
ANNUAL REPORT 2025

forbidden stories



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FINANCIAL REPORT

A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

Across the world, a playbook to silence the press is being refined: block access, discredit, intimidate, surveil, prosecute – and, too often, kill. The intent is always the same: to blind the public by making journalism feel futile, or too dangerous.

But every attack on a journalist is also an admission. It proves that facts threaten power. We built Forbidden Stories for this calculation.

We do not answer enemies of the press with silence or statements. We answer them with journalism

Our mission is simple: when journalists are murdered, jailed, or abducted, we make sure their investigation does not disappear with them. We do not answer enemies of the press with silence or statements. We answer them with journalism.

This past year, we scaled that response. As threats to press freedom rise worldwide, we have published twice as many investigations as we did in 2024. And as always, we did this together, because there is strength in numbers – 97 partner journalists took part in our investigations.

We pursued Viktoriia Roshchyna's investigation into the thousands of Ukrainian civilians illegally detained by Russia that cost her her life. We exposed Ghana's illegal gold rush, which has poisoned waterways and destroyed forests while journalists face abductions, beatings or death threats for reporting on it. We investigated organised crime in Paraguay after 19 journalists were killed over the course of three decades, exposing how corruption has infiltrated the country's justice system itself.

We also continued the work of fellow reporters silenced in Cambodia, Gaza, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Syria, and Turkmenistan.

Millions across the globe read and watched our investigations. What some tried to bury ended up reaching an even wider audience.

This work has had concrete impacts. The European Union sanctioned the jailers of Viktoriia Roshchyna in the "Russian Guantanamo." It also sanctioned the leaders of Russian disinformation operations in Africa whom we exposed, and former Haitian Senator Rony Célestin, the main suspect in the assassination of Haitian journalist Néhémie Joseph, whose work we carried on.

The SafeBox Network is today a one-of-a-kind deterrent

In the face of those who target journalists, we also invest in prevention. Our SafeBox Network now protects the information of over 230 threatened journalists from nearly 40 countries, so that from now on, their investigations are unstoppable. They want anyone who threatens them to hear this loud and clear.

One striking example is Ecuadorian journalist Tamia Villavicencio, whose media outlet La Fuente recently joined our SafeBox Network. In a video that went viral on social media, she warned her father's killers – himself a journalist – that silencing her would only amplify their wrongdoings worldwide.

The SafeBox Network has become a one-of-a-kind deterrent. We must expand it to make it useful for many more threatened and isolated reporters.

In the year ahead and in the years to come, we will focus on systematizing our response to crimes committed against journalists – bringing us closer to our moonshot goal: to publish an investigation each time a journalist is killed, imprisoned or abducted. The more automatic our response is, the more dissuasive we will be.

Finally, as you will read in this report, in 2025, we worked to bring our mission to new audiences through original formats. We brought our investigations on stage, organized an exhibition on the Gaza Project, co-published a one-hundred page magazine, and ran an advertising campaign in the Paris metro.

None of this would be possible without our extraordinary community of partners and supporters

None of this would be possible without this extraordinary community of journalists, editors, partners and supporters around the world – and without the remarkable dedication of the Forbidden Stories team, whose work makes these investigations possible every day.

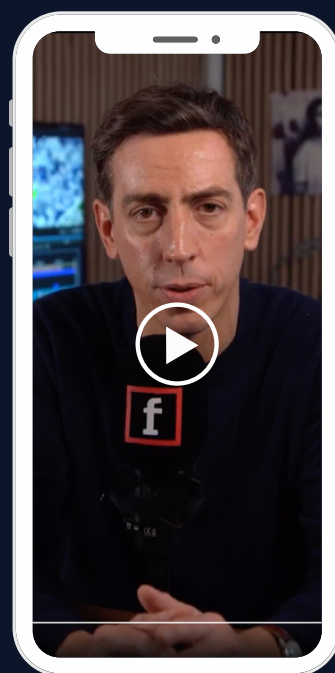
The enemies of the press want to teach journalists a lesson. Together, let's teach them a different one: Killing the journalist won't kill the story.

Laurent Richard

Journalist, Executive Director and
Founder of Forbidden Stories

“Some stories were never meant to be told, but we told them anyway.

We confronted cotton suppliers, captagon traffickers, luxury car dealers, prison observers, local prosecutors... and we did it as a team, with news organizations all around the world.”



Watch our short video summarizing
our impact in 2025!

2025 IN NUMBERS

10 investigations
published

130 media
partners
from 57 countries

4 awards
received for our
investigations

4 local
correspondents

now work for Forbidden Stories
in Mexico, Africa and Indonesia

73 new members
of the SafeBox Network

97 journalists
took part in investigations
coordinated by Forbidden Stories
this year

83M people

heard about our investigations*

5 individuals

identified in our investigations were
sanctioned by the European Union

14 new
countries
represented among the members of
our SafeBox Network

*based on the cumulative daily audiences of our media partners.

OUR INVESTIGATIONS

For eight years, we have been keeping silenced journalists' stories alive and amplifying worldwide information others tried to bury. We leverage the Streisand effect: attempts to suppress information only bring more attention to it.

In the face of growing threats to press freedom and the public's right to access information, Forbidden Stories and its global network of media partners has stepped up its response to crimes committed against journalists in 2025.

We published ten investigations, more than doubling its previous pace of publication. Our investigations have uncovered critical information on environmental crimes, corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, disinformation, and human rights violations.

Our moonshot goal is to keep alive the stories of each journalist killed. And to amplify each of them widely. The more automatic our response is, the more dissuasive we will be.

