

Press Freedom Status For Women Journalists

Most Dangerous Month for Women & LGBTQI Journalists in 2023

July 2023

The Coalition For
Women In Journalism



Objective of report

Every day, worldwide, women journalists face severe threats to their safety. These threats exist online and offline, from misinformation and discrediting campaigns rooted in misogyny and sexism to more serious problems such as harassment from the state. The problems women journalists contend with are not broadly recognized. Newsrooms are often tight-lipped about them; governments take little action to counter violations against women journalists.

CFWIJ's monthly reports are drawn from our daily and feature research that offers a landscape view of what press freedom looks like from a gender angle. Each morning CFWIJ team register new violations against them, marshaling ever more evidence of the severity of the threats they face and the urgent need to raise awareness about these issues. Many of these cases are documented internally by The Coalition, to maintain anonymity and ensure the safety of targeted journalists. Our work shows the incredible courage and conviction women journalists work with in spite of the hurdles they face. Our job is to ensure their circumstances are made visible so accurate resources can be directed for their safety and growth.

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***July Most Dangerous Month for Women & LGBTQI Journalists in 2023:
62 Threats, Attacks, And Harms Done***

July saw the most press freedom violations against women and LGBTQI journalists in 2023.

In the US, Texas A&M watered down their offer to esteemed journalist Kathleen McElroy to lead their journalism program after racist complaints. In Russia, renowned journalist Elena Milashina was brutally attacked by a masked group in Chechnya who broke her fingers, shaved her head, and threatened her at gunpoint. María Luisa Estrada Hernández and her daughter narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in Mexico.

CFWIJ documented a concerning increase in physical assaults against women journalists on the African continent. Political party supporters stoned Élysée Odia in Congo, attacked Nowamani Ainembabazi – injuring her jaw irreparably – in Uganda, and assaulted Annahstacia Ndlovu in Zimbabwe. Police in Kenya teargassed Halima Mohamed and Elizabeth Mutinda.

Turkey yet again ranked number 1 in most violations against women and LGBTQI journalists. CFWIJ documented a continuation of systematically targeting Kurdish women journalists for doing their jobs. Police violence against women journalists covering news on the ground also remained widespread.



Assassination Attempt on One Woman Journalist

Mexico: On July 15, journalist **María Luisa Estrada Hernández** and her daughter narrowly escaped a targeted shooting attack in Guadalajara. The attack was believed to be a warning message to take down her independent media outlet, La Grillotina Política. Despite reporting over 200 threats against her life, the Attorney General's Office dismissed Estrada's protection requests.

2 Women Journalists Abducted

Nigeria: Radio Rivers news director **Priest Nwokocho** was kidnapped by an armed group in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, on July 21. She was abducted at gunpoint in front of her husband. Her family was ordered to pay a ransom for her release. After a week, she was freed and returned home.

Haiti: Radio presenter **Blondine Tanis** was abducted returning to her home in Port-au-Prince on July 21. She was held captive for nine days before being released after a ransom was paid. The incident deeply traumatized the Radio Rénovation host. Tanis is the sixth journalist to be abducted in Haiti this year.



Assassination
Attempt on One
Woman Journalist &
2 Women Journalists
Abducted

3 Women Journalists Arrested

India: On July 4, **Teesta Setalvad**, a prominent human rights defender and journalist, was arrested in Ahmedabad for seeking accountability for the 2002 mob violence in Gujarat. Teesta, along with two former police officers, has been accused of criminal conspiracy and forgery.

Iran: Following a summons to the Evin Prosecutor's Office in Tehran, authorities detained Kurdish journalist Nazila Maroofian on July 8. The journalist was initially arrested in October 2022 and has since experienced a barrage of legal harassment and mental and physical assault at the hands of the authorities.

Tunisia: On July 23 in Kelibia, police arrested journalist **Chadha Hadj Mbarek** for a second time regarding her role at a digital content company. She is potentially facing capital punishment under Tunisian law.

2 Women Journalists Imprisoned

Iran: On July 31, a Tehran court sentenced journalists **Saeedeh Shafiei** and **Nasim Sultan Beygi** to four years and three months in prison for "assembly and collusion" and "propaganda activity against the regime." They are among 31 women journalists and media workers incarcerated in the country.

