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Bosnia and Herzegovina **Women Journalists' Safety** **2024**

Author
Lajla Zaimović Kurtović



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— ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BHJA – BH Journalists Association

BIH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

BIH BD – Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BIH GEA – Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BIH MHRR – Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CFWIJ – Coalition for Women in Journalism

CoE – Council of Europe

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

FBIH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

FMHL – Free Media Help Line

GAP – Gender Action Plan

GBV – gender-based violence

GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

HCABL – Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka

HRC – Human Rights Council

LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons

LPD – Law on Prohibition of Discrimination

MP – member of parliament

NGO – non-governmental organization

PBS – Public Broadcasting Service

RS – Republika Srpska

SJN – Safejournalists Network

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UPR – Universal Periodic Review

WB – Western Balkans

Background and Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the report, its scope and structure.

—1.1 ABOUT SAFEJOURNALISTS NETWORK

Supported by the European Commission (EC), journalists' associations from the Western Balkan countries have established the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) platform (SJN)¹ to jointly monitor media legislation and practices in their countries, while actively engaging in efforts to enhance the legal and institutional frameworks that govern the work of journalists and media professionals. Utilizing carefully designed research methodologies, SJN conducts annual advocacy research that provides journalists' associations and stakeholders with reliable, evidence-based data regarding critical challenges and barriers to implementing European Union (EU) standards on media freedom and the safety of journalists in the Western Balkans. SJN employs two complementary research instruments to comprehensively evaluate media freedom and journalists' safety. The first qualitative research tool titled *Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety* was developed in 2016 and has been continually refined since. It assesses three key areas: (A) Legal Protection, (B) Journalists' Position in the Newsroom, and (C) Journalists' Safety. In parallel, the Network developed a quantitative research instrument, known as the *Journalists' Safety Index*, in 2020, piloted in the same year and further implemented in 2021 and 2022. This index measures changes in conditions that directly or indirectly affect the safety perceptions and practices of journalists and media professionals, structured around four indicator groups: (1) Legal and Organizational Environment, (2) Due Prevention, (3) Due Process, and (4) Actual Safety.

Starting from 2023, SJN integrated both qualitative and quantitative tools into one comprehensive advocacy research framework titled *Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index*,² enabling a more robust and nuanced understanding of media freedom and journalist

¹ See <https://safejournalists.net/>

² The advocacy research is designed and coordinated by Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, research fellows of the [Research Institute on Social Development RESIS](#), from North Macedonia.

safety across six Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia as well as Croatia. Since 2020, SJN has produced annual advocacy research reports for Serbia³, meticulously documenting and assessing the country's progress and challenges regarding media freedom and journalists' safety.

—1.2 RATIONALE FOR FOCUSING ON THE SAFETY OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

Despite existing legislative frameworks and international commitments to gender equality and media freedom in all SJN countries, women journalists continue to face significant and disproportionate threats, pressures and intimidation. Violence against women journalists remains a persistent issue globally and in the Western Balkans, including assault, online harassment and death threats and other types of intimidation, increased surveillance, impersonation and various other online and offline threats.

Evidence gathered by the SJN⁴ and other media freedom organizations point out that women media professionals are frequently targeted through different forms of gender-based violence, including digital harassment, workplace discrimination, threats, intimidation, defamation lawsuits, and occasional physical assaults. These ongoing violations not only undermine the rights of women journalists but also profoundly impact their psychological health, professional advancement, and personal safety and well-being.

Data from the *Safety of Journalists Index* reports, prepared by the SJN⁵, reveal that the violence against women journalist is significantly underreported. For example, in 2023, SJN registered total of 195 incidents: 37 incidents were threats and attacks against women journalists, 68 threats against male journalists and 81 against mixed groups (men and women). These reports consistently highlight gender-specific threats and underscore the urgent need for dedicated protective measures and institutional responses. However, future analysis is needed on the different types of violence and the reasons why women journalists often choose not to report the violence they experience. This report, therefore, explicitly addresses the violation of rights and gender-based challenges experienced by women journalists between 2021 and 2024. It provides a focused analysis of incidents, trends, and impacts, and proposes evidence-based recommendations to strengthen protective frameworks and practices, ensuring safer professional environments for women journalists and media workers.

3 All the reports for the countries and organisations part of SJN can be found on the following link: [Publications - SafeJournalists](#)

4 All incidents monitored and recorded by the SafeJournalists Network for Serbia since June 2020 can be found [here](#).

5 Safe Journalists Network (SJN) is a regional informal network that brings together journalists' associations from seven countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) and Croatia. One of the network's core activities is monitoring the state of media freedom and safety of journalists, which is reflected in an online [database of attacks against journalists](#), as well as annual [national and biannual regional \(comparative\) reports](#).

—1.3 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This specialized report analyses the violations of rights faced by women journalists and media workers in Serbia during the period from 2021 to 2024. Using the SJN's established methodology, the report covers the following key areas:

- **Legal and Institutional Framework** – An examination of Serbia's national legislation, policies, and institutional mechanisms relevant to the safety of women journalists, alongside the country's international obligations and standards on media freedom and gender equality. This includes brief analysis of the effectiveness, shortcomings, and structural challenges in addressing the gender-specific threats faced by women journalists.
- **Types and Trends of Violations** – An analysis of physical and verbal threats, digital harassment, workplace discrimination, intimidation, censorship, and legal threats specifically targeting women journalists in Serbia as monitored by the SJN and based on in-depth interviews with women journalists and media workers.
- **Impact on Women Journalists** – An assessment of how these violations affect the psychological well-being, professional opportunities, and personal safety of women journalists, and how these impacts ultimately undermine media pluralism and media freedom. This analysis draws on data from SJN, independent reports, and interviews with women journalists and media workers, experts and stakeholders.
- **Conclusions and Recommendations** – Evidence-based recommendations directed at policymakers, media organizations, law enforcement authorities, and civil society to effectively strengthen protections, promote gender equality, and improve the overall safety and working conditions for women journalists.

By highlighting gender-specific issues and providing clear recommendations, this report aims to strengthen advocacy efforts, inform policy discussions, foster synergies with other initiatives and encourage proactive steps toward a safer, more inclusive media environment in Serbia.



Methodology

This report adopts a qualitative and exploratory research methodology specifically developed by SJN to examine the safety, rights, and professional experiences of women journalists in Serbia. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, the methodology combines desk research, primary qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and online focus groups. It also incorporates insights from stakeholder consultations and relevant public events. The report is structured to answer the following research questions:

- Which are the safety risks of women journalists and how they affect them?
- Which are the forms of violence against women journalists and discrimination to which women journalists are mostly exposed?
- Why women journalists chose not to report the violence and what is the institutional response and support when they do report?

The desk research formed the foundation of this study, drawing on international frameworks and standards, such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Istanbul Convention, and relevant guidelines and reports from UNESCO, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. Additionally, Serbia's national legislation and strategic documents related to gender equality, violence against women, and media freedom were analysed. This comprehensive review also encompassed previous advocacy research and reports published by SJN.

Primary data collection was conducted between January 2025 and April 2025 through semi-structured interviews and online focus groups. In total, nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out. Among them, five involved women journalists who had directly experienced violence, harassment, or threats related to their journalistic work. These participants represented a range of media outlets, including mainstream private media outlets, TV channels, national public broadcast platforms, print media and online media.

An additional four in-depth interviews were conducted with experts on the protection of media freedom, women’s human rights and gender equality, coming from both state institutions and the CSO sector. This provided a comprehensive view on professional safety, institutional responses, and the effectiveness of existing protective mechanisms.

Table 1: Individual interviews (January 2025 – April 2025)

Name	Position/Role	Media Type Type / Organization / Institution
Woman journalist (attacked)	Journalist and Editor	Private print media
Woman journalist (attacked)	Journalist	Private international TV with national license for broadcasting
Woman journalist (attacked)	Investigative Journalist	Public broadcaster
Woman journalist (attacked)	Journalist	Public broadcaster
Woman journalist (attacked)	Editor	Private media house (print, national TV broadcasting license, online)
Ombudsman	Expert	Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Gender Equality Expert (3)	Advisors	Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH GEA)
Human Rights Advisor	Expert	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH MHRR)
Lawyer	Legal Expert	Civil society organization

Three focus groups were held, two with women journalists and the third one with editors-in-chief, with a total of 18 participants. These focus groups generated rich qualitative data on personal experiences of violence and discrimination, perceptions of safety, and the perceived effectiveness of institutional responses and support mechanisms.

