

PRESS FREEDOM STATUS FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS: JANUARY 2021



**2021
REPORT**

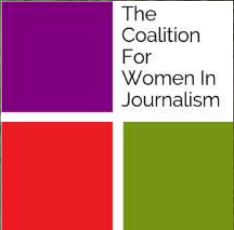


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ABOUT US

The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered mentorship for mid-career women journalists across several countries around the world and is the first organization to focus on the status of free press for women journalists. Our network of individuals and organizations brings together the experience and mentorship necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong mechanism where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

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Executive Editor: Kiran Nazish

Research: Ceren İskit, Ayesha Khalid, Zahidun Nisa, Katarzyna Mierzejewska

Design: Damla Tarhan





PRESS FREEDOM STATUS IN JANUARY 2021

Throughout the month of January, The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented various cases of threats against women journalists. We identified 60 incidents of physical attacks, legal harassment, detainments, arrests and online attacks.

Two women journalists murdered.

A separatist attack on a convoy in Njikwa, the North-West region of Cameroon, resulted in the death of Rebecca Jeme, and four military officials. The unfortunate incident happened on January 6, 2021. Rebecca, popularly known as Becky Jeme, was the top Divisional Delegate for Communication for Momo.

In Algeria, prominent Algerian journalist Tin Hinan Laceb, of ENTV's Amazigh channel (TV4), was reportedly killed by her husband on January 26. Sarah Rezig, a member of the Observatory for Statistics of Women Murdered, information circulating suggests Tin Hinan Laceb was murdered over a personal dispute, having faced physical abuse before.

Seven women journalists were attacked/impeded in the field.

United States photojournalist Erin Schaff for The New York Times was assaulted by Trump supporters during the insurrection at Capitol Hill on January 7. Schaff was capturing images during the US riots when security was breached at the building. She was surrounded by a group of men who pushed her to the floor and snatched her credentials.



On January 7, 2021, CBC journalist Katie Nicholson was reporting live from Washington D.C. when she was suddenly swarmed by a mob of angry Trump supporters. Meagan Fitzpatrick, a Toronto resident, shared a video on Twitter where Katie Nicholson is seen helpless while hostile Trump supporters gather around her, hurling insults.

Saniya Toiken of Radio Free Europe's Radio Azattyk was among the journalists whose phones were confiscated by the police. The media faced interference by the police while covering the parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan on January 10. According to Reporters Without Borders, a police officer took Saniya's phone and deleted some of the videos that she had shot in Nursultan, the capital of Kazakhstan, on election day.

In China, Shandong, a female reporter was beaten and injured by men in the city of Qixia on January 24. In a video widely circulated online, the journalist is heard screaming for help while the men approached her, trying to snatch her camera.

Russia, according to media reports, at least 50 incidents of journalists obstructed in the field have been recorded. Several journalists were detained in 17 major cities throughout Russia while reporting on the recent protests on 23rd January. Elizaveta Kirpanova, Daria Belikova, Aleksandra Godfroid were attacked while doing their job. Although women journalists had their press cards and credentials, it didn't stop security forces from torturing them.



Eight women journalists were detained

In Turkey, Ankara, three women journalists, Habibe Eren, Öznur Değer and Eylül Deniz Yaşar were detained by police. The journalists participated in a protest held for the first anniversary of the disappearance of 22 year old Kurdish student, Gulistan Doku.

In Pakistan, journalist and human rights defender Sanna Ejaz was briefly arrested and later released during the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) protest on January 6. In Peshawar. The journalist included that when she asked for confirmation about her arrest warrant, the security forces refused to provide it.

In the United States, Washington. Zoann Murphy and Whitney Leaming, journalists for Washington Post, were arrested by police while reporting on the Capitol Hill insurrection on January 7. Zoann tweeted about her situation, posting a video during her arrest.

Turkey, Etkin News Agency (ETHA) reporter Pinar Gayıp, who was detained as part of an investigation in İzmir conducted against the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), was released after three-day detention conditionally on a house arrest on January 19. Pinar was arrested and remained behind bars previously in 2018.

