



FACTS MATTER

A photograph of a man in a forest, shirtless, holding a spear in his right hand and gesturing with his left. He has a concerned expression. The background is a dense forest with warm, orange-toned lighting. A large yellow diagonal shape covers the right side of the image, containing the text 'ANNUAL REPORT 2021'.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

CONTENTS

03	AFP IN FIGURES
04	THE YEAR AS SEEN BY PHIL CHETWYND
06	THE YEAR AS SEEN BY DALILA ZEIN
08	THE YEAR AS SEEN BY PATRICE MONTI
10	THE YEAR AS SEEN BY ANNE DELY
12	2021 IN SUMMARY
14	BRIEFING ON THE STORMING OF THE CAPITOL
18	FOCUS ON NEIGHBOURING RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS
20	BRIEFING ON THE FALL OF KABUL
26	FOCUS DIGITAL INVESTIGATION
28	BRIEFING ON FUTURE OF THE PLANET
32	FOCUS ON THE REFORM OF THE PARIS NEWSROOM
34	BRIEFING ON SPORT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
38	FOCUS ON MEDIACONNECT
40	BRIEFING ON 11 DAY WAR
44	FOCUS ON FACTSTORY: OBJECTIVE 2024
46	2021 IN SUMMARY
48	MICHÈLE LÉRIDON: THE AGENCY AT HER HEART
50	ORGANISATIONAL CHART
52	PRIZES & AWARDS

EDITORIAL

HIGHLIGHTS



© Anthony Wallace / AFP

**FABRICE
FRIES**
CHAIRMAN
& CEO

Can you get used to a pandemic? Judging by the Agency's ability to maintain its impeccable news coverage despite the obstacles and despite a growing sense of weariness about the difficulties we face in doing our job, you would have to say yes. Another sign is that when we look at the highlights of 2021, we see that the pandemic no longer dominates everything in its path, unlike in 2020. Let's take three events, very different in nature, that "made" 2021 for AFP at least as much as Covid.

In August, the Taliban took Kabul. We had 11 staff members there and a roughly equal number of stringers -- evidence, if any were needed, of the depth of our network. An operation to evacuate our Afghan staff -- and their families -- who wanted to leave the country had been prepared long in advance by the senior management of the bureau and the Asia regional management. The remarkable work on the ground by the French Embassy and military ensured this risky operation was a success, while -- less spectacular but no less important -- the Agency rallied together to welcome the families when they arrived. At the same time, reinforcements left for Kabul to take up the baton and continue our coverage of the country. Our images, often exclusive, of the last American soldiers leaving Kabul airport will go into the history books.

A change of atmosphere now: on November 11 -- you couldn't make it up -- the Agency signed a deal with Google recognising and remunerating AFP's neighbouring rights. This was the culmination of a long battle

over the value of information. More than two years after a French law was voted through, backed by a decision from the French Competition Authority and a ruling from the Court of Appeal, AFP won a double victory: yes, news agencies are eligible for neighbouring rights and yes, this goes for all their production, not just the -- tiny -- 'B2C' part (AFP very rarely has direct links to the reader). These neighbouring rights will enable AFP to offset part of the revenue loss suffered from our media clients, who have been hit hard by the massive shift of advertising income to the platforms. Commercial deals signed in parallel give us hope that we can now have a more constructive relationship with Google, despite the ferocity of our recent battles.

Finally, this time in the cosy atmosphere of the French parliament chamber during an end-of-year hearing, AFP's situation was summarised like this: 'All the lights are flashing green'. Indeed, the Agency enjoyed another solid year of growth in 2021. AFP's transformation plan is bearing fruit and debt reduction is well on its way. At the same time, the Agency is bolstered by new strengths -- a video product that competes with the best, global leadership in digital investigation, new clients from the platforms. In short, it does not seem inappropriate to talk of a recovery. This is the result of a collective effort that must be maintained but which shows we are heading in the right direction. It is not too often in the Agency's long history that we have been able to say this, so this message should also be seen as one of the highlights of the year.

2021

MIGRANT CRISIS

November

The West accuses Belarus of taking migrants to its borders with EU members Poland and Lithuania, where they are blocked



NEW US PRESIDENT

Jan 20

Joe Biden is sworn in as the nation's 46th president



CAPITOL RIOT

Jan 6

Hundreds of supporters of Donald Trump storm the Capitol, seeking to block certification of Joe Biden's November presidential election victory



MYANMAR COUP

Feb 1

Myanmar soldiers detain civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her top allies during pre-dawn raids



CHAD PRESIDENT DIES

April 19

Idriss Deby dies of his injuries following clashes with rebels, his son takes power the following day



COP26

Nov 13

Nearly 200 nations sign the 'Glasgow Pact' to try and halt climate change, which scientists say falls short of what is needed



SUDAN COUP

Oct 25, Nov 21

Soldiers arrest Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, then reinstate him a month later



TAIWAN-CHINA TENSIONS

Oct 6

Taiwan's defence minister says tensions with China are at their worst in 40 years



COVID-19 PANDEMIC

World death toll reached 5 million on Nov 1.

Cases increased from 83 million early Jan to more than

260 million end of Nov.

54.2% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine*



EXTREME CLIMATE EVENTS

Wildfires, heatwaves and mass flooding magnified by global warming wreaked havoc around the world



ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

May 10

Islamist movement Hamas launches salvos of rockets at Israel, which hits back, leading to an 11-day war



NETANYAHU OUSTED

June 13

Israel gets a new government, ending a 12-year reign of Benjamin Netanyahu



PRESIDENT KILLED

July 7

Haitian President Jovenel Moise is assassinated at his home by a commando



AMAZON EMITS CO2

July 14

A Nature study says climate change and deforestation have flipped the southeastern Amazon from a CO2 absorber to emitter



ITALY WINS EURO 2020

July 11

Italy wins the European football competition after beating England on penalties



GERMAN ELECTIONS

Sept 26

Elections take place in Germany without Chancellor Angela Merkel, set to leave power after a 16-year-long reign



TALIBAN TAKEOVER

Aug 15

The Taliban enter Kabul, Afghanistan without meeting resistance, following the withdrawal of US and NATO troops, prompting thousands to flee



SPACE TOURISM

Sept 16-18

Four SpaceX tourists spend three days in space, the first all-civilian mission



TOKYO OLYMPICS

July 23-Aug 8

After a year-long pandemic postponement, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics take place under strict Covid-19 rules



PEGASUS SCANDAL

July 18

An investigation reveals Israeli firm NSO Group supplied phone malware used by governments to spy on activists, journalists, lawyers and politicians



AFP**IN NUMBERS** **1835**

foundation of the Havas agency which became AFP

 **2,400**
staff **1,700**
journalists **100**
nationalities **151**
countries **260**
cities

Former presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders (D-Vermont) sits in the bleachers on Capitol Hill before Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th US President on January 20, 2021, at the US Capitol in Washington, DC.
© Brendan Smialowski / AFP



THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**PHIL
CHETWYND**

GLOBAL NEWS
DIRECTOR

“Our multilingual and multimedia network is unique. We are widening the gap with our competitors in terms of reliability and breadth of coverage.”

What were the strategic priorities in 2021?

AFP is consolidating its number one position in global media and accelerating its growth despite a year that still threw up difficulties related to the pandemic.

We finalised the move back to our historic headquarters in Place de la Bourse. This move is closely linked to the reform of our Paris newsroom, which is changing in January 2022 from five services to eight hubs. Bringing our multimedia newsroom together at HQ is something everyone was very much looking forward to.

It's a new, ambitious and fully-integrated way of working together, in line with the new demands of our job. The multimedia editors for France and the rest of the world are working together. Photo and video reporting services are located with text teams on the first floor. The graphics and documentation services have been placed together to foster greater cooperation.

Within this organisation are two priority hubs called Future of the Planet and Connected World. The aim is to offer global coverage of these huge trends that affect every country in the world and every AFP client.

The Planet Hub will tackle the topic of the environment, covering climate change, agriculture, industry, and the green economy.

The Connected World Hub will cover all the many aspects of our modern digital life.

Conversations on how to cover these priorities will be totally multimedia and, I hope, extremely stimulating.

Climate change and new technologies are key for AFP, like for all of us.

The coverage of the COP climate summit showed what we can do: using the strength of the AFP network to dig into topics, tell unique stories and report from places others cannot. Our pre-COP packages showed how excellent our coverage of these topics is.

We are boosting our teams in this major priority area: adding a climate fact checker, a photo coordinator, a new reporter.

We will be tackling the same challenge in 2022 to find new resources for the Connected World Hub.

The pandemic remains a key topic at the heart of AFP's newsgathering operation.

Covering the pandemic remained a priority for the Agency, as well as a public health mission. Media all over the world wanted verified news about the virus, government policies, vaccination, protective measures and the pandemic's impact on daily life.

It was up to us to provide reliable ways to contextualise the data, explain the pandemic to the widest possible audience and fight against disinformation.

The pandemic made travel to some locations all but impossible. Many countries are still very closed off, for example Australia and China. In Hong Kong, our regional hub for Asia, all arrivals have to undergo three weeks of strict quarantine.

All this has an impact on the newsroom. It has upended the personal and family lives of our staff, their everyday health, and their children's education.

Added to this is the frustration of virtual work for journalists whose job satisfaction comes from on-the-ground reporting.

The difficulties thrown up by the pandemic showed how agile, resilient and professional our teams are. One of the challenges in the coming years will be to keep a close eye on job satisfaction and ensure we remain dynamic.

AFP distinguished itself in difficult coverage situations, showing the daily reality of people on the ground.

We are our clients' eyes and ears on the ground, both in real life and in the virtual world -- which have become indistinguishable and complementary.

Our multilingual and multimedia network is unique. We are widening the gap with our competitors in terms of reliability and breadth of coverage: more journalists on the ground, proactive bureaux everywhere, editorial organisation forged in our wide experience of hostile environments and a remarkable team spirit. The high quality of our production is universally acknowledged by our clients and our peers. I would like to salute the courage and commitment of our journalists covering conflicts and wars from Gaza to Ethiopia and Myanmar, in Afghanistan of course and plenty of other places.

In Afghanistan, we were able to extract our colleagues in danger and, at the same time, send special correspondents from Pakistan, Qatar and Paris.

In Gaza, we documented the reality of daily life for the people using a wide variety of content and images.

What do you make of the declining public trust in media?

Trust in the media and journalists has been waning for several years.

We have always stood out in the battle against disinformation and we will invest even more in the coming years. We want to integrate digital investigation as much as possible both inside and outside our newsrooms.

Digital investigation is not just about debunking disinformation but also about providing coverage that highlights the constant battle between truth and lies. Fact checkers need to be integrated into the newsroom for maximum synergies.

Threats and violence aimed at journalists have become commonplace. Our teams often work in very worrying conditions. Taking care of them is a big and urgent priority. We are helping them to report all incidents, to disconnect, and to manage stress.

What are the new tools and services in place to help clients use AFP content?

Apart from our main newswires, AFP offers a variety of services to help clients use our content. For example, there is AFP News, offering a single access point for everything produced by the Agency and its partners, AFP Fact Check and its ready-to-publish investigations, AFP Stories and its content that can be published directly on social networks. We have also stepped up our partnerships with the digital platforms.

Alongside the negotiations underway on neighbouring rights, we are working with Google on two significant editorial projects.

The first is fact-checking training aimed at all newsrooms. Several clients are asking us how to work and grow in the digital world.

Our second project is creating new ways of storytelling for mobile devices in line with the new ways that information is being consumed. Attracting younger audiences is a priority for us because it's a priority for our clients.

We need to reform our organisation and structure to adapt to the editorial needs of new big clients like institutions and digital platforms.

THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**DALILA
ZEIN**

MANAGING
DIRECTOR

“The transformation plan laid out in 2018 has delivered, even beyond what we hoped.”

At the end of 2018, AFP set out a transformation plan. Can you remind us of the context at the time?

AFP had long faced financial difficulties. Between 2014 and 2017, sales were down (-3.6 percent), costs were up (+3.7 percent). We had suffered a string of losses, and our cashflow was under constant pressure. At the end of 2017, AFP's debt level stood at nearly 50 million euros.

In 2018, the transformation plan charted a five-year course, aiming to put AFP's finances sustainably back on track, return to growth and implement unprecedented cost savings.

How have you put this transformation plan into action over the past three years?

Our guiding principle has been to ensure we protect what gives AFP its value: respecting our strict social framework, ensuring we take no decision that would weaken AFP over the long term, and keeping the resources needed to maintain our editorial standards and the depth of our network.

In terms of investments, we have focused the resources we have at our disposal on the investments we need most, along clearly defined strategic axes.

In terms of implementation, we have carried out several structural projects at the same time, despite the pandemic. A Voluntary Departure Plan concluded in 2019, improving our organisation at HQ level. Alongside this programme, we are looking closely at our broader editorial needs every time we replace someone who retires. During the pandemic, we managed to carry out modernisation work at our building in Place de la Bourse and bring our HQ-based staff back under one roof. This project will be finalised in the first half of 2022. It will provide annual savings of 2.5 million euros and will also boost significantly other important projects at the Agency (IT security, dematerialisation, etc). In 2019, we launched a project to create a new content distribution platform. This will have transformative effects across the whole Agency, in terms of sales, marketing, IT and editorial.

How is the financial situation?

On the revenue side, AFP has managed to turn the corner, with sales growing by 3.8 percent over the 2018-2021 period. This has been possible due to three main drivers, which were all especially successful in 2021: digital investigation, video, and the “company and institutions” sector driven by our on-demand production subsidiary FACTSTORY. These growth drivers have of course required new skills and new resources.



On the cost side, the goal was to make the savings laid out in the plan but also to bolster the Agency's resources to help our growth drivers.

The efforts made during the transformation plan amount to annual savings of 11 million euros on our wage bill compared to 2018. At the end of 2021, 107 departing staff were not replaced (of the 125 expected over five years in the plan) and 30 jobs were created, notably to continue strengthening the video network. At the same time, AFP has progressively boosted its staff in high-growth areas: the digital investigations team, embryonic in 2018, now has more than 120 journalists.

Thanks to these efforts, AFP managed to limit its cost increases to 2.6 percent over the period. We had to deal with unavoidable new costs and invest in new resources the Agency needed for its development. In terms of cashflow, our debt levels were close to 50 million euros at the end of 2017 with significant settlement dates looming from 2031. AFP has acted to significantly lower debt servicing costs and to progressively reduce debt levels from now until the end of 2028. Our debt stands at 39.5 million euros at the end of 2021, despite the complete overhaul of our headquarters building and the investment in our new content delivery platform.

Can we say that AFP has now stabilised its financial situation for the long term?

The transformation plan laid out in 2018 has delivered, even beyond what we hoped. We have broadly stabilised the financial situation with, alongside our structural savings plans, a favourable one-off pandemic impact on our cost base in 2020 and, to a lesser extent, in 2021. But we should never forget that what makes us unique – producing quality news with a presence in 150 countries – has a high cost and naturally leaves us exposed to multiple geopolitical and economic uncertainties. Our business requires constant investment in innovation to improve our production tools and live up to our clients' expectations. AFP has no shareholders. This ensures its independence, but also requires the Agency to maintain a healthy financial situation to meet these challenges and draw down its debt.

Our good results in 2021 should not make us forget that we need to keep up our efforts on all these fronts: rigorous cost management, defence of our competitiveness and making the most of growth opportunities.

THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



**PATRICE
MONTI**

**SALES AND
MARKETING
DIRECTOR**

“As a way of winning new clients, AFP News has exceeded expectations with an offer that has excited the market.”

