

FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT JANUARY TO APRIL 2021



2021
REPORT

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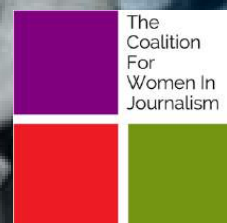


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ABOUT US

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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OBJECTIVE OF THE REPORT

This report presents an image of the threats that women journalists around the world faced between January to April 2021. The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented cases where women journalists have been found vulnerable to various threats as a result of their work. In the first four months of 2021, women journalists were murdered, arrested, faced legal persecution, verbally harassed, abused and threatened online, as well as physically harassed, attacked and assaulted while working in precarious conditions. CFWIJ has been monitoring the situation in various countries around the world, where we have observed the various aspects of threats and attacks in the different regions with a focus on their peculiar nature of incidents. In order to gather data, CFWIJ kept a close watch on the news, updates and first-hand information regarding the many dangers women journalists encounter, which put their safety at risk. The data and information documented by CFWIJ have been consolidated in this report that shares the findings of our work so far.



1. ABOUT CFWIJ

The Coalition For Women In Journalism is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered a mentorship program 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. CFWIJ brings together journalists and organizations to share experiences necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong network where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

In 2017, CFWIJ launched an advocacy branch of the organisation to help make the issues and challenges that women journalists face every day more visible.

In September 2017, the CFWIJ ran a public campaign on Twitter to raise awareness about #ThreatsToWIJ - abbreviated from Threats to Women in Journalism. This Campaign focused on speaking to women journalists about the threats they face for their professional work. Online harassment, physical assault and threats to their families are examples of the obstacles women journalists must overcome to do their job.

The year 2020 called for a revival of this campaign, its second edition featuring a special focus on Pakistan. Our campaign was triggered by the brutal murder of Baloch journalist Shaheena Shaheen and the incessant online trolling of women journalists in this country. They encounter vicious social media attacks, doxing and hacking attempts by accounts often affiliated to the ruling party and conservative, right-wing constituents. #ThreasToWIJ entered the top 50 trending topics in Pakistan on September 15, 2020.

On September 22, 2020, The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) launched its global campaign to discuss various forms of threats and attacks against women journalists. The campaign, designed as an interactive chat on Twitter, used the #ThreatsToWIJ hashtag to bring together women journalists, activists and right advocates. This platform facilitated journalists to share their testimonies and propose remedies to the dire environment in which women journalists perform their jobs.

In 2020, CFWIJ started publishing monthly reports that include various cases of threats against women journalists. These reports highlight the different types of cases we identified, from arrests and detentions to physical assaults and online harassment. The reports show what press freedom looks like for female reporters worldwide.

CFWIJ FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT

MAY 2021

Throughout the first quarter of 2021, CFWIJ documented **348** cases of violence and threats against women journalists around the world.



In the first quarter of 2021, the total number of cases against women in media increased by **284.8%** compared to the first quarter of last year. MENA was the most dangerous country for safety of women journalists with 127 cases which is **36.5%** of total number.



As of May 3, 2021, at least **48** women journalists are still behind bars. **Iran** is the country with the highest number of imprisoned women journalists, with **11** women journalists awaiting justice behind bars. **China** follows its lead by locking **seven** women journalists in prison.

- Iran
- China
- Turkey
- Egypt
- Saudi Arabia
- Philippines
- Belarus
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Vietnam
- Laos
- Guatemala
- Palestine
- Syria



Seven women journalists were killed in **Afghanistan, Cameroon, Algeria and United States** from January to April 2021. That number was five in the entire year of 2020. CFWIJ is concerned about safety of women journalists.



Turkey, India and United States were the top countries with the most number of cases in the first four months of 2021. These countries were the top three countries in the first quarter of 2020 too.



MENA

was the most dangerous region for women journalists in April 2021. CFWIJ documented most of the cases in Afghanistan, Turkey and Lebanon. Besides, Myanmar and Russia were also unsafe countries for women reporters around the world.





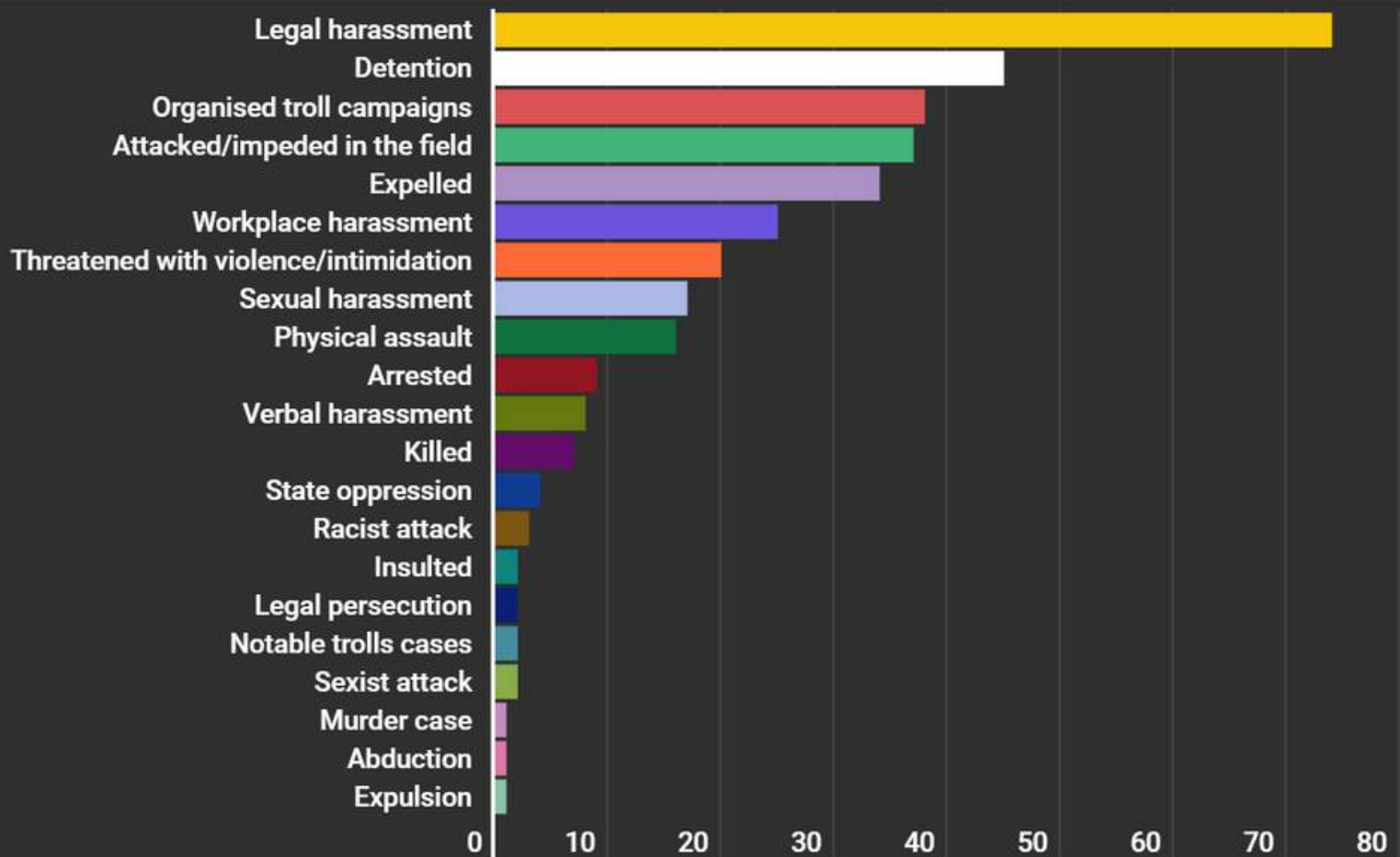
2. CFWIJ metric of the most dangerous threats

Women journalists, no matter what country they belong to, are susceptible to several forms of threats. These dangers can range from online trolling to physical abuse and, in some unfortunate cases, even death. Every month, CFWIJ records a significant number of threats against women journalists, categorized by severity. The unfortunate aspect of this documentation is that the number of threats increases every month. The assaults these women journalists endure, whether online or offline, threatens their right to freedom of expression. In the following categories, we discuss the escalating number of attacks we have recorded in the past three months.

