

**AFP** ○

**FACTS MATTER**



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023**

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Cover photo: Mesut Hancer holds the hand of his 15-year-old daughter Irmak, who died in the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş, close to the quake's epicentre, the day after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country's southeast, on February 7, 2023. © Adem Altan / AFP. Among other awards, this photo won the World Press Photo for the Europe region.

# EDITORIAL

## HIGHLIGHTS



**FABRICE FRIES**  
CHAIRMAN & CEO OF AFP

### Two tragedies and a response

AFP was hit by two tragedies in 2023: the death of video journalist Arman Soldin in Ukraine and the serious injuries suffered by photographer Christina Assi in Lebanon. The emotion sparked within the Agency was huge and has driven it to step up efforts to protect its reporters. To this end, a new position was created in 2023: a journalist in the chief editor's team tasked with three aspects of journalist protection: physical safety, mental health, and cybersecurity. Among the measures already rolled out are: developing clear protocols for the main scenarios, conducting systematic investigations and feedback when incidents occur, and adapting our training programmes to the latest technological developments in combat and equipment.

### Two wars and a controversy

The AFP network came under pressure as the Israel-Hamas conflict added to the ongoing war in Ukraine. At the height of our coverage, which was already very difficult as the topic is so sensitive, came a public controversy that called into question the impartiality of the Agency, on the grounds that it refused to describe Hamas as a terrorist group. It was necessary to explain this editorial guideline which has been in place for more than 20 years, applies to every group no matter who they are, and which is moreover also followed by all the major agencies. We also had to defend our stories against accusations of bias, sometimes for one side, sometimes for the other. From now on, Agency journalists have to be aware that

their production is picked apart on social media and even on TV discussion panels. The best response the Agency can give is to step up its vigilance on respecting editorial guidelines, and always work to strengthen the rigour and quality of its reportage.

### Two goals and a disruptor

The year 2023 ended with the signing of a new Contract of Objectives and Means for the period 2024-2028. Two new strategic goals were identified: the Agency aims to become the go-to agency for its media clients, the one they keep if they have to decide between several agencies – which is unfortunately increasingly the case given the crisis suffered by media all around the world. And precisely because of this crisis, the Agency has to boost its non-media revenues. A proactive course has been charted which should allow the Agency to continue its financial recovery, which took another step forward in 2023 in terms of growth, profits and debt reduction. The framework has therefore been established for the coming years, all the more so as the European Commission has cleared the state aid that AFP receives to support its international network. The main uncertainty clouding this new scenario: what role will be played by the huge disruptor that generative artificial intelligence promises to be. Whether it will weaken the media even more by cutting them out of the chain or whether the value of high-quality info will be better recognised, it will have an impact on the Agency one way or the other. Shifting the balance in the right direction is the battle that is now beginning.

## 2023 AS SEEN BY

PHIL CHETWYND, GLOBAL NEWS DIRECTOR



**“The worst thing that can happen to us: losing a journalist.”**

2023 was one of the most difficult years in AFP history with the death of Arman Soldin in Ukraine, the terrible injuries suffered by Christina Assi in southern Lebanon and a controversy over its coverage of the October 7 Hamas massacre in Israel. Phil Chetwynd looks back at these events and the lessons the Agency has learned from them.

**More than anything, 2023 was the year of Arman Soldin’s death, killed by a Russian strike in Ukraine on May 9, 2023.**

It’s the worst thing that can happen to us: losing a journalist. Arman’s death shook us all. You are never completely in control of your working conditions in a war zone. Wars have changed too. There are drones everywhere, suicide drones like in Ukraine or surveillance drones, which pick up a target’s location and transmit them to the artillery. You can be 20km away from the front line and still be a target. That’s probably what happened in southern Lebanon when our two journalists, Christina Assi and Dylan Collins, plus Al Jazeera and Reuters journalists were targeted by Israel shelling. It’s a challenge for media but we have to adapt to this new reality.

**Indeed, how do we face up to these new threats?**

The first thing is to stay humble. When it comes to security, there are always things that need to be assessed, to be improved. We have worked hard to improve our debriefings, we have shortened the length of missions. Training, especially first-aid training, now happens over the course of two or three days in war zone conditions, even on the ground in Ukraine. You have to be able to save someone in a stressful situation, on the front line, apply a tourniquet. We now appoint a team leader who is in charge of the rest and we no longer do embed missions with Ukrainian soldiers unless a security coordinator can accompany our journalists. We also make sure that we are in a position to evacuate an injured staff member as quickly as possible from the front line to hospital. And we are sharing a lot of information about security with our competitors that we did not do before. I am in a WhatsApp group with my counterparts from AP and Reuters and we talk to each other every day.

**The war in Gaza has also been a source of constant worry about the safety of our journalists.**

First of all, I would like to praise the courage of our

team in Gaza, who have continued to work in extremely difficult conditions. A week after the war broke out, our staff had to leave their homes and the office and seek refuge in the south of the Gaza Strip with dozens of family members – all this while under bombardment. Some of them slept in tents. Many of them have lost parents. They went to hospitals, to morgues. They saw dozens of bodies, including children. Around 100 of their colleagues in the media have been killed.

**On another note, AFP was criticised for its coverage of the October 7 Hamas attack. What lessons have we learned from that in hindsight?**

I have been either a chief editor or News Director for 22 years at AFP and I have never had to manage such a complex story. Why? I would say there are four elements: the first is the level of emotion sparked by the Hamas attack around the world but also within AFP, the ultra-sensitive nature of this conflict. Then there is social media, which means lots of real-time commentary, often very emotional. Also the broader context of disinformation. The final element is populism, which adds fuel to the fire. All this adds up to a pretty explosive mix.

**At the heart of the controversy was how we refer to Hamas. AFP does not call it a “terrorist” group unlike the United States, European Union and Israel.**

Until these dramatic events, there was no debate about the word “terrorism”. We didn’t use it to describe the 2015 Paris attacks, the Bataclan, or Charlie Hebdo. But I would say that the difference this time is the context that I have just described. I spoke to a lot of chief editors around the world and many of them were facing the same controversies. Beyond the media world, there were passionate debates in universities and companies. However, I wouldn’t say that we were perfect. The coverage started a bit slowly but there were special circumstances. It was a weekend, the last day of the Jewish Sukkot holiday. On such massive stories, there are always things that go well and others that go less



Arman Soldin sits on an Ukrainian military tank during an interview with a soldier, along with fixer Oleksiy Obolensky (R), in Donbass region on April 29, 2022. © Dimitar Dilkoff / AFP

well. The important thing in this case was to send people out onto the ground and come back on the events with several angles. And that’s what we did.

**What lessons has AFP learned from the events?**

There are a lot of lessons to be learned, on our internal organisation and our own communication which should certainly rely more on social media than on press releases even if that does not come without risks. But there are a lot of positive lessons as well. No other media, I believe, was able to deploy so many people on the ground in Israel. We had three multimedia teams that criss-crossed the country to gauge reactions in Israeli society, in the north, east, west, in the kibbutzim in the south. And we kept up these efforts even when the focus had

already shifted to Gaza. These events also showed the strength and maturity of AFPTV with extremely reactive video teams capable of keeping up several live streams simultaneously from several different locations. We still need to bolster our network but I am convinced that we now have the best video service in the world. The other revolution in the way the Agency works is what we call the Global Shift, a way of organising the chief editors that shifts from Paris to Washington in the evening, then to Hong Kong during the night. It’s a major plus in terms of speed. Every morning there are alerts about Ukraine that have started in Hong Kong.

## 2023 AS SEEN BY

CHRISTINE BRIEMEL, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR



**“We are trying to identify talent, to bolster our ties with journalism schools, but also IT schools because we are always looking for high-quality IT network and systems experts.”**

For a long time, human resource management was focused on AFP staff in France. But 2023 saw the completion of a network of HR managers on five continents. “It’s about setting a common foundation with our regional management,” said HR Director Christine Briemel.

