

**JX FUND**



# **PANORAMA OF EXILED INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

## **Amid Global Geopolitical Turbulence in 2026**

Report | Berlin, May 2026

## Introductory Note

Exiled media has been studied less than its importance warrants. But it is a fast-changing field, and an increasingly relevant one. The reasons for this lie in the political conditions that have been reshaping journalism worldwide.

For years the number of authoritarian regimes in the world has kept rising while the tools of digital censorship and public manipulation have become ever more sophisticated. The question in such contexts is no longer whether reporting from inside remains possible, but how long the few remaining outlets can hold out before relocation becomes the only option. Where organized crime or armed conflict are added, that point comes sooner.

This pattern is now visible with more than half the world's countries now classified by Reporters Without Borders as "difficult" or "very serious" for press freedom – 94 out of 180 in the 2026 index. In a growing share of these, journalism cannot be done from inside. It is being produced from exile – on infrastructure that is not its own, in legal jurisdictions that do not always protect it, on platforms it does not control.

The result, beyond the sector itself, is that the parts of the world from which independent information once flowed have shrunk. Audiences inside repressive countries lose access to reliable reporting; international audiences lose access to ground-level understanding of what is happening there. Both losses have become more acute in the tense and unstable geopolitical landscape of 2026.

This is the landscape JX Fund has been working in since 2022. During this time, we have carried out extensive research on the conditions under which exiled independent media operate, how they report and reach their audiences, the impact of their work and their capacity to serve as a catalyst for creating new, independent media ecosystems when regimes fall.

We have published extensive research reports<sup>1</sup>, country profiles<sup>2</sup> and other data-driven studies, and are constantly monitoring publications on exiled media from all parts of the world<sup>3</sup>. So far, our publications about exiled media have mainly focused on individual countries. This report looks across exiled media internationally to identify the common causes, challenges and possible future for exiled media communities.

We have been deliberate about our approach, and transparent about where the evidence is strong and where it is still tentative. Exiled media are often secretive and fluid by necessity – as a result, understanding the sector is a gradual and complex process.

1 <https://jx-fund.org/projects/expertise-research/>

2 <https://jx-fund.org/country-profiles/>

3 <https://jx-fund.org/journalism-in-exile/>

Yet this remains an urgent and important task. We are publishing at a moment of profound geopolitical uncertainty. The rollback of US development funding in 2025 reshaped the financial architecture that much of the independent media ecosystem – including exiled outlets – had come to depend on.

The pressure on journalism is not only financial. The tools used to silence journalism (e.g. legal pressure, surveillance technology, and criminalization of audiences) keep getting more sophisticated. At the same time, the questions that exiled media exist to answer – what is happening inside closed regimes, what is being hidden, who is paying the price – have become more critical, not less.

Exiled independent media are not a niche concern. They are a globally relevant institution at a moment when the infrastructure of accountability journalism is under threat from multiple directions simultaneously. That is why we believe this report is an important invitation for joint reflection, and why we hope it reaches well beyond the community of practitioners and funders already familiar with this work.

This is an introduction to a series of reports. The second will examine how exiled media reach their audiences. This includes the distribution strategies, technology used, and platform dependencies that determine whether independent reporting actually lands. The third will turn to the question of organizational sustainability: what it takes, structurally, in terms of people, and financially, to run an exiled media outlet over the long term.

Together, we hope these reports provide the sector – and those who fund and support it – with the clearest picture yet of what exiled media are, how they work, and what they need to deliver the greatest impact possible.

*Maral Jekta,*

*Managing Director, JX Fund*

## Note on Methodology and Research Approach

This overview builds on a body of work that JX Fund has developed since 2022 through its research activities, involvement in thematic discussions, and direct engagement with exiled media communities across the world. Before setting out the findings, it is worth emphasizing what this research is grounded in, its limitations and boundaries.

### Defining the Subject

Discussions about media often suffer from loose and imprecise definitions. This is particularly the case when it comes to the concept of “exile”, which is debated not only on substantive grounds.

To manage this issue, JX Fund has opted for a strict definition. As set out in the Appendix, Exiled Independent Media (EXIM) are defined as media outlets – not individual journalists, not political commentary channels, not purely diaspora publications – that are produced outside the country they primarily seek to serve due to a high level of risk associated with practicing journalism in said country (or the outright impossibility of doing so). A significant part of the editorial team or management should come from the country of origin but operate outside it. Moreover, these outlets should be genuinely independent of state, oligarchic or political actors, and operate in accordance with journalistic standards.

This definition includes a deliberately conservative understanding of the word “media”. It excludes influencers, bloggers and quasi-journalistic content producers who populate the broader information ecosystem, even where their work is politically significant. This strict definition, however, aims to help make meaningful cross-country comparisons possible. Where relevant, this overview acknowledges the existence of a wider ecosystem but focuses on outlets that meet the full criteria.

### The Countries Covered

The empirical foundation of this report is JX Fund's country-level research, which has involved detailed EXIM landscape mapping in eight countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria. These are the countries for which JX Fund has compiled Exiled Media Dashboards<sup>4</sup>, Country Profiles<sup>5</sup> and in-depth reports<sup>6</sup>, which have involved substantial data collection and interviews with practitioners.

The EXIM space is, of course, considerably broader than these eight countries both within the countries surveyed, where EXIM often operate in great secrecy and are therefore difficult to observe by design, and across other countries

4 A digital database of editorial, organizational and other media-level of datapoints on EXIM with the goal of facilitating research.

5 <https://jx-fund.org/country-profiles/>

6 <https://jx-fund.org/projects/expertise-research/>

globally. While JX Fund has also undertaken meaningful research activities covering other countries, these are by no means comprehensive.

This panorama therefore concentrates on the eight countries surveyed in depth, while the broader EXIM landscape will be addressed in future iterations of this work.

### **The Basis of JX Fund's Expertise**

JX Fund has an unusual position in the exiled media sector since it is both a primary source of structural support to outlets and an active institutional observer of the field as a whole. The analysis in this report draws directly on that position.

Since 2022 JX Fund has directly supported 95 exiled media outlets and built sustained working relationships with many more. In 2025 alone, JX Fund advised more than 60 outlets across 19 countries on funding architecture, support mechanisms and sectoral contacts including conversations that give insight into how the sector actually operates, what it needs and where it is moving.

Alongside this direct engagement, JX Fund maintains the most comprehensive ongoing review on analytical literature on exiled media available – research reports, country studies, sector portraits and opinion pieces – from across the world. This ongoing review, accessible and updated at <https://jx-fund.org/journalism-in-exile/>, informs the contextual and comparative dimensions of this report.

It is from this combination of structured empirical research, direct practitioner engagement and continuous literature monitoring that this overview is drawn.

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## 1 A Growing Exiled Media Space

While publications that serve a diaspora or émigré audience have long existed<sup>7</sup>, there is a critical distinction between such publications and EXIM, as defined in the course of JX Fund's research. Most importantly, they are fundamentally different from exiled media in terms of content, target audience, journalistic process, mission and political significance.

### EXIM are Enabled by Digitalisation

Digitalisation of distribution technology is a key reason why modern EXIM can exist. If a news publication is banned from, say, Russia or Iran, it would be hardly possible to print it in Rome or London and distribute it in-country at a meaningful scale. Radio distribution, such as Radio Free Europe's during the Cold War, was only geographically possible for a limited number of countries and then required state-level resources that were out of reach for most, relatively destitute émigré communities.

By contrast EXIM are possible only thanks to large scale digital distribution which allows them to serve a meaningful audience in their country of origin despite being based abroad (similarly, digital channels are critical to reporting out of those countries). Thus, at most, this phenomenon can only date back to the mid-2000s and often later.

There are a few exceptions – for example, the Myanmar-focused Irrawaddy, which launched its magazine from Thailand in 1993<sup>8</sup> – but even such media only gained in-country distribution scale after the launch of online operations.

