

PUBLISHED BY **IRENE KHAN**

Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection  
of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

# #JOURNALISTSTOO

— WOMEN JOURNALISTS SPEAK OUT

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS  
ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES  
WITH HARASSMENT



Published by: Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the  
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and Expression, on the occasion of the 2021 “16 Days of  
Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”



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**CONTENT WARNING:** This document includes graphic content that illustrates the severity of violence against women journalists, including references to sexual violence and gendered or racial profanities. This content is not included gratuitously. It is essential to illustrate the types, methods and patterns of violence against women journalists.

## **ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:**

This publication features 11 stories written by female journalists from all over the world, sharing personal experiences with gender-based violence and threats in the exercise of their profession.

The publication illustrates the different forms of harassment and violence endured by women journalists online and offline. The aim of the publication is to raise public awareness about the pervasiveness and complexity of the issue and its stifling effect on freedom of expression and diversity in the media sector, reflecting perspectives from different regions of the world.

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Journalists have long played an instrumental role in uncovering and reporting on cases of sexual abuse and harassment. It was only after the #MeToo movement emerged and women began speaking out about their personal experiences of sexual violence, abuse and harassment in the workplace that the extent of the problem that women journalists themselves faced became evident.

**WHILE BOTH MALE AND FEMALE JOURNALISTS ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE AND THREATS TO THEIR SAFETY IN RETALIATION FOR THEIR WORK, ATTACKS ON THE WOMEN ARE GENDER-BASED AND HIGHLY SEXUALIZED ONLINE AND OFFLINE.**

In my report on gender justice and freedom of expression ([UN Doc A/76/258](#)) I label acts and threats of physical, sexual and psychological violence to silence women as the most pervasive and pernicious form of gendered censorship.

Women journalists are targeted not only for the content of their reports but as women who dare to speak out. The attacks are intended to intimidate, silence and drive them out of the public sphere. They are a blatant violation of freedom of expression and the right of public participation. They threaten society's right

to information from a diverse media, erode pluralism and undermine democratic debate.

In the pages that follow eleven women from ten countries speak of their personal experiences as journalists in their own words and under their own names (bar one who writes anonymously out of fear of retaliation). We read about the daily challenges they face from family, communities, employers, officials and the general public, and the steadfast courage and determination with which they remain true to their profession.

The women describe in stark language the threats and attacks to which they are subjected in the course of their work, ranging from rape, sexual assault, death and rape threats and sexual harassment to trolling, gendered hate speech, disinformation, smear campaigns and threats to family members. They highlight how sexism and misogyny intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as homophobia, racism and religious bigotry, to intensify the attacks online and offline.

The abuse is inescapable and ubiquitous across the continuum of real and virtual worlds. The perpetrators are multiple, from state agents, politicians and non-state actors to sources, interviewees, employers and male journalists with whom the women are obliged to work.

**The response from States, social media companies and media employers is often INADEQUATE OR ABSENT.**

**THESE PERSONAL  
ESSAYS ARE NOT THE  
STORIES OF VICTIMS.  
THEY ARE TESTIMONIES  
OF COURAGE, RESILIENCE  
AND SOLIDARITY, OF  
DEFIANCE AGAINST  
GENDER STEREOTYPES  
AND OF THE AGENCY OF  
WOMEN WHO REFUSE TO  
SHUT UP OR BE SHUT OUT.**

In several of the essays we read about the solidarity networks, advocacy campaigns and tools the women have developed to combat online and offline violence and pursue accountability. They inspire not just other journalists but all women who are seeking equality and justice.

As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women pointed out in her [report](#), violence against women journalists is rooted in the broader problems of sexism in society. The UN General Assembly [Resolution A/RES/74/157](#)

called upon States to address such violence as part of broader efforts to promote and protect the human rights of women, eliminate gender inequality and tackle gender-based stereotypes in society. [Resolution 39](#), adopted at the 39th session of UNESCO's General Conference, invited the Director-General to reinforce activities aimed at addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists, online and offline.

Despite these efforts the reality shows that much stronger concerted action is needed at all levels to address the impunity, sexism and misogyny on which violence against women journalists thrives. Governments must develop effective prevention, protection, monitoring and response mechanisms for online and offline safety of women journalists. Social media companies must make digital spaces safe for women. Media companies must ensure zero tolerance of gender violence or harassment in the workplace. Politicians and community leaders must condemn attacks on female journalists and refrain from making statements that could put the women at risk.

**It is unacceptable that women journalists are attacked and abused for doing their job. It is intolerable that it happens with impunity. It is high time we listen to the voices of the women themselves.**

**IRENE KHAN**

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE  
RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION

**MIROSLAVA  
BREACH.  
KIM WALL.  
GAURI LANKESH.**

Three remarkable journalists who were assassinated because of their profession, and because they were women. They were made to pay the ultimate price for their integrity. For their commitment to revealing the truth. For being outspoken.

**FOR BEING FEARLESS.**

For many women journalists, the first place they experience harassment is the newsroom. Unscrupulous colleagues, media leaders and mentors all too often take advantage of their position of power to belittle, intimidate, and sometimes **ASSAULT** **THE WOMEN THAT WORK ALONGSIDE THEM.**

Thanks to movements like the #MeToo campaign, women have grown less afraid to speak out and expose predators and abusers, although this may not be the case in all societies. Exposing them is only a first step. We need to put a definitive end to the culture of silence. We need more awareness and improved protection mechanisms. Most importantly, we need to make sure such offenses do not go unpunished.

But this is not the only place in which women journalists face peril. They are much more at risk than their male counterparts in the field and while covering certain beats. They are at times harassed, intimidated, blackmailed or even assaulted by interviewees.

They are also increasingly at risk online. They face misogyny and sexism, subversive groups and politically motivated actors who frequently carry out ruthless digital attacks. Hidden behind the veil of anonymity the Internet offers, they take it upon themselves to destroy these women's public image and their motivation to do journalism. Death and rape threats, the leaking of private information and character assassination are unfortunately commonplace. As a result, women journalists can be tempted to self-censor, to abandon beats they loved, or to quit journalism altogether. We cannot accept that women be silenced because their reporting is inconvenient to some, or because there are people who are angry that women can dare to be so vocal.

To be impactful, to truly reflect our world in all of its complexity and nuances, journalism needs diverse voices. Journalism needs women. It needs women of all ethnicities, of all social classes, LGBTQ women, women with disabilities, marginalized women. There is still a lot left to be done to tackle misogyny at its root and to break the glass ceilings that have kept women out of executive posts in the newsroom and elsewhere.

This collection of essays encourages journalists to fight back. The authors of these essays, in all of their diversity, are precious examples of women journalists who have dared speak out. They are women who have challenged outdated stereotypes of what women should do, how they should behave, and what they are allowed to speak about. Through their courageous testimonies, they tell us of the difficulties, problems and personal tragedies they were forced to face in their careers. But they also tell us stories of resistance, of fighting back, of unity and of solidarity.

As a journalist myself, I believe publications and testimonies such as these are meaningful and necessary. They also send a strong message of hope and resilience to other journalists who may experience similar situations of abuse. It sends them the message that they can overcome this, and that they will not be silenced.

**CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR**

CHIEF INTERNATIONAL ANCHOR, CNN

HOST OF AMANPOUR ON CNN AND PBS





# OVERVIEW

**Since the #MeToo movement emerged in 2017, journalists have played an instrumental role in reporting on the phenomenon and uncovering cases of sexual abuse and sexual harassment.**

As the movement has spread across the globe and exposed sexual misconduct in various sectors in the years since, the media industry itself has been revealed to be implicated in such cases. The exposure of the widespread sexual abuse of women, especially in the workplace, has contributed to triggering a process of reflection on the gender-specific threats faced by women in the media sector – threats that emanate not only from certain colleagues, but also from many other actors as well. And, while both men and women journalists are exposed to violence and threats to their safety, women journalists are additionally targeted by gender-based violence and sexual harassment, online as well as offline.

The need to take into account the gender-specific risks faced by women journalists has given rise to a number of UN resolutions and reports to address the issue in recent years. [Resolution A/RES/74/157](#) by the UN General Assembly expresses concern about specific threats faced by women journalists in relation to their work, and underlines the need to employ a gender-sensitive approach when addressing the safety of journalists. [Resolution 39](#), adopted at the 39th session of UNESCO's General Conference, invited the Director-General to reinforce activities aimed at addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists, both online and offline. And the 2020 [report](#) of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women focused on combatting violence against women journalists.

In this context, this publication aims to shed light on the experiences of women journalists who have been on the receiving end of violence and hateful abuse in the course of their work. It gathers personal essays by 11 women journalists from around the world who have experienced various forms of violence, harassment or abuse. They write in their personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Special Rapporteur for freedom of opinion and expression. Given the sensitive nature of the subject, it is understandable that, as in one instance below, there are women who chose to share their story anonymously.

**THE SELECTION OF STORIES SHOWS THAT VIOLENCE AND HATEFUL ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS IS BOTH WIDE-RANGING AND UBIQUITOUS.**

It occurs offline as well as online, making the abuse inescapable, and operating along a continuum of coercion. The women featured in this publication have experienced a wide spectrum of threats and attacks, from sexual harassment to sexist hate speech, trolling, death and rape threats, threats to family members, sexual assault and rape. The collection of essays highlights how the abuse operates at the intersection of different forms of discrimination, with many women journalists also facing homophobia, racism, or faith-based discrimination, in addition to gender-based violence, thus worsening the impact.

**WOMEN JOURNALISTS  
ARE TARGETED WITH  
VIOLENCE AND ABUSE NOT  
ONLY FOR THE CONTENT  
OF THEIR REPORTAGE BUT  
FOR DARING TO HAVE A  
VOICE AND FOR EXISTING  
IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE.**

By aiming to silence women's voices, this gender-based violence in all its forms threatens freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity. This is the background to why, through spotlighting the voices and experiences of women journalists, this collection of essays aims to raise awareness of the range of attacks women journalists face due to their job but also because of their gender.

The pages also shed light on their responses, and the recourses that women journalists have turned to, whether through legal means or support networks. A common experience is the failure of duty-bearers to provide justice – whether at the level of state actors, internet companies or media executives. But the publication also highlights potential solutions and tools which aim to address the issue, while displaying women journalists' resilience and resistance in the face of continued abuse.

The scope and scale of the problem requires concerted efforts and a collective response in order to effectively tackle this pervasive trend.

It is unacceptable that women journalists have their rights so violated, and it is intolerable that this happens with impunity. It falls to all of us to act in real solidarity, in support of the cause that is so bravely articulated by these personal testimonies.

## BOARDING THE SUBMARINE

The troubling truth is that most of us would have boarded Peter Madsen's submarine.

It's the kind of thing you do when you're a writer, a journalist, a freelancer and a woman just as inquiring about the world and its myriad stories as your male counterparts.

