PRESS FREEDOM STATUS
FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS:
MARCH 2021
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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Throughout the month of March, The Coalition For Women In Journalism reported on an astonishing 111 cases of violence against women journalists around the world. The following report presents a detailed survey of the safety violations against women journalists during March 2021.

Four women journalists were killed in the last month:

Afghanistan: Three women media-workers were shot by terror outfits in the city of Jalalabad. All three victims worked at Enikass Radio and TV. This is the latest attack, in what has now emerged as a pattern, on Afghan women journalists by fundamentalist groups.

United States: Former photo director for “Hearst” and “Conde Nast”, a loving wife for 26 years and mother of two, Lynn Murray was one of the ten victims of the shooting in King’s grocery store, Boulder Colorado on March 22.

Four women journalists were physically assaulted in the field:

Mexico: Four photojournalists were assaulted and detained by the police in Mexico City while covering the events that unfolded on International Women’s Day, 2021.
According to reports by CFWIJ, at least six women journalists were attacked in the field:

Turkey: Dokuz8News reporter Fatoş Erdoğan was subjected to police violence while covering the International Women’s Day rally in Istanbul. The journalist was verbally and physically harassed while doing her job.

Montenegro: Journalist Jelena Jovanović was injured while covering a political gathering. She was attacked by a man at the location. The incident was broadcasted live on national television.

Turkey: The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) team member Ceren İskit was deliberately attacked by police while monitoring women journalists’ safety on the Women’s March against the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention.

El Salvador: Photojournalist for El Diario de Hoy, Jessica Orellana was physically assaulted by President Nayib Bukele’s security team. Jessica was impeded while trying to capture images of the president casting his vote.

Bulgaria: Desislava Panayotova is a journalist for the online news website DEN News. Unidentified men destroyed the glass screen of Desislava’s car, which was parked outside her residence, on Friday, March 12. The incident is the second of its kind. In December last year, Desislava’s car was shot at, leaving bullets in the windscreen.

United States: Adaure Achumba, the reporter for WFMY News 2, was impeded on the street while she was about to broadcast live from Elm Street, Greensboro.
CFWIJ reported five cases of arrest:

Egypt: Activist, writer, and film editor Sanaa Seif was sentenced for 18 months in jail on March 17. Sana was convicted on bogus charges of spreading false news, misusing social media, and insulting a police officer.

Turkey: The court announced the verdict in the case of OdaTV News Director Müyesser Yıldız and TELE1 Ankara Representative İsmail Dukel. On International Women’s Day, Müyesser was sentenced to three years, seven months, and ten days in prison over espionage charges and her one-year sentence was postponed.

Turkey: The trial against journalists Serpil Ünal and Songül Yücel on charges of "being a member of a terrorist organization" and "spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization" was held in Istanbul. The court sentenced the journalists to one year, six months, and 22 days in prison.

Turkey: The hearing of the trial against journalist Perihan Kaya on terrorism charges was held in Diyarbakır. The court sentenced the journalist to one year and three months in prison for "spreading terrorist propaganda".
At least five women journalists were detained in March:

Belarus: State officials cracked down on civilians and journalists for organizing a protest rally against President Alexander Lukashenko. Of those arrested, at least five are journalists, three of them women.

Turkey: Dokuz8Haber reporter Ebrar Başıyigit and Artı Gerçek correspondent Yağmur Kaya were detained while covering the detained Boğaziçi University students’ developments at İstanbul Çağlayan Courthouse.

According to CFWIJ data, at least three women journalists were threatened with death:

Turkey: Journalist Canan Kaya was threatened after her social media post on the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention. The Coalition For Women In Journalism condemns the vicious attack against Canan.

Russia: Natalya Zubkova, editor in chief for The Novosti Kiselevsk network, faced horrific threats. For safety reasons, Natalya had to flee Kuzbass city, along with her young daughters.

