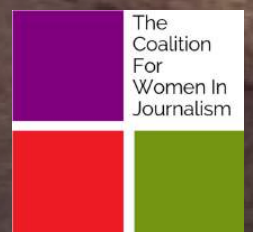


PRESS FREEDOM STATUS FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS: FEBRUARY 2021



2021
REPORT



ABOUT US

The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered mentorship for mid-career women journalists across several countries around the world and is the first organization to focus on the status of free press for women journalists. Our network of individuals and organizations brings together the experience and mentorship necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong mechanism where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

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PRESS FREEDOM STATUS IN FEBRUARY 2021

In the past month, The Coalition For Women In Journalism reported a staggering 97 cases of harassment, threats, assaults, and arrests of women journalists working around the world. Below is a report reviewing the safety of women journalists internationally during February 2021.

At least 11 women journalists were attacked or impeded in the field.

Journalist Elena Solovyova's financial information was released online without her permission. The leak was accompanied by several unfounded accusations that could put her life at risk. Online harassment is not only an attempt to intimidate her, but it also violates her right to privacy and puts her life at risk.

Nanou Kazaku, a radio journalist based in Goma, the capital of North-Kivu province in the DRC, was shot on Wednesday, February 17. Nanou was covering a demonstration in the Keyshero neighborhood when she took a bullet to the neck. The journalist was rushed to CBCA hospital and treated for her injuries.

Police interfered with five female reporters covering the press briefing of HDP Women's Assemblies at İstanbul's Çağlayan Courthouse. Police referenced the reporters removed from the field as, "Terrorist supporters, I wish the car crashed on them!".

In Myanmar, several journalists resigned from a national newspaper once it appeared that the publication was succumbing to military demands. Journalists also left the press council in protest, following an emergency meeting with the new regime.



Independent journalist Talia Jane was detained today while following the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests in Manhattan. She was released shortly after her detention.

In Ethiopia, three gunmen entered journalist Lucy Kassa's house, physically assaulted her, and took equipment from her house. To make matters worse, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, instead of supporting a journalist in distress, claimed that since Lucy was not accredited as a journalist, statements in her support were 'wrong'.

The demonstrators protesting the lockdown in South Africa turned violent and assaulted reporters Athi Mtongana and Monique Mortlock who were covering the protest.

At least 10 women journalists were sexually harassed.

In the United States, Alanna Rizzo, after parting ways with SportsNet LA, opened up about the sexual harassment experienced by women sports reporters. Her statement shed light on the behavior of players as well as the way newsrooms enable this culture.

Also in the United States, White House deputy press secretary TJ Ducklo resigned from his post after reportedly threatening a female correspondent. The deputy secretary called and threatened Politico reporter Tara Palmeri for pursuing a story on his relationship with a journalist. After the media exposed his misconduct, TJ Ducklo was suspended from his post for a week by Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary. However, the decision was widely criticized as insufficient for his deplorable actions.



Another case was reported from the United States, where five anonymous women sports journalists were harassed by the former New York Mets manager and current pitching coach, Mickey Callaway. They accused him of sending them inappropriate texts and asking for their private pictures. The women journalists also said they received unwarranted comments about their appearance from Mr. Callaway, which made them extremely uncomfortable.

Solafa Magdy, a freelance journalist, endured physical and sexual assault while in police custody. Solafa was first arrested on November 26, 2019, along with her husband. She is now being held and tortured at Al-Qanatar women's prison. In one incident, she was reportedly dragged across the floor and stripped of all her clothes. Solafa suffered heavy bleeding after one of these brutal attacks.

In India, KP Pravitha, a correspondent for Mathrubhumi, a Malayalam daily newspaper, was subjected to inappropriate texts from IAS officer Prashant Nair. KP reached out to Prashant through WhatsApp for information regarding a story on Monday, February 22. Prashant Nair replied to the journalist with obscene images and insults.

In Uzbekistan, a female journalist reported being harassed by an official at the Uzbekistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) after applying for media accreditation.



Seven women journalists faced physical assault.

