

AFP ●



# FACTS MATTER

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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# EDITORIAL

## HIGHLIGHTS



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**FABRICE  
FRIES**  
CHAIRMAN  
& CEO OF AFP

The year 2020 revolutionised the way we work at the Agency, forced by Covid, as probably only computerisation has done in the recent past. With constraints but also an agility that has surprised many, teleworking became the norm in very little time. The mobilisation of everyone, starting with those who are not always used to being in the spotlight, permitted impeccable coverage of world news.

The Covid epidemic is the global event par excellence, so much so that it could be said, rightly or wrongly, that for the first time in history, the whole world was afraid of the same thing at the same time. Our global network was perfectly capable of reporting on it, from all corners of the planet, from all angles, always with a human touch. This was naturally the dominant theme of the year 2020, and we will come back to it later.

The third major highlight of the year was the closing of the gap with our major competitors, Reuters and Associated Press, in coverage of US news: we at the least matched them in reporting of the presidential election, reaping the benefits of investments in human and material resources (including the opening of a video control room in Washington). If in 2019 we could say that our video production had reached the same level as that of our two big competitors, in 2020 we can

tell clients that they can do perfectly well with just AFP as an agency since this last weakness in geographical coverage is now a thing of the past. That is a considerable change.

The year saw progress on a number of projects, detailed later, including the launch of our new AFP News platform and the last touches to the move to bring our Paris teams together on a single site. We have also overhauled our visual identity to rejuvenate our image and, above all, adapt it to the needs of video formats.

Thanks to a business model based on subscriptions and still propelled by the growth drivers of video and digital investigation, the Agency has done better than hold its own in 2020, posting a slight increase in its commercial revenues. The sharp reduction in costs linked to the effects of the transformation plan, but also to the cancellation of special events such as travel expenses, generated an historic result that will enable the Agency to accelerate its debt reduction.

The crisis in the traditional media, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, reinforces the need to develop commercial relations with the major digital platforms and to continue the effort on costs, thus paving the way for 2021.

# AFP

## IN NUMBERS

● **1835**

foundation of the Havas agency which became AFP

● **2 400**  
staff

● **1 700**  
journalists

● **100**  
nationalities

● **151**  
countries

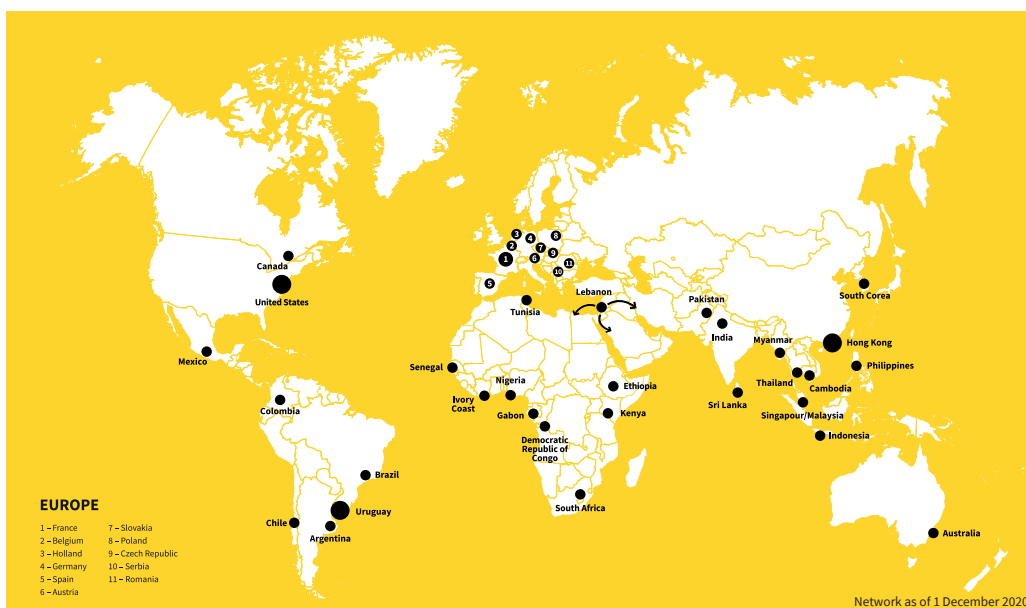
● **260**  
cities





# DIGITAL VERIFICATION NETWORK

AFP RANKS FIRST IN THE WORLD WITH 95 JOURNALISTS  
COVERING 80 COUNTRIES AND WORKING IN 16 LANGUAGES



A renowned expert in misinformation, Claire Wardle is co-founder and US director of First Draft. She leads the strategic direction and research of this non-profit organisation.

**AFP verification teams work all over the world. Their work can be seen on the AFP Fact Check website. How would you describe AFP's work in the fight against misinformation?**

AFP's work is so important because it is truly global, and is able to understand the nuance and cultural complexity connected to false claims and manipulated content. Just as important is that AFP has such an impressive reach, meaning that very large numbers of people are seeing the fact checks.

**Can you highlight any AFP fact checks which have stood out for you?**

One thing that stood out in 2020 was AFP's work in Myanmar, ahead of and during the election. As we know misinformation has had deadly consequences in Myanmar, and to see AFP share as many fact checks as they did was wonderful, and a reminder of how we need to connect local knowledge with global audiences.

# THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**PHIL  
CHETWYND**  
GLOBAL NEWS  
DIRECTOR

**“One of the most important things for us was to try to humanise the story. In many ways this has been a difficult task, especially in the early days of the outbreak.”**

## **How would you describe 2020?**

2020 was one of the most challenging years in AFP's history. Covering the global pandemic challenged every single bureau, every single staff member, every single journalist on so many different levels. We had to mobilise ourselves to work in a very different way. There was a huge amount of change that we had to deal with in a very short space of time. Health and safety issues were always at the back of our mind: there were so many rules to follow, so much disruption to our way of working. We had to organise ourselves to work remotely in just a matter of hours. We are used to working in a fast and agile way on breaking news, like a hospital emergency department. It was difficult, but ultimately also a great success.

## **When and how did AFP journalists on the ground learn about this emerging pandemic?**

We had a clear view of the situation very early on from our bureaus in China. We started to hear about what was really going on early to mid-January. We have teams that have been in the region for the past 15-20 years that are used to covering these kinds of stories: SARS, bird flu, etc. Our journalists on the ground were very quick to identify both the scale and the importance of this new, emerging pandemic.

Many of the most iconic images and stories of the whole pandemic were captured last January in Wuhan. As the first and only major international media in Wuhan at the very beginning of the outbreak, our journalists had the opportunity to cover people's fear of the virus from the very start.

Their images and stories were so exceptionally important for telling the story of the pandemic. It came as no surprise to us when Hector Retamal, our photographer in Wuhan, was named agency photographer of the year by The Guardian newspaper. Those pictures are still being used again and again, one year on.

We learned a lot about how to work safely from our teams first on the ground in Asia. We were absolutely ahead of the game with regards to our competitors.

## **Which angle did you prefer for such a special story?**

I think we, as an agency, are very human led in our storytelling. One of the most important things for us was to try to humanise the story. In many ways this has been a difficult task, especially in the early days of the outbreak, because so



© Hector Retamal / AFP

much of the story was hidden from public view behind rules, quarantines, lockdowns and protective clothing.

This is a story of tremendous human suffering, and yet it was very difficult to cover elements of the human trauma. What was really happening to people isolated at home, losing their jobs or coping with illness alone? Even now, it takes a lot of work to negotiate access to people. That was a huge challenge, getting stories that uncovered the human truth behind the mask.

As a journalist, I covered the aftermath of 9/11. There were lots of funerals, memorial services and public displays of emotion. It was much easier to cover the human side of that huge story compared to this pandemic.

### **How can this human dimension be reflected in news coverage?**

It can be small things that just show you care. A good example is one of our photographers in South Korea spending a lot of time in hospitals. He was working right by the area where the nurses gathered after their Covid shifts. He did a series of portraits showing the healthcare workers' faces and expressions. Many had plasters across their faces because of the pressure sores. Some gave us short personal messages for the captions. This spirit of humanity is something we tried to replicate in different countries in different ways.

### **Alongside a fierce medical war, this pandemic created an information war based on**

### **obtaining the most reliable information to date. What was the Agency's strategy for data management?**

AFP's coverage of the pandemic has been very strong in terms of data, too. Data has perhaps not been AFP's strong point in the past, so we've been investing time and energy into building it up. An incredible amount of work was done by the graphics and the documentation services to build our own databases. This was quite revolutionary for us.

As we were working on these data spreadsheets from our bureaus all around the world, we were able to update and break stories very quickly. We had very important milestones: the first cases, the first thousand cases, the first million cases, the quantity of people in lockdown, etc. These elements were essential for allowing people to understand the pandemic. These efforts helped us become a reference in data information from our clients' perspective, and frequently take the lead in breaking news.

### **How did the Agency organise itself against the spreading of false information in the midst of this enormous wave of data coming from all angles?**

This pandemic has revealed the sheer scale of misinformation, what I call the alternative media ecosystem. There was a tsunami of fake news over the coronavirus. It has been complicated from a scientific perspective but has also been a very sensitive topic to deal with from a political

A nurse from Jilin province hugs her colleagues at the end of a reinforcement mission in Wuhan on April 8, 2020

standpoint, all around the world. It is a mixture of many things, a lot of conspiracy theories stemming from a lot of mistrust in governments, authorities and official sources.

The coronavirus has been a very complicated story to cover in real time. We had a lot of unknowns about the virus. The effects of this uncertainty were strongly felt on social media. Social media doesn't really like the unknown: living in a world where you can Google anything, people want immediate answers. When you aren't able to obtain a very simple answer very quickly, it opens the doors for a minefield of misinformation. There have been a lot of innocent pieces of information but there have also been conspiracy theories, ideologies highlighting a tremendous distrust of authorities, people thinking the virus isn't real, that it was made up, manufactured. We relied tremendously on our health and science reporters, following their guidance on each and every article we wrote about vaccine development, Covid effects, the different drugs available.

## **AFP has to build trust day after day.**

Facts do matter. Fact-checking is so complimentary to, so intertwined with, our core breaking news journalism. We are all able to witness how these alternative ideas have an impact on our society.

Our growing fact-checking teams around the world – more than a hundred people working in multiple languages – have been a great help. It was a challenge to build this team on the front line of information but we now see the fruits of our hard work. The pandemic has given a great visibility with regards to digital verification, and it has proved very important in boosting our image as a trustworthy global news provider. It showed our customers and the public how important our work is.

## **Such varied and impressive coverage would never have been possible without a strong global network.**

One of the most important keywords in journalism is 'access'. At AFP, we believe we have access to one of the biggest and most complete networks of journalists in the world. Our feeling is that our competitors pulled back some journalists from places that maybe they don't think are important. On the contrary, we've always subscribed to the idea that stories can happen anywhere and that, as such, it is impossible to know where the most important places are in terms of positioning your network.

In some ways, for us the important places are precisely where others are not. If something happens in the streets of Washington, everybody is going to cover it. If something huge happens in Ethiopia or Armenia, only those with an efficient core network will obtain good coverage of the story. The pandemic has really showcased the strength of our network.