Five regional HR managers have been appointed between 2021 and 2023 in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, North America, Latin America, and Middle East regions.

Their job is to supervise the recruitment of new staff, onboarding, and movement around the network, but also AFP policy on homeworking and harassment. “They are the conduits of our HR policy,” said Christine Briemel.

Other projects were also launched last year. Among these was a project aiming to extend the possibility of moving around to as many AFP staff as possible. “Here again, the aim is to ensure that more and more journalists, notably in Africa and Asia, can be posted in different countries or even continents than their country of origin,” said the HR director.

One way of doing this is setting up a mentoring system, from the early days at AFP, which allows recent recruits to “get a vision from experienced journalists, to bolster their professional network and to access the international structures of the Agency,” she continued.

“My mentor is somewhere between a colleague and a friend. It’s a more informal relationship where I feel I can raise things that I would probably not raise with my manager,” said one journalist from the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to these measures comes a big effort to train journalists but also our technical and administrative staff. This has accelerated significantly in recent years with a 30-percent increase in the budget in 2023 and in 2022, which is also a way of boosting diversity.

“We are trying to identify talent, to bolster our ties with journalism schools, but also IT schools because we are always looking for high-quality IT network and systems experts,” added Christine Briemel.

In the Middle East and Latin America, we are now offering training schemes to young journalists, often from modest backgrounds, giving them a chance to join the Agency, along the lines of the system in France with the La Chance association, which campaigns for diversity in the media. “In fact, this has become a global policy,” she explained.

The HR director also insists on the fundamental values that AFP intends to promote inside the company such as “priority to people”, mutual respect, responsibility, openness, and transparency. All these values should be central in professional and managerial relations.



On October 17th 2023, Bouchra Berkane was awarded the second « Bourse Michèle Léridon » launched in 2021 by AFP and ARCOM (ex-CSA) with the association La Chance for diversity in the media. Spearheaded by 350 volunteer journalists, they prepare and mentor around 80 young individuals annually, guiding them through preparations for journalism school entrance exams.

In the photo: Marc Epstein, La Chance’s President, Roch-Olivier Maistre, Arcom’s president, Dalila Zein, AFP’s Managing Director and the prize winner Bouchra Berkane.

## 2023 AS SEEN BY

PATRICE MONTI, SALES AND MARKETING DIRECTOR



**“The preferred agency for media”: an editorial but also commercial challenge**

When he was re-elected for a second five-year term at the head of AFP, Fabrice Fries set as one of the top priorities to become “the preferred agency for media everywhere in the world”, an objective rolled out throughout 2023. For Patrice Monti, the Agency’s Sales and Marketing Director, this strategy relies on the quality and variety of AFP’s editorial production but also on a commercial offer that is constantly evolving to our clients’ usage and needs.

“We never stop moving forward editorially, getting stronger to get closer to our goal, which is to become the preferred agency for media,” he said. “It’s a never-ending task but it is already paying off.”

In 2023, the Agency developed especially in the media sector, in France and abroad.

At the heart of this lies the Agency’s new distribution platform AFP News, which meets the needs of a huge number of clients and comes with an innovative commercial offer based on “credits” clients can use to access all AFP production (stories, photos, videos, videographics, graphics).

“Launched at the end of 2020, AFP News doubled in turnover last year, in line with our objectives,” said Patrice Monti, who believes this is down to

a distribution method that is “modern, intuitive, ergonomic and completely without barriers.” The goal for 2024 is to make the user experience even more fluid, he said, “but we are of course also working on improving the experience for our clients to whom we directly ‘push’ our content. Their needs are different but no one is forgotten.”

AFP is also rolling out other developments aimed at attracting new audiences. Among these, Social Stories directly targets younger consumers with international news stories in vertical format, perfect for smartphones and social media. “The aim is to offer our clients a pre-packaged and modern product that responds to the desires and expectations of new generations,” explained the Sales and Marketing Director.

The screenshot shows the AFP website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for NEWS, AGENDA, SPOTLIGHT, and PARTNERS. A search bar is visible with the text "Saisir les termes de votre recherche en français". Below the search bar, there are filters for "Refine" (SORT BY: Newest, Oldest), "LANGUAGES" (Arabic, English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish), and "TOPICS" (Business, Lifestyle). The main content area displays "Search results" for "32356 documents on 08/10/2023". It lists three results: "conflict-israel-palestinian" (252 photos), "hindu-religion-us" (29 photos), and "auto-f1-prix" (29 photos).

# CONFLICTS

SOPHIE HUET, GLOBAL EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**“2023 was an extremely difficult year that reminded us of the high human cost of deploying journalists on the ground.”**

The global editor-in-chief’s team, led by Sophie Huet, is the “control tower” overseeing a newsroom of 1,700 journalists. It has experienced a challenging 2023 in the face of two major wars: the second year of the conflict in Ukraine then, from October, the war sparked by the deadly Hamas attack on Israel. The situation has required quick changes in how the newsroom is led.

“2023 was an extremely difficult year that reminded us of the high human cost of deploying journalists on the ground,” said Sophie Huet, after the death of video coordinator Arman Soldin, killed at the age of 32 during a Russian rocket attack in Ukraine on May 9, then the serious injury suffered by Christina Assi, hit by a shell fired by an Israeli tank in southern Lebanon on October 13. Sophie recalled that a Reuters journalist, Issam Abdallah, was killed during this strike and another AFP journalist, Dylan Collins, was also injured, just a few months after also sustaining injuries in Ukraine.

“We worked around the clock, with several big stories to manage at the same time and a considerable volume of work” for all bureaus and editors involved, said the global editor-in-chief.

However, a reform carried out at the beginning of 2023, which scrapped the night shift for the global editor-in-chief team, considerably softened the blow.

Before the reform, a single journalist in Paris was working through the night overseeing the whole world. But now the work of coordinating and ma-



Journalists work in a shelter in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip on December 11, 2023. © Mohammed Abed / AFP

naging the Agency’s network 24 hours a day moves to other big AFP hubs with the time zones. “At the beginning of the night, Paris hands over to Washington, which in turn passes the baton to Hong Kong before the editors return in Paris in the early morning,” explained Sophie Huet. This means all teams, starting with text, photo, and video, are involved with their full teams, at full strength and very reactive.

“This system really proved its worth when we showed we could simultaneously manage coverage of the war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East at any time of the day or night,” she said.

In addition to these teams, there are people monitoring news of the two conflicts during the night. For Ukraine, two translators based in Australia work shifts to monitor social media and the Russian and Ukrainian agencies, tipping off Washington and Hong Kong. “Every time there are massive strikes against Ukraine at three or four in the morning, it’s the translators that raise the alarm,” said Sophie Huet.

A similar set-up is in place for the Middle East conflict, harnessing journalists throughout the network who speak Hebrew or Arabic. “Here again, this allows the journalists on the ground to take a breather and be woken up if something significant happens,” she explained.

We have also had to adapt to new forms of conflict, with a massive number of drones being deployed. We have learned lessons from our most difficult experiences and drawn on the observations of our teams on the ground.

More than ever before, we have had to weigh up “case-by-case the risks of a reportage versus its editorial interest before giving our green light,” she added. “Just five minutes ago, we turned down a proposed mission to film artillery on the Ukrainian front-line. It was not especially new and didn’t offer enough added value on the editorial front.”

In Gaza, it is impossible to send journalists to reinforce our teams, apart from occasional press trips organised by the Israeli army. “We’ve had to live with the fact that it is not possible to relieve our teams that are dealing with absolutely horrific working conditions, including camping in the open and fearing for their families as the AFP office is unusable after being hit by a strike,” she said.

However, we have deployed considerable reinforcements to Jerusalem and to Nicosia, our Middle East hub, with no fewer than 130 experienced journalists sent there over the past four and a half months – from all over the AFP network, Latin America, Asia...” added Sophie Huet. “After two years of war, our clients’ interest in the Ukraine conflict has not waned while Gaza is top news every day.”