What were the highlights of 2021?

I would say the main thing about 2021 was that it was a lot like 2020 in terms of the Covid situation and its impact on our work. And believe me when I say that the AFP sales teams have been very frustrated not to be able to go out to meet their clients. But after showing great resilience in 2020, our staff demonstrated great adaptability in 2021.

This can be seen in our results, for me the second highlight of the year. The Agency achieved very good results, with nearly five percent growth in turnover. We managed to maintain our results in 2020 and fully profit from the rebound in 2021 -- in nearly every region of the Agency.

This success is down to the commitment of our teams but also to the strong development and performance of our digital marketing operation. Of course, it is also down to the exceptional quality of our editorial production.

What were the growth drivers this year?

We continued to roll out our strategic roadmap along three main growth drivers: digital investigation, video, and on-demand production for corporates and institutions.

2021 was another year of double-digit growth for digital investigation at AFP. Misinformation has not stopped growing, nor the need to fight against it. AFP is currently the global leader in this domain and continues to develop in a very rapid and agile way.

As for video, we have again continued to win new clients at a sustained rate, attracted by the richness and quality of our production. For the second year running, this quality earned us a prize from the Association for International Broadcasting.

In the corporate space, our on-demand production subsidiary FACTSTORY has enjoyed spectacular year-on-year growth of nearly 50 percent.

How was the launch of AFP News, the new content distribution platform rolled out commercially in 2021?

One of the challenges of the year was to simultaneously roll out a new content distribution platform and a new sales offer. But it all went very well.

When we launched AFP News, we put our clients' needs at the heart of the project. Our clients remained our guiding light throughout the whole development process. The result of this client-focused approach was that we could offer both an optimal user experience and a commercial deal tailored to the needs of a big share of the market -- that is a pack of credits offering unfettered access to all

Agency content. Of course, clients with significant needs can still sign up to get unlimited access to the wires, but many clients like the idea of credit packs, sometimes even to go alongside a wire subscription. We rolled out AFP News progressively throughout the year. As new functions became available, we could gradually introduce new groups of clients and prospects. We finished the year with nearly 150 active clients on the platform, including a significant number of new clients. As a way of winning new clients, AFP News has exceeded our initial expectations at this stage of its deployment.

What role does innovation play at AFP?

We have to keep innovating and we intend to launch two new products in 2022.

The first, launched as a Minimum Viable Product, will be audio because we are going to offer clients in the audio world the possibility to use the audio from the Agency's video production.

The second product, still under development for the second half of the year, will be specifically aimed at mobile usage.

But we are also going to continue to develop our existing offer, especially the ready-to-publish digital products such as AFP Stories, as well as AFP Live.

What are your goals for 2022?

Above all, to see our clients again on a regular basis! It's only by meeting them in their world that we can understand their needs, and hence respond to them.

Otherwise, we are not going to change a winning strategy. We will therefore continue to capitalise on our growth drivers, improving what we offer and how the products are packaged.

As for AFP News, the aim is to increase the pace at which we transfer clients from our old platform, depending on when new functions become available. This will go hand-in-hand with a sustained sales and marketing drive to attract what we have identified as a priority sector -- pure players. We will also make available on the new platform at least one new offer, that of a pack of credits without commitment for clients that might only need our production on an occasional basis.

Simply put, we will stick to our strategy while staying flexible enough to seize opportunities when they arise. It is this twin approach of agility and action that makes AFP a commercial force to be reckoned.



**HENRY
BOUVIER**

AFPHUB/LEAD
PRODUCT
OWNER

AFP NEWS – A SYNOPSIS

"In 2021, we launched some essential projects like translating the whole platform into Spanish, German, and Portuguese. Another sizeable project was the uploading of seven years of AFP and partner archives.

Early client feedback has been crucial to constantly improve the platform. Listening to clients' needs is at the heart of the AFP News project. No features are included before in-depth consultation with a selected panel of users.

We now need to accelerate the migration of AFP Forum towards AFP News. In order to do this, we need to add the features required to bring the remaining clients on board. However, we are already seeing that the platform is attracting new clients and can therefore generate additional revenue for the Agency.

We need to continue efforts to boost both the performance and robustness of the platform, as well as the user experience. We have been carrying out this work throughout since the start of the project.

We also need to improve the search results on AFP News as well as the associated content – photo and videos that are suggested when you read a story. We have some room for improvement in this area.

Finally, we need to improve the editorial curating of the platform so we can highlight the richness and breadth of AFP's content. This is one of the key ways to generate more downloads and therefore sales. After all, that's the purpose of this new platform and the new commercial offer on which it is based."

THE YEAR

AS SEEN BY...



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

“After renovating our HQ, our teams in Paris are finally reunited!”

What were your goals in 2021?

On the budget, we had a certain amount and we could not go over that. Before contacting construction companies, we worked hard to break up the overall project into sections to ensure we had a solid cost base for the work and could price up various options that we would activate – or not – as time went on.

In terms of planning, as we had chosen to empty the site and boost our homeworking programme, we absolutely wanted to stick to the promise we made to our staff to get them back into the office eight months after the work started.

However, even before the work began, we had two huge challenges to overcome.

First: to completely empty a 10,000 square-metre site during a period of pandemic-induced homeworking! The projects team, with a contact person in each service, led the operation in a real spirit of collective CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).

There were several initiatives to give a second life to many of the things that were no longer needed: book and picture sales, handing out equipment to schools, donating the canteen crockery to Parisian recycling centres, etc.

What should we do with the furniture and computer equipment from nearly 900 workstations during the work? We aimed to reuse as much as possible in the future building but the new layout meant we had to make some changes. Unneeded furniture was donated to hospitals or entrepreneur friends of AFP staff. We stored the furniture we wanted to keep in a secure location. We hired a professional second-hand furniture company to deal with refurbishments.

Emptying the HQ building meant speeding up our project to convert documents into digital form. We managed to digitalise more than 1,500 staff files.

In total, more than 26 tonnes of rubbish and documents were destroyed thanks to a thorough sort-out by our staff. More than 150 tonnes of furniture and unwanted items were recovered and given a new life by Valdelia, a company specialising in eco-friendly recycling.

First mission accomplished: this operation that took only a few weeks would not have been possible without the huge mobilisation from all AFP staff.

The second challenge: to relocate the server room without stopping production in a record time to avoid delaying the start of building work. The mobilisation and constant efforts of the infrastructure team enabled us to carry out this delicate operation in time. Second mission accomplished.

The building work could therefore start, as planned, at the beginning of April.

Between these two phases, our teams worked to refurbish our offices in Rue Vivienne as effectively as possible, to enable all our staff to work on-site in rotation, once or twice per week.

After all this, all we had to do was to carry out the work on time...

What difficulties did you encounter during the work, especially pandemic-linked?

Our discussions on how to best refit the HQ building took place before the pandemic. The project's main aims were to reunite all our Paris-based staff under one roof, to reflect physically the reorganisation of the newsroom and to implement new ways of working in a more pleasant and collaborative space. The works were also supposed to give us a healthier and renovated building and more secure IT infrastructure.

Throughout the project, we had to stay flexible and take into account new expectations and restrictions.



We had to deal with unforeseen factors – more frequent than usual – linked to the pandemic. Virus-related absences, supply crunches in raw materials and construction materials.

We also had to deal with on-site difficulties: a ‘remarkable’ building like at Place de la Bourse is full of surprises when stripped bare.

We wanted to take advantage of the empty building to undertake heavy maintenance work (clean the façade, remove asbestos, structural renovations). These gave us more difficulties than we initially expected.

Despite all this, work was completed on time, with a small delay of a few weeks for the first returnees. The first staff were rehoused in the Bourse building in January 2022. Some of them had left the building 10 years before and the return coincided with an improvement in the Covid situation in France. This made returning to HQ all the more joyful in the new newsroom.

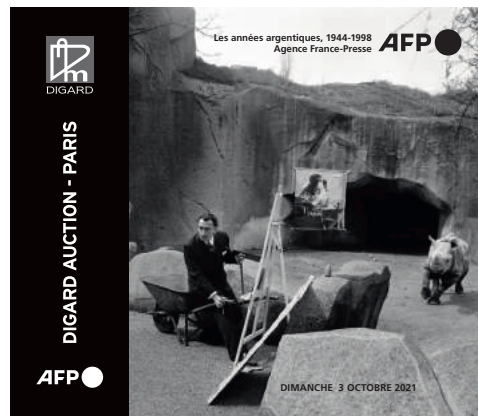
What are the next steps?

Work continues until mid-May. All staff will be back in the building by the end of the first half of the year. Supporting the teams in the new layout is the next big phase.

We have a multidisciplinary team focusing on new working methods in the HQ building. The aim is for all staff to adopt the new working practices offered by the new spaces and new working tools (reserving meeting rooms and using videoconferences for hybrid meetings...). We also want to use the new HQ building to integrate good environmental practises more widely. Finally, we want to instigate shared rules to make better use of common spaces that are adapted to our different needs (concentration, team-working, conviviality). We will have a silent room (in which phones are banned), a garden space for lunch outside the company canteen, and facilities to make better use of the terrace on the 7th floor. These refurbishments should improve everyone’s working life and allow everyone to live better together. This was also a key role of the project.

2021

IN SUMMARY



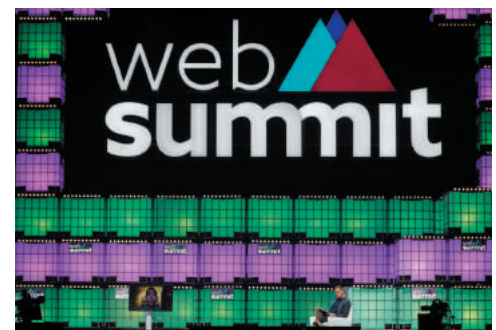
“The Analogue Years”: AFP’s first auction

On October 3, 2021 in Paris, AFP held its first ever auction, at the we are_ space in Paris and live online at digard.com, of nearly 200 photographs from its archives, several of which have become cult classics. It was a rare opportunity to buy unique prints capturing important historic moments that had until now been available only to big international media. With this first photo auction, the Agency unveiled part of its analogue collection, which has more than six million photos (from 1920 to 1997), of which 350,000 are glass plate negatives. A photo of Serge Gainsbourg burning a banknote was the big success of this unprecedented event, which raised nearly 300,000 euros in sales. The money from this first sale goes into the Agency’s turnover. It will in particular contribute to the digitalisation of our enormous photographic archives.



AFP out in force for the Trust in News conference

Three members of the fact-checking team attended the Trust in News conference organised by the BBC, aimed at sharing knowledge on how to tackle disinformation. The AFP speakers were Katarina Subasic, senior fact checker in charge of Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Montenegro, Maria Clara Pestre, a fact checker based in Brazil, and Sophie Nicholson, deputy chief editor, digital verification.



AFP at the 2021 Web Summit

Sophie Huet, AFP’s chief editor, participated in the 2021 Web Summit in Lisbon on November 2. Speaking on the topic: “Staying calm in crisis reporting”, she set out the current state of play and suggested topics for debate in 2022.



“Return to Earth”: An exhibition based on AFP stories

On October 7, 2021, the University of the Côte d’Azur organised a day-long exhibition displaying AFP stories about the Apollo XI mission. These 1,300 stories, from 16 to 24 July 1969, represent a historic account of the first steps of the moon, and provide information about how the event influenced the world at the time. A conference and roundtable discussions also took place about topics such as society, environment and the relationship between nature and culture, attended by Grégoire Lemarchand, AFP’s chief editor for digital investigation.



Pandemia, a beautiful book for History

AFP and the Les Arenes publishing house published the unique work: ‘*Pandemia – The Year That Changed Our World*’. This photo album of 500 pictures tells the story the year that changed the world and pays tribute to the solidarity and human creativity shown across the planet during the pandemic.

For months, world news was exclusively about Covid and the photo production of the Agency was no different. The photos in the album are accompanied by texts from Florence Aubenas, Gaël Faye, Francesca Melandri, Susie Morgenstern, and Charles Pépin.



AFP joins the ‘What now’ festival, with France Culture and Arte

Ahead of the ‘What Now?’ festival that took place on November 29, 2021 at the Maison de la Radio et de la Musique, AFP joined forces with France Culture and Arte to run a broad sociological survey for the 18-30 age group based on five topics: education, work, democracy, intimacy, and science.

The survey results, drawn up with sociologist and CNRS head of research Monique Dagnaud, inspired the festival programme which also featured meetings, shows and debates.



‘A bonne distance (s)’, a major AFP photo exhibition in Rabat

Between March and June 2021, AFP presented ‘A bonne distance (s)’, an exhibition of more than 200 images at the National Photography Museum in Rabat, in partnership with the French Cultural Institutes of Morocco and the National Foundation of Museums of Morocco. The aim of these images, taken by AFP photographers during the Covid 19 pandemic, was to show how resilient humanity has been since the pandemic emerged across the world, and to highlight our reporters’ work on the ground as they documented this period.

BRIEFING ON

THE STORMING OF THE CAPITOL



**ÉRIC
BARADAT**

CHIEF PHOTO
EDITOR NORTH
AMERICA



**JIHAN
AMMAR**

CHIEF VIDEO
EDITOR NORTH
AMERICA

Editor's note: Eric Baradat was appointed Deputy News Director for Photo, Graphics, Data and Documentation on 24 November 2021 and Jihan Ammar was appointed Deputy Editor-in-Chief for Video France on 7 May 2021.

“No one could have imagined what happened in Washington on January 6, when Congress certifies the results of the presidential election in one of the great American democratic traditions.”

5am

One of our photographers had had a brilliant idea: assign two reporters to travel overnight with Trump supporters in bus convoys from Boston to Washington to listen to the President's speech.

After a short and particularly restless night due to the excitement of the supporters, our photographer and VJ were deposited at the crack of dawn at Washington's Union Station, a few kilometres away from the White House where the event was due to take place.

The city was deserted. It was winter and freezing cold. People were working from home due to Covid. Very few cars. The perimeter around the White House was closed off, roads blocked with massive concrete blocks.

Everyone expected a big day. It was a massive party for Trump supporters. The chance to see their president in the flesh for the last time in Washington. An immense crowd, tens of thousands of people in red caps from all over America, gathered in front of the stage set up for outgoing president Trump's speech at the end of the morning.

We knew even before the vote that President Trump would not accept the results, claiming widespread fraud. What we didn't know, however, is how far his supporters would take their protest.

Thinking about it again now, there were plenty of warning signs as to what was going to happen that day. It was so unthinkable to see these scenes in the United States that no one thought it would degenerate that far.

11am

The crowd was delirious, almost out of control. Trump's arrival on stage set them off. Instead of making a traditional speech, Donald Trump angrily urged his supporters to march on Congress.

We had photographers at the White House, photographers and video journalists covering Trump's speech, experienced reporters inside the Capitol building and photographers and VJs along the route and outside the Capitol from early that morning.

After the incendiary half-hour speech, the crowd moved en masse towards the Capitol. The images from one of our live cameras outside the building allowed us to gauge the surging mass of people.

Two VJs filmed the huge crowd from two different angles as they smashed through the barriers to enter. Violent confrontations with Capitol police had already started. Documentaries after the storming of the Capitol showed that the protesters had organised themselves into small groups to invade the building.

A third AFP TV video journalist was in a position further back, taking superb images of people on the structures destroyed on the other side of the Congress. His live lasted several hours.

