

The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism



WOMEN  
PRESS  
FREEDOM

# Press Freedom Status For Women Journalists

## From Killings to Cyber Threats: Journalists Face Escalating Dangers

*November 2023*

# Objective of report

Every day, worldwide, women journalists face severe threats to their safety. These threats exist online and offline, from misinformation and discrediting campaigns rooted in misogyny and sexism to more serious problems such as harassment from the state. The problems women journalists contend with are not broadly recognized. Newsrooms are often tight-lipped about them; governments take little action to counter violations against women journalists.

CFWIJ's monthly reports are drawn from our daily and feature research that offers a landscape view of what press freedom looks like from a gender angle. Each morning CFWIJ team register new violations against them, marshaling ever more evidence of the severity of the threats they face and the urgent need to raise awareness about these issues. Many of these cases are documented internally by The Coalition, to maintain anonymity and ensure the safety of targeted journalists. Our work shows the incredible courage and conviction women journalists work with in spite of the hurdles they face. Our job is to ensure their circumstances are made visible so accurate resources can be directed for their safety and growth.

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# Editor's Note

Our report for November 2023 paints a distressing picture of the global challenges journalists face, particularly the harrowing situation in Gaza.

This month, we have recorded a total of 44 cases impacting women and LGBTQI journalists, emphasizing the varied and often severe threats they confront in their pursuit of honest reporting.

Israel perpetrated the most distressing of these incidents. In Gaza, Israeli shelling killed three women journalists. Alaa Taher Al Hassanat, a seasoned reporter, was killed along with her family members during an airstrike in Gaza City. Similarly, Ayat Khadoura, a freelance journalist, was killed in a shelling incident. Amal Zohd, a collaborator with major news networks, was also killed with her family in an air attack. Israeli shelling killed Lebanese reporter Al-Mayadeen reporter Farah Omar after reporting on air from the Northern frontlines. Plestia Alaqad, a young reporter from Gaza uncovering on the ground realities to millions on social media, was forced to flee.

Apart from these tragic killings, the report documents other forms of violence and intimidation against journalists, including abductions, arrests, imprisonment, and physical assaults. Two journalists were abducted in Nigeria and Mexico, and cases of legal harassment, online harassment, and the troubling use of deepfakes to discredit journalists demonstrate the multifaceted risks involved in their work.



# Editor's Note

The concentration of incidents in regions like Palestine, Mexico, and the U.S. indicates specific areas of concern. Each case, whether it is the harrowing loss of Alaa Taher Al Hassanat and her family in an airstrike, the abduction and release of Silvia Nayssa Arce and others by a drug cartel in Mexico, or the unjust arrest of Alisa Reznick in the US, reminds us of the continuous challenges in ensuring safety and freedom for journalists.

In terms of accountability, there have been some positive developments. In a significant triumph for press freedom and justice, a former detective was convicted for the psychological torture and harassment of journalist Claudia Julieta Duque that took place 15 years prior. This landmark decision marks a momentous step forward in holding perpetrators accountable and safeguarding the rights and dignity of journalists.

Our report not only documents these incidents but also serves as a call to action. We must advocate for stronger protections and freedoms for women journalists worldwide, recognizing their indispensable role in a democratic society. It is imperative that we stand in solidarity with these women, acknowledging their contributions and the risks they endure to keep the public informed and hold the powerful accountable.



**Gaza:**

On November 20, **Alaa Taher Al Hassanat**, a seasoned reporter and presenter at Al Majedat Media Network, was killed along with multiple family members when an airstrike hit her home in Gaza City's Al-Daraj neighborhood.

**Ayat Khadoura**, a freelance journalist, was killed in a shelling of her home in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza, on November 20. In a haunting video posted shortly before her death, Khadoura expressed her fear for her life, narrating the terrifying situation in her area following the use of white phosphorus and thermobaric bombs.

**Amal Zohd**, who collaborated with Al-Jazeera and Al Mayadeen, and her family were killed in the early hours of November 24 in an Israeli air attack on their home in Gaza City. The number of family members killed remains unspecified.