In Uganda, local journalists Irene Abalo of The Daily Monitor, Shamim Nabakooza of Record TV, Rashida Nakaayi of Galaxy FM, and Josephine Namakumbi of NBS were physically assaulted by the military police. The journalists were there to cover the filing of a petition from Bobi Wine, the runner-up in the recent presidential election. They were beaten while reporting outside the U.N. Rights Office in the capital, Kampala.

Lesedi FM current affairs anchor Dimakatso Ratselane was severely stabbed, allegedly by her husband. Neighbors found Ratselane bleeding profusely and called an ambulance. It is reported that the violent attack on the journalist lasted for hours.

In Iran, Zeynab Jalalian endures physical assaults and torture in prison as her health continues to deteriorate.

The worrying trend of harassment and intimidation of journalists continues in Indian-administered Kashmir. At least 18 reporters were interrogated by the police, and at least 12 have been assaulted.

Five women journalists were arrested.

In Iran, journalist Nooshin Jafari was arrested and transferred to Qarchak Prison to serve a four-year prison sentence. She was sentenced on charges of spreading anti-establishment propaganda and insulting sanctities.



In Belarus, Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova were sentenced to two years imprisonment in a minimum-security penal colony. The journalists were arrested for covering a protest rally last year.

In China, the government officially arrested Australian journalist Cheng Lei after almost six months in detention on charges of illegally supplying state secrets overseas. Australian Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, assures that her office is in touch with the Chinese authorities and the Australian consulates in China regarding the matter.

Journalist Lady Ann Salem continues to be detained in jail despite the fact that the court dismissed all charges against her due to police misconduct. Ann was arrested on December 10, 2020, and has been in prison since despite being innocent.

One reporter was abducted in Nigeria.

Chidiebere Onyia, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), was allegedly abducted at gunpoint on Tuesday night as she returned home from work.

At least 10 women journalists were detained.

Following the coup in Myanmar, at least eight journalists were detained, including Shwe Yee Win, for criticizing the military takeover in the country. Authorities have also doubled down on censorship through frequent suspensions of social media, and warning the press council about the language used to describe the political situation in the country.

In Turkey, Newspaper Alinteri reporter Zarife Çamalan and Mesopotamia Agency (MA) reporter who followed the press briefing of the United Struggle Forces (BMG) establishment on February 4, was kept in detention for four days before being released.

Independent journalist Talia Jane was detained on February 13 while following the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests in Manhattan. The journalist was handcuffed and her wrists were bruised because of the tight flex cuffs. She was released shortly with no bail after her detention.

A former journalist in Belarus, Ksenia Lutschina, was detained over accusations of tax evasion.

Russian journalists Elena Kostyuchenko and Valeria Savinova were among the dozens of journalists detained at the protests demanding the release of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

In Iran, Journalist Saba Azarpeik was reportedly arrested by The Iranian Cyber Police (FATA) on February 7 for unknown reasons.

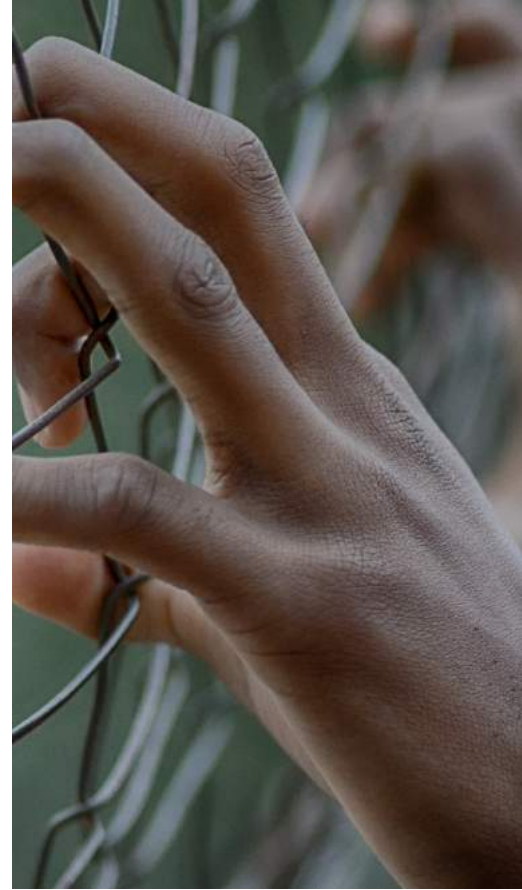
In Belarus, the police detained journalists Alina Skrabunova and Aliaksandr Sidareuski who are affiliated with Belsat TV on February 10. They were released later in the day, however, a summon from the courts was sent out to both of them.