Palestinian journalists attempt to connect to the internet using their phones in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip on December 27, 2023. © Said Khatib / AFP

## SAFETY

JEAN-MARC MOJON, SAFETY COORDINATOR



“Making journalists’ security more professional without jeopardising our reporting culture.”

Since February 2023, Jean-Marc Mojon has been in charge of journalists’ security as part of the central chief editor’s team. This follows a number of postings since the 2000s in East Africa or the Middle East: Jerusalem, Cairo, Nairobi, then Baghdad and Beirut as bureau chief. A direct witness of the violence that has raged across the Middle East, Jean-Marc has managed several high-risk missions over these two decades, such as in Syria or Iraq. He is now placing this on-the-ground experience at the service of the whole AFP newsroom.

The death of Arman Soldin and the terrible injuries suffered by Christina Assi reminded us, if we needed reminding, that the safety of journalists is of paramount importance, as Europe endures a high-intensity conflict on its borders and the Middle East sees a new spike in violence. But these events also revealed new threats facing reporters, who are now sometimes targets even far from the front line: drones, electronic intercepts, geolocalisation...

It’s no longer enough to train teams up and equip them with bulletproof vests, helmets and satellite

phones. A culture of risk assessment and security is now required.

“Until I was appointed, security issues were mainly handled by the technical chief editors. But it became clear that this wasn’t necessarily the best place, that we had to start thinking about security at the very start, as soon as we are planning coverage in hostile environments,” explains Mojon. “And the right place for that is the central chief editor’s department, at the Agency’s Paris HQ, so that security protocols are integrated from the outset,” he said.

### Journalists killed and injured in southern Lebanon: an unprecedented AFP investigation

On October 13, 2023, at 18:02 local time, a Reuters journalist, **Issam Abdallah**, was killed in southern Lebanon and AFP photographer **Christina Assi** was seriously injured. A few weeks later her right leg would be amputated.

The two journalists were part of a group of seven reporters that also included an Al Jazeera team. They were covering the response of the Israeli military to the massacre carried out six days previously by Hamas in Israel.

What happened to Issam Abdallah and Christina Assi shocked the AFP newsroom and sparked an internal investigation of unprecedented scope. For the first time, AFP called on an external partner, British NGO **Airwars**, which is renowned for its work on civilian victims of armed conflicts. It was also decided to publish the conclusions of this investigation.

For nearly two months, a group of around 15 AFP staff from the chief editor’s team, bureaus in Beirut and Jerusalem, the International Hub in Paris, graphics, and social media, carried out this work, which was akin to a forensic police investigation. With a fine toothcomb, they went through the images filmed before and during the strikes, munitions fragments found at the scene and survivors’ testimonies.

The investigation came to the conclusion that the group of journalists was targeted by a 120mm tank shell used only by the Israeli army in this theatre of combat. Two separate strikes, 37 seconds apart, deliberately targeted the journalists, even though they were clearly identified as such with bulletproof vests marked “press”. In addition, there was no military activity reported in the immediate vicinity.

The investigation also revealed that the strikes probably came from the Israeli village of Jordeikh where Israeli tanks were deployed, although it was not possible to trace the chain of command.

AFP will take “all legal means possible and relevant to ensure that justice is done,” said the Agency’s Global News Director, Phil Chetwynd.

Reuters carried out its own investigation, which came to similar conclusions to AFP’s, as well as NGOs Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

As for the Israeli army, they said it would carry out “checks” but has not responded to AFP’s repeated demands for a thorough and transparent investigation.



[The full AFP investigation, which points the Israeli army](#)



Smoke billows after an Israeli strike on the Lebanese village of Alma al-Shaab on October 13, 2023. This is one of the last images taken by Christina Assi, just before the attack that seriously injured her that day. © Christina Assi / AFP

“It’s not just a question of equipment. It’s also about making sure this is a priority during the editorial debate,” he stressed.

His mission is to “make journalists’ security more professional without compromising AFP’s DNA, which is to get out on the ground and report.” The aim is also to reduce the burden on regional chief editors and bureau chiefs when a conflict erupts and difficult security decisions have to be taken.

Sometimes experience gained in one crisis can help solve a different one on the other side of the world. “A situation we faced in Thailand might serve up lessons that help us decide whether to deploy someone in Chad, for example,” said Jean-Marc Mojon.

But it’s also about predicting the conflicts that are likely to break out in the near future in various countries. “It’s not just about sending three bulletproof vests to the bureau involved but asking: are the right people in place from day one, can the bureau transmit if there’s a cyber outage, how do we get reinforcements in?” he explained.

We have also re-thought journalists’ training before their deployment to a hostile environment. “We are trying to develop specific training sessions with security professionals and content we define ourselves, for example in Poland to prepare our

teams for conditions in neighbouring Ukraine,” said Mojon, whose role also covers other aspects of journalists’ security, i.e. their mental health and cyber-security.

Everyone is “debriefed” after a mission in a war zone to assess their psychological health and feed into the database of “retex”, feedback that gives valuable lessons to those who replace them. “There is less to debrief if there was a good briefing before the mission,” said Mojon, who is accompanied by a second journalist specially charged with carrying out these briefings.

As for cyber-security, it’s not about the Agency’s IT networks, which fall under the IT department, but the “digital hygiene” of journalists, i.e. the precautions they need to take to ensure their conversations are not hacked or their personal details published, a form of intimidation recently experienced by a bureau in Latin America.

“The world is maybe not more dangerous, but it is definitely more complex and our playing field seems to be shrinking with more and more unreachable areas. However, AFP’s desire to get to these difficult areas remains 100 percent intact,” said Jean-Marc Mojon.

2023

IN SUMMARY

## First carbon footprint assessment published

AFP carried out its first ever carbon footprint assessment based on 2022 data. This is a complete assessment based on the whole network and using the official methodology approved in the GHG Protocol.

Total emissions came in at 15.44 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e, an average of 6.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/person. It is difficult to compare our carbon footprint with other media, because of the sector's very specific characteristics (in AFP's case, a lot of travel but not much paper consumption).

A detailed study will be conducted based on this carbon footprint assessment. However, some of the existing data already provide us with valuable insights:

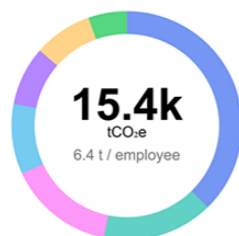
- 38% of the Agency's carbon footprint comes from travel, with an unsurprisingly significant portion coming from air travel;
- the second-largest contributor to our emissions, accounting for 15.7%, stems from energy consumption (heating and air conditioning). This is due to our numerous offices located in France and around the world, which results in increased energy costs per employee.

Concerning emissions related to information technology and digital activities:

- approximately 6% of our emissions came from IT equipment purchases in 2022.
- 1% came from data storage in the cloud.
- 97% of our telecommunications-related emissions were due to satellite transmissions.

The 2015 Paris Agreement committed to limiting the average temperature rise of the planet below 2°C, if possible to 1.5°C. According to the last IPCC report, to have a 50% change of achieving this, global emissions need to drop 43% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels.

AFP should contribute to this global aim by putting in place a proactive policy in 2024. This should set out multi-year decarbonisation goals, establish an action plan to achieve them, lay out indicators to make sure the targets are being hit, and put in place a committee to track progress.



## AFP joins forces with 2GAP to give more voice to women experts

Since October 2023, AFP journalists have been using the database of experts created by global association 2GAP (Gender & Governance Action Platform), which brings together more than 75 female and mixed professional networks from the public and private sectors.

This base of 2GAP experts is a real “pool” of professionals recognized for their advanced skills in multiple fields. The aim is to give journalists, but also conference organisers and public authorities, access to a very varied and easily available pool of experts for broadcasts, conferences and debates, online or offline publications, reflections and proposals.

Access to the base is free. The database is managed by 2GAP volunteers who update it constantly with verified and validated expert profiles.

AFP has been committed for several years to representing women better in its content. Via this partnership, the Agency is stepping up efforts to give more voice to female experts in its global content. “It is essential for AFP's credibility that its editorial staff and content better reflect the diversity of the world we live in and give voice to a wide range of profiles,” says Phil Chetwynd, AFP Global News Director.

