

**Forum:** Human Rights Council (HRC)

**Issue:** Protecting the Rights of Journalists and Activists in States with Centralised Governance

**Student Officer:** George Maragoudakis

**Position:** Deputy President

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## Personal Introduction

Esteemed delegates,

I am George Maragoudakis, 17 years of age and currently a 12th grader at Avgouleia Linardatou School. It will be my honor to serve as a Deputy President in the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the 9th ACG Model United Nations. First off, I'd like to congratulate you on partaking in the 9th ACGMUN and specifically the Human Rights Committee. I find the committee very relevant in the present day, given the constant violation of basic humane principles established by the UN in the 1940s, and especially the topic of censorship, as it has highlighted its presence numerous times in the past years.

This guide contains all the information you may need to have a fruitful discussion within the committee. Its purpose is to help you with easily accessible details regarding the background of the issue, the challenges and more. It would be great if you were to read through it and utilize it in the debating process, as it can prove to be very helpful in almost all circumstances. Furthermore, if you'd be interested in doing your own research, be sure to check the links for further research at the bottom of the guide, as well as the sources themselves.

In case you have any questions regarding the guide, the committee, or anything else related to the MUN, you can contact me via email: [maragoudakisg08@gmail.com](mailto:maragoudakisg08@gmail.com). Looking forward to meeting you inside the committee!

Best regards,

George Maragoudakis

## Topic Introduction

Free speech and objective information are two of the most important topics in the modern world, a world where governments from all sides and allegiances attempt to silence the voices of reporters and journalists. Claims of defamation, national security and more are all but unusual in many if not all, states in the world, from the most totalitarian and authoritarian to the more democratic. Objective information for a specific state is crucial not only for its citizens but also for those who are not affected by that nation's actions. Being aware of certain situations around the world promotes active citizenship and allows the world to strive for a better future, even for people on the other side of the globe. Therefore, any obstacles put in place to limit the reporting process should be taken with precautions and serious reasoning, else it endangers objective information and therefore the wellbeing of civilians worldwide.

Seeing that many centralized governments exercise their power in authoritarian ways, it is fairly apparent that they need to control the narrative to ensure public support and stay in power. The success of such regimes at maintaining control stems from the extremely government-restricted media outlets, usually through violating the very laws set in place by them, and in extreme cases, basic human rights. The ways to censor individuals or even respectable news organizations (both national and international) vary between states according to the freedom allowed by each government, but the main methods are the same. Even the most basic violations of privacy or right to free speech stand as a dismissal of basic human rights established by the UN decades ago.

The already established rights regarding freedom of speech and expression have been in effect ever since 1948, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>1</sup>. Of course, these rights, already from the 1940s, included the right to express personal beliefs. Therefore, the tactics used by such authoritarian and centralized governments are a clear violation of at least one article of a document which could be considered the most important one the United Nations have ever debated upon. The basis of human rights is being violated in the oftentimes fabricated context of national security and sovereignty, posing a great risk to the lives of many journalists across the globe.

Of course, such actions from state actors have implications on the civilian population of said state, the active journalists and every individual in the world. Specifically for the journalists, there can be implications from violation of privacy, either from the legal system of the state the journalist is a

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, 10 Dec. 1948, [www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights). Accessed 22 Dec. 2025.

citizen of or the legal system of the host state, and in extreme cases human rights violations. Seizure of official documents, harassment, deportation, illegal detention, accusations for medium or severe crimes with little to no evidence, illegal imprisonment, misrepresentation in court, unfair trial, false imprisonment, torture and public execution are all dangers activists and journalists must face every day working in such authoritarian environments. For them, it is a matter of surviving in the host nation, whether this is in the figurative sense of harassment from officials or in the literal sense of self-censorship to avoid a death penalty or a life sentence. For the nationals, this means lack of objective information, manipulation and misinformation. The regime uses the media as a tool and pushes for the adoption of policies that are against the interests of the populace to be presented as in favor of them. The role of the demagogue that the state-controlled and state-censored media outlets are called to uphold is undermining democracy, not only inside the state but outside too, with a lack of real comparisons of the authoritarian governments of said states and their democratic counterparts.

The issue stretches from legal implications to economic and social ones, there can be many solutions, both broad and targeted, although the principle remains the same. By ensuring that government harassment is minimized and that there exists a safe space for journalists to provide their organization with information about a specific region, it is possible to ensure that no other violations take place. Regarding the solutions of the issue, there needs to be a way for journalists to avoid the aforementioned obstacles, while being represented by officials from the state they claim citizenship. Meanwhile, the committee should focus on protection explicitly based on human rights violations, as they are the most serious threats the affected people have to face, usually involving life or death situations.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Censorship

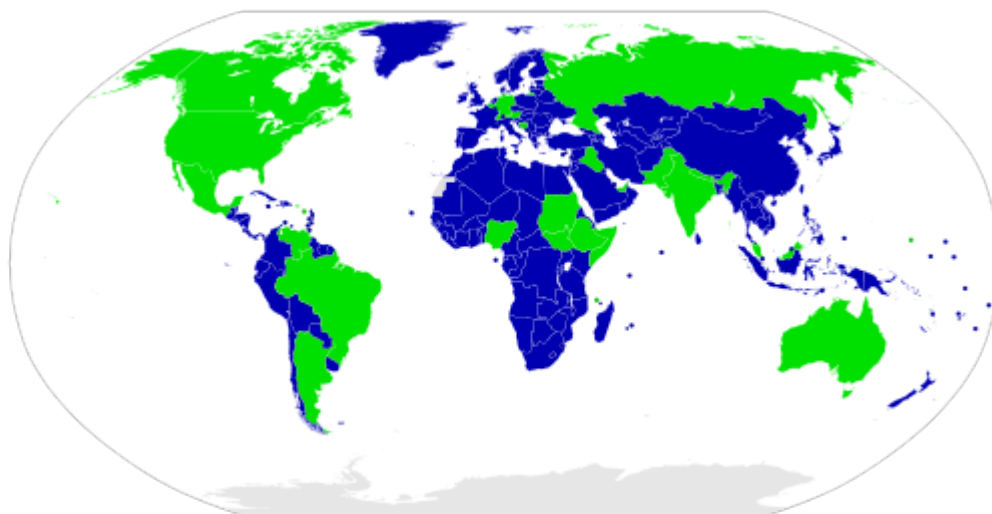
Censorship is an act of suppressing speech or expression. This may include punishing or burdening speech, or any action that would prevent a reasonable person from engaging in that speech again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hansen, Karen. "What Is Censorship — and Does the First Amendment Allow It?" *Freedom Forum*, 5 Sept. 2025, [www.freedomforum.org/censorship-first-amendment](http://www.freedomforum.org/censorship-first-amendment) Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.

