FINDING HUMANITY PODCAST EDUCATION TOOLKITS
Season 2: Seeking Justice on the Frontlines

A Journalist in Captivity | Jason Rezaian

Listen to the Episode

Finding Humanity is a production of **Humanity Lab Foundation** and **Hueman Group Media**. This educational toolkit was created to help inspire additional learning and engagement around critical social justice and human rights topics surfaced the Finding Humanity podcast. The goal of the toolkit is to provide insight into the political, socical, legal and economic systems that hinder our progress on solving complex social and political problems.

Our goal is to share our insights, research, policy analysis and key findings with hopes to inspire continued engagement and learning around the podcast episodes and the substantial content and topics unearthed in each episode.

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About the Finding Humanity Podcast | Season 2:

For some, fighting for change means risking it all, one's own life. As history has taught us, fighting grave injustice requires courage, perseverance and grit. In season 2 of Finding Humanity Podcast, we unpack the stories of people on the frontlines of change. People who put their bodies on the line to create an equitable and just world. Learn More.

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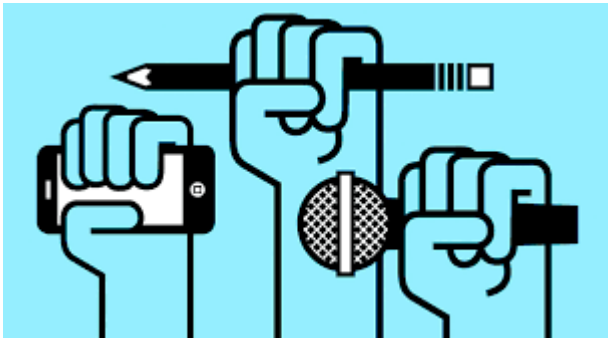
EPISODE

Main topics in Episode: Freedom of journalism, freedom of expression, fake news, hate speech

Short Description of Episode:
This episode tackles the issue of freedom of speech in the context of journalism and the ongoing politicisation of journalists. The Episode aims to situate the experience of Jason Rezaian in this wider context, an issue that is not exclusive to Iran but present globally in countries such as Egypt, Venezuela and the Philippines. Although the focus of the episode is not on US-Iran relations, they are an important backdrop to Jason's experience and his eventual release.

FREEDOM OF JOURNALISM



FREEDOM OF JOURNALISM - OVERVIEW

Freedom of journalism, media freedom, freedom of the press is the principle that communication and expression through various media (printed or electronic) should be considered a right to be exercised freely. Media freedom is held to be necessary for democratic societies. Free media helps ensure that the democratic principles of publicity (referred to as transparency) is satisfied. Freedom of the press implies media responsibility and accountability.

The notion that the press should be free emerged only after the press itself became commonplace. The invention of mechanized printing in the 15th century led to the proliferation of books, newspapers, and other publications that spread ideas faster and farther than ever before. However, because of the potential for these ideas to challenge official power structures, some political and religious authorities actively suppressed publications that they deemed subversive.

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Preserving and promoting press freedom and the free press as a forum for the pluralistic formation of opinions is now even more important. While many countries have come to understand freedom of expression as a common good—indeed, it is one of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—state censorship and regulation of the press have not entirely disappeared. The international organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) monitors conditions for journalists around the world and ranks countries by their degree of media freedom. Countries that rank toward the bottom of RSF's list include those that maintain various forms of state media and impose restrictions on independent outlets, such as China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

It is said that freedom of media is of importance for the **"three D's": Development, Democracy and Dialogue.** Without an open space for the marketplace of ideas to flourish, societies fail to progress by any measure on the human, social and economic development scale.

Sources/Extracted from:
Britannica, Media freedom, 2020 (access), link
Britannica, A Brief History of Press Freedom, 2020 (access), link
UNESCO, Conference paper, Limits to the restrictions to freedom of expression, link

Glossary of basic human rights terms

Human Rights - human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups

United Nations - the largest intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. The UN has 193 members, representing almost all of the world's sovereign states.

United Nations General Assembly - one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. The UN General is

responsible, among other things, for making recommendations through resolutions. The General Assembly is the only UN organ wherein all member states have equal representation.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights - international document adopted by the UN General Assembly that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings. Established in 1948, it is considered a foundational text in the history of human and civil rights.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December 1966. The Covenant commits state parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to a due process and a fair trial. The Convention has 173 parties and six signatories without ratification.

Sources/Extracted from:
OHCHR, Indicators, link
UN, Glossary, link

Quick Facts & Data

PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS

- In 2020, 28 journalists and 3 media assistants were killed in 2020 alone. [1]
- At this time (2020), 245 journalists are imprisoned, 119 citizens journalists and 14 media assistants are imprisoned. [2]
- 1,411 journalists have been killed since 1993 [2]
- Between 1995-2020, 94 foreign journalists were recorded as having been killed. Comparatively, during the same period, 1315 'local journalists' were killed. [2]
- In the past decade, a journalist has been killed on average every four days. [3]
- 9 out of 10 killings of journalists remain unsolved. [3]
- Most journalists were killed in countries with no armed conflict. [3]
- The number of journalists killed in 2019 was historically low - 49 - the lowest since 2003. This figure represents a spectacular 44% fall on 2018 figure. [4]
- More journalists (59% as of 2019) are now being killed in countries at peace than in war zones. [4]
- The deadliest countries for journalists are: Iraq (188 deaths), Syria (134 deaths), Philippines (83), Somalia (68) and Mexico (52) according to data provided by the Committee to Protect Journalists based on 1992-2019 data. [5]

