

# THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM

## FIRST HALF-YEARLY REPORT

Jan-June 2021



# ABOUT CFWIJ



The Coalition For Women In Journalism is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered a mentorship program 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. CFWIJ brings together journalists and organizations to share experiences necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong network where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

In 2013, CFWIJ launched an advocacy branch of the organisation to help make the issues and challenges that women journalists face every day more visible.

In September 2017, the CFWIJ ran a public campaign on Twitter to raise awareness about #ThreatsToWIJ - abbreviated from Threats to Women in Journalism. This Campaign focused on speaking to women journalists about the threats they face for their professional work. Online harassment, physical assault and threats to their families are examples of the obstacles women journalists must overcome to do their job.

The year 2020 called for a revival of this campaign, its second edition featuring a special focus on Pakistan. Our campaign was triggered by the brutal murder of Baloch journalist Shaheena Shaheen and the incessant online trolling of women journalists in this country. They encounter vicious social media attacks, doxing and hacking attempts by accounts often affiliated to the ruling party and conservative, right-wing constituents. #ThreasToWIJ entered the top 50 trending topics in Pakistan on September 15, 2020.

# ABOUT CFWIJ

On September 22, 2020, The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) launched its global campaign to discuss various forms of threats and attacks against women journalists. The campaign, designed as an interactive chat on Twitter, used the #ThreatsToWIJ hashtag to bring together women journalists, activists and rights advocates. This platform facilitated journalists to share their testimonies and propose remedies to the dire environment in which women journalists perform their jobs.

In 2020, CFWIJ started publishing monthly reports that include various cases of threats against women journalists. These reports highlight the different types of cases we identified, from arrests and detentions to physical assaults and online harassment. The reports show what press freedom looks like for female reporters worldwide.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism also focuses on specific countries and individual women journalists. We highlight major events, such as Covid-19, US protests and election, Beirut blast, Belarus protests, which are important in terms of press freedom in the in-focus section. CFWIJ also lists the names of women journalists covering these major events. We listed women journalists reporting in the MENA region, covering Covid-19 on the frontlines, covering BLM protests, farmer protests in India and black women journalists to follow.

**This report was developed with the support of Craig Newmark Philanthropies.**

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# NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is quite concerning to observe the rise in some of the risks that women are facing reporting from different parts of the world. Every month our work at CFWIJ shows, the consistent increase in the particular violations against women and LGBTQ journalist in the field as well as the newsrooms. From imprisonment to false charges against journalists, and vicious misinformation campaign, these are all tactics to silence the very bold and important work women journalists are doing to expose misuse of power around the world. The CFWIJ invites any stakeholder interested in helping us do the support work, which is not only crucial in journalism, but critical to our democracies.

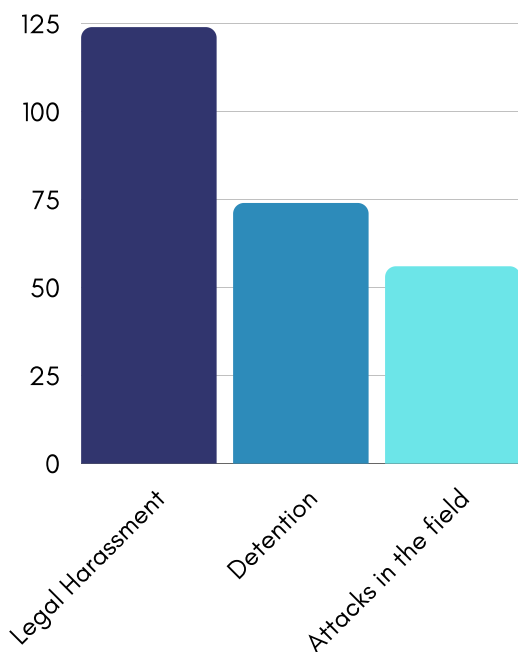
**Kiran Nazish**  
Founding Director, CFWIJ



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Most prevalent types of threats against women journalists in the first half of 2021

In the first half of 2021, women journalists faced the most danger not from criminal elements, but from the states they operate in. According to the data collected by The Coalition For Women In Journalism, the three most prevalent forms of threats to women journalists were legal harassment (124), detentions (74) and attacks in the field (56). Just these three offences comprise 48.5% of the total violations recorded in the past six months. Turkey, especially, emerges as a region where these incidents are common and journalists have to routinely confront law enforcement agencies and the judiciary system for reporting on the political developments in the country. Another country where these tactics are commonly used to silence voices of resistance is Myanmar, particularly after the political coup and military takeover it is currently facing.



## Overview: Most prevalent threats to women journalists

However, attacks on women journalists are not just restricted to physical spaces. They face a similar level of hostility online, where trolls, sometimes even endorsed by the state itself, target women journalists with gendered abuse and threats, perpetuating a violent misogynistic digital culture. Social media tech giants refuse to take responsibility for the severity of these attacks, even as several women journalists have come out to speak about the mental toll that online trolling takes on them. Pakistan is an important case study in this regard, where several women journalists alleged that the state was attempting to weaponize social media against them for criticizing government policies. Agnieszka Pikulicka, who up until recently was stationed in Uzbekistan reported a similar experience. Pikulicka was subject to state-endorsed trolling following her coverage of the attitude towards the LGBTQ community in the country. Sometimes, however, widespread social media trolling might not be propagated by the state but is still testament to state negligence. Perhaps, the most obvious example of this is Patricia Devlin, a journalist based in Northern Ireland, who has received repeated threats from the criminal gangs operating in the region, however, state authorities have completely failed to ensure her safety.

Women journalists, thus, experience the physical and digital world with raised stakes. They are obviously running the risk of holding power accountable and being punished for it. However, their gender makes them vulnerable to vitriol and attacks of a gendered nature that cis-male journalists do not encounter in their line of work. This is especially true of online spaces where anonymity allows for particularly misogynistic culture with minimum effort by billionaire tech giants to create safe spaces. Since social media works on a profit model, it appears that companies often collude with states to facilitate censorship, or refuse to incorporate a more inclusive standard policy for their platform.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism, however, works to not only record these violations and highlight them in an effort to raise awareness, we also work to provide material support to journalists on the receiving end of state persecution.



**48.5%**

**Cases of legal harassment, detention and attacks in the field comprise 48.5% of the total violations recorded in the past six months.**



# Murder Count

From January to June of 2021, the Coalition For Women In Journalism has documented nine cases of murdered women journalists. Out of these nine, four women journalists were murdered in Afghanistan, making the country a dangerous conflict zone for press freedom. Several women journalists have either fled the country or went into hiding amidst threats to their life. The most recent case we documented was the murder of Mina Khairi on June 4. Mina was working as a correspondent for Ariana News in Kabul. She and her family were targeted in an IED blast. Mina was the fourth woman journalist killed in a targeted attack this year. Earlier, on March 3, three young Afghan women journalists were shot dead by the handlers of a separatist organization. Years of violence have resulted in the persistent persecution of journalists and activists in Afghanistan.

The conservative society sees these hardworking women journalists as a threat to the stereotypical values and targets them accordingly.

On May 12, CFWIJ recorded the murder of Reema Saad in Palestine. Women journalists and activists endured endless challenges throughout the latest crisis in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem- mainly from Israeli Defense Forces. Reema was killed in an airstrike along with her husband and two children.

**She was four months pregnant at the time of her murder. The journalist was in her apartment when the forces targeted the 12- floor building that housed Reema, her family, and several other civilians.**



In April, CFWIJ reported the horrific killing of Aviva Okeson-Haberman. The journalist was shot in the head by a bullet that pierced the window of her apartment in Kansas. She was pronounced dead on April 23 when her boss went to check on her and found Aviva unconscious. She was working at KCUR before joining Kansas City's NPR station. The police were investigating the motive behind Aviva's killing.



On March 22, CFWIJ covered the murder of Lynn Murray, an accomplished photojournalist who lost her life in the mass shooting at a superstore in Colorado. Lynn was one of the ten victims that day. The challenges against women journalists do not always come from society or the state. In some instances, even a family member can be the assailant. Tin Hinan Lacedb, an Algerian journalist, was reportedly murdered by her husband. Hinan was working for Algerian TV and had two daughters to look after. She was targeted because of a rumoured family dispute. Rebecca Jeme lyabo was working as a communication specialist when she was murdered in a convoy attack with four other soldiers in Cameroon. Rebecca was popularly known as Becky Jeme among her friends.

4/9



Four out of nine murdered women journalists around the world were killed in Afghanistan.

57.4%



57.4% of physical assault cases were documented in the MENA region.

# Overview: Imprisonments

The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented that **50 women journalists are behind bars around the world**. Compared to last year, we observed an increase of 56.25% in the rate of imprisoned women journalists as of June 30. 56 journalists were in prison at the beginning of 2021, ultimately, six of them regained their freedom in February and April.

## 56.25%

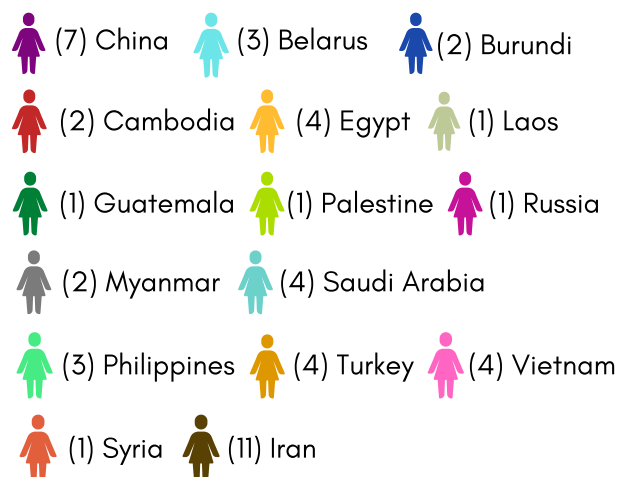
**TOTAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF IMPRISONED WOMEN JOURNALISTS**

Compared to last year, we observed an increase of 56.25% in the rate of imprisoned women journalists as of June 30.

## 50

**TOTAL NUMBER OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS BEHIND BARS**

56 journalists were in prison at the beginning of 2021. Ultimately, six regained their freedom in February and April.



# 22%

of imprisoned women journalists around the world are behind bars in Iran. Iran ranks first as the country with 11 imprisoned journalists.

# 5 releases

Only five women journalists were released from prison in the first half of 2021. Three of them were in Turkey.

**Iran ranks first as the country with the highest number of imprisoned journalists in 2020 as well as this year.** 11 women journalists remain behind bars in the country. Nooshin Jafari was the last journalist arrested in Iran without any prior notice on February 16 and transferred to Tehran's Qarchak Prison to serve her four-year prison sentence. She was sentenced on charges of spreading anti-establishment propaganda and insulting sanctities. She was hurriedly arrested without any official notice because of the "fear of escaping."

**China follows Iran with seven imprisoned journalists.** During the Covid-19 outbreak, many journalists suffered state crackdown and were arrested following their journalistic coverages. After almost half a year of holding under a form of detention that refuses access to a lawyer, the Chinese police officially arrested CGTN television anchorwomen Cheng Lei for "illegally supplying state secrets overseas". Zhang Zhan, a Chinese citizen journalist was sentenced to four years in prison in Shanghai last year due to her coverage of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. She was found guilty of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". She remains behind bars in inhumane conditions.

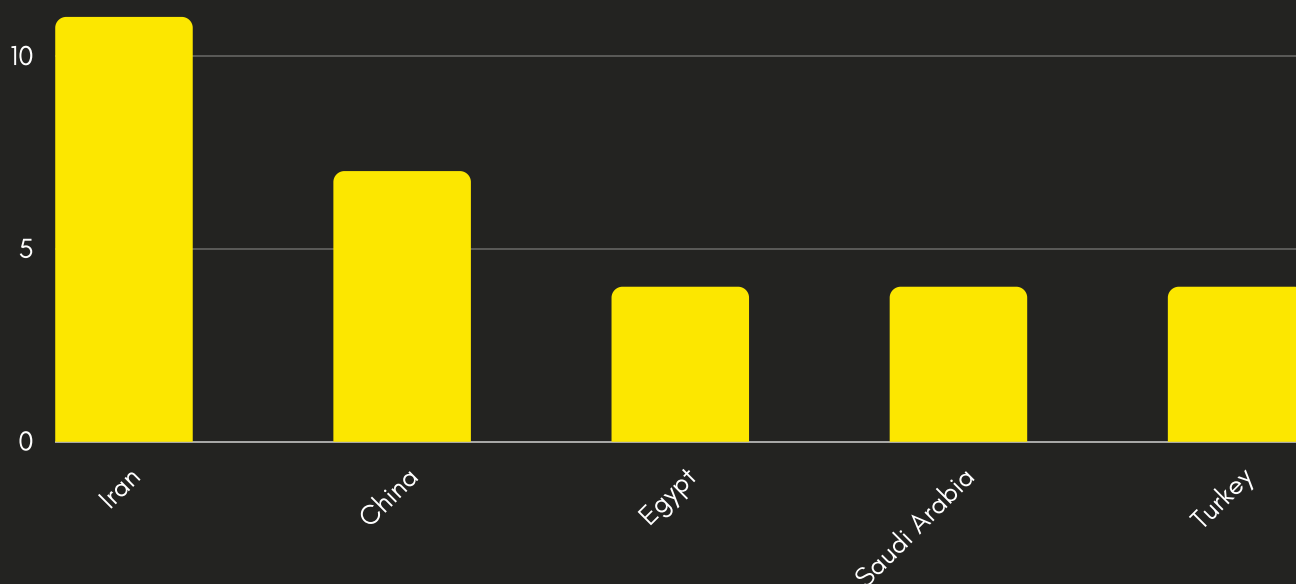
**Egypt and Saudi Arabia kept four journalists behind bars.** Loujain Al-Hathloul was finally released on February 11 after spending 1001 days in prison. She had been framed under allegations of "espionage" and "conspiring" against the kingdom because of her activism for women's rights and criticism of the Saudi authorities and remained nearly three years in prison. She continues to combat the Saudi legal system for her rights. In Egypt, journalist and human rights activist Solafa Magdy and her husband, photojournalist Hossam al-Sayyad, were finally released in March after spending almost seventeen months in extrajudicial state custody. During Solafa's time in prison, she was reportedly subjected to torture and denied medical aid.



**Turkey, on the other hand, ranks fifth place where four journalists are still kept in prison.** At the beginning of this year, the number was seven whereas three women got their freedom. Journalists Şehriban Abi and Nazan Sala were brutally arrested over their coverage of two Kurdish villagers named Servet Turgut and Osman Şiban, who were tortured and thrown from a national army helicopter. After 175 days of imprisonment, both journalists were released at their first hearing. Their trial, however, is still ongoing. If they are convicted, they may be sentenced to 15 years in prison on the charge of being members of an armed terrorist organization.

**Belarus has been among the most dangerous countries for attacks on journalists in the past year.** At least three journalists were incarcerated in the country. Following the election results in

August 2020, which reaffirmed “Europe’s last dictator”, Alexander Lukashenko, in power, Belarus tightened its restrictions on journalists. Journalists Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova have remained behind bars since November 2020 for live streaming a protest. Both journalists were broadcasting the violent dispersal of a demonstration held in memory of Raman Bandarenka, a young activist. Raman succumbed to his injuries after he was reportedly beaten by security forces during an anti-government protest. The journalists are accused of taking an active part and even leading actions that violate public order. Authorities reported that their broadcast disrupted public transport. Also, Alla Sharko, program director of the Press Club of Belarus, was arrested on December 22, 2020, along with her colleagues. Authorities raided their apartments and their offices. Their equipment including computers, phones, and bank cards was also confiscated.



Top five countries with the highest number of imprisoned women journalists

In the Philippines, three journalists remain bars. Manila Today's editor, Lady Ann Salem, was the last imprisoned journalist who was arrested during police operations in Manila on December 10, International Human Rights Day. Even though later the court dismissed all charges against her due to police misconduct, she continues to be detained in jail.

In conclusion, Burundi, Cambodia and Myanmar had two women journalists prisoned, while Guatemala, Laos, Palestine, Russia and Syria had at least one woman journalist behind bars. The CFWIJ identified at least 16 countries that kept journalists imprisoned in the first half of 2021.

# 50%

of imprisoned journalists are kept behind bars in the MENA region. Iran, China and Egypt the top three countries with the highest number of imprisoned journalists.

# 36%

of women journalists behind bars are from Asia, including the East and Southeast Asia regions. China, Vietnam, and the Philippines are the leading countries.



# REGIONAL REVIEW



Photo Credit: Bülent Kılınc/AFP

*CFWIJ broke down the data it recorded into global regions to gain a deeper understanding of the trends regarding free press around the world. This helps us highlight the violations specific to a particular region of the world for a more comprehensive analysis on how different societal aspects are weaponized against women journalists and what enables these behaviours. It also gives us a deeper look into the political developments of the region and the problems that require immediate redressal.*

## Middle East and North Africa

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The MENA region continues to be the most dangerous region where conflicts and wars take place and many people lose their lives. In a region where human rights are trampled on and even the most basic right to life is ignored, of course, press freedom suffered the most. Journalists in the frontline continued to be threatened by arbitrary detentions, assassinations and other forms of intimidation both online and offline.

Women journalists were not just challenged by human rights and press freedom violations but also faced vicious threats because of the sharp gender discrimination.

Between January and June 2021, the MENA region witnessed at least 197 cases of threats against female journalists, accounting for 38.85% of the total cases documented by the CFWIJ. The most dangerous countries for women journalists in the region were Turkey and Palestine in the half of the year. As the CFWIJ, we documented at least 160 cases in Turkey. The majority of the cases were legal harassment solely because of doing their job.

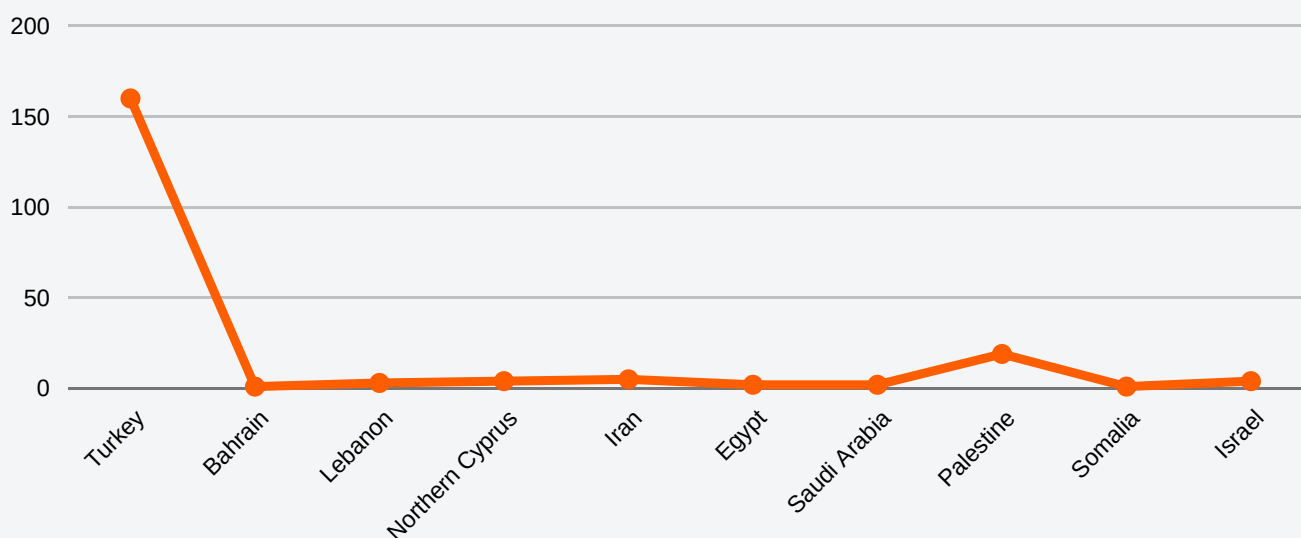
After the escalating conflict with Israeli forces, Palestine follows Turkey with the most threatened women journalists. At least 11 journalists were physically assaulted while covering attacks and violations against Jerusalem and worshipers in the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine. Sadly, Palestinian journalist Reema Saad was killed in a targeted airstrike by Israeli forces on a 10-floor building in the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City. Reema was four months pregnant at the time of her death. Sources on the ground confirmed that she and her husband and two children were killed in the attack.

**2020**

**First Half of 2020**



Iran ranks the most dangerous countries for women journalists, after Turkey and Palestine. The most arbitrary detentions and arrests were monitored and documented in the country. Journalist and charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has been imprisoned and fighting for justice for nearly six years, is now facing an extension of one more year of imprisonment with a new charge. This is a negotiating tactic that the Iranian regime is applying while they are in the middle of discussion for their nuclear activities. Also, a fatal bus accident near the city of Naqadeh took the lives of Reyhaneh Yassini and Mahshad Karimi on June 25. Both women journalists were on the bus along with twenty other reporters. Reportedly, the bus carrying the journalists was in poor condition and crashed near the Islamic Republic's west Azerbaijan region.



The conflicts affected journalists working in Israel to a similar extent as Palestine. Journalists working in Israel have received online threats and endured physical attacks by far-right Jewish groups. Three on-air reporters for news channel N12, Dana Weiss, Yonit Levi and Rina Mazliah, were provided security details by their employer organization after receiving exceedingly violent threats online. Law enforcement agencies have also arrested a suspect in the case of Dana Weiss. The hostility is not just restricted to online spaces, however. Several journalists endured physical attacks by right-wing mobs who had gathered to target Israeli citizens of Palestinian origins in the streets of Tel Aviv and Lod. Far-right group, La Familia, assaulted journalists with rocks at the time, including journalist and TV presenter Ayala Hasson.

In Northern Cyprus, women journalists continue to work under difficult conditions. In the first half of 2021, four women journalists in the country were threatened for their journalistic activities and appeared in court. Özgür Gazete editor-in-chief Pınar Barut was targeted and threatened in June after reporting on the drug smuggling allegations against Turkish Cypriot businessperson Halil Falyalı. Yenibakış Newspaper reporters Esengül Aykaç and Deniz Abidin Kuni were detained on June 3, following the article revealed about the allegation of 50 thousand people being granted citizenship for a bribe. Journalists are facing possible six years prison sentences for “violating privacy”. Also on January 16, Cypriot journalist Esra Aygın became the target of online smear campaigns for criticizing the President of Northern Cyprus Ersin Tatar on her social media account.

# 171.1%

In the first half of 2021, the number of incidents of violence against women journalists increased by 171.1% compared to the entire year of 2020.

# 33.1%

Between January and June 2020, the number of cases documented in MENA region increased by 33.1% compared to the entire year of 2020.

In MENA, women journalists were subjected to many attacks and violence in Turkey, Palestine, Iran, Israel and Northern Cyprus, as well as in Egypt, Somalia, Lebanon and Bahrain. MTV Lebanon News correspondent Joyce Akiki was attacked by Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) supporters, during her live coverage about the protest between two judge supporters at the Palace of Justice in Beirut in March. In Somalia, Radio Kulme reporter Fardowso Mohamud Sahal was beaten and attacked by police while covering a protest in Mogadishu on May 16. Her equipment was also confiscated by security forces. Prominent Bahraini journalist Ahdeya Ahmad revealed that she was bullied and harassed on social media for her stance on peace. She received online abuse for her support of the normalisation of relations between Bahrain and Israel in January.



# Southeast Asia

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The Coalition For Women In Journalism has recorded 16 cases of threats and violation of rights against women journalists from the South Asia region. Nine of the 16 cases were reported from Myanmar. But the press freedom situation in the Philippines is also unsettling. It is at its most fragile point as politicians and criminals continue to act with impunity against journalists. The women journalists who have dared to challenge the populist leader, President Duterte, face an increased threat of attacks ranging from insults to judicial persecution. Rappler CEO and founder, Maria Ressa, continues to face a legal battle backed by a political agenda against her.

On February 11, Maria filed a motion to dismiss the libel case against her and fellow journalist Rambo Talabong. She also questioned the Manila court's jurisdiction in addressing the case. Maria appeared in court again on March 4 to defend herself against tax evasion charges. Next, Maria appeared in court on March 11 to attend a libel case hearing. She requested the court to reconsider its earlier decision of upholding the charges against her. Maria was cleared of defamation charges filed by entrepreneur Wilfredo Keng after he withdrew his second libel complaint against the journalist. CFWIJ has posted a detailed in-focus page containing all of the statements and details according to the timeline of events involving Maria Ressa.

Lorraine Ecarma, a correspondent for Rappler, faced impediment from police on May 20, as she tried to cover the release of Chad Booc, a human rights activist. Police denied her entry at first and then allowed her to enter the police station.



The authorities prohibited Lorraine from interviewing and recording while in the building. According to Lorraine, police accused Rappler of spreading fake news. As President Duterte keeps persecuting oppositional voices, the authorities target journalists who are critical of government policies. Lady Ann Salem is still in prison despite having the charges against her dismissed. She was arrested on December 10, 2020, for possessing illegal firearms. The charges against Ann were dismissed by the trial court on February 5. At the time of the raid, police ordered Ann to face the wall, making it possible for authorities to plant evidence against the journalist.



Inday Espina-Varona, a senior contributing editor for ABS-CBN, has faced persistent harassment and hostility from online trolls. She endures hurtful comments, slurs and is often labeled as a communist. The government failed to address the targeted harassment. On April 10, Chiara Zambrano from ABS-CBN faced an unprecedented threat on her way to an assignment in the west Philippines sea, close to the Palawan region. The crew received a radio message from a Chinese Coast Guard ship, ordering the crew to identify themselves. Chiara said the vessel carrying her and the crew was chased by two Chinese missile-equipped boats as they returned to Palawan island.

In Myanmar, the press freedom situation worsened as the military seized power on February 1st and took control of the media and

press. Several journalists and human rights activists confessed to CFWIJ that they saw it coming. As we continue to monitor the situation, they expressed fear for their safety. Several journalists work from hideouts and regularly change their location to avoid being arrested or abducted. CFWIJ has made a detailed in-focus page to gather the details of violations and threats against women journalists in Myanmar.

An ex-employee for Mytikana News, Myo Myat Pan, was abducted by the police on April 14, on the order of the military council. Her whereabouts remain unknown after the arrest as plainclothes police officers took her away with other civilians. She had stopped working as a journalist on March 1st, as stated by Mytikana News, but this could not save her from being arrested.



Thin Thin Aung, another woman journalist, was abducted by state authorities on April 8. After seizing the journalist, the police went on to raid her home and confiscate her belongings. The authorities left after destroying all of her journalistic work from the past years. Earlier, multimedia journalist Kay Zon Nwe was arrested for covering an anti-coup protest on February 27. The journalist was live-streaming as the police started to crackdown against protestors. Several demonstrations were held in different parts of Yangon.

*"I fear for my life, and I know they will kill me if I ever get arrested. But I can't allow the fear for my own safety to overwhelm me while millions of others face similar risks. When I am with other protesters and on the frontlines of protest movements, my fear usually fades away. We win as a collective, and we lose as a collective, in the face of such an evil regime. This way, I keep my revolutionary spirit up and stay resolute and resolved about my activism."*

- EI THINZAR MAUNG,  
Human Rights Activist, Myanmar

CFWIJ has recorded several unsettling incidents from Myanmar as we remain in regular contact with our sources on the ground. CFWIJ spoke to a female journalist who prefers to stay anonymous due to safety concerns. In her interview, she shared that on the morning of the coup, she felt upset and worried. She checked on her family and rushed up to gather contacts to build a support network with other journalists. She added that women journalists are in greater danger given the threat of sexual assault. Police often sexually harass women who appear to be covering protests. She stated that journalists need to frequently change their locations and stay in hiding as they are always being chased by pro-military crusaders.



# Europe

**107**

CFWIJ documented 107 cases of threats and violence against women in media around Europe between January and June 2021. Belarus and Russia emerged as the most conflict-ridden countries for women journalists to function in.

**65%**

Belarus and Russia have reported 25 and 21 cases of violations, respectively, of the total 70 cases recorded across the continent—responsible for more than 65% of the cases reported.

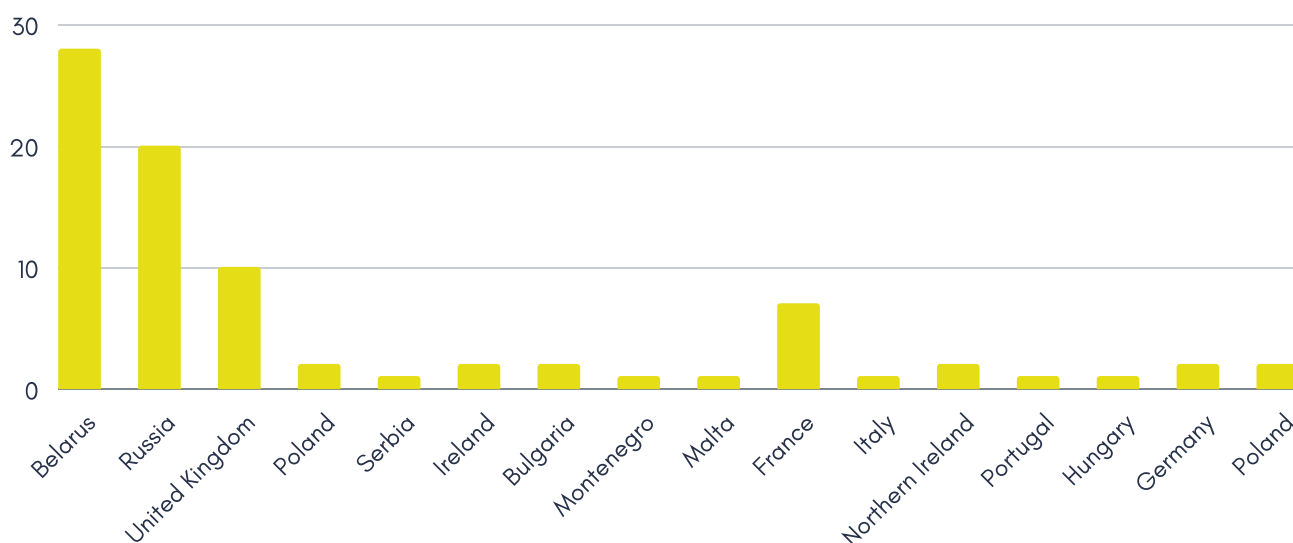
**466%**

In the first half of 2021, the number of women journalists who were detained around Europe increased by 466% compared to the first half of 2020. Belarus is the leading country with at least 17 female reporters behind bars.

**114%**

Between January and June 2021, total number of cases of threats and violence against women journalists increased by 114% around Europe compared to the first half of 2020.

In Europe, Belarus and Russia emerged as the most conflict-ridden countries for women journalists to function in. The growing strength of right-wave politics in both countries resulted in blatant civil rights violations, particularly targeting the journalist community. Legal harassment, physical assaults in the field, and extrajudicial detentions are weaponized against journalists covering the widespread protests in the country or reporting on press overreaches. Belarus and Russia have reported 25 and 21 cases of violations respectively of the total 70 cases recorded across the continent, thus being responsible for more than 65% of the cases reported.



In Belarus, crackdown on the press has become worryingly commonplace. 15 journalists face detention for covering state excesses and popular protests against the current government. Tut.by, an organization that has regularly reported on the political crisis in the country, has witnessed raids on its offices, with its journalists often targeted by the state. Journalists associated with the Belsat media groups have also been taken into custody. Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova, for example, were sentenced to two years imprisonment in a minimum-security penal colony for covering a protest demonstration in Minsk. Journalists have been called in for lengthy interrogations without charge, with several such as Tatsiana Bublikawa, Marina Zolotova, and Larysa Shchyrakova facing unannounced raids at their workplace and homes.

**16**

**countries**

CFWIJ documented violence against women journalists in 16 countries around Europe.

**13.5%**

**of total cases**

13.5% of all cases recorded around the world happened in Europe.

**24.2%**

**of countries**

24.2% of countries where CFWIJ documented threats to women in media were in Europe.

Journalists in Russia have not fared much better either, where illegal detentions are common. In January, journalists Elena Kostyuchenko and Valeria Savinova were among the dozens of journalists detained at the protests demanding the release of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Similarly, in April, Mariya Nuykina was detained, arrested, and fined by Russian police authorities for covering protest movements. Student journalists were not spared in this wave of state brutality either, when the police raided the office of an online student magazine, DOXA, as well as the homes of four of its staff members.

Another incident emerged in Vladimir, where Katya Arenina was detained by security forces while she was investigating reports about torture in the penal facility present there. In fact, on April 24, Russian law enforcement authorities detained at least three women journalists from different parts of the country while they were covering pro-Navalny protests. Physical assaults and threats to safety against journalists are commonplace in the country as well. For example, Natalya Zubkova, editor in chief for The Novosti Kiselevsk network, faced horrific threats following which, she was forced to flee her hometown.



Another country that has demonstrating a concerning trend of violence against women journalists is Northern Ireland, where Patricia Devlin has received repeated threats to her well-being by the criminal elements operating in the country. Police authorities have failed to ensure the safety of the journalist as well as her family despite multiple appeals by the civil society and international pressure groups. Another journalist, Allison Morrison has been on the receiving end of similar threats, and the state authorities have demonstrated equal amounts of negligence in her case as well.

In the western part of the continent, obstruction in the field, organized troll campaigns, and legal harassment have been more dominant. In the United Kingdom for example, Marianna Spring, an award-winning reporter covering disinformation and social media for BBC News was subjected to incessant online trolling. In March, journalist Natalie Higgins also opened up about the vicious online trolling that she has endured since entering the journalism industry. Sonja McLaughlan also shared her experience of being targeted with vile online attacks following her coverage of a rugby match.



Violence against women sports journalist however, is not restricted to online spaces. This year, senior football correspondent for The Independent, Melissa Reddy, also came forth with her harrowing experience with harassment and assault on the field. Sexual violence against women journalists, in fact, is a deep seated issue, as was obvious in senior journalist at NCTA News, Laura Bill testimony of the harrowing sexual assaults she went through over a long period of time.

In France, however, attacks were more in keeping line with the global trends. Women journalists majorly faced threats, legal harassment, online troll campaigns, and attacks in the field. For example, journalist Claire Koç accused supporters of Turkish President Erdogan of sending her death threats online. The attacks reportedly came after the publication of Claire's book that details her experience in France as a Turkish immigrant. Journalist Nadiya Lazzouni also received threats in the form of an anonymous letter at her private residence. The letter was replete with sexist and Islamophobic slurs and included death threats. In June, journalist Isabelle Krismon was forced to file criminal defamation complaints against unknown people who attacked her on social media. The law was also weaponized against women journalists in an effort to silence them. For example, Andreina Mujica, a Franco-Venezuelan journalist was called in by the French police for questioning after a complaint was filed against her by the counsel of Venezuela on June 8.





Journalists also encountered violent attacks in the field. In March, a France 3 reporter was assaulted in a violent attack in Les Vans. The journalist was in the market covering a rally happening in violation of Covid-19 measures on March 27. In the same month, investigative reporter Morgan Large's car was sabotaged in a manner that could have seriously put her life at risk. This was not the first attack on the journalist either.

The challenges faced in the European region are diverse due to the extremely varied nature of politics in the continent. Violations against women journalists, however, remain constant. The Coalition For Women In Journalism reports on the multitude of ways in which violence manifests itself against women journalists in the region and is committed to building a support network for them in order to help counter the threats they face.

PHYSICAL ASSAULTS

12 women journalists

DETENTIONS

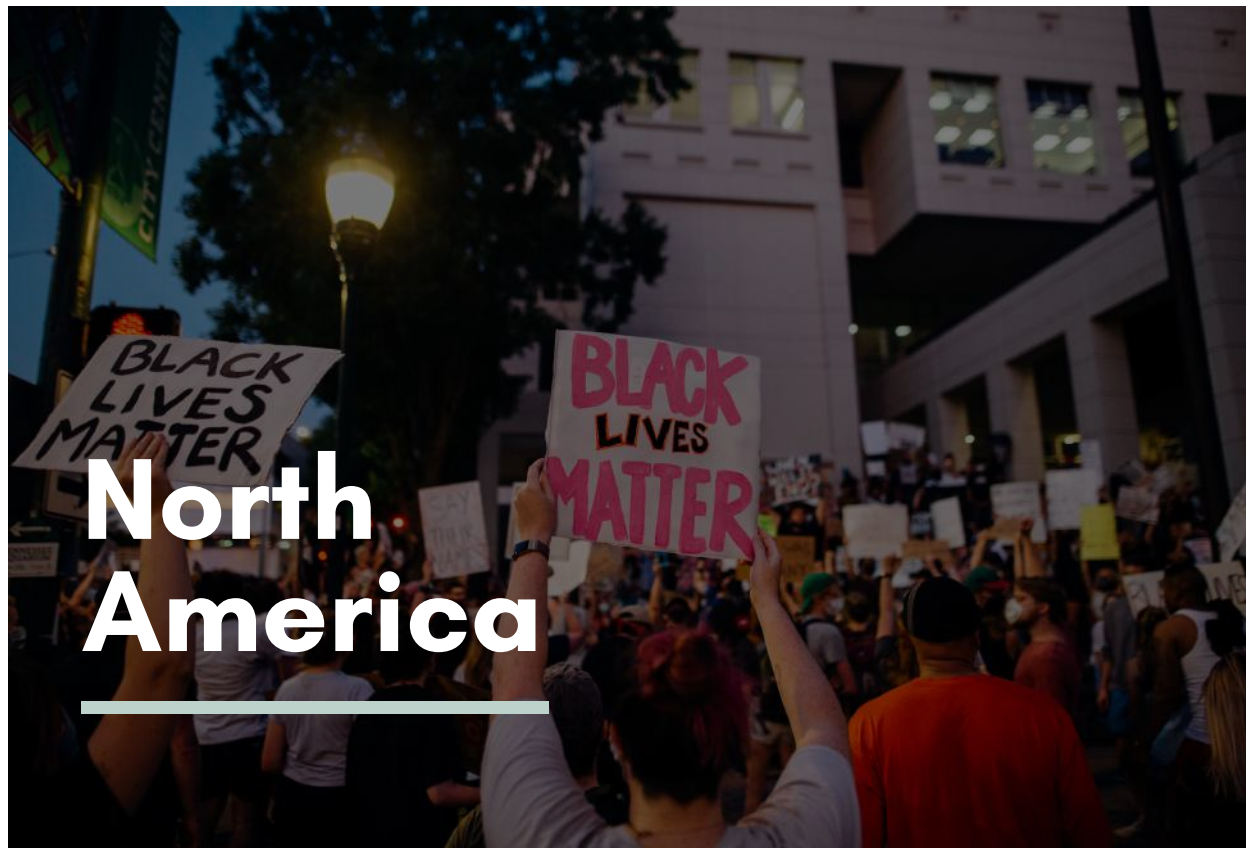
29 female reporters

TOTAL CASES

107 cases of threats  
and violations







# North America

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The Coalition For Women In Journalism reported 92 cases from North America in June. Topping the list, there were 84 cases of threats and violence against women in the United States. Of the 84 cases, 34 were expulsions, 14 reports of organized trolling, nine cases of sexual harassment, nine cases of journalists attacked or impeded in the field, six cases of detention, four cases of workplace harassment, six incidents of verbal harassment, three cases of legal harassment, two murdered journalists, and three racist attacks were reported. Canada, second on the list, reported nine cases of violence and threats against women journalists.

After the results of the presidential election were announced in the United States, tensions heightened as Trump supporters refused to accept his defeat. They stormed Capitol Hill and assaulted several women

journalists, wreaking havoc in and outside of the building. CFWIJ documented at least ten cases of women journalists who fell victim to the violence on January 6. Journalists were insulted, detained, arrested, and even tortured on that tumultuous day. Zoann Murphy and Whitney Leaming from the Washington Post were covering the insurrection at Capitol Hill when they were both arrested. The journalists were not given any details before police transported them in an unmarked van. They were released only after presenting their press credentials. Amanda Andrade-Rhodes, a freelance photojournalist, was also reporting from Capitol Hill on January 6 when she was hit multiple times in the leg by rubber bullets fired by the police. The same day, she was confronted by three demonstrators who threatened to shoot her.

**Asian-American female journalists have been subjected to dangerous racial discrimination since the COVID-19 outbreak. CFWIJ has documented a rise in an already challenging environment.**

There have been numerous complaints from newsrooms claiming racial discrimination in workplaces across the U.S. While we documented several cases on our platform, we also received multiple reports from journalists who preferred to stay anonymous. Apart from discrimination against Asian-American people, the COVID-19 outbreak also created a job shortage in the media. Some women journalists are struggling with working from home while also trying to save their job. The Huffington Post laid off 47 of their long-time staffers just a month into its acquisition by BuzzFeed. The employees were called for a virtual meeting when they were informed about the decision. The majority of the terminated staff were accomplished women journalists. BuzzFeed executives offered no prior warning before the layoffs.

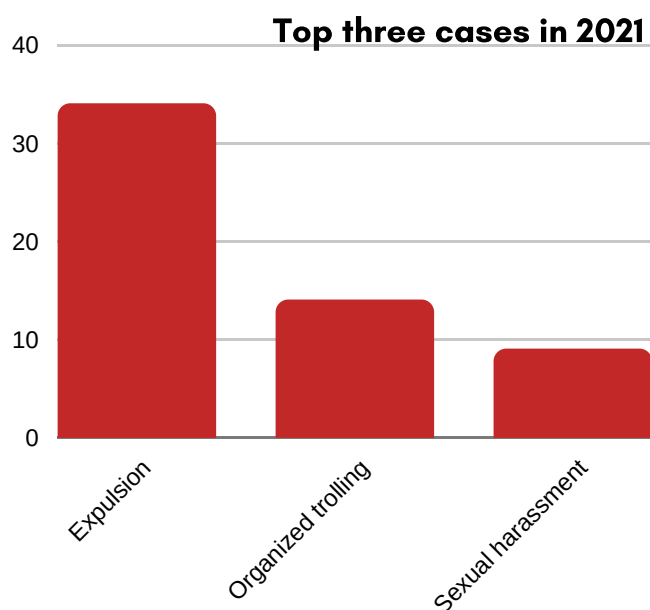
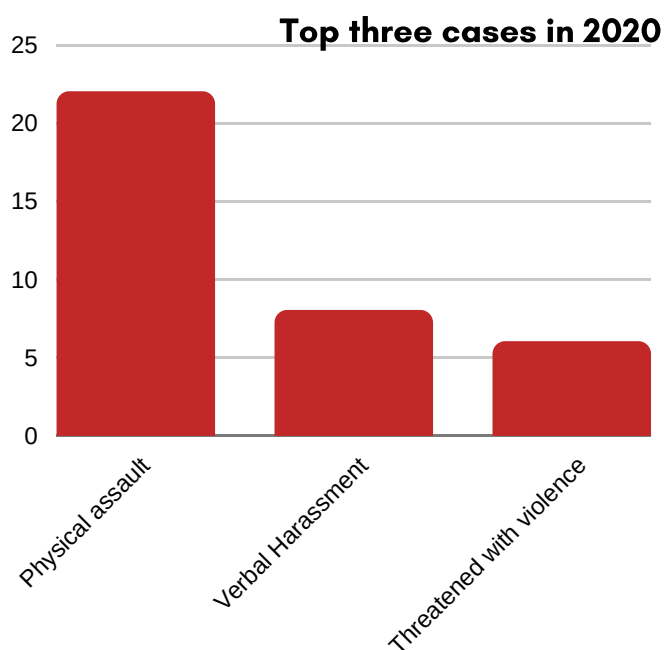
CFWIJ welcomed the acquittal of journalist Andrea Sahouri after she stood trial for her

coverage of Black Lives Matter in May 2020. Andrea was arrested on May 31 while working for the Des Moines Register. Andrea was charged with “failure to disperse” and “interfering with official acts” by the police after she failed to present her press credentials. Despite her employer attesting that Andrea forgot her Press ID in her car, the judge did not dismiss the charges against the journalist. One of the most tragic cases the CFWIJ reported was the murder of Lynn Murray. The photojournalist was killed in a mass shooting incident at a superstore in Colorado. Lynn was pronounced dead along with ten other victims who lost their lives in the horrific shooting. Nearly a month later, on April 23, young journalist Aviva Okeson-Haberman was pronounced dead in her Kansas apartment. Reportedly, the journalist was hit in the head by a stray bullet that pierced her window. Aviva was working for Kansas City’s NPR station.



Emily Wilder was fired by The Associated Press (AP) following public outrage regarding past politicized social media posts. She shared the news in a tweet, quoting the statement from the director of the news agency. The decision was widely criticized by international media outlets, condemning the cancel culture that led to Wilder’s termination. The tweets in question were reportedly from Wilder’s college days, but AP did not specify which posts prompted her dismissal. In Canada, CFWIJ documented four different cases of threats and harassment against women journalists. On February 11, The Royal Canadian Police (RCMP) harassed and attempted to intimidate journalist Brandi Morin as she visited a healing camp in the Amber Bracken area. Brandi was there to shoot a series of videos. According to her tweets, police tried to stop Brandi and questioned her reason for being in the area.

From Edmonton, CFWIJ reported the case of verbal harassment against Lauren Boothby on March 15. She was attacked by a group of miscreants while on an assignment. Lauren shared the details of the incident on Twitter as one of the men among that group was previously charged with hate crimes. During the confrontation, she tried to clarify that she was simply doing her job, but it made no difference. On April 20, CFWIJ documented the case of harassment against Toronto Star reporter Theresa Boyle. She shared the painful details of her experience after the human resources (HR) department failed to provide the necessary support. After being harassed by an editor, Theresa reported the incident to the HR department. Despite having a tough policy (on paper) against harassment cases, the parent company took no action for over two years. Theresa stressed the need to retain an external investigator to look into the matter.



**Between January and June 2021, total number of cases against female reporters around North America increased by 27.7% compared to the first half of last year.**



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# Africa

Women journalists in Africa, on a daily basis, face not just the violence of the colonial structures inherited by their postcolonial states, but also the hostility imbued by the deep-seated misogyny of a patriarchal society. In the first half of 2021, alone, the Coalition For Women In Journalism recorded at least 26 different cases of violations against women journalists across the continent.

In January 2021, two women journalists were murdered in Africa. The separatist attack on a convoy in Njikwa in Cameroon, resulted in the death of Rebecca Jeme alongside four military officers. In Algeria, however, journalist Tin Hinan Laleb who worked for ENTV's Amazigh channel (TV4), was reportedly murdered by her spouse. Two blatant examples of state conflict and patriarchy inflicting immense violence on women journalists in the region. On February 11, in South Africa, journalist Dimakatso Ratselane survived a murder attempt by her husband as well, who severely stabbed her. On the other hand, Nanou Kazaku, a radio journalist based in Goma, the capital of North-Kivu province in the DRC, was shot on February 17 when a protest in the region turned violent.

Security conditions remain tumultuous in Nigeria for journalists despite repeated warnings by Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ). On the night of February 9, Chidiebere Onyia, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) was abducted while on her way home from work. Less than three months later, in the early hours of May 4, Amra Ahmed Diska was abducted from her home in Yola. Both women returned after their ransom was paid.

**However, it is not just non-state actors who threaten the safety of women journalists. As stated above, African states themselves, are very much complicit in these violations of civil liberties and safety.**

On January 28, the police in Botswana arrested Michelle Teise, a correspondent for a news outlet, Moeladitlhoko News Boiler, for trespassing while she was investigating the disappearance of a 37 years old man. She was released ten days later with two criminal charges.

# CASES OF THREATS AND VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

## PHYSICAL ASSAULTS

# Nine

women journalists

## WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

# Four

female reporters

In Algeria, journalists Kenza Khattou, Farida Cherrad, Lynda Abbou, and Ferial Bouaziz were detained for covering anti-government protests alongside 12 other journalists on May 14. Only three days prior in Ghana, on May 11, journalists Zoe Abu-Baidoo Addo and her colleague were detained by the police, in violation of all official protocol, despite no charge. Another journalist who wishes to stay anonymous was detained in Uganda while on a work assignment.

Another way states silence women journalists in Africa is through physical assaults by their law enforcement agencies. Police forces, as it is with most states in the world, act as an armed wing of the state itself, instead of a security force for the citizens. This was witnessed on February 8 in Ethiopia, when three gunmen barged into Lucy Kassa's house, physically assaulted her, and illegally confiscated equipment. Less than 10 days later in Uganda, several women journalists covering the political activities of Bobi Wine, a runner-up in recent presidential elections, were assaulted by the military police on February 17. These included Irene Abalo of The Daily Monitor, Shamim Nabakooza of Record TV, Rashida Nakaayi of Galaxy FM, and Josephine Namakumbi of NBS. Women journalists find themselves especially vulnerable during anti-government protests. In Kayunga Village, for example, Teddy Nakaliga and a fellow journalist were attacked by Ugandan armed forces for covering a protest on April 28. In a similar incident on May 1, in Nairobi, DW East Africa correspondent Mariel Müller was targeted with a gas canister by a law enforcement officer while covering a protest. Police violence is now no longer subject to state permissions. This was evident when Diane Kablakan, a correspondent for Ovajab Media, was physically assaulted by police trainees of the gendarmerie on May 9 in Côte d'Ivoire.



Women journalists are not just vulnerable to the state during protests however, sometimes they are also attacked by demonstrators, when protests get violent. During the lockdown in South Africa in February, for example, protestors assaulted Athi Mtongana and Monique Mortlock who were present there to cover the protest.

It is however, important to remember that violence does not always have to be physical, nor does it have to exist in a physical space. It can be gendered, verbal, and online as well. Recently In Kenya, Judie Kaberia opened up about the sexual harassment she faced from a politician while working as a parliament reporter a few years back. Her opinion piece published on April 20, was a jarring reminder on the multifaceted violence of patriarchy. And how this violence now manifests itself in online spaces was evident on January 10, when Sophie Mokoena, the foreign editor for SABC, was viciously attacked online by ruling party spokesperson in Zimbabwe, Tafadzwa Mugwadi. Patriarchal violence can also be tricky to navigate once we take into account that women, too, can participate in setting the target on the back of another woman. This occurred when South African journalist Qaanitah Hunter was singled out in a Twitter attack by the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) president, Bathabile Dlamini on May 7.



Photo Credit: UNMISS/Isaac Billy

**In the first half of 2021 alone, the Coalition For Women In Journalism recorded at least 26 different cases of violations against women journalists across the continent.**

2021

# COUNTRY FOCUS: MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES FOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS



1 / 3

An analysis of the data we gathered over the past six months brought into the spotlight five countries facing extremely different kinds of challenges and political environments but presenting equally concerning risks.

Between January and June 2021, one out of every three women journalists who were subjected to any type of incident was based in Turkey. As of June 30, at least 81 women journalists appeared in court to defend themselves against terror-related charges since the beginning of the year.

## JANUARY-JUNE 2021

# Cases of threats in different countries

Global, sexual, and national politics interact to create entirely different scenarios in Afghanistan, Palestine, Belarus, Turkey and the United States, shedding light on the various ways violence against women perpetuates itself. An in-depth analysis of the countries help counter preconceived notions and offer a more comprehensive explanation regarding the events unfolding, thus equipping us with the tools to address the problems.

# Afghanistan

Women journalists continue to play an extremely important role in a country that has been in the midst of international conflict for the past two decades. The civil society is extremely vulnerable to the political strife and religious extremism that has resulted from US intervention and the wars in the region. In fact, Afghanistan reported the highest number of women journalists murdered this year. Of the nine women journalists who were killed in 2021, four of them worked in Afghanistan.

Three women journalists, Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Roafi, who were working with Enikass Radio and TV, were targeted in two different gun attacks by terrorist groups on March 2 2021. Attackers shot Saadat and Raofi who were on their way home. Later, at a different location Wahidi was shot as well. All three women succumbed to their wounds and the Islamic State terror group's regional affiliate, IS Khorasan Province, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Only two months later, on May 4 2021, journalist and media worker for Ariana Radio and Television, Mina Kheiri, was killed at seven in the evening in an IED attack in Kabul at Pul-e-Sokhta area. Her mother was also murdered in the attack, while her sister sustained serious injuries and was rushed to a hospital.

These repeated attacks on Afghan women journalists are forcing several to roll back operations, or seek asylum elsewhere. Chief editor of Khaama Press, Fatemeh Hashim, for example left the country claiming that Kabul was a city of terror for journalists. Similarly, political presenter, Farahnaz Forotan relocated to France after repeated threats to her well-being. Another journalist, Nazifa Mahbobi, the Afghan reporter for Radio Free Europe was forced to go into her hiding after her residence was attacked.

Other journalists like Mariam Alimi hope to move out of the country as well, due to the threats she faces. Similarly, Fatima Roshanian, an editor for the feminist magazine Nimorkh Weekly, was forced to work from home after her name appeared on a "kill list" circulated online by extremist groups. Roshanian claims that everyone knows who is behind these threats and the aim is to silence voices of dissent in the country.





As a result of the violence in the regions, several journalists have quit their jobs and are considering changing careers. Following the murders of Wahidi, Sadat, and Roafi, journalist Sahira Saleem resigned from her workplace citing security concerns. An attack on women polio vaccinators in Jalalabad also forced 23-year-old journalist Alias Razia to reconsider her career path. These fears are not unfounded. According to Zabiullah Farhang, an official at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, "14 women have been killed and 22 others wounded since the start of 2021." Of these 14 women, seven were killed last month in Jalalabad.

The security situation of women journalists in Afghanistan is cause for great international concern, yet it receives barely any coverage. It is absolutely reprehensible that global powers refuse to take responsibility for the violence they have enabled in the region and the costs that women journalists are now being forced to pay. The weakness of the Afghan state in the face of non-state groups is extremely concerning, and women journalists will continue to face immense challenges in the region if the international community is not forthcoming in offering solutions.



### — Murders

**Four women journalists were killed in Afghanistan since the beginning of 2021. Mina Kheiri, Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Roafi were murdered while doing their work as journalists.**



### — Women are targeted

**14 women have been killed and 22 others wounded since the start of 2021. Of these 14 women, seven were killed last month in Jalalabad.**



### — House raids

**On November 5 2020, the Afghan police illegally raided the house of photojournalist Tahereh Rezaei. During the raid, for which the agency had no search warrant, they seized property of those inside the house, cut off their cellular and internet connectivity and physically assaulted one of them for questioning the legitimacy of their actions.**

# Palestine

Palestinian women journalists continue to fight for their right to free expression despite the ongoing threats and intimidations meant to silence them. The Coalition For Women In Journalism documents the cases to expose the violations women journalists encounter while reporting from conflict zones. From November 2020 to June 7, 2021, CFWIJ documented 12 cases of threats and violence against women— 11 were recorded in May and June alone. One of the most unfortunate incidents was the killing of Palestinian journalist Reema Saad. On the night of May 11, she was killed in a targeted airstrike by Israeli forces on a 10-floor building in the Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City. Reema was four months pregnant at the time of her death. Sources on the ground confirmed that she, along with her husband and two children, was killed in the attack.

The frequency of the attacks against women journalists by Israeli forces has increased significantly. In addition to arrests and detentions, there have been several reports of physical assaults, attacks with rubber bullets, and tear gas bombs. Amidst this crisis, it is commendable that women journalists continue to report with conviction. Media correspondents have been repeatedly monitored and prosecuted while on duty. Several of these women reporters faced detention and harassment for revealing facts and information. On June 6, Najwan Al-Sumari and Bara'a Abu Romouz were assaulted by Israeli forces while covering confrontations in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. The impunity persists as Israeli forces practice oppression against the press. Still, the journalists working in this heightened tension face risks of physical harm and threats of detention.

On June 5, Givara Budeiri, a Jerusalem-based Al Jazeera correspondent, was forcefully arrested for allegedly hitting a female officer. Givara was covering a sit-in held in Sheikh Jarrah to celebrate the 54th anniversary of Naksa, a term that Palestinian people use to describe the Israeli occupation since 1967.

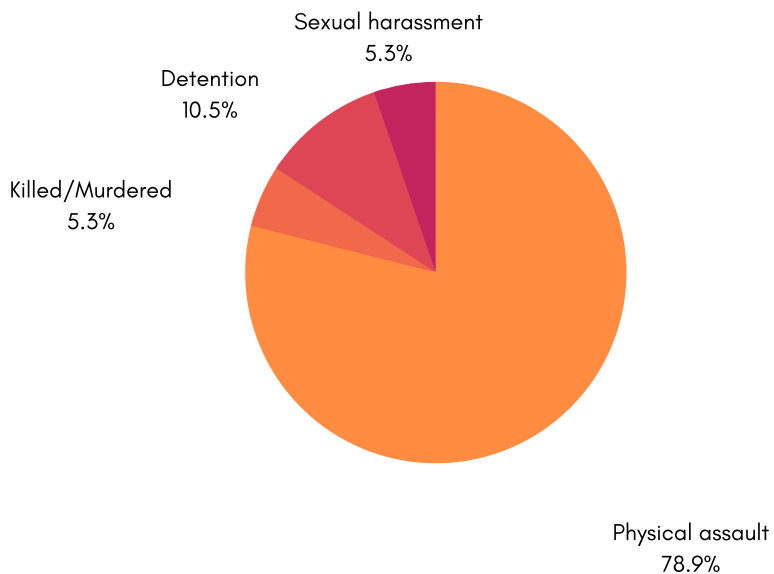




On May 28, Israeli forces arrested Zeina Al-Halawani while she was reporting from a predominantly Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem. She was physically assaulted and was kept in detention without charge. Her detention was widely condemned on social media after the videos of the forceful arrest went viral. Rama Yousef, another Palestinian journalist, took a rubber bullet to the leg on May 18 while covering a protest at Damascus Gate in Jerusalem.

Samar Abu Elouf, a Gaza-based journalist, had to evacuate her family after a missile hit her neighbor's home. She was in the field when she received the news and quickly ran home to evacuate her family. Thankfully, she and her family were unharmed.

On May 19, Israeli forces destroyed the offices of Filastiniat and its affiliated news agency without prior warning. The bombing resulted in the death of two civilians, including one child. Wafa Abdel-Rehman, the editor-in-chief of Nawa, confirmed the news and provided details about the incident. On the same day, in a separate incident, Latifeh Abdellatif, a photojournalist for Middle East Eye, was physically assaulted by Israeli forces at Damascus Gate.



These incidents limit the space for other journalists to report freely and safely. The pervasive harassment from the authorities affects their ability to cover matters of public interest without risking their own safety. On May 10, there was a massive crackdown by Israeli forces on journalists covering the attacks and violations in Jerusalem and the courtyards of the Al-Aqsa mosque. Liwa Abu Rumila, an Ultra-Palestine reporter, was caught in a tear gas attack while following the raids. Another female reporter Fatima Al-Bakri also suffered physical assault by the authorities.

Riwa Murshid was targeted by armed members of a separatist organization for not covering her head on May 4. The journalist was at the coastal enclave's border, adjacent to Israel, when she was approached and impeded from working.

As the Coalition For Women In Journalism continues to document the threats and assaults in Palestine, we urge a peaceful solution to the crisis. We believe that women journalists are unjustifiably targeted, and this must be addressed. Law enforcement authorities should not have the right to intimidate and threaten journalists simply for doing their job. Such restrictions jeopardize the freedom of the press and limit free and fair reporting.

## Belarus

Belarus has a long history of precarious conditions for women journalists when it comes to press freedom. The massive crackdown against critical voices in the country skyrocketed after the latest election last August. The challenges for press freedom have multiplied as the state becomes more repressive towards free speech. Since last August, over 500 journalists were reportedly detained. CFWIJ has recorded 25 cases of press freedom violations against women journalists. Fifteen women were detained, and six faced legal harassment. Two women are still in prison, and at least two were threatened with violence. This number continues to increase each day as the state has tightened its grip on free speech.



The imprisoned journalists have collectively spent more than 1200 days in detention according to the Belarusian Association of Journalists. There were reports that the state-owned publishing house refused to print papers for five news outlets. On May 19, a massive raid was reported at Tut.By news offices. Several of the employees were arrested by state authorities. The police confiscated the equipment and also suspended the web portal and social media accounts of the news platform. The unnecessary targeting of journalists has resulted in a five-point decline in Belarus' rating by the RSF Press Freedom Index- the country now stands at 158 out of 180 countries.

The latest case of a woman journalist fleeing the country was Valyaryna Kustava. She escaped the authorities after they raided her apartment and made it impossible for Valyaryna to enter her home. The journalist shared the details of her difficult experience in a Facebook post on June 15. She recalls having to go through jungles with her toddler to reach safety. Volha Takarchuk runs a YouTube blog and has a following of nearly 37,000 subscribers. According to the recent updates, the journalist was moved to solitary confinement. She was arrested on May 23, on orders of the Peshamiaski district prosecutor. It is unclear what charges are pending against the journalist, as the police have failed to provide any further details.

Even in these challenging circumstances, women journalists still risk their lives to attend protests and cover the atrocities committed by the state. They face detention and are regularly threatened to stay silent. While they are in detention, they suffer torture from authorities for the work they do. A Belsat TV program

host, Arina Malinovskaya, received threats from Belarusian authorities through her relatives. She had left the country fearing possible persecution, but now the authorities are harassing her relatives to call her back. Liubou Kaspiarovich, a Tut.By correspondent, was taken into police custody and sentenced to 15 days in prison for covering an unsanctioned police rally. Katsiaryna Barysvich, staff reporter for Tut.By, was released from detention on May 19 after serving her sentence period. She was charged for violating medical confidentiality while investigating the murder of an activist. The day Katsiaryna was released, state authorities raided her employer's organization offices, made several arrests, and confiscated equipment.

Just a few days before the raid at Tut.By offices, staff reporter Lyubov Kasperovich was detained by Belarusian authorities. She was sentenced to fifteen days in prison for covering a protest. She was detained on May 14 while she was reporting on the trial of 12 young opposition supporters. Similarly, the authorities detained photojournalist Tatsyana Kapitonava on May 13 when she was covering an unauthorized event. As per the eyewitness testimonies, police specifically came to approach her.

To further restrict the freedom of the press, Belarusian authorities proposed another bill on April 2 to legitimize the government's abuse of power. The bill consists of amendments in mass media laws and mass gathering laws. If passed, this bill will further diminish the freedom of the press in the country. It includes conditions that will enhance the authoritative power to deny media accreditation or shut them down completely, and expand the legal restrictions around news organizations.

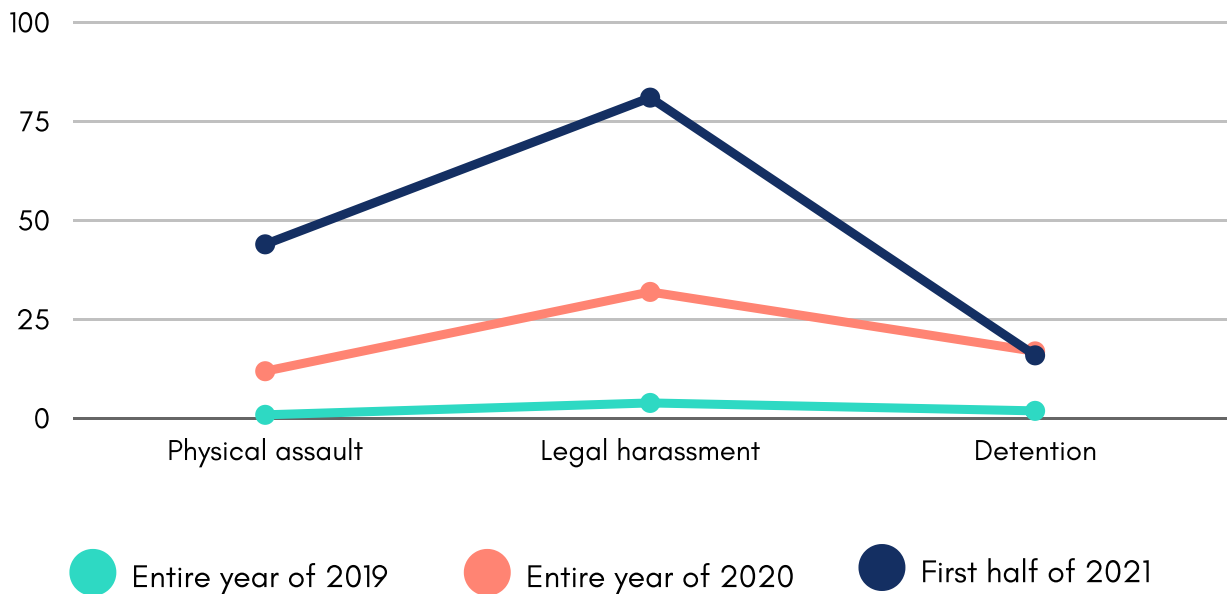


The Coalition For Women In Journalism documented the case of Tatsiana Niadbai, deputy chairman of the Belarusian PEN Center. She was interrogated by an investigation committee about the raid conducted by the authorities at the press club on December 22. She had worked as a coordinator for the press club in 2017. Given that she was forced to sign a non-disclosure form, Tatsiana could not reveal much about her interrogation. Earlier this year, CFWIJ reported the case of Tatsiana Bulikawa, a BelaPAN correspondent, who suffered police mistreatment after a raid on her office in Minsk. She suffered a panic attack and was taken to the hospital for treatment. Even at the hospital, she was guarded by security personnel.



# Turkey

Turkey is one of the most dangerous countries for women journalists with the most number of legal harassment cases. As of June 30, at least 81 women journalists appeared in court to defend themselves against terror-related charges. They are consistently trying to be silenced by the state by using legislation.



Since the beginning of 2021, at least 34 women journalists have been physically assaulted. The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ) team member Ceren İskit was deliberately attacked by police while monitoring women journalists' safety on the Women's March against the withdrawal of the Istanbul Convention. Giving the Directorate General of Security (EGM) directive which cited "violation of privacy" as the justification, claiming that recording and filming prevented law enforcement from doing their duty, many journalists were prevented from following the developments across the country.

After the Directorate General of Security's (EGM) banned citizens from filming or recording social movements, many journalists were impeded from doing their job across the country. After the directive, on May 1 Labor Day, at least four female journalists were beaten with force and one was detained while covering the events across Turkey. Dokuz8Haber reporter Esra Tokat, Yol TV correspondent Özge Uyanık, journalist Sultan Eylem Keleş were impeded from the scene they followed. The police forcefully deleted the pictures and videos taken by Dokuz8Haber's Esra and confiscated Yol TV reporter Özge's phone. Forces also threw the device and stepped on it. Later on, Özge filed a complaint about the police officers.



The police also brutally attacked journalists during the 19th Pride in İstanbul. Evrensel Newspaper's Ayşen Şahin, Cumhuriyet Newspaper reporter Tuğba Özer, Etkin News Agency (ETHA) reporter Pinar Gayıp were blocked while filming the event there. Even though they showed their press credentials, police attempted to stop them from doing their job. Sendika.Org reporter Derya Saadet was also covering the pride. She was physically assaulted and verbally violated by forces. Speaking to CFWIJ, "It is clear where the police order came from. There is no other explanation for attacking us. What they are doing is illegal.

Journalists cannot be prevented from doing their job," Derya quoted. Reporter Elif Ünal, on the other hand, took her Twitter account to draw a picture of police violence against them. The journalist said police tried to take her into custody three times, despite showing her press credentials. Dokuz8News reporter Fatoş Erdoğan was physically attacked by the police force for the fifth time in a row. She was exposed to police violence the most in Turkey. Fatoş Erdoğan

was impeded by the police while covering the student protests on May 27. The students who protested Israeli attacks against Palestine, detained later citing General Information Scan (GBT) as a reason. When journalists followed the incident, police prevented them from the scene, giving the Directorate General of Security (EGM) directive as an excuse. On March 26, she was yet again filming the detentions of students. "The press is forbidden" was said to her. The journalist was also pushed. On March 8, International Women's Day, the police officer threatened the journalist by saying "I would tear you up into pieces". On February 20, police interfered with five female reporters including Fatoş, covering the press briefing of HDP Women's Assemblies at İstanbul's Çağlayan Courthouse. Police told reporters who were removed from the field, "Terrorist supporters, I wish the car crashed on them!".



A dark day for press freedom occurred in Turkey on June 8. Four journalists appeared in court in four separate cases against them on terrorism charges. Each journalists' trial –except Melike Aydın– was postponed yet again. Expert reports, testimonies of witnesses were given as an excuse to adjourn the hearings again. On June 8, 2021, Mesopotamia Agency (MA) reporter Ruken Demir, Jin News reporter Melike Aydın, journalists Sadiye Eser and Canan Coşkun are on trial for terrorism charges based on their journalistic activities. Only Melike was acquitted from all charges.

Jin News reporter Beritan Canözer was detained in a raid on her home early morning on April 8. Police raided her house in Diyarbakır. After four-day detention, journalist Beritan Canözer was called to the court without prior notice and the prosecutor requested her arrest. Due to the confidential investigation, no further information was given to her relatives and lawyers. After appearing in court, Beritan was released conditionally. However, her phone, digital materials and books seized by the police during the raid, are still not returned. Also during her detention, the journalist and 21 women were threatened by the police. Reportedly, one of the detainees wanted to leave the door open, where they were kept, due to a health problem. However, police kept it closed and threatened women saying, "If you even try knocking on the door, I will teach you humanity." Detainees also faced major problems of basic needs.

**450%**

Between January and June 2021, total number of physical assault cases increased by 450% compared to the first half of 2020.



As CFWIJ, we have documented some good news, although the pressure and violence against the press escalate in Turkey. The Constitutional Court (AYM) ruled journalist Beyza Kural, who was subjected to police violence while covering the demonstration, was mistreated and decided 15 thousand Turkish Liras (TL) in moral compensation. AYM also concluded that the journalist's freedom of expression was violated. Also, The ECtHR ruled a violation of freedom of expression on the application of journalist Banu Güven, stated that the ban on reporting on the Parliamentary Investigation Commission, which was established to investigate the allegations against the ministers Erdoğan Bayraktar, Mehmet Zafer Çağlayan, Egemen Bağış and Muammer Güler, after the 17-25 December corruption scandal. In addition, the ECtHR decided to pay Banu a compensation of 1500 Euros.

Journalist Melis Alphan was sued for seven years six months prison sentence on charges of "spreading terrorist propaganda" due to the photo she shared on her Instagram account at the Newroz (Spring Festival) event held in Diyarbakır in 2015. However, the court acquitted the journalist from all charges in the second hearing of the case.



# United States

CFWIJ has reported at least 82 cases from the United States. 32 were regarding the expulsion of women journalists from their jobs. 10 were organized troll campaigns, nine on sexual harassment, and eight reported attacks in the field. Four cases were registered about workplace harassment, three on legal harassment, three on verbal harassment, and two regarding the unfortunate killing of women journalists.



After the presidential election in the United States, Capitol Hill was stormed by Trump supporters. Several women journalists covering the insurrection were subjected to violence and assaulted by rioters. The Coalition For Women In Journalism registered at least ten cases of press freedom violations against women journalists during the Capitol Hill riot on January 6, 2021. Zoeann Murphy and Whitney Leaming, associated with the Washington Post, were arrested by the police while they were covering the riots. Both journalists were not given any details at the time of their arrest and were taken into an unmarked van. They were only released after they produced their press credentials.



Amanda Andrade-Rhodes was hit with several rubber bullets in her leg while reporting on the Capitol riots. The rubber bullets were reportedly fired by the police. She was also confronted by three random protestors who threatened to shoot her. New York Times photojournalist Erin Schaff was assaulted by a group of protestors inside the Capitol Hill building as she was trying to capture images. The rioters pushed her to the ground and snatched her press ID. Later, police found her and ordered her to identify herself at gunpoint. The journalist was only released after her colleagues appeared and proved her identity to the police.



Since the onslaught of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, Asian-American female journalists have been subjected to hateful attacks and racial discrimination. CFWIJ has observed an alarming increase in incidents targeting Asian-American women journalists.

Over the past two years, we have recorded several complaints of newsroom discrimination. While we have reported on several cases, often publicly naming the journalists, we have kept many reports anonymous— as per their request— to avoid any possible repercussions in their careers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also cost women journalists their job security. Despite the many challenges, women journalists worked from home and were able to report in the field, sometimes even without safety gear. However, the economic crunch caused many of them to lose their jobs. The Huffington Post laid off 47 of its employees, at least 31 of them were accomplished women journalists. The employees were informed about their possible termination in a meeting without any prior warning.

Organized trolling is another toxic pattern CFWIJ has observed in the country. Brenna Smith, an investigative intern at USA Today, was tormented by right-wing trolls after publishing her detailed article on how crowdfunding is often used to help extremist movements. In her article, Brenna discussed how rioters involved in the January 6 insurrection were using these platforms to raise money to pay their legal fees.

Felicia Sonmez, a political reporter for The Washington Post, shared her ordeal with cancel culture on Twitter on March 27. She shared in a tweet that she wishes she had the support of her editor when she was viciously



trolled and doxxed in January 2020, following her tweet on Kobe Bryant. Felicia tweeted an article revealing the disturbing details of Kobe Bryant’s alleged rape case. The journalist was forced to delete the tweet and was briefly suspended from her job. She was reinstated later but was ordered to not cover rape topics.

Several women journalists also faced harassment and persecution from the police at demonstrations.

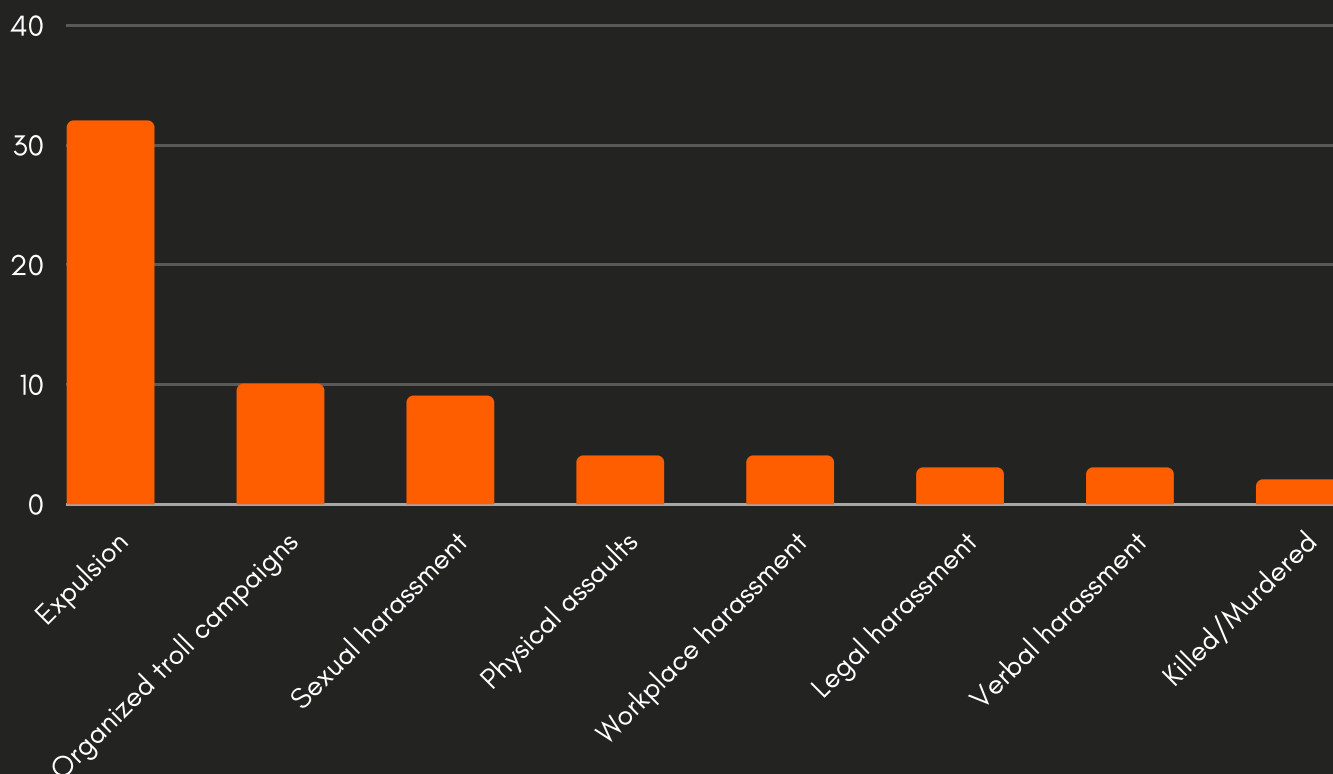
In April, CFWIJ reported the tragic killing of Aviva Okeson-Haberman. The journalist was shot in the head by a bullet that pierced the window of her apartment in Kansas. She was pronounced dead on April 23 when her boss went to check on Aviva and found her unconscious. She was working at KCUR before joining Kansas City’s NPR station. The police launched an investigation into the motive behind Aviva’s murder. On March 22, CFWIJ covered the murder of Lynn Murray, an accomplished photojournalist, who was killed in the mass shooting at a superstore in Colorado. Lynn was one of the ten victims who lost their lives.

Demonstrations erupted in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota after the fatal shooting of a 20-year-old Black man, Daunte Wright, by a police officer. Several journalists were targeted by police while they were covering the protests. Lauren Blanchard, a Fox News correspondent, shared disturbing videos of her and her crew being detained by the police as they were trying to leave the area. Police ordered them to sit on their knees and show ID cards. CNN correspondent Sara Sidner shared in a tweet that she has never seen anything like this in her 25 years as a reporter. Eleonore Sens, an AFP photojournalist, was pepper-sprayed by the police after she had clearly identified herself as press.

Women journalists not only face obstructions on the ground but threats like legal harassment, especially when politically motivated. The Department of Justice under Trump's administration fought a months-long legal battle to obtain Barbara Starr's email and phone records. Barbara was covering the Pentagon for CNN and had extensively reported the military policy on North Korea in 2018. The general counsel of CNN's David Vigilante was placed under a gag order to conceal any details of the inquiry that secretly started in July 2020.

## Cases of threats and violence against women journalists in the United States

January-June 2021



# MAJOR EVENTS FROM THE FIRST HALF OF 2021

Over the first half of 2021 there were several global political developments that became causes of great concern. The Israeli bombardment of news media organizations in Palestine and repression of the Palestinian journalist community, the reemerging Taliban threat in Afghanistan after the US-Taliban peace talks, the incarceration of women journalists in Belarus for covering the political crisis in the country, and the attacks on Pakistani journalists by the country's military were all special case studies that Coalition For Women In Journalism believes require urgent redressal.



# The bombing of global media offices in Gaza and attacks on journalists

As Israeli state violence against Palestine escalated in May, there was a widespread effort to silence the local and international media reporting on the excesses taking place in the region. On May 15, the offices of Al Jazeera and Associated Press, situated in Gaza, were bombed in an Israeli air raid. Two days later, Israeli forces targeted local news outlets and damaged the offices of "Filastiniat" association and its affiliated news agency "Nawa". Another media outlet, targeted by the Israeli state, is Palestine TV. The one-year closure ban on the East Jerusalem based channel was extended again for six more months.



The Coalition For Women In Journalism repeatedly sounded alarm on the rampant suppression of free press that continues to take place in the region. Several women journalists incurred personal and professional costs, as severe as death, due to Israeli hostility. Several sources in Gaza who spoke to CFWIJ confirm the killing of Palestinian journalist Reema Saad in a bombing. Reema was killed in her apartment alongside her children and husband when Israeli forces attacked civilian residences in the city of Gaza on the night of May 11. The Israeli forces also bombed the house of Gaza-based photojournalist Samar Abu Elouf, displacing her and her family.

The professional violations women journalists in the region continue to face at the hands of the Israeli state remains alarming, especially in the absence of any international attention. The Coalition For Women In Journalism covered multiple incidents of this attempt to silence Palestinian voices. On May 10, The Israeli forces deliberately targeted Palestinian journalists who cover attacks and violations against Jerusalem and worshipers in the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque to cover the latest developments in Palestine. At least 10 journalists, two of whom were women, were injured during the incidents.



On May 19, A photojournalist for Middle East Eye, Latifeh Abdellatif was physically assaulted by armed Israeli officers in East Jerusalem at the Damascus Gate, for covering the illegal protests said officers were carrying out in the area.

Less the 10 days later, Israeli forces physically assaulted and arrested two Palestinian journalists in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood without charge and warrant. Wahbi Makiya and Zeina Al-Halawani were arrested while they were covering the predominantly Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem where the Israeli state intends to enact mass displacements.

Al Jazeera was again targeted when, on June 6, its journalist Givara Budeiri was physically assaulted and arrested by Israeli forces while she was on a work assignment in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. On the same day, in the same neighbourhood, journalists Najwan al-Sumari and Bara'a Abu Romouz were also assaulted by Israeli armed forces.

These state endorsed excesses have allowed law enforcement officers to act with complete impunity, enacting gendered violence on the journalists working in the region. On June 10, freelance journalist, Stephanie Glinski reported sexual harassment by a police officer as she was covering a protest in Gaza.

Despite these efforts to silence them, Palestinian women journalists and news outlets continue to report on the violence taking place in the region at great personal risk. It is extremely reprehensible however, that global superpowers, who often claim to abide by democratic principles, do little to aid these voices or limit the human rights violations they confront. The Coalition For Women In Journalism is committed to raising alarm on the challenges women journalists face in Palestine and offering support.



# Violence remains rampant against Afghan women journalists

After twenty years of war in Afghanistan and Biden's announcement of the withdrawal of American troops from the region, the country remains one of the most dangerous places for women journalists to operate.

The Coalition For Women In Journalism thoroughly recorded the ongoing violence in the country even as international powers have remained silent and let the injustices unfold. Women journalists in Afghanistan continue to play an immensely important role in a country that has seen extreme political instability in recent years, despite a direct threat to their life. In times like these, it becomes the moral duty of international watchdogs and those in power to amplify their voices.

**On June 4, Mina Khairi, the reporter for Ariana News, was murdered in Kabul. Khairi died alongside her mother in an IED blast. She is the fourth Afghan journalist to be killed this year, raising alarm on the dangers the Afghan journalist community, especially women journalists, are being forced to confront.**



The recent wave of violence against women journalists in Afghanistan has led several women to quit their jobs, fearing for their lives. Journalist Sahira Saleem was one of them. Her resignation came after the massacre of three journalists from Enikass Radio and TV.

At just 24 years old, Alias Razia has a similar story. Alias quit her job after witnessing the assassination of three women polio vaccinators in the city of Jalalabad. According to Alias, despite the many efforts she made to build a career, it doesn't appear to be worth the risk the profession now poses. Alias claims that Jalalabad has become a hotspot for hit-and-run assassinations that specifically target women.



The editor for the feminist magazine Nimorkh Weekly, Fatima Roshanian was under threat after being identified by extremists. She started working from home for safety concerns in March. In a list issued by the extremist terrorists, Fatima was the eleventh person named. Fatima angered the conservative society of Afghanistan with her coverage of bold topics like women and sex. She believes that such lists are purposely shared by sympathizers of extremist organizations to have people killed.

In Afghanistan, many journalists also fled from the country because of security concerns. Many of them now seek political asylum to live their life peacefully. 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.

However, the CFWIJ also documented some brave works of women journalists who resist working in the country fearlessly. Journalist Neda Sadeq Oghlo recently established her radio channel as she believes that this is the time for civil society to actively work towards peace, and the media industry is one of the avenues she trusts to make a difference. Even though the channel is only two years old, Neda believes in its potential to spread a message of peace amongst the Afghan population who have suffered the senseless violence of the War on Terror. The channel employs 20 workers, eight of whom are women, and broadcasts music, news, and entertainment programs.



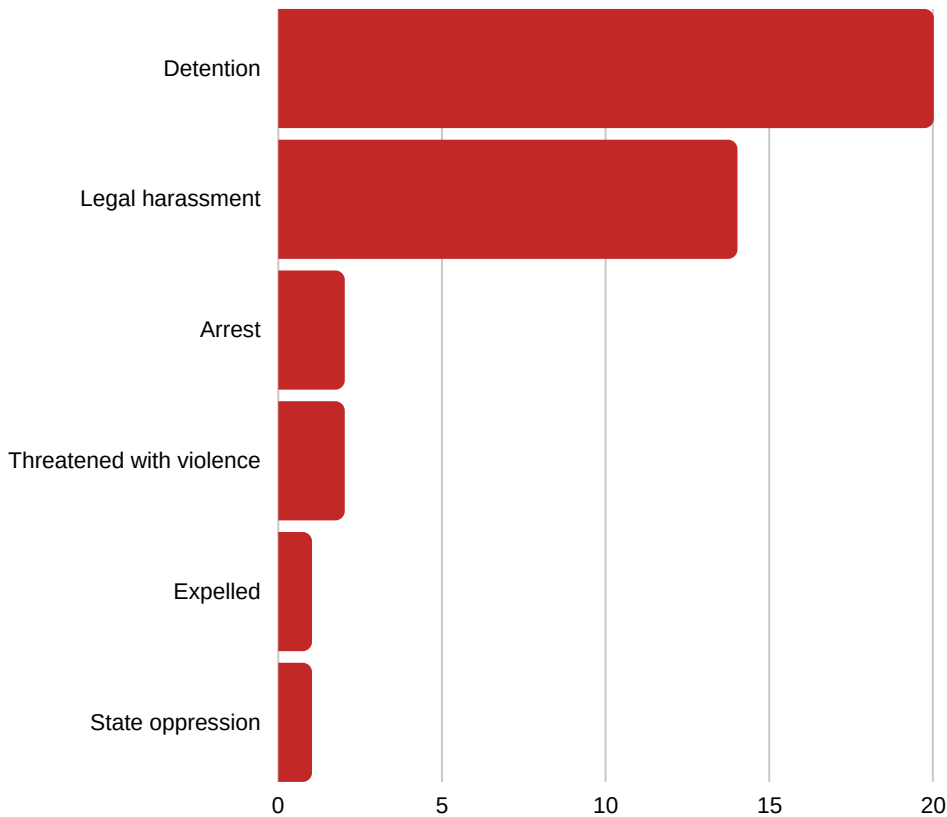


## Women journalists in Belarus on the frontlines at protests and in prisons

Since the fraudulent elections of August 2020, Belarus has been a difficult landscape for press freedom and free speech. The notorious regime, led by President Alexander Lukashenko, has persistently targeted journalists. Women journalists are being imprisoned—regularly targeted with unjustified detentions and equipment confiscation. There are also reports of journalists who fled the country amidst relentless persecution.

Katsyaryna Andreyeva and Darya Chultsova were arrested last year in November 2020 for broadcasting a protest that was held in memory of Raman Bandarenka. Raman was a young activist who lost his life after reportedly being tortured by state authorities at a protest. Both journalists were sentenced to two years in prison on February 18 after the Frundenski district court of Minsk ruled them guilty. Despite the available evidence in favor of the journalists, the judge concluded a two-year imprisonment period at a minimum-security center. They were accused of active participation in the violent protest even though it was proved by both women journalists that they were at the demonstration to cover it for the news.

The very first violation against press freedom this year was recorded when authorities raided the office of BelaPan journalist Tatsiana Bublikawa on January 14. The search was done in connection to an ongoing investigation against former employee Andrei Alexandrov.



As a result of the chaos, Tatsiana suffered a panic attack and was taken to hospital, escorted by security personnel. Tatsiana spoke to CFWIJ about this unfortunate experience. She shared that fear is an instrument of pressure. She confessed there is no law in Belarus to protect journalists, and as a result, several accomplished journalists were leaving the country to settle in a calmer space.

In March, Tatsiana Niadbai, the deputy chairwoman of the Belarusian PEN Center, was interrogated for her role as a coordinator at the Press Club in 2017. The journalist was reported to have signed a non-disclosure form, forbidding her from disclosing details about her interrogation with the authorities. The investigation against the Press Club was initiated after the state authorities raided the office and homes of its employees on December 22, 2020.





**CFWIJ documented the massive crackdown against independent news website Tut.By. Two women journalists, Anastaiya Prudnikava and Ala Burkovskaya, were detained in Minsk on May 25, and were released later that evening. According to the Belarusian News Agency, authorities also searched Anastasiya's house while she was in detention. Police confiscated her laptop and phone, and made her sign a non-disclosure agreement before her release. Authorities also searched Ala's residence and took her gadgets along with them. She was also released after agreeing to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Both were denied access to their lawyer while in detention.**

Before this, on May 18, Marina Zolotova, the editor-in-chief of Tut.By media, was targeted as state security raided her home and the offices of the news outlet under the guise of tax evasion.

CFWIJ welcomed the release of Katsiaryna Barysevich, a staff correspondent for Tut.By. She was finally released from prison on May 19 after completing her sentence period. The journalist was arrested in November 2020 on the allegation of violating medical confidentiality while reporting for one of her investigation stories. She was sentenced to six months imprisonment on March 2. Katsiaryna had reported extensively about the murder of Raman Bandarenka. She, too, was denied access to her lawyer during her imprisonment.

# The rapidly deteriorating state of civil liberties in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the recent most incident was registered against veteran journalist Syeda Maimanat Mohsin, popularly recognised as Jugnu Mohsin, who survived an assassination attempt on her convoy. Jugnu was attacked near Okara, in the Punjab province, while she was coming back from her native village on June 7. Armed assailants fired at the convoy and attacked the cars with sticks and stones. Thankfully, she remained unhurt. Police registered an FIR (First Information Report) and managed to arrest two suspects. The primary suspect is still on the run. Jugnu had received warnings on social media before visiting her village— she was warned not to come, or else she could face severe consequences.



## 175%

Between January and June 2021, total number of organized troll campaigns against women in media increased by 175% compared to the first half of 2020.

## 100%

Total number of incidents against women journalists increased by 100% compared to the first half of last year.

## Two

women journalists were detained in Pakistan since the beginning of 2021.

The journalist community in Pakistan is facing a tremendous number of challenges and threats under the current government. A petition for treason charges against Asma Shirazi and Hamid Mir was registered on June 3. It was reportedly submitted by supporters of the current government. Both journalists were persecuted following Hamid Mir's criticism of the military. After his critical remarks, Hamid was taken off the air. It's perceived that the channel faced pressure from the state authorities to suspend Hamid. Asma Shirazi also came forward and registered her protest against the attacks on free speech and censorship of media. Following her stance on the latest violations against press freedom, she is now facing treason charges.

On March 1st, CFWIJ documented an organized trolling campaign against women journalists incited by a government figure in the country. It is a consistent pattern that government officials are often found targeting and intimidating journalists for their critical coverage. One of these figures is the government spokesperson, Dr. Shahbaz Gill, who frequently torments journalists online. The spokesman shared the address of a woman politician, and when he was questioned for such indiscretion by a women journalist, he bullied her. Dr. Gill was found to routinely target journalists online, and thus starting an online trolling campaign against them. Government trolls would unite to attack journalists online for having a critical approach to their coverage.





# Conclusion

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The first half of 2021 witnessed a worrying spike in violence against women journalists. Compared to 2020, the number of violations have gone up by a whopping 193% within the same time period. There have also been deeply concerning global developments that have made women journalists more vulnerable than ever before. The bombardment and mass displacement in Palestine by Israeli forces, the reemergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan after the abrupt US withdrawal and the coup in Myanmar have made all these three countries hotspots for state persecution and brutality against the journalist community.

However, situations do not always have to be raised to a catastrophic level for international attention. Regions like Pakistan, Belarus, and Turkey are reminders of the everyday challenges women journalists encounter in the professional field. The rise of global right wing politics has served as a chilling reminder that states would go to disturbing lengths to silence voices of accountability. This is a trend that needs to be immediately halted in order to protect democratic values around the world.

However, despite the immense challenges we face in the current moment, it cannot be forgotten that several women journalists have embodied feminist politics and continued to struggle for a more just and equal global community. The Coalition For Women In Journalism joins these journalists with pride. The dangers we face today can only be countered with a flourishing press, and the Coalition, alongside the women mentioned in our report, is determined to strive for it.





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