The protesters quickly became aggressive towards journalists. One of ours



Supporters of US President Donald Trump, including member of the QAnon conspiracy group Jake Angeli, aka Yellowstone Wolf (C), enter the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, in Washington, DC. © Saul Loeb / AFP



Richard Barnett, a supporter of US President Donald Trump sits inside the office of US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi as he protest inside the US Capitol in Washington, DC, January 6, 2021. © Saul Loeb / AFP



Discover the enriched version of the 2021 Annual Report on AFP.com

was threatened and insulted several times. But at the time it was simply unimaginable. The crowd chanting “stop the steal” in the gardens. The weight of the crowd eventually forced open the physical barriers and the police gave way.

2pm

Anyone who was anyone in Washington was inside the Capitol building: 435 members of the House of Representatives, Washington DC delegates, representatives from other territories, 100 senators and their teams of parliamentary assistants... and of course Mike Pence, number two in the outgoing government, who was verifying the electoral college votes -- the last stage of the election process.

The mob surged in from both sides. On the West side, the crowd destroyed the huge stage erected for the presidential inauguration while on the East side, they were smashing doors and windows and infiltrating the Capitol building in their hundreds.

The stage where Joe Biden was due to take the oath of office was destroyed in front of our eyes.

The Capitol, a sacred place of power for all Americans, was invaded by thousands of screaming people. We were left aghast by the real and symbolic violence of their actions.

The secret services and the police were on maximum alert.

Our main priority: ensuring our teams' safety.

Our VJ Diane Desobeau, who suffered threats and racist and sexist verbal abuse, filmed live footage of the first wave of protesters breaching the barriers before joining Agnes Bun.

Agnes and Diane filmed a mob attacking a team of AP journalists, vandalising their equipment before their eyes. The fact that they were together allowed them to protect each other. Their very strong images captured the protesters' anger.

Very few VJs went inside the building. It was very dangerous to enter and the material they need to carry was a real hindrance. Of the main media, only one film crew -- consisting of three men -- managed to get in to film. UGC (User Generated Content) from a few brave freelancers came out. It was only then that everyone could see the terror inside.

Inside, Saul Loeb, one of our specialist politics and Capitol photographers, was taking advantage of a break in proceedings to send his images. Suddenly, loudspeakers blared out a warning message throughout the building: “Stay where you are. Shut the door and do not move.” Saul Loeb shut himself inside an office. Same thing for Olivier Douliery a bit further down, who found himself shut down by Capitol police in an office with parliamentary officials.

The protesters had just broken into the building from the front and the rear, followed by another photographer, Roberto Schmidt, who had climbed up some scaffolding with them. Roberto and Saul passed each other inside without even realising it in the chaos.

After a few moments shut down, Saul decided to go out and start taking photos. His perfect knowledge of the Capitol building enabled him, by going via the higher levels, to move around the place in relative safety and get to where the protesters were clashing with police.

There were not many police officers inside. Everywhere was dangerous.

We took incredible photos that later became famous: the man with the bison head in the Capitol, the Trump supporter with his feet on the desk of Nancy Pelosi, head of the Congressional Democrats, absolutely unthinkable scenes of chaos, people walking around with paintings under their arms.

For Americans and the whole world, the Capitol represents a sanctuary for democracy. Many saw these scenes of a coup d'État as a desecration.

6pm

The police had been overrun long ago. A debate was being held at the heart of government: should the army intervene?

Reinforcements arrived nearly three hours after the start of the invasion. It was the first time in American history the army and National Guard had been deployed with weapons inside the Capitol. They took hours to regain control of the situation. Clashes continued until the end of the night. The situation remained tense. A curfew was declared in the city from 6pm.

After that, the Capitol and surrounding areas became a green zone with concrete walls, army, armoured trucks and troops in the streets.

Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as people try to storm the US Capitol in Washington D.C on January 6, 2021.
© Joseph Prezioso / AFP



How did you feel about these events, given that AFP's Washington bureau is a couple of hundred of metres away from the Capitol?

We all wanted to go there. For the first two hours of the storming of the Capitol, we received very few photos from inside. Telephone networks were either saturated or scrambled.

Hard to believe for one of the world's most connected cities. We didn't know what our photographers and VJs on the ground had managed to capture. Our photographers had to get close to the Capitol and connect to the building's press WiFi system to transmit their images. Then, we understood what they had seen. On the video side, we managed to stay live for virtually the whole day.

Due to the experience of our journalists and a bit of luck, we had incredible coverage of what happened, capturing historic images that were unfolding in front of our eyes. We managed to send out the images in record time.

How long until things returned to normal?

The troops stayed on the ground for several months. Saul Loeb took impressive pictures of soldiers sleeping on the floor in the corridors of the Capitol building. We walked past armoured vehicles on our way into the office. It was very difficult to get into Washington and move around. This capital city, well known for being a picture-perfect postcard full of tourists, was transformed into an impenetrable and unrecognisable military zone.

We suffered no injuries, nor loss of equipment. Just a few unacceptable threats, but no physical violence against our teams. This was a great relief.

The storming of the Capitol came after months of turbulence in Washington due to the Black Lives Matter protests. Because of this, our teams had become used to working in hostile environments, hardened towards tense situations. It was very strange to see journalists in Washington, normally a very calm and peaceful city, kitted out in riot gear and helmets.

It is a day that will remain engraved in our memories and in American history.

FOCUS

NEIGHBOURING RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS



**CHRISTOPHE
WALTER-PETIT**

GENERAL COUNSEL

“The signing of the deal between AFP and Google is a victory. Receiving some of the big platforms’ advertising revenue will help to partly offset the Agency’s drop in sales.”

Can you summarise the issue of neighbouring rights?

The first neighbouring rights came about in the 1980s with the record industry. The producer, despite paying significant sums to produce music, did not benefit from copyright, unlike the musician. Over time, this hampered the ability of producers to continue working. Companies in this sector campaigned for a neighbouring right giving them exclusive rights over the use of their production. As for the media, publishers and agencies spend a lot of money to produce content only for the platforms to publish this online without ever repaying the media or negotiating a licence to use it.

Why isn’t copyright law enough?

It’s true that copyright law does protect media content. But it’s a very formal law, which requires proof of original production for each and every piece of work. This is simply not practical for the 4,000 stories and 3,000 photos produced daily by AFP. Given these practical difficulties, editors and news agencies campaigned for neighbouring rights over their content when it is published by the platforms. This aims to compensate the investments that publishers and news agencies make to produce their content.

Google derives both direct and indirect revenue from the content produced by the media: direct via adverts linked to the content and indirect because publishing this content keeps the user in the Google ecosystem and offers further advertising opportunities. Google has therefore become an ‘answer engine’ and no longer simply a ‘search engine’. Keeping the user in the Google ecosystem also allows the company to collect a considerable amount of data, from which it also profits.

How did these crucial negotiations on neighbouring rights start?

The issue of neighbouring rights stems back to 2016, when AFP responded to a European Commission questionnaire over whether to put in place a system of neighbouring rights. At the time, this was only envisioned for publishers. AFP’s response was to insist that any neighbouring rights should also benefit news agencies.

Neighbouring rights aim to compensate for revenue lost by the media and this has been lost by news agencies as well as publishers.

How was this new text received?

The directive of April 17, 2019 created neighbouring rights for publishers and news agencies at a European level and France was the first to sign this into law,



AFP CEO Fabrice Fries poses with Google Vice President and Managing Director France Sébastien Missoffe at the AFP headquarters in Paris, on November 17, 2021.
© Thomas Coex / AFP

on July 29, 2019. As soon as the law was adopted, Google told publishers that if they refused to give Google a free licence to take their content, they would shut them out from the Google search engine. AFP, the APIG and the SEPM (media associations and unions) filed a case at the French Competition Authority for anti-competitive behaviour, as well as a request to take protective measures. The Competition Authority took an urgent decision on April 9, 2020, ahead of its final ruling. This called for negotiations to take place within a set timeframe in order to work out how to implement neighbouring rights. AFP declared that the negotiations had not been concluded when the deadline ran out and filed another case with the Competition Authority for non-respect of these protective measures.

How did Google react?

Google had appealed against these protective measures, so AFP appeared before the Paris Court of Appeals. At the same time, AFP was filing a case with the Competition Authority for non-respect of these protective measures. The Court of Appeals ruled on October 8, 2020, clearly siding with the measures taken by the Competition Authority.

On the second case relative to the non-respect of protective measures, the Competition Authority, in a ruling of July 12, 2021, ruled that Google had not conducted the negotiations in good faith and imposed a record fine of 500 million euros.

Did this have a significant impact on the negotiations with Google?

Yes. The clear decision of the Competition Authority on the concept of press publication and the record fine imposed on Google allowed us to finalise these negotiations, which remained cordial if tense right up to the final signing of a deal that came into force on November 15, 2021.

What was this experience like for you?

We stuck to our guns. At the beginning, Google wanted to conflate our commercial deals with the neighbouring rights. The Agency always refused to do that.

There was considerable pressure because the sums being negotiated for the commercial deal were quite significant. Turning this down meant depriving ourselves of a significant source of revenue that was available immediately. However, we always insisted that the neighbouring rights were set out in a contract that related only to neighbouring rights. A commercial deal is an agreement that essentially has a limited duration whereas a deal on neighbouring rights, both fundamentally and legally, is supposed to last over time.

So AFP struck a global deal with Google on neighbouring rights covering the whole of the European Union, even though not all the countries have yet signed the legislation into national law?

Unlike publishers, AFP has a global audience and its content is essentially republished all over the world. We did not want to go through the time-consuming and onerous procedure of appealing to every country's Competition Authority. From the beginning, we wanted a global contract with Google, which is also an international company. So while the directive has only entered into law in four countries, AFP managed to sign a global deal.

BRIEFING ON

THE FALL OF KABUL



**DAVID
FOX**

AFGHANISTAN
AND PAKISTAN
BUREAU CHIEF

“The vast network of AFP really shone through in these circumstances. Many of the staff had already been stationed in the region, so their knowledge helped with the coverage.”

How did you evacuate our AFP people in such rapidly changing circumstances?

We immediately put into place an evacuation plan that we had spent the previous year working on. We had managed to obtain French visas, or the promise of visas, for all our editorial staff, but there were also several other people to manage as well -- our cooks and our drivers for example.

The actual evacuations took place from August 16 onwards. By this time we had moved most of our people to the French embassy in Kabul, from where they would be transported to the airport. AFP staff there reported calm and relief compared to the chaos of the city, but there was also drama. Some of our staff -- one of the drivers for example -- had never intended to leave Afghanistan, but at the last minute he decided to enter the embassy with everyone else -- even though he didn't have a passport or visa.

Thankfully, French authorities helped evacuate everyone who made it through the thousands and thousands of desperate people trying to get into the embassy grounds -- regardless of their paperwork.

In total, we have evacuated nearly 60 people from Kabul -- staff and their families. Just a few days after the takeover there were just two other editorial staff left with me -- our amazing photo chief Wakil Kohsar, and reporter Emal Haidary, who would evacuate a few months later. We were the only bureau to remain open and there were perhaps just four or five foreign journalists left in Kabul, including me. My rationale for staying was the worry that if we abandoned the bureau, the Taliban would just move in -- they did this with Reuters -- and we would have literally no bureau left if and when we decided to return. Also AFP has a very proud record in Afghanistan. We have had an uninterrupted presence in the country for decades -- in times of war and in times of peace.

I think it was the second day after the takeover when four Taliban marched into the bureau -- fully armed -- demanding to know who I was, what I was doing, and why I was not evacuating. It was very tense for a while, but we managed to negotiate with them and after about 30 minutes -- and lots of Afghan green tea -- they calmed down and left, saying they would return the next day.

Actually, we didn't see them again in the bureau until three weeks later, but they have generally left us alone.

The bureau is a big two-floor house that AFP has occupied for around four years. Upstairs is the residential quarters for foreign staff, while the actual office and bureau take up the ground floor. Normal staffing is one foreign Franco and one foreign Anglo correspondent and around eight or nine local staff -- for text, video and photo.

At the time Jay Deshmukh was our Kabul bureau chief and Elise Blanchard the Franco correspondent. Both evacuated. I oversee operations from Islamabad as Bureau Chief for both Pakistan and Afghanistan, but I was actually in Kabul at the time of the takeover on my first visit to the office since being appointed a few months earlier.



A US soldier (C) point his gun towards an Afghan passenger at the Kabul airport in Kabul on August 16, 2021. © Wakil Kohsar / AFP



Taliban fighters stand guard in a vehicle along the roadside in Kabul on August 16, 2021. © AFP

Credit for the evacuation plan must go to Jay. It was a major undertaking, but he was the one organizing the staff -- sometimes needing to bully them -- to get their paperwork in order. He was the one dealing with French authorities before, during and after he and the staff were evacuated. It could never have happened without his tireless work, but we also had great assistance from colleagues at Paris HQ, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

How did you manage to get information after almost everybody left?

It was an incredible challenge having to evacuate all the staff and cover the news at the same time. And then cover the news with no staff.

The evacuated people tried to help from abroad, but most Afghan officials had also left -- and we didn't have contact numbers for Taliban officials -- so it was difficult to get "on-the-record" information. You had to rely on what you saw with your own eyes, but even that was difficult as it was hard to move around.

The bureau is in the Green Zone, which was completely evacuated. For many weeks we had the only occupied house in the entire Green Zone -- there are more than 150 houses -- and I was on my own in the bureau for sometimes days at a time, with only stray cats for company. The Taliban controlling the entrance to the zone would sometimes not let anyone in, sometimes not let me out. It depended on their moods. I tried to go out two or three times a day. The Green Zone guards got used to me after a while so they just let me pass as I pleased, seeing me as some crazy foreigner. We have three AFP office cars, but they wouldn't let me take them out of the Green Zone. To do my work, I had to drive to the gate, walk out and then hail a taxi. On the way back, I had to take a taxi to the front, walk back in and then drive in the deserted Green Zone.

After a couple of weeks I found a very senior Taliban official who gave me a piece of paper allowing me to drive anywhere I wanted. After that I hired a new driver -- believe me, you don't want to drive in Kabul! Again, the vast network of AFP really shone through in these circumstances. We had many staff who had been based in the region before, so they helped write stories and background pieces using their knowledge.

So everyone has left, what do you do next? How do we cover the news?

Basically, we restarted the bureau from scratch.

My first hire was a new office manager. I needed someone to work out how to pay bills, where to get supplies, that sort of thing. He then helped me to hire new drivers, a cook, a cleaner. We needed a functioning, liveable office and residence.

Finding new editorial staff, however, is very, very difficult. Almost all English-speaking or French-speaking Afghan journalists evacuated as soon as they could. My only option really was to hire keen young university students and try to train them. They also had to be the kind of people prepared to stand up to the Taliban, to question their officials.

In the short term, we have made enormous use of specials, or "renforts" as we call them, and tried to get experienced staff from elsewhere in the AFP world to come to the bureau for a month or six weeks to help out -- but even this posed challenges.

We had to get Afghan visas for staff, but very few Afghan embassies were operating. We had to get staff into the country, but for weeks there were no flights, and the road was considered too risky.

Finding foreign staff to come for a month or so has been easier. Lots of people volunteered to come to Kabul and Islamabad, which was our backstop bureau. We had photographers, text and video journalists from all over the world -- from Paris, Brussels, Nicosia... from Turkey, Norway, Germany... even from the United States, the Taliban's biggest enemy.

AFP also brought an Arab-language service reporter on a special assignment for the first time -- Rouba El Hussein of the Beirut bureau -- who did a tremendous series of reports focusing on women's affairs. Our commitment to covering the story also showcased AFP's depth -- that we were able to shuffle staff around the world to bring them to Afghanistan -- and certainly no other organization has matched us in that regard.