FORCED LABOR IN TURKMEN COTTON FIELDS

Khudayberdy Allashov, a local journalist working for Radio Azatlyk, died on August 13, 2024, after nearly ten years of persecution by the Turkmen regime.

In 2016, Khudayberdy Allashov dared to tell the story of forced labor in Turkmenistan's cotton fields. Forbidden Stories has carried on his work with this investigation published on January 30, 2025.

Together with our partner Radio Azatlyk, we found that, eight years after Allashov's articles and despite cosmetic reforms, forced labour continues in Turkmenistan, with civil servants, teachers, soldiers and even children being forcibly sent to harvest this "white gold" that represents 2% of the country's GDP.

Khudayberdy Allashov dared to tell the story of forced labor in cotton fields

We also revealed that, despite all the social and environmental commitments made by textile companies, cotton harvested in Turkmenistan continues to flood the shelves of European stores through companies such as Essenza Home and Benetton.

The investigation was shared and reposted on social media by several NGOs fighting forced labor or promoting ethical clothing production.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



CAPTAGON CONNECTION

For decades, under the dictatorship of the Assad father and son, Syria was a media black hole, ranked 179th out of 180 in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index. Monitored, threatened, imprisoned, and murdered, Syrian reporters were systematically prevented from carrying out their duty to provide information. On December 8, 2024, everything changed with the fall of Bashar al-Assad. A wave of hope and relief washed over Syria.

Certain stories remain off-limits to Syrian journalists even in the post-Assad era

The invaluable help of a freelancer on the ground and three Syrian journalists, Forbidden Stories explored how certain stories remain off-limits to Syrian journalists – such as Captagon trafficking – even in the post-Assad era.

The investigation tells the story of Mahmoud al-Harbi, who was murdered in November 2023 for revealing the involvement of a local family in Captagon trafficking in the village of Maaraba, near Damascus. It also looks into the southern, Druze city of Suwayda's position as a hub for Captagon trafficking, and how the city retains this role, despite al-Assad's successors' promise to end this illegal trade.

Thanks to collaboration with ARIJ, the investigation was also republished across the Arab world by eight media outlets.



DEFORESTATION IN CAMBODIA

In the Cambodian countryside, local journalists are trying to alert the public and authorities to the illegal deforestation devouring their forests. One of them, Chhoeung Chheng, succumbed to his injuries after being shot in December 2024 in retaliation for his reporting on deforestation.

Environmental journalists have faced reprisals, imprisonment and murder

In partnership with CamboJA News and RFI, Forbidden Stories went to the scene to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Chhoeung Chheng. This investigation also looks into the case of other journalists who have faced reprisals for investigating environmental crimes in Cambodia, ranging from being banned from entering the country to prison and murder.

Our videos about the investigation in Khmer received over 1.5M views across our social media platforms. The investigation received additional coverage from RFI in Khmer, which has an audience of 5M people in a country with a population of 17.5M. A few months after this story was published, in early June 2025, CPJ announced that a provincial court convicted and sentenced Chhoeung Chheng's murderer to 12 years in prison.



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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



SANCTION BREAKERS

Kyrgyzstan has become a waypoint for European or American goods being smuggled into Russia, which has been under Western sanctions since it invaded Ukraine. Some 11 journalists from independent Kyrgyz news outlet Temirov Live were arrested, four of whom were sentenced, for investigating the trafficking of European cars.

11 journalists from independent Kyrgyz news outlet Temirov Live were arrested

Together with OCCRP, I-Stories, Paper Trail Media, Siena and Novaya Gazeta Europe, Forbidden Stories continued their work. The investigation notably uncovers the mechanisms Russia uses to circumvent Western sanctions through Kyrgyzstan. It reveals that, beyond serving as a hub for trafficking European luxury cars into Russia, several Kyrgyz companies also act as intermediaries to import aeronautical equipment made by major French and American manufacturers (such as Airbus, Thales, Safran, and Michelin), despite the embargo linked to the war in Ukraine. This equipment, with dual civilian and military uses, risks being exploited by Russia's military-industrial complex in its war against Ukraine.

Based on the cumulative daily audience of our media partners, we estimate the investigation reached at least 8.5M people worldwide. The investigation was also widely republished in countries involved in or impacted by our revelations, such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. We estimate that this collaborative investigation reached 96 times more people than it would have if Temirov Live had only published it on its YouTube channel.

The investigation reached at least 8.5M people worldwide upon publication

With regards to impact, the former Minister of Defense of Lithuania filed a criminal complaint in March 2025 against one of the Russian auto dealers mentioned in the investigation, Benas Gutkauskas, who also goes by the name "Mark Berg." Gutkauskas is a dual citizen of Lithuania and Russia, and Lithuania's Ministry of Interior has launched a separate investigation into whether Gutkauskas has the right to have dual citizenship.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



SIENA



SECOND PART OF THE GAZA PROJECT

About 170 journalists have been killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched a war of retaliation for the Hamas terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023. After the first installment of the "Gaza Project" (published in June 2024) revealed how some were targeted by the Israeli Army, Forbidden Stories and its partners have launched a new investigation about these reporters, killed or injured while on duty.

For this new phase, we brought together more than 40 journalists from 11 media partners: Paper Trail Media; ARIJ; RFI; Bellingcat; Die Zeit; Le Monde; France 24; The Seventh Eye/Shakuf; +972 Magazine; ZDF; and Der Standard.

Shedding light on the deliberate targeting of journalists using drones to film the ruins.