The importance of digitalisation cuts across all three dimensions that define EXIM:

- **Exiled media have a strong connection to their home countries** and have left for non-voluntary reasons. But securing information on what is happening in country, and then communicating back to audiences there, would be very difficult without modern messaging apps, platforms, etc.
- Media need to be **independent from political, radical religious groups<sup>9</sup>, oligarchic or government stakeholders**. They should have editorial standards, reject radical or extremist ideology, and maintain an arm's length from direct political projects (which can be tricky given that resisting censorship is in itself a political act). Because digital-first outlets can be sustained at a fraction of the cost of broadcast or print media, this makes them much more viable for organizations rely primarily on philanthropic capital, readers, or a combination of commercial sources.

<sup>7</sup> During the Cold War many Central European émigré communities ran periodicals out of Western capitals – e.g. the Polish *Kultura Paryska*, or *Paris Culture* – which played an important role in terms of political or intellectual life of a portion of the country's elites. However, these had limited direct relevance to audiences in their respective countries of origin. See more <https://openjournals.ugent.be/jeps/article/id/71500/>

<sup>8</sup> Irrawaddy, May 4, 2016. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/burmas-media-landscape-through-the-years.html>

<sup>9</sup> The question of independence from religious movements is complicated, as some religiously oriented publications (notably minority ones) play an important role in informing audiences and generally maintain journalistic standards. However, they should not sacrifice these to pursue a religious agenda, especially one that calls for violence or oppression against other groups.

- Finally, the publications should broadly be defined as **media – that is, they should be produced by a team and represent a diversity of opinions and perspectives**. Although the situation in some countries calls for exemptions, generally, this excludes influencers/ creators who focus on sharing personal opinions and rarely adhere to journalistic principles. In practice, EXIM require collaboration by individuals based in multiple countries (the origin country and one or several exile countries), which is only possible with remote working.

A further aspect of digitalisation that has enabled the emergence of EXIM is the popularization of circumvention tools, anonymity tools and other forms of Anti-Censorship Technology. The most popular of these is the Virtual Private Network or VPN, which allows audiences to access content that may be restricted in their own countries.

While VPNs are frequently used to access non-political/ news content (typically these are films or series that are not distributed in a given country or adult content), the widespread use of the technology has allowed EXIM to “piggyback” and reach audiences that would otherwise be inaccessible at large scale<sup>10</sup>.

### **What Drives Journalists into Exile: Authoritarianism, Conflict, and Organized Crime**

EXIM do not emerge in a vacuum. Behind each outlet is a specific set of circumstances that made independent journalism at home impossible – and that pushed journalists and media organizations to continue their work from abroad. Those circumstances vary, but they fall into three broad categories, which often overlap and interact.

**Authoritarian repression** is the primary driver of EXIM cases documented in this overview. Where a state systematically targets independent media – through legal measures, forced closures, the criminalisation of journalism, or direct repressions – exile frequently becomes the only path through which independent reporting can continue.

This pattern is visible across the countries studied here: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria each represent contexts in which the state has been the principal agent forcing media into exile (although ongoing fighting long played a role for both Syria and Myanmar).

The mechanisms differ, from Belarus's post-2020 crackdown to Afghanistan's overnight transformation under Taliban rule. But the underlying logic is the same: independent journalism was made incompatible with physical presence in the country.

**Armed conflict** operates as a second distinct trigger, though it rarely acts alone. War destroys the physical and institutional infrastructure on which journalism

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<sup>10</sup> This trend has become so significant that Russian EXIM Paper has turned the sale of their own, branded VPN into the main source of revenue for the outlet (<https://thefix.media/2022/09/26/how-independent-russian-media-seeks-new-revenue-sources-in-times-of-severe-censorship/>)

depends, displaces entire populations, and creates conditions in which reporting becomes acutely dangerous regardless of any deliberate state policy toward the press.

In practice, conflict and authoritarian repression frequently coincide: in both Syria and Myanmar<sup>11</sup>, civil war compounded the targeting of independent media by the state, making the two forces difficult to disentangle. What distinguishes conflict as a trigger is that it can force journalists into exile even in the absence of a deliberate state campaign against the press – and that the conditions for return are determined by the trajectory of the conflict as much as by any political transition.

**Organized crime** constitutes a third context in which journalists face displacement, most prominently in parts of Latin America (notably in Mexico and El Salvador prior to the arrival of President Nayib Bukele; after Bukele, the government became the main threat) where criminal organizations exercise territorial control and target reporters investigating their activities.

This dynamic differs structurally from the authoritarian-regime context: the threat comes from non-state actors, the legal and institutional framework is different, and the strategies available to displaced journalists are not directly comparable.

It should be noted that both armed conflict and organized crime are typically not enough to trigger exile without state policies that also target media. Cases of displacement that are triggered by the former usually lead media to move to other parts of the country (this has been the case in Syria and Myanmar, among others), or to relocate for a short period of time (which a different phenomenon, not fully aligned with typical cases of exile).

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<sup>11</sup> In both cases, however, the authoritarian regime nonetheless was a key factor making the open practice of journalism impossible. Both Syria and Myanmar had independent news publications operating partly or fully in non-government-controlled parts of the country.

## 2 Exiled Media as a Global Phenomenon

The global EXIM landscape is bigger, more complex, and more impactful than one might assume at first glance. It includes at the very least hundreds of outlets, some of which are comparable in scale and diversity of content and formats to some of the world's most recognized media publications.

However, it is only partially understood. EXIM are hard to grasp by necessity and there are currently no public, cross-country resources providing an overview of the sector. There are strong associations on a national level – for example, Press Club Belarus<sup>12</sup>, the Syrian Journalist Association<sup>13</sup>, or the Independent Press Council of Myanmar<sup>14</sup>.

Regional and international collaboration remains scarce (the NEMO member network<sup>15</sup> is a relatively unique case of an international peer-to-peer exchange platform) and tends to be folded into regional media and/ or investigative journalism associations (Latin America is a prime example<sup>16</sup>).

EXIM themselves often know little about their peers – especially those from other countries – which hampers cross-border knowledge-sharing and co-operation.

### The EXIM Space is Bigger and More Complex than Meets the Eye

EXIM follow a fundamentally different logic than general media. The latter try to be as loud and visible as possible – to be linked as widely as possible and to highlight their growth. This helps them gain credibility and attract more audiences and commercial partners. By contrast, public attention for EXIM means more risks to their organization, staff and partners.

As a result, many EXIM constantly balance two contradictory forces: they still want new audiences (and funders) to discover their work but need to maintain a low profile while doing so. In many countries consumption of EXIM output is criminalized, which means EXIM go to great lengths to distribute their content via low-visibility channels, which can sometimes have greater following than official ones (e.g., within private messenger groups, via mirror sites or unbranded channels<sup>17</sup>).

On a macro level, this means a great deal of research needs to be carried out to identify the full range of EXIM covering a given country. In practice, this means that a country that initially appears to have just a handful of EXIM operating may turn out to have several dozen. Over several years of research on 8 countries in which substantial EXIM communities have emerged, JX Fund identified at least 280 EXIM that fully met the criteria laid out by researchers.

12 <https://press-club.pro/>

13 <https://syja.org/?lang=en>

14 <https://www.facebook.com/p/Independent-Press-Council-Myanmar-61553884594152/>