How do you see the short-term future management of the bureau?

Fortunately Jay, the Kabul bureau chief, is now back and running things. We felt we had to evacuate Jay in the initial stages because he is an Indian national and there are historical issues between the Taliban and New Delhi. For what it is worth, the Taliban have given assurances that anyone is welcome and they guarantee their safety.

We now have more than 20 new staff on short-term contracts. We fully accept that many will want to leave the country if they get the opportunity.

However, we are also already noticing that some are seeing AFP's commitment to covering the news and to remaining in the country. This means they are thinking twice about their future and feel more comfortable working with us knowing we have made that commitment.

Did you receive any pressure from the Taliban?

We have had no real attempt by them to manipulate our coverage, but to be honest the average Taliban fighter is likely to be barely literate and has no idea who we are. Some of the senior officials, however, are fully aware of AFP's reputation and realise that even if they did try to manipulate us, they would fail.

Coverage is a different story. We have had some photographers or video reporters threatened or hit while covering protests, but we are treated no differently than any other journalists. Taliban fighters are less likely to lash out at obviously foreign journalists than they do against Afghan reporters.

Nevertheless, some foreigners have been detained recently.

We were determined to hire some women as translators/trainees and came under enormous pressure from the Taliban not to do this. I'm proud that we really stuck to our guns though. Every time a Taliban official told us we couldn't do something, we found his boss to get permission. If he told us we couldn't, we found his boss. Perhaps they got tired of us, but we now have a new woman hire working for us for the past month, with plans to recruit another.

This must have been a unique experience even for an experienced reporter like you?

I have only been with AFP for three years now – before this I spent more than two decades with Reuters -- but in 30 years of covering war and natural disasters I haven't seen anything like this. It is also quite funny that I covered the fall of the Taliban's first regime in 2001, and I have spent a lot of time in the country since then.

In a strange way, my job became easier once we had evacuated all our staff. I no longer had to worry about their immediate safety and security, so I could focus on the story.

Again, I was impressed with how focused on the "Afghan story" AFP became – not just editorial, but also sales and marketing. I was interviewed live around the world – from Australia to Ireland, UK to USA on those countries' top news channels by their famous TV presenters. Friends were messaging me from around the world telling me they had seen me on TV. It was challenging but also rewarding. I am aware that I am a very experienced reporter – particularly in these sorts of challenging environments – but you can't do it alone, and I was very impressed with the back-up and support I received from Paris and my regional reporting base Hong Kong every step of the way.

As someone relatively new to the company, I give full marks to AFP's management of the whole Afghanistan drama.

Staff safety and security was a priority over everything else. We planned well, had good back-up and focused on the job in hand. It was a well-thought-out policy that worked.

Afghanistan since the Soviet occupation

Main developments

1979-1989 Soviet occupation

Moscow invades in December 1979 to support a communist regime. The Afghan mujahideen resistance, backed by the West, fights the Soviet Army for a decade until it withdraws in February 1989



1992-1996 Civil war

Nearly 100,000 killed in two years. The Taliban movement, supported by Pakistan, begins to emerge



1996-2001 Taliban rule

Hardline Islamic regime takes power. Led by Mullah Mohammad Omar, regime becomes close to Al-Qaeda, sheltering its leader Osama bin Laden. Women and girls mostly denied education and employment, unable to leave home without male companion and full face coverings



2001 Western intervention

US-led invasion topples Taliban. Hamid Karzai appointed to lead interim government. Up to 130,000 soldiers eventually deployed to help secure the country against the resisting Taliban



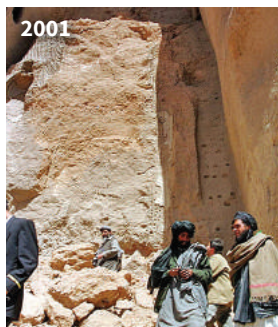
1980
Afghan women attend a workplace literacy course in Kabul in the 80s



2021
Taliban fighters in Laghman province, Aug 15, 2021



1988
Soviet soldier given flowers near Kabul, 1988



2001
Afghan Taliban militia soldiers stand near the dynamited Buddha statue, Bamiyan, 2001



2002
US soldiers arrive at Bagram airbase, 2002

2004-2014 Karzai era

Karzai wins Afghanistan's first presidential election based on universal suffrage

Karzai is reelected in 2009 in a poll marred by massive fraud, low turnout and Taliban violence

2014-2016 US withdrawal

NATO completes handover of security to Afghan army and police. New Afghan President Ashraf Ghani signs deal allowing some US-NATO forces to stay on

Security degenerates. In July 2016 US President Barack Obama slows the planned withdrawal of US troops

2017 US reinforcements

New US President Donald Trump scraps pullout timetable and re-commits thousands of soldiers

Attacks on Afghan forces multiply while US steps up air strikes

2021 US withdrawal, Taliban in control

US President Joe Biden sets delayed drawdown deadline to September 11

Violence surges as NATO begins final withdrawal in May

Taliban make rapid gains through districts and border posts, and in August begin taking control of key provincial capitals

August 15

Ghani flees the country
Taliban enter Kabul

People besiege Kabul airport and chaos breaks out, carrying into following day. All flights temporarily halted, resumed in the evening

August 17

Taliban say "war has ended", vow not to seek revenge against opponents and respect women's rights "in accordance with Islamic principles"

2020 US-Taliban deal

The two sides sign a historic deal following talks that started in 2018, paving the way for the withdrawal of all foreign troops



ODILE DUPERRY

MOBILITY
AND PROJECTS
JOURNALIST
IN THE GLOBAL
NEWS DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT



CLAUDIA RAHOLA

MOBILITY
AND PROJECTS
JOURNALIST
IN THE GLOBAL
NEWS DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT

THE RETURN OF OUR AFGHAN COLLEAGUES

How were our colleagues exfiltrated so quickly safe and sound?

AFP's regional management and the Kabul bureau started the procedure several months previously.

When Kabul fell on August 15, our preparations meant that the bureau staff were already on exfiltration lists.

The whole of Kabul rushed to the airport in absolute chaos. Our staff and their families had just a few minutes to prepare and leave. Several suitcases were lost in the rush and some arrived in France with just a basic rucksack.

The first two flights carrying our staff arrived in Paris on August 18 and 19. There were text, photo and video journalists but also the bureau's drivers and technicians. Others arrived in the following months. Including families, there were around 60 people.

A support network was in place as soon as they arrived on French soil?

The Agency mobilised immediately to provide them with clothes and basic goods. A collection of clothes and childcare equipment was organised within AFP, with great success. The French authorities put our colleagues in a hotel in Montrouge, managed by the association France terre d'asile. At the beginning, they were both completely disorientated but also relieved to have left Kabul. Many spoke no English. None spoke French.

How did their administrative procedures go?

After Covid quarantine at the hotel, they were able to start applying for refugee status. Every family had an AFP "buddy", often a former staff member from the Kabul bureau, to make the process more personal.

Our colleagues stayed for around a month in the Paris area before being allotted apartments around France, where they are still. Only five stayed in Paris or the suburbs.

The promises made by the French President in his August 16 speech on Afghanistan were kept and asylum requests were accepted within three months.

AFP supported them throughout the administrative procedures, answered their many questions and tried to help them as much as possible in their daily lives: arranging appointments, translations, and a variety of situations varying from the delivery room to emergency surgery and a complaint filed after an assault.

A trip on a Paris river boat was organised for the whole group at the beginning of September. A chance for them to discover Paris.

What's going on now?

Almost everyone has obtained refugee status in France. They are trying to adapt to their new life, determined to get by. Their number one priority is to learn French, which they need to be able to work or study. They are eligible for child benefits. The drivers will have to re-take their driving tests. Their children are in school for the most part. One father and two of his sons have already found work in Strasbourg.

A new AFP social assistant has taken up several administrative procedures, working closely with social assistants locally. We are still in touch with them via WhatsApp and will remain so, to help them solve a minor problem, to tell them how to translate or pronounce a phrase or just to admire a baby's smile or a new haircut.

Afghan people climb atop a plane as they wait at the Kabul airport in Kabul on August 16, 2021, after a stunningly swift end to Afghanistan's 20-year war, as thousands of people mobbed the city's airport trying to flee the group's feared hardline brand of Islamist rule.

© Wakil Kohsar / AFP



On Sunday 5 September, the HRD team organised an outing in Paris for the group, including a tour on a bateau-mouche, to give them a moment's respite.

© Sophie Huet / AFP



FOCUS

DIGITAL INVESTIGATION



GRÉGOIRE LEMARCHAND

DEPUTY GLOBAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
CHIEF EDITOR
DIGITAL
VERIFICATION

In 2021, AFP consolidated its position as the world leader in fact-checking. Since its launch in 2017, the Agency has built up a network of digital investigation specialists to respond to the growing need of media, institutions and platforms for expertise in distinguishing the true from the fake.

How do you define fact-checking? It's a recent profession that the public is getting used to but isn't the term confusing?

It's true that the public still has a fairly rough idea of what we do. Fact-checking is about checking the reliability of information. It stems directly from journalism but fact-checking is the purest and most fundamental part of journalism: the precise checking of facts and sources. However, this is not all we do.

We work on what is fake. Fakes have become more and more common, sometimes more so even than the truth. Given this, it is not enough to check, sort through and re-establish the true version. We have to debunk the fake version. Our fact checkers dig deeper, add context and educate.

Our fact checks are sometimes longer than others. This is not because we don't know how to write concisely! But rather to add sense and complexity, and to dispel an over-simplistic version of events.

This is why we are using the term fact-checking less and less. We prefer to employ the term 'digital investigation'. Our profession is largely investigative: our experts are trained in techniques to find and then verify information, photos and video online. They then investigate where and how this content is being published and used.

How has fact-checking evolved at AFP?

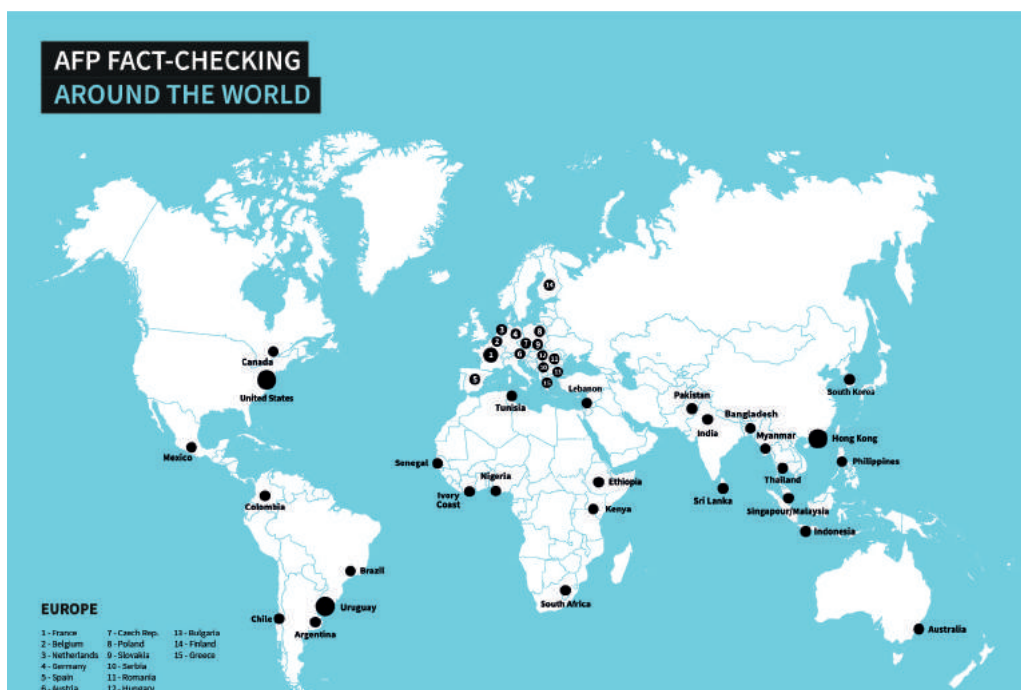
As of the end of 2021, the Agency has around 120 specialists in fact-checking and digital investigation in more than 30 bureaux producing in 24 languages. This is a network that no other media or agency can boast and reinforces our global leadership position.

We have invested in countries where the fight against disinformation is most relevant, either because of its size or because of its political or social situation. We have strengthened our teams in Brazil and India and will bolster our staff in the US and France in 2022 due to elections.

The European Commission has recently issued several calls for tender, which AFP has applied for in many countries. At the beginning of 2022, we will launch several hubs to fight against disinformation in Europe (DE FACTO in France, EDMO BELUX in Belgium and Luxembourg, CEDMO in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland and 444.hu in Hungary).

Is digital investigation now at the heart of AFP production?

We are proud that in just four years we have created a solid and international network recognised across several countries. We are approached more and more, which shows the relevance of our work. The strength of our network often



To date, AFP has more than 120 journalists in charge of digital investigations, covering some 85 countries, in permanent interaction with the other journalists of the agency's worldwide network.

allows us to get ahead of the curve and gain valuable time. For example, when disinformation circulates about vaccines, it is often pushed in a similar way on different continents. Quite often you will find, from one week to the next, sources of disinformation circulating in France, Mexico, the US or Spain. We are therefore in a position to react much quicker and effectively. Fighting against disinformation is like a race against the clock: the sooner we can debunk it, the sooner we can stop it going viral.

We are seeing new ways of consuming information. The written press has lost speed and the social networks and search engines are gaining supremacy. How is AFP tackling this digital challenge?

AFP's strength is that we can conduct investigations on the ground and in the virtual world in a completely complementary way. Sometimes there are places in the world we cannot go, for reasons of safety or access. This is where digital investigation becomes even more valuable. This new way of thinking is gaining ground at AFP: our journalists have become familiar with this know-how.

The Agency works well with the platforms. They need our added value and, in return, give us total freedom and editorial independence. We have been working with the social networks since 2017. Facebook is a key partner but we are also working with WhatsApp and TikTok.

The commercial and neighbouring rights deals with Google at the end of 2021 will allow us to expand the AFP network even more. Also, we will be able to improve our expertise by concentrating on training.

Journalists are increasingly victims of cyberbullying. This violence is growing and becoming more 'normalised'. What is AFP doing about this?

We have to keep an increasingly close eye on cyberbullying. If you haven't experienced it, it is hard to imagine how violent, intrusive and upsetting it can be. Fortunately we work in many countries where press freedom is respected. But we also work in countries like the Philippines and certain countries in Africa where daily life as a journalist is much harder. We have had several cases in France that have led to legal proceedings.

These days, bullying can also affect journalists as a group. Because they are working on controversial topics or communities, fact checkers are exposed to cyberbullying on a daily basis.

Young and women journalists are a preferred target. If a community is unhappy at a journalist after their pseudo-information has been debunked, they lash out with intense and virulent disinformation campaigns.

We do everything we can to protect and warn our journalists and when they are under attack, help them to manage it. Sometimes anger overcomes your good instincts. We are there to prevent a spiral of violence, taking action as soon as the first signs emerge.

BRIEFING ON

FUTURE OF THE PLANET



**SOPHIE
HUET**

GLOBAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Climate change has been an AFP editorial priority for some years. It is a critical subject for us because it stands at the heart of today’s geopolitical and economic challenges.”

How did the Planet Hub come about?

The issue of climate change has become existential and AFP coverage needs to reflect this. Once we recognised this, we started to put concrete measures in place.

The main step was an editorial reorganisation, which came into force in January 2022. As part of a reform of the France reporting services carried out by Jean-Luc Bardet in 2021, the Planet Hub was born.

