Press Freedom Status For Women Journalists

From Georgia to Sudan: April 2024 Highlights Escalating Threats to Women Journalists
Objective of report

Every day worldwide, women and LGBTQI 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.

Women Press Freedom’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, the newsroom registers 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 Women Press Freedom 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.

Women Press Freedom is an initiative by the Coalition For Women In Journalism.

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Our documentation for April 2024 reveals journalists face relentless legal and physical threats merely for performing their duties. This month alone, we recorded close to 70 violations, including imprisonment, arrests, detentions, deportations, physical assaults, legal harassment, denied access, threats and intimidations, online harassment, discredits, job losses, and even the closure of a media outlet.

In Georgia, daily protests erupted in response to the controversial foreign agent law, marking a critical juncture for press freedom. We documented how women-led newsrooms were among those denied access at the onset of the bill’s discussion in parliament, illustrating the targeted restrictions. The foreign agent law itself poses a significant threat to press freedom, aiming to label and stigmatize media outlets that receive foreign funding. As the situation unfolds, we will continue to monitor developments closely, advocating for the rights of journalists to operate freely and without fear of retribution in Georgia.

Our prediction that deepfakes would emerge as a significant threat to women journalists is, unfortunately, becoming a reality. We are documenting an increase in the targeting of women journalists with AI-generated images and videos, which subject them to severe harassment and discreditation. In April alone, we recorded two such cases in Europe. These falsified and damaging contents are disproportionately aimed at women, undermining their credibility and safety, and highlighting the urgent need for effective countermeasures.

Detentions of women journalists who are mothers have far-reaching consequences. In April, the ongoing detention of Palestinian journalist Rula Hassanein in Israel, which has left her prematurely born, exclusively breastfed daughter, Elia, struggling without her mother’s care, underscores the profound impact.
In Turkey, **Kurdish women journalists continue to face severe repression**, particularly in the aftermath of local elections. The Turkish authorities have intensified their crackdown on Kurdish media, leading to numerous detentions and arrests. This month alone, 23 violations were recorded, with Kurdish women journalists disproportionately affected. These journalists are frequently targeted with charges such as “membership in a terrorist organization,” aimed at stifling their voices and disrupting their work. Women Press Freedom has been diligently documenting these violations, highlighting the persistent and targeted persecution of Kurdish women journalists.

War has exacerbated the dangers faced by those reporting. Women journalists in Sudan face a **gendered aspect of threats, including sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and targeted intimidation aimed at silencing their voices**. These threats are often more severe and personal, leveraging societal norms and stigmas to further intimidate and marginalize women in the media.

The **recent layoffs** at openDemocracy in the U.K. are alarming, given the organization’s commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion within the media landscape. As a newsroom known for its progressive stance and dedication to amplifying marginalized voices, the reduction in staff poses a significant threat to the breadth and depth of its coverage. Layoffs of talented journalists, especially women and those from underrepresented communities, undermine the core mission of promoting diverse perspectives and challenging dominant narratives.
April 2024 saw significant challenges for women student journalists in the US. During student protests at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt campus, and Columbia University, women journalists like KRCR reporter Adelmi Ruiz and Columbia Journalism student Iryna Humenyuk faced detentions and restricted access. As external press access was restricted, Humenyuk, alongside other student journalists, remained the sole media representatives on campus.

In April we have further raised the alarm over the arrest of Savanna Craig at a pro-Palestine sit-in in Canada, calling for the police to drop the charges against her. Craig is the second journalist arrested in Canada in 2024: Brandi Morin was arrested in January for covering an indigenous encampment. Our advocacy has intensified pressure on authorities to act, highlighting the baseless nature of the accusations. Our increased scrutiny has brought international attention to Craig’s situation, amplifying calls for justice and accountability.

Inge Snip
Senior Editor, Women Press Freedom

Photo Credit: Alex Kent / Getty Images
Top Press Freedom Violators in April 2024

- Venezuela: 7
- Turkey: 23
- Russia: 7
- United States: 5
- Colombia: 4
- Iran: 3
Top Press Freedom Violations in April 2024

- Detentions
- Legal Harassment
- Physical Assault
A journalist imprisoned

Iran
On April 28, journalist Parisa Salehi was detained and promptly relocated to Karaj's Kaju'i prison to begin serving a 5-month prison sentence. In February, Salehi was initially handed a one-year prison term that was reduced on appeal. She was convicted for making "propaganda against the Islamic Republic."
5 journalists arrested

Canada
CUTV journalist Savanna Craig was covering a sit-in by pro-Palestinian activists at Scotiabank in downtown Montreal when police arrested her on April 15. Officers booked Craig alongside activists involved in the demonstration, which was part of a global economic blockade protest in support of the Palestinian people regarding the ongoing war in Gaza.