## Centralized Governance

A centralized system of government is often linked to an authoritarian regime that gives little to no room for public participation. It is often considered undemocratic. This kind of system is more efficient, with a swift and effective decision-making process, since lesser parties are involved. It also promotes equality among states due to the uniform laws implemented nationwide.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1:** Unitary/Centralized (blue) and Federal/Decentralized (green) governments across the globe<sup>4</sup>

Centralized governments usually push for media censorship in cases where the image of the regime may be portrayed as disadvantageous towards the population.

## SLAPP - Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation

Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP suit) refers to lawsuits brought by individuals and entities to dissuade their critics from continuing to produce negative publicity. By definition, SLAPP suits do not have any true legal claims against the critics. People bring SLAPP suits

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<sup>3</sup> DH Web Desk (2022). *Explained | Centralised vs decentralised government*. Deccan Herald. <http://www.deccanherald.com/india/explained-centralised-vs-decentralised-government-1146544.html>

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. "Unitary State." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 29 Mar. 2019, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitary\\_state](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitary_state). Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

because they can either temporarily prevent their critics from making public statements against them or more commonly to make critics spend all of their time and resources defending the SLAPP suits.<sup>5</sup>

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The UDHR is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected, and it has been translated into over 500 languages. The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired and paved the way for the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today permanently at global and regional levels.<sup>6</sup>

## Background Information

### Historical Background

Censorship in all sorts of states, centralized or not, has always been a significant matter in society, even in ancient times. The most notable example is the trial of Socrates in Athens, the city-state responsible for the creation of the first democratic system. If we were to look at the system, however, we see major issues with its “democratic” character.<sup>7</sup> While most of them involve the limitations on democratic procedures, there were always matters of corruption and censorship, and Socrates is the prime example. Sentenced to death by Hemlock, he was accused and found guilty by a court for the crimes of disrespect to the Gods and for corrupting the youth. If one were to look at the details of the case, it shouldn’t seem strange that many Athenians concluded that his teachings were anti-democratic and should therefore be censored. Incidents during 411-404 BCE were also noted, which the court viewed as a serious issue regarding the situation, and since the evidence was far too compelling, he was swiftly sentenced to death. However, by examining the teachings of Socrates it is clear that no anti-democratic, anti-Athenian or anti-freedom messages are being pushed, therefore

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<sup>5</sup> Wex Definitions Team. “SLAPP Suit.” *LII / Legal Information Institute*, May 2022, [www.law.cornell.edu/wex/slapp\\_suit](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/slapp_suit). Accessed 22 Dec. 2025.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *United Nations*, 10 Dec. 1948, [www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights). Accessed 22 Dec. 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Super User. “The Trial of Socrates.” *Famous-Trials.com*, 2024, [www.famous-trials.com/socrates/833-h](http://www.famous-trials.com/socrates/833-h). Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

making this either the most unfortunate incident in ancient Greece or one of the oldest censorship attempts.

Of equal importance are the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and specifically the largest and wealthiest institutions in the world at the time, the Catholic Church and the British Monarchy. The Index Librorum Prohibitorum is a collection of books and published texts which are approved by the Catholic Church, with books not included considered satanic by church fanatics and overly devoted believers. Of course, the prime example of targeted attacks towards an individual is none other than Galileo's, who, as is widely known, claimed the earth was not the center of the solar system, let alone the universe. For ideas such as this, which clearly were not supported by the Catholic Church despite the lack of evidence in holy scripts regarding opposite claims, Galileo was sentenced to house arrest until death. It is therefore easy to see how politics have a say in censoring otherwise harmless work and research, with even the holiest of institutions such as the Catholic Church utilizing censorship tactics<sup>8</sup>. Similar story with *Areopagitica*<sup>9</sup>, a pamphlet by John Milton criticizing the British Parliament and the decision to approve and license all published books.<sup>10</sup> His pamphlet pushed against the licensing of books by the British Parliament, with the latter institution rather indifferent towards his actions. However, in 1660 with the coronation of Charles II, he was punished for supporting the republican cause in the British civil wars, and, while not being executed, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, later released, fined 500 pounds, (86.000 GBP adjusted for inflation or 112.000 USD)<sup>11</sup>, stripped of all material belongings and fully censored by the government with his works being burned.

While the personalities mentioned so far have nothing to do with journalism, activism or any other similar occupation, they prove that the issue of censorship is deeply rooted in the governmental structures of this world, from the ancient Greek city of Athens to Renaissance Italy to post- civil-war Britain, and it still makes its presence felt through numerous incidents throughout modern history.

