

## The international press and human rights protection through global media coverage and advocacy mechanisms in contemporary society

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### Abstract

This research review examines the evolving relationship between international press and human rights protection through global media coverage and advocacy mechanisms in contemporary society. As human rights violations occur worldwide, media organizations employ various approaches to document abuses, from traditional investigative journalism to digital verification techniques and collaborative cross-border networks. The review analyzes historical developments in media-based human rights advocacy, contemporary reporting mechanisms, and case studies demonstrating media impact on human rights outcomes. Despite significant achievements, journalists face numerous challenges including safety risks, access restrictions, digital threats, commercial pressures, and attention fatigue. The article identifies emerging best practices such as collaborative investigations, trauma-informed reporting, solutions-oriented coverage, and strategic partnerships between media and human rights organizations. These approaches help overcome structural obstacles while strengthening accountability for violations. The review concludes that while the international press faces significant constraints in human rights work, it remains an essential mechanism for protection through its capacity to document violations, amplify marginalized voices, shape public opinion, influence policy decisions, and promote accountability for abuses worldwide.

**Keywords:** Human Rights Journalism; Media Advocacy; Press Freedom; Digital Verification; Collaborative Reporting; Trauma-Informed Reporting

### 1. Introduction

The international press plays a key role in protecting human rights around the world. When human rights violations occur, especially in remote areas or under repressive governments, media coverage brings these abuses to global attention. This visibility often leads to action from international organizations, foreign governments, and concerned citizens who might otherwise remain unaware of such violations.

Media organizations use various tools to document human rights abuses, including investigative reporting, photography, documentaries, and digital storytelling [1]. These methods help break through the silence that often surrounds human rights violations. The resulting coverage can generate public concern, diplomatic pressure, and sometimes direct intervention. As news spreads about human rights abuses, perpetrators face increased scrutiny and potential consequences for their actions.

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However, the relationship between media coverage and human rights protection faces many challenges. Political interests, commercial pressures, access restrictions, and information manipulation can all limit effective reporting [2]. Additionally, not all human rights violations receive equal coverage, with some crises receiving intense media attention while others remain largely ignored, often reflecting geopolitical priorities rather than the severity of abuses.

The media landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. Traditional news organizations now operate alongside digital platforms, social media networks, and citizen journalists. These changes have created new opportunities for human rights reporting, allowing for faster information sharing and more diverse voices. However, they have also introduced new challenges, including the spread of misinformation and difficulties in verifying information from conflict zones [3,4].

This review examines how the international press contributes to human rights protection in today's world. It explores the methods journalists use to report on human rights issues, the challenges they face, and the impact their work has on policy and public opinion. The review also considers how media organizations collaborate with human rights groups, international bodies, and local activists to strengthen their reporting and advocacy efforts.

Despite significant obstacles, the international press remains essential for human rights protection through its ability to document violations, amplify victims' voices, shape public opinion, influence policy decisions, and promote accountability [5]. As press freedom faces growing threats worldwide, understanding and supporting the connection between media and human rights becomes increasingly important for protecting fundamental rights and freedoms in the 21st century [6].

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## **2. Global Media Landscape and Human Rights Discourse**

### **2.1. Evolution of Media Ecosystems and Human Rights Reporting**

Today's global media environment combines traditional news organizations with newer digital platforms, creating a complex ecosystem for human rights reporting [7]. Major international news outlets like BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera maintain dedicated human rights coverage with specialized correspondents who develop expertise in this field. These organizations often have the resources to maintain bureaus in multiple countries and support in-depth investigative work. Alongside these established media institutions, digital-native outlets like The Intercept and ProPublica have emerged with strong focuses on human rights issues, often employing innovative reporting methods. Organizations like Bellingcat use open-source intelligence techniques to verify and document human rights abuses, while podcasts and documentary series provide deeper explorations of complex human rights situations than daily news reporting allows [8,9].

The digital revolution has democratized human rights reporting in important ways. Citizen journalists using smartphones can document abuses in real-time, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and government censors [10]. Social media platforms enable rapid distribution of evidence that might otherwise remain hidden, as seen during the Arab Spring uprisings and more recent protest movements. However, this democratization brings challenges of verification and context. Without professional editorial standards, misinformation can spread alongside genuine documentation [11]. Additionally, the business models of digital platforms often prioritize engagement over accuracy, sometimes amplifying sensationalized content rather than nuanced human rights reporting [12]. Despite these challenges, the diversification of media sources has generally strengthened human rights coverage by creating multiple channels through which violations can be exposed.

