UK

Media
Freedom
Forum

Thursday 05 March -
Friday 06 March

2026

**City St George's,
University of London**

"This year, the UK Media Freedom Forum brings together a distinguished cohort of participants to engage with the most critical challenges shaping today's information landscape.

In a context of escalating armed conflicts, transnational repression, and the misuse of legal frameworks, journalists continue to play a vital role in holding power to account and ensuring that facts prevail over disinformation.

Ensuring access to reliable and verified information is indispensable for maintaining the rule of law, and safeguarding democratic institutions."

Vafa Fati-Zade
Trustee,
Justice for Journalists Foundation

"If anything has been more clearly illuminated over the past twelve months, it is that nothing can be taken for granted. As we discussed at last year's inaugural Forum, media freedom and democracy are intertwined - one is not possible without the other.

Defending democracy requires all of us to act. States must make a significant investment to ensure our societies remain open, free and informed. But as the discussions at this year's Forum will hopefully underscore, we can - and indeed must - all contribute in our own ways towards positive change."

Susan Coughtrie
Executive Director,
The Foreign Policy Centre
Co-chair UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition

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UK Media Freedom Forum

"In 2026, the defence of press freedom is more important than ever. As we experience democratic decline globally, journalists are on the frontline of its protection and are also amongst the first to be targeted under authoritarianism.

In the UK, we must start to truly recognise the protection of press freedom at home and abroad as essential to our national and global security, and as necessary to the defence of democratic values that we hold dear.

The Forum will provide an opportunity to convene policymakers, experts, civil society and journalists together to examine some of the biggest threats to press freedom. But, this Forum is also a crucial opportunity for us to focus on what practical measures can be deployed to strengthen the independent media to weather this storm, and what we can all do to protect journalism from these existential threats. This cannot be achieved through words alone, and our hope is that this Forum will inspire concrete action."

Baroness Helena Kennedy KC
Director, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

"This is a crucial moment for journalism and democracy globally- and the UK Media Freedom Forum could not be more necessary.

Around the world, press freedom is in sharp decline, journalists are being harassed and silenced, and financial support for the media is shrinking.

This is happening against a backdrop of a fracturing world order, where the rule of law itself is under attack. We urgently need political leaders, journalists, legal experts, and media freedom advocates to come together and take a stand on these issues. We need to brainstorm innovative ways to support and protect journalism - and we need to take action."

Professor Mel Bunce
Director, Centre for Journalism and Democracy, City St George's, University of London

Introduction

The **Foreign Policy Centre** (FPC), the **Justice for Journalists Foundation** (JFJ) and the **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute** (IBAHRI), are pleased to welcome you to the second **UK Media Freedom Forum**, in partnership with **City St George's, University of London**.

Today, media freedom faces an ever more complex range of challenges, with an interconnectivity between the domestic and global environment. Although the last United Kingdom (UK) government positioned itself as a global leader on media freedom, and made it a foreign policy priority, a gap appeared between stated commitments and delivery.

Through utilising both a local and international lens, the Forum will also allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of the UK as well as other States' involvement with global initiatives, including the 51-State Members of the **Media Freedom Coalition** (MFC), and engagement at multilateral fora, such as the **United Nations** (UN), the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe** (OSCE), and the **Council of Europe** (CoE), when it comes to taking concrete action to defending media freedom.

Over a year into its term, the UK government continues to shape its approach to media freedom.

With growing attention on the challenges of disinformation and foreign interference, organisers believe that by bringing together key representatives of civil society and policy makers, the Forum will not only provide space to evaluate the extent of existing and emerging problems, but also act as a vehicle through which possible solutions could be identified and discussed directly with law and policy makers in the run up to the May local elections in the UK and the anticipated King's Speech in Parliament.

This two-day conference will explore a number of themes impacting media freedom around the world, including the use of **lawfare and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)**, **transnational repression**, **misinformation and disinformation,** and **media literacy**.

We are delighted that the Forum is being realised in cooperation with the **Council of Europe**, which is using the Forum as the UK launch of the **Platform for the Safety of Journalists' 2026 Annual Report**, with additional support from **UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund**, the **OSCE**, the **Centre for Journalism and Democracy**, the **UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition**, and the law firm **RPC.**

UK **Media Freedom Forum**

UK

Media
Freedom
Forum

Thursday 5th March

Day One

Agenda

Time	Session	Description	Speakers
10:00	**Welcome to the Conference**		**Vafa Fati-Zade** **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC**
10:15	**Opening Keynote**		**Minister Chris** **Elmore MP**
10:30	**Session 1** **Beyond Borders: Journalists and Transnational Repression**	This session will examine how repressive actors extend their reach, erode press freedom internationally, and leverage both traditional and emerging tools to silence dissent. From digital harassment and surveillance to threats, detention and violence, media are targeted, with the growth of transnational repression undermining journalists' safety, open societies, and democratic accountability.	**Simon Papuashvili** **Alsu Kurmasheva** **Michela Wrong** **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC** **Aidar Botagarov** **Renaud Gaudin De Villaine** **Izzy Cutts**
11:40	**Short Break**		
12:00	**Session 2** **Independent Media in Conflict-Affected Regions**	This session will explore how independent media navigate the dangers of armed conflict, state and non-state repression, as well as shrinking information spaces. Panellists will discuss the practical and policy-level measures needed to enhance their safety, resilience, and ability to report freely in the most challenging environments.	**Sir John Whittingdale MP** **Sergiy Tomilenko** **Liz Gibbons** **Jonathan Price KC** **Renaud Gaudin De Villaine**
13:00	**Lunch**		
14:00	**Session 3** **Safeguarding Press Freedom Against Legal Threats**	This session offers a practical, solutions-oriented discussion on how the international community can reinforce and expand collective efforts to address these challenges. It will examine collaborative strategies, highlight international legal and policy frameworks, and showcase mechanisms such as UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund that strengthen global responses to legal intimidation.	**Amy Brouillette** **Ambassador Katja Pehrman** **Can Yeğinsu** **Tarja Turtia**
14:50	**Short Break**		
15:10	**Session 4** **Countering SLAPPs: UK Legislation and Press Freedom**	Focusing on the UK context, this session will examine the national efforts to counter SLAPPs through legislative and regulatory reform. Legal experts and civil society actors will assess the current gaps in protection, and discuss proposals for meaningful change. Spotlighting the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition's campaign to introduce universal anti-SLAPP provisions in the forthcoming King's Speech, and explain how legal change can provide stronger, more effective safeguards for free expression.	**Charlie Holt** **Nik Williams** **Sirin Kale** **Joshi Herrmann** **Miranda Patrucic** **Rupert Cowper-Coles**
16:20	**Media Freedom Matters** **Launching of Centre for Journalism and Democracy**	This is a critical moment for the future of journalism and democracy – with authoritarianism and Big Tech impunity on the rise, and escalating attacks on journalists and media freedom globally. Please join us for the launch of the Centre for Journalism and Democracy - a brand-new research centre designed to explore and help address these issues. Panellists will discuss the key work of the centre, the challenges facing public interest journalism today, and how we can work together across the sector to better understand and respond.	**Prof Julie Posetti** **Prof Mel Bunce** **Jodie Ginsberg** **Prof Jane Martinson** **Prof Inderjeet Parmar** **A/Prof Lea Hellmueller** **Prof Karen Fowler Watt**
17:00	**Media Freedom Fair** **Accompanied by a drinks reception.**		**Speech by Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC**
18:30			