- In 2018, 61% of killed journalists were deliberately targeted because their reporting threatened the interests of certain people in positions of political, economic or religious power or organized crime. [6]
- Bombing by Islamic State in Kabul on 30 April killed nine journalists - it is regarded as the deadliest attack on the media in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, and the deadliest attack against journalists in the world since the 2009 massacre in Maguindanao, Philippines, in which at least 32 journalists were killed. [6]
- China continues to be the world's biggest jailer of journalists - ¾ of them are non-professional journalists who have tried to compensate for the Communist Party's increasingly tight control on the traditional media. [6]
- In Iran, more than ⅔ of the detained journalists are non-professional ones, the victims of the regime's determination to suppress independently reported news and information. [6]
- Taking journalists hostage continues to be a tool of war in the Middle East (esp. Syria, Iraq, Yemen). Armed groups operating in war zones abduct journalists both for ranson and for the purpose of intimidating their colleagues and thereby obtaining their complete submission. [6]

FAKE NEWS

- 74% of global news consumers worried about the spread of fake news about COVID-19 in March 2020. [7]
- 51% of global news consumers have seen fake news on television. [7]
- 44% of global news consumers have seen fake news in print media. [7]
- At its peak, there were around 200 million monthly engagements with fake news stories on Facebook. [8]
- In Croatia, consumers are most likely to actively avoid the news. [7]
- Most trusted sources of general news in 2020 are traditional media, according to 61% consumers (social media - 40%). [7]

[1] Reporters without borders, Barometer, link
[2] UNESCO Observatory of killed journalists, link
[3] UN, Crimes against journalists, link
[4] RSF, Yearly round-up 2019, link
[5] CPJ, Deadliest countries for journalists, link
[6] RDF, Worldwide round-up of journalists killed, link
[7] Statisa, Fake News, link
[8] JournoLink, Fake News Statistics, link

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Topical Background Information & Context

FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

Freedom of opinion and freedom of expression are indispensable conditions for the full development of the person and they are essential for any society. They constitute the foundation stone for every free and democratic society. According to the Human Rights Committee's General comment No. 34, the two freedoms are closely related and freedom of expression provides the vehicle for the exchange and development of opinions. **Freedom of expression is a necessary condition for the realization of the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential for the promotion and protection of human rights.** Moreover, it is integral to the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of assembly and association, and the exercise of the right to vote.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is enshrined in a number of international and regional human rights instruments, including **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (Article 19). The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights stipulates in Article 19 that:

1. Freedom of opinion

Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Freedom of expression and right of access to information

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. Restrictions to freedom of expression

The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

These rights are also represented in other legal instruments: e.g. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights or Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights[1].

Freedom of opinion
Importantly, although Article 19(1) is not explicitly mentioned in Article 4 of the ICCPR, it is not possible to derogate from it, meaning that freedom of opinion is a right that the Covenant allows no restriction or exception. It includes all forms of opinions, such as: political, historic, scientific and religious.

Freedom of expression
Freedom to seek and receive information is to be read as articulation of the right to access to information. Article 19(2) also refers to information held by public bodies (national, local and regional).

Additionally, any "form" and any "means" of information includes: sign language, image, posters and paintings, as well as dress and all forms of electronic and internet-based modes of expression.

Restrictions to freedom of expression
Contrary to paragraph (1) of Article 19 ICCPR, paragraph (2) might be subjected to certain restrictions, as stated in paragraph (3). However, the three level test is required, in order for the interferences to be legitimized. Such restrictions need to be however provided by law and they must conform to the strict test of necessity and proportionality.

Such restrictions must be:

1. provided by law
2. necessary
3. on legitimate grounds

As highlighted in the Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 34, paragraph (3) of Article 19 may never be invoked as a justification for the muzzling of any advocacy of multi-party democracy, democratic tenets and human rights. Nor, under any circumstance, can attack on a person - including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest, torture, threats to life and killing - be comparible with Article 19. It is especially pointed out that **"journalists are frequently subjected to such threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities (...) All such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and**

[1] See a full list here: link

the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress".

Provided by law
Restrictions must be provided by law, formulated with precision and accessible to the public. Additionally, they must comply with the strict requirements of Article 19 (3) and other provisions, aims and objectives of the ICCPR.

Legitimate grounds for restriction

a) respect for the rights or reputations of others
b) protection of national security or of public order, public health and morals

They must be constructed with care (e.g. must not impede political debate. It is not compatible with paragraph (3) to invoke such laws to suppress or withhold from the public information of legitimate public interest that does not harm national security or **to prosecute journalists, researchers, environmental activists, human rights defenders or others, for having disseminated such information.** Additionally, limitations based on the concept of morals must be understood in the light of universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination.

Necessary for a legitimate purpose
Restrictions must comply with the test of necessity - in other words, the protection could not be achieved in other ways that do not restrict freedom of expression. Importantly, they must be necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others. State parties to the Covenant must demonstrate the necessity and proportionality of the specific action taken, in particular by establishing a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the threat.

In relation to the **media freedom,** the General Comment No. 34 establishes that, in particular:

- it is incompatible with Article 19 to refuse to permit the publication of newspapers and other print media other than the specific circumstances of the application of paragraph (3)
- restrictions may never include a ban on a particular publication unless specific content can be legitimately prohibited under paragraph 3
- imposing onerous licensing conditions and frees should be avoided, including on community and commercial stations. The criteria and licence fees should be reasonable and objective, clear, transparent, non-discriminatory

