



WOMEN
PRESS
FREEDOM

Press Freedom Status For Women Journalists

Deadliest Month For Palestinian Women Journalists

December 2023

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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Image courtesy of Bisan Owda via Instagram

Editor's Note

This month, our report records a distressing total of **76 violations** against women journalists. Among these, the most heart-wrenching are the killings, with six recorded deaths. A significant and deeply concerning aspect of these figures is the continued targeting of Palestinian journalists. In December alone, **six Palestinian women journalists were killed in Gaza** under harrowing circumstances, including Shima el-Gazzar, Ola Atallah, Dua al-Cebbur, Nermin Qawwas, Hanan Ayyad, and Haneen Ali al-Qutshan, whose deaths not only represent a profound personal loss but also a devastating blow to press freedom and the right to information in the region. Israel killed at least four women journalists in November and three in October.

Aside from these fatal incidents, the report details various other forms of violations, ranging from imprisonment and legal harassment to denial of access and online harassment. The highest number of violations occurred in **Venezuela, Palestine/Gaza, Australia, and Montenegro**, with denial of access and threats/intimidation being the most prevalent.



Image courtesy of NurPhoto via Getty Images

Editor's Note

Venezuela topped the list this month due to widespread violations of press freedom during the consultative referendum on Essequibo held on December 3, 2023. A total of 16 women journalists faced obstructions while covering the event. The Plan República, a security force responsible for maintaining order during elections, was involved in numerous incidents where they violated press freedom and information guarantees for journalists and media outlets.

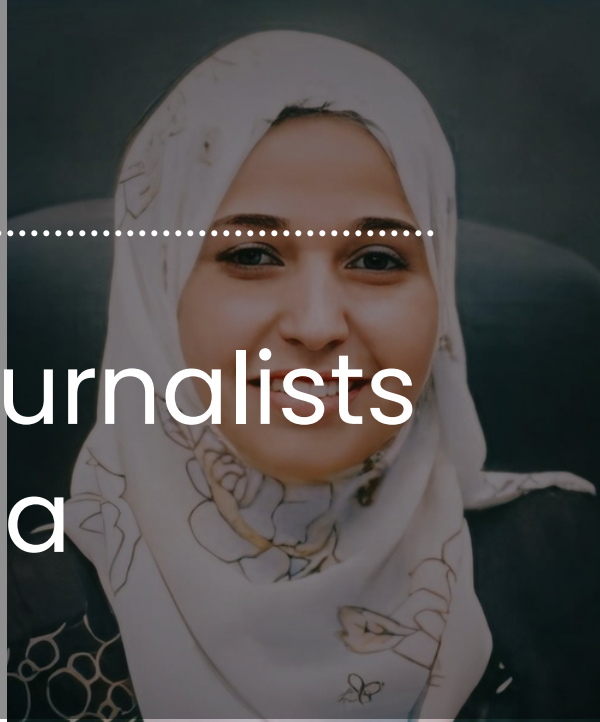
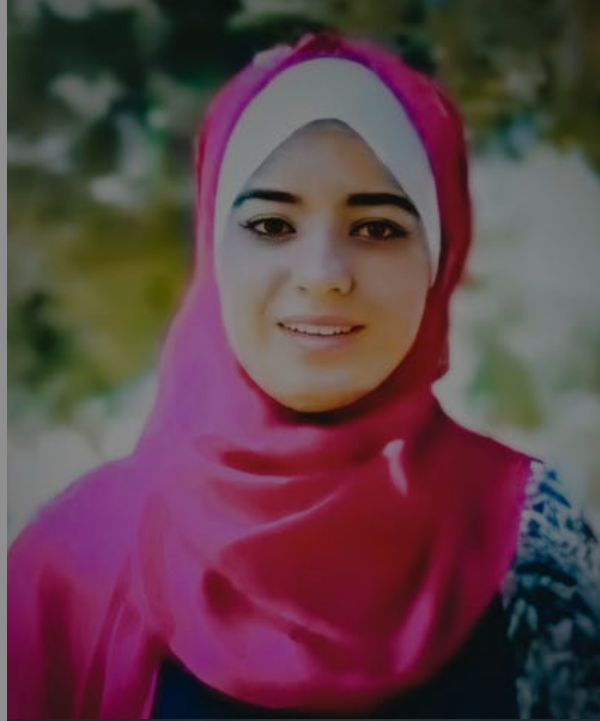
While we documented instances of accountability, these are overshadowed by the overwhelming number of violations. The continued violence against Palestinian journalists is particularly alarming and underscores the urgent need for international attention and action to protect these journalists, who are the only ones able to report from within Gaza.

