



INSI

INTERNATIONAL
NEWS SAFETY
INSTITUTE



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024**



Working on journalism safety this year has sometimes felt like standing behind a locked glass door as a house burns. You see the flames, hear the cries, press your hands against the barrier—but can do nothing.

– Elena Cosentino, INSI director



Cover: A journalist rushes toward the scene of an explosion following an Israeli strike on the outskirts of Gaza City. (Photo by Omar AL-QATTAA/AFP); This page: Fire and burnt out cars are seen after a missile strike in Kyiv on January 2. (Photo by Genya SAVILOV/AFP).

INTRODUCTION

BY INSI DIRECTOR, ELENA COSENTINO

This is the part where I tell you how well we've done this year as an organization—supporting journalists, protecting them, making a difference.

Except we haven't done that well at all. We have certainly tried, but we have also definitely failed. We all have. Gaza is where the buck stops, and where our words, our outrage, and our strategies have met a wall of indifference and impotence.

Words of anger, condemnation, or denunciation of what's been happening feel hollow after a year like this. They fall short—empty and weightless—when measured against the unthinkable loss. In Gaza, journalists have been killed, starved, smeared and silenced. Entire lives have been reduced to a footnote, their sacrifices met with indifference by much of the West. No outcry, no reckoning. And still no access.

Israel's refusal to allow outside journalists into Gaza has been a direct denial of our profession's most basic purpose: bearing witness. It's more than censorship; it's an attempt to erase accountability altogether. This is setting a precedent that could soon be catching on in many other places.

A colleague told me how working on journalism safety this year has sometimes felt like standing behind a locked glass door as a house burns. You see the flames, hear the cries, press your hands against the barrier—but can do nothing. Over time, the horror numbs you, until you begin to accept that the fire may outlast you.

Our collective achievement this year, as an organisation made of active and participating members, has been to fight that creeping sense of impotence and numbness, to continue to stubbornly look for something we could do, no matter how small.

For instance, early in the year, we embarked on a project that seemed potentially useful and also provided us a measure of purpose and team morale. Our illustrated guide to emergency trauma care and improvising a medical kit—specifically created with Gaza in mind, but applicable to many other places—was aimed at journalists in war zones with absolutely no support and equipment. You'd think something



Mourners and colleagues carry the body of Al-Jazeera Arabic journalist Ismail al-Ghoul, killed along with his cameraman Rami al-Refiee in an Israeli strike on July 31. (Photo by Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)



Donald Trump speaks to a journalist as he leaves a press conference at Trump Tower in New York City on September 6. (Photo by CHARLY TRIBALLEAU / AFP)

like that already existed—how to make an effective tourniquet with a rag, or a chest wound seal with a piece of common plastic packaging. We couldn't find anything that matched the needs and restrictions faced by Gazan journalists, so we did it ourselves and called it **"When All Else Fails."**

The guide, in English and Arabic, was designed to be simple, intuitive, and require little data to download in areas with difficult communications. Whether it had any impact on the ground or helped any journalist prolong the survival chances of a wounded colleague, we may never know. At least it was a way to give colleagues there a fighting chance—to send a message through the scalding glass.

And of course it wasn't only Gaza. There were also conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, Lebanon, and then Syria. There has been anarchy in Haiti, fear in Russia, floods in Spain, and a hell of a lot of hate in the United States and beyond.

Throughout the year, together with our amazing members, we have followed the same stubborn ethos: looking to fill the gaps, complementing each other's skill sets, pooling resources and information, showing up, and having each other's back.

You'll find a list of the numerous activities INSI carried out over the year in the following pages. If you consider that each of our members' workload had likely doubled and their available time halved, their resilience and dedication to our shared purpose has been remarkable.

From pioneering a guide on working with high-risk advisors in the field to conducting workshops on the pros and cons of deploying with armoured vehicles or counter-drone technologies, together we've focused on practical solutions for a world increasingly hostile to journalists.