### **2.2. Key Stakeholders and Collaborative Networks**

The landscape of human rights reporting involves numerous stakeholders working in formal and informal networks [13]. Beyond journalists themselves, human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch play crucial roles by conducting systematic research, producing detailed reports, and developing relationships with affected communities. These organizations frequently collaborate with media outlets, providing verified information, expert analysis, and access to witnesses that journalists might otherwise struggle to reach. This connective relationship helps specialized human rights groups gain wider audiences for their findings while giving journalists access to credible, in-depth research.

International institutions, particularly the United Nations and its various agencies, contribute significantly to the human rights information globally [14]. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, special rapporteurs, and investigative commissions produce authoritative documentation that journalists often cite. Regional bodies like the

European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights similarly generate important human rights findings that inform media coverage [15,16]. Local human rights defenders and civil society organizations provide crucial ground-level documentation and contextual understanding, though they often face the greatest risks for their work. When these diverse stakeholders collaborate effectively, they create powerful networks for human rights reporting that can overcome many obstacles to accurate coverage, including access restrictions, security threats, and resource limitations.

### **2.3. Press Freedom and Human Rights Outcomes**

Research consistently shows strong correlations between press freedom and broader human rights protections. Countries with independent media typically experience fewer serious human rights violations, as journalists can expose abuses and hold authorities accountable [17]. Organizations like Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists document this relationship through annual indices and reports that track press freedom violations worldwide. These measurements reveal that restrictions on journalism often precede or accompany wider human rights abuses, with media repression serving as both a warning sign and facilitating mechanism for other violations.

The relationship between press freedom and human rights protection works in multiple directions. Government restrictions on media directly violate the human right to freedom of expression and access to information [18]. Additionally, when journalists face censorship, imprisonment, or violence, they cannot effectively monitor and report on other human rights abuses, creating conditions for violations to occur with impunity. Conversely, when journalists can work freely, they create transparency that discourages violations and builds pressure for accountability when abuses do occur. This dynamic explains why authoritarian regimes typically target independent media as a priority, recognizing that controlling information flow is essential to maintaining systems of oppression. The global decline in press freedom documented over the past decade therefore represents a serious threat to human rights protection mechanisms, reducing the media's capacity to serve as an effective watchdog against abuses.

### **2.4. Media Pluralism and Representation in Human Rights Coverage**

The diversity of media sources, perspectives, and formats significantly impacts the quality and comprehensiveness of human rights reporting. Media pluralism ensures that different types of rights violations receive attention and that diverse victims have their stories told. In homogeneous media environments, certain abuses particularly those affecting marginalized communities often receive inadequate coverage. Studies show that more pluralistic media landscapes tend to produce more robust human rights reporting, as diverse outlets compensate for each other's blind spots and resist various forms of pressure [19].

Issues of representation within media organizations also affect human rights coverage. Newsrooms with diverse staff bring varied life experiences and cultural understandings that enhance reporting on different communities. When journalists share linguistic, cultural, or experiential connections with affected populations, they often develop more nuanced and accurate human rights stories. Furthermore, local journalists typically have deeper contextual knowledge than international correspondents parachuting into crisis situations, though they may face greater risks and pressures when reporting on abuses in their own countries. The most effective human rights coverage often combines local knowledge with international platforms, allowing stories to reach global audiences while maintaining authentic representation of affected communities [20]. Media organizations increasingly recognize this dynamic, developing collaborative models that prioritize partnerships with local journalists and affected communities rather than extractive approaches to human rights reporting.

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## **3. Historical Development of Media-Based Human Rights Advocacy**

### **3.1. Early Examples of Media Impact on Human Rights**

Media coverage of human rights abuses has influenced public opinion and policy responses since the early days of mass media. In the late 19th century, newspaper reports about colonial atrocities in the Congo Free State under King Leopold II of Belgium helped mobilize one of the first international human rights campaigns [21]. Journalists like E.D. Morel and missionaries who documented the brutal exploitation of Congolese people used photographs of victims with severed hands to provide visual evidence that shocked European and American audiences [22]. This coverage eventually contributed to reforms in colonial administration, demonstrating the power of media to generate moral outrage and political pressure around human rights issues.