Inge Snip
Senior Editor

Violations of press freedom

Venezuela, 2023





6 journalists killed

Dec 3 ● **Shima el-Gazzar**

Shima el-Gazzar, a journalist for the Al-Majedat network was killed alongside her family members in an Israeli air strike on Rafah in southern Gaza.

Dec 9 ● **Ola Atallah and Dua al-Cebbur**

Ola Atallah was killed after an Israeli airstrike targeted the place where she and her family were displaced in the Al-Daraj neighborhood, east of Gaza City. On the same day, journalist Dua al-Cebbur died along with her husband and children in the Israeli airstrike on the city of Khan Younis.

Dec 13 ● **Nermin Qawwas and Hanan Ayyad**

Nermin Qawwas, who worked with Russia Today, was killed in an Israeli airstrike. According to reports by the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, Qawwas lost her life when a bomb struck her home. Digital creator Hanan Ayyad was also killed. According to witnesses, Ayyad, her husband, and two children were killed by an Israeli shell that hit the area of the Old City of Gaza.

Dec 17 ● **Haneen Ali al-Qutshan**

Haneen Ali al-Qutshan was killed on Sunday, December 17, during an Israeli air strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp. An unknown number of her family members also perished in the attack.

6 women journalists killed in Gaza



A journalist imprisoned

Turkiye:

Veteran journalist **Nazlı Ilıcak** was sent to prison after her appeal against a contentious conviction was dismissed. The Istanbul 15th Criminal Court of First Instance had originally sentenced the 79-year-old to two years and six months in prison for an article she penned in 2016 on the now-shuttered website Özgür Gündem.

2 journalists sentenced

Kazakhstan:

The Specialized Inter-District Criminal Court in Almaty handed down an eight-year sentence to **Nargiz Severnya** and a seven-year sentence to **Vladimir Severny** on December 4, 2023. The charges stem from accusations of blackmailing two business owners to suppress negative stories about their companies. The Severnys, rejecting any wrongdoing, plan to appeal the verdict.

Iran:

On December 20, **Sara Massoumi**, editor-in-chief of Iranian Diplomacy news site was sentenced to six months in prison and given a two-year media ban for a social media post criticizing the government's response to the death of a teenage girl.



2 journalists sentenced,
1 imprisoned

5 journalists arrested

Belarus:

On December 7, 2023, Belarusian authorities arrested two former employees of Ranak TV in Svetlahorsk. **Yulia Dauletava**, the former editor-in-chief, and reporter **Liudmila Andzenka** were taken into custody and are currently held in connection with a criminal case under Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code related to "assistance to extremist activity."

Mongolia:

Naran Unurtsetseg, the editor-in-chief of the Mongolian news website Zarig.mn, was arrested on December 4 on charges of contempt of court and spreading false information under Article 13.14 of the Criminal Code of Mongolia after posting on her personal Facebook account about the inhumanity of a prolonging court hearing involving an elderly individual in Mongolia.

Russia:

On December 25, 2023, **Nika Novak** was taken into custody and charged with "collaborating on a confidential basis with a foreign state" by Russian authorities in Moscow. She will remain in detention until February 24, 2024.

United States:

Freelance journalist **Roni Jacobson** was reporting on a pro-Palestinian protest near Times Square in New York on December 31, 2023 when she was arrested by the NYPD. She was held overnight at the Midtown South Precinct and faced charges of obstructing governmental administration and disorderly conduct. Charges against her were later dropped.



5 journalists arrested



4 journalists detained

Mongolia:

On December 8, **Naran Unurtsetseg**'s lawyers attended a hearing and appealed to the court for the journalist's release due to unjustified detention. They also raised concerns that some legal provisions may have been violated during the investigation and that the case's investigation was deliberately accelerated.

