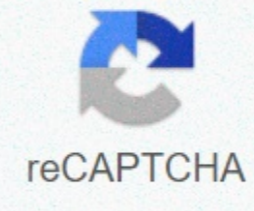




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Reporters without borders ranking 2019

Supported by 2020 World Press Freedom Index Journalists around the world are seeing an increase in fear and violence in their line of work as media freedom faces a further decline, according to data released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) this Thursday. The 2019 World Press Freedom Index categorizes the media climate in more than three quarters of the 180 countries and territories studied as problematic, difficult or very serious. Only 8% have a media climate considered good. The US, Venezuela, Brazil, Iran and China saw their rankings fall. Of those five, China - which a separate RSF report said is increasing its interference and propaganda spread not only locally but in international media - is ranked lowest at 177, while the US drop from three points to 48 is notable as it marks the first time the country's media climate has been labeled as problematic in the index. RSF referenced the attack on Maryland paper Capital Gazette last June when a man opened fire on the publication's offices, killing five staff members. This happened in a democracy, not in a country with a reputation for suppressing freedom of thought, said Cédric Alviani, director of RSF's East Asia Office, to TIME, explaining the shooting as one of the most significant events threatening press freedom in the past 12 months. Also in America, Venezuela slipped four places to 148. Under president Nicolás Maduro's regime, media and social media platforms are regularly blocked, and critics arrested. Maduro has also consistently denied the existence of a humanitarian crisis in the country, blocking the delivery of foreign aid until this week. In February, six American journalists were deported after saying they disliked the questions they asked. Democracy is in great danger, said RSF Secretary General Christophe Deloire. Stopping this cycle of fear and intimidation is a matter of the utmost urgency of all people. At number 172, Saudi Arabia is the richest country in the bottom 10 of the list, falling three places from last year. In October 2018, Washington Post columnist and long-time critic of the regime, Jamal Khashoggi, died at Saudi Arabia's embassy in Istanbul, igniting global concern about an even further deterioration of press freedom in the conservative country. Political leaders constantly denigrate and insult the work of journalists, assuming the media is only driving an agenda whenever they hear something they don't like, Alviani said. Read more: The Guardians and the War on Truth The Trump administration has frequently denounced what it calls the fake news media. In Brazil, which three places in this year's index, President Jair Bolsonaro has also slammed disfavoring stories as disinformation. Many governments go beyond whistleblowers. The editor of Filipino news outlet Rappler, Maria Ressa, was arrested in late March. His

