

Bellingcat

2024 Annual Report

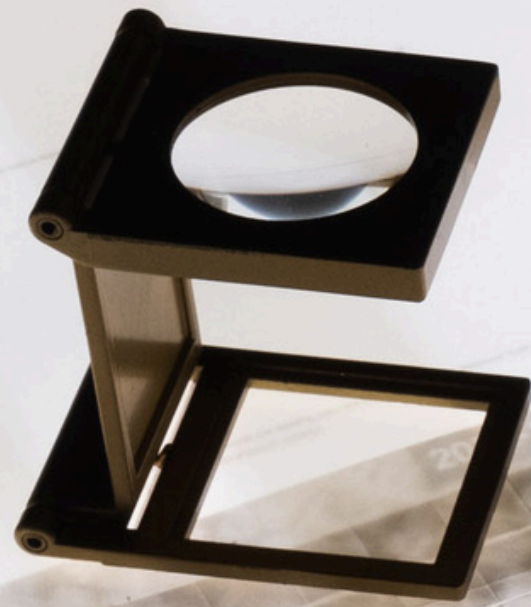


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Credits front cover: a photo of an artwork by Ahmed Shukur, photo by Mareike Foecking.



Welcome

By Eliot Higgins



Ten years ago, I founded Bellingcat with two simple aims: to provide guides and case studies to help people learn how to conduct open source investigations, and to create a platform where anyone carrying out those investigations could publish their work. It was driven by my belief in the value of open source investigations and my desire to foster transparency and accountability in our work. I wanted to create a platform that was not controlled by traditional institutions that typically shape public opinion, but a platform that was shaped directly by the public themselves.

What has happened since has exceeded my wildest expectations. Open source investigation has become an integral part of news reporting worldwide, particularly in conflicts such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the crisis in Gaza. Newsrooms across the globe have adopted Bellingcat's methodologies, often informed by the training we have provided. Meanwhile, open source investigation has evolved from theory to practice in the realm of legal accountability, informing the work of international justice bodies, including partnerships with the International Criminal Court on investigations into crimes committed in Ukraine.

While much of open source investigation has focused on conflict, over the past decade, we have expanded its application to a growing range of topics, including the far right, non-consensual deepfake pornography, environmental issues, and even the kidnapping of dogs. The power of open source investigation lies in its versatility—it can be applied to an immense variety of subjects, from matters of international significance to hyper-local and personal concerns. Open source investigation is for everyone, and no topic is off-limits.

But it is not enough to simply say this—we must take action to ensure it becomes reality. Bellingcat has directly trained thousands of people through workshops and reached many more through our guides, case studies, and community engagement. The impact of this work was most evident in the response to Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. News organisations and human rights groups applied the lessons they had learned from Bellingcat to investigate the conflict in new ways, bringing clarity to contested events and pushing back against disinformation. The community that had formed around Bellingcat since 2014, especially looking at Ukraine, used the knowledge it had gained to rapidly debunk falsehoods, geolocate thousands of videos, and help the wider public make sense of the deluge of online information amid the full-scale invasion.

In turn, Bellingcat built upon these efforts. Our Global Authentication Project—a team of trained volunteers—worked to verify the many geolocations produced by the online community, creating a dataset that populated Bellingcat's Civilian Harm Map, a resource used by civil society actors to inform their work on the conflict. The contributions of this community also enabled us to rapidly publish articles debunking fakes and shedding light on the horrific events unfolding in Ukraine. Most importantly, our Justice and Accountability team, led by Nick Waters, worked with partners at the Global Legal Action Network to develop and implement a process for investigating potential war crimes using open source methods—providing the International Criminal Court with crucial evidence.

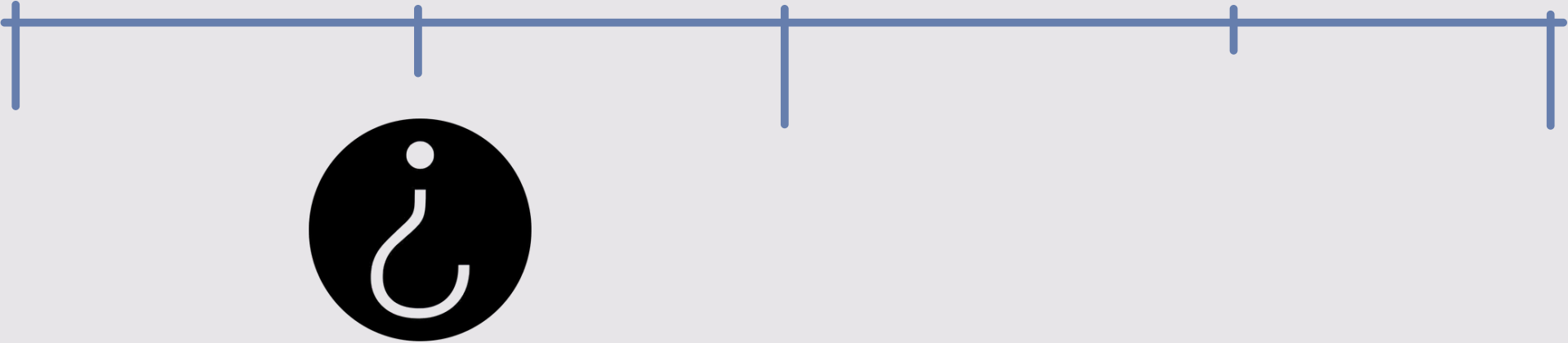
This work demonstrates the value of open source investigation—but also its limitations. If building communities around the use of open source methods in a specific context requires years of engagement, as it did with Ukraine, then the potential to apply open source investigation to a broader range of issues is constrained. That is why Bellingcat has focused on working with universities to develop open source investigation course materials and establish investigative hubs. These hubs allow students to investigate the issues they care about with the support of Bellingcat and its network. Our first hub was launched at Utrecht University, and in the coming years, we aim to expand the project further, starting with Nottingham University and Birmingham University in the UK. Our hope is that this will lead to even wider adoption of open source investigation—led by communities with their own interests and priorities but guided by the same thorough, evidence-based approach that has defined Bellingcat's work.

In ten years, we have achieved far more than I could have imagined when I raised just under £60,000 on Kickstarter in 2014. But for me, and for Bellingcat, this is only the beginning. My hope is that this work will continue to grow, driven by the belief that open source investigation is not just for a select few—it is for everyone.

10 Years of Bellingcat

Over the course of a decade, Bellingcat has redefined investigative journalism through its pioneering use of collaborative open source investigation. It all began in 2014 with the groundbreaking MH17 investigation, tracing the missile launcher responsible for the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 back to Russia's 53rd Air Defense Brigade. This debut investigation established Bellingcat's method of geolocation, social media analysis, and crowd-sourced verification. In the following years, it exposed Russia's manipulation of satellite images, verified Syrian chemical weapons attacks, and reconstructed the 2016 Turkish coup attempt using leaked WhatsApp chats, an investigation that won the European Press Prize.

As time went on, Bellingcat's investigations continued to broaden in scope and ambition, from uncovering human rights violations across the world to identifying white supremacists involved in the Charlottesville rally. The team's meticulous work helped confirm Russia's role in the bombing of humanitarian convoys in Syria and documented far-right extremism across the US and Europe. In 2020, it identified the FSB team responsible for poisoning Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, a case that gained global prominence after Navalny prank-called one of the agents into confessing. In parallel, Bellingcat verified Iran's downing of flight PS752, exposed human rights violations in Nagorno-Karabakh, and tracked QAnon-linked extremists after the January 6th US Capitol insurrection. Our work became increasingly influential in the fields of human rights, journalism, and law. Bellingcat's research was cited as evidence in UN reports, war crimes trials, and government briefings.



Our coverage of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia marked a new high-water mark for the organisation. Bellingcat rapidly mobilised to document war crimes, verify attacks on civilians, track the use of cluster munitions, and debunk disinformation. We also helped expose a GRU agent posing as a Peruvian socialite to infiltrate NATO, while continuing to investigate Syria, far-right networks, and digital influence operations worldwide. In 2023, Bellingcat was among the first to trace the source of the Pentagon leaks to a small Discord server, identifying the suspect. These investigations not only demonstrated the agility of open source methods but also reinforced Bellingcat's role as a decentralised, transparent alternative to traditional investigative outlets, one capable of both rapid verification and deep analytical work.