## First mentoring programme launched

AFP launched its first mentoring programme in November 2023 to give less experienced staff in bureaux around the world, especially those far away from HQ, the opportunity to learn more about the nuts and bolts of the Agency, expand their network and advance their career.

This new mentoring programme was set up in collaboration with the Diversity Committee. Employees from diverse backgrounds were particularly encouraged to volunteer.

Candidates to be mentors have at least 10 years professional experience, and ideally held more than one position within AFP.

To date, around 15 mentor-mentee pairs have already been formed for a year.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ÉDOUARD GUIHAIRE, DEPUTY TECHNICAL EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TEXT &amp; MULTIMEDIA REFERENT



“Our clients and readers have to be sure that AFP production comes from journalists, not from technology.”

AFP did not wait for ChatGPT or Midjourney to explore the possibilities opened up by artificial intelligence. But the Agency will use these new technologies without compromising on its DNA, the need for rigour and verification that AFP is known for. AFP is using AI to a reasonable degree for indexing stories or transcribing video interviews, under the close supervision of journalists in the newsroom.

“This technology can free up journalists from time-consuming tasks, relieve mental stress, and enable them to get on with more value-added tasks,” says Edouard Guihaire, the “point-person” in the newsroom for AI-related issues.

“But it's not a magic wand. AI is still a long way from being a mature technology and great care must be taken when using it,” he warns, pointing to the “hallucinations” sometimes suffered by chatbots that lead them to spit out inaccurate, biased, stereotypical or even downright fantastical information. Or the security risks linked to handing over confidential information on platforms.

AFP uses AI for very precise tasks, like helping with transcription, translation or extracting “metadata” from stories, the names or topics mentioned in the story that gives each text a unique “identity card” and makes searching easier.

“We used AI at last year's Cannes Film Festival to identify celebrities on the red carpet, sparing editors from extremely laborious searches. We did the same for the Rugby World Cup,” continues Edouard Guihaire.

“It's important that journalists become familiar with these technologies, use them, test them out,

and consider them like a suggestion box,” he explains. “But it will always be humans that supervise, check, and validate.”

“Our clients and readers have to be sure that AFP production comes from journalists, not from technology,” he insists.

The emergence of AI is similar to search engines in the 1990s. AFP has not only been watching developments in AI intently but also experimenting internally. For example in Summer 2023, a working group made up of several different professions explored various ways we could use AI.

“We are in a proactive phase, not reactive,” stresses Edouard Guihaire. The Agency has set up an ad-hoc governance structure to define a coherent strategy and drive these projects forward. AI is relevant not only for the AFP newsroom, but for all its departments, from the technical department that is playing a key role in developing the technology, to the sales and marketing team.

“These technologies are designed to grease the wheels, to make our work easier, better, and more dynamic at all levels of the company,” says Edouard Guihaire.



# MIDDLE EAST

JO BIDDLE, MENA EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



## AFP stands up to the test of the Israel-Hamas war

AFP mobilised all its resources to report on the Israel-Hamas war, one of the most dangerous conflicts to cover on the ground for years, but also one of the most complicated and internationally divisive given the extreme reactions it has provoked across the world.

It has been above all an ordeal that has affected our people: in southern Lebanon, two AFP journalists were wounded on October 13, likely hit by a shell from an Israeli tank – Dylan Collins and, more seriously, Christina Assi. In Gaza, the nine permanent AFP staff members have been living and working in fear of their lives, in unbelievably difficult conditions.

The challenge has also been editorial. On-the-ground coverage has rarely been more difficult – impossible to send in reinforcements, an intense propaganda war – and, in the rest of the world, fierce reactions and endless controversy.

“On October 7, everything started with rocket fire, just like previous clashes,” recalls Jo Biddle, Chief Editor for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

“Hamas announced it had fired 2,000 rockets from Gaza into Israel and little by little, we learned that this was much bigger, with hundreds of fighters from the Palestinian movement also crossing the

border” to carry out what would be the worst attack suffered by Israel since it was founded in 1948.

The first hours were “chaotic”, she says. The Israel military, engaged in hand-to-hand combat with Hamas fighters, gave out little information. The whole of the south of Israel was declared a military zone and was unreachable.

AFP offices in Jerusalem and Gaza got to work. That very day, AFP published the first pictures of Israeli bodies in the streets of the town of Sderot. From the regional HQ in Nicosia, Jo Biddle sent four journalists out on the first plane: a French-language reporter, an Arabic-language reporter, an English-language reporter, and a video journalist – who got to work the next day.

It was the start of a long stream of special correspondents: more than 130 AFP staff from all departments came to the region from all over the world for the next six months.



An aerial picture shows the site of the weekend attack on the Supernova desert music Festival by Palestinian combatants near Kibbutz Reim in the Negev desert in southern Israel on October 10, 2023. © Jack Guez / AFP



Palestinians fleeing the north through the Salaheddin road in the Zeitoun district on the southern outskirts of Gaza City, walk past Israeli army tanks on November 24, 2023, following a four-day ceasefire that began early in the morning. © Mahmud Hams / AFP

“We told so many stories, travelled the length of Israel from north to south. We went to morgues, interviewing forensic doctors who described how victims had been mutilated and the difficulties in identifying mutilated or burned bodies via DNA. We were among the first to report on the accusations of rape that Israeli women suffered on October 7. We also ran stories about harvests on Israeli farms deserted by foreign workers or about schools as teachers tried to deal with this terrible trauma,” says Jo Biddle.

AFP mobilised its global network to keep up with such an intense story, in particular relying on its “Global Shift” editorial monitoring system which links chief editors in Paris, Washington and Hong Kong.

In Gaza, AFP staff are trying to work under fire, without – and this is almost unprecedented – any back-up from outside because of a lack of authorisation from the Israeli army. “They want to tell their story, what is happening to them and to the people of Gaza,” explains the MENA chief editor. “I would like to hail their devotion, professionalism, and commitment despite the very precarious conditions they are working under and the constant threat of Israeli strikes that have killed several of their colleagues. They have carried on working seven days a week and produced great quality stories and images.”

Jo Biddle emphasises the “very rich” coverage provided by this team including stories “on poverty, famine, the situation in hospitals, orphaned children, amputations, the exodus of the population to the south, how hard it is for journalists to work.”

“But they have also done lighter stories like fathers playing music to calm their children or the return of ancient traditions to cook food in the absence of gas or electricity,” she adds.

The AFP office in Gaza City was almost completely destroyed by a targeted strike on November 3. It had been unoccupied for several days: our staff had evacuated in mid-October when the Israeli authorities ordered people to leave the city and move to the south of the territory.

“Our colleagues left with their families in a convoy of around 50 people. They took shelter in the house of one of the photographers, sometimes also with relatives. One journalist spent 10 or so days in his car, others slept in tents,” recalls Jo Biddle. “They had to leave every day to find food and water. They have seen a lot of death and destruction. They have lost members of their own families but also their homes, either destroyed or severely damaged,” she adds.

The only good piece of news is that all of our permanent Gaza staff have been able to leave, over the course of weeks and months, to neighbouring countries thanks to the tireless efforts of AFP’s MENA management. New journalists have been gradually recruited and trained on the ground. Our coverage goes on.



[Death, exhaustion and suspicion: AFP journalists on the horrors of Gaza, by Phil Chetwynd](#)



## WAR IN UKRAINE

KARIM TALBI, EUROPE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DARIO THUBURN, MOSCOW AND WARSAW BUREAU CHIEF



### The challenges of covering a long-running war

Marked by the death of Arman Soldin, the year 2023 will go down in history as one of the most painful for AFP and especially for teams in Kyiv, Moscow, and Warsaw. The war in Ukraine, now in its second year and set to last, has required major changes to bolster the security of journalists – an absolute priority – or convert Warsaw into a regional hub, say Dario Thuburn, Moscow and Warsaw Bureau Chief, and Karim Talbi, Europe Chief Editor.

