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## One Free Press Coalition Spotlights Journalists Under Attack

At the top of the list is Chen Qiushi, a journalist who had been reporting on the coronavirus crisis in Wuhan when he went missing.



ILLUSTRATION: WIRED STAFF

**IN MAY 2019**, WIRED joined the One Free Press Coalition, a united group of preeminent editors and publishers using their global reach and social platforms to spotlight journalists under attack worldwide. Today, the coalition is issuing its eighth monthly “10 Most Urgent” list of journalists

worldwide. Today, the coalition is issuing its eighth monthly **TEN MOST URGENT** list of journalists whose press freedoms are being suppressed or whose cases demand justice.

Here's March 2020's list, ranked in order of urgency:

### **1. Chen Qiushi (China)**

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

Freelance video journalist Chen Qiushi has not been seen since February 6, when he told family he planned to report on a temporary hospital. On January 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 January 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

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 January 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 February 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 February 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.**

February 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 January 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

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.

The One Free Press Coalition is comprised of over 30 prominent international members including: Al Jazeera Media Network; AméricaEconomía; The Associated Press; Bloomberg News; The Boston Globe; BuzzFeed; CNN Money Switzerland; Corriere Della Sera; De Standaard; Deutsche Welle; Estadão; EURACTIV; The Financial Times; Forbes; Fortune; HuffPost; India Today; Insider Inc.; Le Temps; Middle East Broadcasting Networks; NHK; Office of Cuba Broadcasting; Quartz; Radio Free Asia; Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty; Republik; Reuters; The Straits Times; Süddeutsche Zeitung; TIME; TV Azteca; Voice of America; The Washington Post; WIRED; Yahoo News.

One Free Press Coalition partners with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) to identify the most urgent cases for the list, which is updated and published on the first business day of every month.

The mission of the Coalition is to use the collective voices of its members—which reach more than 1 billion people worldwide—to "stand up for journalists under attack for pursuing the truth." News organizations throughout the world can join the Coalition by emailing [info@onefreepresscoalition.com](mailto:info@onefreepresscoalition.com). Members of the public are also encouraged to join the conversation using the hashtag [#OneFreePress](https://twitter.com/OneFreePress) and following developments on Twitter [@OneFreePress](https://twitter.com/OneFreePress).