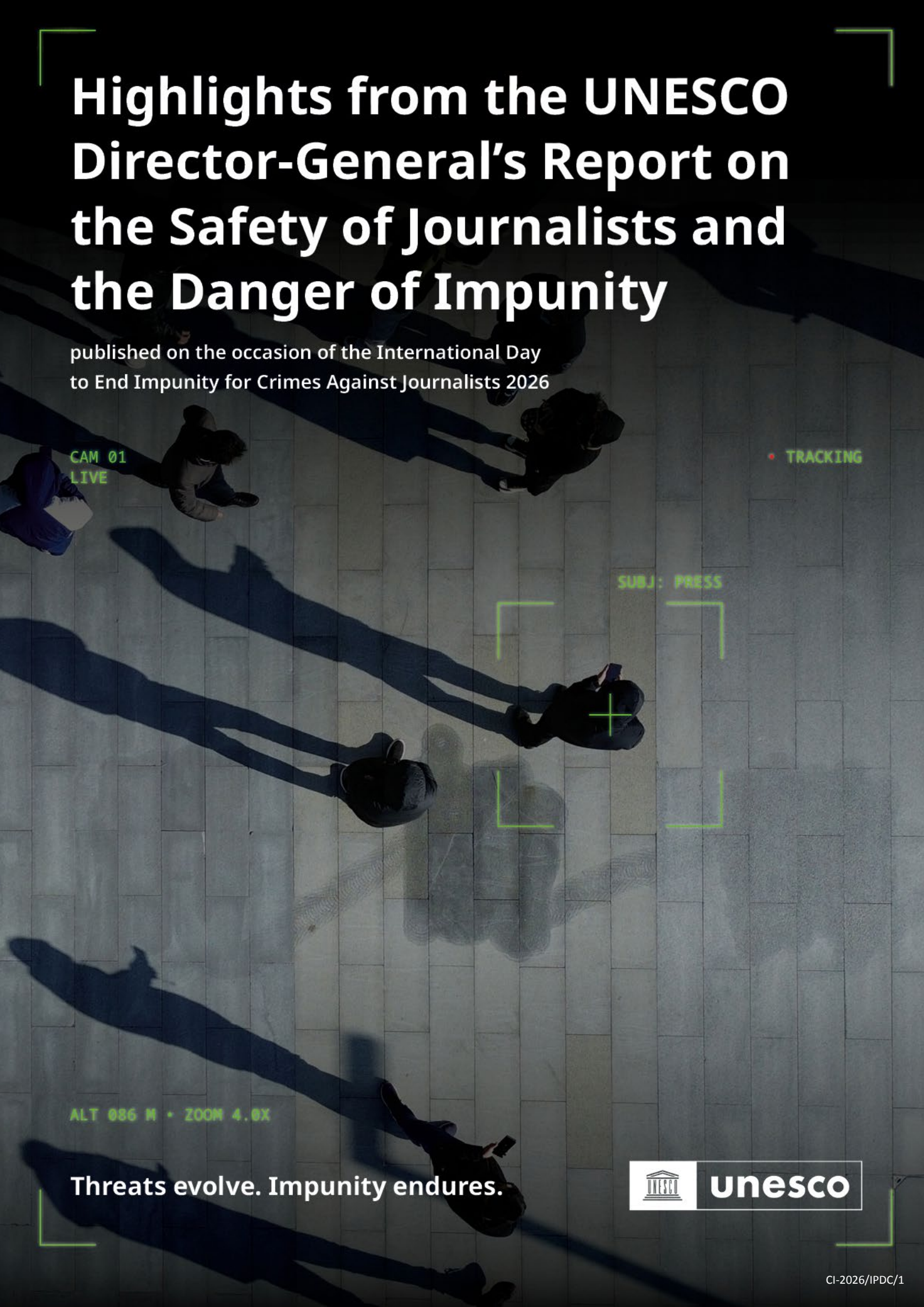
Highlights from the UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity

published on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists 2026



Threats evolve. Impunity endures.

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

- **A total of 1,641 journalists have been killed worldwide** since UNESCO began systematically monitoring in 2006, **on average, one every four days.** Armed conflicts are the single most significant factor driving journalist killings in specific periods in 2006-2007, 2012-2015, and 2023-2025.

- **Killings in countries not experiencing armed conflict in 2024-2025 were at their lowest in the last 18 years (62 killings).**

- Killings of journalists, media workers and social media producers engaged in journalistic activity **rose by 20% to 189 during the period 2024-2025.** This biennium had the highest number of killings recorded since the 2014-2015 period.

- Armed conflict accounted for a substantial proportion of journalist killings in 2024-2025, **with 127 killings, amounting to 67% of overall killings, with 40% of these reportedly due to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones.**

- Slightly over a quarter – **26%** – of overall killings of journalists were reported as being killed by unmanned aerial vehicles or drones, across six war zones.

- **The 2024-2025 biennium saw the lowest percentage of women journalists killed in over a decade, but conflict zones remain a major risk factor**. Fourteen (14) women

journalists were killed overall, accounting for **7% of total killings.** All but one were killed in conflict zones.

- The highest numbers of killings were recorded in the **Arab States and in Latin America and the Caribbean**, with 97 and 37 killings of journalists respectively.

- **The number of journalists killed in the 25-29 year age range rose to 20 in the 2024-2025 period,** a significant increase from 12 during 2022-2023.

- Overall, impunity for killings of journalists has increased globally. **Six out of seven killings remain ongoing or unresolved.** The **impunity rate rose by one percentage point since 2024 to 86%**, a return to the rate recorded in 2022. This is a reversal of the gradual long-term decrease in the rate of impunity. However, this still marks a reduction from the rate of 95% recorded in 2012.

- **The impunity rate for cases of killed journalists in countries not in conflict dropped to 77%** in 2026, compared to 94% in 2012. This is a decline on average of one percentage point per annum.

- There was a decrease in State reactions to the Director-General's request for information on the status of judicial inquiries and criminal investigations into the cases of killed journalists, to **62%**, down from 80% in the previous biennium.