NUMBER OF CASES

As of April 2021, CFWIJ documented 348 cases of violence and threats against women journalists around the world since the beginning of the year. Legal harassment, attacks in the field, detentions and organized troll campaigns are top cases that we documented.

Cases of violence and threats against women journalists around the world



Legal harassment cases constitute the top category in the first four months of 2021. Detentions and organised troll campaigns follow legal harassment cases. See the numbers above.



2.1. MURDER

Attackers often target women journalists to discourage their coverage and silence their voice. Threats to the lives of women journalists are increasing daily in different countries but especially in Afghanistan. Three young women journalists were shot dead in broad daylight by a fundamentalist group on March 3. With years of persistent violence, women journalists and activists are now targeted daily in Afghanistan. Many of whom have left their job or are now working in hideouts. CFWIJ also documented the harrowing killing of Lynn Murray, a celebrated photo director who was one of ten victims of the Colorado shooting on March 22.

For women journalists, violence doesn't always come from the society or state, sometimes the perpetrators could even be the family. Tin Hinan Lacey, a prominent Algerian journalist, was reportedly killed by her husband over a family dispute. The mother to two daughters had worked for Algerian TV4 for many years. Women journalists reporting from conflict zones are particularly prone to death threats. From Cameroon, CFWIJ reported the death of Rebecca Jeme Iyabo, popularly known as Becky Jeme. The journalist was serving as a communication official when she was murdered, along with four soldiers, in a bomb attack on her convoy.

On April 28, CFWIJ reported the case of the horrific killing of journalist Aviva Okeson-Haberman. The journalist was shot by a blind bullet, pierced through the window in her Kansas apartment. Police authorities are investigating the unfortunate incident. Okeson-Haberman was an intern at KCUR before she joined Kansas City's NPR station.



2.2. ATTACKED OR IMPEDED IN THE FIELD

In the past three months, CFWIJ has registered more than 33 cases where women journalists were attacked or impeded in the field. This sort of harassment often comes from the authorities who use security officials to intimidate women journalists. Turkey is the leading example when we speak of such attacks. Fatos Erdogan, a reporter at Dokuz8News, was harassed verbally and physically while covering a Women's Day rally on March 8 in Istanbul. On February 20, police interfered with five reporters covering a press briefing of HDP's women assemblies. Police called these reporter terrorist supporters and wished a car could crash over them. Ceren Iskit, a CFWIJ team member, was assaulted by a police officer while covering the March 20 protest against Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul convention.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism recorded multiple assaults on women journalists covering the insurrection at U.S. Capitol Hill on January 6. Many women reporters and photographers were attacked by angry Trump supporters, and a few were detained by Capitol police, even after being identified as journalists. Photojournalist Erin Schaff was capturing images at the Capitol when rioters pushed her to the ground and snatched her press ID. Katie Nicholson was live on CBC News when she was swarmed by rioters hurling insults at the journalist, but she and her crew stood their ground and continued their coverage.

In Russia, there were at least 50 incidents of journalists facing obstruction while reporting the protest of January 23. Aleksandra Godfroid, Daria Belikova, and Elizaveta Kirpanova were attacked by security forces. In Ethiopia, three gunmen entered the residence of freelance journalist Lucy Kassa and assaulted her. The assailants threatened her, pushed her to the ground, and seized her computer.



2.3. SEXUAL ASSAULTS AND HARASSMENTS

Sexual assaults and harassment are some of the most distressing threats faced by women journalists. These degrading attacks can affect mental health and emotional well-being. In the past three months, The Coalition For Women In Journalism recorded at least 17 cases where women journalists experienced this mistreatment in workplaces, public spaces, and even prisons.

CFWIJ documented Solafa Magdy's case from Egypt. The journalist was first arrested on November 26, 2019, and was only recently released on April 13, 2021. Solafa suffered brutal sexual assault by jail authorities, and one incident even resulted in heavy bleeding. In the United States, Five NY1 women journalists filed a complaint against Charter Communications, citing discriminatory treatment based on gender and age. The journalists also alleged that female employees were subjected to incessant harassment and humiliation when they disputed inappropriate behavior. From the U.S., CFWIJ also reported on the cases of sports journalists Alana Rizzo and Britt Ghiroli, who faced nonconsensual sexual advances during their coverage.

In the United Kingdom, CFWIJ shed light on journalist Melissa Reddy's experience with sexual assault. Melissa is a senior football correspondent whose personal space was violated twice in the span of a few hours at Wembley stadium in 2016. Laura Bill from NCTA News also revealed sexual assaults she faced in the past. It was admittedly difficult for the journalist to disclose the gruesome details of those past experiences. On March 22, French women sports journalists took a unanimous stand against the pervasive sexist culture that enables harassment and unwelcome sexual advances in the field. More than 150 French women sports journalists signed a statement to raise awareness against the toxic phenomenon. They demanded fundamental structural changes to address the issue of harassment in the workplace and online.



2.4. IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE

The Coalition For Women In Journalism reported the mistreatment of imprisoned women journalists in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran. We also documented at least 17 cases of physical assault against women journalists. CFWIJ extensively covered the case of Saudi women's rights activist Loujain Al-Hathloul. Loujain was released conditionally from prison on February 10, 2021, after more than two years of imprisonment. The activist still faces trial, and in a recent court hearing, the court confirmed the sentence for terrorism charges against her. Saudi Women rights activist Nassimah Al-Saddah was also detained by authorities on July 31, 2018. CFWIJ has determined that Nassimah has suffered threats and assaults in prison, and to date, there is no news of her release. Nassimah had fiercely campaigned for women's right to drive and vote in the Kingdom.

From Egypt, CFWIJ documented the unjustified imprisonment of journalist Solafa Magdy. She was held at Al-Qanatar women's prison before being released on April 13, 2021, after spending nearly 18 months in jail. In Turkey, CFWIJ recorded the imprisonment of Seheriban Abi and Nazan Sala. The journalists were released conditionally on April 2 with an imposed travel ban. Seheriban and Nazan were detained on October 6, 2020, for their coverage of two Kurdish villagers who were reportedly tortured by the national army. Iran is no exception when evaluating threats and torture against women journalists. Journalist Zeynab Jalalian was sentenced to death in 2008 on charges of enmity against God and alleged participation in a Kurdish opposition group. In 2011, her sentence was reduced to life imprisonment, but there are concerns about her precarious health condition in prison.



2.5. ARRESTS, DETENTIONS AND LEGAL HARASSMENT

The Coalition For Women In Journalism has also recorded an alarming increase in arrests and detentions of women journalists. This disconcerting threat often leads to persistent legal harassment. In many recorded incidents, women journalists often suffered torture at the time of their detention. Most of the time, the charges are unfounded with no legal grounds, used as malicious propaganda against the journalist.

CFWIJ has recorded more than 10 cases of arrests from Turkey, Belarus, Iran, China, and Egypt. Sana Seif, a writer and activist, was sentenced to 18 months in jail on March 17. She was convicted of spreading misinformation and insulting a police official. The activist was advocating for prisoners detained in Egypt's unhygienic prisons, susceptible to Covid-19 given the overcrowded conditions. In Turkey, Muyesser Yildiz, news director of OdaTV, was convicted for disclosing confidential information. On March 8, she was sentenced to three years and seven months in prison.

Mucadele Birligi Newspaper reporters Serpil Unal and Songul Yucel were sentenced to over a year and a half in prison on March 9. The journalists were charged for their social media posts about the Turkish Army's Olive Branch operation. They were accused of inciting hatred and false information to support terrorist propaganda. Iran, another tough country for women journalists, sentenced journalist Nooshin Jafari to four years in prison on February 16 with no prior warning. According to her lawyer, the authorities did not serve notice because they feared she might flee the country before detention.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism also documented major arrests of women journalists in Turkey, China, Belarus, and the Philippines.