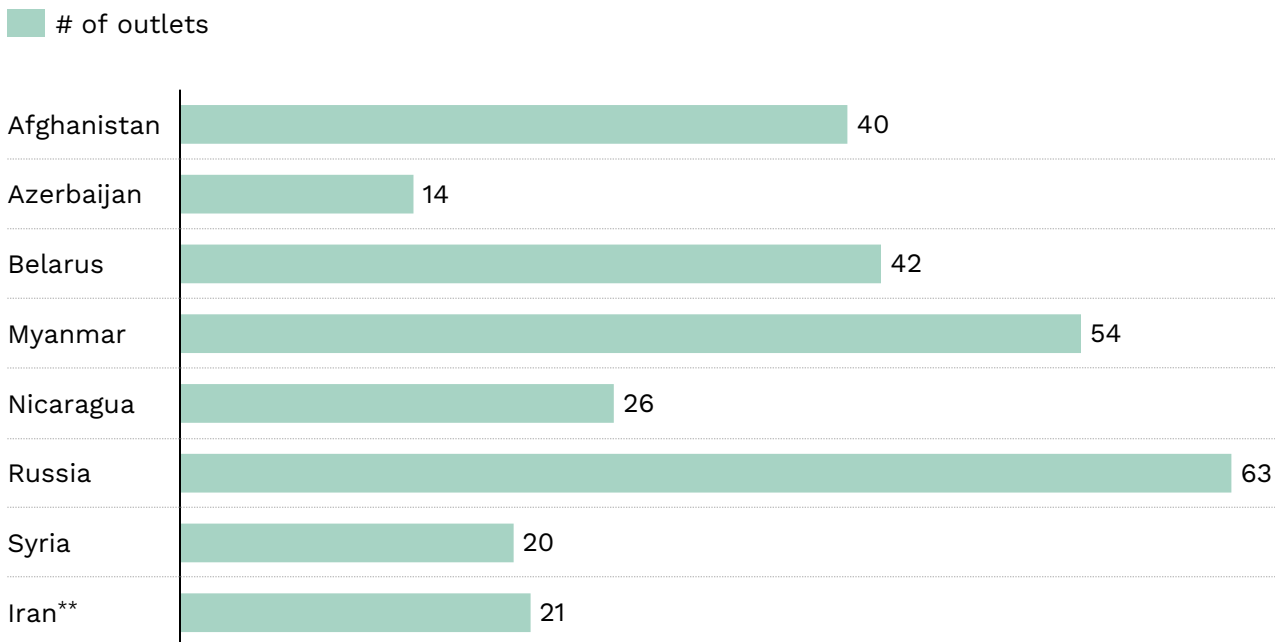
15 <https://www.exiled.media/members/>

16 Latin American includes a number of fairly active regional associations, including the Network of Central American Journalists, the Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP), and Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión).

17 For example, as of Dec. 2025 a selection of 8 Belarusian EXIM ran 31 TikTok channels (official channels had 54M monthly views, unofficial ones had 133M)

### Verified EXIM Included in JX Fund Country Profiles

The number of exiled independent media\* identified for selected countries (2025-2026)



\*Media were identified during the preparation of country profiles, based on open-source research and expert interviews, with a detailed review of each outlet for alignment with EXIM criteria.

\*\*Preliminary figure. The Iran Country Profile has not yet been published at the time of writing.

Source: JX Fund Research. Data for all countries except Syria and Iran was gathered and reviewed in 2025; Syria and Iran data was gathered and reviewed in 2026.

This, however, only scratches the surface of the EXIM phenomenon. Firstly, because not all countries with EXIM have been surveyed<sup>18</sup>. Secondly, because media that meet all critical EXIM criteria and most non-critical ones, are only a part of richer tapestry.

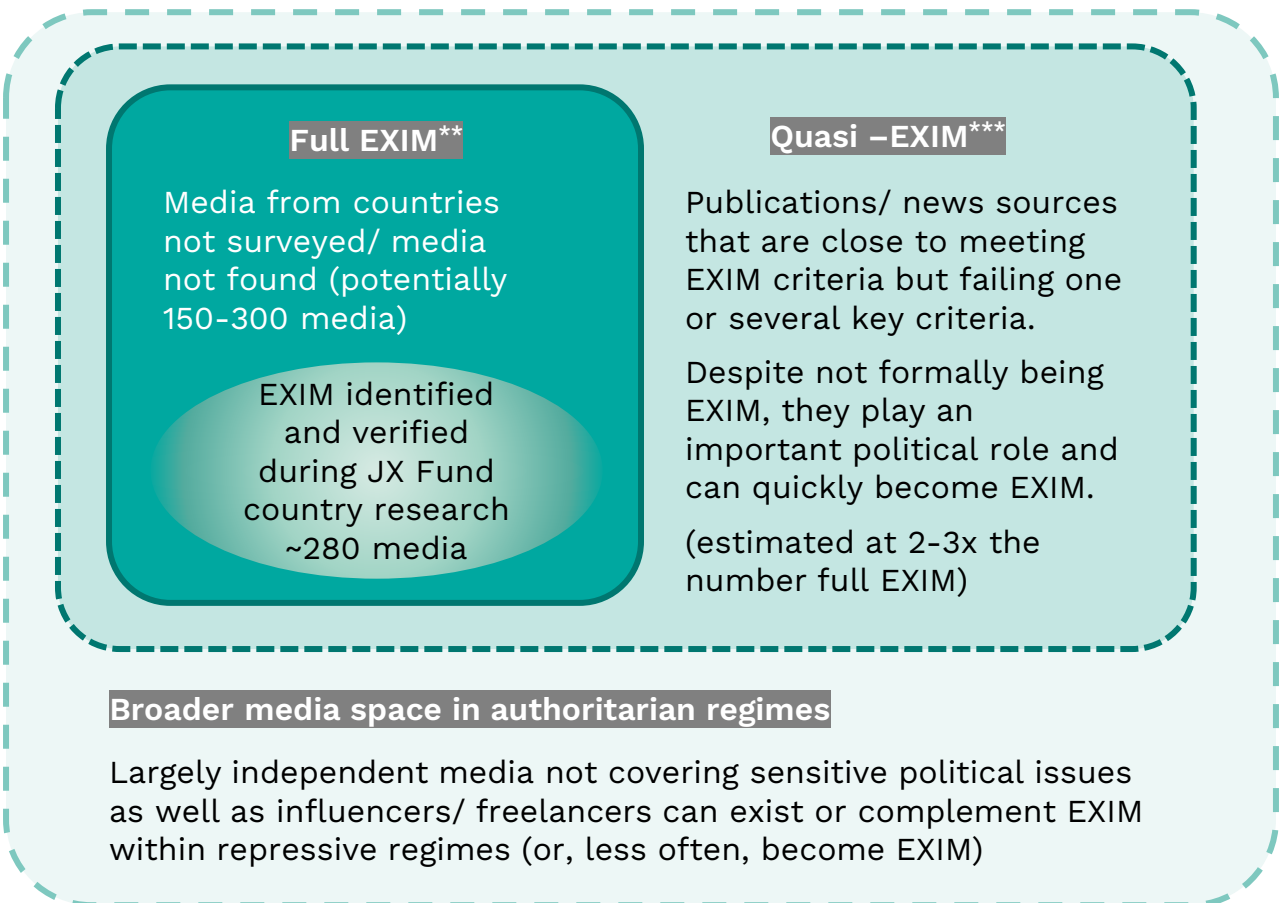
In addition to verified independent exiled media (full EXIM) there are many media projects who fail to meet several important criteria at the moment (quasi-EXIM), which can change quickly. A typical example is an influencer YouTube channel focused on one person sharing political opinions, which is counted as a full EXIM once several additional team members join and the content pivots to a more journalistic, news-focused agenda. Such quasi-EXIM account for several times more organizations than their full counterparts (anecdotal research across several countries suggest this space is 2-3 times bigger).

These quasi-EXIM are complemented by a broader universe of influencer/ blogger content producers, of independent media that focus primarily on non-political coverage and other related entities. All this creates a vibrant ecosystem that is all the more resilient because of its depth and diversity – and thus merits at least high-level monitoring.

<sup>18</sup> Due to the factors previously highlighted, identifying and tracking EXIM is a fairly labour-intensive activity, which additionally requires a combination of language skills, niche expertise on a country's media landscape and socio-political conditions, and general media analysis.

## Assessed Structure of the EXIM Space Globally

The likely structure and scale of the global EXIM space\*



\*Media were identified during the preparation of country profiles, based on open-source research and expert interviews, with a detailed review of each outlet for alignment with EXIM criteria.

\*\*Media fully or very closely aligned to EXIM criteria (i.e., elements that are not fully matching are due to exceptional or country-specific circumstances).

\*\*\*A typical case is a YouTube show run by a single expert (e.g., sharing opinions), which will be counted as an EXIM in case of hiring additional staff, providing space to additional speakers and pivoting to a greater news-focus.

