

JOURNALISM PROTECTION INITIATIVE

Record Numbers of Journalists are Fleeing into Exile

How Should US Fellowship Programs Respond?

Robert Mahoney • March 2026

Preface

This Press Freedom Briefing is adapted from a report commissioned by the advisory board to the Knight Press Freedom Fellowship Program, which was established by the Journalism Protection Initiative in January 2026 to provide refuge and safe haven for journalists facing persecution and repression. The stated goal of the Knight Press Freedom Fellowship Program is to help these journalists stay in the profession.

This briefing was written by Robert Mahoney, a former executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists and news executive for Reuters. It draws on more than 40 interviews with journalists in exile, representatives from press freedom organizations, and fellowship program administrators working across Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Asia.

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The Exodus

Who Is Fleeing and Why?

Journalists are abandoning their home countries in record numbers not only because of war but also because of creeping authoritarianism—the systematic targeting of independent media by governments bent on controlling information and stifling critical scrutiny.

Nearly three-quarters of the world's population lives under autocratic rule, according to the Swedish research project V-Dem Institute. The trend is worsening. "Freedom of Expression is the most hard-hit in this global decline over the last quarter-century: From 52 countries improving and only five declining in 2000 to 44 declining and only eleven improving in 2025," the Institute noted in its 2026 Democracy Report. "Media censorship efforts by the government remains the most frequently used tactic of autocratizers – worsening in 44 countries in the last ten years," it added.

If journalists wish to remain in their home countries, they must either quit the profession or risk jail or violence. So many flee. There is no systematic tracking of this exodus. Estimates of the numbers are regionally based at best. Tallying assistance numbers from emergency support groups such as members of the Journalist in Distress (JiD) network and other media development organizations gives some indication of the scope of the exile crisis. Some exile media outlets also collect numbers of their national or regional diaspora groups. But the landscape is constantly changing, and some journalists do not want to advertise their presence in a safe haven country for security or immigration reasons.

By the numbers: French-based Reporters Without Borders allocated 70 percent of its emergency financial aid in 2025 to exiled journalists, who number more than 700. The IXFund, created in 2022 to support exiled media outlets, has helped around 1,600 media professionals in 95 exiled news outlets in 25 countries.

Regional breakdown:

- **Latin America:** More than 900 journalists are estimated in exile based on research analyzing 2018-2024 displacement, with Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba accounting for 92 percent. Nicaragua alone has forced 283 media workers and journalists into exile, with at least 26 media outlets operating from abroad.

- **Russia and Eastern Europe:** More than 1,000 Russian journalists fled in the 12 months following the February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, many continuing to report from exile while facing transnational persecution.
- **Asia-Pacific:** Myanmar's 2021 military coup prompted numerous journalists to flee to Thailand. Afghanistan's Taliban takeover in 2021 displaced media professionals across multiple countries.
- **Middle East and Africa:** Syria's civil war and rising authoritarianism across Iran, Iraq, and other countries continue generating waves of displacement.

The historical benchmark: In 2012, the United Nations published a groundbreaking Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists. That report did not even mention exile. Today, it threatens to overwhelm the international press freedom agenda—underscoring how rapidly authoritarianism is reshaping the profession.

Surviving in Exile

What Resources Are Currently Available?

For journalists facing persecution, exile once seemed like a temporary refuge. But without proper support systems, few ever return home, and many abandon journalism altogether.

One of the most consistent findings across interviews with more than 40 journalists and support organizations is the existence of a critical "gray area" between immediate emergency assistance and long-term sustainable solutions. This period—often lasting months or even years—leaves many exiled journalists in limbo.

The emergency response gap

Most press freedom NGOs provide emergency funds covering three to six months of living expenses. Once that support ends, however, journalists are alone. They are no longer in acute danger requiring emergency evacuation, yet they remain unable to rebuild careers or secure legal residency. As Ruth Kronenburg, executive director of [Free Press Unlimited](#), describes the problem: "We can support them fleeing the country, put them in a safe house, give them some initial money to deal with trauma, and psychosocial support for the first three months. And then what? That is the gray area."

Annie Zaman, co-founder of [Exile Hub](#), echoes this frustration: "Any organization working on the safety of exile journalists now has mandates only for short term or for long term. Nobody covers mid-term." This gap often forces journalists to abandon their profession. As Kronenburg notes, "Some drop out and choose another occupation because they have to live, right?"