## **How has our video expertise supported newsgathering worldwide?**

Our video projects reached full maturity this year. Video is something we have been building over the past 15 years: this year we saw how valuable that work is. There was a tremendous variety of AFP video coverage. We are now convinced that we have the best pandemic-related video coverage amongst all the agencies. In the first six months of the pandemic, we had live television broadcasts from more than 1,500 different datelines. The feedback has been extremely positive from major television broadcasters all around the world.

## **This pandemic has forced us to live differently. How did the Agency manage to keep employees connected on a day-to-day basis?**

One of the biggest challenges for our staff was figuring out how to manage remote work. We know it was very hard for people and we managed it carefully. We are very aware of the stress and pressure put on our teams: difficulty working, families struggling to educate their kids, people who haven't seen their family in a long time, people getting sick. We have been trying hard to help our staff, let them know that we understand, put programmes in place to help them, find ways to organise meetings and exchange on a regular basis.

AFP photographer Sajjad Hussain works near India Gate in New Delhi on April 9, 2020, during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown against the spread of the coronavirus.





# THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**DALILA ZEIN**  
MANAGING  
DIRECTOR

**“We were able to unite despite the pandemic.”**

**At the end of 2018, AFP drew up a transformation plan with important goals for the first two years. Has the health crisis led you to revise this roadmap?**

In March 2020, in just a few dozen hours, we went from a practice of teleworking that was still very much in its infancy to almost 100 percent of our staff working remotely. All our support teams (technical, purchasing, general resources) mobilised their energy, expertise and creativity to enable each employee to be equipped to telework, and to provide health protection equipment to journalists who continued to cover news in the field.

We were incredibly quick to adapt to the situation and took a huge leap forward by integrating collaborative tools into our working methods. The quality of our editorial coverage has been widely praised by our clients. It is in AFP's genes to adapt to the unexpected and ensure that its mission to inform is always fulfilled. But the Agency must also ensure that it continues to profoundly transform itself.

The roadmap outlined key projects to be prepared in 2020 so the results could be seen from 2021 and 2022. It was essential to continue to make progress on these decisive projects, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The challenge was to forge unity around future-oriented projects when daily life was put to the test by social distancing and uncertainty. In addition, large-scale projects such as the new content delivery platform, the Future Headquarters plan and the Paris editorial reorganisation require a high level of interaction between teams and staff representatives. It was important for us not to sacrifice the quality of dialogue and the collaborative spirit that are essential to the success of these projects, and I think we did rather well.

**What is the Future Headquarters project and what were its objectives for 2020?**

We decided in 2019 to bring the Paris staff, currently spread across two buildings, onto the same site. Beyond the economic advantages (it will ultimately lead to annual savings of 2.5 million euros), this has been eagerly awaited as it will allow the implementation of the Agency's editorial strategy in the workspace. The goal in 2020 was to make progress on the restructuring plan, right up to the specificities of micro-zoning, in order to be able to start the consultation process with the companies that we will be working with by the end of 2020, and to launch the work in 2021.

**How did the health crisis affect this project and how did you adapt?**

It imposed two major challenges: to establish dialogue and a collaborative spirit despite the distance between staff, and to plan the layout of a future premises whilst workspaces were being reconsidered.



© Charly Triballeau / AFP

everywhere, with even the need for offices sometimes called into question.

At AFP, our premises, and in particular the headquarters at Place de la Bourse, contribute to a sense of belonging and help forge strong ties between employees. To design our workspace of tomorrow, we based ourselves on guiding principles defined at the outset of the project that are consistent with our values: equal treatment on all floors and across all departments; preserving quality of life at work; creating spaces for privacy or meetings as the workspace becomes more open plan; finding the right balance between standardisation and the specific needs of each department; and not imposing a “flex office” but offering it as a possibility. These guiding principles have served as a basis for all exchanges with employees, with a simple objective: to be able to justify each decision taken.

## In hindsight, do you think you were able to manage these projects as smoothly as you could have if there hadn't been a pandemic?

With regards to the HQ restructuring project, it is clear that discussing detailed plans via computer screens was no easy task. The project team did a remarkable job in meeting the expectations of each service, taking specific needs into account as much as possible whilst staying within the predefined framework. I believe the result is satisfactory: the project that was designed allows us to create streamlined open workspaces, conducive to interaction and perfectly adapted to different situations.

In terms of the actual restructuring work, the pandemic led us to opt for a shorter and less risky timeframe. The initial plan was to carry it out over 25 months while the site was still occupied. We were aware of the difficulties associated with the works being conducted on an occupied site but could not see an alternative. The lockdown led us to see things in a new light: we are going to completely empty the Bourse building, carry out the major works on an entirely empty site, and have our Paris staff rotating through one-third of workstation capacity over an eight-

month period, therefore increasing teleworking. This will reduce the duration of the works by 12 months and avoid the inconveniences of carrying them out on an occupied site. We would never have envisaged such a teleworking-intensive scenario if it were not for the pandemic.

More generally, the Future Headquarters project has accelerated other plans: the modernisation of our ways of working (the move towards a zero-paper culture with the digitisation of documents and processes, to be carried out in stages over several years) and the safeguarding of our information system infrastructure. Regarding the social aspect, we have signed an accord with our trade unions to cover the need for increased teleworking during the renovation and afterwards. This agreement is a step forward in terms of our social policies, in line with our values: every employee will be able to work remotely, if they so wish, with various formulas possible, but for no more than two days a week, to preserve the social link that is precious at AFP.

On reflection, the Future Headquarters project has in many ways served as an antidote to the doom and gloom of 2020. Working on a project that concerns all Parisian staff, with a common goal, and looking towards a time when we hope this health crisis will be behind us as we move into the revamped headquarters, has in fact done wonders in terms of team cohesion.

We are now preparing to enter this period of construction that will again shake up our routines. The goal for 2021 is to keep to the planned timeframe and to continue, despite this unusual situation, to develop the Agency.

Masked commuters head to work during the morning rush hour at Shinagawa Station in Tokyo, on February 28, 2020





April 27, 2020  
May 27, 2017



© Ozan Kose / AFP



## The “new normal” in life after lockdown

Some practices and trends foreseen to continue to prevent the spread of coronavirus, as governments ease lockdown restrictions

<h1>The “new normal” in life after lockdown</h1> <p>Some practices and trends foreseen to continue to prevent the spread of coronavirus, as governments ease lockdown restrictions</p>	<h2>AVOIDING MASS GATHERINGS</h2>  <p>Many people will continue to <b>stay isolated</b>, keep away from large gatherings and practice <b>social distancing</b> (at least 1 m away)</p>	<h2>DISTANCING AT WORK</h2>  <p>Employees will be asked to respect <b>distancing rules. Work from home</b> (for those who can do their jobs from home), <b>tele/videoconferencing</b> will continue for the foreseeable future</p>	<h2>WEARING A MASK</h2>  <p>Many countries impose or recommend use of mask in public places. Wearing gloves could be normal</p>	<h2>TRAVEL AND COMMUTING</h2>  <p>International / long distance travels only for exceptional reasons. Many will opt to walk, use scooters, bicycles or even cars instead of public transport for work or short travels</p>
<h2>HEIGHTENED HYGIENE PRACTICES</h2>  <p>Intensive and regular sanitising at work and at home, <b>washing hands</b> and <b>avoid touching the face</b> are highly recommended</p>	<h2>GOING DIGITAL</h2>  <p><b>Digital commerce</b> will be on an upswing, as more stores and restaurants offer ‘no-contact’ delivery services. Increased use of online media / apps / video services also expected</p>	<h2>BOOSTING IMMUNE SYSTEM</h2>  <p>Maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise and rest to <b>boost immune system</b> and <b>mental health</b> will be a priority. <b>Home gyms</b> and <b>online tutorial exercises</b> are popular</p>	<h2>DISTANCE LEARNING</h2>  <p>Many schools will use <b>online tools</b> to continue distance education but could be hard for people without access to internet/digital tools. <b>Home schooling</b> will be a trend</p>	<h2>ESPORTS AND EMPTY STADIUMS</h2>  <p>Many events will be <b>canceled, postponed</b> or may be ‘reinvented’ with new formats. <b>Esports, video-on-demand, indoor sports</b> will be popular. <b>Empty stadiums</b> are expected</p>

© Sabrina Blanchard, Gal Roma / AFP

AFP



© DR

The AFP company doctor since 2015, Olivia Hicks looks back on a year in which the medical service was in particular demand across the world as the coronavirus outbreak developed into a pandemic.

### When did the concerns of staff first arise?

In January 2020 we were asked by the teams in China to send protective equipment because we had stocks of FFP2 masks; then we monitored the reporters in Wuhan remotely, by telephone, until their return to the south of France.

### What were the first arrangements put in place?

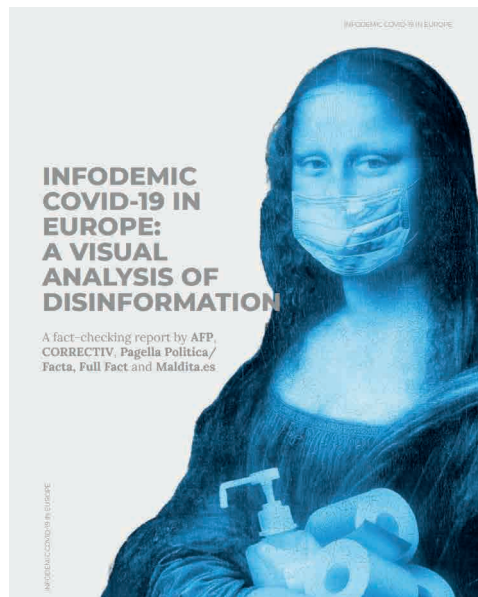
From February onwards we took part in the “Continuity” group with the general management, HR, the purchasing department, general and technical services, and Communication, which enabled very effective coordination to manage this crisis. The role of the medical service was central in writing up health protocols, advising on the necessary protective equipment, monitoring sick employees, tracking down contact cases, validating the return to the office after reporting in risk zones or having Covid – and this all over the world. Knowledge and recommendations were constantly evolving, and this is still the case today. Nurses have been at the forefront in supporting employees, even during their own transition to teleworking in lockdown. I was on site every morning and could be reached by phone seven days a week.

### What unexpected lessons have you learned from this crisis?

At the Paris headquarters the sudden introduction of teleworking in March made us realise that working remotely was possible even for jobs for which it had not seemed to be previously. Even if today the months of working at a distance are increasingly wearing some of us down, it will eventually lead to an improvement in the quality of working life for many. In addition, the application of barrier measures has led to the virtual disappearance of the usual winter infections.

2020

IN SUMMARY



## Covid-19 “Info-demic”: a project addressing the fight against disinformation

In collaboration with four other European media monitoring services, AFP has published a study on misinformation about Covid-19 based on 645 fact checks from these organisations. This review reveals the major and recurrent misinformation in the five European countries most affected by the pandemic in March and April 2020.