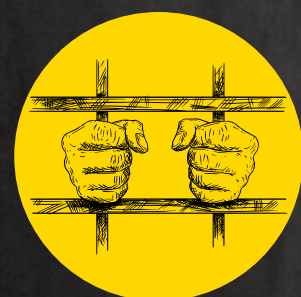


3 women
journalists arrested
& 2 imprisoned

Spain: On July 2, in a landmark case in Huelva, an **unnamed woman journalist** was sentenced to two years for publishing information from a leaked judicial report on a murder investigation. As the sentence is just under two years, the journalist will serve a suspended sentence under the criminal code as it was her first criminal offense. The journalist, who worked for Huelva Información, must also pay a fine and compensation to the victim's parents. This is the first time a journalist has received a jail sentence for revealing such details in Spanish history.

Lebanon: On July 10 in Beirut, journalist **Dima Sadek** was sentenced to one year in prison and fined for a social media post in a slander case brought against her by the Free Patriotic Movement. Sadek's sentence is not suspended, meaning she could be imprisoned at any time if she doesn't appeal. The journalist plans to appeal the verdict.

Iran: On July 10, **Sepideh Qolian**, activist and journalist, had her two-year prison sentence upheld by the court of appeals in Tehran. The charges against her include "insulting the supreme leader." In addition, Qolian faces a two-year ban on using smartphones, living in Tehran or neighboring provinces, and participating in social or political groups.