- licencing regimes for broadcasting via media with limited capacity should provide for an equitable allocation of access and frequencies between public, commercial and community broadcasters.
- an independent and public broadcasting licensing authority should be established, with the power to examine broadcasting applications and to grant licenses
- care must be taken to ensure that systems of government subsidy to media outlets and the placing of government advertisements
- private media must not be put at a disadvantage compared to public media in such matters as access to means of dissemination/distribution and access to news
- the penalization of a media outlet, publishers or journalists solely for being critical of the government or the political social system espoused by the government can never be considered to be a necessary restriction of freedom of expression.
- Limited accreditation schemes are permissible only where necessary to provide journalists with privileged access to certain places and/or events. Such schemes should be applied in a manner that is nondiscriminatory and compatible with article 19 and other provisions of the Covenant
- It is normally incompatible with paragraph 3 to restrict the freedom of journalists to travel outside the State party, to restrict the entry into the State party of foreign journalists to those from specified countries or to restrict freedom of movement of journalists and human rights investigators within the State party (including to conflict-affected locations, the sites of natural disasters and locations where there are allegations of human rights abuses). States parties should recognize and respect that element of the right of freedom of expression that embraces the limited journalistic privilege not to disclose information sources

Furthermore, no one should be penalized for statements which are true; neither should they be criminally penalized for the dissemination of hate speech, unless it has been proven they did so with the intention of hostility or violence.

Striking a balance: permissible restrictions to the Article 19

As we established above, freedom of opinion and expression and its corollary - freedom of the press - are the cornerstone of any democratic society. If the individual does not have the right to freely seek, receive and impart her ideas and opinions, she/he will also not be able to benefit from her/his other human right. This also has consequences for the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as laid down in Article 18, for without freedom of expression, as a fundamental principle, this right cannot be practiced.

Article 19 (3)(a) explicitly states that restrictions might be imposed if they are necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others. "Rights" refers to human rights in general (not limited to the scope of the ICCPR) and "others" refers to individuals or a community. Therefore, such restrictions might include for e.g.: prohibition of insults, defamation, untrue assertions. However, to an extent, highly critical and offensive articulations are sometimes permitted, due to the political function of freedom of expression. **In multicultural societies it is necessary to reconcile the right to freedom of expression with other rights, such as the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or the right to be free from discrimination. This reconciliation can become a source of problems, nonetheless some restrictions to the exercise of freedom of expression might be necessary.** Especially, it is crucial to review hate speech and fake new phenomenon from the perspective of freedom of expression and media freedom.

- **Hate speech**

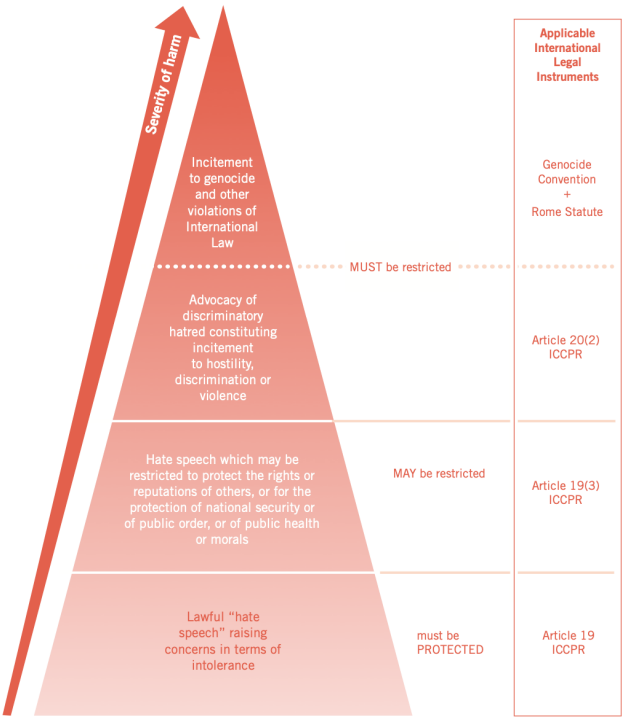
There is no international legal definition of hate speech and the characterization of what is "hateful" is controversial and disputed. Hate speech covers many forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons:

- racial, ethnic and religious hate
- negationism and revisionism
- homophobia
- condoning terrorism and war crimes

Rather than prohibiting hate speech as such, international law **prohibits incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence** (see for e.g. in Article 20 (2) ICCPR, which states that "*any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that consitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law*").

On the other hand, prohibitions that censor offensive viewpoints are often counterproductive to the aim of promoting equality, as they fail to address the underlying social roots of the kind of

The 'Hate Speech Pyramid'



prejudice that drive hate speech. In most instances, equality is better promoted through positive measures which increase understanding and tolerance, rather than through censorship.

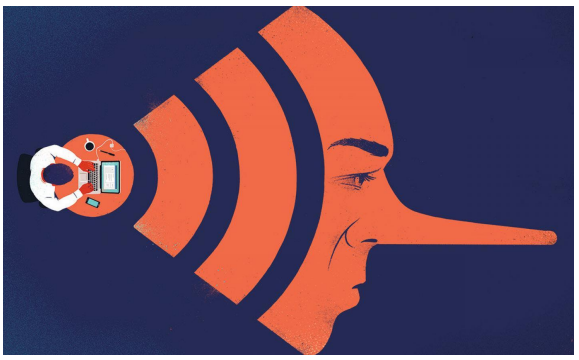
Source: article19.org
ARTICLE 19, a British human rights organization, established a six-part test to assist in determining in which situations the danger of violence, hostility or discrimination is sufficiently present to justify prohibitions on the expressions:

1. Context of the expression;
2. The speaker;
3. Intent;
4. Content of the expression;
5. Extent and magnitude of the expression;
6. Likelihood of harm occurring, including its imminence.

Comprehensive manuals on hate speech can be found here and here (European perspective).