Source: JX Fund Research

## Global EXIM Map

*Note: This section in particular should be considered as an early attempt to map out the EXIM space rather than a final verdict. The process of understanding the EXIM space requires granular and extensive research. JX Fund is sharing the findings of its work since 2022 in the hopes of stimulating further research and discussion, rather than offering a definitive view on the sector<sup>19</sup>.*

The distribution of where EXIM come from relatively closely maps to press freedom maps – as a rule, the more repressive a country the more likely it is to generate a relatively significant EXIM community. However, this correlation has notable exceptions; moreover, the causality behind the EXIM phenomenon is somewhat more nuanced.

19 For a perspective on the migratory flows associated with the EXIM phenomenon, see the global mapping exercise carried out by Reporters Without Borders – <https://rsf.org/en/exile-journalists-map-fleeing-europe-and-north-america>

First and foremost, the existence of EXIM in a country is in fact not just reliant on a country currently being repressive, but rather that it became repressive after a period of relative media freedom. Simply put, a period during which media publications emerged needs to precede a period during which a local independent media community emerged and grew to the point of having some institutional resiliency.

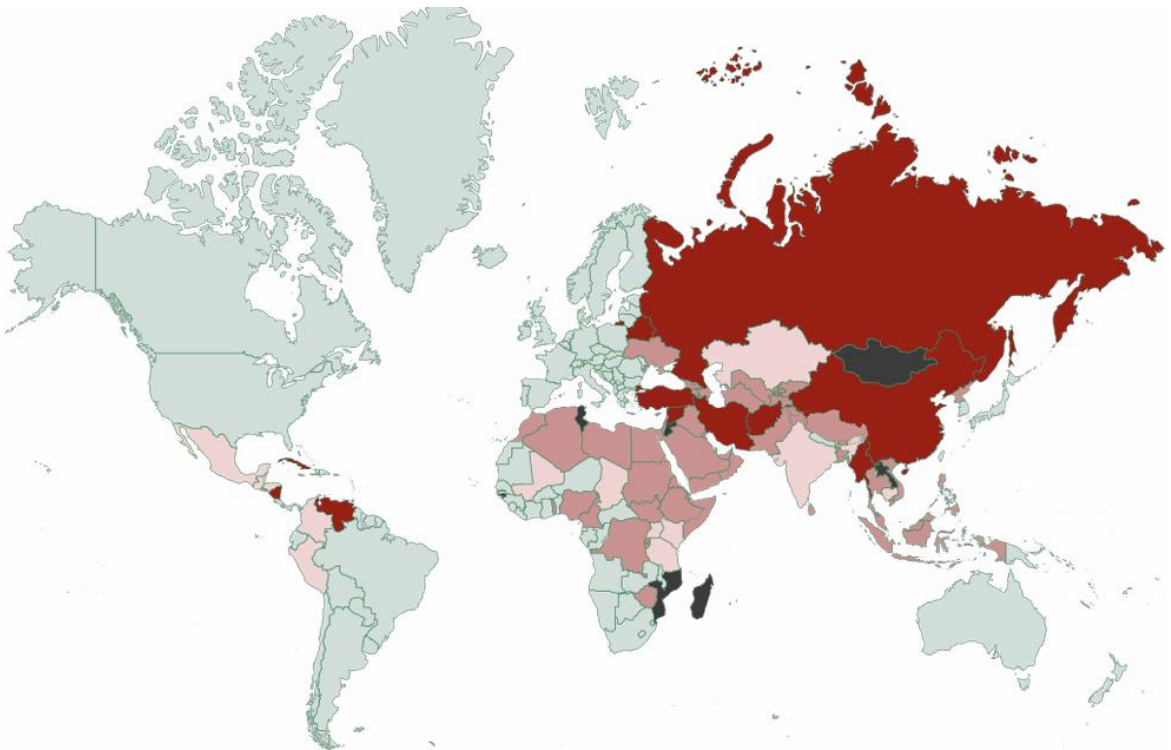
In addition to full EXIM, there is also a large number of countries that have individual journalists who are forced into exile. In some cases, these first “canaries in the coal mine” can be followed by full EXIM (or they set up organizations around themselves).

Exhibit 3

**Exiled Independent Media are a Global Phenomenon**

Overview of countries in terms of the assessed significance\* of their EXIM community

- Major source of EXIM (at least 10 full EXIM)
- At least one confirmed EXIM
- Exiled journalists but no “Full EXIM” identified
- Highly repressive countries\*\* but with no significant EXIM activity identified.



\*Research carried out by JX Fund for the purpose of preparing country reports and other research. Note this likely undercounts the total amount of EXIM.

\*\*Countries in the bottom 80 of the Reporters Without Borders 2025 ranking. Note that some countries still have independent media in-country despite very low rankings (e.g., Philippines).

Source: JX Fund Research. Note: EXIM criteria compliance has only been systematically carried out for Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria. For other countries this is based on a preliminary assessment.

## **EXIM are highly diverse in terms of focus and format**

The 280 outlets tracked across JX Fund's eight country profiles represent not a single type of journalism but an exceptionally varied ecosystem of formats, missions and editorial focuses.

That diversity is not accidental. It reflects the different media landscapes that existed in each country before exile, the different circumstances in which journalists left, and the different audiences they are trying to reach – audiences whose needs, levels of digital access and exposure to risk vary enormously from country to country.

Thematic range across EXIM communities is broader than is often assumed. General news and political reporting form the core of most landscapes, but the sector extends well beyond this.

Afghan exiled media include outlets dedicated specifically to the situation of women under Taliban rule – a subject that is simultaneously banned at home and of acute concern to international audiences.

Myanmar's exiled media community includes outlets with ethnic and regional focuses, serving specific linguistic communities among the country's diverse population whose access to information in their own languages has been severed by the junta.

Belarusian exiled media include specialist publications covering economics or culture alongside news, as well as, unusually, a major sports outlet, Tribuna<sup>20</sup>, which began covering politics after openly supporting the 2020 protests and now operates eight language editions.

Russian EXIM encompass investigative platforms, regional outlets, Telegram-native news providers and host-led YouTube channels. This diversity reflects the relative maturity and scale of the Russian independent media sector before exile.

This thematic breadth matters: it is a measure of the sector's depth and resilience, and an indicator of the range of public needs it is attempting to serve.

Format and channel choices vary just as significantly – and are shaped as much by censorship and audience constraints as by editorial preference. YouTube has become a near-universal distribution channel: all Nicaraguan EXIM tracked by JX Fund operate YouTube channels, as do 93% of Azerbaijani outlets and 89% of Myanmar's exiled media, with Russian and Afghan outlets close behind.

But the dominance of YouTube sits alongside a wide variety of other approaches. Myanmar's exiled outlets have built some of the largest Facebook followings of any media anywhere in the world<sup>21</sup> – a reflection of Facebook's particular importance in that country's information ecosystem, and of the censorship pressures that have shaped how audiences in and from the country access content.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://thefix.media/2023/03/17/belarusian-sports-outlet-banned-in-the-country-the-case-of-tribuna/>

<sup>21</sup> It is not uncommon for Myanmar EXIM to have millions of Facebook followers, with some reaching as high as 18 million (The Irrawaddy) or 20 million (Democratic Voices of Burma).

Belarusian outlets, operating for a more digitally sophisticated audience accustomed to circumvention tools, have invested heavily in Telegram and in covert distribution channels including private messaging groups and mirror sites.

Text-heavy formats remain strong in the Belarusian and Russian contexts, while video-first approaches dominate in Afghanistan, where literacy rates make audiovisual content more effective at reaching broader audiences. Afghan media in exile have established free-to-air satellite broadcasts that reach millions inside the country, including those without internet access.

Taken together, this diversity is one of the sector's defining strengths – and one of the reasons why aggregate reach figures tell only part of the story. The 484 million monthly YouTube views recorded across EXIM from seven countries<sup>22</sup> in 2025 represent an impressive cumulative number, but behind it lies a patchwork of very different operations: large Russian outlets with structures resembling mid-sized international newsrooms, small Nicaraguan investigative platforms operating with skeleton teams from Costa Rica, and Afghan women's media producing content for audiences who must access it on shared devices in environments where discovery carries serious risk.

