

Press Freedom Group Gives Russia 'Red Card'

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Reuters

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has used the international focus on Russia ahead of the World Cup to shed [light](#) on the plight of imprisoned journalists.

RSF ranked Russia's press freedom in 148th place out of 180 countries this year. The organization says at least 34 journalists have been killed in connection with their reporting since Vladimir Putin came to power almost two decades ago.

Embed:

☒ An RSF protest on the eve of the [#2018WC](#) in [#Russia](#) – a fake football pitch in Paris with 7 imprisoned Russian journalists displayed on the pitch. Russia has less press freedom now than at any time since the Soviet Union's fall.
pic.twitter.com/FqFntuwOUT

— RSF (@RSF_inter) [13 июня 2018 г.](#)

“No one ever gets a red card for tackling journalists from behind. From police violence to murders of journalists, impunity is the rule,” RSF said in an online statement Wednesday.

The press freedom organization launched an awareness campaign ahead of the World Cup with giant portraits of seven imprisoned journalists, made to look like football trading cards, arrayed on a green pitch in Paris.

More journalists are imprisoned in Russia than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, RSF said, with an environment inside the country where "press freedom NGOs are being criminalized, foreign media are under threat, and the formerly free internet is in the process of being throttled.”

“Despite determined resistance, independent journalism is losing ground,” the press freedom organization said.

RSF vowed to continue its campaign in the course of the month-long World Cup to prevent state-run media from disguising “the steady decline in media pluralism in Russia.”

Christophe Deloire, director-general of RSF, said the organization would use the June 14 to July 15 World Cup “to prevent the biggest media event of the year from being reduced to [a] Potemkin sham.”

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