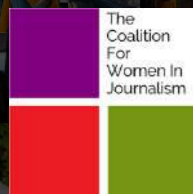


*“When
journalists are
under attack,
democracy is
under attack.”*

- Maria Ressa, journalist, Nobel Laureate

2021 Annual Press Freedom Report

*The most dangerous but resilient
year for women journalists*



Contents

January-December 2021



Alena Waqar, a female journalist from local tv channel Geo News. Photo Credit: AP Photo/Anjum Naveed

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The year 2021 saw major violations against women journalists across the globe increase by 12.4% as compared to the previous year.

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This year, we recorded 11 killings of women journalists worldwide.

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At least 45 women journalists remained behind bars in different countries around the world in 2021.

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Regional Review

Reporting remains challenging for women journalists around the world, facing detention, online threats, sexual threats and other violations, even murder.

Middle East and North Africa

During 2021, CFWIJ recorded a staggering 295 cases of violations against women journalists in the region.

North America

The Coalition For Women In Journalism reported 133 cases from North America during 2021.

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Europe

2021 was a challenging year for women journalists in Europe, even the continent with well established press freedom compared to the other regions.

South Asia

The South Asian region has represented mounting challenges to women journalists in 2021 as well.

Africa

At least 35 female journalists were exposed to different types of threats and violence in Africa this year.

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Country focus

The CFWIJ has documented cases of severe threats and violations against women journalists globally but a handful of countries have been observed showing the most intense and insane growing graph of these cases.

Turkey

Turkey has failed in press freedom this year as well. It ranked first among the violence, harassment and violations.

Belarus

Belarus has always been a challenging country when it comes to press freedom as the massive crackdown against critical voices became more intense.



Journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones. Photo Credit: AP Photo/Robert Bumsted

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January-December 2021



Amber Bracken
Photo Credit: Jason Franson

Canada

In 2021, The CFWIJ recorded 37 cases of violations against women journalists in Canada.

United States

CFWIJ recorded at least 96 cases of violence against women journalists in the United States this year.

Russia

In 2021, The Coalition For Women In Journalism recorded 34 cases of violations against women journalists in Russia.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is the country with the highest number of killed women journalists- four out of 11 reported during 2021.

CFWIJ has evacuated **320** journalists, activists, women rights advocates, and others from Afghanistan.

Shaimaa Sami was detained since May 20 and her detention was renewed with no trial or justification. Shaimaa was facing charges of spreading false news, membership of a banned terrorist group, and using social media platforms to disrupt national security and spread rumors. She released from prison on September 2021 and spoke to CFWIJ.

"The word set me free and there are still hundreds waiting

To be resurrected, that is simply the case. This is how you feel when you are released from prison after spending a period in solitary confinement and knowing different types of pain that make you doubt that you are not alive, detach from reality and question the reality of your existence itself and that this is really happening to you.

A nightmare, or a scary and sad book or film! Something like that, but the fact that you're handcuffed or hungry and sick and tired you couldn't be more tired, you've hit the bottom. Alone or in a concrete cell, one meter twenty centimeters wide and one meter seventy centimeters long. No outlet for light and no source of light.

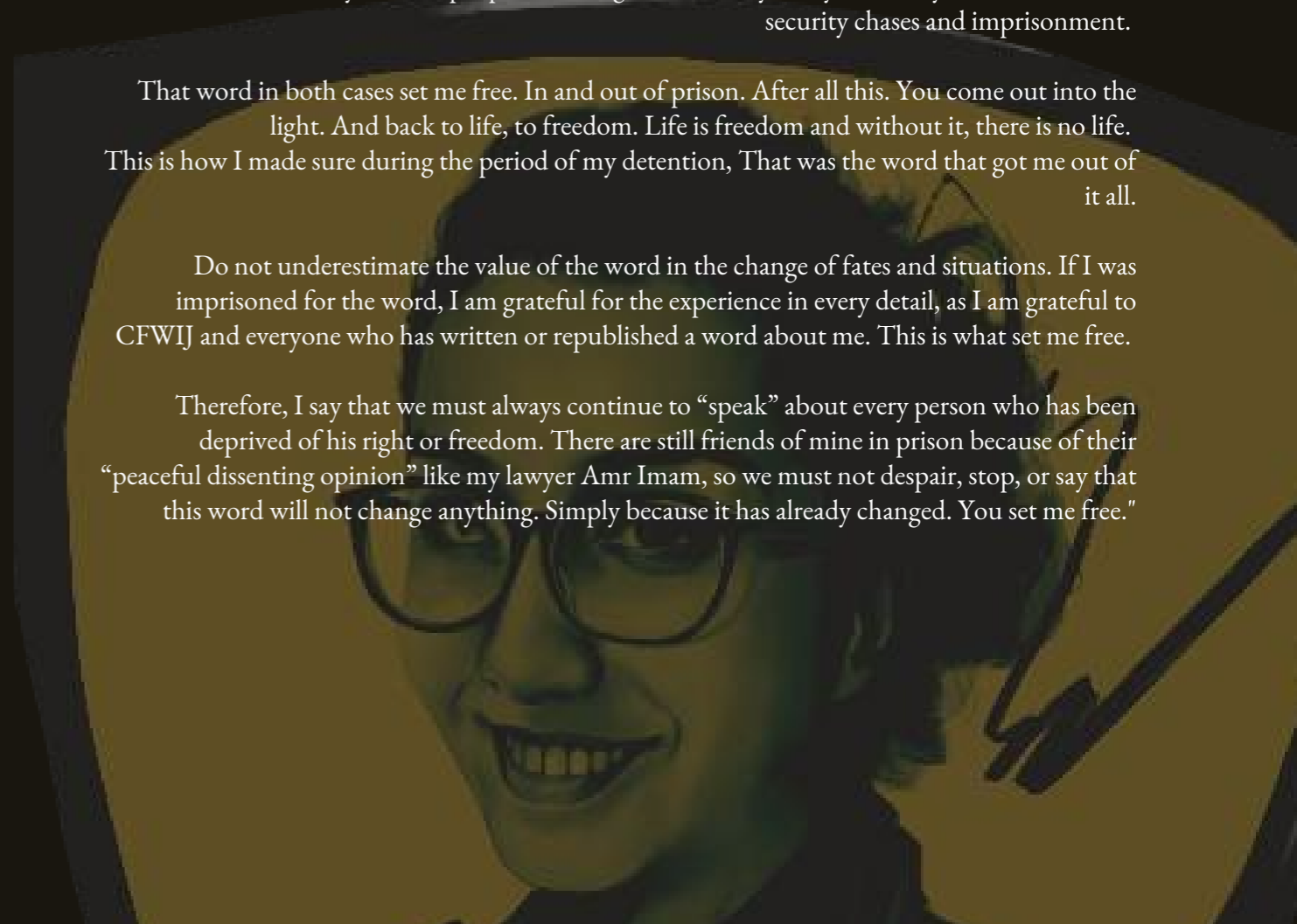
After you spend about a year and four months in your country's different cells, in cruel and inhuman conditions, and subjected to various types of violations. And the reason is that you said a "word" in a newspaper article or during my work as a human rights researcher. A word that exhorts freedom, peace, and love. A word in which you criticize the system or make fun of societal constraints.

This "word" annoyed some people in the regime, so nearly two years of my life were stolen in security chases and imprisonment.

That word in both cases set me free. In and out of prison. After all this. You come out into the light. And back to life, to freedom. Life is freedom and without it, there is no life. This is how I made sure during the period of my detention, That was the word that got me out of it all.

Do not underestimate the value of the word in the change of fates and situations. If I was imprisoned for the word, I am grateful for the experience in every detail, as I am grateful to CFWIJ and everyone who has written or republished a word about me. This is what set me free.

Therefore, I say that we must always continue to "speak" about every person who has been deprived of his right or freedom. There are still friends of mine in prison because of their "peaceful dissenting opinion" like my lawyer Amr Imam, so we must not despair, stop, or say that this word will not change anything. Simply because it has already changed. You set me free."





RIUJ
Stop Killing Journalist.
 Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists

RIUJ
Stop Killing Journalist.
 Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists

RIUJ
Abolish all black Laws against media.
 Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists

RIUJ
 کورونا سے متاثرہ میڈیا ورکرز کو بھی فوجی
 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY
 Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists

OVERVIEW

Major violations against women journalists in 2021

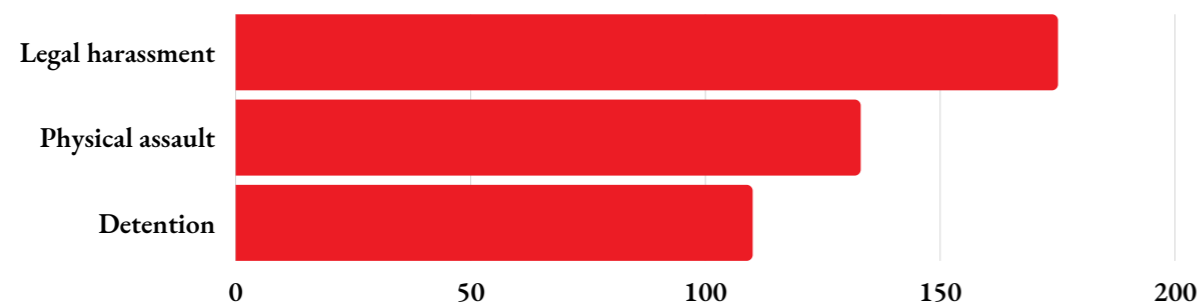
The year 2021 saw major violations against women journalists across the globe increase by 16% as compared to the previous year. The economic toll of COVID-19 that hit last year carried forward to 2021 along with the health and social implications of the pandemic. Even as countries and newsrooms adapted to intermittent tightening and easing of restrictions, women journalists worldwide continued to bear the brunt of increased care work alongside the demanding nature of the job.



The year 2021 presented a bleak picture for press freedom worldwide. The CFWIJ recorded a total of 831 cases of violations against women journalists throughout the year. A sharp increase since 2020 when we witnessed 731 such cases. We saw the number of incarcerated women media workers reach a record high - as many as 63 remained behind bars on December 31, according to the CFWIJ's findings, with at least 20 women journalists jailed in 2021 alone. At least 12 women journalists were killed while numerous others were subjected to various forms of state suppression, legal harassment by state and non-state actors, physical assaults and harassment, sexual assaults and harassment, and online violence.

The economic toll of Covid-19 that hit in 2020 carried forward to 2021 along with the health and social implications of the pandemic. Even as countries and newsrooms adapted to intermittent tightening and easing of restrictions, women journalists worldwide continued to bear the brunt of increased care work alongside the demanding nature of the job. And yet, they reported on the pandemic from the frontlines, responding to the situation each time the pandemic reared its head in the form of a new variant, and kept citizens well informed. For many, this came at the cost of their own safety. Threats by the virus aside, critical journalists were also forced to deal with government retaliation for exposing mishandling of the pandemic, monetary irregularities and graft, and for merely holding elected representatives accountable for their actions to secure public health.