UK Media Freedom Forum

Agenda

Time	Session	Description	Speakers
10:00	**Opening 'In conversation with'**		**Emily Thornberry MP** **Susan Coughtrie**
10:30	**Session 5** **Defending Democracy: Countering Disinformation & Navigating AI**	The session will examine how these campaigns are evolving, especially in the age of AI, and what this means for democratic resilience and media freedom. Drawing from both UK and international perspectives, the discussion will explore how to counter disinformation, and the roles of journalists, platforms, civil society and policymakers in strengthening information integrity and public trust.	**Rebecca Vincent** **Carole Cadwalladr** **Peter Geoghegan** **Mark Stephens CBE** **Hannah Perry** **Prof Julie Posetti**
11:40	**Short Break**		
12:00	**Parallel Workshops**	• **SLAPP First Aid Kit:** Media defence lawyers, RPC, are delivering a workshop discussing tips on mitigating the risk of being SLAPP'd and what to do if you're faced with an abusive claim.	**Samantha Thompson** **Thomas Otter**
		• **Using FOI to Investigate Power:** Freedom of Information (FOI) is one of the most powerful tools for uncovering how decisions are made, how public money is spent, and how influence operates behind closed doors. This workshop will equip participants with the skills and examples needed to use FOI effectively for investigations.	**Jenna Corderoy** **Ed Siddons**
		• **SLAPP Risks for Students:** SLAPPs are used to intimidate student journalists into silence. This interactive workshop explores how legal threats can affect student journalism and provides practical guidance on how to recognise risks.	**Nik Williams** **Gill Phillips** **Carlos Gaio**
13:00	**Lunch**		
14:00	**Session 6** **Media Literacy and Local News as a Democratic Defence**	A broader erosion of civic trust can be seen across nations, reflected in declining media confidence, shrinking news ecosystems, and weakening democratic participation. To counter this, media literacy and strong local newsrooms are emerging as critical lines of defence. Communities without access to reliable local news are more vulnerable to false or misleading content, while gaps in media literacy limit people's ability to navigate the increasingly complex information landscape. This session will explore how media literacy initiatives and sustainable local news models can bolster democratic engagement from the ground up.	**Prof Mel Bunce** **Ambassador Katja Pehrman** **Meera Selva** **Franz Wild** **Rebecca Whittington**
15:10	**Short Break**		
15:30	**Spotlight Session** **Presentation from the Safety of Journalists Platform**	This session marks the UK launch of the Platform's 2026 annual report, prepared by its member coalition. It will convene representatives from Platform organisations to discuss key issues including media capture, transnational repression, and the political dimensions of the Platform's work.	**Vafa Fati-zade** **Jamie Wiseman** **William Horsley** **Felicity Garvey**
15:50	**Session 7** **Next Steps: Resilience Mechanisms - What is Working and Where?**	In a media landscape marked by political pressures, disinformation and economic fragility, strengthening resilience is central to safeguarding press freedom. Around the world, journalists and civil society are innovating tools, legal frameworks and collaborative local to global initiatives that help the media withstand growing threats. This session will spotlight approaches that are delivering impact around the world, while also exploring gaps that remain and the emerging pathways to address them.	**Deniz Wagner** **Stefan Kossoff** **Giulia Lucchese** **Barbara Trionfi** **Carlos Gaio** **Closing remarks by Jan Braathu**
16:50	**Closing Address**	**Followed by a drinks reception**	**Edward Lucas**

Speakers

Aidar Botagarov, Consultant, Office of the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media

Amy Brouillette, Director of Advocacy, International Press Institute, Co-Chair of the Media Freedom Coalition-Consultative Network

Alsu Kurmasheva, Press Freedom Advocate, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Barbara Trionfi, Principle Adviser to Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, OSCE

Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC, Director, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Can Yeğinsu, Barrister and Deputy Chair of The High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, Human Rights Lawyer

Carlos Gaio, CEO, Media Defence

Carole Cadwalladr, Investigative journalist, The Nerve

Charlie Holt, European Lead for CliDef and UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition Co-chair

Deniz Wagner, Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Ed Siddons, Senior Reporter, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Edward Lucas, Writer and consultant specialising in European and transatlantic security

Emily Thornberry MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Felicity Garvey, UK Advocacy Officer, Reporters Without Borders

Franz Wild, CEO and Editor-in-chief, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Gill Phillips, Editorial Legal Consultant

Giulia Lucchese, Co-Secretary CDMSI, Council of Europe

Hannah Perry, Director of Digital Policy, DEMOS

Inderjeet Parmar, Professor of International Politics, Associate Dean (Research), School of Policy and Global Affairs, City St George's, University of London

Izzy Cutts, Policy and Parliamentary Affairs Manager, The Foreign Policy Centre

Jamie Wiseman, Senior Europe Advocacy Officer, International Press Institute

Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Jane Martinson, Marjorie Deane Professor of Financial Journalism, City St George's, University of London

Jenna Corderoy, Investigative reporter, Democracy for Sale

Jodie Ginsberg, CEO, Committee to Protect Journalists

Jonathan Price KC, Media and Human Rights Barrister, Doughty Street Chambers

Joshi Herrmann, Founder and Editor, Mill Media

Julie Posetti, Chair, Centre for Journalism and Democracy

Karen Fowler Watt, Head of the Journalism Department, City St George's, University of London

UK Media Freedom Forum

Katja Pehrman, Ambassador for Human Rights and Disability Inclusion of Finland, Co-Chair of the Media Freedom Coalition

Lea Hellmueller, Associate Dean for Research, Associate Professor, City St George's, University of London

Liz Gibbons, Executive Editor, World Service Long Form and Investigations

Mark Stephens CBE, Partner, Howard Kennedy, and Co-Chair of the International Bar Associations Human Rights Institute Council

Mel Bunce, Director, Centre for Journalism and Democracy, City St George's, University of London

Meera Selva, Chief Executive, Internews Europe

Michela Wrong, Journalist and author

Minister Chris Elmore MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office)

Miranda Patrucic, Editor-in-chief, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)

Nik Williams, Policy and Advocacy Officer, Index on Censorship and UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition Co-chair

Peter Geoghegan, Founder and Editor, Democracy for Sale

Rebecca Vincent, Media Freedom Expert

Rebecca Whittington, Online Safety Editor, Reach PLC

Renaud Gaudin De Villaine, Adviser, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Rupert Cowper-Coles, Head of Media, RPC

Samantha Thompson, Senior Associate, RPC

Sergiy Tomilenko, President of the National Union of journalists of Ukraine

Simon Papuashvili, Programme Director, Eastern Europe/South Caucasus at International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

Sir John Whittingdale MP, Chair of the APPG on Media Freedom

Sirin Kale, Investigative journalist, The Guardian

Stefan Kossoff, Head of Democratic Governance, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

Susan Coughtrie, Executive Director, Foreign Policy Centre and UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition Co-chair

Tarja Turtia, Chief of the Section for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, UNESCO

Thomas Otter, Senior Associate, RPC

Vafa Fati-zade, Trustee, Justice for Journalists Foundation

William Horsley, Co-founder and International Director, Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM)

To access the conference agenda and speaker list online scan the QR Code:
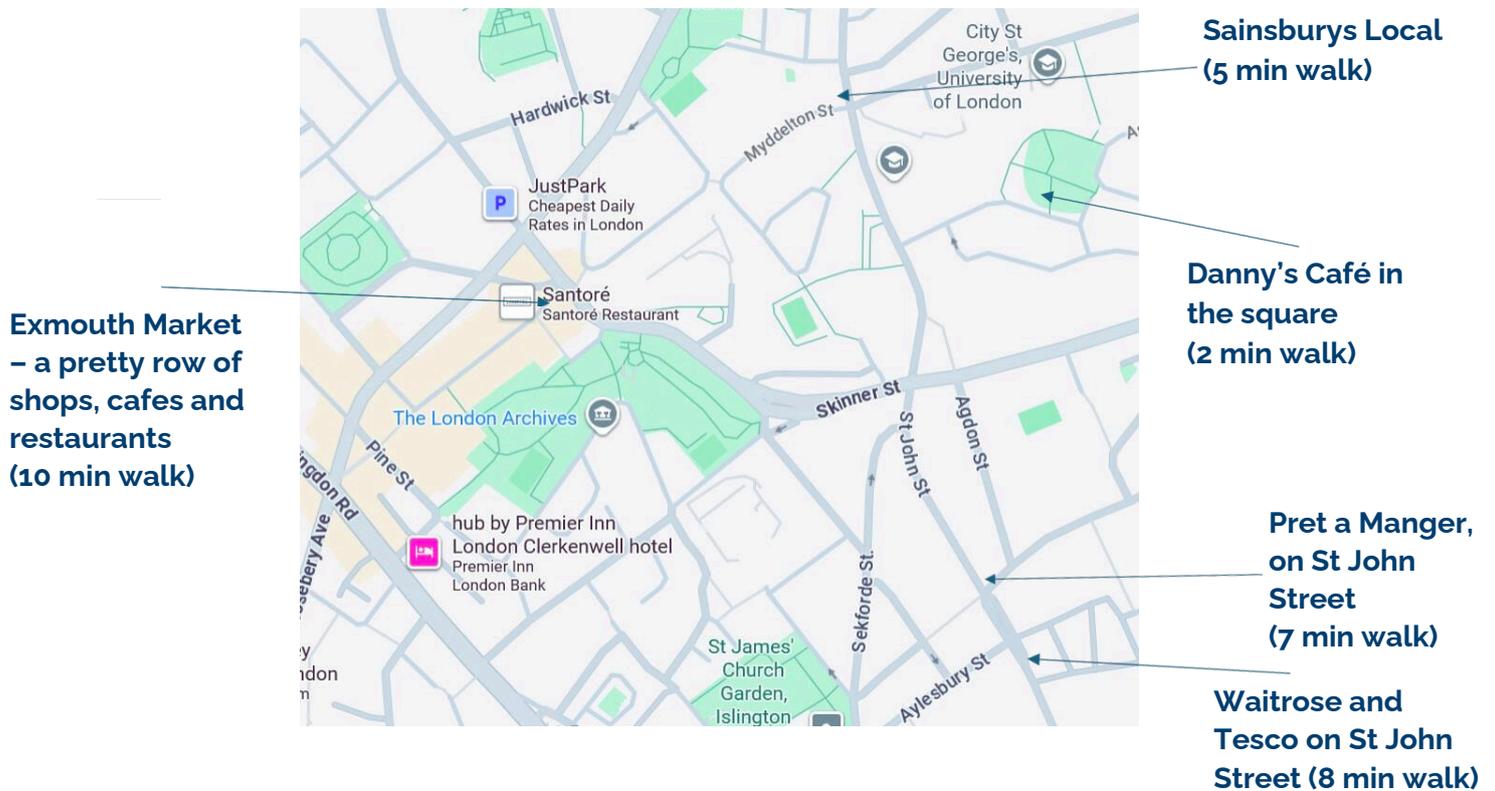
On the day info