Understanding the sector means understanding that diversity, not flattening it into a single narrative. Moreover, it should be noted that this overview is but the tip of the iceberg. Many EXIM use anonymous or otherwise disguised channels to distribute content – avoiding the watchful eyes of censors. Anecdotal evidence found that these “hidden views” were more than twice as significant for some social media channels than those secured by official ones<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria (note: different months are compiled for some of the countries).

<sup>23</sup> JX Fund research. Additional details not disclosed for security reasons.

### 3 Why Exiled Media Matter in 2026

EXIM exist because the alternative is silence. Authoritarian regimes, war and persistent violent crime make journalism all but impossible across vast parts of the world. As a result, a growing body of media and journalists have decided that exile is preferable to giving up – and working in their home country is simply too dangerous.

The result is that over the past decade the EXIM space has spiked sharply. While repressive states have “created” a supply of EXIM, they have also increased demand for their work: isolated audiences want to access independent information, and the world wants to learn what is happening inside closed regimes.

Their importance has sharpened amid the geopolitical turbulence of 2026. The rollback of US development funding in 2025 and the growing sophistication of transnational repression (i.e., legal harassment, surveillance technology, the criminalisation of audiences) mean that EXIM operate under mounting pressure at precisely the moment their work is most needed.

This is not a niche or transitional phenomenon. When regimes fall, it is often exiled media that are best placed to help rebuild independent information ecosystems from the ground up. That makes EXIM a matter of global democratic infrastructure, not simply a concern for the countries and communities they directly serve.

The impact of EXIM operates across multiple dimensions simultaneously – which also makes it so difficult to measure and so easy to underestimate.

#### **An Approach to Understanding of EXIM Impact**

At the most immediate level, EXIM inform audiences who would otherwise have no access to independent reporting: people inside repressive countries, diaspora communities cut off from reliable news about their homelands, and international audiences – including other media organizations – seeking ground-level insight into closed regimes.

At the same time, EXIM actively counter regime propaganda, deconstructing state narratives and challenging disinformation campaigns that would otherwise go unanswered in the global information space.

The social and political dimensions of EXIM impact extend well beyond the news cycle. For people living under authoritarian rule, knowing that independent journalism exists and is watching can reduce the profound sense of isolation that repressive governments deliberately cultivate.

EXIM also provide visibility to civil society actors, dissidents, and reform movements that lack any other platform – creating pressure for accountability that can influence both domestic politics and international policy. Importantly, they play a key role in documenting crimes, pushing for accountability, and

building the evidentiary record that transitional justice processes will eventually require.









Perhaps the most underappreciated dimension of EXIM impact is their role as a foundation for what comes after. When political change arrives – as it did in Syria after Assad's fall – it is exiled media that are often best positioned to help rebuild a professional, independent media ecosystem.

EXIM are de facto carriers of editorial standards, institutional knowledge, and journalistic know-how, which can be brought back into a landscape that repression has hollowed out.

Exhibit 4

### Dimensions of EXIM Impact

Types of impact delivered by EXIM

 <p><b>Inform audiences in-country and among the diaspora</b> with independent perspective and covering under-exposed/ censored issues</p>	 <p><b>Sustaining the media ecosystem</b> – training of new generation of journalists, cross-promo, publishing</p>
 <p><b>Inform international audiences,</b> incl. media, about what is happening in repressive countries, leveraging on the ground context and sources</p>	 <p><b>Supporting civil society and change</b> – providing visibility for topics and voices, and creating pressure for reform</p>
 <p><b>Deconstructing fake news</b> – EXIM challenge both domestic and international propaganda spread by repressive regimes</p>	 <p><b>Reducing the sense of isolation</b> – people who disagree with the current political situation feel less isolated and depressed</p>
 <p><b>International and transitional justice</b> – EXIM play a critical role in documenting crimes and tracking accountability procedures</p>	 <p><b>Foundation for rebuilding</b> – EXIM can help rebuild a professional media ecosystem in the case of political change</p>

Source: JX Fund Research

## Deep Dive: Examples of Different Types of Impact

Below is a deep dive into specific types of impact delivered by EXIM.

### 1. Serving audiences who lack alternative sources of information

At their core, EXIM exist to serve audiences who have been cut off from independent reporting – people inside repressive countries, diaspora communities seeking reliable news about their homelands, and international audiences trying to understand what is happening inside closed regimes.

The scale of this reach is often underestimated. In Belarus, for instance, between a quarter and 39% of residents reported using independent exiled media in 2024<sup>24</sup> – a striking figure for outlets that are formally banned and whose audiences risk legal consequences for accessing them.

The diversity of themes and formats used by EXIM underscores their value for unique communities. Confidential, Nicaragua's leading exiled outlet, has extended its reach beyond a politically engaged readership with Nicas Migrantes, a dedicated sub-project serving the large Nicaraguan diaspora in Costa Rica, the United States and Spain<sup>25</sup> – an example of how diversity of format and audience focus is itself a dimension of impact.

The EXIM space also includes multiple specialist media covering minority communities, regional issues, environmental reporting, and cultural production that is banned or suppressed at home. Afghan outlets such as Zan Times<sup>26</sup> and Rukhshana Media<sup>27</sup> focus on the situation of women under Taliban rule – a subject that is simultaneously a matter of life and death for their primary audience and of significant international concern.

### 2. Countering propaganda and exposing disinformation

EXIM are often uniquely positioned to challenge the propaganda that authoritarian regimes produce<sup>28</sup>. They combine insider knowledge of the political and media landscape, access to sources inside the country, and the editorial freedom to investigate and publish what state-controlled media (or other non-independent publishers) cannot. The result is a body of work that goes well beyond reactive fact-checking.

A growing body of documented examples shows EXIM outlets acting as early warning systems for transnational disinformation campaigns: identifying botnets spreading false content across multiple languages, exposing fake accounts mimicking Western media, and investigating AI-trained systems designed to manipulate public narratives. This work has made them key partners for international civil society organizations, tech platforms, and other media working to defend the integrity of the information space.

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24 <https://mediaiq.info/a-divided-reality-analysis-of-the-belarusian-media-in-2024>

25 <https://confidencial.digital/author/nicasm/>

26 <https://zantimes.com>

27 <https://rukshana.com/en/>

28 Notable examples of fact-checking: Nicaragua (<https://www.divergentes.com/diver-check/>), Belarus

(<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/belarusian-investigative-center-bias-and-credibility/>), Russia (<https://provereno.media/>)

Mediazona's long-running Russia 200 project<sup>29</sup> – developed in collaboration with the BBC – offers one illustration of this at scale. By systematically documenting the identities of soldiers killed in Russia's war against Ukraine, drawing on open sources, testimonies and family contacts, the outlet has built an evidentiary record that directly contradicts official Russian narratives about the conflict's human cost.

### 3. Serving as sources for international reporting

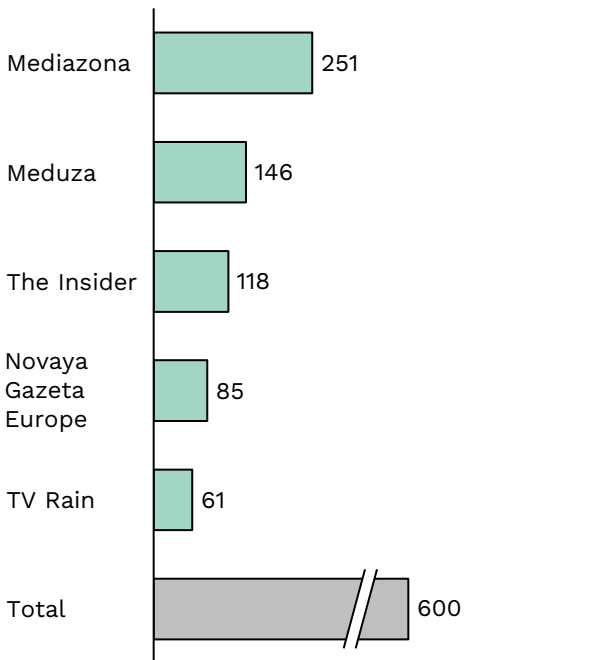
Russia's EXIM are cited in major international publications at a rate comparable to some of the world's most recognised news outlets. This is not unique to the Russian context: across the countries studied, EXIM have become primary conduits through which foreign correspondents, researchers and policymakers gain access to information about closed regimes that would otherwise be unavailable.