In Russia, Vera Ryabitskaya of The Insider, was tortured during her arrest in St. Petersburg on January 23. She was beaten with a truncheon and thrown to the ground. According to the journalist, security officials entered the crowd and brutally beat people with truncheons.



11 women journalists were targeted with organized troll campaigns.

Samantha-Jo Roth who is correspondent for NY1 and Spectrum 24 hour news station was harassed online for a tweet she did narrating the abuse the media was receiving during capitol hill insurrection in Washington, U.S. Samantha said that she will report these online threats to Twitter and law enforcement.

In the United States, the New York Times reporter Sarah Jeong tweeted her concerns on January 9 sharing the thread of another journalist. She reiterated that fellow journalist Andy Ngo's disinformation poses a threat among already precarious conditions. Sarah stated that she refrained from raising the issue earlier because of rape and death threats she had received in the past. Several other women also come forward, sharing similar unpleasant experiences fuelled by pro-Trump rhetoric.

In North Macedonia, Brussels-based journalist Tanja Milevska was targeted by gender-based online trolling on January 1. The journalist was threatened after responding to a misogynistic thread about the gaming community. Speaking to the CFWIJ, Tanja referred to the community as one of the most aggressive towards women and minorities. She added that she was targeted with gender-based online attacks for five days following her response.

On January 10, in Zimbabwe, Sophie Mokoena, the foreign editor for SABC, was viciously attacked online by the ruling party's spokesperson, Tafadzwa Mugwadi. Sophie Mokoena remains undaunted by the threats and bullying. She expressed in a tweet that she is committed only to her job.



On January 14, Esra Aygin, a journalist in Northern Cyprus and correspondent of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), became the target of online smear campaigns. The reporter came under fire after posting her critical views about the Northern Cyprus President Ersin Tatar on her Twitter account.

Loyal Alikhtiar, a journalist in Lebanon, was targeted with a hate campaign initiated by a separatist organisation. She was sent death threats for a tweet she posted on January 5.

Prominent Bahraini journalist Ahdeya Ahmad reveals she was bullied and harassed on social media for her stance on peace. She was targeted by online abuse for her support of the normalisation of relations between Bahrain and Israel.

India, Nidhi announced on her Twitter account on Friday, January 15, that her job offer was fake and she was scammed after she was convinced to join Harvard University in September 2020. Nidhi revealed that the emails she received stating that the attendance date has been withdrawn due to the ongoing pandemic and that the classes are said to begin in January 2021.

One woman faced workplace harassment

VOA news correspondent Patsy Widakuswara was reassigned after her director stopped her from covering the White House. On January 11, at an event organized at VOA headquarters in Washington D.C., director Robert Reilly held a live broadcast with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. After she prompted Pompeo with questions, Patsy was criticized by the VOA director for being out of line. Patsy was subsequently demoted and reassigned to the VOA Indonesian service.

16 women journalists were legally harassed.

An investigation was launched by Turkish authorities against Deutsche Welle (DW) reporter Pelin Ünker and DW manager Peter Limbourg over coverage aired in September 2020 on the DW website. The investigation was initiated after a complaint was filed by Aktif Bank. Pelin Ünker has faced three lawsuits for the same articles that exposed the secrets of the Paradise Papers investments.

In Turkey, journalist Ayten Akgün was sentenced to 11 months in prison on charges of insulting the President. Ayten, who shared coverage about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on her Twitter account, was sued for insulting Erdoğan as per the prosecutor's indictment. The court sentenced the journalist to 11 months and 20 days in prison.

Turkish OdaTV news editor Müyesser Yıldız and TELE1 Ankara Representative İsmail Dukel stood trial at Ankara's 26th High Criminal Court on January 6th. In the second hearing of the case filed on military espionage charges, the court decided to continue the judicial control measures on journalists Müyesser and İsmail.

Diana Moukalled, a veteran journalist and the editor-in-chief of the news outlet Daraj, appeared in court on January 14 in Beirut, Lebanon, for her alleged defamation of a person named 'Rahhal'. Diana announced the libel case filed against her on her Twitter account.