JournalismAi  
FESTIVAL 2020  
7–11 DECEMBER

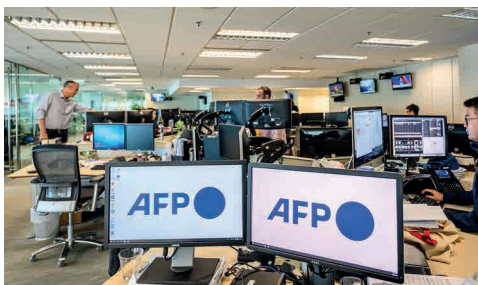
## AFP at the JournalismAi Festival

How can AI be used to measure bias and stereotypes in journalistic content in an automated way? The Agency explored the subject for six months with seven other news outlets – Deutsche Welle, La Nación, Nice Matin, Nikkei, Reach PLC, Reuters and Schibsted. The working group, brought together by Polis, a think-tank at the London School of Economics, presented its findings on December 8, 2020. Le site du groupe de travail : [aijoproject.com](http://aijoproject.com)



## Maria Lorente elected to IAPA board of directors

Director of the AFP bureaus in Buenos Aires and Asunción, Maria Lorente was elected to the board of directors of the Inter American Press Association, whose main aim is to defend press freedom in the Americas. This nomination recognises AFP's work in the region.



## AFP's Asia-Pacific headquarters reinvents itself

Still located in the city centre and with its breath-taking views, the renovation of the Hong Kong headquarters has been completed. It benefits from a larger newsroom to accommodate more text editors and fact-checkers, its desks are more ergonomic and larger for video editors, and photo and video editor-in-chiefs are now all in the same office. It also boasts a multi-purpose room with a relaxation area, a photo and video studio, a meeting room and, last but not least, an enclosed area for private conversations and video voiceovers.



## “Twenty Twenty”, a podcast dedicated to the US presidential election

Antoine Boyer, a journalist at AFP's Washington bureau, took a behind-the-scenes look at the US presidential campaign. Through reports and interviews, this weekly podcast candidly addresses the questions posed by a divided country. The 38 episodes and two specials, created in partnership with Programme B and Code Source, are available on all streaming platforms.



## “The Fulani”, a new multimedia project

An AFP team combining various departments (text, photo, video, data visualisation) set off to meet one of the last great nomadic peoples of the planet for several months in 2019, in Nigeria, Mali and Niger, to tell the story of these freedom-loving men and women tossed about by the great evils of the 21st century. Immerse yourself in this new all-media project, which once again demonstrates the strength of AFP's network and the quality of its journalists.



## AFP in full force at Médias en Seine 2020

Once again AFP took part in Médias en Seine, the first international festival celebrating the media of tomorrow organised by Franceinfo and Les Echos. The third edition of the event was held 100 percent virtually in Paris on November 19. Fabrice Fries and Pauline Talagrand respectively spoke at the round tables “Publishers: is a partnership with the GAFA possible?” and “Can fact-checking stem the tide of disinformation”. Phil Chetwynd's keynote address explained “How a global agency is covering the health crisis”.



# THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**PATRICE MONTI**

SALES  
AND MARKETING  
DIRECTOR

## FOLLOWING OUR ROADMAP, EVEN IN TIMES OF CRISIS

**2020 will be remembered as a complex year in all respects. How has AFP handled this exceptional year?**

Indeed, 2020 was extraordinary in all aspects. Suddenly, all the rules of the game regarding our organisation went out the window, with a health crisis that completely overturned our ways of working. If I had to choose only one highlight of 2020, it would be the tremendous adaptability shown by the Agency as a whole. As for sales and marketing, it would be the admirable discipline, enthusiasm and resilience of the teams who, despite these difficult circumstances, continued to show commitment to their work and remain focused on our customers. We were, in fact, better prepared than we had thought.

**You were able to maintain turnover in 2020 at 2019 levels despite the economic and health context. How do you explain this success?**

It is indeed a success for AFP to have managed to maintain its turnover despite the complex economic and health context. I think we owe it simply to a clear commercial strategy that we have been fully committed to implementing throughout the year, without deviating from our course.

Over the past few years, we have identified three major growth drivers for the Agency: image, and video in particular, digital verification and corporate content services. It is on these areas that we are fully focused. Putting aside corporate content services, which virtually ground to a halt in March, the other two played a significant role in stabilising our turnover.

**Can you tell us more about the specifics of these two products and their development?**

Of course. With regards to video, we once again saw double-digit growth, mainly in the television segment. I don't think we have ever achieved such quality and diversity in our video production – broadcast, digital or live – and clients clearly recognise this. And this is true for all parts of the world. There is still room for significant development with regards to our video product in the coming years.

As far as digital verification is concerned, we have quite simply become the world leader in this field. This was an exceptional year for disinformation, be it in terms of Covid or key events such as the US presidential election. The Agency





© Alberto Pizzoli / AFP

now has more than 100 journalists in digital verification and our production is available in 18 languages. There are so many opportunities for our media clients around the world to benefit from the production of information that has been verified and is often viral. Taking advantage of our expertise in the field, we have also launched digital verification training courses. Here also we expect to continue growth in the next few years.

## Was AFP able to continue innovating in 2020?

Yes, this has not been stopped by the crisis, even if we lost pace for a few months. In this area, too, we have remained extremely focused on our roadmap.

The major innovation for 2020 was of course the launch of AFP News, our new content distribution platform, which is set to eventually replace our current platform, AFP Forum. We made it available to our first customers on November 24 in the form of a MVP (Minimum Viable Product). We will continue to refine this platform throughout 2021.

Today we have tremendous production from all the Agency's services and we thought it necessary to equip ourselves with a distribution tool that would do justice to such high quality and diverse content. We will have this with AFP News, which offers a great user experience and also better showcases our output, without product silos. This boosts the "discoverability" of our content and therefore its use by clients.

This technological innovation is joined by a commercial innovation with the launch of credit packs that allow clients to purchase the full range of the Agency's products.

As you can see, AFP News will be key to improving client retention as well as acquisition in the coming years.

In 2020 we also launched a new version of our live product, AFPTV Live, enriched with new features, as well as a new offering for the regional daily press in France, which we co-produced with these news outlets in order to better meet their needs.

Finally, we have continued the digitalisation of the marketing department so as to increase its contribution to the Agency's turnover and better serve AFP's production.

## How are you approaching 2021?

With all the caution necessary given the unstable economic situation, which will most certainly make our work more complicated, but also with the confidence built up over 2020.

What is certain is that we will above all stay close to our clients and continue innovating for them.

AFP VJ Arman Soldin films a nurse on April 8, 2020 in the new intensive care unit at the Casal Palocco hospital, near Rome.

# BRIEFING ON

## US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



**HERVÉ ROUACH**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
NORTH AMERICA

**“AFP’s newsroom was one of the few in Washington to have staff on site for the big night, obviously with strict health measures in place.”**

The US presidential election is traditionally a high point of world news and activity in the North American bureaus. But in 2020 the event took on an extra dimension due to the extraordinary nature of Donald Trump’s four-year presidency and an unprecedented context.

The pandemic, disinformation, social violence, racial tensions over the death of George Floyd... many complex issues were juxtaposed in a country divided and in crisis. These had to be managed editorially as well as practically.

We mobilised the widest range of products for this exceptional coverage: exhaustive video production with, notably, hundreds of hours of live broadcast; a photo output worthy of the Agency’s aspirations; a rich array of angles and explainers in text; multimedia formats; graphics and videographics; fact checks; and even an experimental podcast!

The pandemic obviously weighed on campaigning. Candidates limited their movements and activities, especially Joe Biden who stayed close to his base of Wilmington, Delaware, careful to set an example of a Covid-responsible campaign. Trump wanted to highlight his divergence, especially in the last weeks, and strode into swing states for rallies that caused much debate because his supporters rarely wore Covid protection masks.

Access to the candidates was restricted to a small number of journalists and AFP was able to benefit from decades of presence in Washington and American political institutions. The Agency is included in the White House’s exclusive “reporting pool”. An AFP photographer follows the US president permanently and is joined at regular intervals by one of two text correspondents assigned to the presidency. A similar arrangement was put in place for coverage of Biden.

In 2016 the media was harshly criticised for failing to see Trump’s victory coming and not correctly understanding the mood of the United States.

In 2020 we made a considerable effort to deploy into the field, boosting the number of journalists throughout the country for maximum coverage of the range of opinions, issues and situations, which vary from one state to another, one social context to another.

We tried to tell the story of the United States in all its diversity and divisions: the Trumpist electorate base, traditionalist and religious; voters from minority groups who played a determining role in the election; the states that swung behind Trump in 2016 and this time switched to Biden. All this without forgetting the impact of the pandemic and debate over racial discrimination.

AFP’s presence on the ground was massive in the primaries as well as the final stretch of the campaigning before the November 3 vote.

US President Donald  
Trump addresses the press  
at General Mitchell International  
Airport in Milwaukee, Wisconsin,  
on November 2, 2020.  
© Brendan Smialowski / AFP



Candidate Joe Biden during  
a drive-through speech in Coconut  
Creek, Florida, on October 29, 2020.  
© Jim Watson / AFP





## Next level video offer

For AFP, this presidential campaign showed that our video offer has reached the next level. It is now mature, competitive and well-positioned among our peers. AFPTV was able to offer hundreds of hours of live coverage of voting or campaign events.

At the same time, it continued to shine a spotlight on American society in coordination and synergy with text and photo reporters, an integration that is a trademark of AFP.

In comparison to the 2016 election, the Agency was able to take advantage of a growing network of video reporters and freelancers across the United States, and of agreements with US channels, for a complete coverage of the territory.

## A traditional election night

Reporters in the field took the greatest possible precautions to protect themselves from Covid-19. The rule was to wear protective gear, avoid enclosed spaces conducive to contamination as much as they were able to, and be tested on their return from assignments. Many journalists volunteered for assignments and the Agency was able to achieve a high level of production from the ground.

Working from the office was also made voluntary during the pandemic. That said, we wanted election night operations to be as normal as possible, to preserve the cohesion that is essential for successful coverage of major events.

AFP's newsroom was one of the few in Washington to have staff on site for the big night, obviously with strict health measures in place. Journalists had to be tested within the days prior to the event and wore high-protection FFP2 masks throughout, also respecting rules on physical distancing.

A behind-the-scenes podcast over the evening allowed listeners to experience the excitement of a US election night in a newsroom.



Hervé Rouach giving his final instructions in the Washington newsroom on presidential election night, on November 3, 2020.



## Twenty Twenty

The podcast was an episode of the Twenty Twenty series, born from an idea of Antoine Boyer, a journalist at the Washington bureau's French desk.



Throughout 2020, AFP offered a weekly instalment to tell the story of the United States in the run-up to the elections. It was an exciting and enriching professional endeavour, since AFP had no recent experience in audio.

Each week the podcast explored a theme of the campaign, mainly in the form of reportage and regularly calling on AFP journalists for their analysis or insight.

## Fact-checking

After the 2016 election and its problems linked to disinformation, it became clear that we could not cover the 2020 vote without a strong fact-checking capacity.

Disinformation via social networks is now present in the electoral processes of all major democracies. It became particularly prevalent in the United States with Trump in the White House, accused on numerous occasions of spreading false information that was passed on by his supporters, feeding conspiracy theories.



### Human error in Michigan county vote tally sparks claims of election fraud

Louis Boudoin-Lucman, AFP USA

AFP's US production benefitted from the contribution of a team of seven journalists who, in terms of a deal between AFP and Facebook, track down false information circulating on social networks in the United States.

