

2024

L

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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FOREWORD

As someone who grew up in Britain at a time when churches across Europe were emptying it's hard not to see some parallels with the challenges now facing journalism. The decline of church attendance was incomprehensible to many priests. Society, as they understood it, had no way to conceive of itself in the absence of their work, their words.

Some preachers responded with anger, others with renewed zeal, but there was an enduring belief that the moral force of their message would bring people back. When it didn't, some in the church saw that as a moral failure among the people who were no longer coming. For those brought up to see their calling as essential to community and society it was a catastrophe. Watching the gradual and now accelerating collapse in engagement with newspapers and the broader church of serious journalism it's hard not to hear the echo of the priests in the anger and confusion of many journalists who find the "legacy label" attached to their work.

Journalism's reverence of tradition and standards can cross the line into self regard. There is a distinct flavour of moral panic and inter-generational judgement in the response of some parts of our industry to its apparently declining currency. Conversations among journalists can too often veer towards the idea that society is no longer meeting our standards. There is an essential role for the industry and its institutions in fostering healthy societies but there is little room for nostalgia.

Lighthouse has never been tied to a single format or platform. With every investigation we look to build a coalition of storytellers and outlets. We aim to participate in the broad creative reimagining of our work that's already underway.

Much of it begins with a willingness to meet people where they are. At a local level, communities are being invited into dialogue with newsrooms to help them adapt what they're producing to actual information needs.

On the level of product this has prompted an explosion of formats and experiments that challenge the fatalistic idea that people have been lost to algorithms indexed for fear and anger.

Movements like service journalism — reporting that seeks to help people navigate their lives, as well as telling them truth — suggest that the way forward will require more humility and less broadcasting.

The switch among younger age groups to personality-led news is being embraced by some content creators to make brilliant explanatory journalism. We will look to learn from, host and celebrate these innovations and more. Lighthouse has partnered with dozens of newsrooms, large and small, old and new, and will continue to do so. But we will also be partnering beyond these boundaries and working to model new ways to serve audiences. There are fascinating lessons to learn and share from the struggle for attention and relevance and we're privileged to be doing so on behalf of a mission to inform change.

Daniel Howden
Managing Director

OUR IMPACT

Our strength is measured not just in stories published, but in how well we meet the needs of those we aim to serve — and whether we can build bridges beyond journalism. In 2024, we pushed ourselves to ask harder questions: Are we reaching the communities most affected by the issues we cover? Are we enabling civil society, content creators and directly impacted groups to turn reporting into change?

We listened to small farmers protesting European agricultural policies, learned from Sudanese activists and worked with creators to repackage findings in formats that reach new audiences. From radio in Ki'che to video testimonies by those harmed by violent push-backs screened in the European Parliament, we found new ways to meet people where they are.

Four months after our Poison PR exposé, the lobbying firm v-Fluence had lost contracts, laid off staff, and deleted its internal database tracking opposition activists and scientists. In Kenya, we partnered with Africa Uncensored to screen the Poison PR documentary with farmers, helping spark local debate and political response. In the DRC, our investigation into biometric ID profiteering led to the cancellation of a controversial contract with French firm Idemia, pressure from anti-corruption watchdogs, and a public backlash so sharp the deal's architect accused us of conspiracy.

In the UK, our Left Behind series helped reverse the government's rejection of asylum for Afghan special forces trained by Britain. Brain Waste, a bold multi-country, data-led investigation, led to policy reform for teachers in Portugal, while in Spain, immigrants organised for changes to the homologación process.

In Norway, Inequality Before the Law prompted calls for oversight of lay judges, and Sweden launched a national inquiry after Suspicion Machines was published. And for the first time, U.S. sanctions targeted spyware executives named in our Flight of the Predator investigation, marking a new level of accountability.

We built new partnerships in Latin America, where Smoke and Lies was recognized as one of the year's top ten impactful projects. Our investigations are being taught as courses in classrooms, shared by influencers from Veritasium to The Food Babe and Joe Rogan.

Journalism is a public service, and the impact we make is shared — with the people and movements that use it to inform change.

