

# EASTERN EUROPEAN INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST FUND

A group of over 25 media support organizations is launching the Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund to pay for stories produced by Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian journalists who are reporting the truth on the war despite the enormous risks.



Foto: Middle East Eye

## Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund

In response to the war in Ukraine, we - a group of over 25 media support organizations and media outlets - are launching the Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund to pay for stories produced by Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian journalists who are reporting the truth on the war despite the enormous risks. The fund will serve as a lifeline to allow them to stay on the job even as their normal income plummets or vanishes, the direct consequence of living and working in or near a war zone.

Like all facets of life in Ukraine, the practice of journalism has been upended. Journalists who normally cover other areas are now war correspondents, in their own country - with no training and no experience. Normal sources of income for Ukrainian media - such as advertising and subscriptions - are disappearing if not already gone. But these reporters stay on the job, unpaid and in danger, not knowing how or when their next paycheck will come. Depending on the days ahead, many might be compelled to flee abroad and do their best to report from there.

Other groups are raising money to provide [security gear](#) and medical equipment, or helping individual journalists and news outlets [relocate abroad](#). The Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund will pay them directly for their reporting work for local and national media outlets so they can continue to accurately inform their audiences and to tell the world what's happening on the ground.

We also must not forget the Belarusian reporters who continue to report on their government's role in the war. Almost all of them are operating from abroad, victims of the crackdown launched by authoritarian leader Alyaksandr Lukashenka after a disputed election in August 2020 led to massive protests. Since last summer, after the regime began to brutally attack any and all media dissent, hundreds of journalists have escaped to neighboring countries, including Ukraine. Now, many have had to uproot themselves and their families again. Exiled Belarusian journalists also need our assistance.

And lest we forget: Not all Russian journalists toe the government line and many have been paying the price. Russian reporters, both at home and abroad, are pushing back against Russia's massive propaganda machine. For example: Led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Dmitry Muratov, Novaya Gazeta leads a coalition of 25 independent Russian media outlets, "Syndicate 100." They penned [a joint statement](#) calling for an end to the war that read, in part: "Pain, anger, and shame are three words that reflect our attitude to what is happening. This invasion will bring grief to the families of thousands of people in Ukraine and Russia. ... We promise that we will be honest about what is happening while we have this opportunity." As the authorities have moved to [crush the last remaining independent outlets](#), many have fled, fearing draconian prison sentences. The Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund will also help them.

## **What kind of stories will the fund enable?**

The primary goal is to pay for independent, on-the-ground reporting on the war and all its repercussions.

## **Will the fund only work with freelancers?**

No. The fund also will pay staff reporters working on stories for independent media, both local and national. In all cases, journalists should have a demonstrated history of reporting freely and independently and not in the service of any political or economic interests. The fund's partners will use their contacts and experience in the region to closely evaluate every application.

## **How will we evaluate the stories?**

Journalists reporting from a war zone and neighboring countries don't need complicated application forms. We will set up a streamlined process for funding stories. A rapid reaction committee of media experts will review the applications as soon as they come in and will arrange funding immediately. Our organizations have managed dozens of subgranting programs for reporters and have funded thousands of stories. We know many journalists from the countries in question from earlier programs and those of our partners.

## **Who are we?**

The campaign coordinator is Transitions, a Prague-based publishing and journalism training organization that has supported and trained journalists for more than 20 years. Our mission is to

foster high-quality, independent journalism and informed and engaged public. The heart of our operation is our [flagship newsmagazine](#), with insightful reportage from Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, Turkey, and Eurasia. With over 25,000 articles published to date, we serve as a platform for the region's independent journalists to cover topics often underreported in their home countries. More than 10,000 journalists and journalism students have passed through our training programs. We also run [Press Start](#), the first global crowdfunding platform to provide a lifeline for reporters in countries where the press cannot report freely.

We are setting up the Eastern European Independent Journalist Fund in partnership with the South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM) – a network of 19 media centers and institutes across 13 countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe – and a series of other media support centers and media outlets.

The following is the list of partners. If you represent a media support organization or media outlet and you wish to join this initiative, we would be honored to have you. Please write: [transitions@tol.org](mailto:transitions@tol.org)

If you have any other questions, please also write [transitions@tol.org](mailto:transitions@tol.org) or [memo98@memo98.sk](mailto:memo98@memo98.sk)

For more information, visit also [kickstarter](#).



[AEJ-Bulgaria \(Sofia, Bulgaria\)](#)

[Albanian Media Institute \(Tirana, Albania\)](#)

[Balkan Investigative Reporting Network](#)

[Center of Independent Journalism \(Bucharest, Romania\)](#)

[444.hu](#)



[Gazeta Wyborcza Foundation](#)

[Global Voices](#)

[HlídacíPes.org \(Prague, Czech Republic\)](#)

[Independent Journalism Center \(Chisinau, Moldova\)](#)

[Investigative Journalism Center \(Zagreb, Croatia\)](#)

[IPS Communication Foundation \(Istanbul, Turkey\)](#)

[Kosovo Media Institute \(Pristina, Kosovo\)](#)

[Macedonian Institute for Media \(Skopje, Macedonia\)](#)

[Media and Reform Center Nis \(Nis, Serbia\)](#)

[Mediacentar Sarajevo \(Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina\)](#)

[Media Center LTD \(Belgrade, Serbia\)](#)

[Media Development Center \(Sofia, Bulgaria\)](#)

[Media Diversity Institute \(Western Balkans\)](#)

[Media Plan Institute \(Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina\)](#)

[MEMO 98](#)

[Montenegro Media Institute \(Podgorica, Montenegro\)](#)

[Notes of Poland \(Warsaw, Poland\)](#)

[Novi Sad School of Journalism \(Novi Sad, Serbia\)](#)

[Peace Institute \(Ljubljana, Slovenia\)](#)

[Platform for Independent Journalism \(Istanbul, Turkey\)](#)

[Project Syndicate](#)

[Reporting Democracy](#)

[Solutions Journalism Network \(New York, United States\)](#)

## **Risks and challenges**

The work won't be easy in a region embroiled in conflict, where independent media face constant pressure and dangers. We are well-prepared to take on the challenges and take nothing for granted. For example, to combat the problem of internet access in Ukraine, we will have alternative ways for journalists to apply for funding besides an online form. Of course, as with any open process, some applicants might try to game the system. With our decades-long experience in working with journalists from Eastern Europe, including a just-completed, multi-year project in Ukraine, we have

resources on the ground to help vet applications.

[Learn about accountability on Kickstarter](#)