In September of 2017, I'm taking a grim tally at a journalism conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

I've recently met Sonia Paul, a close friend of slain Swedish journalist Kim Wall. Sonia's identity is revealed and illuminated by a Ugandan LGBT+ activist who smiles warmly at her and says "Hey guys, this is Sonia. I'm very sorry about Kim."

When Sonia leaves our group for a moment, I make the stomach-twisting count.

"I would have got on his submarine too. Would you..?"

The deadly decision is unanimous.

**EVERY WOMAN AT  
THE TABLE NODS IN  
AGREEMENT AND I  
REALISE IN SOME  
WAYS, WE ARE ALL  
KIM WALL.**



Not because we all possess her incredible talent or had our lives brutally and abruptly ended by Danish inventor Peter Madsen. Rather because, as women journalists, we go out, we pursue stories, and sometimes that means putting our trust in our fellow men to devastating results.

As a freelance travel writer, I've learnt to lock and key the bad bits.

When I take my very first overseas work trip and I'm sexually assaulted by the porter showing me to my room at a prominent hotel in New Delhi, I choose not to get off on a bad foot with my esteemed hosts by reporting the incident.

Instead, after five days spent in a country I've always dreamed of visiting, I write glowing columns about the Taj Mahal, New Delhi's breathtaking chaos and the heartwarming idea that in India a guest is God.

**As a first-time travel writer, I write not a word about the assault.**

[REDACTED]

Intuition tells me that if I talk about the porter grabbing me in my hotel room, pushing me backwards and forcing a hot, wet, soul-destroying kiss, I'll be some kind of nuisance.

A woman journalist who isn't as drama-free as a male correspondent, who can't suck it up, get on with her job and see the bigger picture.

For better or worse, that incident has inspired my travel journalism philosophy.

I suck it up.

When I find myself bumping along a forest road alone with a tour guide in Bali and the conversation suddenly turns sexual, I try to make light of it.

I laugh nervously and feign nonchalance when he asks whether black women are as wild as rumoured in bed. I pretend to answer a fake call from a boyfriend I don't have when he inquires as to the whereabouts of my partner and I pray for safe passage.

In a travel column recounting this day, the inappropriate questions, the fear and the messages attached to photos of my tour guide's business card, face, alternate phone number and Facebook profile where he identifies himself by another name, which I surreptitiously sent to my best friend James, are left out. Because, often, once you're home safe, the crappy parts pale in comparison to the majesty.

You live to explore, experience, inquire and write another day and these things tend to melt into the bright blue water surrounding a sea temple at Tanah Lot.

They whip away on the wind ruffling a woman's brightly coloured hijab on a rice terrace in Tegallalang or they slowly dissolve in the sheer joy inherent in being an African woman journalist out in the world, adding to a canon dominated by Western, mostly male voices.

But except for perhaps one article – "Travelling while African" – I keep these struggles to myself.

#### I omit the sexual harassment.

I don't tell anyone how many times I am solicited for sex in Rome even though I am clearly carrying a camera, a tripod and scribbling notes into a journal, as I do everywhere.

Though I sell my Ghana travel stories to two publications, I never mention the ten or so men who surround me in Accra, on Labadi Beach.

The ones who angrily shout for me to show them the photographs of an empty section of sea a guard assured me I could take, until a "manager" quells their yells of "stupid woman, arrogant foreign journalist".

Again, I publish not a sentence of it.

Instead, I weigh the sheer privilege of travelling in Africa, the relative beauty of my experiences and of being a paid writer, against everything that I have ultimately survived and I decide to omit the experience.

#### Because we need women to travel.

#### We need women to take up professional space.

We need women to normalize fearlessly living our lives, intrepidly pursuing stories, our dreams and careers through excellence and critical mass and this doesn't happen if we are afraid.

We don't legitimize the female gaze, change the world and the perceptions of people in it, if we stay home. If we step back, cowed by the kind of pervasive intimidation that strives to diminish our existence, attempts to dictate the length and breadth of our lives and the depth of our contributions.

**IN A WARPED WAY, AT  
LEAST FOR NOW, I'VE  
COME TO THINK OF  
THESE AGGRESSIONS,  
INTIMIDATIONS AND  
ASSAULTS AS SOME  
SICK UNSPOKEN  
TRADE-OFF.**



## IT SHOULDN'T BE.

But as a freelancer, you're on your own.

The ideas, the passion, the pitches and the elation in writing a lot of what you want to write are your own but so is the risk to your equipment and person.

Which is why every freelance woman travel writer I've encountered has her spells.


The rituals, precautions and talismans she carries with her that create a compelling veneer of safety.

A thin gold crucifix from a mother. The habit of sending a loved one their entire itinerary for the day, before breakfast. The practice of making themselves hyper visible.

That last one, alongside a small woven golden luck dragon named Falkor, is my own.

Though, as a solo black woman traveler, I often stand out, I always feel safer when I've made some local acquaintances.

I learn greetings, befriend hotel staff and regularly pop by stores, kiosks or stalls to buy small things I don't need, always making sure I tell a few people how long I'll be around in case I disappear before I'm due.



**SUCH ARE MY SMALL, DESPERATE ATTEMPTS AT SAFETY WHICH, IN MY HEART OF HEARTS, I KNOW ARE NO MATCH FOR THE VIOLENCE, ENTITLEMENT AND THE DULL EVER-PRESENT TERROR THAT IS PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY.**

Six years after that night in New Delhi, I know my life as a travel journalist only changes when the world does. So I try to do my bit.

As a woman, a freelance columnist and journalist, I try to exist and travel unapologetically, while in my home city of Windhoek, Namibia, I join the fray.

I march against gender-based violence and for human rights.

I write columns decrying so-called “passion killings” and toxic masculinity.

I send a pointed email to an entertainment producer who drunkenly gropes me while I’m covering a performance.

I ignore the inbox messages and text messages from men who acquire my mobile number and call me a c\*\*t, a man-hater and a gold-digging whore. And I slump in horror and fleeting defeat as the feminist issue I pitch to the country’s biggest national newspaper is published on the same day as two sisters are found murdered in a riverbed by the younger one’s boyfriend.

In defiance of this and because of it, as women journalists and moreover as women, *a luta continua*.

We travel. We write. We photograph. We witness. We protest. We march. We beseech. We exist, and I imagine Kim Wall as a flame.

**THE TRAGIC STORY THAT  
BURNED US AND A LAMP  
THAT LIGHTS THE WAY.**



Martha Mukaiwa

Photo: courtesy of the journalist



**SALLY  
KOHN**

UNITED STATES

You can imagine what it would be like  
to be an

# OPENLY GAY, PROGRESSIVE, JEWISH, FEMALE TALKING HEAD

on the conservative Fox News Channel  
during the dawn of Twitter.

**AND YOU'D BE CORRECT.**



I can't think of a single time I went on air without receiving hate mail — both over email and on social media. And most every single time, there was something about my clothes (too butch) and something about my hair (too curly) and about my weight (just too much in general). I got death threats and rape threats and, if I dared go on air to defend abortion rights, I would get messages from presumably irate anti-abortion viewers telling me that my own mother should have had an abortion. Somehow they missed the irony.

But let's be honest, the liberal lesbian chick in the Fox's den dynamic is just the most over-the-top iteration of what is a fairly quotidian experience in my life and the lives of most women journalists. Women in the public eye — **and in particular queer women, trans women and women of color** — are disproportionately harassed and harangued for having the audacity of simply raising our voices and sharing our views. I know this from my own anecdotal experience, and from stories I've heard from dozens of friends and colleagues, but research reinforces the point. The International Center for Journalists [surveyed](#) more than 700 women journalists worldwide and found that almost three-quarters had experienced threats of physical or sexual violence or other versions of online brutality. A [study](#) by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue found that women politicians are two to three times as likely as their male counterparts to be the targets of harassment online. And importantly, Amnesty International research has [found](#) that rates of harassment are exponentially higher for women of color. According to Amnesty's research, when compared to the experiences of white women, Black women are 84 percent more likely to experience abuse on Twitter. Latinx women are 81 percent more likely to be harassed online, and Asian women are

70 more likely. [Other research](#) has shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are roughly twice as likely as non-LGBT people to be harassed online, and subjected to severe forms of online abuse.

## I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I GOT HATEMAIL.

**INCOMING MESSAGE: \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\***

It was a mini screed over email that I'm afraid it's not appropriate to transcribe here, but suffice it to say, the author tried his or her best to skewer every aspect of my identity and existence in typo-strewn prose. But it wasn't the content of the email that most shocked me; I'd been an activist in the LGBT rights movement since college and knew the kinds of things certain segments of people felt about me and my ilk. Maybe I should have been less jaded, but the fact is I wasn't upset by the nastiness in the message. Rather, what deeply disturbed me was the idea that anyone would feel such hatred toward an absolute stranger so intensely that they would go to the trouble of finding my email address and pounding out a message; that they felt the supremacy of their views and their very existence entitled them to self-righteously pierce my privacy in order to impose their hate.

And what I realized in that moment was something that maybe had occurred to me before on a theoretical level but I'd never truly understood — how structural inequity and oppression translated at the individual granular level, where some people felt historically and institutionally justified to say and do whatever they wanted while my views and my very existence were circumscribed, inferior, always qualified by some invisible but implied asterisk of my categorical less-than-ness. Hatemail isn't just isolated individuals expressing their outlying outrage, but histories and systems of bias and bigotry handed the means of mass communications. Hate-mail is the personal evidence of pervasive hate.

In which sense it's simply too easy to blame this on Fox News alone. Because the fact is that anti-equity right wing media are throwing a match on a pre-existing pile of kindling — hateful otherizing and resentment being something they enthusiastically amplify, but did not themselves invent. Nor something they, or their viewers, alone perpetuate. I have received hatemail or hate tweets every single time I've gone on television or the radio, whether it's a conservative program or a left-leaning station or anything in between. MSNBC, CNN, NPR, you name it. I still get the comments about my sexuality and my hair, littered with what is, by now, a fairly predictable smattering of degrading vocabulary. At this point I barely pay attention. I have, for better or for worse, become deeply jaded — to the point where I still have to remind myself how incredibly unfair and uncommon this harassment is when a friend or colleague experiencing it for the first time reaches out for support. I've learned to shrug it off. But does that also mean I'm also shrugging off the myriad injustices and inequities that give rise to

such harassment? How do I inoculate myself emotionally while still finding a constructive amount of righteous outrage? **I'm afraid that I don't know.** I worry that I've come to accept hate as normal. I worry that we all have.

## HATE ISN'T NEW.

But the barriers to spreading it have lowered, which raises the costs of having a public voice or being a public figure in this era. And that's another conundrum we have to figure out — how we ensure that the very voices and leaders we need in this moment to fix not only the current culture of harassment but the enduring systems and institutions of oppression behind it, that those leaders aren't the ones systematically discouraged from leadership because of these dynamics.