- Voluntary reporting on SDG Indicator 16.10.1, which covers the monitoring of verified killings of journalists and associated media personnel, significantly increased – **Eleven (11) States** reported on SDG Indicator 16.10.1 in their National Voluntary Reviews, compared to only one State in the 2022-2023 period. There was also an increase **in the percentage of supported recommendations on freedom of expression** by States during the Universal Periodic Review – from 65% to **69%.**

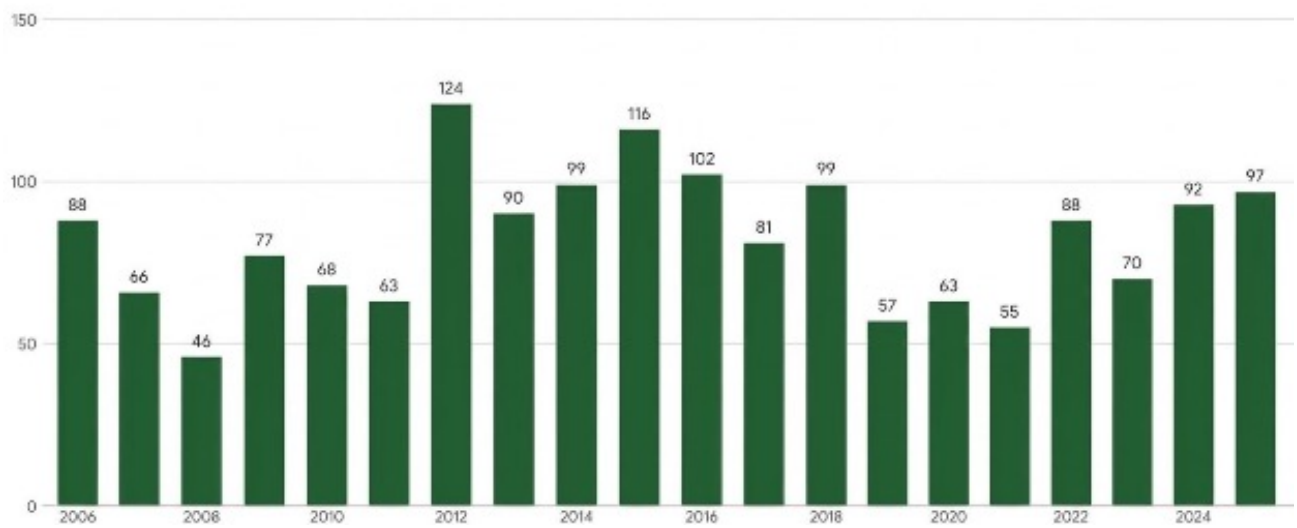
Killings of Journalists in 2024 and 2025: Key Findings

From 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025, 189 journalists, media workers and social media producers engaged in journalistic activity were killed. This is a 20% increase from 2022-2023, during which UNESCO recorded 158 killings, and the highest two-year total since 2014-2015. On average, one journalist was killed every four days. In 2025 alone more journalists were killed than in any other year in the last eight years.

In 2024, the country with the highest number of journalist killings was the State of Palestine with at least 30 killings, followed by Pakistan (9) and the Republic of the Sudan (8). Killings also occurred in Mexico (7), Bangladesh (5), Colombia (4), Ukraine (4), Iraq (3), Myanmar (3), Lebanon (3), the Syrian Arab Republic (3), India (2), Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Haiti (2), Cambodia (1), Chad (1), Honduras (1), Indonesia (1), the Russian Federation (1), Somalia (1) and Yemen (1).

In 2025, the State of Palestine again recorded the highest number of cases, with at least 32 killings, followed by Mexico (10) and Yemen (9). Killings also occurred in Ukraine (8), the Republic of the Sudan (6), Peru (4), Ecuador (3), Philippines (3), Bangladesh (2), Colombia (2), Guatemala (2), India (2), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (2), Pakistan (2), Afghanistan (1), Brazil (1), Honduras (1), Nepal (1), the Russian Federation (1), Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of) (1), Somalia (1), the Syrian Arab Republic (1), United Republic of Tanzania (1), and Türkiye (1).

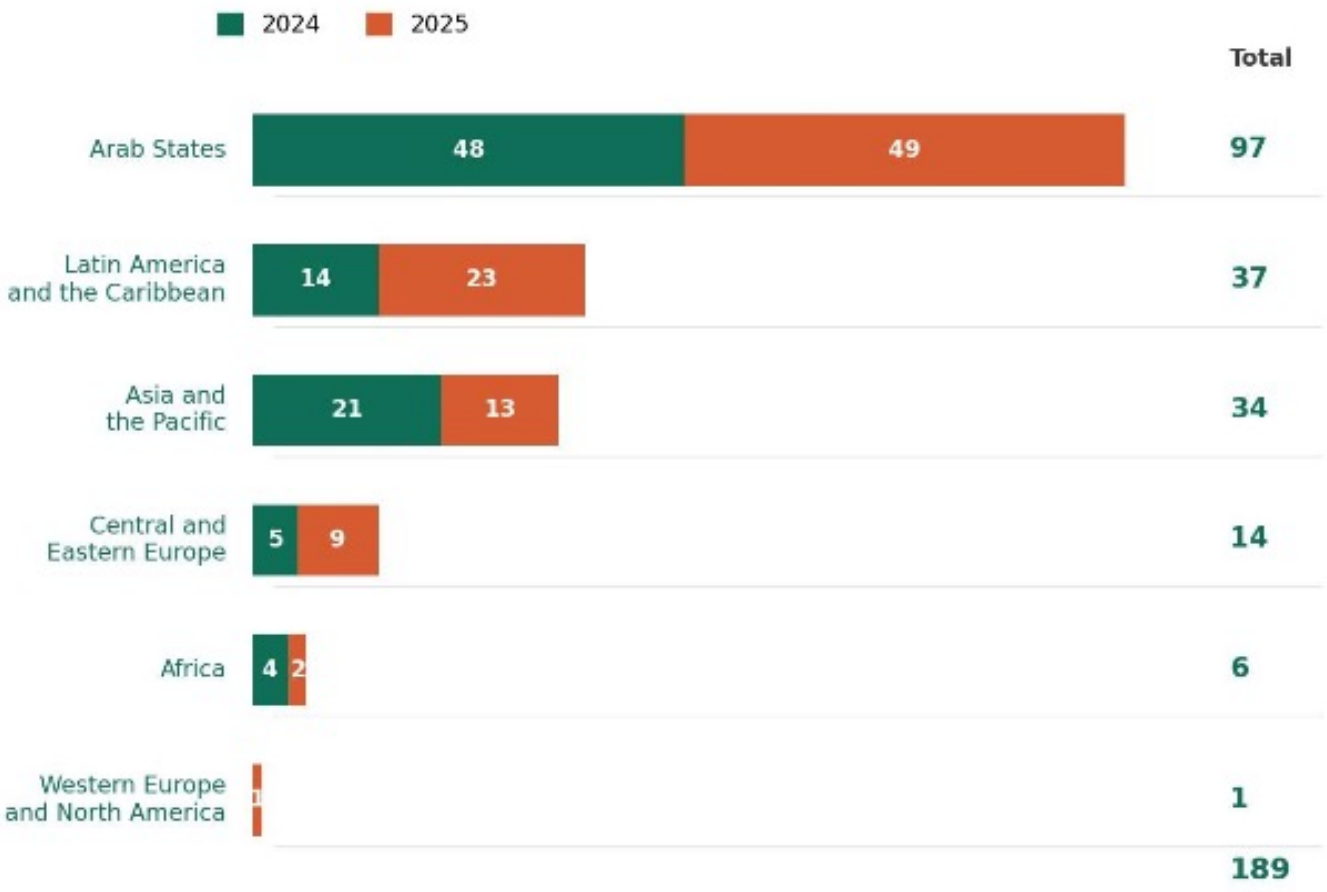
FIGURE 1:
No. of killings of journalists (2006-2025)