This eight-article installment documents the stories of several journalists who were severely injured or killed by the Israeli army, while shedding light on the deliberate targeting of journalists using drones to film the ruins – one of the only ways to show the extent of the damage to Gaza.

It further exposes the strategies used by the Israeli government to evade accountability for the deaths of these journalists.

Two long-form videos were produced as part of the project, one by Forbidden Stories on the targeting of journalist Fadi Al-Wahidi, and one by our partner Bellingcat on the targeting of drone journalists. The videos were sponsored in several countries (including Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel) and generated over 6 million impressions.

We estimate that the second installment of the Gaza Project reached at least 18M people around the world upon publication.

As journalists in the Gaza Strip continue to face extreme danger, and the Israeli government continues to bar international media from entering this territory, we joined our voice in June 2025 to some 200 media outlets around the world in an open letter coordinated by the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Le Monde

DERSTANDARD



bellingcat

DIE ZEIT

PAPER TRAIL MEDIA

+972
MAGAZINE

rfi

ARIJ

העין השביעית



VIKTORIIA PROJECT

Ukrainian journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna's investigation into the thousands of Ukrainian civilians illegally detained by Russia cost her her life. Coordinating a team of 45 journalists from 12 media outlets, Forbidden Stories continued her work.

The project's first installment investigated the circumstances of Viktoriia's detention and death as well as the fate of Ukrainian civilians who had been detained by Russian forces and held incommunicado. The second installment revealed how the Wagner Group duplicated the methods used in Ukraine and Russia in Mali: kidnappings of civilians, arbitrary arrests, no contact with the outside world, and systematic torture.

Viktoriia Roshchyna's investigation into Russia's ghost detainees cost her her life

The Viktoriia Project reached at least 47 million people around the world upon publication. It was also widely disseminated beyond our network, with at least 748 republications in 90 countries and in 54 languages.

A week after the publication of the Viktoriia Project, a Ukrainian MP demanded the prosecution of Viktoriia's alleged torturers, which had been identified in the investigation. Ukrainian authorities then announced in August 2025 that they had opened a war crimes investigation into the head of the Taranrog prison for his role in Viktoriia's torture.



47M

people reached upon publication*

748

republications in 90 countries and in 54 languages

2

jailers of Viktoriia sanctioned by the European Union

The investigation triggered numerous reactions, including from the Spokesperson of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, the EU Ambassador to Ukraine, and the OSCE Representative on Media Freedom, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, and the European Federation of Journalists.

Viktoriia was posthumously awarded World Press Freedom Hero by International Press Institute (IPI) and International Media Support (IMS), the "Honour of the Profession" prize at the Kyiv Journalism Awards, and the Order of Freedom by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media initiated "Victory for Victoria Day" commemoration, honoring war correspondents, media freedom, and Viktoriia's memory. In October 2025, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution on Ukrainian journalists held in captivity by the Russian Federation.

In November 2025, the European Union adopted sanctions against two of Viktoriia's alleged torturers identified in our investigation, Alexander Shtoda (Director of the Taranrog prison) and Andrey Mikhailichenko (Shtoda's deputy), "for serious violations or abuses of human rights and the repression of civil society and democratic opposition in Russia".

*based on the cumulative daily audiences of our media partners.

forbidden stories

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Le Monde The Washington Post

DERSTANDARD DIE ZEIT

PAPER TRAIL MEDIA

DER SPIEGEL

The Guardian

ZDF

УКРАЇНСКА ПРАВДА

FRANCE 24

Tamedia

ВАЖНЫЕ ИСТОРИИ

UNDER SURVEILLANCE IN SERBIA

Spied on, intimidated, and harassed, Serbian journalists from local investigative outlet FAR had started investigating suspicious public contracts in Dimitrovgrad, drawing the mayor's ire. In 2024, one of them was taken to the police station and had their phone hacked. With Forbidden Stories, their silenced investigation resurfaces.

With Forbidden Stories, their silenced investigation resurfaces

Conducted together with FAR, this investigation, titled "Under surveillance: local corruption and a journalist spied on in Serbia", picks up the trail of an investigation into local corruption in the town of Dimitrovgrad, looking into the questionable practices of the mayor, his possible collusion with companies owned by members of his family, and the manipulation of public contracts.

The investigation was republished by a dozen news outlets, mainly in Europe and the MENA region.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



HAITI: A STATE IN RUINS, PREDATORS IN POWER

Conducted together with Haitian media outlet Ayibopost, the investigation "Haiti: A State in Ruins, Predators in Power" looks into various cases journalist killings involving armed gangs or powerful figures in Haiti, while looking into broader issues such as corruption, trafficking, land theft, and the violent tactics used by gangs.

Forbidden Stories' video about the investigation has received over 127k views on YouTube. The investigation was published locally by Ayibopost and republished globally by a handful of media outlets in Europe (Le Monde, France 24) and within the Haitian diaspora. Each reader and viewer represents one more person who, without our investigation, would have been deprived of this information some tried to bury – and which ultimately reached audiences far beyond Haiti.

The European Union adopted sanctions against Rony Célestin

In December 2025, the European Union adopted sanctions against Rony Célestin, a former Haitian Senator identified in our investigation as being implicated in smuggling and arms trafficking, and who has been charged in connection with the murder of the journalist Néhémie Joseph.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **ayibopost**

ALIANZA PARAGUAY

Nineteen journalists have been killed in Paraguay – and two in Brazilian border towns – in roughly 30 years. Seven of them were murdered in the Pedro Juan Caballero region amid rampant corruption and impunity. Forbidden Stories and its partners took forward their investigations into organized crime and corruption.