The main room for the Forum is **Oliver Thompson lecture theatre**. Located in the <u>Tait Building: First Floor</u>, City St George's, University of London. Please enter through the main University building entrance (Northampton Square, EC1V 0HB). See map and look for **letter C**.

The parallel workshops are located in the following rooms:

- Workshop 1: SLAPP First Aid Kit - Oliver Thompson lecture theatre
- Workshop 2: Using FOI to Investigate Power - BG03 (University building - **see B below**)
- Workshop 3: SLAPP Risks for Students - BLG07 (University building - **see B below**)

For **nearby lunch options**, please refer to the map below, as lunch is not included as part of the Forum. Additionally, in the **main University Building**, there is the City Café on the ground floor next to the main reception, and the Coffee House on Level 1.

Sainsburys Local (5 min walk)

Danny's Café in the square (2 min walk)

Exmouth Market – a pretty row of shops, cafes and restaurants (10 min walk)

Pret a Manger, on St John Street (7 min walk)

Waitrose and Tesco on St John Street (8 min walk)

UK **Media Freedom Forum**

Media Freedom Coalition

The **Media Freedom Coalition (MFC)** brings together 51 countries from six continents to promote media freedom through advocacy, diplomatic interventions, legal reforms, events and funding. In carrying out this work, governments of the MFC – as well as their embassies – work closely with civil society, legal experts, multilateral organisations and journalists themselves.

What does the MFC do?

- **Advocacy:** including case interventions, in which MFC states take action in public or in private in support of journalists under threat.
- **Embassy networks:** which leverage the MFC's wide network of embassies to promote media freedom.
- **Supporting legal reforms:** to promote policies and laws supporting media freedom.
- **Events:** which may include the MFC's own events, or taking part in other events such as World Press Freedom Day.
- **Global Media Defence Fund:** administered by UNESCO, which supports projects that enhance journalists' legal protection and/or media freedom.

The MFC's report **Why Media Freedom Matters** seeks to make the argument for protecting media freedom even stronger.

The report brings together over 100 pieces of evidence on the links between media freedom and democracy, health, the economy, peace and security, and the environment. It has been distributed to MFC governments and their embassies to help them advocate for media freedom.

Find the report via mediafreedomcoalition.org/reports

Contact the MFC Secretariat via info@mediafreedomcoalition.org or Twitter @mediafreedomc. For more information, visit the MFC's website www.mediafreedomcoalition.org or by scanning the QR Code opposite.

Who is involved in the MFC?

The MFC's key stakeholders and groups are:

- **The member countries:** All members have signed the Global Pledge on Media Freedom. The MFC is currently led by its co-chairs, Finland and the UK.
- **The Consultative Network** is a group of national, regional and international organisations that, in collaboration with a much broader set of civil society groups, voluntarily provides advice to the MFC and facilitates selection of cases that it believes require state intervention. The Consultative Network's current co-chairs are Amy Brouillette (International Press Institute), alongside Luisa F. Isaza Ibarra (FLIP).
- **The High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom** is an independent advisory body to MFC member countries (see below).
- **UNESCO** administers the Global Media Defence Fund and participates in MFC discussions as an observer.
- **The Working Group on Media Development** ensures that the MFC's work on media freedom incorporates issues relating to media development, such as the skills and capacities of media outlets and their financial viability.
- **The MFC Secretariat** provides administrative support to the Co-chairs and wider coalition, to ensure the MFC can maximise its impact.

The High Level Panel of Legal Experts

An independent advisory body of the MFC, the High Level Panel's remit is to provide **legal advice and recommendations to the MFC and its partners**, including international organisations, for the purposes of **promoting and protecting a vibrant, free, and independent media.** The High Level Panel also provides individual States with legal advice in the form of legal opinions on draft legislation or legislation already in force, where media freedoms are engaged, as well as amicus curiae opinions at the request of a constitutional court or an international court in a media freedom case of general public importance.

The Secretariat is the **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute**, providing operational, technical, and legal assistance. The Chair of the High Level Panel is Baroness Helena Kennedy LT KC and its Deputy Chairs are Mr. Can Yeginsu and Ms. Catherine Amirfar.

For more info: www.ibanet.org/IBAHRIsecretariat

Scan to visit the MFC's website

UK Media Freedom Forum

UNESCO

As the United Nations agency with a specific mandate to foster 'the free flow of ideas by word and image', **UNESCO** leads the implementation of the **United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity**, which is the only systematic UN-wide plan that aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers in both conflict and non-conflict situations.

UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund

Enhancing the Legal Protection of Journalists and Combatting Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

The Global Media Defence Fund contributes to breaking the cycle of impunity for crimes against journalists by supporting local, regional, and international non-profit organizations that work to strengthen the legal protection of journalists and promote media freedom through legal assistance, investigative journalism and strategic litigation. Through its Crisis Response Mechanism, it also provides emergency support to journalists and media in distress in countries experiencing unforeseen or sudden major crises.

According to a 2025 external evaluation conducted on the Fund: *"the GMDF is the only global fund taking a holistic approach to legal defence, responding to critical needs that other mechanisms do not currently address"*

Since its inception in 2019, it has supported over:

- **9400 journalists**, of which **40% women** journalists , in over **80 countries**
- **1600 lawyers**, of which **25% women** lawyers
- **300 media organisations**

Aligning with UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality, all GMDF-funded projects pay particular attention to enhancing the capacity and safety of women journalists, who face gender-specific threats.

The Media Freedom Coalition and the Global Media Defence Fund are complementary and interconnected pillars in the international effort to protect press freedom and journalist safety.

Established as outcomes of the Global Campaign on Media Freedom, spearheaded by the United Kingdom and Canada, the GMDF funds two independent bodies that advise and inform the Coalition's agenda: the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom and the MFC Consultative Network.

UNESCO's World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development

Released in December 2025, **the World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development** offers a deep dive into the state of freedom of expression and media development over the past four years (2022–2025). Drawing on original research and data-driven insights, it examines global shifts through two critical lenses: information as a public good and information integrity. This edition, titled ***"Journalism: Shaping a World at Peace"***, reveals that these values are under unprecedented pressure, threatening the world's ability to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 16.10 by 2030.

Press freedom has experienced its steepest decline since 2012. V-Dem's Global Freedom of Expression Index has **dropped by 10% over the past 10 years**, a stark indicator of how press freedom is eroding despite isolated countertrends. This decline mirrors broader patterns: weakened parliaments and judicial institutions, falling levels of public trust, and deepening polarisation. It has also coincided with setbacks in equality, alongside rising hostility toward environmental journalists, scientists, and researchers. Some key figures:

- Media self-censorship has risen sharply, by **nearly 5% annually** and by **63% overall** since 2012, as journalists increasingly avoid topics perceived dangerous or politically sensitive.
- Control over the media by government and powerful actors has **grown by almost 4%** per year, resulting in a **48% increase** in restrictions over the past 12 years, often through restrictive laws and smear campaigns that undermine trust in journalism.
- This contraction extends beyond the media sector. Academic and artistic freedom have **declined nearly 3%** annually, signaling a broader narrowing of civic space.
- These trends unfold in a global context where authoritarian regimes now outnumber democratic ones. Today, **72% of the world's population** lives under some form of authoritarian rule; the highest level in decades.

