

Exile Journalism in Europe

Current challenges and support programmes



‘The worst thing of all is being alone, far away from loved ones and from home.’

Vivienne Francis, Refugee Journalism Project

‘Many people feel forced to give up their jobs.’

Katrin Schatz, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom

‘Our goal is to help journalists to ensure that they are protected from persecution and can continue their work.’

Katja Heinemann, Reporters Without Borders

‘Freedom of the press is always an indicator of the condition of a democracy – where journalists come under pressure, sooner or later democracy also comes under pressure.’

Claudia Roth (Bündnis 90 / DIE GRÜNEN), Minister of State for Culture and the Media

‘The main problem is that I am always worried about how I am going to make ends meet, how I am going to pay my rent, my insurance.’

Zehra Doğan, Kurdish journalist in exile and artist

Editorial



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Dear readers,

As a follow-up to our first report about the situation of exiled journalists in Germany, this year we are focusing on Europe. This report is being published at a time when the issues of forced displacement and exile could hardly be more relevant in Europe. Russian President Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine has forced millions of Ukrainian civilians to flee their homes. Many of these people are representatives of the media who were no longer able to work because their lives were at threat. The situation faced by independent journalism has also deteriorated dramatically in Russia itself. Repressions against regime critics and the radical curtailment of freedom of the press are also forcing numerous journalists from Russia into exile.

Just a few weeks earlier, the Olympic Games in China demonstrated to the world how greatly authoritarian regimes fear independent reporting and how far they are willing to go to impede it. China and Russia are two examples of numerous countries where journalists are harassed, persecuted and even killed. In its figures for 2021, Reporters Without Borders states that China, followed by Myanmar, Vietnam, Belarus and Saudi Arabia, have imprisoned the most journalists of any country in the world. Furthermore, Reporters Without Borders rates Mexico, Afghanistan, Yemen, India and Pakistan as the five most dangerous countries for journalists.

Journalists who manage to escape war zones and authoritarian regimes often seek protection

in democracies that guarantee freedom of the press and permit them to work in exile. In recent years, organisations and initiatives have been founded in numerous European countries to help representatives of the media, and government and independently funded support programmes have also emerged to do so.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this report describes several key organisations and programmes in Europe for exiled journalists. Moreover, it details what exiles need if they are to continue their work and outlines ways to strengthen exile journalism in line with the principles of democracy and freedom of the press that are enshrined within the EU.

We hope that this report will help raise awareness about the situation of exiled journalists in Europe, provide helpful information about the support available to them and demonstrate promising ways to strengthen their work.

We would be very pleased to hear from you if you have any suggestions, comments or tips.

Best Regards

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Head of Department Democracy, Engagement, Cohesion

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Programme Director for Projects on Exile

Journalists seeking refuge in Europe – sadly still a contemporary issue

Freedom of the press is facing significant challenges in an increasing number of countries around the world. In its annual report, Reporters Without Borders estimates that more journalists were in prison at the end of 2021 than ever before. At least 488 journalists are being held in prison around the world – an increase of over 20 percent compared to the previous year. The US journalists’ association Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) provides slightly lower estimates. However, its figures still highlight the same trend: a substantial increase in arrests and more journalists in prison than ever before.

The term ‘journalist’

These trends could lead to greater numbers of journalists seeking refuge in Europe. There are no exact figures on the number of journalists fleeing their home countries because no information is collected about refugees’ occupations when they arrive in Europe. Nevertheless, even if this information were available, the term ‘journalist’ would have little meaning: no official qualifications are needed to take up journalism because freedom of the press means that the profession must be open to everyone. In addition, people do not need to register, gain a permanent position in an editorial office or publishing house or even undertake an apprenticeship to call themselves journalists. Furthermore, the boundaries between other professions in writing, film and photography – such as public relations, social media managers and paid bloggers – are becoming increasingly blurred. Is there really a difference between an opinionated comment on Facebook and one printed in a newspaper? And if YouTubers, Twitterers and influencers are media professionals and publicists, are they not also journalists? How the profession is defined is open to debate.

But if these individuals post illegal content or break taboos, they can all face problems with governments.

Estimating the number of exiled journalists

Despite the lack of exact figures, it seems plausible that fluctuations in the number of exiled journalists could be inferred from more general trends in global refugee movements. Before the war in Ukraine, the United Nations estimated that the number of people who had fled their homes had risen to more than 80 million. However, even these figures do not enable robust conclusions to be drawn about the number of journalists who have gone into exile. Exiled journalists have different reasons for leaving their countries than other refugees. The suppression of the mass protests against President Lukashenko in Belarus in 2020 and 2021 is a case in point: although the situation forced numerous journalists into exile, the actual number of journalists who left the country was relatively small compared to the entire population of Belarus.

European aid organisations that work with exiled journalists state that the number of people who have contacted them has remained the same or even slightly decreased. As Fanny Toubin from Reporters Without Borders in Paris explains,

‘the number of journalists in exile – everywhere, not just in Europe – has declined somewhat because people have had difficulties crossing borders since 2020 due to the COVID pandemic’.

At the same time, it is also difficult to use the offers of help available to estimate how many

exiled journalists are residing in a particular country. No figures on this were available for this report because not all organisations publish them due to security concerns. Therefore, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about changes in the numbers of exiled journalists in Europe.

At the same time, it is still unclear what consequences the Russian military's attack on Ukraine and the associated increase in legal restrictions on press freedom and freedom of expression within Russia will have for journalism.

In the first few weeks of the war, several thousand intellectuals left Russia, including numerous journalists.

Reporters Without Borders fears that the invasion of Ukraine could pose major challenges to the provision of emergency assistance to journalists.

Exiles in Europe – selecting a destination country

Journalists are relatively safe in Europe. Fundamental rights are particularly well-grounded in Northern, Western and Central Europe. The Scandinavian countries – Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark – regularly top Reporters Without Borders' rankings for freedom of the press. Most European countries also guarantee asylum to politically persecuted people – at least on paper. In practice, however, the legal requirements for asylum vary greatly.