Nineteen journalists have been killed in Paraguay in roughly 30 years

Co-coordinated with OCCRP and in partnership with six media outlets, Alianza Paraguay looks into the cases of several silenced journalists in Paraguay, continues the work of assassinated journalist Leo Veras into cross-border firearms trafficking, exposes authorities' failure to investigate his suspected murderer, and reveals a broader pattern of inaction against organized crime and corruption.

Based on the cumulative daily audience of our investigative media partners, Alianza Paraguay is estimated to have reached at least 2 million people upon publication. Paraguayan outlet ABC Color Group, one of Paraguay's largest media outlets, also joined as a republishing partner. In addition, millions more people were able to read the investigation as it was republished by some 40 media outlets, mostly in Latin America.

Judge Mirna Carolina Soto González has been removed from her position

With regards to impact, Paraguayan authorities immediately reacted to the investigation and published a statement two days after Alianza Paraguay's publication reaffirming the Prosecutor General's Office's "technical and legal action" in Leo Veras' case and denying any kind of complicity with organized crime. The statement provides an overview of legal action in Veras' case, underlining that the acquittal of his alleged murderer had been reversed in 2023. However, according to Paraguayan sources, the publication of this statement, which does not list any judicial action regarding Veras' case since 2023, was only intended to give the illusion that Paraguayan authorities are actively fighting against organized crime.

Three months Alianza Paraguay's publication, our partner ABC Color reported that Mirna Carolina Soto González, the judge who had acquitted Leo Veras' alleged murder, had been removed from her position by a jury of magistrates. The magistrates stated that Mirna Soto's behaviour "had violated the principle of impartiality that should guide her actions".

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



CUESTIÓN PÚBLICA

LA NACION

piauí

RPI



la diaria

ALIANZA PARAGUAY

19 journalists killed in the last 30 years.
A country in the grip of organized crime.

TOXIC GOLD IN GHANA

In Ghana, journalists investigating the proliferation of illegal gold mining have suffered abductions, beatings or death threats during their reporting.

This is our first investigation in the new #GreenCrimes series focused on environmental crimes

Together with Ghanaian outlet The Fourth Estate and Indian outlet The Reporters' Collective, Forbidden Stories continued the work of Erastus Asare Donkor and his team, who were attacked by heavily armed men in October 2024 while documenting an illegal mine located in a protected forest.

Mapping over 150,000 hectares of active and abandoned mines using an innovative AI technique and satellite imagery, this investigation finds that more than 75% of the areas affected by gold mining are outside of legally delegated concessions. It also delves into illegal gold mining's dire effects on the environment and the health of local populations, as well as how this illegal gold potentially ends up in the supply chains of major international companies such as Starbucks, Amazon, Tesla and Xerox.

This is our first investigation in the new #GreenCrimes series, focused on environmental crimes.

Forbidden Stories launched this series in response to the growing dangers faced by journalists reporting on environmental issues. According to UNESCO, between 2009 and 2023, 749 journalists covering environmental crimes faced violent reprisals, and 44 were killed. When environmental journalists are silenced, citizens are deprived of vital information, weakening our collective ability to address the climate crisis. Continuing the work of those who have been silenced is therefore essential to ensure that reliable information on environmental issues remains available.

Amazon and Starbucks have announced internal investigations

Through sponsored, targeted ads, our social media publications about the project were viewed by 141K people in Ghana. Following Forbidden Stories' revelations, Amazon and Starbucks have announced internal investigations. When contacted in December by one of our journalists, Amazon stated that they encouraged the refinery to commit to responsible mineral sourcing, and also engaged with their supplier regarding the refinery's compliance status or its potential removal from the supply chain.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

[the reporters' collective]



TOXIC GOLD

**The heavy toll
of Ghana's illegal
gold rush |**

OUR SAFEBOX NETWORK

To deter crimes against journalists before they happen, Forbidden Stories also deploys its **SafeBox Network**. This unique and innovative mechanism leverages technology to defend access to information, by circumventing threats and putting the information that enemies of the press seek to silence beyond their reach.

In 2025, the reach of the SafeBox Network significantly expanded through five in-person workshops organized in partnership with local organizations in South America and Asia. As a result, **73 new members joined the mechanism this year**.



A secured, shared and duplicated backup



A global network ready to take over



A warning to aggressors: attacks will be counterproductive

239 journalists and newsrooms across 40 countries, among the most threatened in the world, use the SafeBox Network on a daily basis.



THE SAFEBOX NETWORK: A POWERFUL DETERRENT

Many SafeBox Network members have chosen to communicate about their membership. For them, it's a new way of protecting themselves: if their aggressors know they are backed by an international community of reporters, they should understand that attempts to silence them are pointless.

Journalists have publicly highlighted their membership in various ways, including videos, social media posts, or banners on their websites.

Their aggressors should understand that attempts to silence them are pointless

According to our 2025 annual evaluation of the SafeBox Network, 85% of members feel that their membership helps reduce their isolation. Beyond this, many members emphasise that their membership has enabled them to pursue investigations that would otherwise have been too dangerous to publish without the support of the SafeBox Network.

Through social media posts, Forbidden Stories has highlighted these investigations secured via the mechanism. A few examples include an investigation into the misuse of criminal laws to jail journalists in the Nigerian state of Kwara, by journalist Salihu Shola Taofeek; an investigation into staff shortages and inadequate equipment in healthcare centers in the Nigerian state of Akwa Ibom, leading to high maternal and child mortality rates, by journalist Ekemini Simon; and an investigation into the labeling of protesters as "anarchists" to justify their arrest in Indonesia, by journalist Fadiyah Alaidrus.

