

A record number of journalists imprisoned in 2020

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In news

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a record number of journalists were imprisoned during 2020, as governments cracked down on coverage of the coronavirus pandemic or tried to suppress reporting of civil unrest

Key findings

- As of December 1 at least 274 journalists were in jail, the most since the New York-based group began collecting data in the early 1990s
- The CPJ report blamed a lack of global leadership on democratic values, and in particular attacks on the media by U.S. President Donald Trump, which it said gave cover to authoritarians to crackdown on journalists in their own countries.
- As per the report, Globally, 34 journalists were jailed for “false news” in 2020, compared with 31 last year
- CPJ in its report says that while no journalists were in prison in the United States as of Dec. 1, 110 were arrested or charged in 2020, many while covering demonstrations against police violence
- According CPJ report, countries where the number of jailed journalists rose significantly include Belarus, where the re-election of its long time president sparked mass protests, and Ethiopia, where political unrest has led to armed conflict.

What were the causes of the arrest?

- Protests and political tensions were the cause of many arrests, with the most made in China, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia
- During COVID-19 outbreak, authoritarian leaders tried to control reporting by arresting journalists
- The report found that two-thirds of journalists in jail were charged with anti-state crimes such as terrorism or membership of banned groups, while no charges were disclosed in nearly 20% of cases.

About the Committee to Protect Journalists

- It is an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide
 - CPJ defends the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal.
 - CPJ is made up of about 40 experts around the world, with headquarters in New York City. When press freedom violations occur, CPJ mobilizes a network of correspondents who report and take action on behalf of those targeted.
- CPJ reports on violations in repressive countries, conflict zones, and established democracies alike. A board of prominent journalists from around the world helps guide CPJ's activities.