Sally Kohn

Photo: Paul Takeuchi



NEHA  
DIXIT

INDIA

EVIL WOMEN STICK  
THEIR NECKS OUT

**“JOURNALISM  
IS NOT  
FOR GOOD  
WOMEN  
FROM  
REPUTED  
FAMILIES”**

said my old-school grandfather, patriarch of a North Indian regressive Brahmin family and a former bureaucrat, in 2003. He was reacting to my announcement to the family, which had never sent any girl to another city to study, that I wanted to go to New Delhi, 500 km from my hometown, Lucknow, to study journalism. My rebellion against this patriarchal diktat, aided by my mother and brother, earned me a scandalous reputation in the family, a social boycott, and the ire of an emotional father who didn't visit me for the next three years. My twelve-year career as an investigative journalist hasn't been such a small feat.

Against the backdrop of resisting the inherent misogyny and patriarchal structures within the family, when a woman journalist is confronted with criminal charges and repeated online trolling with morphed pictures, rape and death threats and defamatory accusations, along with sexual harassment and sexism within media organizations, it epitomizes the double-edged sword she is fighting with every day of her life. This may not be an encouraging message to small-town girls aspiring to prove their mettle in the big city. But what's definitely true is they'll be alone there, so they'd better toughen up, for better or worse.

In 2008, I was interviewing a leader of a kangaroo (vigilante) court – known as Khap Panchayat in India – that had issued and executed diktats of 'honour killings' on six couples found guilty of self-choice marriages. In the middle of the interview, he stopped to look at me and said, "If you were a woman from our clan, roaming around with a male camera person the way you are doing now, **we'd have you crushed under a truck as punishment for dishonouring the community.**" Such direct threats – plus reporting trips where mining mafia chased my vehicle and politicians made sexist remarks and overtures, as well as lecherous bosses at the office – framed my initial years in journalism. The threats at work were met with shock and condolences by the media organizations I worked for, but no support or action. There was no point in reporting these mishaps to the family. It would have meant proving the patriarchs right and being forced to pack my bags and head back home.

Since then, it has been clear to me that bravery is not a virtue but a necessity for women journalists. Taking threats, abuse, sexism, harassment in one's stride. The reasons? One,

so you're not assigned 'feeble', 'soft' stories and get a go at the hardcore stuff. Two, because no internal mechanism that will come to your rescue exists within the organization or the external press bodies. Three, so that you can continue to do the work and live the life of your choice as an independent woman.

IN THE LAST YEARS, I HAVE REPORTED ON

HUMAN TRAFFICKING,  
CHILD ABUSE,  
GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE,  
SECTARIAN RIOTS,  
ALLEGED EXTRAJUDICIAL  
KILLINGS BY MEMBERS  
OF THE INDIAN POLICE,  
MINING MAFIA, ILLEGAL  
CLINICAL TRIALS,  
AND RELIGIOUS  
AND IDEOLOGICAL  
FUNDAMENTALISTS.

**In all these years, the threats and abuse have changed form but never perished.**

Earlier, each time I received a legal notice for a piece of reportage, editors would call it a 'badge of honour', proof that the report had made an impact. There was at least an outward show of adhering to the law of the country. Journalists could stand by their stories and present facts when they had their day in court. However, in the last five years, journalists in India are faced with new forms of pressure, of a much more dangerous nature: online campaigns of abuse by a paid troll army as well as the risk of physical attacks by fundamentalist groups. In a country with one of the highest populations of under-25 year-olds and a severe unemployment crisis, several reports have shown how certain right-wing affiliated parties, including those in power, have hired jobless youths at an abysmal salary to work as trolls. This raises two questions that apply in many societies. How can journalism be done in the face of apparent weak political will? And how can some political actors remain unaccountable for curbing the basic freedom of expression and promoting a culture of misogyny?

**THE TASK OF  
ONLINE TROLLS  
IS EASIER WHEN  
THE TARGET IS A  
WOMAN.**

**ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS  
QUESTION HER INTENTION,  
AGENCY, INTELLECT AND  
CHARACTER.**

When men are trolled they are called corrupt or 'paid media'. When women are trolled they are called sex workers, porn actors and concubines of male politicians. That way, trolls not only intimidate the woman journalist who may then resort to self-censorship, but they also promote an abysmal quality of public discourse that relies more on mob justice than on intellectual or legal arguments.

For the past years, every morning, I wake up to dick pics, poop pics and long Twitter threads discussing how I should be raped for writing a particular news report. Whether it should be a metal rod or a thorny stick from a rose bush. Pictures of my family, my residential address inciting stone pelting – such items surface online with alarming frequency. And gun-toting political party henchmen tell me how they are tracking my location and soon I will be shot dead.

I initially tried to argue, present facts and file complaints with the central government cyber cell, but when none of my attempts worked, I developed immunity, indifference. It is sick that I have started finding humour in trolling. If a troll calls me the 'wife of a Lashkar-e-Toiba leader' for writing about mass rapes of Muslim women in sectarian violence, I wonder why am I the Wife and not the Leader? Even the trolls don't give me agency as a woman.

Offline, high ranking police officials have called me up casually to say if I continue reporting on extrajudicial killings and police shootouts, they know where my mother lives. While out alone on reporting assignments, **I have been locked up inside religious seminaries and told to watch my behaviour as a woman.** I have been chased by police informers who enjoy impunity from the State. In the absence of a political will to stop the attack on women journalists, the only way to escape these situations is individual persistence and resolve.

It bothers me that in the sea of attacks, trolling and abuse, my identity has been reduced to that of a victim. Someone who is threatened and attacked a lot. In this discourse, the journalistic work and its subjects – poor working-class women, religious minorities, human rights and marginalization of tribals and Dalits, the so-called ‘untouchables’ – are lost.

In a heavily corporatized media, where a corporate-political nexus allows the killing of fact-based, in-depth investigative ground reporting, I started working as an independent journalist. While this decision has enabled me to find an outlet for the stories I want to report, it has denied me institutional support to deal with the harassment and the criminal charges filed against me in far-flung areas.

Since the magnitude of these threats is so large, I have now decided not to file complaints any longer. I also realize if I keep chasing these complaints, in a climate where the government itself can’t seem to curb the problem effectively, I’ll have no time for the work I came from my hometown to do – reporting and telling the stories of the marginalized.

Most journalists who stay true to their duties are threatened, attacked and abused. In India, Gauri Lankesh, a veteran journalist based in the South Indian state of Karnataka, was shot dead in September 2017. The Special Investigations Team (SIT) found out the 18 people involved belonged to a religious fundamentalist group that justified the killing with a quote from a religious book: “It is a sin not to slay an evildoer; violence towards evildoers is non-violence itself.” The SIT confirmed that the murderers were part of an “organized crime syndicate”. The fact that a woman journalist was identified as the ‘evildoer’ shows to what degree a patriarchal society is threatened by a woman journalist. No wonder I was told many years ago that journalism is not for ‘good’ women.

There is a Hindi proverb, “A turtle makes progress when it sticks its neck out.” In this case, **the ‘evil’ women are doing the same.**



**Neha Dixit**

*Photo: Committee to Protect Journalists*

**ADELA NAVARRO  
BELLO**

MEXICO

# THE HARASSMENT NETWORKS

It was a rainy day, I remember it clearly. 18 January 2010, the first time I knew I had been targeted. A United States Homeland Security official called my office to tell me about some wiretaps the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had. A drug cartel kingpin living in Tijuana, Mexico had given orders to have me killed.

I was not the only one under threat. Rosario Mosso Castro, *ZETA*'s editor-in-chief, was also on the hit list. For the following three months, we had to live our lives, practicing journalism, escorted by seven Mexican Army officers. The hitmen hired to kill us were eventually detained, but they were never brought to trial for intending to murder us.

I don't remember the first time I was the target of sexual harassment just for being a woman and practicing investigative journalism in one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. But I do remember, in 2014, the oppressive heat I felt in my chest when I started reading an email attacking me with slander. It was full of offensive sexual insults against me as a woman. It was a different kind of attack, but it



had the same purpose: to destroy me by trying to discredit me and the newspaper I work for.

Since 2006, I have been general director of *ZETA Weekly* in Tijuana, Mexico. I was the first woman on the editorial board headed by Jesús Blancornelas, journalist and founder of this newspaper back in 1994. By 2006, I had become the first woman to be the general director of a newsprint media in Baja California, Mexico, and the first woman to run a weekly newspaper specializing in investigative journalism on topics such as government corruption, drug trafficking, drug cartels and organized crime.

There were more email attacks. In 2015, local journalists were offered money to publish the content of the email I had received the year before, which had been sent to numerous other people too. Ten thousand dollars if they published it and extra money if they forwarded it by email or text message. The point was for more people to read it. Pure trash.

They called me a slut. They said my personal life was linked to the information I published. They accused me of receiving envelopes of money from a state official. My name and a family member's were attached to various crimes. Always pointing out that I was the general director of *ZETA TIJUANA magazine*.

**DESPITE THE  
PAIN, SHAME AND  
FRUSTRATION I FELT  
AT THIS HARASSMENT**

## IT DID NOT STOP ME.

I continued doing what I am known for doing, investigative journalism, and being responsible for a team of professional journalists focused on exposing corruption in the state government. Though our own investigations and those of other journalists, we discovered the attacks and smear campaign had originated within a member of that government.

By 2016, the harassment acquired a new form: social media. A website and a Facebook fan page were created just to keep attacking me with lies, most of them with sexual content and always mentioning the name of *ZETA idem*. They even took a picture I had shared on my personal Facebook profile, trying to duplicate it to keep spreading this smear campaign. The tactics and strategies used were designed by social media experts. With professional help, including from the State Cybercrime Police, we managed to find out where and when the site and fake profile had been created.

Many, many times I tried to speak to Facebook staff. First I used the help and support options provided on the Facebook site to stop harassment, and then I addressed my requests directly to the company's offices in Mexico City. But even then, after the people in charge had been contacted, they said Facebook could not take down the pages used to attack me, it was too "difficult". Each day, those Facebook posts reached more and more people.

Unable to press charges for libel and slander because the guilty parties remained anonymous, a lawyer representing me asked

the government to intervene. Nothing happened and the harassment continued.

But then those who were behind all these attacks made a mistake. They started attacking another journalist, also a woman. And then we joined forces. We sought support among our colleagues, we called a meeting and we were able to rally more than 120 journalists who signed a petition for the government to take action. And we named those who were behind the smear campaigns. That was how our movement gained attention.

The National Human Rights Commission in Mexico sent an expert to document the case. News websites and newspapers, including *ZETA idem*, published the petition. Finally, the Tijuana state government responded. Those responsible for the attacks were removed from their posts. And with that, the smear campaign ended.