Top three trends



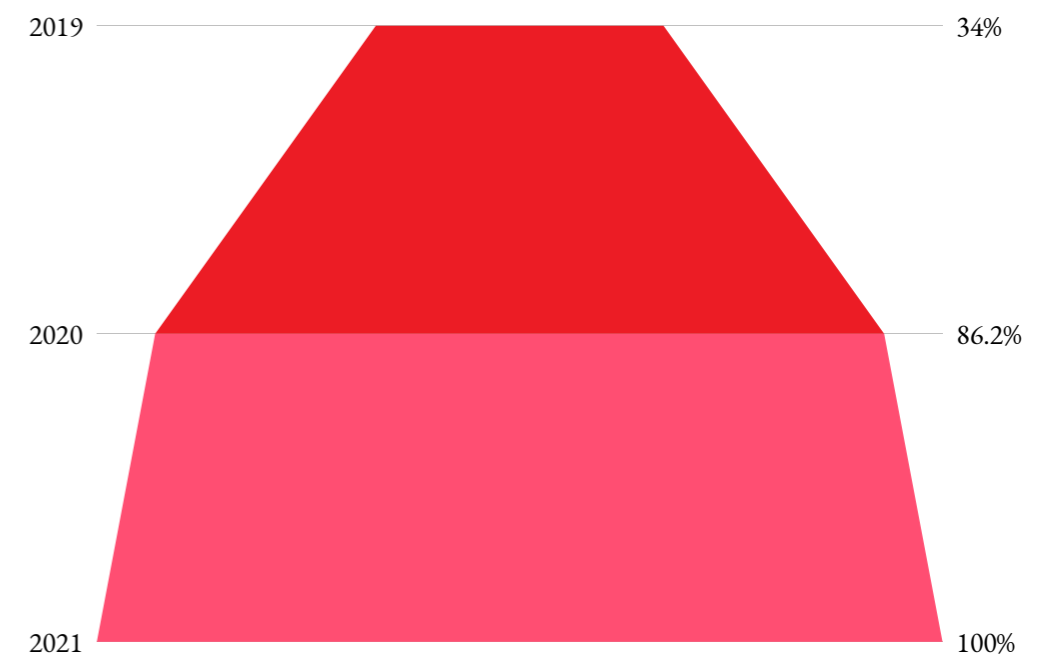
Throughout the year, we saw legal harassment employed as a common tactic to gag critical journalists. Under the garb of anti-terrorism laws, increased censorship ostensibly to counter “fake news” and the pandemic, oppressive regimes sought to embroil critical journalists and dissenting voices in legal battles.

Apart from state suppression in the form of legal harassment and imprisonment, women journalists also faced threats from other state-linked institutions. We recorded instances of police and military violence against female media workers as well as slander campaigns run by pro-government media outlets against critical journalists and abductions.

The year 2021 saw multiple threats to women journalists. At least 72 of them were obstructed in the field, 65 faced expulsion from work, 52 were subjected to some form of threat or miscellaneous intimidation tactics, 26 women journalists faced some form of workplace harassment, 17 were subjected to verbal harassment and three had their accreditation revoked. High on our radar in 2021 were Turkey, Afghanistan, Belarus and Russia. Read on below for our in-depth review on threats to women journalists in regions around the world as well as details of some of the most horrific attacks on women journalists this year such as the targeted killing of Yemeni journalist, Rasha Abdullah.

16% increase

The year 2021 saw major violations against women journalists across the globe increase by 16% as compared to the previous year.





MURDER COUNT

This year, we recorded 12 killings of women journalists worldwide. Female reporters were killed in Afghanistan, Kenya, Yemen, Algeria, Palestine, the United States and Cameroon.

The number of murders witnessed in 2021 increased by 100% compared to 2020.

Afghan men carry the coffin of journalist Malalai Maiwand, who was shot and killed by unknown gunmen in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on December 10, 2020. (Reuters/Parwiz)

United States On March 22, 2021, former photo director for Hearst and Conde Nast, **Lynn Murray** was shot dead in the United States. The journalist was one of 10 victims of the shooting in King's grocery store in Boulder, Colorado. The following month, on April 23, journalist **Aviva Okeson-Haberman** was found dead in her apartment in Kansas City, Missouri, US. She was killed by a bullet that pierced through her window.



Algeria

On January 27, Algerian journalist **Tin Hinan Lceb**, of ENTV's Amazigh channel (TV4), was reportedly killed by her husband. Tin Hinan Lceb left behind two daughters and a remarkable legacy built over the years she worked as a presenter for TV4 and as a website specialist for Arab and Amazigh news.



Cameroon

The very first week of 2021 was marred by a separatist attack on a convoy in Njikwa, Cameroon, which left journalist **Rebecca Jema Iyabo**. The journalist was killed on January 8, 2021, along with four military officials, when a bomb exploded near the convoy.



May saw the death of Palestinian journalist **Reema Saad**, who was killed in a bombing on the 13th of the month. Reema was killed in her apartment alongside her children and husband when Israeli forces attacked civilian residences in the city of Gaza.

Palestine

Afghanistan



On March 2, **Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat and Shahnaz Roafi** were shot dead by terror outfits in Afghanistan. All three victims worked at Enikass Radio and TV. This was the first attack, in what has emerged as a pattern of violence on Afghan women journalists by fundamentalist groups. On June 3, **Mina Kheiri**, a journalist and media worker for Ariana Radio and Television was killed in an IED blast in Pul-e-Sokhta area of Kabul. **Najma Sadeqi**, a young Afghan YouTuber from the Afghan Insider channel was at the airport trying to secure an evacuation flight when the bomb was detonated.

Yemen



November saw the devastating killings of two women journalists. Yemeni journalist **Rasha Abdullah al-Harazi** and her unborn child were killed in a horrific car bombing in Aden on November 10, 2021. Her husband, journalist Mahmoud al-Atmi, who was driving her to the hospital when they were targeted, was also critically injured.

Kenya



On November 23, the police launched a probe into the killing of **Kate Mitchell**, a worker for BBC Media Action. Kate was found dead in her hotel room in Nairobi. Police told local media that Kate was likely killed by strangulation and a homicide investigation has been opened.



IMPRISONMENT

At least 21 women journalists were jailed in 2021, bringing the total number of incarcerated women journalists across the globe to 62. According to our data, the world saw a 31.24% increase in the number of women journalists put behind bars in 2021 compared to the previous year. Although 19 women journalists were also released the number of women journalists still languishing behind bars is extremely concerning.

A pro-democracy activist holds up a sign in support of Chinese citizen journalist Zhang Zhan who has been sentenced to four years in prison and the 12 arrested people in Hong Kong, China, 28 December 2020. Photograph: Miguel Candela/EPA

釋放12港人



62 women journalists behind bars

At least 62 women journalists remained behind bars in different countries around the world in 2021.

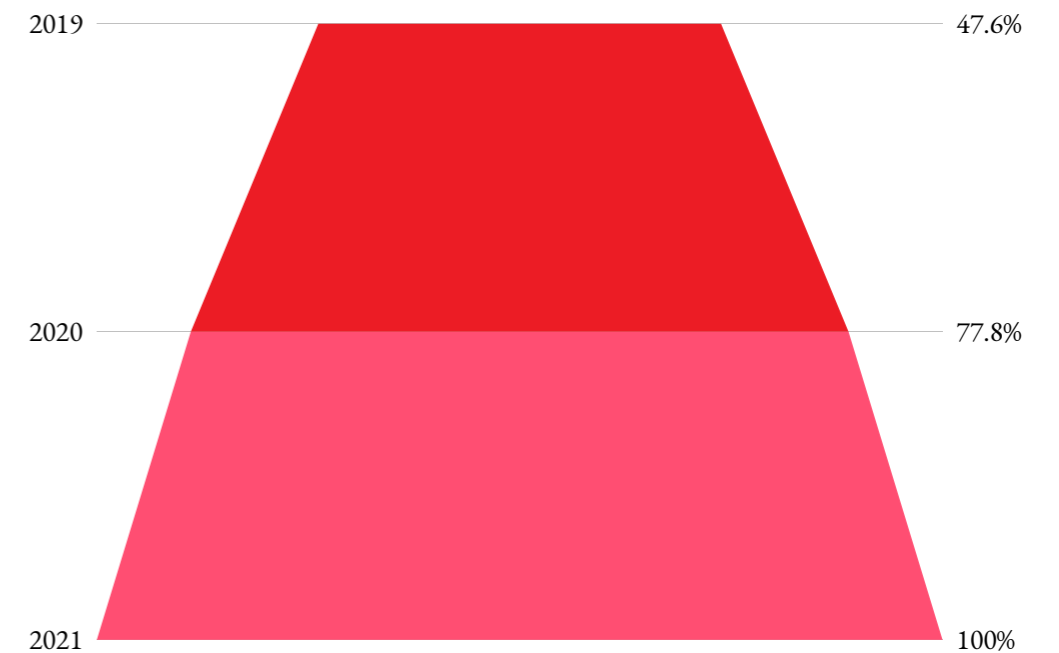


China replaced Iran as the world’s biggest jailer of women journalists in 2021, with at least 17 incarcerated. At least seven of the imprisoned journalists are Uyghur women with little to no information available regarding their arrests or incarceration status. Given the magnitude of China’s human rights violations against its Muslim Uyghur population and extensive press censorship, the actual number of Uyghur journalists jailed is expected to be higher than reported figures. In second place, **Iran** still had 10 women journalists in prison in 2021 as state authorities remain relentless in their attacks on press freedoms. **Belarus** stood in third place with 10 women journalists incarcerated, eight of whom were jailed in 2021. **Myanmar**, another country that has relentlessly persecuted media workers, had at least eight women journalists behind bars in 2021. The highest rate of imprisonments was witnessed in Belarus, which moved up from sixth place on the CFWIJ’s list of jailers of women journalists in 2020.

Meanwhile, at least three women journalists remain incarcerated in Turkey, as many in Vietnam, two in Ethiopia, and one each in Cambodia, Burundi, Egypt, Laos, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Russia. Read on for more details about women journalists imprisoned in each country.

31.24% increase

The CFWIJ recorded a **31.24%** increase in the number of women journalists imprisoned in 2021 as compared to 2020.





Freedom
FOR the Poet
Chimengul
Awut

Xinjiang, CHINA

CHINA

Sophia Huang Xueqin, freelance journalist and #MeToo activist, went missing on September 19, 2021, the day before she was to leave the country to pursue a master's degree at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. Her arrest was later confirmed under charges of "inciting subversion of state power". The journalist was also detained previously between October 2019 and January 2020 under charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" for reporting on mass protests in Hong Kong.

Gulmira Imin was arrested on charges of "splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration" in July 2009. She participated in a major demonstration protesting the deaths of Uighur migrant workers in Guangdong Province on July 5. Gulmira was taken into custody after authorities alleged she had organized the protests. She was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Atikem Rozi has been in prison since February 2014. She was detained at an undisclosed location in Xinjiang on charges of participating in alleged separatist activities led by Ilham Tohti, founder of the Xinjiang news website *Uighurbiz*.

Wang Shurong has been behind bars for more than five years now. She had been volunteering for several years as a citizen journalist with the human rights website *64 Tianwang* when she was detained in February 2016.

Chimengul Awut was arrested in July 2018. She was sent to a re-education camp for her contribution to a novel that the Chinese government denounced.

Zhang Zhan has been behind bars since May 2020 and is currently imprisoned in Shanghai. Zhang was arrested after she criticized the authorities' measures to contain COVID-19 on her Twitter account. The journalist was formally charged with undermining the authorities. Her health has significantly deteriorated in prison and she is currently on the brink of death.

Cheng Lei was officially arrested after almost six months of detention on charges of "illegally supplying state secrets overseas". She was working as a news anchor for the state-owned news channel China Global Television Network and had been there for eight years.

Haze Fan was detained in December 2020 on suspicion of endangering national security. She was escorted from her apartment and currently remains in the custody of Chinese authorities. She is a Chinese citizen employed by an American publication house.

Wang Linlin, director and contributor at provincial news platform Hui Town Site, was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of extortion and picking quarrels and provoking trouble for her coverage of sensitive social issues. She has been behind bars since April 12, 2018.

Several Uyghur journalists remain imprisoned in China. The CFWIJ was available to identify the names of seven such women, but given the extensive suppression of news regarding the state's atrocities against its Uyghur population.