Accords of this kind exist in many countries and AFP is at the forefront of established media participating in a programme of digital verification and signalling of fake news initiated by Facebook.

Intimately tied into the social networks, Trump's presidency – during which Twitter became a tool of government – was saturated with defiance of the traditional media and complacency towards unverified information.

The disinformation and conspiracy theories that had been simmering over the course of those four years literally exploded after November 7, when Biden's victory was announced. Trump convinced some of his supporters that the election had been stolen from him and that there had been large-scale fraud, deepening division and violence. This, of course, culminated in the events in the Capitol on January 6.

Fact-checking has consequently imposed itself as indispensable, especially in this kind of election sequence. Disinformation has also become a challenge for major social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, which realise it is necessary to act with more determination against users who spread these theories, ultimately going so far as to ban Trump.

The use of social networks and disinformation throughout Trump's presidency, from the first day to the last hour, was simultaneously historic, surprising and totally destabilising, forcing us to completely rethink our way of working.

# FOCUS

## BREXIT: DEAL OR NO DEAL?



**FRANÇOISE  
MICHEL**

AFP BRUSSELS  
BUREAU CHIEF

**The coverage of post-Brexit negotiations from March until the announcement of an agreement between the United Kingdom and EU member countries on Christmas Eve was a collective effort by the London and Brussels offices, with full support from all services and in all languages. In Brussels, we were convinced there would be a deal. But the question was: ‘When?’**

We organised ourselves so as to be able to follow the meetings of the chief negotiators, Michel Barnier and David Frost, as talks progressed. Luckily, the British diplomatic mission and the Berlaymont, the headquarters of the European Commission, are located near our bureau.

AFP photographers and video journalists set up camp, watching the comings and goings of Frost and Barnier in the hope of obtaining that key quote that would set the tone for the day.

The goal of these meetings was to come up with a compromise or, more often, to identify the sticking points among the countless issues that faced the negotiation teams, which had more than 100 experts on each side.

Brexit required massive cross-checking of sources (British, European, diplomatic, parliamentary). All this carried out in an atmosphere of spin and intense rumour, and with the very real risk of false leads.

In March, at the beginning of the talks, we were communicating with the London office via e-mail.

It quickly became clear we needed to create a WhatsApp group to remain in constant contact. The Berlin bureau was regularly in the loop since Germany, which held the rotating presidency of the European Union, was putting all its weight behind the push for an agreement. For Angela Merkel, a “no-deal” – which would tarnish her period in office – was the worst possible outcome.

The politically charged subject of fishing blocked discussions for weeks and could have precipitated total failure until the very last day.

Prior to the divorce, Belgians, French and Dutch had been fishing in British waters for years; but Brexit shuffled the cards, with the United Kingdom making control of its waters a symbol of its regained sovereignty.

London turned this into a weapon to pressure European countries that refused to sacrifice their fishermen to a trade agreement with London.

The AFP network played to full strength. When we learned that a proposal was on the table with regards to this deeply sensitive issue, we alerted bureaus in fishing countries (Netherlands, Denmark, France, Belgium) for confirmation or denial.

In Paris we had close contacts with specialised journalists in the economics service, who kept up with progress in the horse-trading through their ministry and professional sources. It was the same with journalists reporting on the French presidency, as Emmanuel Macron was closely following the quest for an agreement that he wanted, but not “at any price”.

Our proximity to numerous sources in Brussels was also a determining factor.

We had access to a dozen representatives from the 27 member countries, which allowed us to follow the talks. A high-ranking source close to the president of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and another who followed the negotiations daily, proved crucial for our Brexit coverage.

Michel Barnier regularly updated the European Parliament as well as ambassadors of the EU-27 behind closed doors, which again gave us many opportunities to find information. Neither London nor Brussels ever respected deadlines but at no point in time, even during periods of extreme tension, did it



Staff remove the UK flag from the European Parliament building, on January 31, 2020

ever really seem like either party would throw in the towel.

In the office, we were haunted by the dark prospect of a half-baked deal hurriedly made on December 30, or even December 31, as European and British leaders alike insisted that they were ready to walk away without an accord.

The month of December was trying for everyone: journalists, negotiators and diplomats were exhausted by this never-ending saga. During the week and the weekends alike, we had to write about the slightest change, the threat of failure or hasty statements by one side or the other.

We had to rack our brains in London and Brussels to figure out how a story written ad nauseum could still be of some interest.

In the final stretch, disagreements were settled at the highest level, directly between Boris Johnson and von der Leyen, closely watched by Merkel and Macron.

The last set of negotiations was supposed to play out on the night of December 23. Dave Clark, the deputy bureau chief, and journalist Clement Zampa were on duty. At one in the morning, we knew there would be nothing that night. Another team took over early the following day.

A rumour began to circulate that negotiations would be extended for yet another night. There were also fears of a pause for Christmas, with talks to resume on December 26.

The historic agreement was finally reached on the afternoon of December 24, confirmed by our sources before the official announcement: the thumbs-up emoji and a firm “yes” was met with a huge sigh of relief on both sides of the Channel! A dozen stories, prepared long in advance by Brussels, London and the documentation service

in Paris, were sent to the wire while Europe applauded this complicated conclusion.

Boris Johnson showed off the 1,200-page agreement on the evening of December 24 in a televised address. Ursula von der Leyen and Michel Barnier gave a more sober press conference. The chief Brexit negotiator was finally able to announce that the “clock is no longer ticking”, an allusion to the catchphrase “the clock is ticking” that he had been repeating for 10 months.

We were fully mobilised to cover the end of the transition period at midnight on December 31... but nothing happened in Brussels. No tweets, no statement to say goodbye to “our British friends”. The European Union gave the signal that a page had been turned and that Brexit was behind it. There was, however, massive coverage of that historic evening in the UK as well as France – in Lille, Calais and Paris – to mark the start of the new adventures of the now-separated country. A first in the long history of European construction. The Europeans, whatever they may say, are far from finished with Brexit.

The British are going to test the limits of the new treaty, determined to assess the resistance and unity of the EU-27.

And, if Brexit does not live up to British hopes, the prospect of a return of the United Kingdom to the European fold may not be an idle dream... that is if both the United Kingdom and the European Union have not already disintegrated.

# BRIEFING ON

## CORONAVIRUS



**SOPHIE  
HUET**  
GLOBAL  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**2020: the year when the impossible became possible. Every day like science fiction. A world in prolonged hibernation, deprived of human contact, made up of masks and handwashing, and acronyms that became commonplace: Covid, PCR, RNA...**

Like a slow tsunami, the pandemic invaded the planet, its progression extraordinarily documented by AFP journalists at the human level, with words and faces emerging from thousands of reports, in text, photo and video.

One had to be in the field to get to grips with the shock of the situation, to show, to understand, to open the window on our lives under a bell jar. To portray deserted towns and the solitude of the sick on respirators; to bear witness to the devotion of exhausted carers and the absence of the dead, who left without a farewell.

Our reporters complemented their normal equipment with FFP2 masks, goggles and hydro-alcoholic gel.

Over the months, scenes of uncertainty, horror and emptiness emerged across the globe: from Wuhan, the epicentre of the silent pandemic, to the small town of Codogno in Italy and Manaus in the heart of the Amazon. The situation also opened a vast terrain for conspiracy theorists and authoritarian systems, for all those who prefer official statements and propaganda to free and independent journalism. Our reporters everywhere told extraordinary stories of struggle, resilience, creativity and solidarity: applause at 8pm on the balconies of the world; food collection baskets in Naples; football on the roof in Dhaka; hugs under plastic film in Sao Paulo.

We also told of sport at a halt, with its avatars of fans in empty stadiums.

And always based on facts, on sources that are reliable and trustworthy in the face of the flood of disinformation.

Our health journalists have worked tirelessly to explain and decipher the virus and the race for vaccines. Our global network of 96 fact checkers has written more than 2,400 articles in 18 languages, debunking disinformation linked to the pandemic. Day after day, AFP's data-journalists used their precious databases to measure the progress of the pandemic and vaccinations, explained in dispatches, videos and graphics.

Thanks to the input of our bureaus and our specialists in economy, the unrelenting economic crisis caused by this invisible virus quickly took shape: collapses and accelerated change that benefit technological giants, increased social divides and inequalities. A legacy for a youth already disoriented by the long-announced crisis of global warming.

AFP converted to teleworking in the blink of an eye. Sending out an alert in pyjamas has become commonplace. From a living room or the corner of the bedroom, alone at the office or with rare colleague, all masked, collectively producing solid, powerful, award-winning coverage based on facts and reporting on the ground.

Never since World War II has a single subject monopolised international news for so long. The virus has crept in everywhere, also attacking our own resistance and professional endurance. Nor are we immune to fear, fatigue, stress, isolation for some. There is no magic solution; but now we are more attentive, and psychological support has been made available to everyone.

Never before have informal contacts and exchanges between colleagues seemed so essential to our personal wellbeing and to the richness of the editorial debate. Never before has our work seemed so vital in connecting people. Never, in the face of so many uncertainties, has our profession been guided so much by humility.





### **Leo Ramirez, VJ in Wuhan**

“We were one of the few media on the ground (in Wuhan). It was a big responsibility for us. Every day we left the hotel not knowing what we were going to see. It was really day to day.”

After his quarantine in Carry-le-Rouet, France: “We got to see a lot of things, the saddest and bravest part of this epidemic. I’m sad to be here now, so far away from what’s going on there. I guess it’s the process and I understand that we had to leave, as a team, and I’m glad that me and my team, we’re all safe.”



### **Tom Little, journalist in Stockholm**

“We had to learn to work with new precautions – keeping distance from interviewees, wearing masks and disinfecting our camera equipment meticulously. Sweden never locked down, so – at times – life felt almost normal. But the extra measures always brought back to mind how serious the situation was.”



### **Sébastien Bozon, photographer in Mulhouse**

“*The real, it’s when it hits you*, said the French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Lacan. For me, with Covid, it was when I saw for the first time a patient being evacuated by helicopter, hooked up, on a drip and surrounded by carers equipped from head to toe with protective gear. Afraid of also being infected and following drastic protective measures, one had to negotiate for permissions every day, find contacts, organise reporting to give a broad overview of the effects of this pandemic.”



### **Miguel Medina, photographer in Milan**

“I was covering the fashion shows in Milan when it all started. I had to go to the small town of Codogno, where the first cases were identified. Then Bergamo, the hospitals, the intensive care and resuscitation departments. It’s unsettling to ask the age of intubated patients and to hear the answer, 52, my own age. But you do your job, with doubled masks, gloves. The Italians in the north were surprisingly well disciplined, strictly confined in Milan yet so active in the small villages. No football matches, no restaurants. I spent three hours every evening on WhatsApp with my friends from all over the world. The motorways were empty, no traffic jams. The only good thing was that it was very pleasant to drive.”



### **Catherine Triomphe, New York bureau chief**

“New York was synonymous with crowds, traffic jams, shows and excitement. Frightened by the record number of deaths in the spring, the American economic capital has been in hibernation ever since. Will it regain its legendary energy? Many believe so, even if it could take some time.”



### **Laurent Thomet, coordinator of the Beijing coverage from Saint-Germain, France**

“As a journalist, you want to be close to the action, so it was frustrating to be so far away from my team in Beijing. But thanks to technology, we were able to stay in close contact. I am proud of their work.”