This hub, based in Paris, aims to be as wide-ranging as possible, covering topics of global interest and a wide variety of sectors and trends. It brings together specialists on climate and environmental subjects – that we have been covering for decades – and specialists on other social and economic sectors that either cause climate change or are affected by it.

We aim to make our expertise available to the whole AFP network. The whole Agency should seize on this topic for story ideas and to tackle issues specific to a region or event.

Environmental stories have a strong visual impact. Two photo and video journalists have joined the Planet Hub to ensure our coverage is fully multimedia. Strong images about climate change (ice melting, pollution, biodiversity) help raise awareness about what is happening, taking us beyond the alarming and striking figures outlined in reports.

We have also created a digital investigation job to fight against climate disinformation.

So this hub should become more influential as time goes by?

We have been delighted to see that it’s already had an impact in 2021. The AFP newsroom immediately understood the need to have more on-the-ground coverage of these topics, illustrating complex topics like climate tipping points with concrete examples.

We are going to expand this Agency-wide work, creating an informal global network of journalists and bureaux interested in this topic.

Multimedia coverage needs to be prepared a long time in advance of events. We have altered our working methods to improve forward-planning for big summits like the COP. For example, we ran a series of reports on climate refugees ahead of the meeting.

Special reports like this require a heavy investment in terms of resources and time: they often take place in far-flung places, where climate change is visible but where journalists are not always present.

There’s also the challenge of educating all the Agency teams?

Researcher Ninis Rosqvist at the peak of the southern summit of Kebnekaise in northern Sweden, as she uses equipment to take GPS measurements on the mountain's height on August 26, 2021. © Jonathan Nackstrand / AFP



We are also going to work on training the whole newsroom. A few years ago, our climate specialists already drew up guidelines to place extreme weather events in their correct context. We want to expand this toolbox to give the whole newsroom access to the right context, sources and wording. Journalists from the Planet Hub have already run training programmes at HQ. We are working on developing other types of training module to increase the newsroom's awareness of these topics.



**URSULA
HYZY**

**HEAD OF
PLANET HUB**

THE BIRTH OF THE PLANET HUB

What are the main changes after the reform of the Paris newsroom?

We used to have a big economics service that covered the French economy by sector: finance, services, agriculture, industry, while also contributing to international coverage. We also had a separate cell of Franco and Anglo specialists covering climate and environment globally. This cell was in a huge service that covered topics ranging from science to literature and performing arts.

The reform has enabled us to link up our climate and environment experts with our reporters covering the sectors that emit most greenhouse gases – and which are therefore most under pressure to come up with climate change solutions. These sectors are agriculture, transport and industry, especially the construction and energy industries.

Added to this team are two journalists from the Social Service to cover the social side of industry and transport and to look into the social aspects of climate disruption and economic transformation. A photographer and VJ bring the visual dimension that is essential to these topics.

The other half of the old economics service, covering macroeconomics, banks, insurance, tourism, the luxury goods sector, has reformed into the Companies/Macro Hub. It is just next to us. The journalists in this hub are aware of what we are doing and vice-versa. Climate is also a big topic for them (green finance, how to find a measure of national wealth that takes the environment into account).

Beyond this, the Planet Hub has started to contact the regional chief editors to create an informal network of journalists that have a special interest in these subjects.

What are the strengths of this reform?

Putting specialist reporters in environment and climate in the same room as those covering agriculture, transport and industry had an instant effect.

There were animated discussions in the first meeting of the Planet Hub! The two sides already worked closely together but bringing them physically together created new synergies.

Reforming the hub around a few sectors makes us more agile and sparks ideas for the whole AFP global network, in coordination with the regional chief editors.

It has also enabled us to move from coverage centred on the environmental and human impact of climate change to looking at how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via industrial solutions and transforming economies and businesses.



**RICHARD
CARTER**

DEPUTY
TO THE GLOBAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ENVIRONMENT COVERAGE IN 2021

What were the highlights of 2021?

2021 was a big year for our climate coverage, centred around two important events.

The COP26 in Glasgow was an editorial priority for the Planet Hub and for the whole Agency.

It also gave us a huge scoop. Senior editor Marlowe Hood obtained a key IPCC report in June, a full eight months before it was due to be formally published in February 2022. The report is a summary of scientific research to guide global decision-makers, specifically about the impact of climate change.

This came about due to great cultivation of sources from Marlowe. These sources chose AFP because they knew we would give this crucial information the importance it deserved. They wanted to get the information out in the public domain to stimulate debate before the COP meeting in November and December. This explains the timing of the leak. We harnessed the whole of AFP's global network to illustrate some of the themes laid out in the report.

Marlowe and the environment team worked with the chief editors on the best way to use the material. Firstly, how should we ourselves publish the information? We worked in secret as we did not want it to leak out to our competitors that we had obtained the report. Secondly, we organised several reporting missions to illustrate and contextualise some of the topics set out in the report. For example, we published an ambitious report on coastal cities affected by climate change, using reporting from Venice, Dakar, Cape Town and Rotterdam.

We were very pleased to have the time to work up special reports with several elements, using strong quotes, video, photos and graphics.

How did the publication go?

We broke our scoop on June 23. We moved five alerts, full-length stories, as well as explainers for the main points of the report. Our story had a huge impact, not just in terms of clients picking up the story but there were also several stories about the fact we had obtained the document so far in advance. Young climate activist Greta Thunberg was among those reacting and gave us an interview about the report, showing how significant the scoop was.

The report was also very useful when it came to preparing the COP26 in November. Its thousands of pages contained hundreds of story ideas. We sought ideas from our climate, economy, industry teams and mobilised bureaus right across the AFP global network. We received more than 100 story pitches. We had to coordinate the ideas, sometimes combine various proposals and make sure we didn't double up.

In the end, we moved about 50 stories, publishing them at regular intervals in the five weeks leading up to the COP. Every Monday and Tuesday, we moved a package based around a specific topic, with on-the-ground reportage and explainers. In the week leading up to the COP, we moved a package every day.

One of the major topics of the report was tipping points: meaning climate trends that cannot be reversed. To illustrate this topic, we did a mission lasting several weeks in Scandinavia about melting permafrost and a similar mission in the Amazon to report on deforestation.

How do you see the future?

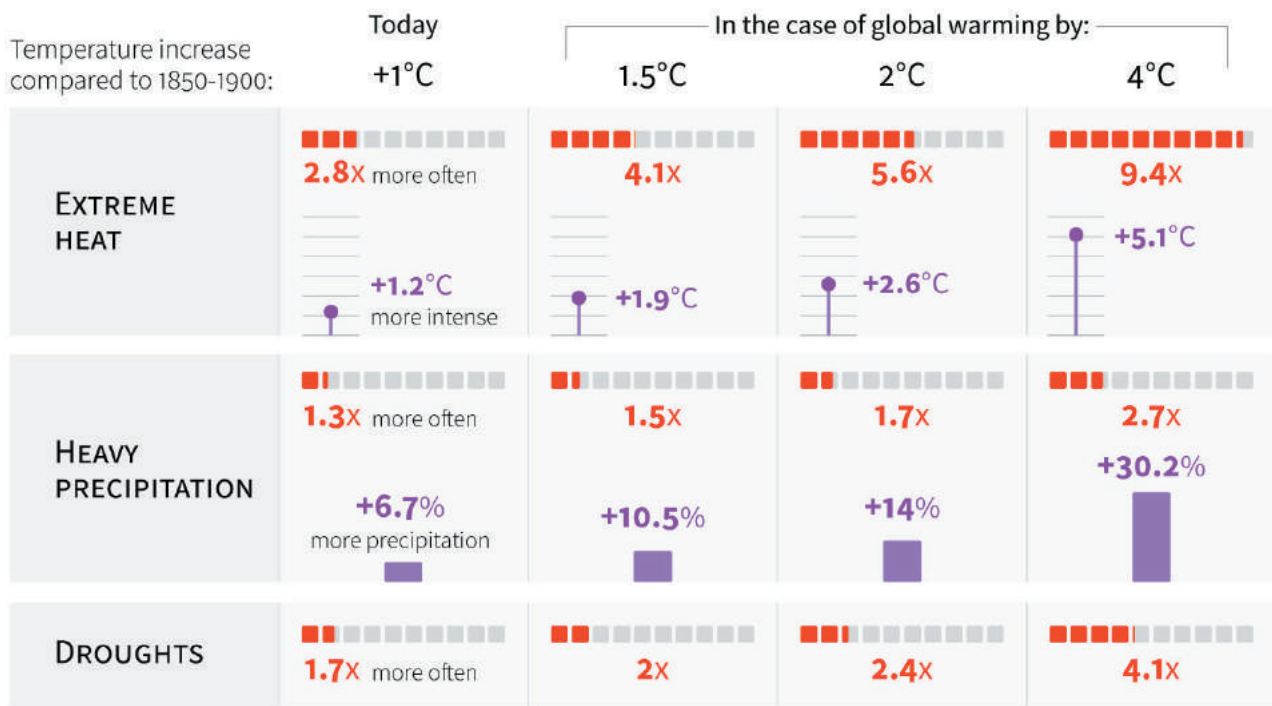
All this took place before the Planet Hub was formed. The new structure will make us even more flexible and efficient, create synergies and enable us to harness the entire network to report on climate problems but also solutions.

A local resident gestures as he holds an empty water hose during an attempt to extinguish forest fires approaching the village of Pefki on Evia (Euboea) island, Greece's second largest island, on August 8, 2021. © Angelo Tzortzinis / AFP



GLOBAL WARMING: MORE FREQUENT AND MORE INTENSE EXTREME EVENTS

For events that had a probability of occurring once every 10 years before the onset of global warming (1850-1900) the increase in the **probability** and **intensity**:



Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)



© Simon Malfatto, Paz Pizarro / AFP

FOCUS

REFORM OF THE PARIS NEWSROOM



**JEAN-LUC
BARDET**

FRANCE DIRECTOR
AND DEPUTY TO
THE GLOBAL NEWS
DIRECTOR



**RAPHAËL
HERMANO**

CHIEF EDITOR
FOR FRANCE

EIGHT HUBS FOR RICHER AND BROADER COVERAGE

What did you hope to achieve with this reorganisation?

We wanted to expand our coverage of the priority areas identified by the Global News Management, make the newsroom more coherent in its organisation and improve synergies between departments. The last time we reformed the Paris newsroom was 25 years ago.

This reform was launched in 2019. We set up working groups and workshops and sent out questionnaires to identify the main areas of work and how best to organise ourselves. At the end of this process, we decided on eight hubs and then worked on a more detailed plan with the rest of the newsroom.

The two priority areas are the future of the planet and the connected world. Our work led us to add another crucial topic: news linked to the society we live in. This is a vast area, including topics like health, poverty, addiction, education, sexual and gender equality, religion, migration. All these themes will be covered by a dedicated hub.

Our aim was to have more international coverage and also coverage that brings together different departments. The hubs are there to help the rest of the newsroom, to be a reference point for the whole French and international network.

How did the renovation of AFP's historic HQ play into this reform?

Reuniting the whole newsroom back in a renovated and modernised HQ building in Place de la Bourse helped us create synergies and of course played into the reform. Our text, photo and video production services are all together on the 1st floor, editing and sports on the 2nd, chief editors on the 3rd. This allows for better communication and interaction between departments.

Can you sketch out the basic structure of the hubs and what they will cover?

The France newsroom in Paris used to consist of five services. There are now seven hubs, plus an eighth, the International Hub (formerly the Bureau de Paris), which covers diplomacy, defence and international terrorism, as well as France for a foreign audience (in French, English, Spanish and German).

The **Planet Hub** brings together Franco and Anglo environment and climate specialists with journalists covering the main economic sectors that have an impact on the climate or are affected by climate change: industry, energy, transport and agriculture.

The **Connected World/Culture Hub** houses reporters following cultural issues, media and tech, notably the platforms. Our life is increasingly online. We the-



refore thought it was a good idea to bring together journalists covering cultural content and those following how it is broadcast.

The **Society/Social Hub** deals with the big social issues from birth to death, in particular the topic of health – both from a scientific and medical point of view but also economic and social, as well as hospitals and the healthcare system. It covers education and training, poverty and social exclusion, addiction, but also religion, migration, work and strikes.

The **Politics Hub** unsurprisingly focuses on politics, the President and Prime Ministers' offices, parliament, political parties and elections.

The **Investigations Hub** covers police and justice topics, especially trials and investigations. It also covers urban violence with reporters who can be deployed in France or abroad. Like an increasing number of reporters at the Agency, they have been trained to deal with hostile environments and situations. We are very aware of the need to ensure the safety of our journalists covering conflicts or violent demonstrations.

The **Territories Hub** will expand coverage of the fascinating topic of territories: cities and suburbs, suburban zones and countryside, inequality but also creativity and innovation. Our journalists have already expressed a keen interest in these topics but we wanted to give them special attention. This hub will bring together our reporters covering the Greater Paris region, France's foreign territories, but also housing and town planning.

The **Macroeconomics/Companies Hub** will cover macroeconomics, financial markets, banks and insurance, retail, the hospitality industry, tourism and luxury goods.

The Planet and Macroeconomics/Companies hubs, which both touch significantly on economic issues, will work together and partly share resources. The same goes for the Investigations and Territories hubs, allowing us to stay reactive on police/justice issues.

The sports department is not affected by the reform. It has a newsroom based in Paris, with a network in France and abroad, and a dedicated desk.

What are the staffing levels of the Paris Newsroom?

A significant percentage of the more than 500 journalists based in the HQ building are covering France. Others include sport, documentation and graphics, photo and video, editing desks, chief editors, social media and digital investigation.

We should also mention our network throughout France, which has 80 text, photo and video journalists spread out across our seven regional bureaux and 11 satellite offices.

The seven hubs have around 140 journalists, 18 of these are managers. There are six anglophone journalists (two at Connected World/Culture, three at Planet, one at Society/Social), one Spanish-speaking journalist at Connected World/Culture, four VJs at Planet, Digital/Culture, Investigations and Politics, three fact checkers.

BRIEFING ON

SPORT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



**EMMANUEL
PIONNIER**

HEAD OF THE
SPORTS
DEPARTMENT

“We are still the eyes and ears of our clients.”

What were the main features of this year?

Adapting, anticipating and reacting were the keywords of the year 2021. We had a great year, demanding and intense across the board. Our ability to stay flexible was our best asset in the face of a complex logistic and staffing situation the whole world over. More than simply being active, we had to anticipate and react to events.

Public health measures, restrictions, homeworking, endless tests, sick journalists... our teams answered the call despite all that, on a voluntary basis. They spared no efforts. Congratulations to them!

What was the Sports Department's strategy to deal with these unprecedented situations?

We stayed true to the Agency's commitment to on-the-ground journalism.

The editorial management gave us our direction very early on. At the sports department, our mantra is to be the eyes and ears of our clients. Whether via journalists from the department sent out onto the ground or via correspondents working in bureaus around our global network.

You have to take the positives: the restrictions enabled us to cover more events. With some events cancelled, we took the opportunity to cover others, often in several languages. For example, we followed the French women's football team whenever they played away, even when they travelled long distances.

There's nothing like seeing the action unfold in real time in terms of power and emotion. It's useful to be able to follow events virtually but this needs to be used correctly.

How did this play out in concrete terms?

We had to wait to find out how each institution was going to organise its events, often right up until the last minute.

Health restrictions could change from one day to the next and from one country to the next. Each federation required strict health safety measures, protocols could change at the drop of a hat. Our journalists coordinated between themselves as quickly as possible to avoid missing anything. Spaces were limited in the stands, there were no mixed zones and access to press conferences was limited or even banned... But we were there.