Former Chinese journalists He Qiang and Zou Sicong face a civil fine for a 2018 article written anonymously by He and published by Zou. In the piece, He alleged prominent journalist Deng Fei of sexual misconduct. The journalist reported she was a 21-year-old intern while Deng was a chief reporter at the time of the incident.

In Turkey, an investigation was launched against Melis Alphan in November for a photo she shared from the Newroz event in Diyarbakır about six years ago. The journalist faces up to seven years sentence in prison.

An investigation was launched against Turkish journalist Dicle Müftüoğlu, editor of the Mesopotamia Agency (MA), for allegations of spreading propaganda for an organization of her social media posts. The journalist was sentenced to 15 months in prison at the first hearing of the case against her.



The second hearing of the case filed against Olcay Büyüktaş Akça, the senior editor of the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, and former reporter Alican Uludağ, was held on January 11, in İstanbul. Journalists Alican Uludağ and Olcay Büyüktaş Akça face charges of wrongfully disclosing or publishing the identity of those who report crime and criminals.

On January 14, Tatsiana Bublikawa, a reporter at the independent Belarussian news agency BelaPAN, was mistreated by police during a raid at her office in Minsk. The police misconduct can be described as violent, the trauma of which led Tatsiana to have a panic attack and she ended up in the hospital. However, she along with other journalists in Belarus who are seeking to disseminate information to the public are facing trouble at the hands of the government.

The fourth hearing of the trial against journalist Ruken Demir was held on January 15 in Izmir, Turkey. The file examining the digital materials seized by the police was presented to the court. According to the MA, Ruken attested the materials did not belong to her.

Filipino-American journalist Maria Ressa, a co-founder of Rappler, faced a third charge of cyber libel on January 15. According to her lawyer Ted Te, the third cyber libel complaint came after a story published in October 2020 about De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in Manila. The article purported that students paid PHP20,000 to pass their thesis. An arrest warrant was issued against Maria on January 11, her bail posted at PHP30,000.



The fifth hearing of the trial against Turkish journalist Durket Süren was held in Diyarbakır on January 23. Durket faces charges of being affiliated with a terrorist organization, knowingly and willingly aiding an organization, and spreading propaganda for an organization. The case was adjourned once again, as the report requested by the court over a year ago was still not included in the case file.

The first hearing of the trial against Hatice Şahin, editor for the Turkish newspaper Yeni Yaşam, was held on January 20 at Diyarbakır's 9th High Criminal Court. Hatice faces serious charges of being affiliated with an armed organization. An investigation was launched against Hatice by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on October 9, 2018, and police raided the journalist's home on October 18, 2018.

The second hearing of the trial against Sonya Bayık, the Jiyan News managing editor, was held on January 22, in Batman, Turkey. She was detained for covering the protest held in Hasankeyf two years ago and released on charges of violating the laws of marches. Sonya was detained in June 2019 for reporting on the protests against the intentional flooding of Hasankeyf. Sonya was subsequently released.

The fourth hearing of the case against journalist Derya Okatan was postponed again due to the judge was on leave. The journalist faces up to two years sentence in prison over the charges with a crime of insult was committed publicly because of the story entitled "Mersin Women's Platform: We are exposing the molester attorney Onur Kale" was published in Etkin News Agency (ETHA) on May 1, 2016, while Derya was the editor in the news outlet.



Polish journalist Dorota Nygren was unfairly dismissed by the director of Information agency Radio, Paweł Piszczek for not revealing some intimate details about the subject of her story. When the journalist was refused to identify the key details requested by the employer Pawel Piszczek, she was threatened with dismissal.

Four women journalists faced sexual harassment.

India, editor of India Today, Preeti Choudhry alleged that several women were sexually harassed by the farmers. Preeti said that her team reported various incidents of harassment against women journalists covering the ongoing demonstrations. She wrote on her Twitter account, "Our farmers have already etched themselves in world history.