Afghanistan: Fatima Roshanian, an editor for the feminist magazine Nimorkh Weekly, is working from home after being identified by extremists. Fatima was named in a “kill list” issued by the Taliban.
At least 33 women journalists were expelled from work:

United States: Huffington Post laid off 47 of its staffers just a month into its acquisition by Buzzfeed. Several employees were invited to attend a virtual meeting where they were informed about the decision. 31 of the total staff fired were women journalists, editors, and reporters.

Turkey: After the protocol signed with the union, Disk Basın-İş, nine journalists, two of whom are women, of Artı TV and Artı Gerçek, were forced to resign for "not observing the hierarchy".

21 cases of workplace harassments came to light:

Croatia: Journalist Maja Sever was given a dismissal warning by her employer organization when she spoke about the misogynistic culture prevalent in the firm during an interview.

Turkey: 20 women complained of workplace harassment following the decision of the management of Artı TV and Artı Gerçek to withdraw the protocol on workplace working conditions that they signed with Disk Basın-İş.

At least 13 women reporters faced legal harassment:

Colombia: State representatives walked out in “protest” from a virtual hearing in Jineth Bedoya’s case. The hearing aimed to determine the role of the Colombian state in the ordeal that Jineth went through in 2000.

Turkey: The third hearing of the trial against journalist Sadiye Eser was held in Istanbul. The court adjourned the trial again. The next hearing will be held on June 8, 2021.
Turkey: The 12th hearing of the trial against journalist Kibriye Evren was held in Diyarbakır. The court ruled to decide the request of merging another lawsuit at Mersin until the next hearing. The next hearing will be held on June 24, 2021.

Turkey: The second hearing of the trial against Democrat-News editor Selda Manduz on the charge of being affiliated with an armed terrorist organization was held. The court ruled to wait for the review reports of digital materials until the next hearing until April 8, 2021.

Saudi Arabia: Last month, Lina Al-Hathloul announced the court’s confirmation of the first sentence against Loujain. Loujain was imprisoned in May 2018 and accused of receiving foreign funding to impose foreign agendas, attending international conferences and events, and other such vague claims.

Turkey: The third hearing of the case against Habertürk columnist, Nagehan Alçı, was held in İstanbul. The court ruled to give both parties time for their pleas after the prosecutor submits his opinion, and adjourned the case until March 31, 2021.

Turkey: The 16th hearing of the trial against the closed Dicle News Agency (DİHA) reporter Şerife Oruç was held in Batman. The court postponed the next hearing until June 26, 2021, by giving additional time for the completion of witnesses’ statements.

Turkey: The 33rd hearing of the case where the executives of the shutdown Taraf newspaper and apprehended Yasemin Çongar on charges of "obtaining, disclosing and destroying information about the security of the state" was held and adjourned yet again.
The Philippines: Rappler CEO & Executive Editor, Maria Ressa, was once again summoned to court. In the latest legal challenge, Maria faces charges of tax evasion. The prosecutor believes Rapplers’ parent company owed sales taxes, given their alleged dealings in financial securities. These accusations are the latest in the slew of baseless claims filed against the journalist.

Turkey: The fourth hearing of the trial against journalist Seyhan Avşar was held in İstanbul. Seyhan was tried for “identifying a public officer as a target for terrorist organizations”.

Turkey: Third hearing of the trial against Daily Yolculuk reporter (former student journalist at Cumhuriyet) Buse Söğütlü was supposed to be held on March 24, 2021. However, the court postponed the trial without seeing it to April 14, 2021.

Cuba: Karla Maria Perez, an independent journalist, and collaborator for the “DNA Cuba” portal was left displaced at Tocumen airport, Panama. Karla was forced to request asylum in Costa Rica after being denied entry into her country.

Belarus: Tatsiana Nyadbai, a deputy chairman of 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.
CFWIJ recorded three cases of verbal harassment of women journalists:

United States: Investigative journalist Lindsay Nielsen revealed that she faced threats and damaging harassment by Governor Andrew Cuomo’s administration. Later, the journalist decided to leave News10, giving the fact that the attacks she faced were one of the reasons for leaving her job.

United States: Tucker Carlson attempted to underplay the violence that women journalists face by targeting The New York Times reporter, Taylor Lorenz.