Turkiye:

JIN News reporter **Elfazi Toral** and Democratic Modernity journalist **Sema Korkmaz** were beaten and detained by police after reporting on a press conference in Istanbul.

Pakistan:

Somiayah Hafeez, a Pakistani journalist, was unjustly detained by police in Pakistan's capital Islamabad late at night on December 20 while reporting on a long march by Baloch protestors. She was later released.



1 journalist missing

Belarus:

On December 7, 2023, Belarusian authorities arrested former employees of Ranak TV following a spate of detentions in June. The whereabouts of a third journalist, **Alena Shcherbin**, a former director at Ranak TV, remain unknown.

4 journalists detained,
1 journalist missing

4 journalists physically assaulted

Ukraine:

On the afternoon of December 22, photographer **Vlada Liberova** was wounded in Donetsk Oblast. Russian forces allegedly targeted the vehicle in which she was traveling, injuring her leg.

On the evening of December 30, the Kharkiv Palace Hotel, situated in the heart of Kharkiv, was hit by a missile strike from Russia. Producer for German channel ZDF **Svitlana Dolbysheva**, sustained multiple injuries.

Paraguay:

On December 11, 2023, Senator Carlos Núñez physically assaulted journalist **Rocío Pereira Da Costa** when asked about his possible involvement in crimes related to Operation Dakovo, an international operation that exposed an arms trafficking network linked to Paraguayan politicians and military figures.

Kosovo:

On December 28, 2023, journalist **Blerta Dalloshi Berisha** from TV Klan was forcefully prevented from reporting by the security team of Prime Minister Albin Kurti. The assault occurred as she attempted to pose a question to the country's top politician.

1 journalist raped

France:

On December 19, **Ruth Baza**, a Spanish journalist and author came forward with allegations of rape against Gérard Depardieu. Baza has accused the French film star of raping her nearly 30 years ago.



4 journalists physically
assaulted, 1 journalist
raped

12 journalists threatened or intimidated

France:

Ruth Elkrief, a prominent French Jewish columnist with TV broadcaster LCI, is currently facing heightened security concerns after threats has been placed under police protection. The threats stem from comments made by far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon following an interview conducted by Elkrief with Manuel Bompard, a lawmaker from Mélenchon's France Unbowed (LFI) party on December 3, 2023.

Colombia:

During a soccer match on December 3, supporters of Atlético Nacional targeted six reporters, including **Maria Camila Vergara** from Teleantioquia and **Sheyla Garcia** from Win Sports, with verbal and physical assaults, harassment, and destruction of their equipment.

Canada:

On December 10, 2023, **Brandi Morin** and her colleagues, embedded with activists, were confronted by security personnel at the TMX pipeline near Pipsell (Jacko Lake) in British Columbia. Despite identifying themselves as journalists and invoking case law safeguarding their right to report on matters of public interest, they were unjustly threatened with arrest. The incident occurred as the journalists covered a protest against the TMX pipeline expansion in Secwepemc's sacred territory.

Paraguay:

On December 12, **Fiona Aquino** of ABC TV claimed that Senator Norma Aquino threatened her with legal action. The Senator, through a phone call, threatened Aquino for publishing a list of legislators who provided a quorum to approve the controversial Superintendence law. Senator Norma Aquino participated in the legislative process, initially providing a quorum for the vote, but later attempted to distance herself from the outcome.



12 journalists
threatened or
intimidated

12 journalists threatened or intimidated

Montenegro:

On December 14, **Danica Nikolić**, the chief editor of M portal, disclosed that she is once again facing serious threats, this time including reprehensible rape threats. Her journalist colleagues **Tamara Nikčević**, **Bojana Dabović**, **Mirka Dević**, and **Slavica Kruščić Vasović** have also been targeted, presenting a distressing pattern of intimidation.

Pakistan:

Fatima Razzak, a reporter for the digital platform Lok Sujag, was subjected to harassment and intimidation while she was returning home after covering the ongoing Baloch women's protest in Islamabad on December 24.