During the early 20th century, media reporting played significant roles in various human rights contexts. Coverage of Armenian massacres during World War I helped document what would later be recognized as genocide, though

international response remained limited **[23 It is going to be an image]**. In the 1930s, journalists reporting on the Spanish Civil War brought attention to civilian suffering in new ways, with writers like Ernest Hemingway and photographers like Robert Capa creating powerful narratives and images that influenced international perceptions [24]. Similarly, early reports about Nazi persecution of Jews, though often underplayed or buried in Western newspapers, created at least some documentation of abuses that were later fully revealed.

The post-World War II period saw media coverage of the Holocaust and Nuremberg trials help establish human rights as a matter of international concern rather than internal state affairs. This coverage contributed to the normative framework that would become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 [25]. Throughout the Cold War era, media reporting on human rights often reflected ideological divides, with Western press emphasizing civil and political rights violations in Communist countries while Soviet-aligned media focused on economic inequalities and racial discrimination in capitalist nations. Despite these limitations, journalists on both sides occasionally broke through propaganda barriers to document significant abuses, establishing precedents for later human rights reporting.

### **3.2. Technological Developments and Their Impact**

Technological advances have repeatedly transformed human rights reporting throughout history. The invention of portable cameras allowed photojournalists to document atrocities with visual evidence that written accounts alone could not provide. During the Vietnam War, television brought graphic images of civilian suffering directly into American living rooms, contributing to antiwar sentiment and raising awareness about war crimes [26]. This period marked a turning point in visual human rights reporting, demonstrating how powerful images could generate immediate emotional responses and political pressure.

Satellite communications in the 1980s and early 1990s enabled more timely reporting from remote locations, reducing governments' ability to control information flows during crises. CNN's live coverage of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 and the first Gulf War in 1991 established the concept of the "CNN effect," whereby real-time global broadcasting could influence policy decisions by generating public pressure for intervention [27]. However, research has shown that this effect operated selectively, with political will remaining the decisive factor in whether media coverage translated into intervention.

### **3.3. Landmark Cases of Media Driven Human Rights Interventions**

Several historical cases demonstrate how media coverage has directly influenced human rights outcomes. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and resulting famine in Biafra represented an early example of humanitarian reporting driving international response. Photographs of starving children created widespread sympathy and prompted unprecedented NGO intervention, though critics argued that some coverage oversimplified the conflict's political dimensions [28]. In the 1970s and 1980s, media coverage of Latin American dictatorships helped mobilize international solidarity networks that supported local human rights defenders and pressured Western governments to reconsider support for repressive regimes.

Perhaps the most studied case of media influence on human rights intervention involves the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Initial international media coverage largely missed the systematic nature of killings or framed events as tribal conflict rather than planned extermination [29]. This inadequate framing contributed to international inaction during crucial early weeks. When more accurate reporting emerged, graphic images of massacre sites generated public concern but came too late to prevent the genocide. The failure of media to promptly and accurately characterize events in Rwanda prompted professional soul-searching and eventually led to more sophisticated approaches to covering mass atrocities.

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## **4. Contemporary Media Mechanisms for Human Rights Protection**

### **4.1. Traditional News Organizations and Investigative Journalism**

Despite financial pressures and changing media consumption patterns, traditional news organizations continue to play vital roles in human rights reporting. Major international outlets maintain specialized human rights beats and invest in long-term investigative projects that smaller or newer outlets often cannot sustain. The New York Times' investigation into China's detention of Uyghurs, for example, combined satellite imagery analysis, leaked documents, and dozens of interviews to document mass internment that Chinese authorities denied [30]. Similarly, Reuters' Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting on the persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar provided critical documentation of military atrocities that Myanmar's government attempted to hide from international view.

Beyond individual investigations, traditional media organizations often support sustained coverage of human rights situations that might otherwise fade from public attention. The Guardian's long-term focus on migrant deaths in the Mediterranean, BBC's ongoing coverage of conflict in Yemen, and Al Jazeera's reporting on Palestinian conditions under occupation exemplify this approach [31]. Such consistent coverage helps prevent human rights crises from becoming normalized or forgotten. Additionally, established media platforms provide legitimacy and reach for human rights concerns that might be dismissed when raised by advocacy organizations alone.