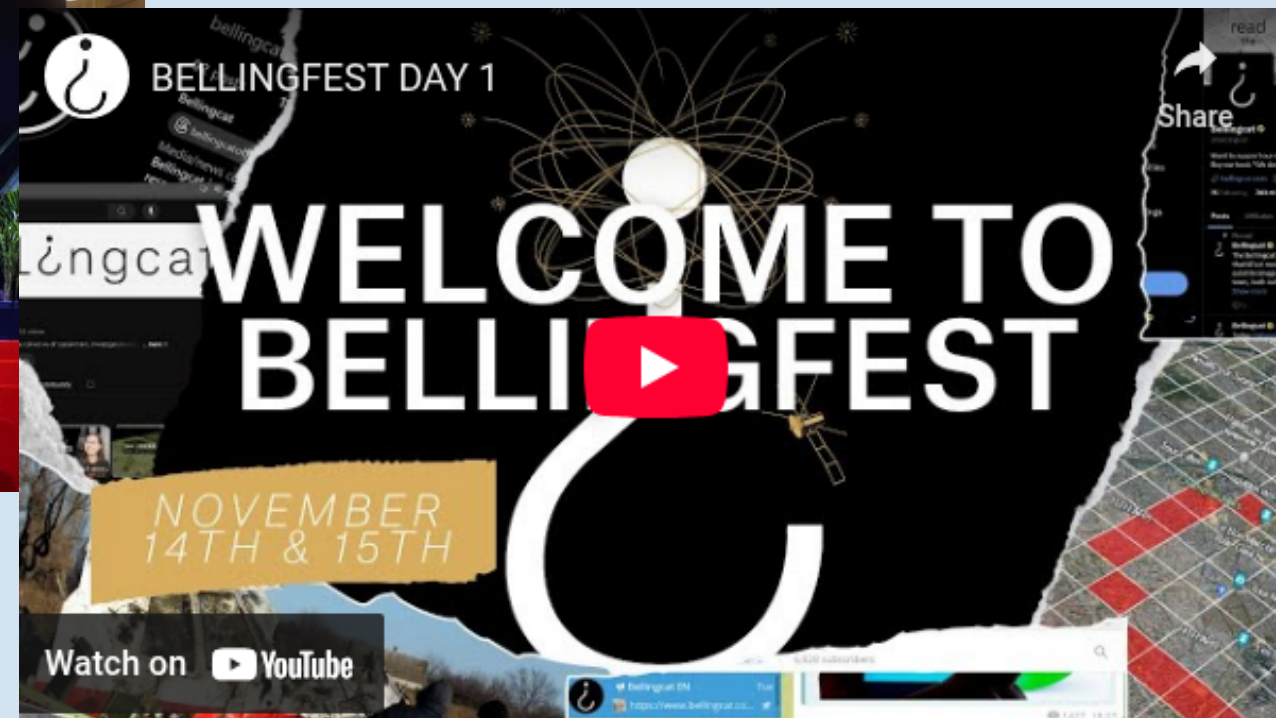
Over the years, Bellingcat's work has been recognised with numerous awards, including the European Press Prize, Emmy Awards, the Nannen Prize, and the ICFJ's Innovation Award. Our investigations have been featured in award-winning documentaries including Navalny (Oscar winner, 2023) and Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World (Emmy winner, 2019). Beyond investigations, Bellingcat has helped democratise open source investigation through our comprehensive guides, in-depth trainings, and collaborative partnerships, seeding open source units in mainstream newsrooms and human rights organisations. A decade on, we stand not just as a newsroom, but as a networked model for evidence-based accountability in a post-truth age.

10 Years of Bellingcat

To mark our ten-year anniversary, Bellingcat hosted Bellingfest at the end of 2024, a celebration of the whole open source investigation community. The event brought together contributors from a wide range of backgrounds, from keen amateurs to seasoned veterans (or as seasoned as one can be after ten years), highlighting the extraordinary variety of work and achievements produced across the open source investigation community. More than just a retrospective, Bellingfest embodied the spirit of collaboration and camaraderie that has defined Bellingcat's growth, and the growth of the open source investigation community; a community bound not by hierarchy, but by curiosity, shared values, and a commitment to truth.



Check out our Bellingfest livestream



Looking ahead on Patreon

What have we learned in these past 10 years, and how can Bellingcat contribute to what comes next? In this special three-part Patreon podcast series, we explore the challenges for the future of online communities, digital platforms, and open source investigations.

Research Highlights

1



Cartel King Kinahan's Google Reviews Expose Travel Partners

A wanted narco boss, Christopher Kinahan Sr, for years exposed his movements and whereabouts by leaving hundreds of online reviews for hotels, restaurants and luxury shops. This investigation was done in partnership with The Sunday Times Ireland.

2



Russian Missile Identified in Kyiv Children's Hospital Attack

This analysis of open source evidence, as well as multiple missile experts, pointed to a Russian launched Kh-101 cruise missile being the weapon that struck a children's hospital in Kyiv in July 2024.

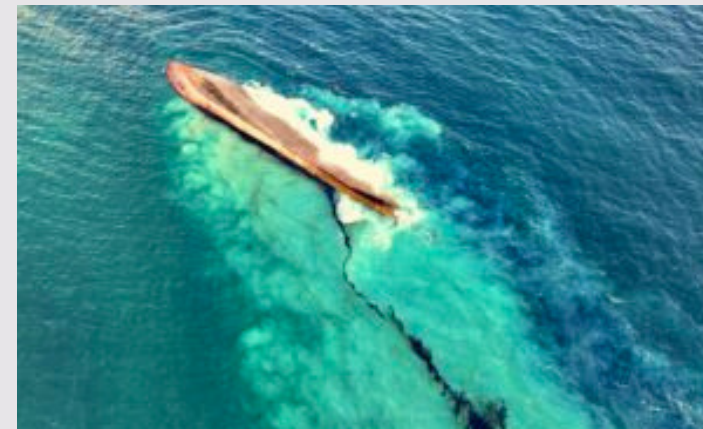
3



"We've Become Addicted to Explosions" The IDF Unit Responsible for Demolishing Homes Across Gaza

Bellingcat and Scripps News followed one IDF battalion's movements across Gaza, geolocating their social posts to highlight IDF involvement in systematic destruction of Palestinian land and livelihoods.

4



Identifying the Mystery Vessel at the Site of Trinidad & Tobago's National Emergency Oil Spill

An unidentified vessel ran aground off the coast of Tobago on February 7th 2024. The vessel was leaking oil, coating beaches, wildlife, and over 80 kilometres of the Caribbean Sea. Bellingcat and our Discord community identified the mystery vessel and tracked down the owners.

5



Strike That Killed World Central Kitchen Workers Bears Hallmarks of Israeli Precision Strike

Using imagery from the aftermath, Bellingcat geolocated the strikes by Israeli forces, on The World Central Kitchen vehicles to the outskirts of Deir al-Balah.

Organisational Development

A major part of 2024 was dedicated to strengthening the governance of both Bellingcat Foundation and Bellingcat US, the entity which we set up in the United States back in 2022 to support the global expansion of the organisation.

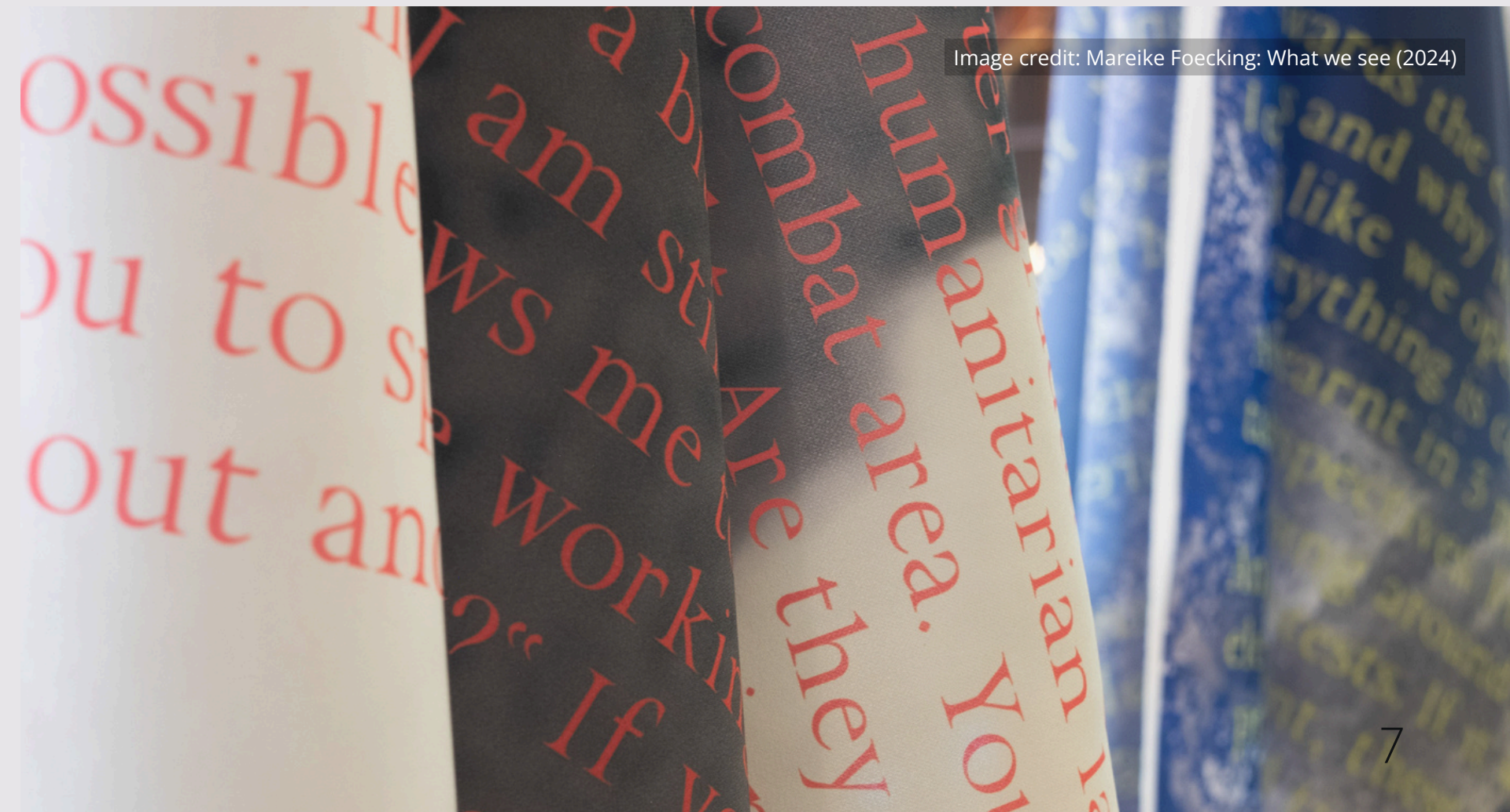
In June we welcomed a third member of the Foundation's Supervisory Board - Miriam Struyk. Miriam brings invaluable experience in human rights, international coalitions and overseeing large programs across distributed teams in multiple geographic areas. Her track record in various governance board roles and extensive knowledge of regulations for the non-profit sector in the Netherlands will contribute even further to the professionalisation and growth of our organization and its impact.