Self-portrait of photographer Jim Watson in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House, April 9, 2020, in Washington, U.S.



AFP journalists Daphné Rousseau and Colin Bertier with a Covid patient at the Lariboisiere Hospital in Paris on April 27, 2020. © Joël Saget / AFP



A selfie taken on April 9, 2020 shows Bangkok-based AFP photographer Lillian Suwanrumpha in protective gear after coverage of Covid in Bangkok. © Lillian Suwanrumpha / AFP



Photographer Nelson Almeida at the cemetery of Vila Formosa, in the suburbs of Sao Paulo, Brazil, on March 31, 2020. © Paula Ramon / AFP



AFP video journalist Tom Little (L) interviews, from a distance, Sergio Brusin, principal expert in response and emergency operations at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, on March 27, 2020 at Solna, near Stockholm. © Jonathan Nackstrand / AFP



VJ Raphael Ambasu in Nairobi on May 28, 2020. © Céline Cléry / AFP





## Pascale Trouillaud, Rio bureau chief

“AFP-Brazil is going through a surreal situation with its three offices closed for 10 months and absolutely no prospect of reopening in the middle of the second wave, and with 218,000 deaths from the coronavirus.

I haven’t seen my team since March 2020. Our daily challenge: to continue to cover the news of this immense country as if we were in normal conditions.”



## Paul Ricard, health/medicine journalist in Paris

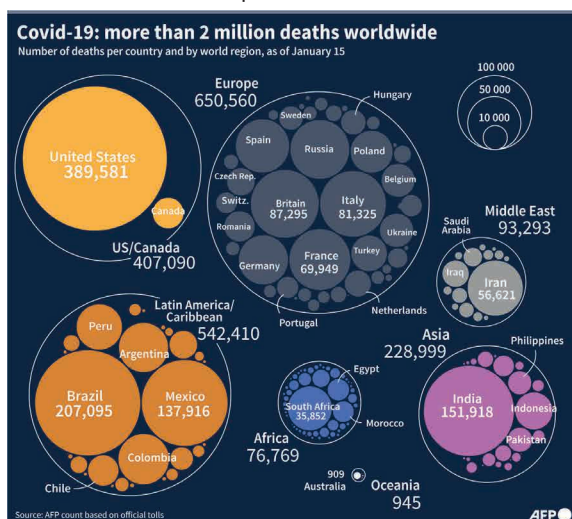
“When I came to the health/medicine service in 2017, I said to myself: ‘There will be less breaking news, it will leave more time for less urgent subjects.’ What intuition!

More seriously, in the Covid-19 unit, we have been going through a unique professional experience for a year now: telling the story of science being written before our very eyes. It is incredible to have covered both the appearance of a disease unknown to humanity and the development of its vaccines.

It’s certainly all new, but it means sticking more than ever to the good old rules of agency journalism.

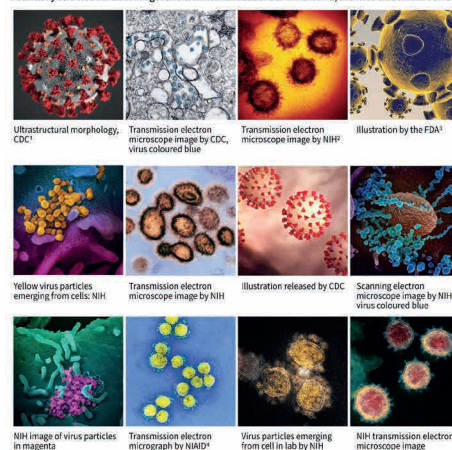
Facts, accuracy, balance. Don’t get carried away, don’t underestimate.

Covid or not, that’s what health coverage requires, probably more than any other. Poor coverage of health issues – illnesses and the search for treatments – is likely to provoke as many unfounded fears as false hopes.”



### Portraits of a virus

Artificially coloured handout images and technical illustrations of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19



Sources: <sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; <sup>2</sup>National Institutes of Health; <sup>3</sup>Food and Drug Administration; <sup>4</sup>National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases



## Julie Charpentrat, fact-checking journalist in Paris

“The other virus is misinformation. As chance would have it, I started health fact-checking in January 2020. The baptism of fire was quick and intense. For the past year, my professional life has been 100 percent Covid disinformation. It’s a steady stream but despite the times of weariness, one must not give up. For me, it’s a question of public health.”



## Alain Bommenel, head of graphics and innovation

“Supplied by our offices around the world and managed by a small team of data journalists in Paris, Covid-19 databases have been at the heart of the coverage of the pandemic, enabling us to produce, day after day, semi-automated balance sheets and maps, trends and elements of analysis, data-visualisations and video sequences.”

## FOCUS

### NAGORNO-KARABAKH: LIVE FROM THE WAR ZONE



**MICHAEL  
MAINVILLE**

MOSCOW  
BUREAU CHIEF

The long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan had been simmering for decades, until it finally exploded in the autumn of 2020. AFP journalists were on the ground during six weeks of fierce fighting and the aftermath of the war.

#### How did this seemingly frozen conflict in Karabakh suddenly turn into a full-blown war?

Clashes involving artillery fire had taken place over four days on the northern borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in July 2020. This was the first major fighting in several years, our first indication that things were maybe heating up again between the two sides. At least 17 people were killed, including several Azerbaijani military commanders.

At the time, we didn't know a much more significant conflict was coming. The Karabakh dispute had been frozen for nearly 30 years. Azerbaijan was investing huge amounts of money into developing a modern army but the Karabakh separatists, supported by Armenia, had spent decades digging in and building up their defences.

We certainly didn't expect a full-blown war to break out from one day to the next, as it did a few months later.

#### How did you manage to send journalists to this war zone in such a short amount of time?

The only way to properly cover any conflict is to be there on the ground.

Covering a war zone is always an incredible human and logistical challenge, but this time we also had to contend with the coronavirus pandemic. We sent a first team with a text reporter, photographer and video journalist from Moscow within 24 hours of the conflict starting. They flew into Yerevan and, after getting accreditations and Covid tests, drove for 10 hours through difficult mountain roads to get to Karabakh's main city, Stepanakert.

It quickly became clear how dangerous this conflict was going to be. Shortly after they arrived in Karabakh, the team's car was caught up in Azerbaijani strikes on the town of Martuni, with a rocket exploding only 50 metres away and blowing out its windows. No one from our team was injured but journalists from other news outlets were wounded in the strikes, including a reporter and a photographer from Le Monde who had to be evacuated.

We needed to get more people in to cover the conflict, including on the Azerbaijani side, but were struggling with travel restrictions because of the pandemic. And it was clear we needed experienced war reporters. In collaboration with our Paris office, we built up teams of journalists who were both able to travel to the region and had the necessary experience in hostile environments. AFP eventually sent more than 15 text reporters, photographers and video journalists to cover the conflict on the ground, from Moscow, Paris, Istanbul, Athens and Beirut.





## How did AFP organise its reporters in the field, given the intensity of the strikes?

The fighting began on September 27 and lasted until a ceasefire was agreed on November 9. It was a very intense six weeks.

Gaining access to the front was very difficult and Stepanakert was under heavy bombardment from Azerbaijani forces. Our teams would venture out during the day to report and do interviews, under the constant threat of artillery and rocket fire. Azerbaijani drones, which they could often hear buzzing overhead, were especially terrifying. They spent the nights in underground shelters, trying to sleep despite the sounds of shelling.

On the Azerbaijani side, another team was travelling near the front line, visiting areas that were coming under fire from Karabakh, like in the town of Ganja, where they arrived shortly after one strike to find rescuers digging through the rubble of an apartment building for survivors.

Other journalists worked in Yerevan – where we managed to get an interview with the Armenian prime minister at the height of the fighting, in Azerbaijan's capital Baku and in Georgia's capital Tbilisi, gathering official information. Our regional team in Moscow pulled everything together, writing and editing stories, editing and captioning photos, producing videos, and coordinating with the reporters in the field and with Paris.

Everyone was working incredibly hard but it was the journalists on the ground who impressed me most. They were reporting in extremely difficult conditions, making choices under pressure about how much risk was worth taking to tell a story.

Communications were also complicated and challenging: mobile phone signals were often down and we had to be careful about satellite calls in case they could be used to target the team. It was such a relief when we were able to talk to them. Covering a war zone is difficult enough as it is.

## How did you deal with the added stress of the pandemic?

The pandemic added an extra layer of complexity to our reporting and was exceptionally difficult to deal with. It had a profound impact on the logistics of our entire mission: flights, transit, on-site tests, transportation, contacts, etc.

We had to organise everything so that our team was able to follow sanitary rules and stay focused. The teams needed PCR tests immediately upon arrival at the airport but in most cases were able to get to the front line within about 12 hours. As well as the flak jackets, helmets and communications gear we normally need in war zones, we had to make sure they were equipped with enough PPE, which was hard to find on the ground.

Social distancing and mask wearing were not always easy. How do you keep a distance of two metres when you're in trenches with soldiers or in crowded shelters with civilians? Many people from the team there contracted Covid and several had to spend weeks in quarantine on-site when they should have been heading home after a difficult assignment.



© Aris Messinis / AFP

A woman carries her child into a basement shelter in the historic city of Shusha on October 8, 2020, some 15 kilometres from the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh province's capital Stepanakert.



© Bülent Kiliç / AFP

Xatire Celilova stands inside her destroyed flat following a ceasefire during the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, in the town of Terter, Azerbaijan, on October 10, 2020.



© Alexander Nemenov / AFP

A man walks past a burning house in the village of Charektar outside the town of Kalbajar on November 14, 2020, during the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**After the ceasefire, the situation remained tense and volatile for many days. The population protested against the Armenian authorities, accusing them of having given in. How did you cover the aftermath of this war?**

The November 9 ceasefire agreement was a late-night surprise. We stayed up all night to cover it as protests broke out in Yerevan. Even after the fighting ended, it was important for us to stay on the ground for as long as we could, to keep showing the human impact of the story.

AFP was one of the only news organisations to stay put in Stepanakert from the beginning of the conflict to far after the end. Armenia handed three regions back to Azerbaijan over several weeks and we stayed until the very last one, capturing images of the Azerbaijani soldiers rolling in. Multimedia teams were there to make sure we were always able to capture the complete picture. Our journalists obtained moving testimonies from people having to abandon their homes with entire families, even livestock, and we produced powerful images of people burning their homes rather than letting them fall under Azerbaijani control.

**Coverage of this war has once again shown the quality and responsiveness of AFP's global network.**

The quality of this coverage was the result of a tremendous mobilisation of the Agency. We were given enough resources on the ground, allowing us to get the job done and produce quality content even in the most extreme conditions.

If you want to make people care about a story, especially a complicated one like the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, you have to give them the opportunity to immerse themselves in situations that other people are living through, help them to feel the human side behind the words and images. How would you feel if your home was coming under fire, if you had to give it up? What would you do if you were in their shoes? The best journalism is about conveying facts and true emotions, to give people an understanding of what's really going on.

Being a war journalist requires remarkable strength and tenacity. We knew we could trust AFP's journalists, both to manage risks and to bring unique images and content from a place where history was being written.