The modern times have not proven to be any more merciful to those who dare defy authority where it is concretely established. China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Eritrea,

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<sup>8</sup> Britannica. "Censorship - Medieval Christendom." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 Dec. 2025, [www.britannica.com/topic/censorship/Medieval-Christendom](http://www.britannica.com/topic/censorship/Medieval-Christendom). Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Milton, John. "Areopagitica: Text." *Milton.host.dartmouth.edu*, 1644, [milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading\\_room/areopagitica/text.shtml](http://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading_room/areopagitica/text.shtml). Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Britannica Editors. "Areopagitica | Pamphlet by Milton." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, [www.britannica.com/topic/Areopagitica](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Areopagitica). Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Bank of England. "Inflation Calculator." *Bank of England*, 2025, [www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator). Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

Iran, Israel, Russia, Turkey are all states with alarming rates of governmental censorship and free speech limitations. However, not all centralized governments are suffering from / causing the issue of censorship. Norway and Estonia are the least controlling of public expression, activism and objective journalism, and their governments are considered centralized. The issue doesn't revolve around centralized governments, it merely suggests that this form of governance serves the authoritarian style far better than the decentralized model, as shown in the aforementioned states and many more.

### **Causes of censorship and rights violations**

Governments and officials trying to cling to power go to great lengths, from illegal actions to even violations of internationally ratified documents such as the UDHR. This goes to show that for an authoritarian and (usually) not elected government to keep functioning without fear of revolt or open dissent, there have to be measures in place to prevent these outbreaks, and, living in the 21st century, where information is power, they focus on this aspect of suppression. This modernist approach differs from those of earlier centuries, mainly because there was no digital equipment, lightspeed-fast information travel, etc. The very existence of the internet and computers means that guards, indiscriminate arrests and executions, fearmongering from positions of power and the abuse thereof don't work all that well and good, which forces the centralized administrations to "wage war" on information channels in the form of propaganda.

The issue of false information slowly but surely claiming its spot on the world news is not a new idea, but it is employed to the fullest even today, especially during times of high tension or during special operations from major powers, as seen in the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, respectively.

Firstly, in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the Russian state has many times prevented journalists from entering the conquered lands, unless given authorization from a government official. It is also important to note that the legislation passed in Russia in 2022<sup>12</sup>, condemning any dissemination of false information regarding the Russian state, does not specify which information should be considered false, and the numerous arrests and imprisonments of journalists are increasingly alarming.

On the opposite side of the conflict, similar issues appear. The Ukrainian state has faced continuous corruption issues at the lowest government levels, while a lack of monitoring in the areas close to the frontlines leaves journalists exposed to many dangerous situations. Furthermore, there has

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<sup>12</sup> Program, Asia. "Russia's Repression Record - Committee to Protect Journalists." *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 5 Dec. 2025, [cpj.org/2025/12/russias-repression-record](https://cpj.org/2025/12/russias-repression-record). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

been little effort to prevent pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian propaganda in Ukrainian- and Russian-majority regions, further polarizing the populace and preventing factual information from being broadcast.

The war in Gaza is a similar situation. Specifically, the Sumud Flotilla interception incident stands as a direct violation of policies surrounding international waters, since the operations conducted by the military forces of Israel included the detention of unarmed and non-hostile personnel outside national waters.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, incidents regarding the detention of activists, journalists, militia members and civilians have proven that the facilities Israel uses are inadequate and the treatment unreasonably harsh, borderline inhumane.<sup>14</sup> Israel has also proven to conceal information regarding the true situation in the Gaza strip, offering journalists ‘press tours’ in the occupied regions in an attempt to mask the well-established abuse of power as mentioned before.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the Gaza strip is characterized by a situation of anarchy and chaos, with the terrorist organization of Hamas acting as a governing body since 2007. This leads to the militia acting as they see fit, with very limited numbers of foreigners allowed in the state, including journalists. Furthermore, there have been reports from even before the 7th October 2023 about the lack of safety and freedom journalists have to endure, including confiscated equipment, with the justification of portraying Hamas as a criminal organization.<sup>16</sup>

Both of these conflicts show that the official operations against another sovereign state are almost always accompanied by unofficial operations against media freedom. By convincing the nationals of the aggressor state that the administration is operating in their interest, the latter gathers more support as time goes on, strengthening its position.

However, not all media control and lack of freedom comes from warzones. Specifically in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, either due to corruption and regime instability or strict

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<sup>13</sup> Melimopoulos, Elizabeth. “Israel Intercepts Gaza Sumud Flotilla Vessels: What We Know so Far.” *Al Jazeera*, 1 Oct. 2025, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/1/israel-intercepts-gaza-sumud-flotilla-vessels-what-we-know-so-far](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/1/israel-intercepts-gaza-sumud-flotilla-vessels-what-we-know-so-far). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.

<sup>14</sup> “Israeli Prisons and Detention Camps Designed to Torture Palestinian Detainees - Occupied Palestinian Territory.” *ReliefWeb*, 11 Jan. 2025, [reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/israeli-prisons-and-detention-camps-designed-torture-palestinian-detainees](http://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/israeli-prisons-and-detention-camps-designed-torture-palestinian-detainees). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Qudah, Sara. ““Not Journalism – Theater”: Inside Israel’s Press Tours to Gaza - Committee to Protect Journalists.” *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 3 Dec. 2025, [cpj.org/2025/12/not-journalism-theater-inside-israels-press-tours-to-gaza/](http://cpj.org/2025/12/not-journalism-theater-inside-israels-press-tours-to-gaza/). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Bernstein, David. “Forty Questions for the International Media in Gaza.” *The Washington Post*, 31 July 2014, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/07/31/forty-questions-for-the-international-media-in-gaza/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/07/31/forty-questions-for-the-international-media-in-gaza/). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.

authoritarian/centralized policies, the freedom of the press is very limited.<sup>17</sup> While some post-Soviet states like Armenia or Estonia have made significant progress towards media pluralism and freedom of speech, other nations have not fared as well. The goal of financial sustainability for small and medium scale broadcasting organizations has yet to be fulfilled, according to Deutsche Welle, with resources being diverted to other operations and favoring other departments, all while SLAPP lawsuits and lack of properly trained personnel are already hindering media freedom progress.