Formula One restarted as early as 2020. Their procedures required that journalists could be at the event but 'confined' all day in the press centre: no access to the stands nor the press conferences. Journalists who had made the trip to be present at the event felt hard done by when organisers held virtual press conferences. They needed to find a way to give priority to those physically there.



AFP photographer Aris Messinis covers the China vs Puerto Rico (women) basketball game on July 27, 2021 during the Tokyo Olympics. © Thomas Coex / AFP

A compromise was mooted: the first part of the press conference would be open to all for 10-15 minutes. Then there would be a second part, still via video-conference but only for journalists actually present at the venue. In this way, the drivers could expand on their answers, giving more information.

Euro 2020 and the Tokyo Olympics were postponed to 2021. Was this a challenge?

The Euros were a logistical headache: 11 countries, 11 cities, different Covid rules, a variety of restrictions on movement both within and between countries. Our coverage plan, normally agreed four to six months before an event, was still up in the air until the week before kick-off.

We needed to have plans A, B, C and D. We had to reorganise trips, flights, accreditations, hotels, tests. Luckily, we quickly had confirmation that we had accreditations for all the matches we wanted to cover. Same situation for the Olympics. We had 150 people covering the event. One week before departure, we still did not know for certain where we would be staying. The government dripped out information, waiting to see how the situation would develop. About a fortnight before the Games started, they decided the event would be held behind closed doors, tens of thousands of tickets were cancelled.

We only received confirmation that we had seats in the stands when we actually got there.

The Tokyo Olympics coverage was unanimously hailed as a success. What was it like behind the scenes?

After lengthy and difficult entry procedures, the Games took place in a positive atmosphere.

The Japanese government was worried about thousands of foreigners arriving in the country. However, positive cases remained low so the measures were relaxed. There was still concern about mixed zones, which in the end were set up with social distancing. In the end, our coverage was roughly the same as what we would have hoped for in an ideal world.

There were a third fewer journalists in Tokyo than there had been in Rio, around 4,000 compared to 6,000 expected. The conditions to get into Japan and then move around put off a lot of media.

We did the opposite: we assigned the same number of journalists that we had done in Rio so we could be present on the ground in large numbers. This was really appreciated by our clients.

For 14 days after arriving in Japan, you could only move around in the Olympics area, the hotel and Olympics sites. You could not go into town or take public transport. This temporarily prevented our journalists from doing stories on the sidelines of the Olympics, about Japan, temples, Mount Fuji...

So the Tokyo bureau gave us a huge added-value. AFP could offer a wide variety of stories that the bureau had been working on for months.

As the head of the service, I went out early in mid-June and stayed for two months. I had a strict quarantine locked in my room, with meals placed three times a day outside my door. Then I lived like a Tokyo resident for three weeks ahead of the Opening Ceremony. I worked in the Tokyo bureau for a few weeks before my colleagues arrived, then I joined up with the Olympic team. This resulted in very smooth coordination.



Discover the enriched version of the 2021 Annual Report on AFP.com

What will remain after the pandemic? What will it be like going back to normal?

Working methods of both journalists and organisers have changed. We need to keep a close eye on these changes, though, and make sure they result in the news getting out.

One question is how to organise journalists in stadiums.

You could imagine a reduction in the number of media seats for live events. But one day, we'll have to go back to the number of seats that was envisaged in the first place. The press seats must not be transformed into a VIP area.

In the name of Covid measures, photographers have been extremely restricted in terms of access and in terms of pitch-side movement at football matches, often only being allowed to move at half-time. This is clearly over the top.

There is a clear argument in favour of safety when it comes to the pandemic. But this must not be misused to hinder journalists' work.

Do you think virtual press conferences will become the norm?

Institutions are broadly in favour. So are we: it offers greater access to information. We believe it is fundamental however that journalists that make the trip should retain the advantage.

Some clubs tried to put in place a system where journalists had to submit questions the day before a press conference. No way! The whole point of a press conference is precisely that no one knows what questions will be asked and who will speak. The exercise cannot be distorted. We cannot allow questions to be known in advance or even selected by press officers.

To ease logistical and staffing challenges, a few journalists can sometimes collate colleagues' questions, but the press officer cannot have access to them beforehand.

We wrote a protest letter to a major federation, signed by the whole press corps, to insist that press conferences are organised in a correct fashion and do not become a propaganda exercise.

How did your teams find this year?

Interpersonal relationships, which is what gives our job its richness and satisfaction, were limited in 2020 and 2021. Our journalists really missed that.

It was a serious challenge to keep spirits up, what with lockdowns, never-ending tests, isolation, fewer contacts, social distancing.

Journalists also had the difficulty of not being able to work their sources, with informal and formal meetings virtually non-existent in 2021. This prevented us from keeping up our relations with sources. New AFP journalists arrived in the department (because of our internal mobility scheme) on new beats and had practically never been able to see their main contacts.

With three years to go until the Paris 2024 Olympics, let's hope that the situation improves. We will keep the same mantra: get on the ground, always on the ground.

For the Winter Olympics in Beijing in 2022, we are keeping the same staffing levels as in 2018 to get the news out – just as our clients like it.



A butterfly lands on Japan's Naomi Osaka as she plays against Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during their women's singles match on day five of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on February 12, 2021. © Paul Crock / AFP



The pack rides during the 118th edition of the Paris-Roubaix one-day classic cycling race, between Compiègne and Roubaix, northern France, on October 3, 2021. © Anne-Christine Poujoulat / AFP

FOCUS

MEDIACONNECT



**ANNE
BOUSSARIE**

MEDIACONNECT
MANAGING
DIRECTOR

“An innovative service without precedent in France, MediaConnect aims to ease relations between journalists and communications officers at institutions, firms and NGOs.”

How was MediaConnect born?

MediaConnect came about after a survey of current practices. We conducted interviews and focus groups with the various parties: journalists (from AFP and elsewhere) and communications officers to find out what was working and what could be improved.

Armed with this information, we found out that the press release remained an extremely important tool for journalists but their inboxes are literally drowning in them. Journalists receive a press release by mail every eight minutes on average among which only 10 percent are relevant to them. And even those often lack the necessary information to dig deeper into a topic. There are several reasons for this: a writing style that is too ‘marketing’ for journalists to use, irrelevant multi-media content linked to the release, insufficient or missing contacts.

What conclusions did you draw?

There is no tool available today enabling journalists to access all this information in the same place. And more broadly, there is no tool that brings together all press releases in one place.

The lack of accurately targeted releases, mentioned both by journalists and communications officers, showed that press relations strategies needed to be more closely aligned with communications and content strategies. A tool was needed that could give an exhaustive overview of a sector beyond what can be found in the ‘press and media’ section of websites.

MediaConnect has been operational since June 2021. This new service is the fruit of a joint venture between AFP and its European technology partner Epresspack, a specialist in software solutions for communications professionals, notably those in charge of press and public relations.

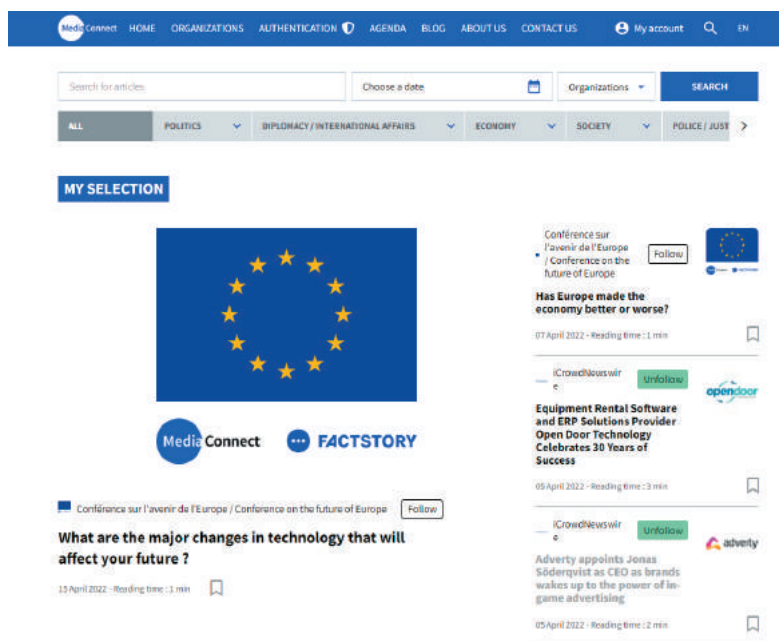
How does it work for journalists?

The MediaConnect database offers journalists content tailored to their preferences via personalised alerts.

Journalists can fill in a form free-of-charge, set up an account and gain access to a secure and personalised space. Each journalist selects alerts by doing an advanced search of topics. The journalist can subscribe to a section or a distributor and can toggle favourites. He or she can also watch press conferences live via the platform and see forthcoming events from that distributor. It is also possible to set up alerts depending on the topic covered, apply for accreditations, and integrate forthcoming events into his or her own diary.

MediaConnect respects GDPR data protection laws and the confidentiality of the personal data, which can be easily deleted if the journalists wish. The data are only available to MediaConnect.

Access to MediaConnect is totally free to journalists and the public. The platform is available as a mobile version in English and in French.



And for distributors?

Companies and organisations have a dedicated interface “pressroom”, which has a description (logo, contacts, social media) that allows them to present their content how they like and without intermediaries.

The communications teams finance the platform with two possible subscriptions: Easy Pack (a contact base of journalists in France) and Premium Pack (a contact base of journalists in France and internationally).

These packages allow them to publish unlimited content on MediaConnect and benefit from several functions:

- Storage space to link multimedia content to their press releases
- Blockchain certificates to fight against the publication of fake press releases
- Access to a diary to publish information on forthcoming events
- The possibility to publish information on international newswires, for a premium fee, via partnerships
- Performance analysis tools via a series of indicators showing how various pieces of content were viewed or used. Using the interface, the distributor can also publish their releases by email to his or her own contacts, which can be easily imported.

Who are your first clients?

Our first clients came from several different branches: ANCOLS (national agency for low-cost housing), the Committee of the Regions (an EU institution representing regions and cities), Solocal (former Yellow Pages), PaybyPhone, Ducatti. The initial feedback from journalists and distributors is encouraging.



MediaConnect, *Challenges* and Hopscotch organised a talk on 17 November 2021 on “Journalists & communicators: Getting out of the trench warfare?” with Anne-Laure Descleves (Head of Communications at Getlink/Euro-tunnel), Benoît Désveaux (Managing Director and member of the Hopscotch board), Fabrice Fries (Chairman and CEO of AFP), Anne Meaux (President of Image 7), Pierre-Henri de Menthon (Editorial Director of *Challenges*), Lucie Prusak (President of the Association of Social Information Journalists), Amaury de Rochegonde (President of the Association of Media Journalists), Xavier Simon (Managing Director Western Europe of Cision). A talk co-hosted by: Thuy-Diep Nguyen (Editor-in-Chief of *Challenges*) and Hugues Dago (Editorial Manager of MediaConnect)

BRIEFING ON

11 DAY WAR



**GUILLAUME
LAVALLEE**

**JERUSALEM
BUREAU CHIEF**

“11 days of direct clashes between Hamas and the Israeli army, remorseless aerial bombing of Gaza, 4,300 rockets fired into the south of Israel. No front-line, no shelter. Intense coverage without a break.”

Tell us how this blitzkrieg started.

The weeks leading up to the war were very tense in Jerusalem, with violent clashes every day between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli forces in and around the Old City.

At the beginning of May, these tensions increased, culminating in weekend clashes on the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem that resulted in hundreds of injuries.

On the afternoon of May 10, “Yom Yerushaleim” or “Jerusalem Day”, everything started moving very quickly. We were worried about fresh clashes because Jewish organisations were also marching in the Old City. At 5pm, the Islamist movement Hamas issued an ultimatum from the Gaza Strip: if police did not withdraw from the esplanade within an hour, rockets would be launched.

At 6pm, air raid sirens sounded in Jerusalem as the first rockets were fired towards the city. Hundreds of rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel during the night. The Israeli army immediately responded with air strikes on Gaza.

At the beginning, we didn’t know if this was an escalation, the sort of two or three-day clash that happens quite regularly between Israel and Hamas, or whether we were actually at war, the fourth in Gaza.

How were your teams organised?

Everyone immediately switched into ‘war mode’. We had to mobilise text, video and photo teams in Gaza, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in a fraction of a second. Everything happened at the same time.

There were also serious tensions between Arabs and Jews in other Israeli cities. On the West Bank, there were violent clashes in Palestinian camps. So we were dealing simultaneously with war in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, clashes in “mixed cities” in Israel, and violence in Palestinian camps. If the clashes intensified, we knew that it would be extremely hard to cover three fronts at once.

At one point, rockets were fired from Lebanon towards Israel. We thought that if this were to spread as well towards the northern borders, we would be overtaken by events.

All this together combined to give us a feeling that things were getting on top of us. The amount of things we had to cover was increasing -- so were the risks. Given this, how could we cover such an unpredictable situation 24 hours a day? How to manage the significant security risks for our teams? For example, how does our reporter on the ground manage risk if clashes break out in Lod, a city two hours from Tel Aviv, and people start shooting?

This all lasted for 11 days but when we were in the midst of the coverage, we asked ourselves when it would end: could this war last several months?



The Israeli Iron Dome missile defence system intercepts rockets fired by the Hamas movement towards southern Israel from Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on May 14, 2021.
© Anas Baba / AFP

On top of clashes of untold violence, we then had Saturday May 15, the day the Jala Tower in Gaza was destroyed.

May 15 was perhaps a turning point in the war. The Israeli army had signalled that they were going to target the Jala Tower, which houses the offices of US agency Associated Press and TV channel Al-Jazeera. Everyone was evacuated. An hour later, the Israeli army bombed the tower, which collapsed like a pancake.

We had decided to offer our colleagues from AP and Al-Jazeera shelter in our office, which went from 10 people to 30 in the space of a few hours -- in the middle of a war.

On a human level, it was very tricky. Gaza is a small place: there is no front line, no shelter from air strikes. Nothing in front, nothing behind. Journalists had to work, deal with logistical problems, and get their families to safety.

It was extremely stressful for us all. One colleague saw the house next to his completely destroyed, with damage that also wrecked part of his ground floor, as children screamed and cried.

On the Israeli side, our colleagues in Tel Aviv saw rockets landing in their neighbourhood every day.

How did you manage the situation as bureau chief?

This war took place at the end of Ramadan, after a month of already high tensions in Jerusalem. When war broke out, we were already extremely tired. No one really slept during this time.

It was a challenge to coordinate and also be on the ground. Major media had similar experiences to us. The journalists here have already covered this sort of thing, they know where and how to position themselves, how far to keep from the events as they unfold, how to be “as close as possible” without exposing oneself to too much danger.

What fascinated me was the intensity. Hamas fired more than 4,000 rockets in 11 days at Israel. Ninety percent of them were intercepted but that still leaves considerable destruction. It was shorter than other Gaza wars but it had never been so intense, which resulted in tough psychological pressures.

For part of the war, as bureau chief, I was caught between two stools, because I am bureau chief but also a reporter. I alternated between coordinating and getting out on the ground.

As bureau chief, you want to see what is happening: it's not easy to strike the right balance between being in the “control tower” and being on the ground.

During the war, Gaza was blocked off. I couldn't send reinforcements. I had to wait until the war was over, on May 21, to go into Gaza, to see the damage, both physical and psychological. The stress people felt was so intense that it actually became a story but it was also something to deal with inside the office: how could we be sure our colleagues would cope after the war?

