

RSF launches Tracker 19 to track Covid-19's impact on press freedom`

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is launching Tracker-19 to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on journalism and to offer recommendations on how to defend the right to information.

Tracker 19

The press freedom NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is launching a tool for monitoring an unprecedented global crisis. Called "Tracker 19" in reference not only to Covid-19 but also article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this project aims to evaluate the pandemic's impacts on journalism. It will document state censorship and deliberate disinformation, and their impact on the right to reliable news and information. It will also make recommendations on how to defend journalism.

Journalism at a time of global crises

The philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote in 1957: "For the first time in history, all peoples on earth have a common present." With the Covid-19 global epidemic, humankind's "common present" has become even more evident. As RSF has long been saying, without journalism, humankind could not address any of the major global challenges, including the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, discrimination against women and corruption.

Censorship is not an internal matter

"The coronavirus crisis provides irrefutable proof of the relevance of our fight," RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire said. "Censorship cannot be regarded as a country's internal matter. Information control in a given country can have consequences all over the planet and we are suffering the effects of this today. The same goes for disinformation and rumours. They make people take bad decisions, they limit free will and they sap intelligence."

The human cost of censorship

"Some of the most active centres of Covid-19 infection, such as China and Iran, are countries where the media have been unable to fulfil their role of informing the public," Deloire said. "There is an urgent need to render an exhaustive and honest account of the obstacles to press freedom and the attempts to manipulate information during this unprecedented epidemic. And we must offer solutions that enable journalists now and tomorrow to provide reliable information and combat rumours."

A dependable tool for an unprecedented crisis

RSF's teams all over the world are mobilized. RSF has taken measures to ensure that it remains as fully operational as possible while guaranteeing the safety of its personnel and partners. The data RSF collects comes from its network of bureaux and correspondents. Tracker-19 offers an interactive world map on the press freedom situation, constant coverage of developments and analyses of key issues.

Dedicated to the journalists covering the pandemic

"I pay tribute to the work of the journalists all over the world who are taking risks, who are exposing themselves to the virus in order to report what is happening," Deloire added. "They are fulfilling an essential social function. This tracker is dedicated to these 'historians of the present' covering our common present."

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