It is therefore apparent that, while an active conflict significantly worsens the question of censorship and attacks against activists and journalists, it does not stand as the only situation in which they are endangered or slandered. Even during peacetime, information is being censored, in favor of profits, narrative control or authoritarian and centralized governments, which is why the issue of censorship is one which needs quick and effective solutions.

### **Impact on civilians and journalists**

Censorship is carried out by a state actor in a state-controlled broadcasting organization, in order to ensure that no open criticism of the governmental policies and the approach to national and international issues exists. Self-censorship, on the other hand, is driven by fear, the fear from journalists regarding the risk they will face in case their findings are publicized. Both forms of censorship lead to less information being broadcast or uploaded online, allowing national and international propaganda to become more believable. Meanwhile, with the narrative pushed by the government not receiving open criticism, there is a lack of freedom of ideas and ideals, creating an intellectual stagnation which prevents art, science, critical thinking and education from evolving.

With the said stagnation and the lack of media pluralism, the very democratic ideals of human coexistence begin to fade. The lack of freedom of expression and open dissent of government policies strips the people of their rights to freely express themselves without fear of punishment, a fundamental right ratified by the UDHR. From 1948, nearly 80 years ago, it has been established that holding personal beliefs and ideas and having access to any news broadcast or source one desires are both fundamental human rights. By imposing this state of censorship and showing one-sided opinions on national news sources, a lack of free and objective information channels is created, effectively violating two of the clauses of the Human Rights Declaration. This, along with the indoctrination and blind belief

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<sup>17</sup> Welle, Deutsche. "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Challenges for the Media." *Deutsche Welle*, 10 July 2025, [akademie.dw.com/en/strong-ownership-weak-sustainability-the-state-of-media-development-in-eastern-europe-and-central-asia/a-73215924](https://www.akademie.dw.com/en/strong-ownership-weak-sustainability-the-state-of-media-development-in-eastern-europe-and-central-asia/a-73215924). Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.

and trust in the regime lead to more polarized and extremist ideas being cultivated within the national borders. In turn, public support due to propaganda increases and a regime change becomes exponentially harder. Not only that, but the authoritarian governments are empowered to reshape national identity as they see fit, erasing previous customs and often endangering the traditions of minorities, in an attempt to unify all national customs to support the regime. Reporters and civilians who push back are often imprisoned, tortured and killed, making sure that any group or individual expressing open disagreement with government policy is silenced permanently.

Censorship also affects the psychology of civilians and their cognitive ability, as well as critical thinking. With the government oppressing the population further, all in the name of progress, coherence, peace and development, the contradiction in the state's narrative and the reality becomes apparent. In most situations where claims of development and progress are made, censorship of science, arts and philosophy is rampant. Higher life quality and freedom are claimed quite often among undemocratic regimes, even though the reality is usually along the lines of a less developed state with numerous institutions and safeguards of direct and indirect control over expression and thinking. Psychology-wise, the constant fear of expression, lack of opposition and continuous indoctrination are all factors that negatively impact the mental wellbeing of humans, regarding "cognitive rigidity and polarization"<sup>18</sup> being the most important, while the cognitive ability and critical thinking skill are both negatively affected due to the simple fact that there is no contradictory information from different sources, therefore there is little need for the development of such skills in a state where only one-sided information is publicly available.

### **Challenges with solving the issue of censorship**

The authoritarian regimes of the world, oftentimes aided by the unitary government model, unleash regular attacks against independent journalists and news organizations, since they do not follow the government-approved narrative. While some attempts have already been made by NGOs and third-party organizations including the creation of a network by ICORN to ensure journalist safety, the issue has not yet been resolved. The reason behind it is, of course, governmental control. The initiatives have no jurisdiction in any state which refuses to support their operations and therefore cannot affect their actions. Meanwhile, if there were to be any attempts at bypassing national legislation, there could be issues such as questioning of national sovereignty, since every state has the right to

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<sup>18</sup> Kesner, Ladislav, et al. "Impact of Media-Induced Uncertainty on Mental Health: Narrative Review (Preprint)." *JMIR Mental Health*, 11 Nov. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2196/68640>. Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

regulate itself. This can lead to even more delays in the legislative process, since every state which is unwilling to comply can claim a breach of sovereignty. Simply put, no outside organization can have a considerable effect on the actions of the state officials, especially considering the nature of the regimes. It should also be noted that such authoritarian government systems don't accept any outside assistance from international organizations like the UN, either because they consider third-party intervention harmful or because said intervention risks revealing international law violations such as the existence of labor camps and other violations of the UDHR. Therefore, even if NGOs or other organizations had legislative power, it would be nearly impossible to affect any such state, given the fact that the existing government's sole purpose is to retain its capacity as the governing body of the state.

On the civilian aspect of the issue, the challenges are also noteworthy. As previously explained, the constant indoctrination and propaganda campaigns by the authoritarian regimes result in an underdeveloped critical thinking ability, therefore preventing the people from escaping the government's narrative. Having little capacity for information filtering, it also becomes harder to create counter-propaganda initiatives and push for a pluralist approach in national media. An indoctrinated crowd becomes the regime's most vocal defender, obstructing any attempts at resolving the issue of censorship. Thankfully, there exist very few percentages of partially or fully indoctrinated individuals, even in totalitarian states, so the issue of discarding democratic ideals solely based on propaganda has yet to become a significant one.

Creating a global legal system covering the basics of media freedom and pluralism would be a great solution - on paper. In reality, it stands as a violation of national sovereignty even in states where censorship does not take place from state actors. The proposal of any legally binding universal clauses would be met with heavy resistance, both from states with state-controlled narratives and those with excessive media liberties. Other existing solutions, such as the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression, are not legally binding and therefore serve as recommendations, adding little value to the pre-existing legislation due to their severely limited effect.

