Federation

Aged 64

Predator since **2000**

Vladimir Putin has alternated between the positions of prime minister and president since 2000. He was FSB (former KGB) director in 1998 and 1999.

Attack technique: **nationalistic authoritarianism**

Catapulted into the presidency in 2000 after a decade of dilution of authority, Putin has always had an overriding obsession with control. The media quickly felt the effects of his concern to impose top-down authority, called the “power vertical,” during his first two terms as president, when all the national TV channels were gradually brought under the Kremlin’s control from the start of the 2000s. The authoritarianism became even more pronounced after Putin’s return to the presidency in May 2012 and an unprecedented wave of protests. The regime reacted to the new civil society assertiveness with a string of draconian laws criminalizing protests and limiting free speech. And the previously free Internet was reined in. Websites were blocked without reference to the courts, bloggers were tightly regulated and social network users found they could be jailed over a single post. While the leading TV channels inundate viewers with propaganda, the climate has become very oppressive for those who question the new patriotic and neo-conservative discourse or simply try to defend quality journalism. Leading independent media have been picked off one by one. The editors of *Lenta.ru* and *RBK* were ousted. *Dozhd TV* was dropped from satellite and cable TV services. The main Russian media defence NGOs were all declared to be “foreign agents.”

Kill tally: **There is less freedom of expression in Russia now than at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union.**

4 journalists are currently in prison: **Zhalaudi Geriyev** (Kavkazsky Uzel) since 16 April 2016; **Alexander Sokolov** (RBK) since 27 July 2015; **Sergei Reznik** since 26 November 2013; and **Alexander Tolmachev** (Upolnomochen Zayavit and Pro Rostov) since 20 December 2011.

Enforcers:

- **The Duma** (parliament’s lower chamber), which is always keen to pass draconian legislation
- **Oligarchs and businessmen**, who buy independent media outlets and then bring them into line
- **The security services**

Favourite targets: **independent investigative media**, especially those that investigate high-level corruption.

Official discourse: **brazen hypocrisy**

“The media’s active and responsible attitude and a truly independent and courageous journalism are more than ever desired and indispensable for Russia.” (Address to the Union of Journalists, April 2013)

Country score: Russia is ranked **148th** out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2016 World Press Freedom Index.



Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN

President of Turkey

Aged 62

Predator since **2009**

Recep Tayyip Erdogan had been prime minister since 2003 before being elected president in 2014

Attack technique: **aggressive dictatorship under a veneer of democracy**

Erdogan does not like the media, or rather, he likes the media to be submissive and docile and to sing his praises. He persecutes critics with the help of a law under which they can be prosecuted for “insulting the president” and broad terrorism legislation that allows every kind of abuse. By various political and economic means, he also controls almost all the leading media groups (especially TV channels). The state of emergency declared in July 2016 (after a failed coup) gave him the opportunity to arrest unprecedented numbers of journalists and to close more than 100 newspapers, magazines, TV channels and radio stations.

Kill tally: Since the coup attempt of 15 July 2016, at least **124 media outlets have been eliminated** by decree, more than **200 journalists have been arrested** (of whom 125 were still in prison at the start of October) and dozens of others have fled the country.

Turkey’s media freedom record was already grim in 2015, with 120 journalists arrested (against 72 in 2014), at least 19 journalists and two cartoonists convicted of insulting the president (10 times more than in 2014), a police assault on a media group and six newspapers banned by decree from publishing.

Enforcers:

- **The courts**, which are more politicized than ever
- **The MIT** (intelligence agency)
- **The BTK** (Council for Information Technology, which censors the Internet)
- Various branches of the administration, including the **General Directorate for Information and Media** (BYEGM), an offshoot of the prime minister’s office

Favourite targets: **all critical journalists and media**, whether left wing, pro-Kurdish, pro-Gülen movement, secularist or nationalist.