**Lebanon:**

On November 21, Al-Mayadeen reporter **Farah Omar** and cameraman Rabih Al-Me'mari were killed by a missile shortly after concluding their 10 am live broadcast from Tayr Harfa in southern Lebanon.



4 journalists killed

### Two journalists abducted

**Nigeria:** An unnamed journalist with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), covering the presidential villa in Abuja, was abducted at the Federal Secretariat on November 15. The kidnappers, allegedly former soldiers, blindfolded the reporter and held her for hours before finally releasing her.

**Mexico:** Armed men in Guerrero kidnapped journalist **Silvia Nayssa Arce**, her husband Alberto Sánchez, and journalist Marco Antonio Toledo with his wife and son on November 19 and 22, respectively. They were released four days later. The abductions of the journalists are believed to be orchestrated by a drug cartel.

### A journalist missing

**China:** On November 30, Kyodo News reported that **Minnie Chan**, a Hong Kong journalist with the South China Morning Post (SCMP), has been missing since her attendance at the Xiangshan Forum in Beijing in late October 2023. The last story she published from the forum was on November 2, and attempts to contact her have been unsuccessful, sparking concerns that she may have been detained by Chinese authorities.



Two journalists  
abducted, one  
missing

### **A journalist arrested**

#### **United States:**

Police arrested KJZZ radio reporter **Alisa Reznick**, charging her with criminal trespass while reporting on a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Tucson, Arizona, on the morning of November 30.

### **2 journalists imprisoned**

#### **Turkiye:**

On November 2, Kurdish author and journalist **Dilşah Kocakaya** was taken into custody by authorities in Edirne and sent to prison to serve a 15-month sentence. The journalist was jailed for allegedly spreading information in support of a "terrorist organization" for her involvement in the "On-call journalism" solidarity campaign in support of the now-banned pro-Kurdish newspaper Özgür Gündem.

#### **Iran:**

Journalist **Saeideh Shafiei** commenced her three-and-a-half-year sentence at Tehran's Evin prison on November 19. Shafiei, known for her investigative reporting on social injustices, faces imprisonment, travel restrictions post-release, and is banned from political and social activities for two years.

A journalist arrested,  
2 imprisoned



## 2 journalists sentenced

### Turkiye:

Istanbul's 23rd Criminal Court of First Instance imposed a 8 month prison sentence on journalist **Şehriban Alkış** on November 14. The case stems from a July 7, 2020, incident where Alkış was covering a protest defending the Istanbul Convention. The journalist won't serve jail time, as the court opted to replace the prison sentence with a fine.

### Brazil:

On November 11, Brazilian journalist **Schirlei Alves** was sentenced to one year of open detention and fined over \$80,000 for defamation of public officials.



## 3 journalists detained

### West Bank:

Israeli occupation authorities detained journalist **Somaya Jawabra** on November 5 after summoning her for an interview at the Huwara camp, Nablus, in the occupied West Bank. Jawabra, who works for the Palestinian Information Centre's monitoring team, is seven months pregnant, prompting concerns about her well-being and health.

### Azerbaijan:

On November 30, journalist **Nargiz Absalamova** from Abzas Media was detained and arrested by police on charges of smuggling foreign currency. Ten days before Absalamova's detention, Khatai District Court in Baku issued an order for Abzas Media editor-in-chief **Sevinj Vagifgizi** to be held in custody for four months. Vagifgizi is also facing charges of conspiring to unlawfully bring money into the country. The reporter was detained upon her arrival at Baku airport in Azerbaijan, and subsequent to her detention, the police conducted searches at her apartment and office.



2 journalists  
sentenced, 3 detained



## 4 journalists physically assaulted

### Lebanon:


On November 13, Israeli missiles hit a press tour of at least twelve journalists, including **Amal Khalil, Rif Akil, and Nahed Youssef**. The journalists were reporting on damage caused by Israeli bombing in southern Lebanon. Fortunately, no casualties were reported. The attack occurred a month after fatal strikes in Lebanon, attributed to Israel, killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah.