Burundi
On April 18, journalist Sandra Muhoza was arrested in Bujumbura following comments she allegedly made in a private WhatsApp group. She has been formally charged with “endangering internal security,” an offense that could carry a sentence of life imprisonment. She was detained by the National Intelligence Service last weekend and transferred to the Mpimba prison, notorious for its harsh conditions.
5 journalists arrested

Iran
Atena Faraghdani, an Iranian cartoonist, was violently arrested yet on April 14. Security forces apprehended Faraghdani in Tehran while she was attempting to display her cartoons in public. During the arrest, she sustained repeated blows to the head, leading to a nosebleed. She lost consciousness and later found herself detained.

On April 28, Dina Qalibaf, a journalist and student of Tehran’s Beheshti University was re-arrested after posting on X about her previous arrest and alleged sexual assault in a metro station by morality police. and sexual assault was arrested.

Turkiye
On April 26, Esra Solin Dal, a reporter for Mezopotamya Agency, was arrested and placed in pre-trial detention. The day prior, police conducted raids on her residence as well as the homes of six other journalists associated with Kurdish media outlets. Esra Solin Dal, along with two other journalists, is facing charges of “membership in a terrorist organization.”
15 journalists were detained

United States
In the early hours of April 30, KRCR reporter Adelmi Ruiz was detained alongside three other journalists while covering student protests at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt campus. She was taken to Humboldt County Jail and later released without charge after the Humboldt County Sheriff intervened.

On April 30, 2024, during a police operation to clear a building occupied by pro-Palestinian protesters, Iryna Humenyuk, a student at Columbia Journalism School, was forcibly detained inside a campus building by the New York City police. With external press access restricted, student journalists like Humenyuk were the sole media representatives present on campus.

Russian-Occupied Ukraine
At a Council of Europe conference in Kyiv on April 9, Svitlana Zalizetska, editor-in-chief of RIA South (RIA Melitopol), revealed troubling news about journalist Anastasia Glukhovska. Glukhovska, along with six administrators of Telegram channels RIA Melitopol and Melitopol in Ukraine, was kidnapped on August 20, 2023, by Russian forces in occupied Ukrainian territories.

Venezuela
Nicole Gómez Cubillán, a correspondent for El Medio, was detained by the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) on April 21 while covering the National Popular Consultation, a nationwide referendum, in Lechería.

Cuba:
Independent journalist Camila Acosta was detained by State Security while on her way to meet with families of political prisoners in Cárdenas, Matanzas province, on April 21.
15 journalists were detained

Turkiye
Following local elections, protests swept through Turkish cities following the initial decision by electoral authorities to block a pro-Kurdish mayor-elect in Van. Multiple journalists reporting on the protests were detained. In Van on April 3, police beat and detained Medine Mamedoğlu. Before facing police aggression, the journalist was attacked and harassed online after reporting on human rights abuses during protests. She was later released.

While reporting protests in Esenyurt, Istanbul, on April 3, Yeni Yaşam journalist Sema Korkmaz and was violently detained by police. Artı Gerçek’s Müzeyyen Yüce and PİRHA reporter Dilan Şimşek were also detained.

On April 4, 2024, a group of women and members of the LGBTQI community were demonstrating in front of the Süreyya Opera in Kadıköy, Istanbul when police intervened and detained at least 35 people, including Siyasi Haber journalists Zilan Azad and Yeşim Dokur. They were taken into custody for allegedly breaching the law on meetings and were released after giving statements to police.

On April 23 nine journalists from Kurdish media organizations were detained in coordinated operations carried out in Istanbul, Ankara, and Urfa in the morning hours. The detained include Mezopotamya Agency (MA) reporter Esra Solin Dal, journalists Saliha Aras, Yeşim Alici, and Beste Argat Balç.
3 journalists faced deportation

Sweden
Sweden expelled a Chinese journalist, citing “national security” reasons. The journalist, a 57-year-old woman from China who has been a resident of Sweden for over two decades, was expelled on April 8, according to Swedish media reports. Her identity has not been disclosed, but it is known that Sweden’s security services arrested her in October 2023, and she is now banned from returning to the country.