We've prepared for major events like Euro 2024, the Paris Olympics, and the US election. We've met regularly to strategise on how best to tackle the forces that are eroding journalism's foundations: populism, disinformation, online abuse, and corruption. The obstacles remain staggering, particularly in the Middle East and Gaza, but the solidarity and ingenuity of our members are infectious and inspiring.

This isn't about optimism. It's about necessity. To not be defeated is to keep going when all else fails. And so we do.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Online and in-person meetings, expert briefings

News leaders and safety experts from our more than 50 INSI member organisations met online or in person at least twice per month in 2024. They exchanged crucial information covering conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East and Sudan; on threats of terrorism and civil unrest at the Paris Olympics and the UEFA 2024 championship in Germany; logistics and safety advice on the Venezuelan elections; the far right riots in the UK; gang wars in Haiti; and the growing risk to journalists and news media in Russia and China.

War again dominated our work in 2024 and has taken an unbearable toll on journalists and our own members. Of the more than 50 local colleagues killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza this year were three staff

journalists and at least five freelancers from Al Jazeera Arabic, the sister organisation to INSI member Al Jazeera English.

And in Ukraine, INSI founding member Reuters also lost one of their dedicated editorial security advisors, who was killed in a strike on a hotel in Kramatorsk while his colleagues were gravely injured.

INSI meetings provided a life-saving opportunity to build on each other's first-hand experience and strengthen our members' ability to use the most effective mitigations and latest technology to protect journalists' safety in the field. They also offered a space for shared grief and collective solidarity in the face of ever-worsening danger for journalists operating in conflict zones.

King Felipe VI of Spain (L) is heckled by angry residents during his visit to Paiporta, in the region of Valencia, eastern Spain, on November 3, in the aftermath of devastating deadly floods. (Photo by Manure Quintero / AFP)





A man wears a shirt that says "Defund The Media" during a campaign rally for former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in Las Vegas, Nevada on June 9. (Photo by Jim WATSON / AFP)

An extended session and Q&A on armoured vehicles by leading expert and provider Manuel Ramming of ACP Deutschland and their use in newsgathering was particularly well attended and received. It empowered editorial and safety managers to make better informed decisions when evaluating the complex risks versus rewards of taking armoured cars into conflict zones.

Equally successful and appreciated was a member session on mitigation options against the spiralling threats posed by small drone attacks in Ukraine and, possibly soon, elsewhere. In the best INSI tradition of mutual trust and support, members gathered in confidence to exchange information and questions about the electronic countermeasures that newsgathering teams may consider adopting along the frontlines of Ukraine to shield themselves from drone attacks. Possible legal, financial and reputational implications were also discussed.

We are grateful to Dragonfly Intelligence for the exclusive risk intelligence briefings delivered to INSI members throughout the year.

Relevant notes were also produced and distributed to members in accordance with confidentiality requirements from all the sessions, to ensure that members were able to pass on their learnings and raise the bar of safety and security preparedness across our industry.

In October, we travelled back to New York, along with UK, European and Canadian members, for an in-person meeting with our US colleagues ahead of the presidential election there. The meeting, kindly hosted by Reuters at their Times Square headquarters, provided a much needed opportunity to discuss safety implications for news organisations and their teams, both during the election period and in the months after. The consensus was that the US would likely become an increasingly unfriendly environment for news organisations and their staff at every level: physical, digital, legal, psychological and financial. As hostility to traditional media also grows in the UK and Europe, this in-person meeting and the networking event which followed was more crucial than ever to strengthen connections between colleagues from around the world with shared journalistic purpose and values.

Towards the end of the year we launched a new series of cyber security and online harassment roundtables to strengthen members' cooperation on critical issues, strategies, and tools, as well as to alert each other to specific threats and threat actors. An in-person all members meeting took place in London to discuss the challenges ahead of 2025, covering the developing story in Syria and the rest of the Middle East, the conflict in Ukraine, Trump 2.0, and the dangers posed by the climate crisis.