- **Fake news**

Fake news can be defined as the dissemination of false information via media channels (print, broadcast, online). This can be deliberate (disinformation), but can also be the result of an honest mistake or negligence.
There is a growing danger of the development and support of policies that only consider a limited array of evidence. What has been described as **post-truth politics** has to be considered alongside a sceptical attitude in society toward academia, journalism, science and other sources. The importance of 'truth' and 'evidence' has not declined in our current society. Rather, it has been politicized by the increased questioning of what qualifies as a 'legitimate' source of truth. The medium rather than the phenomenon of fake news has changed. Information has become easier and cheaper to share, leading to **'democratization of information'.** What can be identified as particular to our current environment is the effect of fake news in an era of **rising populism**, reinforcing its impact on discourse and the media.



Disinformation on Social Media
Fake news has been present globally in the context of political campaigns. It gained momentum on social media during the US Presidential election

2016. At the beginning, social media companies established themselves not to hold any accountability over the content being published on its platform. In the intervening years, they have since set up a mix of automated and human driven editorial processes to promote or filter certain types of content.

- **Social media and hate speech**

Social media companies have developed different definitions of hate speech and guidelines to regulate it. Since 2017 Twitter has been enforcing new policies towards hate speech, banning accounts or taking down hateful posts in line with their motto: "freedom of expression means little if voices are silenced because people are afraid to speak up. We do not tolerate behavior that harasses, intimidates, or uses fear to silence another person's voice". YouTube has built in a user anonymous reporting system in order to counteract the growing trend of hate speech. Facebook's terms and community standards forbid content that is harmful or which has potential to stir hatred and incite violence. In March 2019 Facebook banned content supporting white nationalism, extending a previous ban of white supremacy.

- **Social media and fake news**

Currently, social media companies have adopted two approaches to fight misinformation. The first one is to block such content outright (e.g. anti-vaccination content by Pinterest). The other is to provide alternative information alongside the content with fake information so that the users are exposed to the truth and correct information. This approach, which is implemented by YouTube, encourages users to click on the links with verified and vetted information that would debunk the misguided claims made in fake or hateful content. If you search "Vaccines cause autism" on YouTube, while you still can view the videos posted by anti-vaxxers, you will also be presented with a link to the Wikipedia page of MMR vaccine that debunks such beliefs.

Recently, in 2020, Twitter has updated its policies to protect against content that could suppress the vote and help stop the spread of harmful misinformation that could compromise the integrity of an election or other civic process. Twitter labels or removes false or misleading information intended to undermine public confidence in an election or other civic process, e.g. information that causes confusion about the laws, disputed claims that could undermine faith in the process itself (e.g. ballot tampering, vote tallying) or misleading claims about the results or outcome of a civic process. Read more about Twitter policies here.

In addition, Twitter has started putting warning messages on tweets containing misleading information about COVID-19.

Fake news laws during COVID crisis: impact on freedom of journalism

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the fake news trend. Worldwide, at least 17 countries used this phenomenon to introduce some form of legislation against "online misinformation". With global levels of press freedom in decline, **this domino effect of "fake news laws" brings with it serious risks to media freedom.** On the one hand, while many of these laws stem from an understandable desire to combat falsehoods, their vague definition and broad scope means that they can be easily manipulated to censor critical reporting. On the other hand, states that have no genuine interest in protecting quality information use the fight against disinformation as a pretext for laws that limit critical speech. For illiberal leaders who have long sought new methods to suppress independent media and dissent online, the health crisis and subsequent "infodemic" presented an opportunity to rush through laws without scrutiny and add another tool to their legislative arsenals. Of course, not all laws passed during the pandemic have been used against the media. In some cases, public pressure and constitutional checks on power ensured that disproportionate laws against disinformation – or other disproportionate emergency measures – were withdrawn or limited to being valid only during the state of emergency.

Sources/Extracted from:
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ARTICLE19, Hate speech explained, link
UUA, Freedom of the Press, link
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ADL, What is fake news, link
IPI media, Rush to pass fake news laws, link
Brookings, How social media combats misinformation, link
NPR, Facebook bans white nationalism, link

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Media freedom is inherently related to the ability for an individual to seek, receive and impart information effectively. Access to information is critical for enabling citizens to exercise their voice, to effectively monitor and hold governments to account, and to enter into informed dialogue about decisions which affect their lives. It is seen as vital for empowering all citizens, including vulnerable and excluded people, to claim their broader rights and entitlements. But the potential contribution to good governance of access to information lies in both the

willingness of government to be transparent, as well as the ability of citizens to demand and use information – both of which may be constrained in low capacity settings.

Media literacy

According to the Center for Media Literacy, media literacy is a 21st century approach to education. Media literacy is the **ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media** in a variety of forms - from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. To become media literate is not to memorize facts or statistics about the media, but rather to learn to raise the right questions about what you are watching, reading or listening to. Although media literacy mostly emphasizes critical thinking, nowadays it is also necessary to understand how information is created (i.e. fake news) and how media outlets are organized.

Journalism

The right of everyone to have access to information and ideas, reiterated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, underpins the journalist's mission. The journalist's responsibility towards the public takes precedence over any other responsibility, in particular towards their employers and the public authorities. Journalism is a profession, which requires time, resources and the means to practise – all of which are essential to its independence.

Journalism conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who disseminate information using websites, blogs and social media is classified as **citizen journalism.** It has expanded its worldwide influence despite continuing concerns over whether citizen journalists are as reliable as trained professionals. Citizens in disaster zones have provided instant text and visual reporting from the scene. People in countries affected by political upheaval and often in countries where print and broadcast media are controlled by the government have used a variety of technological tools to share information about hot spots. Citizen journalism has played a major role in 21st-century political events. Twitter established itself as an emerging outlet for the dissemination of information during the protests following the Iranian presidential election in June 2009. Although the protests did not result in a change in the election results or a new election, the tweets of de facto journalists showed the potential of nontraditional media to circumvent government censorship. In Egypt, activists protesting the government during the uprising of 2011 often organized themselves by forming groups on Facebook.