Table 2: Online Focus Groups Conducted (December 2024 – March 2025)

Participant Group	Number of Participants	Main Topics Discussed
Editors-in-chief (3 mainstream media, 3 non-profit media)	6 (4 women and 2 men)	Editorial policies, institutional responses to threats and safety risks faced by journalists
Women Journalists (Group 1)	6	Experiences of violence, discrimination, institutional responses, and support mechanisms
Women Journalists (Group 2)	6	Safety risks, online threats, harassment, and perceptions of safety

All focus groups were held online and moderated by BH Journalists Association (BHJA). They involved participants from different cities (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Zenica, Mostar, Tuzla, Trebinje, Gacko), from both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS). The total of 18 persons participated, out of which 16 were women and 2 (editors-in-chief) were men. For each focus group, BHJA selected 5–7 participants who came from different media and various parts of the country. The focus groups were divided by experience level – one for more experienced and one for less experienced journalists – to compare their perceptions of safety, experiences, and knowledge of protection mechanism. The third focus group consisted of editors-in-chief, both women and men, coming from different types of media and with different experiences. Additionally, five in-depth interviews were conducted with women journalists who significantly contributed to this report with their professional experience and firsthand account numerous forms of threats and attacks.

The interviewed women journalists represent a diverse group in terms of age, media that employ them, and experiences with GBV.

All research activities were conducted in accordance with strict ethical standards, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity throughout the process. Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded only with explicit consent of participants, then transcribed, anonymized, and securely stored. Where consent was granted, direct quotes have been included. The collected qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and the findings are organized around three core dimensions: (i) safety risks for women journalists; (ii) specific forms of violence and discrimination encountered; and (iii) impact on psychological well-being, professional opportunities, reporting and personal safety.

While rigorously conducted, the methodology acknowledges certain limitations, including the potential for underreporting due to participants' fears of stigma or retaliation, the voluntary nature of participation, which may affect representativeness, and the inherent difficulty in openly discussing sensitive experiences of violence and harassment. The analysis in this report is further informed by data from a recent survey with journalists in BiH, as well as additional findings from independent reporting on journalists' safety and media freedom.



Safety of Women Journalists and Gender-Based Violence in Journalism – International Framework

Gender-based violence remains a critical concern across numerous professional fields, including journalism.⁶ Women journalists face a distinctive and compounded risk profile, experiencing violence both in their capacity as media professionals and specifically because of their gender. Despite the growing global awareness, GBV against women journalists continues to be significantly underreported and insufficiently addressed by societal and institutional mechanisms.

— 3.1 IMPACT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON WOMEN JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

Women journalists, including freelancers, fixers, and other media personnel, frequently face physical threats, psychological intimidation, and digital harassment that are explicitly gender related. These forms of abuse have a profound impact on their professional performance and personal well-being, often resulting in lasting trauma and inhibiting career advancement. Intersectional factors, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or freelance status further compound these vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for inclusive and tailored institutional support.

In response to escalating global threats, UNESCO launched the *Journalism without Fear or Favor* initiative in 2020⁷ to specifically address sexual harassment, discrimination, and gender-based violence faced by women journalists worldwide. Subsequent UNESCO research revealed a troubling prevalence of victim-blaming attitudes among newsroom management when women journalists report online harassment.⁸ Furthermore, the World Association of News Publishers has emphasized that sexual harassment and gender-based violence

6 Violence against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women).

7 "[Journalism without Fear or Favour](#)" | UNESCO.

8 UNESCO, [Gender-sensitive safety policies for newsrooms: guidelines + checklist](#), UNESCO, Paris, 2021.

within news organizations carry serious organizational implications.⁹ These include decreased productivity, weakened teamwork, diminished staff trust, higher employee turnover, and substantial financial costs associated with attrition. As a result, media organizations face considerable reputational risks, which can erode public trust and credibility. Addressing gender-based violence, therefore, requires a comprehensive approach, including effective internal policies, robust reporting mechanisms, and intersectional support frameworks.

According to the *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequence on Combating Violence against Women Journalists*, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2020,¹⁰ violence against women is a global epidemic affecting one in three women worldwide during their lifetime. This widespread violence fosters a culture of normalization and tolerance, meaning that women journalists and media workers often operate in environments where systematic and structural gender-based violence is part of their daily reality. They are subjected to different forms of gender-based violence and abuse, including rape and sexual harassment in the newsroom and in the field, and other forms of intimidation, including threats to their family.

Women journalists covering protests and riots face an increasingly high risk of sexual assault, with many experiencing groping and harassment; yet, only a few have come forward to report these ordeals. Those reporting on feminist issues are also targeted because of the nature of their work, often covering stories that have helped shift public attitudes and contributed to the growing rejection of gender-based violence as a human rights violation.

— 3.2 INTERSECTIONALITY AND SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES

Women journalists with intersecting identities and vulnerabilities, including freelancers, fixers, ethnic and racial minorities, LGBT individuals, younger journalists, and those working in rural or marginalized areas, often encounter heightened safety risks and discrimination. These compounded vulnerabilities become particularly pronounced when journalists report on politically sensitive topics, such as corruption, human rights abuses, or conflicts.

Moreover, these intersectional risks are exacerbated by newsroom cultures often shaped by hegemonic masculinity. In such environments, harassment frequently takes the form of derogatory, sexualized commentary, attempts to undermine professional credibility, and systematic exclusion from high-profile assignments, editorial decision-making, and opportunities for career advancement. These practices not only

⁹ See [here](#).

¹⁰ See [A/HRC/44/52](#).

delegitimize women's professional contributions but actively discourage their participation in public discourse, thereby undermining media pluralism and democratic representation.

— 3.3 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO ELIMINATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The CEDAW¹¹ explicitly defines gender-based violence as encompassing harmful cultural, ideological, and political practices directed at women professionals, including journalists, politicians, and human rights defenders. The CEDAW obligates signatory states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and requires them to implement awareness campaigns through mass media aimed at dismantling gender stereotypes and barriers to women's active public participation, thus indirectly supporting women's roles in journalism.

In this context, it is also important to highlight the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women,¹² which affirms that harmful practices and crimes against women human rights defenders, politicians, activists or journalists constitute forms of gender-based violence against women shaped by such cultural, ideological and political factors.

Another critical legal framework addressing gender-based violence is the Istanbul Convention,¹³ adopted in 2011. While the Convention does not explicitly reference journalists, its comprehensive provisions effectively extend protection to women journalists in their professional roles. As the most detailed international treaty on the prevention of violence against women, it offers a broad and inclusive approach, addressing physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence in a comprehensive manner.

Monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)¹⁴ has raised significant concerns about online and digitally facilitated gender-based violence. According to the GREVIO Recommendation No. 1, digital gender-based violence disproportionately affects women journalists, human rights defenders, political figures, and individuals with high public visibility, such as social media influencers. GREVIO explicitly recognizes this phenomenon not merely as a form of gender-based violence but also as a serious infringement on women's broader human rights under international law.

The systematic targeting of women journalists with online violence is further confirmed by the UNESCO-ICFJ survey,

11 See [CEDAW](#).

12 See [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35](#).

13 See [Istanbul Convention](#).

14 See [GREVIO](#).

in which nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents identifying as women reported experiencing online violence in the course of their work.¹⁵ GREVIO also emphasizes that although online violence may not always be explicitly criminalized, it can result in severe psychological harm due to its repetitive nature, mob dynamics, and the rapid spread of harmful content through digital platforms.

Moreover, GREVIO highlights the need to confront entrenched, male-dominated power structures within media institutions and calls for structural reforms that promote equality, diversity, and the safety of women journalists, especially those experiencing intersectional vulnerabilities.¹⁶

The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists¹⁷ has significantly influenced global efforts to push countries to establish legal frameworks that protect journalists from both online and offline threats, with particular attention to the vulnerabilities faced by women journalists. Notably, the Plan advocates for a shift in terminology, from “violence against women journalists” to “gender-based violence in journalism”, to more accurately reflect intersectionality and acknowledge the diverse experiences of individuals in the journalism profession who face compounded risks.¹⁸

Further reinforcing international commitment, the UN General Assembly Resolution 72/175 explicitly calls on member states to recognize and proactively address attacks that disproportionately affect women journalists.¹⁹ Similarly, the UN HRC Resolution 33/2 (2016)²⁰ unanimously condemned targeted attacks on women journalists, explicitly denouncing sexual and gender-based discrimination, violence, intimidation, and harassment occurring in both digital and physical environments.²¹ Additionally, the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders²² obligates states to take all necessary measures to protect individuals, including journalists, from violence, threats, retaliation, and discrimination arising from their legitimate work in defending human rights.