Guzelnur Qasim, Kashgar Uyghur Press

Mahinur Hamut, Kashgar Uyghur Press

Anargul Hekim, Kashgar Uyghur Press

Ayshem Peyzulla, Editor, Xinjiang Education Press

Mahibeder Mekhmut, Editor, Xinjiang Education Press

Aynur Tash, Ürümchi People's Radio Station

Baqtugul Oralbai, Kuitun Daily News reporter

IRAN

Askari Zadeh was first arrested by the police in February 2008, while collecting signatures for the "One Million Signatures" campaign at Tehran's Daneshjou Park. She was charged with "acting against national security" and was held in Evin Prison.

Zeynab Jalalian was arrested in 2008 and sentenced to death under the charge of Moharebeh [waging war against God]. She was arrested for her alleged membership to the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), an armed Kurdish opposition group.

Mojgan Sayami was arrested for the first time in October 2017. Security forces raided her house and detained her for 27 days after which she was released from prison on bail. The journalist was then arrested in Tehran for the second time in April 2019 and shifted to Ardabil Prison after she was accused of blasphemy, insulting the Supreme Leader of Iran and disturbing public opinion. In 2021 she continued to languish in prison awaiting trial.

Sepideh Qolijan has been imprisoned since June 21, 2020. She was imprisoned after being handed a five-year sentence for covering a rally by the Haft Tappeh sugar mill workers, who were protesting unpaid wages. Prior to that the journalist was arrested in November 2018 in Shush for reporting on the rally and released on bail on February 9, 2020. After the verdict was announced, she was put behind bars again in June 2020 and remained in jail in 2021.



A female prison guard stands along a corridor in Tehran's Evin Prison.

Zoreh Sarve was arrested in March 2020. She was charged with insulting the founder of the regime, propaganda against the regime and conspiracy against national security. Zoreh was sentenced to three years and ordered to read the Quran as punishment.

Nada Sabouri was arrested by representatives of the Tehran prosecutor's office in August 2020 and taken to Evin Prison in Tehran to serve a sentence of three and a half years. She was charged with "assembly and collusion" for protesting prison conditions in Evin Prison in 2014.

Shabnam Ashaouri, the editor of *Aghabinameh*, an economic bi-monthly specializing in the working class, was arrested from her home on October 4, 2020, by the Revolutionary Guard intelligence officers in plain clothes and remains in prison.

Alieh Motalebzadeh was summoned to report to Tehran's Evin Prison in October 2020 after the appeals court upheld the three-year sentence awarded to her in 2016 on charges of propaganda against the state and assembly and collusion. She was earlier arrested in November 24, 2016, and temporarily released 25 days later on bail on December 19 with a surety of 300 million Toman imposed on her. She remained in prison in 2021.

Nooshin Jafari was arrested in February 2021 and transferred to Qarchak Prison to serve a four-year prison sentence. She was imprisoned on charges of spreading anti-establishment propaganda and insulting sanctities and remains behind bars.

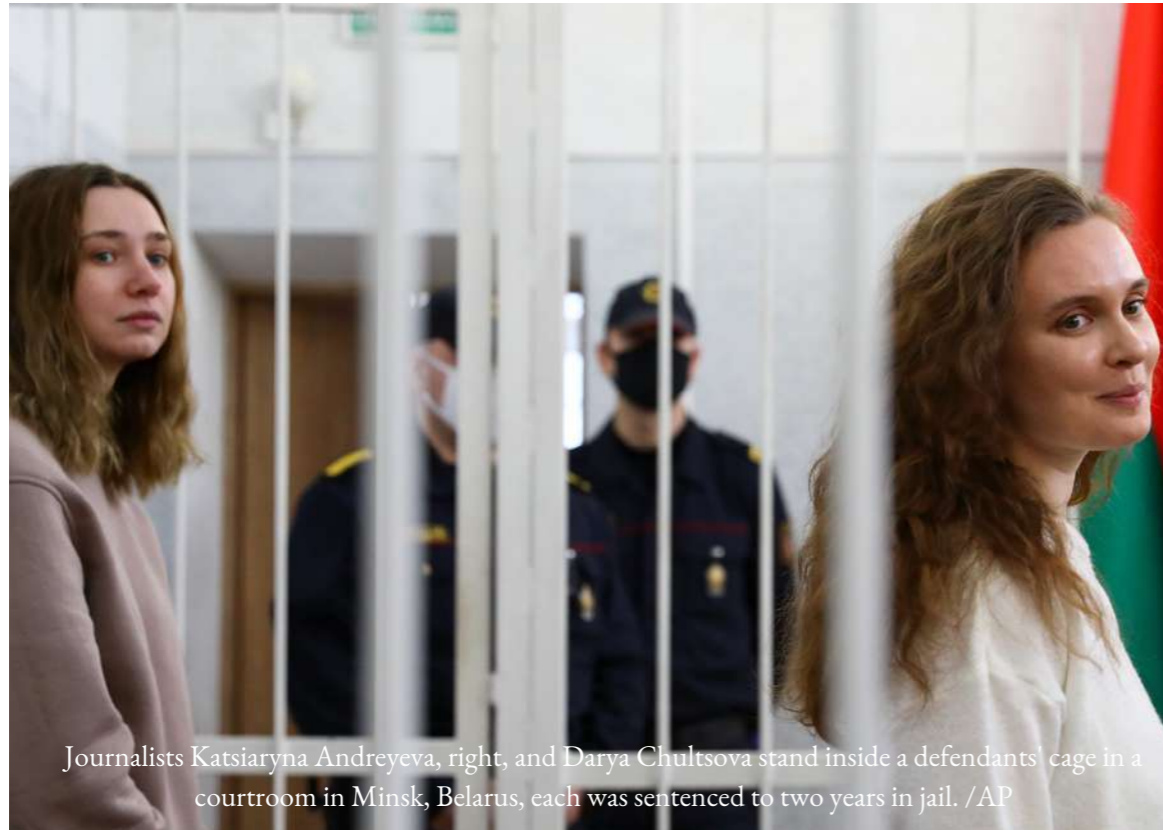
Rahil Mousavi, a freelance photojournalist, was arrested on November 9, 2021 over unspecified charges and remains in state custody. The journalist was taken to an undisclosed location.



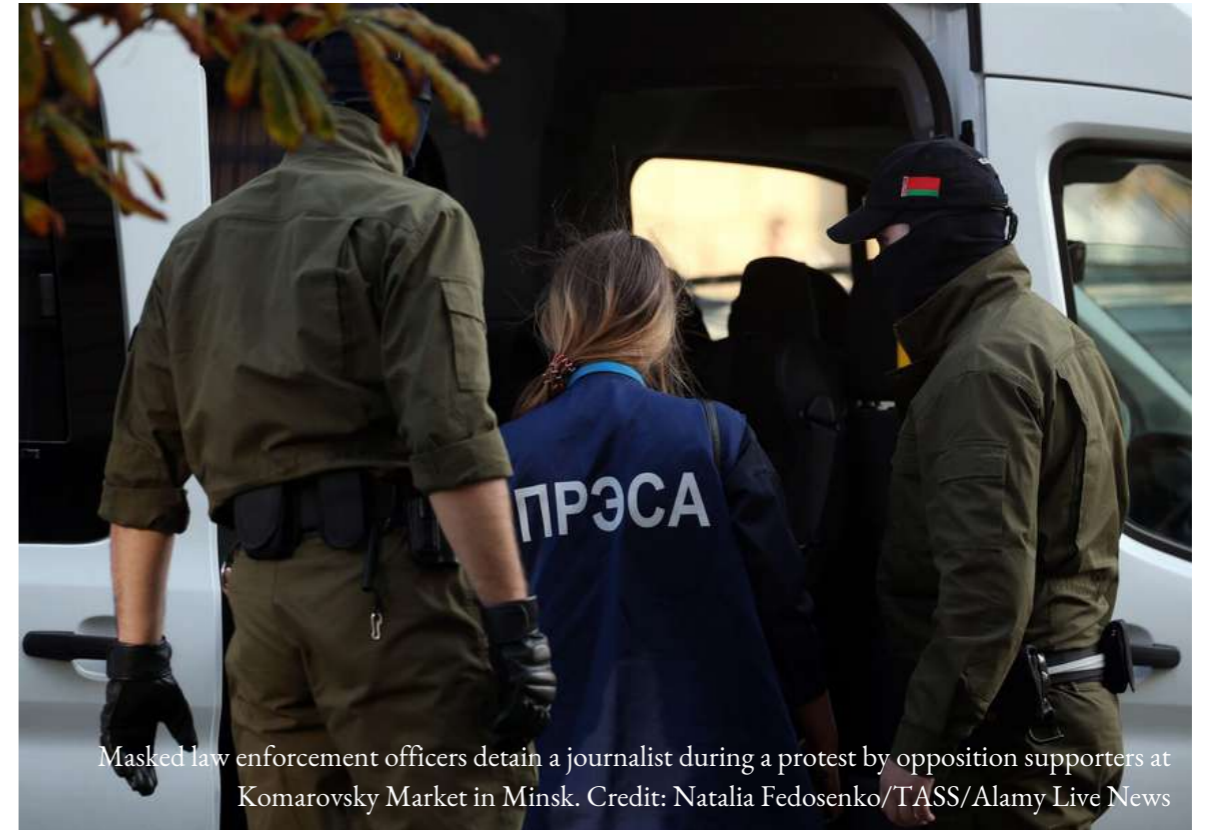
"We can say that freedom of expression is the same in all third world countries, and this is not a matter for men and women. The lack of specificity of expression is reflected in the media."

- Azar Mahdavan

Speaking to CFWIJ, Azar Mahdavan, correspondent of MEHR News Agency said, "There are some issues that restrict the profession of female journalists. For example, a woman in Iran cannot work as a journalist in a war environment and it is considered appropriate to have more male reporters in these environments. I am not allowed to work in such an environment even though I work in the international service."



Journalists Katsiaryna Andrejeva, right, and Darya Chultsova stand inside a defendants' cage in a courtroom in Minsk, Belarus, each was sentenced to two years in jail. /AP



Masked law enforcement officers detain a journalist during a protest by opposition supporters at Komarovskiy Market in Minsk. Credit: Natalia Fedosenko/TASS/Alamy Live News

BELARUS

Katsiaryna Andrejeva has been imprisoned since November 2020, along with her colleague **Darya Chultsova** for live streaming a protest in Minsk. Both the journalists were convicted for violating public order and sentenced to two years in prison each.

Alla Sharko, a human rights activist and program director at the Belarus Press Club was arrested on December 22, 2020, along with her colleagues. Authorities raided the apartments of detainees and their offices at the Press Club. Alla was charged with evading payments of taxes and fees on an especially large scale. She remains in prison still.

Ksenia Lutskina has been in prison since December 2020. Ksenia was first implicated in the investigation against the Belarusian Press Club in August 2021 new criminal charges were brought against her.

Valeria Kostyugova, an independent analyst and editor of the *Belarusian Yearbook*, was detained on June 30, 2021, when the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus raided her house. She was held at a detention center on Akrestsin Street.

Alena Talkachova, Tut.By reporter, was detained during police raids on the offices of TUT.BY media and apartments of media workers in May 2021. The journalist was charged with tax evasion and faces up to 12 years in prison.

Volha Loika, political and economic editor at Tut.By, was another journalist detained during the mass police raids on employees of the news outlet. Volha was detained on May 18, 2021 and charged with evasion of taxes and fees of especially large amounts, under Article 243 of the country's criminal code.

Marina Zolotova, editor-in-chief of Tut.By, was arrested during police raids on the news outlet and its employees in May 2021. She faces up to seven years in prison. The journalist was also heavily fined in 2019 on charges of unauthorized access to information of government-owned news agency BelTA.

