

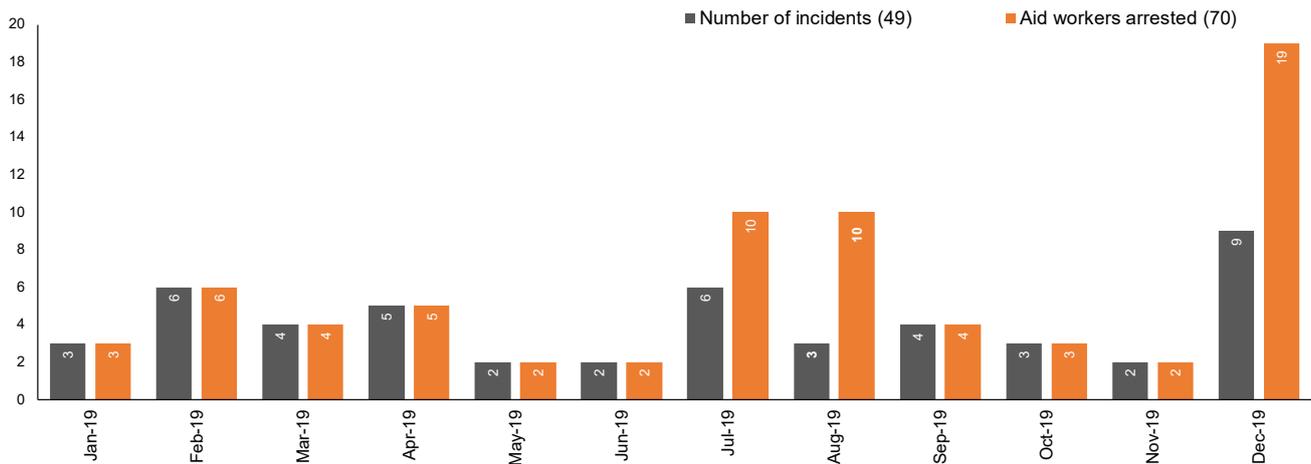
Aid Workers Arrested

2019

This document is published by Insecurity Insight and is part of a series that examines key trends in aid workers being killed, kidnapped and arrested (KKA) in 2019. It is based on incidents identified by Insecurity Insight's monitoring of open sources and verified submissions from partner agencies in which aid workers were reportedly arrested, charged, detained, fined or imprisoned.¹

Reported incidents and number of aid workers affected

This graph shows the number of incidents in which aid workers were arrested and the number of aid workers who were affected between January and December 2019. The data can be accessed via the [Aid Worker KKA](#) dataset on HDX.



Key trends in 2019

- In 2019, 70 aid workers were reportedly arrested in 49 incidents across 24 countries. A high number of aid workers were reportedly arrested in Yemen (23), followed by the CAR (8), South Sudan (7) and Syria (6).¹
- 2019 saw **fewer arrests than in 2018**, when 184 aid workers were arrested, with high numbers being reported in Bangladesh (61) and South Sudan (53).
- The reduction in the number of aid worker arrests and detentions in Bangladesh may be related to a reduction in the number of organisations operating in the country due to the **difficulties of the registration process**. In South Sudan, **bureaucratic restrictions**, interference by civilian authorities and security forces, and intimidation and harassment perpetrated by the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in Opposition (SPLA-IO), which has demanded that NGOs seek its permission to work in opposition-held areas, could be behind the decrease.
- The number of individual aid workers arrested peaked in December 2019. The main reason for this was the detention of seven aid workers during ID checks at road checkpoints in Yemen.
- Most aid worker arrests were related to general administrative procedures that took place during random stop-and-search activities at checkpoints or at airport immigration.
- However, aid workers in South Sudan and Iraq were arrested over allegations of membership of a terrorist or opposition group. In South Sudan, three INGO aid workers and their boat driver were stopped by members of the South Sudan People's Defence Force (SSPDF) while travelling by river in Upper Nile state. After a search of their boat resulted in cash being found, the SSPDF personnel detained all four on accusations of transporting money to the SPLA-IO. The aid workers were interrogated and the boat driver was severely beaten. After support from UNOCHA and state authorities, negotiations resulted in the release of all four detained people.
- Aid workers were also arrested for their personal behaviour, including personal disputes and criminality, including the sexual abuse of minors.

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Sexual abuse of beneficiaries by aid workers

- In 2019, at least three aid workers were arrested for, or on allegations of, the sexual abuse of minors:
- In the Dominican Republic, police arrested the US founder of a Haitian orphanage who had fled Haiti to avoid arrest and prosecution for reportedly molesting boys in his care.
- In Nepal, a court sentenced a Canadian charity worker to nine years' imprisonment on charges of sexually abusing two boys.
- In India, the founder of an NGO children's shelter home was detained following allegations of his involvement in the sexual abuse of an HIV-infected minor during her stay at his home in 2016.

Reporting Sexual Violence in Conflict Settings

Our new monthly report entitled 'Reporting Sexual Violence' provides summaries of publicly reported cases of sexual violence by members of state bodies or conflict actors, and sexual violence that targets IDPs/refugees or vulnerable beneficiaries. [Read the latest report here](#)

Aid workers arrested and detained in Yemen

- Most arrests or detentions of aid worker took place during random stop-and-search activities at checkpoints. However, in other cases aid workers were detained due to their personal profiles or on allegations of illegal espionage activities.
- On two occasions, female aid workers returning from aid distribution sessions were questioned and detained at checkpoints in Hajjah governorate for being in public without a male relative. They were denied further travel and told to stay at home.
- In another case, a male aid worker was informed by police that the aid organisation for which he worked had been placed under surveillance. He was later arrested for a personal matter and reportedly pressured into signing a confession incriminating the organisation as being involved in illegal espionage activities.



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The data has been updated with new and previously unavailable earlier reports and has been cross checked with the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD). The available open-source and partner-verified information is an indication of the number of aid workers arrested in 2019 and has not been independently verified. All decisions made on the basis of or with consideration to such information remain the responsibility of the organisations making such decisions.

Data collection is ongoing and data may change as more information is made available. Where the number of staff affected is unspecified, one is counted. Find more on definitions used by Insecurity Insight here: www.insecurityinsight.org/methodology-and-definitions. Suggested citation: Insecurity Insight. 2020. 'Aid workers arrested 2019, v. April 2020.' Vevey, Switzerland: Insecurity Insight.

¹Arrested: Refers to a staff member being arrested, charged, detained, fined or imprisoned.