“Arman’s death is devastating. Even if we tackled it in several ways, getting professional help to deal with the trauma felt by the teams, and holding ceremonies in Kyiv, Warsaw, London, and Paris to honour his memory, the pain remains acute,” says Dario Thuburn.

“We will never be completely safe from tragedies during a conflict, but we are doing everything possible to avoid them by permanently assessing the situation on the ground. This is reassuring for the reporters but also for people back at HQ in Paris,” says Karim Talbi.

The Europe Chief Editor says the tragedy has also had editorial consequences, with fewer stories from the front line and “more detailed” pieces away from the fighting. “We should never forget that the most important people in a conflict are civilians, not soldiers,” he says.

With the front-line basically at a standstill, AFP teams set about painting a profile of a Ukrainian society plunged into a war economy, less united than during the first months of the conflict, with people trying to avoid conscription, deserters, the end of political unity. Fault lines are appearing in Europe and the United States, with some intransigent towards Putin, others complacent. Europe’s practical support in terms of weaponry is reaching its limits. Debate is heating up between supporters and opponents of opening negotiations with the Kremlin...

“We have had so many great reportage pieces: along the Dnieper River – a natural border between areas under Ukrainian and Russian control – commando operations, the drone war, prisoner swaps, the liberation of Kherson, poignant profiles of elderly people in deserted villages or the Russian surgeon who crossed into Ukraine and operates

on Ukrainian soldiers behind the front line,” recalls Talbi.

AFP itself has had to change its deployment. “After moving in dozens and dozens of special correspondents during the first months of the war, we have managed to consolidate the network and construct a permanent base in Ukraine, with Warsaw as a back-up hub to cover this high-intensity war that promises to last a long time,” explains Thuburn.

Experienced Ukrainian journalists have joined AFP, while the special correspondents are now in place for six months to a year, renewable. Nearly 70 Agency staff, editors, photographers, reporters and VJs, technicians or translators are now contributing to AFP coverage of this conflict, around 25 of whom are in Ukraine – in Kyiv, Donbass, or Odessa. Around the same number are in Warsaw and around 20 in Moscow.

“Even if the situation is constantly changing in Moscow, where we have never been forced to reduce our staffing levels, our reporters can still talk to the Russian people on a daily basis, observe how the people see the situation, and report from various parts of Russia,” stresses the Moscow and Warsaw bureau chief. “This team gives us essential value-added journalism.”



[Ukraine war: Two years on, still no end in sight](#)



Ukrainian military paramedics evacuate a wounded serviceman from the front line near Bakhmut, on March 23, 2023. © Aris Messinis / AFP



A portrait of Yevgeny Prigozhin is seen at the makeshift memorial in Moscow, on August 24, 2023. © Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP

# AFRICA

PIERRE AUSSEILL, AFRICA DIRECTOR



Covering a continent “on the move”

AFP is the top global news agency in sub-Saharan Africa. The Agency has pinpointed the region as an editorial priority and is pushing forward there in its three main areas of text, photo, and video. This can be seen in the creation of jobs in Africa, which continued in 2023, a presence in 47 countries but also in our editorial strategy, which is not to limit ourselves to covering the crisis shaking the region but to explore all the facets of this continent “on the move.”

**What’s the thinking behind this coverage strategy?**

Africa is the continent that pollutes the least but is most affected by climate change. It holds 40 % of the global mineral reserves needed to make electric car batteries and smartphones. It’s also a continent experiencing a demographic explosion, with its population set to double by 2050. There are dynamic civil societies with a growing middle class, like in Kenya, and a flourishing cultural scene. In all these areas, but of course also on breaking news, we have widened the gap with our competitors, making ourselves indispensable for many clients in Africa and the world over. We do not want to paint a catastrophic vision of Africa, which does not actually reflect daily reality. It’s not about putting a positive spin on things but telling the real story of a continent that is part of the globalised world.

**And we have created jobs to achieve this...**

Yes and it’s why we created the role of Chief Africa Editor in 2016. This job, entrusted to Jennie Matthew in 2023, allows us to take a broader view and work on inter-regional topics, such as the manufacture of electric cars in China, from the extraction of minerals in Africa to their sale in Europe. We also created three video jobs, two based in Lagos and Dakar, and a third editor job in London. Here too we have overtaken the competition in terms of quality and volume. We go beyond the breaking news with our feature stories. And we also now have a marketing coordinator for Africa to bolster our commercial presence on the continent.

**Has this produced results?**

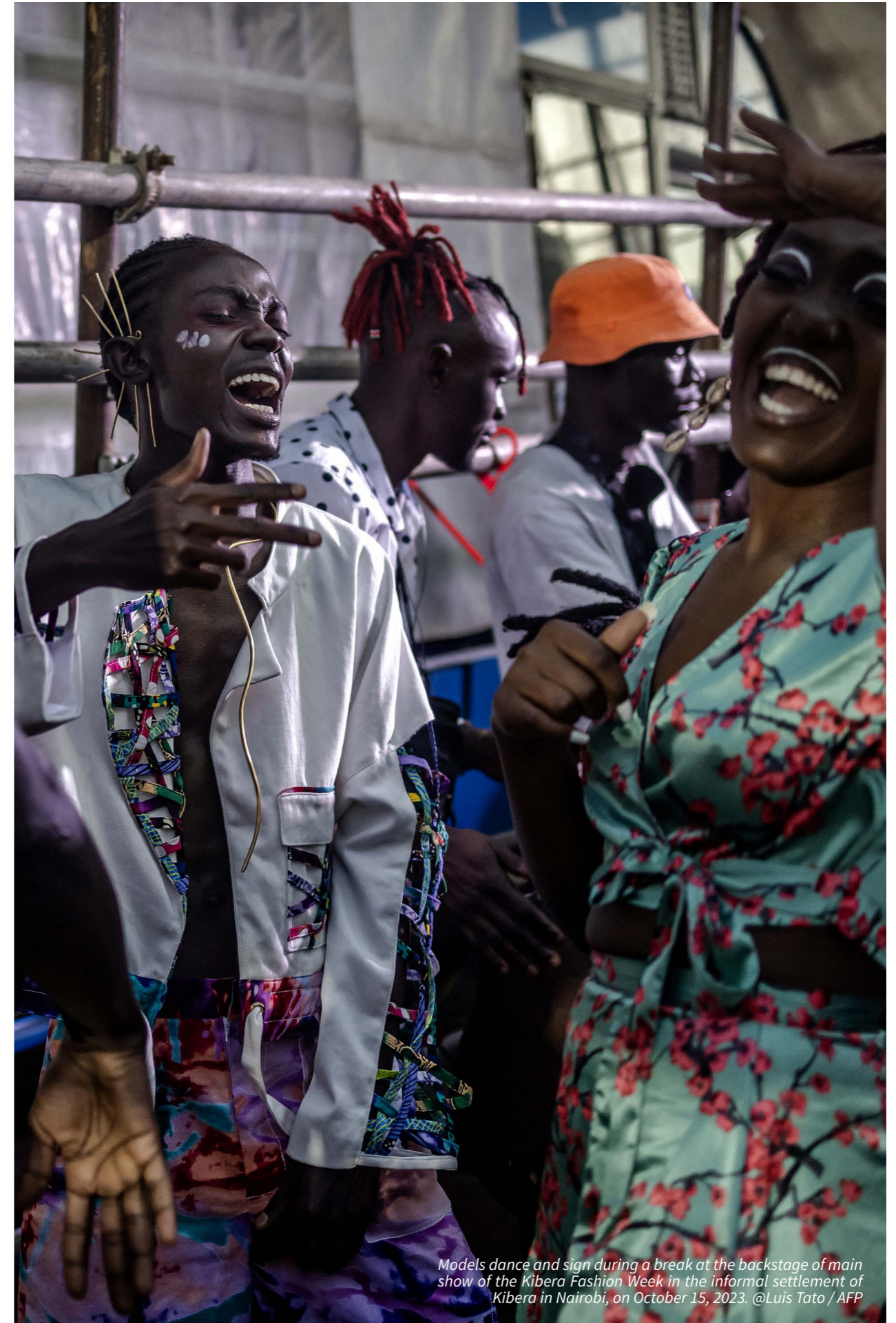
Our revenue from media and corporate clients in Africa grew by 10 percent between 2022 and 2023, thanks especially to a strong performance by FACTSTORY, our on-demand audiovisual content subsidiary. FACTSTORY works mainly for UN agencies, international organisations like the World

Bank, and the international organisation of French speakers... We enable these institutions, which make significant investments in development programmes, to communicate with the general public via on-the-ground packages that show very concretely what they are doing and how these programmes are benefitting the population.

