



ARTICLE 19

# The Global Expression Report 2022

Headlines and highlights

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# A brief introduction

The *Global Expression Report* is an annual look at the rights to freedom of expression and information across the world.

Our data, the GxR metric, tracks freedom of expression across 161 countries via 25 indicators to create a score between 0 and 100 for every country. That score places it in an expression category.

GxR score	Expression category
80–100	Open
60–79	Less Restricted
40–59	Restricted
20–39	Highly Restricted
0–19	In Crisis

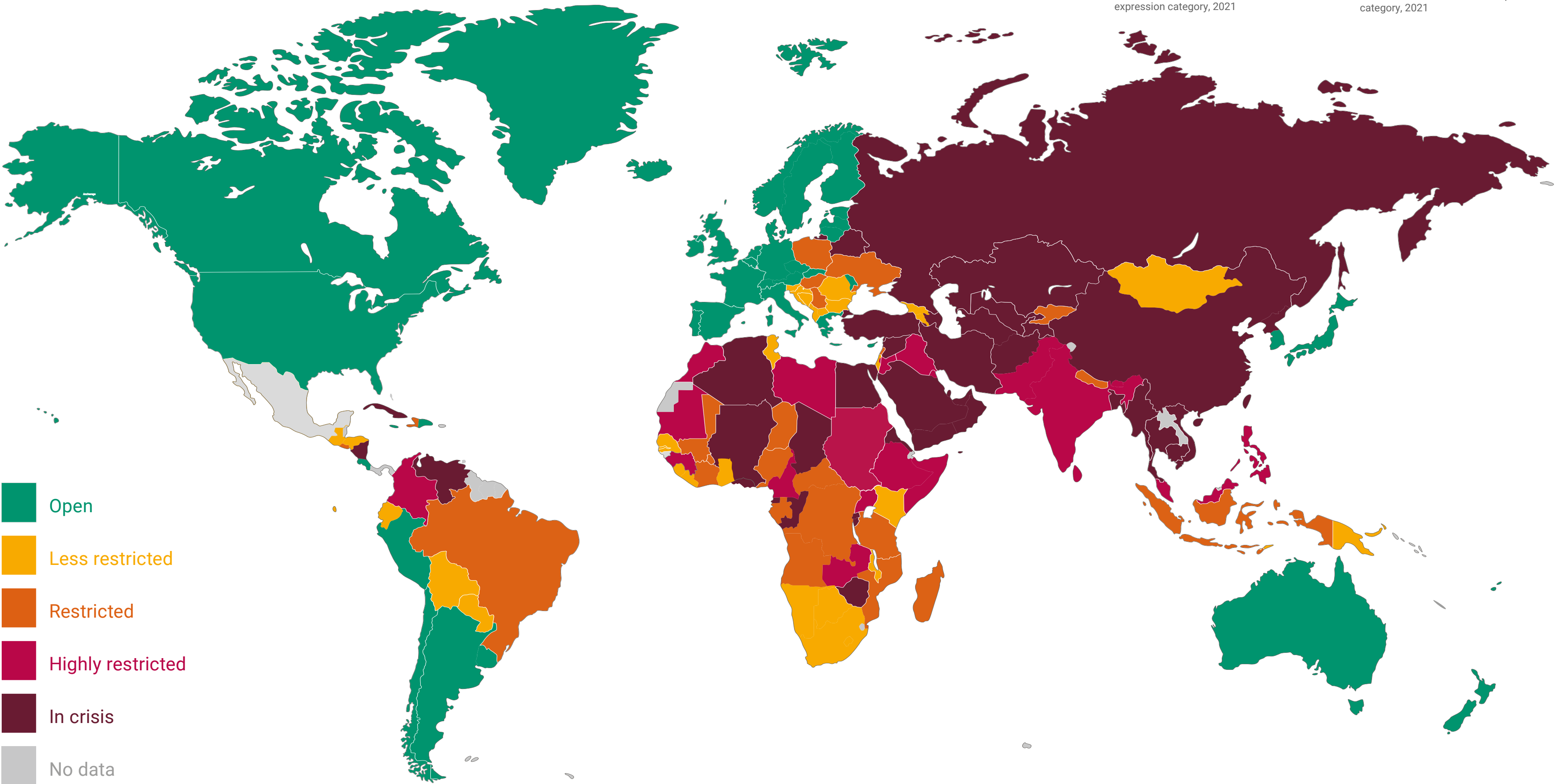
In each year’s report, we explore score changes over time across three time periods: the preceding year (2020–2021), the last five years (2016–2021), and the last 10 years (2011–2021).