Journalist Killings – A Global Scourge

UNESCO recorded killings of journalists across all regions of the world. The fewest killings took place in Western Europe and North America (one killing), a significant reduction from the previous biennium, when six killings were recorded. In the Africa region, six killings of journalists were recorded, a significant reduction from the previous biennium where 14 killings were recorded. In the Asian and Pacific region, 34 killings were recorded. In Central and Eastern Europe, there were 14 killings.
The highest number of verified cases of killings of journalists were in the Arab States region, with 97 cases, followed by the Latin American and Caribbean region, where 37 killings were recorded.

FIGURE 2:
Number of journalist killings by region (2024-2025)

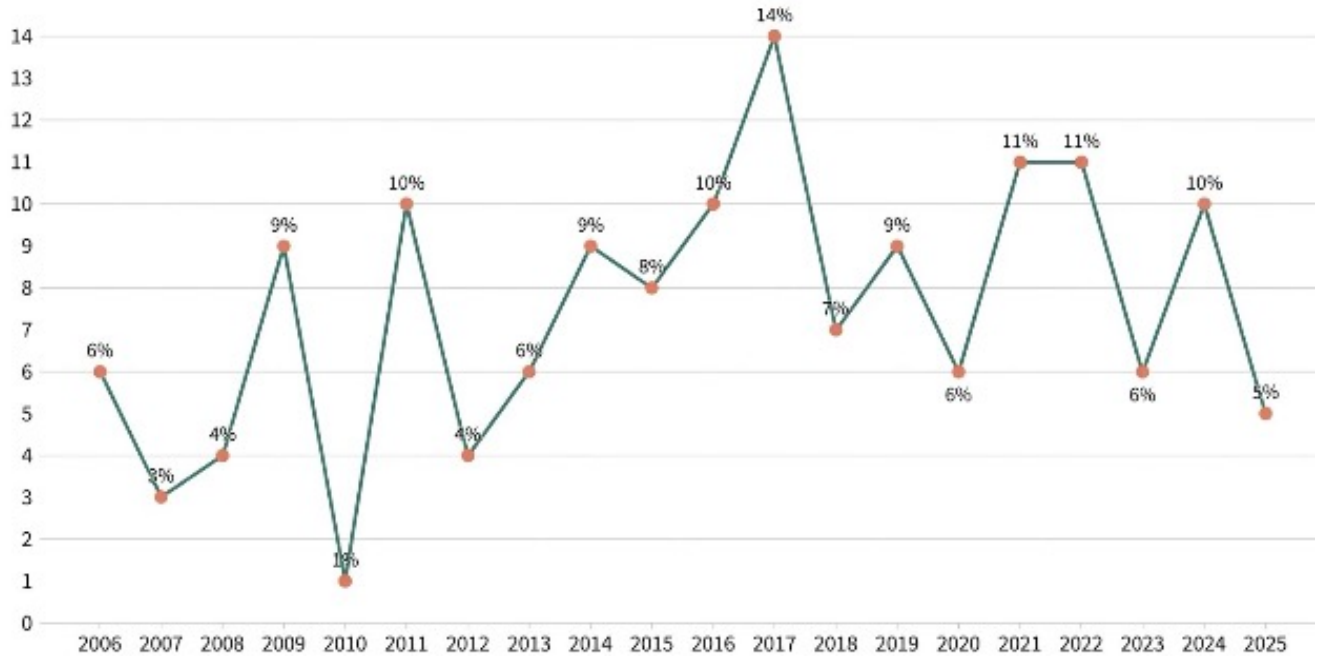


Killing of Women Journalists: Conflict a Major Factor

UNESCO recorded 14 killings of women journalists, accounting for 7% of overall killings. While the number of killed women journalists remains equal to the previous biennium, it is the lowest overall percentage since the 2012-2013 biennium.

Almost all killings of women journalists (13) took place in countries experiencing armed conflict. Only one woman journalist was killed outside of conflict areas.
This continues a pattern observed in previous reporting periods, where a majority of women journalists were killed while working in conflict zones.

FIGURE 3:
Percentage of women journalists killed by year (2006-2025)



Killings Surge in Countries Experiencing Conflict

UNESCO recorded 127 killings of journalists in countries experiencing armed conflict, accounting for 67% of all killings. This is a 24-percentage point increase from the rate recorded in 2022-2023, where killings in conflict accounted for 43% of overall killings.[1]

This is part of a five-year increase in the number of journalists killed in conflict, from 20 in 2021 to 63 in 2025.