Journalists tend to have advantages over other refugees when attempting to gain recognition as political refugees and, thus, residency status. As they work in public, their activities are usually well documented, as are the restrictions on freedom of the press in their countries of origin. This means that journalists often find it easier to gain recognition as victims of political persecution

than political activists from other professional groups do so.

The choice of destination country

Which countries do exiled journalists move to when they come to Europe? As mentioned above, there are no exact figures on the number of such journalists in Europe and even less information about their distribution on the continent. Relief organisations indicate that two considerations play a role when exiles choose a destination country: the prospects that exiles can expect in a country; and geographical, personal and cultural connections. The first point leads exiles to favour the Northern and Western European countries mentioned above due to the promises of safety and decent housing. However, the second point means that they are spread across many European countries.

Existing structures

Exiled journalists from Africa are more often drawn to France and Belgium, whereas those from the Caribbean are more likely to settle in the UK. Similarly, Germany traditionally plays a major role in hosting Turkish journalists, but exiles from South America often choose Spain – language certainly plays a role in these cases. Belarusian refugees tend to settle in Poland and the Baltic states, which can be explained by those places' geographical proximity to their home countries. In contrast, the sheer number of refugees from Middle Eastern and Arab countries leads organisations in all destination countries to report having received exiled journalists from these regions.

Pressure within Europe

An overall picture needs to account for the fact that Europe has not only increasingly become a destination for exiled journalists but also a place of origin. This is due to political crises and wars such as those in Belarus and Ukraine as well as antidemocratic and authoritarian tendencies in a growing number of countries, especially in Eastern Europe, where fundamental rights are being restricted. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) stresses that

‘The gap between the principles enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and reality is widening’ and that ‘this not only applies to authoritarian states, but also to countries with strong democratic constitutions and long democratic traditions.’

Human rights organisations from Poland and Hungary in particular, as well as from Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia and Greece, are seeing increasing restrictions on freedom of the press. However, apart from some isolated cases, the situation in these countries is yet to become so difficult that journalists feel compelled to leave.

This contrasts with Russia and Belarus, where repressions have increased massively in recent

years, and more and more journalists are leaving those countries. The situation in Turkey also continues to be precarious.

Non-state causes of exile

It is not just the authorities that are responsible for attacks against freedom of the press, but private individuals and political and criminal organisations as well. One method involves the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). SLAPPs are an abuse of the judiciary aimed at suppressing freedom of expression. They involve journalists or even entire editorial offices facing cases aimed at intimidating them and preventing them from working. SLAPPs can also damage reputations – no matter how unjustified these cases may be –, and cause journalists to spend significant time and money defending themselves. Importantly, SLAPPs are not only used in dictatorships, but also in democracies, including the countries mentioned above, and they have the potential to cause lasting damage to independent journalism and even force journalists into exile.

The same applies to the growing danger media professionals face from organised crime. In Mexico, for example, armed drug cartels pose a deadly threat to journalists. Numerous murders in Mexico have led Reporters Without Borders to rank the country as the most dangerous in the world for journalists, followed by Afghanistan. However, journalists can be at risk in the supposed safe havens of Western Europe and the EU; this is particularly clear from the case of the Dutch journalist Peter de Vries, who was murdered in 2021, most likely by someone linked to organised crime.

Short or long-term support for exiles?

Not only the definition of journalism, but also the understanding of the term exile is becoming increasingly blurred. This point is rarely so clear as in the case of the Turkish journalist Can Dündar: Dündar knows that he can no longer return to Turkey because he faces arrest or even death if he does. But what about journalists who are merely threatened with arrest or court cases? The decision to go into exile is particularly difficult in countries that are not overt dictatorships but where freedom of the press is still under threat. In these countries, the consequences that journalists or their families might face are unclear. When does a journalist reach the point that they have to go into exile? These situations can be extremely stressful and a reason for temporary relocation.

Temporary relocation

Journalists, human rights activists and artists who are under threat or who are being persecuted can be removed from their current situation and brought to safety for a limited period. Experts refer to this as ‘temporary relocation’. Instead of permanently and suddenly leaving their country, temporary relocation enables exiles to move abroad for a short time to get out of the firing line, at least for a while. This helps them relax, recuperate and to go about their work undisturbed. US relief organisations such as Freedom House and the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) already provide opportunities such as these, but European organisations are also increasingly offering temporary relocation – officially in the form of internships lasting several months.

Temporary relocation – some offers at a glance

The Irish relief organisation Front Line Defenders runs the Rest and Respite programme. The programme is primarily aimed at human rights activists, but it is also open to journalists. Stays can last from 1 week to several months and can take place either in Ireland or countries closer to the person’s home.

www.frontlinedefenders.org

The Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted provides a similar programme that guarantees human rights activists, including journalists, a stay in Hamburg ‘in a pleasant environment that provides them with their own four walls’. Scholarship holders may also bring their families, partners and children with them, if they are able to.

www.hamburger-stiftung.de/en/

Reporters Without Borders recently launched the Research and Recharge Fellowship, which covers travel and accommodation costs and grants fellowship holders a monthly subsidy of €1,000 to cover living expenses. The scholarship is only provided for a limited period. Wherever possible, scholarship holders return to their home countries after 6 months.

www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de

The EU project Protect Defenders is similar. It is primarily aimed at human rights activists but is also open to journalists. It provides immediate assistance to people who are experiencing difficulties or under threat. Protect Defenders has set up a multilingual hotline that is available around the clock for secure communication. The project stresses that its staff are trained to respond to the needs of women as well as trans and nonbinary individuals, and that 10,000 people and organisations turn to Protect Defenders every year.

www.protectdefenders.eu

Longer-term support

Relief organisations in many parts of Europe offer a wide range of support to people who need to permanently leave their home countries. These organisations have set up centres specifically for journalists in numerous places including Spain, France, the UK, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Norway. In the south and east of the continent, however, help for exiled journalists is much rarer if not non-existent. More details are provided about some of these projects from throughout Europe on page 8. The support offered is diverse and begins in part even before a person leaves for exile. Some organisations, such as Reporters Without Borders, contact journalists who are planning to move into exile while they are still in their home countries. They help exiles to leave their homes, obtain visas and tickets for travel and even pick them up from the airport. Once in Europe, exiles need accommodation, help to cover the costs of living and, in some cases, psychological support, as they may have escaped war, hardship and prison. Homesickness and loneliness can also place a heavy burden on them.

