

Abstract

This study examines how exile journalists adapt their practices to navigate working under increasingly authoritarian regimes before their forced departure from their country of origin, and how this experience shapes their work once in exile. Existing research often concentrates on the transition to exile, overlooking the years of work under an authoritarian regime that precedes a journalist's departure from their country of origin. Through a thematic analysis of nine semi-structured interviews with journalists from six countries, namely Azerbaijan, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Myanmar, and Russia, this research investigates how journalists continue operating before leaving their countries and after going into exile, and contributes to bridging that gap. The primary research question focuses on how independent journalists navigate professionalism and news safety in the context of democratic backsliding and forced exile. The findings show that journalists develop different strategies and tactics to continue gathering information and producing journalism under an increasingly hostile environment for press freedom in the country of origin. These tactics persist and aid their work once in exile, as the journalists strive to uphold journalistic quality standards and journalistic authority while they navigate the challenge of denied access to the place they are covering. This research contributes to a broader discourse of journalism created beyond democratic contexts and a growing body of work on the alarming trend of exile journalism, which has caught the attention of press freedom NGOs and academics alike, in a global context tilting towards authoritarianism.

Keywords

Exile journalism, journalistic authority, authoritarianism, democracy, press freedom