Our blog was a way of paying tribute to the work of our colleagues, with a special focus on Gaza, this

enclosed territory and its exceptional risks. Lots of people however did not want to be interviewed, out of modesty, not to play the journalistic hero and see their names in print. I would like to pay tribute to each and every one of them here.

Let's get back to the coverage strategy. How do you manage to write so many stories in such a chaotic situation?

We stayed extremely vigilant. During a war, both parties are more sensitive but so too are readers. The Israel-Palestinian conflict enflames passions: people become hypersensitive to every word we write, every photo and video we publish. I think we fulfilled our mission: bear witness to reality, show the human face of the conflict and stay within AFP guidelines.

We had guidelines for our coverage: how to refer to certain things, what context to give, how to remain impartial... these guardrails enabled us to aim for the same high standards, over very high volumes of production.

One photo from this war stands out, a picture taken by Anas Baba where you can see the rockets being launched from Gaza and, at the same time, Israel's anti-missile shield working to intercept them. The photo captured the technological reality of 21st century war in a strangely poetic way, while still hinting at the contrast between this aerial ballet and the devastating impact on the ground.

We also spent a considerable time sifting through the rubble to show the human face of the war: people who had lost loved ones, the daily fear of having a rocket or bomb fall on your house.

This blitzkrieg caused untold damage. How did journalists and the people bounce back from this tragedy?

What struck me was the reach of the psychological trauma. It has a cumulative impact, wars that come back and pile up, traumas from past wars that re-emerge. We followed psychiatrists in Gaza to see how they worked after a war to prevent the intense stress turning into long-term post-traumatic stress syndrome. This group of psychiatrists went to speak to people. They visited civilian victims' families, played games to get children speaking, drawing, moving. Getting them back on their feet somehow.

The taboo that used to surround mental health is starting to become outdated. People now admit they have been through a significant trauma. Socially there is more openness about this issue and its treatment.

What were your staffing levels like on the ground?

The bureaux in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Gaza are linked. This is about 35 people: photographers, video journalists, technicians and administrative staff. We produce directly in French, English and Arabic. During the war in Jerusalem, we had text, photo and video reinforcements. Others came after the war in Gaza. We also mobilised our stringer network. All this meant that we had around 50 in total.

The global success of our coverage of this war showed the intense interest from our clients around the world.

The war showed how the Israel-Palestinian conflict continues to fascinate people, despite what you might sometimes think. Millions of people were trying to find out what was going on. Rumours were spreading everywhere. On this issue, it is often said that truth is the first casualty of war. Our job is to stay as close to the action on the ground as possible, bring it to life via images, words and human stories. This does not mean that we are not sometimes wrong, but our guiding light remains the search for the facts.



This combination of pictures created on May 15, 2021 shows the Jala Tower (highest building) housing international media outlets in Gaza city controlled by the Palestinian Hamas movement, on May 15, 2021, and a ball of fire erupting from the the same building after being hit by an Israeli air strike on the same day.
© Mahmud Hams / AFP

FOCUS

FACTSTORY: OBJECTIVE 2024



**OTMAN
MERICHE**
FACTSTORY
MANAGING
DIRECTOR



**FLEUR
LAURENT**
FACTSTORY
DEPUTY
MANAGING
DIRECTOR

“FACTSTORY’s performance has been remarkable: 15-percent growth in sales compared to 2019, the reference year until now.”

How was 2021 commercially?

It is our best year ever in terms of sales, with record profits. So very good! Our order book started to fill up from May. There is maybe a catch-up effect from 2020 but we had a record spike in orders in the second half of the year.

To achieve these results, we decided to focus on keeping our existing clients, while of course actively seeking new prospects.

Our activity is special: we produce audiovisual material but many of our projects are one-offs, making them the first relationship we have with the client.

It’s up to us to make sure it’s not the only one. We want clients to recognise our qualities and commit to longer and more ambitious production contracts.

FACTSTORY’s business is driven by big contracts with European and international institutions such as the European Parliament, UNFPA, and UNICEF. These make up half of our turnover.

We have also chosen to increase our sales efforts on the domestic French market and this is beginning to pay off. Today, we now have EDF (Electricite de France) as one of our clients. They weren’t in our portfolio before 2020 and we are starting to build a very interesting relationship with them.

As for prospective clients, we are more selective on the size and quality of our portfolio, which allows us – once we have a trusting relationship – to ‘upsell’ other services.

Finally, we have merged our photo and video production services and appointed a project chief to put client relations at the heart of our activity. This project head has a combined commercial and editorial vision, allowing us to support our clients for longer on more projects.

Was the name change in 2020 well received by clients?

Yes and that was definitely one of the highlights of the year. AFP Services became FACTSTORY in October 2020 but we didn’t start to communicate on the new name until the beginning of 2021. Several clients liked the name change and congratulated us on our new visual identity.

At first, it wasn’t easy for many of us not to bear the AFP name any more. But in the end, it allowed us to ‘renew’ ourselves, define a different image and make our position on the market more readable. We are now clearly recognised as a production company, whose business is separate from AFP’s.

This new identity has allowed us to highlight our creative side. Video represents 70 percent of our turnover but we also produce photos, text, graphics and motion design...

2021 was a year of significant progress. What about 2022?

We have three goals for 2022 and the coming years. First of all, we want to conso-



Photographic coverage of the Diamond League in Florence (Italy) in July 2021. More than 150 photos per competition. © Stefano Rellandini.



Filming at the site of a Boko Haram attack in Zabarmari, northern Nigeria. © Hamza Suleiman.

validate our current levels of turnover. This will be possible on the corporate side if we manage to keep our best clients for as long as possible by making ourselves an irreplaceable partner in their content production strategy.

We also need to do more work on institutional calls for tender. Institutions remain at the heart of our business and are the best shop window to show what we can do.

We must also keep profitability levels above 10 percent to ensure we can continue to develop.

What strategies do you have in place to hit these goals?

We are in a very competitive market where barriers to entry are beginning to be set up. Filming equipment has become lighter and less expensive than 10 or 15 years ago, enabling lots of smaller companies to come in with very competitive rates. Let's not forget either that institutions and big corporates have also invested in their own production teams. This is why we have chosen to concentrate on three main axes: quality, creativity and, above all, an unrivalled international production network.

Our main priority today is the French domestic market. We want to make the expertise we have been developing internationally for the past 10 years available to the French market.

Our main strength is that we produce our audiovisual content locally. We are currently the only production company able to get filming crews in place anywhere in the world in record time thanks to the breadth of our network. This translates into significant cost savings for our clients and also helps them reduce their carbon footprint.

We are also beginning to notice a significant trend on the French market that we have already seen elsewhere in the world. Institutions and companies are producing more and more content about their 'raison d'être', their mission, or their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) programme. They are tackling topics like energy transition, equality and diversity. We have been working on these topics for a long time with the European Parliament, the EU's DG ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) and EDF.

Our second main axis is of course to continue expanding our work with international institutions.

This sector is now at the heart of our business: the quality of our editorial work and our skills are recognised the world over. The fact that we are the audiovisual production subsidiary of AFP bolsters this reputation considerably. In 2022, we will be launching a development programme on this market in Africa, along the same lines as we previously put in place in Latin America.

Third axis: sport. With the Rugby World Cup in 2023 and the Paris Olympics in 2024, we are entering a huge period of sport in France, with institutions, companies and civil society all gearing up for it. We therefore need to be right on top of our game. On sport, we have built up unparalleled know-how over the years. Our good relations with the IOC, FIFA and other sporting institutions will be crucial. Diamond League athletics coverage or IOC productions during the Tokyo and Beijing Games are examples of our ability to gear up for big events.

Finally, we are working on developing the "documentary" format. Institutions are already frequently asking us to produce these. We recently did a documentary for Arte and France24 in northern Nigeria entitled "Surviving Boko Haram". This also showed our ability to shed light on historic and complicated geopolitical topics.

2021

IN SUMMARY



© Jens Schlueter / AFP

Homeworking proves effective at AFP

Homeworking had not been a frequent practice at AFP, but the Covid crisis showed the positive side of it and enabled us to continue working without too much inconvenience. Now, outside periods of pandemic and building work, eligible staff can work from home up to two days per week, in agreement with their manager. De-connecting, working time, isolation... work/life balance problems can quickly arise for homeworking staff. In February 2021, AFP published a guide to homeworking, including the main options and best practice to avoid the associated risks, with advice and resources, as well as a dedicated email address available to all. A Q&A on homeworking has recently been published on the intranet.



AFP taking the fight to all forms of discrimination

Since 2019, AFP has offered training in preventing sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. A procedure to raise the alarm on bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination has been tested at HQ and will be tested in Asia this year before being rolled out worldwide. Any staff member can at any time inform management if he/she spots any type of discrimination. Three people have been trained to deal with cases raised at HQ and others will soon be appointed across the regions.



© Bertrand Guay / AFP

2021 Annual pay negotiations: we have a deal

A package of measures totalling more than 1.3 million euros was agreed at the 2021 salary negotiations, of which nearly 0.8 million were yearly measures. To better reward everyone's commitment, we decided on the following measures: an increased fixed collective bonus from January 1, 2022; a more generous system of individual bonuses and promotions in the first quarter of 2022; increased stringer rates and kilometre-based transport rates from January 1, 2022; and a one-off management contribution for social and cultural activities in 2021.



© Tiziana Fabi / AFP

Negotiations on equality and quality of life at work

A four-year negotiating cycle comes to an end at the start of 2022. A meeting assessing a previous deal on this subject was held at the end of October with the relevant unions. A new negotiating cycle is being held from end 2021 to the beginning of 2022. Management agreed to maintain salaries at 100 percent during paternity leave and childcare after extending the length of the latter in July. Other measures proposed by management will be discussed with our social partners from mid-April.



© Jonathan Näckstrand / AFP

AFP getting as close as possible to young audiences

In order to target young audiences more effectively, the 'new audience' group is working directly with top editors to ensure that AFP immediately covers their topics of interest, such as the future of the planet, connected world, sport, gender and diversity. A new informal network of journalists interested in video games has already had an impact on our coverage of this crucial topic. We need to ensure that the voices and ideas of our youngest journalists are better heard and taken into account.



© AFP

AFP boosts its coverage in North Africa

Based in Tunis, a new 'North Africa Hub' will give AFP even more complete, dynamic and original coverage of news from the region.

"We believe the Maghreb is a strategically important area which is under-reported by many international media. AFP's decision to strengthen coverage of this region is part of our wider commitment to deepening our unique global network of bureaus and correspondents," said AFP's Global News Director Phil Chetwynd. Headed by one of AFP's most experienced journalists, Ezzedine Said, the new regional editorial structure will be tasked, among other things, with producing more multimedia content across a range of subjects including the environment. It will coordinate and enhance the reporting by the Tunis, Rabat, Algiers and Tripoli bureaus, to tackle in greater depth stories from all spheres of life from social issues to the economy and culture.

In all, AFP will have 24 journalists based around the Maghreb region, including in text, photo, video and digital verification.

MICHÈLE LÉRIDON

THE AGENCY AT HER HEART



© Geoffroy Van der Hasselt / AFP

Terrible news struck us during that strange period of time towards the end of a lockdown: Michèle Léridon died suddenly, sending a shockwave through the whole Agency.

AFP Global News Editor for five years before leaving for the French Broadcasting Authority (CSA) in 2019, Michèle was an extraordinary woman, whose vision left a deep mark on the Agency.

First and foremost, Michèle was a great news professional, a peerless, independent and demanding journalist driven by justice and the freedom to inform. “Our work is a battle, a collective battle,” she would say. She deeply loved her profession, as one loves oxygen. A way of life, based on openness, honesty, morality and courage.

She knew every nook and cranny of the Agency, in all its richness and complexity. Her 37-year AFP career was impressive: desk, reporter in France and in Africa, Rome bureau chief, first woman appointed head of the Global Editorial Careers Management department and then the first woman Global News Director. Never forgetting what it was like to be on the ground, always seeking to go further, seeing things with a critical eye, listening to society -- the whole of society -- and searching for the truth behind the facts.

This was the spirit of the debate she launched within the Agency after the astonishing election of Donald Trump and the vote for Brexit. How could we, the media, have been so blind as not to see anything like this coming?

It was her integrity, combined with a keen intellect and great professional rigour, that led her to ask such questions. Her straight-talking and her quips hit home. You came out of such exchanges a bigger person. A better one too.

“The legacy she left behind is the foundation on which everything we are doing

now is built,” stresses Phil Chetwynd, who worked at her side as Global Chief Editor before succeeding her as Global News Director.

Video, the lightning-fast development of fact-checking, our indispensable editorial charters... Michèle was daring and ambitious in arming AFP for the huge challenges facing it. “For everything to stay the same, everything must change,” she would say, quoting Le Guépard.

“If there was a Marianne of journalism, she would look like Michèle” was the shrewd assessment of Christophe Deloire, General Secretary of Reporters Without Borders, at a eulogy to an “ideal journalistic colleague” on Place de la Bourse on May 20, attended by her three sons Timothee, Joseph and Pablo, her partner Piero and many friends and media personalities.

Michèle was a woman of conviction, blessed with immense human qualities, sincere and without artifice, sensitive to the world and other people. She was extremely humble, as noted in so many eulogies after her death.

She was always accessible and took an interest in all the Agency’s journalists and staff, wherever they were in the world. She had herself experienced the horrors of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, so never forgot what journalists go through when covering brutal conflict. She worked hard to extract our stringers from Syria, rushed to the Beirut bureau to oversee the delicate evacuation of one of our photographers from Aleppo, and travelled to Kabul to console our teams and relatives when our journalists were killed in Afghanistan.



16 March 2017 - Michèle Léridon with Karam Al-Masri, winner of the Investigation and Reporting Award at the 10th edition of the Assises International Journalism Awards.



November 2018 - At a dinner with the Kabul office

She prioritised the safety of our journalists and treating the psychological dangers to which they are exposed.

Well before #Metoo, she openly fought for the place of women at the Agency and in the content it produces. She had a knack of seizing on a nascent idea and expanding it into an innovative initiative that would improve equality, diversity and opportunities for younger generations. To honour this, AFP and Arcom -- the successor to CSA that regulates audiovisual and digital content -- created the “Michèle Léridon prize” for diversity in the media, open to students that have followed the training course at the La Chance association.

Tall with sparkly, kindly eyes and a bright smile, Michèle had an elegance in heart and spirit that inspired a deep respect.

You wanted to share her passions for cinema, for Italy, her enthusiasm, her sense of humour and her peals of laughter.