In Myanmar, multimedia journalist Kay Zon Nwe was arrested while following an anti-coup protest held in Sanchaung, Yangon on Saturday noon. The reporter was live-streaming from the sight of protest where the police cracked down on protestors. The whereabouts of Kay Zone remains unknown after the arrest.

At least 32 women faced legal harassment.

In India, the Unnao police filed a complaint against The MOJO story news portal run by senior Indian journalist Barkha Dutt. The FIR names seven other Twitter handles for deliberately spreading misinformation over the case. Barkha has termed the police action against her as “brazen harassment and bullying”, and she is ready to fight the charges in court.

Journalist Lady Ann Salem in the Philippines continues to be detained despite the court having dismissed all charges against her due to police misconduct. Ann, who was arrested on December 10, 2020, has been in prison even since being found innocent.



Belarusian security forces raided the homes of several journalists and human rights activists earlier this month. Offices of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) and the Viasna Human Rights Centre were also searched without any legitimate grounds, in what appears to be the latest crackdown on civil liberties by the authorities.

Journalist Mrinal Pande was charged with sedition for reporting and sharing allegedly unverified news about the ongoing farmers' protests in New Delhi.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) harassed and attempted to intimidate journalist Brandi Morin when she visited the Unist'ot'en Healing Camp.

The Louisiana Attorney General, Jeffrey Landry, sued The Advocate reporter, Andrea Gallo, in response to a public-records request she filed with his office. The request was in connection with the sexual harassment inquiry that took place against Landry's staff member.

The Indian police added reporter Ismat Ara's name to the complaint registered against The Wire's editor for tweeting an article that implicated police in a farmer's death during the Indian Republic Day demonstration. The article cited the claims made by the family of Navreet Singh, the sole casualty of the clash between the state and the protestors.



The first hearing of the trial against Democrat-News editor Selda Manduz was held on February 10. The journalist faces the charge of being affiliated with an armed terrorist organization. Selda could be sentenced to up to 15 years if found guilty.

The 12th hearing of the trial against journalists Semiha Şahin and Pınar Gayıp was once again postponed, this time to April 15. The two journalists are facing charges of being members of an armed terrorist organisation and spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization.

The third hearing of the trial against Jin news reporter Melike Aydın was held in İzmir. Melike faces charges of being a member of a terrorist organization. The prosecutor requested the court investigate the evidence against Melike and the secret witnesses heard. The court postponed the next hearing to June 8, 2021.

The 13th hearing of the trial against journalist Meşale Tolu was held in İstanbul. The journalist faces charges of being affiliated with a terrorist organization. The court granted defense lawyers a month to examine the expert report and prepare their response. The next hearing was adjourned until September 16-17, 2021. The verdict is expected to be announced at the next hearing.

The second hearing of the case against Habertürk columnist Nagehan Alçı was held in İstanbul. The prosecutor in the lawsuit presented the final opinion on the accusations and requested the court to convict the columnist for the alleged insult. The next hearing was adjourned until March 10, 2021.



The 19th hearing of the trial against former Özgür Gündem editor Reyhan Çapan and her colleagues was held at İstanbul's 13th High Criminal Court. The hearing was postponed once again after the court decided to wait for the execution of arrest warrants issued for defendants and ordered their initial testimonies to be taken. The trial was adjourned until June 22, 2021.

The fifth hearing of the trial against journalist Ruken Demir was held in İzmir. The court lifted the journalist's travel ban however, the trial was adjourned once again in a request to examine Ruken's social media accounts. The next hearing will be held on June 8.

