

Unleashing the Power of Investigative Journalism

How ICIJ Rocked the First Quarter of 2024

In the United States

- The U.S. is teaming up with Cyprus to fight financial crimes, including money laundering and sanctions evasion. The Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation will work with Cypriot law enforcement to prosecute illicit activities and address Cyprus' role in helping autocratic regimes move dirty money. [The initiative](#) was announced in March, just months after revelations in ICIJ's 2023 [Cyprus Confidential](#) investigation.
- The U.S. [sanctioned](#) Intellexa and its leaders for disseminating surveillance technology that targets American citizens. The proliferation of the firm's "Predator" spyware, used against U.S. officials and journalists, led to the sanctions. Cyprus Confidential [uncovered](#) Intellexa's exploitation of lax regulations and highlighted security threats.
- In January, the U.S. launched a long-awaited beneficial ownership registry to collect the names of company owners and unmask anonymous shell companies. The registry was mandated by the Corporate Transparency Act, which passed shortly after ICIJ's 2020 [FinCEN Files](#) investigation showed how dirty money flows through America's biggest financial institutions. The new database is currently being challenged as unconstitutional in an Alabama court.
- New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art appointed a top executive from the auction house Sotheby's to lead provenance research

after ICIJ's 2023 [Hidden Treasures investigation](#) raised questions about artifacts linked to looters. [Lucian Simmons](#) is expected to start work next month, scouring the Met's collection and vetting potential acquisitions.

- A new [investigation by PublicSource](#) unearthed two Pittsburgh universities' connections to tax havens and opaque private equity funds that masked controversial investments in fossil fuels. The news nonprofit's investigation grew out of our findings in the [Paradise Papers](#).

In Cyprus

- Aiming to shed its image as a tax haven for Russian elites, Cyprus announced plans to create a [financial sanctions unit](#) by year's end. The office will enforce tougher penalties, penalize complicit lawyers and improve collaboration with the United Kingdom, which pledged to provide technical support.

In Saudi Arabia

- [Amazon paid \\$1.9 million](#) in reimbursements to more than 700 migrant workers who paid recruitment fees and other costs to secure work at the online retailer's distribution centers in Saudi Arabia. ICIJ and its partners revealed fees and other unfair labor practices last year in [Trafficking Inc.](#)

In Malaysia

- Relatives of Malaysia's former finance minister Daim Zainuddin were found to be [beneficiaries of a \\$52.5 million trust](#) with real estate assets in London, Delaware and Massachusetts. Daim and others from his inner circle are already under investigation by the

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission over revelations in the [Pandora Papers](#).

In India

- The Enforcement Directorate is actively investigating several prominent Indians named in the Pandora Papers including international cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, businessman Anil Ambani and lobbyist Niira Radia. The investigation has involved searches and asset seizures related to potential money laundering. The Indian Express has the [details](#).

In the Global Marketplace

- Eight companies, including Beiersdorf and Procter & Gamble, [stopped sourcing palm oil](#) from First Resources. The suspension came after ICIJ partner [The Gecko Project revealed](#) the supplier's billionaire owners secretly controlled a network of shadow companies that cleared more forest for palm oil than any other firm in Southeast Asia. The Gecko Project's findings were part of ICIJ's 2023 investigation [Deforestation Inc.](#)
- The importation of [timber from Myanmar](#) into Europe dropped by 80% in 2023 amid a wider crackdown that included raids by customs officials and coordinated inspections in multiple countries.

In The Know

Here's some bonus content about journalism industry happenings we thought would interest you.

- [Dermot Desmond's defamation case](#) against The Irish Times, stemming from coverage of the Panama Papers, is set to advance to trial. The Irish High Court sided with Desmond in dismissing the newspapers' proposal to call expert witness Joseph Stiglitz, a

Nobel laureate economist who contends the reporting on Desmond was in the public interest.

- The National Press Club and a group of journalism organizations and freedom of expression groups [released a statement](#) condemning legal action against [Gustavo Gorriti](#), a Peruvian investigative journalist. Gorriti, an ICIJ member who's covered corruption in Latin America, is the target of a legal complaint brought by the political party of a candidate he investigated.
- Long-time ICIJ member and highly-respected investigative journalist Claudio Tognolli, 60, died last month in Brazil following complications from heart surgery. He will be sorely missed by all his friends in the ICIJ network.
- The University of Maryland named its new journalism awards after ICIJ member and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa. [The Maria Ressa Prizes for Courage in Journalism](#) recognize groundbreaking reporting in the face of adversity. Ressa also received the inaugural prize last month.
- Speaking of prizes, ICIJ won a few at the [Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing Awards](#). Along with our partners, we took first place in the banking and finance category for Cyprus Confidential, first for international reporting for Deforestation Inc. and an honorable mention for international reporting for Trafficking Inc.