Devastating consequences

After crackdowns the profession typically hemorrhages jobs. No organization tracks exile and job loss statistics globally. But a picture can be pieced together from national and regional reporting by press freedom groups and journalist associations. When Beijing's freedom-stifling National Security Law was enacted in Hong Kong in 2020 some 900 journalists lost their jobs according to [RSF](#). More than 200 of them fled abroad but when the International Federation of Journalists [surveyed](#) them in 2023 only about one third continued to work in the media in exile.

A 2014 [report](#) by the Committee to Protect Journalists found that only about 20 percent of the exiled journalists it assisted remained in journalism. That figure had not changed much a decade later. A [study](#) conducted by Salzburg University of exiled journalists in Germany found similar results: "Long

transition and waiting periods mean that many have to leave their profession. According to expert estimates, only 20 to 30 per cent are able to continue their journalistic work in exile,” it noted. Without sustained funding and professional development opportunities, the vast majority of the world's exiled journalists are lost to the profession.

What support exists today

Organizations like the [JXFund](#) have begun developing structural support for exiled news outlets. Over the past four years, it has implemented 48 projects targeting different needs of both exiled media outlets and freelance journalists, providing support tailored to different phases of exile—from emergency aid through to organizational sustainability and entrepreneurship training. In 2025, the JXFund awarded [38 grants](#) to 30 independent media outlets in exile, demonstrating both the scope of need and the limitations of current capacity.

Structural barriers to resettlement

Journalists fleeing persecution sometimes face insurmountable obstacles to continue working. “Distance from their country creates difficulties in maintaining access to sources. Administrative and legal insecurity in exile—uncertain visa status, drawn out asylum procedures, employment restrictions—hinders their ability to plan investigations or secure stable employment in media outlets,” noted Valentine Gavard, CPJ’s Journalist Assistance Program Coordinator. “Meanwhile, many remain subject to transnational repression, through online harassment, surveillance, pressure on family members back home, or legal actions initiated by the authorities in their home country; this influences the topics they feel safe covering,” she added.

One of the most painful barriers to successful resettlement is family separation. Many journalists from cultures emphasizing extended family bonds either refused to leave their countries or returned despite ongoing danger rather than face exile alone. As Claudia Duque, a Colombian journalist who lived in exile with her daughter and now trains other exiled journalists, explains: “Many journalists have expressed to me their anguish because their children have not been properly integrated in schools, or because they are harassed by other children, or because their wives do not have any work or social activity, or because their parents are depressed in exile.”

The impact on professional outcomes is measurable. Exiled journalists fare far better professionally and emotionally when accompanied by family members. Yet most support programs treat families as an afterthought, if they address them at all. The costs multiply when spouses and children are

included—but so do the prospects for psychological stability and long-term success. Dual support for spouse employment and children's education remains a rarity among existing programs.

Psychological trauma

Exile is not simply displacement; it is psychological uprooting. Mónica Velásquez Villacís, an Ecuadorian journalist who fled to Canada in 2024 after receiving death threats for her reporting, describes the experience starkly: "You are torn away from the place where you built your life...In Canada, the feeling of loneliness was overwhelming—we knew no one, personally or professionally."

Yet mental health support for displaced journalists is frequently minimal or nonexistent. Many arrive in host countries with untreated trauma, and the initial shock of displacement often impairs their decision-making capacity. The practical implications are significant. Unaddressed trauma impairs not only personal wellbeing but also professional judgment, limiting journalists' ability to plan sustainable careers or make sound decisions about future employment. Elisabet Cantenys, head of the [ACOS Alliance](#), recommends a straightforward solution: "At the front end, really put some funds aside and connect these people with trauma support experts."

Immigration barriers

Journalists do not have special immigration status. They are treated as ordinary migrants, asylum-seekers, or refugees—a designation that leaves many in legal limbo for years. The shortage of affordable legal assistance compounds this crisis. Elisa Muñoz, head of the [International Women's Media Foundation](#), notes that "Immigration lawyers are apparently notoriously difficult to find on a pro bono basis." Many journalists languish in legal uncertainty, unable to pursue education, obtain work permits, or plan for the future.

The situation has become increasingly difficult for journalists seeking refuge in the United States. As immigration policies have become more restrictive, obtaining visas and securing asylum status have grown more challenging. Héctor Silva Ávalos, an exiled Salvadoran journalist, describes the burden: "The asylum process is expensive, slow, and frustrating."

For journalists from certain countries, the barriers have become nearly insurmountable. Russian journalists seeking US visas face particular obstacles, with the process often taking months even when approved. This means that finding alternative host countries and supporting journalists through regional hubs have become increasingly important.