3 Women Journalists Sentenced to Prison

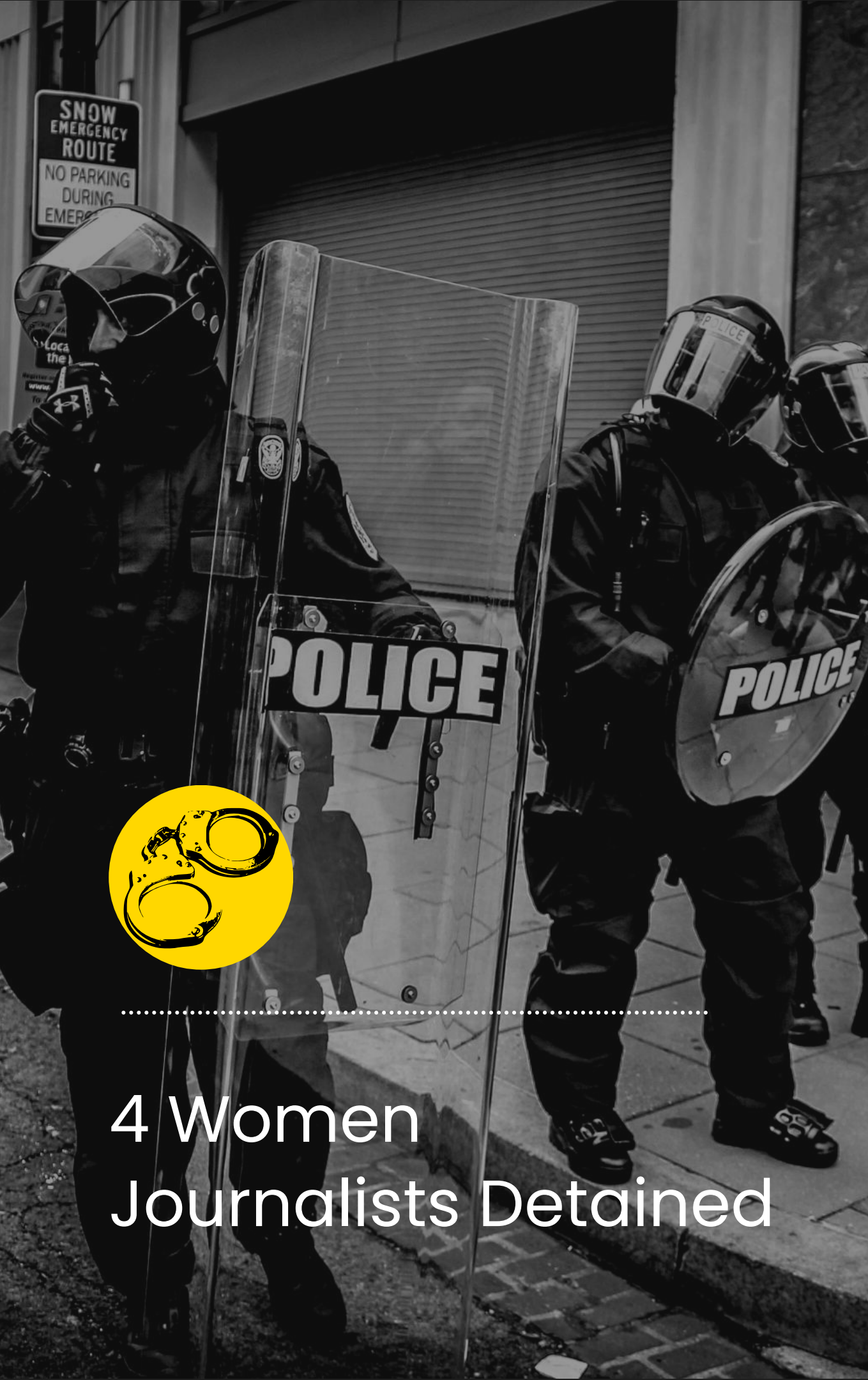


Türkiye: On July 25, three women journalists, **Sibel Yüklér**, **Evrım Deniz**, and **Evrım Kepenek**, were detained for retweeting news about the reassignment of a prosecutor and his wife. They are facing charges of "targeting a public official." The journalists were released under "judicial control" on July 26. This incident adds to the ongoing harassment of journalists by Turkish authorities.

Ukraine: **Lutfiye Zudiyeva**, a journalist from the media outlet Graty, was detained by Russian security forces while reporting on an appeal hearing in occupied Crimea on July 27. Zudiyeva and 12 other activists and journalists were detained after being denied entry to the courthouse in Simferopol. She was fined and released after being accused of participating in a mass gathering "with the purpose of subsequently giving information to the media."



4 Women
Journalists Detained



Russia: On July 4, journalist **Elena Milashina** and lawyer Alexander Nemov were brutally attacked by a masked group in Chechnya. Armed attackers broke her fingers, shaved her head, and threatened her at gunpoint. Milashina and Nemov were traveling to Chechnya to attend a trial of human rights activists. Attackers are believed to have targeted them specifically due to their involvement in covering such cases.

Zimbabwe: VOA journalist **Annahstacia Ndlovu** was attacked by supporters of the ruling party, Zanu PF, as she documented street skirmishes leading up to the presidential elections in Bulawayo on July 17.

Attackers shoved her against a truck and forced her to delete footage from her phone,

Ukraine: **Yuliya Kiriienko**, a correspondent for TSN, sustained a mild concussion while reporting on the frontlines in Ukraine's Donetsk region. She was covering the Russian offensive on Kupyansk and Lyman on July 19 when shelling by a Russian tank injured her.

Uganda: On July 20, during a press conference held by Uganda's largest opposition party, FDC, in Kampala, several journalists were assaulted by party supporters. **Nowamani Ainembabazi**, a journalism student interning with New Vision, was injured in the attack and was hospitalized for mouth injuries.

Pakistan: On July 1, online harassment of ARY News reporter **Sahrish Khokher** escalated to physical assault. Nine individuals in Rohri surrounded and threatened Khokher, demanding she remove her Facebook post about a police investigation into two journalists.



12 Women Journalists Physically Assaulted

Kenya: Journalists **Halima Mohamed** and **Elizabeth Mutinda** were tear-gassed by police while covering anti-government protests in Mombasa on July 12. The incident highlights the ongoing mistreatment of journalists in the country, with previous protests in March also resulting in assaults on reporters.

Türkiye: On July 15, two women journalists were beaten and dragged by police in Istanbul while covering the Saturday Mothers protests. Reporter **Dilan Şimşek** was assaulted and forcibly dragged through the streets, while **Fatoş Erdoğan** was pushed to the ground. The journalists were obstructed from documenting the clashes between protestors and police at the protest.

Maldives: On July 20, Sangu News reporter **Maathu Hussain** was pushed to the ground by a police officer while covering protests in Malé. The incident was captured on video and sparked outrage from local media and press freedom organizations. The police commissioner has ordered an investigation and suspended the responsible officer.

Bolivia: Journalist Daniela Valdez of Radio Cepra was brutally attacked, robbed, and strangled by a violent mob while covering a protest in Sucre on July 24. Valdez, who was covering a demonstration against the paving of a street, was targeted by the crowd despite displaying press credentials and pleading for respect. She suffered injuries including facial swelling, abdominal pain, and neck injuries, forcing her to stop working.

Democratic Republic of Congo: On July 29, journalist **Élysée Odia** and four other journalists were attacked and stoned by ruling party supporters while covering a political rally in Kananga. This is the latest in a series of incidents targeting journalists in the lead-up to the December presidential election.



12 women journalists
physically assaulted

Argentina: During a court hearing in San Luis on July 7, journalist **Mercedes Romero** was intimidated by defendant Marco Lino Rafaelli, who is accused in a brutal assault case. Rafaelli threatened Romero with personal information about her private life and home details.

Croatia: On July 15, **Nikolina Martinović**, editor-in-chief of 035portal, received threats after refusing to remove a report from the news outlet. The man contacted the newsroom in Slavonski Brod, prompting the outlet to report the incident to the police.