The fourth hearing of the trial against journalist Canan Coşkun was held in Istanbul. The journalist faces charges of targeting the counter-terrorism officer to terrorist organizations. The court ruled to await the result of the warrant written to the police service regarding the officer in question and adjourned the next hearing to June 8, 2021.

The fifth hearing of the trial against Sözcü columnist Çiğdem Toker was postponed to a further date due to the judge's administrative leave. Çiğdem is on trial with a claim of 80,000 TL for moral compensation.

The 11th hearing of the trial against Etkin News Agency (ETHA) editor İsmi naz Temel and reporter Havva Cuştan was held on February 18. Both journalists face terrorism-related charges. The court decided to hear the witnesses and to maintain the imposed travel ban on the journalists. The next hearing was postponed to May 25.



An indictment was filed against Jin News reporter Şehriban Abi, journalist Nazan Sala, and Mesopotamia Agency (MA) reporter Zeynep Durgut on terrorism-related charges. Both Şehriban and Nazan were apprehended by the authorities and remain behind bars. Zeynep, however, was listed in the indictment but has yet to be arrested. The Van 5th High Criminal Court accepted the case, and judicial proceedings are underway. The journalists, if convicted, face a sentence of up to 15 years in prison.

The lawsuit filed against the journalists beaten and detained during the police raid on Özgür Gündem newspaper was postponed once again. The next hearing of the case, in which five female journalists are on trial, will be held on April 22.

The defamation case against Turkish journalist Canan Kaya was adjourned on February 1. Demirören Media Group sued journalist Canan Kaya and five news organizations for 50,000 Turkish Lira in compensation for their accusation of intentional reporting to defile the brand's reputation. Next trial will be held on April 1, 2021.

Andrea Sahouri was arrested in May 2020 while covering a Black Lives Matter protest. Her trial is scheduled to take place next month. Despite her employer publication registering a protest, and terming this repression of the press, the charges against her have not been culled.

The fourth hearing of the trial against 38 people including journalists Sedef Kabaş, Merdan Yanardağ, Mustafa Sönmez and Bloomberg economy reporters Fercan Yalınkılıç, Kerim Karakaya on the allegation of "economic coup attempt" was held on February 26 at the Istanbul 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance. The court decided to wait for the expert reports. The next hearing will take place on June 4, 2021.

OdaTV News Director Müyesser Yıldız and TELE1 Ankara Representative İsmail Dukel were tried in the third hearing on February 6 in Ankara. The prosecutor sought a sentence of 31 years in prison for all the defendants over espionage charges.

The third hearing of the trial against Evrensel columnist Ceren Sözeri because of her news story titled "Who made AKP lose votes?" was held on February 3. The trial was adjourned to July 14, 2021.

Dünya Newspaper regional representative Recep Şenyurt verbally harassed his female colleagues for a year. Resigning after his abuse, Şenyurt also disgracefully sued for defamation case against the female journalist who revealed the incident. The court dismissed the case against the woman journalist.

Two women journalists were faced legal persecution.

On February 18, more than twenty journalists resigned from The Myanmar Times when it became obvious that the management had decided to comply with the military's terms regarding how the paper was to be run in the country. The management banned the use of the term "coup" when reporting on the recent power grab, and instructed journalists to use "power transfer" instead. Journalists viewed this as an attempt at censorship and decided to quit instead of agreeing to the violation of their civil liberties.

Four women journalists were targeted with death threats.

In Northern Ireland, Patricia Devlin received sinister death threats. These threats are the latest in the malicious prosecution she has faced for two years now. This time, however, it appears that the authorities have finally taken note.





In the same region, award-winning journalist Allison Morris, a security correspondent, and columnist for The Irish News, was targeted with death threats in a similar fashion. Allison has received threats from paramilitary forces in the past as well.

In Pakistan, Zebunnisa Burki, a deputy editor for The News, endured vicious rape and death threats on Sunday, February 14. A rider associated with a local parcel delivery service verbally assaulted the journalist, threatening to rape and kill her along with her family. Zebunnisa reached out to the vehicle service via chat to report his behavior. The journalist only received a response after tweeting about the incident.