International newspapers and broadcasters have developed various models for human rights reporting. Some maintain dedicated human rights correspondents with specialized expertise, while others integrate human rights angles into geographic beats or thematic coverage areas like conflict reporting or gender issues. Successful models typically combine strong field reporting with access to experts who can contextualize violations within legal and historical frameworks. Traditional media organizations also increasingly partner with specialized human rights organizations and digital forensics teams, recognizing that collaborative approaches often produce stronger human rights investigations than any single organization can achieve alone.

#### **4.2. Digital Platforms and Citizen Documentation**

Digital platforms have fundamentally transformed human rights documentation by enabling victims and witnesses to record and share evidence directly. During the 2011 Arab Spring protests, activists used platforms like YouTube and Facebook to document security forces' violence against demonstrators, creating real-time visual records that contradicted government narratives. In Syria's civil war, citizen journalists provided crucial documentation of chemical weapons attacks, hospital bombings, and other war crimes when professional journalists could not safely access affected areas [32]. Similar patterns have emerged in conflicts and protest movements worldwide, with smartphone footage often providing the first visual evidence of human rights violations.

Social media platforms serve as both distribution channels and evidence repositories for human rights content. Twitter enables real-time alerts about developing violations and helps coordinate advocacy responses. Facebook groups connect affected communities with journalists and human rights workers. Instagram and TikTok reach younger audiences through visual storytelling about human rights issues. However, these platforms also present significant challenges for human rights work. Content moderation algorithms often remove graphic documentation of violations as "violent content," sometimes destroying unique evidence. Platform policies can inadvertently silence vulnerable communities, while surveillance capabilities create security risks for human rights defenders sharing sensitive information.

#### **4.3. Visual Media and Documentary Approaches**

Visual documentation plays an increasingly central role in human rights advocacy, with photographs and video serving as both evidence and emotional catalysts for action. Strategic use of visual media can overcome language barriers, simplify complex situations, and generate empathy for victims in ways that written reports alone often cannot [33]. Iconic images like the photograph of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian child who drowned during a Mediterranean crossing can transform public understanding of humanitarian crises and increase support for policy responses. Video evidence has proven particularly effective in challenging official denials of abuse, as seen in cases of police violence where body camera or bystander footage contradicts official accounts.

New visual formats continue to emerge, with virtual reality documentaries offering immersive experiences of refugee camps or conflict zones, and animated films protecting identities of vulnerable sources while making their stories accessible. News organizations increasingly employ visual investigations teams using satellite imagery, 3D modeling, and other visual analysis techniques to document violations in areas with access restrictions. These approaches recognize that visual evidence often proves more compelling than written descriptions alone, particularly in an era of information overload where capturing audience attention presents a significant challenge for human rights communicators [34].

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### **5. Challenges and Limitations**

#### **5.1. Safety Risks and Access Restrictions**

Journalists covering human rights face increasing physical danger worldwide. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, hundreds of journalists have been killed in the past decade while reporting, with many deaths directly linked to human rights coverage [35]. War correspondents face obvious dangers in conflict zones, but local journalists often face even greater risks when reporting on human rights in their own communities, where they lack the relative

protection that international status sometimes provides to foreign correspondents. The murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who investigated corruption, and the assassination of Mexican reporters covering drug cartels and human rights abuses demonstrate how lethal these risks can become [36].

Beyond direct violence, journalists face numerous access barriers when covering human rights issues. Authoritarian governments increasingly restrict press visas or create bureaucratic obstacles for foreign correspondents, while intimidating local journalists through surveillance, legal harassment, and threats to family members [37]. Even democratic countries have created "exclusion zones" around sensitive sites like detention facilities or border operations, preventing documentation of potential abuses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments cited public health concerns to further restrict media access to prisons, refugee camps, and healthcare facilities where human rights violations were reported [38]. These safety risks and access restrictions create significant blind spots in human rights coverage. Regions under authoritarian control, active conflict zones, and remote areas with limited infrastructure often experience the most serious human rights violations yet receive the least comprehensive media coverage.