To date, no member of the SafeBox Network has been killed after officially joining.

If you are at risk due to your journalistic work and would like to secure your sensitive ongoing investigations with Forbidden Stories, please get in touch with us.



“ When we publish a new investigation, we publicly state that the information is protected by SafeBox. Several politicians in Ecuador told me that they now think twice before trying to silence us. ”

— **Leonardo G. Ponce**,
editor-in-chief of Tierra de Nadie (SafeBox member)

“ The SafeBox is the most potent blow dealt to enemies of press freedom. It has become the most trusted ally for journalists all over. ”

— **Lami Sadiq**,
Nigerian journalist
and SafeBox member



SPOTLIGHT ON THREE SAFEBOX NETWORK MEMBERS: WHEN PEOPLE TRY TO SILENCE A STORY, MAKE IT LOUDER

La Fuente – Periodismo de Investigación

La Fuente – Periodismo de Investigación was founded by investigative journalist Fernando Villavicencio. Over more than four decades, he published over 260 investigations that exposed major corruption scandals in Ecuador, revealing how criminal mafias had infiltrated the country's institutions.

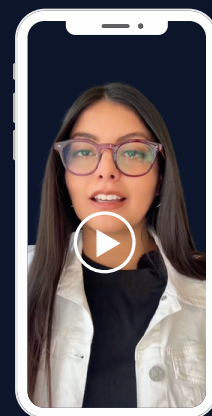
In 2023, Fernando Villavicencio – by then also a candidate in Ecuador's presidential election – was assassinated. Despite intense hostility, his widow and two daughters chose to carry forward his legacy, pursuing investigations into corruption, organized crime, and environmental crimes.

The media outlet and its team have faced death threats, harassment, and online intimidation, particularly in connection with ongoing legal proceedings related to Fernando Villavicencio's murder.

In this context, La Fuente joined the SafeBox Network in September 2025 to secure their ongoing investigations as well as Fernando's archives, in order to deter further attacks.

“ Every investigation we do, every truth we uncover, is being safeguarded by a global network of journalists. If something happens to us, our work will not disappear. It will be published in collaboration with international media outlets around the world. It changes the rules of the game. ”

— **Tamia Villavicencio**,
co-Director of La Fuente –
Periodismo de Investigación



“ SafeBox is the hand on your shoulder that says, 'Keep going. We have got the story covered,' and it turns silencing a journalist into an outdated, failed strategy for perpetrators. ”

— **Rohit Upadhyay**,
Indian journalist and
SafeBox Network
member



forbidden stories

Rohit Upadhyay

Rohit Upadhyay is an investigative journalist based in New Delhi, India. His work focuses on the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as environmental issues, including trafficking networks and corruption.

Rohit Upadhyay currently faces serious legal and physical threats. Indian authorities filed a First Information Report (FIR) – the document that formally initiates a criminal investigation under India's justice system – against him following his investigation into a corruption case in the state of Goa. He has also been physically assaulted while covering a Hindu-Muslim protest.

He joined the SafeBox Network following a workshop held in Nepal in December 2025. For Rohit, the mechanism provides a critical safeguard, as he faces the risk of arrest that would prevent him from publishing his findings.

Edmond Izuba

Edmond Izuba is an investigative journalist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he focuses on uncovering large-scale financial misconduct, embezzlement, and corruption involving major companies, influential political figures, and members of the government in Kinshasa.

Because of his work, Edmond has faced sustained intimidation, including threatening messages, phone calls discouraging publication, and repeated court summons linked to his reporting. He joined the SafeBox Network in September 2024 during an in-person workshop in Kinshasa. Aware that his work exposes sensitive cases of corruption and financial wrongdoing, he wanted to ensure that information of vital public interest remains protected and cannot be suppressed through intimidation or legal pressure.

In June 2025, in retaliation for his investigations into the Regulatory Agency for Subcontracting in the Private Sector (ARSP), Edmond Izuba faced a defamation campaign and was summoned by the DRC's National Intelligence Agency. In a video posted on social media on June 4, he stated:

“Regarding this investigation, the files and documents we consulted were saved by the SafeBox Network. I therefore encourage investigative journalists to choose the SafeBox Network to safeguard their documents so that nothing is lost.”

— **Edmond Izuba**,
Congolese journalist
and SafeBox Network
member



Members of the SafeBox Network participating in a workshop.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS |

Forbidden Stories is governed by an international Board of Directors, with members drawn from a variety of specialist backgrounds, from investigative journalism to law, media development, human rights, and digital security. Our Board operates in a pro bono capacity, and meets quarterly, with one in-person meeting held every two years.