CFWIJ followed the deteriorating situation of freedom of the press in Myanmar after the recent coup of February 1. Several journalists, including women journalists, were detained, tortured, or taken into custody while covering protests. In Yangon, at least eight journalists were detained for criticizing the military takeover. Police detained freelance journalist Shwe Yee Win on February 11 and media broadcaster Htoi Awng on February 14, among eight others. On February 27, in Sanchaung, Yangon, multimedia journalist Kay Zon Nwe was detained by soldiers while she was live-streaming the anti-coup demonstration. The whereabouts of Kay Zon Nwe remain unknown after her arrest.

From the United States, CFWIJ documented the detention of Talia Jane on February 13. Talia Jane was detained while covering the BLM protest in Manhattan, New York City. Despite showing her press card, Talia was handcuffed, which left bruises on her wrists. Washington Post journalists Zoann Murphy and Whitney Leaming were detained briefly on January 7 while covering the U.S. Capitol Hill insurrection. As per the Mayor's orders, the journalists were allowed to report and had their press credentials visible when they were detained by the police. Newspaper Alinteri reporter Zarife Camalan was detained by police for four days following her coverage of the United Struggle Forces (BMG) press briefing on February 4. She was released on February 9 under the travel restrictions.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism registered at least 23 cases of detentions in Turkey, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Iran, and Russia.



Legal harassment is another weapon the authorities use against women journalists. So far this year, CFWIJ has documented more than 61 cases of legal harassment. On March 16, in Columbia, state representatives walked out in protest from the virtual hearing of the Jineth Bedoya case, citing bias. The hearing was held by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to determine the role of the Colombian government in Jineth's abduction in 2000. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights intervened after the Colombian courts failed to conduct a fair trial. In Saudi Arabia, the legal persecution against Loujain Al-Hathloul continues; the latest hearing was conducted on March 10, and the court confirmed her sentence for terrorism-related charges. Loujain was arrested in May 2018 and was released conditionally on February 10, 2021.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism also shared at least 72 cases of legal harassment from different countries around the world, including Turkey, India, China, Canada, United States, Belarus, Poland, Cuba, and Lebanon.

CFWIJ has recorded more than 10 cases of arrests from Turkey, Belarus, Iran, China, and Egypt.



2.6. ORGANIZED HARASSMENT, ONLINE TROLL CAMPAIGNS & THREATENED WITH DEATH/VIOLENCE

The Coalition For Women In Journalism considers organized harassment a grave risk that not only compromises the performance of a woman journalist but also affects her psychological well-being. It poses a double burden on women journalists as they are not just attacked for being journalists but also as women. The misogynistic culture is very much prevalent in newsrooms globally and this affects women journalists interns of having equal opportunities. CFWIJ recorded at least 23 cases of organizational harassment. In Turkey, 20 women journalists complained of workplace harassment at Artı TV and Artı Gerçek news on March 23. After the withdrawal of news outlets from the workplace conditions protocol they signed with Disk Basın-ı, its decision put at least 16 women journalists at risk of unemployment. In the United States, VOA correspondent Patsy Widakuswara faced workplace harassment as she was reassigned following her attempt to question the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. Patsy addressed Pompeo while he was leaving an event held at VOA headquarters on January 11. The director of the VOA news outlet reprimanded Patsy and called her behavior out of line.

Online trolling often targets journalists and taints the online space. Trolls threaten journalists with rape and racial slurs, sometimes using photoshopped images or falsified videos to harass them. The Coalition For Women In Journalism records such cases of online threats on an almost daily basis. From the United States, CFWIJ reported the persistent online harassment against Samantha-Jo Roth, Sarah Jeong, Felicia Sonmez, and Seung Min Kim.

Washington Post reporter Felicia Sonmez shared on March 27 how she had to leave her home after the abuse she received online threatened to manifest real attacks. The journalist faced a barrage of hateful comments after she tweeted an article written on Kobe Bryant's disturbing rape case the day after his death. Felicia was briefly suspended and then reinstated after the backlash following the Posts' decision.

Like many others at that time, NY1 correspondent Samantha-Jo Roth experienced vicious online threats. She faced abuse and threats after she tweeted about the violent situation the media was facing at the time of the Capitol insurrection on January 7. The New York Times correspondent Sarah Jeong raised concerns against the disinformation spread by another journalist, Andy Ngo. She shared that Andy's actions pose grave threats to her online safety as she has received death and rape threats in the past from Andy Ngo's radicalized supporters.

CFWIJ also highlighted the case of Egyptian journalist and former Al-Monitor reporter Reem Abdellatif. She shared the threatening email she received to her dutch-registered business account on February 11. The email ended with the message, "For with anger and expect retaliation soon". Reem is determined to continue raising her voice against injustice. Indian journalist Rana Ayyub endured brutal online trolling after she criticized the government handling of the farmers' protests. On February 4, Rana shared that the kind of hate, threats, and abuse she has received in the past two days is something she never witnessed before. Several Indian journalists were subjected to online hate for their opinion on the farmers' protests.

From Pakistan, CFWIJ recorded the online attacks against four working women journalists who were continuously being targeted by a government official. Dr. Shehbaz Gill regularly attacked these women journalists by questioning their work, accusing them of spreading false information, and biased journalism. The public intimidation from Mr. Gill triggered an onslaught of threats and abuse against the women journalists by his supporters.



HUFFPOST

2.7. EXPULSION

Harassment against women journalists doesn't always come from threatening trolls or opposing groups or states. Sometimes, they are targeted right at their workplace. In the more extreme examples, these journalists are wrongfully dismissed from their job. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this threat. Globally, women journalists are affected by a lack of opportunities while working remote jobs. Throughout the pandemic, several women journalists have been working in the field, in high-risk conditions, to report the latest developments. In several countries, women journalists are still not vaccinated and susceptible to the virus, but they have no option but to continue working as they fear losing their job.

CFWIJ documented at least 34 cases of women journalists who faced expulsion from work. In the United States, The Huffington Post laid off 47 of its staffers on March 10— the majority of them women journalists. The employees were informed about the decision in a Zoom meeting without any prior warning. The CEO termed this harsh decision as a necessary step to fast-track profitability. Thirty-one women journalists, many of whom were quite accomplished, were laid off without consideration for how the decision will affect them during the already distressing time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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3. COUNTRIES IN SPOTLIGHT

The Coalition For Women In Journalism continues to document daily threats and harassment of women journalists around the world. Women journalists endure unique risks and restrictions almost every day. 2021 presents another challenging year for journalism. Since our first quarter, we have documented 305 incidents of threats, attacks, and harassment against women journalists. In January 2021, we detailed 60 cases of physical assaults, legal harassment, detentions, arrests, and online attacks on women journalists. In February, the number of cases rose to 97; five female journalists were arrested, and at least 11 were targeted by online troll campaigns. In March, the number nearly doubled compared to January 2021. In the March report, we documented 115 violations against journalists. Four women journalists were murdered, at least 21 journalists were exposed to workplace harassment, and 13 faced terror charges related to their journalistic coverage.

In this section, we evaluate the top five countries where women journalists face state oppression, assaults, and threats. Among the most documented countries are Afghanistan, Turkey, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Belarus. Almost half of the 305 cases we have documented so far this year were reported from these countries.





3.1. AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is among the most dangerous countries for working women journalists. The recent wave of violence against women journalists in the country has led most to quit their jobs, fearing for their lives. The attacks escalated following the peace negotiations between the U.S. government and the Taliban leadership. The assaults and murders are widely believed to be carried out by extremist groups looking to derail the process.

In Jalalabad, three women media workers were shot by terror outfits in the city. Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Roafi, employed by news and entertainment platform Enikass Radio and TV, were victims of targeted killings. The women worked to translate and dub foreign entertainment programming into local languages. Two separate attacks took place in Jalalabad, the capital of the Nangarhar province, on Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

This is not the first time that terror outfits in the country have targeted women journalists. December 2020 witnessed the assassination of Malalai Maiwand that sent similar shockwaves through the region. The past few months have made it abundantly clear that the civil society in Afghanistan is exceedingly vulnerable to armed terror groups operating in the country attempting to create discord in the peace process.

Those armed terror groups admitted organizing a terror cell to attack journalists, who they claim are easy targets. Many women journalists have fled the country for their protection, while the rest seek political asylum to live their life peacefully. Farahnaz Forotan, Fatema Hashim, Nazifa, and Mariam Alimi are some of the many women journalists targeted with death threats in the latest series of killings in the country.