‘The worst thing of all is being alone, far away from home and their loved ones’,

says Vivienne Francis from the Refugee Journalism Project in London. All exiles struggle with these problems equally.

Financing

Donations cannot be expected to cover the costs of long-term support projects, such as costs incurred by providing secure housing. However, relief organisations that help exiled journalists particularly rely on donations as an important source of income. This leads to difficulties because donations fluctuate regularly and it places pressure on the organisations helping exiles. ‘It’s very difficult to plan for other people, if you don’t have that stability yourself’, says Katrin Schatz from the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom.

Alongside funding from private foundations, government funding is increasingly being made available to support exiled journalists and media. For example, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom receives funds from the German federal state of Saxony and the city of Leipzig. However, federal funding for journalism is still in its infancy. In autumn 2021, the federal government decided to implement a programme to support press freedom aimed specifically at journalists. The Minister of State for Culture and the Media, which is responsible for the programme,

explains that it promotes projects including those that support programmes for exiled foreign journalists in Germany.

The EU also awards increasing amounts of money to organisations that support persecuted journalists. For example, the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) project, which helps journalists living in the EU who have been threatened or attacked, is partly funded by the EU Commission. Some of the costs incurred by Protect Defenders are also covered by EU funds. However, governments generally find it difficult to support individual journalists and media outlets because of the need to remain politically neutral. In many countries, therefore, independent NGOs have adopted this role – and some are provided with government financing.

The needs of exiled journalists

Exiled journalists have diverse needs. Communication is essential if exiled journalists are to find their way around a new country, gain information about residency permits, access offers of help and continue their work. Journalists make a living from language, from speaking, from writing, from contacts and from information. It is essential that they can continue their research, publish again and keep in touch with home. Therefore, wherever possible, relief organisations prepare exiles for their new role: as journalists in exile. Journalists in exile need to network with one another, contact exiled editors and platforms, learn the host country's language and familiarise themselves with the free press. Further education, workshops and training are therefore extremely helpful, and are offered by some organisations. However, in addition to individual training, many exiled journalists state that they would like to see the various services that provide training made available by a single journalism academy or on the same website. On the one hand, exiles argue that governments and EU agencies are responsible for this work, and especially for providing professional job opportunities to exiled journalists. On the other hand, they also have expectations of civil society organisations, which they would like to see cooperating more closely and implementing and running projects together.

Exiled journalists are often under pressure to make decisions quickly about their professional future: if they are unable to find work in their host countries in the medium term, they may have to give up journalism altogether or retrain. Exiles argue that strong networks and cooperation between them in host countries strengthen exile journalism but also enrich the media in host countries and at the international level. They would also like to see campaigns to raise awareness about their situation and the importance of exile journalism in democratic societies.

Exiled journalists clearly need to be protected from harm. In Sweden, in 2021 the body of the exiled Pakistani journalist Sajid Hussain was found dumped in a river. In Berlin, Erk Acarer, an exiled Turkish journalist who was critical of the Turkish government, was attacked and injured outside of his home. Clearly, exiled journalists are not even completely safe in Europe. At the same time, reports about digital attacks on exiled journalists are becoming ever more common. Some journalists report that rumours have been spread about them or that their private email accounts have been hacked. Editorial offices are also targeted: the website of Radio Publique Africaine, operated by exiled journalists from Rwanda, has been hacked several times. As such, relief organisations need to take on the responsibility of protecting exiled journalists from dangers such as these.

One of the **greatest challenges** to journalists in exile is **finding employment**.

The language barrier is usually too high for them to work in established media; even useful, short-term placements and internships are difficult to take on with limited language skills. Occasionally, exiled journalists can continue working in their own language. Examples of media in exile where exiled journalists work include the online magazine *Meduza*, which is based in Riga, Latvia, and primarily reports about Russia; and the Warsaw-based broadcaster Belsat, which is financed by Poland and other EU countries and provides work to exiled Belarusian journalists. The foreign-language services of European public media outlets – such as the Russian-language service of the BBC, which hosted the Russian investigative journalist Andrei Sakharov – may also be an option for exiled journalists. However, such opportunities, already few and far between, are becoming even rarer.

The practical side – where can exiled journalists receive help?

Journalisten helfen Journalisten, Munich, GERMANY

The name of this German aid organisation, which translates to 'Journalists help journalists', speaks for itself when it comes to supporting exiled media professionals. Solidarity with their colleagues drives journalists to support each other. Solidarity has a long tradition in trade unions in practically every European country. Many national journalists' associations, which are organised under the umbrella of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), offer non-bureaucratic help to foreign colleagues upon request. By contrast, very few national trade unions have set up their own programmes to support exile journalists. The association currently supports eight media professionals who are in exile outside Germany. According to its director Carl Wilhelm Macke, the association supports around 50 journalists per year, with some people being helped over several years.

www.journalistenhelfen.org/galerie

International Media Support, Dansk Journalistforbund, Copenhagen, DENMARK

One exception is the Danish trade union Dansk Journalistforbund (DJ), which founded the non-profit organisation International Media Support (IMS) in 2011. IMS is aimed at supporting media professionals in countries affected by war and repression. Since 2011, IMS has provided direct assistance to almost 300 journalists. It has set up a safety fund that is financed by donations amounting to €60,000 – €70,000 per year. The fund can be used to support exiled journalists, as Line Wolf Nielsen from IMS points out. However, support from the fund is limited to the provision of immediate emergency help for a maximum of 6 months. IMS works closely with the Journalists in Distress network, which is run by the CPJ.