Iryna Leushyna, chief editor of *BelaPAN* news agency, was detained on August 18, 2021, along with accountant Katsyarana Boyeva and former director Dzmitry Navazlylau. Police searched the homes of staff members and also raided the agency's offices in Minsk. The detainees were subsequently sent to prison.

Irina Slavnikova, a Belsat TV representative, was illegally detained at Minsk Airport as she arrived with her husband from Egypt on October 29, 2021. She was reportedly sent to prison for 15 days by court under charges of sharing "extremist" content on her social media. She has remained in prison since.

MYANMAR

Shwe Yee Win, a freelance journalist, was arrested along with other media workers in a series of arrests by the military junta shortly after its takeover of the country in February 2021. Cracking down on resistance to the coup, the military and police forces made sweeping arrests across Myanmar picking up hundreds of journalists, activists, protestors and members of the opposition after the coup. Some of the detainees were later released but Shwe remains incarcerated since February 11. No further details about her detention were given.

Htet Htet Khine, a freelance producer for BBC Media Action, was arrested by military authorities on August 15, 2021 along with her colleague Sithu Aung Myint, contributor to US Congress-funded broadcaster Voice of America and columnist for independent local magazine *Frontier Myanmar*. Htet Htet was charged under Section 17(1) of the colonial era "Unlawful Association Act" for allegedly working for a banned radio channel and harboring Sithu Aung Myint, who was evading an arrest warrant. If Htet Htet is convicted, she could face up to three years in prison.

Ma Thuzar, freelance journalist, has been under arrest since September 2021 after junta forces abducted her.

The journalist was held incommunicado for at least five days before the authorities confirmed her arrest on September 5. The journalist, who had extensively covered anti-junta protests and contributed to Myanmar Pressphoto Agency and the local Friday Times News Journal, was in hiding for months before her arrest. In May, the authorities raided her home and reportedly detained her husband for five days in hopes of finding the journalist. Ma Thuzar was initially kept at military detention centres in Yangon and reportedly charged under Article 505(a) of the penal code for incitement and spreading false news, but her current whereabouts remain unclear. The loosely defined provision under Article 505(a) criminalizes "any attempt to cause fear, spread false news or agitate directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a government employee" or that "causes their hatred, disobedience, or disloyalty toward the military and the government" and carries a maximum sentence of up to three years in prison.

Mya Wun Yan (Hla Yin Win), editor-in-chief of the Than Lwin Thway Chinn Journal, was arrested on July 20, 2021 after authorities raided her residence in Taunggyi, Shan state. The journalist and her two daughters, who are also reporters, were taken to an interrogation center in blindfolds. The former was charged under Article 505(a) of the penal code and reportedly shifted to Taunggyi's Taung Lay Lone Prison while the latter were released with a warning after a week of interrogation. Around 30 security personnel reportedly participated in the raid at the journalists' home and confiscated phones, laptops and cameras. Mya Wun Yan remains incarcerated since.



Myanmar authorities nightly internet blackouts and detained hundreds. At demonstrations they have fired gunshots, and used rubber bullets and water cannons. Photo Credit: AFP/Getty Images

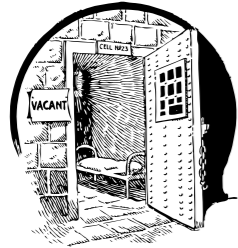
Nang Nang Tai and **Nann Win Yi**, editor and reporter of Kanbawza Tai news, respectively, were arrested on March 24, 2021, from Hopong, Shan state, after covering protests against the military junta, and have been jailed since.

Yin Yin Thein, a freelance journalist, was beaten and arrested on November 18, 2021, after military and police forces conducted a violent raid at her home in Indaw Township of Sagaing Division. The authorities reportedly seized her laptop, phone and camera equipment and beat up members of her family. The journalist is a member of the Myanmar Journalists Association and was a regular contributor to the Monitor News Journal and Lightning Journal. Her current whereabouts and legal status remain unclear.

Ma Hmu Yadanar Khet Moh Moh Tun, a video journalist with the Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, and her colleague, photographer Kaung Sett Lin, were critically injured and subsequently arrested by the military forces while covering a peaceful anti-regime protest in Yangon on December 4, 2021. Both the journalists were injured when a military vehicle drove through the crowd of protestors and onlookers.

EGYPT

Doaa Khalifa was put in Al-Qantar prison in 2020 by Egyptian authorities without interrogation. Her arbitrary detention was renewed without being questioned or moved to court. She still remains behind bars.



TURKEY

Hatice Duman was arrested in July 2003. She was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of managing a terrorist organization. She appealed her case before the Court of Cassation in 2012, but her appeal was rejected.

Ayşenur Parıldak was sent to prison in August 2016. She was arrested on charges of being a member of a terrorist organization, and sentenced to seven and a half years in prison.

Tülay Canbolat, correspondent for *Sabah Ankara*, was arrested in the scope of the Bylock investigation. She has remained behind bars since January 2020.



Doaa Khalifa

VIETNAM

Huynh Thuc Vy was sentenced in November 2018 to two years and nine months in prison on charges of defacing the country's national flag. The court ruled she would remain under house arrest until her young children reached three years of age, after which she would be required to serve her full term in prison.

Pham Doan Trang, RSF's 2019 Press Freedom Prize recipient, was arrested on October 7, 2020, during a raid on a room that she was renting. Pham was forced to rent due to constantly being chased out by police, depriving the journalist of her right to a permanent residence. In December 2021 she was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of "anti-state propaganda".

Tran Thi Tuyet Dieu, independent journalist, was arrested in August 2020 on charges of "anti-state propaganda". Her Facebook page, where she posted news and commentary, was reportedly taken down. On April 23, 2021, the court convicted the journalist under Article 117 of the Vietnamese penal code and sentenced her to eight years in prison for "creating, storing and disseminating information and materials against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam". In September, a court of appeals rejected her plea and upheld the sentence.



Pham Doan Trang

ETHIOPIA

Luwam Atikilti, a reporter for Ahadu Radio & TV, was arrested at her workplace on October 22, 2021. The arrests came after the channel aired an interview of an official, who spoke about the takeover of Hayk town in Amhara by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a rebel group that's been long engaged in a war with the federal government.

Meza Mohammed, Roha TV founder and reporter, was arrested by security personnel on December 11, 2021. She was reportedly the third journalist to be arrested that week as the police ramped up arrests under the country's state of emergency law.

LAOS

Houayheuang Xayabouly was arrested in September 2019. She posted a video on Facebook that drew attention to the government's negligence towards devastating floods in Champasak and Salavan. Houayheuang was jailed on charges of spreading propaganda against the Laos People's Democratic Republic, and trying to overthrow the party, state and government. She was sentenced to five years of imprisonment and a fine of 20 million kips was imposed on her.



BURUNDI

Agnès Ndirubusa has been behind bars since December 2019. She was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and a fine of one million Burundian francs was imposed on her on charges of trying to undermine state security.

SAUDI ARABIA

Maha Al-Rafidi was arrested during a crackdown on activists, journalists and writers across the kingdom on September 28, 2019. She has been kept behind bars since.

CAMBODIA

Long Kunthea and **Phuon Keoreaksmeay**, who worked for the environmental website Mother Nature Cambodia, were arrested on September 3, 2020. They face charges of incitement to commit a felony or cause social unrest. Their crime was investigating the decision to fill in part of Lake Boeung Tamok.

SYRIA

Tal al-Mallouhi has been in prison since December 2009. On February 14, 2011, the State Security Court in Damascus convicted Al-Mallouhi of divulging information to a foreign state.

PHILIPPINES

Frenchimae Cumpio was arrested, along with four human rights activists, on February 6, 2020. She was taken into custody during simultaneous raids across Tacloban city that targeted journalists and human rights activists. She was arrested after the military and police raided two offices of groups known for their leftist positions. The arrested individuals have been accused of illegal possession of firearms. She is still in pretrial detention.

RUSSIA

Malika Dzhikayeva was arrested on March 9, 2020, on drug possession charges. She has since spent more than a year in state custody in a pre-trial detention center. Malika was sentenced by the Factory Court in Grozny on December 11, 2020 to three years in a general regime colony. The latest decision by the Supreme Court ruled that she will be transferred to a regime colony to fulfill the remaining time of her sentence.

HONG KONG

Chan Pui-man, an associate publisher of Apple Daily, was arrested several times in 2021 and has been held in pretrial detention since July 21 on charges of conspiring to collude with foreign powers. The police have reportedly cited 30 pieces published in Apple Daily, primarily opinion pieces and commentary urging foreign sanctions, as criminal evidence against the journalist. Media reports stated that the newspaper's headquarters and homes of its executives were also raided, and police seized computers and documents.



"Press freedom is not just about journalists, right? It's not just about us, it's not just about me, it's not just about Rappler. Press freedom is... the foundation of every single right of every single Filipino to the truth, so that we can hold the powerful to account."

-Maria Ressa





REGIONAL REVIEW

Reporting remains challenging for women journalists around the world, facing detention, online threats, sexual threats and other violations, even murder. Women journalists in the Middle East are still facing overwhelming state pressure and Turkey with 238 cases was the largest contributor of violations against women journalists in the region.

Meanwhile, women journalists in North America were most frequently subjected to police brutality, expulsion, and organized troll campaigns. In Europe, most of the cases reported had to do with detention, physical violence and legal harassment, among other violations.

In Asia, women journalists experienced more pressure from power centers and targeted hate campaigns from troll armies as well as state suppression. In Africa detention and state oppression stood out as the most common tactics for suppressing critical journalists. Moreover, the abduction of women journalists continued in 2021.

“The CFWIJ was the first place I passed by in every unfortunate event that happened to me. I want to thank them and their staff for helping women journalists not let them alone and support them all the time.”

Meral Danyıldız, Journalist, Turkey

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

238



Reporting remains challenging for women journalists around the world, facing detention, online threats, sexual threats and other violations, even murder. Women journalists in the Middle East are still facing overwhelming state pressure and Turkey with **238** cases was the largest contributor of violations against women journalists in the region.

In 2021 the CFWIJ recorded a staggering 291 cases of violations against women journalists in the region. Turkey, with 238 cases, was the largest contributor. Other countries of concern included Palestine, where the Israel Defense Forces were responsible for extensive violence against journalists, as well as Iran where the state continues to incarcerate women journalists.

In Turkey, the state has routinely weaponized its institutions in attempts to intimidate and silence women journalists reporting on state violence and official overreach. The most common tactics employed to target women journalists in the country were legal harassment, police brutality in the field, and arbitrary detentions. According to CFWIJ's data, at least 96 women journalists faced legal harassment prompted by their work, 81 journalists were attacked in the field (the number includes physical assaults as well as other miscellaneous attempts to restrict access in the field) and 22 journalists were detained in Turkey in 2021. The number of incidents in 2021 increased by a horrifying 249.99% compared to the numbers we reported the previous year. For this very reason, CFWIJ has remained on top of the events unfolding in the country and has reported extensively on each violation. Our multifaceted coverage of Turkey includes issue-based reports, timeline of events, in-depth cases of specific journalists as well as regular updates on the ongoing court cases of women journalists.



Israeli forces arrest Al Jazeera journalist, Givara Budeiri, during a protest in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, June 5, 2021. (AP Photo/Oren Ziv)

In Palestine, the frequency of the attacks against women journalists by Israeli forces flared up significantly during May and June 2021. In addition to arrests and detentions, there were several reports of physical assaults, attacks with rubber bullets as well as tear gas bombs. Media correspondents were repeatedly monitored and persecuted while on duty. Several of these women reporters faced detention and/or harassment of some form for revealing facts and information. At least 20 Palestinian women journalists suffered some form of violation ranging from murder to street harassment in 2021. Israel's aggressive tactics to silence critical press in the region led to the killing of Palestinian journalist Reema Saad. Sources on the ground confirmed that she, along with her husband and two children, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza city. Reema was four months pregnant at the time.