But AFP’s editorial and commercial strength in Africa is felt above all beyond the African continent. AFP’s coverage of Africa is essential for its global clients like the BBC, Al Jazeera and France 24, which cannot afford to have gaps in their coverage. Whenever a big story breaks somewhere in the world, they want the text and image content immediately. And AFP has an unrivalled network on the continent among the major international news agencies, with seven bureaus and text, photo, and video correspondents in every country on the continent apart from Eritrea. When our chief executive visited the United States recently, the *New York Times* praised the strength and credibility of our coverage in Africa, especially during coups and elections in countries basically deserted by our competitors.

**What about training?**

In October 2023, we identified eight journalists in Africa that would benefit from a mentoring programme. We are trying to pinpoint young talent and empower them to move around not only within the continent but also across the Agency’s global network. It’s a major objective.



Models dance and sign during a break at the backstage of main show of the Kibera Fashion Week in the informal settlement of Kibera in Nairobi, on October 15, 2023. @Luis Tato / AFP

## SPORTS

## PIERRE GALY, HEAD OF THE SPORTS DEPARTMENT



“Sport in 2023: a dress rehearsal before the big show”

2023 was a rich year for sporting events but also a training run ahead of the Paris Olympics 2024. All the competitions, such as the Football World Cup in December 2022 in Qatar, the Rugby World Cup in France, the World Athletics Championships in Budapest and the Swimming World Championship in Fukuoka (Japan) “were used to do the final tweaks before the Olympics on AFP home soil,” says Pierre Galy, head of the sports department.

**How have photo and video been preparing for this massive global event?**

The Olympics are always a good moment to innovate. For photo, a specialised team at the technical chief editor’s office worked hard all throughout 2023 to develop remote shooting via robots or remote-control alongside the athletics track or behind the goal. This was how our photographer Olivier Morin immortalised the victory of Jamaican sprinter [Usain Bolt](#) (nicknamed ‘Lightning Bolt’) at the Athletics World Championships in 2013. A flash of lightning zig-zagged in the sky above the stadium and everyone can still remember the photo. We have been working flat out with Nikon to ensure our remote boxes are functioning perfectly. The idea is to get the most meaningful, the most perfect and the most extraordinary photo possible with machines that can take 60 images per second. In a football match, you can see the ball hit a player’s face and the beads of sweat splashing everywhere. In video, the main goal is to consolidate our position as a major player with our clients. To achieve this, we equipped our journalists last year with lighter cameras so they could be more mobile in the crowd and the mixed zones where the athletes meet reporters. We have also deployed new technical solutions to transmit more efficiently, and we have been using transcription and translation software for interviews since last year. Video will be mobilised to an unprecedented extent with summaries of the day’s key events. We will also be present on social media with a whole series of short videos.

**Not forgetting the text...**

No, of course not. There again we are innovating by pooling all the production in the Agency’s main languages, French, English and Spanish. Before we would send two or three journalists to a press conference in several languages. Now we are sending just one, leaving the others to work on more in-depth pieces. This requires a huge coordination effort from the sports editors but also between the

reporters themselves. We are also in permanent dialogue with the general reporting departments in Paris and with our offices around the world, which are fully involved in covering the news on the sidelines of this event. The Olympics is not just a sports story. It is a social and environmental story as well. Security and transport are also major concerns.

**What does this event mean for the Agency?**

The whole Agency is concentrating on making the coverage a success. It will be a team effort. Since Paris won the games in 2017, everyone has been working towards it. The unprecedented mobilisation will show AFP’s strength. But of course, things picked up pace last year. We’re playing at home. The coverage will be extensive both on and off the field of play, in all domains (text, photo, video, graphics, etc). And the staffing levels that we have been fine-tuning for months need to be up to the task: around 250 people mobilised to cover the Games, including more than 100 text reporters working in six languages, some 100 photographers and editors, and around 30 for video coverage. Thanks to AFP’s presence in 150 countries, we will also have the story behind the story, i.e. how the Games are being watched abroad and how the athletes are welcomed home as heroes. As for the Paralympic Games, AFP has not waited for the Paris Games to provide strong coverage for its clients. We will have very broad coverage from the Opening Ceremony on Place de la Concorde to the Closing Ceremony at the Stade de France. Around 15 reporters, backed up by the desks, will provide the sporting coverage, getting up close with the athletes to explain their exceptional performances. Photo and video will also be present to an unprecedented extent, at and around the competition venues.



Mexico's team compete in the final of the women's team technical artistic swimming event during the World Aquatics Championships in Fukuoka on July 18, 2023. © Manan Vatsyayana / AFP

In this photo taken on September 4, 2023, salesmen arrange bundles of newspapers at a shop in Dhaka. Hundreds of articles praising Bangladeshi government policies apparently by independent experts have appeared in national and international media but the authors have questionable credentials, fake photos and may not even exist, an AFP investigation has found. © Munir uz Zaman / AFP



## DIGITAL INVESTIGATION

SOPHIE NICHOLSON, DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR  
DIGITAL INVESTIGATION



**“In terms of disinformation, 2024 is a perfect storm. Half the planet is going to the polls, with the European Parliament elections, the Biden-Trump rematch in the US and other elections such as in Mexico and India.”**

AFP has been preparing since last year but is also getting thousands of journalists around the world ready with its “Digital Courses”: Free, online courses available in four languages -- English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

AFP’s digital investigation team – the biggest in the world with 150 journalists working in 26 languages – is the best placed to observe the havoc that disinformation campaigns, interference, and all sorts of manipulation can wreak on elections. The presidential elections in the US and France in 2016 and 2017 were a turning point in this regard. The war in Ukraine has only intensified these campaigns and we have been preparing since last year for the spike in disinformation we are likely to see in 2024. That’s why we thought it was so important to develop these online courses and make them freely available, not only for AFP journalists but for all journalists or journalism students. The goal is to share our experience and help journalists to debunk disinformation. We are supported in this by the Google News Initiative, which is striving towards the same goal. Fifteen thousand users around the world have already taken part in the training.

### What do you learn on this course?

More than ever, journalists need to check the information they are publishing. Some checks only need a basic level of computer knowledge, others require real expertise. Especially as new technology like generative AI is coming to the fore. For example, there was an attempt to influence Slovakia’s September 2023 elections by registering a candidate from scratch using these new tools. We’ve also seen broader campaigns to exert influence, blamed on Russia, like the dozens of pirated news

sites imitating *The Guardian*, *Spiegel*, *Bild*, *20 minutes* or *Le Monde* to spread pro-Russian and anti-Western propaganda.

### What do the “Digital Courses” look like?

The modules last only an hour and can be done wherever and whenever convenient. They start with a one-minute video that sums up the content. They are good because they incorporate the real-life work and experience of our journalists with relevant examples, quizzes, and exercises to test the knowledge acquired. That’s why some journalism schools, like Sciences Po Paris, or universities, notably in Brazil, have decided to integrate them into their training programmes. We are constantly updating the training modules, because changes are happening so quickly on social media. They are also very concrete with topics such as “identifying the origin of a photo or a video”, “protecting yourself online”, “learning to tackle disinformation during elections”, or “exploring the financing of online campaigns.”



**Tackling disinformation during elections:** the module to learn tools to monitor election campaigns, and the most common types of election disinformation about candidates, political parties and the electoral system itself.