At the same time, the Report points to countercurrents pushing back against these negative trends. Between 2020 and 2025, around **1.5 billion people** gained access to social media and messaging platforms, widening opportunities for citizens to engage with information as a public good. Other positive developments include the growth of collaborative investigative journalism, rising paid news subscriptions, more participatory governance of online content, and multistakeholder efforts to counter climate disinformation. Notably, one major tech company has also partnered with media outlets and creators to block unauthorised AI scraping—an uncommon alignment of corporate interests with media protection.

Taken together, these intertwined trends shape the landscape for elections, climate action, young people, and progress toward the SDGs. The Report underscores the urgent need to strengthen initiatives that support both information integrity and information as a public good. Its **core message is clear**: without renewed, multistakeholder governance of communications—grounded in freedom of expression and access to information—regressive trends will prevail.

For more information, you can read the report, scan the QR code:

UNESCO's Global Initiative on Strategic Lawsuits

Abusive legal claims are increasingly being used to silence journalists. To respond to this alarming global trend, UNESCO launched the Global Initiative on Strategic Lawsuits Against Freedom of Expression, building on its work under the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. This initiative engaged **over 800 judicial actors globally over 2025**, confirming that:

- Legal harassment of journalists is a growing concern for its impact on media freedom;
- The legal bases for the strategic use of lawsuits are rapidly evolving, complicating the identification of these tactics as threats to freedom of expression; and
- Effective responses require enhanced specialisation of judicial actors, including through access to knowledge, resources and mutual learning.

Some key findings:
- A striking **78%** of legal professionals reported an increase in Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)—a tactic used to intimidate and silence journalists through burdensome legal action.
- **68%** of respondents observed the growing complexity and severity of legal pressures faced by the media over the past 5 years.
- **One-third** of media lawyers reported facing barriers to defend journalists, such as limited resources, lack of expertise and fear of reprisals. Likewise, **over 40%** of judges and prosecutors surveyed reported feeling ill-equipped to address SLAPPs effectively.

To address the rising misuse of legal systems UNESCO identified the following areas outlining key actions to strengthen protection, enhance legal capacity, and ensure that justice systems uphold—rather than undermine—freedom of expression:

- Legislative reform
- Knowledge resources
- Networks of Lawyers

- Reinforcement of the specialization of judicial actors
- Empower journalists and media as agents in their own protection

With the support of the
UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund (GMDF)

Observatory on killed Journalists:
This Observatory provides updated information on the killing of journalists since 1993 and on the judicial status of condemned cases since 2006. It also provides public access to country responses to UNESCO's requests for information into the judicial status of ongoing and unresolved cases. You may browse the full list of killed journalists and search for visual statistics and data. This Observatory makes publicly accessible UNESCO's work on monitoring and reporting on the safety of journalists, as well as on global impunity for these crimes, data which is largely collected through the Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity. It forms an essential part of the implementation of the UN Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists:
UNESCO has developed this Repository to serve as a reference point for journalists, media managers, relevant stakeholders, experts, and the general public on the broad spectrum of mechanisms currently in place. It also aims to assist duty-bearers and rights-holders to further engage with these mechanisms on issues related to the safety of journalists. The National Safety Mechanisms included in this Repository address the safety of journalists in one or more of the three axes of prevention, protection and prosecution.

Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms: All stakeholders share responsibility for sustaining an enabling environment for freedom of expression and the right to information, while ensuring there is an open, safe and secure environment for users and nonusers. The guidelines outline a set of duties, responsibilities and roles for states, digital platforms, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, media, academia, the technical community and other stakeholders to enable the environment where freedom of expression and information are in the core of digital platforms governance processes.

UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity: Aiming to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, thus strengthening peace, democracy and sustainable development worldwide, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity addresses the fundamental aspects of prevention, protection, and prosecution. The Plan is calling for a coalition-based and holistic approach to its implementation. It includes six areas: raising awareness; standard setting and policy making; monitoring and reporting; capacity building; research and coalition building.

The OSCE

The **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** comprises 57 States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, and is the world's largest regional security organization. The OSCE monitors media developments in its participating States for violations of free expression.

This includes monitoring and demanding accountability for murders, attacks and harassment of journalists and prosecution of journalists and members of the media for their professional activities; reviewing legislation that can affect media freedom and freedom of expression. The OSCE also engages in media development through training and support for editors and journalists.

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

The Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), an independent OSCE Institution, has a unique mandate to protect and promote media freedom in all 57 OSCE participating States.

The RFoM's activities include observing media developments as part of an early warning function and helping participating States abide by their commitments to freedom of expression and free media.

Jan Braathu (Norway) is the sixth OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, appointed in December 2024.

Find out more about the RFoM's work at: www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media

The OSCE's **comprehensive approach to security** integrates not only political and military aspects, but also economic and environmental issues, and human rights, including media freedom.

When journalists and other media actors can work independently and safely, citizens have access to accurate, trustworthy information; authorities are held accountable; and constructive public debate can flourish.

A freer flow of information helps prevent or de-escalate conflicts by exposing harmful rhetoric, disinformation campaigns, and human rights abuses before they spiral further.

The **Biannual Report** to the OSCE Permanent Council is featured overleaf, by the OSCE RFoM on a **"paradigm shift in the information space"**.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Media Freedom and Security

Paradigm Shift in the Information Space

The OSCE RFoM addresses the Organisation's Permanent Council twice a year, identifying priority areas and providing an assessment of the overall media freedom situation across the OSCE region.

In his latest report, the OSCE RFoM Ambassador Jan Braathu addressed the profound and accelerating **paradigm shift in the information space**, which is undermining democratic resilience and placing journalists at growing risk. The report highlights continued attacks, intimidation, and arbitrary detentions of journalists, including during protests, and identifies political pressure, disinformation, economic fragility, the dominance of major online platforms, and the rise of artificial intelligence as reshaping how societies access and trust information. This concentration of power, combined with increasing hostility toward journalists, is further fragmenting public discourse. Scan the QR code above for the report or see: www.osce.org/fom.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media responds to these challenges through public and silent diplomacy.

Furthermore, a selection of the OSCE RFoM's recent project work are listed below:

Safety of Journalists

The "Safety of Journalists" project aims to take stock of existing national measures and good practices across the OSCE region while supporting participating States in implementing OSCE commitments and international standards on journalist safety, including OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 3/18. Central to this project is the **Safety of Journalists Toolbox** was developed as a flexible instrument that brings together national mechanisms and initiatives, allowing participating States to adapt measures to their own contexts. It is based on input from OSCE participating States, the work of the OSCE National Focal Points on Safety of Journalists, and recommendations from seven thematic expert roundtables. The Toolbox also includes a series of thematic audio podcasts offering practical expert recommendations. Conceived as a living resource, the Toolbox will continue to evolve to address emerging challenges to the safety of journalists across the OSCE region. See: https://osce-soj.glide.page/dl/783bbb.

UK **Media Freedom Forum**

Safety of Female Journalists Online (SOFJO)

The "Safety of Female Journalists Online" project aims to ensure that women journalists can participate in the public debates on social media without fear of harassment, attacks, and violence. The OSCE RFoM "Guidelines for Monitoring Online Violence against Female Journalists" are aimed to help identify key indicators and metrics signalling escalation of online violence against women journalists and highlight the responsibilities of different stakeholders in this area. See: https://rfom.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/b/0/554098_1.pdf As a next step, an E-Learning module is being developed with targeted support on the implementation of these Guidelines.

Journalists Under Severe Political Pressure

Through its project on "Enhancing Protection of Journalists under Severe Political Pressure", the RFoM engages in efforts toward fostering the unimpeded transborder flow of information and promoting an enabling and safe working environment for journalists, particularly those in exile, by advocating for protection and support responses that facilitate continuation of their professional activities. As part of the project, in September 2025, the OSCE RFoM launched an Outcome Report on "Enhancing Protection of Journalists under Severe Political

Pressure", which offers a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by journalists in exile and recommendations for OSCE participating States. See: https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/597612.

Safeguarding Media Freedom in the Age of Big Tech Platforms and AI

In October 2025, the "Healthy Online Information Spaces" project officially launched a Policy Manual on Safeguarding Media Freedom in the Age of Big Tech Platforms and AI. See: https://projects.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/598525. Developed in co-operation with the Forum on Information and Democracy (FiD) as implementing partner, the Manual is the culmination of a two-year Media & Big Tech initiative that included a comprehensive analysis of existing policy approaches to media economic sustainability, visibility and safety in the online realm. Following three expert roundtables, a series of consultations, in-depth research and numerous interviews, the Policy Manual consolidates the expertise of more than 150 leading scholars and practitioners in media freedom, technology, and human rights from across the OSCE region and beyond. It develops actionable policy guidance for states on the most effective ways to enhance the availability and accessibility to quality journalism as well as to reliable, diverse, and public interest information online.