Next door in India, Pushpa Rokde, a journalist based in Chhattisgarh, was targeted with death threats, reportedly from a local committee. The threats, written on a piece of paper, were pinned on a tree near her village.

11 female reporters were targeted by online troll campaigns.

In Canada, Hockey Night Punjabi broadcaster, Amrit Gill, was targeted by vicious online trolls. Amrit posted a picture of her excitement to host Hockey Night Canada only to face an onslaught of derogatory remarks. The comments under Amrit's tweet, most of them now deleted, were disrespectful and insensitive.

In the Netherlands, Egyptian journalist Reem Abdellatif, a former Al-Monitor reporter and founder of Redefined Communications, was subjected to online threats for an email she received to her Dutch-registered business account.



Indian journalist Rana Ayyub was targeted for criticizing the government over the ongoing farmers' protest in the country. In a tweet on February 4, Rana expressed her distress over the relentless trolling. In the tweet, journalist Rana described the most recent aggression as something she has never witnessed before.

KP Pravitha, a correspondent for Mathrubhumi, a Malayalam daily newspaper, was subjected to inappropriate texts from IAS officer Prashant Nair. KP reached out to Prashant through WhatsApp for information regarding a story on Monday, February 22. Prashant Nair replied to the journalist with obscene images and insults.

A threatening and hateful video was posted on a YouTube channel on February 11, asking for the hanging of some notable journalists in India. The video posted by an account named The String accused renowned journalists, including female columnist Rana Ayyub, independent journalist Faye D'Souza, acclaimed host and head of the MOJO Story, Barkha Dutt, and the senior editor of The Wire, Afra Khanum Sherwani.

Journalist Leigh Sales was viciously attacked by supporters of the Victorian premier, Daniel Andrews. The attack happened online in the aftermath of a press conference during which Sales had questioned Andrews' policy.

Washington Post correspondent Seung Min Kim was subjected to racist and sexist attacks. The hateful attacks against the journalist were followed by a picture of her with senator Lisa Murkowski.

Evrensel Newspaper columnist Ayşen Şahin was targeted with a vicious organised trolling campaign after her appearance in Halk TV.



CFWIJ documented one notable troll case.

Rohini Singh, a senior journalist and contributor to The Wire, was targeted online with rape and death threats from a Twitter user named Kapil Singh Viayan. Singh reported the threats to both Twitter and the Udaipur Police. The criminal was soon arrested, and the journalist thanked the police for their quick response.

In Turkey, one journalist was expelled from the workplace.

In Turkey, Habertürk sports presenter Hande Sarioğlu had to resign following the overwhelming backlash she faced after posting a dance video on her social media.

Two women journalists endured verbal attacks.

Journalist Nataša Miljanović-Zubac was verbally abused by Vojislav Šešelj, the founder and president of the far-right Serbian Radical Party, as well as a convicted war criminal. Nataša was targeted on live television during the politician's January 30 appearance on the Weekend Morning show on Happy TV.

Journalist and managing editor for NayaDaur Media, Ailia Zahra, endured misogynistic and sexist remarks from infamous Pakistani writer Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar. Ailia appeared as a panelist for a T.V. show on Saturday, February 20. During the discussion, Mr. Khalil-ur-Rehman started yelling at the journalist. When he was warned about his tone, the writer put down his microphone and left the live show. He also reportedly accused Ailia of being a RAW agent before leaving the premises. The incident was followed by a vicious online campaign targeting the journalist with threats and abuse.

However, there was some good news too...

Journalist Hatice Kamer was tried on charges of spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization. The journalist was facing a sentence of up to seven years over her journalistic coverage she posted on her social media account six years ago. Hatice was acquitted in the first hearing of the trial, held in Diyarbakır.

Saudi activist Loujain Al-Hathloul was finally released on Wednesday, February 10, after spending 1001 days in prison. Loujain, a prominent advocate for women's rights and outspoken critic of the Saudi authorities, was framed for espionage and conspiring against the Kingdom.





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