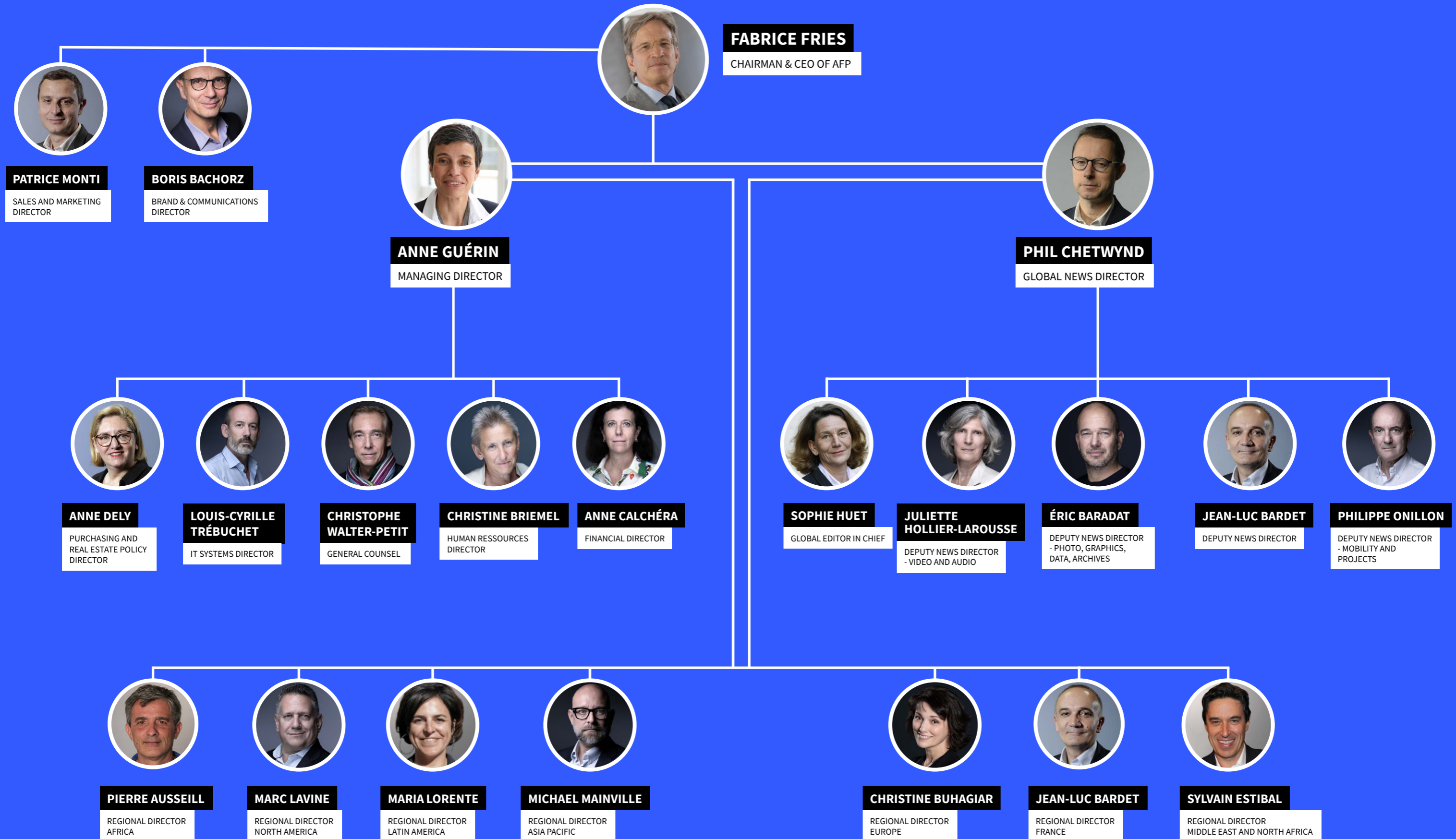
**AFP Fact Check: how to verify information online.** This playlist provides quick tutorials in online tools from AFP journalists.



**AFP Digital Courses:** Multilingual open courses for journalists and journalism students from leading global news agency AFP, supported by the Google News Initiative

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

APRIL 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2024



# ARMAN SOLDIN

## PORTRAIT

### Arman Soldin: from Bosnia to Ukraine with a smile

Arman Soldin was barely a year old when his mother carried him onto a humanitarian flight from war-torn Bosnia to France.

On Tuesday, another conflict claimed the unshakably smiling AFP video journalist's life in Ukraine.

Widely praised for his empathy, his courage and his professionalism, the 32-year-old French citizen had, just days earlier, finished some final stories depicting both the intensity of the fighting and the threat of death hanging over people outside the headlines.

In bomb-scarred Siversk, Arman followed Oleksandr, a former welder who became one of the war's unsung heroes by delivering bread on a pattering moped to isolated old people near the front line.

"How can we live without bread?" asked Lyubov Shcherbak, a spindly 76-year-old, as she showed the journalist her meal of three eggs, freshly laid by her hens.

Near Bakhmut, Arman visited a field hospital providing first aid to wounded Ukrainian soldiers during the night.

On May 1, he tweeted of his "pure terror" as, prone on the ground, he filmed Russian rockets battering down a few dozen metres (yards) away.

#### - Friends for life -

Oksana Soldin and Arman fled the panic, destruction and death of the conflict in Bosnia on a humanitarian flight to France on April 25, 1992.

TV footage from that day shows her arriving at Paris' Orly airport, Arman beside her with his then-blond curly hair standing out against his black jumper.

"Shells had blasted the staircases of our house in Sarajevo. I managed to get aboard the plane... We spent the flight on the floor, with Arman in my arms," remembers Oksana, now aged 59.

It would be six years in France before the family returned to Bosnia, once the bloody ethnic conflict had finally cooled.

More than 100,000 people died in the fighting that raged until 1995.

"Sarajevo was devastated. Arman would ask us questions all the time. We were the same age but his mind was older," remembers school friend Aldin Suljevic.

The two became friends "for life" on September 2, 1998, when they first took their seats side by side in

primary school -- never losing contact even when Arman returned to France in 2002 after his parents separated.

#### - Uprooted -

"We went through a testing time of being rootless. We found ourselves right at the bottom of the heap as refugees. That's why our family is so close, why we talk every day," says Arman's brother Sven, 26.

He saw his older sibling as "invincible", "an idol" and "the most important person in his life".

Each summer, Arman, Sven and their sister Ena would return to Bosnia to see their father Sulejman, himself a well-known journalist.

"Arman was French but Bosnia was in his heart," his friend Suljevic said.

Suljevic believes the pain of the conflict in Arman's homeland "played a role" in his desire to cover the fighting in Ukraine.

Aged just 11, Arman played at writing news alerts in his bedroom in the western French city of Rennes, his mother recalls.

And at 16, he uploaded to YouTube a compilation of excruciating images titled "Sarajevo in War", soundtrack by the sorrowful Adagio of Italian composer Tomaso Albinoni.

"Arman may not have had any ties with Ukraine but he chose to go there because he wanted to make himself useful, He wanted to seek the truth," said Oksana, a philosophy and sociology professor.

#### - 'Smiling all the while' -

Like many French teenagers, Arman was crazy about football and played in the youth team of top-tier club Stade Rennais from 2006 to 2008 -- only giving up on a professional career due to knee injuries.

"Football was a big part of his life," his brother Sven said.

"He was extremely good, extremely talented. He had something extra."

A French, English and Italian speaker, Arman studied in London, Lyon and Sarajevo before securing an internship at AFP's Rome bureau in 2015.

Video reporter Sonia Logre remembers him as "a dream intern".





At a Tough Mudder obstacle course in London in 2016 to raise funds for the Rory Peck Trust, which provides practical and financial support to freelance journalists and their families around the world. © Leon Neal / AFP

“He wanted to do everything, see everything, know everything. He wanted humbly to learn, had a desire to discover Italy and a deep love of life.”