Albania: During a live broadcast in Rrogozhina on July 15, journalist **Marsi Korreshi** and her Syri TV crew were harassed by relatives of the town's mayor, who is running for reelection. They were surrounded and threatened by multiple individuals, with footage showing two men disputing their reporting and grabbing a crew member's arm.

On July 14, investigative reporter **Ola Xama** was verbally assaulted by Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj after exposing his involvement in a waste concession in Tirana. The mayor called Xama a "contracted killer." Pro-government media outlets echoed the mayor's language, further intimidating the journalist.

Ecuador: On July 25, La Posta reporter **Mónica Velásquez** fled Ecuador after receiving death threats and avoiding potential assassination attempts. The threats came after Velásquez exposed corruption involving President Guillermo Lasso's brother-in-law and public officials.

Niger: On July 30, TV5 Monde reporter **Anne-Fleur Lespiaut** was threatened at a pro-junta rally in Niamey. Anti-Western sentiment has risen in Niger following the recent coup, with protesters expressing hostility towards French journalists.

North Macedonia: Journalist **Rita Behadini** faced online threats after criticizing sexist remarks made by a religious leader on July 27. The reporter received threats of violence targeting herself, her co-workers, and her family members.



7 Women Journalists Threatened or Intimidated



Russia: On July 24, exiled Russian journalist **Marfa Smirnova** revealed that an unknown individual threatened her and her family. Over Telegram, she was sent an audio recording from inside her family's home in Moscow, along with photographs of family members. Smirnova's family is considering temporarily relocating due to the escalating threats.



A Woman Journalist's Family Threatened

Finland: On July 2, Finnish journalist **Ida Erämaa** was targeted with online harassment and rape threats following a smear campaign by right-wing politicians. The campaign aimed to discredit Erämaa after she criticized the politicians' attempts to curtail reporting on their extreme right connections.

Italy: On July 7, following **Linda Di Benedetto**'s interview with a cardiologist, anti-vax commenters attacked her with sexist comments and shared her personal Facebook photos to discredit her.

Serbia: On July 10, a member of the main board of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) published an Instagram video targeting reporters and anchors from N1, Nova S, and Nova daily newspaper, including **Žaklina Tatalović** and **Vanja Đurić**. The video alleges the journalists' objective is to "destroy Serbian culture and Orthodoxy in Serbia." It includes photographs of present and former journalists alongside certain opposition politicians, branding them as "the dark world of the N1 and Nova media".

Armenia: Journalists **Ani Gevorgyan** and **Hripsime Jebejyan** faced coordinated threats and harassment after questioning the Armenian Prime Minister at a press conference on July 25. Pro-government activists and media outlets were identified as the perpetrators of the online attacks, which included insults and threats toward the journalists and their families.



6 Women Journalists Targeting in Online Smear Campaigns

Italy: Former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi filed criminal and civil lawsuits against journalist **Bianca Berlinguer** following her claims that he pressured journalists to target political rivals with negative press. Renzi, now the leader of the Italia Viva party, alleges that Berlinguer made defamatory statements about him during an interview published on July 6.

Bangladesh: On July 10, a religious group in Dhaka filed a lawsuit against journalist **Adhora Yeasmein** after she exposed its criminal activities. Yeasmein is being charged under the Digital Security Act, a controversial law often used to harass and imprison journalists.

Israel: On July 11, an Israeli court convicted Lama Ghosheh, a prominent journalist from annexed East Jerusalem, to a community service requirement, a three-year suspended sentence, and imposed a fine. The suspended sentence means that Ghosheh, who has been under house arrest since September 2022, could face arrest again if she commits any violations during that period.

Türkiye: On July 25, **Seyhan Avşar**, a journalist for Halk TV, revealed that the Ministry of Family is investigating her following her exposé on child abuse in state care homes. Avşar reported on mistreatment, violence, drug use, and pregnancies and abortions among children under state protection.

On July 27, an Istanbul court accepted an indictment against Bianet journalist **Ayça Söylemez**. She is facing prosecution and a potential three-year prison sentence for an article she wrote about a former judge who is now the deputy justice minister. The charges against Söylemez were filed following a complaint by the former judge, known for controversial rulings against journalists and politicians.

Portugal: On July 10, a police union took legal action against public broadcaster RTP and illustrator **Cristina Sampaio**. They allege that Sampaio's satirical cartoon on RTP's program Spam Cartoon on 7 July contained false information that could damage the credibility and trustworthiness of police.