VIRGINIE DUCROT
Board Chair

LYNETTE CLEMETSON
Member

JOANNE LEVINE
Member

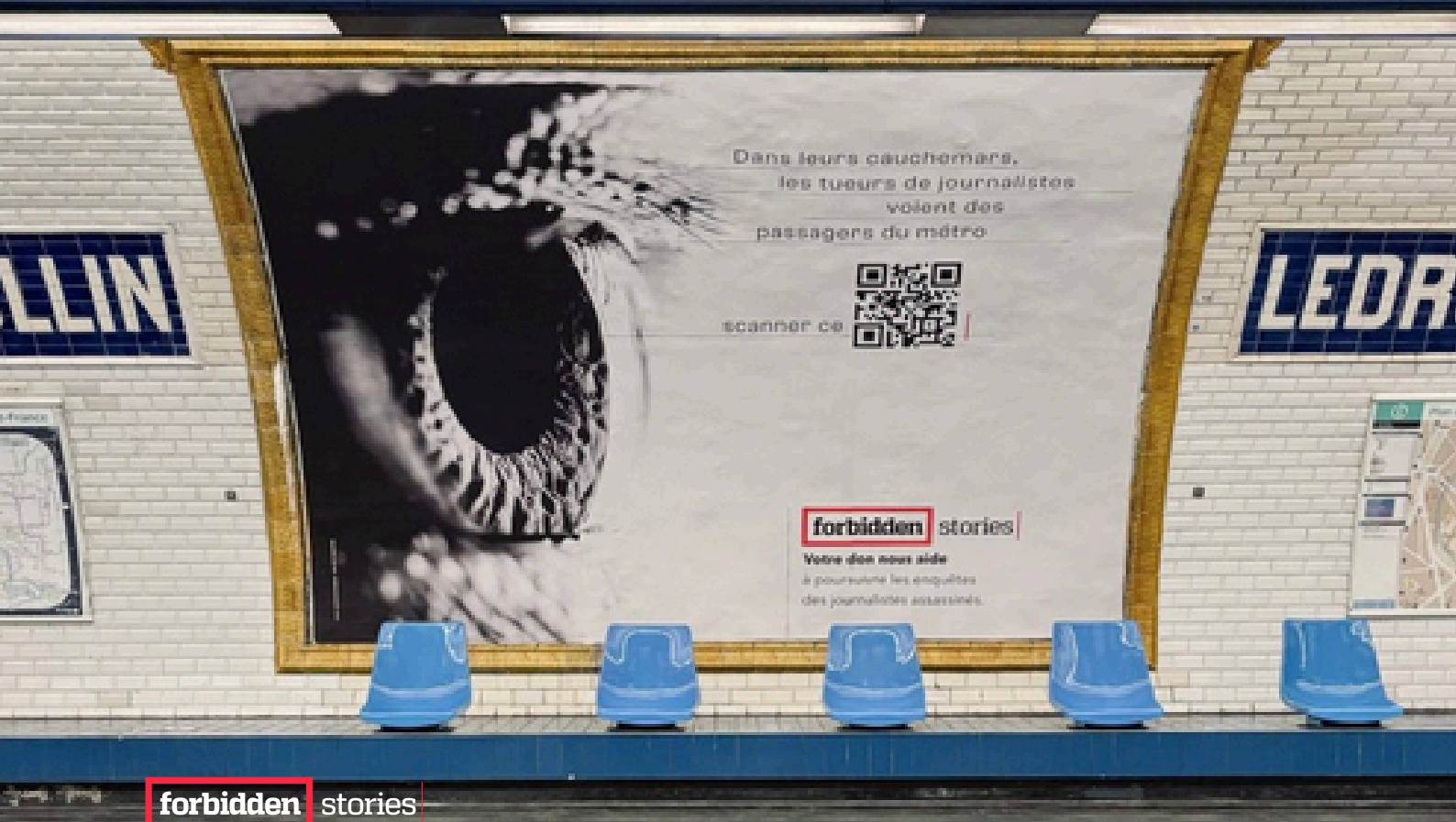
LAURENCE FRANC-MENGET
General Secretary

RÉMI LABED
Member

BASTIAN OBERMAYER
Member

LUISA HANDEM PIETTE
Treasurer

Fundraising and awareness-raising campaign poster displayed in the Paris metro (April 2025).



OUR TEAM |

ALEXANDER ABDELILAH

Investigative journalist

MARIANA ABREU

Investigative journalist

ANOUK AFLALO DORÉ

Journalist - Video manager

SOFIA ALVAREZ JURADO

Investigative journalist

LOUISE BERKANE

Publications coordinator
& IT officer

EMMA CHAILLOUX

Communications
& Partnership manager

WILLIAM CLARK

Communications intern

EMMANUEL COLOMBIÉ

SafeBox Network Coordinator
for Latin America

HÉLÈNE GARRETA

SafeBox Network Coordinator
for Africa & Asia

SARA GUGLIELMI

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

RÉMI HAVET

Administrative & Financial
assistant



Credits: Renaud Bouchez

ELISA KIRKLAND

SafeBox Network Project manager

ELOÏSE LAYAN

Investigative journalist

CLÉMENT LE MERLUS

Deputy Executive Director

FRÉDÉRIC MÉTÉZEAU

Editor

ÉDOUARD PERRIN

Editor

LÉA PERUCHON

Lead coordinator

MICHELLE PONCE

Administrative & Logistics
manager

GHYDA RADWAN

General accountant

LAURENT RICHARD

Founder & Executive Director

PAULINE RIVERA

Fundraising officer

GUILLAUME VÉNÉTITAY

Investigative journalist

OUR NETWORK OF LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

The SafeBox Network team was supported by 4 local correspondents in English-speaking Africa, French-speaking Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico as of December 2025.

EVENTS & VISIBILITY |

At the Théâtre de la Concorde in February

Forbidden Stories took the stage at the Théâtre de la Concorde in Paris for a unique event blending theatre and journalism. Under the direction of French playwright Mélody Mourey, whose plays were nominated for 12 Molière awards, the evening brought back to life the stories for which journalists have lost theirs, sharing Forbidden Stories' mission and message with 650 attendees.



OPINION

Collaborative Journalism Is Our Only Future

A case from Forbidden Stories.