Exhibit 5

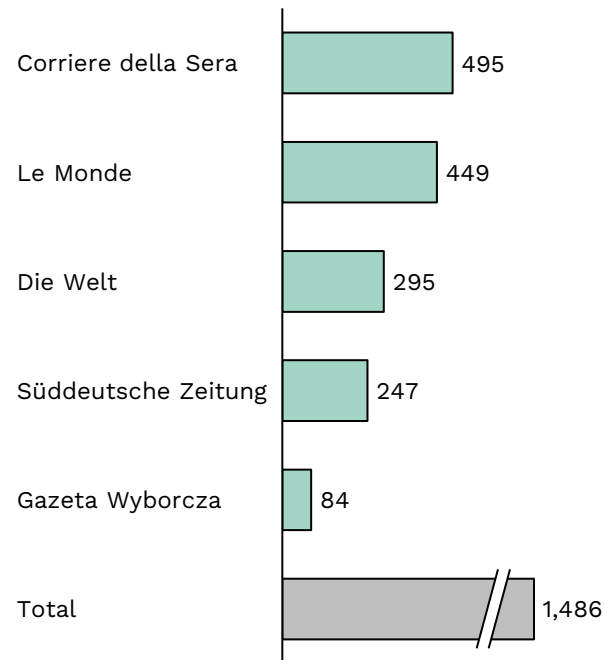
#### Russian Independent Media in Exile (EXIM) as Sources for Global Media

Number of citations of major national media and selected Russian independent exiled outlets in leading global publications\* between September 1, 2024, and September 1, 2025.

Selected Russian media in exile  
(# of citations)



Major national media (# of citations)



\*The list of the selected global outlets comprises the New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian, BBC News, Bloomberg, Reuters, Financial Times, Deutsche Welle (DW), Le Monde, The Economist, Euronews, CNN, France 24, Al Jazeera, The Associate Press.  
Sources of citations: The New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian, BBC News, Bloomberg, Reuters, Financial Times, Deutsche Welle (DW), Le Monde (excluding citations of Le Monde), The Economist, Euronews, CNN, France 24, Al Jazeera, The Associate Press

The partnership model between EXIM and international outlets has become increasingly formalised. Afghan EXIM have been particularly active in this regard: Zan Times has collaborated with The Guardian<sup>30</sup>, France's *Courrier International*<sup>31</sup> and the Italian outlet *Avvenire*<sup>32</sup>, among others, on reporting about the situation of women and girls under Taliban rule, while Rukhshana Media has similarly partnered with The Guardian on a "Women Report Afghanistan" series<sup>33</sup>.

These collaborations extend the reach of exiled reporting to audiences who might never encounter the originating outlet directly. They also lend institutional weight to findings that authoritarian governments otherwise dismiss as opposition propaganda.

#### 4. Holding power to account and supporting civil society

Accountability journalism<sup>34</sup> from exile faces structural obstacles that domestic journalism does not. Exiled journalists cannot be present at the institutions they investigate, have limited ability to compel disclosure, and operate in legal environments that offer no protection when their work targets the country they have left. Measuring impact in this context is particularly complex.

Divergentes, a Nicaraguan exiled investigative outlet, has noted that impact is most visible not in direct legal consequences – which remain rare in a context where the rule of law has been comprehensively dismantled – but in the secondary effects of its investigations<sup>35</sup>: the frequency with which its findings are picked up by international media, and the discussions they generate among Nicaraguan civil society and diaspora communities.

In Belarus, a sharper form of accountability has occasionally been achieved. When journalist Viktor Mališeŭski exposed electoral code violations<sup>36</sup> by media figures aligned with the government of Aleksandr Lukashenko, those individuals were subsequently stopped appearing on state television – a direct, measurable consequence of exiled reporting within a state that officially denies the legitimacy of independent journalism.

Where domestic accountability mechanisms are absent, exiled media have also contributed to accountability through international channels. Investigative work by outlets including *iStories*<sup>37</sup>, *The Insider*<sup>38</sup>, *SIRAJ*<sup>39</sup> and *Divergentes*<sup>40</sup> has fed into processes that resulted in targeted sanctions against regime-linked individuals and entities.

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30 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/nov/29/afghanistan-taliban-women-children-arrested-begging-rape-torture-killings-jails-destitution-work-ban>

31 <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/societe-afghanistan-l-amour-au-temps-des-talibans>

32 [https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/da-dirigenti-ad-allevatrici-di-polli-la-dignita-delle-lavoratrici-afghane\\_95102](https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/da-dirigenti-ad-allevatrici-di-polli-la-dignita-delle-lavoratrici-afghane_95102)

33 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/12/afghanistan-female-journalists-rukshana-media-sexism-taliba>

34 Reporting that investigates and exposes the abuse of power by institutions, governments, or individuals in the public interest (as opposed to publishing that focuses solely on entertainment, influencers, community/ diaspora dynamics, opinion and commentary etc.). Note: many EXIM combine a mixture of themes and formats in their work.

35 <https://ijn.net.org/en/story/born-nicaragua-forced-exile-case-divergentes>

36 <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/89173.html>

37 <https://istories.media/en/stories/2024/03/07/renishaw>

38 <https://theins.press/en/politics/277251>

39 <https://sirajsy.net/the-secretive-supply-chain-sending-eu-trucks-to-syria/>. Note: SIRAJ has a structured approach to engaging with whistleblowers (<https://sirajsy.net/contact/>)

40 <https://www.divergentes.com/china-emerges-as-a-key-mining-power-in-nicaragua-within-two-years/>

## 5. Sustaining audience relationships under extreme conditions

An often overlooked but critical dimension of EXIM impact is the ongoing work of maintaining a relationship with audiences who face legal and personal risks for consuming independent journalism. This is not only a distribution challenge – it is also an editorial and organizational one.

Meduza's Flower Power Campaign<sup>41</sup>, launched in January 2026, illustrates the creativity this requires. Following its designation as an 'undesirable organization' in Russia – which made donating to, or even sharing links to, Meduza a criminal offence – the outlet developed a campaign in which Russian-based supporters could anonymously express their support under botanically themed pseudonyms, referencing the covert resistance movement White Rose in Nazi Germany.

The campaign served simultaneously as a fundraising mechanism (directed at overseas readers acting on behalf of those who could not), an audience engagement tool, and a public demonstration that readers in Russia had not been silenced.

The outlet had earlier developed 'Magic Links'<sup>42</sup> – a censorship-resistant distribution system allowing individual articles to be shared via unique URLs that bypass domain-level blocking – as a direct response to increasing censorship pressure.

Both innovations speak to a broader pattern: the most constrained EXIM have often become the most inventive in sustaining their connection to the audiences who need them most.

## 6. Preserving journalistic culture and rebuilding media ecosystems

Perhaps the most structurally significant – and most underappreciated – dimension of EXIM impact is their role as carriers of a country's journalistic culture during periods of repression, and as potential rebuilders of independent media ecosystems when regimes change.

The experience of Syrian exiled media following the fall of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 provides the clearest recent illustration. As Syria has begun the difficult process of establishing a professional and independent media sector, formerly exiled outlets – currently operating in a hybrid state, with staff and operations both inside and outside the country – have been formally invited to help set the rules and standards for the new environment<sup>43</sup>.

The new Ministry of Information has sought guidance from respected exiled media on the development of an industry-wide code of conduct: Rozana Radio was directly consulted on this process<sup>44</sup>, and the drafting committee is headed by Ali Eid, managing editor of Enab Baladi<sup>45</sup>.

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41 <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2026/01/22/flower-power-against-the-kremlin>

42 <https://thefix.media/2024/08/15/the-tech-stack-behind-meduzas-efforts-to-bypass-russian-censorship/>

43 JX Fund Syria Country Profile, March 3, 2026. <https://jx-fund.org/countries/syria/>

44 JX Fund Syria Country Profile, March 3, 2026. <https://jx-fund.org/countries/syria/>

45 Enab Baladi, September 15, 2025. <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2025/09/syrian-media-institutions-discuss-draft-code-of-professional-conduct/>

The process remains fragile, and a free press in Syria is far from guaranteed. But the example illustrates that EXIM are not simply a stopgap measure for periods of repression. They are, in the fullest sense, custodians of a country's capacity for independent public communication – a role whose value becomes most apparent precisely when political conditions finally create the possibility of exercising it.