Fatima Roshanian is another journalist identified by extremists. The editor for the feminist magazine Nimorkh Weekly was the eleventh person named in a list issued by a terrorist organization. After the list was released, Fatima confined herself to her home and limited her movement. Fatima has angered the conservative society of Afghanistan with her coverage of bold topics like women and sex. She believes that such lists are purposely shared by sympathizers of extremist organizations to have people killed. After the recent wave of killings against activists and journalists in Afghanistan, the journalist takes the threats very seriously.

We are extremely concerned about the safety of women journalists in Afghanistan. The Afghan authorities need to take stringent action towards protecting women citizens. This is a crisis that demands domestic and international attention. We urge the Afghan government to ensure the safety of women journalists and bring the assailants to justice.



3.2. MYANMAR

The situation in Myanmar is rapidly deteriorating, marked by rampant brutality of military rule. On the early morning of February 1, 2021, the military seized control over Myanmar after arresting Aung San Suu Kyi and top members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party in a raid. Having swiftly pacified their obstacles to reclaiming power, the generals declared a state of emergency, which is expected to last for at least a year. The results of the recent election, won by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), prompted the overthrow. In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the military deployed troops to patrol the streets, established a night-time curfew, and started to regularly shut down the internet. The journalist community in Myanmar finds itself cornered and threatened as the junta tightens its grip on civil liberties.

The toppling of the democratic government sparked a massive civil resistance. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country took to the streets. The demonstrations, soon hailed as the Spring Revolution, showed their defiance and demanded the release of all democratically-elected political leaders. While the protests were relatively peaceful at the beginning, they rapidly escalated, becoming violent and dangerous. Demonstrations are now dispersed, organized far from central areas, in townships and suburbs, after Police turned to more confrontational tactics such as deploying water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets against protesters who refuse to retreat. While the international community was appalled by the images of water tanks and live ammunition fired against protesters, we are now witnessing executions in broad daylight. In a conversation with CFWIJ, Ei Thinzar Maung, an iconic Myanmar activist, underscored the pervasive fear of being assassinated any minute. "Everyone is fearful of being arrested, abducted, tortured, or even executed on the street because the security troops are killing wantonly day and night, on the streets or inside residential homes", she says. To make matters worse, the military uses rape as a weapon of war to torment women. Ei Thinzar is currently on the military regime's wanted list of activists and remains in imminent danger of being killed.

More than two months after an orchestrated coup, the junta steadily extends its crackdown on civil liberties and press freedom. CFWIJ is in constant contact with journalists and activists in Myanmar who paint a harrowing picture of the blatant human rights violations and the growing atmosphere of fear and surveillance.

With well-founded concerns of being targeted, journalists cannot feel safe, let alone pursue their coverage. Local Myanmar journalists face severe risks of being detained, arrested, abducted, tortured, and executed. Hateful campaigns launched to discredit and intimidate reporters bears a striking resemblance to a witch hunt. The military leadership frames them as biased against the state, often accusing journalists of focusing solely on vilifying the military and exposing state secrets. In the face of growing persecution, journalists flee their communities and are forced into hiding to work undercover. Many journalists we spoke to have reported on reprehensible treatment that leaves them tormented and traumatized. A female journalist who prefers to stay anonymous revealed that while operating secretly, she and her colleagues have been diligently working to enhance secure networks and a free flow of information among journalists to offer and solicit direct help. Betty Han from Frontier Myanmar admits that journalists try very hard to keep their activity low key. “Many of my colleagues stay in safe locations and work remotely. Only a few of us take up assignments on the ground. We try to reduce potential risk. I don’t wear a badge or press credentials. I cover my face and aim to stay unnoticed. I speak to people out of the big crowds and record the events with my phone secretly. As long as I am not recognized, I can do my job”, she explained.

Journalists who work on the ground are usually not very well equipped— they don’t have helmets or safety kits, leaving them especially vulnerable to physical violence. Women journalists are additionally exposed to threats strictly related to their gender, like sexual harassment. During a February demonstration in Yangon, a woman journalist simply took a photo, which sparked rage among the men. They assaulted her, tried to grab her phone, and pulled her hair.



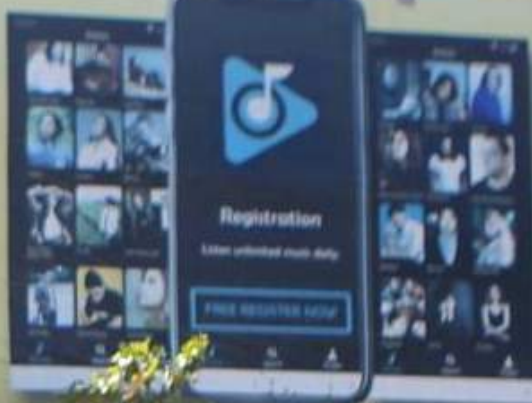
TAY THAN THAR

Music Application

မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရှိ ပရိသတ်အား အသံဖွဲ့ဖန်တီးမှုများကို အလွယ်တကူနှင့် အမြန်အဆင်ပြေစွာ အသုံးပြုနိုင်စေရန်

“အောင်စာမှာလဲချင်းနားထောင်ပါ”

Available on the App Store



Journalists are regularly arrested for covering anti-coup demonstrations. According to the data collected by CFWIJ and journalist collectives on the ground, as of April 15, 30 of the 66 journalists detained since the beginning of the military coup were freed. While we welcome their release, these reporters should never have been apprehended in the first place. As of now, six women journalists remain behind bars, including Kay Zon Nway, whose distressing case is further discussed later in this report. Additionally, arrest warrants were issued against two female journalists. Journalists are notoriously charged under section 505 (a) of the Myanmar Penal Code – a law the military relies heavily upon to penalize free speech. This section criminalizes comments that “cause fear, spread false news, agitate directly or indirectly against a government employee.”



3.3. BELARUS

Since the dubious presidential election of August 9, 2020, the dust has yet to settle in Belarus. Following the election results, which reaffirmed “Europe’s last dictator”, Alexander Lukashenko, in power, Belarus tightened its restrictions on journalists. Since the beginning of this year, The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented eleven detentions, arrests, and legal persecution against women journalists.

The year began with a raid on BelaPan journalist Tatsiana Bublikawa’s office on January 14. The search was conducted in relation to an ongoing investigation into a former employee, Andrei Alexandrov. As a result, Tatsiana suffered from panic and high blood pressure and was later admitted to the hospital. The CFWIJ spoke to Tatsiana to better understand her condition and ability to work following the raid. “Fear is the instrument of pressure,” Tatsiana told CFWIJ. She also highlighted there was no law in Belarus to protect journalists, and as a result, many were leaving Belarus to settle in a calmer environment.

Journalists Katsyaryna Andreyeva and

Darya Chultsova have remained behind bars since November 2020 for live streaming a protest. Both journalists were broadcasting the violent dispersal of a demonstration held in memory of Raman Bandarenka, a young activist. Raman succumbed to his injuries after he was reportedly beaten by security forces during an anti-government protest. The journalists are accused of taking an active part and even leading actions that violate public order. Authorities reported that their broadcast disrupted public transport.

Both journalists appeared in court on February 18 and were sentenced to two years in prison when the Frundenski district court of Minsk ruled them guilty. Despite the defense arguing inconclusive evidence and explaining the journalists' professional presence at the protest, the judge decreed a two-year sentence in a minimum-security penal colony. The time Katsyaryna and Darya have already spent in detention will count toward their total sentence. Both journalists were charged with: ‘organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order’ (Art. 342 of the Criminal Code).

The Belarusian authorities continued to repress the journalist community in the country with the arbitrary detention of Belsat TV reporters Alina Skrabunova and Aliaksandr Sidareuski on February 10. Although they were both released later that day, Alina's cellphone and equipment were confiscated by the police. This is not the first time the journalists faced harassment from the authorities. Both journalists were fined 1,350 Belarusian rubles (US\$511) for reporting on a rally in support of opposition candidate Sviatlana Cichanouskaya in July 2020.