## Case studies

### Weimar Republic - German Reich (1924-1945)<sup>19</sup>

Following the release of Adolf Hitler from prison in 1924, one of the first measures was the unification of the split nationalists and socialists of the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeitspartei - National Socialist German Labor Party), utilizing the public's resentment towards the democratic government to gain momentum and support for the party. By manipulating people into believing the economic collapse of Germany in 1923 and 1929 was caused by the government's policies, and with the pre-existing political instability, the NSDAP was shown as a savior of Germany, finally winning the 1933 elections and appointing Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany.

During the next 12 years, Hitler and his officials, specifically the architect of modern propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, built a very convincing and compelling facade for the Nazi regime, which led to the glorification of Nazism (disguised as national socialism). War movies depicting Germany as a savior and the emphasis of the Wehrmacht's effectiveness during the first stages of the war meant that the NSDAP had successfully turned a large number of the German populace into loyal supporters.

However, this rise to power came at a cost that many of the supporters failed to notice. Away from the eyes of the public, the regime set up labor camps to "rehabilitate" its political opponents and those who dared to oppose the ideology of the NSDAP. The folk were mostly oblivious to the policies regarding antisemitism and absolute censorship, since all broadcasts and printing presses not following the Nazi regime were shut down and their employees imprisoned, tortured and killed by the Schutzstaffel (SS). The government burned books, papers, and anything that hinted at Hitler and his Inner Circle as tyrannical. Works of supporters of communism, like Marx or Engels, were also censored, including all pro-Jewish writers. Meanwhile, anyone who supported these ideas openly or happened to stand in the way of the Nazi Party's attempts to polarize the German folk was swiftly imprisoned, forced to work under inhumane conditions in labor camps or executed publicly, and even though the UDHR was not drafted during that time, documents such as the Weimar Constitution (which after 1933 was suspended) were safeguarding humane treatment for all.

The German propaganda machine operated for just 12 years, yet it managed to become one of the most known large propaganda attempts in history, mainly due to its success. The idea was to utilize the absolute power of the Führer and the blind trust of the totalitarian Germans as a weapon against

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<sup>19</sup> The Wiener Holocaust Library. "Propaganda and the Nazi Rise to Power." *Theholocaustexplained.org*, The Wiener Holocaust Library, 2022, [www.theholocaustexplained.org/the-nazi-rise-to-power/the-nazi-rise-to-power/propaganda/](http://www.theholocaustexplained.org/the-nazi-rise-to-power/the-nazi-rise-to-power/propaganda/). Accessed 29 Dec. 2025.

free speech, by attacking objective journalism as anti-German and promoting all forms of censorship. The fear of stigmatization and later torture alone was enough to force many - otherwise vocal against the regime - to proceed to self-censorship to avoid the backlash from state and society alike. Meanwhile, the emergency powers that Hitler granted himself after the Reichstag fire in March 1933 were used to their fullest capacity by the Schutzstaffel and the Gestapo, in an attempt to find political and ideological opponents throughout Germany and later the occupied lands.

### Islamic Republic of Iran (1999-2026) (ongoing)

Iran is a country with extremely diverse cultures and a rich history and has attracted quite the attention from eastern and western powers alike ever since the 1970s. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, which concluded on February 11, 1979, was a nationwide uprising that overturned the 2,500-year-old Pahlavi monarchy and replaced it with an Islamic Republic. Led by Ayatollah Khomeini, it unified diverse groups against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's autocratic rule, economic disparities, and Western influence, establishing an Islamic theocratic state in its place.

Just 20 years later, in 1999, came the first open dissent and criticism against the regime, in the form of peaceful protests by university students in Tehran as a response to the shutdown of a newspaper. However, the situation escalated quickly when security forces conducted an operation inside a university campus killing one student. In turn, more protestors took to the streets, with the outcome being the arrest of 1400 people and the death of many others. This, however, was not the only time the Islamic Republic witnessed such events, as in both 2009, 2019 and 2022 similar protests unfolded, with the same outcomes.

The key similarity in the 4 different time periods previously mentioned is the widespread use of censorship by the theocratic government in an attempt to weather the storm. Starting from 2009, the government issued orders to execute massive crackdowns in social media campaigns against the ruling government. Even today, most of Iran has remained without any internet service following the mass demonstrations, in another attempt to silence the opposition.<sup>20</sup> Other than severing internet connection and closely monitoring SMS texts and phone calls, the state has once more turned against the

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<sup>20</sup> Hein, Shabnam von. "Iran: A Timeline of Mass Protests since 1999." *Dw.com*, Deutsche Welle, 8 Jan. 2026, [www.dw.com/en/iran-a-timeline-of-mass-protests-since-1999/a-75431588](http://www.dw.com/en/iran-a-timeline-of-mass-protests-since-1999/a-75431588). Accessed 4 Feb. 2026.

protestors with the use of violence, with the death toll estimated to be at 6.000 individuals,<sup>21</sup> while other sources claim more than 36.000 deaths.<sup>22</sup>

The impact on the civilian population is huge, and so is the challenge activists, reporters and journalists must face. With the Ayatollah government attacking all sources that are not favoring the regime, it is increasingly difficult to avoid imprisonment, harassment, and death. The lack of internet connection and severely limited access to phones or text leaves many professionals defenseless against the nature of the crackdowns against dissidents, endangering even more lives in an attempt to topple the Iranian theocracy.