— 3.4 EUROPEAN UNION FRAMEWORKS FOR PROTECTING WOMEN JOURNALISTS

The EU has established robust policy and legal frameworks designed to strengthen the safety and empowerment of women working in journalism and the broader media sector. The EU Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534 on the protection, safety, and empowerment of journalists and media

15 Jordaan, Lucinda, [Global guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists](#). WAN-IFRA, October 2023.

16 GREVIO. [General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women](#), pp.24, 2021.

17 See [here](#).

18 UNESCO. (2022). [Outcomes of the Regional and Thematic Consultations](#).

19 Article 19 (2019) Ending Impunity. [Acting on UN standards on the Safety of Journalists](#).

20 See [here](#).

21 Human Rights Council (2020). [Combating violence against women journalists](#) - Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences.

22 See [here](#).

professionals²³ explicitly acknowledges the critical role played by civil society and news organizations in combating both online and offline harassment, threats, discrimination, and incitement to hatred, particularly when targeting women journalists, minority groups, and those reporting on equality-related issues.

Furthermore, the EU Directive 2024/1385 on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence²⁴ marks a crucial legal advancement in ensuring comprehensive protection for women and girls, including specific provisions addressing violence in digital spaces. For women journalists, this directive imposes a clear obligation on EU Member States to adopt and enforce policies safeguarding them from harassment and abuse, both online and offline, thereby enhancing their safety in professional settings. Complementing these instruments, the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III, 2021-2025)²⁵ advances gender equality and women's empowerment through an explicitly gender-transformative and intersectional approach. Collectively, these EU frameworks underscore the need for proactive institutional and policy responses. Despite robust international standards and sustained advocacy, gender-based violence in journalism remains widely underreported. This is largely due to persistent cultural stigma, fear of professional repercussions, and inadequate institutional responses. Breaking this "culture of silence" demands structural reforms, accessible and transparent reporting mechanisms, effective enforcement of protections, and broad societal and organizational change.

23 [Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2021/1534](#) of 16 September 2021 on Ensuring the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists and Other Media Professionals in the EU.

24 See [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence](#).

25 See [here](#).

IV

Overview of the Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

All over the world, we witness a major decline in press freedom and an increase in attacks on journalists. According to the Safety of Women Journalists report published by Free Press Unlimited and BHJA, these safety risks are often gendered as women journalists tend to face the double burden of being attacked both for being a journalist and for being a woman. Not only do women journalists face more risks than their male colleagues but they also face different types of risks. From newsrooms to reporting from the field, as well as online, this violence can take different forms ranging from digital privacy and security breaches, coordinated disinformation and smear campaigns, to sexual harassment, assault, torture, and even death. In other instances, it leads to self-censorship and women withdrawing from public life or not reporting a story at all for fear of reprisals.²⁶

In recent years, BiH has seen an increase in the number of women who experience gender-based violence. According to UN Women, every second woman in BiH experienced some form of violence since the age of 15. This violence is often seen as socially acceptable behavior justified by traditional patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes.²⁷ Among them, there is a significant number of women journalists who experience threats and violence only because of their gender. Many of them do not even report the fact that they have been threatened, attacked or harassed, but even with those who do, the figures are worrisome. Although BiH has a legislative framework in place and both the international and institutional mechanisms to provide protection to women against gender-based violence, this seems to be insufficient in practice.

26 [Report-Safety-of-Women-Journalists-BiH-19-04-1.pdf](#): Perceptions, Experience and Understanding of Safety and Gendered Safety Risks. Focus Group Discussions with Women Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Free Press Unlimited and BHJA, 2023, pp.3, accessed on April 23, 2025.
27 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/bosnia-and-herzegovina/ending-violence-against-women>, accessed on March 16, 2025.

— 4.1

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS

This report section analyzes the BiH's legislation concerning gender equality and protection of women's rights, focusing on the position and protection of women journalists, and its compliance with international instruments.

Over the years, BiH has ratified the most important international instruments regulating gender equality and protection of women²⁸ and has conducted activities to harmonize its legislation with those instruments. Furthermore, BiH has established all the necessary institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in the country. At the state level, the most relevant body is the BiH GEA²⁹, formed within the BiH MHRR³⁰, as well as BiH Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Gender Equality³¹. At the entity level, there are the FBiH Gender Center and the RS Gender Center, as well as committees in their respective legislative bodies. Cantonal Assemblies in FBiH have also established Committees for Gender Equality. At the local level, there are committees within municipal assemblies in almost all BiH municipalities.³²

As for the domestic legislation, BiH has several laws in force pertaining to criminal liability, prevention of violence, protection against discrimination, gender equality, media services, etc. However, BiH does not have a law protecting from gender-based violence that could prevent and/or provide support to victims of gender-based violence other than domestic violence. Furthermore, BiH does not have a law to protect journalists on the ground of their profession. Several laws adopted at the state level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its Entities and the District regulate issues which are directly or indirectly related to the status of journalists. These are primarily laws which stipulate the conditions for and the manner of establishing the media and their activities, the oversight over their work, their rights and responsibilities, laws which regulate civic responsibility of journalists, labor related status of journalists, etc. The main problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the lack of regulations, but their inadequate implementation. The statistics show that the situation in the media has deteriorated. According to the Reporters Without Borders Index, BiH fell by 17 places, from 64th (out of 180) in 2023 to 81st in 2024.³³

28 CEDAW available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>, The CoE Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) available at <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>, UN Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf, Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 available at <https://rm.coe.int/recommendation-cm-rec-2013-1-of-the-committee-of-ministers-to-member-s/1680982c06>, The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life available at <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/08/the-european-charter-for-equality-of-women-and-men-in-local-life>. All websites accessed on February 25, 2025.

29 <https://arsbih.gov.ba/english/>, accessed on February 26, 2025.

30 https://www.mhrr.gov.ba/default.aspx?langTag=bs-BA&template_id=127&pageIndex=1, accessed on March 3, 2025.

31 <https://www.parlament.ba/committee/read/21?lang=en>, accessed on March 3, 2025.

32 Institutional mechanisms - ARS BiH, accessed on February 25, 2025.

33 <https://rsf.org/en/country/bosnia-herzegovina>, accessed on 29 March 2025.

For the purposes of this report, 17 laws were analyzed in areas of criminal conduct and procedures, defamation, gender equality, gender-based violence and public broadcasting services.³⁴ They provide an excellent legislative framework for criminal procedures, protection from discrimination, and gender equality, however, none of them specifically defines or protects the position of journalists. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, journalists do not have a legally recognized status as persons performing work in the public interest and are therefore not protected by any law on the ground of their profession. Women in BIH are protected by the FBIH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the RS Law on Protection from Domestic Violence,³⁵ but these refer only to violence committed by their spouses or partners. Therefore, there are no legal grounds in BIH to protect women journalists from gender related threats or violence related to their work. The FBIH Labor Code does not define harassment or gender-based violence at the workplace, while the RS Labor Code prohibits sexual harassment and gender-based violence against employees, as well as job seekers, and defines GBV and sexual harassment as unwanted behavior.³⁶ The BIH Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (LPD) does define sexual harassment,³⁷ and prohibits it everywhere, including at the workplace.

4.1.1. CRIMINAL LAW FRAMEWORK

Criminal codes and criminal procedure codes at the state and entity levels in BIH contain no special provisions defining attacks on journalists, although initiatives for introducing such criminal offences have existed since 2019. In 2018, BHJA officially initiated amendments to the criminal codes and criminal procedure codes (at the state and entities levels and in BD BIH) to ensure criminal protection of journalists in cases of safety threats and risks.³⁸ A similar initiative was adopted by the FBIH Parliament,³⁹ as well as by the BIH Parliament, where both houses, at the proposal of groups of MPs of the state and FBIH parliaments, upheld the initiative to recognize journalists as persons performing work in the public interest.⁴⁰ However, in 2023 and 2024, the criminal codes and criminal procedure codes in Bosnia and Herzegovina were still not amended to provide protection to journalists. On two occasions, the RS Government rejected the initiatives to amend the Criminal Code proposed by BHJA and BHJA Journalists' Club Banja Luka, whereas the initiatives remained active at the state and FBIH level. At the state level the initiative was included in a conclusion

34 BIH Law on Gender Equality, BIH Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, BIH Criminal Code, FBIH Criminal Code, RS Criminal Code, BD BIH Criminal Code, BIH Criminal Procedure Code, FBIH Criminal Procedure Code, RS Criminal Procedure Code, BD BIH Criminal Procedure Code, FBIH Law on Protection Against Defamation, RS Defamation Law, FBIH Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, RS Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, BIH Law on the Public Broadcasting Service, FBIH Law on the Public Broadcasting Service, and RS Law on the Public Broadcasting Service.

35 [Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of Republika Srpska](#), accessed on February 22, 2025.

36 [Labor Code of the RS](#), Article 23, accessed on March 19, 2025.

37 Sexual harassment shall be considered every form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behavior of sexual nature which aims for or has the effect of harming the dignity of a person, especially when it creates fearful, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. <https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/002-Anti-Discrimination-Law-.pdf>, pp. 2, accessed on April 30, 2025.