A deputy chairman of Belarusian PEN Centre, Tatsiana Nyadbai, was interrogated by an investigation committee. The investigation is linked to a raid conducted on the Press Club and the homes of several of its employees on December 22, 2020. The journalist worked as a coordinator with the Press Club up until 2017. She signed non-disclosure agreements that restrict her from disclosing any details of this interrogation.

The second wave of repression, after the allegedly falsified election results of President Alexander Lukashenko, emerged on March 29, 2021, in Minsk. State officials cracked down on civilians and journalists for organizing a protest rally against Lukashenko. At least five journalists, most of them women, were arrested. Photojournalist Nadia Buzhan, journalist Katsiaryna Karpitskaya, Natallia Dulina, and Andželika Borys were on the list of detainees.





3.4. TURKEY

Since the beginning of the year, Turkey is the leading country for attacks and threats against women journalists. We recorded a total of 114 female journalists who were attacked and threatened since the beginning of 2021. Almost 50 women journalists appeared before the court to fight baseless charges; twenty suffered heavy workplace bullying at the newsrooms; fifteen female journalists were subjected to police violence while covering the news; fourteen were detained; three women journalists were sentenced to prison, and three were expelled. While one journalist was threatened with intimidation, another became the target of racist rhetoric.

Turkey's increasingly autocratic political climate continues to target journalists. The monotonous news published by pro-gov media outlets, under orders from President Erdogan, infringes the freedom of expression. Journalists, who are determined to write the truth, are struggling to continue their work.

The country started 2021 with misogynistic attacks against women by detaining three female journalists covering a protest in the capital city, Ankara. Jinnews reporters Habibe Eren, Öznur Değer, and journalist Eylül Deniz Yaşar were detained with 18 other women who participated in the protest organized by the Ankara Women's Platform. The protestors gathered to decry the disappearance of 22-year-old university student Gülistan Doku over a year ago. The journalists were released after their health examination and testimony were taken. The detained protesters were prosecuted for violating the law on demonstration.

The student protests in Istanbul, the women's movement denouncing Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, and the Covid-induced labor protests challenged female journalists in the field. Many women journalists were subjected to verbal harassment and police violence while doing their job. Most of the detentions we recorded were of women journalists arrested while covering developments on the ground.

In February, students started protesting the approval of Prof. Dr. Melih Bulu— the new rector of Bogaziçi University appointed by the Turkish Presidency. As the events escalated, several journalists were subjected to police violence while following the protests. Elif Akgül, Board Member of The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), was one of those journalists physically assaulted by the police.

Evrensel Newspaper columnist Ayşen Şahin was another journalist who followed and shared the developments of the Boğaziçi protests on her social media account. She was taken into custody from her home at 10:00 PM. Her social media posts were cited as the reason for her arrest, and she was subsequently charged with inciting the public to hatred and hostility. Speaking to the CFWIJ after her detention, Ayşen highlighted the situation women journalists are facing in Turkey, describing the current pressure on journalists as an empire of fear.

Dokuz8Haber reporter Ebrar Başıyigit and Artı Gerçek correspondent Yağmur Kaya were also apprehended while covering the developments of the case against Boğaziçi University students at İstanbul Çağlayan Courthouse. Artı Gerçek's Yağmur Kaya was battered and arrested while covering the police attack. The assault against the journalist went public in a video posted on Twitter. Another reporter from Dokuz8, Fatoş Erdoğan, was also prevented from filming, police yelling, "Getaway, the press is forbidden" before pushing the journalist from the scene. Yağmur and Ebrar were released shortly after their arrest.

At the beginning of April, the tension surrounding the Boğaziçi protests increased with the arrest of two students. On April 1, police intervened in the Boğaziçi University student protests that took place in İstanbul. More than 30 students were detained, and many journalists, including women reporters, were deliberately obstructed and brutally attacked by the police. At least four women journalists at the scene were tear-gassed and beaten.





State incursions and intimidation tactics are not limited to journalists working in the field. Many journalists, male or female, are detained in early morning police raids on their homes. Because of their journalistic coverage, they are either arrested or released conditionally with an imposed travel ban.

On February 5, police intervened in the press briefing of the United Struggle Forces (BMG) establishment, and two female journalists were detained during the public announcement. While Mesopotamia Agency (MA) reporter Rojin Altay was released the next day, reporter Zarife Çamalan from Alinteri Newspaper was held without just cause and denied legal counsel. Zarife was released four days after her detention, despite informing the authorities of her health problems.

Jin News reporter Beritan Canözer was taken into custody on April 5 when police raided her home in Diyarbakır. The reason for Beritan's arrest was not specified and remained confidential. During her detention, Beritan was threatened and mistreated, along with 21 other women who were taken into custody during a police operation. Reportedly, one of the detainees wanted to leave the door open for reasons relating to health concerns. However, the police kept it closed and threatened the women, saying, "If you even try knocking on the door, I will teach you humanity.", on top of depriving the detainees of basic needs. After her four-day detention, Beritan was called to court without prior notice, and the prosecutor requested her arrest. However, after appearing in court, the journalist was released conditionally. Her phone, digital materials, and books were seized by the police during the raid and have yet to be returned.

In Turkey, the CFWIJ monitored and documented the cases of legal harassment against women journalists. At least 50 female journalists have appeared in court since the beginning of the year. Journalists are often prosecuted on terrorism charges for their stories and social media posts. In 2021, three female journalists were sentenced to prison.

Journalist Perihan Kaya was sentenced to one year and three months in prison for spreading terrorist propaganda. At her first hearing, the court found her guilty. Perihan's membership to the Free Journalists Association (ÖGC), social media posts, phone calls with colleagues, and confidential witness statements were taken as evidence. The journalist was accused of being responsible for the KCK organization's Press Area, organizing propaganda, and being a member of an armed terrorist organization.

Mücadele Birliđi Newspaper reporter Serpil Ünal and Önsöz Magazine editor-in-chief Songül Yücel were sentenced to one year, six months, and 22 days in prison on the charge of making propaganda for a terrorist organization. The journalists were tried for their social media posts about the Turkish military "Olive Branch" operation in Afrin in January 2018.



One of the significant trials was about imprisoned journalists Şehriban Abi and Nazan Sala. On October 6, 2020, journalists Şehriban and Nazan were detained during the raid on Mesopotamia Agency's Van office. Four days later, they were arrested for reporting about two Kurdish villagers named Servet Turgut and Osman Şiban, who was tortured and thrown from a national army helicopter. One of the victims of the torture, Servet Turgut, died from his injuries on September 30. Both journalists remained behind bars for 175 days. When the first hearing was held in Van on April 2, Şehriban and Nazan were released conditionally. Their trial continues over charges of being members of an armed organization and spreading terrorist propaganda through the press. If convicted, both journalists face a sentence of up to 15 years in prison.

The CFWIJ closely monitored the developments regarding the arrested journalists Şehriban Abi and Nazan Sala. We documented that the journalists were tortured and held in the male ward of the jail, facing deplorable conditions. The journalists endured malicious treatment in prison that violated human rights. During their 14-day quarantine, imposed as part of pandemic precautions, they were held in unhygienic conditions, their basic needs unmet. Despite the cold weather conditions in Van, the journalists were denied the necessities to stay warm. During their four-day detention, the journalists were not allowed to see their lawyers and were therefore unable to prepare their defense.



3.5. PAKISTAN

Pakistan is among the countries where women journalists are threatened regularly. Most are targeted by vicious social media attacks and organized trolling campaigns that make it incredibly difficult to carry out their professional duties. These crusades are often aimed at women with dissenting views and those whose reports have been critical of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government, specifically its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the unfortunate examples of these online attacks is Dr. Shahbaz Gill's criticism of journalists online. He discriminated against women journalists and berated their work. He shared the address of female politician Palwasha Khan on Twitter, and as a result, her home was attacked, followed by a barrage of threats. When journalist Benazir Shah called out the spokesperson for his mistake, he turned his intimidation tactics on her. He went on to bully her, declaring Benazir a liar and enemy.