However, with the collapse of the Iranian economy and the recent statements from the United States about an intervention from the US military, there is a chance for a decrease in violence and censorship in Iran.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### China

The current Chinese government prevents journalism portraying the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its policies as non-beneficial, scandalous or disadvantageous for the Chinese people, making freedom of expression almost impossible, with most media broadcasters partially or fully state-owned.<sup>23</sup> The extent of governmental control is such that there exist specific pre-installed apps on devices in order to prevent access to some of the most famous Western sites, while more than 30,000 'internet police' are actively overseeing internet cafes and internet content.<sup>24</sup> The Chinese national policy seems to have the reduction of foreign influence as much as possible as its main goal, with the legislation protecting freedom of speech being so vague that it is easily bypassed by even the lowest governmental position.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> News, PBS. "Iran's Crackdown Has Killed at Least 6,159 People, Activists Say." *PBS News*, 27 Jan. 2026, [www.pbs.org/newshour/world/irans-crackdown-has-killed-at-least-6159-people-activists-say](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/irans-crackdown-has-killed-at-least-6159-people-activists-say). Accessed 4 Feb. 2026.

<sup>22</sup> Iddon, Paul. "Scale of Iran Protest Massacres "Rare Show of Brutality," Analysts Say." *Forbes*, 27 Jan. 2026, [www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2026/01/27/scale-of-iran-protest-massacres-rare-show-of-brutality-analysts-say/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2026/01/27/scale-of-iran-protest-massacres-rare-show-of-brutality-analysts-say/). Accessed 4 Feb. 2026.

<sup>23</sup> Reporters Without Borders. "China | RSF." *Rsf.org*, 2024, [rsf.org/en/country/china](http://rsf.org/en/country/china). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

<sup>24</sup> "Culture and Society - China's Political System and the Extent of Democratic Participation - Higher Modern Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize." *Www.bbc.co.uk*, [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zptxxnb/revision/7](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zptxxnb/revision/7). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

<sup>25</sup> Xu, Beina, and Eleanor Albert. "Media Censorship in China." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 17 Feb. 2017, [www.cfr.org/background/media-censorship-china](http://www.cfr.org/background/media-censorship-china). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

## Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The DPRK, or North Korea has always stood as a state cut off from the world. With very limited and strict controls on those who enter or exit the nation, it is virtually impossible to acquire valid information about any issue regarding the government, or rather anything about North Korea. Freedom-wise, North Korea’s improvements on Human Rights violations have stopped since 2014 according to the UN<sup>26</sup>, and even though some isolated examples of improvement have been noted, the situation regarding quality of life, access to food, shelter and electricity has not shown any progress, rather slightly deteriorating. It is also notable that the charges which allow for the death penalty have also been increased in number, showing the DPRK’s stance seems to become even harsher, while there exist 3 laws that criminalize access to unauthorized foreign information and prohibit the consumption or dissemination of information (through, for example, publications, music and movies) from 'hostile' nations and the use of linguistic expressions that do not conform with prescribed socialist ideology and culture<sup>27</sup>. Local news sources are fueled solely by state-owned media, while no journalists are allowed inside, and special restrictions apply to any civilian entering the DPRK. The restricted access to internet and cellphone services comes with the addition of government officials having access to all conversations<sup>28</sup>, leading to numerous arrests and labor camp imprisonments.<sup>29</sup>

## Türkiye

The state of Türkiye has, throughout the years, proven to be rather hostile to journalism which does not follow the Turkish agenda.<sup>30</sup> The regime has consistently moved against free journalism in Türkiye, with hundreds of arrests every year.<sup>31</sup> Most notably, in March 2025, there were 1.100 official

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<sup>26</sup> Heenan, James, and Office of the High Commissioner. ““Blocking People’s Eyes and Ears” – Human Rights Violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.” *OHCHR*, 2025, [www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2025/09/blocking-peoples-eyes-and-ears-human-rights-violations-democratic-peoples-republic](http://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2025/09/blocking-peoples-eyes-and-ears-human-rights-violations-democratic-peoples-republic). Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Ryall, Julian. “Securly - Geolocation Sharing.” *Dw.com*, 18 Sept. 2025, [www.dw.com/en/un-north-korea-worst-human-rights-violator/a-74046171](http://www.dw.com/en/un-north-korea-worst-human-rights-violator/a-74046171). Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch. “Human Rights in North Korea.” *Human Rights Watch*, Human Rights Watch, 5 June 2018, [www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/05/human-rights-north-korea](http://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/05/human-rights-north-korea). Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International. “North Korea 2024.” *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/east-asia/north-korea/report-korea-democratic-peoples-republic-of/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/east-asia/north-korea/report-korea-democratic-peoples-republic-of/). Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

<sup>30</sup> “Is There Hope for Journalism in Turkey?” *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*, 9 Aug. 2017, [www.freiheit.org/east-and-southeast-europe/there-hope-journalism-turkey](http://www.freiheit.org/east-and-southeast-europe/there-hope-journalism-turkey). Accessed 21 Jan. 2026.

<sup>31</sup> solidaritywithothers.com. “Legal Repressions and Digital Censorship [Updated] - Solidarity with OTHERS.” *Solidarity with OTHERS*, 4 Nov. 2025, [solidaritywithothers.com/legal-repressions-and-digital-censorship-updated](http://solidaritywithothers.com/legal-repressions-and-digital-censorship-updated). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

arrests across all of Türkiye, with many journalists among them<sup>32</sup>, for statements regarding the policies of Türkiye's leader and internal policies. It is clear that there are many sectors, like the one of media freedom and pluralism, that have yet to improve in the Turkish state, and with no governmental initiatives to rectify the situation, the issue will continue to worsen. It is also noteworthy that, while there exists no law limiting the actions of journalists or activists, there exist many issues with freedom of speech in practice.