Freedom of the Media, Democracy, and Security

The Project on "Media Freedom and Security" aims to bridge the gap between media freedom and security sector in order to strengthen media freedom as a strategic asset for democracy, peace, and security. The OSCE RFoM Research Report on Media Freedom, Democracy, and Security provides clear empirical evidence of this nexus. A key finding of the report is that free media reduce the risk of international armed conflict, internal armed conflict, and state repression, both by putting security concerns on the public and political agendas, and by providing the public with accurate and timely information about the risks, realities and horrors of armed conflict. See: https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/3/0/572878_1.pdf

In 2026, the OSCE RFoM will also publish a report on "Strategies against Disinformation" and a "Guidance for Public Interest Framework for Media Freedom" within the context of its project on media and security.

Next Steps

Ultimately, these efforts reflect the OSCE's long-standing position that **human rights and fundamental freedoms, including media freedom, are indispensable for security.**

As emphasised in the OSCE reports on media freedom and security, the weakening of independent journalism frequently precedes broader abuses of power and the destabilisation of institutions.

Comprehensive security stems from resilient and inclusive public spheres, powered by independent and pluralistic media.

By bringing together different stakeholders, the OSCE RFoM aims for practical pathways to reinforce independent journalism – an essential cornerstone of societal cohesion.

At its core is a renewed commitment to the principle that **an open, pluralistic media environment is the strongest guarantor of lasting peace** and stability throughout the OSCE region.

UK Media Freedom Forum

Council of Europe

The **Council of Europe** is an international organisation pursuing human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It has 46 member states, 27 of which are members of the European Union. It has developed a consistent body of standards supporting media freedom as well as a unique Safety of Journalists Platform.

Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists

The Platform reports on serious threats to the safety of journalists and media freedom in Europe in order to reinforce the Council of Europe's response to the threats and member states' accountability.

2025 ▾	Member states ◯	Europe-wide
5	**91**	**25**
killed journalists	journalists currently in detention	cases of impunity for murder

Launched in 2015, the **Safety of Journalists Platform** is a collaborative effort between the Council of Europe and a network of 15 prominent press freedom organisations and journalists associations.

Its primary objective is to be **a real-time mechanism for monitoring and addressing threats against journalists and media professionals**, ranging from harassment and physical attacks to legal and political pressures.

The Platform operates by collecting and verifying alerts on serious threats to media freedom and the safety of journalists.

These alerts, submitted by the Platform's partner organisations, are published **to raise awareness and prompt action from national authorities.**

By making these alerts public, the Platform seeks to ensure **accountability and encourage member states to fulfill their commitments** under the European Convention on Human Rights to protect freedom of expression.

To visit the Platform go to https://fom.coe.int or scan the QR Code:

Europe Press Freedom Report:
On the Tipping Point: Press Freedom 2025

The Media Freedom Forum follows-up on the publication of the latest Europe Press Freedom Report on 3 March 2026. Covering 2025, the report by the 15 partner organisations to the Safety of Journalists Platform analyses key legal, policy and practical developments affecting media freedom and journalist safety in Europe and sets out actions to improve protection.

Representatives of the partner organisations will present key findings and recommendations highlighted in the report.

The Safety of Journalists Platform plays a vital role in monitoring and defending media freedom across Europe.

Despite everything, I continue my journalistic work with the same passion and determination as ever. Yet I must admit that I have never felt more exposed or vulnerable.

Sigfrido Ranucci
Journalist and presenter of the investigative programme Report, broadcast on Rai3, targeted in a 16 October 2025 car bombing outside his home.

This illegitimate government is trying to abolish journalism [...] I ask you, our European friends: do not let go of our hand. Together, we can defeat the darkness and ensure that freedom prevails. Because freedom, truly, is more valuable than life.

Mzia Amaglobeli
Co-founder and director of the outlets Batumelebi and Netgazeti, laureate of the 2025 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and the 2025 IPI-IMS World Press Freedom Hero award, sentenced to prison on 6 August 2025.

Europe Press Freedom Report
On the Tipping Point: Press Freedom 2025

An annual assessment
by the partner organisations
of the Safety of Journalists Platform

March
2026

safety of
journalists
platform

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

UK Media
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Forum

RESOURCES

New important policy documents have been adopted by the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI) in December 2025:

Guidance Note on Generative AI Implications for Freedom of Expression

The Guidance Note examines the implications of generative AI for freedom of expression. While highlighting the significant opportunities offered by generative AI, it also addresses key risks related to transparency, accuracy, reliability, and manipulation of AI-generated content. The document outlines the main characteristics and lifecycle of generative AI, analyses its individual and societal impacts on freedom of expression, including deepfakes, hallucinations, and disinformation and proposes concrete, actionable measures for policymakers and other stakeholders through an agile governance framework based on four interlinked pillars: observe, assess, enable, and empower.

Policy Document on National Media and Information Literacy Strategies

The Guidelines for National Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Strategies aim to support governments in developing comprehensive national approaches to strengthen citizens' ability to access, critically assess, and responsibly create and share information throughout life. The Guidelines are structured around five interconnected policy areas, including political leadership and coherent regulatory frameworks, evidence-based policymaking, the integration of MIL across formal and lifelong education, inclusive citizen empowerment with a focus on vulnerable groups, and sustained multi-stakeholder cooperation. An accompanying explanatory report and practical indicators support effective implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

Policy Document Resisting disinformation: 10 building blocks to strengthen information integrity

The document, centring policy responses on the concept of information integrity, provides actionable guidance to help member states counter disinformation and related information disorders in a comprehensive, coherent and effective manner. It sets out ten building blocks aimed at developing a comprehensive national strategy, supported by five key policy pillars covering research and monitoring, support to media and information literacy, quality journalism and media resilience, electoral integrity, and accountability in the digital ecosystem.

Feasibility Study on Benefits and Challenges to Freedom of Expression in Immersive Realities

The feasibility study provides the Organisation's first in-depth analysis of how immersive technologies are reshaping the exercise of freedom of expression. The study highlights how XR environments, where expression is embodied, behavioural, and multisensory, expand opportunities for creativity and civic engagement while also raising new risks related to surveillance, manipulation, content moderation, and inequality. It notes that the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly Article 10, offers a flexible and resilient framework to address these challenges, while identifying areas where targeted interpretative guidance and soft-law instruments could further strengthen the protection of fundamental rights as immersive realities evolve.

Future Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on Online Safety and the Empowerment of Users and Content Creators

The CDMSI has also completed its work and approved in December 2025 a draft of a future recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers addressing one of today's central digital challenges: ensuring an open internet that protects free expression while also protecting individuals from harm - such as violence, hate, manipulation, unfair moderation, biased algorithms, and disinformation. The draft is on agenda of the Committee of Ministers for possible adoption in spring 2026.

It proposes principles for an online environment where everyone, including women, children, and vulnerable groups, can participate safely. The recommendation emphasises the significant role of platforms in shaping public information and encourages states to focus on platform responsibilities. A key part is advancing "platform accountability" legislation. This includes transparency requirements and independent oversight of platforms' design choices, risk management, and content curation and moderation systems - including algorithmic tools.

The recommendation also promotes "empowerment by design", giving users more control over their online experience, stronger procedural rights and independent appeals, and better access for researchers. It warns that safety measures must be proportionate and respect human rights; poorly designed rules risk restricting free expression and damaging democratic debate.

JOURNALISTS MATTER
Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

The **'Journalists Matter' campaign for the safety of journalists**, is a pan-European project launched by the CoE in October 2023 and expected to last at least until the end of 2027.

Campaign progress:
As of 2025, **implementation** of the Journalists Matter campaign has continued to gain momentum across member States, with 41 Campaign Focal Points and 28 national Campaign Committees established, many since the campaign's launch. Progress has also been made in policy planning, with 11 national Action Plans on the safety of journalists adopted or in place, and further plans under development.

In 2025, the campaign focused on strengthening the prosecution pillar, including efforts to improve judicial responses to attacks on journalists, combat impunity, and address abusive lawsuits. A **mid-term evaluation** report adopted in December 2025 noted significant progress in national frameworks and dialogue between authorities and media actors, while highlighting the need to sustain national structures, broaden stakeholder engagement, and better respond to emerging threats such as online harassment, gender-based abuse, and SLAPPs. Activities planned for 2026–2027 will reinforce prevention and promotion efforts, including greater youth engagement, alongside continued policy guidance, capacity-building, peer exchange, and awareness-raising across Europe.