www.mediasupport.org

International Federation of Journalists, Brussels, BELGIUM

Trade unions also provide help at the international level to journalists who have been driven into exile. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has set up a safety fund because 'When one journalist is attacked, it affects us all'. The IFJ states that 'The safety fund not only offers practical help and assistance, but is also a symbol of the international determination of journalists to keep going even in times of struggle and distress'. The fund recently supported around eight colleagues from Belarus who had to leave the country. In 2021, it raised more than €90,000 to protect threatened journalists and provide them with legal counsel and medical treatment. The families of persecuted journalists can also receive support, such as if they have lost their main source of income. The IFJ safety fund has provided more than €3 million in humanitarian aid since it was established in 1992.

www.ifj.org/safety-fund

Reporters Without Borders, Paris, FRANCE

Reporters Without Borders is undoubtedly the most important cross-border organisation helping exiled journalists in Europe. One of the core tasks of the organisation, which was founded in 1985, is to support persecuted journalists who are fleeing their home countries and moving into exile. However, emergency assistance only forms a small part of the organisation's work. Reporters Without Borders is committed to freedom of the press and freedom of information throughout the world. It operates worldwide from its Paris headquarters and has its own sections in many countries, some of which run their own support programmes. The organisation is not primarily focused on supporting journalists in exile, but

rather in their home countries. However, if this is no longer possible, Reporters Without Borders also helps journalists move into exile. 'Our goal is to help journalists to ensure that they are protected from persecution and can continue or resume their work in the long term', says Katja Heine-mann from the German section (see interview on page 16). To do so, Reporters Without Borders provides scholarship programmes and accommodation in Germany and Spain where threatened journalists can receive short-term protection. Reporters Without Borders states 'In 2021, we helped 40 journalists in European exile by providing letters of support for their asylum applications'. The Spanish section primarily welcomes colleagues who have fled Latin America, where increasing attacks on freedom of the press have prompted Reporters Without Borders to launch a special programme.

Freedom of the press is under threat from authoritarian regimes in Venezuela and Cuba, but also from organised crime in countries such as Mexico and Colombia. Journalists who have fled the region are offered a 3-month stay in Madrid.

The goal is to create 'an atmosphere of security and reassurance' that empowers journalists.

Fifteen journalists have taken part in the programme so far. Threatened media workers from various regions with restricted press freedom are invited to Berlin by Reporters Without Borders as part of a series of protection programmes.

However, temporary relocation is only a small part of the assistance that Reporters Without Borders gives to journalists at risk. The organisation also supports exiles during asylum procedures and legal disputes, as well as with the coverage of medical costs and other emergency aid. To date, Reporters Without Borders has helped more than 600 journalists.

In response to the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine, Reporters Without Borders has initiated a joint fund together with other journalistic

Further assistance for media professionals and artists

The difficulty of clearly distinguishing between professional journalists and other creative professionals means that organisations providing help to professionals from related fields, such as artist and writers, are open to supporting exiled journalists.

An example of this is the Writers in Exile programme from PEN Centre Germany. The programme is primarily aimed at exiled authors but also regularly opens its doors to journalists. Writers in Exile supports exiles for a maximum of 3 years, providing them with a safe stay in Europe as well as covering their expenses. Writers from Iran, Belarus, Turkey, China and many other countries have already benefited from the programme. Writers in Exile houses exiles in various cities in Germany, some of which are provided by donors.

www.pen-deutschland.de/en/writers-in-exile/

The British initiative Exiled Writers Ink, founded in 2000 by author Jennifer Langer, primarily supports writers. However, in addition to creative writers, the initiative now also provides help to journalists. It strives to ensure that exiles are safe and that they can network with their British colleagues.

www.exiledwriters.co.uk

The Martin Roth-Initiative, which was founded in 2018 by the Goethe Institute and the Institute for Foreign Relations in Germany, is primarily aimed at artists. However, scholarship holders include media professionals such as the Indian photo artist Sujatro Ghosh. But Ghosh is not just an artist: he is also a trained journalist and long-time freelance press photographer.

www.martin-roth-initiative.de/en



Reporters Without Borders © Robin Grassi /RSF

partners. For the JX Fund/European Fund for Journalism in Exile, money is being collected with a broad circle of supporters from the media, politics, business and civil society to enable threatened journalists and editorial offices to continue their work from a safe place on an ad hoc basis. Beyond emergency aid, the Fund will act as an interface and clearinghouse, using the combined knowledge of many partners and the effective matching of needs and offers to jointly support structures for a sustainable exile media landscape. www.rsf.org/en

Maison des Journalistes, Paris, FRANCE

Since it was founded 20 years ago, Maison des Journalistes (House of Journalists) has taken in more than 400 persecuted people from more than 70 countries and therefore certainly lived up to its name. From the outside, the Maison des Journalistes building does not look particularly glamorous. It is an aging industrial structure on the outskirts of Paris that previously housed a brush factory. Newcomers are offered a place to stay until they receive official refugee status in France.