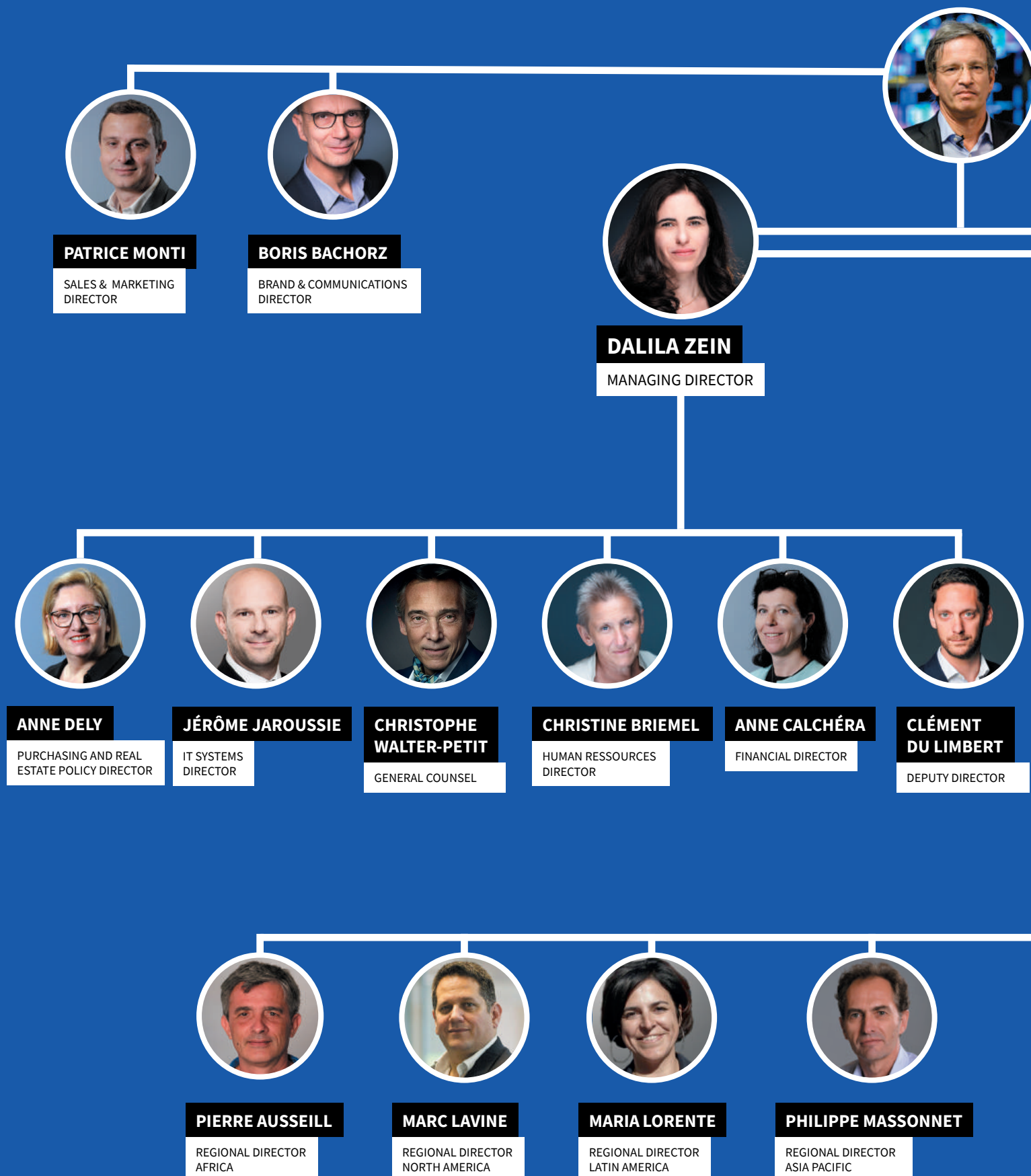
Every day, I count myself as privileged to have worked at her side, forming with her a friendly rapport. She always hated it when we overdid things.

“This story is too long,” she would say. She left me with an obsession: try to be fair. Just that.

Sophie Huet, Global editor-in-chief

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

DECEMBER 1ST, 2021



FABRICE FRIES

CHAIRMAN & CEO



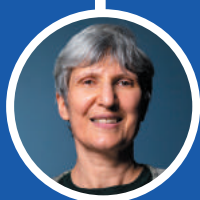
PHIL CHETWYND

GLOBAL NEWS DIRECTOR



SOPHIE HUET

GLOBAL EDITOR-
IN-CHIEF



**JULIETTE
HOLLIER-LAROUSSE**

DEPUTY NEWS DIRECTOR -
VIDEO AND AUDIO



ÉRIC BARADAT

DEPUTY NEWS DIRECTOR -
PHOTO, GRAPHICS,
DOCUMENTATION AND DATA



JEAN-LUC BARDET

DEPUTY NEWS
DIRECTOR



PHILIPPE ONILLON

DEPUTY NEWS
DIRECTOR - MOBILITY
AND PROJECTS



CHRISTINE BUHAGIAR

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
EUROPE



JEAN-LUC BARDET

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FRANCE



SYLVAIN ESTIBAL

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AMERICA

PRIZES

& AWARDS

In 2021, AFP journalists won several international prizes. For the second consecutive year, AFP video production was recognised by the AIB Media Awards and photo production by the Guardian's "Agency photographer of the Year."



Agence France-Presse

AIB Media Awards 2021
News Agency of the Year



Mohamed Abed

Bayeux Calvados-Normandie Award for war correspondents
2nd Prize in the "Photo" category - International Jury awarded by Nikon



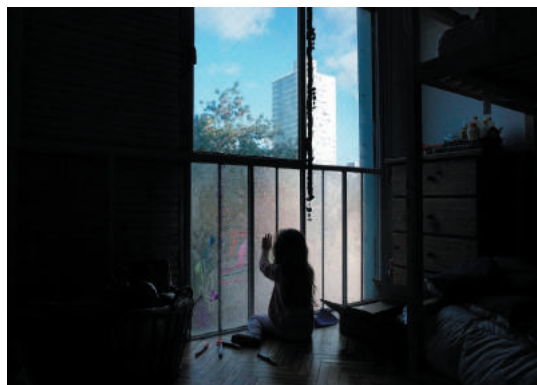
May 20, 2021 – Gaza, Palestine



Eitan Abramovitch

POY Latam

2nd Photo Prize in the “Pandemic in Latin America” category



April 06, 2020 – Montevideo, Uruguay



Sameer Al-Doumy

Hamdan International Photography Awards (HIPA)

1st Place in the “General - Color” category



August 27, 2020 – the Channel, France



Raul Arboleda

Paris Sport Photo

3rd Place in the “Reportage” category



September 27, 2018 – Puerto Colombia, Colombia



Ernesto Benavides

World Press Photo 2021

2nd Place in the “Spot News” category



November 12, 2020 – Lima, Peru

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



Yasuyoshi Chiba

The Guardian

Agency Photographer of the Year



June 23, 2021 – Mekele, Ethiopia



Fabrice Coffrini

Paris Sport Photo

3rd Prize in the “Action” category

Swiss Press Photo

3rd Prize in the “News” category



December 19, 2020 – Engelberg, Switzerland



June 6, 2020 – Geneva, Switzerland



Yuri Cortez

Istanbul Photo Awards

2nd Prize in the “Single News” category



September 4, 2020 – Quezaltepeque, El Salvador



Josh Edelson

Covering Climate Now Journalism Awards
Winner in the “Photography” category



September 7, 2020 – California, United States

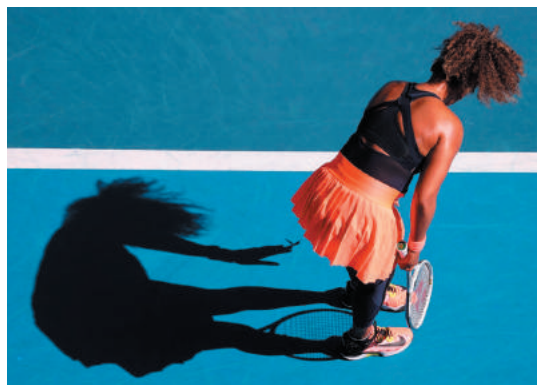


David Gray

Tokyo International Foto Awards (TIFA)
Silver Award in “Editorial/Sports” category

Bronze Award in “Editorial/Sports” category

Honorable mention



February 12, 2021 – Melbourne, Australia



Marlowe Hood

Biophilia Award for Environmental Communication (BBVA Foundation)
3rd Biophilia Award for Environment Communication

Fundación
BBVA



Andrej Isakovic

Serbia Press Photo
Best Sports Photo of the Year



September 12, 2021 – Monza, Italy

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



Aref Karimi

Marai Photo Award

Winner in the "Photo Story" category



May 05, 2019– Herat, Afghanistan



Sammy Ketz

Prix Scam 2021

Christophe de Ponfily Award for his
entire journalistic work

Scam*



Chandan Khanna

Andrei Stenin International Press Photo Contest

1st Prize in the "Top News Series" category



June 02, 2020 – Minneapolis, United States



Joe Klamar

Paris Sport Photo

3rd Prize in the "Offbeat" category



August 09, 2020– Brno, Czech Republic



Wakil Kohsar

Prix Varenne National

Award for an International Topic

Prix Polka

Polka Award for Photographer of the Year 2021



August 16, 2021 – Kabul, Afghanistan



August 16, 2021 – Kabul, Afghanistan



Solan Kolli

Rory Peck

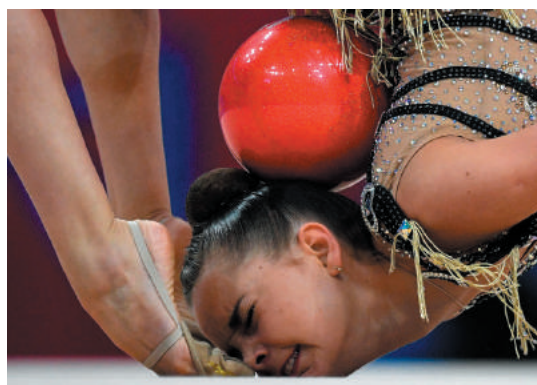
1st Prize in the “News” category



Kiril Kudryavtsev

Paris Sport Photo

2nd Prize in the “Offbeat” category



June 22, 2019 – Minsk, Belarus

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



Saul Loeb

POYi

2nd Prize in the “Impact 2020: Election Season”
category



August 28, 2020 – Maryland, United States



Léo Malafaia

Prix Varenne

International Award



October 21, 2019 – Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Brazil



Clément Melki

Prix Varenne

Young Journalist Prize in the “National Daily Press”
category



Guerchom Ndebo

Albert Kahn Prize

Winner of the “Avenir Photo” section



May 22, 2021 – Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo



Segun Olakoyenikan

Prix Africa Check

2nd Prize of “Fact-Check of the Year by a Working Journalist”



Jeff Pachoud

Paris Sport Photo

Grand Prix as well as first prize for his black and white “best of” selection from the Tour De France

Winter Sport Photo Awards

1st Prize in the “Stories/Single” category



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



March 16, 2018 – Arêches-Beaufort, France



Mauro Pimentel

Vladimir Herzog Journalism Award for Amnesty and Human Rights

Honorable mention



May 06, 2021 – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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



Juliette Rabat

Plumes et caméras de l'économie et du droit
"Plume d'argent" (silver quill) in the "Economic and
legal issues" category



LES PLUMES
DE L'ÉCONOMIE & DU DROIT



Leo Ramirez

The SOPA Awards
2nd Prize in the "Excellence in Video Reporting"
category



Paul Ratje

Lucie Awards
Impact Award



September 19, 2021 – Del Rio, United States



Hector Retamal

The SOPA Awards
1st Prize in the "Excellence in Photography" category



April 16, 2020 – Wuhan, China



Hector Retamal

POYi

1st Place in the “Spot News” category

Fotoprensa

1st Prize in the International category



January 31, 2020 – Wuhan, China



Steven Saphore

TIFA

Silver in the “Editorial/Political” category



July 24, 2021 – Sydney, Australia



Roberto Schmidt

POYi

1st Place in the category “Impact 2020: protests and movements”



June 02, 2020 – Washington, United States



Antonin Thuillier

Paris Sport Photo

3rd Prize for his “From Above” series from the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha



September 30, 2019 – Doha, Qatar

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



Kenzo Tribouillard

Prix Varenne
National Press Award



April 29, 2020 – Seraing, Belgium



Loïc Venance

Mirabaud Yacht Racing Image
Main Prize



February 06, 2021 – Les Sables-d'Olonne, France



Kerem Yücel

Press Photographs of the Year (TFMD)
Photo Essay of the Year Award
Special Prize “Rafet Hüner”



September 01, 2020 – Kenosha, United States



Medialab of AFP

U.S.-Paris Tech Challenge
Prize winner (International competition
for the best tools to fight disinformation)





**Jalees Andrabi
Bhuvan Bagga
Maude Brulard
Abhaya Srivastava
Archana Thiyagarajan**

Human Rights Press Awards

Award of Merit in the “Breaking News” category
(in English)



© Sajjad Hussain / AFP

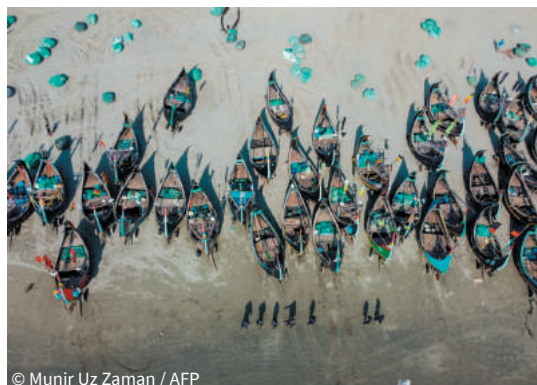
November 21, 2020 – New Delhi, India



**Peter Brieger
Haeril Halim
Sam Jahan
Sam Reeves**

Human Rights Press Awards

Award of Merit in “Investigative Feature
writing” category (in English)



© Munir Uz Zaman / AFP

October 07, 2020 – Shamlapur, Bangladesh



**Hector Retamal
Sebastien Ricci**

Human Rights Press Awards

Winner in the “Breaking News writing” category
(in English)



© Hector Retamal / AFP

April 08, 2020 – Wuhan, China



**Mladen Antonov
Lillian Suwanrumpha
Jack Taylor**

Human Rights Press Awards

Award of Merit in the “Photography (Series)”
category



© Mladen Antonov / AFP

November 21, 2020 – Bangkok, Thailand

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



Bhuvan Bagga
Sajjad Hussain
Indranil Mukherjee
Jewel Samad
Arun Sankar
Himanshu Sharma
Money Sharma

Human Rights Press Awards

Award of Merit in the “Photography (Series)”
category



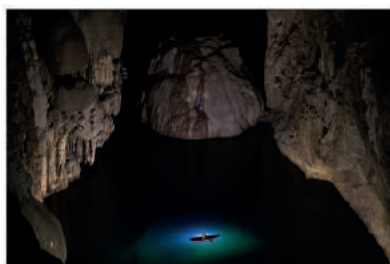
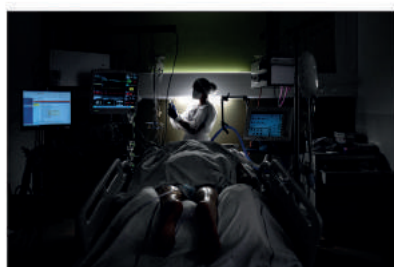
May 13, 2020 – New Delhi, India

THE YEAR

IN PICTURES

Focus

Le regard des photographes de l'AFP



La Découverte

To be there first, to bear witness: Eduardo Soteras was there in Tigray, in northern Ethiopia, revealing the horrors of a war that had been waged behind closed doors.

To be the last one there, when almost everyone else has left: Wakil Kohsar, who chose to stay in Kabul because he knows what it means to be a refugee, showed the Taliban parading around with the weapons and equipment abandoned by “the most powerful army in the world”.

Being where no one goes anymore, for a long time: Alexis Huguet documented the despair of refugees in Bijombo, DRC, really forgotten by all.

Being where you are not wanted because of what you represent: freedom of expression in Burma, or “mainstream media” during the assault on Capitol Hill.

Available in all (online) bookshops



Follow us on



[afp.com](https://www.afp.com) • [correspondent.afp.com](https://www.correspondent.afp.com) • [factcheck.afp.com](https://www.factcheck.afp.com)