Serbia:

On December 15, **Isidora Kovačević** revealed she faces a relentless campaign of intimidation against her, including a disturbing incident involving "Wanted" posters. She attributes the harassment to the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and criticizes the lack of action from the police and prosecutor's office.

On December 22, **Žaklina Tatalović** and her TV NI team were covering the ongoing demonstrations against the alleged fraudulent general elections. However, upon their return from the field, an unidentified person on a motorcycle with Belgrade license plates persistently followed the NI team, who were traveling in an official marked car. As they reached Žaklina Tatalović's street, the motorcyclist proceeded to circle the NI vehicle before driving away in the opposite direction. The motorcyclist then returned and circled the vehicle once more before finally departing.

During the ongoing protests, a live broadcast team from Al Jazeera experienced an unprovoked attack by police officials. **Jelena Glušac**, a reporter for Al Jazeera, was present and witnessed a troubling incident where a police officer forcefully restrained the cameraman, preventing him from documenting the arrest of protesters on December 24.



12 journalists
threatened or
intimidated

6 journalists legally harassed

Russia:

The latest charges against **Maria Ponomarenko**, officially filed on December 8, 2023, accuse her of using violence against staff within the detention facility. If convicted, Ponomarenko could face an additional sentence of up to five years on top of her existing six-year term.

On December 12, Russian authorities opened a new criminal investigation into detained journalist **Alsu Kurmasheva**. The RFE/RL editor is facing new accusations of disseminating "fake" news about Russia's armed forces. If convicted, she could serve up to 15 years behind bars.

Turkiye:

On December 12, 2023, the 5th High Criminal Court in Diyarbakır extended **Dicle Müftüoğlu's** detention postponing her trial until January 18, 2024.

India:

On December 23, police charged journalist **Vineetha VG** with "criminal conspiracy" in Kerala, India. VG, a respected journalist with 24 News, was covering a state government outreach program on December 10 when the alleged incident involving student protestors occurred.



6 journalists legally
harassed

6 journalists legally harassed

Paraguay:

On December 7, a Paraguayan judge's ordered a restraining order against **Mabel Portillo**, a journalist from Guairá Press. The order bars Portillo from coming near Yataity's Municipal Mayor, Gloria Duarte, among other harsh restrictions.

Romania:

For close to two weeks, renowned investigative journalist **Emilia Șercan** has been protesting in front of the General Prosecutor's Office and the Prosecutor's Office of the Bucharest Court of Appeal. She is protesting against the court's decision to close the case regarding the threats and intimidation she faced while carrying out her journalistic duties.



6 journalists legally
harassed

14 journalists arbitrarily denied access

Venezuela:

During the consultative referendum rewrite on Essequibo, held on December 3, several instances of press freedom violations and breaches of information guarantees for journalists and media organizations were observed. **13 women journalists were affected**. These incidents involved officials from Plan República and the National Electoral Council (CNE).

United States:

On December 4, 2023, a lawsuit was filed by publishers of Delaware paper The Reporter, **Kim and Randy Shepard**, claiming that the County attorney issued a gag order prohibiting county employees from speaking to the newspaper. This directive is considered a violation of the County employees' First Amendment rights to speak on matters of public concern and The Reporter's First Amendment rights to receive newsworthy information from willing speakers.



14 journalists arbitrarily
denied access

2 journalists blocked from accessing information

Bolivia:

On December 14, 2023, journalists **Miriam Peñafiel** and **Carmen Challapa** revealed they were abruptly ousted from two law enforcement press group chats eight months ago. Despite pleas for reinstatement, access has not been restored.

United States:

Sarah "Eli" Nachimson, a student journalist at University of California, Los Angeles' Daily Bruin, was fired on December 4 for speaking at a rally supporting a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas conflict.



2 journalists blocked
from accessing
information

3 journalists discredited

Australia:

On December 20, following malicious media attacks by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp media outlets since signing a letter in support of ethical reporting of conflict in Gaza. Three journalists have faced targeted accusations and smear campaigns from Murdoch's media, including **Patricia Karvelas, Lauren Dubois, and Jan Fran**. All reported negative impacts on their abilities to do their jobs.