Maison des Journalistes can provide space to 14 people, and it has housed exiled journalists from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, parts of Africa, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Turkey. Many have escaped poverty, but some are still driven to continue working. The organisation provides them with opportunities to work, as well as access to a telephone and the internet. In addition to accommodation, the journalists' expenses are also covered. Most stay for several months, bridging the gap until the authorities issue them an official residency permit. Maison des Journalistes also helps exiles connect with civil society. In addition to professional training and language courses, it provides residents with the opportunity to tell their stories at French schools and to publish in local media. The organisation reports on the lives of the building's residents in the newsletter *L'œil de l'exilé* (The Eye of the Exile). Maison des Journalistes is financed by renowned media companies such as the TV broadcasters Arte, Canal Plus and TF1. The French government and the EU also provide funding.

www.maisondesjournalistes.org/english-version-mdj/



Maison des Journalistes © Maison des Journalistes

Engaje, Brussels, BELGIUM

The relatively new Belgian aid organisation ‘Ensemble – Groupe d’aide aux journalistes exilés’ (Joint Aid Organisation for Exiled Journalists, or Engaje) follows the example set by Maison des Journalistes in Paris. It also refers to its Brussels headquarters as the Maison des Journalistes, but unlike its Paris counterpart, the building is not residential. Nevertheless, Engaje provides a variety of help to journalists in exile. This includes assistance with administrative procedures, finding accommodation, learning the language, finding internships and enrolling in training courses. ‘There are 71 journalists in exile in Belgium. We know about 40 personally’, says Jean-François Dumont, president of Engaje. About 25% of exiles in Belgium are women.

The exiles **come from 23 countries**, with the largest group coming from Burundi, followed by Palestine.

In addition to helping journalists in exile, Engaje intends to ‘raise awareness among Belgians about freedom of the press and migration’, as Dumont puts it. This led Engaje to organise an exhibition in October 2021 entitled ‘Journalists in Exile’ and to ensure that reports by exiles are published in the media. Engaje also publishes videos online, which are 3 to 4 minutes long and involve four exiled journalists from Burundi, Mauritania,

Palestine and Afghanistan who now live in Belgium describing the paths that led them into exile. Engaje also helps exiled journalists to continue working: the organisation has created an online directory in which 36 exiled journalists present their experiences and skills; the directory is similar to a freelance marketplace. Engaje is currently preparing a new digital medium that will be produced in Brussels by young exiles and Belgian journalism students. Engaje is funded by the public sector, partner institutions and donations.

www.engaje.be/english/

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, Leipzig, GERMANY

The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) in Leipzig is another important contact point for exiled journalists in Europe. It was founded in 2015 and is committed to defending freedom of the press at the European level. Since its foundation, the ECPMF has provided direct practical support for 80 media professionals – through its Journalists-in-Residence (JiR) programme, which offers temporary shelter in Leipzig, and through a further project especially dedicated to journalists, who already are in exile in Germany.

The ECPMF provides safe houses for journalists under threat in Europe: rent-free, furnished apartments, where they can stay for a maximum of six months. In addition, the Journalists-in-Residence Programme supports the journalists in their everyday life. It provides them space in the ECPMF office so that they can work, if required, as well as psychosocial counselling. In addition, the organisation provides the journalists with a monthly €1,000 grant to cover their living expenses and pays insurance, visa and travel expenses.

Representatives of the media from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Malta, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine among others have already taken part in the ECPMF Journalists-in-Residence programme. Not all of them stay in Germany permanently; some return to their home countries after three to six months. They use the programme in Leipzig to recover from the hardships of persecution.



Katrin Schatz of the ECPMF with the exiled journalist Raad Al Mashhadani © ECPMF

Katrin Schatz from the ECPMF explains that ‘the people seeking protection have quite diverse needs’. Some are desperate to return home, or at least to be able to continue reporting about their home countries. Others prepare for a longer-term or permanent stay in Germany. They learn the language and try to make contacts with the German media. Unfortunately, this is extremely difficult, as Schatz reports: ‘Only very few journalists succeed in finding employment in the media sector.’ However, the ECPMF still organises workshops, facilitates language courses, legal counselling and professional psychosocial support so they can continue trying. The aim is to work together to create long-term prospects.

‘Our capacities are limited, but we dedicate ourselves to react to the needs of the journalists as individually as possible.’

The ECPMF currently supports five journalists-in-residence in Leipzig and around 20 more media professionals in exile in Germany. The ECPMF

leads the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) consortium, which was founded in 2020 and reacts to violations against press and media freedom in Europe. Members include Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT) from Italy, an organisation that, like the ECPMF in Leipzig, offers journalists a 6-month stay in a safe house in Milan. Due to the pandemic-related travel restrictions, the programme was expanded to include journalists who have already arrived in Italy.

www.ecpmf.eu

Refugee Journalism Project, London, UK

In 2016, the Syrian war and the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea led Vivienne Francis, a former BBC journalist and university lecturer, to found the Refugee Journalism Project (RJP). Today the RJP is an important point of contact for exiled journalists in the UK. The project aims not just to help people in need, but also to encourage them to use their knowledge and skills so that they can tell their stories. Francis points out that ‘Many exiles have no idea how the media works in the UK’. That is why the RJP offers courses to exiled journalists, who are primarily from the Middle

East, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, to prepare them for the UK media. The fact that they are not permitted to work while their asylum applications are being processed does not make things any easier. 'If you are unemployed for 6-7 years, your skills and knowledge begin to fade away.' The RJP does not provide emergency assistance, nor does it publish its own media. Rather, it empowers exiled journalists to help themselves. Therefore, volunteers from the project are supporting exiles in establishing a new network in the UK. They offer workshops, a mentoring programme and courses lasting several months aimed at exiles in the UK who have already gained residency permits and accommodation. In 2022, the project is funding people from 10 countries; most are newly arrived journalists from Afghanistan. The proportion of women is higher than ever: 15 out of the programme's 21 participants are women. The work of the RJP has led to the development of a network, with its graduates taking care of the new intake. In the last 6 years, the project has supported 68 media professionals from 22 countries.

www.refugeejournalismproject.org

ICORN, Stavanger, NORWAY

The European city network International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) is a hybrid initiative involving a grassroots movement and government support. It is based on an initiative undertaken by probably the most famous living exile writer of all: Salman Rushdie. In 2006, it was re-established under the direction of the Norwegian literary festival organiser Helge Lunde. Since then, more than 70 cities and regions, mostly from Europe, have joined ICORN, including Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Barcelona. The cities aim to provide creative people from all over the world with a safe haven. Although it is primarily focused on artists, the network no longer offers protection only to writers, musicians and illustrators: 37 of the 138 exiles who are currently supported by ICORN are journalists. In 2021, it was mainly Afghans who sought support from ICORN; before that, most exiles came from the Middle East. About half of the applicants are already in Europe when they apply for a place in the programme. The help on

offer depends on the city in question. The stay is usually limited to 1 year, although some participating cities also offer more time. All provide housing. ICORN supplies the cities with a list of possible candidates, and the cities choose whom they want to help. Local coordinators, mostly from the responsible city administration, look after the newcomers and arrange language courses, translators and further training. ICORN is financed by an annual membership fee of €2,000 per city, as well as by private donations and grants.