## European Union (EU)

The EU's media policy openly supports free speech and media pluralism in the world, despite operating solely in Europe. Its policies and measures against censorship have offered Europeans access to almost all news organizations from all parts of the world. While some policies, such as the "Chat Control" draft, have faced severe criticism regarding privacy and freedom of expression, the institution has made some significant steps to ensure that the citizens of the EU have constant access to any information source they wish. Not only that, but the union has stood as a prime example for other governments and organizations across the globe, while also proposing legislation regarding human rights violations across Europe. All in all, while the EU is not perfect in its policies, it has had a net positive impact in Europe and the world, pushing for media freedom, solidifying the rights of EU citizens and acting as an inspiration and basis for other states to follow.

## Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF)

RSF is an NGO whose main focus is to defend the right of every human being to have access to free and reliable information. The organization aims to provide free and objective information for any situation across the globe, often focusing on censorship attempts and the safety of independent journalists operating in conflict zones or high-risk environments. With the collected information, they create a media freedom index, ranking countries based on key parameters such as censorship attempts, national propaganda, security concerns and more. The outreach and effectiveness of the organization are not to be underestimated, seeing that their actions have aided more than 10,000 journalists over the past 5 years.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Michaelson, Ruth. "Journalists among More than 1,100 Arrested in Turkey Crackdown." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 24 Mar. 2025, [www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/24/journalists-among-more-than-1100-arrested-in-turkey-crackdown-istanbul](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/24/journalists-among-more-than-1100-arrested-in-turkey-crackdown-istanbul). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Reporters without borders. "Who Are We? | RSF." *Rsf.org*, 22 Jan. 2016, [rsf.org/en/who-are-we](http://rsf.org/en/who-are-we). Accessed 31 Dec. 2025.

## Blocs Expected

### Alliance One

The first Alliance is characterized by a freer media environment, where governmental censorship of journalism and activism are minimal. States in this alliance are advocating in favor of a more pluralist approach regarding information broadcasts, and apply national policies based on media freedom.

### Alliance Two

Alliance two follows a more controlling approach and limits media freedom on the national level. These states allow for little freedom of information, approaching the question of media liberty with caution and maintaining strong control and oversight of independent / non-government-owned broadcasting channels.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
399 BCE	The trial of Sokrates, one of the most well-known censorship attempts of ancient times.
1616-1632	The Galileo affair, the examination of his work by the Roman Inquisition Panel of the Catholic Church, leading to indefinite house arrest and a total ban on all his books.
1660	Charles II ascends to the British throne, punishing John Milton for his republican ideals, imprisoning him and releasing him shortly thereafter.
January 1933	The Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, established by Adolf Hitler and headed by Joseph Goebbels, which centralized control over all media, arts, and culture to enforce Nazi ideology, demonize enemies, and rally support for total war.

10 December 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is voted upon in the General Assembly, cementing the basis of human rights and granting freedom of expression and thought.
March 2022	Russia’s president Vladimir Putin signed a set of laws that criminalized “public dissemination of knowingly false information” about the armed forces, or “discrediting” them. <sup>34</sup>
13 February 2023	Russian journalist sentenced to 6 years in prison on the grounds of spreading misinformation. <sup>35</sup>
March 2025	1.100 arrests across all of Turkey, with many journalists among them. <sup>36</sup>

## Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

### [A/RES/425\(V\)](#)

This resolution, voted upon in 1951, constitutes the first UN-voted resolution on which the freedom of speech and expressions are mentioned in the General Assembly, calling upon all member states to respect Article 19 of the UDHR regarding freedom of thought and expression. Its purpose was to limit the interference in objective information and radio broadcasts from any member state, in order to uphold the UDHR and the International Telecommunication Convention. While discouraging government-controlled radio broadcasts from slandering ideals, it also mentions that even during emergencies, there should be extreme caution regarding the exercised censorship.

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<sup>34</sup> Program, Asia. “Russia’s Repression Record - Committee to Protect Journalists.” *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 5 Dec. 2025, [cpj.org/2025/12/russias-repression-record](https://cpj.org/2025/12/russias-repression-record). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

<sup>35</sup> “Russian Journalist Sentenced to 6 Years over Ukraine Posts.” *AP News*, 15 Feb. 2023, [apnews.com/article/putin-politics-russia-government-moscow-b04c509757e6e470f45be9a2c5b87182](https://apnews.com/article/putin-politics-russia-government-moscow-b04c509757e6e470f45be9a2c5b87182). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

<sup>36</sup> Michaelson, Ruth. “Journalists among More than 1,100 Arrested in Turkey Crackdown.” *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 24 Mar. 2025, [www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/24/journalists-among-more-than-1100-arrested-in-turkey-crackdown-istanbul](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/24/journalists-among-more-than-1100-arrested-in-turkey-crackdown-istanbul). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

### [A/RES/54/82](#)

This document was drafted in the 71st plenary meeting in 1999. Through it, the UN General Assembly reaffirms its stance on censorship and the principles of the UN charter. While emphasizing the importance of pluralism, it also calls upon member states to support initiatives regarding access to diverse media sources, equal access to information and cultural representation through news organizations. Furthermore, it acknowledges ongoing efforts regarding the issue of media pluralism and freedom, while also highlighting previous initiatives and calling upon the Department of Public Information to strengthen its operational capacity.

### [S/RES/1738](#)

The Security Council's resolution focuses on protecting media professionals as part of a broader attempt at ensuring the safety of civilians in UN member states. While calling for the upholding of international humanitarian law regarding journalism, the council classifies the nature of equipment needed to report as civilian equipment, reminding member states that they have no right to damage it unless actively used in military activities. Furthermore, the document condemns any act of violence towards unarmed personnel or civilians, while stressing the need to comply with international legally binding policies even during conflict. Lastly, it emphasizes the fact that any professional journalist or reporter active in a conflict zone must be treated according to international law.