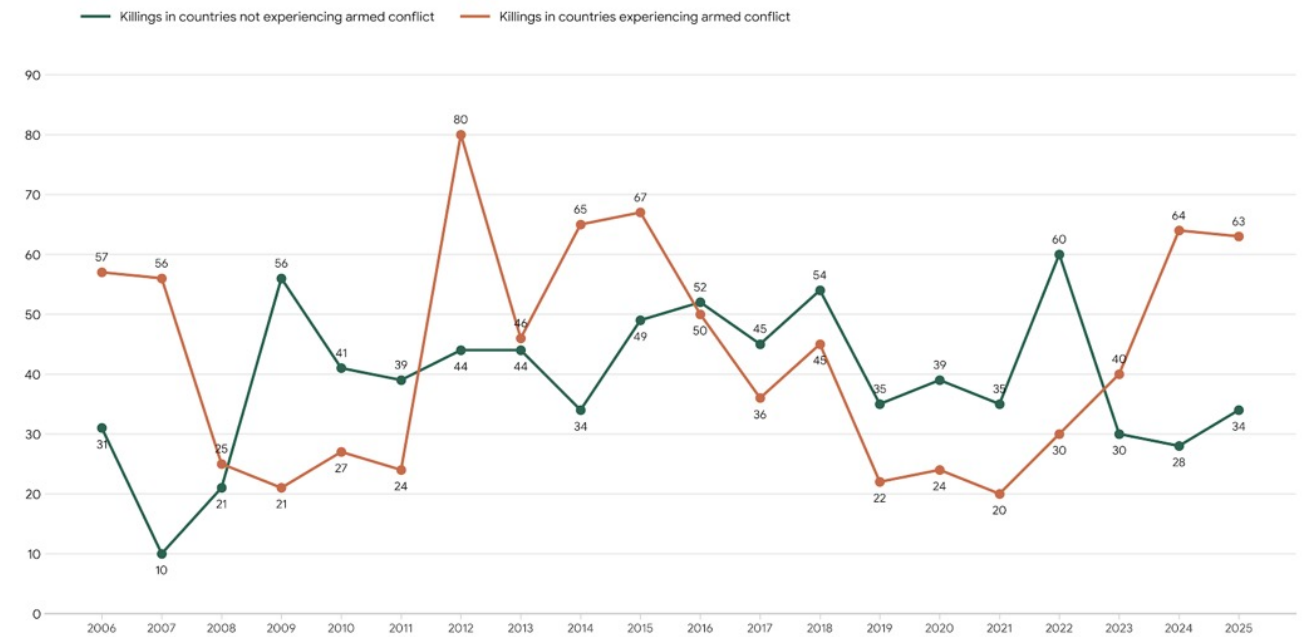
On the contrary, sixty-two (62) journalists were killed in countries not experiencing armed conflict, representing the lowest number of killings in countries not experiencing armed conflict in the last 18 years.

[1] Based on the countries mentioned in the reports of the UN Secretary-General on the Protection of civilians in armed conflict in 2025 and 2026 which cover developments in 2024 and 2025. The countries included were: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Cameroon (far North), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad (in 2024), Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran (in 2025), Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Somalia, South Sudan, the Republic of the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (country names as mentioned in the UN Secretary-General's Reports).

FIGURE 4:
Percentage of journalist killings in countries experiencing armed conflict (2006-2025)



FIGURE 5:
Number of journalists killed in countries experiencing armed conflict and countries not experiencing armed conflict (2006-2025)



Who, Where, How: Types of Killings of Journalists

In 2024-2025, 127 journalists were killed in countries experiencing armed conflict. Among these, 50 journalists were reportedly killed in six countries by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as “drones”. These figures account for 40% of journalist killings in direct situations of armed conflict, and 26% of overall killings during this biennium.

In conflict zones, groups of journalists totalling 36 were reportedly killed in temporary field media houses and workplaces in four countries. In one instance, a single attack led to the killing of nine journalists.

Local journalists covering armed conflict continued to account for the vast majority of killings, representing 90% of journalists killed in countries experiencing armed conflict (compared to 91% in 2022-2023).

Foreign journalists represented 10% of all killings in countries experiencing armed conflict 2024-2025. This is one percentage point up from the previous biennium (9% in 2022-2023). This small increase in percentage obscures nearly a doubling of foreign journalists being killed in countries experiencing armed conflict rising from seven to thirteen (13) killings during this biennium. Foreign journalists were predominantly killed in Ukraine (9) and Syrian Arab Republic (2).

Fifteen (15) journalists were reportedly killed in conflict zones while wearing identifiable press vests or in vehicles clearly marked as press.

Beyond conflict zones, killings of journalists increasingly take place at their workplace, outside of field assignments. In 2024-2025, 17 journalists were killed in their workplace, compared to 10 in 2022-2023 and one in 2020-2021.

The killing of journalists in private spaces such as homes or cars often endangers their families or other people that happen to be nearby. In 2024-2025, 20 journalists (11%) were killed in their homes, in some cases along with their family members. This is a slight drop compared to 22 killings (14%) in 2022-2023, and 23 killings (20%) in 2020-2021.

Journalists killed while travelling by car or motorcycle continues to be a common trend, also extending the risk to family members who may be accompanying them or persons who happen to be in the immediate vicinity of the killings. In the 2024-2025 period, the number of journalists killed in their vehicles increased, with 18% (33 killings) occurring in these circumstances, compared to 12% in 2022-2023.

Journalists were also killed in terrorist attacks or while reporting on a terrorist attack. The number of journalists killed in such attacks decreased to four in 2024-2025 compared to eight in 2022-2023. One journalist was killed in such attacks in 2020-2021.

Journalists reporting on protests sometimes face risks of violent attacks from protestors and law enforcement. In **2024-2025, seven journalists were killed in connection with a protest,** reaching the highest figure recorded. Six journalists were killed in protests over the 2020-2021 period. UNESCO has further documented an increase in non-lethal attacks on media professionals reporting on protests, many perpetrated by security forces, in an Issue Brief safety of journalist covering protests and demonstrations and a Brief on the role of law enforcement agents: ensuring safety of journalists during public demonstrations and elections.

Journalists’ lives can also be at great risk during crowd violence. Two journalists were killed in South Asia by large groups or mobs. In 2022-2023, three journalists were killed this way.

Community media play an essential role in promoting access to information for all, especially underserved communities. Four community journalists were killed in 2024-2025.

Which topics of coverage put journalists most at risk?

Journalists are often targeted, detained, harassed or killed because of the subjects they cover, the individuals or entities they report on, and the interests their reporting may affect. **In 2024-2025, journalists covering conflicts accounted for the highest number of killings (104).** Other journalists who were killed, in countries experiencing armed conflict, principally covered topics like corruption, crime and politics.

Journalists face risks across a broad range of reporting areas, not only when covering armed conflict. Thirty-eight (38) journalists that were killed reported on general politics, twenty-two (22) reported on criminal activity, twenty-two reported on corruption, while coverage of other beats like sports or entertainment also accounted for 22 killings.

One journalist was killed in connection with his reporting on local elections.

Three journalists were killed in connection with their reporting in the context of defence of land, natural resources and the environment. In 2022-2023, six journalists were killed in connection with their environmental reporting, down from eight in 2020-2021.

Killing of Young Journalists Almost Doubled

Youth is defined statistically as within the 15–24-year age range. **UNESCO data shows that at least 5 young journalists were killed in 2024-2025.** This figure amounts to 3% of all killings recorded this biennium and equals the number of killings of young journalists in the 2022-2023 biennium.