www.icorn.org

Free Press Unlimited, Amsterdam, NETHERLANDS

The journalist organisation Free Press Unlimited is based in the Netherlands and active in more than 40 countries throughout the world. Together with more than 90 local media partners, the organisation is dedicated to disseminating independent news and information. Instead of focusing on emergency assistance or supporting exiles, Free Press Unlimited supports people in their home countries. However, this changed abruptly in August 2021 when the Taliban took power in Afghanistan. It was immediately clear to the organisation that their journalist colleagues had to be taken out of the country. Free Press Unlimited used its contacts in the region and with the Dutch authorities to swiftly evacuate threatened journalists. The activists managed to help 96 people leave Afghanistan and therefore evade the Taliban's grasp. But the organisation is not always successful, reports Jantine van Herwijnen, who is responsible for the safety of journalists at Free Press Unlimited:

'Some people gave up trying to leave and had to stay behind.

One family tried three times to reach the airport. Others had sick children or loved ones who couldn't travel. It was heartbreaking.'

www.freepressunlimited.org



© Kristian Schuller

‘Germany must provide a safe haven for representatives of the media who have fled their home country’

Claudia Roth (Bündnis 90/DIE GRÜNEN) has been Minister of State for Culture and the Media since December 2021 and is responsible for the federal government’s promotion and protection of journalism.

Shortly after taking office you stated that ‘Commitment to persecuted journalists will be one of the focal points of my work’. Why is this topic so important to you?

Roth: The issue of freedom of the press is so close to my heart because free media, art and culture are the elixir of life of every democracy.

Without independent media, a democratic social order is simply unthinkable. Precisely for this reason, freedom of the press is always an indicator of the condition of a democracy – where journalists come under pressure, sooner or later democracy also comes under pressure. When I announced an increased commitment to persecuted journalists at the beginning of December, I could only imagine a war in Europe in my worst nightmares. This takes on a whole new dimension. Solidarity is now the order of the day: Solidarity with all Ukrainians, artists and cultural workers, the free media and journalists. We must provide help now.

What does this mean for government policy?

Roth: My House will provide 1 million euros as emergency aid to enable more refugee artists, scientists and journalists to be admitted, together with the Federal Foreign Office.

How does your House promote journalism beyond that?

Roth: The federal government is committed to freedom of the press at the national and international level. To this end, we will set up a programme for journalists and defenders of freedom of expression, which will offer them support in Germany and protection from persecution in their home countries. In addition, there is our programme for the promotion of journalism, with which we support projects for the protection and structural strengthening of journalistic work. This means that programmes that support exiles are also eligible for funding.

In addition, my House has been funding the Writers in Exile programme since 1999. Around 60 scholarship holders have been accepted into the programme, including journalists, who are granted scholarships in Germany for up to 3 years, and we intend to expand the programme. In addition, my House has provided extensive funding to the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom in Leipzig (ECPMF) (Editor’s note: cf. Page 11), which also runs a journalists-in-residence programme. Furthermore, my House advocates the protection of press freedom in legislative procedures. In the coalition agreement, for example, we

agreed to introduce a right to press information at the federal level and to strengthen non-profit journalism – my House will be intensively involved in the implementation of these plans. The BKM already represents the interests of press freedom in the context of investment protection audits in the media sector, an area of activity that is still relatively new, but which has become considerably more important, for example, in view of China's investment ambitions.

Can the government actively support journalists, or should it remain neutral?

Roth: Freedom of the press is very important in Germany because of its function for democracy and also because of our history and is therefore also centrally anchored in the constitution. This results in a special duty of protection for the state: politics must ensure that journalists can pursue their work as freely and independently as possible. In any form of support, however, the state must remain as neutral as possible in terms of content and must not interfere in journalistic competition. When it comes to funding measures, all levels of government therefore pay very close attention to ensuring that the content of the media is not made a criterion for funding. For then the state could influence the formation of public opinion through its financial support – and that would no longer have anything to do with freedom of the press. State funding of the media must therefore be clearly oriented towards neutral criteria.

What is your view of the current situation faced by journalism at the international level?

Roth: Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index ranks Germany 13th out of 180 countries. This is not a bad result overall. However, since 2021, Reporters Without Borders has no longer rated press freedom in Germany as 'good'. This is the first time that this has happened. The reason for this is obvious: what begins verbally with accusations such as 'lying press' or 'state broadcasting' increasingly ends in violent attacks on journalists, especially at Corona demonstrations they are physically attacked – this is complete-

ly unacceptable, it must stop! Every democracy should aim to rank number one for press freedom. Freedom of the press is under threat throughout the world: 488 journalists were in prison last year, according to Reporters Without Borders – an increase of 20% in one year. The Ukraine war will make the situation of press freedom even worse.

What is your view about the way in which Germany has accepted exiled journalists in recent years?

Roth: In general, the framework in Germany means that refuge is offered to people who are persecuted regardless of their profession. Since journalists are always the voice of democratic debate and freedom, they are always among the first to be repressed in repressive states. This has been seen for many years in Turkey, but also in Russia, where the Putin regime is cracking down on cultural workers, free media as well as civil society organisations like Memorial. I admire the many courageous Russian journalists who strongly condemn the Putin regime's war of aggression and clearly distance themselves from it. We stand alongside these voices from culture and the media who are standing up for freedom, democracy and peace in Europe. We want to enable them to receive fast and uncomplicated help in Germany.