6 Women Journalists Legally Harassed

2 Women Journalists' Property Attacked

Bosnia and Herzegovina: On July 14, the home of investigative journalists **Žana Karić-Gauk** and Eldin Karić in Sarajevo was broken into, with their work laptops stolen. The journalists work for Žurnal, an outlet that has been targeted for exposing corruption.

Israel: During demonstrations in Tel Aviv on July 23 against proposed judicial reforms, protestors blocked the car of Channel 13's **Noga Nir Neeman** and banged on the vehicle while she was reporting.

2 Women Journalists Faced Discrimination in the Workplace

United Kingdom: Saima Mohsin, British news presenter, and international correspondent, announced she is suing CNN in the UK for mistreatment, racial discrimination, and unfair dismissal after a severe injury on the job. On July 10, Mohsin began proceedings at the UK Employment Tribunal to determine whether her case could be heard in the UK.

United States: On July 19, Texas A&M University backtracked on appointing former New York Times editor **Dr. Kathleen McElroy** to lead its journalism program. After facing political pushback, the university changed its offer from a five-year tenure-track position to a one-year, at-will contract. Dr. McElroy, who initially felt excited about the opportunity, declined the position following complaints about her focus on gender and diversity. Texas A&M President Kathy Banks resigned after the controversy, and the university offered Dr. McElroy a \$1M settlement after an investigation.



2 Women Journalists'
Property Attacked & 2
Faced Discrimination
in the Workplace

6 Women Journalists Subjected to Verbal Assault

Afghanistan: On July 31, the offices of **Hamisha Bahar** were raided by Taliban officers while a three-month introductory journalism training workshop was in progress. The officers rudely disrupted the training session, which was being attended by 16 journalists, including six women. The women journalists were specifically subjected to verbal harassment, with the officers making derogatory remarks by comparing the training to prostitution. As a result the outlet was forced to shut its operations.

A Woman Journalist Unfairly Dismissed From Workplace

Türkiye: On July 20, TRT, a Turkish public broadcaster, denied journalist **Elif Akkuş** access to their building even after her three-month suspension expired. Akkuş, a veteran war correspondent with 25 years of experience at TRT, has not been provided with an explanation for her suspension or the denial of entry. Her lawyer plans to sue TRT in response.



6 Women Journalists
Subjected to Verbal
Assault & One
Unfairly Dismissed
From Workplace

2 Women Journalists Arbitrarily Denied Access

Serbia: During an EU event on July 27 featuring Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, several reporters, including **Žana Bulajić**, were locked in a room, preventing them from asking questions or interacting with officials. This incident and others highlight the worsening situation for press freedom in Serbia.

Türkiye: Renowned photojournalist **Zeynep Kuray** was fined and obstructed from covering an environmental protest in Türkiye's Mugla Province on July 27. Kuray was among several local people, activists, and journalists forcibly removed from the area.

A Woman Journalists' Accreditation Revoked

Czechia: On July 6, exiled Russian journalist **Farida Kurbangaleeva** was forcibly removed from the premises of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's press conference in Prague after her accreditation was revoked without explanation.

A Woman Journalists' Book Dropped by Publisher

Colombia: On July 4, journalist **Laura Ardila Arrieta**'s investigative book on an influential political family in Colombia was pulled by the publisher, Editorial Planeta, just days before its release due to fears of potential lawsuits.



2 Women Journalists
Arbitrarily Denied
Access & One's
Accreditation Revoked
& One's Book Dropped
by Publisher

PRESS



4 Women Journalists Are Released

The Coalition For
Women In Journalism



Türkiye: On July 12, fifteen Kurdish journalists, including **Neşe Toprak**, **Elif Üngür**, **Safiye Alagaş**, and **Remziye Temel**, were released pending trial after being detained for 13 months. They were charged with terrorism-related crimes for reporting the news. The Coalition For Women In Journalism welcomes their release but expresses concern over the ongoing harassment of Kurdish journalists in the country. The journalists were released under judicial control measures with a travel ban imposed. The next hearing is scheduled for November 9, 2023.



Spain: On July 19, journalist **Olivia García** finally saw justice after six years of fighting against her online stalker. The court in Logroño sentenced the unnamed man to one year in prison and a 10,000 euro fine for harassment and insults against García and a sexology psychologist. The stalker began targeting García after she expressed support for the LGBTQI community.

Ukraine: On July 12, an ex-special forces police officer in Ukraine was sentenced to five years for attacking journalist **Maria Lebedeva** during the Maidan protests in 2013. The court found Ruslan Marchuk guilty of using excessive force against Lebedeva, who was filming the police crackdown on the protests.



Court Wins For 2 Women Journalists



**CFWIJ is working hard to change these
circumstances everyday.**
Join us in this mission



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