In Iran, years of war, political revolutions, international intervention, and the rise of the religious right-wing has given way to a political landscape where women, especially women journalists, find themselves increasingly vulnerable at the hands of racism, international Islamophobia, patriarchy and theocratic elements within its governance system. This year, CFWIJ recorded eight significantly harrowing cases of persecution of Iranian women journalists. Perhaps the one case that highlights the extent of threat faced by women journalists in Iran is that of prominent Iranian human rights activist and journalist living in New York, Masih Alinejad. Masih was the target of an international kidnapping attempt this year. Four Iranian intelligence officials have been convicted by the Federal Court in Manhattan for orchestrating the plot.

NORTH AMERICA

The CFWIJ reported 145 cases from North America in 2021. This year saw a 26.08% increase in violations against women journalists in the region compared to 2020, when we documented 115 cases. There were at least 96 cases of violations documented in the United States, 38 in Canada, and 11 noticeable cases in Mexico in 2021.

At least two women journalists were killed, 11 were attacked in the field, 11 were sexually harassed, 11 were physically assaulted, 35 were expelled from their jobs, seven were detained, at least seven women journalists faced threats to their well being, 35 women journalists were subjected to organized troll campaigns, five faced racist attacks and six journalists were verbally harassed. Other violations include workplace harassment, legal harassment, deportation, online harassment and other miscellaneous forms of state oppression.

One of the most tragic cases the CFWIJ reported in 2021 in the US was the murder of Lynn Murray. The photojournalist was killed in a mass shooting incident at a superstore in Colorado in March. Lynn was killed along with 10 others in the horrific shooting. A month later, on April 23, young journalist Aviva Okeson-Haberman was found dead in her apartment in Kansas. Reportedly, the journalist was hit in the head by a stray bullet shot through her window. Aviva was working for Kansas City's NPR station at the time. Throughout the year, the CFWIJ also continued to monitor Black Lives Matter-related, and other racially charged, violations against women journalists in the country.

Meanwhile, Canada saw a vicious organized harassment campaign, which entailed deeply gendered and racially charged threatening emails sent to scores of women journalists of color. The campaign, sparked by a provocative tweet by right-wing politician Maxime Bernier inciting his supporters to "play dirty", targeted at least 20 women journalists. Although Bernier's tweet was later deleted for violating Twitter's community standards, the damage was done. Bernier had gone as far as to dox critical women journalists and shared their personal details online. Despite widespread condemnation, the Canadian authorities took negligible action against

responsible for the online hate, threats and harassment women journalists of color were subjected to. Racial inequalities in Canada were also reflected in the escalation of police transgressions against women journalists covering ongoing protests by Indigenous land defenders in different parts of the country and violations against them.

Mexico remains one of the most difficult places in the region for women journalists to exercise their duties, recording the highest number of cases for physical assaults in the region. In March 2021, four photojournalists were assaulted and detained by the police in Mexico City.

15.65%



This year saw a 15.65% increase in violations against women journalists in the region as compared to 2020.



Journalist Jen Osborne was one of the many journalists who revealed the repression of the free press at the Fairy Creek on May 17. Photo credit: Mike Graeme.

LATIN AMERICA

The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented 30 cases of violations against women journalists in Latin America. This shows an increase of 66.6% compared to previous year when CFWIJ found 27 cases where women journalists were vulnerable to different threats.

Colombia recorded eight cases, the highest in the region, followed by Peru six cases, Cuba five cases, Ecuador three cases, Argentina three cases, while El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Brazil and Venezuela recorded one case each.



Nicaraguan police officers move journalists to stop their monitoring of a raid on the house of opposition leader Cristiana Chamorro in Managua, Nicaragua, June 2, 2021. (Reuters/Carlos Herrera)

Three trends of violations in Latin America are physical assaults with nine cases recorded, legal harassment with eight cases and threats to personal well being with three cases recorded. Other violations were state oppression with two cases recorded, detention with two cases, sexual harassment with two cases. The journalists were also attacked/impeded in the field, organised troll campaign, workplace harassment, abduction, sexual harassment and online harassment.

In Columbia, police viciously attacked Katy Sánchez and Alexandra Molina, reporters of Colombian independent RCN Radio, while they were covering anti-government protests in the capital, Bogota. Security forces impeded journalists from filming the protests and beat them. The incident took place in June. In July, 2021, CubaNet journalist Camila Acosta was arrested following the demonstrations she covered.

Camila was intercepted by agents of the political police shortly after leaving her home when she was preparing to carry out personal meetings. Hours before her arrest, Acosta was covering the protests that took place in the capital against the Miguel Díaz-Canel regime. The journalist's access to the Internet and the WhatsApp messaging app was restricted on July 11.

"If the Cuban regime does not reconsider, or the world forces, the blood will flow, because the Cuban people have shouted out loud that they lost their fear," Camila wrote in her last tweet before being arrested. "It is time to pressure them to leave power. If we give in now, we will have many more years of dictatorship," added the journalist. Women journalists in Colombia also faced legal harassment. One case was recorded in November when President of the Senate Juan Diego Gómez filed a defamation lawsuit against Cuestión Pública's founders Claudia Báez and Diana Salinas. In an investigative report, the journalists had revealed his alleged corruption and links with drug traffickers.

The most recent case in the region occurred in Cuba where two unidentified masked men physically assaulted journalist Mabel Páez at her home. The journalist was beaten by two men who entered her house around 8:30 a.m on December 7 according to the Cuban Institute for Freedom of Expression and Press (ICLEP). The assailants physically attacked the reporter and left severe injuries including a swollen chin, bruises, and scratches on her left eyebrow, mouth, nose, arms, and torso. Two fingers on her right hand were injured during the assault as well.

EUROPE

The year 2021 also proved to be a challenging one for press freedom in Europe. The CFWIJ documented at least 196 cases of violations against women journalists. In several instances the perpetrators were linked to the state and/or benefitted from the culture of immunity that persists around crimes against journalists.

The year saw physical violence against at least 38 women journalists while 46 of them were detained, 20 faced threats to their well-being, and two were subjected to some form of state oppression. 36 women journalists faced legal harassment, five were attacked in the field, five were sexually harassed, and another five women journalists faced verbal harassment. Finally, 20 women journalists were dismissed from their workplace due to abrupt shutdowns of media houses.

Most of these attacks happened in the Eastern part of Europe. Red hot on our risk map for women journalists were Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and the United Kingdom. Since 2021, Belarus has had the highest number of violations against women with at least 48 cases recorded. Russia followed Belarus with 35 cases, Ukraine with 17 cases and the United

Kingdom with 12 cases of threats and attacks against female journalists. France had eight cases while Kosovo, Albania and Italy had five. Bulgaria and Poland have four cases each. Azerbaijan, Greece, Montenegro and Slovenia witnessed three violations while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia had two. Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland reported one case each against women journalists.

Katsyaryna Andrejeva and Darya Chultsova were sentenced to two years imprisonment in a minimum-security penal colony after being arrested while covering a protest rally in 2020. Continuing crackdown against independent news outlets in Belarus sharply escalated in May when police raided the homes of at least 15 journalists, six of whom were women.

Russia followed Belarus with similar actions against women journalists, where 16 were detained due to their journalistic activities, and nine were legally persecuted. The year started with harsh police violence against women journalists when on January 23, Novaya Gazeta's Elizaveta Kirpanova, Al Jazeera's Aleksandra Godfroid and the Echo of Moscow's Daria Belikova were brutally beaten following an uprising in Russia.

Ukraine was another country where women journalists faced significant challenges. Ukraine's largest independent English-language newspaper, Kyiv Post, abruptly suspended operations on November 8 after its owner Adnan Kivan dismissed all staffers in the newsroom. The sudden dismissal came amid an ongoing disagreement between its real-estate tycoon Kivan and the publication's editorial team. More than 50 journalists, including 29 women media workers, employed by the 26-year-old newspaper were fired without notice.

Physical assaults on women journalists in Georgia were a cause of concern in 2021. 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. In July the situation got worse in the country when 54 media workers were physically assaulted by a far-right anti-LGBTQ group in the capital Tbilisi on July 7.

In Northern Ireland, just like 2020, award-winner journalist Patricia Devlin faced death threats. The journalist continued her legal struggle to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to account. On May 10, 2021, she was threatened with sexual violence against her minor son. On April 21, she was targeted on social media after her coverage of the actions of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

In the United Kingdom, mostly journalists were deliberately targeted online and exposed to sexist attacks. An award-winning reporter Marianna Spring, covering disinformation and social media for BBC News, was subjected to incessant online trolling. In March, journalist Natalie Higgins also shared her experience of the vicious online trolling that she has endured since entering journalism. Sonja McLaughlan was the third journalist who was targeted with vile online attacks following her coverage of a rugby match.



Halina Abakunchyk-Belarus-Photo credit Belsat

ASIA

The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented 129 violations against women journalists in Asia, including four murders in Afghanistan. Other violations include 27 organized troll campaigns, 26 legal harassments, 20 detentions, 18 women journalists threatened with violence or intimidation, six women journalists were attacked in the field, six experienced physical assaults, five verbal harassments, three of them experienced state oppression and others were arrested, expelled, deported, etc.

With five out of 12, Afghanistan is the country with the highest number of murdered women journalists during 2021.

Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Roafi, who were employed by Enikass Radio and TV, a news and entertainment platform, became victims to targeted killings on March 2, 2021. Mina Khairi is the fourth woman journalist killed in Afghanistan. Khairi was murdered in Kabul alongside her mother in an IED blast.

With the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, women journalists' lives have been in danger. Being prohibited from work and seeking survival, many have managed to flee but a very long list still plead for help while evading the Taliban's watch. CFWIJ has evacuated 270 journalists, activists, women rights advocates, and others from Afghanistan. However, there are hundreds more urgent cases in grave danger.

The CFWIJ has reported extensively on the threats and violations against women journalists in recent months in Afghanistan. Outside of Afghanistan, organized troll campaigns and legal harassments lead the type of violations list in Asia.

A threatening and hateful video was posted on a YouTube channel on February 11, asking for the hanging of some notable journalists in India. The video 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 in the video were unsubstantiated, yet it was endorsed by many right-wing politicians.

From Pakistan, the CFWIJ has observed a spike in troll campaigns against women journalists who question the state's brutalities and challenge its oppressive narrative. From state-level persecution to organized harassment campaigns, women journalists in Pakistan suffered it all. Difficulties for Tanzila Mazhar didn't ease even in 2021. She continued to face legal harassment despite medical complications.

Maria Ressa- the first Filipino Nobel Prize laureate faced constant legal harassment by the state. On December 9, 2021, Maria arrived in Oslo, Norway to collect the prestigious prize bestowed upon her and Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace."

In Bangladesh, the CFWIJ extensively documented the harrowing experience of journalist, Rozina Islam. Rozina was wrongfully arrested on May 17, 2021, when she was at the ministry of health office, covering an investigative work assignment. Rozina was released after an international outcry but she's been facing legal persecution since then. Her passport and mobile phone remain with the state authorities. Her work accreditation has also been revoked. The CFWIJ launched a joint statement together with 23 international press freedom organizations to push Rozina's case and bring justice to her.

CFWIJ's fellow member and freelance journalist Agnieszka Pikulicka faced various forms of violence by state officials including sexual harassment, threats of violence or intimidation, revoked accreditation, deportation and physical assault.