## **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

### **Freedom Online Coalition (FOC)**

“The Freedom Online Coalition is a group of countries deeply committed to the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Established in 2011 by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, the organization now has 41 member states, all aiming to uphold the basic human rights principles related to freedom of speech, highlighted in the UDHR. The Coalition has delivered many statements regarding restrictions to information, such as the internet shutdowns in Iran in 2022, although all of its legislations are non-legally binding. Similar to the AU's initiative, it is clear that the efforts of the coalition are hindered by the nature of the proposed policies. Seeing that all of the “Foundational Documents” are recommendations regarding freedom of speech, it is deducible that, however concrete the documents may be, their legislative power is lacking severely.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Freedom Online Coalition. “About Us - Freedom Online Coalition.” *Freedom Online Coalition*, 7 Nov. 2024, [freedomonlinecoalition.com/about-us/](https://freedomonlinecoalition.com/about-us/). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

### Media Freedom Coalition (MFC)

The Freedom Coalition is a 51-state initiative aimed at protecting freedom of expression and ensuring the safety of journalists across the globe. Documents such as the Global Pledge on Media Freedom have been signed by all member states and call for an increase in media freedom and pluralism on the national level, while pushing for increased cooperation internationally. The broader target of the coalition is to “promote media freedom by lobbying on individual cases, working to hold abusers to account, supporting members of the Coalition and other countries to improve protections for the media and making collective statements in multilateral fora.”<sup>38</sup> However, there seems to be little progress based on the Coalition’s initiatives, as a Swedish declaration states regarding the war in Gaza and the limited access to the conflict zone given to journalists by the Israeli officials.<sup>39</sup>

### Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa

Adopted by the African Commission on Human and People’s rights in 2019, this document reaffirms the freedom of expression and access to information for all Africans. Overall, this attempt focuses on the reception of information, aiming to establish free information channels and provide non-restrictive access to the internet and broadcasts for all African residents, while also focusing on the implementation of said measures. The document has been in effect for 6 years, during which there have been numerous incidents in Africa such as the Sudanese civil war, and, due to the fact that the proposals are not legally binding for members of the African Union (AU), it has seen little implementation. Its effectiveness would have been unquestionable if it was proposed as a mandatory legislation in the union.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Media Freedom Coalition. “Media Freedom Coalition: An Overview.” *GOV.UK*, 2 Feb. 2022, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/media-freedom-coalition-an-overview/media-freedom-coalition-an-overview](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/media-freedom-coalition-an-overview/media-freedom-coalition-an-overview). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Government. “Media Freedom Coalition Statement on Foreign Media Access to Gaza.” *Regeringskansliet*, Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, 21 Aug. 2025, [www.government.se/statements/2025/08/media-freedom-coalition-statement-on-foreign-media-access-to-gaza/](http://www.government.se/statements/2025/08/media-freedom-coalition-statement-on-foreign-media-access-to-gaza/). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

<sup>40</sup> African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. “Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa 2019.” *African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights*, 17 Apr. 2020, [achpr.au.int/en/node/902](http://achpr.au.int/en/node/902). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

## **International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)**

“ICORN is a global network of cities and regions which provides temporary protective residencies for writers, artists, and journalists who face persecution due to their work.” As their statement suggests, the network does not involve any national delegations, but rather focuses on cooperation with cities and their respective administrations. The organization supports independent journalists and reporters who are in dangerous situations, either facing backlash and censorship or actively evading false charges by government officials. The initiative has proven to be effective, saving more than 300 journalists, writers and artists who were targeted for their ideas and expression, while almost 100 cities across Europe and America have contributed to the security of these individuals. By expanding the initiative in the future, ICORN hopes to shelter even more victims of censorship from state and non-state actors.<sup>41</sup>

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Establishing a monitoring body to ensure member states refrain from censoring media**

The main issue revolves around governments abusing their power on the national level to silence voices which do not follow the worldviews and ideals the state is trying to implement. Therefore, by establishing an organization tasked with monitoring member states' governments in actions regarding illegal or unreasonable detention and/or harassment of journalists and media personnel, we can ensure that the national power is not abused against independent journalists or broadcasting organizations, preventing state censorship and ensuring freedom of speech and expression. This organization will operate with the support and funding of the UN, allowing it to have a global reach and be uniformly effective and functional. As a result, there should be a rise in compliance with international law regarding censorship and harassment, while the administrations of chronically problematic regimes will be closely monitored to ensure the safety of reporters and activists alike.

### **Establish safeguards regarding information sharing**

While many governments resort to blackmail or loopholes in the legal code, some extreme situations involve imprisonment and execution. In order to tackle the issue effectively, the United Nations should create and sustain an underground network of journalists aimed at sharing information before it is publicized, to ensure that the reports and related research one has conducted are not lost

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<sup>41</sup> “About - ICORN - International Cities of Refuge Network.” *Icorn.org*, 2024, [www.icorn.org/about](http://www.icorn.org/about). Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

or destroyed. In the scenarios regarding lengthy imprisonment or loss of life, it should be made possible for the network to publish the findings and ensure that objective information is not stopped by making sure the reports of missing or dead journalists are publicized, even when threatened with death. This network enables the free flow of information even if a journalist becomes incapable of proceeding with their expedition, therefore allowing otherwise lost information and reports to be made accessible despite extreme governmental efforts not to.

### **Collaborate with journalists to provide support**

A UN subcommittee aimed at providing legal, financial and security support to journalists working in dangerous environments would operate in favor of journalists, attempting to shield them from the potentially abusive nature of national governments and/or individuals with ties to the administration. Instead of targeting the national legislation and policies/actions, the subcommittee will prioritize the journalists operating in states where there is a history of censorship attempts. The organization's funds and legal aid will prevent any unreasonable legal implications, while ensuring that the oftentimes limited funds of journalists are not depleted. Lastly, with constant monitoring and security details it is possible to ensure that no harassment including seizure of documents or false imprisonment takes place, upholding and strengthening legislation previously voted on and applied by the UN.

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