MARCH 28, 2023
By LAURENT RICHARD

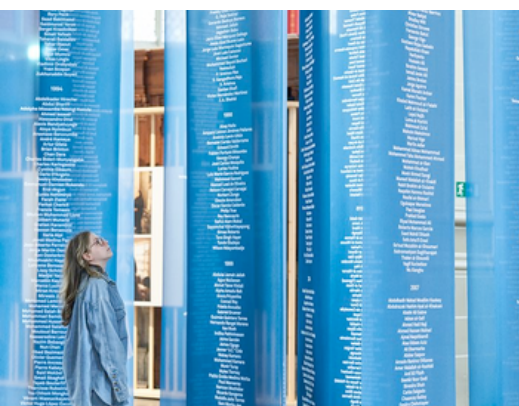
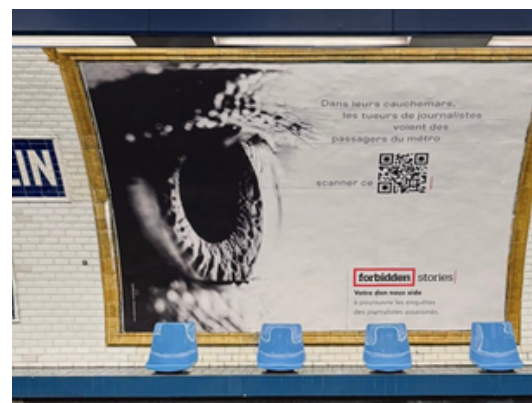


In the Columbia Journalism Review in March

In an opinion piece published in the Columbia Journalism Review, Forbidden Stories' founder delivers an unequivocal message: collaborative journalism is the only way journalism will survive the next decade. As a dangerous narrative stretching from the White House to the Kremlin labels reporters 'enemies of the people', "we must move from the 'lone wolf' model to that of partnership, serving an editorial project that goes beyond the scope of one's own news outlet."

On the Parisian metro network in April

Forbidden Stories ran an awareness-raising and fundraising campaign on the Parisian metro network (RATP) for the first time. Through a series of five powerful visuals, the campaign called commuters' attention to the myriad ways enemies of the press silence journalists and to Forbidden Stories' mission. The campaign was advertised on metro platforms in 112 stations in Paris and nearby suburbs, with a potential viewership of 5.7 million people.



Credits: Tomek Dersu Aaron

At the World Press Photo exhibition from April to September

Our 9-minute documentary from the Gaza Project investigation, which tells the story of Palestinian journalist Fadi Al-Wahidi, was displayed from April to September at the World Press Photo 2025 exhibition in Amsterdam. On October 9, 2024, Fadi Al-Wahidi was reporting alongside a crew of journalists near Jabalia in the Gaza Strip, when what they claim was an "Israeli quadcopter" initiated a chase that ended with Fadi Al-Wahidi being shot in the neck despite wearing his press vest. He survived the attack but is now paralyzed.

At the Sir Harry Evans Truth Tellers Summit in May

Forbidden Stories' founder, Laurent Richard, took part in a panel on the Viktoriia Project at the Sir Harry Evans Investigative Journalism Summit. The discussion showcased Forbidden Stories and its partners' work pursuing Viktoriia Roshchyna's investigation into the fate of Ukrainian civilians detained in Russia.



Credits: Sir Harry Evans Investigative Journalism Summit



At the ABRAJI Annual Congress in July

Our SafeBox Regional Coordinator for Latin America took part in the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism/ABRAJI Annual Congress, the largest investigative journalism event in Brazil. He contributed to a panel discussion on preventing and responding to digital attacks against journalists and held a workshop to expand the reach of the SafeBox Network in Brazil.

At the Ukrainian Investigative Journalists Conference in September

Forbidden Stories' editor, Edouard Perrin, took part in a panel discussion on the Viktoriia Project with colleagues from Ukrainska Pravda and Slidstvo.Info. The discussion centered on investigative findings on Viktoriia Roshchyna's work, detention, and death in Russian captivity, as well as on how newsrooms can join forces to pursue the work of journalists who are victims of war, armed conflict, or held in captivity and are no longer able to report.



At the launch event for the new CLEMI game in October

The French Centre for Media and Information Literacy (CLEMI) launched 'Trafficking in the Amazon', the latest edition of their educational role-playing game 'Classe Investigation', directly inspired by the Bruno and Dom Project, a collaborative investigation coordinated by Forbidden Stories in 2023. The new edition is intended to enhance middle and high school students' awareness of environmental crimes and underscores the role of journalism in investigating these issues.

At Forbidden Stories' first exhibition in October

In the context of the 32nd Bayeux Calvados-Normandy Award for War Correspondents, we organized our first exhibition, dedicated to the Gaza Project. Free and open to the public, it took visitors behind the scenes of the investigation, revealing how Forbidden Stories and its partners continued the work of its Palestinian peers who are no longer able to report, and looked into the targeting of several Palestinian journalists in both Gaza and the West Bank.

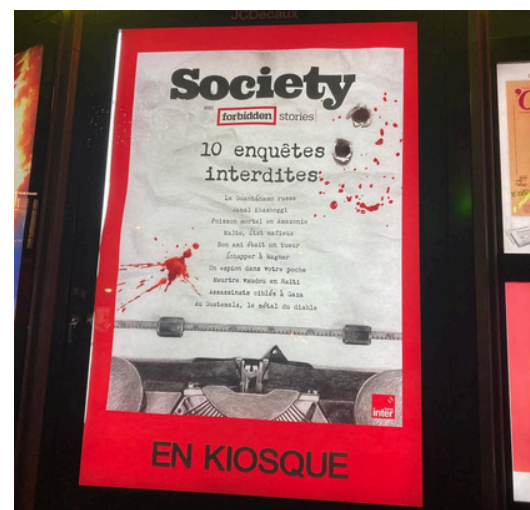


At the 2025 Global Investigative Journalism Conference in November

Forbidden Stories attended the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Malaysia, where the team organized a SafeBox Network workshop for journalists from 12 countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Our founder also participated in a panel discussion titled "Uncovering Environmental Crimes Through Collaboration," sharing insights on building trusted networks among other practical cooperation techniques.