In parallel with the strengthening of the Foundation's governance, we worked hard to set up the governance and administrative structure of Bellingcat US. In the process, we received (and still receive) invaluable support and guidance from Alexander Papachristou (Executive Director at Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice) and Emiel Jurjens (member of Bellingcat's Advisory Board and Associate Partner at Prakken D'Oliveira Human Rights Lawyers). The governance set up was a necessary and important step, which couldn't have been completed without the generous help and advice of Covington & Burling LLP.

By the end of the year we welcomed five prominent members of the Board of Bellingcat US - Ann Poletti (bringing tech and business development experience), Mark Bergman (robust track record in law, governance and fundraising), Pam Maples (Managing Director of the JSK Journalism Fellowships at Stanford University with invaluable media experience and networks), Evan Guillemin (strong background and experience in finance) and Giancarlo Fiorella (Director of Research & Training at Bellingcat Foundation and member of its Executive Board). This stellar board will help us expand our activities in the US, including establishing partnerships with local media, developing education materials on open source research together with universities and training journalists, academics, and professionals from all walks of life on how to conduct ethical open source research on topics of public interest.

Another important organisational development was the strengthening of the editorial team - a fundamentally crucial building block to ensure the quality and impact of Bellingcat's investigations and publications. We hired three new experienced editors with backgrounds in investigative reporting, tech and human rights/civil rights reporting. We also hired a social media producer to help increase our presence across different social media platforms and develop new engaging formats.

Image credit: Mareike Foecking: What we see (2024)



Strategy

Last year was a test year in implementing our 2024-2028 organisational strategy. The global upheavals of 2024 challenged not only our commitment to the strategic direction and choices made, but also our organisational agility in responding to unforeseen events. One significant example of this adaptability was strengthening the governance (and setting up the administrative framework) of Bellingcat US, Inc. in the second half of the year. Though this undertaking fell outside the original scope of the strategy, it proved to be essential.

Significant progress was made in all three main areas of the strategy - volunteer community, regional focus and thematic structure and teams.

In 2024, Bellingcat's volunteer community, identified as one of the organisation's "unique selling points", underwent a major transformation under the guidance of a new Volunteer Community Manager. Formerly known as the Global Authentication Project, the community grew from 19 to 104 members, with around 50 actively participating each month. Collectively, volunteers contributed to 13 editorial outputs over the year. The community is now well-positioned for deeper engagement with staff researchers and editors. Additionally, our Discord server saw significant growth, increasing by approximately 7,000 members to reach a total of 33,000 by year's end. This community today continues to be a buzzing hub of activity, including bi-weekly guest lectures from open source researchers and thought leaders, a monthly book club, and daily activity in our channels.

The regional focus successfully shifted attention away from topics involving Central Europe and Eastern Europe, with the caveat that the War in Ukraine continued to demand global attention in 2024. The strategic plan to focus more attention on open source research in Latin America and Africa was somewhat disrupted by the conflict in Gaza, which resulted in research efforts focused on the MENA region. Looking into 2025, we want to ensure that we build and foster relationships in Latin America and Africa and increase our research capacity to those regions.

The "team focus" strategic pillar was effectively implemented. Throughout 2024, Bellingcat researchers and editors organized into five independent research teams (financial investigations, environment, human rights/civil rights, online ideologies and conflict monitoring), each led by a team lead and supported by an assigned editor. These teams held regular meetings and functioned autonomously. A review of the team leadership structure is currently underway, with adjustments (including dual team leadership by an editor and a senior researcher) anticipated by early June 2025.

Impact

Oil Spill Accountability

A conversation between Bellingcat researchers and community members in Bellingcat's public Discord server grew to become a continent-crossing investigation into a mysterious oil spill in the Caribbean. In a series of four [articles](#), Bellingcat and our community identified the ship responsible for the spill of 35,000 barrels of fuel oil, traced its path from Panama to Trinidad and Tobago with satellite imagery, identified the owners, and found the responsible tugboat after it fled to Angola. This led to a collaboration between Trinidad and Tobago authorities and Angola to [arrest](#) the tug, and research published by Bellingcat was used by the International Oil Spill Compensation [funds](#) in their financial accountability investigations.

Documenting the Destruction of Cultural Heritage Sites in Gaza

Bellingcat's [investigation](#) with our partner Scripps News into the destruction of cultural heritage and religious sites in the first eight months of Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip found that more than 150 sites had been either damaged or destroyed. The sites included mosques, cemeteries, archeological and historical locations – some dating to antiquity. Amnesty International's 2024 [report](#) on Israel's assault on Gaza cited our work as part of its documentation of the destruction of cultural and religious sites in areas the Israel Defense Forces controlled.

Advancing the Use of Sound to Investigate Shootings

Working with audio forensic expert Dr Robert Maher, Bellingcat has advanced the use of shooting sound analysis across multiple investigations. These methods, now adopted by several major news organisations, offer a powerful new layer of evidence in conflict and accountability reporting.

In 2024, we showcased this work through an immersive 3D audio installation at the [Architekturmuseum der TUM](#) in Munich. Using our investigation into the killing of indigenous Colombian journalist [Abelardo Liz](#) as a case study, the installation invited visitors to step into the scene and explore where gunshots originated, how conclusions were reached, and what tools made this possible. The exhibition attracted over 28,000 visitors, marking a significant moment in public engagement with Bellingcat, its investigative methodologies and the future of forensic storytelling.



Impact

Exposing the Scale of Human Smuggling Through Mexico

Bellingcat's story on a TikTok-famous, self-proclaimed "coyote" (slang for someone who smuggles migrants across the Mexico-US border) formed part of "Cargo Trucks: A Trap for Migrants", a seven-month cross-border investigation exposing the deadly scale of human smuggling through Mexico, where overcrowded trucks transport migrants in perilous conditions from Central America to the US. The investigation was led by Noticias Telemundo and the Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP), in collaboration with ICIJ and outlets in Mexico and Central America.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador responded to our investigation describing the smuggling of migrants through Mexico in cargo trucks as "very unfortunate", but avoided questions about whether his government should bear responsibility.

The investigation was honored with the Tom Renner Award for Outstanding Crime Reporting, with judges praising its powerful storytelling for humanising a brutal system and holding governments accountable for enabling a "circle of impunity" around this deadly trade.

It also received the Excellence in Collaboration and Partnerships Award at the Online Journalism Awards, with judges describing it as "collaborative journalism at its most impressive and necessary".



Investigating Platforms Using AI to Create Pornographic Images

Our work exposing a global network including Clothoff, one of the most controversial non-consensual deepfake porn sites on the internet, resulted in multiple payment processors and online marketplaces disabling accounts that were used to collect payments for such sites – hitting their income streams on multiple fronts.

This investigation was cited in an Australian Senate Standing Committee statement introducing a new bill targeting the non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit material, including deepfakes. Bellingcat researcher Kolina Koltai was also featured on CBS News' 60 Minutes about her work on non-consensual deepfake pornography, continuing to put pressure and attention on Clothoff and similar sites.

Bellingcat also investigated OpenDream, a site that claimed to be an AI art generation platform, but that many users were using to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM) that was openly displayed on OpenDream's gallery. Both Google and Bing's search engines, which had indexed many of these images, took action to remove CSAM images generated by OpenDream after we reached out to them for comment.

Editorial

Bellingcat continued to engage and collaborate with partner publications and our wider community across 2024. We partnered with 22 separate news organisations, providing further reporting depth and reach for our investigations. Our partners spanned the US, Europe, Latin America and Africa, and included major outlets such as Agence France Presse (AFP), the Sunday Times and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).

Our community, meanwhile, contributed to close to 30 stories published on Bellingcat's platforms, providing a stage for the most talented open source investigators. The online open source community is at the roots of Bellingcat. We will continue to nurture and cultivate it, sharing knowledge and best practice while giving as many as possible the tools and platform to succeed.