The author conducted the interview in February 2022.



© Juliane Halsinger

‘Networking can also afford a form of protection’

The journalist **Katja Heinemann** has been head of the Assistance Desk and Fellowships at Reporters Without Borders in Berlin for a year and provides help to threatened representatives of the media from all over the world.

Why does Reporters Without Borders support refugee journalists?

Heinemann: Refuge and exile is just one area that we cover. We focus on supporting people in their home countries. We want our colleagues to be able to continue their work for as long as possible and to do so where they are most needed: in their own countries. That is why we are primarily focused on freedom of the press and freedom of information, we create publicity, do political work. Emergency assistance is just one area among many at Reporters Without Borders to support press freedom.

But sometimes people need this type of help.

Heinemann: And when they do, we are more than ready to provide it. If a journalist is arrested, tortured or beaten up because of his or her work, we cover their medical and legal fees. If a journalist’s equipment is taken away, we help them purchase what they need. Our aim is to ensure that they can continue working.

How do you find out about people who need help?

Heinemann: We are a global organisation with a presence in many countries. Some journalists

contact us directly, but we also receive tips from colleagues in Europe. They contact us and say, ‘My fixer in xy has been arrested, can you help?’ That’s when we get involved.

Can help from the outside be dangerous?

Heinemann: Support from Western organisations is viewed with suspicion in some areas. There are countries where being awarded a Reporters Without Borders fellowship would likely lead to increased surveillance or even endangerment. It is important to weigh up the best solution in each case. Some people need background support; but we also publicise what is happening in some other cases. Networking can also afford a form of protection. It helps to know that the community is watching, and that everyone is looking out for one another.

How do you decide who gets help and how?

Heinemann: We consult closely with our international colleagues and verify the person’s credentials: Have they really been persecuted because of their work as a journalist? We consult our network of correspondents to find out more about their situation. We also check how threatening things are in the country. Is the story plausible?

Can we verify that the person really is a journalist there?

Where do the people who are seeking protection come from?

Heinemann: From all over the world. Some people come from the Caucasus region, from Azerbaijan, others from Uzbekistan. Turkey has been an important country of origin since 2016; the Middle East, Egypt, Pakistan and Myanmar. Afghanistan since last summer. Some people come from Latin America, above all from Mexico, Brazil and Colombia, and more recently from Belarus, currently Russia and, unfortunately, in the long term also Ukraine.

These countries are by no means all dictatorships in the traditional sense of the word.

Heinemann: No. And we are increasingly dealing with nonstate persecution. In some countries, we are seeing mixed forms of persecution where it is no longer clear is this mafia, or is the state also involved? One example is Malta or Mexico.

What happens if it is no longer possible to help people in their home country?

Heinemann: In this case, we help them to get out of danger: we book flights, organise visas, find

accommodation and pick up the refugees when they arrive at the airport. We take care of health and travel insurance, residency permits and, if necessary, organise psychological support. But permanent exile should be the last option. Depending on the situation, temporary relocation can also be an option; sometimes it just helps if a person leaves the country for a while. This is often the case, for example, during ongoing court proceedings. Reporters Without Borders also offers emergency assistance: we provide people with the opportunity to temporarily relocate to Berlin for 3 to 6 months. This is for their protection. Ultimately, it enables people to sleep well for a while as they no longer have to constantly look over their shoulder. This helps people come back stronger.

There are cases where exiled journalists are still threatened and even attacked in Europe. How safe are exiled journalists in Germany?

Heinemann: We shouldn't be naive. We know that some secret services are active in Germany and that they keep 'their' exiles under observation. Therefore, personal protection can be needed in some cases. However, Germany is generally a safe country.

The author conducted the interview in February 2022.



© Şemzin Şin

‘Funding, digital security and public campaigns would be important’

Zehra Doğan is a Kurdish journalist and artist who most recently was artist in residence at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin.

Where do you see the strongest need for support for journalists in exile?

Doğan: Many journalists have to manage the flight to Europe on their own, including financially. But if you're a journalist who can't do your job properly because you've been pushed to the brink of starvation, you don't have 7,000 to 8,000 euros to give to the smugglers. Even if you have the money, you fall into the hands of unreliable people, often ending in your death. Only if you survive the escape, you can get help. Of the dozens I know, only one or two have received help from NGOs, and in those cases only for a few months.

It would be important that those who come here would be welcomed as journalists, if they were helped to leave their home countries safely, whether through funding, digital security, public campaigns, or whatever. If they were given equipment and language training, that would be very effective.

What opportunities should the country of exile provide?

Doğan: For example, every country has government-supported television and radio stations. If there were opportunities for media work-

ers in exile to participate there, if they could pursue their work and were encouraged to report on what they experience, they would not become passive. Because due to lack of work opportunities, endless visa problems and more, people who are otherwise active and creative become fatigued and apathetic. As a journalist, if you don't have a camera, a capable computer, and a safe home, you are shut out of life. Then they tell you if you want to convey something, convey your homeland.

What would you like to see from media professionals in exile?

Doğan: Famous journalists, editors, writers, and artists can, for example, form delegations and take initiatives here in Europe: they can work to give exiled journalists a place on major channels and in major newspapers, or they can organize regular solidarity visits to imprisoned colleagues, to their trials, to editors of endangered platforms, to journalists who have been attacked. They could take care of them. In such cases of war, conflict and violence, activist journalism is very important.

In my opinion, it should lead to the exiled creating their own platforms. Appropriate bud-

gets must be made available, and more spaces must be created. Journalists are not really known as journalists in exile. Also, because they are forced to take other jobs. Maybe Can Dündar, I and others are lucky that we are representative in a known sense, but there are dozens, hundreds of journalists, and artists like us who are stranded on the continent.

What is your personal situation? What's next for you?