## **5.2. Digital Threats and Information Manipulation**

The digital environment presents new threats to human rights journalism alongside its opportunities. State-sponsored hacking targets journalists and their sources, compromising confidential communications and exposing vulnerable individuals. Digital security has become an essential concern for news organizations, requiring significant resources and expertise that many smaller outlets cannot afford [39].

The platform architecture of social media creates additional challenges. Algorithmic amplification often promotes emotional, divisive content over nuanced human rights reporting. Content moderation systems frequently remove documentation of atrocities as "graphic violence," inadvertently censoring crucial human rights evidence [40]. Filter bubbles limit exposure to human rights information outside users' existing beliefs, while the economics of attention incentivize sensationalism over careful human rights analysis. These structural features of the digital information environment complicate efforts to translate human rights documentation into public awareness and political pressure.

## **5.3. Commercial Pressures and Resource Constraints**

Economic factors significantly impact human rights reporting capacity. Traditional media business models have collapsed in many markets, with advertising revenue shifting to digital platforms and subscription revenue declining [41]. This financial pressure has led many news organizations to reduce or eliminate expensive forms of reporting, including international coverage and long-term investigations. Foreign bureaus have closed, specialist correspondents have been replaced with general assignment reporters, and travel budgets have shrunk, all reducing capacity for sustained human rights coverage.

Resource constraints affect diversity and representation in human rights coverage. When budgets tighten, news organizations often rely more heavily on international wire services rather than developing their own reporting, reducing the diversity of perspectives [42]. Foreign correspondents may parachute briefly into complex situations without developing deep understanding of local contexts. Meanwhile, local journalists who thoroughly understand these contexts often lack resources to conduct investigations or reach international audiences. These limitations contribute to simplified or stereotypical coverage of human rights situations that fails to capture their complexity or center the perspectives of affected communities.

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# **6. Emerging Models and Best Practices**

## **6.1. Collaborative Cross-Border Investigations**

Collaborative journalism networks have emerged as powerful vehicles for human rights investigations that exceed the capabilities of any single news organization [43]. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) pioneered this approach with projects like the Panama Papers and Pandora Papers, which revealed financial networks enabling corruption and human rights abuses worldwide. These investigations coordinated hundreds of journalists across dozens of countries, allowing for comprehensive analysis of leaked documents while distributing the legal and security risks across multiple organizations.

Cross-sector collaborations between journalists and other specialists have proven particularly effective for human rights reporting [44]. Partnerships between media organizations and legal experts help frame human rights violations within appropriate legal contexts. Collaborations with digital forensics specialists enable verification of digital evidence. Work with academic researchers provides historical and theoretical frameworks that strengthen human rights analysis.

These multidisciplinary approaches recognize that documenting complex human rights situations requires diverse expertise beyond traditional journalistic skills alone.

## **6.2. Trauma-Informed Reporting and Ethical Frameworks**

The human rights journalism field has developed more sophisticated approaches to working with trauma survivors and vulnerable communities. Trauma-informed reporting practices recognize that conventional interviewing techniques can retraumatize victims and fail to capture their experiences accurately [45]. Guidelines now emphasize informed consent processes, awareness of power dynamics, and interview approaches that restore agency to survivors rather than treating them primarily as sources of emotional testimony. These practices improve both the ethical quality of human rights reporting and its accuracy in representing complex trauma experiences.

Ethical frameworks for human rights journalism increasingly address questions of representation and voice. Rather than speaking for affected communities, many outlets now prioritize platforms for direct testimony and partnership with local media [46]. This shift reflects recognition that human rights reporting can inadvertently reproduce colonial dynamics when Western journalists become the primary narrators of distant suffering. Organizations like the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma have developed training programs and resources to support ethical engagement with affected communities, emphasizing approaches that recognize the dignity and agency of human rights victims.

## **6.3. Solutions Oriented Human Rights Coverage**

A growing movement toward solutions journalism has influenced human rights reporting, countering the field's traditional focus on documenting abuses with increased attention to effective responses [47]. This approach does not minimize violations but pairs their documentation with reporting on interventions, resilience strategies, and accountability mechanisms that have proven effective in similar contexts. Organizations like the Solutions Journalism Network have developed methodologies for rigorous reporting on responses to human rights challenges, emphasizing evidence-based assessment rather than simply highlighting inspiring stories.