TEAM

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SUPERVISORY BOARD



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Tuesday Reitano

CALENDAR OF THE YEAR

**FEBRUARY
2,200 FRONTEx
EMAILS TO LIBYA**



In partnership with
DER SPIEGEL

**FEBRUARY
GREAT BRITISH
BETRAYAL**



In partnership with
PANORAMA

**FEBRUARY
AUTOMATING
DISTRUST**



In partnership with
De Limburger

**MARCH
SMOKE
AND LIES**



In partnership with
LA VERDAD

**MARCH
SINK THE
BOATS**



In partnership with
Le Monde

**APRIL
BRAIN
WASTE**



In partnership with
FINANCIAL TIMES

**MAY
DESERT
DUMPS**



In partnership with
The Washington Post

**MAY
FARMERS
PROTEST,
WHO GAINS?**



In partnership with
Spolunr

**MAY
AFGHAN WAR
PROFITEERS**



In partnership with
OCCRP

**JUNE
FALSE PROMISE
OF BIOMETRICS**



In partnership with
Bloomberg

**JULY
THE QANON
RECIPE**



In partnership with
euobserver

**SEPTEMBER
THE KUTUM
MASSACRE**



In partnership with
sky news

**SEPTEMBER
POISON
PR**



In partnership with
The Guardian

**OCTOBER
TURKEY'S EU-FUNDED
DEPORTATION
MACHINE**



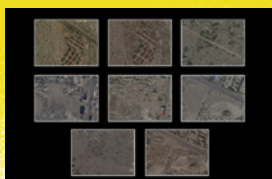
In partnership with
POLITICO

**OCTOBER
BORDER911**



In partnership with
THE OBSERVER

**NOVEMBER
INSIDE THE TALIBAN'S
DEMOLITION
CAMPAIGN IN KABUL**



In partnership with
Afghan Witness

**NOVEMBER
SWEDEN'S
SUSPICION
MACHINE**



In partnership with
Svenska Dagbladet

**DECEMBER
UK-TRAINED
COMMANDOS
LURED BY RUSSIA**



In partnership with
The INDEPENDENT

**DECEMBER
DROWNINGS AND
DETERRENCE IN
THE RIO GRANDE**



In partnership with
The Washington Post

NEWSROOMS

BORDERS



BORDERS

The year 2024 saw Europe double down on efforts to build ‘migration management’ partnerships with third countries, even where such states were led by authoritarian and openly xenophobic regimes. The true financial and human costs of such agreements started to emerge, with evidence revealing human rights abuses carried out with European money and backing.

We revealed with first-time visual evidence that French police, with the help of British money, had violently intercepted dinghies of UK-bound asylum seekers, risking people’s lives. We also exposed how, through deals with North African countries, Europe had financed and been directly involved in clandestine operations to dump tens of thousands of Black people in the desert or remote areas. In a third investigation, we found the EU had funnelled hundreds of millions of euros into a shadowy deportation system operating in Turkey, with Syrian and Afghan refugees detained, abused and even killed as a result.

IMPACT

Our Desert Dumps investigation, published weeks before the European elections, was cited multiple times during the election debates. As a result of our publication, the term ‘desert dumps’ came into being. Following the publication of our findings of pullbacks by French police in the Channel, the violent tactics appeared to reduce, and lawyers began to explore the potential for legal challenges against such actions. Following our Turkey deportation story, EU representatives were probed about the findings, and European diplomats in Ankara were said to have been “shaken up” by the reporting.

BORDERS US



BORDERS

In 2024, the US Borders team published three in depth investigations with media partners in the US and Mexico including local independent newsrooms, state media outlets and national news publications. The investigation **Smoke and Lies** used leaked government records from Mexico to visually reconstruct the movements of government employees during a fatal fire at an immigrant detention facility. We revealed that keys to a locked cell, where 40 men were left to die, were at the facility but never used, contrary to government claims.

Another investigation relied on more than 160 public information requests in Mexico and the US to compile the first ever database of migrant drowning deaths in the Rio Grande. The investigation **Border 911** analysed tax and regulatory filings, and thousands of pages of public records, to link Trump-aligned law enforcement officials with disinformation campaigns and election interference before the 2024 presidential election

IMPACT

Our investigation *Smoke and Lies* was cited by numerous news outlets and human rights organizations in Mexico, and it won a UN human rights award in Mexico as well as a top investigative award in the US.

The database we created for *Death and Deterrence in the Rio Grande* of drowning victims in the Rio Grande will be included in the first ever public repository on migrant deaths, to be hosted by the University of Texas, which will help relatives find their missing loved ones. We were also invited to share our data findings with human rights groups at the International Organisation for Migration. Following Trump's election as president, and the appointment of members of the nonprofit *Border911* to key cabinet positions, several research organisations and media outlets followed up on our reporting, citing our investigation.

SURVEILLANCE



SURVEILLANCE

Our major investigation of 2024 was a three-part series looking at the real story behind the purchase of digital identity systems in Uganda, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. International institutions promote these expensive tools as facilitators of efficiency and good governance, and Western companies are cashing in. But our reporting found little in the way of democratic dividends. Our reporters instead uncovered a byzantine tale of corruption, mission creep towards a chilling surveillance state, and an ongoing saga of electoral manipulation.