Doğan: It's unclear what will happen next. I think that's the basic problem. A journalist or someone who draws or does something with his art – which I don't see as separate from the media, because art is another form of transmission –, should not be most concerned with how to make a living in the future. This is so fundamental, but unfortunately, we have always suffered from it. In the last three months of our internships or residencies, we suddenly become depressed because we don't know what will happen next. For example, when I was in London thinking about what I would do when the English PEN residency ended, I couldn't do anything in those two or three months. Now I'm at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, and I'm pretty sure that by the end of the

year-long residency I'll be panicking about how to make ends meet again. This state of constant panic actually makes you unable to work, because I think the main problem in Europe is that I'm always worrying about how I'm going to make ends meet, how I'm going to find money in the long run and pay my rent, my insurance. That makes it all the more difficult.

The interview was conducted by Ege Dündar in the fall of 2021.



The Exile Media Forum at KörberForum © Claudia Höhne / Körber-Stiftung

Ten ways to improve the situation of exiled journalists in Europe

- › Information is needed about exiled journalists so that we can understand their current situation. This information is currently lacking. Therefore, government bodies and journalists' associations need to provide the basis to collect the necessary information and enable continuous monitoring.
- › The way in which journalists are being persecuted has changed. In addition to repression from authoritarian regimes, journalists are increasingly facing threats from political groups and organised crime. Civil society supporters and journalists' associations need to respond to these new threats, such as by organising temporary relocations.
- › Journalists in exile have diverse needs. Networks need to be created so that exiled journalists can establish themselves in their host countries and continue working. Relief organisations, therefore, should promote networking between exiled journalists, supporters and exiled editorial offices and platforms.
- › Persecuted journalists need practical and accessible support in their host countries. This includes help finding accommodations and securing their residency status. They also need support to obtain residency permits and financing to cover their living expenses. In addition, they may also need assistance in overcoming the difficulties associated with living in a foreign country and psychological support due to trauma.
- › Relief organisations often provide further training, workshops and courses for exiled journalists independently of one another. It would make sense for such organisations to work together, for example, by offering these courses at a single academy or on a specialised website. Relief organisations should coordinate their work and the assistance they provide.
- › Digital security is a central aspect of the work of exiled journalists. Therefore, it is particularly important to provide information about digital security and the associated security tools.
- › The fates of journalists who go into exile are as different as are their reasons for exile. Some exiled journalists continue to focus on their home countries, while others prepare themselves for a permanent stay in Europe. Therefore, career development for exiles needs to account for these two situations: some exiled journalists will need help integrating into their new society, whereas others will require support to return home.
- › Exiled journalists are under pressure to keep working in their host country. Rapid action on the part of government and relief organisations is required so that exiled journalists can start work in their new country and continue professional training.
- › Exiled journalists can still face persecution in their host country. Therefore, they are also in need of physical protection.
- › Freedom of the press is under threat throughout the world. The situation in Europe has recently deteriorated. Nevertheless, most countries in Europe are comparatively free, peaceful and secure. Despite this, freedom of the press must be defended in Europe.

Körper-Stiftung's focus on exile journalism

In the department 'Democracy, Engagement, Cohesion', Körper-Stiftung assists people who live in exile in Germany to reflect on their experiences of war and migration, the loss of their home country and their arrival in a foreign culture. The foundation aims to afford visibility to the journalistic, artistic, scientific and political endeavours of people living in exile, provide exiles with a voice in society, and, thus, strengthen social cohesion.

By conducting international specialist events such as the Exile Media Forum, discussion series like Voices of Freedom and supporting the news platform Amal, Hamburg!, Körper-Stiftung and its partners focus on the challenges linked to and the possibilities associated with strengthening exile journalism in Germany. The foundation also organises the Days of Exile in Hamburg and, increasingly, in other areas of Germany. Days of Exile is an audience-centred programme based on more than 50 events that encourages participants to get to know one another, and promotes dialogue between exiles and other sections of the population. The month of events is rounded off with the Speech on Exile, which is held by a prominent figure.

Exile Media Forum

Once a year, around 100 experts, exiled journalists and other representatives of the media are invited to Hamburg to discuss challenges associated with exile journalism. They discuss future issues, examine new trends and share experiences. The conference is a central place for networking between the media, civil society and politics. The 2022 conference will focus on the security of exiled journalists in Europe.

Exile journalism in Germany

Germany is one of the main destinations for refugee journalists. Once in exile, however, they face many challenges. The 2019 publication 'Exile Journalism in Germany' takes a look at the situation, outlines existing hurdles and lists selected support initiatives.

Here you can download your copy:

<https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/publikationen/koerber-topics>



Overview of organizations*

Engage www.engage.be/english/
European Centre for Press and Media Freedom
www.ecpmf.eu
Exiled Writers Ink www.exiledwriters.co.uk
Free Press Unlimited www.freepressunlimited.org
Front Line Defenders www.frontlinedefenders.org
Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted
www.hamburger-stiftung.de/en/
ICORN www.icorn.org
International Federation of Journalists: Safety Fund
www.ifj.org/safety-fund
International Media Support www.mediasupport.org
Maison des Journalistes
www.maisondesjournalistes.org/english-version-mdj/
Martin Roth-Initiative www.martin-roth-initiative.de/en
PEN Centre: Writers-in-Exile
www.pen-deutschland.de/en/writers-in-exile/
Protect Defenders www.protectdefenders.eu
Refugee Journalism Project
www.refugeejournalismproject.org
Reporters Without Borders www.rsf.org/en

* This list provides an overview of organisations active in the field of exile journalism in Europe. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

March 2022

Körper-Stiftung

Social development needs dialogue and understanding. Through its operational projects, in its networks and in conjunction with cooperation partners, Körper-Stiftung takes on current social challenges in areas of activities comprising Innovation, International Dialogue and Vibrant Civil Society.

Inaugurated in 1959 by the entrepreneur Kurt A. Körper, the foundation is now actively involved in its own national and international projects and events. In particular, the foundation feels a special bond to the city of Hamburg. Furthermore, the foundation has an office in Berlin.

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