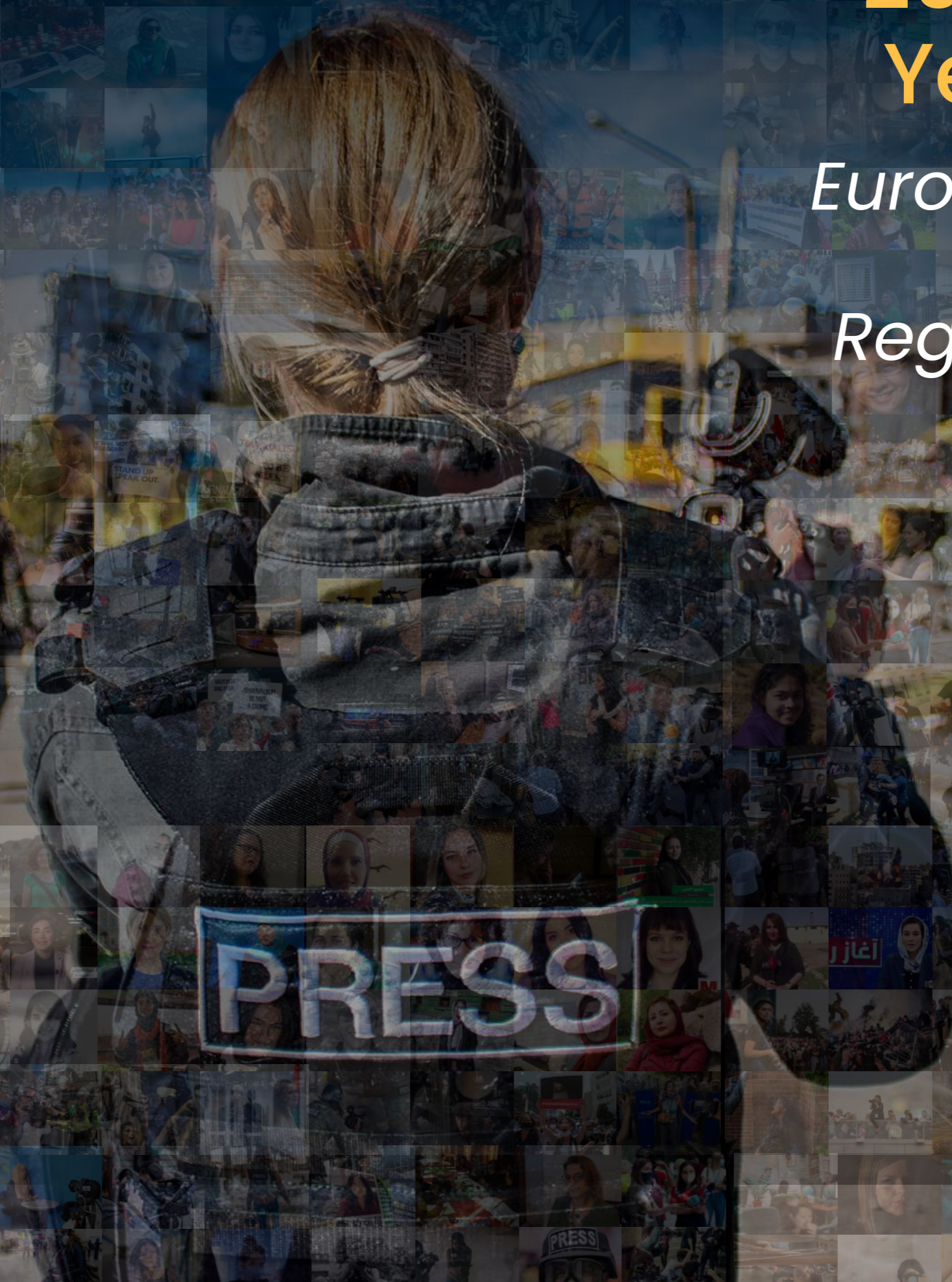




**WOMEN  
PRESS  
FREEDOM**

# 2023 First Half Yearly Report

*Europe Emerges as  
the Deadliest  
Region for Women  
Journalists*



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# Note From the Founding Director

In a given year, we follow hundreds of journalists reporting from their countries, communities and traveling abroad to report the truth as foreign correspondents. We monitor their working conditions, the health of access they have, their ability to report the truth, and take note of any impediments that emerge. These impediments may include verbal and physical threats, including online smear campaigns, police violence, and legal harassment by corporations, governments, and powerful institutions.

The history of journalists facing threats for telling the truth is as old as journalism itself, but in a world disturbed by conflicts amidst widespread corruption, fading democracies, polarization, coup attempts, and governance either aligned with cartels or under the control of non-state actors, the threats journalists face today are multipronged and unprecedented. If you look at the world map today, from our newsroom, 80 percent of the globe is dangerous for journalists, particularly from gender and minority backgrounds. In the last four and a half years of monitoring press freedom violations against women and non-binary journalists at the CFWIJ, we have noted that at least 1 out of 5 women journalists are threatened for their jobs.

When I worked as a journalist for almost two decades, often covering terrorism and conflict in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, I often felt less on the radar as a woman. Particularly in more conservative countries, targeting women was against social norms, and in most parts of the world, women journalists were not taken seriously enough to be considered a threat. While verbal harassment and threats were not uncommon, physical assault, kidnapping, assassination attempts, and murders were very unlikely – all of which are the top violation trends we have reported at the CFWIJ Press Freedom Newsroom.



# Note From the Founding Director

Something shifted in the last decade as press freedom has been declining, simultaneously with the rise of social media polarization that platformed the bombastic surge of political hate and misinformation. At the CFWIJ, we consistently noted a rise in attacks on women and non-binary journalists in the most crucial spots around the world. Our Press Freedom Newsroom, which monitors 128 countries, observes a simultaneity in global instability and rise of attacks on women and non-binary journalists – often, the latter remain confidential due to the very real danger LGBTQI+ journalists face all over the world with close to no protection.

Whether it is covid-19 related misinformation, elections in a country in Africa, cartels in Latin America, or indigenous issues in Canada, the last four years show a clear trend: big events mean more women journalists will be targeted, and their gender will often be utilized to abuse them more viciously. This year, it has been no different, but only more concerning as Russia has taken the front seat in targeting any form of speech, particularly in eastern and western Europe.

Concerningly, in the first half of 2023, we have documented the spike of a new trend: assassination attempts. As we monitored worldwide violations, we have recorded an increase in press freedom attacks in Europe. At this point, our team has documented a very similar nature of attacks around the world – police violence, legal harassment including SLAPPs, abductions, and assassination attempts – which means Western democracies, which for decades if not over a century, have been the safe haven for domestic and foreign journalism.

This year, we documented two murders and four assassination attempts. Victoria Amelina was fatally targeted with a deadly Russian missile in Ukraine, and Samaher Abdelshafi, who had first escaped Sudan due to her work and had been taking refuge in a camp in Darfur, was killed in a shelling.



# Note From the Founding Director

***Russian missiles have been found to be one of the most common sources of journalistic killing since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Should we be suspicious of these patterns? Perhaps very much!***

The assassination attempts were all very well planned, including attempts to fatally poison and blow up the cars of journalists. All of these assassination attempts are also graphics and put together in a way that if they were successful, it was impossible to miss the fact that these journalists were deliberately targeted. The message is dangerous. It is not 'we will kill you,' it is 'we will come after you wherever you go.'

Read below in this report the assassination attempt of Natalia Amo, who is the third female journalist exiled and targeted by Russia in this way, all in European countries.

These trends should worry us all, particularly when Europe is one part of the world considered to be safe for exiled journalists from Russia and other parts of the world to live and work. Particularly when, for decades, press freedom attacks have been a business in the global south, where democracies have fallen, dictatorships have risen, or non-state actors have been in charge. Additionally, we have seen a rise in SLAPP cases, also in Europe, where we still await the clear punishment of the killers of our friend Daphne Caruana Galiza, who was killed 5 years ago for exposing corrupt politicians in Malta.



# Note From the Founding Director

A truly urgent time for us to put on our re-thinking hats, come together in a room/zoom, and re-examine our process and planning around protecting journalists. Press freedom organizations, including the CFWIJ, individual advocates, defenders, and allies, are working harder than ever, but the threats have gotten more ubiquitous and serious. This lack of balance is unsustainable for our world. When violence gets close to journalists, it gets closer to civilians. In 2024, we are launching a new initiative called Women Press Freedom, which will focus solely on this issue that affects our world at large. In the last four years of CFWIJ's Press Freedom Newsroom, which was merely a response initiative, has learnt some incredibly nuanced lessons about the role of gender in a world undergoing ideological and security turmoil. With the launch of our new initiative, Women Press Freedom, we are taking it to the next level.

Issues like misinformation, targeting of the media, and racial, political, and religious violence are merely tools and symptoms of something much greater happening to humanity. When women journalists are targeted around the world in raising numbers, and entire cultural shifts take place against women and minorities who speak, the issue does not affect the media alone. I hope we can all see that.

In our changing world, it is vital to project the role journalists from gender, race, and minority backgrounds play. That is what Women Press Freedom's work is set to be, and we will appreciate it if you join us in this journey.

Yours,  
Kiran Nazish



# Note from the Women Press Freedom newsroom's senior editor

In an era where truth is constantly under siege, the resilience and courage of women journalists operating on the frontlines of global conflict have never been more crucial — or more imperiled. Our dedicated team at the Coalition For Women In Journalism is meticulously documenting the manifold threats that loom over them in their pursuit of truth. This report is the culmination of relentless observation, empathetic engagement, and rigorous research, aiming to bring their stories into the limelight and advocate for a safer, more equitable journalistic landscape.

Our international team, comprising people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, has navigated the complexities of this task with a singular purpose: to stand in solidarity with women journalists who are navigating through a maelstrom of propaganda, online vitriol, and physical dangers. We have engaged directly with journalists on the ground, sifted through countless reports and tips, and conducted thorough investigations to ensure no incident goes unnoticed and unaddressed.

As we delved deeper into this vortex of violence and intimidation, we encountered stories that left us shaken to the core. Every violation we documented — whether it be a chilling threat, an act of violence, or a tragic loss — served as a stark reminder of the price these journalists pay to uphold the tenets of a free press. Yet, in the face of such adversity, we also witnessed unparalleled bravery and tenacity, stories of women and LGBTQI journalists who refuse to be silenced, who continue to report from the trenches despite the overwhelming odds.



# Note from the Women Press Freedom newsroom's senior editor

This report transcends mere data and statistics; it is a compendium of lived experiences, a tapestry woven from the threads of fear, threat, and unwavering determination that characterize the lives of our colleagues across the globe. Each figure and fact presented herein is a testament to their valor and a clarion call for us to redouble our efforts in ensuring their safety and well-being.

The escalating attacks, particularly against minority and local journalists, amplify the urgency of our mission and underscore the imperative of collective action. This report is not just a presentation of findings — it is an impassioned plea, a rallying cry for all who believe in the sanctity of press freedom to unite and act.

Inge Snip





# History of Our Press Freedom Work

We found ourselves caught up in providing assistance to bail journalists out of jail, finding legal support, among other resources and means to advocate for our members around the world. In December of that year, we decided to launch a platform where these press freedom attacks could officially be documented. With the generous support of Craig Newmark Philanthropies, we were able to launch the Press Freedom Newsroom.

In essence, CFWIJ Press Freedom work has been a response to a galactic vacuum of information about press freedom attacks on women and non-binary journalists. In 2019, we started monitoring 12 countries, and now we monitor and report on press freedom violations in 128 countries. This includes nuanced and often in-depth reporting on serious cases of violations against women journalists, timelines of tedious or prolonged cases, and details about how women journalists get targeted, why they get targeted, and who is responsible.

Most of our reporting involves insight from the ground, directly from journalists who face these pressures for doing their job, and anyone else with insight, such as lawyers, colleagues, or local groups. Our peer support networks spread worldwide are instrumental in making this work.

In the last few years, we have built on some significant groundwork for press freedom support for women and non-binary journalists. In 2024, we will be officially launching our new separate initiative organization called the Women Press Freedom. The goal of WPF is to focus solely on identifying press freedom problems that journalists from gender and racial backgrounds encounter and find solutions for them worldwide.

Meanwhile, the following documentation features an incisive coverage of press freedom violations the CFWIJ documented in the first half of 2023.

# History of Our Press Freedom Work

In 2019, the Coalition For Women In Journalism launched its Press Freedom support system for women and non-binary journalists. Through our previously established mentorship and peer-support networks, we found the majority of women journalists in our network, particularly local, racialized, and minority journalists of women or non-binary backgrounds, did not get support and solidarity when they faced threats from the state. Often, press freedom attacks on them did not get documented and, due to that, were also excluded from the global press freedom data.

In 2018, several CFWIJ mentorship and peer support members who faced press freedom attacks were refused assistance from international groups due to various factors. In essence, as press freedom attacks increased for women journalists worldwide, there was little to no support for the majority of women in the industry, particularly in the global south, Middle East, and Latin America. A young female journalist was abducted in Pakistan, another in Mexico, a member of the CFWIJ mentorship program, was deported from Turkey under false assumptions, and another member was arrested without charge in India. In the backdrop, Gauri Lankesh was killed in India and Kim Wall in Denmark.

**900+**

women  
journalists and  
leaders  
evacuated and  
relocated

**105**

legal support  
provided

**50**

female  
reporters  
benefit from  
mental health  
therapy

**197**

organization,  
media and  
general  
partnerships

**1500+**

top women  
journalists  
within our  
network

**128**

countries  
where we  
monitor  
press  
freedom

**160**

global mentors

as of July 31, 2023



## Overview: Most prevalent threats to women journalists

Worldwide, CFWIJ documented 280 press freedom violations against women journalists from January to July 2023. We saw threats and intimidations reach a record high, with a 450% increase compared to the first half of 2022.

Cases in Europe contrasted starkly with other regions. In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ recorded 109 cases of violations against women journalists in Europe, indicating a troubling trend of increasing violations. Especially worrying in Europe is the hostile environment journalists encountered while covering protests, with police and protestors contributing to the challenges.

# Overview: Most prevalent threats to women journalists



**280**  
press  
freedom  
violations



**450%**  
increase on  
threats and  
intimidations



**38%**  
of cases  
documented  
in Europe



*Globally, two women journalists were killed in the first half of 2023, compared to 12 in all of 2022. CFWIJ documented four assassination attempts targeting women journalists. None were recorded in the first half of 2022. CFWIJ documented no abductions in 2022, but the first half of 2023 saw three abductions in Haiti and one in Nigeria.*

On a positive note, the first half of 2023 saw a decrease in smear campaigns compared to previous years. Women journalists globally, however, have shared with CFWIJ that they are less likely to share their experiences in fear of retaliation or because they see it as an inescapable by-product of the job. The normalization of online hate and trolling is dangerous. CFWIJ's data shows the likelihood of online harassment and troll campaigns turning into legal harassment or physical assault is not to be underestimated.

These incidents are deeply alarming and are a stark reminder of the declining state of press freedom worldwide. The intentional targeting of women and LGBTQI journalists is a grave violation of their rights and poses a significant threat to the principles of free and independent media.



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## Contextual Special Provision on Russia

*Russia has emerged as the leading violator of women journalists among European countries. Almost 20% of all violations in Europe were committed by Russia. Many of these have taken place on the frontlines in Ukraine since it invaded the country in February 2022.*

*Ukrainian Victoria Amelina, a well-known author turned war crimes investigator, was killed in targeted shelling. Anastasia Taylor-Lind and reporter Yuliya Kiriyenko were injured in missile attacks. Yevhenia Kytayiva, Anna Kudryavtseva, and Catalina Gómez were also deliberately targeted by Russian missiles but managed to get out unscathed.*

# Contextual Special Provision on Russia

It is not only through direct attacks on journalists' lives that Russian forces seek to intimidate the free press in Ukraine. They also employ detentions, enforced disappearances, and criminal prosecution as a tactic to silence media workers and their relatives. Journalists such as Iryna Levchenko and Lutfiye Zudiyeva have been wrongfully detained. Meanwhile, Iryna Danylovych, who has been held behind bars since the spring of 2022, was denied medical care in prison in Crimea by Russian forces, resulting in loss of hearing. \_

Beyond Ukraine, an assassination attempt targeted Russian journalist Natalia Arno in the Czech Republic. She was allegedly poisoned by Russian security services, raising serious concerns about the safety of exiled women journalists beyond the immediate conflict zones.

Within Russia itself, two women journalists faced severe consequences for their work. Siberian journalist Maria Ponomorenko was sentenced to six years in prison for her social media posts about civilian deaths in Mariupol. Meanwhile, food blogger Veronika Belotserkovskaya, now living in France, was sentenced in absentia.

All cases CFWIJ documented related to Russia in the first half of 2023 are linked to its relentless war against Ukraine.

In a joint effort, CFWIJ and 23 other press freedom organizations have called for international organizations to take action against Russia and hold it accountable for its war crimes against journalists. The urgency to protect press freedom and ensure the safety of women journalists cannot be overstated.



# Chasing To Kill

## *Murders, assassination attempts, and abductions*

*This section sheds light on how journalists have been chased to their killing by oppressors and abusers while these journalists were covering the news or after and for covering the news. Two journalists were successfully killed in this war, but this year we report it could have been more. Several journalists have barely escaped assassination attempts, from poisoning to car explosions. These are indiscriminately harsh realities women journalists have encountered from the beginning of this year.*



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# *Fatal Frontlines: Two Journalists Killed in Conflict Zones*

## **Victoria Amelina – Ukraine Deadly Russian Missiles**

Ukrainian writer Victoria Amelina, a well-known novelist turned war crimes investigator, was killed by Russian missiles on Kramatorsk, eastern Ukraine, on June 27. The murder of Victoria Amelina marks the fifth woman journalist to be killed in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022.

"Russian missiles have been found to be the most common source of journalist killings since the beginning of the war on Ukraine," said Kiran Nazish, founding director of the Coalition For Women In Journalism. "Should we be suspicious of this pattern? Perhaps!"



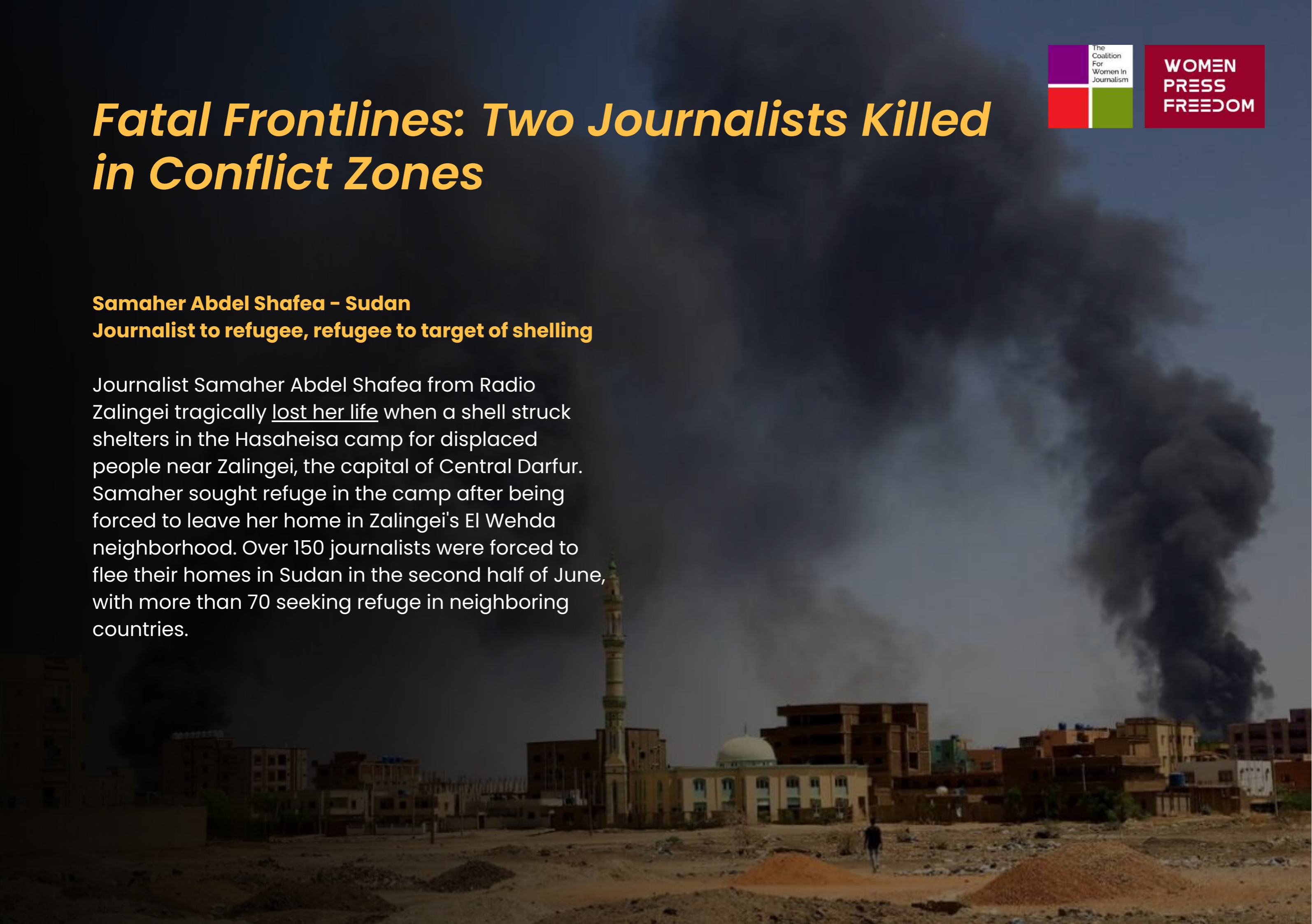




# ***Fatal Frontlines: Two Journalists Killed in Conflict Zones***

## **Samaher Abdel Shafea – Sudan Journalist to refugee, refugee to target of shelling**

Journalist Samaher Abdel Shafea from Radio Zalingei tragically lost her life when a shell struck shelters in the Hasaheisa camp for displaced people near Zalingei, the capital of Central Darfur. Samaher sought refuge in the camp after being forced to leave her home in Zalingei's El Wehda neighborhood. Over 150 journalists were forced to flee their homes in Sudan in the second half of June, with more than 70 seeking refuge in neighboring countries.



# Unrelenting Threats: Chilling Assassination Attempts of 4 Women Journalists



## Natalia Arno, Russia

In August, alarming allegations of Russian poisoning attempts against three exiled women journalists surfaced. Elena Kostyuchenko, exiled in Germany, and Irina Babloyan, while in Georgia, were poisoned at the end of 2022. Natalia Arno, the head of the Free Russian Foundation, was targeted while staying in Prague, Czechia, in May 2023. Originally from Siberia, Arno has been living in exile in the United States since 2014. The suspected poisonings are part of a long-standing pattern where Russian security services employ poison to assassinate. Recent reports suggest Russia maintains two secret poison production facilities, indicating their significant involvement in such activities.



## Morgan Large, France

Morgan Large, a respected environmental journalist and Radio Kreiz Breizh host, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in Brittany. Her car was deliberately sabotaged, marking the second incident in just two years. The journalist, known for her in-depth investigations into the agricultural sector in Brittany, has been targeted for her work previously. In an eerily similar incident in March 2021, Large's car's wheel bolts were tampered with shortly after she appeared in a documentary exposing excesses of the agri-food industry in Brittany.

# Unrelenting Threats: Chilling Assassination Attempts of 4 Women Journalists



## María Luisa Estrada Hernández, México

On July 15, journalist María Luisa Estrada Hernández and her daughter narrowly escaped a targeted shooting attack. A police officer told Estrada that the attack was a warning to take down her independent media outlet, La Grillotina Política. Ahead of the attempt on Estrada's life, the Attorney General's Office (FGR) dismissed her protection requests, while Mexico remains the deadliest place in the world to be a journalist. On the same day Estrada was targeted, journalist Nelson Matus Peña was murdered in Guerrero. He was the second journalist killed that week.



## Lissette Ormanza, Ecuador

Unknown persons attempted to kill journalist Lissette Ormanza and mask the incident as a road accident. The attack follows weeks of death threats and an organized troll campaign faking her death. CFWIJ believes the threats and assassination attempt are linked to her reporting on a fatal bus accident in which she exposed the culpability of the transportation company.

# 3 Abductions of Women Journalists in Haiti

In Haiti, three women journalists were kidnapped in the first half of 2023. Press workers are being killed, kidnapped, and assaulted with impunity since the country plunged into political and social turmoil following the President's assassination in 2021. Marie Lucie Bonhomme Opont, Blondine Tanis, and Sandra Duvivier were all kidnapped by criminal gangs.

The lack of action by authorities and allegations of collusion with these gangs exacerbated the problem. Journalists have become prime targets as they strive to report the truth and raise awareness about the situation.

The effects of these abductions extend beyond the journalists themselves. Their families also face threats and disappearances, as seen in the case of Bonhomme's missing husband.



# Over 100 Women Journalists Remain Behind Bars Worldwide

According to data collected by CFWIJ, there has been a 7% decline in authorities locking women journalists up during the first half of 2023 compared to 2022. There are currently over 100 women journalists behind bars worldwide.

In Spain, in a shocking sentencing rocking the foundations of press freedom in the country, an unnamed woman journalist was sentenced to two years in prison for publishing leaked judicial information. Countries with the highest number of incarcerated women journalists are Iran, China, Belarus, and Turkey.



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## GLOSSARY

*Detained: no formal charges, behind bars*

*Arrested: detained, charges brought*

*Imprisoned: sentenced and behind bars*

*Sentenced: found guilty, either behind bars or not*

# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Spain

In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ documented a landmark case in which an unnamed woman journalist received an unprecedented prison sentence for publishing confidential information from a leaked judicial report, marking the first time in Spanish history that such a sentence has been imposed.

In a statement following the verdict, the journalist expressed her shock and struggle to process the impact of the sentence.

“I am still assimilating the blow of the sentence,” said the journalist in a statement after the verdict. The journalist was fired by her newspaper while on leave due to anxiety stemming from the court proceedings. “The process has taken away my desire to practice journalism,” she added.

*“I am still assimilating the blow of the sentence. The process has taken away my desire to practice journalism”*

— Spanish anonymous woman journalist

Sentencing the journalist to a two-year prison term and imposing a significant fine appears to be excessive, particularly considering that reporting on confidential court documents is a common practice in the country. It is important to strike a balance between protecting sensitive information and preserving press freedom, which plays a vital role in upholding transparency and accountability.



# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Iran

With 41 women journalists behind bars, Iran tops the ranks in the number of imprisoned women journalists. In the first half year of 2023, 4 women journalists were taken into custody or imprisoned, compared to 0 in the first half of 2022. The death of Mahsa Amini and subsequent September protests resulted in a resurgence of legal harassment against the press. Women journalists have been arrested, severely mistreated behind bars, ordered to pay exorbitant bail costs, faced unfair trials, and were sent to prison as part of its efforts to suppress dissent.

A prime example of the relentless harassment by Iranian authorities against journalists is the ongoing persecution of 23-year-old Kurdish journalist **Nazila Maroofian**. Following her coverage of the death of Mahsa Amini and her interview with Amini's father, Maroofian has been continuously arrested and detained. In the first half of 2023, after being released on a suspended sentence, Maroofian was stalked for months by a security officer before being re-arrested in July following a raid on her home.

The other targeted women journalists in the first half year of 2023 include **Nasim Sultan Beygi**, — sentenced to four years and three months in prison on July 31, 2023 — and journalist and writer **Saeedeh Shafiei** — sentenced to four years and three months in prison on July 31, 2023.

# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Iran

**Sepideh Qolian**, a freelance Iranian journalist, has faced torture, unjust imprisonment, and ongoing legal harassment from the Iranian regime. Despite receiving amnesty for her initial five-year sentence in March 2023, Qolian was again arrested and imprisoned for another two years in July 2023.

The faith of many journalists remains unclear, however. **Atena Farghadani**, a renowned cartoonist, was detained following the posting of a satirical political cartoon on her Instagram account on June 7, 2023. It is uncertain if any formal charges have been brought against her at this time. **Melika Hashemi**, a journalist working for the Shahr news agency, was detained by authorities in the Islamic Republic after being summoned for "explanations" on July 31, 2023. Authorities have yet to charge the journalist with a crime.





# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Belarus

Belarus is the world's third-worst jailer of women journalists, with currently 10 women journalists behind bars. In the first half of 2023, courts sentenced two women journalists to a combined total of 24 years.

On March 17, journalists **Maryna Zolatava** and **Lyudmila Chekina** were sentenced to 12 years in prison each. The sentencing came after a smear campaign targeting the team at TUT.by. The verdict highlights the Belarusian regime's crackdown on freedom of expression. Censorship, violence, raids, and arrests are being carried out in the name of "combating extremism," which appears to be a tactic to suppress any anti-Russian propaganda following the invasion of Ukraine.

**Anastasia Sharkevich**, social media manager of independent news outlet Narodnaya Volya, was detained on February 6. She was charged with distributing extremist content and released after 13 days of detention.



# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Ethiopia

In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ documented two imprisonment cases of Amhara women journalists in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has continuously aimed to curtail press freedom since the outbreak of civil war in the Tigray region in 2020. Several journalists have been killed since, and many whose reporting does not align with government narratives have been detained on serious charges, including terrorism.

**Genet Asmamaw**, a journalist with Yeneta Media, was unlawfully arrested on April 6, 2023, in the midst of civil unrest resulting from military centralization efforts across the country. While in detention, the journalist was physically assaulted. On April 9, police arrested journalist, lecturer, and political analyst **Meskerem Abera**. Ten federal police officers conducted a search of her home and confiscated her phone before taking her into custody. Abera faces charges of inciting violence and riots. Both journalists mainly report and comment on political and social issues affecting the Amhara ethnic group, the second-largest in Ethiopia.

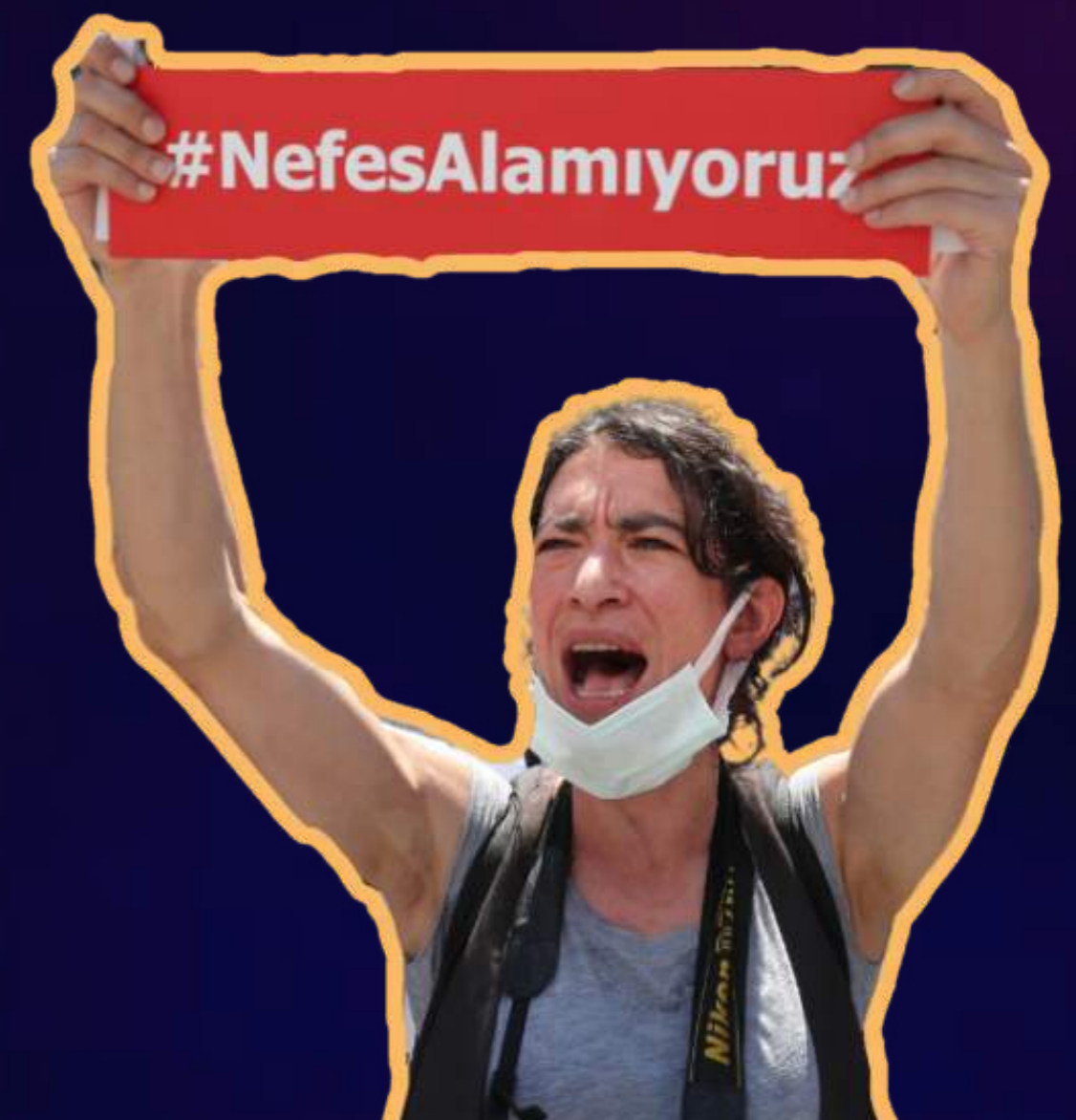


# Troubling Sentences in Spain and Intensified Crackdown in Iran and Belarus

## Turkiye

Although Turkiye consistently ranks among the top violators of press freedom – ranking number three in the highest number of women journalists behind bars globally – legal harassment cases significantly decreased by 40% compared to last year. Presidential elections in May of this year tempered authorities' crusade against the free press to win the hearts and minds of voters. The continued systematic targeting of Kurdish women journalists for doing their job, with 70% of women journalists imprisoned in Turkiye since 2020 being Kurdish, remains an alarming trend.

In the first half of 2023, and based on data collected in the previous year, CFWIJ detected a new tactic used by Turkish authorities to suppress journalists: intentionally prolonging pre-trial detention periods to intimidate journalists, several spending over 1 year in prison, unaware of the bogus charges.



# Regional Review: CFWIJ Records a Fourfold Increase in Europe

In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ recorded 109 cases of violations against women journalists **in Europe**, indicating a troubling trend of increasing violations. This number has quadrupled from 27 cases in 2022, showing a rapid rise within a year. Compared to 2021, there has been a **40% increase** in violations against women journalists.



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# Regional Review: CFWIJ Records a Fourfold Increase in Europe

The safety of women journalists in Europe is increasingly at risk, with a rising number of violations threatening their physical well-being. These violations, including assault, harassment, and fatal attacks, have been observed in countries like Russia, Ukraine, France, and Kosovo. The targeting of women journalists not only hampers their ability to report truthfully and critically on important issues but also creates a climate of fear and intimidation, leading to self-censorship. The violations against women journalists are often part of broader crackdowns on independent media, as seen in Russia and Belarus. The continuous threats and attacks also have a profound psychological impact, causing increased stress, anxiety, and fear for their safety.

## Violations in Europe H1 2022-2023



# Regional Review: CFWIJ Records a Fourfold Increase in Europe

**Russia** stands out as the main perpetrator of these violations in Europe. The Russian government, army, and security services continue to harass journalists within Russia, in Ukraine, and beyond. CFWIJ documented 19 cases of the Russian government or its institutions targeting women journalists in the first six months of 2023.

In **Kosovo**, violent protests in Serb-majority towns resulted in various attacks on journalists over three weeks starting in May 2023. The unusually high number of attacks on women journalists (13) during this period can be attributed to the tense environment surrounding these protests.



**Belarus** follows with 11 violations, including eight detentions and the 12-year sentencing of TUT.by journalists Maryna Zolatava and Lyudmila Chekina. President Lukashenko continues suppressing dissent by unjustly imprisoning journalists and activists on false charges.

**France** also witnessed a concerning increase in attacks, from nine in the first half of 2023 to two in 2022. Particularly worrying are the violent assaults on women journalists by police during protests. Four instances of physical assault were documented, along with an assassination attempt on journalist Morgan Large, known for reporting on the environment and agricultural industry. In February, there was a disturbing escalation of threats from ultra-right groups targeting media outlets and journalists.

In **Georgia**, CFWIJ documented 10 cases of press violations against women journalists. During successful protests against the "Foreign Agents Law" in March, four women journalists were assaulted at demonstrations. Additionally, three women journalists had their accreditation revoked after questioning members of parliament.

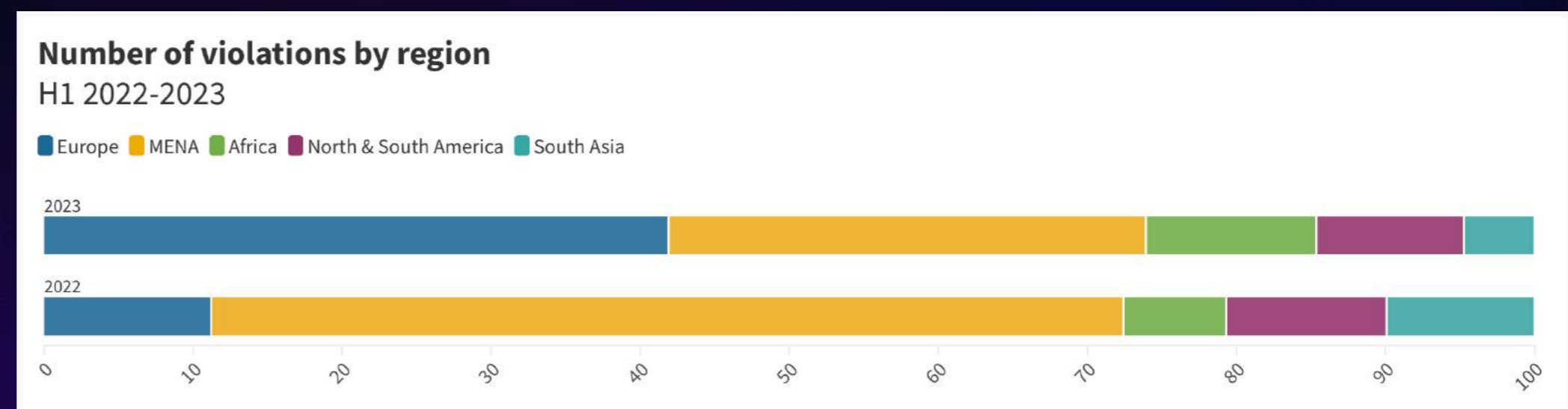
# Regional Review: CFWIJ Records a Fourfold Increase in Europe

One concerning trend that emerged during this period was the hostile environment journalists encountered while covering protests, with both police and protestors contributing to the challenges. Of particular concern is the routine aggression displayed by French police officers and security personnel towards the press. In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ documented three cases of police assault on women journalists and one case of a woman journalist being attacked by protestors.

In an alarming incident in Marseille, an unnamed woman journalist from Made in Marseille was strangled and verbally abused by a Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS) officer after presenting her press card. This distressing event occurred during President Macron's visit to the city in June. The journalist suffered injuries, including a contused trachea and bruises on her arms and legs.

During the pension reform protests in March, journalist Chloé Gence was manhandled, strangled, and forcibly arrested by police in Paris. In May, journalist Harmony Pondy-Nyaga was assaulted by security personnel and police officers while reporting on a climate demonstration.

During the unrest following the police killing of a teenage boy, protestors brutally attacked journalist Emma Audrey and her colleague with crowbars. Audrey sustained minor head trauma and bruising as a result.





# Turmoil, Elections, and Media Layoffs: A Recap of Major Events Impacting Press

*Turkiye–Syria Earthquake: 17% of cases  
CFWIJ documented in Turkey are  
earthquake-related*

Journalists covering the devastating earthquake in Turkiye on February 6 encountered numerous challenges and harassment, hindering their ability to report effectively. Sema Çağlak, a reporter from Jinnews, and several of her colleagues were detained while attempting to film the wreckage in Urfa. In an effort to control the spread of "disinformation," social media access was restricted, including a block on Twitter, which impeded communication and coordination for aid efforts. The declaration of a state of emergency further complicated matters as journalists were targeted and prevented from accessing affected areas. They faced detainment, harassment, and threats from law enforcement and the public. Journalists documenting the facts on the ground were criticized and attacked by fellow journalists in pro-government media.



# Turmoil, Elections, and Media Layoffs: A Recap of Major Events Impacting Press

## *Turkiye Elections: A Closer Look at the Press Freedom Violations and Safety Risks Faced by Women Journalists*

During the election season in Türkiye, CFWIJ diligently monitored the proceedings and recorded numerous violations, including press access denial, unwarranted obstacles, and physical assaults targeting women journalists. We observed that journalists from diverse backgrounds were targeted using different tactics. Local women reporters, both Turkish and Kurdish, experienced physical assaults, while foreign correspondents faced online harassment. CFWIJ has noticed that some of the attacks, especially those against Kurdish journalists, appeared to be organized.



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# Turmoil, Elections, and Media Layoffs: A Recap of Major Events Impacting Press

## *Women Journalists Defying Challenges to Cover Nigeria's Presidential Elections*

During Nigeria's presidential elections, unidentified attackers targeted and impeded the work of at least 28 journalists. Bolanle Olabimtan, Ajayi Adebola, Ima Elijah, Henrietta Oke, and Nkiru Nwokedi were among the journalists who faced assault, as CFWIJ documented.

Ima Elijah, a reporter for Pulse.ng, along with her camera operator, were forcibly removed from polling stations while unidentified individuals confiscated the phone of AIT correspondent Nkiru Nwokedi. Also, Henrietta Oke, a correspondent for AIT, faced a similar ordeal during the attacks.

"They came and took my phone, went through my private chats, deleted pictures and videos, searched my entire gallery, checked my official and election group chats. They went on my Instagram and checked my feed and private DMs. They threatened me, and this was under the rain, and I was shivering," said journalist Bolanle Olabimtan in an interview with TheCable.



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# Turmoil, Elections, and Media Layoffs: A Recap of Major Events Impacting Press

## *Large-scale Layoffs on the Rise in 2023*

In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ closely monitored the wave of layoffs within the media industry, particularly in North America, and documented instances of large-scale layoffs, highlighting the concerning trend that has increased in recent years.

These layoffs have profoundly impacted the media landscape, leading to widespread job losses and a significant decrease in the number of journalists working in the industry.

In March, CFWIJ recorded layoffs at Global News, which have significantly affected Canadian women journalists, particularly those who have been targeted with death threats for their reporting. Well-known journalists Rachel Gilmore and Teresa Wright were among those affected. This decision raises concerns about the safety and security of women in the journalism industry.

This decision has immediate consequences for these individuals and sends a chilling message to Canadian women journalists who already face online harassment. It is crucial for media companies to support and protect their female employees. Laying off women journalists under the guise of a vague restructuring effort is simply unacceptable.



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# A Troubling Surge in Intimidation and Threats

In the first half of 2023, the Coalition For Women In Journalism documented a disturbing rise in cases of intimidation and threats targeting women journalists. A total of 33 incidents were recorded during this period, a significant increase compared to just 6 cases in the same timeframe in 2022.

Turkiye stands out as the country with the highest number of reported incidents, with 11 instances of threats and intimidation against women journalists. These incidents occurred during the coverage of the aftermath of February's earthquakes and a court hearing involving journalist Sibel Tekin. The involvement of both the public and the police in harassing women journalists is particularly alarming.

Seven documented cases involved threats or intimidation by politicians, public officials, or political parties directed towards women journalists. These acts of aggression include verbal assaults, insults, and even forced exclusion from press conferences. Such tactics are clearly aimed at intimidating and undermining the work of women journalists who may be critical of those in power.



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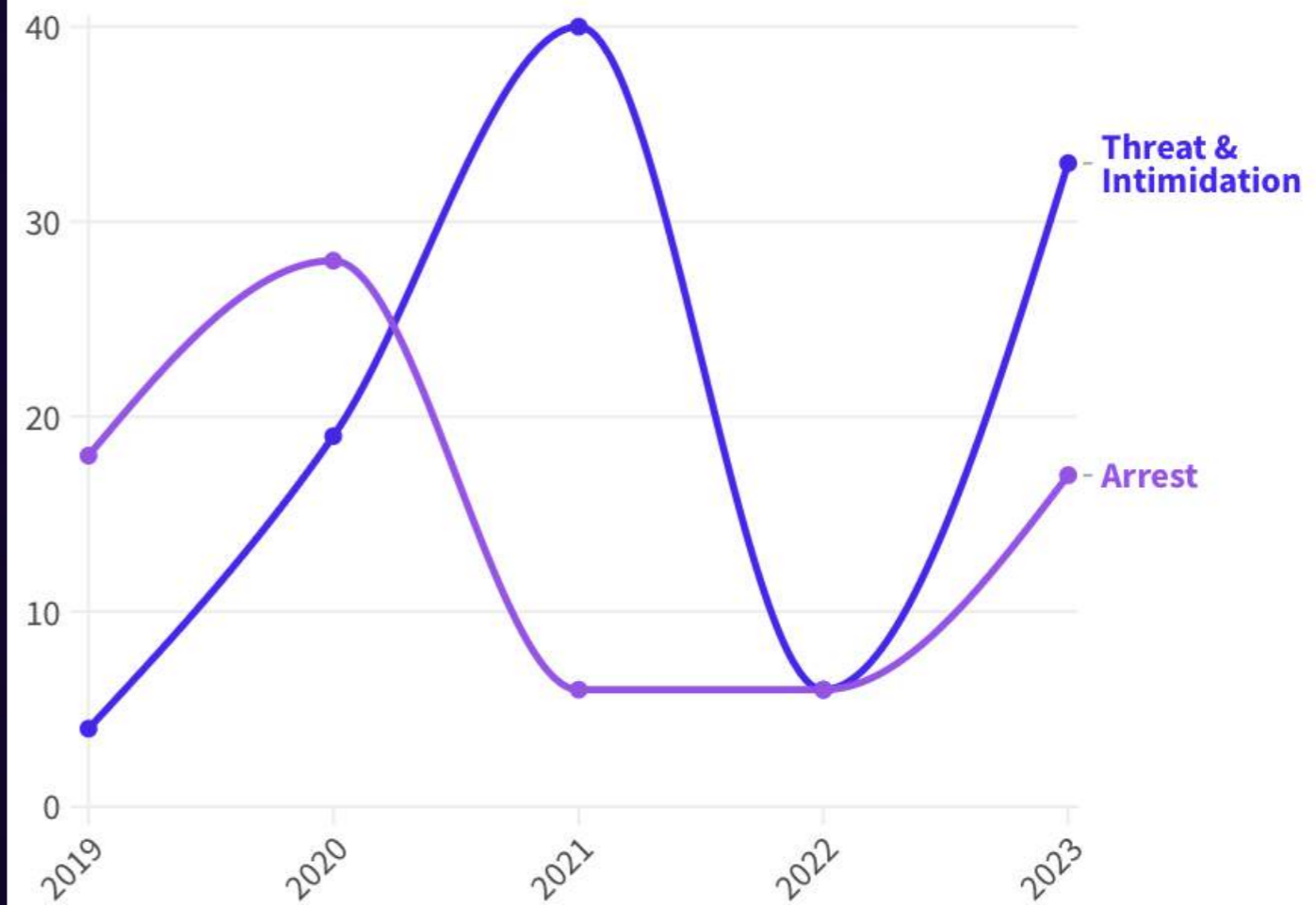
# A Troubling Surge in Intimidation and Threats

One example is the case of Albanian investigative reporter Ola Xama, who was called a “contracted killer” by Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj after publishing an article about the mayor's involvement in a waste concession. Similarly, Bulgarian journalist Flora Stratieva faced threats, ridicule, humiliation, and insults from the far-right Revival party, with the party's leader, Kostadin Kostadinov, even forcing her to leave their press conference.

Two cases of threats and intimidation were identified as instances of transnational repression, specifically involving China threatening journalists in Europe. This highlights the global nature of the issue, where press freedom is being challenged beyond national borders.

## Top Trends Against Women Journalists in H1 since 2019

Cases documented in H1 each year



# A Troubling Surge in Intimidation and Threats



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One such case involves Su Yutong, who fled China in 2010 and has been targeted with threats and abuse, including stalking, blackmailing, and threats to her life and safety. These attacks intensified after her reporting at a Hong Kong protest in front of the Chinese embassy in Germany. Su suspects the involvement of Chinese authorities, stating that although she does not know her harassers personally, they consistently accuse her of "smearing China" and label her as an "anti-China reporter" who should stop criticizing the Chinese government.

Another journalist, Dutch reporter Marije Vlaskamp, formerly a correspondent in China, has also received threats of Chinese origin. In October 2022, bomb threats were made in Vlaskamp's name to Chinese embassies in The Hague and other locations.

These findings demonstrate a disturbing rise in the intimidation and threats women journalists face in 2023. It is crucial to address these issues and protect the rights and safety of journalists, especially women, who play a vital role in ensuring a free and informed society.



# Ebbing Tide: A Significant Decrease in Smear Campaigns



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In the first half of 2023, CFWIJ recorded 22 instances of the same period last of organized troll campaigns and online harassment. This represents a 35% decline compared to 2022 and a significant 65% decrease from 2021. Among the regions, Europe accounted for the highest number of cases, comprising 45% of the total, followed by Asia with 18%.

North America experienced a sharp decrease, with only 13.6% of all cases in 2023, compared to its leading position in 2022, representing 47% of all documented cases.



# Ebbing Tide: A Significant Decrease in Smear Campaigns



*Saba Eitizaz, Rana Ayyub, Taylor Lorenz, Rachel Gilmore, Erica Ifill*

The decline in cases in North America could be attributed to women journalists either accepting online trolling as an occupational hazard or leaving social media platforms altogether.

Especially worrying is how women journalists have shared with CFWIJ that they are no longer reporting the online harassment they receive. The abundance of hate received online has become such an integral part of the profession that many will shrug it off. Unfortunately, CFWIJ's research shows that the line between online and offline attacks is incredibly thin. Organized smear campaigns and online harassment often lead to real-life consequences, such as legal harassment and physical assault.

Organized smear campaigns also lead to self-censorship, hindering the dissemination of important information to the public. Shockingly, one in three women journalists contemplate leaving the profession due to online harassment.



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



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