Meanwhile, we continued our work on harms resulting from algorithmic decision making in the EU, delving into a secretive fraud prediction system in Sweden. Our reporting revealed that despite the country's reputation as a model welfare state, the algorithm resulted in discrimination against women, migrants and low-income earners. We found the state had deployed this system despite objections from regulatory authorities and its own data protection officer.

IMPACT

The Congolese government cancelled its \$1.2bn contract with French vendor Idemia days after our revelations of spiralling costs and lack of implementation.

Our reporting in 2023 into a secretive fraud detection algorithm in France led to more than 30 NGOs signing a letter to the prime minister calling for an end to the use of the algorithm, with 15 organisations later taking the government to court.

Spyware executives highlighted in our Flight of the Predator exposé from 2022 were sanctioned by the US government. Our Ghost in the Network investigation was cited by UK phone regulator Ofcom as a key piece of evidence of the need to tighten controls.

Our Suspicion Machines series was cited in over a dozen academic papers.

FOOD SYSTEMS



FOOD SYSTEMS

In 2024, we continued our critical investigations into the complex global food systems, while expanding our work beyond Europe and working with new media partners.

Our Poison PR investigation revealed that the US government financed a covert campaign to downplay the dangers of pesticides around the world, in particular in Africa. We uncovered a members-only website that hosted profiles of hundreds of scientists, politicians and campaigners who had been critical of pesticides.

Another investigation, Farmers Protest, Who Gains?, revealed that European farmers are represented by a few powerful people who bear little resemblance to the average farmer they claim to speak for.

We also launched several new projects that will require scientific methods and established partnerships with academic researchers to carry them out.

IMPACT

The company at the centre of our Poison PR investigation announced following our publication that it had removed the secret profiles from its website and scaled down its operations.

The story had a global reach. It was featured on the Joe Rogan show and shared by prominent food and health influencers. We screened the documentary to smallscale farmers and civil servants in Kenya.

The investigation into farmer unions was published in several outlets and key EU policy-makers remarked privately that they found it informative and useful. We also experimented with outreach to influencers and learnt valuable lessons for our future work.

WAR WINNERS



WAR WINNERS

The War Winners Afghanistan team tested new investigative methodologies and expanded our local and international partnerships in 2024. Based on a trove of leaked property data from Dubai, we exposed how Afghan contractors of the US-led intervention stashed millions in the secretive emirate. Another investigation used satellite and open source imagery to map the Taliban's demolition of swathes of Kabul, leaving thousands homeless. As part of the Left Behind project, we obtained documents and communications showing Afghan ex-special forces in Iran being targeted by militia recruiters to fight for Russia in Ukraine.

Our Afghanistan and Syria teams collaborated on a major international investigation into EU funds used by Turkey to deport Syrians and Afghans to danger. As the year ended, we prepared to launch War Winners in Sudan and supported long-standing Syrian partners to respond to the extraordinary new opportunities for investigative journalism after the fall of Bashar al-Assad.

IMPACT

Our investigation about Afghan war profiteers dominated Afghan headlines and TV bulletins for days and won an international data journalism award. Our demolitions investigation was cited in a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan and was used to train a group of Afghan journalists on OSINT in Afghanistan. Our story on Turkey's EU-funded deportation machine was extensively covered by European and Turkish media and prompted open letters by human rights groups and a EU parliamentary committee, resulting in fury in Ankara and alarm in Brussels. The European ombudsman called the investigation "truly shocking".



MIGRATION

The Migration Newsroom leveraged its track record of thorough, transparent documentation to gain recognition as a research entity by Eurostat. This unlocked a trove of data that enabled us to produce the first comprehensive investigation into thousands of university-educated migrants across Europe who are barred from professional positions, despite huge labour shortages in critical areas and the huge costs to European economies.

The investigation found that almost half of university-educated migrants in Europe are overqualified for the jobs they're in and nearly twice as likely as natives to be unemployed. In Spain, we exposed the intractable bureaucracy keeping immigrant doctors out of hospitals and in France, the policies barring specialist doctors from addressing acute shortages. The lack of internship opportunities in the Netherlands and of degree recognition in Portugal are keeping talented teachers out of classrooms. In Sweden and Italy we discovered contributing factors for those countries having among the highest rates of brain waste in Europe.

IMPACT

Our findings have sparked commentary from economists, politicians, EU level experts on skills matching, employment agencies and heads of HR at companies such as Patagonia, Mahou and San Miguel.

A Spanish MP from a migrant background cited our findings in an op-ed on migration integration issues. A week after we published, the Portuguese education body agreed to meet with a group of Brazilian teachers for the first time to discuss the requirements. This resulted in a decision to change the rules for Brazilian teachers to access jobs and the creation of a working group with some of the teachers we spoke to.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

The world's largest humanitarian crisis has been unfolding in Sudan since the war started two years ago, claiming at least 150,000 lives and forcing more than 12 million to flee. The two warring sides, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudan's armed forces, have both been accused of war crimes and ethnic massacres, which both deny. In a war where journalists are unable to access the frontlines and there's a near total internet blackout, such reports have been difficult to prove.