Rana Ayyub. Photo Credit: Time Magazine

Journalists Saniya Toiken of Radio Free Europe's Radio Azattyk in Kazakhstan faced interference by the police while covering the parliamentary elections on January 10, 2021. She was among those whose phones were confiscated by the police. A police officer took Saniya's phone and deleted some of the videos that she had shot in Nursultan on Election Day.

In October, 2021 HOLA News editor-in-chief Zarina Akhmatova and founders Alisher Kaidarov and Adilet Tursynbek were forced to resign after the website of the independent news network was made widely inaccessible for users. HOLA News was forced to remove its report on the Pandora Papers, implicating former president Nursultan Nazarbayev's believed extra-marital partner Assel Kurmanbayeva as a beneficiary of secretive offshore payments, before its website was restored after 10 days.

AFRICA

Africa is another region that frequently beamed red on our radar in the past year.

Home to 54 countries, the region has a diverse and varied political landscape but safeguarding press freedom and ensuring that the rights of journalists are protected remains a challenge in many. Given escalating insecurity and political instability, many countries struggled to provide a safe and conducive environment for media workers in 2021.

The CFWIJ documented 35 cases of violations against women journalists in the region over the course of the year. Coups in Sudan, Guinea, Chad and Mali were followed by widespread crackdowns on media workers while growing authoritarianism and conflict between armed groups led to increased attacks on journalists in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, South Africa and South Sudan. Women journalists were killed, imprisoned, physically assaulted and subjected to state suppression as well as gendered attacks, among other violations.

At least one female journalist was killed in Cameroon, Algeria and Kenya. Rebecca Jema Iyabo, former divisional delegate for communication in Momo, was killed in a separatist attack in Njikwa, North-West region, in January. The same month saw the brutal murder of Algerian journalist Tin Hinan Lacey, who was reportedly killed by her husband. The region saw yet another killing of a woman journalist as the year drew to a close with the murder of BBC Media Action worker Kate Mitchell in Kenya.

At least 10 women journalists across Africa faced imprisonment and arrests throughout the year. Arrests of journalists ramped up in Algeria and Ethiopia, with the former clamping down on journalists covering anti-government protests in the lead up to parliamentary elections in June, and the latter trying to quash coverage of its ongoing civil war with the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front and allied rebel forces.

Algerian journalist Kenza Khattou was arrested in May along with 15 other media workers covering protests in Algiers. The police resorted to physical violence against the journalists and Kenza, host of political programs on Radio M, bore marks of blows to her body. In custody, she was reportedly forced to put her fingerprints on a statement she could not read after her glasses were broken during the scuffle with the police and she refused to sign it. Some of the journalists were later released.

In Ethiopia, Ahadu Radio and TV reporter Luwam Atikilti was arrested in October at her workplace after the channel aired an interview of an official speaking about TPLF's gains in the ongoing civil war. The next two months saw the arrests of dozens of media workers under the pretext of the state of emergency imposed by the government in light of the conflict. Meaza Mohammed, Roha TV founder and reporter, was arrested by security personnel on December 11. Her home and office were searched and computer equipment was seized. Reportedly, the police initially refused to offer any explanation for the arrest but then claimed they were holding Meaza at Sostenga for being unauthorized by the Ethiopia Media Authority.



Arrest of Kenza Khato, Algeria
© Sami K

Meanwhile, in Ghana, journalist Zoe Abu-Baidoo Addo was tricked into coming to the police station after her colleague Caleb Kudah, who was investigating potential graft in the government's dealings at the time, was arrested and beaten in May. Zoe was detained briefly and her phone was confiscated and the journalists were allegedly assaulted and harassed while in custody. The incident brought widespread condemnation and four of the involved officers were dismissed by the police department. However, one of the sacked officials was appointed in the armed forces the following week.

The region saw an escalation of violations against women journalists and the CFWIJ reported almost twice as many cases in 2021 as documented the year before. Media workers faced threats from non-state actors as well as state-linked suppression. In South Africa, reporters Athi Mtongana and Monique Mortlock were attacked by demonstrators protesting against COVID-19 related restrictions in February. Violent protestors resorted to tearing off the journalists' masks from their faces and hindered their reporting.

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, freelance journalist Lucy Kassa was physically assaulted by three armed men in plain clothes, who broke into her home in February. They pushed her to the ground, threatened her, and took a computer, a USB stick, and some photos connected to her reporting. The perpetrators questioned her loyalty to the state because she worked for "foreign outlets" like Al-Jazeera, and accused her of "spreading lies" and supporting "the Tigray junta."

The same month saw the abduction of Chidiebere Onyia, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Chidiebere was taken at gunpoint while she was returning home from work. She was released days later after pressure surmounted on the police to ensure her return.



COUNTRY FOCUS

“The Coalition For Women In Journalism has been documenting the harassment and intimidation of female journalists around the world which helps highlight the various challenges they face. Networks like CFWIJ, therefore, play an important role in pressuring the authorities to act and protect journalists.”

Ailia Zebra, Journalist, Pakistan

Photo Credit: Mohammad Rakibul Hassan

TURKEY

Turkey has consistently fared poorly on press freedom watchdog indexes in the past decade. In 2021, the CFWIJ found Turkey to be among the most dangerous countries for women journalists. We documented around 238 cases of violations against female media workers based in the country. These included cases of physical assault, obstructions in the field, dismissals, arrests, legal harassment, direct or indirect state oppression and online and offline harassment. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has propagated a hostile attitude towards journalists and the press since he came into power, but matters got significantly worse in 2012, and even more so since 2016 after the attempted coup.

In 2021, threats to journalists continued with state institutions and the law repeatedly weaponized against them. Under Erdoğan's leadership, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has expanded its control over broadcast media and social media besides targeting journalists through refusal of issuing press credentials and persistent legal harassment of journalists through broad terrorism laws and "insulting the president" legislation. Systemic and persistent efforts to muzzle critical press landed Erdoğan a spot on media watchdog Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) list of press freedom predators. Patterns of violence and hostility towards women journalists also landed Turkey the top spot on the CFWIJ's radar for press freedom violations.

At least three women journalists remained incarcerated in Turkish prisons in 2021. Hatice Duman, former owner and news editor of the Turkish socialist weekly *Atılım* [Leap] has been behind bars since 2003, when she was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges including membership in a terrorist organization and spreading terror propaganda. Similarly, Ayşenur Parıldak, a court reporter for the shuttered Turkish daily *Zaman*, has been incarcerated since 2016 on charges of membership in a terrorist organization and is serving a seven years and six months sentence. Her appeal in 2017 against the conviction was denied. Another journalist, Tülay Canbolat, correspondent for *Sabah Ankara*, was arrested in the scope of the Bylock investigation and remains behind bars since January 2020.

Local and international media freedom watchdogs and journalist groups have repeatedly called attention to the pervasive legal harassment of journalists in Turkey under the country's anti-terror laws. But to no avail. The state continues to target and prosecute journalists under terrorism charges in attempts to intimidate and force them into submission. Such trials can go on for years making the process itself punitive, with the defendant's rights violated, arbitrary and pre-trial detentions, endless legal rigamarole becoming commonplace. Journalists taken into custody or put behind bars are frequently mistreated, abused, and even tortured, before the trial begins. We have also observed a practice of prolonged pretrial detentions after which accused journalists are allowed conditional release pending trial.

One such case is of Jinnews reporter Şehriban Abi and freelance journalist Nazan Sala, whose trial began in April 2021. After reporting on military torture of villagers in Van, also known as the 'helicopter drop' case, which resulted in at least one death, the journalists were charged with membership in a terrorist organization along with three others, namely, Zeynep Durgut, Adnan Bilen and Cemil Uğur. Before their trial began, however, Şehriban, Nazan and Mesopotamia Agency reporters Bilen and Uğur were jailed for 175 days. Arrested in October 2020, the journalists faced brutal conditions in prison, including beatings and violation of their basic rights.

In 2021 alone, the CFWIJ closely monitored nearly 100 different trials of women journalists. Most of the defendants stood trial for critical reports published or statements made or shared on social media. According to our findings, women journalists are frequently tried under charges of insulting the president, spreading terror propaganda and/or association with or membership in a terrorist organization. Another charge frequently brought forth against women journalists is "disruption of public duty" or "insulting a public official". The latter two are typically used against journalists covering protests or reporting on scenes of police brutality.



On July 20, 2021, Dokuz8News reporter Fatoş Erdoğan was injured when police resorted to harsh measures, including the use of tear gas and rubber bullets

Police brutality and obstructions in the field presented another challenge to women journalists in the country. Throughout 2021, the CFWIJ documented more than 46 instances of women journalists attacked in the field and at least 36 cases of police overreach, preventing them from doing their jobs. Law enforcement agencies also frequently resorted to physical violence and temporary detentions to prevent media workers from reporting on matters of public interest. In several cases, run-ins with the police were made worse when law enforcers demanded government-sanctioned press accreditation and rejected outlet cards of women journalists. The Presidency's Directorate of Communications, which issues such press cards, has remained notoriously biased against media workers and outlets critical of the president or the AKP government. Scores of journalists associated with pro-Kurdish media or pro-opposition news outlets have had their press accreditation canceled as have journalists who are critical of the government or its beneficiaries.

In 2021, the CFWIJ documented at least two such cases involving women journalists. In April, the General Directorate of Security (EGM) issued a circular to bar journalists, who do not have government-sanctioned press cards, from filming public officials on duty. The move immensely and adversely affected journalists' ability to report on matters of public interest, rendered them toothless in face of police brutality, and was met with extensive backlash. The notification was suspended months later by the Turkish State Council after pressure surmounted.

Throughout the year, which for Turkey was marred with protests, be it against worsening economic conditions or rising cases of femicide, and political unrest, women journalists faced various forms of obstruction in the field. In March, a member of the CFWIJ's team, Ceren İskit, was physically obstructed by the police while monitoring the women's march in Ankara against the Turkish government's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. Ceren was prevented from filming the police's violent pushback against the protesting women.

On July 20, Dokuz8News reporter Fatoş Erdoğan was injured when police resorted to harsh measures, including the use of tear gas and rubber bullets, to disperse a crowd of demonstrators in İstanbul, who had gathered to pay tribute to the victims of the 2015 Suruç bombing. Seven other female media workers, including BirGün Newspaper reporter Meral Danyıldız, Evrensel Newspaper Eylem Nazlıer, Artı Gerçek reporter Yağmur Kaya, Reuters photojournalist Dilara Şenkaya, Kızıl Bayrak reporter Kardelen Yogungan and freelance journalists Sultan Eylem Keleş and Zeynep Kuray, were also injured as the police charged against the demonstrators. Similarly, in August, Euronews Turkish Service reporter Dilek Gül's and Fox News reporter Gülşah İnce were denied access to areas impacted by wildfires across the southern and Aegean regions of the country.



Press organizations and journalists gathered to call the Turkish government to end police violence and intimidating policies against journalists across the country.

Apart from direct and indirect forms of state suppression, women journalists in Turkey encountered several challenges while doing their jobs in 2021. At least eight female media workers were dismissed from their jobs during the year. Journalists employed at Artı TV and media Artı Gerçek faced threats to their jobs following disputes with their Dutch-German parent company over poor working conditions, including non-payment of salaries. Nine journalists, including six women, were forced to resign. Another prominent example was the Cumhuriyet newspaper, where the publisher sacked eight journalists, including five women, without notice and without the editor-in-chief's consent.

Throughout the year women journalists in the country faced hindrances to their work and had to brave violations against them for their reportage. The state's persistent encroachment on the freedom of the press and growing discontent in the country continue to pose challenges for female media workers. The CFWIJ found 2021 to be yet another difficult year for the Turkish media landscape and is extremely concerned over the increasingly restricted space for independent press in the country.