## 4 Forced Innovation Drivers

Necessity has made EXIM some of the most innovative organizations in the media sector. Operating under conditions that would paralyse a conventional newsroom – being banned from their home country, cut off from domestic revenue, subject to legal harassment across multiple jurisdictions, and serving audiences who risk prosecution for consuming their work – exiled outlets have been forced to solve problems that most media organizations never face.

The result is a culture of structural improvisation that has produced solutions with relevance well beyond the EXIM context: censorship-resistant distribution systems, legally insulated organizational structures, shared back-office infrastructure across competing outlets, and revenue models built around the specific constraints of an audience that cannot safely donate, subscribe or share content publicly.

### Rise of Autocratic Regimes and the Censorship Toolkit

Digital censorship has grown dramatically more sophisticated over the past decade, moving well beyond simple website blocks to encompass deep packet inspection, algorithmic content suppression, and the targeted disruption of VPNs and circumvention tools.

Where authoritarian governments once used blunt instruments, like shutting down the internet entirely during moments of unrest<sup>46</sup>, they now have much more sophisticated tools that allow them to silence specific voices, particular platforms, or manipulate what content is surfaced to users without them ever knowing an intervention has taken place. Russia's sovereign internet infrastructure<sup>47</sup>, Iran's National Information Network<sup>48</sup>, and China's Great Firewall<sup>49</sup> represent the most advanced iterations of this model: parallel digital environments designed to control the information landscape.

What makes this trend especially alarming is that these technologies and the expertise behind them do not stay within borders. China has been the most systematic exporter of censorship infrastructure<sup>50</sup>, supplying surveillance systems, content filtering tools, and “safe city” platforms to governments across Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East through programs linked to the Belt and Road Initiative.

Russia has shared technical knowledge and legislative models – most notably its “sovereign internet” and “foreign agent” laws – with allies and client states seeking to replicate its approach (as is currently happening in Georgia<sup>51</sup> or Nicaragua<sup>52</sup>). The result is a growing convergence of authoritarian information control, with governments that once lacked the capacity to suppress digital dissent now acquiring it rapidly.

46 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/11/belarus-president-cuts-off-internet-amid-widespread-protests>

47 <https://thefix.media/2026/03/18/russias-expanding-surveillance-system-is-starting-to-target-the-audience/>

48 <https://www.afpc.org/publications/policy-papers/irans-digital-fortress-the-rise-of-the-national-information-network>

49 <https://www.scmp.com/abacus/who-what/what/article/3089836/story-chinas-great-firewall-worlds-most-sophisticated>

50 <https://www.wired.com/story/geedee-networks-mass-censorship-leak/>

51 <https://rsf.org/en/georgia-s-parliament-urged-reject-foreign-agents-bill>

52 <https://confidential.digital/english/ortega-the-anti-imperialist-surrenders-to-russian-interests/>

In practice this means that the amount of EXIM globally is likely to increase in the coming years as new regimes learn how to push media and independent voices out. But it also means that the learnings for EXIM of how to survive under such circumstances become increasingly valuable.

Beyond the tools used for censorship, it is also important to recognize the significant resources that are being dedicated to this purpose. Russia is a particularly telling case: reportedly, in 2024, some \$660 million over 5 years has been allocated to this purpose<sup>53</sup>.

Exhibit 6

### Independent Media Are Fighting a Propaganda Leviathan

Recent historical breakdown of spending on propaganda and censorship by the Russian state compared to the then overall estimated value of EXIM budgets.

Type of spending	Breakdown and examples of expenses	Estimated 2024F cost
<b>Official Propaganda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023, \$1.6 billion was allocated to state and sponsored mass media (just over half went to VGTRK, Russia Today and Rossiya Segodnya)</li> </ul>	1.43 billion euros (assuming 2024 spending was at the level of 2023 – conservative estimate)
<b>Unofficial Propaganda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Russia spent \$182 million in 2016–2021 on lobbying, foreign influence in the US</li> <li>Regular campaigns uncovered (Voice of Europe, Doppelganger, Portal Kombat...)</li> </ul>	100 million euros (assuming half of propaganda spend is not officially disclosed)
<b>Censorship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roskomnadzor 2023 budget of \$354 million</li> <li>Innovation spending (e.g., TSPU traffic management tools, estimated at \$660 million for 5 years)</li> </ul>	486 million euros (annualized value of new propaganda package and main Roskomnadzor budget)

Comparing 2024F expected annual total spending, EUR millions



\* Likely significantly underestimated, as a portion of spending is concealed (does not include intelligence operations)

\*\* Estimated 2024 spending on propaganda and censorship (including innovation)

Source: JX Fund Research

### EXIM Face Challenges that Go Beyond those Encountered by “Classic Media”

Running an exiled media outlet is unlike running any other newsroom. The challenges span journalism, law, finance, mental health, and physical security simultaneously. The initial phase of exile – involving the physical relocation of individuals and legal relocation of organizations – is often intense and difficult, requiring support in such areas as housing, visas, access to banking services, trauma counselling, and legal representation.

But this is often more than a one-off event. Syrian EXIM sector experienced waves of displacement – first into neighbouring countries (2012–2013), then deeper into Europe (2015–2016), especially after conditions in Turkey, where many media initially relocated to, deteriorated.

Following the crackdown on media in Belarus post-2020, many fled to Ukraine – only to be displaced again by Russia's invasion in 2022. Afghan newsrooms that escaped to Pakistan or Iran faced arrests and deportations. Myanmar journalists in Thailand live under constantly shifting visa rules. Repeated exile erodes institutional memory, continuity, and the ability to plan.

Yet EXIM are also among the most adaptive organizations in the media sector. Belarusian outlets built shared legal and HR back-offices. Meduza developed censorship-resistant distribution tools. Enab Baladi and IranWire built structured citizen-journalist networks for sourcing and verification. DVB uses AI-assisted tools to process conflict footage at scale. Across the board, the organizations most constrained by external pressure have become the most innovative in response to it.

That said, EXIM also suffer from challenges that affect the global media industry – including the ongoing degradation of media economics, changes in consumer behaviour, news avoidance, staffing shortages etc. However, the specific circumstances in which EXIM operate mean that these challenges are typically more acute and complex. A more in-depth discussion of these will be found in subsequent reports.

### **Phases of EXIM**

One of the most important factors determining how an EXIM is set up, what it works on, which channels it uses for distribution and how it plans its work once in exile are the circumstances in which it left its home country.

EXIM typically leave a given country in waves, which map to political and/ or security events in that country. Once in exile, most publications find themselves at a loss – in terms of resources, their mission and how they see themselves.

During this period, they typically focus on their core activities, cutting down on experimentation and growth projects (e.g., video-first publications run as social media channels focus on YouTube, print publications typically focus on their website) and shutter any projects that are either very expensive or require in-country presence (e.g., print publishing, broadcast, radio).

Once the initial shock of exile starts to subside, many media begin to experiment and redefine their activities. Typically, this is driven by a balance of cost-effectiveness (i.e., which channels and formats are the most efficient at reaching and growing audiences) and reactions to censorship (which can force media to launch new social media channels, for example, or to close existing ones).

## Phases of EXIM

Typical sequence of events leading to EXIM emergence and possible re-integration



Source: JX Fund Research

In terms of formats, most media prioritize the relatively cheap option of combining a website, several social media channels, and potential some covert ways of distribution (e.g., using Signal or WhatsApp groups to share content).

More recently, YouTube has become a core element of EXIM distribution. It both is widely consumed – even in repressive regimes (to understand how significant this task is, it is worth noting just how long Russia has been trying to cut YouTube out of the Russian media consumption diet<sup>54</sup>) – and offers options for monetization (mostly among the diaspora, as advertising in home countries is often restricted and/ or has very low rates).