Benazir was not the only journalist exposed to the wrath of Mr. Gill. He also attacked broadcast journalist Reema Omer on February 25. Mr. Gill quoted one of her tweets and implied that Reema does not scrutinize the opposition party enough. In a tweet posted on February 19, he insinuated that Pakistani member of CFWIJ and broadcast journalist Gharidah Farooqi was hired as a translator by the opposition party. Gharidah had tweeted about the results of a recent by-election.

He also attacked core Pakistan members of CFWIJ and prominent journalist Asma Shirazi but then deleted his tweet. When we reached out to Asma for a comment, she said, "It is very unfortunate how frequently Mr. Gill comes after journalists. He exhibits discrimination against women journalists and it's very concerning since he has powers and resources as a government official".

Pakistani cyberspace is another hazard to women journalists. Online harassment has become increasingly violent in the past few years, especially towards women critical of the state. The authorities continue to overlook the issue despite its dangers and often illegal activity. On March 4, CFWIJ member Gharidah Farooqi experienced a cyber attack when someone tried to hack her Twitter account. Gharidah shared this news with other women journalists on a WhatsApp group, attaching screenshots as proof of suspicious activity.

Shiffa Yousafzai, Morning Show host and columnist, was another victim targeted in personal attacks online. Political commentator and YouTuber Asad Ali Toor recently insinuated in his vlogs that Shiffa gets her job done through her public relations with certain institutions and ministers. Asad mocked the journalist, saying if a monkey can dance well, that does not mean he should be given a screen. While judging Shiffa's journalistic caliber, Asad crossed the line and attacked her personally.

Journalists in Pakistan are also verbally harassed while doing their job. Ailia Zahra, journalist and managing editor for NayaDaur Media, was one of them. She endured misogynistic and sexist remarks from infamous Pakistani writer Khalil ur Rehman Qamar during the panel discussion she was invited to attend. In the TV event, Khalil ur Rehman started yelling at the journalist. When he was countered for his tone, the writer put down his microphone and left the live show. He also reportedly labeled Ailia a RAW agent before leaving the premises. The incident was followed by a vicious online campaign with threats and abuse against the journalist.

Zebunnisa Burki, a deputy editor for The News, endured vicious rape and death threats on February 14. A rider associated with a local parcel delivery service abused 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. It is reported that the delivery service has fired the employee involved in the alarming misconduct.





4. CASES IN SPOTLIGHT

4.1. Myanmar

Reporting on the reprehensible developments in trouble-torn Myanmar has become incredibly dangerous. Since the orchestrated coup, the junta has arrested at least 66 journalists, banned several media outlets from broadcasting, and crippled communications by regular internet shutdowns. Journalists are framed as biased, accused of instigating public disorder and conveying foreign, anti-state agenda. The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) carefully monitors the unsettling developments in Myanmar. We remain in close contact with reporters on the ground to help amplify their stories and try to provide the assistance they need. Many of the journalists we spoke to have reported on the conditions from hideouts where they fear military abductions, detentions, torture, and even execution. Journalists are regularly persecuted as the military carries out its determined witch hunt against reporters. In the face of this crackdown, journalists flee their communities to work undercover or decide to put their reporting on hold altogether. Their reality is marked by regular relocation and the desperate search for safe houses.

Five major local media outlets — Mizzima, DVB, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Now, and 7Day News— were outlawed by the military, which means their low-key activities are under even more scrutiny. Journalists and newsrooms are understaffed and underfunded. This vile crusade against journalists resulted in significant declines in the number of active reporters working in the field. Additionally, in smaller communities, reporters are more likely to be identified by police officers and public officials. Journalists in these areas are unable to maintain anonymity given the relatively small population. Therefore, when there is a protest, police know who is behind specific coverage, resulting in raids on homes and attempts to seize phones and computers to destroy evidence.



In the beginning, military forces did not attack people who were taking to the streets in thousands. Since the end of February, police and military have resorted to lethal violence to squash demonstrations. Brutality has become a pattern in Myanmar, severely affecting the journalist community. Soldiers and officers clash with protestors and use live ammunition on a daily basis. If they spot a journalist in a crowd, they try to impede them from reporting at any cost. That means severe physical attacks, arrest, or worse. “I myself go to the streets and report on the ground. I use Twitter to disseminate the news and reach out to more people and always watch my back. The unpleasant sensation of being a target always stays with me. I feel very concerned about my safety. I know the danger is real, and I can be abducted or arrested any minute. Even if I try to stay out of their sight”, said Betty Han, a journalist at Frontier Myanmar, in a conversation with CFWIJ. In the immediate aftermath of the military coup, many journalists resigned from bylines. Newsrooms and independent media collectives are very cautious about who takes up assignments on the ground. Betty Han explained to us what her typical day on the ground looks like: “I don’t wear a badge or press credentials. I cover my face and aim to stay unnoticed. I speak to people out of the big crowds and record the events with my phone secretly. As long as I am not recognized, I can do my job. At least to some extent. But nobody knows how long it will last. It’s better if they take me for an anonymous protester or a pedestrian just walking the streets. Once I gather the material I need, I quickly come back home. I don’t hang out outside more than it’s necessary”, she revealed.



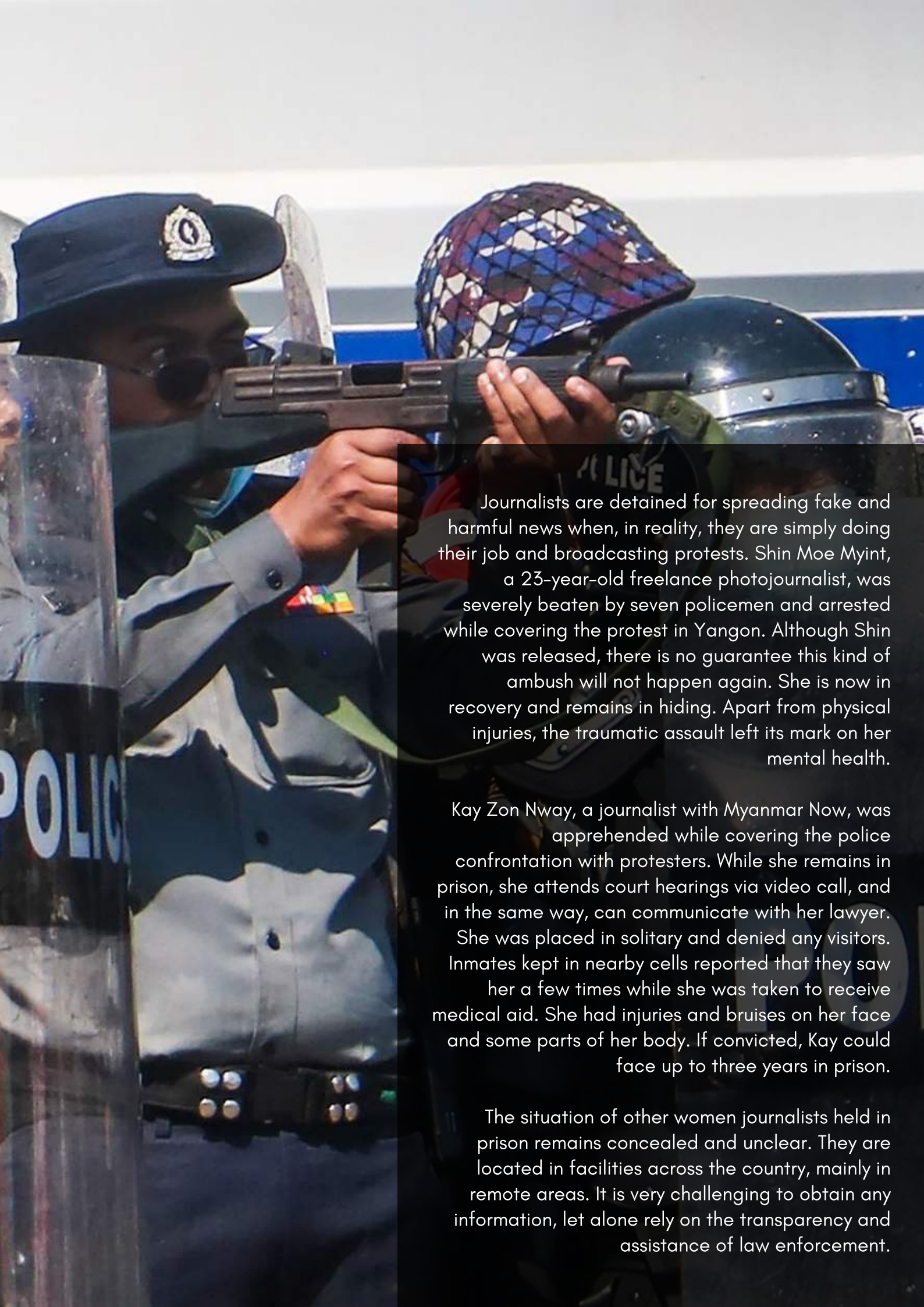
Betty Han was injured while covering one of the demonstrations in Yangon. “While I was on the ground, the police officers started pressing on us, attempting to surround us, and we found ourselves trapped. I escaped together with several civilians and other journalists, and we hid in an apartment in a block nearby. Officers chased us there, and once they saw me recording the whole situation, they fired rubber bullets and shot me. I got injured”, she says.