United States, female sports journalist Britt Ghiroli has opened up about her experience with sexual harassment in 2012. While reporting on the Baltimore Orioles baseball team, the journalist was misled by a player and lured to his hotel room.

In India, Assam, a press conference was held at the Guwahati Press Club by film producer Umashankar Jha and actor Uttam Singh. Reportedly, when the journalist inquired a few questions about the film, she was verbally abused in front of everyone. Later on, when she and another photojournalist went to the duo to ask about their misbehaviour, they assaulted her.



In the United States, January 20, 2021 -- The recently hired general manager of the Mets baseball team in New York, Jared Porter, admitted to sending vulgar text messages to a female journalist in 2016. The journalist, who is not from the United States, chose to keep quiet as she feared backlash in her native country.

Seven women journalists were threatened with violence or intimidation.

In Slovenia, Denník N newspaper journalist Monika Tódová was monitored and photographed by two unidentified individuals for at least two times in the early days of January. Surveillance with his family of journalists in a country house in the High Tatra Mountains in northern Slovakia is thought to be linked to the 2018 murder of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak. The journalist reported the suspicious to the police.

Farahnaz Forotan, Fatema Hashim, Nazifa, and Mariam Alimi are some of the many women journalists targeted with death threats in the latest series of killings in Afghanistan. Separatist organizations have admitted to organizing a terror cell to attack journalists, who they claim are easy targets. Many women journalists have fled the country for their protection, while the rest seek political asylum to live their life peacefully.

In India, Neha Dixit, a reporter in New Delhi, has taken to Twitter to share how she has been stalked since September 2020. Moreover, she has also said that someone tried to break into her house on January 25, but they retreated when she shouted and opened the door.

WRCB-TV reporter Meredith Aldis and photographer of the media outlet were threatened with arrest after posing a question to the U.S. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene in Dalton, at the town hall meeting. Security escorted Meredith from the meeting hall and threatened to arrest the journalist and her crew for criminal trespassing if they did not leave the property.

Two women journalists have acquitted the trials they faced

A lawsuit was filed against Hazal Ocak and the president of Cumhuriyet Foundation, Alev Coşkun, in October 2019 on behalf Cengiz Holdings over allegations of defamation. The lawsuit was in retaliation to Hazal's article in Cumhuriyet Newspaper titled "Luxury fixture with a view of the Bosphorus", which revealed an illegal construction project of Cengiz Holding and its chairman Mehmet Cengiz. Hazal and Alev faced a fine of 1 million Turkish Liras for reputational damage. The sixth hearing of the case against journalists was held on January 26 and the court decided to dismiss all the defamation charges against journalists.

The investigation launched against the Mesopotamia Agency (MA) reporter Zeynep Durgut was dismissed by the prosecutor. Zeynep was taken into custody by security forces while she was on the way to Şırnak on October 8, 2020. In her detention, the images she took of the local people in caves, which were used to store their cheese instead of refrigerators, were deleted by the security forces. An investigation was conducted after her release and she faced charges of "illegally seizing or disseminating personal data."





One woman journalist faced verbal harassment

In Canada, CTV reporter Krista Sharpe posted a video of her experience with harassment on her Twitter account on January 18. In the recording, she is seen filming a broadcast in downtown Kitchener when a car drives past her, hurling vulgar insults. Sharpe was very disturbed by the uncalled for, hurtful insults.

CFWIJ documented one notable trolls case this month

Lauren Wolfe, a former New York Times editor, tweeted a picture last Tuesday of President Biden's plane landing in Washington captioned, "I have chills". Lauren was then viciously trolled by far-right supremacists, targeted with rape and death threats. Following the outcry, news of her termination from The New York Times was announced on January 23.



Contact Email: data@womeninjournalism.org

Website: www.womeninjournalism.org

Twitter: @CFWIJ

Facebook: [@coalitionforwomeninjournalism](https://www.facebook.com/coalitionforwomeninjournalism)

Instagram: [@womeninjournalism](https://www.instagram.com/womeninjournalism)