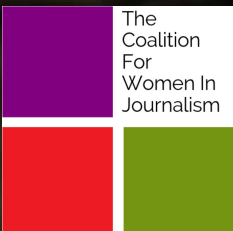


EUROPE HEATS UP ON RISK MAP FOR PRESS VIOLATIONS: THE EASTERN REGION A SERIOUS CONCERN.

ПРЕСА



**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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Europe heats up on risk map for press violations: The Eastern region a serious concern.

As The Coalition For Women In Journalism keeps documenting cases of violations against women journalists, it raises concerns about their safety in Europe, especially in the eastern part of the continent where data suggests women have been more vulnerable.

CFWIJ documented 149 cases of violations against women journalists in Europe from January 1 to October 1, 2021.

Reported cases included detentions, physical assault, legal harassment, threats of violence and intimidation, organized troll campaigns, verbal harassment, attacks in the field, arrest, sexual harassment, state oppression, sexist attacks, racist attacks, expulsion, workplace harassment among other violations.

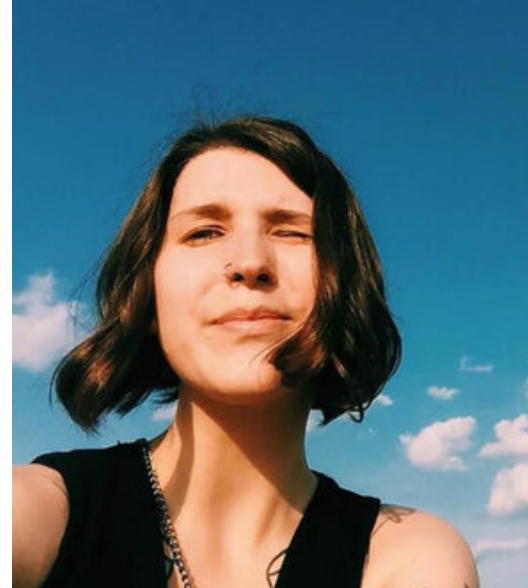
As of October 1, Belarus has the highest number of violations against women journalists in Europe, with at least 46 cases documented since January. The country is followed by Russia with 28 cases, Georgia with 16 cases, the United Kingdom with 11 cases, France with seven cases, Bulgaria with four. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan witnessed three violations, Poland, Montenegro, Slovenia and Northern Ireland saw as many and Belgium, Italy, Germany, Croatia and Ireland each witnessed two violations against women journalists. One case each was also documented from the Netherlands, Greece, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Spain, Malta, Portugal and Switzerland.



Arbitrary detention of journalists was noted to be a common tactic used to obstruct press freedom. Between January 1 and October 1, 2021, at least 42 women journalists were detained in Europe including 23 in Belarus, 15 in Russia, three in Azerbaijan, and one in Poland.

Journalists associated with the Belarus Belsat media groups were taken into custody. Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova, for example, were sentenced to two years imprisonment in a minimum-security penal colony for covering a protest demonstration in Minsk. Journalists were called in for lengthy interrogations without charge, with several like Tatsiana Bublikawa, Marina Zolotova, and Larysa Shchyrakova facing unannounced raids at their workplace and homes.

In January, Elena Kostyuchenko and Valeria Savinova were among the dozens of journalists detained at the protests in Russia demanding the release of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Similarly, in April, Mariya Nuykina was detained, arrested, and fined by the Russian police authorities for covering protest movements. Student journalists were not spared in this wave of state brutality either. The police raided the office of an online student magazine, DOXA, as well as the homes of four of its staff members. Another violation was recorded in Vladimir, where Katya Arenina was detained by security forces while she was investigating reports about torture in the penal facility present there. Moreover, on April 24, Russian law enforcement authorities detained at least three women journalists covering pro-Navalny protests in different parts of the country.



Belarus also had the highest number of legal harassment against journalists. Out of 29 such violations, 16 were recorded in Belarus, four in Russia, three in France, two in Poland, two in the United Kingdom, one in Hungary and as many in Romania.

In March Tatsiana Nyadbai, a deputy chairperson of the Belarusian PEN Centre, 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.

Tut.by, an organization that has regularly reported on the political crisis in Belarus, had its offices raided and its journalists targeted by the state. Meanwhile, the highest number of physical assaults on women journalists were observed in Georgia. Out of the 29 cases recorded, 16 were in Georgia, two in Russia, two in Montenegro, two in Germany, two in Bulgaria and one each in France, Greece, Albania, Italy and Slovenia.

In June, Georgia's TV Pirveli reporter Nini Elikashvili and cameraman Papuna Khachidze were verbally and physically assaulted. The TV crew was deliberately attacked at Tsalka Municipality in southern Georgia while covering local protests. One person was arrested in connection with the assault.