As of April 15, 30 of the 66 journalists detained since the beginning of the military coup were released. On February 25, two female journalists were detained by security forces when they went to the police station for a follow-up interview with military personnel. The journalists were released shortly after their detention, charged with causing fear to a group of citizens or the public, spreading false news, and provoking a coronal offense against a government employee. Six women journalists remain behind bars in Myanmar. They are all booked under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code. It is a legal provision used by the military to penalize critical speech.



On April 14, Myo Myat Myat Pan, an ex-employee of Myitkyina News Journal, was abducted by police authorities. The journalist was reportedly arrested on orders from the military council. Her whereabouts remain unknown.

Thin Thin Aung, the co-founder of Mizzima News, was apprehended by the military on April 8. She disappeared early in the morning, but her friends and relatives were hopeful that she might have gone into hiding. However, they quickly learned that she was taken into custody. Tin is now being held in Yay Kyi Eaing interrogation center. Following Thin’s detention, the military raided her apartment and seized most of her belongings, including her car, computers, and money. The Women's League of Burma, established by Thin Thin Aung, issued a statement calling on international support for her immediate release. Apart from being a journalist, she is a seasoned human rights defender who spent 20 years of her life exiled in India.



Journalists are detained for spreading fake and harmful news when, in reality, they are simply doing their job and broadcasting protests. Shin Moe Myint, a 23-year-old freelance photojournalist, was severely beaten by seven policemen and arrested while covering the protest in Yangon. Although Shin was released, there is no guarantee this kind of ambush will not happen again. She is now in recovery and remains in hiding. Apart from physical injuries, the traumatic assault left its mark on her mental health.

Kay Zon Nway, a journalist with Myanmar Now, was apprehended while covering the police confrontation with protesters. While she remains in prison, she attends court hearings via video call, and in the same way, can communicate with her lawyer. She was placed in solitary and denied any visitors. Inmates kept in nearby cells reported that they saw her a few times while she was taken to receive medical aid. She had injuries and bruises on her face and some parts of her body. If convicted, Kay could face up to three years in prison.

The situation of other women journalists held in prison remains concealed and unclear. They are located in facilities across the country, mainly in remote areas. It is very challenging to obtain any information, let alone rely on the transparency and assistance of law enforcement.



4.2. United States

Following the presidential election in the United States, Capitol Hill was stormed by Trump supporters, who did not accept the election results. The rioters assaulted several reporters who were covering the insurrection, including women journalists who were subjected to violence and verbal assault.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) documented at least ten cases against women journalists during the riot on Capitol Hill. Many journalists were detained, attacked, and targeted by organized troll campaigns on January 6, 2021.

Washington Post journalists Zoann Murphy and Whitney Leaming were covering the Capitol Hill insurrection when they were arrested by police. They were not given any details before the arrest and were taken to an unmarked van. Later on, they were asked to present their press credentials in order to be released.

Freelance photojournalist Amanda Andrade-Rhoades was also reporting the Capitol insurrection when she was hit multiple times in the leg by rubber bullets reportedly fired by the police. She was also confronted by three different protestors who threatened to shoot her.

CFWIJ documented another Capitol Hill incident involving New York Times photojournalist Erin Schaff. Erin was taking pictures during the riots in Washington D.C. when she was assaulted by a group of rioters. According to the photojournalist, she was looking for a place to hide when the Capitol police found her and ordered her, at gunpoint, to get on the ground. Erin did not have her press credentials on her at that moment and therefore could not prove her identity. Luckily, two other photojournalists appeared at the scene and intervened. The police officers then offered protection to the journalists.

Samantha-Jo Roth, a correspondent for NY1 & Spectrum News, was harassed online for a tweet she posted on the day of the Capitol Hill insurrection. In her tweet, Samantha stated that she would report the online harassment to Twitter and law enforcement. The journalist shared that she was confronted with several threats for her tweet describing the precarious position of the press during the riots.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, Asian-American female journalists have been subjected to racial discrimination and attacks. The CFWIJ has observed a clear rise in challenging, and at times, hateful treatment towards Asian-American journalists and women. Over the last two years, especially, we have received many complaints of newsroom discrimination across the United States, apart from the obstacles and unsafe environment they maneuver in the field. While we publicly reported several cases of discrimination and hate against women journalists, we also received numerous confidential reports from journalists unwilling to share their experiences out of fear of the possible repercussions to their personal and professional lives.

The Huffington Post laid off 47 staffers, 31 of whom were women, just a month into its acquisition by BuzzFeed. Several employees were invited to attend a virtual meeting where they were informed about the layoffs. The majority of the fired staff are journalists, including several accomplished women reporters. The announcement came as a surprise, with no forewarning of BuzzFeed's executive decision.

Women journalists in America face another challenging year as socio political tensions intensify in the country. So far, in 2021, the United States reports the second-highest number of infringements against women journalists worldwide. We have recorded 65 cases of harassment, violence, and assault against women journalists in America.





4.3. India

In India, the ongoing farmers' protests have negatively impacted journalists. Many women journalists were attacked, along with multiple reports of threats to women reporters covering the protests on the ground. Women in television and public media are vulnerable to online trolling and disinformation campaigns intended to undermine their coverage.

The Indian farmers' protests, sparked by the three farm bills passed by the Indian parliament, have been ongoing since September 2020. The legislatures have been described as anti-farmer laws by different trades and unions. Politicians from the opposition claim the new laws would leave farmers at the mercy of corporates. The government maintains they will make it effortless for farmers to sell their produce directly to big buyers and stated the protests are based on misinformation. There is great outrage at these new laws as farmers believe they are not serving their best interests and could harm their business.

Preeti Choudhry, an editor at India Today, alleged that several women were sexually harassed by the farmers. Preeti said her team reported various incidents of harassment against women journalists covering the ongoing demonstrations. She took to her social media account to report the incidents and urge the farmers' representatives to distance themselves from the perpetrators.

Indian journalist Rana Ayyub was also targeted for criticizing the government's response to the protests in the country. In a tweet on February 4, Rana expressed her distress over the relentless trolling she has endured. In the tweet, Rana described the aggression as "something she has never witnessed before".

Several journalists stationed within and outside India were tormented by attacks on social media for their coverage. Supporters of the Indian government weaponized online spaces to silence any criticism of the government's actions. Members of what is popularly called "IT Cells" and widely perceived as state-sanctioned troll farms conducted aggressive online attacks against critics and journalists, particularly women.

A hateful and threatening video was posted on a YouTube channel on February 11, asking for the execution of some notable journalists in the country. The video was viewed by almost half a million people before it was taken down for violating YouTube's policy on hate speech. The video accused journalists critical of government policies of having vested interests and financial incentives. The claims made in the video were unsubstantiated, yet it was endorsed by several right-wing politicians. 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, were named in the vicious video.

Another example of these attacks is The Wire's editor Ismat Ara. The Indian police added the reporter's name to the first information report (FIR) registered against The Wire's



editor for tweeting an article that implicated the 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. Following the article's release, a case was initiated under Indian Penal Code Sections 153-B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505(2) (statements conducive to public mischief). The FIR was filed by a Rampur resident who accused Siddharth Varadarajan, editor of The Wire, of fanning tensions in the region. Later, the FIR was amended to include Ismat, who worked on the article.