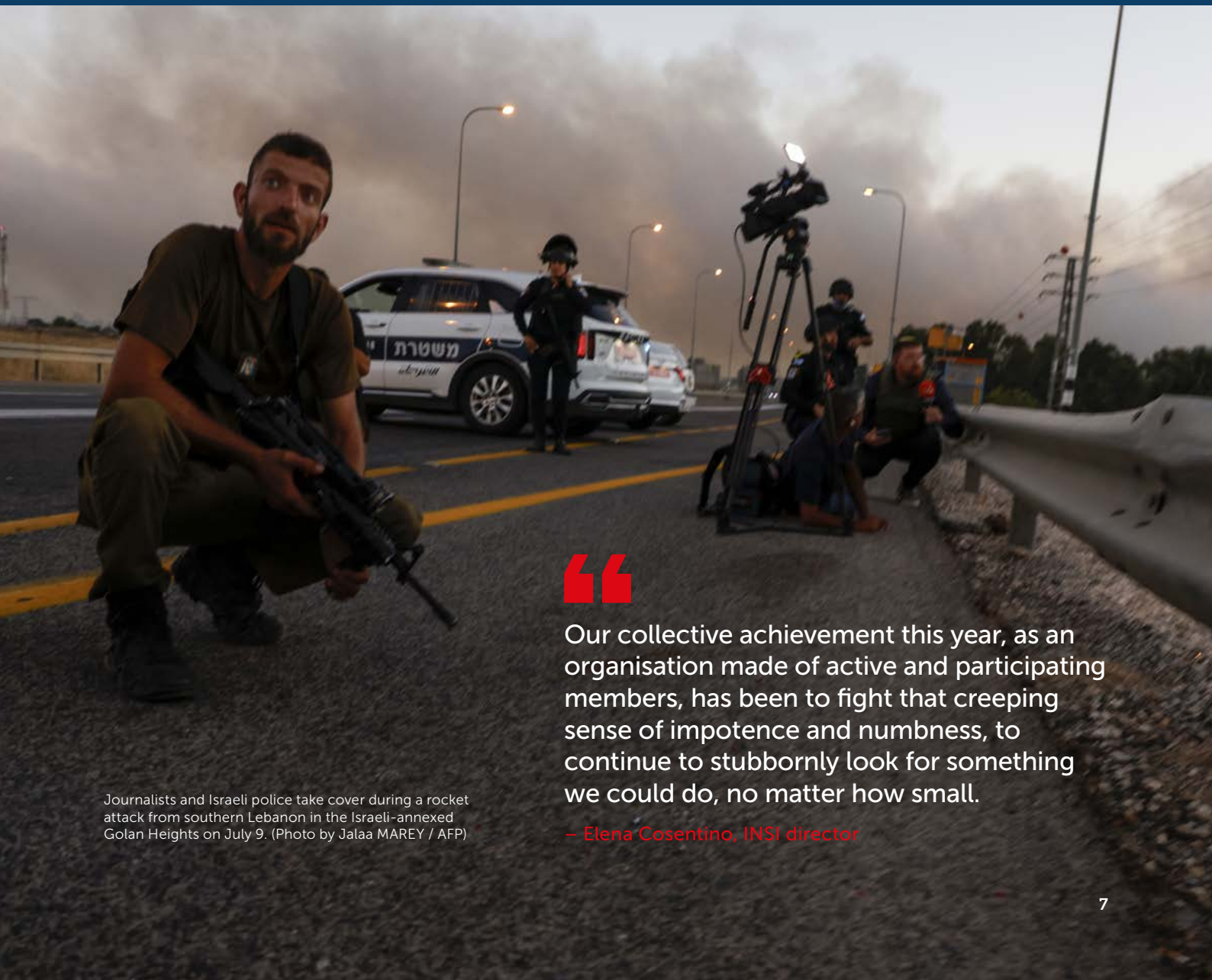
INFORMATION EXCHANGE

INSI continued to run dedicated information exchange groups on topical stories from Ukraine to Lebanon and Syria, the US to Haiti, to the UK riots. These groups allowed members to quickly exchange practical, up-to-the minute information and ask questions directly to each other, often while deployed.