38 [Istrage i procesuiranje napada na novinare i medijske radnike u Bosni i Hercegovini](#), Nedim Pobrić, BH Novinari, 2020, accessed on March 21, 2025.

39 [Usvojena inicijativa za zaštitu novinara - CIN](#), Center for Investigative Journalism (CIN), accessed on March 18, 2025.

40 [Usvojena inicijativa kojom će se napad na novinare/ke tretirati kao posebno krivično djelo](#), MC Online, accessed on March 18, 2025.

tasking the Council of Ministers to prepare amendments to the BiH Criminal Code.

4.1.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The CoE's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) – one of the most important international mechanisms for protection from gender-based violence (in this context, the most relevant) – was adopted in Istanbul in 2011. Bosnia and Herzegovina was the sixth country to ratify this Convention in November 2013. By doing so, BiH committed to undertake legislative and other measures to ensure legal, institutional and organizational framework for prevention of violence against women, protection of victims and punishment of perpetrators.⁴¹ In order to enable this, BiH conducted activities to harmonize its legislation with the Istanbul Convention. In June 2022, GREVIO, an independent human rights monitoring body mandated to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention by the parties to the convention, published its first report on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The report is the fruit of baseline evaluation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the context of implementation of the Istanbul Convention and compliance of country legislation and practice in all areas covered by the convention.⁴²

According to the GREVIO Report, there has been some positive progress in the legal framework to harmonize it with the Istanbul Convention.⁴³ However, this progress did not directly affect women journalists. New criminal offenses were introduced at the entity level, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, forced sterilization, harassment, sexual harassment and forced marriage. Moreover, the Entities have special laws on preventing domestic violence that protect victims, however, they fail to recognize a broader gender dimension of violence against women when violence is not committed at home or by a person who is not an intimate partner.

According to the experts of the BiH GEA,⁴⁴ not much has been done in terms of prevention of violence against women in BiH, including women journalists. Gender-based violence is not recognized either in the relevant legislation or the institutional framework. According to the Agency's experts, BiH is not sufficiently harmonized with the Istanbul Convention, either in the context of its legal framework or its institutional actions. Every act of violence that does not have a component of domestic violence is not recognized by the BiH legislation. Victims of other forms of gender-based violence do not have the same rights as victims of domestic violence. According to the current legislation, a victim of rape in BiH, for example, cannot use the services offered to the victims of domestic

41 <https://arsbih.gov.ba/project/istanbulska-konvencija/>, accessed on January 20, 2025.

42 GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2022, pp. 4, accessed on March 17, 2025.

43 Ibid.

44 The meeting was held on December 19, 2024, with Mrs. Branislava Crnčević Čulić, Senior Expert Advisor, Mrs. Kika Babić Svetlin, Expert Advisor, and Mr. Joško Mandić, Expert Advisor.

violence, such as safe houses, psycho-social support, helplines, etc., and is not entitled to specific support. A victim of gender-based violence committed by someone outside of her family can reach out to support mechanisms but will not receive any or will not be able to receive the same support as victims of domestic violence. Strategies and laws are almost exclusively targeting domestic violence and do not foresee concrete measures for other forms of violence against women, including in the digital sphere. Therefore, GREVIO underlines the importance of improving the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the context of all forms of violence against women not sufficiently included in strategies, services and support programs.⁴⁵

As a result, a new and improved Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women has been adopted by the FBiH Parliament in the beginning of 2025, with the aim of incorporating the Istanbul Convention into the FBiH legislation.⁴⁶ The new Law improves protection measures against perpetrators and increases police powers. Furthermore, it expands the mandates and increases responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the process of combating domestic violence, including centers for social work, education institutions, police and judiciary.⁴⁷ However, it does not mention online violence to which women journalists in FBiH are often exposed to.

4.1.3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The BiH Law on Gender Equality⁴⁸ prohibits discrimination on the ground of gender identity and sexual orientation in all spheres of life and defines gender-based discrimination as putting any person or groups of persons into a less favorable position based on gender due to which the rights of some persons or groups of persons are protracted or enjoyment and realization of human rights and freedoms are not recognized.⁴⁹ In this context, different types of gender-based violence are considered forms of discrimination, i.e., a violation of human rights, such as “any act causing physical, mental, sexual or economic damage or suffering, as well as threats of such action, which interfere with the enjoyment of rights and freedoms based on gender equality in public and private life”.⁵⁰

The BiH LPD⁵¹ also creates a framework for the realization of equal rights and opportunities for all persons in the country and regulates the system of protection from discrimination on the ground of, inter alia, sex and gender. The process of amending this Law to align it with the relevant EU Directives has resulted in a law protecting BiH citizens from discrimination in

45 GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2022, pp. 14, accessed on March 25, 2025.

46 <https://www.gcfbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Zakon-o-zastiti-od-nasilja-u-porodici-SNFBiH-19-25.pdf>, Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 01-02-1-128-01/25, accessed on April 16, 2025.

47 <https://fbihvlada.gov.ba/hr/predstavnicki-dom-parlamentna-fbih-usvojio-novi-zakon-o-zastiti-od-nasilja-u-porodici-i-nasilja-nad-zenama>, accessed on April 16, 2025.

48 Law on Gender Equality in BiH – consolidated text, Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 32/10, accessed on February 3, 2025.

49 Ibid, Para. 1 of Article 3, pp.1, accessed on February 3, 2025.

50 Ibid, pp. 3, accessed on February 3, 2025.

51 Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Official Gazette of BiH, 59/09 and 66/16, accessed on February 5, 2025.

all areas of life. This includes labor and employment, social and health protection, judiciary and administration, housing, public information, education, sports, culture, science and economy – however, it does not mention the media. Furthermore, this Law prohibits sexual and every other form of harassment, mobbing, segregation and incitement to discrimination.⁵² The central institution competent for the protection from discrimination, according to this Law, is the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the BIH MHRR BIH monitors its implementation. The available mechanisms for protection from discrimination include submitting discrimination-related complaints and filing lawsuits.⁵³

Additionally, within its scope of work, the BIH MHRR conducted an analysis on the compliance of legislation at all levels of government with the LPD and the Law on Gender Equality, as well as an assessment of the LPD's compliance with the EU's *acquis communautaire*. The analysis identified certain inconsistencies and, as such, it may serve as a platform for further action by institutional gender equality mechanisms for the purposes of further harmonization. Out of 188 laws encompassed by the analysis at the state and entity levels, only four (4) laws were found to be harmonized with the LPD. The analysis did not encompass cantonal legislation.⁵⁴

4.1.4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR FREE LEGAL AID

Legal aid provided by the state for women victims of gender-based violence depends on the conditions that need to be met to receive the aid, but also on the canton, entity or district in which the victim resides. This is due to non-harmonized legal aid regulations in the country and highly complex and fragmented legal and institutional framework.⁵⁵ Legal aid to women victims of GBV is mostly provided by women's rights organizations. However, that support is project-based, and the organizations cannot represent the victims in courts, mostly because of limited financial capacities and little or no financial support from the government.⁵⁶

The GREVIO Committee warns that women from rural areas and migrants are facing additional challenges in accessing legal aid with the offices that provide it at entity/cantonal level because those offices are mostly located in major cities. Additionally, there is limited capacity of official centers for legal aid and very limited training for lawyers on violence against women; therefore, they demonstrate a lack of knowledge of violence against women and domestic violence from the gender perspective.⁵⁷ However, the GREVIO Report does not specifically mention women journalist.

52 Bosnia and Herzegovina Report on Legislative and Other Measures Giving Effect to the Provisions of the CoE's Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200206-Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-GREVIO-REPORT_ENG.pdf, pp. 5, accessed on February 5, 2025.

53 [Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), Official Gazette of BIH, 59/09 and 66/16, pp. 7, accessed on February 5, 2025.

54 [MHRR UPR Report, 4th Cycle](#), BIH MHRR, September 2024, pp.6, accessed on January 16, 2025.

55 [GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2022](#), pp. 89, accessed on April 22, 2025.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

— 4.2 PROTECTION SERVICES AND MECHANISMS

In 2023 and 2024, significant improvements have been achieved in the development of protection mechanisms for journalists and media workers by nominating “focal points” in prosecutors’ offices and police agencies throughout BiH, whose mandate is communication and cooperation with journalists and journalists’ associations regarding threats and assaults. They are tasked with registering and monitoring the action taken upon reports regarding attacks on journalists, including violence against women journalists.⁵⁸ In total, 18 focal points have been designated in prosecutors’ offices,⁵⁹ as well as 15 inspectors and spokespersons in police institutions whose contacts are publicly available. However, the role of the focal points is not acting in cases of threats, assaults or hate speech, but establishing a registration system and tracking cases related to safety threats to journalists, prioritizing the investigation, taking ex officio action, coordinating with officers in charge, as well as improving communication with journalists and journalists’ associations. As the newly established mechanism of focal points is in the early development phase, there are no officially available data on the number and outcomes of registered cases of attacks on and threats to journalists, desegregated by sex. Each prosecutors’ office and police agency have their own database on the cases, available upon request. There are some positive examples of specialized trainings of professionals, including trainings of focal points in prosecutors’ offices and police agencies on gender-based violence and digital gender-based violence. However, the understanding of the specificity of journalists’ job and threats to journalists still depends on the sensibility and training of officers in prosecuting institutions and police agencies assigned to the case.