The Indian police also filed an FIR against the National Herald's Mrinal Pande and nine other journalists on charges of sedition for reporting and sharing unverified news about the ongoing farmers' protests in New Delhi. Many of the FIRs against journalists and media workers claim they are trying to provoke protesters with false and misleading information on the internet for their political and personal gain.



4.4. Turkey

In Turkey, The Coalition For Women In Journalism has documented several cases against female reporters and the increasingly prevalent gender discrimination. The sanctions against women in Turkey contribute to the rising tensions in the country. On March 8, International Women's Day, 13 women were detained, and their houses raided under allegations of insulting President Erdoğan. During their detention, the women were charged with violations relating to actions and slogans made during the women's march.

Since the discussions of withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention in Turkey began, women, including women reporters, are susceptible to threats, attacks, and violence. From the beginning of 2021, the CFWIJ documented several cases against women journalists facing gender discrimination. Women reporters face discrimination in the field from their male colleagues and bullying by their managers over their marital status. Women journalists are also far more vulnerable to police violence compared to men.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) women assembly held a press briefing to draw attention to the violation of rights inflicted on arrested women in Istanbul on February 20. However, the police intervened and interrupted the event. Five women reporters, Sema Turan and Berna Kijin (Mesopotamia Agency), Yağmur Kaya (Artı Gerçek), Fatoş Erdoğan (Dokuz8 News) and Nişmiye Güler (Jin News) were prevented from filming the incident. Police later accused the journalists who were suspended from the field as "pro-PKK" (terrorist supporters).

During International Women's Day, Dokuz8News reporter Fatoş Erdoğan was subjected to police violence while covering the rally in Istanbul. The journalist was verbally and physically harassed while doing her job. A police officer further threatened Fatoş, saying, "I would tear you up into pieces".

On March 8, OdaTV News Director Müyesser Yıldız also appeared in court and was sentenced to three years, seven months, and ten days in prison over espionage charges. She remained behind bars for 155 days and was released after the first hearing.

On the day of the withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention, Canan Kaya, the editor-in-chief of Medya Koridoru, was threatened over a post she shared criticizing the situation. The online assailant, who told Canan to delete the post in an audio recording, threatened the journalist with the words "No to the Istanbul Convention". It was later revealed that the suspect was someone named Hayrullah, with a criminal record of rape. The journalist filed a criminal case against the attacker on March 22.

Another unfortunate incident happened against our CFWIJ team member Ceren İskit. Ceren was deliberately attacked by police while monitoring women journalists' safety during the women's march protesting the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention. She was physically and verbally harassed by police while filming the incident at the very end of the demonstration. As the women were leaving the protest area, a man came and verbally abused a group of women. When they defended themselves, our colleague was filming the incident. A group of police pushed Ceren and yelled 'Stop filming and stay away'. Ceren was identified and was deliberately impeded.

The Istanbul Convention is a human rights treaty of the Council of Europe addressing domestic violence against women, which was opened for signature in May 2011—Turkey being the first signatory. However, efforts to abolish this treaty, enacted in 2014, have gained momentum since last year. In a presidential decree released on March 20, the administration announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. In the ensuing demonstrations, many women, including women reporters, were subjected to police violence and prevented from raising awareness on the matter.





5. WOMEN JOURNALISTS AT THE CENTER OF CONFLICT

Over the past quarter, The Coalition For Women In Journalism traced timelines for several brave journalists who suffered harassment, threats, and attacks in retaliation to their coverage. These timelines not only exemplify the brutal reality of working as a woman journalist but demonstrate the dedication needed to persist despite the dangers.

Agnieszka Pikulicka, a journalist and fellow at The Coalition For Women In Journalism in Uzbekistan, was targeted by a state-backed harassment campaign following her support for the LGBTQIA+ community. We established a timeline of the incidents.

Another journalist, whose case we have consistently followed, is Maria Ressa. Maria, who is now seen as a symbol of resistance, has faced relentless state harassment in The Philippines through legal and online channels.

We also tracked the sexual harassment case at Charter Communications. Journalists Roma Torre, Kristen Shaughnessy, Jeanine Ramirez, Vivian Lee, and Amanda Farinacci filed a lawsuit against the firm claiming a toxic workplace environment. We constructed a timeline of the legal proceedings and Charter's attempts to bully and harass these journalists into silence.



It is not only state authorities or capitalist institutions that threaten women journalists. Patricia Devlin, in Northern Ireland, has been targeted by criminal groups threatened by her reporting. Over the years, Patricia has received disturbing death threats accompanied by threats to her family while the authorities remain silent spectators. We mapped out Patricia's struggle in one of our timelines.

Pakistan is a region where women journalists are particularly vulnerable. Journalist Gharidah Farooq, for example, has endured countless attacks from right-wing political actors for years now. Whether it be her coverage of the national election or holding elected officials accountable, she is regularly targeted by organized online harassment campaigns.

But in Pakistan, it is not just journalists under attack. Women activists are also subjected to state persecution – from legal harassment to verbal and physical attacks. Gulalai Ismail from the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the late Karima Baloch of Balochistan, whom we lost this year, survive as symbols of courage.





6. REASONS TO RESIST

Since the beginning of 2021, CFWIJ welcomed the release of long-imprisoned women journalists and activists, including Solafa Magdy, Loujain Al-Hathloul, Nouf Abdulaziz, Andrea Sahouri, who fought tirelessly for change in the face of tyranny. We also saw several deserving women journalists recognized for their contributions to the field of journalism.

Saudi women rights activist Loujain Al-Hathloul was finally released on February 11, after spending almost three years in Saudi detention. Loujain's release is conditional, and she is still facing trial. Loujain faced brutal torture during her incarceration. She was sentenced to six years in prison, but due to mounting international pressure, her sentence was reduced. Egyptian journalist and human rights activist Solafa Magdy, along with her husband, was finally released from prison after a torturous stay of 18 months. They were taken into custody on November 25, 2019. Solafa, like Loujain, also suffered inhumane treatment while in an Egyptian prison. Solafa was always active in condemning sexual harassment crimes against women and defending minority rights in Egypt.

In New Mexico, Regina Martinez, the crime reporter assassinated in 2012, received the George Polk Award. Forbidden Stories, a global network of investigative journalists, followed the lead of Regina Martinez and started the Cartel Project, a report on the involvement of politicians in the drug circuits in Veracruz. Regina intended to publish her findings on the people implicated in this network but was murdered before she had the chance. In Turkey, nine women journalists were awarded the "People's Rights Press and Solidarity Awards" on the 89th anniversary of the People's Houses. Nine women journalists shared this prestigious award for their fearless journalism and groundbreaking stories.



7. CONCLUSION

In the first quarter of 2021, the rise of sociopolitical tensions around the world created a dangerous landscape for women journalists. Right-wing governments used repressive tactics; whether it was legal harassment in Turkey or online violence in Pakistan, the goal was to intimidate women journalists into silence. It is crucial to understand how attacks on the press can affect civil liberties and freedom of expression. Journalists are a fundamental tool to keeping societies engaged and informed, and the principles of press freedom must be preserved.

The cruel crackdowns in Myanmar, the targeted killings in Afghanistan, and the attacks on journalists in the United States are examples of how far-right leadership threatens the existence of the free press. The rise of these far-right ideologies tilts the political spectrum towards conservative ideals that leave little room for opposition, much less for women journalists. The lack of domestic and international intervention against these attacks on the nonpartisan press is unacceptable. Unrestricted access to information is the only line of defense against state propaganda. As a global community, the presence of free press across the world is essential to maintain the flow of impartial information.

Despite the obstacles, women journalists persisted against all odds. The more violent the tyranny, the more determined the drive to hold it accountable. This is why civil societies must come together to ensure the safety and freedom of their press. In a world where right-wing parties gain incremental state power, the only non-state institution holding it culpable is an independent media. In times like these, unbiased voices are needed to report the truth— like the women journalists featured in our report. A safer future can only be assured by fighting against the present threats.



The Coalition For Women In Journalism 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. We thoroughly document cases of any form of abuse against women in any part of the globe. Our system 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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