The number of journalists killed in the 25–29-year age range rose from 12 in the previous biennium to **20 cases in 2024-2025.**

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), LLDCs and LDCs

UNESCO recorded 45 killings of journalists in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) and Least Developed Countries (LDC), accounting for **24% of all cases.** Killings of journalists occurred in Afghanistan (1), Bangladesh (7), Cambodia (1), Chad (1), Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Haiti (2), Myanmar (3), Nepal (1), Somalia (2), the Republic of the Sudan (14), United Republic of Tanzania (1), and Yemen (10).

State Reactions: Status of the Judicial Inquiries into Cases of Killed Journalists from 2006 to 2025

In October 2025, UNESCO requested updated information from 78 States on the criminal and judicial status of 1,358 unresolved cases that took place between 1 January 2006 and 31 October 2025. During this period UNESCO verified a total of 1,637 cases of killed journalists.

FIGURE 6:
Reactions received from States on the status of judicial inquiries into killed journalists

STATES	REACTION TO DG REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION	NUMBER OF CASES OF KILLINGS COVERED BY THE REQUEST
AFGHANISTAN	X	71
ALBANIA	✓	1
ANGOLA	✓	1
ARGENTINA	✓	1
AZERBAIJAN	✓	2
BAHRAIN	✓	1
BANGLADESH	X	24
BARBADOS	X	1
BRAZIL	✓	31
BURKINA FASO	X	3
BURUNDI	X	1
CAMBODIA	X	1
CAMEROON	X	4
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	X	5
CHAD	X	4
CHILE	✓	1
CHINA	✓	1
COLOMBIA	✓	33
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	X	17
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	X	1
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	✓	1
ECUADOR	✓	7
ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT	X	7
ERITREA	X	4
ETHIOPIA	✓	2
GHANA	✓	1
GREECE	✓	2
GUATEMALA	○	22
GUINEA	X	1
GUYANA	X	5
HAITI	○	17
HONDURAS	X	40
INDIA	○	60
INDONESIA	✓	2
IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)	✓	4
IRAQ	X	168
ISRAEL[17]	✓	3
KAZAKHSTAN	✓	1
KENYA	X	4
KYRGYZSTAN	✓	1
LEBANON	✓	7
LESOTHO	○	1
LIBERIA	X	1
LIBYA	○	23
MALDIVES	✓	2
MALI	✓	3
MALTA	✓	1
MEXICO	✓	141
MOZAMBIQUE	X	2
MYANMAR	✓	9
NEPAL	X	5
NETHERLANDS (KINGDOM OF THE)	✓	1
NIGERIA	X	7
PAKISTAN	X	95
PALESTINE (STATE OF)	✓	77
PANAMA	✓	1
PARAGUAY	✓	5
PERU	✓	4
PHILIPPINES	✓	82
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	✓	6
RWANDA	X	1
SAUDI ARABIA (KINGDOM OF)	✓	2
SLOVAKIA	✓	1
SOMALIA	X	57
SOUTH SUDAN	X	10
SRI LANKA	○	9
REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN	X	15
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	✓	121
TANZANIA (UNITED REPUBLIC OF)	X	1
THAILAND	✓	4
TÜRKIYE	✓	9
UGANDA	○	4
UKRAINE	✓	37
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND	✓	1
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA[18]	X	4
VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)	○	2
VIET NAM	✓	1
YEMEN	X	50

TOTAL:
78 Director-General Requests

✓ Response on cases received (40)
○ Acknowledgement of the Director-General's request (8)
× Did not respond (30)

Decrease in States' Response Rate

Of the 78 requests sent by the Director-General, 48 States responded: 40 provided substantive responses and 8 sent acknowledgments, resulting in a 62% response rate in 2026. Thirty (30) States did not react to the requests. This is the lowest response rate since 2019 and below the decade average (68%).

FIGURE 7:
State response rate (%) to the Director-General's request by year (2009-2026)

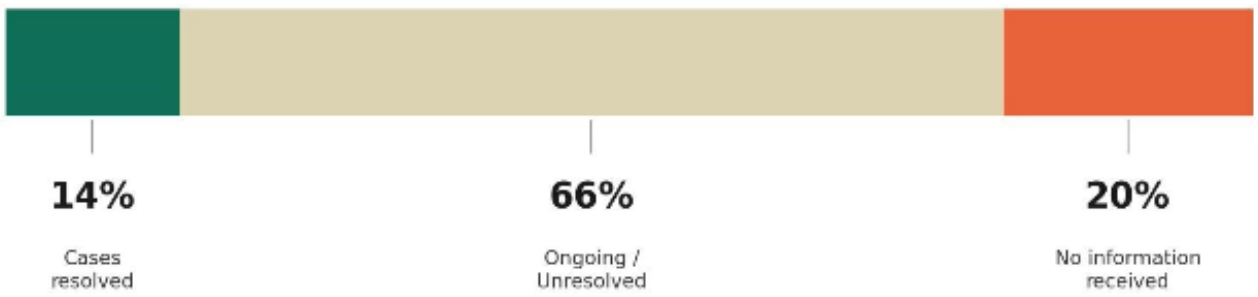


Higher Overall Impunity Rate in 2026

According to the submissions received from States, eleven additional cases were resolved in 2025-2026. Out of all cases recorded since 2006, 223 cases have now been resolved, 1013 cases are ongoing or unresolved, 23 cases are attributed to actions of a foreign actor, and 41 judicially archived, with all judicial avenues for resolution having been exhausted. No updated information was provided for a further 321 cases, which UNESCO therefore continues to consider as unresolved.

In 2026, the overall rate of impunity for the killing of journalists increased by one percentage point to 86% (in both conflict and non-conflict). Since 2012, the global impunity rate had continuously decreased from its recorded historical high of 95% to 85% in 2024. In 2026, this trend has been reversed to the same rate of impunity recorded in 2022.