Awards

Bellingcat received several awards in recognition of our work over the course of 2024. The organisation was honoured with the Olaf Palme Prize, the Franco-German Journalism Prize, the Nijmegen Peace Prize Medal and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award for Freedom of Speech.

Our investigation into a ghost fleet of Russian vessels surreptitiously exporting grain from occupied grain won the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Innovation in partnership with Scripps News. At the Online Journalism Awards, we were honoured with prizes in the Excellence in Collaboration and Partnerships and the Excellence in Visual Storytelling categories, respectively, for investigations into human smuggling across the US-Mexico border and an Israeli army unit that carried out detonations of civilian buildings in Gaza. We were also runner-up in the European Press Prize for Innovation for our investigation with CeroSetenta into the death of journalist Abelardo Liz.



Editorial

Bellingcat produced stories on a greater variety of subject matter than ever before over the course of 2024. A new team structure and dedicated focus on topics such as the environment, conflict, human rights, financial investigations and online ideologies saw significant investigations produced in each of these areas.

Financial Team

Our most widely read story of the year came from our financial investigations team after it found that wanted cartel drug trafficker, Christy Kinahan Sr., had been posting online reviews of everything from hotels, restaurants and cafes for years. The discovery allowed Kinahan's movements to be assessed, revealing new insights about his business operations, business partners and luxurious lifestyle. The treasure trove of data continues to inform new stories about the illusive narcotics kingpin.

Conflict Monitoring

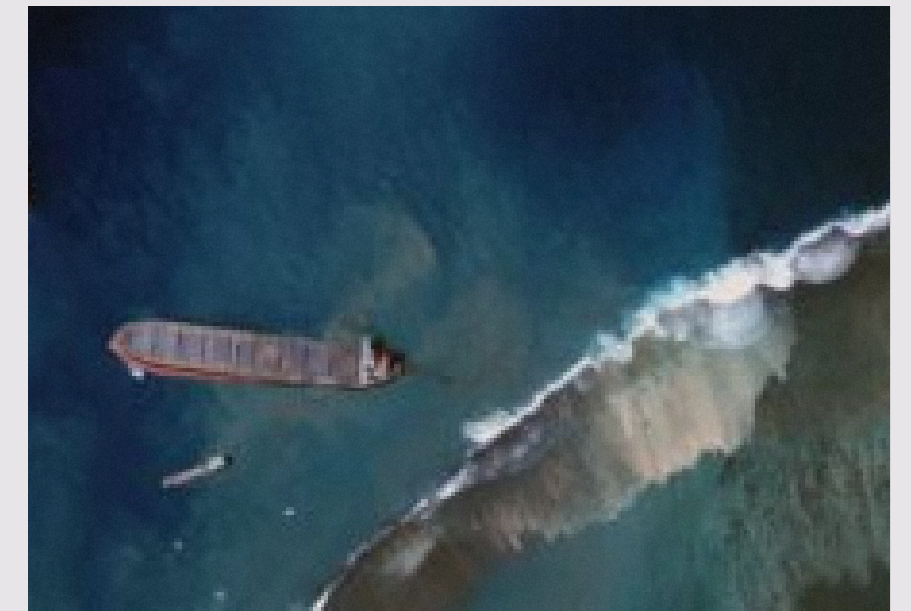
A number of conflicts around the world were the focus of our conflict and human rights team, from Gaza to Ukraine and from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Sudan. Our work investigating an Israeli army engineer corps that had blown up dozens of civilian buildings across Gaza won the Excellence in Visual Storytelling prize at the Online Journalism Awards.

Environment

Our environmental team tracked and uncovered the owners of a tug that had abandoned a mystery barge leaking oil off the coast of Trinidad and Tobago. The investigation looked into companies in Panama, Angola, Mozambique and beyond, and was covered widely in local and international media.

Online Ideologies

Our online ideologies team continued to focus on the rise of the far-right around the world but it also began to look into the murky world of deepfake pornography, identifying some of the companies and individuals behind organisations making the tools that create non-consensual images. Our reporting led to payment companies blocking several sites.

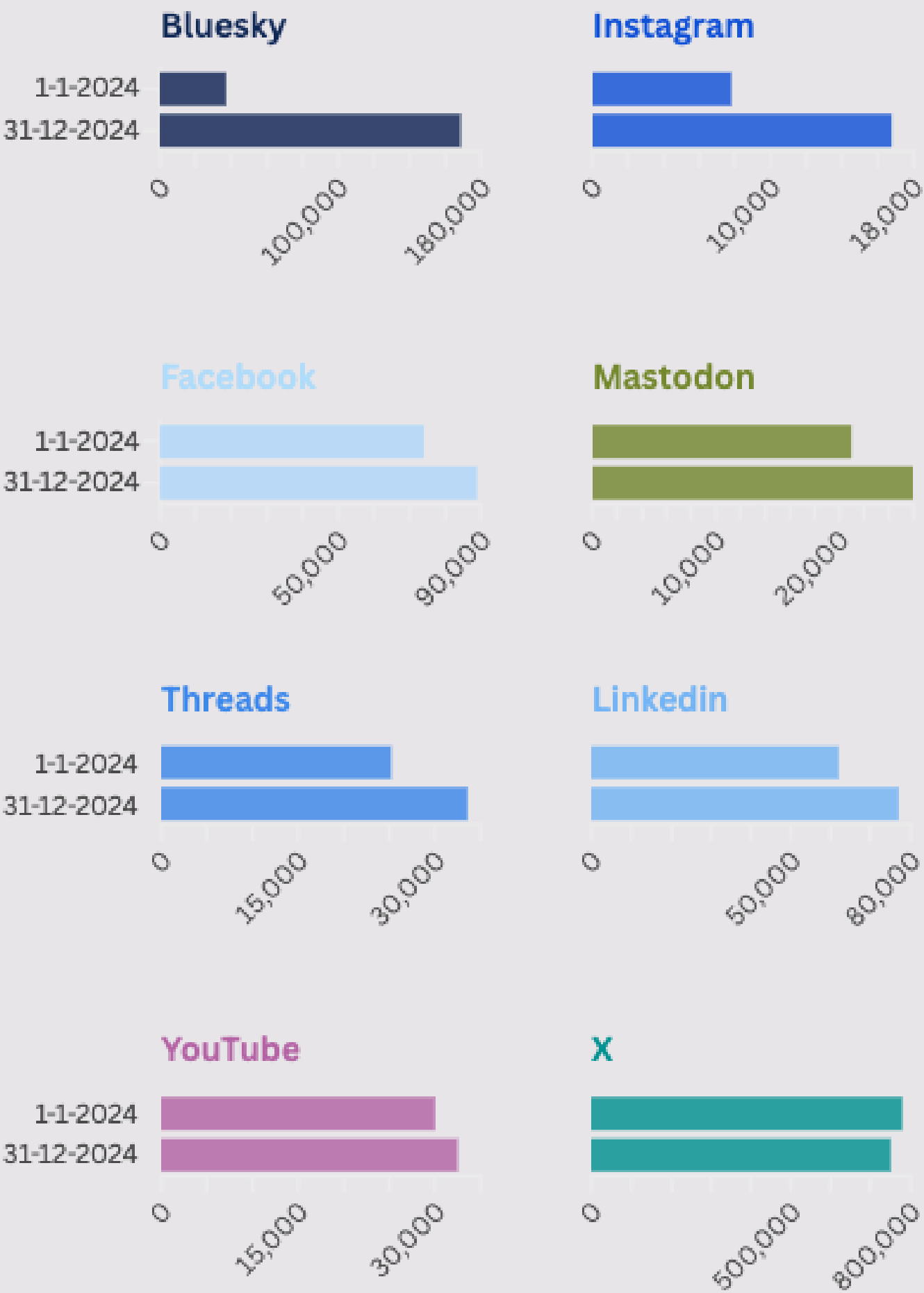


Editorial

While Bellingcat continued to produce important and impactful work, 2024 was still a year that brought challenges. Changes at social media companies like X (previously Twitter) and Facebook, which have deprioritised news, have forced lots of media organisations to think about how they engage and reach their audiences. Bellingcat is no different and, as a result, has sought to focus on growing on other social platforms such as Bluesky, Instagram and YouTube. We will also begin to put significant effort into cultivating even more direct relationships with our audience in 2025 through new newsletters and podcasts.

Over the course of 2024, we continued to grow on new social platforms, diversifying our content, producing more videos and audio than ever before. Working with long-standing partners and new ones to create multimedia projects, bringing our investigations to different audiences. This included inviting our wider community to our 10-year celebrations via YouTube livestream over the course of the two days.

We spent the year refining our community model, highlighting where our community can have input and access to our work, resulting in community call-outs and engagement in social spaces, with constructive conversations forming between our researchers and community members. Some of our most impactful investigations were born out of these conversations. We also started to spotlight more community members within our popular live podcast, the Discord Stage Talk series.