But later on, the same lies, the same insults were used again by other people on social media, through live streams and videos on Facebook pages. I have talked personally to district attorneys and even judges about these cases, and although this time the people attacking me could be fully identified, I was told there was no way to press charges. So they kept attacking until they got tired of it.

According to the  
NGO ARTICLE 19,  
impunity for crimes  
committed against  
journalists in Mexico  
stands at >>> >> >

99%

Gender-based attacks are a major element. In 2017, there were 130 criminal attacks against women journalists, 20 with a gendered element, and seven of these occurred in the digital space. We women journalists are attacked for our gender, but to date we lack opportunities to seek redress through the justice system.

We will continue to join forces and publicly demand from the relevant authorities that the perpetrators of these attacks be held accountable. It is the only solution we have found. We will not be silenced.

**WE WILL KEEP  
DEDICATING OUR LIVES  
TO JOURNALISM AND TO  
EXPOSING CORRUPTION  
AND CRIME.**



Adela Navarro Bello

Photo: Eduardo Jaramillo

## WHEN THE TWITTER MOB CAME FOR ME

In my career as a foreign correspondent, I have witnessed the strange psychology of the mob in many conflict zones. I have observed at close range how a mob forms. How a mob can so quickly resort to violence. And how that violence can so easily result in a death or serious injury. I was born and raised in a country that endured a decades-old war so I knew mobs before I began reporting on them.

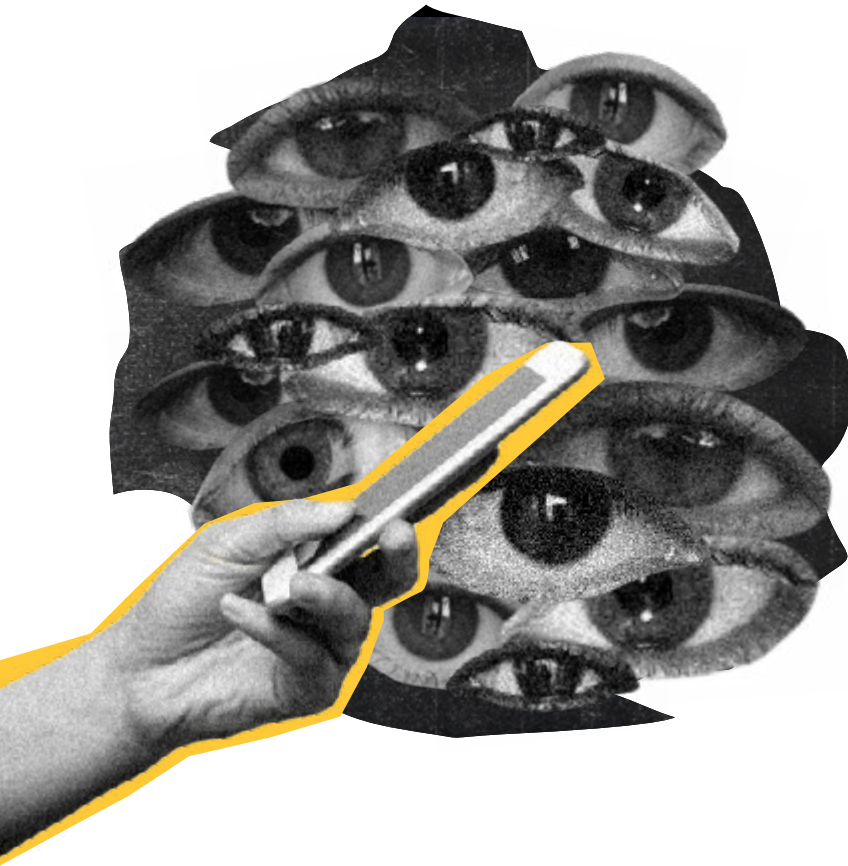
**But I wasn't prepared for when a Twitter mob came for me.**

Let me explain. For years I have reported on and researched a country I watched slowly tip into civil war. Every conflict since time immemorial has also been a propaganda war, its protagonists locked in a fierce battle for narrative. Today, in an era of "fake news" when anyone can become a keyboard warrior through social media, the stakes are even higher.

The country I report on – though access is increasingly difficult – is awash with not just misinformation, but disinformation wilfully spread by the belligerents and their supporters. They want to confuse the population of that country but also the outside world about what exactly is going on there. Not surprisingly, they see journalists like me, whose job it is to unpick those narratives and report the realities of the conflict and the impact on civilians, as a threat.

And so the mob came for me. It began, as mobs in real life begin, with just a few individuals. Shrill, partisan voices – some





of them hiding behind anonymous Twitter handles – whose baiting and baying drew the attention of others until quite a virtual crowd had gathered. The accusations of that initial handful were designed to make some noise that would attract a wider audience: I was in the pay of this faction or the other in what was then a rapidly spiraling conflict; I was a liar; I was a propagandist; I was a spy. Their smears travelled fast – and far. The accusations against me were shared on other social media, including Facebook forums, and eventually ended up broadcast on TV channels allied with particular actors in the conflict.

Who took part in the mob? Most were citizens of the country I work on. Some lived there, others were part of a diaspora scattered across the Middle East, Europe, the US and Canada. But others were not from that country,

instead they were linked to it through personal connections – some business related – or by a certain type of social media activism that draws both the bored and those desperate for a cause. Most were men, of all ages.

But a not-insignificant number were women. The women tended to be foreigners whose reasons for being interested – sometimes obsessively so – in the country I work on were not clear. The archetypal keyboard warriors sitting comfortably far away from a conflict zone whose tweets had serious consequences for me as a journalist on the ground.

I grew up on the schoolyard maxim that ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me’ and I have the thick skin of an experienced reporter, particularly one who has covered numerous conflicts in different parts of the world. But over the past decade, I have also seen several colleagues – including dear friends – kidnapped, tortured or killed, some in the most brutal ways by the so-called Islamic State.

I KNOW WHERE SUCH RUMOURS  
CAN SOMETIMES LEAD.  
**ABDUCTION, DETENTION,  
TORTURE, AND WORSE.  
I HAVE BEEN DETAINED  
BY BELLIGERENTS AND  
SECURITY FORCES IN  
SEVERAL COUNTRIES.**

**MY FEARS ARE REAL.**



Much of what I was subjected to on social media was gender-based. The country I work in is socially conservative and many of the worst male trolls hid behind anonymous accounts. Their attacks were often sexually explicit and sometimes included insinuations about my personal life or comments about my appearance. Some drew derogatory cartoons of me which they posted on social media. Several men sent me threats – often of a sexual nature – in personal messages and emails, some didn't even bother to hide their identity.

**ON ONE OCCASION, I FROZE  
WHEN I REALIZED A MAN I HAD JUST  
BEEN INTRODUCED TO, ALONG WITH  
HIS WIFE, AT A PUBLIC EVENT WAS  
ONE OF THE MOST  
PERSISTENT TROLLS.**

I was also struck by how often women encouraged the men in their aggressive trolling of me. They cheered the misogyny and took glee even in the sexually explicit attacks I was subjected to. Particularly disturbing was to see how some women even mocked those who had defended me and publicly raised concerns about my safety as the attacks continued.

At times it felt like swarms of trolls around me. Their harassment online but also the fact their smears were taking root beyond social

media and putting my safety at risk caused me considerable stress.

Everyone has a different way of dealing with such harassment. I'm a believer in not feeding the trolls. And while I initially resisted blocking people on Twitter – preferring to mute instead – now I have learned to love the blocking button. For some of those who had trolled me for years, it appeared to be a case of out of sight, out of mind.

My attempts to report accounts to Twitter were largely in vain. Even someone who openly discussed whether it was better if I were killed or not was judged not to be in violation of what Twitter calls its community standards. This is not good enough. These are dangerous days for journalists across the world. We are being targeted in greater numbers than at any other period in my lifetime. We are being harassed, threatened, jailed. Some of us have been tortured, even murdered. All too often it begins with a virtual mob and ends with terrible consequences in real life. I have not been detained or physically attacked as a result of the baseless accusations against me that began on social media. But given those smears have now been amplified far beyond Twitter, they pose a risk to my personal safety and security. As a result, I have had to restrict my movements in the country I focus on. I take few chances. My work suffers as a result.

Companies like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube should do more to address the ways their platforms are used to harass, defame and incite. Because, right now, **THE MOB IS COMING FOR FAR TOO MANY OF US.**

## A SHADOW OVER THE ISLAND OF SOLIDARITY

I could never have imagined it. When I took my three-year-old daughter to nursery school one Monday morning, her teacher asked me why there were posts on the internet claiming that I was having “sex with n\*\*\*\*\*s”. Nor could I have ever imagined that one of my female colleagues would quit active journalism for office desk duties in fear of losing her life. In Lesbos – the Greek island that has become internationally known for its people’s solidarity to refugees – democracy and press freedom are under attack. Journalists, and predominantly women journalists, have become the easiest and most convenient target.

In Greek, the word “journalist” is of masculine gender. Even though many other professions, as women grew stronger, became female-gendered too, “journalism” remains male. Gender-based discrimination applies equally to salaries, promotions and managerial posts. In the great crisis the Greek media have experienced since 2010, lay-offs of thousands of journalists are the norm, as evidenced by the shutdown of popular newspapers and TV channels as well as by the overall unemployment rates in the field. In Athens, while many women have acquired management posts in wide-circulation newspapers, many permanent positions are being replaced by freelancing.

In the rest of the country, the new media reality has left every journalist vulnerable and forced to work under conditions of low pay and precarity. In this context, women are once again the most affected group “because of their nature”: pregnancy, motherhood, menstrual cycles are considered by many as

**“OBSTACLES  
INHIBITING  
OUR  
PRODUCTIVITY”**

**“CLOUDING OUR  
JUDGMENT”**

OR

**“MAKING US  
MORE  
SENTIMENTAL”**

in a profession in which being “tough” and “determined” is the only way to get an exclusive reportage.

Yet when we do get an exclusive, we are rarely acknowledged in the same way men are. Mainstream journalistic discourse has a rigid “man’s look”, being “serious” and “rational”; any other form of journalistic style and discourse is automatically labeled as “sentimental”, deemed fit only for the yellow press and tabloids. The aforementioned publications create and reinforce a prevalent sexist working environment and set the only available framework for pursuing equal treatment in a male-dominated profession.

Things get worse when we write stories about extreme right groups, groups that support the overlooked and underrated role of women in society. It is not easy to forget the incident in June 2012 in which a woman journalist and member of the Communist party was slapped on live television by a member of the extreme right party Golden Dawn. And however unacceptable this act was, a large number of viewers approved of it because the woman was perceived as being “provocative”.