Language and employment barriers

Language proficiency is one of the strongest predictors of successful resettlement. Yet many journalists, particularly those from Central America, do not speak English or the languages of their host countries. Cinthia Membreño, coordinator of the [Network of Exiled Media Organizations](#), explains the challenge: "Many journalists in Nicaragua do not have professional-level English proficiency, which limits what they can report on and their ability to communicate or apply for jobs." This language barrier blocks access not only to employment but to government services, training programs, and integration support. It also isolates journalists from mainstream news organizations, leaving them to rely primarily on exile media outlets—which themselves face precarious funding.

Outside of exile media outlets, employment opportunities for displaced journalists are scarce. News organizations in host countries often lack the capacity or inclination to hire journalists they perceive as linguistically or culturally distant. Worse, journalists trained in conflict zones or developing economies may lack the technical skills demanded by Western newsrooms. Bushra Seddique, an Afghan journalist who secured a rare fellowship with The Atlantic, describes the barriers candidly: "I recognized the significant barriers exiled journalists like me face, including language challenges, limited access to higher education, discrepancies in professional experience, and gaps in subject matter expertise, all of which hinder career advancement."

Even when fellowships end, permanent employment rarely follows. Seddique's fellowship did not convert to a full-time role: "I'm still exploring opportunities across a broad range of sectors—not just journalism—including academia and the nonprofit space."

The sustainability problem

The problem extends beyond individual hiring. As [International Media Support](#) notes, their exiled media partners generate only three to seven percent of revenue from commercial sources. Sustainable exile journalism is funded almost entirely through donor support, which means journalists remain dependent on grants rather than building careers based on their work's market value. This structural dependence on donor funding creates vulnerability: when international aid is cut—as happened with the Trump administration's 2025 freeze of USAID programs—entire outlets and networks of journalists face sudden crises.

The Role Of US Fellowship Programs

A Brief History and Current Landscape

US journalism fellowship programs have historically played a significant role in supporting journalists facing persecution and seeking professional development. The Alfred Friendly Press Partners at the University of Missouri has trained more than 90 at-risk journalists from 82 developing countries. The Knight Press Freedom Fellowships at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY supports mid-career journalists from around the world who face censorship or other repressive action. The program aims to enable threatened journalists to stay in the profession. Other US programs include the Knight-Wallace fellowships at the University of Michigan;¹ the Knight Journalism Fellowships (JSK) at Stanford University² and The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University.³

¹ Knight-Wallace Fellowships (University of Michigan)

- **Duration:** 8 months (late August to April)
- **Location:** Ann Arbor, Michigan
- **Details:** Academic year of study and collaborative learning. Fellows pursue individual journalism projects, participate in weekly seminars, and have access to university resources.
- **Stipend:** \$90,000 plus housing allowance and benefits
- **Languages:** Open to journalists worldwide
- **Experience Required:** Minimum 5 years

² John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships (Stanford University)

- **Duration:** 9 months (September to May)
- **Location:** Stanford, California
- **Details:** The Fellowships empower diverse journalism leaders to succeed as effective change agents, sustain democratic communities, and defend press freedom around the world.
- **Stipend:** \$130,000 plus additional allowances
- **Languages:** Open to journalists worldwide
- **Experience Required:** At least 5 years

³ Nieman Foundation Fellowships (Harvard University)

- **Duration:** 9 months
- **Location:** Cambridge, Massachusetts
- **Details:** Academic year program allowing journalists to pursue a study plan, attend seminars, and participate in events[#]
- **Stipend:** \$85,000 plus health insurance and allowances
- **Languages:** Open to journalists worldwide
- **Experience Required:** Varies, generally 5+ years

“The composition of our fellowship cohort varies from year to year,” said Ellen Tuttle, Communications Officer for Nieman. “While we often accept qualified journalists at risk, there’s no easy way to quantify the number or percentage since each class is different.”

Lynette Clemetson, director of Wallace House, agrees. “I cannot characterize what percentage of our classes are under threat from year to year. It changes each year. Typically, our classes have 10-12 U.S. journalists and 4 - 6 international journalists from a range of situations. Ironically, however, some of the foreign fellows in this year’s Wallace class, notably from Somalia and Venezuela, have felt threatened by an immigration crackdown and anti-immigration sentiment in the United States.

“The thing that has been striking this year are the threats our fellows face within the U.S.,” said Clemetson.