**AFPTV**
**TAKES THE LEAD**


**JULIETTE  
HOLLIER-  
LAROUSSE**

AFPTV DIRECTOR

**AFP is proud to have won the News Agency of the Year at the 16th edition of the Association for International Broadcasting (AIB) awards in November last year. This distinction is the result of the exceptional work of AFPTV's journalists around the world throughout this very unusual year.**

### **How would you sum up 2020?**

2020 has been both challenging and rewarding. At the beginning of the year, we set ourselves three goals: to broaden the growth momentum initiated several years ago; to deliver optimal coverage of the US presidential election, with more resources and larger teams than for the previous one; and to distinguish ourselves at the year's major sporting events, particularly the Olympic Games and football's Euro championship.

We also planned to continue working on the editorial quality of our production, with the strengthening of our network and of our presence in the field. We were determined to offer an ever-growing variety of content in different formats, from breaking news to reportage and including features, archive material and profiles.

From February, the shock of the pandemic completely altered our plans: there was a considerable tightening of the market for our clients; the US election campaign was reduced to a strict minimum; major sporting fixtures were cancelled, and a host of other events were called off or postponed indefinitely.

Overnight the job of a journalist became a human, editorial, technical and logistical challenge. But we more than coped and our work on the ground earned us the loyalty of our subscribers and the recognition of our competitors.

### **How did AFPTV organise itself in the face of this sudden crisis?**

Our teams were incredible: they adapted in record time to an unprecedented situation. We were able to make technical arrangements that allowed production activities to continue from home when hardly anyone could work in the office. We took pains to listen to one another and maintain dialogue, despite the distance, to help manage the personal and professional impacts of this crisis. The goal was to ensure that each and every employee had the means to work as comfortably as possible.

We had to deal with a number of constraints: how can we tell human stories when entire populations are in lockdown and the possibilities of meeting people are limited? We had to go further than images of cities with deserted streets, as striking as they were. We implemented strict sanitary procedures for meeting people, favouring outdoor interviews when possible, using boom poles rather than handheld microphones, and adopting new video conferencing tools when face-to-face interviewing was not an option.

**AFP was the first foreign media outlet in Wuhan, arriving on January 11, 2020 and once again showing a capacity to respond quickly.**

Our mission is to take images that illustrate the upheavals of our planet, in real time, as close as possible to the people affected, showing the reality on the ground. In Wuhan, we were



present within the very first hours of the crisis. We were able to capture striking images, such as that of an old man lying dead on a pavement which has become emblematic of the brutality with which the pandemic hit the city.

The impact of the pandemic gradually became global: new cases, massive hospitalisations, conflicting medical information, the ramping up of press conferences. Faced with a global story that crushed all others, media around the world needed images and reliable information to make sense of what was happening beyond the statistics.

We went through this difficult period feeling that something unprecedented and exceptional was happening on the human level. In each production, we deliberately focused on the real impact on people's lives. Our journalists went to meet the victims – both direct and indirect – of this health, medical, social and economic crisis. It was important to us to also show the resilience, the tremendous displays of solidarity, the musicians playing at their windows, the gym teachers in Latin America giving fitness classes outside their buildings, people supporting the elderly.

We were able to draw on the quality of AFP's global network to increase our angles and offer a global perspective on this phenomenon, on every continent, from South Africa to Brazil or Peru, from Europe to Asia, from the United States to the Middle East.

**AFPTV largely kept its promise with regards to coverage of the US presidential elections, deploying unprecedented teams of people and technical means.**

Yes, it was a success and we are pleased. The US election was one of our top priorities in terms of strengthening our editorial coverage. Our team was considerably bigger than that for Donald Trump's election: 23 staff in 2020

Selfie of AFP's VJ Diane Desobeau in New York, February 2, 2021



© Diane Desobeau / AFP



© Andreas Solaro / AFP

AFP video journalist Sonia Logre (2nd L) is helped by a member of the medical staff put on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to work inside the Intensive care unit for patients infected by the Covid-19 at the Policlinico di Tor Vergata hospital, in Rome, on April 8, 2020.

compared to seven in 2016, without counting a vast network of freelancers. We wanted to be at least on a par with our traditional competitors. A live control room was set up in Washington and deals were made with major sources to ensure access to official feeds.

The election campaign was truly atypical but our reactivity meant we were able to make the best of a challenging situation on many occasions. Our meticulous organisation meant that we could offer a live feed almost immediately as crowds were gathering at the iconic Black Lives Matter Plaza, as just one example. We were often in good time, sometimes even a little early! Such responsiveness required careful planning and constant flexibility in the face of unexpected events related to the pandemic, campaign schedules and the candidates themselves.

Our best proof of success was the level of subscriber use of our production during the elections, even though all major media had several special envoys in place and our competitors were also very present. Throughout 2020, and including in the United States, we were clearly identified by our international clients as a first-choice partner for major events.

In addition to the US elections and Covid-19, we were also present at all the big stories of the year, including the explosion in Lebanon, the Black Lives Matter movement, the crisis in Yemen, the bushfires in Australia. Each time we took care to convey the human dimension of what was happening and the stories of the people who were affected.

## **This high quality of production earned you the News Agency of the Year at the AIB media awards.**

We are very honoured to have won this award. It is all the more significant considering the AIB is composed of the world's leading broadcasters.

It is clear that our video offer has now reached maturity. It stands apart and is unanimously considered to be one of the best in the world, if not the best.

Our clients find what they need in our production and this is our greatest source of satisfaction. We have succeeded in demonstrating that the quality of our coverage in the field and the variety of our video content are of great use to a wide range of newsrooms, television outlets, digital media, newspapers and websites.

Numerous client testimonials highlighting satisfaction with our service, the constant dialogue we have with them, and their loyalty, all indicate that we are on the right path. We are fortunate to have great video teams, which are supported in their daily work by the entire Agency. It's a collective success serving the global, rapid, contextualised and verified coverage that is the hallmark of AFP.



# FOCUS

## TIGRAY, FROM PEACE TO CIVIL WAR



**THOMAS  
MORFIN**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
AFRICA

### How did this crisis begin?

On November 4, 2020, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, announced the launch of a military offensive against Tigray, a region in the far north of the country. Tensions had been rising for months between the federal government and regional authorities led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a party that had dominated the country for many years. It was a major development in one of Africa's giants, a demographic and economic heavyweight, a key country in many regards.

The Agency has a text, photo and video team based permanently in the capital Addis Ababa and managed by the Nairobi bureau, which organises coverage of the whole of East Africa. We had been following the tensions between the federal government and the Tigrayan authorities for months. The team had visited Tigray a few months earlier, when the region had held its own local elections. Rejected by the government, this ballot was a sign of the crisis that was to ensue.

Everything came to a head on November 4: Ethiopia was at war. From the outset, the situation made it difficult for us to do our jobs as journalists. A communications blackout made our sources largely unreachable. Access to Tigray was blocked. The Ethiopian authorities, meanwhile, were firing out their own messages.

We cannot settle for coverage based merely on a slew of belligerent statements from one side or the other. We decided to get as close as possible to the situation, as soon as we could.

### How did the Agency organise this exceptional coverage?

Our team of Robbie Corey-Boulet for text, Eduardo Soteras for photo and Solan Kolli for video was able to enter the region twice. Agence France-Presse is the only major international news agency to have carried out such early, in-depth and comprehensive coverage on the ground. Movement in the region and reporting by the international media has been extremely limited; since November, the Ethiopian authorities have only given official access to media a handful of times. Our team in Addis Ababa, in constant contact with the regional office in Nairobi, managed to sneak in thanks to skill, perseverance and, undoubtedly, a bit of luck. One thing is certain: the fact that we were physically there, on a permanent basis, worked immensely in our favour. It enabled our reporters to build long-standing relationships with a range of authorities as well as official and non-official contacts.

The first assignment was in November and the second in the first half of December.

The first weeks of the conflict were the most intense. Our reporters first went to western Tigray, close to the border with Sudan, to gather exclusive accounts from the terrorised residents of Humera, which came under artillery fire before being recaptured by the federal forces after intense fighting. This became the first in a series of pieces from Tigray to show the physical and psychological scars of the conflict, violence and terror.

A few days earlier, on November 12, AFP became the first international news agency to publish images of Ethiopians crossing the Sudanese border to flee the civil war.





Village of Bisober, in the Tigray region, on December 9, 2020.

Tens of thousands of Ethiopians have taken refuge in Sudan. Our bureau in Khartoum, which falls under AFP's Middle East region, swiftly dispatched a team to gather their stories and report on this humanitarian crisis. The Agency remained in this region of Sudan for weeks, rotating staff working in austere conditions.

Back in Tigray, we were also the first news agency to reach Mai-Kadra. Amnesty International had reported, based on witness statements, that there had been an ethnic massacre in the town, with a number of civilians summarily executed. By going to the scene, our reporters were able to gather startling accounts of what had happened and show the world the first images of mass graves from scene, evidence of the killings.

Having one team in Tigray and another in Sudan enabled us to present a more complete and complex picture of the events in Mai-Kadra. The authorities in Addis Ababa had portrayed their opponents, the TPLF, as solely responsible for the massacre. However, thanks to numerous accounts collected in Sudan, we were able to document that there had clearly been killings committed by both sides.

The outbreak of the Tigray crisis made headlines around the world and these first reports were used by our clients on an exceptionally large scale, testament to the quality of the work and its rarity. Many media had little choice but to turn to us to understand and expose this crisis.

## How did the second assignment go?

Our team managed to return to the country at the beginning of December while most other international news outlets were still applying in vain for visas.

This second assignment took place in the east, in another

region of Tigray, and in a totally different moment of the unfolding events.

On November 28, the Ethiopian prime minister declared victory and the end of the war, or rather of the "law enforcement operation" as it was officially called, by announcing the capture of Mekele, Tigray's capital. Our team of reporters left Addis Ababa once again to return to the scene. The challenge: to see whether the war was really over and to assess the humanitarian crisis.

This led to a new series of exceptional reports. In particular, we managed to document atrocities against civilians that were attributed to the Ethiopian army, contrary to the narrative of the Ethiopian central government. People were critically short of food, drinking hot water to stave off hunger.

This civil war has awakened past communal tensions linked to access to power and land. These disputes are a serious threat to modern-day Ethiopia, with its very unity at stake as tensions continue to rise even outside Tigray.

## The coverage of this conflict is a source of pride for the teams on the ground and for Agence France-Presse as a whole.

This war is a major crisis, not only for Ethiopia and Africa but also for the international community, and AFP was able to gain exceptional access to the crisis as it unfolded. The Agency once again sets itself apart with its handling of this kind of extremely complex coverage. Despite many setbacks, our journalists accomplished work that honours their profession: investigating on the ground, telling human stories, fighting propaganda and presenting even the most tragic situations as accurately as possible.

# HOMAGE

NABIL HASAN AL-QUAETY



**MOHAMED  
HASNI**  
DUBAI BUREAU  
JOURNALIST

**“Nabil always made the most of the resources he had. He required some training to produce precise images of his subjects, but it was immediately clear that he was incredibly talented and dedicated.”**

I've been an AFP journalist since 1986, hired to cover the Middle East. I began reporting on Yemen in 1988. Led by Ali Abdallah Saleh, the country was relatively politically stable at the time. Back then, it was the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula, and remains so today.