**BEING A WOMAN JOURNALIST WHO WRITES ABOUT THE REFUGEE FLOWS IN LESVOS HAS BEEN AN EXTREME SPORT FOR SOME TIME NOW.**

In October 2016, as I was leaving the refugee camp of Moria, I was personally attacked by a 60-year-old man. When I tried to stop him from swearing at some women wearing burqas, telling him I was a journalist, he came towards me and started pulling my hair. I escaped by starting the engine of my car. I managed to take the women and their children along with me and drive them to a safer place.

I reported the incident to the police but the man still remains unidentified. In addition, extreme right groups in Lesbos reposted my own allegations about the incident, casting doubt on my honour and integrity with sexist comments, and claiming I was having sexual fantasies about elderly people.

A month later there was an evacuation by police of the central square of the island, which was being occupied by Afghan refugees. Members of extreme right groups who were among the crowd on the scene attacked me again with offensive and sexist comments when they saw me taking photos. I tried to explain that I was a journalist and I had official permission to be there. When I asked a policewoman for help, she replied my presence was “provocative”. If I had not been “rescued” by a member of the Communist party, which has its offices nearby, I do not know what would have happened to me on that day.





# OBVIOUSLY, I AM NOT THE ONLY WOMAN JOURNALIST UNDER ATTACK.

There was a Facebook post concerning a colleague of mine with the title “Hang her”. Another colleague was verbally attacked and threatened while covering a story and the police did not provide any protection, being allegedly busy with “more serious matters”. After that incident, she is seriously considering giving up active journalism. She is terrified of leaving her house unaccompanied.

In May 2018, fifteen professional journalists in Lesbos made a public call for the protection of press freedom, as well as journalists’ personal safety. Having met with the chief of police and the general prosecutor without results, we were left with no choice but to stage a day-long strike. We reiterated in the strongest possible terms that we were being attacked because we were refusing to produce disinformation and instead revealing the truth. Disinformation such as “the refugees eat stray dogs”, or “the refugees urinate in the churches and destroy them”, or “journalists are funded by NGOs” are some illustrative examples of the ongoing extreme-right and racism-motivated propaganda on the island.

Since September 2018, the sexist attacks have intensified. On 6 September, a story I had written came out, revealing attacks by the

extreme right against a local girl who was taken for a Muslim because she had a scarf wrapped around her head. On 8 September, two colleagues of mine and I covered a story about African asylum seekers training for the local football championship. After the interviews, we took a photo with the footballers and posted it on Facebook for a limited audience. On the same day, members of extreme right groups, from the village where the young girl was attacked, posted my photo with the footballers publicly on Facebook, stating I was having sexual relationships with “n\*\*\*\*\*s”. They used other sexist, racist and offensive expressions, leading eventually to intervention by the Council of Europe and a number of Greek politicians.

**THE COUNCIL OF  
EUROPE EXPLICITLY  
HIGHLIGHTED THE  
SEXIST NATURE OF  
THESE ATTACKS; THE  
SAME DID NOT HAPPEN  
IN GREECE.**

**BUT WE ARE FIGHTING BACK.**

By publicizing every attack and mobilizing the Association of Journalists of the Peloponnese, Epirus and Islands (ESIEPIN) and our Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions (POESY), we are succeeding in making the problem known both nationally and internationally.

Because sexism is a concept that goes hand-in-hand with fascism and it is becoming dominant in public discourse, we need a

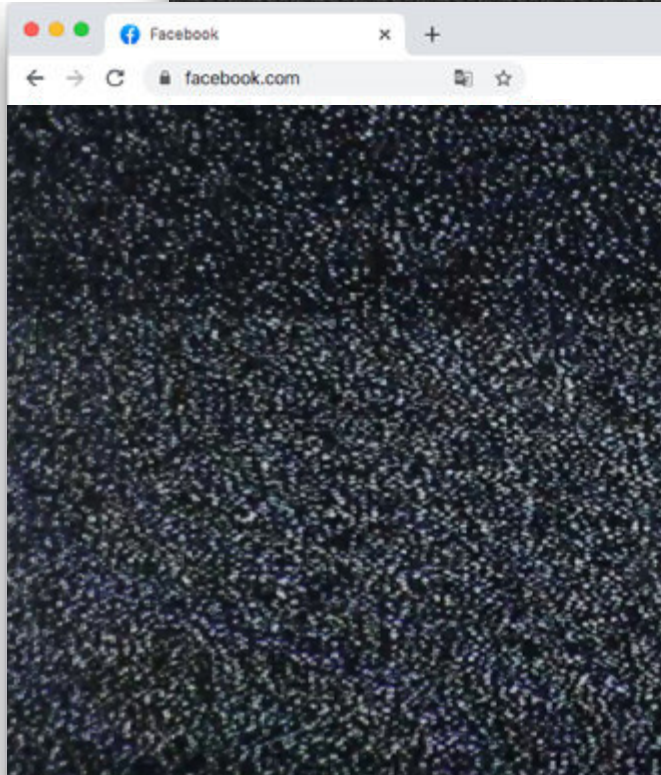
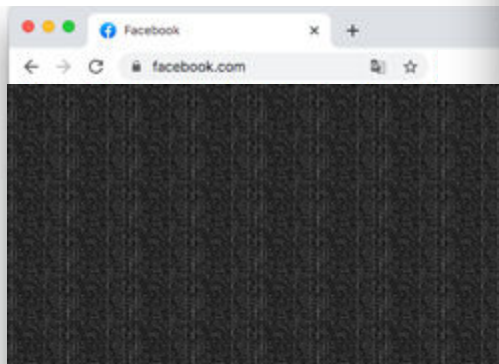
protective shield. If journalists are to promote press freedom and gender equality, online sexual harassment should be prosecuted by the state. Media organizations must include women's voices and perspectives and raise an outcry when women journalists are verbally abused and/or assaulted. And our professional associations must create special spaces for women journalists where they can have access to legal and psychological support.



**Anthi Pazianou**

*Photo: Ilias Giannakopoulos*

## **A TRAITOR THAT NEVER WAS**



On 1 December 2014, a friend tagged me in a Facebook post. When I clicked to see what it was about, I froze in horror. It was a post by Interaz – International Azerbaijan Television, a major national television channel broadcasting from Russia, according to the description on its Facebook page. The post Interaz shared on their Facebook page was about me and another Azerbaijani female journalist, Salatin Asgarova. Our pictures were placed next to each other. The captions read “hero” under her picture, “traitor” under mine. There were short texts accompanying the photos. In her case, the text described Asgarova, an Azerbaijani journalist killed by the Armenian army while covering the Karabakh war in 1991, as a hero. The text describing me was less positive. It contained false information about my work in the field of conflict-sensitive journalism and conflict transformation. The text claimed I was denying the conflict, supporting the perpetrators of the war while being critical of the authorities in Azerbaijan, and so on.

This was just one of the many defamatory posts and articles I have seen written, screened or posted about me in the course of the last four

years. And it all began in March of 2014 when a small low-profile news website in Azerbaijan published an interview with me. It was titled “An Azerbaijani journalist, working for an Armenian newspaper”. Weeks before the interview went online, the author had reached out to me. She asked if she could interview me for her series on successful Azerbaijani women, working and living abroad. When I received the questions, having agreed to the interview, I realized this was not about my professional career, but about my work, at the time, with a small bilingual Turkish-Armenian weekly newspaper, *Agos*.

When I joined *Agos* in 2013 as a columnist, I covered mostly the news from Azerbaijan and occasionally penned opinion pieces about the region at large. For practitioners in the field of conflict transformation and especially those who work on information wars and media propaganda, such collaboration was an example of breaking of stereotypes. But for some circles in Azerbaijan, this was a perfect excuse to come after me. **And come they did.**

The interview triggered a wave of online misogyny, harassment, death threats and defamation campaigns against me, on the grounds that I was a traitor who had sold out her country by working for an “enemy” newspaper. “A dirty microbe fallen off an Armenian whore”, commented one troll on Facebook, expressing his utter disgust for me. “Arzu - slut - ullayeva”, wrote another, mangling my last name to express his hostility. “Gey daughter of geybullayeva, she is brushing her teeth with sperm, look how white they are. She is probably getting gangbanged often,” wrote yet another man. “Even if she is a traitor, she looks like a bomb. I would pay 50 manats to have an hour with her,” wrote a certain Fuad. “This illiterate

Armenian renegade should be hanged,” wrote a woman by the name of Terane.

There were people who were ready to kill me and spend the next 15 years in jail. There were those who threatened to rape me, to hang me by my feet. Some messages and comments were so descriptive that I was amazed by the wild imagination of Azerbaijani men and often women. Now I am sufficiently recovered to find it almost funny, but it wasn’t the case at the time. I felt powerless, weak, discredited.

THE LAST WAS  
A MAJOR BLOW  
BECAUSE AS A  
JOURNALIST, IT  
TAKES SO MUCH  
TIME, EFFORT AND  
INVESTMENT TO  
ESTABLISH YOUR  
CREDIBILITY. AND YET  
WHAT HAD TAKEN  
YEARS OF BUILDING  
TOOK A MERE  
FEW MONTHS TO  
DESTROY.



I keep a collection of these comments and death threats, as well as links to articles, news programmes and so on that were published about me at the time and over the years. They have been very useful in understanding how the hate mechanism works in Azerbaijan and how trolls can be deployed against government critics. Probably I also have enough material for anyone who wants to study a selection of Azerbaijani men and see what constitutes manhood in part of our culture.

One day, when I have time, I would be interested in exploring some of these attitudes among Azerbaijani men. A few months ago, I reached out to one of my trolls and asked him what gave him the right to call my mother a whore and me a microbe. He wrote back. "Hello. If you could clarify what you are talking about and in what context I made that comment, I could answer your question." Note there was not a hint of apology, even four years later. I responded that regardless of the context, didn't he think it was unacceptable to write something like that about someone he'd never met? He replied: "You are asking me whether I think it is ok to insult someone I don't know. We don't personally know Armenians targeting us from other side. Yet we're ready to cut off their heads for the political ideas they have. So I'm not sure what it is you don't understand. You should prepare for everything if the ideas you have are a threat to a nation of ten million and a violation of their rights, regardless of your nationality and identity."

When I reached out to the author of the slur "Arzu - slut- ullaeva", he said he did not remember making that comment but if indeed he had, he asked my forgiveness. The third man never got back to me but I did have an interesting exchange with the one called Fuad. He refused to apologize and instead demanded that I share with him the original picture under which he had left the comment. "I don't leave a comment without a reason. This is why the picture is very important. If I have written 'traitor', then the picture must smell of an Armenian. If Azerbaijani see a picture of an Armenian piece of trash, then he/she deserves the worst slurs no matter what gender."

What worries me most about online harassment and hate slurs is that women often face the worst of it, whether they are journalists or not. And if you are unfamiliar with this kind of behaviour, you can easily feel lost, alone and afraid for your safety and the well-being of your loved ones.

One of the most important lessons I have learned on this journey is

NOT TO KEEP QUIET

BUT

**TO SPEAK UP**

WHEN FACED WITH HARASSMENT.

In the last few years, I have opened up about my experiences, documented my harassers and exposed them. Did it make me feel safer? Not really, but at least I know I am not alone and I have a voice, as a journalist, as a woman, but above all, as a human being, entitled to dignity.

**I WAS NEVER A TRAITOR,  
AND I WILL NEVER BE ONE.**



**Arzu Geybulla**

*Photo: courtesy of the journalist*

JINETH  
BEDOYA LIMA

COLOMBIA

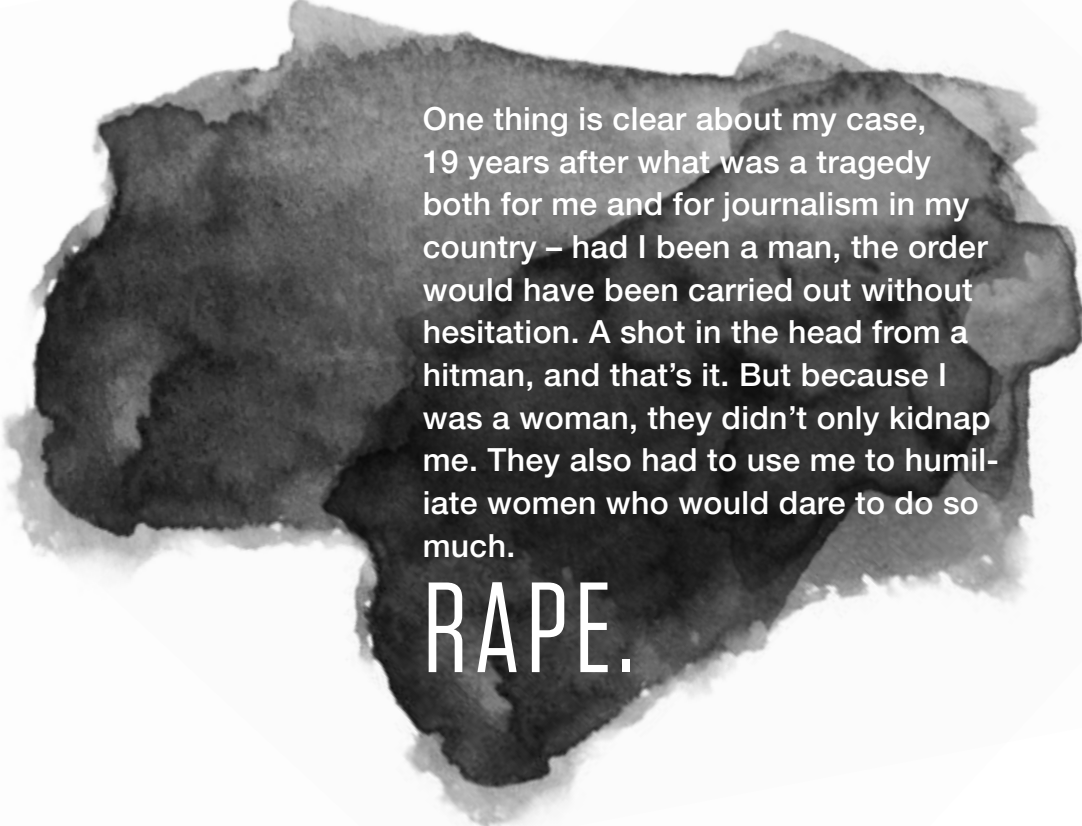
## TRANSFORMING THE PAIN

# ABSOLUTE LONELINESS.

It's the second sensation that  
overcomes you after a violent attack.  
The first one is feeling *muerta en vida*,  
dead even though you're still alive.

That's how I felt on May 25 in 2000, after being tortured and raped by three of the men who'd kidnapped me when I was waiting at the door of La Modelo prison in Bogotá to interview a paramilitary leader.

Until this moment, the idea that being a journalist could cost me my life wasn't on my radar. Despite a first attack the year before, and constant threats in the days leading to this attack, I never believed the criminals would be so daring. I was the daring one, for continuing to denounce the network of arms trade and the trafficking of kidnapped persons orchestrated by paramilitaries, guerrilla fighters and members of the Colombian security forces. Publicly, these groups were all bitter enemies. But in private, in the darkness of crime, their relationships were transformed, and they became the best of partners.



One thing is clear about my case, 19 years after what was a tragedy both for me and for journalism in my country – had I been a man, the order would have been carried out without hesitation. A shot in the head from a hitman, and that's it. But because I was a woman, they didn't only kidnap me. They also had to use me to humiliate women who would dare to do so much.

**RAPE.**



To take deep breaths again, after several days in the hospital when all **I could think about was possible pregnancy, how I could show my face in public, or what I needed to do to finish dying (suicide), became the hardest and most complicated task.** And I found in journalism the oxygen valve that saved me and is still my main engine today.

Getting reacquainted with one's own story, through other people's stories, all coming out of the barbarity of war, could be considered a re-victimization. But in my case it was first a source of motivation, second an answer, and finally a cause. A cause to seek justice and to reclaim thousands of Jineths. Because sexual violence can have thousands of faces but in the end you only need one name to denounce it. All the more when the victim named is a journalist and she can give visibility to a crime that continues to be taboo in many countries of the world.

For years, I refused to recognize myself as a victim because I always believed that journalists had no right to complain, and even less the right to be activists. But the day I managed to restrain my demons and raise my voice, in September 2009, I began this transition of pain that stands up to impunity, with the incentive that every victory in a courtroom is a door that opens not only for you. Behind you are hundreds of victims who see a light of hope in your case.

What may be the most difficult part of the fight is bringing the culprits to jail. Crimes against journalists are always surrounded by corruption and power, and when there is sexual harassment or violence, the chances of reaching the trial phase get slimmer with each action or piece of evidence. In my case, the struggle began alone, without witnesses, without

evidence, without a file. I was stigmatized by my own colleagues, who made me out to be the only person responsible for what had happened to me, and not a victim. Maybe that's why it took so long for me to see myself as one.

For years, I attended innumerable hearings at the Attorney General's office to give my testimony, trying to prove I had been raped, trying to materialize with my words something that was very clear to me in the privacy of my home. That I *was muerta en vida*.

One afternoon in 2009, during one of those exhausting days, I was sitting on the stairs of the Attorney General's office, and the former Director of the Foundation for Press Freedom (*Fundacion para la Libertad de Prensa – FLIP*) found me crying, ready to quit pursuing a judicial process that hadn't even started yet. He was the only one who believed in me, and thought it was possible to identify those responsible for my assault.

IT WAS THE  
TURNING POINT  
OF THIS BATTLE  
AGAINST IMPUNITY.

Then came grueling days of reconstructing the facts, hearings, interviews, judicial proceedings, retelling time and time again my rape, new threats, relapses, returning to the psychologist, contemplating suicide for the second time, my weight dropping to 39 kilos and relentless anorexia. And yet, paradoxically, my soul was getting stronger, and so was my voice.

This is how the campaign I now lead was born:

# NO ES HORA DE CALLAR

(THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO STAY SILENT).

I was no longer ashamed that people knew this woman they saw on television or whose articles they read in the pages of *El Tiempo* had been horribly raped.

My body was my greatest ally because it enabled me to endure a series of marathon days, with the support of FLIP and Oxfam, to knock on the doors of the Spanish government, to reach the European Parliament, the United States Congress, the White House, the House

of Lords in London, travel through Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and France, as well as present the case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington. There have been countless trips, meetings, hearings, letters and petitions, and even more tears.

I believe, in the end, these tears also represented the strength of knowing that despite the circumstances, I was still attached to journalism. It is what to this day has allowed me to stay alive, because despite my case having reached an international level, the threats have not stopped.

## IN 2018 ALONE I RECEIVED SEVEN DIRECT THREATS,

in which the authors reminded me  
“not to forget this is what they like”,  
referring to rape, and that “no ar-  
moured car, no escort or bodyguard  
will be enough to protect” me.

But I believe there is something that does protect me. Because death stops being a problem when you have to live with it. Managing to make journalism a channel for empowerment and a tool for constant transformation is the greatest protection, when your voice becomes the voice of millions.

In recent years, through *No Es Hora De Callar*, we were able to get 120 women from Colombia's South Pacific to denounce the crimes of sexual violence they suffered. These women did not smile and always looked at the ground, ashamed to raise their heads. I decided to teach them journalism. I got a multinational to donate cell phones and with the help of campaign volunteers, we showed the women how to tell their own stories. They recorded their testimonies and we turned that material into the short documentary *The Power of My Voice*.

Journalism, which saved my life, also made visible the sexual violence that Colombia has suffered in silence for decades. Journalism gave hope to the victims and prepared them, through *No Es Hora De Callar*, to make their transition into being survivors. It gave them the hope to transform their pain. It transformed my pain.

Perhaps I will need to go through more legal hearings and many more tears, but the worst is over, because the stories that journalism has allowed me to write and tell are the best legacy for those who face sexual violence. They are a source of strength for women who, like me, found in journalism their reason for existing.

I'm often asked how I managed to forgive and, although I initially thought I had, it's clear there's physical, emotional and spiritual damage for which no reparation or forgiveness is possible. But I've decided to do my job and

be an activist with love, not hatred. I don't know if that translates into indulgence.

The harm done to me is incommensurable, because it left me without a family, unable to become a mother, without the possibility of doing my job or going out onto the streets freely. I am always accompanied by bodyguards. I am always conscious that today could be my last day. For me, every day is my last day. This is why I dedicate myself to finding the best story, writing the best column, organizing the best conference, producing the best documentary.

**TO CONTINUE**

**TRANSFORMING MY PAIN**

**THROUGH JOURNALISM.**



**Jineth Bedoya Lima**

*Photo: EL TIEMPO Casa Editorial*



**DIANA  
MOUKALLED**  
  
**LEBANON**

**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**  
**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**  
**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**

**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**  
**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**

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**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**

I am an enthusiast of free spaces of expression created through social media, especially Twitter. I tend to follow the trending hashtags, I read the comments and participate in writing replies expressing opinions that are considered bold in our societies. I mean views on political freedom, personal freedom and equality, as well as on current events.

I take part in the criticism of public figures and I get drawn into discussing certain phenomena and news items. There is so much going on deserving of reflection, dialogue and sometimes explicit confrontation.

But I often ask myself: When are we supposed to stop? What are the limits when a campaign, any campaign, targets a particular person in a humiliating and destructive manner? I have experienced this feeling personally, although it's nothing compared to what many others have endured.

Are these outrageous campaigns of cyberbullying, even when they represent legitimate opinions, ever useful? I have been concerned with this phenomenon for years: the escalation of individual and group participation in cyberbullying campaigns.

I am not talking here about criticism, which is useful and necessary, especially when a public figure does or says something stupid or shocking. I mean the outrage of vindictive people, with a strong desire to debase those who have made a mistake, or simply taken a stance incompatible with the majority's opinion. Thus campaigns of slander, insult, defamation and fabrication begin.

I follow celebrities whom I would categorize as "thugs" on social media. They have become stars because of their ability to create provocative and scandalous hashtags that attract the vengeful. The examples are too numerous to mention.

**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**

Because of the magnitude of the reactions and comments, especially from anonymous people, the impact on the targeted person is considerably worse than from mere criticism. In the case of abusive hashtags, it seems as if a whole society or world has passed judgment and begun to destroy one's life.

When the target of the campaign is a woman who has a role in public life, the onslaught becomes even more severe. The level of violence increases, horrific descriptions and sexual expressions are used. The issue becomes gender.

I have experienced gender-based attacks repeatedly in recent years. From the words "old", "whore" and "ugly", to the list of insults that have nothing to do with the content of what I say, but are attempts to degrade me as a woman.

These campaigns have become a constant subject of discussion for me and my colleagues who are active on social media. We are trying to find constructive ways to react.

One friend in particular, a famous media figure with many followers, is constantly exposed to savage bullying when she expresses a controversial opinion. She called me once crying. I tried to comfort her by saying she did not have to feel so vulnerable to sexual insults on Twitter.

I told her: "I'm no longer affected. I immediately block those who insult me and I don't respond. You will be stronger with time – don't back down from your convictions."

But my words did not comfort my friend. "That is not a solution, to get used to insults and abuse. This is intolerable," she said.

I REALIZED ALL I  
WAS DOING WAS  
RESISTING, BUT WITH  
NO REAL ABILITY TO  
CURB THE VICIOUS  
ELECTRONIC ATTACKS.

For me, the problem of cyberbullying really began five years ago, when I started to use Twitter and Facebook to participate in the public debate going on in Lebanon and the region.

I am a Lebanese journalist, I have worked in the media for 25 years and covered wars in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. I have visited several hot spots, I am concerned with women's issues and I have made a series of documentaries on the situation of women in the region. I have covered many subjects and faced a lot of prejudice and violence.

When I look back, I can recall many incidents of harassment and bullying that weren't virtual. I remember going to Pakistan in 2002 to report on Taliban Islamic schools in Peshawar and visiting one of the famous schools where Taliban leaders had studied. I interviewed a prominent cleric, but he refused categorically to let me film in classes. While the male crew members did the filming, he took me to his home where I had to stay with his family until the crew had finished. In the presence of his wife and children, talking to me in Arabic which they couldn't understand, he told me how much he enjoyed watching sexy Lebanese television programmes. This same cleric taught his young students that television is a satanic tool!

Among the bizarre incidents in my career, that one was humorous. Others have been scarier.

**BUT NONE HAD  
PREPARED ME FOR  
DIRECT CONTACT  
THROUGH SOCIAL  
MEDIA WITH  
POLARIZED  
PUBLIC OPINION**

**– AN EXPERIENCE  
FULL OF CRUELTY,  
INDECENCY AND  
UNRESTRAINED  
BULLYING.**

The Reporters Without Borders 2018 annual report highlighted “cyberbullying” against media professionals, which the report describes as “shooting bullets in the virtual world”. It is a worldwide phenomenon, also affecting democratic societies. In the Arab world, “electronic flies” as they are called, lead defamation campaigns against journalists, as I have experienced.

Now I devote time to verifying the names of those who use abusive and indecent words to describe me, and I find they are mostly fake accounts, fictitious names of individuals whose followers are very few. And while the names vary, the language, phrases and insults are almost identical. These are the characteristics of the “electronic soldiers” used to defame and destroy people.

Electronic defamation and intimidation campaigns may not cause physical harm, but they create fear and anxiety, contributing to the spread of self-censorship. Journalists, especially women, may hesitate to discuss public issues related to war crimes, discrimination against women, minorities or corruption.

In a country where legal, social and religious violence against women is widespread, a bold statement or public attitude can result in a threatening campaign with frightening speed.

But escape and withdrawal are not the right choice, especially as they do not prevent attacks. These social media spaces play an important role in politics and public debate in the modern era, and women's active participation must not be hindered by campaigns targeting them.

Social media has become a weapon of mass destruction – a phenomenon that will not stop and will not be rationalized, but will continue to be an outrage. For me the solution lies in the ability to ignore it and carry on. At least that's what I'm trying to do

ONE THING I AM SURE OF:

**BACKING OFF IS NOT AN OPTION**



Diana Moukalled

*Photo: Ammar Abd Rabbo*



## **BRAZILIAN WOMEN JOURNALISTS AGAINST HARASSMENT: A COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE**

In the last years, we have been seeing frequent reports on the Brazilian news about women journalists being harassed morally or sexually by sources and within their own work environments.

This does not mean the phenomenon is new in Brazilian society – a society in which the bodies of women are often the target of reductionist and insistent hypersexualization. But now it is finally being talked about.

One reason is that just over two years ago, with other women journalists based mainly in the city of São Paulo, we began, in a very organic way, the work of what would become the first collective to report harassment in our own profession, called “Journalists against harassment”.

At that time, we gave support to a journalist from IG Portal who had been fired after reporting sexual harassment by a singer during an interview. Her case served as an alert: What if it happened to us? We could also be exposed to the same vulnerability if we did not keep quiet in the face of harassment. We decided to take action.

At first, we collected, from groups of women journalists on WhatsApp and Facebook, phrases heard inside and outside the newsrooms, which had affected them or their colleagues. We received more than 100 videos in selfie

format in less than two days with comments, summarizing harassment suffered during women’s entire professional lives.

We used the reports to make a video of just over a minute telling the world that yes, we journalists also suffer harassment.

**AND NO,  
WE ARE NO  
LONGER WILLING  
TO TURN THE PAGE  
AS IF NOTHING  
HAD HAPPENED.**



From that point, we have gone on to analyze a series of other similar cases that had ended up being glossed over, in a profession that systematically reported harassment practiced in other areas, but not within its own.

We produce video campaigns focusing on women journalists suffering various types of harassment: from sources in sports or politics, for example, and even from the companies where they work. Complaints about women journalists' difficulties in getting promotions or simply wage increases compared with men in the same job are not uncommon. Not being assigned to cover the country's most crucial issues, such as politics and economics, is another negative aspect a woman reporter has to deal with, even when, in many cases, she is more qualified than the male colleague to whom the story is assigned.

Last but not least, there are numerous cases of harassment against journalists who want to exercise their maternity rights and are not always respected in their choices. The cases of women who have had their skills called into question after becoming mothers are unacceptable and outrageous.

We have spent years in deconstruction, awareness-raising and simply shedding light on the subject. The work has shown how much a female journalist is more vulnerable to these attacks because the nature of the aggression against her is much more sexual and psychological, and less related to her professional capacity.

One of four video campaigns, called "Juntos contra o Machismo" ("together against sexism"), showed us that we would not reach

the stalkers if we did not also involve men in the task – the majority of harassers are men. We received the collaboration of dozens of nationally prominent male journalists who read aloud real comments heard by women inside and outside the workplace, thus helping other men and themselves to reflect on their behaviour.

An important development of our collective's work was the

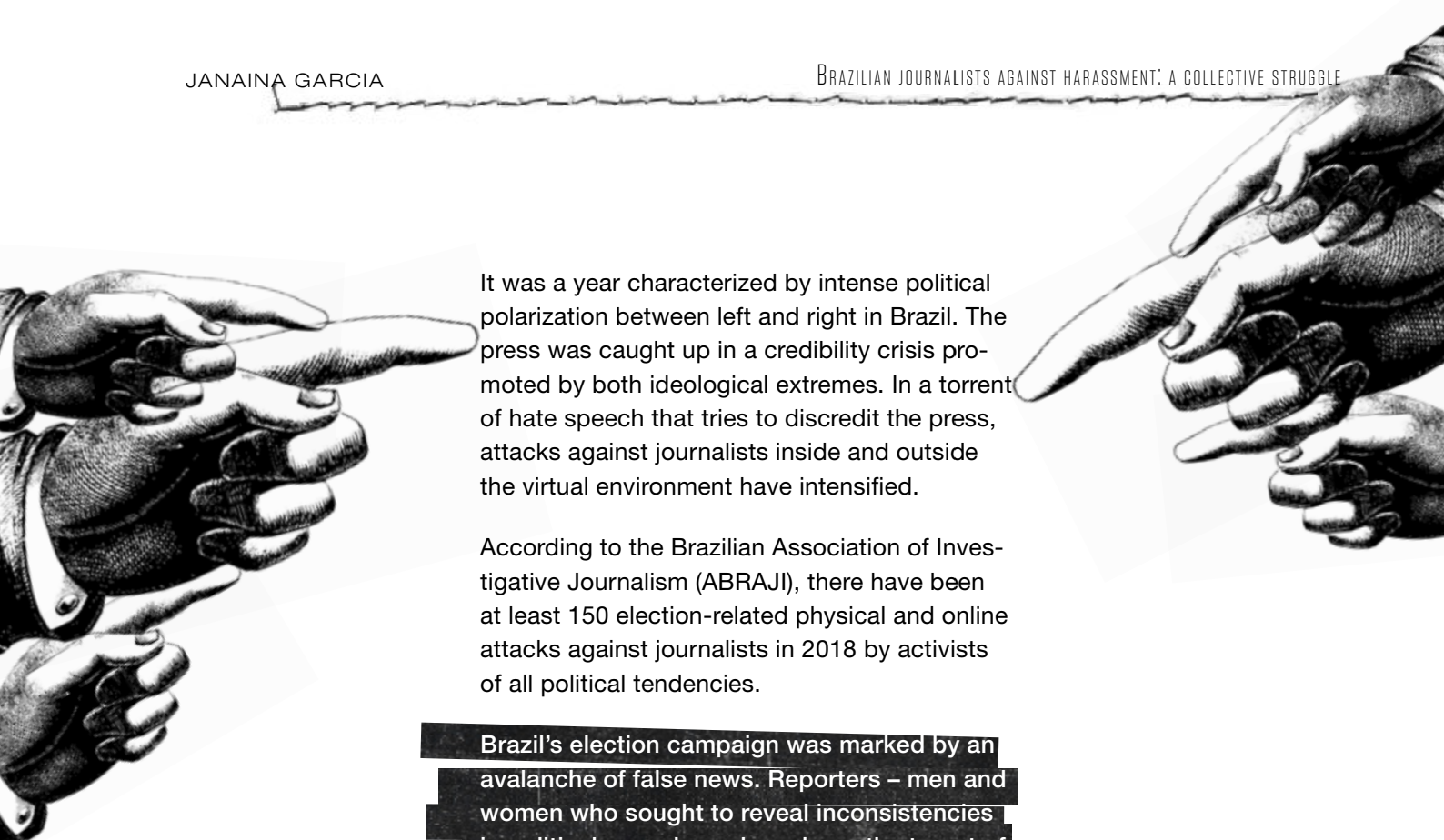
## #DEIXAELATRABALHAR

(LET HER DO HER JOB) campaign, launched in March 2018 in the form of a video manifesto to combat the sexual and other harassment suffered by female sports journalists in stadiums, on the streets and in newsrooms.

The initiative included about 50 journalists working in sports – presenters, reporters, producers and press officers from various media – and it met with success. Besides amplifying the voices against the harassment, it got some of the biggest Brazilian soccer clubs involved in spreading the campaign hashtag. And also since most journalists were from TV or radio, the message was passed on to a large audience.

The demand is also growing from communications students to tackle this issue in their academic work. Through lectures and chats with college students, we encourage them to do so within their own journalism classes at their universities.


But 2018 also revealed to us that the harassment scenario that we – the collective and other organizations attentive to freedom of the press – must work on is much broader than what we were highlighting.



It was a year characterized by intense political polarization between left and right in Brazil. The press was caught up in a credibility crisis promoted by both ideological extremes. In a torrent of hate speech that tries to discredit the press, attacks against journalists inside and outside the virtual environment have intensified.

According to the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), there have been at least 150 election-related physical and online attacks against journalists in 2018 by activists of all political tendencies.

Brazil's election campaign was marked by an avalanche of false news. Reporters – men and women who sought to reveal inconsistencies in political speeches – have been the target of hundreds of threats, defamation campaigns and fake social networking profiles. Even in these cases, Brazilian women journalists are more affected by gender-based violence: not only their credibility, but also their physical, moral and sexual integrity is under threat.



The Folha de S.Paulo's reporter Patricia Campos Mello, for example, uncovered a scheme to disseminate fake news. As a consequence, her WhatsApp account was hacked and her contacts erased. The journalist also suffered a series of threats and other internet attacks.

Campos Mello was only one of several women journalists targeted during the campaign. One of Brazil's most respected journalists, Miriam Leitão (*GloboNews*, *O Globo*, *TV Globo*), was subjected to a massive smear campaign, with false reports that she had once been arrested for a hold-up in the 1960s. In fact, she was detained and tortured in 1972 during the military dictatorship.

A reporter for the NE10 news website was attacked and threatened with rape by Jair Bolsonaro supporters on the day of the first-round voting. "When the commander is president, all the press will be killed," she heard from the aggressors after showing them her press card.

**A reporter for the Intercept Brazil news website, Amanda Audi, received virtual assaults and death threats after reporting that a female deputy for the Bolsonaro party, also a journalist, had been found guilty in 2015 of plagiarism.**

Our collective recently highlighted the current situation of harassment and virtual lynching of Brazilian journalists at the NGO ARTICLE 19's international congress in Mexico City. We were also able to discuss the work our collective has carried out in the last three years at the main conference of Brazilian journalists organized by ABRAJI, focusing on the risks to women journalists.

In the present situation, the work of activists for freedom of expression, including those involved in the "Journalists against harassment" collective, remains as relevant as ever. Our collective seeks to show that people may disagree with the message, but do not have the right to attack the messenger.

It is necessary that external organizations monitoring the principles of democracy also keep a close eye on Brazil to ensure that this freedom of expression is upheld.

At the same time, platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp should be more vigilant and faster to punish cyber criminals who act with the clear intention of intimidating or engendering self-censorship in journalists by means of persecution.



Janaina Garcia

Photo: courtesy of the journalist



**MICHELLE  
FERRIER**

UNITED STATES

## **TROLLBUSTERS: WHEN PASSION AND PURPOSE MEET THE WORLD'S NEEDS**

I have receipts.

As the first African-American columnist at the newspaper, I began receiving racist, violent hate mail for my writings almost as soon as I started finding my voice in the lifestyle section of the newspaper.

All told, I'd received more than a dozen letters and packages from the same letter writer. The writer would send clippings from newspapers and other print newsletters from all over the Eastern seaboard of the United States, pointing toward Black people as criminals and stupid and at risk.

**"N\*\*\*\*\*S, GOD'S ONLY MIS-  
TAKE," HE WROTE. "THERE  
WILL BE A RACE WAR  
AGAINST ALL YOU N\*\*\*\*\*S,"**

he warned.

At the time, I was writing a weekly column At

At the time, I was writing a weekly column called “Chasing Rainbows” in a regional newspaper. My first column was written the evening after the NASA Columbia shuttle explosion as I sat in the newsroom, looking at photographs and stories of the catastrophe. I was struggling with how to tell my young children about death as we watched America’s astronauts vanish in the smoke. In the face of the loss of the shuttle crew, I struggled to hold it together.

“They are lost. There’s nothing NASA can do,” I said. Behind my stoic face, I was stunned. Another shuttle explosion? I had worked at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center as a young girl, spending five summers learning to code and working with scientists and engineers in the space program.

I’d always wanted to be an astronaut. And so I wrote my heart that evening in the newsroom – about death and loss of innocence and shattered dreams. From then on, I wrote my heart – what it was like to raise my young family in a Southern town or stories of teaching my children to ride their bikes. My columns were little fly on the wall stories, a peek into my life and my family. My stories invited these neighbours and readers into my life to share the most mundane and the most joyous events with my family.

Readers wrote to me as if they were friends. I received letters from readers who were moved by stories of my pets and comforted me in my grieving. And now, this intimacy had been violated by this hate mail I received for sharing my most personal details and bringing my readers into my home.

Via email, then online and often by mail, the hate mail would come. Sometimes it was a

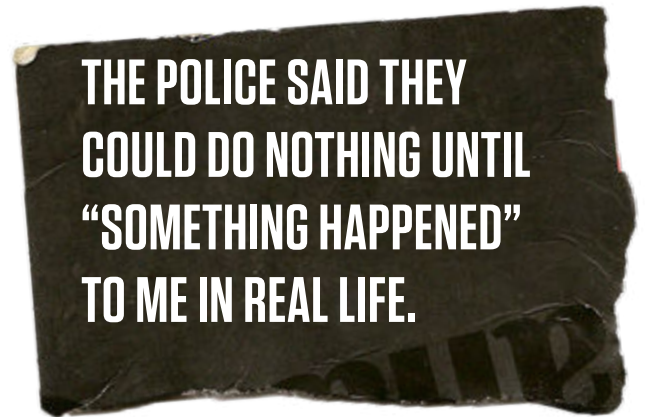
critique, finding me guilty for a whiff of privilege detected in one of my columns. Sometimes it was a racial epithet hurled across cyberspace. But oftentimes, it was one particular letter writer.

He sent persistent hateful missives, letters, manifestoes, pictures and threats in all block letters, shouting at me with every cutting word. Or he joked...

“HOW DO YOU GET A N\*\*\*\*\* OUT OF A TREE? CUT THE ROPE!”

He had several “jokes” like this that peppered his writings.

Every few months, he would send another package addressed to me at the newsroom. I went to the local police after the third or fourth letter.



I’d been receiving threatening and racist letters from this letter writer for more than a year. I had been analyzing the letters, looking for similar phrasing or clippings across the material I’d received. I also used Internet searches to find the use of the same phrases and geographic data to see if I could find similar stories of letters or threats in hate crime records or in local newspaper reports.

I wrote down my growing suspicion that the tactics and the rhetoric in the letters I received fit a pattern of intimidation of white nationalist

groups scattered throughout the Florida landscape and throughout the country. I was feeling the rise of an emboldened racist undercurrent in American society that was being whipped into action by the inauguration of the first African-American president in the United States. Ultimately, the goal was to silence my voice in the newspaper.

I felt exposed. I'd exposed my family as well. I had made myself and my family vulnerable through my writings. I began disguising myself when I traveled out of my home and altering my routines to avoid being a target. I became more fearful and reclusive, fearing the public appearances.

The last letter I received was filled with venom and rage. But the tone was different, more personal. He was mad, that was clear.

His sentences were less coherent, more jarring and hesitant. He claimed that I was responsible for the conditions of his life – his lack of a job and the utter disdain he held for me or for anyone with dark skin. He blamed me and I had to die.

I called my boss and told her "I quit." He'd won. The letter writer had won. He had killed my voice in the newspaper, my column. I was devastated.

**BUT IN THAT  
MOMENT,  
TROLLBUSTERS  
WAS BORN.**





## **TROLLBUSTERS IS ONLINE PEST CONTROL FOR JOURNALISTS,**

born out of my own experiences. I know what it feels like to be under attack. I know how these attacks can change your relationships with friends and family. I know what happens when suspicion grows on every face you see. I know how these attacks can change you and how you do your work.

Using machine learning and social media monitoring, TrollBusters provides just-in-time rescue services and coaching to journalists under attack online. When a target or a bystander sees online harassment or threats in their social streams, they report the activity to TrollBusters. TrollBusters will monitor their accounts, collect digital evidence and provide coaching on what to do next. We've intervened with social media platforms, worked to create impact litigation, conducted international research with collaborators around the globe and created policy changes that impact journalists and their safety.



We've also worked with management and individual journalists to educate them about online harassment and how to armour oneself and one's organization against online abuse. As someone who had experienced firsthand the devastation that can happen with online attacks, I was confident TrollBusters could provide the necessary supports to keep journalists and the free press online.

I conducted research with the International Women's Media Foundation on women journalists and media workers. In the October 2018 report *Attacks and Harassment: The Impact on Female Journalists and Their Reporting*, 52 per cent of women respondents said they had experienced an offense within the past year. And the attacks are designed to discredit, intimidate, threaten or shame.

Seventy per cent of the women experienced more than one type of harassment, threat or attack in the past five years. More than one-third indicated that they had considered leaving the profession because of the online abuse and threats they received because of their journalism work.

And many journalists reported discomfort after the incidents, irritability when reminded of them, difficulty concentrating, or avoidance of people or places that reminded them of the incidents. Many journalists report either having abandoned their pursuit of specific stories or having difficulties with their sources as a result of the threats and abuse.

Since 2015, TrollBusters has assisted journalists in the United States and also overseas, helping them find resources in their countries. TrollBusters has helped to educate and provide training to journalists worldwide.

**AND I CONTINUE TO  
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM  
OF EXPRESSION AND  
FREEDOM OF THE  
PRESS FOR JOURNALISTS  
WORLDWIDE.**



Michelle Ferrier

Photo: Barton James Photography

Published by: Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, on the occasion of the 2021 “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”

## **ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:**

This publication features 11 stories written by female journalists from all over the world, sharing personal experiences with gender-based violence and threats in the exercise of their profession.

The publication illustrates the different forms of harassment and violence endured by women journalists online and offline. The aim of the publication is to raise public awareness about the pervasiveness and complexity of the issue and its stifling effect on freedom of expression and diversity in the media sector, reflecting perspectives from different regions of the world.

## **PROJECT PARTNERS:**

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