The situation worsened the next month with 54 media workers who were physically assaulted by a far-right anti-LGBTQ group in the Georgian capital on July 7. The news crews belonged to 16 different media companies and at least 14 women journalists were among those attacked.



In Bulgaria, on August 5, 2021, Sofia- Polina Paunova and Genka Shikerova, journalists associated with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty were physically attacked and verbally abused while covering a conference arranged by the ruling party, GERB. Masked men cornered Sofia when she tried to film GERB members clashing with protestors on the ground and physically assaulted her. The incident was caught on tape by her colleague Genka Shikerova, who said that no one came to assist the two journalists.

At least 17 cases of women journalists being threatened with violence or intimidation were witnessed this year, as of October 1.

Northern Ireland saw three such violations, followed by Slovenia, Ireland, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom with two cases each and France, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, and Albania with one case each.

In Northern Ireland on May 10, 2021, award-winning crime reporter Patricia Devlin was sent a horrific threat targeting her son on Facebook. She was threatened with sexual violence against her minor son. The journalist shared a screenshot on Twitter on May 8. "This is what happens when authorities fail to pursue and hold to account vile creatures using fake accounts to make threats."



On April 21, Patricia Devlin was targeted on social media after her coverage of the actions of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Devlin, who is a crime reporter has faced similar threats in the past, any time she reported on the loyalist groups operating within Ireland. Over the past couple of years, Devlin was targeted with death and rape threats aimed towards herself and her family, and social media doxxing campaigns.

In July Anna Mongayt, a presenter for Dozhd TV in Russia was threatened online after she interviewed a same-sex couple for Elle magazine. Reportedly, the supporters of a right-wing movement sent vile and deeply gendered messages to Anna over Instagram. Followers of a movement called Male State called her a "creature" and warned her, "walk and look around".

At least nine instances of organized troll campaigns were recorded in nine cases. Four of these were in the United Kingdom, two in Belgium, one in the Netherlands, and as many in Russia and France.

In the United Kingdom Marianna Spring, an award-winning reporter covering disinformation and social media for BBC News, was subjected to incessant online trolling. In March, journalist Natalie Higgins also opened up about the vicious online trolling that she has endured since entering journalism. Sonja McLaughlan was also targeted with vile online attacks following her coverage of a rugby match.



As of October, five women journalists were attacked in the field this year; three in Russia, one in France, and one in Italy.

Although women journalists carried their press cards and credentials while reporting in Russia, it didn't stop security forces from assaulting them at different protests.

Elizaveta Kirpanova, a correspondent for Novaya Gazeta, was pushed to the ground while reporting from Pushkin Square, Moscow. The journalist was wearing her press vest when she was hit in the head with a truncheon. Another female journalist, Vera Ryabitskaya of The Insider, was tortured during her arrest in St Petersburg. She, too, was beaten with a truncheon and thrown to the ground.

Daria Belikova also described her experience at a protest in Orenburg, saying she never saw anything like it in her 10 years in the field. Daria, who reports for the Echo of Moscow, described the situation as depressing. According to the journalist, security officials stormed the crowd and brutally beat people with truncheons.

Moreover, four cases of verbal harassment against women journalists were documented in Europe, one in each Serbia, Croatia, Spain and Montenegro.



Sonia Lopez, a correspondent for Antena 3 in Spain, was harassed while covering an anti-mask demonstration in the Plaza de Colón, Madrid. The movement, named World March For Freedom, was protesting the use of masks and the inoculation of minors against Covid-19. Sonia was recording a segment for the program Espejo Público when protestors began hurling insults and slurs at her.

Three instances of sexual violence against women journalists came to light. Two were witnessed in the United Kingdom and one in Albania. On March 23, 2021, senior football correspondent for The Independent, Melissa Reddy, shared her harrowing ordeal of harassment and assault on the field. The journalist recalled how she was subjected to two assaults in a single day on February 28, 2016, at Wembley stadium. Melissa recalled that after the second incident of harassment, she called her manager and explained why there would be no video, describing it as “one of those days”.

Two women journalists were also expelled - one from Russia and one from Belarus. The latter also witnessed the arrests of two other women journalists.



Sarah Rainsford, a BBC correspondent in Moscow, was denied an extension to her work visa in August 2021. Reports cited retaliation against the United Kingdom failing to grant visas to Russian journalists as the reason. Sarah is an accomplished BBC journalist who has reported from Moscow for several years now.

CFWIJ also documented two cases of online harassment against women journalists; one in Russia and one in Switzerland.

Other violations included one case of workplace harassment in Croatia, one case of verbal attack in the United Kingdom, one case of state oppression in Belarus, one case of a sexist attack in Malta, and one case of racist attack in Portugal.

Seeing the large number of cases where journalists' rights have been violated, The Coalition For Women In Journalism calls on European countries to take into consideration the concerns and take necessary measures against those interfering with freedom of speech and expression.



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