Hong Kong
On April 10, Aleksandra Bielakowska, a representative of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) was detained and subsequently deported by Hong Kong authorities upon her arrival to monitor a high-profile national security trial. Aleksandra Bielakowska, an RSF advocacy officer based in Taipei, faced six hours of detention, questioning, and multiple searches at Hong Kong’s international airport.

India
Avani Dias, an Australian journalist known for her role as the South Asia correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), was forced to leave India prior to the nation’s six-week-long general elections. Dias was informed by an official from the Indian Ministry that her visa extension would not be granted due to her reporting, which they claimed “crossed a line.”
12 journalists physically assaulted, 5 injured

**Turkiye**
Jinnews reporter Rabia Önver was injured by a rubber bullet fired by police while covering protests in Yüksekova on April 3.

**Ukraine**
On April 4, in the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine, Russian Shaded drones struck multiple times, causing damage and casualties. Yulia Boyko, a journalist for Novosti.Live and Belstat channel, was injured.

Ukrainian journalists Olha Zvonaryova and Kira Oves were wounded by Russian missiles while reporting in Zaporizhzhya, a city in southeastern Ukraine on April 5.

**Kyrgyzstan**
On April 6, jailed journalist Makhabat Tazhibek accused Penitentiary Service employees of beating her. She claims the violence was ordered by higher authorities to pressure her. Her husband, journalist Bolot Temirov, shared her statement on Facebook revealing her injuries.

**Kosovo**
On April 3 in Pristina, Fjolla Hyseni and Lindita Berisha were physically assaulted and insulted by a couple, initially due to a confrontation involving the journalists' taxi blocking their path. Despite knowing one journalist was pregnant, the woman attacker still physically harmed her. When the attackers saw they were being filmed by journalists, they became more aggressive.
12 journalists physically assaulted, 5 injured

Mexico
On April 7, at the Planetarium Torreón, municipal president Román Alberto Cepeda launched a scathing verbal attack against journalist Camelia Muñoz, a collaborator of Proceso. The mayor’s press chief, Cristal Barrientos, also joined in, aggressively confronting and physically assaulting the reporter.

Colombia
During far-right demonstrations against the government nationwide on April 21, thirteen journalists, including Sayni Elisa Agámez, Johana Niño, Beatriz Bolaño and Vanessa Romero were attacked. Reporters faced physical assaults, verbal abuse, and threats, prompting them to halt their coverage to ensure their safety. None of the journalists sustained any injuries.
14 journalists faced legal harassment

Turkiye
On April 2, at the Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court, Elif Akgül, a former manager at DİSK Basin-İş faced criminal charges based on accusations arising from reports by both the police and the gendarmerie.

Ali İhsan Arslan, a deputy from the ruling AKP party, is suing İleri Haber, its former Editor-in-Chief Doğan Ergün, and the current Editor-in-Chief İzel Sezer for defamation. The hearing on April 4 was postponed.

The fourth hearing of the retrial of exiled journalist Perihan Kaya took place on April 5 at the Diyarbakır 10th High Criminal Court. Kaya is facing trial for alleged involvement with the Press Area of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) structure, as well as charges of engaging in “terrorism propaganda” and “membership of a terrorist organization.”

At the first hearing of her retrial at the Diyarbakır 5th High Criminal Court on April 16, journalist Ayşe Kara once again faced terrorism charges related to a 2020 investigation.

On April 17, the prosecutor in Tunceli launches an inquiry into Duygu Kit following a complaint from the Erzincan Office of the Governor. They allege that Kit’s reporting, particularly an article titled “Opposition to Quarry in Ergan: Villagers Just 500 Meters Away,” contains falsehoods aimed at discrediting the office.

On April 19 the first hearing of a case brought against BirGün reporter Asena Tunca and 76 SOL Party (Left Party) members began at the Anatolian 14th Criminal Court of First Instance. This legal saga stems from their presence at a demonstration decrying the government’s actions and the Red Crescent’s response to the February 2023 earthquakes.
14 journalists faced legal harassment

Turkiye
Kurdish journalists Saliha Aras, Yeşim Aliç, Beste Argat Balcı detained in mass raids on April 23, were charged with membership of terrorist organization and released under judicial control on April 26.

On April 30, Zeynep Kuray reveals she is under investigation for her social media images from an HDP (People’s Democratic Party) protest in Şirinevler, Istanbul. Authorities are investigating whether the images she shared in October 2022 amount to “terrorist propaganda.”