Although some progress has been made, journalists are still unsatisfied with the speed and efficiency of investigations, especially concerning online violence. Violence in the digital sphere is not sufficiently regulated in Bosnia and Herzegovina and online threats cannot be prosecuted as a criminal offence in the same way in all parts of the country. The RS and BD BiH have better definitions of online violence in their legislation, while it is still a grey zone in FBiH, allowing for digital threats to happen quite often.

To report threats and attacks, journalists mostly rely on media organizations. There is the highly functional Free Media Help Line (FMHL) operating within BHJA. During 2023, the FMHL registered a total of 87 cases of violating journalists’ rights and media freedoms, which is approximately 10% more than in 2022. In 2023, the FMHL registered at least two cases of suspending investigations on the grounds of nonexistence of elements of a criminal offence.⁶⁰ Additionally, BHJA provides

58 [MHRR UPR Report](#), 4th Cycle, BiH MHRR, September 2024, pp. 8, accessed on January 16, 2025.

59 <https://pravosudje.ba/vstvfo/B/10001/kategorije-vijesti/122916>, accessed on February 09, 2025.

60 [BiH Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety Index 2023](#), BHJA, 2024, pp.45.

free psychological and legal support, as well as services of representing women journalists in courts. According to the *Safety Index 2023*, the Association filed two lawsuits in accordance with the LPD for the protection of two women journalists that were exposed to gender-based violence, insults, and misogynous speech by a public official. According to BHJA's experience in initiating criminal cases for the protection of journalists, the estimate is that about 2,5 years pass from the moment of filing a report until receiving any kind of prosecutor's decision, which is contrary to standards of efficient investigation.⁶¹ At this moment, BHJA has 20 open cases at BIH courts and one at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Among them, three relate to women journalists; seven to one man journalist and one woman journalist; and eleven cases relate to men journalists only. Two cases that include women journalists relate to discrimination and insults on the ground of gender, while one relates to mobbing, discrimination and violation of labor rights. Seven cases that include both men and women journalists are based on defamation and insults. However, two among these seven cases are specific – the defamation lawsuit by a woman journalist against a highly positioned politician and a lawsuit against a woman journalist by a lawyer/businessman. Both cases, although adjudicated under civil defamation law, were resolved in favor of women journalists. Additionally, both cases contain elements of gender-based violence, including misogyny, gender-based insults and vulgar vocabulary. BHJA/FMHL have also initiated a significant number of investigations of physical attacks and online violence against women journalists. Currently, there are nine investigations related to online threats, attacks, and physical attacks on women journalists at prosecutor's offices – three investigations in Banja Luka, five in Sarajevo, and one in Mostar.⁶²

Furthermore, the organization Your Rights provides free legal aid to journalists and, since November 2024, has a mechanism in place for reporting threats and attacks directed towards journalists and media workers.⁶³ Another organization that is active in providing services to women that face violence and violation of their rights is the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka (HCABL). In 2023, HCABL formed a legal team to support human rights defenders who find themselves in critical or risky situations. Later, HCABL also formed the Help Line for Human Rights Defenders. This service is also available to journalists, especially those writing about sensitive topics and investigating corruption in BIH. Through this mechanism, both women and men journalists can access support from the HCABL's legal team and the Help Line, when in a situation where all other forms of legal and/or institutional support are denied to them. Until now, the HCABL legal team assisted in two cases involving journalists – one was a case of a woman journalist who received a death threat.⁶⁴ Additionally, HCABL runs the Pillar

61 Ibid.

62 FMHL database on attacks and threats to journalists.

63 <https://medijska-prava.vasaprava.org/>, accessed on May 14, 2025.

64 One case related to a woman journalist who received a death threat and who was unable to obtain, as she stated, adequate police protection; the other case related to a man journalist who was summoned to a police station for allegedly unauthorized filming.

of Shame page where it publishes sexist statements by public officials, some of which were addressed to women journalists. Finally, HCABL organizes different trainings on gender equality and gender-based violence. The organization held a training for journalists on how to report on violence against women professionally and in a non-stereotypical manner, and it published the Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Reporting on Violence Against Women.⁶⁵

Women's rights groups provide a set of specialized support services – like safe houses, legal aid, psychological support, helplines – also available to women journalists in case they are victims of any form of gender-based violence. However, these programs mostly depend on international donors and their financial support. This and many other problems related to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, as well as the CEDAW,⁶⁶ are discussed in alternative reports by women's NGOs.⁶⁷ In its Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of BIH, the CEDAW Committee was concerned about anti-gender discourse and online threats against women politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and women's non-governmental organizations, including by high-level politicians, and the lack of effective sanctions for such acts. It urged for BIH to adopt effective measures for the protection of women politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and women's non-governmental organizations to enable them to freely undertake their important work without fear or threat of violence or harassment.⁶⁸

Concerning the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BIH and their mandate, this institution only acts in cases where the violation is committed by a public institution at any level in BIH.⁶⁹ In 2023, the Institution received seven complaints concerning journalists and media, including attacks on journalists, demolition of their property, activities that journalists consider as exerting pressure on their work, and difficulties that journalists encounter while gathering data from public institutions. One recommendation was made based on these complaints, which does not categorize the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BIH as the most efficient institution for the protection of journalists, including women journalists. The positive aspect is that the Institution, in their yearly report on results and activities, underlined the necessity to define attacks on journalists as a specific criminal offence in the criminal legislation or as a more serious form of the criminal offence against an official carrying out his/her duty.⁷⁰ On that occasion, the Institution also reminded of the conclusions, opinions and recommendations from their Special Report on the Status and Cases of Threats Against Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, underlining that regardless of the passage of time, no significant progress has been made in this area since they

65 Interview with Mrs. Dragana Dardić, Program Director at HCABL. Interview was held on April 7, 2025.

66 [Alternative CEDAW Report](#), Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka and Rights for All, 2023.

67 [Alternative NGO BiH Report to GREVIO Committee](#), Udružene žene and Medica Zenica, Banja Luka/Zenica, 2019.

68 [CEDAW/C/Bih/CO/R.6](#)

69 <https://www.ombudsmen.gov.ba/Default.aspx?id=0&lang=EN>, accessed on January 12, 2025.

70 [Annual Report on the Results of the Activities of the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), Banja Luka, March 2024.

published the report in 2017.⁷¹ The Special Report also included the gender dimension of attacks against women journalists.⁷² Furthermore, the Report of the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH states that, on the basis of all responses provided by prosecutor's offices in BiH, it can be concluded that criminal codes do not specifically prescribe a criminal offence of an attack against a journalist.⁷³ It is clear that journalists cannot be treated as officials, but this does not exclude an obligation to consider a possibility of defining attacks against journalists as a separate criminal offence, primarily because of their important social role of ensuring public information as a vital element of freedom of expression.⁷⁴ When interviewed for the purposes of this research, the Ombudsperson⁷⁵ underlined the importance of regulating the status of journalists, either by amending the Criminal Code, because it only recognizes attacks against officials, or by regulating the status of journalists as persons performing public duties (together with teachers, social workers, etc.), adding that "information which journalists publish should not be a basis for attacking them, they should be protected as officials".

Furthermore, the Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWIJ)⁷⁶ publishes monthly, quarterly and annual reports on the situation in press freedom from a gender-based perspective and provides a platform for reporting on violence against women journalists. In 2023, this platform registered five "high-level" cases of endangering safety of women journalists in BiH.⁷⁷

71 [BiH Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2023](#), BHJA, 2024, pp. 34.

72 [Special Report on the Status and Cases of Threats Against Journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), The Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman, Banja Luka, 2017, pp. 51, accessed on April 14, 2025.

73 Ibid, pp.51.

74 Ibid, pp. 49.

75 Interview with the Ombudsperson, Mrs. Jasminka Dzumhur, held on January 14, 2025.

76 [Coalition For Women in Journalism \(CFWIJ\)](#), accessed on April 16, 2025.

77 [SEARCH — Coalition For Women in Journalism](#) (CFWIJ), accessed on April 16, 2025.