These programs address several important gaps. They target established, mid-career journalists who were already making contributions to journalism in their home countries. Critically, they bridge the gray area by providing substantial support—stipends, housing, security training, psychological support, and professional development—for durations longer than emergency grants but shorter than indefinite dependency.

Dawn Garcia, director of the Stanford program, says about one journalist per year, about six percent of overall admissions, has faced threats or repression.

Academic institutions can leverage resources unavailable to most nonprofits

Housing facilities, access to training infrastructure, health services, and institutional legitimacy that can assist with visa applications and immigration processes. This reduces per-fellow costs while enabling more comprehensive support.

Garcia says the case of Mikhail Rubin, a 2025 JSK Fellow and deputy editor-in-chief of Proekt, an exiled Russian investigative newsroom, shows how networked, university-based fellowship programs can bridge structural gaps in exile support.

“Mikhail cannot go back to Russia to do journalism,” Garcia said. “He would likely be imprisoned upon arrival.”

As his JSK fellowship ended, Stanford worked with partner organizations to ensure continuity of support. Through the Journalism Protection Initiative at Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, Rubin was able to continue his work and remain connected to an institutional base, while focusing on building a documentary production arm within Proekt to reach broader audiences. At the

same time, he has continued to produce major investigative work, including one of Proekt's largest projects analyzing nearly 10,000 Russian officials and their families and finding that more than 75 percent of senior figures have placed relatives in government roles, reaching millions of viewers despite platform restrictions. He also co-authored *The Tsar Himself*, a book about Vladimir Putin that examines the system of power around him and challenges key narratives about his leadership.

Responding to new realities

The evolution is instructive. Randy Smith, who runs the Alfred Friendly Press Partners program, notes that the program shifted its approach in 2024 after recognizing a fundamental change in the nature of exile. Roughly one-third of international journalists could no longer return home by 2022 due to rising authoritarianism. This represented a qualitative shift: exile was no longer temporary displacement but permanent resettlement.

Rather than providing training for temporary displacement, the redesigned fellowship focuses on sustainable resettlement, including entrepreneurship training, community building, and long-term career planning. Smith's model demonstrates that university-based programs can leverage institutional resources—housing, training facilities, health services—to keep per-fellow costs manageable while providing holistic support.

As Smith emphasizes: "One solution doesn't fit all people." Successful programs must adapt to individual circumstances: family needs, trauma histories, language proficiency, and security concerns. This flexibility is not a luxury but a necessity. A journalist fleeing with family has different needs than one who fled alone. A traumatized journalist arriving with unprocessed psychological injury requires different support than one with more psychological resilience. Professional backgrounds matter: a television journalist may need different technical training than an investigative print reporter.

How US Fellowship Programs Can Respond

Adapting to the Present Reality

Given the scale of the problem documented above, it is clear that fellowship programs cannot help everyone. The critical question is: How should they prioritize, and what goals should guide their work?

Selection criteria for fellows

Fellowship programs should focus on experienced journalists who have demonstrated commitment to independent journalism and whose return to their home countries is currently impossible. Priority should go to those with demonstrated audience reach, editorial responsibility, or investigative capacity—journalists whose loss represents a tangible loss to global journalism. This requires moving beyond traditional metrics of prestige to recognize diverse forms of journalistic impact: the blogger documenting local corruption may be as critical to democratic accountability as the newspaper editor; the video journalist documenting human rights violations may have as much reach as the print reporter.

Goals beyond individual support

Programs should adopt dual goals: supporting individual journalists to remain active in their profession while strengthening the broader ecosystem of exile journalism. This means designing fellowships that enable fellows to contribute to exile media outlets, mentor younger journalists, and document conditions in their home countries—rather than isolating them in purely academic or professional development tracks.

Beyond the US-based model

Fellowships should recognize that supporting journalists through regional hubs and alternative host countries has become increasingly important. Rather than assuming all exiled journalists should resettle in North America or Western Europe, programs can partner with organizations operating in countries like Costa Rica, Thailand, and Kenya, where journalists can remain close to home countries, maintain sources, and work within shared linguistic and cultural contexts. Organizations like Casa para el Periodismo Libre in Costa Rica and Exile Hub in Thailand provide both logistical support and a professional community.

These regional approaches offer distinct advantages. They cost significantly less than US-based programs (housing and living expenses are dramatically lower), they allow journalists to maintain professional networks closer to home, and they create sustainable ecosystems where exile journalism can take root. For many journalists—particularly those with family obligations in neighboring countries or those who speak Spanish or Thai rather than English—regional hubs may be more appropriate and effective than US-based fellowship programs.