The Arab Spring protest movement, little by little, eroded Yemen's already fragile stability. The country gradually descended into civil war and chaos. The Huthi rebels, named after their leader Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, belong to the Zaydi minority (Zaydism being a branch of Shiism). They structured themselves to form a powerful movement in Saada, a mountainous region in the north of the country, in response to acts of discrimination by the central government, dominated by Sunnis.

I carried out my last assignment in Yemen in April/May 2015. I travelled to the southern city of Aden as international journalists were forbidden access to the northern capital of Sanaa, which fell to the Huthis in 2014. At the time, the internationally recognised government had retreated to the south.

Formerly a British trading post, Aden overlooks the Gulf of Aden. It occupies a strategic position at the mouth of the Red Sea coming from the Indian Ocean, called the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a narrow water passage that separates the Horn of Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

I was in Aden when the rebels were marching southwards towards the city. The fear of their imminent arrival created a certain buzz. The Pan-Arab television channels Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya had been active since March. My goal was to swiftly recruit a video journalist on the spot, seeing as video had become a priority for AFP.

One morning, I came across a young man in the lobby of my hotel who was trying to sell images to journalists from Arab TV stations. I decided to approach him, taken by his enthusiasm. I asked him if he wanted to make videos for the Agency. This is how my collaboration with young Nabil Hasan al-Quaety began. The first videos we filmed together dealt with the city of Aden, its very distinct colonial heritage, its superb buildings, its many temples, churches and places of worship, evidence of its illustrious past. Among other things, we filmed an old cinema that was still doing business, belonging to a time when Aden was a cultural capital.

Nabil always made the most of the resources he had, even when these were very limited. He required some training to produce precise images of his subjects, but it was immediately clear that he was incredibly talented and dedicated to his job.

On March 14, 2015 rumours spread of an imminent rebel entry into Aden. I managed to flee on the very last flight out, whilst Nabil remained in the city. Before my departure, I had informed him of all the precautionary measures he should take. The situation became tense a few hours later. Saudi Arabia intervened with its military to support the government in place and stop the rebels at the gates of Aden.



© Nabil Hasan / Facebook / AFP

Yemen is a country with complex geopolitics. The Huthis occupy the capital in the north along with much of the rest of the country. In the south, the government is supported by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. And in the far south, a separatist movement united by a Southern Transitional Council wanted to take advantage of this situation to re-establish southern Yemen as an independent state, as it was before 1990.

Nabil continued to work for us for the next five years. He provided AFP with images of exceptional quality, rare videos. I remember in particular his images from the rebel attack on a military parade where several soldiers died: these poignant photos were seen all over the world. His recognition as a finalist for the 2016 Rory Peck Award for his coverage of the Yemeni conflict is well-deserved. Nabil was what you might call a citizen journalist. He was very active on social media, voicing his support of the people from the country's south and opposing rebels from the north. He campaigned for the return to independence of South Yemen. This did not prevent him from providing impartial coverage for the Agency.

He told me he had received numerous death threats as a result of his activity on social media. I did not take them seriously, as this is unfortunately common in a country at war.

On June 2, 2020 Nabil was killed in front of his home by a group of armed men who fled in a car. He was married with three children, with a fourth on its way.

AFP lost a precious team member that day, a likeable colleague with a disarming smile, full of humanity, a true professional who was quick to learn and had a bright career ahead of him. I was deeply affected by his death because I guided him through his first steps in this difficult job.

People suspected of Nabil's murder were arrested, only to be released somehow.

The Yemeni government, its justice system and security forces are in chaos. Activists, politicians, journalists and personalities are being murdered; dozens of cases like this go unpunished.

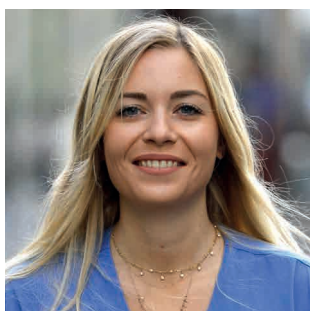
I salute the memory of Nabil. We demand the truth about the killing of our former colleague.





**OTMAN  
MERICHE**

MANAGING  
DIRECTOR



**FLEUR  
LAURENT**

SALES  
AND MARKETING  
DIRECTOR



**HORTENSE  
DE VALROGER**

DEPUTY  
MANAGING  
DIRECTOR

## FOCUS

### FACTSTORY: THE TRANSFORMATION

**“Successful rebranding, business performance and decentralisation in Latin America... 2020 was a positive and productive year for FACTSTORY.”**

#### **What is your assessment of the year 2020?**

2020 was both a complicated year and one rich in positive change. We ended the year with a turnover of 5.8 million euro, which is about 25 percent lower than our performance in 2019. We achieved a positive net result for the fourth consecutive year. We maintained our positions with our main institutional clients and continued to build the loyalty of our corporate clients. The “slow” periods of the year were an opportunity to review our sales methodology in depth, in particular with the implementation of a specific unit dedicated to responding to calls for tender. Our fundamentals remain solid, whether in terms of our business responsiveness or the variety of our expertise: we are clearly identified as an on-demand content production agency.

#### **2020 is the year in which AFP-Services became FACTSTORY. How did this transformation take place?**

We wanted a positioning that would not give rise to confusion. FACTSTORY perfectly illustrates what we offer: FACTSTORY is a content factory, an international company that does storytelling with strong values. We used our storytelling skills, our creativity and our reactivity to carry out this entire strategic repositioning in-house, within a few months. This transformation gives us greater freedom to communicate on our strengths: our global presence, strong cultural and editorial added value at the local level, and our commitment to eco-responsibility. It is also an opportunity to communicate differently on our social networks and website. We are delighted with the speed of adoption of this new branding by both companies and institutions.

#### **The investment in your commercial response methodology has enabled us to win many tenders.**

Institutions have always been FACTSTORY’s historical market. We have renewed the contract with the European Parliament for the next five years, with an increased budget. We also won a contract with the European Commission, DG ECHO, for the next four years. We have won several tenders with the United Nations, signed framework contracts notably with OCHA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF and UNFPA. These successes give us a welcome visibility on our future in this sector. Institutions mobilise us to deal with particularly engaging and committed issues: Europe’s response to the pandemic, the subject of sexual harassment,



Behind the scenes of a FACTSTORY shooting, in Montevideo (Uruguay).



complex humanitarian issues. Our clients are sensitive to our editorial know-how, which stems from our journalistic fibre. On the corporate side, we mainly produce content on societal and environmental issues related to their development (CSR, gender equality, diversity, health crisis management). Over the past two years, we have noticed a very strong shift in formats towards social networks. Dedicated teams have been created to respond to this trend and to offer relevant and profitable content. Our production follows specific shooting methodologies that favour the transmission of emotions while respecting the sanitary constraints in force (choice of angles, integration of motion design, etc).

### **Decentralisation of activities has been a major challenge for FACTSTORY for several years. How is your presence evolving in Latin America, FACTSTORY's second largest market?**

The contract we won with Coca-Cola in Latin America four years ago brought the subject of our decentralisation back to the forefront. Today FACTSTORY has two main hubs: Brussels for historical reasons and Paris, where the head office is located. The fact that we have already developed

a part of our activities in Latin America is an additional asset to pursue our decentralisation there. The Coca-Cola Projects team currently consists of 19 people. We have set up an additional team in Montevideo to manage business development, consisting of four people: a production manager, a content strategist, a graphic designer and a project manager. Latin America has been hit hard by the pandemic, particularly in Brazil and Mexico. However, we have managed to obtain several important business contacts in countries such as Argentina, Ecuador and Bolivia. We are already working with several institutions there. This decentralisation in Latin America is one of the keys to our international development.

### **What are the pillars of FACTSTORY's business development?**

Our strength as a content agency is that we offer cutting-edge and sought-after skills, combined with a high level of responsiveness, anywhere in the world. Our global presence allows us to instantly activate our own network of local experts and offer quality coverage all over the world.

Finally, it is important for us to reconcile development and the environment by reducing our carbon footprint in each of our productions. We are committed to being a responsible player in this changing world.



**An enriched multimedia version of this annual report can be found at [AFP.com](http://AFP.com)**

**2020**

**IN SUMMARY**



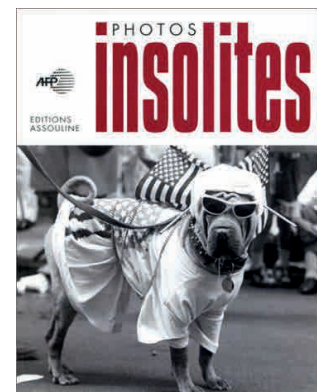
## **AFP, partner of La Gacilly photo festival**

The 2020 edition of La Gacilly Festival, focused on the future of the planet, partnered with AFP to showcase the images of three of the Agency's photographers working in Latin America: Martin Bernetti, Pedro Pardo and Carl de Souza. Their photos highlighted the important environmental issues that the region is facing.



## **“Custodians of the Tomb of Christ” at Montmartre**

The Sacré-Cœur Basilica of Montmartre in Paris hosted an AFP exhibition on the Franciscan Friars of Jerusalem to mark their 800th anniversary of presence in the Holy Land. Thomas Coex, an AFP photographer, was able to witness their daily life and was the first to capture the event in pictures.



## **Massive book handout ahead of HQ renovation**

Preparations for the evacuation of the Bourse headquarters in Paris ahead of renovation work provided the opportunity for an unprecedented distribution of books. As cupboards were emptied and shelves sorted, several thousand books were collected to be given away freely to Agency staff in a drive that lasted several months. Among them were important AFP albums, including of some of the Agency's most emblematic photos. We were also able to provide a whole network of libraries and associations across France with more than a thousand books.





© Alberto Pizzoli / AFP

## The Italian lockdown from the perspective of the foreign press, including AFP, exhibited in Rome

AFP photographers based in Italy had the opportunity to exhibit their photos taken during the first wave of coronavirus in Italy at the Capitoline Museums in Rome. The “Lockdown Italia” exhibition highlighted the resilience of the Italian people.



© Olivier Douliery / AFP

## Psychological support available for all AFP staff

To help staff cope with the upheavals in their living and working conditions caused by the pandemic, the Agency has over the past months put in place extra psychological support. Besides guides on teleworking and advice on organising family life in times of lockdown, it is now also possible to consult with experienced psychologists in complete anonymity and confidentiality. This service is available to all employees in all services and locations, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and in about 20 languages.



© Anthony Wallace / AFP

## AFP at the “Black Carbon” exhibition in Bangkok

An exhibition on the growing air pollution crisis in Asia opened on January 30, 2020 at the Alliance Française in Bangkok. Organised by the IRD, a French public research institution, the event’s curators selected a dozen AFP images from across the region to illustrate the impact that human activity has on the deterioration of the quality of the air we breathe.

From the silhouette of a smog-covered city in Hong Kong to the protests of masked students against air pollution in India, the 22 panels presented included photos, explanatory texts in English and Thai, as well as graphics and videos.