BELARUS

Belarus has frequently shown up on our radar for the challenges it poses to independent media but the clampdown on critical voices has especially intensified since the controversial 2020 general elections. Incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko, dubbed Europe’s “last dictator” was listed as a press predator in 2021 by the RSF for launching an unprecedented level of persecution on journalists and media outlets since his reelection in August 2020. State suppression, in the form of arbitrary detentions, legislation criminalising and obstructing journalistic work, imprisonment, censorship, violence and even torture, to silence critical journalists has become commonplace in the country. According to the CFWIJ’s data, at least 10 women journalists remained incarcerated in Belarusian prisons in 2021. As many as six of them were jailed in 2021 while four were imprisoned the previous year.

The year saw a major crackdown on leading independent news website TuT.BY, with its offices raided and several of its executives charged with tax fraud. The media outlet’s editor-in-chief Marina Zolotova, political and economic editor Volha Loika, and reporter Alena Talkachova were all put behind bars after mass police raids at the homes of TUT.BY employees in May 2021. Journalists’ equipment was seized during the raids and the organization’s web portal and social media accounts were blocked.

Ahead of the raids on TuT.BY offices, one of their staff reporters, Lyubov Kasperovich, was detained and sentenced to 15 days in prison for her coverage of a mass demonstration in the Belarusian capital Minsk. She was taken into custody on May 14 while she was reporting on the trial of 12 students from the Oktyabrsky District Court premises. A day prior, on May 13, freelance photographer Tatsyana Kapitonava was taken into custody while she was covering a conference at the Startup Family coworking center in Minsk. Tatsyana was accused of attending an unauthorized demonstration and handed a 10-day sentence for the same charge.

The same month saw threats to Belsat TV program host Arina Malinovskaya and her family by the Belarusian authorities. Arina, who had left the country amid fears of persecution, was called by an investigator and threatened with the detention of members of her family if she did not return to the country. The authorities warned of taking her elderly grandparents into custody as well.

Another mass police operation followed in July with security forces raiding the offices and homes of critical journalists. The office of US broadcaster Radio Liberty in the capital of Minsk was searched as were the homes of at least 15 journalists, six of whom were women. These included a journalist from the Polish TV channel Belsat and several local reporters.

Speaking to the CFWIJ, deputy chairperson of the Belarusian Journalists Association, Barys Haretski, said that pressures on independent media outlets and journalists have surmounted since the summer of 2020. “This year [2021], we have faced an unprecedented level of repression of journalists. In less than a year we’ve seen over 550 detentions of journalists, more than 70 cases of violence against journalists, and the arrests of [over] 34 media representatives. Half of the journalists in custody are women, some of them report declining health. Many print outlets have been effectively destroyed by the authorities, with more than 50 media websites remaining blocked. The widespread detentions and administrative arrests of 2020 were mainly replaced by arrests on criminal charges, where journalists face up to seven years in prison. This is a major crackdown on independent media and brutal suppression of free speech.”

The CFWIJ has repeatedly called on the Belarusian government and state institutions to end the strangling of critical voices in the media. We call on Lukashenko and the country’s judicial and security forces to safeguard the rights of press freedom, access to information and freedom of speech. Journalists and media houses must be allowed to hold power to account and report on matters of public interest without fear of government retaliation.



RUSSIA

The year 2021 was bleak for press freedom in Russia. The CFWIJ documented more than 35 cases of violations against women journalists in the country during the year. The notorious “foreign agents” legislation, first introduced against media outlets in 2017, was made more sinister in December 2020 with an amendment to include individual journalists and bloggers under its ambit, and media workers continued to feel its stifling impact in 2021. The year saw further amendments to the draconian law under which journalists were bound to declare in any published report whether they, their affiliate media outlet or any person or organization quoted in the article has been listed on the justice ministry’s foreign agents registry. Moreover, the law placed a target on the backs of critics of the military and journalists’ lawyers in 2021. Throughout the year, the Kremlin continued to tighten its grip on independent media as well as exerting pressure on social media operators to regulate content. Violations against women journalists came in the form of weaponization of state offices in attempts to silence critical reporting. Journalists were routinely detained or legally harassed by state authorities for being critical of state policies.

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

Physical assaults and threats to safety against journalists were commonplace in the country as well. A glaring example was the attack in February on Natalya Zubkova, editor in chief for The Novosti Kiselevsk network, who faced horrific threats in Kuzbass city. She was subsequently forced to flee her hometown along with her young daughters and take shelter in an undisclosed location.

The persistent targeting of journalists did not let up in the second half of the year either, and the trend of intimidation by the state continued with worrying consistency. In July, Anna Mongayt, a presenter for Dozhd TV, was threatened online after interviewing a same-sex couple for Elle magazine. The following month, an attempt was made to hack into the phone of Irina Pankratova, a journalist associated with the publication, The Bell. August saw the unjustified deportation orders for BBC correspondent Sarah Rainsford. The relevant authorities refused to renew her work visa, citing the United Kingdom’s failure to grant visas to Russian journalists as reason.

In September, Alesya Marokhovskaya, Polina Uzhvak, and Irina Dolinina were detained by the police in Moscow while picketing outside the Ministry of Justice. The three were protesting the use of the term “foreign agent” for independent journalists. And their fears appeared to be well-founded, for the very next month, Tatyana Voltskaya, Yekaterina Klepikovskaya, Yelizaveta Surnacheva and Yelena Slovyova were branded “foreign media agents” by the ministry.

The Russian authorities’ run-ins with foreign media did not only occur on an official, systemic level. President Vladimir Putin came under fire when he made sexist remarks against CNBC journalist Hadley Gamble during an interview. Putin implied that Hadley was too “pretty” to understand policy changes regarding the recent gas shortage in Europe. When pushed on the question, Putin displayed visible annoyance, adopting a pointedly rude demeanor.

The CFWIJ reasserts its concerns over the hostile attitude that the Russian authorities have adopted against journalism, and especially foreign news media outlets, in recent years. The draconian “foreign agent” legislation was first promulgated in 2012, requiring non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to identify as foreign agents - a term loaded with connotations similar to “spy” or “traitor” and present themselves for audits. Repeated amendments to the law have expanded its reach to include media outlets, journalists, activists and critics of the Kremlin. Despite Russia’s claims that the “foreign agent” law mirrors restrictions imposed in other countries, such as the US, it does not go amiss that the legislation is frequently employed as a cudgel against critical media and other dissenting voices which have little, if any, links to a foreign government. Notable international media outlets, including the RFE/RL’s Russian service and its services in other languages, have also been frequent targets. The CFWIJ has documented several cases of threats and harassment, which saw women media workers being stripped of their rights as journalists. We call on the Russian government to end its crackdown on independent media and uphold press freedom. We demand that state institutions stop harassing reporters and journalist networks striving to ensure freedom of speech and the right to information.



Photo Credit: Oleg Nikishin/Getty Images

AFGHANISTAN

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, women journalists have found themselves navigating a perilous and uncertain landscape. They face threats by the ruling Taliban, restrictive guidelines, unexpected dismissals and a potentially violent political environment threatening their personal and professional lives. Throughout the year, the CFWIJ documented several violations against female media workers at the hands of the state, militants and other non-state actors throughout the year. At least five women journalists were killed while several others were forced to leave the country or the profession. The media workers who remained braved threats prompted by their gender and profession. The numbers tell a sordid story.

Even before the fall of Kabul in August 2021, the country presented a challenging environment for reporters. In the months leading up to the Taliban takeover, many journalists were forced to leave the country, given the growing uncertainty and worsening security situation. Farahnaz Forotan is a political presenter who relocated to France after repeated threats to her safety. Fatemeh Hashim, chief editor of Khaama Press also left the country, stating that Kabul is a city of terror for journalists. Nazifa Mahbobi who worked for Radio Free Europe, was forced to go into hiding after an attack on her home. Photojournalist Mariam Alimi who has been active since 2006, also sought asylum due to the risks she faced in the country.

Those left behind continued to face severe danger and sinister attempts to silence them. Fatima Roshanian, an editor for the feminist magazine Nimorkh Weekly, had to resort to working from her home after militant networks identified her in the country. Roshanian's name appeared on a "kill list" that was circulated on social media, indicating the risks her visibility had brought to her door. Roshanian claims that everyone knows who is behind these threats and the aim is to silence voices of dissent in the country.

Moreover, Afghanistan saw the highest number of female journalists killed in 2021, with at least five documented cases. On March 2, Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat and Shahnaz Roafi, employed at Enikass Radio and TV, a news and entertainment platform, became victims of targeted killings. According to news reports, assailants shot dead Sadia and Shahnaz as they walked to their homes in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province. Later, on the same day, their colleague Mursal Wahidi was also gunned down at a different location on the same day.

Three months later, an IED blast in Pul-e-Sokhta, Kabul, claimed the life of Mina Kheiri, a journalist associated with Ariana Radio and Television. Her mother was also killed in the targeted attack while her sister was reportedly injured. Her employer news channel reported the journalist was out shopping with her family when she was attacked.



Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Roafi, who were employed by Enikass Radio and TV, a news and entertainment platform, became victims to targeted killings on March 2, 2021. Photo Credit: Noorullah Shirzada/Agence France-Presse - via Getty Images

The latter half of the year saw escalating threats to women journalists as one by one Afghan cities fell to the Taliban, and attempts to seek refuge elsewhere intensified. For hundreds of citizens, including journalists and activists, seeking to leave the country on August 26 this meant death. A bomb attack on Kabul airport killed more than 170 evacuees and refugees.

Among the dead was Najma Sadeqi, a young Afghan YouTuber at Afghan Insider channel, who was in her last semester at journalism school. Najma dreamed of a career in media and despite the many threats she had endured in the profession, she hoped to reach somewhere safe to continue practicing journalism. She had hoped to flee the country and find somewhere safe to practice journalism. The young journalist was at the airport trying to secure an evacuation flight when the bomb was detonated. Her sister Freshta shared that Najma had a compilation of threatening texts from the Taliban that she was planning to show Afghan journalists. The blast killed Najma, her brother, and a cousin who had accompanied them to the airport. At least two other journalists were killed in the bombing, including Jihad Hamidi, an AIJA reporter, and Ali Reza Ahmadi, a correspondent for Raha news agency.

In the months that followed, more and more journalists attempted to leave the country or were forced out of the profession. The new regime issued guidelines for journalists and women in the media, further suppressing press freedom. The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice issued directives regarding the presence of women in the media. The Ministry ordered broadcasters to stop airing plays and TV soaps which feature female actors, it also directed them to not platform any media that is against “Islamic values” and women who appeared on television were told to wear the *hijab*. Not only are these directives vague and ambiguous, the definition of *hijab*, for example, remains subjective based on the interpretation of Islam the person in question is following, it is also a direct attempt to erase women from the media space.

The move received severe backlash, in response to which Akif Muhajir, spokesperson for the Ministry, claimed that the directives issued were not rules but religious guidelines. This has done little to placate women journalists and civil activists in the country, who fear that such direct terms of operation by those in power will only empower right-wing elements within society to target and harass women for not abiding by subjective religious codes.

“It is really hard for female journalists,” Zahra Nabi, co-founder of Bano TV told Al-Jazeera, citing a recent example where she had to enter the city of Kunduz as a humanitarian worker and not as a journalist. “I’m not showing myself as a journalist. I had to arrange with local women a safe office space to work in.” Sonia Ahmadyar, another journalist who had to leave her job since the Taliban takeover, claimed these are attempts to “muzzle the media”. The Taliban are bringing forward these measures against women journalists “to not let them be active,” said Sonia.

On September 8, dozens of women gathered in Kabul to protest the all-male interim Taliban cabinet and said they are not accepting a new government with no female minister. Independent journalist, MH, who covered the protest, was beaten by the Taliban forces. The woman journalist, who went to document women demonstrators in Kabul, was forcefully restricted from entering the Dasht-e-Barchi area to film the protest. She was beaten and flogged several times at the beginning of the protest then her camera was pulled from the neck and thrown to the ground. She fainted from the pain afterwards.