It is also important to distinguish between journalism and **mass communication.** Journalism in a broad sense is all about news reporting whereas mass communication deals with different mediums of media to spread messages, information or entertain masses. Reporting in newspapers, magazines, T.V., radio or the digital mediums usually comes under journalism. Based on the different mediums, the field of journalism can be divided into three broad categories namely the print (i.e. the newspapers and magazines), electronic (i.e. T.V. and radio) and online journalism. Journalism is about stating facts and telling the readers about the exact things that happened. Whereas, mass communication involves disseminating information to the people at local, national or international level with or without a necessary intent, with the help of multiple media platforms.

Media ethics

At a time of polarized debate and technological change, ethical journalism in the public interest has never been more important. As commercial organisations and governments seek to manipulate news, profit-hungry social media platforms undermine quality journalism, and political propaganda and hate speech masquerade as truth, journalists' unions are campaigning for a media environment which embraces the core values of journalism – truth, independence and the need to minimise harm. Media ethics deals with ethical questions about how the media should use text and pictures, promotes and defends values such as universal respect for life and the rule of law and legality.

There are five core principles of journalism, according to Ethical Journalism Network:

1. Truth and Accuracy
2. Independence
3. Fairness and impartiality
4. Humanity
5. Accountability

The IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists has become the principal text for journalists and their unions to enforce ethics and quality in journalism.

Right to information and whistle-blowing

Whistleblower an individual who, without authorization, reveals **private or classified information** about an organization, usually related to wrongdoing or misconduct. Whistleblowers generally state that such actions are motivated by a commitment to the public interest. Although the term was first used to refer to public servants who made known

governmental mismanagement, waste, or corruption, it now covers the activity of any employee or officer of a public or private organization who alerts a wider group to setbacks to their interests as a result of waste, corruption, fruco, or profit seeking.

That **whistleblowing can sometimes be justified** does not imply either a moral or a legal obligation to act. For one thing, failure to go public is an act of omission rather than of commission, and there is considerable philosophical debate about the moral imperative to act in order to prevent harm. Even if it is thought morally obligatory to do so, it is only in rare instances that the law requires an individual to act to prevent harm. Finally, given that whistleblowers may be made to suffer, it might be too burdensome to require potential whistleblowers to act against their own interests. Currently, whistleblower protection programmes have been included in many national laws. Read more about famous whistleblowers, such as Edward Snowden or Chelsea Manning, who exposed massive wrongdoings here or here.

Sources/Extracted from:
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Ethical journalism, 5 principles, link
Britannica, Citizen journalism, link
Jargan, Journalism v mass communication, link

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests**.**

Goal 16 of the SDG is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Goal 16 consists of twelve specific targets to create action to promote peace, justice and strong institution.

SDG Goal 16.10

The 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development** adopted by the UN General Assembly, includes Goal 16.10 to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements". Indicators of these targets are assaults of journalists etc. (16.10.1) and guarantee for access to information (16.10.2). See metadata for SDG indicators for target 16.10 here.

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

The Press Freedom Index is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Reporters Without Bordersbased upon the organisation's own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year. It intends to reflect the degree of freedom that journalists, news organisations, and netizens have in each country, and the efforts made by authorities to respect this freedom. Reporters Without Borders is careful to note that the index only deals with press freedom and does not measure the quality of journalism nor does it look at human rights violations in general.

The report is based on a questionnaire using six general criteria:

1. Pluralism
2. Media independence
3. Environment and self-censorship
4. Legislative framework
5. Transparency
6. Infrastructure

According to the 2020 report, Norway was ranked as the freest and safest countries for the media, with Finland being the 2nd and Denmark - 3rd.

According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World data, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. The trend is most acute in Europe, previously a bastion of well-established freedoms, and in Eurasia and the Middle East, where many of the world's worst dictatorships are concentrated. If democratic powers cease to support media independence at home and impose no consequences for its restriction abroad, the free press corps could be in danger of virtual extinction.

MEDIA CENSORSHIP

The history of the written word has always been a story of censorship and the destruction of writings. Writings were - and still are - censored to prevent unwelcome ideas from being distributed and preserve state or ecclesiastical power.

Some countries flout the international standard of media freedom by banning or severely restricting independent media and intimidating journalists into silence with imprisonment, digital and physical surveillance, and other forms of harassment.

In the top three countries – Eritrea, North Korea, and Turkmenistan – the media serves as a mouthpiece of the state, and any independent journalism is conducted from exile. The few foreign journalists permitted to enter are closely monitored

Other countries on the list use a combination of blunt tactics like harassment and arbitrary detention as well as sophisticated surveillance and targeted hacking to silence the independent press. Saudi Arabia, China, Vietnam, and Iran are especially adept at practicing these two brands of censorship: jailing and harassing journalists and their families, while also engaging in digital monitoring and censorship of the internet and social media.

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The list addresses only those countries where the government tightly controls the media. The conditions for journalists and press freedom in states such as Syria, Yemen, and Somalia are also extremely difficult, but not necessarily attributable solely to government censorship. Rather, factors like violent conflict, insufficient infrastructure, and the role of non-state actors create conditions that are dangerous for the press

Sources/Extracted from:
CPJ, Most censored countries, link
Freedomhouse, Media freedom, link
Artsandculture, Censorship and freedom of the press, link

PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS

The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under attack, and part of the assault has come from an unexpected source. Elected leaders in many democracies, who should be press freedom's staunchest defenders, have made explicit attempts to silence critical media voices and strengthen outlets that serve up favorable coverage. The trend is linked to a global decline in democracy itself: The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming.

According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World data, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. The trend is most acute in Europe, previously a bastion of well-established freedoms, and in Eurasia and the Middle East, where many of the world's worst dictatorships are concentrated. If democratic powers cease to support media independence at home and impose no consequences for its restriction abroad, the free press corps could be in danger of virtual extinction.