V

Safety of Women Journalists 2021-2024

This chapter provides an analytical overview of the safety situation of women journalists in Bosnia and Hercegovina between 2021 and 2024, highlighting key trends and patterns identified through documented alerts by SJN. It examines the primary forms of threats, harassment, and intimidation faced by women in journalism, emphasizing the prevalence of online harassment, verbal abuse, and smear campaigns as dominant concerns. The analysis includes statistical insights, a thematic categorization of attack types, and detailed case studies that illustrate specific patterns of gender-based intimidation and pressure, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the environment women journalists navigate in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

— 5.1 SJN ALERTS REGARDING ATTACKS AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS 2021- 2024

For the purposes of this report, all attacks on journalists in the period from 2021 to 2024 that have been registered with SJN in BIH have been analyzed. The aim was to determine the total number of attacks and the ratio of attacked women and men, but also to compare the type and number of attacks. The total number of attacks has been disaggregated by attacks on men and women journalists and then further analyzed based on the type of attack and/or threat.

In the period from the beginning of 2021 until the end of 2024, there have been 132 journalist attacks in total registered with the SJN database for Bosnia and Hercegovina. Out of 132 attacks, 31 attacks and threats have been directed towards women individually, 47 towards men, 33 towards media outlets and organizations, while 21 attacks have been directed towards groups of journalists. Within group attacks, additional 10 attacks have been directed towards women, including actual attacks and threats against women journalists.

In 2021, there were 22 attacks out of which seven (7) were threats against women journalists – one was registered as a threat to journalist's

life and physical safety, while the remaining six were other threats (mostly verbal and online), including sexist comments, censorship and hate speech. There were eight (8) threats against men journalists (two actual attacks, three death threats and three other threats) and seven (7) threats against media outlets.

2021	Men journalists	Women Journalists	Group	Media outlet or organization
Actual attack	2	-	-	-
Death threat	3	1	-	-
Other threats	3	6	-	7

In 2022, there were 33 attacks on media outlets and journalists in total registered with the SJN database. Out of the 33 attacks, nine (9) attacks and threats were targeting women journalists – one was an actual attack (a car belonging to a journalist was set on fire), two were threats against life and safety, and six were other threats to journalists, including gender-based violence and hate speech. There were also nine (9) attacks/threats against men journalists, out of which one was an actual attack. Additionally, there were eight (8) threats against media outlets and seven (7) threats against groups of journalists (in one group attack, one woman journalist was registered).

2022	Men journalists	Women Journalists	Group	Media outlet or organization
Actual attack	1	1	-	-
Death threat	-	2	1	-
Other threats	8	6	6	8

In 2023 there were 48 attacks on journalists registered. Women journalists suffered 12 attacks individually, while four (4) more were attacked as part of a group, which makes a total number of 16 women journalists attacked in 2023. Out of these 16, four (4) were actual attacks, including three physical attacks. In the same year, 19 men were attacked and threatened to individually (three actual attacks, three threats to lives and safety of journalists and 13 other threats) and 12 more as part of a group. There were nine (9) attacks and threats against groups of journalists, including three actual (physical) attacks, one burglary and six (6) other threats. Finally, in 2023, there were 7 threats to media outlets, out of which one included major cyber-attack, while others were registered as other threats to journalists.

2023	Men journalists	Women Journalists	Group	Media outlet or organization
Actual attack	4	1	3	1
Death threat	3	1	-	-
Other threats	12	10	7	6

In 2024, there were 29 safety attacks on journalists reported and registered with the SJN database. Out of this number, there were three (3) individual attacks on women journalists, and three (3) more as part of groups, adding up to six (6) women

journalists attacked in total in 2024 in Bosnia and Herzegovina – five (5) registered as other threats to journalists, while one case was an actual attack on a woman journalist, consisting of stalking, harassing and car damage. Out of the 29 attacks in 2024, eleven (11) attacks were directed at men journalists, while one journalist was attacked three times. In this period, another man journalist was attacked as a part of a group. Out of this number, four (4) were threats to life and safety of journalists. In 2024, there were eleven (11) attacks on media outlets and organizations.

2024	Men journalists	Women Journalists	Group	Media outlet or organization
Actual attack	3	1	-	-
Death threat	2	-	-	-
Other threats	6	2	4	11

When these data are broken into years, they undoubtedly show that violence against journalists in BIH has increased in the period 2021 – 2023, both for men and women journalists. The number of reported individual attacks on female journalists relative to the total number of reported attacks has increased by almost 60% over a four-year period – from 17% in 2020 to 30% in 2023 – which is an alarming increase in such a short period of time. Both men and women most often report threats (online and verbal during press conferences), but men are more often physically attacked, while women receive more verbal and online threats which are, quite often, gender based. Fortunately, the number decreased in 2024, especially concerning women journalists.

— 5.2
EXAMPLES OF ATTACKS AGAINST
WOMEN JOURNALISTS

In addition to the “usual” attacks against women journalists, categorized as “other attacks”, which consist of verbal assaults and harassment mostly by politicians and corrupt businessmen, there have been several actual attacks and death threats against women journalists in the period 2021-2024 analyzed for the purposes of this report. The most radical cases were when women journalists received death threats and/or were physically attacked. One woman journalist was physically attacked as part of a group of journalists supporting LGBT activists in Banja Luka. She was beaten, while her male colleague had a bottle smashed up on his head. Two other women journalists and activists were also attacked on this occasion.

Several women journalists received death threats via social networks. One woman journalist, after posting a photo with migrants, received a message from a person who said that he would happily “cut heads” not only of migrants, but also of those who welcome them and take care of them. Another woman journalist, after publishing an article on amendments to one of the laws in BIH, received a threat saying that if the amendments are passed, she will be “looking into a pit”. Two

women journalists had their cars set on fire, while one woman journalist's apartment had been broken into and her laptop was taken. Also, there is a case of a woman journalist who worked for a local TV station and her editor tried to censor her on the ground of ethnic and political intolerance. After she published an article on the media's website, the editor asked her to delete it because she used the word "genocide". Eventually, that word was replaced by "suffering", however, despite this, her article was deleted from the media's website and social networks accounts. After the case was published in the media, the woman journalist faced numerous threats and verbal attacks. Three months later, due to the pressure and unsafety that she felt, she left the media outlet and journalism as a profession.

VI

Experiences and Perspectives of Women Journalists

All findings, gathered both through focus groups and in-depth interviews, have been divided into three categories: (i) safety and risks, (ii) violence and gender-based discrimination against women journalists and (iii) mechanisms for protection, needs and support. This section will provide a summary and analysis of the input provided by the participants in focus group discussions and interviews.

— 6.1 SAFETY AND RISKS

The questions asked during this session served to find out more about the participants' understanding of safety and risks that they were encountering in their work daily. The answers differed from one focus group to another, depending on women journalists' experience, however, they all agreed that the level of safety depends on the situation that they find themselves in. One woman journalist said "Safety is when you feel good while doing your job, and we do not feel good here".⁷⁸ While most of the women journalists that participated in focus groups believe that safety means having support of their media outlet, some of them also stated that for them safety varies depending on whether they are in the newsroom or out in the field (and on the kind of field). In the context of journalism, according to them, safety is very questionable, because they do not think about it unless something happens.

In general, the perception of women journalists that participated in focus groups is that women journalists are more exposed to risks than their male colleagues and that they (women journalists) are aware of that. Speaking from her own experience, one journalist said that whenever she works with a male colleague, everyone usually speaks to him, not to her, but if the people they interview attack, they attack her. Another woman journalist said that her male colleagues are always treated better; she only gets a dose of respect when she mentions which media outlet she works for. One of the editors-in-chief, a woman journalist herself, said that there is a belief that women are weaker, more sensitive and

78 Focus group with women journalists, organized and conducted by BHJA on February 20, 2025.

more vulnerable, and that as journalists they do not understand the topic and do not have the experience – therefore, they are easier to manipulate. However, men journalists are also exposed to different risks and receive threats and attacks, but the vocabulary used in verbal threats and attacks is different.

All participants, both women journalists and editors-in-chief, agree that additional factors, such as their age, geographical position, ethnicity, marital status, sexual orientation and similar can influence the level of safety of women journalists. One participant shared her experience of how a journalist can be offended when writing or reporting on gender related topics, such as LGBT rights. For example, when she was writing a story on LGBT Pride March and while she was waving the LGBT flag for a photo shoot, some people on the street verbally insulted her thinking that she was a member of the LGBT community. Also, women journalists agreed that the risks for women journalists increase if they are working in a smaller town and with their age, especially if they are not keeping up with the development of digital technology. Moreover, the patriarchal tradition is even stronger in smaller communities and people sometimes avoid talking to women journalists. However, one woman journalist said that for a long time she did not think of the gender aspect of her work, she did not perceive herself or her colleagues (she works for a completely female newsroom) as women but as journalists – she thought that the problems were related to work, not gender. But then she realized that most of the comments/verbal threats that they received would not have been addressed to men journalists. Most of the participants said that they most often do not know how to react in such situations – when someone offends them during work or when they receive sexist comments. In such situations, they usually just turn around and leave, and only later realize that they should have reacted differently and said something. They say that when they discuss this in different trainings and workshops, they know exactly what they were supposed to say in such a situation, but in practice they freeze. One of the participants said that once when she was trying to take a statement from a politician and he started making sexist comments on her looks, she just turned around and left, without the statement.