FIGURE 8:
Status of judicial inquiries into journalist killings (2006-2025)



Decrease in Impunity Rate in Countries Not In Conflict

The global impunity rate for killings of journalists around the world is 86%. **In countries not experiencing armed conflict it is markedly lower, at 77%, a rate which has remained at the same level since 2022 (down from 94% in 2012).**

Over the period from 1 January 2006 to 31 October 2025, 774 killings of journalists were recorded in countries not experiencing armed conflict. **By 2026, 177 of these cases had been resolved, 447 cases were marked as ongoing or unresolved, and for 150 cases, UNESCO did not receive any information on the judicial status.**

Regional Trends in Impunity for Journalist Killings

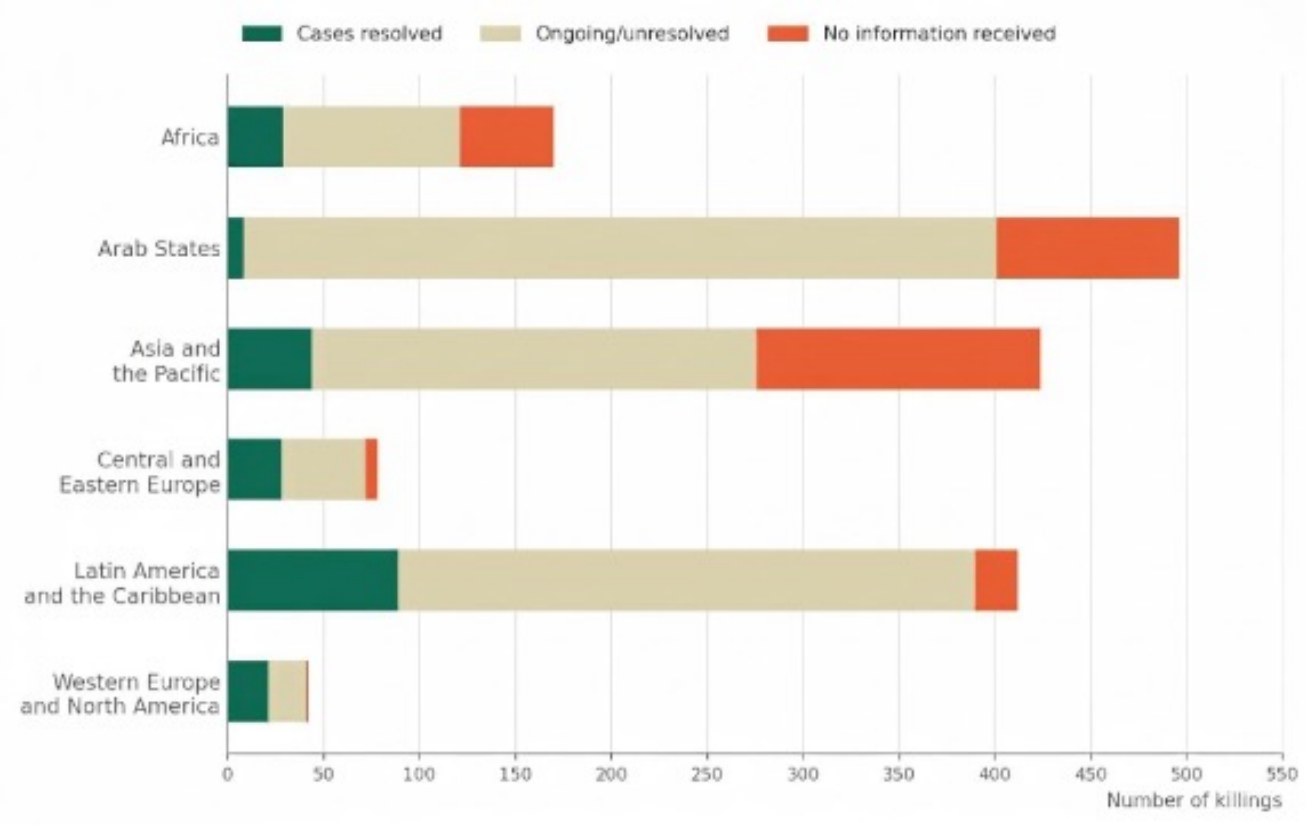
The Arab States continue to be the region with the highest rate of impunity for killings of journalists at 98%. Only 8 cases have been resolved in this region.

Asia and the Pacific was the only region where the impunity rate declined to 88%, with 49 resolved cases. The rate of impunity in Africa rose for the first time in six years to 83%, with 29 solved cases.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the impunity rate rose one percentage point to 78%, similar to levels recorded in 2022.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the impunity rate rose significantly from 59% in 2024 to 65% in 2026.

Western Europe and North America recorded an impunity rate of 50%, a single percentage point increase from 2024 and a 7-percentage point increase since 2022.



Measures and Actions to Promote Safety of Journalists and to Combat Impunity

Thirty-eight (38) States provided information on measures to promote the safety of journalists and to combat impunity for crimes against journalists.

Brazil reported having adopted the "National Protocol for the Investigation of Crimes against Journalists and Social Communicators", an initiative carried out by the Observatory on Violence against Journalists and Social Communicators. This safety mechanism has also been included in UNESCO's Repository of National Safety Mechanisms.

Slovakia reported on the development of a draft methodology for police procedures to protect journalists at high-risk mass events in connection with the Strategy for the Prevention of Crime and Other Anti-Social Activities in the Slovak Republic until 2028. This strategy is included as a national action plan in UNESCO's Repository of National Safety Mechanisms.

The Netherlands (Kingdom of the) reported on strengthening the existing safety mechanism, *PersVeilig*, included in UNESCO's Repository of National Safety Mechanisms. The developments include: the addition of a reporting point and direct support in case of incidents, increased training courses on practical safety measures, and regularly commissioning research and monitoring of attacks.

Ukraine reported on the creation of the Coordination Committee for the Council of Europe's "Journalists Matter Campaign" in April 2024. This safety mechanism is included in UNESCO's Repository of National Safety Mechanisms.

Colombia reported on the creation of a fund for the safety of women journalists, the Fund for the Prevention, Protection and Assistance of Women Journalists Victims of Gender Violence in 2024. This national safety mechanism is included in UNESCO's Repository of National Safety Mechanisms.

TOTAL:

78

Director-General Requests

26 Responses on measures and actions taken to promote the safety of journalists and to combat impunity (33%)

21 Responses on measures actions and good practices aimed at tackling the gender dimension of journalists' safety (27%)

Several States reported on various measures and actions to promote the safety of journalists in their respective countries, including Albania, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malta, Myanmar, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Palestine (State of), Paraguay, Peru, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of), Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine and Uruguay.

Increased Support for National Safety Frameworks

In 2024, UNESCO launched the Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists to collect good practices implemented by States to prevent, protect and prosecute crimes against journalists. In 2025, UNESCO launched an Issue Brief on National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists to support States in the development and strengthening of national mechanisms and action plans dedicated to the safety of journalists.

Information on Non-lethal Attacks Against Journalists

UNESCO does not systematically collect data on non-lethal attacks against journalists, although the Organization does compile and report some data on non-lethal attacks in its issue briefs on urgent issues related to the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, under the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom series. The data on non-lethal attacks is collected by international civil society organisations specialised in the safety of journalists which hold consultative or associate status with UNESCO. The UN Statistics Division outlines five areas of non-lethal criminal conduct: enforced disappearances; acts of torture; arbitrary imprisonment; kidnapping; and other harmful acts, which include sexual violence, threats, coercion, harassment, stalking, psychological violence, invasion of privacy and discrimination.

