

# Media Freedom: *BBC's World Service Presents* highlights journalists forced to work in exile

The recent crackdowns on press freedom in Russia, Afghanistan and Ethiopia have seen more *BBC* teams relocating for their safety, many leaving family and friends behind, with over 300 *World Service* journalists - around 15% - now working in exile.



Source: Royal Television Society [Royal Television Society](#) Over 300 *BBC World Service* journalists - around 15% - work in exile

This new figure was announced at *World Service Presents*, a three-day series of events highlighting the courageous work of journalists around the world, and the state of media freedom globally.

Journalists are facing increasing pressure, including state interference, harassment, and criminal charges, which are consistently used to attempt to undermine their work.

Staff at *BBC News Persian* have been working in exile for over a decade and continue to face harassment and persecution.

Last month, the *BBC World Service* filed an urgent appeal to the UN over abuse of national security and counter-terrorism laws against *BBC News Persian* journalists.



*BBC World Service* files urgent appeal to UN over abuse of *BBC News Persian* journalists

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## *BBC News Russian* journalists

Following the invasion of Ukraine, *BBC News Russian* journalists and their families were moved out of Moscow to the Latvian capital of Riga.

Now, 39 BBC staff remain in Riga, continuing the work of reporting independent and impartial news to audiences around the world in Russian. They also play an active part in countering disinformation about the war.

On 12 April, *BBC Russian* correspondent Ilya Barabanov was labelled as a "foreign agent" by the Russian justice ministry.

Barabanov has written extensively about Russia's war in Ukraine. The "foreign agent" label has been used by the government to marginalise journalists and critics of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Ilya and the *BBC* reject the decision, which they are disputing in court.

Barabanov, says: "The most difficult part about exile is the lack of direct contact with people. We lost the opportunity to talk to our contributors. The inability to travel around Russia, report from the field, talk to real people – that's the hardest part about being a journalist in exile.

"In early April, the Russian authorities designated me a "foreign agent". This affected my status and ability to talk to people. I now must warn my contributors about this new, unpleasant status."



#SAelections24: Initiatives to fight misinformation, provide access to reliable information launched

26 Apr 2024



## Press Freedom under pressure

Talking about press freedom on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May, Liliane Landor, director, *BBC World Service* says: "Press freedom is under increasingly intense pressure at a time when millions, voting in elections around the world, need to be well informed of the choices ahead of them."

The *BBC's* news services are blocked or difficult to access in many countries. Landor states including China, Russia and Afghanistan.

"Our journalists face ongoing harassment and persecution from countries such as Iran and Russia to name but two. *World Press Freedom Day* is a stark reminder of the gravity of the situation underscoring the urgent need for journalists everywhere to be able to do their job unhindered."

The *BBC World Service Presents* showcased the breadth of journalism provided by the *BBC World Service* to 318m people weekly around the globe across 42 language services including English.

For three days from Monday 29 April, screenings, live programme recordings, speeches and panel discussions examined the key issues facing journalism and highlighted the *BBC's* as a trusted international news broadcaster.

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