UK Media Freedom Forum

SPOTLIGHT ON

The UK National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists

Journalists' **Safety Tracker**

Established in 2020, the **UK National Committee on the Safety of Journalists** brings together representatives from government, journalism, policing, prosecution services and civil society to work collaboratively to:

- Coordinate work across key partners involved in the protection of journalists' safety;
- Assess how the UK is protecting the safety of journalists, ensuring they are not subject to violence, or threats of violence;
- Identify and agree priorities for journalist safety and develop and publish a National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists operating within the UK;
- Maintain oversight of the delivery and effectiveness of the National Action Plan.

The **UK's National Action Plan** was published in March 2021 and initially focused on online harassment and physical threats. It was updated in 2023, to include Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs), and an expert SLAPPs Taskforce was also convened.

The UK NAP encompasses five steps:

1. Increase understanding of the problem;
2. Enhance the criminal justice system response in tackling crimes against journalists;
3. Support journalists and their employers to build the resources they need to protect personal safety;
4. Help online platforms to tackle the wider issue of abuse online; and
5. Improve public recognition of the value of journalists.

As part of the NAP, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Society of Media Editors published a **Journalists Safety Toolkit** - *www.journalists-safety.tools.*

To support building an evidence base of threats, the NUJ also created **Journalists Safety Tracker** - *journalistsafetytracker.org.uk*, which allows journalists to report incidences of harassment.

To access the UK's NAP, scan the QR Code:

Media Freedom and the UK

The UK has often been heralded as a global leader on media freedom. In 2019, under the last government, the UK and Canada co-founded the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC -see page 11) and made this issue a key foreign policy priority.

In February 2026, the UK has announced it will once again assume the role of co-chair of the MFC, serving a two-year term alongside Finland. This renewed leadership comes at a moment of acute global pressure on journalism, with reporters facing escalating threats ranging from physical violence and arbitrary detention to digital surveillance, legal harassment, and online abuse.

The current government has publicly underscored the centrality of a free press to democratic life. In October 2024, **UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer** stated in an op-ed that: **"Journalism is the lifeblood of democracy. Journalists are guardians of democratic values,"** and committed the current government to **"always champion press freedoms."**

While the UK's renewed co-chairing is a welcome and positive mechanism for advancing media freedom internationally, **protecting media at home and abroad, particularly in today's climate, will require sustained action and investment.**

With a greater interpenetration between the domestic and international environment, it is important for the UK to recognise the proactive role it can play in addressing new and existing challenges. This includes taking steps to:

- **Counter transnational repression**, including harassment, surveillance, and intimidation of journalists operating in exile or reporting across borders;
- **Promote media and digital literacy**, equipping the public to critically assess information and strengthening societal resilience to manipulation;
- **Tackle disinformation and misinformation**, particularly where coordinated campaigns undermine democratic processes or target journalists; and
- **Prevent the misuse of the UK legal system**, including abusive litigation and other legal tactics designed to silence public-interest journalism.

'Media Literacy' Report

In July 2025, the **UK House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee**, published the findings of its comprehensive inquiry into **'Media Literacy.'**

Shared here are the report's key recommendations for the UK Government:

- **Embed media literacy across the national curriculum:** Integrate media literacy in schools, and ensure teachers receive training and ongoing support to deliver lessons on this effectively.

- **Raise public awareness and target new support for adults:** Launch a clear public campaign on media literacy, provide easy access to resources, run year-round initiatives, and support local organisations, such as libraries, to deliver help.

- **Address the leadership vacuum on media literacy:** Appoint a senior government minister to coordinate and lead media literacy efforts across departments and public services, and within education and local government.

- **Demand more from platforms:** Require tech companies to fund media literacy initiatives through a levy, and have Ofcom set and monitor minimum standards for their media literacy efforts.

"Media literacy is an issue that affects us all. In a world of polarising views and declining interest in traditional news media, it is more important than ever that both children and adults have the skills to think critically about the content they access and create.

We [published] our report on the same day that important protections for children under the Online Safety Act [came] into force. Online safety and media literacy go hand in hand; tackling the complexity of the digital world will require a combination of regulation and education.

[..] It is also time to fill the leadership vacuum on media literacy. Ofcom's contributions are valuable, but only the Government can drive real progress in this area."

The Baroness Keeley
Chair of the House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee

To access 'Media Literacy' Report in full, scan the QR code:

SPOTLIGHT ON

Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs)

A SLAPP - or **Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation** - is an abusive legal threat aimed at stifling public participation and protected speech. They are brought by the powerful and wealthy to avoid scrutiny and intimidate public watchdogs into either not publishing or removing information from the public domain.

There has been considerable momentum globally to understand and address the ways in which SLAPP suits undermine the rule of law, democracy and human rights. In the UK and in Europe, following targeted awareness raising efforts by experts and civil society groups, there have been some positive developments to combat these meritless lawsuits.

In February 2024, a **EU Anti-SLAPP Directive** was adopted establishing minimum standards for protecting public watchdogs against SLAPPs. Elements introduced by the directive include procedural safeguards, support for the defendant in court proceedings, early dismissal, award of costs and protection against third country judgements, including those

made in the UK. EU member states have until April 2026 to transpose the directive into national law.

Meanwhile, in April 2024, the **CoE Committee of Ministers approved Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2**, which establishes a set of minimum standards for CoE member states to tackle SLAPPs.

According to the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE), the Recommendation provides a robust and detailed set of standards and will help push non-EU member states to introduce meaningful anti-SLAPP protections of their own.

It is also particularly important in assisting courts and national authorities in identifying SLAPPs, thanks to a long list of "SLAPP indicators".

The Recommendation is not legally binding the same way the EU Directive will be on member states, but offers a clear and robust pathway for national anti-SLAPPs laws and protections.

UK **Media Freedom Forum**

FPC, JFJ and IBAHRI previously organised three UK Anti-SLAPP Conferences (2021-3). It is possible to watch back the sessions and find other resources on the conference website - *anti-slappconference.jfj.fund*

Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA): Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

This policy paper published by the UK Government provides background information to the anti-SLAPP provisions in the UK's ECCTA, adopted in October 2023. The provisions are due to come into force in 2025.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: The impact of SLAPPs on human rights and how to respond

This briefer examines the impact of SLAPPs on human rights, as well as the right to public participation. It also suggests measures that States should take to tackle SLAPPs, including the decriminalisation of defamation, blasphemy and other offences; the adoption of anti-SLAPPs laws; and the possibility for courts to dismiss SLAPPs through abuse of process provisions.

Please note the resources on SLAPPs from UNESCO (p.15) and CoE (p.24).

Anti-SLAPP laws are not a new concept. Since the 1990s, anti-SLAPP laws have been adopted in 30+ states in the United States, three regions of Canada; and in the Australian Capital Territory.

Currently there are no universal statutory protections to counter SLAPPs in UK law.

While limited provisions to protect reporting on economic crime were included in the 2023 Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) these only came into force in September 2025, and would not protect everyone who speaks out in the public interest.

At the start of 2024, a standalone SLAPPs Bill was introduced into the UK Parliament through a Private Members' Bill. Backed by the previous government, it was making positive progress only to fall away due to the General Election.

Amendments made to the draft SLAPPs Bill, committee stage highlighted similar, pre-existing flaws in the anti-SLAPP provisions in the ECCTA. The introduction of a new standalone anti-SLAPP Law, superseding these flawed provisions, would relieve concerns in this area and create certainty as to the UK's course to address this issue.

To see the UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition's model UK Anti-SLAPP law, scan the QR code or visit antislapp.uk:

mediafreedomforum.co.uk

The UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition

The UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition is an informal working group established in January 2021, co-chaired by FPC, Index on Censorship and CliDef. It comprises a number of freedom of expression, whistleblowing, anti-corruption and transparency organisations, as well as others researching, monitoring and highlighting cases of legal intimidation and SLAPPs, as well as seeking to develop remedies for mitigation and redress.

Solutions have fallen into three main areas: legislation, regulation and cultural change. Aside from legislative and regulatory reform, there have been other positive anti-SLAPP developments, including:

- a change in policy to prevent sanctioned individuals being given automatic licence to pursue SLAPP cases;
- the inclusion of SLAPPs in the UK's National Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists; and
- the establishment of a cross-governmental SLAPPs Taskforce, to develop non-legislative solutions.

The Coalition continues to provide support to those subject to SLAPPs, and to campaign for a universal UK Anti-SLAPP Law.