We measure the freedom of everyone – not just journalists or activists – to express, communicate, and participate. How free is each and every person to post online, take to the streets, investigate, and access the information we need to hold power-holders to account? And can we exercise those rights without fear of harassment, legal repercussions, or violence?

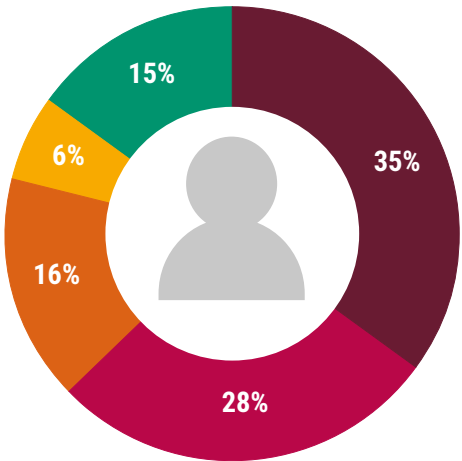
This report is based on quantitative measurement, and ARTICLE 19 acknowledges the limits of that approach to represent individuals, including those at risk or who face discrimination, whose specific experiences often lack data and research more generally.



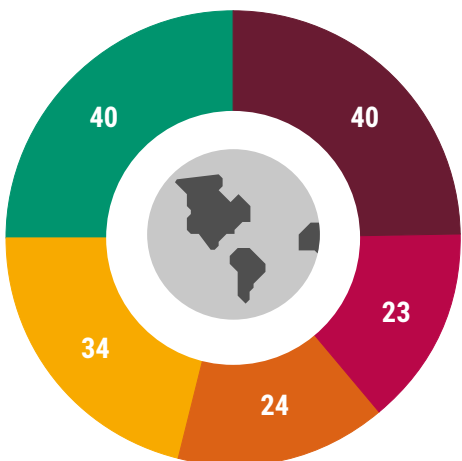
# Headlines and highlights



GxR score map: Global



Percentage of global population in each expression category, 2021



Number of countries in each expression category, 2021

- **80% of the global population** have less freedom of expression now than a decade ago – that’s 6.2 billion people. Only 7% of the global population have seen an improvement in their freedom of expression since 2011.
- **The global score has declined over the last decade:** all regional scores are either falling or stagnant.
- **35% of the global population – 2.7 billion people – now live in a country in crisis.** It is now the largest category, both by population and number of countries – there are 40 countries **in crisis**. Five new places dropped into crisis this year: Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sudan, Hong Kong, and Chad.
- **Only 15% of the world’s population live in open countries** – which is as low as it has been during this decade.
- **Freedoms are more precarious than ever, and scores are plummeting at higher rates than ever before.** The data shows bigger one-year decreases in scores than the GxR has ever recorded – and in more countries: 19 countries saw shrinking freedom of expression environments from 2020 to 2021, compared to only one country between 2010 and 2011. In 2011, the combined decrease in scores for countries in decline was nine; in 2021 it was 195.
- **Many of the countries that made advances over the last decade have quickly regressed:** Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka – all countries the world looked to at one time as democratising nations and beacons of hope, only to see freedoms crushed and the respect for human rights all-but-disappear.