AFP’s former sports correspondent in Rome, Emmanuel Barranguet, said Arman was “beaming all the time”.

“He even smiled when he would play football. He out-dribbled me I don’t know how many times, smiling all the while.”

Arman was hired by AFP in London that same year, where outside work and covering Brexit he threw himself into big-city life “partying from Friday night to Sunday” with a close group of friends, remembers ex-girlfriend Diane Dupre.

The young reporter was nevertheless frustrated at “not being out in the field enough”, she added.

Alongside his AFP work, Arman became UK sports correspondent for French premium TV channel Canal+ from 2019, where deputy sports editor David Barouh recalled his smile and a “wild charm” that meant “everyone loved him, professionally and as a human being”.

#### - ‘Coming up for air’ -

Later, whenever Arman would return from Ukraine, he would slip instantly back into the luxurious world of the Premier League and its immaculate turf -- days after being under bombardment.

“Maybe it was like coming up for air for him,” Barouh muses.

Arman was already in position in Ukraine when Russia invaded in February 2022.

He had volunteered to be among the first AFP special correspondents sent in -- just as he had volunteered to cover the first lethal months of Europe’s Covid-19 epidemic in Italy.

AFP photographer Dimitar Dilkoff met Arman on February 24, the day of the Russian attack.

“We went into Ukraine together,” the Bulgarian said, hailing his colleague’s “sunny” nature and his “desire to be the first on the ground”.

Emmanuel Peuchot, a journalist with long experience of war zones and other hostile environments, joined the team last October.

He found in Arman a reporter “belonging to the younger generation, a whole social network by himself. He was always on Twitter but not at all to post his own selfies.”

Peuchot remembered his colleague’s “openness whenever he would meet people”, saying at heart “he liked people, he was oriented towards others”.

In late April this year, the AFP team found a badly hurt hedgehog in the bottom of a crater.

Arman took it upon himself to feed and care for the creature back at AFP’s base.

#### - ‘Get people to understand’ -

Just a few days later, the hedgehog -- “Lucky” as the videojournalist dubbed him in Twitter posts -- was set free again.

“Amid this cute story, don’t forget there is a bloody war going on and millions of people are displaced. Help by donating to NGOs,” Arman wrote in one of his final posts to the network.

Besides his daily reporting, Arman had begun working with an artist on a graphic novel about Ukraine, to “get people to understand what’s happening on the ground”, Diane Dupre said.

The reporter “wanted to embody the war, without making himself the story”, she added.

On May 9, 2023, Arman was caught in a barrage of Grad rockets near Chasiv Yar, a Ukrainian town close to Bakhmut. The rest of the AFP team survived unharmed.

Moments before, “he was just like always, he was making jokes”, photographer Dilkoff said.

Arman died “with his camera in his hand”, his face showing no signs of suffering, Peuchot said,

Since his death, hundreds of Arman’s colleagues and friends, as well as anonymous members of the public and politicians, have hailed the big-hearted video reporter.

Many of the dozen people AFP interviewed for this piece laughed as they remembered his hijinks, before bursting into tears again.

Born in Sarajevo and killed in the Donbas, Arman Soldin was above all “a very sensitive, very emotional person”, his mother Oksana said.

“He gathered all the flowers in the world for me.”

by Joris Fioriti, May 12 2023.

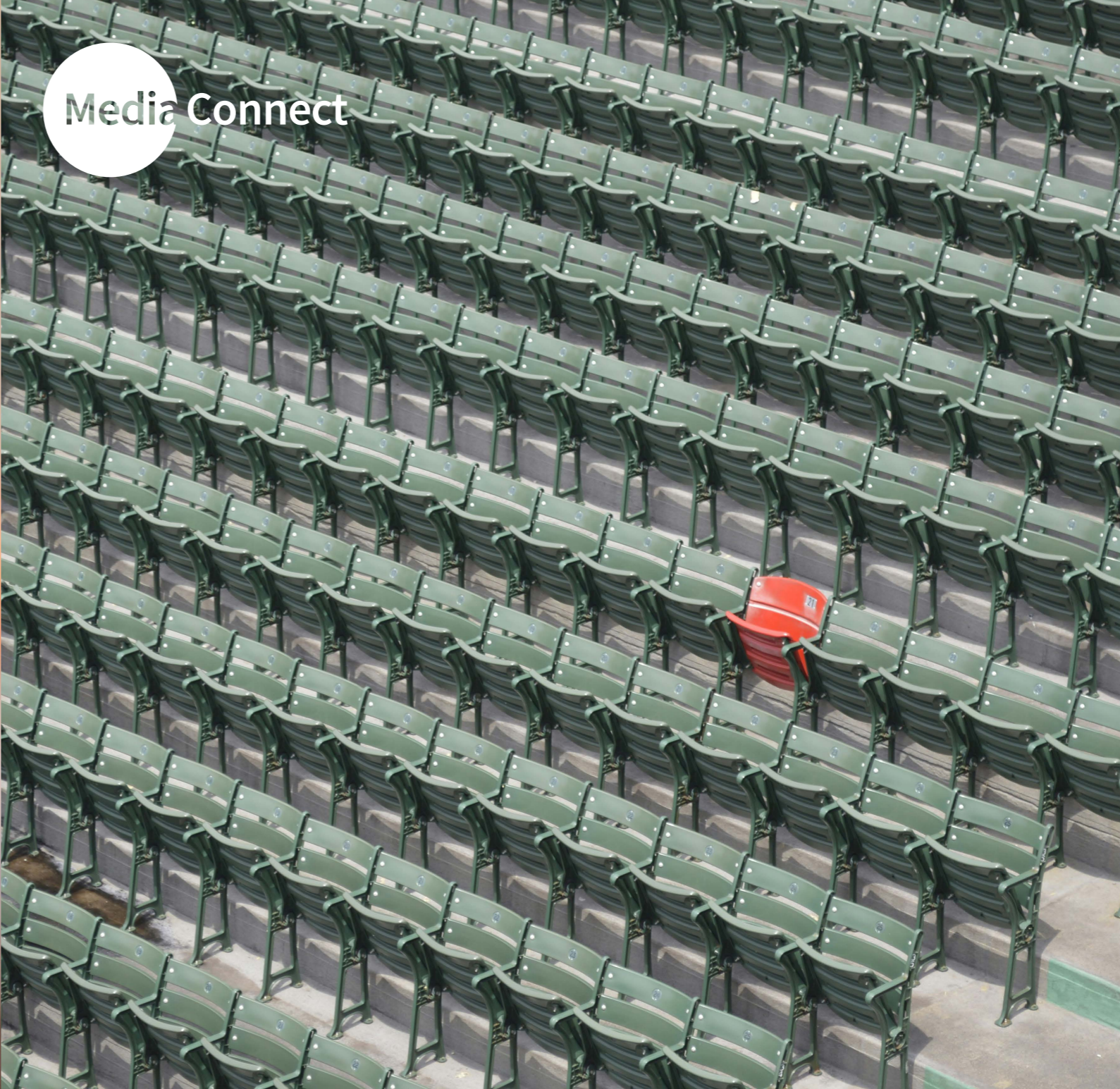
Arman Soldin was posthumously awarded the **Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur** by decree of the French President on 13 July 2023.

To mark the UN’s International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, every year around 2 November, France will reward “Courage in Journalism” with a **new prize, named Anna Politkovskaya-Arman Soldin**, after two emblematic figures who embodied courage in journalism and who were killed in the line of their work. This prize will honour reporters and photojournalists who continue the vital mission of providing free, accurate, high-quality information from crisis and conflict areas.

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**AFP**

**IN NUMBERS**

● **2,600**  
staff

● **1,700**  
journalists

● **100**  
nationalities

● **150**  
countries

● **260**  
locations

● **2,300**  
stories/day

● **3,000**  
photos/day

● **6**  
languages

● **300**  
videos/day

● **1,500**  
live streams/month

● **100**  
videographics/month

● **80**  
infographics/day