Acknowledgments

This report was created by the International Women’s Media Foundation for the Coalition Against Online Violence, May 2023.

Author:
Claudia Gonzalez

Design by:
Angie Caballero

This report was made possible by the Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Innovation Fund Winning Initiative “ScrollSafe”.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 license.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Introduction</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Rise in Online Violence and Impact on Women Journalists</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Coalition Against Online Violence (CAOV)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Change for the CAOV</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and Structure of the CAOV</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of the Online Violence Response Hub</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Organization of the Report</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Building an Ecosystem of Support to Combat Online Violence</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Assistance: Empowering Individuals Affected by Online Violence</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Research and Knowledge Exchange</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Toward Media Organizations</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Toward Platforms</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Regulatory Policies: Safeguarding Against Online Violence</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. Recommendations for Digital Safety Support</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for journalists</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for media organizations</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for platforms</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for platform users and the general public</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for civil society organizations and activists</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. End Notes</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

**The** Mapping Report, released by the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF), provides an overview of the Coalition Against Online Violence (CAOV) and its member organizations. The report offers valuable insights on solutions for women journalists facing online abuse, harassment, and other forms of digital attack, collected through a series of interviews and email exchanges with CAOV members in May 2023. The report covers a wide range of digital safety strategies, including prevention, response, and support measures. It also highlights how the collective efforts of the CAOV strengthen the ecosystem of support for journalists and other individuals facing online violence.

**Part I** of the Mapping Report introduces the CAOV, a collective of more than 70 news outlets; tech companies; and research, advocacy, and policy organizations. This section focuses on the inception of CAOV, which was established to tackle online gender-based violence, and its theory of change, which was developed by members in 2022. It highlights the Online Violence Response Hub, an extensive resource center created by the CAOV to assist journalists in accessing digital safety resources and tools.

**Part II** of the Mapping Report is structured around the five working groups within the CAOV: assistance, research and knowledge sharing; newsrooms advocacy; platforms advocacy; and, legal/regulations advocacy. Each section of the report offers an overview of the key issue, outlines the theory of change, and provides examples of practical strategies implemented by the CAOV member organizations to promote digital safety. Moreover, the report not only highlights the services and resources offered by individual organizations or companies, but it also emphasizes the collaborative efforts that have emerged as a result of the CAOV.

**Part III** of the Mapping Report provides an overview of recommendations for journalists, media organizations, platforms, platform users, and activists based on the input from CAOV member organizations.
Part I

Introduction
The rise of online violence poses a significant threat to freedom of the press, demanding urgent attention from governments, tech platforms, news media employers, and civil society organizations. Of particular concern is the disproportionate impact on women, with the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse reporting that 85 percent of women and girls have encountered some form of online abuse.¹

This issue extends beyond borders: A survey conducted by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) found that, globally, nearly 3 in 4 women journalists have experienced online violence.²

Additionally, 20 percent of the women surveyed reported offline abuse for attacks that originated online and spilled into their physical lives.³
Overview of the Coalition Against Online Violence (CAOV)

The Coalition Against Online Violence (“Coalition”) was established in July 2020 and has grown into a global network of more than 70 nonprofit organizations, news outlets, research institutes, and tech companies. While a vast majority of the Coalition supports journalists, fact-checkers, and other media professionals, Coalition members also provide assistance to activists, artists, politicians, researchers, human rights defenders, and other at-risk populations.

Together, Coalition members aim to provide effective solutions for women journalists and others facing online abuse, harassment, and digital attacks. Founded by the IWMF, the Coalition not only focuses on finding solutions for online violence but also provides collective support for journalists, bolsters digital security, and empowers the news media as a whole to ensure the safety of journalists online.

The Coalition was established to:

» Increase and improve coordination between organizations addressing online abuse across different sectors.

» Amplify – not duplicate – the efforts of peer organizations.

» Respond promptly to online attacks.

» Create crucial resources and an easily accessible online hub to provide comprehensive support for individuals facing online abuse.