— 6.2 VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

This section of focus group discussions intended to analyze more closely the actual forms of attacks and threats that journalists, both women and men, are most often exposed to, but also, if the form of violence differs for women journalists. Additionally, it explored whether the forms of violence depend on topics that journalists are researching, whether women journalists face gender-based violence, how it affects them and what kind of persons/groups they feel most threatened by.

The majority of women journalists and editors-in-chief that participated in focus groups agreed that the most common forms of violence are verbal and online threats (threats to life and safety, including hate speech), but some of them also experienced physical pushing and even hitting. These forms of violence happen to both women journalists and their male colleagues; however, they agreed that their male colleagues always get better treatment and more respect than they do. Editors-in-chief insisted that the most common threats and attacks in the RS happen while journalists are conducting field work, while those in FBiH emphasized that journalists are mostly attacked online.⁷⁹

Persons and groups of persons that they feel most threatened by are politicians, men/women in positions of power, and persons engaged in criminal conduct/corruption who feel threatened or disturbed by their investigative journalism. Very often politicians make verbal threats against journalists in press conferences or when giving statements. When it comes to women journalists, men politicians make sexist comments on their looks and sometimes invite them “to their office to further discuss the issue” or “to have drinks together”, while women in positions of power often talk to them in a patronizing manner. Also, one of the most frequent sources of online threats are political parties’ bots. Some of the women journalists that participated in focus groups, especially those who belong to an ethnic minority in the places they work, said that they receive a significant number of hate speech messages directly into their inboxes. Most of them agree, however, that women journalists are usually verbally attacked on social networks by whoever feels threatened by their articles. In most cases, these online attacks contain a gender-based violence aspect as well and, in one way or another, refer to the fact that they are targeting not only a journalist, but a woman journalist. They believe that the fact they are women protects them (in most cases) from physical attacks, but it encourages others to make sexist comments on their looks, the way they dress, to question if they are mothers, wives or similar.

When asked about whether forms of violence differ in the context of topics they choose to investigate, most participants said that this does not play a significant role because they were attacked and threatened when working both on soft and hard topics. Some of the topics proved to cause more attacks than others (for example, for one participant these topics were LGBT and migrants), while sometimes a topic that seems quite banal causes a violent reaction. One of the participants said that it does not matter which topic she covers and whether it is sensitive or not – only because she is a woman, she will always receive threats and comments. However, they all agreed that they would never use self-censorship to protect themselves. The only reason why they would choose not to publish something is lack of evidence to prove a story. If they cannot prove something, they will not publish it. They insisted

79 Focus group with editors-in-chief, organized and conducted by BHJA on April 10, 2025.

on responsibility towards their job as one of the most important principles of their profession.

Furthermore, a significant number of sexual harassment incidents against women journalists has been registered, but gender-based violence is a topic that women journalists do not talk about voluntarily. The problem is also the lack of support from editors and media owners, as well as the lack of their interest to improve the safety of women journalists. Women journalists in BIH need ongoing psychosocial support and encouragement to begin talking about problems, pressures and threats, and start reporting incidents to relevant institutions.⁸⁰ According to the interview held at the BIH GEA, women do not report violence because they do not obtain any response or support from the institutions.⁸¹ The state focuses on the prosecution of the perpetrator, not on prevention of violence. According to the Istanbul Convention, every act of gender-based violence is a criminal offence, not a misdemeanor, but this should be harmonized through the Law on Prevention of Violence and the Criminal Code. The Law on Gender Equality does not contain penal provisions, it only states that violence is forbidden. The Criminal Code does not mention gender-based violence or sexual harassment, only rape and serious physical injuries.

— 6.3 MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTION, NEEDS AND SUPPORT

This final section of the focus group discussions referred to the extent to which women journalists are aware of protection and support mechanisms available to them and whether they use them. What kind of measures are available? In addition, this section explored whether they report violence when it occurs, and if not, why.

The focus group with less experienced women journalists showed that they are all extremely aware of the protection mechanisms available to them. They attended numerous trainings and workshops on this topic, and they unanimously stated that they know the form they are supposed to fill in when an incident occurs and exactly who to call and where to report the violence. They are aware of the support provided by BHJA and the protocol that the Association promotes, and of the newly introduced focal points in prosecutors' offices and police agencies. However, in most cases, they decide not to report the violence. One of the main reasons is that they do not want to feel like victims or be perceived like victims, they rather want to be seen as strong women who can rise above the situation. They say they want to overcome it and get their job done – to make news, instead of being news. They are also always more

80 [Free Press Unlimited: How to improve the safety of female journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), conclusions from focus groups with women journalists held in Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka, BHJA, March 2023, accessed on May 16, 2025.

81 The meeting was held on December 19, 2024, with Mrs. Branislava Crnčević Čulić, Senior Expert Advisor; Mrs. Kika Babić Svetlin, Expert Advisor and Mr. Joško Mandić, Expert Advisor.

ready to fight discrimination against others than discrimination against themselves.

Another reason for not reporting the incidents is the time-consuming process of giving statements to police officers and, in the case of court proceedings, the fact that they usually feel inferior to judges, the opponent's attorney and the perpetrator. Furthermore, they say that they do not trust the system and that prosecutors' offices have done so little in the past to prosecute the cases they report. One of the participants said that, from their cases, she realized that prosecutors' offices and police agencies do not understand the media, and that is something that needs to be worked on. Additionally, if journalists are supposed to travel across the country to report an incident, they very often decide not to, to save time and do their job. Therefore, they increased their tolerance threshold and found ways of fighting this internally, within newsrooms. By doing so, they minimize the situation, even if it entails gender-based violence. One woman journalist said that her (all-women) newsroom, when violence occurs, writes a letter to the institution/company or superiors of the perpetrator and explain what had happened, asking to discuss it and to make sure that no one in that company treats journalists that way.

Regarding safety and incident reporting protocols in newsrooms, most of the journalists and editors stated that they do not have official protocols, but only internal arrangements on how to act in case of an incident. Only one media outlet, whose director participated in the focus group, stated that they have developed a very detailed and comprehensive Gender Equality Code that prescribes how to act in case of any form of discrimination against their employees, in the newsroom or beyond.⁸²

When sending a team to a dangerous field assignment, one journalist said that her newsroom develops safety protocols consisting of regular location updates, providing everyone in the newsroom with information on the route, accommodation and every detail needed in case they would have to search for them. When they received death threats in the newsroom, they switched to working remotely, changing their daily routes, having a focal point in the team that everyone should contact in case of emergency, and similar. One of the editors explained that, when sending a team to the field under a potential risk, they conduct safety measures to protect their journalists. On several occasions, the media outlet even contacted the police and asked for additional protection, especially when criminals were involved in the investigation. During the focus group with women journalists, a journalist from this media outlet stated that she feels safe because she is protected by her media outlet. In case of an incident, the media outlet that she works for hires a lawyer and takes care of everything – she is completely protected and does not have to do anything regarding the process. Nevertheless, this is true only for larger media outlets that can afford to engage a lawyer for each incident.

82 Focus group with editors-in-chief organized and conducted by BHJA on April 10, 2025.

Still, all participants agree that newsroom support is most important in overcoming threats and violence. For them, more important than having a protocol is having a safety net that they can rely on. One of the editors-in-chief insisted that having support from one's own media outlet is most important and if a journalist does not have that, he/she should not work there. Unfortunately, colleagues from the newsroom are not always as supportive as they should be and it happens quite frequently that journalists laugh when their colleagues are facing difficult situations, threats or verbal harassments. They say that most of their colleagues do not comprehend that women journalists face an increased level of unsafety and are exposed to different forms of gender-based violence, therefore, they very often lack solidarity and support in newsrooms. Most of the media outlets do not have internal procedures or mechanisms in the workplace for protection from gender-based discrimination or sexual harassment. Also, there is no solidarity among media outlets, unless something extremely difficult happens – something that the participants agreed should be built gradually to improve the support system and protection mechanisms that journalists can rely to. One woman journalist suggested that when a politician is threatening a journalist at a press conference, all other journalists should leave –that could serve as a mechanism they build for themselves and show politicians how journalists should not be treated.