On newsstands: our special issue with Society in December

Forbidden Stories and the French biweekly magazine Society collaborated on a 100-page special issue taking readers behind the scenes of the "forbidden stories" for which reporters lost their lives, retracing eight years of investigations. It features in-depth accounts of key investigations, profiles of reporters who have been murdered or detained and a comprehensive article on the SafeBox Network. More than 50,000 copies were printed and distributed in newsstands across France, as well as in select locations in Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland.



Forbidden Stories has brought its mission to the forefront at several other events and conferences including CENOZO's annual event; the Africa Media Festival; a BUILD grantee meeting organized by the Ford Foundation; the Perugia International Journalism Festival; the Assises du Journalisme de Marseille; Dataharvest; an event hosted by the Council of Europe on Ukrainian Journalists; the World Expression Forum; the 50 Partners Impact Days 2025; the Festival La Mécanique de l'Info; the ACOS Annual Safety Coordination Meeting; and the 2025 IPI World Congress and Media Innovation Festival.

2025 AWARDS

El Mundo Press Freedom Prize

On behalf of Forbidden Stories, our founder Laurent Richard was awarded the El Mundo International Journalism Prize in the Freedom of the Press category in May. The award ceremony took place in January 2026, during which Laurent received the prize from Queen Letizia of Spain, alongside Emma Tucker, Editor-in-Chief of The Wall Street Journal.

Special Award of the European Press Prize

The "Baku Connection" investigation also won a Special Award at the European Press Prize in May.

Assises du Journalisme de Tours' Investigations and Reportage Award

Our Lead Coordinator, Léa Peruchon, received the Assises du Journalisme de Tours' Investigations and Reportage Award for her work on the "Propaganda Machine" in March.



El Mundo International Journalism Prize Ceremony (January 2026)

IJ4EU Impact Award

The “Gaza Project” investigation won the 2025 Investigative Journalism for Europe (IJ4EU) Impact Award in September 2025, marking the fourth time Forbidden Stories has received this award. Our founder received the prize at the iMedD International Journalism Forum in Athens.

Shortlists

The “Viktorina Project” was shortlisted for the 2025 Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism, and the “Gaza Project” was shortlisted for GIJN’s 2025 Global Shining Lights Award in the “Large Outlets” category.



IJ4EU Impact Award Ceremony (September 2025)

SUPPORTERS & DONORS |

To our community of donors and supporters:
THANK YOU!

Our work would not be possible without your generosity and trust. Thanks to you, we are able to continue investigating all around the world and bring to light the stories that enemies of press freedom have tried to silence.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the new institutional donors who supported us this year: the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the MacArthur Foundation, the Knight Foundation, Fritt Ord, and our first major donor via CAF America.

We are also deeply grateful to UNESCO, the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, and Luminate for renewing their support this year. By standing with us year after year, you allow us to plan with confidence and scale up our response to growing threats to press freedom – increasing our pace of publications and extending our support to more threatened journalists across the world.

Our institutional donors in 2025



We would like to share a deeply heartfelt thank you to all of the individuals donors who have supported us this year. Whether you joined us this year or have been with us since the beginning, whether you have donated once or on a monthly basis, every contribution — no matter how large or small — makes a difference. We can never thank you enough for your trust and for believing in our mission.

If you wish to help us continue the work of journalists who have been silenced, you can make a donation to Forbidden Stories through our website.

Donations are tax-exempt up to 66% for French residents.

FRANCE



INTERNATIONAL



“ In times like these, when the truth is so often distorted, we need brave journalists like you to shine a light on the darkest corners where secrets are being held. ”

— **Suzy**,
a donor from
The Netherlands

“ Keep the faith! Democracy has never been more under threat, we need our brave word-soldiers to stand ahead of us to expose wrongdoing and corruption. ”

— **Eve**,
a donor from Ireland

“ Thank you for everything you do, for your courage and determination to bring the truth to light and keep us informed despite the growing threats to our freedom of information and expression around the world! ”

— **Catherine**,
a donor from France

FINANCIAL REPORT |

Revenue*		
	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Foundation grants	€2,395,006**	€1,958,242**
Prizes	€0	€5,750
Public donations	€37,535	€68,588
Donation from Proton	€45,124	€0
Forbidden Films (Dividends)	€0	€100,000
Agreement with an audiovisual production company	€40,000	€20,000
Interests on income	€4,488	€38,945
State aid for work-study programmes	€5,000	€5,500
Participation in conferences	€1,656	€421
TOTAL	€2,528,809	€2,197,446

Expenses*		
	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Staff Salaries and taxes	€1,342,678	€1,713,596
Operating expenses	€724,048	€695,220
TOTAL	€2,066,726	€2,408,816

* Please note that these figures apply to fiscal years from September to August.

** Forbidden Stories received several portions of grants in advance that should be allocated to the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years. The figure presented here therefore deducts those tranches to show the actual total of foundation grants allocated to the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 fiscal years.

CONTACT US

For general questions: info@forbiddenstories.org

For media inquiries: media@forbiddenstories.org

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