

WALK THE TALK
WHAT KEY ACTORS CAN DO
FOR THE SAFETY OF FEMALE
JOURNALISTS ONLINE



SAFETY OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS ONLINE

PROPOSED ACTIONS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

1. Establish a national action plan on the safety of journalists that addresses specific conditions for female journalists;
2. Put in place protection measures that are gender-responsive;
3. Collect data on attacks against female journalists to inform policy and research, and to support awareness-raising campaigns to spur engagement among decision makers and the public;
4. Report on the safety of female journalists to the key international human rights mechanisms, and integrate the issue into foreign policy.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

1. Review and, when necessary, amend or adopt laws to promote a gender-responsive approach to the safety of journalists;
2. Make sure that legislation addressing online harassment and abuse against female journalists does not undermine the right to freedom of expression.

JUDICIARY

1. Raise awareness on gender issues throughout the judicial system, as this is essential for the protection of female journalists;
2. Increase expertise among judicial personnel on issues of freedom of expression, safety of journalists and harassment and abuse, offline and online;
3. Apply and promote best practices in access to justice, sentencing and remedies;
4. National human rights institutions should engage on the issue of safety of journalists.



LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

1. Enhance training of law enforcement authorities on the issue of online safety of journalists, with a gender-responsive approach;
2. Review and improve gender considerations in risk assessments of threats and harassment;
3. Strengthen protocols, methods and procedures to investigate crimes against journalists and freedom of expression;
4. Increase dialogue and co-ordination on the safety of journalists between law enforcement authorities, media outlets and civil society.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Mainstream gender-responsive approaches in human rights standards and mechanisms on the safety of journalists;
2. Support States to address the implementation gap of international standards on the safety of journalists;
3. Help increase data and research that could inform the initiatives on safety of female journalists online;
4. Prioritize co-operation and co-ordination of actors to leverage impact.

INTERNET INTERMEDIARIES

1. Respect international human rights standards on freedom of expression, privacy, participation and non-discrimination in policy and practice;
2. Make sure that policies on content moderation are clear, transparent and accessible for users, and that users are aware of how content is moderated, what constitutes online harassment and abuse, and how to report it;
3. Adopt user-centered and non-discrimination-based approaches in all operations;
4. Handle content removals and users' data requests with transparency and consistency;
5. Promote the role of women in journalism.

MEDIA OUTLETS

1. Improve the workplace culture with comprehensive policies on both safety and gender;
2. Ensure support and training to journalists facing online harassment and abuse;
3. Develop gender-responsive community guidelines for interactive online platforms;
4. Monitor and document online abuse and harassment of female journalists, including freelancers.

JOURNALISTS' ORGANIZATIONS AND SELF-REGULATORY BODIES

1. Increase collective action and advocacy to improve safety and other working conditions for female journalists;
2. Reinforce capacities through peer-to-peer networks, training and other practical support;
3. Document attacks and use information to raise awareness among key actors;
4. Promote the inclusion of safety and gender equality issues in the work of self-regulatory bodies.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Increase data, knowledge and awareness on gender-based online harassment and abuse among key actors and society at large;
2. Join forces to advance the implementation of safety standards and other working conditions for female journalists at the national level;
3. Develop holistic protection training and educational materials;
4. Integrate journalists' safety and gender equality in journalism education and training institutions' activities.

JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS

1. Monitor and assess the risk landscape for female journalists;
2. Practice a holistic approach towards safety and security, including physical, legal, psychosocial and digital security;
3. Document and report threats and attacks;
4. Support colleagues who are facing online abuse and harassment, and those who are at higher risk of experiencing such attacks;
5. Become informed on available forms of support, including legal mechanisms.



Facing an additional layer of risk

Nearly two out of three women journalists have been threatened or harassed online. Just because of their gender, female journalists face an additional layer of risk, next to the attacks that all journalists are increasingly experiencing. Nowhere do we see this form of harassment and abuse more starkly than in the online sphere.

Hampering freedom of expression

Online harassment and abuse against women journalists has become a major hazard to the profession. One that threatens women journalists' ability to do their jobs. It violates their right to freedom of expression as much as it hampers free and open access to information for all members of society. "I have thought about coming off social media," says BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg in the documentary "A Dark Place", produced by the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in co-operation with the International Press Institute. "But then people who are there, who want information, which is the most important thing for me, then they lose, and then I lose."

Affecting the quality of our democracies

In short, the safety of women journalists online directly threatens to affect the quality of our democracies. This #SOFJO Resource Guide formulates an answer to that threat, proposing actions to strengthen the way we address the safety of women journalists online.

A platform for raising awareness

Starting in 2015, the Safety of Female Journalists Online (SOFJO) project has generated innovative and sustainable initiatives. It became a platform for raising awareness, for making collective strategies, and sharing tools and resources for female journalists who have been targeted. Conferences, closed group meetings and the social media outreach campaign #SOFJO have helped create a network of support from governments, media organizations, academia and civil society actors across participating States.

Good practices and real action

This #SOFJO Resource Guide aims to assist States and non-State actors across the OSCE region in taking real actions to improve the safety of female journalists online. The practices presented are all examples of ways in which international standards and commitments can be realized. It points at a systemic approach for actors that are central for creating a safe and enabling media environment, providing 40 proposed actions.

All key actors involved

A multi-stakeholder approach is much needed. This #SOFJO Resource Guide provides the key actors with a brief selection of the most relevant and achievable steps. Concrete examples of best practices, put in place by different actors in various countries, illustrate each proposed action. A selection of useful resources complements this list. Lastly, it includes a section on international human rights standards that, over the last decade, increasingly call for a gender-responsive approach to the safety of journalists.

Time to walk the talk

Taken together, these steps form an interrelated structure in which women journalists can continue their profession online in a safer manner. Unfortunately, there is nothing virtual about this form of harassment and abuse. It is a real problem that needs real solutions.

It is time to walk the talk.

FROM THE
RESOURCE GUIDE
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