That said, it should be noted that while many media have started channels, only a portion of them use this as a core channel for content and dedicate significant resources to operating it.

## 5 Final Remarks and Outlook

EXIM are no longer a marginal or transitional phenomenon. They have become a permanent and structurally significant part of the global media landscape – and the forces that lead EXIM to appear are, if anything, growing stronger.

The sustained rise of authoritarian regimes, the increasing sophistication of censorship infrastructure, the rollback of international support for press freedom in 2025, the persistence of high levels of organized crime and both civil and international wars have all together created conditions in which more media are being pushed into exile, not fewer.

Critically, the impact of EXIM extends well beyond their countries of origin. Outlets such as The Irrawaddy or Meduza have become primary sources through which the international community learns what is happening inside closed regimes – cited regularly by major global publications and relied upon by policymakers, diplomats and researchers.

When regimes fall, EXIM are an institution that is uniquely capable of helping to rebuild independent information ecosystems from the ground up. The experience of Syrian exiled media following the end of the Assad government in late 2024 illustrates this capacity, even as the political character of the transitional government remains contested and a free press in Syria is far from guaranteed.

Exiled outlets can carry the editorial standards, institutional knowledge and professional culture that repression has hollowed out at home. These are not niche actors. They are part of the infrastructure of global democratic accountability.

### **Diversity is Critical – to Both Survival and Impact**

One of the most consequential findings of JX Fund's research is that the EXIM landscape is far larger, more varied, and more adaptive than is commonly assumed. The sector encompasses not only established newsrooms with international profiles, but a dense ecosystem of outlets at different stages of development, operating across different formats, channels and political contexts.

This diversity is not incidental – it is a survival mechanism. EXIM that depend on a single distribution channel, a single funder, or a single legal jurisdiction are acutely vulnerable to disruption.

Those that have developed redundant systems, diversified revenue streams, and strong networks of peer support have proved consistently more resilient. Innovation within the sector – from censorship-resistant distribution tools, to branded VPNs as revenue streams, to the use of covert social media channels that far outperform their official counterparts – has almost always emerged from the pressure of constraint rather than from resources or comfort.

The same logic applies to the overall impact of exiled media landscapes. EXIM that serve a politically engaged urban elite play one role, those that address wider populations with an adapted mix of formats serve a different one. Publications with a narrow thematic focus - such as those on environmental issues, gender topics or ethnic minorities - ensure that these topics do not disappear entirely from the public agenda, while also reaching people who are not reached through other independent media. A sector that is diverse in its forms, its funders, its geographies and its audiences is one that is harder to silence and more capable of serving the full range of people who need it.

### **Structured Understanding of EXIM Landscapes is Itself a Form of Support**

The work of understanding the EXIM sector - mapping its landscapes, documenting its practices, and tracking its evolution - is not separate from the work of supporting it. It is part of that work.

Funders cannot allocate resources effectively without knowing what exists and where the gaps are. Support organizations cannot design relevant programmes without understanding the specific conditions under which different EXIM operate. EXIM themselves are better equipped to navigate their circumstances when they can learn from peers, access relevant knowledge, and understand how their experience compares to that of others working under similar constraints.

JX Fund's direct engagement with 95 supported outlets and its broader monitoring of requests and contacts from exiled media across more than 30 countries has made clear that the demand for this kind of structured knowledge - practical, grounded, and current - is real and largely unmet.

This report is a first attempt to provide it at a cross-country level. As noted throughout, even the most careful research uncovers only a portion of what exists: the 280 outlets formally identified across the eight countries studied almost certainly represent the visible tip of a much larger phenomenon. The methodological boundaries described in the introductory note - a conservative definition of media, only partial coverage of countries not yet fully surveyed - are intended to make the findings reliable within their scope, not to suggest that scope is complete.

Filling in the picture will require more research, more country landscapes, more exchange between practitioners and analysts, and more willingness among funders to treat structured understanding as an investment rather than an overhead. JX Fund hopes this report contributes to that effort - and invites the wider sector to build on, challenge, and extend what it has started.

The next reports in this series will examine how exiled media reach their audiences and what it takes, structurally and financially, to sustain an exiled outlet over the long term.

## 6 Appendix

Exiled Independent Media (EXIM) are a relatively new element in the global media landscape. Due to the inherent secrecy of the EXIM space and limited amount of structured research, there is currently no widely accepted methodology or classification of what constitutes an EXIM.

In the course of its work since 2022, JX Fund has developed and refined a definition of what kind of publication should be classified as being an EXIM and which should not. Such a definition is helpful in determining the scope and nature of the EXIM phenomenon.

This, however, is a work in progress. There is currently no clearly agreed definition for what constitutes an independent media<sup>55</sup>, much less an exiled one. EXIM vary significantly between one country and another – as do the media spaces in each country.

Moreover, they are constantly evolving, both due to general media industry trends (which adapt, for example, to the appearance of new channels of distribution or changes in consumer preferences) and due to censorship and other factors specific to the EXIM space.

It is also worth noting that EXIM vary significantly by country and their experience in exile. Not all the points outlined in the graphic below are equally relevant to all publications. They are also not of equal importance – for instance, covering current affairs may be less critical<sup>56</sup> than being independent of state actors – which means that considerable human judgement and contextual knowledge needs to be applied to assessing media, rather than using the criteria as a must-have checklist.

Thus, this definition should be considered as a “jumping off point” rather than a final verdict on what constitutes an EXIM. It will likely continue to evolve alongside changes of the media itself, further research, and the growth of the number of countries that have produced EXIM communities. The definition has been included here in the hopes of fostering further discussion and debate.

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55 Karppinen, K., & Moe, H. (2016). *What We Talk About When Talk About “Media Independence*. *Javnost - The Public*, 23(2), 105–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2016.1162986>

56 Afghan EXIM present an interesting example. Some media that are widely recognized as EXIM focus on music content, which is banned under the Taliban regime. However, publications that would mainly publish music in a Russian context would likely not be considered as fully EXIM.

## What are Exiled Independent Media – and what they are not

		Example questions	What types of media are out of scope
<b>Exiled</b>	<b>Ties to country of origin</b>	Did a related organization exist in the country of origin? Is a portion of leadership from the country of origin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Diaspora media (focused purely on the lives and concerns of diaspora community)</li> <li>✗ Foreign-affairs/ interest media (e.g., media about Russia run by US academics)</li> <li>✗ Commercial projects unrelated to country-of-origin launched by entrepreneurs from said country</li> </ul>
	<b>Target audience</b>	Does the target audience reside in country of origin? Is the coverage relevant to the country of origin?	
	<b>Status/repressions</b>	Was this media targeted by administrative or other repressive measures in the country of origin?	
	<b>State policy</b>	Does the country-of-origin limit media freedom? Are administrative measures used against media?	
<b>Independent</b>	<b>Editorial standards</b>	Does this media adhere to the Munich Charter? Does the organization adhere to editorial principles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Foreign state media</li> <li>✗ PEP-affiliated media</li> <li>✗ Fundamentalist media</li> </ul>
	<b>Funding</b>	Is this media funded from mainly non-state funds? Is the media financially independent of PEPs?	
	<b>Rejection of extremism</b>	Has this media called for abuse of given group (e.g., on religious grounds) or extremism?	
<b>Media</b>	<b>Journalistic approach</b>	Does it cover socially and politically important topics? Is it primarily an activist organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Non-journalistic advocacy projects</li> <li>✗ Influencers that are not news focused/ not building a media organization</li> </ul>
	<b>Organizational structure</b>	Is this a single individual or a team? Does it have a mission/ identity larger than 1 individual?	

# JX FUND

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The JX Fund helps media workers quickly and flexibly to continue their work after they have fled war and crisis zones. It aims to strengthen independent media in exile beyond a current phase of high attention and to support the building of sustainable media outlets accessible for their home countries. The continued work of journalism in exile will have to provide the independent sources of information that will make future democratic developments in their home countries possible. Without them, censorship wins out. To learn more, reach out to [info@jx-fund.org](mailto:info@jx-fund.org) or visit [www.jx-fund.org](http://www.jx-fund.org)

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