[illegible]

A world map with a light blue background. Countries are outlined in white. A subset of 30 countries is highlighted in a darker blue color. These highlighted countries are located in North America (USA, Canada), South America (Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana), Europe (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Cyprus), Africa (Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Congo, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, South Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar, Reunion), Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Palau, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, New Caledonia), and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, New Caledonia).

Countries Covered in 2024

In 2024 we covered a total of 30 countries in our investigations, with stories spanning across five different continents. Our readers came from 109 different countries.

Training




Bellingcat’s training and education activities continued at full speed in 2024, aided by constant engagement from the public for engagement from our researchers. In total, Bellingcat staff facilitated over a hundred training and educational events in 2024, ranging from week-long workshops to guest lectures at universities. As always, Bellingcat’s Training Team took care to balance trainers’ research commitments with their training assignments, keeping in mind the exertion that is necessary to carry out trainings especially if they are delivered in-person.

In 2024, Bellingcat trainers took part in:

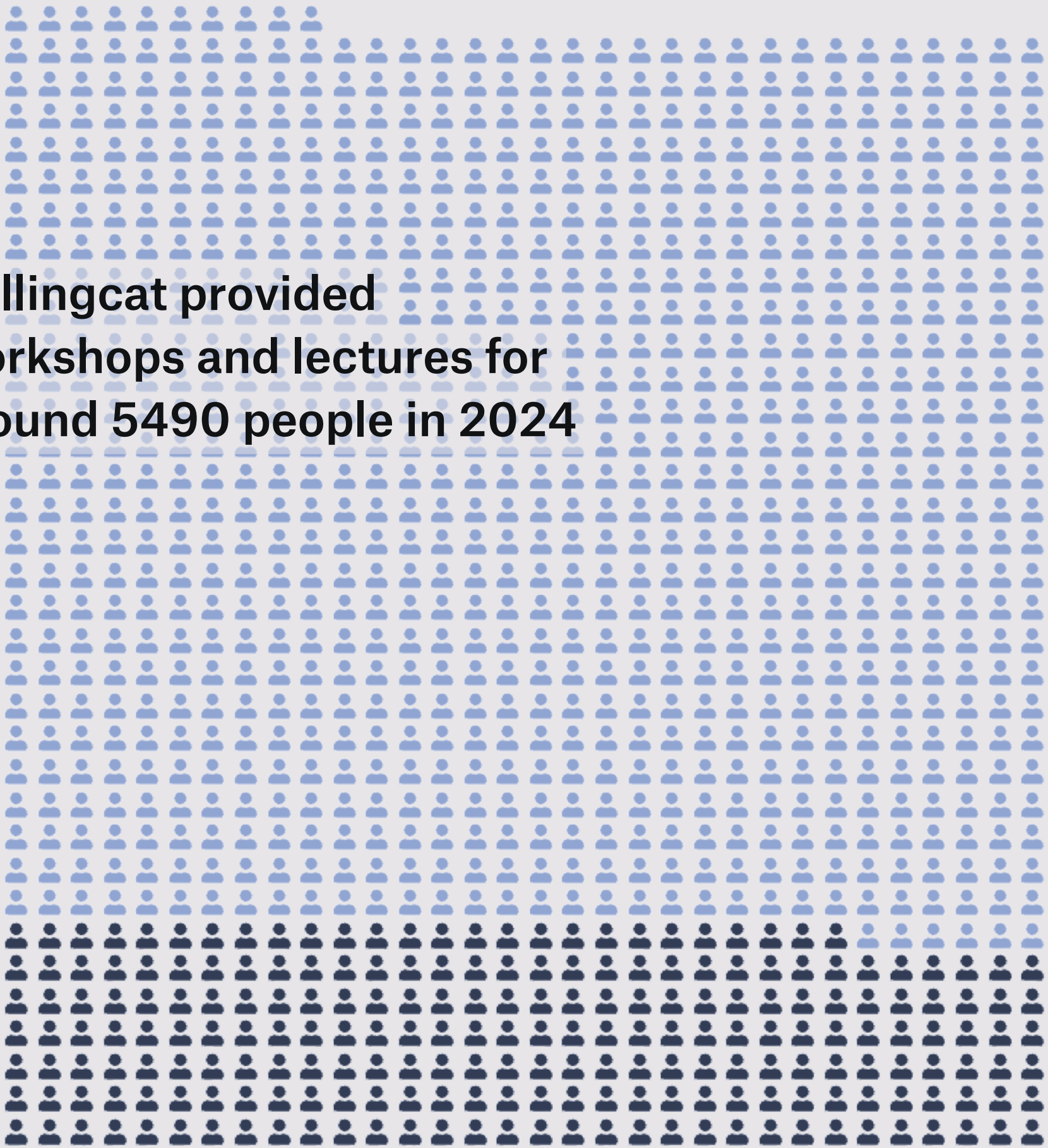
- 53 workshops, training a total of approximately 1,090 individuals.
- 94 speaking engagements events, ranging from guest lectures at universities to keynote addresses and panel talks at academic and professional conferences, with an estimated total audience of approximately 4,400 individuals.

As in previous years, our workshops were attended primarily by journalists, scholars, human rights lawyers, and freelance researchers and investigators. In 2024, our workshops provided sought-after foundational knowledge to students as well as an opportunity for Bellingcat to grow its network of collaborators and allies.

Beyond our workshops, Bellingcat’s collective knowledge continued to be in demand as evidenced by our researchers’ participation in a wide range of speaking engagements in 2024. Among these were dozens of guest lectures at colleges and universities primarily across Western Europe and North America, indicating a continued recognition of our researchers’ place at the tip of the spear of methodological and investigative developments in the field of open source investigations. The same conclusion can be drawn from our researchers’ participation in journalism conferences throughout 2024, including at NICAR and the International Journalism Festival at Perugia, where Bellingcat staff shared their knowledge with journalists from across the world.

 = 5  All workshops over 4 hours - 53 workshops
 Other lectures, presentations etc. - 94 events

**Bellingcat provided
workshops and lectures for
around 5490 people in 2024**



Volunteer Community

In 2024, our Volunteer Community continued supporting Bellingcat's Civilian Harm Map, our largest collaborative project thus far. We also kicked off another long-term, community-driven effort: Bellingcat's Online Investigations Toolkit. This has undergone a major revision since it was first created several years ago. In addition to these major efforts, our volunteers also contributed to a set of other meaningful research projects, some of which led to significant findings and resulted in publications. Here's an overview of some of these efforts:

Mapping Incidents of Civilian Harm in Ukraine (● Ongoing)

Since February, 2022, Bellingcat and its volunteers, are tirelessly working on documenting, geolocating and curating an [interactive timemap of the Civilian Harm in Ukraine](#). The findings of this project have also been used for [Justice & Accountability](#) purposes. In 2024 alone, we collectively successfully geolocated more than 600 incidents that are accessible through the public map. This work continues with new incidents recorded every day.

The Hidden War in Gaza and the West Bank

Bellingcat's Investigation Team, in partnership with Scripps News and supported by our Volunteer Community members, used satellite imagery to identify and analyse conflict in Gaza and the West Bank, uncovering new details about tensions on the ground. For further insights, you can explore [Bellingcat's coverage of IDF demolitions in Gaza](#) and [view Scripps News' documentary](#).

Bellingcat's Community Members Geolocate New 1xBet Stream Sites

In collaboration with our community, Bellingcat's financial investigations team uncovered several secret locations linked to a controversial Russian-founded gambling platform. Using geolocation techniques, we identified where thousands of amateur sports events are live-streamed to the platform's website. Read more about it in [this publication](#).

A Phantom's Tale: The Coyote Influencer on TikTok

Bellingcat, with the support of our Volunteer Community member and investigative partner, the Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP), analysed an alleged coyote's TikTok account which alluded to people smuggling activities. You can read more about it in [this publication](#).

Taking Over from the Inside: China's Growing Reach Into Local Waters

Bellingcat's Volunteer Community is also open to work and supports other organisations doing important investigative reporting. The Outlaw Ocean Project investigated China's expanding presence in the Pacific Ocean and examined alleged illegal activities by Chinese-owned fishing vessels. You can read the full story [here](#). Our volunteers contributed to this reporting.

Exploring the Skyline: How We Located an Alleged Cartel Member in Dubai

In this guide, the Bellingcat team demonstrated how we pinpointed the location of an alleged cartel member in a luxury Dubai skyscraper. One of our members, with expertise in architecture and experience in perspective matching, played a crucial role in confirming some of our findings. You can explore the guide [here](#).

To Blur Or Not To Blur: Exposing Finland's Lakeside Neo-Nazi Meetup

Bellingcat first investigated Finland's 'White Boy Summer Fest' (WBS) in 2023. With the help of the formal Bellingcat's Volunteer Community and the wider community in our public Discord server, we geolocated the 2022 and 2023 festivals as well as the 2024 edition! [Learn more in this publication](#).

Tracking Your Search: A Guide to the Grid Generator

Open source investigations often involve analysing vast areas of satellite imagery. The new [Bellingcat Search Grid Generator](#) aims to simplify such tasks by overlaying a simple grid, turning your search into manageable sections. Launched by our tech team, this tool was built in collaboration with our Volunteer Community. This is just one of many examples of how our volunteers contribute to the creation and maintenance of investigative tech tools!