Speaking to the CFWIJ after the protest, MH underscored that the situation of Afghan newsrooms and journalists was more precarious than ever under the new regime.

Amid increasing restrictions and limited space to practice journalism, many women media workers continue to seek refuge outside of the country. According to the latest updates, a number of women journalists are stuck at different points, taking shelter in homes, buses, safe houses— wherever they can stay out of danger. Some have toddlers and family to feed, but there is no reprieve from the circumstances they are facing. The escalating security threats have further derailed the already slow process of evacuation.

Despite the chaos, the CFWIJ worked actively in 2021 to assist Afghan women journalists and other vulnerable individuals in finding safe passage outside the country.

CFWIJ evacuated 320 journalists, activists, women rights advocates and others from Afghanistan. However, there are hundreds more urgent cases in grave danger. We are in the process of vetting more than 2,500 applications and are engaged with several host countries, including the US, Canada and Pakistan, in addition to international organizations assisting evacuations. We call on the international community to join efforts and facilitate the safe departure of vulnerable Afghans from the country. At this time, it is critical to support Afghan journalists, particularly women, who are desperately trying to resist escalating threats.

When asked about protests by women across the country, MH told the CFWIJ, “Women are calling on the Taliban to include women in society just like men. You cannot forcefully forget the achievements of women over the past 20 years. The unprecedented mobilization of women shows that no force can squash their rights”.

The CFWIJ calls on the Taliban regime and the international community to ensure protection of independent news organizations and women journalists, who continue to brave dangerous conditions. We must be unified in supporting and ensuring an independent press in the country. The need for robust journalism is more urgent than ever if the new regime is to be held accountable and the rights of women, journalists and other vulnerable groups are to be protected.

CFWIJ has evacuated over 320 journalists, activists, women’s rights advocates, and other women in roles that now put them in immediate danger, from Afghanistan.



UNITED STATES

Still reeling from the dangerous rhetoric propagated by the Trump administration against both journalists and women, the United States witnessed at least 96 cases of violations against women media workers in 2021. The CFWIJ documented 27 cases of sexual harassment of women journalists around the world and of these, 40.7% were from the US. Moreover, we witnessed detentions, expulsions, attacks in the field and cases of online violence against women journalists throughout the year as well as fallout from the Black Lives Matter protests and the 2020 elections.

Patterns of state suppression of journalists and police transgressions against media workers at protests witnessed in 2020 carried on in 2021. According to data collected by the US Press Freedom Tracker, around 142 journalists were assaulted, 57 were arrested or detained and 23 journalists and news organizations were subpoenaed throughout the year. The CFWIJ reported extensively on cases of violence against women journalists, who found themselves in the eyes of the storm especially when covering protests and marches.

In January, Washington Post journalists Zoann Murphy and Whitney Leaming were detained while reporting on the Capitol Hill insurrection. Washington was under curfew at the time but the orders issued by the mayor had exempted essential workers, including media with outlet-issued credentials, from the restrictions imposed amid violent First Amendment protests.

Talia Jane was detained again the following month while following Black Lives Matters protests in Manhattan, New York. She was taken to a police precinct despite showing her press accreditation and stating repeatedly that she is a member of the press. According to the account she shared on Twitter, she was released hours later with a desk appearance ticket (DAT) for unlawful assembly. Reporter Oliya Scootercaster, who was also on ground covering the protests, reported that at least 11 people were arrested that night, including media workers.

April saw the detentions of Minneapolis Star Tribune photojournalist Renée Jones Schneider and her colleague Liz Flores, who were covering protests in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, following the killing of a 20-year-old black man Daunte Wright, by Kimberly Potter, a white police officer. The protest on April 16 reportedly turned violent when, according to the authorities, some protesters attempted to breach the barrier between themselves and the police station.

Throughout the year, women journalists in the US were subjected to deeply gendered attacks both online and offline. At least 10 cases of women media workers being subjected to some form of sexual harassment in the US emerged in 2021. In January, the then general manager of the New York Mets baseball team Jared Porter admitted to sending more than 60 vulgar text messages, including explicit and lewd images, to a female reporter in 2016. The woman, who was a foreigner working in the US, reportedly left her job as a journalist and returned to her native country because of Porter's actions. Porter was later dismissed as the Mets general manager after pressure for his resignation surmounted.

Not only the sports industry but even the White House proved to be unsafe for women journalists. In February, Vanity Fair reported on the sexual misconduct of former White House deputy press secretary TJ Ducklo, who harassed Politico reporter Tara Palmeri, targeting her with derogatory and misogynistic comments, and threatened to "destroy" her. Ducklo's behaviour was reportedly in reaction to Palmeri's pursuit of story about his relationship with another reporter. to pursue a story on his relationship with Axios reporter Alexi McCammond.

Throughout 2021, women journalists in the US faced multiple challenges and threats on the job. They were assaulted, threatened and harassed in the field and for their reportage. On top of that, journalists worked through the raging pandemic with the constant fear of losing their jobs as news organizations resorted to massive layoffs citing budgetary concerns. Prominent among them was Huffington Post, which dismissed 47 staffers just in a month into its acquisition by BuzzFeed. At least 31 of the dismissed layoffs were women journalists. The massive layoffs and in some cases, even closures of publications, brought to the fore the problems that arise when capitalist interests supersede robust journalism. Misogynistic and hostile attitudes towards women journalists, compounded with the fallout of Covid-19 and political unrest, led to the US falling on the CFWIJ's press freedom rankings.



NPR Newsroom. Photo Credit: NPR



Journalist Jen Osborne was one of the many journalists who revealed the repression of the free press at the Fairy Creek on May 17. Photo credit: Mike Graeme.

Shortly afterwards, Saba Eitizaz approached our organization to report the multiple vile messages she was sent. From thereon, it appeared a floodgate had opened on Twitter, with several Canadian journalists coming forward with screenshots of the extremely vile, gendered and racist hate mail they were sent. The targeted journalists included Ashleigh-Rae Thomas, Shireen Ahmed and Angela Sterritt, among others.

Another major issue that came to the fore in Canada was that of police overreaches against women journalists and the impunity with which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has been allowed to operate. This was especially apparent when it came to the police's approach towards matters concerning land rights of Indigenous peoples, and coverage of such conflicts. The recent crackdown on the press and protesters at Gidimt'en camp in Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia stand as a prominent example.

At the center of the conflict is a multi-billion dollar natural gas project — touted as the largest private sector investment in Canadian history — and an assertion by Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs that no pipelines can be built through their traditional territory without their consent. The resulting conflict has led to unjustified arrests and police violence in the area for several months now.

The CFWIJ has routinely reported on disturbances related to the protests by Indigenous land defenders in the Wet'suwet'en territory as well as at Fairy Creek. However, overtime it has become abundantly apparent that the Canadian police act with an air of impunity against citizens in the area as well as the civil rights afforded to them. They have also repeatedly encroached on the freedom of the press and the citizens' right to information.

The first violation in the now escalating trend by the RCMP that we recorded dates back to February 2020, when Melissa Cox, an American journalist and documentary filmmaker, was arrested while documenting a protest by Indigenous people in Gitksan territory in New Hazelton. She was conditionally released after seven hours of detention.

CANADA

In 2021, CFWIJ recorded 38 cases of violations against women journalists in Canada. The violence was experienced physically as well as digitally by journalists active in the region, coming mainly in the forms of organized trolling campaigns instigated by right wing groups as well as institutional overreach by law enforcement agencies.

In September, more than 20 women journalists of color were targeted by a vicious online campaign, which entailed hateful, vile, racially charged and deeply gendered abuse sent via email. The CFWIJ reported extensively on the issue at the time. We were alerted to the campaign after Christy Somos, who was specifically mentioned in Bernier's tweet, came forward.

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At least 25 women journalists were targeted with organized troll campaigns.

The violations only continued to accelerate from that point onwards. A year later in February 2021, the RCMP harassed and attempted to intimidate journalist Brandi Morin when she visited the Unist'ot'en Healing Camp. In response to the subsequent lawsuit filed by Brandi against the restriction of press, the RCMP submitted an affidavit, accusing her of lying about being prohibited from visiting the site despite there being video proof to the contrary.

As protests in different areas regained momentum, so did the RCMP's bullying tactics against journalists covering the conflicts between Indigenous land defenders and the Canadian authorities. On May 17, the RCMP temporarily restricted press access to the headwaters of Fairy Creek, and sent concerned journalists on a wild goose chase under pretenses of bureaucratic formalities.

On May 19, Jen Osborne returned to the blockade, and the environment became increasingly contentious. The RCMP largely kept most of the journalists at a distance. Jen disclosed that they were held back too far away to capture any decent footage or photographs. When asked to comment about the situation, Jen said, "Media should expose corruption. It should not be a tool to be used by the corrupt. Although officers made an attempt to allow press access to the arrest events of May 19th, they did not work hard enough to accommodate our needs to report freely and fairly".

According to Jen, the RCMP made two forceful arrests on the morning of May 20, before the press arrived at the scene. Two hours later, the authorities extended a media invite as a feeble attempt at transparency. Jen believed this was a tactic used by the RCMP to control the narrative. "The RCMP is only allowing media access when the situation is stable and when our reporting can provide positive PR for their organization."

On June 15, Jen again faced similar restrictions. She was prevented from covering the events at Fairy Creek. In a tweet, she said that she was denied access to ensure that instances of police brutality against protestors are not reported.

On November 19, Amber Bracken became the latest victim of RCMP's transgressions against journalists covering the police's conduct toward indigenous people and protesters. Speaking to CFWIJ, her lawyer confirmed that 14 people, including Amber and fellow journalist Michael Toledano, were arrested from the site. Both Amber and Toledano were charged with breaching the Coastal Gaslink injunction. They were later released subject to conditions.

The risks faced by women journalists by Canada remained a source of great concern to our organization over the past year. It became abundantly clear that the news media industry in the country needs to find a way to protect journalists digitally, and tech giants need to take responsibility for the kind of political vitriol their platforms are enabling. Canadian authorities should also pay attention to the systemic violence they are enabling on ground by not reigning in the police authorities. They need to hold those running RCMP operations to account, for the police system cannot be allowed to run amok to protect corporate interests over environmental and civil rights.



Amber Bracken.
Photo Credit: Amanda Follett Hosgood



CONCLUSION

2021 witnessed a worrying spike in violence against women journalists. Compared to 2020, the number of violations have gone up by a worrying 115% this year. Extremely concerning global developments that have made women journalists more vulnerable than ever before. The Taliban takeover of Kabul, the persistent legal harassment of journalists in Turkey and the rise of right wing populism in India, all indicate a worrying trend in international politics.

However, situations do not always have to be raised to a catastrophic level for international attention. Regions like Pakistan, Belarus, and Canada are reminders of the everyday challenges women journalists encounter in the professional field. Instances of physical violence manifesting into digital hostility makes it clear that states around the world are looking to gain greater control of all platforms available to journalists and civil societies to hold them accountable. This is a trend that needs to be immediately halted in order to protect democratic values around the world.

However, despite the immense challenges we face in the current moment, it cannot be forgotten that several women journalists have embodied feminist politics and continued to struggle for a more just and equal global community. The Coalition For Women In Journalism joins these journalists with pride. The dangers we face today can only be countered with a flourishing press, and the Coalition, alongside the women mentioned in our report, is determined to strive for it.

People in Valletta, Malta, light up their cellphones during a demonstration on Dec. 8 to demand justice in the 2017 killing of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. (Darrin Zammit Lupi/Reuters)