# ORGANISATIONAL CHART

APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2021



**FABRICE FRIES**  
CHAIRMAN & CEO OF AFP



**DALILA ZEIN**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**PATRICE MONTI**  
SALES & MARKETING  
DIRECTOR



**BORIS BACHORZ**  
BRAND & COMMUNICATION  
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**ANNE CALCHÉRA**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



**CLÉMENT DU LIMBERT**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR



**ANNE DELY**  
PURCHASING AND REAL  
ESTATE POLICY DIRECTOR



**JÉRÔME JAROUSSIE**  
IT SYSTEMS  
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**CHRISTOPHE  
WALTER-PETTIT**  
GENERAL COUNSEL



Awaiting Recruitment  
HUMAN RESSOURCES  
DIRECTOR



**PHILIPPE ONILLON**  
DIRECTOR FOR  
EDITORIAL CAREERS  
AND DEVELOPMENT



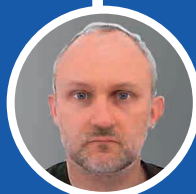
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REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
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**BRIGITTE DUSSEAU**  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
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**SYLVAIN ESTIBAL**

REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



**GILES HEWITT**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
ASIA PACIFIC



**DAVID WILLIAMS**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
EUROPE



**ANNIE THOMAS**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
FRANCE



**JO BIDDLE**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



# PRIZES

## & AWARDS

**In 2020 AFP journalists won numerous international prizes, including the World Press Photo which went to Yasuyoshi Chiba, a Japanese photographer based in Nairobi, for his image of Sudanese teenager Mohamed Youssef during his country's revolution. Meet the photographer.**



**In the moment that you took this photo, did you know that it would have a special impact?**

I didn't expect anything about the impact when I finished shooting this moment. But I felt a certain response myself and I knew that the picture would be one of my favourites.

**For Mohamed Youssef, the award this picture garnered represents a great victory for freedom and for mankind. What about you? What does this prize mean to you personally? What does it represent?**

Personally, this prize is my new motivation towards photography. It seems like a kind of invisible supporter to cheer me up always to shoot better photographs.

**Mohamed Youssef is now studying in Maastricht. Are you in regular contact with him?**

I was really happy to hear that Mohamed is now out of Sudan, studying in the Netherlands after getting a scholarship. After exchanging emails with Mohamed, I had another assignment in Sudan in December 2020. So I could visit Mohamed's home with enlarged prints and the exhibition catalogue. Though Mohamed was not there, it was great to meet his parents and all his brothers and sisters. I'm sure Mohamed and I will see each other at some point in the future.

**Has this prize changed way you work?**

Honestly, this doesn't really change me, but I do feel more responsibility for my work, for what I shoot.



June 19, 2019 – Khartoum, Sudan – It is one of the most emblematic images of the Sudanese Revolution: Mohamed Youssef, 15 years old, hand on his chest, reciting a poem amidst fellow protesters. Japanese AFP photographer based in Nairobi, Yasuyoshi Chiba, won the 2020 World Press Photo of the Year award for the image. It also earned him first prize at the World Press Photo Awards in the “General News – Singles” category.



## Yasuyoshi Chiba

**World Press Photo 2020**

World Press Photo of the Year 2020

1<sup>st</sup> Prize in “General News – Single” category

**POYi**

Award of Excellence in “Daily Life” category



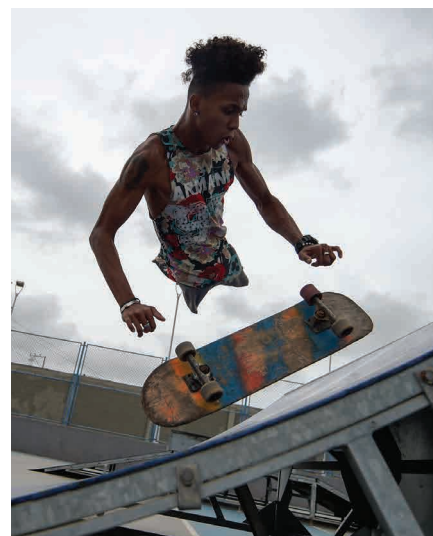
February 14, 2019 – Port Harcourt, Nigeria

All AFP's award-winning photos and reports  
can be found on [AFP.com](https://www.afp.com) in an extended version  
of this annual report



## Raul Arboleda

**AIPS Sport Media Awards**  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize in "Photo (Action)" category



September 28, 2018 – Barranquilla, Colombia



## Nicolas Asfour

**World Press Photo 2020**  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize in "General News – Singles" category

**POYi**  
Award of Excellence in "General News" category



September 12, 2019 – Hong Kong, China



October 1, 2019 – Hong Kong, China

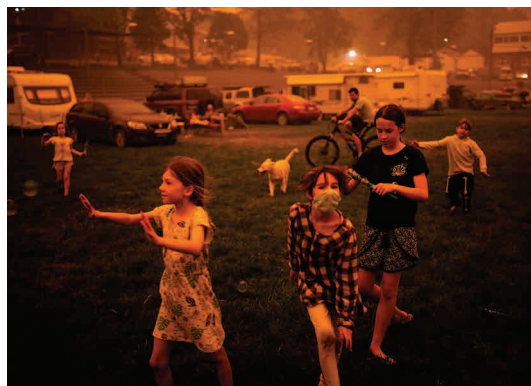




## Sean Davey

**World Press Photo 2020**

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in “Contemporary Issues – Singles” category



December 31, 2019 – Bega, Australia



## Franck Fife

**Istanbul Photo Awards**

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize in “Story Sports” category



May 1, 2019 – Merzouga, Morocco



## Mahmud Hams

**Istanbul Photo Awards**

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in “News – Single” category



April 4, 2019 – Beit Hanoun, Palestinian Territories



## Sammy Ketz

**May Chidiac Foundation**

MCF Engaged Journalist Award



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can be found on [AFP.com](https://www.afp.com) in an extended version  
of this annual report



## Bülent Kiliç

POYİ

Award of Excellence in “National/International  
News Picture Story” category



February 17, 2019 – Al-Hasakah, Syria



## Kirill Kudryavtsev

“The Energy of victories” Sports Journalism  
Award

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in “Single News” category



February 7, 2020 – Moscow, Russia



## Leila Macor

Sunshine State Awards

Journalist of the Year Award for Spanish  
media





## Jeff Pachoud

POYi

Award of Excellence in “Sports Action” category



July 18, 2019 – Bagnères-de-Bigorre, France



## Cristina Quicler

Andalusian Journalism Awards

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in “Photography” category



August 20, 2019 – Huelva, Spain



## Hector Retamal

The Guardian

Agency Photographer of the Year



January 30, 2020 – Wuhan, China



## Oli Scarff

World Press Photo

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize in “Sports – Singles” category



June 2, 2019 – Liverpool, United Kingdom



All AFP's award-winning photos and reports  
can be found on [AFP.com](https://www.afp.com) in an extended version  
of this annual report



## Oli Scarff

**POYi**

Award of Excellence in "Sports Life" category



July 27, 2019 – Gwangju, South Korea



## Brendan Smialowki

**POYi**

Excellence Award in the "General News" category

**WHNPA**

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize in the "Political Portfolio" category



December 2, 2019 – Washington, United States



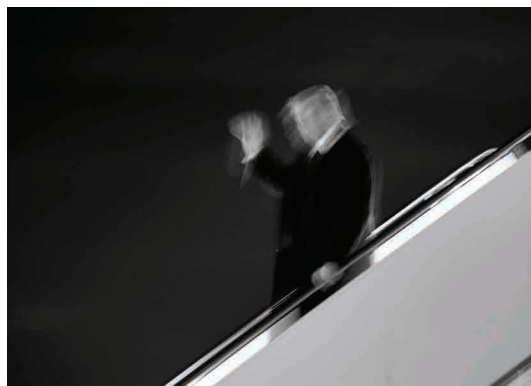
May 21, 2019 – Montoursville, United States



## Brendan Smialowski

**WHNPA**

Award of Excellence in “Politics: History in Pictures” category



November 8, 2019 – Maryland, United States



## Eduardo Soteras

**POYi**

Award of Excellence in the “Daily Life” category



January 7, 2019 – Lalibela, Ethiopia



## Carl de Souza

**POYi**

3<sup>rd</sup> Place in the “Science and Natural History” category



August 26, 2019 – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



## Angelos Tzortzinis

**UNICEF**

Photo of the Year Award



April 21, 2018 – Sokota, Nigeria



## Anthony Wallace

**Bayeux Calvados-Normandie Award for war correspondents**

Photo Trophy – Public's choice Award

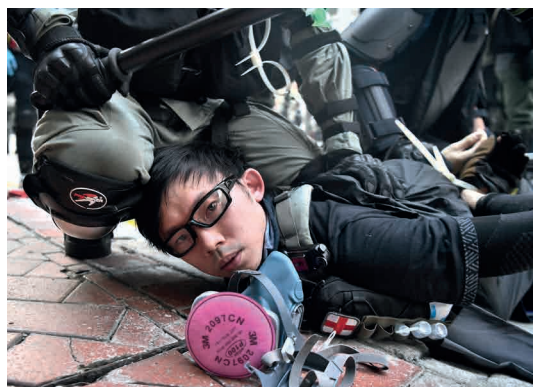
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize in the "Photo Trophy – International Jury" category

### Visa pour l'image

Ville de Perpignan Rémi Ochlik Award

### Human Rights Press Awards

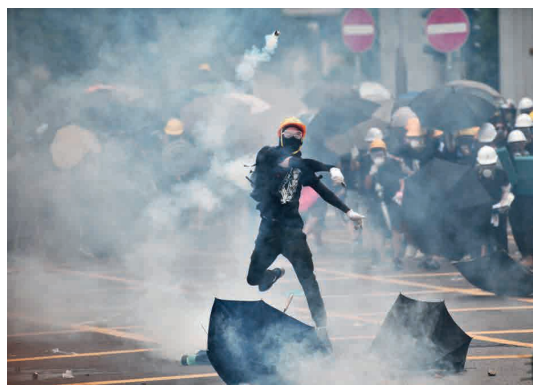
Photography (Series) Award for his coverage of 2019 pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong



October 1, 2019 – Hong Kong, China



August 31, 2019 – Hong Kong, China



July 27, 2019 – Hong Kong, China





## Agence France-Presse

AIB Media Awards  
News Agency of the Year



## Nicolas Asfour Philip Fong Isaac Lawrence Hector Retamal Anthony Wallace

The SOPA Awards  
Award of Excellence for their coverage of the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests



September 15, 2019 – Hong Kong, China



## Andrew Beatty Xiao Eva Eric Randolph Sam Reeves Pak Yiu

The SOPA Awards  
Honorable Mention in Excellence in Human Rights Reporting: The Many Dimensions of China's Uighur Crackdown



October 9, 2019 – Shayar, China



## Clément Melki avec la collaboration de Thomas Bernardi et Sameer Al-Doumy

Grands Prix du Club de la Presse des Hauts de France

Young journalist prize for the written press for "Just God, the water and us: risking the Channel 'death route' to Britain"



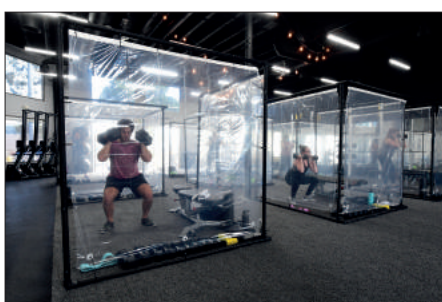
August 27, 2020 – Sangatte, France

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