Data from accredited organizations

Enforced Disappearance and Kidnapping

Over the biennium, Reporters Without Borders reported at least 160 journalists who were "disappeared," 64 of whom were reported as cases of "enforced disappearance." Reporters Without Borders also recorded at least 29 journalists having been taken as hostages or continued to be held hostage over the same period. These cases were recorded in at least 45 States. The Committee to Protect Journalists, meanwhile, recorded at least 98 journalists as "missing" in 2024 and 2025. These cases were recorded in at least 25 countries.

Imprisonment and Arbitrary Detention

Reporters Without Borders recorded at least 938 journalists as "detained" in connection with their journalistic activity in at least 72 States in the period 2024-2025, including cases that were either ongoing or had ended during the reporting period. This figure is lower than in the previous biennium (2022-2023). The Committee to Protect Journalists recorded at least 466 cases of "imprisoned" journalists, in at least 49 States. This figure only includes cases of journalists that were still imprisoned as of 1 December in 2024 and 2025, respectively, as part of an annual "census". It does not include cases of journalists that were imprisoned at one time and released during the reporting period.

Gender-based Online Attacks

In 2025, UN Women and the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ), in cooperation with UNESCO, conducted a survey identifying trends in online violence and its impact on women journalists.

The 2025 survey, the Tipping Point, found that women journalists and media workers are self-censoring at a rate of 45%, which is 50% higher than reported in 2021 in a similar UNESCO-ICFJ survey (30%). Women journalists were twice as likely (22%) to report online violence incidents to the police than they were in 2021 (11%). Women journalists were also more likely (14%) to take legal action against perpetrators and facilitators of online violence compared to 2021 (8%).

Although, the percentage of women reporting online violence increased from 73% (2021) to 75% (2025), those that reported having experienced physical violence as a result of online harassment more than doubled, from 20% (2021) to 42% (2025).

Limited Freedom of Movement of Journalists

Across the globe, an unprecedented number of journalists are living in exile or displacement, media professionals are being detained, and entire "zones of silence" remain largely inaccessible to the media. These realities represent only a fraction of a broader set of growing challenges to the free movement of independent and professional journalists. The freedom of movement of journalists is a key element of the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and its implementation. UNESCO aims to upscale it's "Safe Spaces" flagship initiative that protects displaced, exiled, and conflict-zone journalists; as well as providing concrete legal support for relocated, exiled, and displaced journalists and media professionals facing barriers to safe mobility, legal status and continued professional activity, with particular attention to women journalists. Furthermore, it advocates for and support the enlargement of emergency visas schemes for journalists, ensuring that eligibility criteria and relocation mechanisms are responsive to the specific protection needs of women journalists, including survivors of gender-based violence and journalists facing family-related reprisals.

Other Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms on the Safety of Journalists

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

UNESCO, as co-custodian of SDG indicator 16.10.1, reported on its monitoring of the indicator to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 2024 and 2025. UNESCO's data on the killings of journalists was used in the Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16: Indicators on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies in 2024 and 2025. UNESCO's data on killings of journalists in countries experiencing armed conflict was also used in the annual Secretary General's Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in 2024 and 2025.

Voluntary National Reviews: Reporting on SDG 16.10.1

In 2024, thirty-six (36) States submitted Voluntary National Reviews. Six (6) States made explicit reference to the safety of journalists or reported on 16.10.1 (Austria, Brazil, Ecuador, Kenya, Samoa and Sierra Leone).

In 2025, thirty-five (35) States submitted Voluntary National Reviews. Five (5) States made explicit reference to safety of journalists or reported on 16.10.1 (Angola, Bangladesh, Eswatini, Japan and Qatar).

Increasing Engagement with the Universal Periodic Review

In the 2024-2025 biennium, during the 45th-50th UPR Working Group Sessions, eighty-four (84) States were reviewed. According to data from the OHCHR's Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI), from the 21,867 recommendations made during these sessions, 871 (4%) addressed the theme of freedom of opinion and expression and access to information under SDG Target 16.10. This shows a relative decrease of almost 30% compared with the previous period.

However, out of the recommendations made, 69% were supported by the receiving State, a higher percentage compared to previous 41st-44th sessions, which was 65%.

Resolutions, Decisions and Other Normative Texts Addressing the Topic of Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

International and regional intergovernmental bodies continue to address the topic of safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. **During this biennium, at least 18 resolutions and decisions were adopted** in total by the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication, UNESCO's Executive Board, the Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union.

Trends in Journalist Safety from 2006-2025

Since 2006, UNESCO has recorded 1,641 killings of journalists, media workers and social media producers. On average 80 journalists were killed every year, either in connection with their journalistic work or while reporting on assignment.

A journalist was killed every 4 days, yet very few of those responsible are being held to account for these crimes. In 2012, at the height of killings and recorded impunity for crimes against journalists (95%), a multi-stakeholder UN Plan of Action was developed at UNESCO to tackle this issue. Impunity for crimes against journalists has since reduced to 86%, a notable decline from previous years, although the figure remains above the 85% recorded in 2024.

The decline in the rate of impunity for cases of killed journalists appears to have been slowed mainly by the lower rate of case resolution for journalists killed in conflict zones. Killings of journalists in countries experiencing armed conflict have accounted for the majority of killings during the past twenty years, 52% (or 860), whereas non-conflict related journalist killings have accounted for 48% (781).

UNESCO data suggests that case resolution is more likely where security and judicial institutions remain functional and accessible. Out of 223 resolved cases since 2006, 177 (almost 80%) were resolved in countries not experiencing armed conflict. The impunity rate for cases of killed journalists in countries not experiencing armed conflict is significantly lower than the global rate of impunity, at 77%, although still too high.

The rate of impunity for cases of journalists killed in countries not experiencing armed conflict decreased from 94% in 2012 to 77% in 2026. However, this data also shows that challenges for resolving cases of killed journalists persist regardless of conflict, since 2022 the rate of impunity in countries not experiencing conflict has plateaued at 77%.

From 2006, during the first decade of systematic monitoring, in most years the majority of journalist killings took place in countries experiencing armed conflict. From 2016, this trend reversed, with most killings taking place in countries not experiencing conflict, precipitating a seven-year period of relatively low conflict related killings which ended in 2023 when killings in conflict zones once again became predominant.

Recently, conflict related killings again significantly outpaced non-conflict related killings, a phenomenon which has previously occurred during periodic flare ups lasting several years, for example from 2006-2008, 2012-2015, and currently 2023-2025. The most recent flare up of armed conflict has seen the emergence of UAV-related journalist fatalities in conflict zones, accounting for 40% of killings in countries experiencing conflict in 2024-2025.