Human rights organizations have increasingly incorporated solutions elements into their media strategies, recognizing that documentation alone may not generate sustained public engagement [48]. Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign connects audiences directly with actions they can take to support human rights defenders. Human Rights Watch now regularly includes specific policy recommendations alongside abuse documentation. These approaches reflect growing recognition that effective human rights communication must not only inform audiences about violations but also provide frameworks for understanding how change can occur.

## **6.4. Strategic Partnerships Between Media and Rights Organizations**

The traditional boundary between journalism and advocacy has evolved as media organizations and human rights groups develop more sophisticated collaborative models [49]. While maintaining editorial independence, many news outlets now partner strategically with human rights organizations that can provide specialized expertise, access to affected communities, and sustained attention to issues that news cycles might otherwise abandon. These partnerships take various forms, from co-published investigations to training programs that build journalistic capacity among human rights defenders.

Some of the most effective partnerships focus on strengthening local media capacity in regions experiencing human rights challenges. International organizations provide security training, legal support, and technical resources to local journalists documenting abuses in their communities. Regional press freedom organizations create networks that allow journalists facing threats to continue their human rights reporting from safer locations when necessary. These support systems help address the disproportionate risks faced by local reporters while ensuring that human rights coverage includes perspectives from those most directly affected by violations.

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## **7. Future Directions and Recommendations**

### **7.1. Technological Innovations and Human Rights Reporting**

Emerging technologies present new opportunities and challenges for human rights reporting. Artificial intelligence tools can process massive datasets to identify patterns of violations that human analysis might miss, as seen in projects analyzing satellite imagery to detect forced displacement or monitoring social media for early warning signs of violence against minority groups [50]. Machine learning algorithms can help verify digital content by detecting manipulation or

identifying inconsistencies across multiple sources. These technologies may help address the overwhelming volume of potential human rights evidence generated in the digital age.

Looking forward, several technological priorities emerge for human rights journalism. Secure verification systems using blockchain or similar technologies could help establish authenticity of digital human rights evidence [51]. Decentralized storage solutions might preserve documentation that would otherwise be vulnerable to censorship or platform removal. Machine translation improvements could help overcome language barriers that currently limit which human rights situations receive international attention. Investment in these technologies, alongside traditional journalistic skills, will shape future capabilities for documenting and addressing violations.

## **7.2. Policy Recommendations for Media Freedom and Human Rights Coverage**

Strengthening legal protections for journalists represents an essential foundation for effective human rights reporting. International organizations should prioritize implementation of existing mechanisms like the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists, which provides a framework for preventing attacks and ending impunity for crimes against reporters. National governments should reform laws that criminalize journalism, including overly broad national security, defamation, and cybercrime statutes frequently used against human rights reporters. Media organizations and press freedom groups should continue documenting attacks on journalists and using this documentation to advocate for stronger protections.

Access to information laws requires significant strengthening to support human rights investigations. While different countries have adopted freedom of information legislation, implementation often falls short, with governments denying legitimate requests or imposing prohibitive fees and delays [52]. International standards should emphasize proactive disclosure of human rights-related information and establish narrow, clearly defined exemptions that prevent over-classification. Digital access issues also require policy attention, with internet shutdowns and platform blocking increasingly used to prevent human rights documentation during critical events.

Sustainable funding models for human rights journalism need policy support through various mechanisms. Reports established that tax incentives for nonprofit journalism, public funding distributed through independent bodies, and requirements for digital platforms to compensate news organizations for content use could all help address the market failures affecting human rights reporting [53]. Philanthropic funding has emerged as an important support for human rights journalism, but requires careful governance structures to ensure editorial independence. Mixed funding models combining reader revenue, philanthropic support, and potentially public funds offer the most promising approaches for sustaining independent human rights reporting.

## **7.3. Educational Initiatives for Journalists and Audiences**

Specialized training programs for human rights reporting have expanded significantly but require further development. Journalism schools should incorporate human rights law, verification techniques, digital security, and trauma-informed interviewing into core curricula rather than treating these as optional specializations. Mid-career training opportunities should be accessible to journalists from diverse backgrounds, particularly those working in contexts with serious human rights challenges. Collaborative programs bringing together journalists, human rights defenders, and legal experts can build cross-sector understanding that strengthens human rights reporting [54].