Volunteer Community

In 2024, we introduced a cohort-based quarterly recruitment system, enabling steady community growth and ensuring sustainable engagement. Over the year (Jan 2024–Jan 2025), our net growth reached 85 members, with an average of 50 active members per month.

By implementing a more comprehensive recruitment and onboarding strategy, we also diversified our members’ profiles—expanding across different expertise areas, interests, and regions—while creating more opportunities for meaningful participation in a broader range of projects.

We expanded our community engagement channels beyond our main platform, introducing a [Public Homepage](#), a [LinkedIn page](#), and an internal member-only Community Hub, along with additional resources.

We launched the "Expert Voice" program in 2024—one of the ways we recognise and give back to our most dedicated members. Alongside other forms of support for their professional growth, "Expert Voice" members receive complimentary access to Bellingcat’s public online workshops.

We also introduced a one-on-one buddy and peer support program this year. The initiative is designed to foster peer learning, skill-sharing, and helps new members engage with more experienced peers.

Building on the momentum of 2024, in 2025, we will continue to strengthen and expand our Volunteer Community by focusing on expanding our work with all of Bellingcat’s research teams, offering more skills sessions for members and hosting more interactive events for the community.

With these priorities, we aim to create more meaningful opportunities for collaboration, learning, and impactful investigations in 2025 and beyond.



In January 2024 the
volunteer community
existed of **19** Members

In December 2024 we counted
104 members

Volunteer Community Voices



"I really enjoy being part of the Bellingcat Online Investigation Toolkit project because it allows me to help shape a vital resource for investigators navigating the constantly evolving social media landscape. It's a great way to collaborate with dedicated volunteers and staff, share expertise on crucial tools, and contribute to making open source research more accessible and effective!" - Martin Sona

"The Bellingcat Volunteer Community allows me to help in a meaningful way while also allowing me to learn a lot from a super talented team of other volunteers. This is a digital community that helps inspire me and gives me hope in otherwise dark times." - Anonymous

"We get to collaborate with people with so much knowledge, such diverse talents and interests. And those collaborations have a real life impact that we see every week. People uplift one another and celebrate each other's achievements to drive transparency and accountability across the board." - Lora P.

"This community is a way for me to give back to the organization that helped inspire and motivate me to get into the career field I am currently in. The impact of the work here is tangible, it feels good to see the effort contributing to meaningful research. I value the fact that I've not just made professional contacts, but also friendships that will last long beyond the personal contribution I make here." - Svir

"I value the learning I've done on the tools themselves but also the experience of a project with intensive staff participation and leadership in the Toolkit Project." - Anonymous

Investigative Tech Team

In 2024, the Investigative Tech Team focused on strengthening the engagement between Bellingcat and the wider tech community. With the help of our tech community facilitator, we were consistently active in our public and volunteer community Discord spaces, resulting in the co-publication of four tools and three accompanying guides with community members.

To make technical research methods more accessible, we regularly published video guides showcasing step-by-step processes, helping users navigate complex technical tasks more easily. You can now find ten videos in our [Tech series](#) on Bellingcat's YouTube channel, covering topics from installing Python to using our Instagram Location Tool.

In September 2024, we launched [Bellingcat's Online Open Source Investigation Toolkit](#) to make it easier for open source researchers to find the right tools for their work. We collaborated with Bellingcat's volunteer community and published 140 Tool Deep Dives. Between its launch and the end of the year 2024, the toolkit attracted 200,000 page views and more than 50,000 unique visitors. The toolkit was listed by GIJN as one of the [top investigative tools of 2024](#).



The Bellingcat Open Source Investigation Toolkit

200.000
Page Views in Q4 of 2024

140
Tool Descriptions

12
Different Categories
of Tools

25
Volunteers

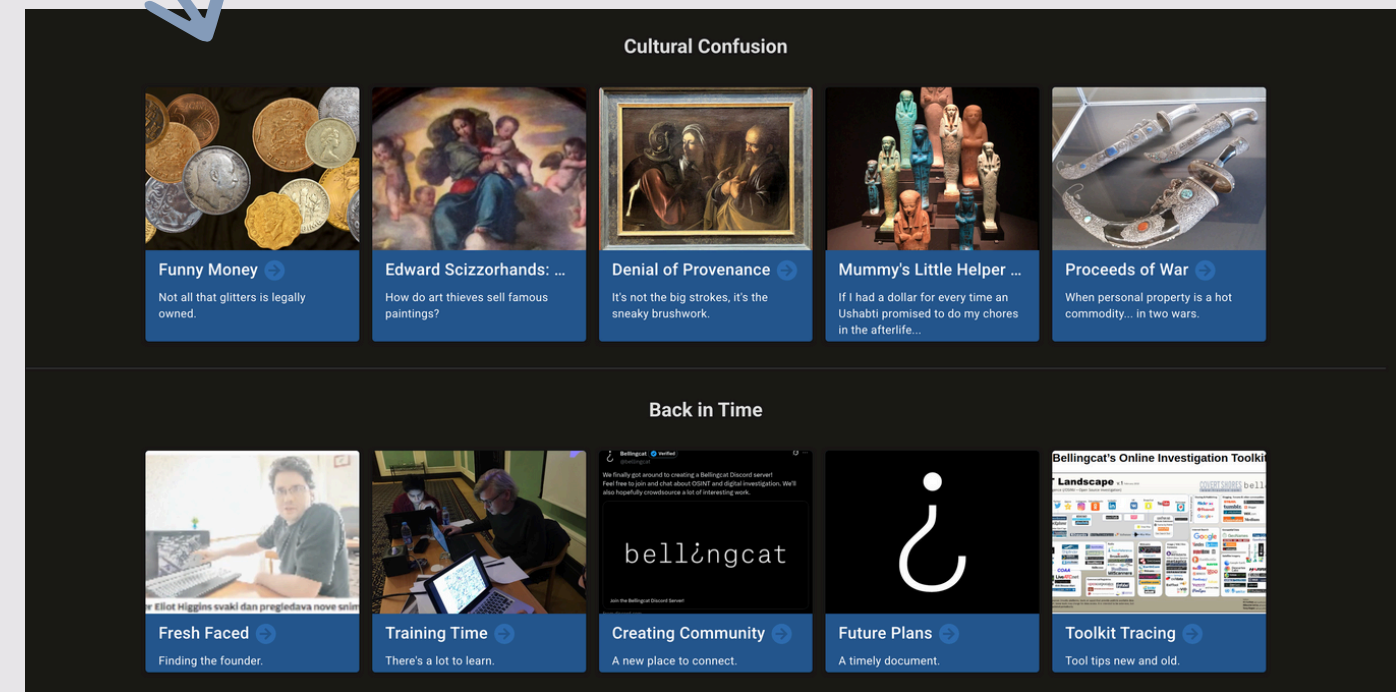
Investigative Tech Team

In December, we introduced the [Bellingcat Challenge](#), a daily open source challenge delivered via a dedicated website, engaging over 33,000 participants. We recognised this as an effective way to engage with our community, and we plan to continue this initiative in 2025.

Following the success of our 2023 Amsterdam hackathon, the Investigative Tech Team organised an in-person hackathon in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, in 2024. Thirty students from three international universities participated, working on visualising environmental and nature-focused stories. The results of this collaboration can be found [here](#). Additionally, we conducted five workshops, which we worked to continuously improve based on participant feedback.

We also hosted six fellows who focused on developing tools and writing guides on technical methods. Overall, the Tech Team developed nine tools and published thirteen articles throughout the year. We continued supporting Bellingcat research projects by assisting with [data analysis](#), creating [scrollytelling webpages](#), producing [visualisations](#), and building [interactive infographics and maps](#).

From 2025 on, the Investigative Tech Team will be directly embedded into Bellingcat's research teams to further interlink our organisation's technical capacity with our research skills.



Justice and Accountability Unit

A partnership between the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and Bellingcat's Justice and Accountability Unit continued its work on demonstrating the viability of open source information as evidence. The team continued training legal practitioners in our methodology and completed investigations into the use of cluster munitions in Kharkiv, as well as establishing their direction of origin. We also worked on updating our methodology with the lessons we've learned over the previous two years.

2024 marked the last full year of activity for the Justice & Accountability Unit, which was scheduled to conclude operations by mid-2025.

Civilian Harm

The Team continued to input, update and check incidents in the [Civilian Harm Timemap](#) on a regular basis. As of the end of 2024, we had logged over 4,100 incidents of civilian harm, of which over 2,150 incidents had been geolocated. This was done in partnership with the volunteers from Bellingcat's Global Authentication Project using the ATLOS platform.

Investigations

Our Justice and Accountability unit worked on the RFI model and continued to collaborate with the International Criminal Court (ICC). We also worked on several further requests for information that were completed and delivered to the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office, the Kherson regional prosecutor's office, and the Mykolaiv prosecutor's office.