Members also made use of their access to the INSI network of large and smaller news organisations spread around the world, contacting Director Elena Cosentino and INSI staff on a regular basis for information, advice and contacts on a myriad of

topics such as travelling to Belarus or Sudan, crossing borders with body armour, attending BRICS or operating in Georgia and Yemen.

Our first-person accounts of deployment to difficult places made for equally fascinating and useful reading. One member who'd been on a rare road trip from Port Sudan to the outskirts of Khartoum shared granular and precious information on the logistics and challenges of this difficult journey. Other journalists shared their experiences in the Republic of Congo rainforest and the cartel-run Sinaloa region of Mexico.



Journalists and Israeli police take cover during a rocket attack from southern Lebanon in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights on July 9. (Photo by Jalaa MAREY / AFP)

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PUBLICATIONS

Working with high risk advisors in the field. The INSI guide to working with high-risk advisors was published in April after months of collaboration with members from the world’s top news organisations. They contributed invaluable knowledge and experience to help news managers assess the core skills of prospective high-risk advisors. This guide is the first of its kind and we believe will be a vital newsroom resource for years to come.

INSI first aid guide for journalists in a war zone. Ensuring all of our colleagues are properly trained and equipped is at the heart of INSI’s mission. But much of our regular advice is useless to journalists living under bombardment in places like Gaza, with no access to water and food, let alone to a first aid kit. Given these exceptional circumstances, in February, INSI published a comprehensive but accessible guide for journalists caught up in trauma-related medical emergencies with no conventional first aid supplies, using everyday objects as an improvised medical kit. We published the documents in **English** and **Arabic**, in the lowest resolution possible, for easy downloading where internet access is limited.

Killing the Messenger. Our annual report of media casualties around the world was an especially sobering read due mainly to the shocking number of our colleagues killed in the space of just 12 weeks in Gaza. While 2023 saw an apparent decrease in the number of journalists killed in Latin America, particularly Mexico, our analysis did not suggest this was due to any improvement in journalist protections on the ground. More realistically, the carnage of previous years had deterred many from embarking on sensitive journalistic work, knowing that it could be a death sentence. The number of casualties in Ukraine was also lower, likely because fewer journalists were there.



Palestinian journalists attempt to connect to the internet using their phones in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip amid continuing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas. (Photo by SAID KHATIB / AFP)



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NEW MEMBERS AND BOARD CHANGES

INSI welcomed five new members in 2024. Channel 4, the Washington Post, Politico, Business Insider and Al Arabiya are already making important contributions to our network.

At the board level, Fran Unsworth was appointed as the new chair of INSI. Fran has worked in the media for over 40 years, having previously been Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC. Fran's distinguished career and broad experience in journalism at the highest levels will be a huge support to INSI's team and members as journalists all over the world face some of the worst threats ever to their lives, livelihoods and ability to hold power to account. Fran succeeded Robin Elias, who supported us through the challenging years of COVID and the beginning of the

war in Ukraine.

Neil Ashton also stepped down as treasurer after eight years. Neil has been replaced by Callum Hunt, head of business for the BBC's World Service Group. The former Guardian managing editor Jan Thompson also left the board, while Simon Gardner, Global Head of Editorial Safety at Reuters, joined.

June saw the departure of Team Assistant Tommy Hodgson. We'll miss him but are lucky to have found Angus Barrett as his replacement.

We thank Neil, Robin, Tommy and Jan for their years of service and all they have done for INSI, and look forward to working with our new members, trustees, staff and allies in 2025.

A destroyed media car at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted an area where a number of journalists were located in the southern Lebanese village of Hasbaya on October 25. (Photo by Ali Hankir / AFP)





An aerial photo shows crowds of Syrians raising a giant independence-era flag, used by the opposition since the uprising began in 2011, as they celebrate the fall of Bashar al-Assad's iron-fisted rule at the central Umayyad Square in Damascus on December 13, 2024. (Photo by OMR HAJ MADOUR / AFP)

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