By bringing together a team of experienced international and Sudanese journalists and visual investigators, we obtained verified unique visual evidence proving that RSF forces were involved in the extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians, including five brothers. We were able to confirm the identities of these brothers, and confirm that they, and other victims in the videos, were civilians not involved in the fighting and targeted due to their ethnicity.

IMPACT

The investigation was aired and published worldwide by legacy media, and we translated the findings in short videos which we shared on social media. They were shared by Sudanese civil society organisations and influencers.

Weeks after the investigation was published, we presented the footage in the UK parliament during a hearing about the situation in Sudan. We also held meetings with politicians behind closed doors to inform them about our findings and organised a press briefing for journalists and policymakers.

A

2023 Philip Meyer
Journalism Award

**3RD PLACE – INSIDE
THE SUSPICION
MACHINE**

A

V edición de los Premios
Desalambre

**BEST MULTIMEDIA
WORK –
RECONSTRUCTING
THE MELILLA
MASSACRE**

A

2024 SIGMA Awards

**SUSPICION
MACHINES**

A

Amnesty Media Awards 2024

THE LEFT BEHIND

A

2024 EPPY Award

**BEST
INVESTIGATIVE/
ENTERPRISE VIDEO
– 1ST PLACE –
SMOKE AND LIES**

A

2024 EPPY Award

**BEST
COLLABORATIVE
INVESTIGATIVE/
ENTERPRISE
REPORTING –
2ND PLACE –
SMOKE AND LIES**

A

Access Info Impact Award

**SUSPICION
MACHINES**

›N‹

One World Media Awards

THE LEFT BEHIND

›N‹

IJ4EU Impact Award 2024

**HONOURABLE
MENTION –
SUSPICION
MACHINES**

›N‹

2024 Daphne Caruana
Galizia Prize

DESERT DUMPS

›N‹

2024 Daphne Caruana
Galizia Prize

BRAIN WASTE

›N‹

Press Gazette's British
Journalism Awards


























THE LEFT BEHIND

›N‹

COLPIN Awards

**SPECIAL MENTION –
SMOKE AND LIES**

MEDIA PARTNERS

	The 		Svenska Dagbladet		
					EL PAÍS
		Le Monde	L'Espresso	sky news	
		tagesschau®			
	Público	france.3	The Observer	LA VERDAD	EL PASO MATTERS
	De Limburger			PANORAMA	POLITICO
NEW LINES MAGAZINE	euobserver	THE EUROPEANS	UNBIA'S THE NEWS!	The Washington Post	
THE NEW LEDE	The New Humanitarian	THE WIRE		The Continent African journalism.	Bloomberg
	FINANCIAL TIMES	WIRED			

DONORS



FINANCIALS

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE	2024 (€)	2023 (€)
INCOME		
Grants and contract income	2,035,126	2,390,035
Media partners	1,843	9,043
Lighthouse sessions participations fees	0	(661)
Other income	18,317	15,242
	2,055,286	2,413,659
WAGES AND SALARIES		
Wages and salaries	215,320	278,922
Socials security charges	54,171	65,039
Holiday payments	9,673	15,457
Core team compensation	1,136,072	899,029
	1,415,236	1,258,447
PROJECT COSTS		
Consultancy costs	1,845	10,512
Freelancers	205,095	156,487
Software, subscriptions and hosting costs	2,941	2,522
Travel costs	97,225	131,210
Workshop costs	1,109	2,881
Other costs	116	1,875
	308,331	305,486
DEPRECIATION TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS		
Equipment	7,994	6,041
MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS		
Accountancy costs	11,053	39,483
Auditor's costs	15,746	15,253
COO Consultant costs	3,294	10,614
Consultancy costs	15,045	—
Bank and interest charges	6,761	3,927
Supervisory board expenses	6,482	6,626
Insurance costs	9,816	12,322
Office and phone costs	52,481	41,948
Software, subscriptions and hosting costs	53,445	29,935
Travel costs	52,231	64,467
Workshop costs	2,420	—
Web development	8,550	22,036
Other costs	19,373	37,851
	256,697	284,461

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Lighthouse is built on the trust and support of our partners and our funders. We rely on our core team and also the deep network of freelance and staff journalists who invest their time and talent in our ambitious work. Our impact work relies on the openness and collaborative nature of civil society organisations in the many countries where we publish. We're incredibly grateful for everything our partners do to improve, promote and sustain our work.

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BLUESKY / LINKEDIN / BACKLIGHT

