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# 10 journalists who deserve justice immediately

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The last thing journalists seek when they go behind the scenes of a story is to end up behind bars. But for many reporters, harsh interrogation, wrongful arrest, and brutal assault are all possible realities of doing one's job.

Even today, as the world is in the midst of a [coronavirus](#) outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China, journalists who have reported on the situation have been punished for doing so. Chen Qiushi, a video journalist who revealed that hospitals in China were struggling to deal with the virus, has not been seen since Feb. 6. Meanwhile, three other journalists, who wrote an opinion piece regarding the crisis, have been expelled by the Chinese government.

When it comes to fighting a virus that has threatened public health, caused profits to plummet, and hit global markets hard, cracking down on free press does nothing to address the crisis at hand and only puts more people's lives at risk. That's only one of the reasons why *Fortune* remains committed to fighting for fellow journalists—and why publishing this monthly list of the "10 Most Urgent" press freedom cases is a moral imperative.

The [One Free Press Coalition](#) (OFPC) compiles the list (below), in partnership with the Center for Press Justice (CPJ) and the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF). This month marks one year of these organizations' efforts to circulate their list. While some journalists have received justice since appearing on these lists, other cases remain unresolved, and new cases continue to arise. ([You can read last month's list here.](#))

## 1. [Chen Qiushi \(China\)](#)

### **Journalist missing as Chinese authorities stifle reporting on coronavirus outbreak.**

Freelance video journalist [Chen Qiushi](#) has not been seen since Feb. 6, when he told family he planned to report on a temporary hospital. On Jan. 24, he traveled to the city of Wuhan in Hubei province from Beijing and began filming and reporting on the coronavirus health crisis, according to his posts on [YouTube](#), noting local hospitals were short of resources and struggling to handle the number of patients who needed treatment. Later, China [expelled](#) three accredited *Wall Street Journal* journalists over an opinion headline relating to the crisis.

## 2. [Daler Sharifov \(Tajikistan\)](#)

### **Tajikistan silences independent media ahead of March 1 elections.**

Daler Sharifov is ordered two months of pretrial detention since Tajik police raided the independent reporter's home on Jan. 28, confiscating a computer and books, and days later issuing a statement announcing charges of inciting ethnic, racial and religious hatred. The statement refers to "more than 200 articles and commentaries containing extremist content" he published between 2013 and 2019. CPJ [calls](#) this "a clear attempt to silence ahead of elections one of the few media critics that remain." A guilty verdict could mean up to five years in prison.

## 3. [Patrícia Campos Mello \(Brazil\)](#)

### **Politicians join in online sexual harassment to undermine journalist's integrity.**

A reporter for Brazil's largest daily newspaper, *Folha de S.Paulo*, [Patrícia Campos Mello](#) experiences ongoing harassment online in retaliation for her reporting. During a

congressional hearing in Brasília last month, an individual falsely accused Campos Mello of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for a “scoop.” Hundreds of Facebook and Twitter users, including the son of President Jair Bolsonaro, shared the allegations, many using sexual language. The allegations were later referenced by the president himself, whose 2018 presidential campaign backers [distributed](#) misinformation through WhatsApp to millions of Brazilians, Campos Mello reported.

#### 4. [Roohollah Zam \(Iran\)](#)

##### **Trial underway for anti-government journalist held in undisclosed location.**

Intelligence agents of the Islamic Republic Revolutionary Guards Corps arrested Iranian journalist Roohollah Zam in October. Founder of anti-government Amad News, Zam had been living in France and, following his arrest in Baghdad, was extradited to Iran. He is accused of working with French, Israeli and U.S. intelligence agencies, amounting to 17 charges, including espionage and spreading false news, although the government has made his platforms almost completely inaccessible for more than two years. In February, at least three trial sessions were held in his case.

#### 5. [Agnès Ndirubusa and the team at Iwacu \(Burundi\)](#)

##### **Court delivers prison sentence and fines for Burundi’s only imprisoned journalists.**

Following their October [arrest](#), a Burundi court [convicted](#) four journalists on Jan. 30 of attempting to undermine state security, fined them each \$530, and sentenced them to two years and six months in prison. The four, who had been covering clashes in the country’s Bubanza Province and submitted their appeal on Feb. 21, include Agnès Ndirubusa, head of the political desk at *Iwacu*, one of Burundi’s last independent outlets, and three colleagues: broadcast reporter Christine Kamikazi, English-language reporter Egide Harerimana and photojournalist Tércence Mpozenzi.

#### 6. [Azimjon Askarov \(Kyrgyzstan\)](#)

##### **Kyrgyz court hears final appeal of journalist’s life sentence.**

After nearly ten years in prison and his life sentence [twice upheld](#), award-winning journalist [Azimjon Askarov](#), 68, pursued a final appeal at the Supreme Court. The Feb. 26 hearing was quickly adjourned until April 7. The ethnic Uzbek’s reporting on corruption, abuse and human rights elicited trumped-up charges that included incitement to ethnic hatred and complicity in the murder of a police officer. Kyrgyzstan’s one [imprisoned journalist](#) experiences deteriorating health amid [harsh conditions](#) and limited access to medication.

#### 7. [Jamal Khashoggi \(Saudi Arabia\)](#)

## **U.S. executive branch idles while calls persist for Khashoggi's justice.**

Feb. 14 marked 500 days since Jamal Khashoggi's murder inside Istanbul's Saudi consulate. *The Washington Post's* columnist's fiancé, Hadice, observed the date with an op-ed calling for justice. The Trump administration has so far ignored a law passed by Congress, and signed by the president, that mandated the release of an intelligence report about Khashoggi's murder by Jan. 19. That's in addition to ignoring a [deadline](#) to reply to Congress regarding the killing, as required under the U.S. Global Magnitsky Act.

## **8. Pham Doan Trang (Vietnam)**

### **Journalist in hiding to evade arrest continues reporting.**

Phan Doan Trang has been in hiding since August 2018, after Ho Chi Minh City police [brutally beat](#) her and confiscated her national ID card, on top of silencing measures including interrogation, monitoring and shutting off her internet and electricity. A colleague reports that Trang, cofounder of *The Vietnamese* and *Luat Khoa* news publications, has not fully recuperated from the assault and her health has deteriorated. While moving between safe houses, she has continued critical reporting on the environment, freedom of religion and online civil society.

## **9. Mahmoud Hussein (Egypt)**

### **Journalist held in extended pretrial detention for unspecified charges.**

Mahmoud Hussein, a journalist working with Al Jazeera, has spent more than 1,000 days in pretrial detention in Cairo. Last May, an Egyptian court ordered his release, but authorities opened a new investigation with unspecified charges and returned him to prison. Hussein's initial arrest dates to December 2016, and his detention has been repeatedly renewed every 45 days, with anti-state and false news charges stemming from a 2016 documentary about conscription in Egypt which the government claims uses fake footage and aims to incite chaos.

## **10. Aasif Sultan (India)**

### **Communications blackout further delays imprisoned journalist's trial.**

*Kashmir Narrator* reporter [Aasif Sultan](#) has spent more than a year and half behind bars, since his 2018 arrest and charges months later of "complicity" in "harboring known terrorists." He has been [repeatedly interrogated and asked to reveal his sources](#) for a [cover story](#) on a slain Kashmiri militant, whose killing by Indian security forces set off a wave of anti-government demonstrations in Kashmir in July 2016. A number of hearings have been postponed—and other journalists harassed and [detained](#) the past year.

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