Official discourse: **denial cloaked in threats**

“We have never done anything against freedom of expression or media freedom. On the contrary, the press in Turkey have criticized me a great deal, me and my government, and have attacked me a great deal. And despite these attacks, we have been very patient in the way we have responded to these attacks.” (Interview for CNN, 1 April 2016)

Country score: Ranked around 100th in RSF’s World Press Freedom Index at the start of the 2000s, Turkey has plunged since 2009 and is ranked **151st** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



Gurbanguly BERDYMUKHAMMEDOV

President of Turkmenistan

Aged 59

Predator since **2006**

Berdymukhammedov was reelected in 2012 with 97% of the votes.

Attack technique: **totalitarian autocracy**

Since taking over as president, Berdimukhammedov has often used a reform discourse but the gulf between his words and reality could not be bigger. This is one of the world's most totalitarian regimes. It adopted a media law in January 2013 that proclaims free speech and bans censorship. But that was pure window-dressing. The state continues to have a complete monopoly of the media, which are used to pump out propaganda, and punishes any deviation from the official line very severely. Journalists have not forgotten that *Radio Azatlyk* correspondent **Ogoulsapar Muradova** died under torture in 2006.

Since 2008, Berdimukhammedov has been waging a war against satellite dishes, which are used by the population to watch Russian, Turkish or Arabic TV channels and are the only way to escape the state media's stifling propaganda. The only Internet available is a completely expurgated national intranet called "Turkmenet." In recent months, the handful of journalists who still dare to work clandestinely for independent media outlets based abroad have been subjected to unprecedented pressure and some have had to stop working.

Kill tally: **Several journalists have been detained** arbitrarily in the most appalling conditions in the past 10 years. One journalist is currently imprisoned: **Saparmamed Nepeskuliev**, a reporter for *Alternative Turkmenistan News* and *RFE/RL*, who has been held since 7 July 2015. There are hardly any independent journalists left in Turkmenistan, which is now reduced to a vast media desert.

Official discourse: **authoritarian pressure**

"The Turkmen media do not provide enough coverage of the state's successes." (Message to the media, January 2014)

Country score: Ranked **178th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Turkmenistan is in the same category as North Korea and Eritrea.



Hamed bin Isa AL KHALIFA

King of Bahrain

Aged 66

Predator since **1999**

The regime began pursuing harsher policies towards journalists when cracking down on the Arab Spring in 2011

Attack technique: **monarchic intolerance**

Reporters and photographers are constantly persecuted in connection with their coverage of the frequent protests in Bahrain since the Arab Spring in 2011. Often accused of participating in protests, acts of vandalism or supporting terrorism, journalists have been sentenced to long jail terms or even life imprisonment. Well known human rights defender Nabeel Rajab has been in prison since April 2015 in connection with two tweets, one of them about torture in Jaw prison. Withdrawal of Bahraini citizenship is another arbitrary method often used by the regime to intimidate journalists.

Kill tally:

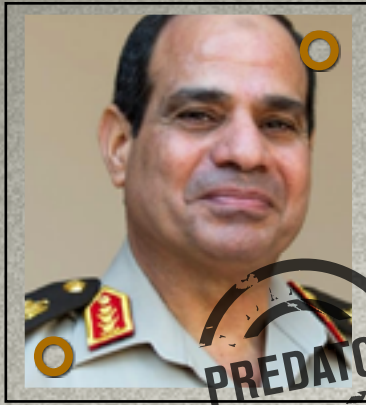
- At least **12 journalists and citizen-journalists** in prison
- **A blogger sentenced to life imprisonment** on 4 September 2012

Favourite targets: **photographers and cameramen**

Official discourse: **blatant lies**

"We fully and constantly support the rights of journalists, writers and media people and the organizations that carry out their noble mission without any threat or mistreatment. We do not tolerate, nor will we tolerate in the future, during our reign, any insult, arrest or detention of journalists who have used their legal and constitutional right to free speech." (Statement by the king on World Press Freedom Day, 2 May 2012)

Country score: Ranked **162nd** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Bahrain is one of the world's worst regimes.



Abdel Fattah AL-SISSI

President of Egypt

Aged 61

Predator since **2014**

Sisi was elected president in May 2014 after leading a military coup on 3 July 2013

Attack technique: **Mass arrests**

Journalists are subject to mass arrests, especially when covering demonstrations, prolonged pre-trial detention and often long jail terms (even life imprisonment). Under the August 2015 terrorism law, journalists are required on “national security” grounds to report the official version of bombings and other attacks. Many foreign journalists have been deported.

Kill tally:

- **6 journalists killed** since July 2013
- At least **27 journalists imprisoned**

Enforcers: **The security services**

Favourite targets: **all media** outlets suspected of any kind of link with the Muslim Brotherhood

Official discourse: **déni total**

“I don’t want to exaggerate, but we enjoy unprecedented media freedom in Egypt. No one in Egypt can prevent anyone working for a media or a journalist from expressing their opinions.” (Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in an interview for CNN in September 2015)

Country score: Egypt was already badly placed in RSF’s World Press Freedom Index before the Arab Spring, but it has fallen since then and is ranked **159th** out of 180 countries in the 2016 Index.



Ali KHAMENEI

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Supreme Leader
Aged 77

Predator since **1989**

He was president from 1981 to 1989,
when he succeeded Ayatollah Khomeini as Supreme Leader

Attack technique: **unrelenting harassment**

Even since the Islamic Republic's creation in 1979, a Shiite cleric known as the Supreme Leader has put religious dogma at the heart of the law. Since the Internet's advent, the Supreme Leader and his allies have also monitored the purity of news and information on social networks. Iran's many citizen journalists are watched, harassed, interrogated and often sent to prison, where conditions are appalling.

Kill tally:

Since the start of 2015, at least **40 journalists have been questioned by the authorities** and **15 have been given jail terms**. Since 1989, at least **400 journalists and online information activists have been convicted**, and more than 500 have fled the country. **24 independent journalists are currently detained**.

Enforcers: **Revolutionary Guards**

Favourite targets: **all independent journalists**

Official discourse: **National religious relativism**

"Nowadays some people keep repeating the expression 'recently acquired press freedom.' In my view, that means nothing. It comes from hostile foreign radio stations." (Address to students at Tarbiat Modares University on 3 September 1998)

Country score: Ranked **169th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Iran has been placed near the bottom of the Index ever since it was created.



SALMAN bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

King of Saudi Arabia
Aged 80

Predator since **2015**

Since succeeding his brother Abdullah as king, Salman has embodied the heritage of a dynasty that has always been hostile to media freedom

Attack technique: **medieval autocracy**

The monarchy tolerates no media freedom. Harming the king's image and reputation, blasphemy, insulting religion and "inciting chaos" are all punished severely. The Internet is the only place where freely reported news and information may be able to circulate but citizen journalists take a big risk when posting online. They are closely watched and often arrested. The most emblematic case is that of **Raif Badawi**, a blogger sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes. He received the first 50 lashes on 9 January 2015.

Kill tally: At least **10 journalists and bloggers** are currently in prison.

Enforcers:

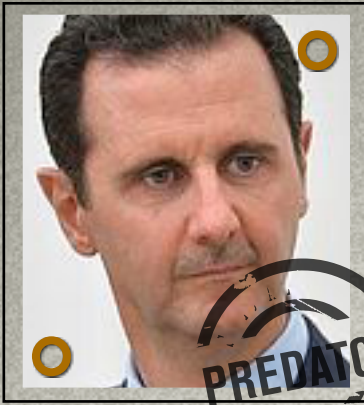
- **Intelligence agencies**
- **Interior ministry**
- **Religious police** (Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice)
- **Communications and Information Technology Commission**
- **Internet Services Unit**

Favourite targets: **citizen journalists and bloggers**

Official discourse: **intransigence**

"Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute towards the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights." (Article 39 of the 1992 "Basic Law of Governance")

Country score: Saudi Arabia is ranked **165th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index. The Saud family's kingdom has ranked among the world's worst regimes ever since the Index's creation in 2002.



Bashar AL-ASSAD

President of Syria

Aged 51

Predator since **2000**

Bashar Al-Assad succeeded his father, Hafez Al-Assad, as president

Attack technique: criminal and bloody dictatorship

Ever since inheriting the Syrian presidency, Bashar Al-Assad has done everything possible to deserve the title of media freedom enemy and predator. Long before the start of the uprising and civil war in March 2011, the authorities kept a tight grip on the news reported in the state media and routinely banned foreign journalists from entering the country, while the cyber-police hunted down anyone whose online activities were deemed to pose a threat to the regime's interests.

The situation has deteriorated terribly since 2011. Hundreds of journalists have been physically attacked, arrested, detained arbitrarily and tortured. A complaint filed in a US court in July 2016 accused the Assad regime's artillery of deliberately targeting the building from which US journalist Marie Colvin was reporting live on CNN how the regime was orchestrating the bombardment of civilians in Homs. Not all of the abuses and atrocities against journalists in Syria can be blamed on Bashar Al-Assad, but he has had a leading role.

Kill tally: around **200 professional and non-professional journalists killed** since the start of the conflict in March 2011, victims both of the regime's crackdown and crimes by armed rebel groups such as Islamic State, Jabhat Fatah Al-Sham (former Al-Nusra Front) and the Syrian Kurdish PYD. Around 30 journalists and citizen-journalists are currently held in Syrian government jails.

Enforcers: **the Shabiha**, plainclothes gunmen working for the Assad regime

Official discourse: machiavellian cynicism

"She worked with the terrorists, and because she came illegally, she's been responsible of everything that befall on her." (Referring, in an interview in English for NBC on 14 July 2016, to Sunday Times journalist Marie Colvin, killed while reporting the deliberate bombardment of civilians in Homs)

Country score: Ranked **177th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Syria is the world's deadliest country for journalists.



Islamic State

Predator since **2013**

Although it has changed its name several times, the group has existed in Iraq since 2006

Attack technique: barbaric acts in religion's name

What with hostage taking, murders and gruesomely staged public executions, there is no limit to the barbarity by Islamic State in the territory it controls, not only in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Libya. Islamic State uses foreign journalists for leverage in its political and ideological war against the West and all those regarded as non-believers. But it also tries to control journalists and their reporting in the territory it occupies. In the Syrian province of Deir Ezzor, it issued 11 commandments for journalists.

Kill tally: Since 2014, at least **3 foreign journalists beheaded** in Syria, **dozens of journalists and media workers murdered** in Iraq and Syria, and around **20 Iraqi and Syrian journalists and media workers held hostage**.

Favourite targets: All **journalists and citizen journalists** who do not swear allegiance to Islamic State

Official discourse: deranged authoritarianism

"These regulations are not definitive and may be changed at any time according to circumstances, to the level of cooperation from journalists, and their commitment to their counterparts from the Islamic State media division." (The 10th of the 11 "Deir Ezzor commandments" imposed on journalists by Islamic State)

Country score: Islamic State's atrocities play a significant role in the current rankings of Syria and Iraq (**177th** and **158th** respectively) in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index.



The Houthis

or Ansar Allah, Shiite political movement in Yemen

Predators since **2011**

The Houthi movement emerged in northern Yemen in the 1990s, played an active role in the 2011 revolution and, since 2014, has controlled the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country

Attack technique: **murderous brutality**

There have been countless abuses against the media since these Shiite militants seized control of Sanaa and much of the rest of the country, starting with the arrests of many journalists when they overran TV stations (*Al-Jazeera*, *Al-Yamane-Shabab* and *Yemen-Digital Media*). In the first eight months after the Houthis occupied the capital, the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate reported 67 attacks on journalists that were carried out to prevent the victims from doing their job. Many witnesses have reported torture in detention and many journalists have been abducted or have disappeared. Houthi leader Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi has declared open war on media personnel, regarding them as more dangerous than the Saudi-led Arab coalition that is fighting the Houthis.

Kill tally:

- **Many assaults on media outlets** in Houthi-controlled areas
- At least **13 journalists and media workers held hostage by** the Houthis in Sanaa

Favourite targets: **all media critical of the Houthis**

Official discourse: **hate speech**

"The mercenaries and those who work in culture, politics and the media are more dangerous for this country than the traitors and illiterate mercenary fighters." (Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi, Houthi leader, on Al Masirah TV on 19 September 2015)

Country score: The abuses by the Houthis have played a major role in Yemen's current ranking, which is **170th** out of 180 countries in RSF's 2016 World Press Freedom Index.