### Spain:

In a recent and troubling surge of violence against journalists in Spain, **Paula García de Mora**, a cameraperson from Antena 3, and her colleague Javier Bastida, a reporter with La Sexta, were subjected to physical assaults while covering anti-amnesty protests in Madrid

## A journalist's killer goes free

**Russia:** On November 14, Sergei Khadzhikurbanov, a former Russian detective convicted in the 2006 assassination of journalist **Anna Politkovskaya**, was pardoned by President Vladimir Putin. Khadzhikurbanov's release comes following his participation in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, as confirmed by his legal representative. The assassination of Politkovskaya, one of Russia's most revered journalists, serves as a grim reminder of the perils faced by those daring to scrutinize the Kremlin.



4 journalists physically  
assaulted, one's killer  
goes free

**Mexico:**

On November 4, political commentator and journalist **Stephanie Henaro** was sent threats online after criticizing the government's response to Hurricane Otis in Acapulco on television.

***"It is really dangerous to be a journalist in Mexico. And I think it's even more dangerous in this period of history with this kind of government when polarization is at its maximum level, and attacks against the press are promoted by the President."***

-Stephanie Henaro

**France:**

On November 5, 2023, Swiss public broadcaster RTS and Reporters Without Borders filed a formal complaint against the Gendarmerie (branch of the French armed forces) for their aggressive behavior towards RTS journalists **Adeline Percept** and Thomas Chantepie.

While reporting near the Tricastin nuclear power plant on September 15, six officers abruptly encircled the journalists and demanded the deletion of their footage.

***"Six guys with military outfits, which were not recognizable. In France, the gendarmerie has specific uniforms. These were not the ones the officers were wearing. They approached us and encircled us. They took our passports, press cards, and claimed we had no right to film the nuclear plant."***

-Adeline Percept



9 journalists  
threatened/  
intimidated

#### Israel:

On November 6, Palestinian journalist and Al Mayadeen TV correspondent **Hanaa Mahameed** stationed in Jerusalem, was ambushed, harassed, and threatened by an Israeli journalist. The reporter says she was lured by an Israeli Channel 12 TV correspondent and a news crew who falsely informed her that she had a package awaiting collection at a local post office. Upon arriving at the location, she quickly discerned that it was a ruse, designed to harass her on behalf of the Israeli TV outlet.

Two Jewish women journalists based in Israel, **Rolene Marks** and **Emily Schrader**, said on November 8 they have received violent, rape, and death threats over social media since October 7.

#### Costa Rica:

**Vilma Ibarra**, radio host of the show "Habla Claro," disclosed on her November 8 broadcast that an online death threat was directed at her. The perpetrator, an alleged supporter of President Rodrigo Chaves, ominously called for Ibarra to meet the same tragic fate as her grandfather, Lucio Ibarra, a communist leader assassinated in 1948.

#### Spain:

Journalist **Matilde Alcaraz** and cameraman Toni Polit from Á Punt were attacked while reporting live by far-right protestors mobilized by the political party Vox. Extremists accused journalists of being manipulators, threw cans and made Nazi salutes.



9 journalists  
threatened/  
intimidated

**Turkiye:** The 4th hearing of the case against **Nazlıcan Yıldız** took place on November 2 at the 21st High Criminal Court of Bayrakli Courthouse. Yıldız stands accused of "membership in a terrorist organization" due to her alleged involvement with the Free Student Initiative.

Bianet journalist **Evrım Kepenek** was under scrutiny by Istanbul prosecutors on November 3 for a tweet regarding aid distribution following the devastating earthquakes that shook eastern Türkiye in February. Kepenek is accused of spreading "misleading information" and inciting hatred.

**Russia:**

On November 27, Russian authorities initiated a criminal case against **Masha Gessen**, who currently resides in the U.S. and is a staff writer for the New Yorker. The journalist is being charged with allegedly disseminating false information about Russia's military actions in Ukraine.

**Lebanon:**

On November 16, **Layal Alekhtiar**, a journalist with the pan-Arab channel Al-Arabiya, revealed she is under investigation by order of the Lebanese Military Court. The news anchor claims it follows complaints from Hezbollah supporters after her interview with an Israeli army officer last month.

**Germany:**

On November 24, **Irina Borogan**, known for her investigative journalism and co-founding the Agentura.Ru website, revealed she was subjected to a legal challenge by Alexey Kozlov, a Berlin-based financier.



5 journalists legally  
harassed

### A journalist discredited

#### **Croatia:**

On November 8, Minister of Culture and Media, Nina Obuljen Koržinek, attacked the credibility and integrity of Telegram.hr journalist **Dora Kršul** after her corruption investigation


***"It's very annoying to work in this kind of country where you point to corruption and criminal activities, and you would expect that they're going to deal with that criminality and corruption. But no, you are the one who is guilty of everything."***

*-Dora Kršul*

### A journalist hacked

#### **Gaza:**

On November 10, **Plestia Alaqad**, a Palestinian journalist known for her on-the-ground reporting from the Gaza region, was hacked. Her Instagram account, @byplestia, was compromised, leading to misleading posts that have sowed confusion and concern among her followers.



A journalist  
discredited, another  
hacked

## 2 journalists targeted by deepfakes

### South Africa:

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was compelled on November 14 to clarify that their anchors, **Bongiwe Zwane** and **Francis Herd**, were impersonated in AI deepfake videos circulating online. These videos, promoting a fraudulent investment scheme, amassed significant attention, with one featuring Herd garnering over 123,000 views on YouTube since its appearance on November 3.

## 4 journalists denied access

### Venezuela:

On November 2, **Lisbeth Martínez**, a La Verdad de Monagas journalist, was forcibly removed while attempting to cover a protest at the Dr. Manuel Núñez Tovar University Hospital. The director of the Monagas Police abruptly ejected her from the hospital. Martínez received no explanation for this unjust removal.

### Albania:

On November 9, journalists attempting to engage with ministers and deputies for questioning faced obstruction from the Guard outside the parliament in Tirana. Guard physically restrained KlanTV journalist **Klesiana Omeri** and barred a camera operator from filming. Omeri told Safe Journalists that guards, acting on "new directives," have restricted journalists to a specific area, significantly limiting their ability to conduct interviews.

### Gaza:

On November 22, in a move that reflects the escalating tensions in Gaza, Palestinian journalist **Plestia Alaqad**, known for her in-depth social media coverage of the region's crisis, fled the area.



2 journalists targeted  
by deepfakes, 4  
denied access

### **A journalist resigns**


#### **United States:**

**Jazmine Hughes**, a writer and editor for The New York Times Magazine, resigned on November 3 following a conversation with her editor. Hughes had signed a letter denouncing the Israel-Gaza war, an action that was deemed in violation of the newspaper's newsroom policies, according to The New York Times.

### **Closure of feminist media outlet**

#### **United States:**

On November 9, G/O Media announced the closure of the influential feminist news site Jezebel. The decision, communicated through an internal memo to its staff, marks the end of an era for the platform dedicated to impactful reporting on critical social and political issues.



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**A journalist resigns,  
feminist media  
outlet closed**

## 1 journalist loses her life in tragic accident

### Colombia:

Beloved sports journalist **Luz Piedad Eusse** tragically lost her life in an accident at the Tocancipá racetrack during the 2023 Ford Motorcraft Season Grand Finale on November 19. The journalist hosted the Cars and Motorcycles show at Blu Radio for 11 years and was well known for her work in motorsports journalism.

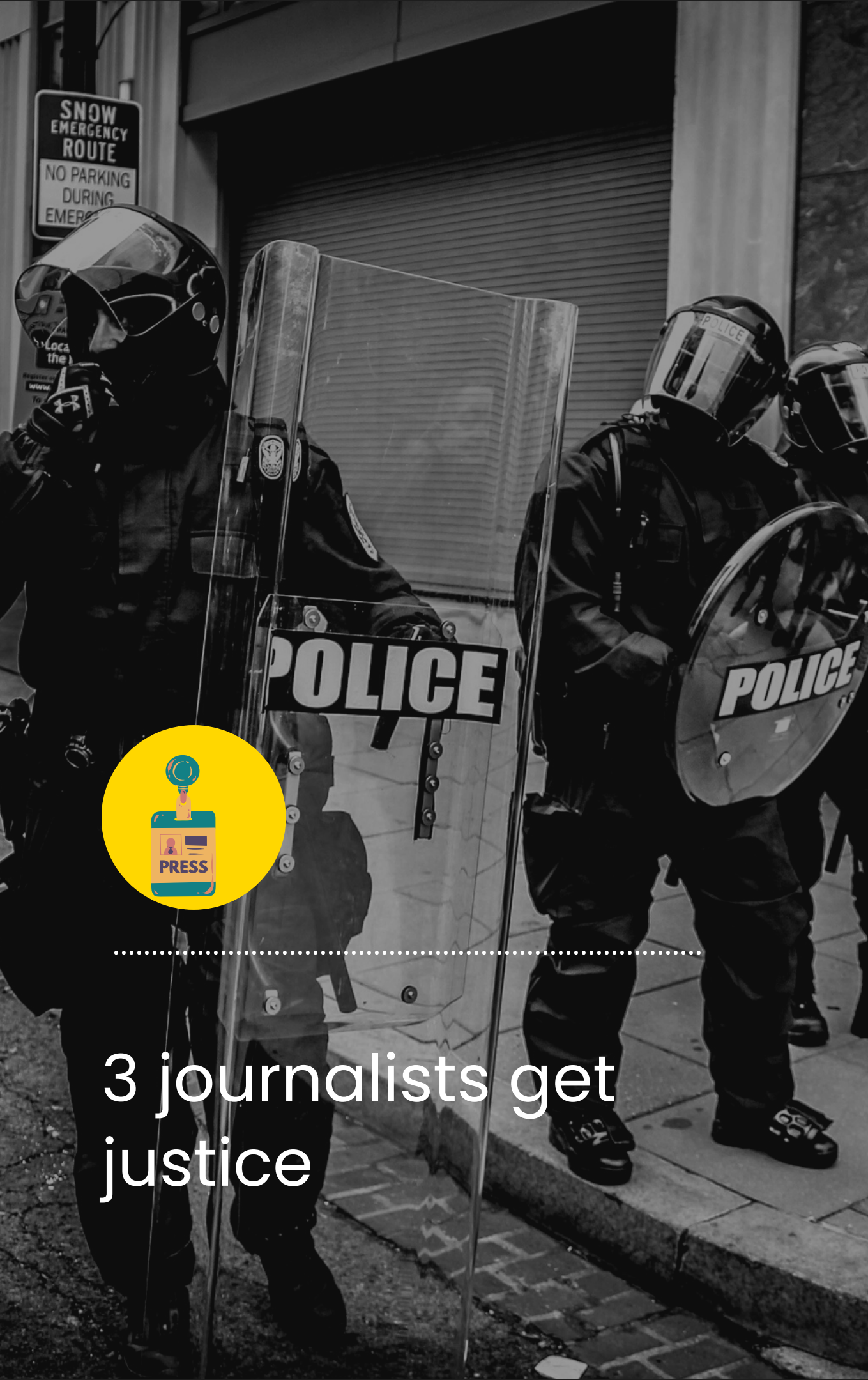
## A journalist secures a conviction

**Colombia:** On November 20, Bogotá Superior District Court found Ronal Harbey Rivera Rodríguez, a former detective of the now-defunct state intelligence agency Department of Administrative Security (DAS), guilty of psychologically torturing and harassing journalist **Claudia Julieta Duque** 15 years ago.



A journalist loses her  
life, another secures  
a conviction





3 journalists get justice

**Turkiye:** On November 7, Gazete Kadıköy's Editor-in-Chief, **Semra Çelebi**, was acquitted of all charges related to her 2020 tweet about a Pride March. The case was brought against her by Aydoğan Ahiakın, a politician with the Justice and Development Party, who accused Çelebi of various offenses, including "openly disrespecting the state's sovereignty."

On November 9, an Istanbul court dismissed a lawsuit against **Canan Kaya**, Editor-in-Chief of Medya Koridoru, brought by Demirören Media Group. In June 2022, the media group initiated its second legal action against Kaya, this time for her reporting on the company's financial difficulties.

**United States:**

On November 7, Los Angeles County agreed to settle the case brought against it by LAist reporter **Josie Huang**, who was brutally arrested and detained by the police three years ago.

**A journalist secures a conviction**

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

**Join us in this mission**



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