Complementary approaches to individual fellowships:

- **Supporting media organizations, not just individuals:** Rather than only offering individual fellowships, programs can subsidize positions at exiled outlets. The Inter American Press Association subsidizes positions at exiled outlets like La Prensa and Confidencial, paying roughly \$600 per month per journalist. This approach costs significantly less than individual fellowships while maintaining professional journalism communities and reducing isolation. A fellowship-supporting organization can amplify its impact by funding multiple journalists in collaborative settings rather than providing intensive individual support to fewer fellows. This also creates sustainable employment rather than temporary fellowship positions.
- **Peer support networks:** Fellowship programs can facilitate or fund platforms where exiled journalists support one another. Organizations like NEMO create knowledge-sharing platforms that strengthen professional communities. Free Press Unlimited's work in Amsterdam and similar hub cities demonstrates that in-person community dramatically improves mental health and professional outcomes. The psychological benefits are not incidental: research consistently shows that professional community and peer support are among the strongest predictors of mental health stability and career sustainability for exiled journalists. A program that invests in building community alongside individual support will see better outcomes at lower cost.
- **Focused legal and immigration support:** Fellowship programs should partner with or fund specialized legal assistance. Organizations like ECPMF in Germany and Front Line Defenders in Ireland provide legal assistance for journalists navigating immigration, visa, and asylum processes. This sector expertise is essential: immigration law varies dramatically by country, and generic legal assistance often proves ineffective. A fellowship program that partners with immigration specialists can help fellows navigate this landscape far more effectively than programs providing only general legal referrals. Yet this remains underfunded relative to need.

Recommendations

For Fellowship Programs and the Broader Journalism Support Sector

The current exile support structure leaves critical gaps that both fellowship programs and journalism support organizations (JSOs) must address.

For fellowship programs specifically:

1. **Bridge the gray area with mid-career fellowships.** Design fellowships of 18-36 months that explicitly acknowledge the one-to-three-year period when journalists are rebuilding but remain vulnerable. Most programs currently offer three to six months of emergency assistance or require journalists to compete for highly selective academic fellowships. Funding for this gap should become a priority. This is not simply a funding issue but a program design issue. Fellowships should be structured to recognize that meaningful career rebuilding takes time: learning a new language, obtaining work permits, securing housing, processing trauma, rebuilding professional networks, and developing new story ideas all require runway. Programs designed for quick exits or academic achievement will fail to support journalists through genuine transition to sustainable employment.
2. **Include family as core program design.** Programs should explicitly include family members and provide dual support for spouse employment and children's education. This requires deliberate planning: fellowship programs should partner with schools, host employers, and family support organizations. Visas and immigration status should be considered for family members from program inception, not as an afterthought. Childcare support, if needed, should be budgeted. Spousal employment services should include both job placement and professional licensing assistance (many professionals must recertify in new countries). Health insurance for all family members should also be included in countries such as the U.S. where medical costs may not be covered by the state. This comprehensive family support is more costly upfront but dramatically improves outcomes and reduces dropout rates. The costs multiply when spouses and children are included—but so do the prospects for psychological stability and long-term success.
3. **Budget for trauma-informed care from the beginning.** Every fellowship should include professional mental health support as a standard component, not as an afterthought or referral. Partnership with trauma specialists should be built into program design. This means ongoing access to counselors trained in displacement trauma, not one-time psychological assessment.

Many exiled journalists arrive carrying complex trauma: loss of home, threats to family, witnessing violence, legal persecution. Processing this trauma is not a distraction from professional work—it is essential to professional capacity.

4. **Provide substantive language and cultural orientation.** Host institutions should provide intensive language instruction and cultural orientation alongside professional development. This is not incidental. A journalist who cannot navigate basic interactions in the host country language will struggle to find employment, build professional networks, secure housing independently, and integrate into society. Language instruction should be intensive (15-20 hours per week minimum) and sustained (6-12 months). Cultural orientation should address not just abstract concepts but practical navigation: how to approach employers, how professional norms differ, how to navigate bureaucracy, how to build networks in a new context. This is not a peripheral service but a core component of successful resettlement.
5. **Ensure meaningful journalist input in program design.** As Claudia Duque emphasizes, "Many structures and programs impose their ideas without letting journalists participate in their own integration." Fellowship programs should actively solicit feedback from fellows and adjust program design accordingly. This means creating formal mechanisms for journalist voice: advisory groups of current and former fellows, regular structured feedback, and demonstrated willingness to adapt based on that feedback. Journalists understand their own needs better than administrators; programs that ignore this wisdom will underperform.