Trainings

An important part of our work is to train legal practitioners in the use of this methodology and create awareness of the utility of online audio-visual content. A team of GLAN and Bellingcat staff visited Ukraine in February 2024 at the invitation of the European Union Advisory Mission to Ukraine (EUAM) to conduct a week-long training for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers. The training included an introduction to open source digital investigations tools and methods, as well as a study of existing precedents of admission of the evidence obtained from open sources. A highlight was the practical demonstration through a mock trial, co-developed with Bellingcat and the GLAN, with the involvement of Joanna Korner, a judge on the ICC. This exercise provided participants with firsthand insight into the process of judicial acceptance of open source investigations as evidence. We also participated in an Advanced Advocacy Training on Open Source Evidence for barristers, organised by the TRUE Project at the ICC.

In July 2024, the National School of Judges of Ukraine, together with the Asser Institute and the EUAM, conducted a specialised training for judges, judicial assistants, and court secretaries of local general and appellate courts, which addressed several practical issues, as well as the admissibility of evidence from open sources. The program of the training envisaged a mock hearing on the admissibility of evidence from open sources, which was conducted by a professional team of experts, including Justice and Accountability team lead Nick Waters.

Bellingcat Productions

Work continued at Bellingcat Productions throughout 2024, with Bellingcat's three-part documentary series for National Geographic, Murder in the Skies: Who Downed MH17?, completing filming ahead of its global premiere in February 2025. The documentary follows Bellingcat's investigation into the downing of MH17, featuring interviews with Bellingcat's founder, Eliot Higgins, team members who worked on the case, family members of victims, political figures, and other key individuals involved in the investigation.

Throughout 2024, Antidote—the documentary following the work of former Bellingcat team member Christo Grozev, Evgenia Kara-Murza, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and a Russian chemical weapons scientist who helped develop the agents used in assassinations targeting Russian dissidents and perceived enemies—was screened at select events. Ongoing developments surrounding the story have led to a new version of the film being produced for release in 2025, along with a two-part documentary series adaptation titled Kill List: Hunted by Putin's Spies, that aired on Channel 4 in the UK in March 2025.

Bellingcat Productions' third documentary project, focusing on the work of researchers investigating war crimes in Syria, made significant progress in 2024. The fall of the Assad regime at the end of the year led to new opportunities for the documentary team inside Syria. The documentary is continuing in development and is expected to air in the second half of 2025.



The Bellingcat Team



Executive Board



Eliot Higgins

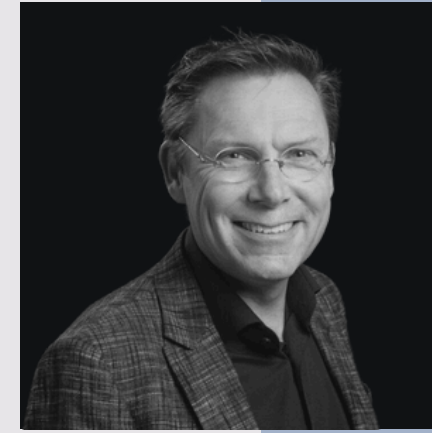


Dessi Damianova

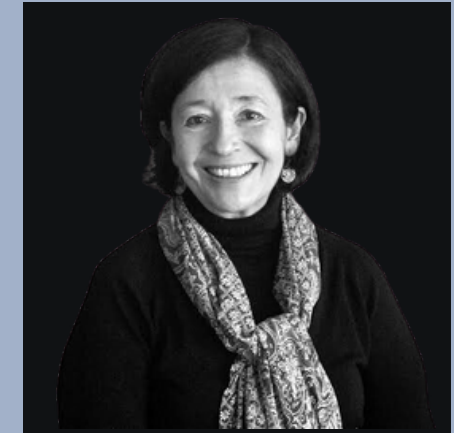


Giancarlo Fiorella

Supervisory Board



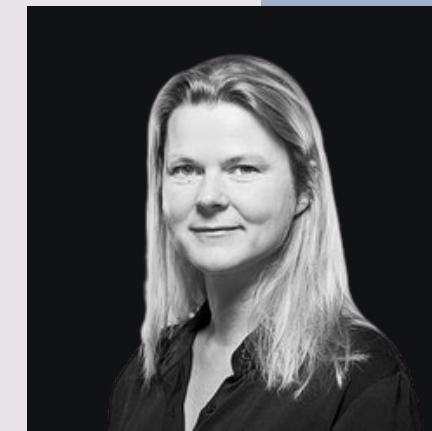
Sander van Luik



María Teresa
Ronderos

External Advisory Board

- Alan Jagolinzer
- Algirdas Lipstas
- Anya Niestat
- Francis Fukuyama
- Premesh Chandran
- Emiel Jurjens (external advisor)



Miriam Struyk

Partners & Supporters

Part of our thriving community are our valuable partners for projects and research in 2024, with whom we often share a long history of appreciated collaboration.

Media outlets

- De Groene Amsterdammer
- Knack
- Le Vif
- Texas Observer
- Trinidad and Tobago Guardian
- Sunday Times
- Sunday Times (Ireland)
- Lloyd's List
- Scripps News
- CLIP
- Beam Reports
- OCCRP
- KRIK
- Diario Rombe
- LA Times
- Outlaw Ocean Project
- Josimar
- AFP

Other partners including in-kind donations

- Bitwarden
- Cobra CRM
- Datayo
- Donorbox
- Dropbox
- Financial Times
- Hunchly
- Maltego
- Mapbox
- Mapcreator
- OSSO
- Planet
- Plausible.io
- RiskIQ
- Salesforce
- Total Design
- Vizlegal
- Yubico

Contributors

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our work in 2024

- Thomas Bordeaux
- Ethan Doyle
- Lotte van de Waal
- Michael Lee
- Connor Plunkett
- Salima Almzbekova
- Akk36
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- Yoruk Isik
- Edward Tian
- Andro Mathewson
- Tomi McCluskey
- Rob Cecilio
- Adriano Belisario
- Gabor Friesen
- Wim Zweijnenburg
- Ella Chakarian
- Bence Szechenyi
- Fraser
- Afton
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- Marjolein Kassenaar
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- MA students and faculty of the Peter Behrens School of Arts, University of Applied Sciences Dusseldorf
- Mareike Foecking
- Felix Obermaier
- Jeremy Radvan



Funding Partners

Our work wouldn't even remotely be possible if not for our funders and donors. Each euro, dollar, krona, pound, rupia, peso etc. represents the trust of thousands of donors worldwide and enables every second we spend on investigating, training, building tech tools, empowering our community and advancing standards of justice and accountability. Many supporters choose not to be mentioned publicly, and we respect that. We therefore would like to thank the foundations and companies listed here for their generous support as representatives of our supporting community: THANK YOU!

- Civitates
- The Dutch Postcode Lottery
- The European Commission
- Limelight Foundation
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Startsmall Foundation
- Swedish Postcode Foundation
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Financial Statements



Consolidated balance sheet as per 31 December 2024

In Euro’s, after profit appropriation

ASSETS	31 December 2024	31 December 2023
Fixed Assets		
Intangible Fixed Assets		
Website	307	5.443
Intangible Fixed Assets		
Building	11.972	16.580
Hard – and software	20.878	21.941
Office equipment	6.016	9.124
Total tangible fixed assets	38.866	47.645
Total Fixed Assets	39.173	53.088
Current Assets		
Deposits	42 . 249	32 . 540
Debtors	38.495	23.509
Accounts receivable and advances	754.941	129.725
Interest to receive	12.929	12.035
Total current assets	848.614	197.809
Cash and cash equivalents	9.267.186	4.208.807
Total Assets	10.154.973	4.459.704

LIABILITIES	31 December 2024	31 December 2023
Reserves and funds		
Continuity reserve	7.255.823	1.621.441
Earmarked reserve	725.000	725.000
Share of third parties	0	-34.246
Total reserves and funds	7.980.823	2.312.195
Current liabilities		
Payable to staff	84.567	64.417
Payable to suppliers	75.720	23.365
Taxes Payable	58.014	28.371
VAT payable	29.625	27.516
Other short-term liabilities	146.629	62.077
Obligations related to current projects	948.234	720.070
Grants received in advance	819.470	1.208.122
Other amounts received in advance	11.891	13.571
Total current liabilities	2.174.150	2.147.509
Total Liabilities	10.154.973	4.459.704