1 journalist's award revoked

France:

On December 12, France stirred a new controversy after revoking the Simone Veil award from French-Moroccan journalist **Zineb El Rhazoui** due to her pro-Palestine position.



3 journalists discredited,
1 journalist's award
revoked

6 journalists lost their jobs

Romania:

On December 6, journalists **Iulia Roșu**, **Camelia Stan** and **Cătălin Tolontan** were fired from their editorial positions at leading Romanian newspaper Libertatea. The outlet's owner, Ringier, also announced that 20% of the paper's journalists would lose their jobs.

Iran:

On December 14, **Elnaz Mohammadi** revealed through an Instagram post that she was forced to resign from her position at Hammihan newspaper.

Australia:

On December 20, following malicious media attacks by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp media outlets since signing a letter in support of ethical reporting of conflict in Gaza, **Antoinette Lattouf** was fired from ABC, and Nova Podcasts axed **Clementine Ford**'s award-winning podcast.

Peru:

Juliana Oxenford unjustly dismissed from ATV network in Peru on December 1. Her dismissal appears to be motivated by political pressure and influence from far-right businessmen.



6 journalists lost their
jobs

1 journalist targeted with racist attack

France:

On December 5, **Salhia Brakhia**, presenter with Franceinfo, shared a screenshot on Twitter, exposing a message with overtly racist undertones that she received following her on-air debate with far-right politician Marion Maréchal.

1 journalist's car attacked



Slovenia:

Attacks on well-known journalist **Eugenija Carl** — who has faced years of harassment after a former Prime Minister called her and another journalist “prostitutes” — intensify with multiple car vandalization incidents on December 12.

Journalists face grenade attack

Latvia:

A grenade attack at a popular bar frequented by Russian exiles, including journalists from the BBC Russian service, raises concerns about the safety of independent journalists in exile. The incident, which occurred on December 24 at the Čē bar in downtown Riga, involved an RGD-5 training grenade and resulted in the detention of two suspects.



1 journalist targeted
with racist attack,
1 journalist faced car
vandalism, several
faced grenade attack

1 journalist targeted with deepfake

Peru:

On December 19, Golperú journalist **Nair Aliaga** revealed that an AI-manipulated photograph depicting her without clothing was shared online.

1 journalist targeted by online trolls

Mexico:

Online trolls target journalist **Reyna Haydee Ramírez** after she questions President López Obrador about police inaction to violence during a press conference on December 13. In response, the President dismissed the information as "inventions" and made insulting remarks against the Mexican press, characterizing it as "servile journalism" linked to economic power, corruption, and crime.



1 journalist targeted
with deepfake,
1 journalist targeted by
online trolls



Newsroom faces
ongoing legal
harassment



Newsroom faces ongoing legal harassment

United States:

On December 9, the Kansas Commission on Judicial Conduct dismissed a complaint against magistrate **Laura Viar** for her involvement in issuing a search warrant that authorized the police raid at the Marion County Record.

An arrest of perpetrator

Kenya:

On December 3, a police officer in Turkana Central was apprehended in connection with the assault of Capital FM journalist **Angela Muiruri** in 2020. Muiruri, a former Miss Kenya-USA pageant winner and a prominent radio presenter, was among 21 women assaulted during a security operation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Court wins for 2 journalists

Philippines:

Maria Ressa was cleared of a criminal case on Tuesday, December 12, by the Philippine Justice Department. The renowned journalist, who has been unjustly targeted with multiple charges in the last five years, was accused of allegedly having foreign ownership of her news website Rappler.

Australia:

In a December 18 ruling, a judge determined that 9News investigative journalist **Charlotte Grieve** will not be required to reveal the identities of 13 confidential sources she spoke to for a story criticizing renowned orthopedic surgeon Munjed Al Muderis. The judge found that the journalist was entitled to journalist privilege, protecting her from having to disclose her sources. The remaining portion of the defamation trial is scheduled to be heard in March.



1 arrest of perpetrator,
2 court wins for
journalists

**CFWIJ is working hard to change these
circumstances everyday.**

Join us in this mission



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