# Africa

Regional score:

42

Regional population:

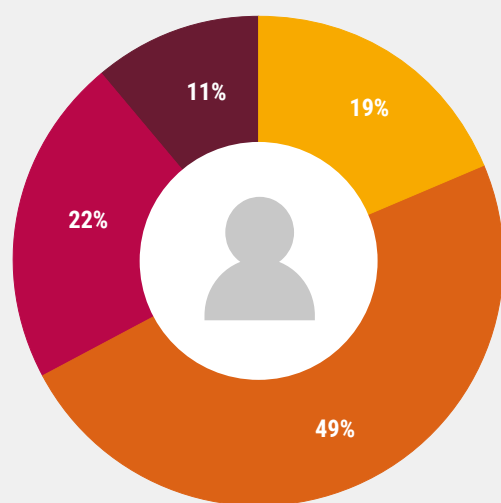
1.2 billion

Number of  
journalists killed:

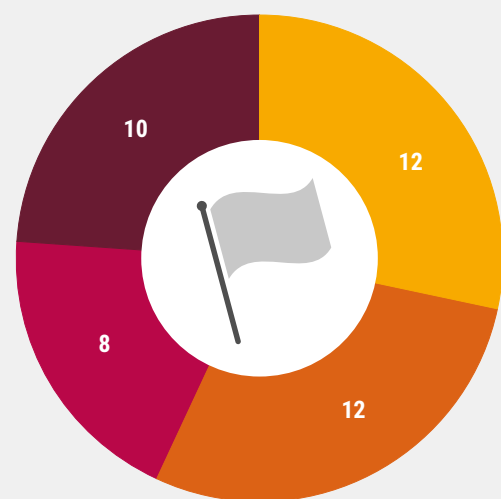
10

Number of human rights  
defenders killed:

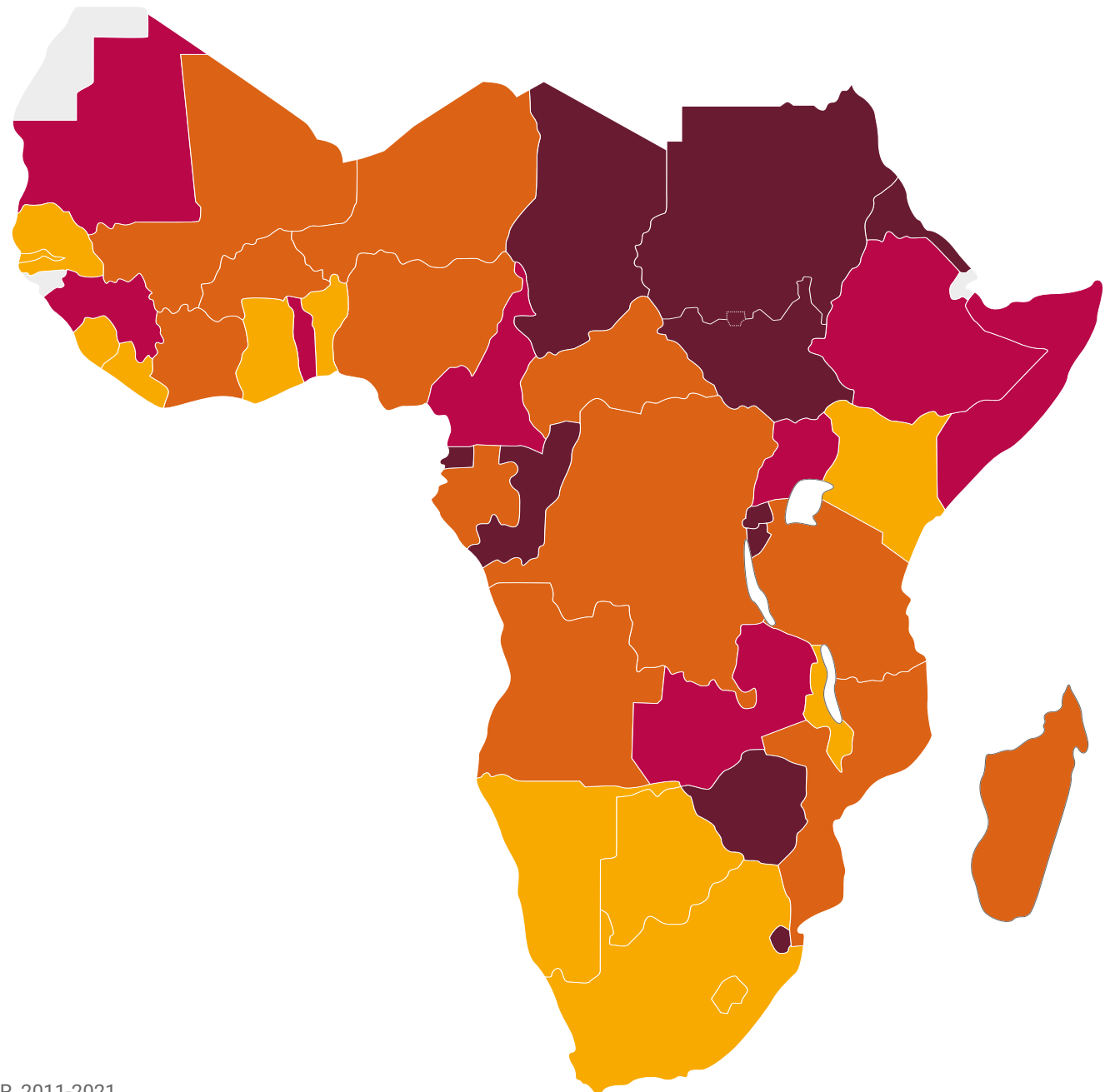
20



Percentage of population per expression category in 2021: Africa



Number of countries per expression category in 2021: Africa



Africa regional GxR, 2011-2021

- **For the third year running, there are no open countries in Africa:** nearly half of the continent's population live in **restricted** environments.
- **The population living in crisis doubled in 2020–2021**, and is now at 11%, though it remains smaller than a decade ago.
- **In 2021, there were four military coups in Africa, plunging countries like Sudan into crisis.** Political opposition faces major hurdles, and protests are met with violence in many places – as well as internet shutdowns, an increasingly favoured addition to the autocrat armoury.

# The Americas

Regional score:

62

Regional population:

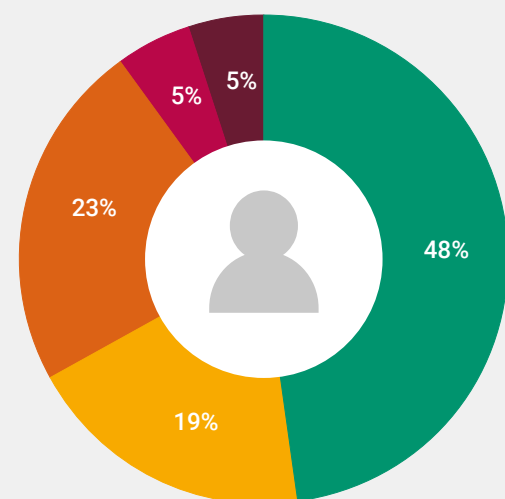
1 billion

Number of  
journalists killed:

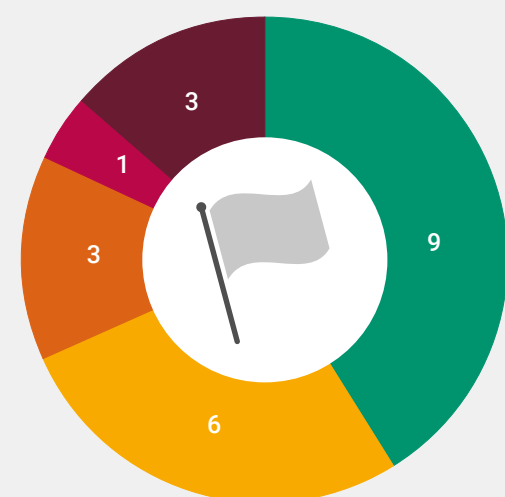
14

Number of human rights  
defenders killed:

252



Percentage of population per expression category in 2021: The Americas



Number of countries per expression category in 2021: The Americas



GxR score map: The Americas

- **While half of the region lives in **open** environments for expression (driven by the USA and Canada), the autocracies are digging in their heels:** Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba scrape the bottom of the scale, and Colombia's and El Salvador's environments for expression are seeing a severe decline.
- **Communicators and activists in this region, particularly in Latin America, face extreme levels of physical violence and threat:** more than 70% of murders of human rights defenders occurred in The Americas – the three countries with the most murders were all in The Americas: Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil. Mexico's journalists face levels of violence comparable only to countries embroiled in active conflicts.

# Asia and the Pacific

Regional score:

42

Regional population:

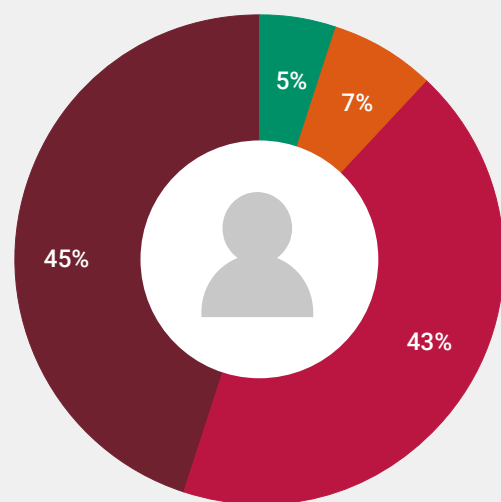
4.2 billion

Number of  
journalists killed:

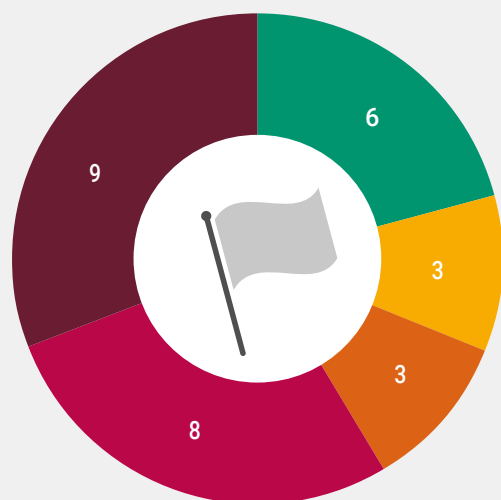
23

Number of human rights  
defenders killed:

79



Percentage of population per expression category in 2021: Asia and the Pacific



Number of countries per expression category in 2021: Asia and the Pacific



GxR score map: Asia and the Pacific

- **Two of the most dramatic one-year score-declines in the history of this data occurred in this region in 2021.** A military coup in Myanmar and Taliban retaking control in Afghanistan were followed by immediate and severe restriction of the environment for freedom of expression by the new regimes.
- **Nearly 90% of the population of the region live in highly restricted or in crisis environments.** In 2011, the region was dominated by countries in the less restricted category (28%): there are now only three countries in that category, holding less than 1% of the population. The highly restricted category has grown from 7% of the population to 43%, while the population in crisis has been constant at around 40%.

# Europe and Central Asia

Regional score:

68

Regional population:

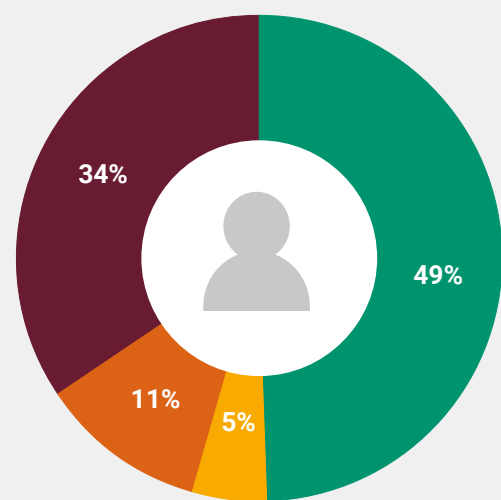
924 million

Number of  
journalists killed:

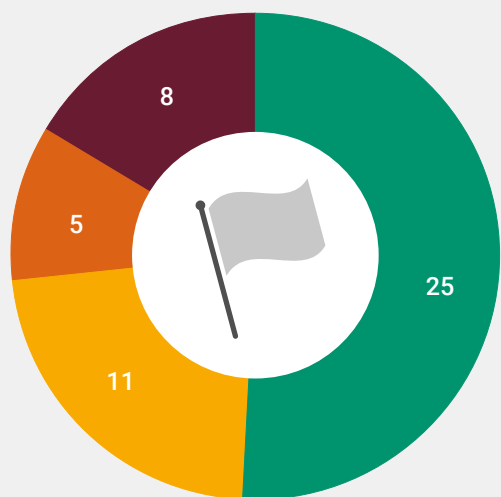
6

Number of human rights  
defenders killed:

2



Percentage of population per expression category in 2021: Europe and Central Asia



Number of countries per expression category in 2021: Europe and Central Asia



GxR score map: Europe and Central Asia

- **The region now has eight countries *in crisis*, holding a third of its population, and two countries in the global bottom 10.** Belarus suffered a steep decline over the last two years and dropped into the *in crisis* category in 2020 and the global bottom 10 in 2021.
- **Countries in Central Asia are showing a serious decline, but the EU is not immune:** human rights in some EU countries are deteriorating, including Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Slovenia held the presidency in 2021 – a year in which its score dropped six points.
- **Attacks on journalists have increased, particularly those reporting crime and corruption.** An avalanche of abusive litigation (also known as strategic lawsuits against public participation or SLAPPs) continues to fall on journalists in Europe (and further afield), but steps are finally being taken to counter this abuse of the courts.



# Middle East and North Africa

Regional score:

23

Regional population:

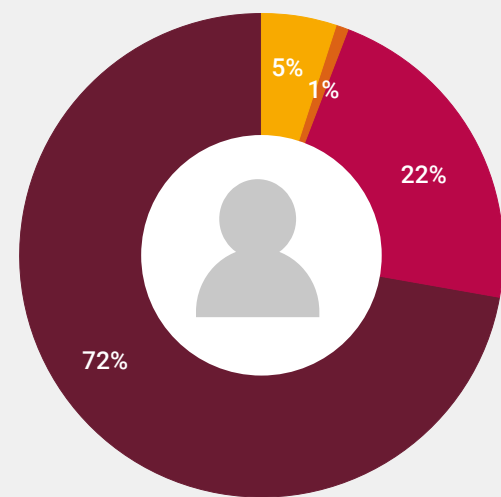
471 million

Number of  
journalists killed:

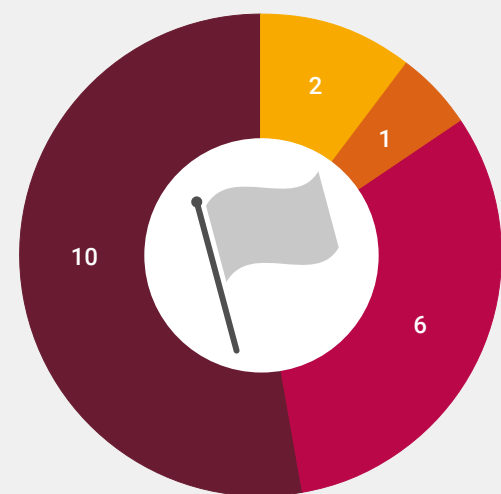
2

Number of human rights  
defenders killed:

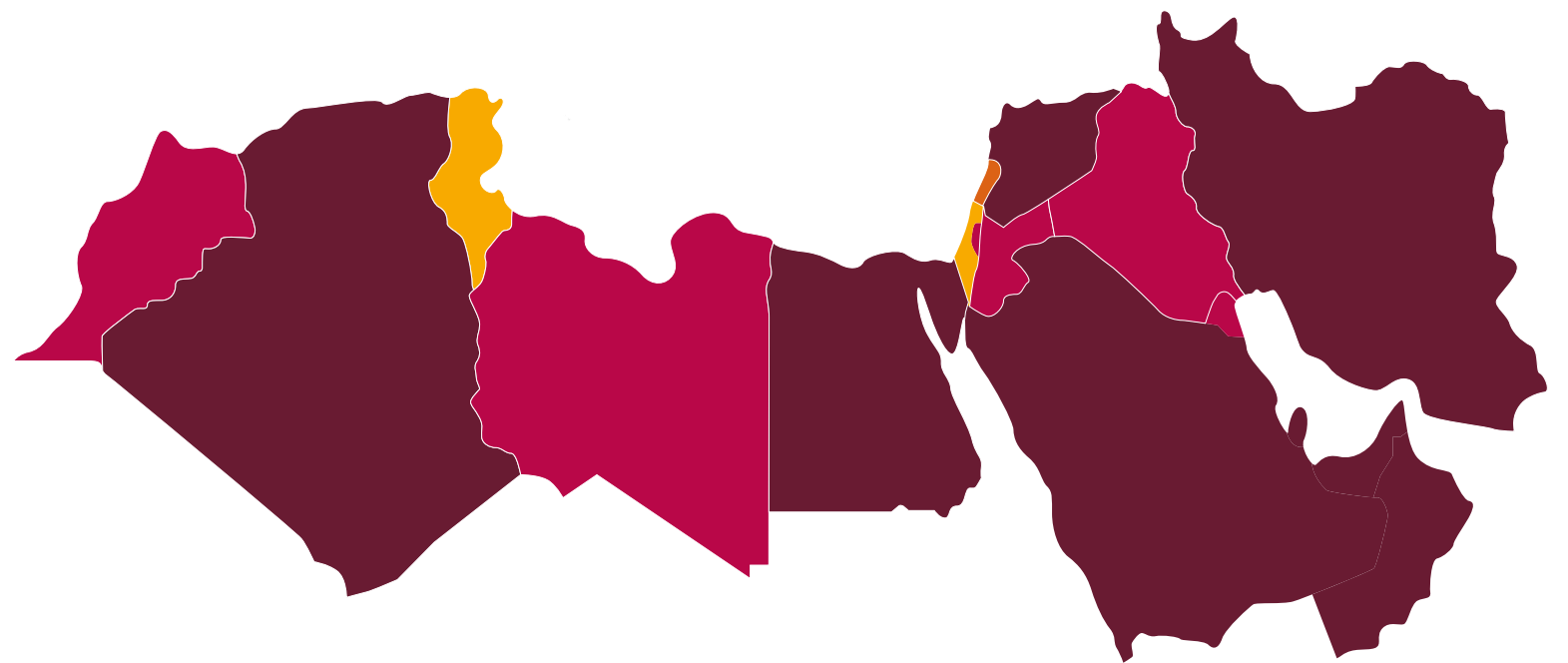
3



Percentage of population per expression  
category in 2021: Middle East and North Africa



Number of countries per expression category in  
2021: Middle East and North Africa



GxR score map: Middle East and North Africa

- **There are no open countries in the Middle East and North Africa region.** 72% of the population live in countries **in crisis** – far more than in any other region, and twice the proportion living **in crisis** in 2011.
- **Many countries in the region show little movement in their scores, but only because they have no further to fall.** Dictatorships with no respect for freedom of expression and brutal response to dissent or discussion are entrenched across the region, often using national security narratives as a pretext to silence voices and bypass justice.
- **A decade after the Arab Spring, many of the catalysts for that movement remain unchanged:** economic issues (deepened by the pandemic), unaccountable and undemocratic governments, and routine violations of the right to freedom of expression, especially protest.
- **Even Tunisia, the success story of the Arab Spring,** took worrying steps backwards in 2021.



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