The Coalition against SLAPPs in Europe

CASE is a coalition of non-governmental organisations from across Europe united in recognition of the threat posed to public watchdogs by SLAPPs.

The campaign work by CASE was instrumental in the realisation of both the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive and the CoE Recommendation *(see previous page)*. CASE is now monitoring and supporting the implementation, as well as continuing to provide support to those subject to SLAPP threats. Since 2019, CASE members have worked with Amsterdam Law Clinics, part of the Law Faculty at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), to also catalogue and analyse SLAPP cases from across Europe, thus far collecting together 570+ cases over a 10 year period.

antislapp.uk

www.the-case.eu

UK Media Freedom Forum

Spotlight on
Tackling Transnational Repression in the UK
WORKING GROUP

Transnational repression (TNR) refers to acts or threats against individuals, groups and communities across territorial borders carried out by governments or their proxies, which violate human rights and/or intimidate, control, coerce, or silence dissent.

TNR is on the rise globally. Perpetrators have a broadening array of tools to surveil, threaten, harass and attack individuals on foreign soil, violating their fundamental rights.

Political dissidents and human rights defenders have traditionally been the targets of TNR, but today members of many diaspora communities who face persecution and mass atrocities in their country of origin also find themselves subject to transnational human rights violations here in the UK.

"With our national security interests and way of life threatened on a scale unparalleled since the 1930s and 1940s, democracies must act together in strong alliances to combat multipolar threats to our way of life.

We are fools to take for granted our privileges and freedoms – including the right to think, to speak, to believe, even to live. All over the world the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are under concerted attack. We have been far too complacent, far too dependent on the states which threaten us and insufficiently focused on resilience. Transnational Repression is a harbinger of far worse to come.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights concluded that transnational repression risks undermining the UK's ability to protect people who have sought safety within our borders, but we also found that a failure to deal robustly with Transnational Repression and the malign activities of hostile states, will also increasingly put the UK's population at risk too."

__Lord Alton__
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

About the Working Group

Who are we?

Established in 2024, we are an informal working group with over 60 organisational and individual members all working on tackling transnational repression in the UK. Members of the steering committee are: Foreign Policy Centre, Richardson Institute at Lancaster University; Index on Censorship, Reporters without Borders, Azadi Network, Amnesty International and Impact Shift.

What do we do?

We convene concerned parties to research and monitor incidents and the effects of TNR in the UK; to support those affected by TNR; and to identify and shape the development of a comprehensive institutional response to TNR in the UK.

If you are interested in joining the Working Group, please contact: info@fpc.org.uk

Keep your eyes peeled for our new website launching soon: tackling-tnr.uk

Our Four-Part Approach To Tackling TNR in the UK

Monitor

- Provide a clear, accessible and trusted contact point for lodging TNR complaints.
- Collect data, research and reports on the prevalence and forms of transnational infringements of UK residents' human rights, in a consistent manner that is regularly made public (e.g. through annual reports).
- Play an active role within the international community (including through the Council of Europe, Interpol, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, OSCE and UN) to ensure information and data is shared to help combat TNR at a global level, while also protecting against international mechanisms being abused to further TNR.

Respond

- Inform relevant UK government agencies (across all four nations) to ensure legal threats and actions, extradition, deportation and freezing of assets are not used to violate human rights.
- Raise TNR cases, both individually and in aggregate, through diplomatic channels and in public statements.
- Provide rapid response protection mechanisms for individuals facing serious threats, and ensure coordination between all relevant agencies to warn targeted individuals.

Support

- Provide individuals experiencing TNR with accessible channels of advice and support.
- Support individuals, communities and family members to access legal assistance, humanitarian visas and temporary traveling documents, as well as other potential avenues of redress.
- Provide appropriate physical or digital protections for victims or targets of TNR.
- Develop national guidance and provide training for local and national law enforcement and first responders about transnational repression, including tactics that might not be criminal offences but warrant attention.

Prevent

- Develop evidence-based proposals for necessary legislative and regulatory changes.
- Develop legal and diplomatic mechanisms to penalise perpetrators of TNR.
- Investigate and hold to account UK institutions, systems or professional industries complicit in TNR.

CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM
AND DEMOCRACY

THE CHALLENGE

Journalism and democracy are under attack globally. Reporters are being murdered in war zones and jailed for doing their jobs at unprecedented rates. Independent media outlets are pressured and smeared by political leaders, while journalists are harassed, abused and threatened online and off. Viral disinformation and conspiracy campaigns are polluting information ecosystems as Big Tech companies dismantle the guardrails. And the business model for public interest media is failing.

WHAT WE DO

The Centre for Journalism and Democracy brings together researchers and practitioners to examine these issues. Its research and events explore the pressing issues facing journalism, the impact of these on public lift, and interventions to address them. We partner with journalists, think tanks, NGOs, and policy-makers to explore how ethical, public interest journalism can be reimagined and protected for future generations.

For more information, scan the QR Code:

CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM
AND DEMOCRACY

OUR HOME

The Centre is based in the School of Communication and Creativity at City St George's, University of London. It brings together researchers from across the university, particularly those in journalism, poilicy and law.

City's Department of Journalism is the biggest and best-known centre for journalism education in the UK, with over 7000 alumni working at the top of newsrooms around the world, from the BBC and Washington Post, to Al Jazeera, Tik Tok and the Times of India.

Researchers in City's **School of Policy and Global Affairs** provide policymakers, activists =, business and commercial sectors with world-class research and insight to make sense of the changing global landscape.

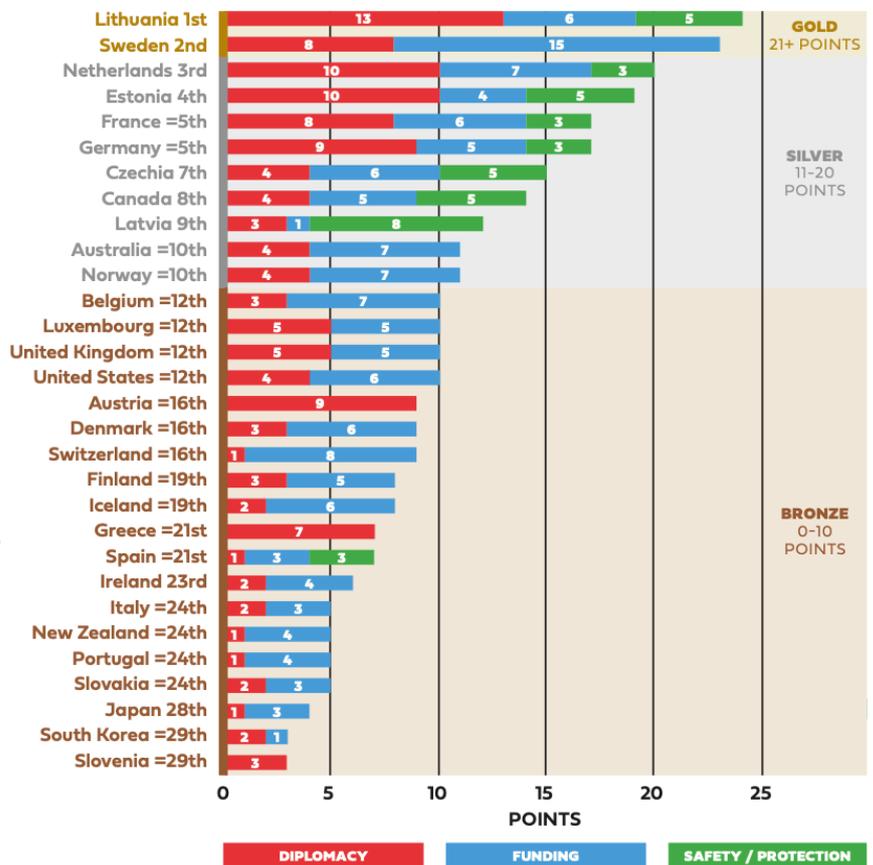# THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT (IMFS)

WHAT DOES THE IMFS INDEX MEASURE?

The IMFS Index ranks the 30 states that are members of both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) (30 countries). These countries are evaluated for their contribution to diplomatic, financial and safety initiatives beyond their borders.

HIGH PERFORMING COUNTRIES

- **Lithuania** (1st) is the highest ranked country, largely due to its diplomatic efforts, including its leadership of two multilateral initiatives.

- **Sweden** (2nd) spent a far higher proportion of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) on media development in 2023 than any other country (0.91%). It is the only country to get close to the benchmark of 1.0%, as recommended by the Forum on Information & Democracy.