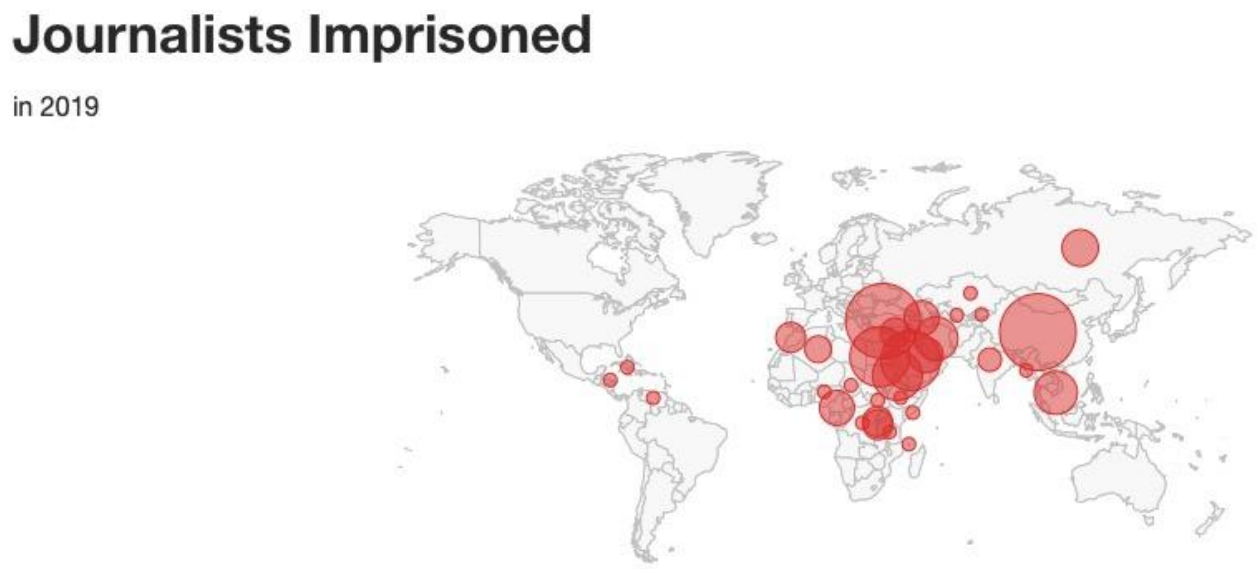
The challenges that journalists encounter in undertaking their professional work are manifold. While the death or plight of foreign journalists in armed conflict situations frequently draw the attention of the international community, local journalists continue to face daily challenges in situations that have not reached the threshold of an armed conflict, but may be characterized by violence, lawlessness and/or repression. These range from restrictions to movement, including deportations and denial of access into a country or a particular area; arbitrary arrests and detention, particularly during public crises or demonstrations; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual violence against female journalists; confiscation of and damages to equipment, information theft, illegal surveillance and office break-ins; intimidation, including summons to police stations for

questioning, harassment of family members, death threats, stigmatization and smear campaigns to discredit journalists; abductions or enforced disappearance to killings.

Attacks against journalists may be perpetrated by a range of actors – State or non- State – such as organized crime groups, terrorist groups, security forces or militia. Journalists are placed at risk of attack for documenting and disseminating information deemed to be "inconvenient," including on human rights violations, environmental issues, corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, public crises, emergencies or public demonstrations.

In addition to articles 19 of the Declaration and of the Covenant, which protect the right of journalists to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of any kind through any medium of communication, journalists are also protected under other provisions in international human rights law, including the right to life, freedom from torture and arbitrary arrests and detention, and the right to an effective remedy.

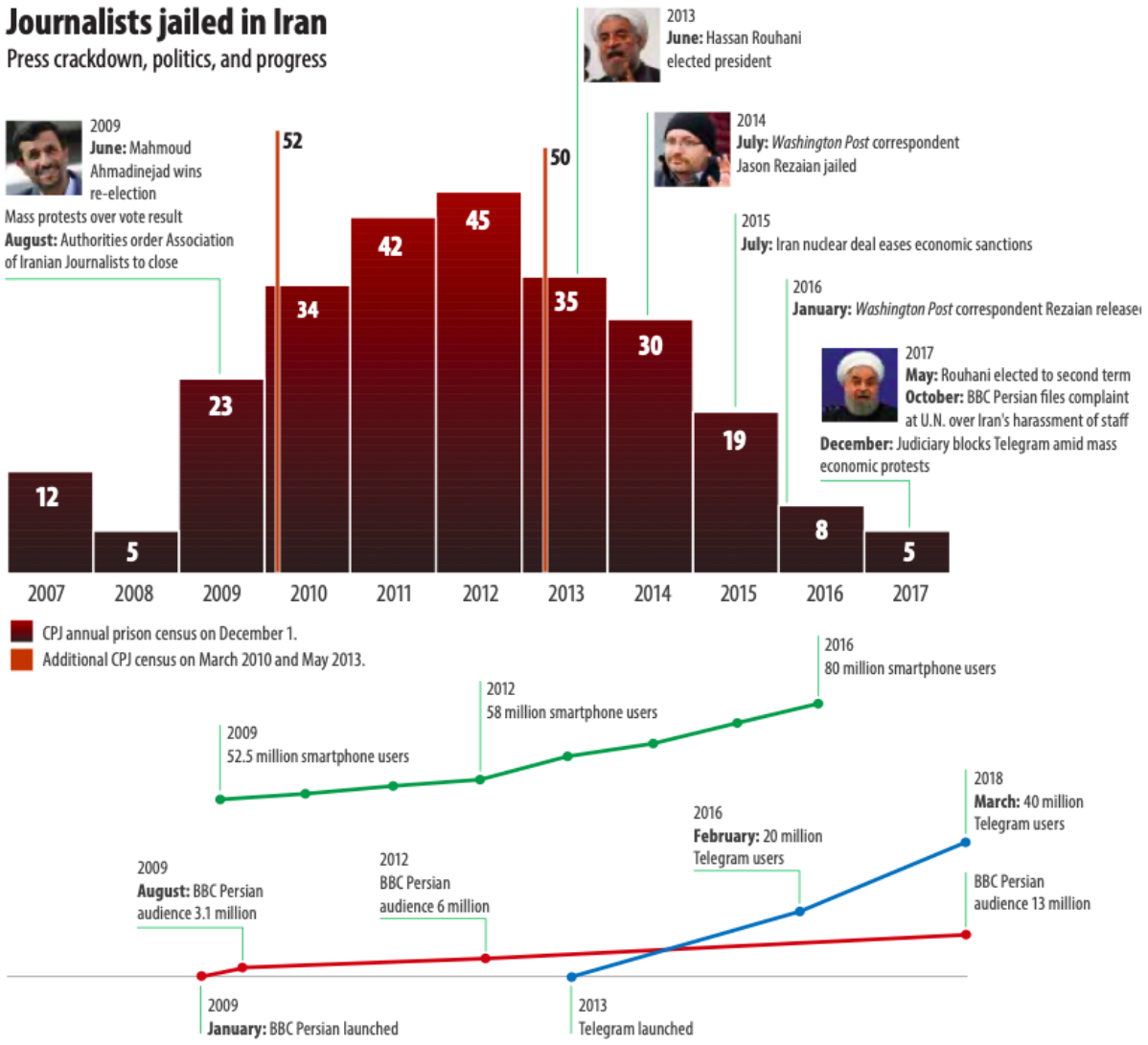
Sources/Extracted from:
Freedomhouse, Media freedom, link
UN, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, link