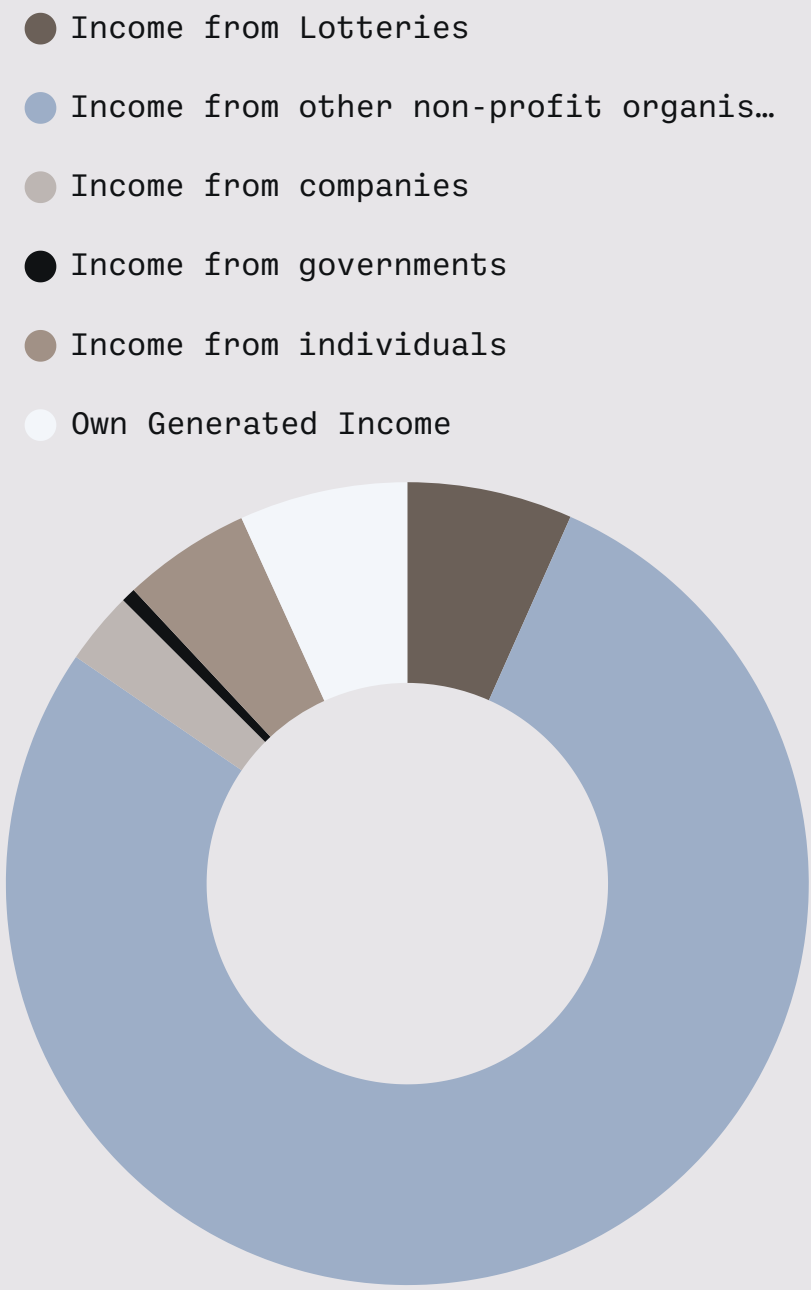
Consolidated statement of income and expense from 1 January till 31 December 2024

INCOME			
	Actuals 2024	Budget 2024	Actuals 2023
Income from Lotteries	710.121	650.000	353.608
Income from other non-profit organisations	8.301.410	2.270.000	2.316.663
Income from companies	312.181	85.000	374.996
Income from governments	62.172	79.000	77.165
Income from Legacies	0	0	51.286
Income from Individuals	550.011	395.000	555.588
Sum of the proceeds gained	9.935.895	3.479.000	3.729.306
Income from workshops	481.191	550.000	635.616
Income from presentations	57.377	25.000	61.968
Income media productions	183.990	0	34.528
Sum of earned income	722.558	575.000	732.112
Total Income	10.658.453	4.054.000	4.461.418

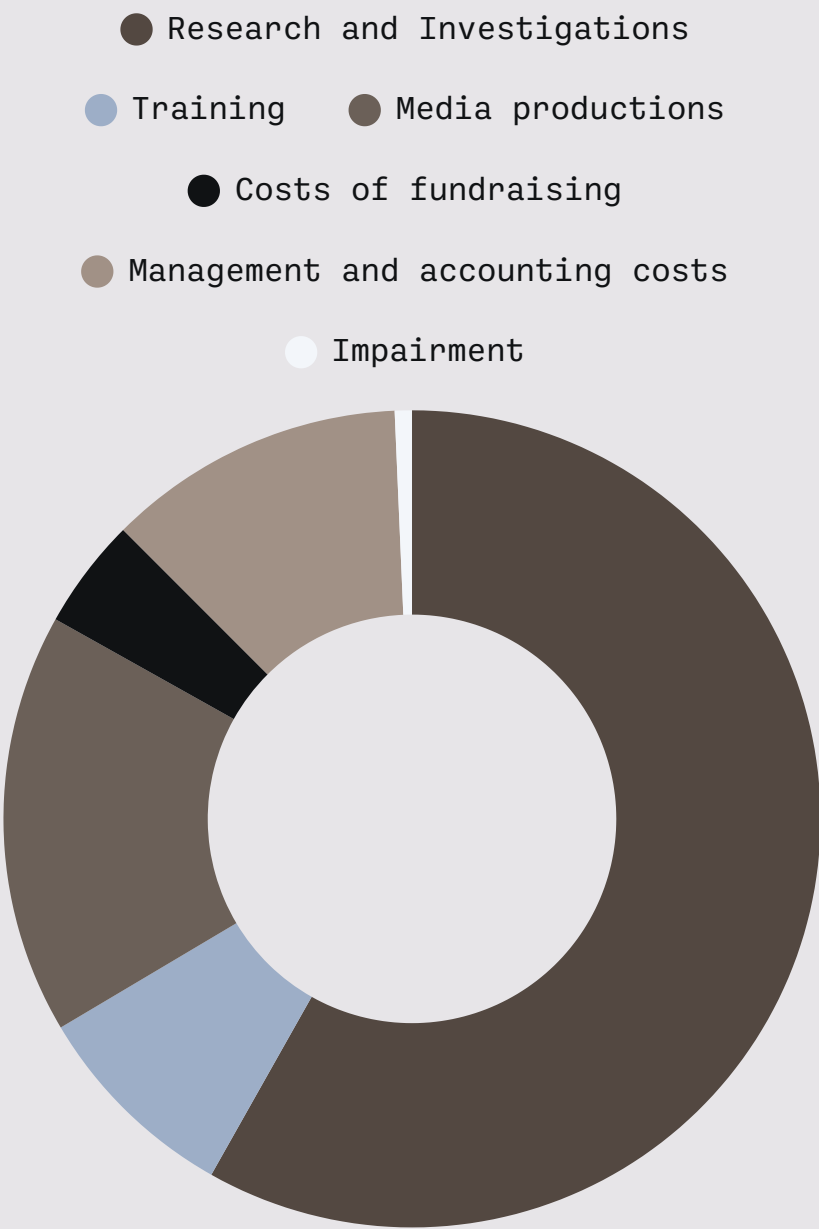
EXPENDITURE			
Spent on the organisation's objectives:			
	Actuals 2024	Budget 2024	Actuals 2024
Research and Investigations	2.934.373	2.803.997	2.314.590
Training	418.572	423.659	405.673
Media productions	839.974	0	149.542
Costs of fundraising	220.948	313.552	163.923
Management and accounting costs	596.128	453.292	383.467
Impairment	34.247	0	0
Total expenditure	5.044.242	3.994.500	3.417.195
Operating result	5.614.211	59.500	1.044.223
Financial income and expenditures	15.949	-14.000	-1.417
Result before taxes	5.630.160	45.500	1.042.806
Corporation tax	-4.998	0	15.737
Share third parties	0	0	26.836
Result after taxes	5.625.162	45.500	1.085.379

Appropriation of the balance of income and expenses			
Additions to:	Actuals 2024	Budget 2024	Actuals 2023
Continuity reserve	609.280	45.500	436.076
Earmarked reserve	0	0	500.000
Earmarked funds	0	0	-21.255

Total Income:
10.658.453




Total Expenditure:
5.044.242



Consolidated cash flow statement						
			2024			2023
Cash Flow from Operational activities						
Balance of income and expenses in the financial year		5.625.162			1.085.379	
Changes for:						
Ratedifference in reserves		9.219				
Depreciation		18.003			17.494	
Impairment		34.247			0	
Changes in working capital						
current assets		-650.805			287.521	
current liabilities		26.460			-45.765	
cash flow from operational activities			5.062.466			1.344.629

Consolidated cash flow statement						
			2024			2023
Cash flow from investment activities						
Investments activities						
Investment in tangible fixed assets		-7.123			-22.554	
Disinvestments in tangible fixed assets		3.036			1.498	
Cash flow from investment activities			-4.087			-21.056
Net cash flow			5.058.379			1.323.573
Liquid assets at the start of the financial year	4.208.807			2.885.234		
Liquid assets at the end of the financial year	9.267.186			4.208.807		
Changes in liquid assets			5.058.379			1.323.573

The background of the image consists of several rolled-up scrolls. The scrolls are made of a light-colored material, possibly parchment or paper, and are wrapped in a dark, textured cloth. The scrolls are arranged in a way that they overlap each other, creating a sense of depth. The text on the scrolls is written in a red, serif font, which is slightly blurred and faded, giving it a historical or antique feel. The text is arranged in columns, following the curve of the scrolls. The overall color palette is muted, with the red of the text providing a subtle contrast to the neutral tones of the scrolls and the dark cloth.

The artworks and photographs featured in this
report were created by MA students and faculty of the Peter Behrens
School of Arts, University of Applied Sciences Dusseldorf for Bellingfest.
Under the leadership of Professor Mareike Foecking.