For the broader journalism support sector:

1. **Create shared pro bono legal networks.** Press freedom organizations should pool resources to create shared pro bono legal networks in major host countries rather than duplicating efforts. This might involve establishing legal hotlines staffed by specialists, creating resource databases of vetted immigration attorneys, developing template documents and guidance for common issues, and coordinating pro bono commitments from law firms. A journalist in Berlin should be able to access reliable legal guidance; one in Cairo should have access to trusted referrals; one in São Paulo should know where to turn. Coordination prevents duplication and extends reach of limited resources. This coordination is essential given the shortage of affordable legal assistance.
2. **Invest in regional solutions.** Rather than concentrating resources on bringing all exiled journalists to North America and Western Europe—an expensive and often unwelcome strategy—the sector should significantly increase investment in regional hubs where journalists

can remain closer to sources and families. Regional hubs have demonstrated effectiveness: journalists in Costa Rica supporting Nicaraguan outlets, journalists in Thailand covering Myanmar, journalists in Kenya covering the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. These journalists maintain sources, speak the relevant languages, understand the political context intimately, and often have family in nearby countries. Supporting regional exile journalism is not only more cost-effective but produces better journalism. It also distributes support geographically, reducing concentration of exiled journalists in a handful of Western cities. This diversifies risk, reduces per-journalist costs, and better serves journalists who may not want to relocate to distant countries.

3. **Develop coordinated funding for the mid-term gap.** The sector should create dedicated funding mechanisms specifically for the 6-36 month period that falls between emergency assistance and sustainable self-sufficiency. This might involve coordinated pledges from foundations, bilateral donors, and multilateral institutions, but also innovative mechanisms: venture funds for exiled media startups, insurance pools covering the gap period, employer matching programs pairing fellowship programs with news organizations willing to commit to post-fellowship employment, or portfolio approaches where some journalists receive full support while others receive partial support stretching resources further. The key is recognizing the mid-term gap as a distinct funding challenge requiring distinct solutions.

Conclusion

The exile of thousands of journalists is not a temporary humanitarian emergency—it is a structural consequence of global authoritarianism. As democracies contract and autocracies expand, this crisis will deepen.

No single fellowship program can solve this problem. But collectively, the journalism protection sector can do far better. Fellowship programs have demonstrated models of what sustained, individualized, comprehensive support looks like. Other organizations can adapt elements of this approach—longer grant periods, family inclusion, trauma support, entrepreneurship training, and meaningful journalist input—within their own resource constraints.

What makes the moment urgent is not only the scale of displacement but the narrowing window for response. A 2012 plan for press freedom did not even identify exile as an issue. Today, it threatens to overwhelm the sector. If the institutions supporting press freedom do not act in the next two to three years to address the structural gaps documented here, an entire generation of experienced journalists will be lost to the profession. The cost—both to individual journalists and to global journalism—could be irreversible.

Fellowship programs have a particular responsibility here. They work with the most vulnerable journalists and often have the institutional resources and funding capacity that smaller organizations lack. They are uniquely positioned to model comprehensive, journalism-centered approaches to exile support. If fellowship programs begin deliberately designing for the mid-career gap, for family support, for trauma-informed care, and for meaningful journalist participation, other organizations will follow. If they neglect these challenges, the sector will continue treating exile as an emergency rather than as the structural reality it has become.

What remains essential is recognizing exile as a permanent feature of contemporary press freedom work, not a temporary crisis. Until press freedom organizations and democratic governments adequately fund the gray area—the critical months and years between emergency response and sustainable career rebuilding—thousands of experienced journalists will continue abandoning their profession. That represents not just a personal tragedy for exiled reporters, but a global loss of journalistic capacity at precisely the moment democracies most need it.

Resources Referenced

- [Journalism Protection Initiative](#)
- [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)
- [Reporters Without Borders](#)
- [IXFund](#)
- [Free Press Unlimited](#)
- [International Women's Media Foundation](#)
- [ACOS Alliance](#)
- [Exile Hub](#)
- [Network of Exiled Media Organizations](#)
- [Inter American Press Association](#)
- [European Centre for Press and Media Freedom](#)
- [International Media Support](#)
- [Alfred Friendly Press Partners](#)
- [V-Dem Institute](#)
- [Front Line Defenders](#)
- [Casa para el Periodismo Libre](#)
- [La Prensa](#)
- [Confidencial](#)