Local journalists covering armed conflict have always borne the brunt of these physical attacks. Since 2006, local journalists in countries experiencing armed conflict were largely killed in Iraq (164), the Syrian Arab Republic (101), the State of Palestine (100), Somalia (77), Afghanistan (72), Yemen (49), Pakistan (48) and Colombia (31).

Local journalists account for 91% (779) of journalists in countries experiencing situations of armed conflict. Foreign journalists killed in countries experiencing armed conflict account for 9% (81) and were largely killed in Ukraine (23), the Syrian Arab Republic (20), Afghanistan (10) and Iraq (6).

Overall, including non-conflict countries, foreign journalists have only accounted for 7% of journalist killings. Local journalists reporting on local stories whether that be corruption, crime or armed conflict account for the vast majority of killings.

Women journalists accounted for 7% (122) of all journalist killings. In most years, less than 10 women journalists were killed except for 2016, 2017 and 2022. From 2014-2017, there was a spike in the number of women killed journalists representing the highest cumulative number in a four-year period.

Globally, three regions recorded much higher numbers of killings of journalists than the rest. The Arab States (509), the Asia-Pacific (425), and Latin America-Caribbean (417) have all recorded the highest numbers of killings, doubling or tripling other regions like Africa (171), Central-Eastern Europe (77) and Western Europe-North America (42).

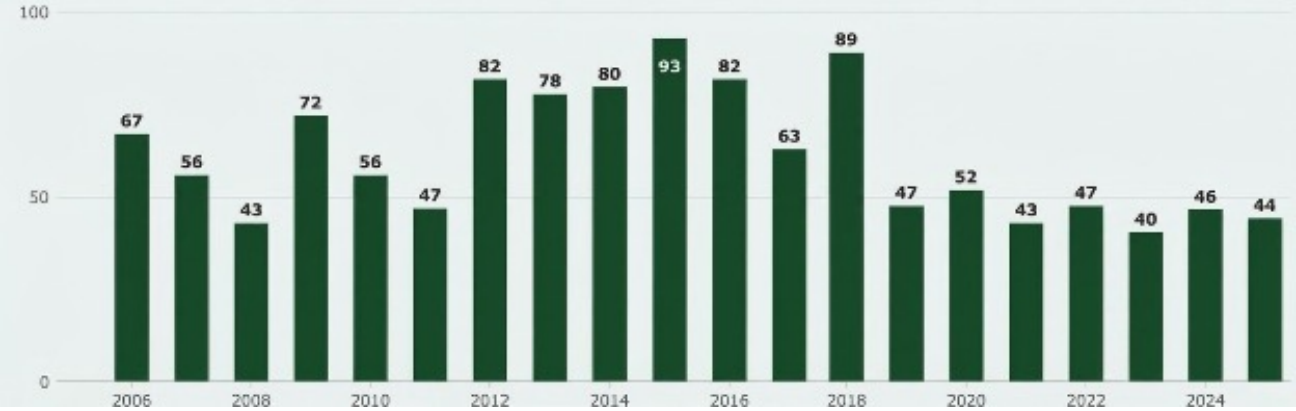
Regional trends in killings of journalists have remained largely consistent since 2006. Any changes recorded were mainly due to outbursts of conflict-related killings, particularly in Central-Eastern Europe (2022) and the Arab States (2006-2007, 2012-2015 and 2023-2025).

Reporting on environmental issues has become a vector for increasing violent attacks against journalists. In 2024, UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists conducted a survey of journalists reporting on environmental issues, Press and Planet in Danger, to map specific risks, pressures and reporting challenges faced during their work. UNESCO found that at least 749 journalists, groups of journalists, and news media outlets reporting on environmental issues had been attacked in 89 countries between 2009 and 2023. Over 300 attacks occurred between 2019-2023, marking a 42% increase from 2013-2018.

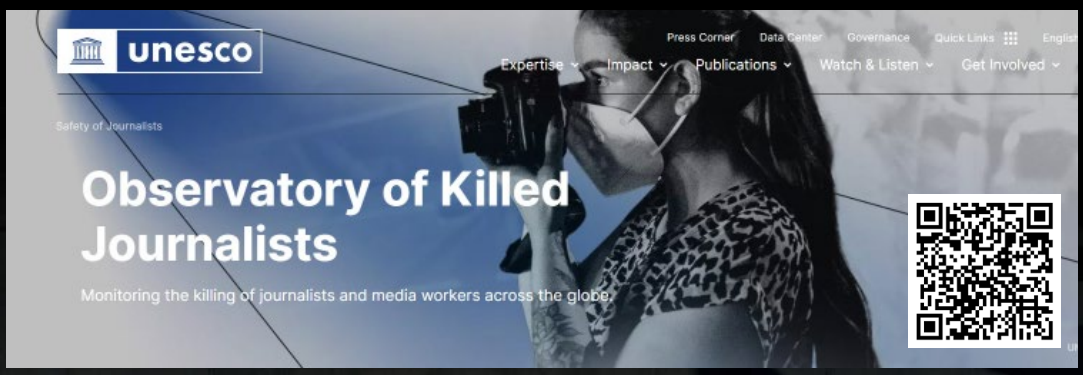
A recent International Labour Organization (ILO) Report, Decent work and the safety of journalists, highlights the challenges facing journalism, including changing business models, the growth of freelance work, wage stagnation, gender pay gaps, violence and harassment. According to the Report, the business model of journalism has changed, towards increased reliance on freelance and self-employed independent journalists as newsgatherers to create content. Freelance journalists also often lack basic safety training and newsroom backup when covering conflicts, natural disasters and other crises.

Furthermore, the ILO Report suggests that less staff journalists overall are being hired, and freelancers or casualised work forces continue to be sent into potentially dangerous contexts, with increasingly less access to safety equipment, legal, social and psychological support. In UNESCO's data, the killing of staff journalists has decreased while the killing of non-staff journalists has risen, particularly since 2022. Between 2012-2018, 567 staff journalists were killed compared to 319 staff journalists from 2019-2025.

FIGURE 9:
No. of staff journalist killings (2006-2025)



Observatory of Killed Journalists



Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists



Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and Danger of Impunity Hub



About this Report

The UNESCO Director-General's Report responds to a call from the 39 Member States in UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) to provide an analytical report on the killing of journalists, media workers and social media producers engaged in journalistic activities. The Report is a unique mechanism within the UN system for monitoring the killings of journalists and is published every two years.

This brochure is also supported by UNESCO's Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists.