



# World Press

# Freedom Day

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Impunity and silence,  
emboldens aggressive states

# Objective of report

The press and media industry have historically existed as an accountability mechanism to the state and its extensions of power. Thus, it only stands to reason that it is among the first casualties of state violence. This year our first quarterly report focuses on the ways in which journalists are targeted in order to suppress reportage that seeks to demand answers for state impunity in conflict zones as well as violence propagated by populist majoritarian states.

We do this by focusing on three main regions of concern: Russia, Israel and India. The three countries have, in recent times, used militarization to expand their ambit of power while clamping down on press freedoms in order to detract from global attention towards their overreaches. This has resulted in them managing to create a perpetual state of fear and violence in the Ukrainian territory, Palestinian territory, Kashmir and among marginalized religious groups respectively.

In the first section of the following report we look at the several ways in which violence against women journalists have been realized in these regions. We examine the weaponization of state institutions, the use of brute strength under the guise of lawful force and utilization of majoritarian sentiments to intimidate. We also provide our readers a guide to how we categorize violence at The Coalition For Women In Journalism and shed light on the journalists who have suffered repercussions for continuing to stand up to unchecked state power.

In our second section review the first four months of 2022 and recall major cases of violations against women journalists between January 1 and April 30. Even as states seek to quash accountability, silence dissent and restrict space for independent media, women journalists around the world continue to speak truth to power and do their work. The CFWIJ is proud to shine the spotlight on some of the fierce press freedom defenders who challenged power in the past four months.



# Country Focus

The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism



Since the beginning of 2022, CFWIJ has recorded 14 violations against women journalists by the Russian state discounting the violence in the field that reporters have had to confront in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine. In 13 of the 14 incidents, the Russian state has weaponized the judicial process against journalists; detaining seven, initiating legal proceedings against five and imprisoning one woman journalist. In all 13 cases, women journalists were punished for reporting on state overreaches, especially with regards to Russia's attack on Ukraine. The attack on the free press was further aggravated by legal provisions restricting and regulating the content of news reports.

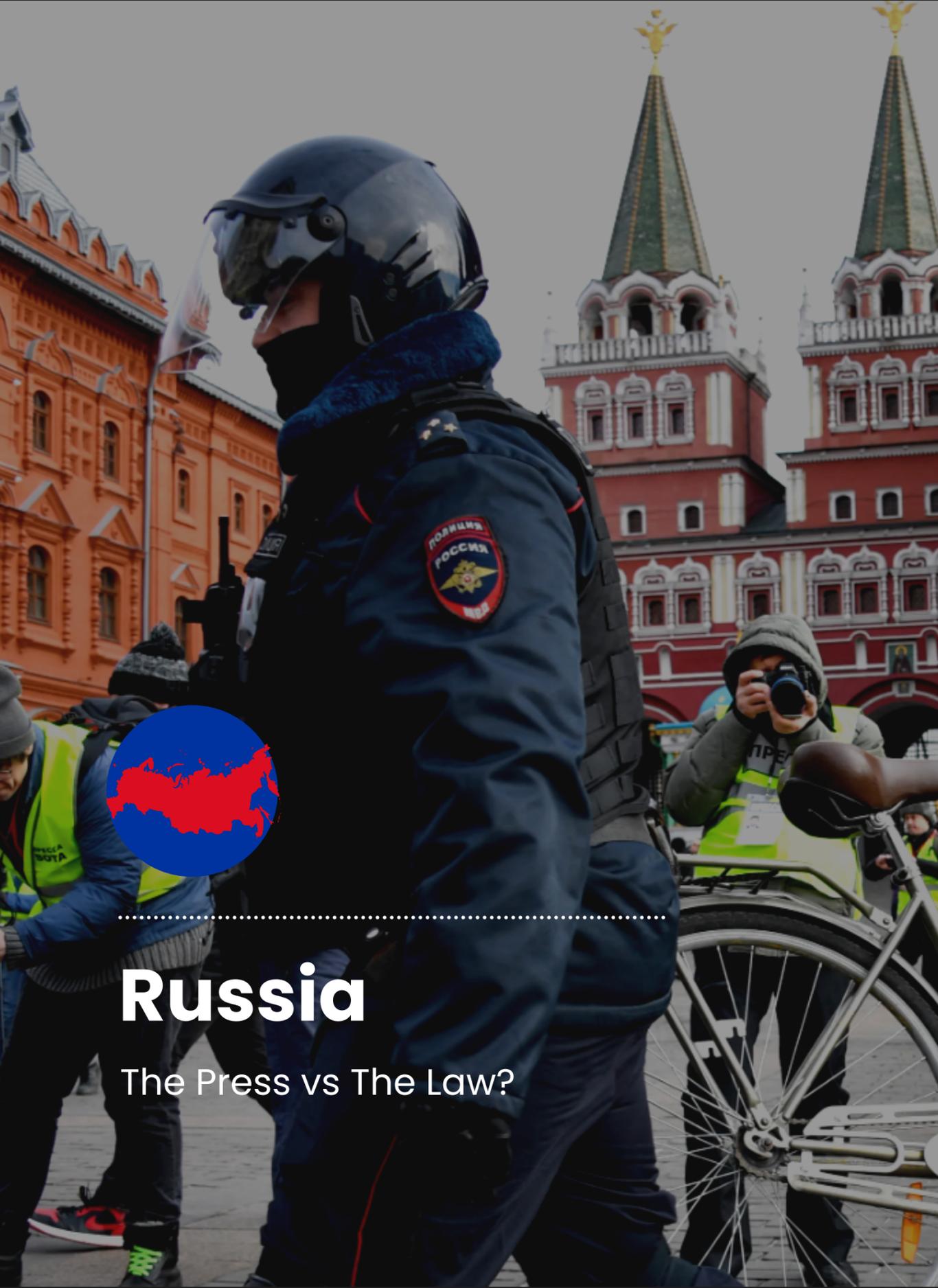
On February 26, the state media regulator Roskomnadzor announced that news outlets can only report official government statements about the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine. Roskomnadzor also threatened news outlets to block their websites if any pieces objecting to the declaration are published.

Roskomnadzor also sent notifications to the news outlets for 'false information'. Echo of Moscow, television station TV Rain, independent news websites InoSMI, Medizona, New Times, Free Press, Novaya Gazeta, The Journalist, Linizdat, and the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty website Crimea.Realities were on the list and accused of spreading false information.

On day six of the war, at least 2,000 people were arrested over anti-war protests and demonstrations, and among them were three women journalists who were also beaten, detained and threatened while following the outrage. British daily Telegraph's Moscow reporter, Nataliya Vasilyeva was briefly detained while reporting anti-war protests in the capital. Shortly after, Nika Samusik, a photographer for Sota.Vision was arrested by security forces in St. Petersburg on February 24. She was held for two nights and was charged under Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code. Lastly, reporter for local news website Simbirsk.City, Viktoria Avdeeva was detained in the city of Ulyanovsk and charged under Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code.

## Russia

The Press vs The Law?



# Country Focus

The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism



Those who resisted the state's policies were met with further legal action. [Marina Ovsyannikova](#), an editor at state-run Channel One television, was detained overnight and fined for making an anti-war video and staging a demonstration on-air. [In March](#), at least seven other journalists, including Elena Izotova and Darya Poyadina, working with independent news website Sota.Vision were detained, fined or harassed by law enforcement agencies.

On March 25, a civil lawsuit was registered against Isabella Evloyeva, the editor of Fortanga, the Caucasian Republic of Ingushetia's only independent news website, for criticizing the presence of Russian tanks in Ukraine. Similarly on March 30, Yana Yanovskaya, the editor for Parma-Novosti editor, was fined 50,000 roubles (550 euros) for "discrediting" the armed forces in an editorial.

Then on April 6, former DOXA editor Natalia Tyshkevich was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest over a social media post five years ago. Natalia was a student at the time of the presumed offense. She was then sentenced to two years of correctional labor alongside Alla Gutnikova and two other male colleagues for a case that was registered against the four in 2021.

Further attacks include the civil suit against Listock, a small newspaper based in Gorno-Altaysk, in western Siberia's Altai region, which was fined 300,000 roubles (3,300 euros) for articles "discrediting" the Russian army), while its editor, Olga Komarova, was fined an additional 100,000 roubles (1,100 euros).

The efforts are blatant attempts by the Russian authorities to bar the press from reporting on its overreaches in general, and its disregard for human life in Ukraine. Russian media has suffered at the hands of state suppression even before this war was launched, with legislation such as the "foreign agent" law used to shut down several independent outlets. Contorting state institutions to silence the press leads to human rights violations currently unfolding in Eastern Europe. The weaker the press, the more impunity the state can afford to demonstrate.



## Russia

The Press vs The Law?

# Country Focus

The Coalition For  
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Over the past several years, the Israeli state has used unrestrained state violence to counter the voices of journalists reporting on Palestinian resistance and Israeli overreaches in the region. This year, CFWIJ recorded two cases of violence against women journalists. However, we caution against viewing these incidents in isolation. Rather, they should be looked at as the latest examples in an ongoing trend of press repression that the Israeli state appears to have adopted as a policy in Palestine. Methods and instances of repression are eerily similar to the manner in which state violence was inflicted on journalists in Israel's bombing of Palestine in 2021 as well.

On March 22, Palestinian journalist Bushra Al-Taweel was jailed by Israeli forces for the fourth time in recent years. The journalist was arrested at a checkpoint in Nablus and was sentenced for three months without a trial or a charge.

Then on April 15, Israel Defense Force (IDF) officers shot journalist Nasreen Salem in the head with a rubber bullet while she was covering the violence that unfolded at the Al-Aqsa mosque. Over 150 people were injured during the attack.

Violence began in a similar manner in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in 2021 that culminated in 12 cases of violations against women journalists. The two attacks this year are the logical continuation of years of unchecked powers that the Israeli state has been allowed to operate with in the region without any international checks and balances. The Palestinian press, meanwhile continues to languish and bear the brunt of this international silence.

When speaking of the power of the independent press in connection with Israel, one must also note that the press is not free from criticism either. When media conglomerates choose to render their publications toothless against atrocities of some regimes they too add to the impunity of those regimes, even as they counter aggressions by other regimes. The Ukraine crisis, for instance, has laid bare that the international press amplifies violations against the press and state excesses differently when they are committed against non-white communities.



## Israel

Unchecked and Persistent  
Violence

# Country Focus

The Coalition For  
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In Indian-administered Kashmir, arm twisting and fear have been used extensively to control the press since 1989 when separatist rebels began fighting Indian soldiers, but after New Delhi revoked the region's special status in 2019 the state adopted more sophisticated mechanisms to silence journalists. Prominent among them were the extensive communications blockade and the Public Safety Act, which allows authorities to imprison anyone for up to two years without trial.

Emboldened by the impunity it has enjoyed thus far, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has also not hesitated from employing similar tactics in mainland India as well. In its 2021 round-up, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) noted India was on a par with Yemen when it came to the number of journalists killed that year for their work. The country has also seen a rise in judicial harassment, state-sponsored intimidation, vicious online trolling and misinformation campaigns against journalists.

The state has created systematic fear and forced self-censorship on those who attempt to criticize policies of the BJP government. The state institutions spur into action against such persons subjecting them to extreme harassment, intimidation and violence. Under the BJP government, a political party closely tied to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), it does not go amiss that it is the Muslim minority which bears the brunt of these policies.

Washington Post correspondent and senior journalist Rana Ayyub continues to be blatantly targeted by state institutions and state-sponsored trolls. The journalist has repeatedly alleged that she faces state harassment due to her principled stance against the right-wing populist tactics of the BJP that seeks to target and silence religious minorities in the country. And there appears to be truth in Rana's words.

In February of last year, for example, the Indian police registered a complaint against The Wire editor Ismat Ara for tweeting an article that implicated the police for the death of a farmer during the Indian Republic Day demonstration.

I SAY NO TO  
FEAR &  
HATED



## India

Majoritarian Populism  
Threatens Minority Journalists



NOT IN MY NAME

# Country Focus

The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism



Then in June, freelance journalist Saba Naqvi alongside Rana herself faced a criminal complaint accusing them of posting a video on Twitter with misleading and unverified information.

The harrowing nature of these repeated attacks on Muslim women journalists was realized in July, when a website targeting Muslim women including those in the news media industry was discovered. The website, titled “Sulli Deals” consisted of profiles of at least 90 different women who were “on sale”. Men would subsequently “bid” on these profiles to harass the women. A similar incident occurred in January of this year with the emergence of social media application “Bulli Bai”, a platform where Hindu men “bid” on Muslim women.

It was unsurprising then, that physical violence was used against a journalist’s father in Kashmir, the most militarized region in the country. In July 2021, photojournalist Masrat Zahra alleged that the police assaulted her father in order to intimidate her. Currently, based in Germany, Masrat took to her Twitter account to post pictures of her injured father after the police denied allegations.

It is not just Muslim women who have had to suffer due to the popularization of Hindutva politics in India. In January, journalist Meena Kotwal received violent, casteist and sexist threats after one of her tweets. The reaction came from right-wing Hindu groups who claimed that Meena insulted their religious sentiments. This is not the first time Meena has been on the receiving end of such threats, given the nature of her work. However, despite several requests the police refused to register an official complaint.

The attempts to target and harass journalists belonging to religious minorities aims to remove the voice of these groups from mainstream media. This allows the state to act with greater impunity against marginalized communities, thus strengthening their populist rhetoric to hold onto power. It, thus, becomes of utmost importance to empower the press in the country, specially journalists and reporters who come from minority communities in order to ensure that the state remains accountable to all its citizens.



## India

Majoritarian Populism  
Threatens Minority Journalists

# Top trends



## Legal Harassment

When the law is weaponized against a journalist in order to deter them from pursuing a story, punish them for having done so and intimidate them into submission. Legal harassment can be carried out through a criminal or a civil lawsuit brought either directly by the state or through powerful persons objecting to the contents of a report. Cases brought by the latter can be understood as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).

## Custody

When the journalist is taken into state custody in relation to their work.

**Detention:** When a journalist is taken into custody by law enforcement agencies, without the issuing of a formal arrest warrant or legal charges brought forth.

**Arrest:** Used when an arrest warrant is issued against a journalist and they are taken into custody.

**Imprisonment:** When a journalist is sentenced to jail after criminal proceedings.



## Physical Assault

When a journalist is attacked by an individual or a group with or without the use of a weapon, which results in harm to their person.

**Physical Assault Resulting in Death:** Physical assault by state or non-state actors resulting in death.

**Physical Assault Resulting in Injury:** When a journalist is physically assaulted either on the field, in the newsroom or in their private premises, causing bodily harm.

**Physical Assault Resulting in no Injuries:** When a journalist is physically assaulted either on the field, in the newsroom or in their private premises, however, there is no bodily injury.



## Threats/Intimidation

Attempts to intimidate a journalist by issuing threats against them, their outlet, colleagues, or family by state or non-state actors.

## Attacks Against Journos

**Attacks on/Threats Property:** Attempts to destroy any item that the journalist has legal title over:

**Attacks on/Threats to Equipment:** Attempt to destroy a journalist professional equipment

**Attacks on/Threats to Personal Belonging:** Attempt to destroy a journalist personal belonging

**Attacks on/Threats to Occupiable Property:** Attacks on a journalist's private property or place of work



# Types of Online Harassment

Following are the categories The Coalition For Women In Journalism recognizes as online violence since the abuse of power manifests itself in the digital space.



## Online Harassment/Abuse/Bullying

When a journalist faces personal and professional attacks, threats, abuse, or questions aimed at their person or professional integrity through online platforms, such as social media or email.



## Organized Troll Campaign

When a journalist faces personal attacks, threats, or questions towards their person or professional integrity through online channels as part of a coordinated online campaign.



## Disinformation

False or misleading stories or public announcements promoted by state or non-state actors that either impact a journalist personally or the principles of free press in the country.



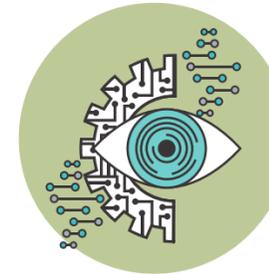
## Blocked access to information

These include the blocking of websites, or refusal to respond to inquiries by organizations.



## Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Attack

A journalist or outlet is targeted by a DDoS attack that prevents or hinders access to journalistic reporting.



## Surveillance

The use of surveillance (both digital and in-person) to monitor the work and communication of journalists, including with colleagues and sources. This can include state and non-state actors and improper abuse of national security or policing laws to violate the privacy of journalists and media outlets.



## Hacking

Unlawful access or manipulation of a journalist's data or information by state or non-state actors. This can target the journalist, their outlet and sources, or any actor in a manner that could threaten the journalist's work.



The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism

# For daring to speak truth to power

## Rana Ayyub



A fearless reporter and staunch critic of the Modi government, Rana has been repeatedly subject to harassment by state offices. The Washington Post correspondent has been routinely targeted via legal and extrajudicial means due to her work. Just four months into this year, she has been repeatedly harangued by state offices as well as supporters of the BJP in online as well as physical spaces. She was targeted with rape and death threats as well as slander campaigns by state-sponsored trolls. Then in February, the Enforcement Directorate initiated a fiscal probe against journalist Rana Ayyub, alleging that she misused the donations collected for Covid-19 relief through the Indian crowdfunding platform, Ketto. A formal graft investigation was launched against her with INR 17.7 million cited as the misappropriated amount and subsequently her funds were frozen.

Despite Rana responding to investigation summons several times, she was barred from flying to London where she was to attend a journalism event, till the courts intervened. The court directed Rana to deposit some money and inform the government agencies of her travel and contact details, local news reported. A timeline of violations against Rana Ayyub is available on [our website](#).

## Meena Kotwal



Dalit journalist Meena Kotwal received violent, casteist and sexist threats from right-wing Hindu groups after she posted a tweet in December 2021, burning the "Manusmriti". Many Hindus believe that the "Manusmriti" is an ancient religio-legal text and an essential part of the Hindu canon, while others denounce it for upholding caste and gender discrimination in society. The backlash was immediate. Hindutva nationalistic groups like Bajrang Dal, Karni Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad led organized online attacks on her and subjected her to a deliberate and prolonged smear campaign. One message threatened her with "the same fate as Gauri Lankesh" (a Dalit woman journalist who was shot and killed in 2017). The police refused to register an official complaint, however.

This year, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor wrote a letter to the Indian government regarding the matter. They revealed that they kept the letter confidential for 60 days before making it public in February. During the time, the Indian government was expected to issue a statement, however, the UN said that the government did not respond to the letter. UN experts defined the threats to Meena particularly alarming because they were in direct retaliation to her "exercising her right to freedom of opinion and expression online". The letter further noted that they subjected to various forms of discrimination as a woman and a Dalit.



**The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism**

# For daring to speak truth to power

## **Bushra Al-Taweel**



The Israeli occupation forces arrested freelance journalist Bushra Al-Taweel last month for the fourth time in two years. According to the lawyer of the journalist, Ashraf Abu Sneineh, Bushra was transferred to Damoun Prison and no investigation or formal charges have been brought forth. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) released a statement about the journalist. MADA said Bushra was talking to her mother on the phone, when an Israeli soldier arbitrarily stopped the journalist and demanded to see her ID card. She was subsequently arrested by the officer.

Bushra was arrested for the first time in 2011, while still in high school, and was sentenced to 16 months in jail. She was released as part of a captive-exchange deal later that year. In 2014, she was arrested again and sentenced to 10 months, which she served in full. In 2017, she was detained again and served eight months. She was put in jail yet again in December 2019 and released in July 2020. In the past nine years, Bushra has served two and a half years in jail time; she battles constant intimidation from Israeli authorities.

## **Sota.Vision Journalists**



Since March 7 at least seven journalists, including Elena Izotova, Nika Samusik and Darya Poyadina, have been targeted by the Russian authorities for reporting on the anti-war sentiment in the country. On March 17, journalist Elena's home was searched and her technical equipment was seized by the authorities. On March 18, authorities detained Nika Samusik along with four male colleagues in Moscow and St. Petersburg ahead of planned rallies. On March 23, Sota.Visions' editor Darya Poyadina's home in the northwestern city of Arkhangelsk was searched by Russian Investigative Committee operatives. Darya was subsequently held for more than 12 hours at the Investigative Committee's office in the city. She was released after she signed a non-disclosure agreement.



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# For daring to speak truth to power

## Marina Ovsyannikova



Marina Ovsyannikova, then an editor at state-run Channel One television, was detained overnight and fined for making an anti-war video and staging a demonstration on-air. On March 14, Marina ran onto the set of Russia's most-watched news segment, Vremya, holding up an anti-war placard. "No war, stop the war, don't believe the propaganda, they are lying to you here," read her placard which was signed "Russians against the war". In her video, she said she was embarrassed to be working for the state-run channel and spreading "Kremlin propaganda".

Marina was first detained and denied legal access. She was then charged and convicted of attempting to organize an unsanctioned protest. The Ostankino district court criminalized Marina for her video and ordered her to pay a fine of 30,000 rubles (over \$300). Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov termed her protest as "hooliganism" and Channel One's media manager Kirill Kleimenov dubbed her "a traitor". In April, Marina was hired by a German media outlet as a print and TV correspondent amid widespread support from the international community and those critical of the Kremlin's war. But in her home country, the state perceives her as a criminal who now also faces the charge of "discrediting" the armed forces and a fine of up to 50,000 rubles (over \$500). The threat of a prison term of up to 15 years under the "fake news" law enforced in March also hangs over her head.

## Katsyaryna Andreyeva



Katsyaryna Andreyeva, a correspondent for Poland-based independent broadcaster Belsat TV in Belarus, was detained in November 2020 along with her camera operator Darya Chultsova while live-streaming incidents of police brutality during a rally held in memory of murdered dissident Raman Bandarenka. In February 2021, each of them were convicted and sentenced to two years in prison on charges of "organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order". In April 2022, Katsyaryna was also charged with "high treason" after a so-called secret investigation. The details of her alleged crime were not disclosed but the journalist now faces up to 15 more years in prison.



# Conclusion

The analysis presented in this section of the report is meant to call attention on states that have utilized immense violence in order to expand their power in the region. However, we would like to clarify that by no means are these tactics exclusive to these particular countries alone. Regions like Saudi Arabia, for example, where we saw the infamous case of Loujain Al-Hathloul, tend to often escape criticism due to lack of data from the country. The absence of data in itself is a reminder of the extent of repression that the Saudi press is subject to under the rule of Mohammad Bin Salman.

Similarly we would also like to bring attention to the inequality of oppression. Following the invasion of Ukraine, the world witnessed the unveiling of widespread racism within the media industry as well as the global political leadership. The question of a refugee crisis brought to the fore the biases associated with color of the skin of those under attack. There is an obvious bias in the way the Ukraine crisis is spoken about compared to, for example, the crisis in Palestine or Afghanistan. It would do global political leadership well to remember that it cannot turn its eyes away from violence in one region of the world and claim to uphold moral principles in another based on vested political interests. The patterns and the causes of the violence when it comes to state oppression in areas of conflict remain similar, the response must be too.



Inequality of  
oppression



The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism

# Is the press really free?

What does the press look like for women journalists?

63

women journalists are behind bars  
as far May 3, 2022.



Five

women journalists were  
killed this year.



# Introduction

One must remember that women journalists, no matter what country they belong to, are susceptible to several forms of threats. These dangers can range from online trolling to physical abuse and, in some unfortunate cases, even death. Every month, CFWIJ records a significant number of threats against women journalists, categorized by severity. The assaults these women journalists endure, whether online or offline, threatens their right to freedom of expression.

This year, the CFWIJ specially focused on the killings of journalists in Mexico, the legal harassment rampant in Turkey and the ways in which the digital space is weaponized against journalists in Canada. Furthermore, CFWIJ was available to launch pressure campaigns for journalists on the receiving end of state violence; these included Rozina Islam in Bangladesh and Sedef Kabas in Turkey. CFWIJ was also an active member of in advocating for safety of Ukrainian journalists and joined over 170 civil society groups and over 200,000 citizens to demand effective legal protection against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation [SLAPPs].

The report summarizes everything the Coalition For Women In Journalism was working on in the first quarter of 2022.





# Top countries with the most number cases

## Canada

Canada ranked third in terms of the frequency of violations against women journalists in this quarter. The most common violation we witnessed in the country was attacks online. The CFWIJ recorded a total of 13 cases of online attacks around the world in the first four months of 2022 and eight of these were witnessed in Canada. Last year right-wing politician Maxime Bernier tweeted a provocative message targeting women journalists of color and we witnessed organized online attacks on more than 20 women media workers hailing from non-white communities. The impunity allowed to Bernier by state authorities and by the digital platform emboldened him to repeat his actions rendering several more women journalists vulnerable during trucker protests. Another common violation we have witnessed in Canada in the past has been excesses by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

## Turkey

Turkey saw the most cases of violations against women journalists between January 1 to April 30, 2022, with a total of 63 cases documented. The most common violation we witnessed in Turkey was legal harassment, including seven civil lawsuits and two defamation cases. In criminal cases the most frequent charge we saw was under anti-terrorism and "insult" laws. Out of the total 42 such cases we recorded around the world, 34 were witnessed in Turkey. Among other violations, the country also witnessed two women journalists detained and two imprisoned for their work.

## Russia

Russia followed Turkey on the CFWIJ's index with 11 cases of violations against women journalists documented. These included seven cases of women journalists detained, at one imprisonment and two criminal lawsuits, among other violations. Not to mention the multiple killings, detentions and harassment of journalists at the hands of Russian invasion forces in Ukraine.



The Coalition For  
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# Murdered women journalists

## Mexico



Mexican journalist **Lourdes Maldonado López** was shot dead by unidentified assailants while she was in her car on January 23. She is the third journalist to have been murdered in the country this year. She had earlier informed President Andrés Manuel López Obrador that she feared for her life and asked for help. On February 9, local authorities confirmed the arrest of three people linked to the crime. However, details regarding the identities of the alleged arrested suspects and the motive for the killing were not disclosed.

**Michelle Perez Tadeo**, known as Michell Simon, was found dead on February 22, after being reported missing for three days. Authorities found her body wrapped in sheets in the southwestern Santo Tomas Ajusco neighborhood, Tlalpan district in Mexico City. Her death was confirmed after firefighters on duty at a nearby Picacho-Ajusco highway spotted her body and alerted the local authorities. The cause of death was seemingly murder and it was not immediately clear whether the killing was connected to her work.



## Ukraine

**Vira Hyrych**, a journalist working with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in was found dead in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on April 28. According to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, Vira's body was found in the wreckage after Russian forces bombed the residential building where she lived.

Vira was the third woman journalist and the sixth media worker to be killed in Ukraine by Russian fire since the Kremlin invaded the country on February 24.

Russian journalist **Oksana Baulina**, reporter for the independent Latvia-based investigative news website The Insider, was killed during shelling by Russian forces in Kyiv on March 23. Oksana's work had exposed Russian corruption and excessive state power. Her reportage shed light on the fissures in President Vladimir Putin's regime. She was forced into exile after her former employer, opposition leader Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, was wrongfully put on the list of extremist organizations in June 2021 and later joined The Insider as a reporter following Russian escalations in Ukraine from Lyov to Kyiv.

Ukrainian journalist **Oleksandra (Alexandra) Kuvshynova** was killed on March 14 by incoming fire from Russian troops, near the village of Horenka, outside Kyiv. A correspondent with Fox News, she was killed when her crew was attacked while on the road in a van marked "press". Cameraman Pierre Zakrzewski was also killed in the attack.



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# Six women journalists imprisoned

The CFWIJ recorded six cases of women journalists jailed for their work in the first four months of this year. While we documented as many as 21 detentions and arbitrary arrests, the journalists featured in this section were behind bars for at least 30 days. Four of them continue to languish in prison while two have been released.



## **Sedef Kabaş**

Senior journalist and political commentator Sedef Kabaş was charged with “insulting the president” and jailed as a “flight risk” on January 22, after she used a popular proverb on live television while referring to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government. After 49 days behind bars, she was released on March 11 on order of the Istanbul 36th Criminal Court of First Instance, which convicted her of the charge and awarded a suspended sentence of two years and four months in prison.



## **Aksana Kolb**

Belarusian journalist Alsana Kolb was arrested on April 20 for an interrogation as authorities conducted a new wave of arrests of independent journalists and activists. The journalist was allowed a call to inform her relatives a day after she was arrested. She was shifted to a temporary detention center, where she was to be kept for up to 10 days. The basis of her arrest and the charges on which she was detained have yet to be disclosed.



## **Sagal Mustafe Hassan Nur and Naima Abdi Ahmed**

Sagal Mustafe Hassan Nur, reporter for Voice of America (VOA), Naima Abdi Ahmed, freelance journalist and YouTuber, and eight other journalists were arrested in Somalia on April 13 while covering a prison scuffle in its capital, Hargeisa. No details of the charges against the journalists were disclosed but the commander-in-chief of Somaliland Custodial Corps Brigadier General Ahmed Awale Yusuf accused journalists of misinforming the public.



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# Locked Behind Bars



According to the CFWIJ's database, at least 63 women journalists are incarcerated in different states around the world. Many of them have been in jail for years with no apparent end in sight. Find select cases featured on this section.



## Zhang Zhan

Zhang Zhan has been behind bars since May 2020 and is currently imprisoned in Shanghai. The lawyer turned citizen journalist was arrested after documenting Beijing's initial mishandling of Covid-19. In December 2021, Zhang was sentenced to four years in prison by the Shanghai Pudong New Area Court for allegedly "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Her family has expressed serious concerns but despite international outrage the state seems intent on punishing Zhang and has not yet supported calls for her release.



## Hatice Duman

Hatice Duman was arrested in July 2003. She used to work as an editor and publisher for Atılım newspaper. Hatice was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of managing a terrorist organization. Officials accused her of being a member of the banned Marxist Leninist Communist Party, producing propaganda, and "attempting to change the constitutional order by force." She appealed her case before the Court of Cassation in 2012, but her appeal was rejected.



## Zeynab Jalalian

Zeynab Jalalian was arrested in 2008 for her alleged membership to the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), an armed Kurdish opposition group and then sentenced to death after being convicted of Moharebeh [waging war against God]. Her death sentence was upheld on appeal in May 2009 but was later commuted to life imprisonment in December 2011 when she was granted clemency by Iran's Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Hosseini Khamenei.

# Ukraine **Invasion**

When on February 24, Russia launched a full-scale military invasion in Ukrainian territory, the CFWIJ spurred into action. We had closely been monitoring the region in view of escalating tensions amid growing NATO influence in Eastern Europe and when the crisis hit, we extended support and solidarity to women and LGBTQ+ journalists in Ukraine. Along with 84 other journalistic and rights-based organizations we stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and particularly with journalists who found themselves at the frontlines of a large-scale European war. We condemned the violence and aggression that has put thousands of our colleagues at imminent risk and called on the international community to provide all possible assistance to those taking on the brave role of reporting from the war zone that is now Ukraine. Read our full statement of support [here](#).

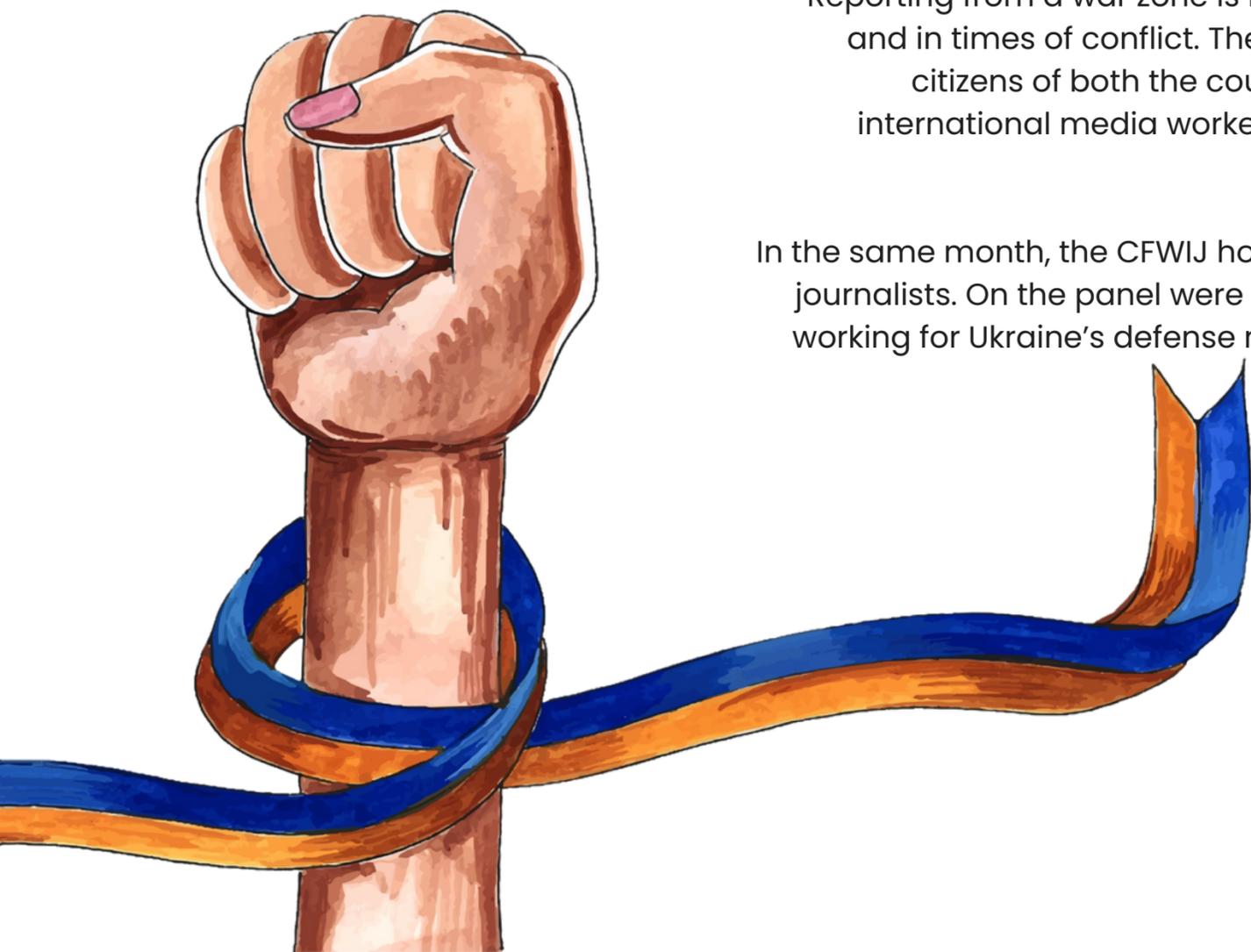
Reporting from a war zone is no easy feat! Information is often the first to fall to distortion and manipulation by aggressive forces and in times of conflict. Therefore, it is essential that journalists are permitted to do their jobs and bring vital information to the citizens of both the countries as well as the international community at large. The CFWIJ stands in solidarity with local and international media workers operating in the region and will continue to do so. In March, we launched a fund to aid and assist journalists caught in conflict. Find our [bank details here](#) if you wish to [donate](#).

In the same month, the CFWIJ hosted on Twitter Spaces a panel discussion on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impact on women journalists. On the panel were CFWIJ founding director Kiran Nazish, Ukrainian photojournalist Julia Kochetova, volunteer journalist working for Ukraine's defense ministry Anastasiia Levchenko, Ukrainian activist Olena Halushka, editor-in-chief at Zaborona Media

Katerina Sergatskova and freelance journalists Daniela Prugger and Kristina Jovanovski.

We discussed the experiences of women journalists on the frontlines of the war in Ukraine and the difficulties of reporting from a war zone.

Moreover, our [in-focus page on Ukraine](#) features a list of women journalists on the ground as well as safety guidelines and resources for journalists on the frontlines. You can follow our [Twitter list](#) of these women journalists to stay informed and up to date on the latest dispatches from the war-ridden country.





The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism

# Notable Initiatives



## Mental Health

We recognize that mentally healthy journalists have better tools to navigate the newsroom, industry, and their mission to tell amazing stories. This year, the CFWIJ launched a dedicated mental health initiative that offers tools and an open platform for women journalists to share their experiences and needs.

Mental health has been part CFWIJ's work from the very start - part and parcel of many of our projects focused on development and safety for journalists. Women journalists can go through our [Mental Health page](#) where meditation videos and advice by psychologists, personal experience are published, as tools to help ease the struggle coming from the stressful job.



## Events and conversations with women journalists

### **Exiled women journalists – a journey of struggles and victories**

Out of sight does not always mean out of mind. Threats to journalists in exile can continue even in their host countries. In April, the CFWIJ brought together women journalists for another Twitter Space to discuss the struggles and experiences of exiled journalists. On the panel were Luna

Safwan, Kiran Nazish, Masih Alinejad and Arzu Yıldız. The speakers underscored that threats to such journalists can come from both their home and host countries.



The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism

# Notable **Initiatives**

## Events and conversations with women journalists

### How to tackle SLAPP cases against journalists around Europe

When the rich and powerful bring SLAPPs, vexatious lawsuits aimed at silencing women journalists, the process is the punishment. In April, the CFWIJ hosted a panel discussion on Twitter Spaces to discuss how journalists around Europe can fight back against SLAPPs. On the panel were CFWIJ's operations manager Damla Tahrán and journalist protection advisor Nik Williams, Council of Europe's MSI-SLP Committee of Experts on Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation secretary Giulia Lucchese, legal officer at Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation Dalia Nasreddin and Luhze Newspaper director Julia Nebel.



### What Afghan women want: perspectives of journalists, leaders and stories from the ground

Afghan women have historically suffered as collateral damage in US imperialistic ambitions and as soft targets for militants who frame them as Western agents. Now, after 20 years of war and subsequent Taliban takeover, what do Afghan women want? To answer this question, the CFWIJ hosted yet another Twitter Space in April. On our panel were Kiran Nazish, Heather Barr from the Human Rights Watch, Afghan activists Pashtana Dorani and Zohra Saed, and Polish journalist based in Kabul Jagoda Grondecka.

Find more events organized by CFWIJ in 2022 [here](#). You may also find recordings of all Twitter Spaces hosted on our timeline [@CFWIJ](#).



The Coalition For  
Women In Journalism

# Notable Initiatives



## Advocacy and support campaigns

### Call For EU Anti-SLAPP Legislation

In February this year, the CFWIJ joined over 170 civil society groups and more than 200,000 citizens in demanding effective legal protection against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). The petition, with 213,432 signatories, was handed over to the Vice President of the European Commission Věra Jourová in Brussels on February 1, 2022, by representatives of the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE) and two individuals affected by SLAPPs. Find our petition [here](#).

### Campaign for Sedef Kabaş

The CFWIJ launched a campaign in March to demand the release of senior journalist Sedef Kabaş, who was charged with “insulting the president” and jailed as a “flight risk”. As many as 38 press freedom organizations and journalists joined our call increasing pressure on the Turkish state and judiciary. Sedef was released after 49 days in prison and a suspended sentence of two years and four months in prison. Find more details [here](#).

### Demanding an end to online violence against women journalists in Canada

Following the documentation of dozens of cases of online violence against women journalists in Canada – majority of them by far right, anti-immigrant and anti-mask groups, the CFWIJ extended its complete support to those targeted. Prominent journalists and CFWIJ’s members joined a video campaign calling for an [end to online violence against women journalists in Canada](#).

### International Women’s Day

[On International Women’s Day](#) this year, CFWIJ highlighted the work and struggles of women journalists reporting from the heart of war and conflict. Amid violence, aggression and heightened misinformation, propagated by bad actors, journalists on the frontlines find themselves vulnerable to threats exacerbated by the conflict. Yet, newsrooms and reporters around the world strive to ensure a flow of verified information for affected citizens and the international community at large. Their efforts in the pursuit of independent journalism often put them at direct risk of physical and psychological harm. On March 8, CFWIJ celebrated women around the world and paid tribute to the works of women journalists reporting from the frontlines of war. In our report, we focused on three major conflict zones that emerged within the last year – Palestine, Afghanistan and Ukraine.



### Emilia Șercan – Romania

On January 18, Romanian investigative journalist Emilia Șercan published a report alleging that Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă plagiarized his doctoral dissertation. Since then, she has been subjected to an organized smear campaign led by the premier's supporters. The state too became directly complicit in the violations against her when documents she submitted to the police as evidence were leaked exposing her to further harassment and distress. Find [our report here](#) and our [letter](#) to the Romanian government here.



### Negar Mortazavi – United States

Iranian journalist and political analyst Negar Mortazavi has been living in exile in the United States for nearly a decade. For her staunch criticism of the Trump administration's foreign policies, especially on Iran and US economic sanctions, the journalist was subjected to vicious online attacks. But Negar refused to be silent. Instead, she collected four years worth of data and exposed the Iran Disinformation Project. We laud her spirit and extend her [complete support](#) as she fights back!



### Raissa Robles – Philippines

When senatorial candidate Larry Gadon published a vile and abusive video online to insult and sexually harass veteran journalist Raissa Robles, she fought back. In February she filed [complaints](#) against Gadon on counts of libel, cyberlibel and violation of the Safe Spaces Act. Speaking to the CFWIJ at the time, she said, "I am not alone in this fight." The CFWIJ lauds Raissa for her decision to fight back and extends her complete support. Read our statement [here](#).



### Rozina Islam – Bangladesh

Investigative journalist Rozina Islam published a series of investigative reports revealing mismanagement and graft in the country's health sector. Shortly afterward, she was charged with theft and espionage under an outdated colonial law. Rozina faces up to 14 years in prison or even the death penalty. The CFWIJ lauds Rozina for her commitment to her work. "My struggle for journalism and truth will continue," she wrote, and despite more canceled hearings this quarter, Rozina remains convinced that her work must go on.



### Viktoria Roshchina – Ukraine

Ukrainian journalist Viktoria Roshchina was captured by Russian forces and held for nearly a week after she sent in a report on Russian-occupied Enerhodar on March 11. Her employer organization confirmed that the journalist had been missing since. She was later released on March 23, allegedly after being forced to record a video stating that Russian soldiers had saved her life and treated her well. The CFWIJ commends Viktoria's work and honors her for courage.

# Celebrating our wins

## Women journalists spotlight



# CFWIJ is doing to help. Join us in this mission



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