- **France** (5th) is the only country to award funding to all four qualifying multilateral pooled funds in 2024.

- **Latvia** (9th) is the only country to have both an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at risk and to support a national initiative that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile.

RANKING & SCORING FOR EACH COUNTRY IN THE 2025 INDEX FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT*

Legend: DIPLOMACY (red) | FUNDING (blue) | SAFETY / PROTECTION (green)

Scoring bands: GOLD 21+ POINTS | SILVER 11-20 POINTS | BRONZE 0-10 POINTS

Country	Diplomacy	Funding	Safety/Protection
Lithuania 1st	13	6	5
Sweden 2nd	8	15	
Netherlands 3rd	10	7	3
Estonia 4th	10	4	5
France =5th	8	6	3
Germany =5th	9	5	3
Czechia 7th	4	6	5
Canada 8th	4	5	5
Latvia 9th	3	1	8
Australia =10th	4	7	
Norway =10th	4	7	
Belgium =12th	3	7	
Luxembourg =12th	5	5	
United Kingdom =12th	5	5	
United States =12th	4	6	
Austria =16th	9		
Denmark =16th	3	6	
Switzerland =16th	1	8	
Finland =19th	3	5	
Iceland =19th	2	6	
Greece =21st	7		
Spain =21st	1	3	3
Ireland 23rd	2	4	
Italy =24th	2	3	
New Zealand =24th	1	4	
Portugal =24th	1	4	
Slovakia =24th	2	3	
Japan 28th	1	3	
South Korea =29th	2	1	
Slovenia =29th	3		

METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

Theme 1 **Diplomatic support for media freedom:** Assessed through measures of states' leadership, membership and advocacy within multilateral initiatives.

Theme 2 **Financial support for media development:** Assessed through measures of states' funding levels, fulfillment of financial commitments and contributions to pooled multilateral funds.

Theme 3 **Support for journalism safety and protection:** Assessed through states' provision of safe refuge and assistance programmes for journalists at-risk or in exile.

*The Index draws on data from the previous calendar year (2024) except for the ODA figures, which are from 2023, due to the time lag in reporting.

University of East Anglia Norwich | CITY ST GEORGE'S UNIVERSITY OF LONDON | CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY | **mediafreedomforum.co.uk**

About the Organisers

FPC, JFJ and IBAHRI are delighted to be realising the second UK Media Freedom Forum in partnership with City St George's, University of London.

Justice for Journalists
Foundation for International
Investigations of Crime against Media

🌐 **www.jfj.fund**

@jfjfund

The **Foreign Policy Centre**

🌐 **www.fpc.org.uk**

@fpcthinktank

The Justice for Journalists Foundation (JFJ) is a London-based charity whose mission is to fight impunity for attacks against the media. JFJ monitors attacks against media workers and funds investigations worldwide into violence and abuse against professional and citizen journalists.

JFJ also organises media security training and creates educational materials to raise awareness about the dangers to media freedom and methods of protection from them. Since 2020, JFJ has funded a number of media freedom related projects, including FPC's Unsafe for Scrutiny project.

The Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) is an independent, non-partisan international affairs think tank based in the UK. FPC's mission is to inform both the British and global debate, seeking sustainable solutions for the world's most pressing challenges.

FPC takes a global perspective, informed by the values of democracy, human rights, good governance and conflict resolution. Media freedom is a core theme for FPC, particularly through the work conducted as part of its Unsafe for Scrutiny project, which examines issues at the nexus of safety of journalists and anti-corruption.

Notably, FPC published the 2022 landmark report 'London Calling': The issue of legal intimidation and SLAPPs against media emanating from the United Kingdom', with ARTICLE 19.

🌐 **www.ibanet.org/IBAHRI**

@IBHARI

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) works with the global legal community to promote and protect human rights and the independence of the legal profession worldwide.

Since 2019, IBAHRI has acted as the Secretariat to The High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom, the independent advisory body of the Media Freedom Coalition.

The High Level Panel comprises a diverse group of leading international lawyers tasked with providing legal advice for the purposes of promoting and protecting a vibrant, free, and independent media.

🌐 **www.city.ac.uk**

@CityUniLondon

Based in the heart of London, City St George's, University of London is a short walk from both historic Fleet Street and the Inns of Court. City's Department of Journalism is a nationally renowned centre for journalism education and research.

Founded in 1976, the Department has over 7000+ alumni at the top of newsrooms around the world, from the BBC and the Washington Post to the Times of India, Al Jazeera and Tik Tok.

City is ranked 1st in the UK for Journalism, 1st in the UK for Media and Communications, and 1st in the UK for graduate jobs and employability in media.

UK **Media Freedom Forum**

Supporting Organisations

We are grateful for the financial support and assistance of our partners to organise the second UK Media Freedom Forum:

safety of journalists platform

fom.coe.int/en/accueil

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

www.coe.int/en

unesco

With the support of the
UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund (GMDF)

www.unesco.org/en

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

www.osce.org

UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition.

antislapp.uk

CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

jdem.org

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RPC is an international law firm specialising in media and technology, retail and consumer, insurance, commercial and financial disputes and regulatory, with offices in London, Bristol, Hong Kong and Singapore.

It has the largest and one of the most highly regarded media defence teams in the UK, recognised in the market as the "go to" firm for publishers and journalists facing media litigation, with long-standing experience of defending public interest reporting.

www.rpclegal.com

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Anti-SLAPP team

Anti-SLAPP expertise – RPC has a dedicated anti-SLAPP team led by Head of Media Disputes, Rupert Cowper-Coles, who is the only private practice solicitor to have given evidence to the Commons Justice Select Committee on "SLAPPs" and is the UK's appointed expert on the issue to the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

Disputes powerhouse – with over 250 lawyers undertaking contentious work we can handle anything from simple disputes between individuals to large, complex disputes for global corporations. Over the last five years, we have had more cases in The Lawyer's top 20 than any other law firm. We defend commercial and media litigation robustly but ethically and are well versed in responding to "SLAPP" tactics

Media expertise – we are passionate about protecting freedom of expression and never act against the media. Our market-leading media defendant team acts for anyone whose speech is under threat, including many of the world's leading publishers and platforms

International coverage – we can service international clients through our foreign offices or our network of referral firms

Managing costs – with clients ranging from private individuals to global companies, we always seek to ensure our service reflects the needs of the litigation and the client's resources

Value and transparency – we understand the importance of providing transparency on fees through regular cost reporting and working to ensure estimates reflect litigation developments

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Snapshot of RPC

We are a law firm that works with relentless determination for you. We listen, understand and deliver.

2026
Top ranked
Media & Entertainment: Publishing
CHAMBERS AND LEGAL 500

2026
Top ranked
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CHAMBERS AND LEGAL 500

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130+
Partners

500+
total lawyers

1,120+
people

"Without hesitation the firm of choice for defendants in complex defamation and privacy litigation."
Legal 500 2026

"The firm is simply the best defendant defamation team on the market."
Legal 500 2026

Additional Resources

Many of the organisations participating in the UK Media Freedom Forum have resources, tools or services that can support journalists and others working on media issues. Some resources have already been linked to throughout this booklet; included below are three practical examples:

Index on Censorship 'Am I facing a SLAPP?' Tool

An online tool specifically aimed at helping journalists to understand whether the legal threat or action they are facing might be classified as a SLAPP.

The questions asked in this assessment are based on research carried out by Index on Censorship into how SLAPPs against journalists most commonly manifest themselves. If your answers coincide with the most common symptoms of a SLAPP, then you are more likely to be told that you are facing a SLAPP. This assessment is intended as a helpful tool and not as legal advice.

www.indexoncensorship.org/am-i-facing-a-slapps-lawsuit

Media Defence Legal Support

Media Defence supports journalists – including citizen journalists, bloggers, broadcasters, photojournalists, cartoonists or fact-checkers – and independent news outlets when they are confronted with legal action as a result of their reporting. They can provide funding for your legal defence, help you find a lawyer or provide technical legal support to your lawyer.

Media Defence can also help you bring legal action to compel the state to protect your rights if they have been violated.

www.mediadefence.org/apply-for-case-support

Reporters without Borders Support for Exiled Journalists

In 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) launched a free e-learning course for exiled journalists based in the UK, to help them continue their vital reporting.

Developed in partnership with the National Council for the Training of Journalists to (NCTJ), the course covers topics like UK media law, public affairs, writing styles and an introduction to the UK media industry.

For more information, contact fgarvey@rsf.org

Notes

**To access the conference website,
for the agenda and speaker list,
scan the QR Code below:**

mediafreedomforum.co.uk