Russia
On April 13, the Russian Ministry of Justice labeled exiled journalists Asya Kazantseva and BBC Russian correspondent Ilya Barabanov as “foreign agents.” The term “foreign agent” carries negative implications in Russia, reminiscent of Soviet-era campaigns against dissenters. The designation is used to marginalize those challenging Kremlin policies and has been repeatedly assigned to independent journalists at home and abroad.

On April 16, Russian news outlets revealed that exiled journalist Maria Menshikova is facing further terrorism charges for her reporting. The case revolves around a post on her outlet DOXA’s public page on VKontakte dating back to July 11, 2022.

Law enforcement raided St. Petersburg journalist Ksenia Klochkova’s home on April 19. Klochkova says she is being called as a witness in the case against exiled Russian journalist Andrey Zakharov, who is being charged for repeatedly failing to disclose his “foreign agent” status. Police seized her phone and laptop, and she was ordered to appear for questioning by the Investigative Committee.
14 journalists faced legal harassment

Israel
On April 3, the Judea military court postponed the hearing of Rula Hassanein — a Palestinian journalist facing charges of incitement on social media and supporting a banned organization — for the third time, denied her bail, and rejected her lawyer’s request for her release to care for her ill infant. Since her arrest following a raid by the Israeli Occupying Forces on March 19, 2024, Hassanein’s prematurely born daughter, Elia, has experienced a significant decline in health. Elia, who suffers from a weak immune system and ulcers on her palms, feet, and mouth, has been struggling without her mother’s exclusive breastfeeding.

Chile
On April 22, Josefa Barraza faced the initial hearing of a lawsuit unjustly filed against her in Santiago by former congresswoman Andrea Molina. This baseless legal complaint accuses Barraza of libel in her coverage of Molina’s new role in the municipality of La Reina.
5 journalists threatened/intimidated

**Bosnia Herzegovina**
On April 5 Mayor Milan Kovač of Šipovo verbally attacked journalists Bojana Ninković and editor-in-chief Siniša Vukelić from the CAPITAL news portal.

**Turkiye**
Medine Mamedoğlu, a journalist based in Van, received threatening messages labeling her a “traitor” and vowing to end her life. These threats emerged after she shared an image showing plainclothes police officers beating a 12-year-old child during detention. In response on April 6, Mamedoğlu took legal action, lodging a criminal complaint with the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office.

**Israel**
Spanish foreign correspondent Almudena Ariza faced obstruction and intimidation while reporting live for La 1’s Telediario from Jerusalem, Israel, on April 10. Ariza attempted to reason with the man who was blocking the camera, but the interference persisted as more men joined in.

**Sudan**
Samar Sulaiman, known for her humanitarian work in Kassala State, was threatened, doxxed and falsely accused of being a sleeper agent affiliated with the paramilitary group the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

**India**
Neha Purav faced threats at the doorstep of her house in Mumbai on April 27. A group of men warned her to stop reporting on a government minister. Purav, who works for a local Marathi newspaper, Navakal, filed a first information report (FIR) at Mumbai’s police.
Three journalists denied access

United States
Sandra Fish, a seasoned political reporter for the Colorado Sun, was expelled from a Colorado Republican Party assembly in Pueblo on April 6 after being accused of biased reporting by the state party chair.

Georgia
On April 8, the parliament in Tbilisi began discussing the reintroduction of the controversial draft “foreign agent law.” Anticipating increased media coverage of debates concerning the draft law, the parliament’s press office denied access to several journalists, including Mariam Nikuradze of OC Media.

United States
At Columbia University in New York on April 30, journalists were barred from covering student demonstrations as police officers breached an academic building where protestors were barricaded. CNN reporter Julia Vargas Jones reported live from the scene was impeded by police.
Four journalists harassed online

Denmark
On April 3 an investigation by outlets TjekDet and Politiken reported that AI-generated images of TV 2 host Divya Das were being used without permission to promote fake news articles. These articles were tricking people into investing in fake cryptocurrency schemes. The false stories spread mainly on Facebook and Instagram, both owned by Meta.

Argentina
ESPN reporter Lola del Carril revealed she has been subjected to a vicious online harassment campaign for her work on April 8.

United Kingdom
On April 17, Cathay Newman, a prominent presenter and investigations editor at Channel 4 News, revealed she had found deepfake pornographic videos of herself online.