Canada: Reporter Lauren Boothby was harassed by a group of miscreants while on duty. The situation would have become dangerous since one of the men among the group has already been charged with engaging in hate crimes.

Two women journalists experienced sexist attacks:

Malta: Norma Saliba, the head of PBS News, was subjected to sexist slurs by controversial commentator Leone Ganado. His comments were posted during a live stream Norma was hosting with Nationalist Party leader Bernard Grech.

Australia: Broadcaster turned politician Basil Zempilas made reprehensible remarks towards his female co-host, Jenna Clarke.
And another two came forward with testimonies of sexual harassment on the field

United Kingdom: Senior journalist at NCTA News, Laura Bill shared the harrowing sexual assaults she went through over a long period of time. In a recent article, Laura revealed the harassment she was subjected to both, inside and outside the workplace.

United Kingdom: Senior football correspondent for The Independent, Melissa Reddy, shared her harrowing experience with harassment and assault on the field. In her recent article, the journalist recalled how she was subjected to two deplorable incidents in a single day on February 28, 2016, at Wembley stadium.

CFWIJ recorded seven cases of an organized online troll campaign:

Pakistan: There was an attempt to hack Gharidah Farooqi’s Twitter account following the display of support to her and other women journalists by the Coalition For Women In Journalism.

The Philippines: Inday Espina-Varona, a senior contributing editor for ABS-CBN, has faced persistent harassment and threats. She says the hostile environment towards journalists has worsened since President Duterte took office in 2016. Inday has been targeted online by slurs, hurtful comments, and accusations of providing sensitive information to rebel groups. The journalist admitted she lives in constant fear given the precarious position of press freedom in the country.
United States: Writer and editor at “Deadspin” Julie DiCaro shared harrowing trauma she suffered because of mass trolling in her recently published book, “Sidelined: Sports, Culture, and Being a Woman in America”.

United States: Felicia Somnez held Steven Ginsberg accountable for his lack of support in Felicia’s case despite claiming to be a feminist ally. Felicia was suspended from her job due to severe social media backlash after tweeting about the sexual assault allegations against the late basketball player Kobe Bryant. She was subjected to a barrage of hateful messages, including rape and death threats.

Pakistan: Morning show host and columnist Shiffa Yousafzai was subjected to targeted personal attacks online. Political commentator and YouTuber Asad Ali Toor recently insinuated in his vlogs that Shiffa gets her job done because of her public relations with certain institutions and ministers. Following which she was viciously targeted by trolls online.

United States: Brenna Smith, an investigative intern at USA Today, was viciously harassed by right-wing trolls for her first byline. Brenna wrote an investigative piece on how online crowdfunding is used to aid extremist movements.

France: Journalist Claire Koç accused supporters of Turkish President Erdogan of sending her death threats online. The attacks reportedly came after the publication of Claire’s book that details her experience in France as a Turkish immigrant. Claire has since filed a criminal complaint against the perpetrators.
At least two women journalists faced racist attacks:

Turkey: The Salom Newspaper columnist Karel Valansi was deliberately targeted with anti-Semitic hate speech by pro-government newspapers in Turkey on the anniversary of Gallipoli Victory.

Canada: Founder of the Anecdotia Media filmmaker and journalist Eileen Park was subjected to hateful, racist comments after her private wedding pictures were published in a magazine last week.

And finally, one journalist reported state oppression:

Cuba: Luz Escobar, a correspondent for website 14yMedio, was barred from leaving her home in Havana on International Women’s Day. There were plainclothes police personnel guarding her door, as well as two women from the ministry of the interior in a nearby car, keeping surveillance.

We would like to acknowledge the many women journalists who came forward with their testimonies of the sexual harassment they have faced over the years in France:

France:

In a public appeal, 150 women sports journalists denounced the sexism they face in their line of work. The misogynistic culture around sports worldwide fosters the harassment and hate women journalists face in the field. The appeal issued by French women journalists calls for a unified effort to push back against such misconduct.