Source: CPJ

***RELATED TO THE EPISODE:* IRAN**

Iran's government jails journalists, blocks websites, and maintains a climate of fear with harassment and surveillance, including of journalists' families. Domestic media must adhere to tight government controls. All journalists working in Iran must receive official accreditation;



Source: CPJ research, BBC, ITU database, news reports. Images: AFP, AP

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those permissions are regularly suspended or revoked. Foreign bureaus are permitted but work under intense scrutiny; correspondents from international outlets have had their permission to work suspended for periods of time, and in some cases permanently. Authorities arrest and impose harsh prison sentences on journalists who cover topics deemed sensitive, including local corruption and protests. The government suppresses online expression by spying on domestic and international journalists, jamming satellite television broadcasts, and blocking millions of websites and key social media platforms, according to the Center for Human Rights in Iran and U.S. Congress-funded Radio Farda. When nationwide anti-government protests took place in late 2017 and early 2018, authorities throttled and shut down the internet and mobile networks, according to Newsweek. They banned circumvention tools and used hacking and trolling campaigns targeted at domestic and international reporters, Radio Farda reported. The National Cyberspace Council has banned Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube–and the messaging apps Telegram and WhatsApp–but these are accessible via VPNs, according to Bloomberg.

In January 2019, Iran's judiciary sentenced Yashar Soltani to five years in prison on anti-state charges after he published a series of articles that unveiled alleged corruption in Tehran land deals. Soltani worked for Memari News, the now-defunct independent website focusing exclusively on architecture and urban affairs.A man uses his cell phone, with a photo of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Tehran, Iran, on October 13, 2017. The government in recent years has stepped up internet and digital censorship, including bans on social media sites and messaging apps.

Sources/Extracted from:
Source: CPJ
CPJ, Most censored countries, link

SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

Promoting the safety of journalists and combating impunity for those who attack them are central elements within UNESCO's support for press freedom on all media platforms. On average, every five days a journalist is killed for bringing information to the public. Attacks on media professionals are often perpetrated in non-conflict situations by organised crime groups, militia, security personnel, and even local police, making local journalists among the most vulnerable. These attacks include murder, abductions, harassment, intimidation, illegal arrest, and arbitrary detention.

Impunity for crimes against the media fuels and perpetuates the cycle of violence and the resulting self-censorship deprives society of information and further affects press freedom. It directly impacts the United Nations' human rights based efforts to promote peace, security, and sustainable development.

Under the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, actions are structured around six axes: standard-setting and policy making; awareness-raising; monitoring and reporting; capacity building; academic research; and coalition building. The UN Plan of Action is the first concerted effort within the UN system to address these issues via a multi-stakeholder and holistic approach and brings together UN bodies, national authorities, media, and civil society organizations. It contributes directly to the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since 1997, UNESCO's Director-General has condemned each killing of a journalist, and has compiled the biannual Report on The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity to the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) since 2008. It consists of updated information voluntarily received from Member States on the judicial status of cases of killed journalists.

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists is a UN-recognized day observed annually on 2 November.

Sources/Extracted from:
UNESCO, Safety of Journalists, link
UN, International Day to End Impunity, link

Proposed Discussion Questions

- What role do journalists play in society?
- How can we ensure that we preserve a safe space for journalists?
- What does "media freedom" mean to you? Why is it important?
- What measures can we take to counter hate speech?
- Which types of hate speech should be prohibited and under which circumstances?
- Have you ever been tricked by fake news? What can we do to spot fake news?
- How is fake news harmful for both individuals and society?
- To what extent can access to information and government transparency, advance the claims of poor and marginalised groups and make governments accountable?

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- Why are protections needed for whistleblowers? What is their role in today's society?
- How to strike a balance between limiting hate speech without restricting the right of freedom of expression?
- How to protect freedom of expression and opinion in the world of fake news and post-factual truths?
- Is there a way of regulating hate speech/fake news without limiting certain viewpoints (illiberal, religious etc.)?

