**REPORTERS  
SANS FRONTIERES**

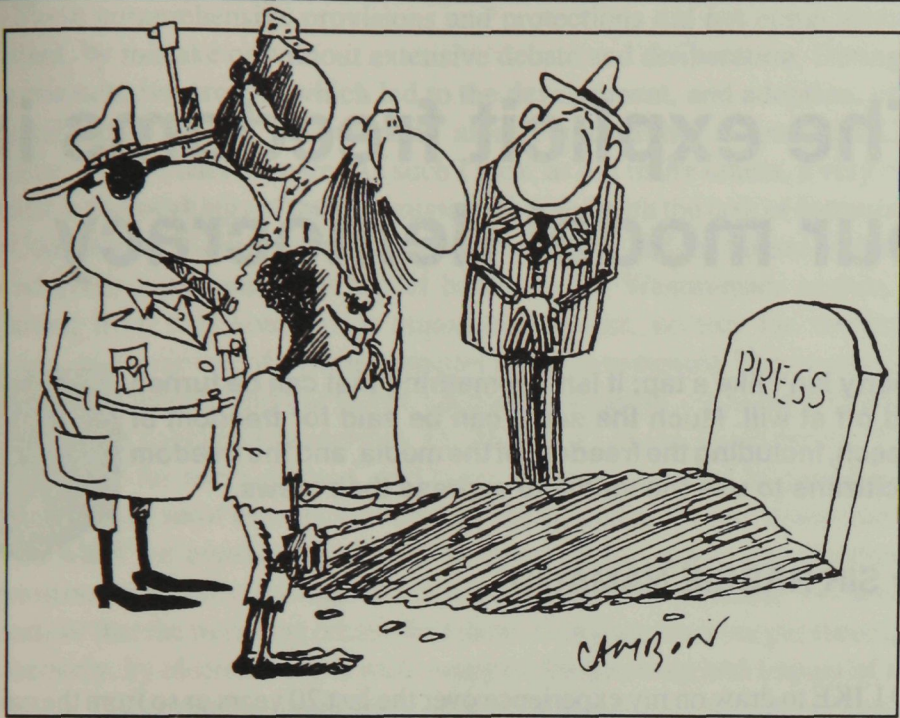
## A day for freedom

ON 3 May 1996, International Press Freedom Day, Reporters Sans Frontières published its seventh Annual report on freedom of the press throughout the world, which gave an account of infringements of the right to be informed in 149 countries.

In 1995, 51 journalists were killed in the course of their work or because of their opinions (compared to 103 in 1994 and 59 in 1993). Three-quarters died on the African continent, mostly in Algeria. At least 386 journalists were imprisoned for at least 48 hours in 1995 because of their profession or their opinions, mainly in Asia (Burma, China, Vietnam), Africa (Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria) and North Africa and the Middle East (Algeria, Syria, Tunisia). And at least 108 journalists were jailed or arrested in Turkey during 1995.

Two new forms of repression have been spreading at a particularly worrying rate. First, the independence of the judiciary is often challenged by governments that have little respect for the principle of the separation of powers. In 1995 legislative reforms aimed at restricting freedom of the media were introduced in several East European countries (Albania, Romania), in sub-Saharan Africa (Congo, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and in North Africa and the Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Palestine). Second, making justice subject to political interests tends to foster a climate of impunity. Not only do the various forms of 'ordinary' harassment (administrative pressure, confiscation of newspapers, arrests) rarely result in any legal sanctions but, more seriously, the only action taken over the murder and kidnapping of journalists is, at best, the opening of investigations that never name the guilty parties. By choosing to shoot well-known and respected journalists such as Vladislav Listiev, in Russia, the killers are sending a message to other members of the profession that nothing, not even fame, can protect them.

In addition, a number of incidents serve as a reminder that even in Western democracies, freedom of the press requires constant vigilance.



## FREEDOM DAY

The violence of some extreme right-wing groups, for instance in Austria, France and Germany, and of some extremist nationalist movements (such as those in the Spanish Basque country and Corsica), hampers the work of the media. Examples are the death of 6 April 1995 of Raimund Friedl, who was murdered by mistake in an attack aimed at Wolfgang Purtscheller, a journalist with the Austrian daily *Der Standard*, a specialist in the extreme right, and a machinegun attack on the Paris home of Guy Benhamou of the French daily *Libération*, who had been investigating Corsican independence movements, on 8 March 1996.

□ *Reporters Sans Frontières Newsletter editorial May 1996.*