Human rights organizations should continue developing public education resources that enhance understanding of international standards and monitoring mechanisms. When audiences better understand human rights frameworks, they can more effectively engage with related media coverage and hold authorities accountable for obligations. These educational initiatives should emphasize connections between seemingly distant human rights situations and local concerns, helping audiences recognize relevance to their own communities. Greater human rights literacy among general populations would strengthen the impact of media coverage by creating more informed and engaged audiences [55].

## **7.4. Diversifying Human Rights Narratives and Sources**

The future effectiveness of human rights reporting depends significantly on diversifying both its practitioners and perspectives. Traditional human rights journalism has often prioritized certain violations (particularly civil and political rights) while giving less attention to others (such as economic, social, and cultural rights). Similarly, Western media organizations have historically dominated international human rights narratives, sometimes imposing external frameworks that don't fully reflect local understandings of justice and rights [56]. Addressing these imbalances requires deliberate efforts to broaden whose stories count as human rights coverage and whose voices shape those narratives.



Media organizations should invest in recruiting and supporting journalists from communities historically underrepresented in human rights reporting, including those from the Global South, indigenous backgrounds, and marginalized groups within wealthy nations. Beyond diversity in staffing, news organizations should develop source diversity tracking systems to ensure they aren't repeatedly centering the same voices in human rights coverage. International NGOs play a significant role in this ecosystem as both sources and amplifiers of human rights narratives. Research found out that NGOs employ various strategies to influence public discourse on refugee rights, including media engagement, research publication, and direct advocacy campaigns [57]. NGOs contribute to shaping human rights narratives through strategic knowledge production and dissemination, though these efforts are often constrained by funding limitations and political contexts. Media organizations seeking to diversify human rights coverage should critically evaluate their relationships with NGOs, ensuring they engage with a wide spectrum of organizations rather than relying primarily on well-resourced Western NGOs that may dominate the narrative landscape. Partnership models with local media can help shift power dynamics in international reporting, ensuring that local perspectives shape coverage from the outset rather than being added as token quotes to externally-framed narratives [58].

The concept of human rights itself continues to evolve, and media coverage should reflect these developments. Issues like environmental justice, digital rights, and disability justice have gained recognition within human rights frameworks but often receive limited media attention compared to more established concerns [59]. Similarly, interconnections between different rights such as how economic inequality affects political participation or how climate change impacts multiple human rights simultaneously require more sophisticated coverage that transcends traditional issue silos. Forward-looking human rights journalism will engage with these evolving understandings while maintaining commitment to fundamental principles of human dignity and justice.

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## 8. Conclusion

The international press serves as an indispensable mechanism for human rights protection despite facing significant challenges in today's media landscape. Through documentation, amplification, analysis, and advocacy, journalists establish factual records of violations, create visibility for affected communities, mobilize public concern, and pressure responsible actors. These functions remain essential even as technological, economic, and political developments transform how human rights information circulates globally, with collaborative approaches between media organizations, cross-border partnerships, and strategic relationships with human rights organizations creating resilience against information suppression.

Ethical engagement with affected communities and balanced technological innovation are foundational to effective human rights reporting. Approaches prioritizing the agency and dignity of those experiencing violations fulfill moral obligations while producing more accurate coverage through trauma-informed methods and meaningful partnerships with local media. Similarly, while digital tools have expanded capacities to document violations and circumvent censorship, these technologies create new vulnerabilities through surveillance and disinformation that require critical evaluation rather than uncritical embrace.

The sustainability of human rights journalism ultimately depends on addressing structural challenges through policy interventions, funding innovations, and educational initiatives. Legal protections for press freedom require strengthening, economic models supporting public interest journalism need development, and educational programs must prepare both journalists and audiences for increasingly complex information environments. Despite these obstacles, when journalists document otherwise hidden abuses, amplify unheard voices, and maintain attention on forgotten situations, they contribute concretely to protecting fundamental human rights a vital function requiring commitment from multiple stakeholders including media organizations, human rights groups, technology companies, governments, educational institutions, and engaged citizens.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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