Additional Reading & Follow up

Learn more about:

Jason Rezaian:

- Story about the arrest in Iranian jail, the Guardian, link
- Articles in the Washington Post, link

David Kaye:

- Biography of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, OHCHR, link
- UCI Law, Profile, link

Farnaz Fassihi's work:

- Articles in New York Times, link

Protection of journalists:

- UNESCO Observatory of killed journalists, link
- Committee to Protect Journalists, link
- Reporters without borders, link
- Global Investigative Journalism Network, link
- CoE, Safety of Journalists, link

Hate speech:

- Silence hate, Hate speech, link
- CoE, Hate speech and violence, link
- ARTICLE19, Hate Speech Explained. A Toolkit, link

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- ARTICLE19, Hate Speech on social media platforms, link

Fake news:

- More information about COVID-19-related fake news, link
- European Commission, Tackling online disinformation, link
- Organization that protects communities from disinformation, First draft, link
- Google fact check toolkit, link

Episode Speaker Biographies

[Main Story Biography] JASON REZAIAN | Journalist, the Washington Post, CNN Contributor

Jason Rezaian is a journalist who has long covered Iran, the Middle East and U.S. Iran relations. Twitter: @jrezaian, @washingtonpost, @postopinions

[Expert Biography] David Kaye | Professor of Law, UC Irvine School of Law

David Kaye is a clinical professor of law at the University of California, Irvine. From 2014 – 2020 he served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. He is also the author of Speech Police: The Global Struggle to Govern the Internet (2019). His reporting for the UN addressed, among other things, encryption and anonymity, the protection of whistleblowers and journalistic sources, the regulation of online content by social media and search companies, Artificial Intelligence technologies and human rights, the private surveillance industry, and online hate. A member of several boards dealing with freedom of expression, online and offline, since October 2020 he has been serving as the Independent Chair of the Board of the Global Network Initiative. He has also written for international and American law journals and numerous media outlets. He began his legal career with the U.S. State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and is a former member of the Executive Council of the American Society of International Law. Twitter: @davidakaye, @UCILaw

[Expert Biography] Farnaz Fassihi | Reporter, The New York Times

Farnaz Fassihi is a reporter for The New York Times writing about Iran. Previously she was a Senior Writer and a war correspondent for 17 years at The Wall Street Journal. She was based in the Middle East covering wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza, Syria and uprisings from Iran to Turkey and the Arab Spring for 14 years. From 2016 to 2019 she was part of the WSJ's national security team covering foreign policy and diplomacy based at the United Nations. Fassihi has been a journalist for 30 years, she was an investigative reporter at the Star-Ledger in New Jersey covering the intersection of organized crime and local government and a local news reporter at the Providence Journal in Rhode

Island. She has won more than a dozen national journalism awards and was a recipient of an Ellis Island Award and a Nieman fellowship at Harvard. She is the author of a book on the Iraq war, "Waiting for An Ordinary Day." Twitter: @farnazfassihim @nytimes

[Host Biography]Hazami Barmada| Founder & CEO, Humanity Lab Foundation; co-Executive

Producer & Host, Finding Humanity Podcast. Hazami is a social entrepreneur, thought leader, and public affairs and social impact expert recognized by Forbes as an "inspirational agent of change." She has consulted for many leading global brands including the United Nations, United Nations Foundation, Aspen Institute, and the Royal Court of the Sultanate of Oman. Among her posts at the United Nations, she served as the Coordinator for the United Nations Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit, an Advisor to the first-ever United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Envoy, as a member of the United Nations SDG Strategy Hub for the launch of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Hazami has a Masters from Harvard University where she was an Edward S. Mason Fellow in Public Policy and Management. She studied social and public policy at Georgetown University and has a BA in Anthropology and Sociology. Twitter: @hazamibarmada

PODCAST PRODUCTION ORGANIZATIONS & TEAM

Humanity Lab Foundation is a disruptive empathy-driven movement at the intersection of public policy and people power. As a collective of enablers, the Humanity Lab facilitates public engagement and social innovation to drive progress on human development and create an equitable and just world. Through a diverse portfolio of programs and initiatives, the Humanity Lab enhances global development systems by convening, connecting and collaborating with everyday people to solve complex challenges and drive social change. The Humanity Lab aims to: unlock human potential, break down barriers, provoke thought-leadership and knowledge sharing, facilitate partnerships, catalyze action, and democratize access to the power that shapes the world. The Humanity Lab has collaborated with a large array of partners including the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Office of Partnerships, United Nations, Qualcomm, The Elders, Warner Music, MTV and the Washington Diplomat.

Hueman Group Media ("HGM") is an award-winning podcast company for social change. HGM produces impactful and high-caliber podcasts for leading nonprofit organizations, purpose-driven companies and thought leaders, amplifying conversations around today's most important causes and issues — including gender inequality, climate change, racial injustice, and mental health. HGM podcasts cater to diverse, socially conscious, and deeply curious audiences. With the power of storytelling and expert-driven conversations, HGM activates listeners to take action and make a positive impact in their communities. HGM has worked with notable organizations including UN Women, The Elders, SAP, GoDaddy, CORE Response, and MIT Solve.

Podcast Production Team:

Ayesha Amin, Fact-Checking, Policy, Research
Maverick Aquino, Mixing, Editing, Music
Hazami Barmada, Co-Executive Producer & Host
Diana Galbraith, Assistant Producer & Research
Camille Laurente, Co-Executive Producer
Karolina Mendecka, Fact-Checking, Policy, Research
Fernanda Uriegas, Associate Producer
Martyna Wanat, Fact-Checking, Policy, Research

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