The last part of this focus group explored the ways in which support measures and services could be improved. All participants noted that BHJA's FMHL is the most efficient first step for reporting the incidents. Some participants also had experience with BHJA hiring a lawyer and taking their case to court. One woman journalist interviewed for this report shared that after five years she won a court case that can be categorized as SLAPP. The case was supported by BHJA, through the FMHL and its free legal aid. Another participant of the focus group said that for a long time she felt alone in court cases initiated against her and was not aware of available support mechanisms. When she and her newsroom colleagues were sued, it meant a great deal that BHJA reached out and offered their support. There are other organizations that provide psychological support to victims of violence and women journalists can turn to them for help. Nonetheless, they say that not all journalists are aware of these support mechanisms, and that should be changed and improved. Some participants mentioned that campaigns on social networks could be used to raise awareness on support mechanisms and to reach younger colleagues. The younger generation of journalists is not interested in learning about prevention and protection from violence, and they do not think about it unless it happens. A participant noted that the same group of women journalists consistently attends trainings and workshops on violence against women journalists and suggested that the pool of participants should be expanded.

The ideas to improve the situation of journalists in BiH discussed in this part of the focus group included granting journalists the status of a person performing work in the public interest, forming a trade union and an ombudsman office for journalists'

rights. More importantly, all participants concluded that they should work on strengthening and empowering themselves to be able to report each incident and, by doing so, to set an example to other women journalists. A focus group participant suggested that women journalists should talk more about the violence they experience, as this would empower their colleagues to go public and report incidents. She shared that, thanks to the BHJA's focus group, she now regrets not reporting past incidents. Having heard her colleagues' stories, she feels more empowered to report any future incidents.

Furthermore, several experts that were interviewed for the purposes of this report believe that BiH does not have sufficient capacities to implement the existing laws.⁸³ Political pressures and brutal threats against women journalists are continuing, while victims are very often exposed to double victimization: during the incident and during the investigation. Secondary victimization occurs when police and prosecuting institutions fail to recognize elements of gender-based violence and consider threats an acceptable part of journalist vocation, tradition, as well as of voluntary participation by women journalists in public communication space, including social networks. The problem is also the lack of support by editors and owners of media outlets in improving the safety of women journalists in newsrooms. Women journalists need continuous psychological and social support and encouragement to begin talking about problems, pressures and threats, as well as to report cases to relevant institutions.⁸⁴

83 Meetings held at the BiH GEA and the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH.

84 [BiH Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2023](#), BHJA, 2024, pp. 49.

VII

Conclusions

Women journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are increasingly exposed to gender-based violence and safety threats. Although many of the legal instruments necessary to ensure gender equality and protection against discrimination and violence are in place, the institutions fail to manage to protect women journalists from violence. One of the main reasons for this is the insufficient harmonization of BIH legislation with international instruments. The journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not protected or recognized by law. Women are protected only against domestic violence. There is no institutional mechanism that could protect women journalists from violence. When violence happens and they report it, the judiciary is too slow, and it takes approximately 2.5 years to process the case.

According to the qualitative data analysis, the conclusions of this report can be divided into three categories, as follows:

—7.1

SAFETY AND RISKS

Women journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina perceive safety depending on a situation that they find themselves in and generally do not think about it unless an incident happens. Furthermore, the concept of safety varies for them depending on whether they are working in the field or in the newsroom. Although they believe that their male colleagues are also facing job-related risks, women journalists are convinced that they are more exposed to safety risks than men journalists just because they are women. Unlike men journalists, they are exposed to sexist comments, subjected to hate speech, are not taken seriously enough and, especially in smaller communities, people avoid talking to them because of the lack of respect. They also agree that safety risks that they are usually exposed to increase with their geographic location, ethnicity, age, family/marital status, sexual orientation, etc.

Patriarchal patterns that are quite prevalent, especially in smaller communities in BIH, also have a significant role and affect them when taking statements, attending press conferences and investigating for their stories. For example, one woman journalist who participated in the

focus group said that when she goes to the field with a male colleague, people prefer talking to him, not to her; another said that when she is investigating for a story, people do not take her seriously and do not perceive her as a journalist. Most of them agree that people avoid talking to them when they are working on a story.

—7.2 VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

Women journalists who participated in focus groups conducted for this report agree that most common forms of violence they are exposed to are verbal and online threats (threats to life and safety, including gender-related hate speech). However, some of them have also experienced destruction of their property, physical pushing and even hitting. Similar forms of violence and threats happen to men journalists in BiH, although they experience more threats to life and more physical violence.

Women journalists feel mostly threatened and attacked by politicians/men in positions of power who make sexist comments during press conferences and statements taking. In addition, persons involved in corruption and criminal conduct who feel disturbed or threatened by journalists often demonstrate violence against journalists. Many of the violent acts and threats against women journalists contain elements of gender-based violence, including threats to harm their children and insults with sexual connotations.

Types of violence against women journalists generally do not depend on the topic that they are working on – violence is caused by the simple fact that they are women and are investigating. It happens equally when they are working on soft or hard topics. However, it increases with more sensitive topics, such as the LGBT community or migrants. Nevertheless, women journalists say that they never censor themselves to avoid violent reactions to their stories. The only reason they would not publish a story is a lack of proof.

—7.3 MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTION, NEEDS AND SUPPORT

Women journalists who participated in focus groups understand the mechanisms for protection, needs and support available to them in BiH. Most of them attended numerous trainings and workshops on this topic. However, they usually do not use these mechanisms when a violent incident happens to them. The primary reason is because they do not want to feel like victims or be perceived like victims, which leads to normalization of violence and impunity of perpetrators. They want to be seen as strong women who can rise above the situation. Another reason is that they do not want to “lose time” reporting the incident and going through the entire legal process. They describe it

as humiliating and time-consuming, with no guarantee of a favorable outcome. Therefore, they decide not to report and to do their job instead.

Nevertheless, they are realizing their silence prevents institutional change and that they should report violence for their own benefit and to encourage colleagues to do the same. Though informed themselves, participants perceive that most women journalists in BIH are unaware of the existing protection and support mechanisms. Most media outlets in BIH lack internal protocols for violent incidents. Women journalists report that support from their media outlets is more important than various mechanisms.

VIII Recommendations

The recommendations resulting from this report are divided into the same categories as the conclusions and are categorized under two subsections, as follows:

— 8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA OUTLETS AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS:

SAFETY AND RISKS

- Media organizations and networks should develop social media campaigns to raise awareness among women journalists about the safety risks they are exposed to, and about how to react and respond when incidents occur.
- Media outlets, as employers, should take into account the specific safety risks faced by women journalists and provide training in self-protection.
- Media outlets should develop guidelines for reporting from unsafe places with increased risks.

VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

- Media outlets and organizations should advocate for better legal regulation of online violence to reduce attacks against journalists.
- Media outlets should develop gender-based policies that promote equality and establish mechanisms against gender-based violence and discrimination within newsrooms.

MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTION NEEDS AND SUPPORT

- Media organizations should advocate for better harmonization of local legislation with international mechanisms.
- Media organizations should advocate for legal amendments that would grant journalists the status of persons performing work in the public interest, thereby protecting them by law.
- Media outlets, as employers, should develop clear safety protocols for reporting of and responding to gender-based violence.
- Journalists should work on establishing a trade union to help them advocate for their rights.
- Media outlets and organizations should develop social media campaigns on support and protection mechanisms for women journalists, targeting especially younger women journalists.
- Media outlets and journalists should foster solidarity between media outlets to make them stronger in fighting violence.
- Media organizations should conduct joint capacity building activities with institutions to build mutual understanding and enhance institutional support and safety protection of the media.
- Media organizations should develop educational modules on gender equality in the media and on gender-based violence – how to recognize it and how to respond – and establish a rapid response mechanism to gender-based violence both online and offline, in newsrooms and in the field.

— 8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

SAFETY AND RISKS

- Institutions should provide training and additionally raise awareness among their employees on protection from GBV. These trainings should also include women journalists who were victims of gender-based violence, regardless of whether they received adequate institutional support.

VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

- Given that most common threats against women journalists occur online, institutions should regulate

online violence through relevant legislation and ensure harmonization at all levels.

- Institutions should enhance their knowledge, internal capacities and response mechanisms for more effective handling of online gender-based violence cases. This could include additional training for designated focal points in police agencies and prosecutors' offices.

MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTION NEEDS AND SUPPORT

- Institutions should strengthen the implementation of legislation on protection from GBV.
- Institutions should further harmonize national legislation with international instruments on GBV protection (notably the Istanbul Convention) to increase protection and the support system for victims of gender-based violence.
- Institutions should amend criminal legislation to define the status of journalists and thereby ensure legal protection that would prevent their exposure to violence.

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Author
Lajla Zaimović Kurtović

Editor
Borka Rudić

Reviewer
Neda Čalovska-Dimovska

Proofreader
Aida Spahić

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Andrija Vukelić

Design
comma.rs



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