Pakistan
Government advisor maligned journalist Nadia Saboohi on social media after she interviewed him for a report. The advisor doxed the journalist on April 19. After this, Saboohi began receiving calls and inappropriate messages from unknown numbers. This episode traumatized Nadia mentally and jeopardized her safety.
Three journalists were discredited

**Slovenia**
During a press conference held on April 2 former Prime Minister Janez Janša and the leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) launched a *scathing attack* on Anuška Delić and Oštro, making false accusations concerning the editor and outlet’s credibility.

**El Salvador**
The Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES) filed a formal complaint with the Attorney General’s Office on Thursday morning, April 4, concerning an *assault* on a journalist during the January electoral campaign, reportedly involving municipal officials from El Refugio, Ahuachapán, who were involved in verbal abuse, defamation, surveillance, and online harassment directed at the unnamed journalist.

**Slovakia**
On April 8, Martina Tôrêková, a reporter for TV Markíza, was subjected to a *vicious verbal attack* by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, Tomáš Taraba. As Tôrêková attempted to interview Taraba following a press conference, her line of questioning sparked an aggressive reaction from the ultranationalist Slovak National Party politician.
A journalist fired

Germany
Helen Fares, a presenter for the German public broadcaster Südwestrundfunk (SWR), has been dismissed following her social media posts that criticized Israeli policies and called for boycotting products supporting Israel’s economy. The broadcaster confirmed her termination on April 9, stating that her actions violated its neutrality policy.

4 journalists laid off

United Kingdom
Journalists Anita Mureithi, Caroline Molloy, Laura Oliver, and Ruby Lott-Lavigna were all impacted by the recent layoffs at openDemocracy. The circumstances surrounding the layoffs despite the organization’s reported financial surplus, raise concerns about transparency and decision-making within the organization.
Positive outcomes

Australia: Court Win for Lisa Wilkinson
After a year-long legal battle, Lisa Wilkinson and Network 10 have been cleared of defamation charges for their reporting on the case of Brittany Higgins, a former Liberal party staffer who says she was raped by her work colleague Bruce Lehrmann.

United States: Felony Charges Brought against Sherry Digmon Dropped
The charges against Sherry Digmon and Don Fletcher, publisher and journalist at Atmore News in Alabama, were dropped on April 19. They were arrested in October 2023 and accused of revealing grand jury information, including allegations of mishandling COVID relief funds by the local Board of Education. Despite facing felony charges, all accusations were dismissed.

Paraguay: Angie Prieto Acquitted of Libel
On April 9, Angie Prieto, was acquitted in an important libel case against her former employer, Albavisión. She was accused of defamation after speaking out against sexual harassment within the company. Prieto’s acquittal highlights the broader issue of workplace harassment in Paraguay’s media sector.

Argentina: Influencer Convicted for Harassing Marina Abiuso
On April 11, the justice system in Buenos Aires convicted influencer Manuel Jorge Gorostiaga, known as Emmanuel Danann, for engaging in systematic harassment of journalist Marina Abiuso on social media platforms.
Positive outcomes

Turkiye: Dilan Oyunş Released from Prison
Dilan Oyunş — who was detained in June 2016 while covering demonstrations and sentenced to five years for “being a member of a terrorist organization” — spent almost eight years in prison before being released on April 13.

Turkiye: Rojin Akın and Nimet Ölmek Acquitted
After a seven-year legal battle, Rojin Akın was acquitted of terrorism charges on April 3 for her reporting on the frontlines in Syria. On April 24, at the Hakkari 1st Criminal Court of First Instance journalist Nimet Ölmek was cleared of an “insult” charge brought by the local chairman for the ruling Justice and Development Party. Ölmek was on trial for a social media post she made concerning the case of the rape of an 11-year-old girl in Hakkari.

Turkiye: Investigations Into Zeynep Kuray and Şükran Ekinci Dropped
Turkish authorities dropped their investigation into journalist Zeynep Kuray’s social media posts concerning police intervention at Akbelen forest protests. The decision, made on April 26, 2024, came after scrutiny under a censorship law, which was viewed as an effort to silence Kuray’s reporting on environmental and left-wing issues.

The Istanbul prosecutor announced it was dropping its investigation into Arti TV journalist Şükran Ekinci on April 1. The probe was initiated following Ekinci’s social media posts regarding the number of miners trapped in a mining disaster in February 2024.
CFWIJ and WPF is working hard to change these circumstances everyday.

Join us in this mission