Support for the CAOV is provided by Craig Newmark Philanthropies, the Emerson Collective, the Knight Foundation, and the Luminate Group.
In December 2022, the CAOV developed its theory of change through facilitated conversations with network members, led by a monitoring and evaluation expert. The framework outlines the steps the Coalition plans to take to achieve its desired impact.

Civil society organizations have limited capacity and struggle to collaborate effectively.

Enhance collaboration and joint provision of assistance for journalists.

Coalition members share research and knowledge to jointly provide effective assistance for journalists.

Coalition members improve their program effectiveness.

Section II of the Mapping Report provides a more detailed look at the theory of change.
Leadership and Structure of the CAOV

The Coalition operates under the guidance of an elected advisory committee, with each member responsible for one of the five working groups:

» Assistance
» Research and Knowledge Sharing
» Newsrooms Advocacy
» Platforms Advocacy
» Legal/Regulations Advocacy

The advisory committee reflects the diverse cultural, cross-disciplinary, and geographic representation within the CAOV network. Members contribute valuable expertise and perspectives and play a crucial role in the leadership structure. Through members’ active engagement, the advisory committee ensures effective governance of the CAOV and works collaboratively toward the achievement of shared objectives.
Introduction of the Online Violence Response Hub

In July 2021, the CAOV launched the Online Violence Response Hub (“Hub”), a comprehensive resource center designed to assist journalists and allies in accessing support.

The Hub consolidates more than 130 resources from Coalition members, focusing on various critical areas for journalists and newsrooms, such as:

» Digital security training
» Documentation and reporting of abuse
» Emergency assistance
» Newsrooms protocols
» Strategies for responding to abuse
» Legal support
Purpose and Organization of the Report

The Mapping Report provides an overview of the digital safety support and resources offered by CAOV member organizations. It examines how the collective efforts of the Coalition are strengthening support for journalists and other individuals facing online violence.

The report presents key findings on effective strategies, as well as identified needs and gaps. To gather this information, the IWMF conducted interviews with 45 Coalition members, exploring their activities related to online violence, observable gaps in the ecosystem of support, their experience as Coalition members, and expectations for future engagement. Furthermore, the IWMF conducted a review of existing resources compiled through the Coalition.

The report is structured according to the domains of the working groups: assistance, research and knowledge sharing, newsroom advocacy, platforms advocacy, and legal/regulations advocacy.

The next section focuses on presenting key findings related to successful strategies and best practices for digital safety support, as well as identified needs, gaps, and challenges.

Section III offers practical recommendations to enhance digital safety support.
Part II
Building an Ecosystem of Support to Combat Online Violence
Direct Assistance: Empowering Individuals Affected by Online Violence

Problem Statement

Journalists operate in a system that exposes them to risks and hampers their ability to protect themselves. Hostility toward the media and online harassment disproportionately affect people already marginalized in journalism and society. Rapid technological change can make it difficult for journalists to stay up to date on best practices. During incidents, journalists facing online violence may feel isolated and stigmatized as perpetrators use a variety of methods to attempt to silence them. Journalists are often hesitant to ask for support from their newsrooms as it may incur victim blaming, and freelancers, in particular, do not have institutional support.

Journalists are not a monolith, and some may perpetuate hate. After incidents, journalists often lack the necessary support and tools to minimize harm, including access to adequate health insurance and legal aid.
Theory of Change for Direct Assistance

01 Empower journalists to protect themselves and enhance their support systems.

02 Journalists are better able to protect themselves and have access to improved support.

03 Journalists adopt improved protection tools for prevention and response.

04 Journalists are less likely to face catastrophic harm when attacked online.
Strategies for Digital Safety Support

The Coalition plays a vital role in enhancing coordination among its member organizations, enabling the network to strengthen the ecosystem of support for journalists worldwide.

The Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN) acts as a bridge between the news media and the Syrian women’s movement, with a focus on improving the representation of women in the media. In an interview with the IWMF about the CAOV, Hayma Alyousfi, program manager for SFJN, said,

“It is beneficial to have access to existing resources and a list of organizations for referrals that provide individual support and training.”

Additionally, several CAOV member organizations are affiliated with other networks, such as the Journalists in Distress (JiD) Network, the Legal Network for Journalists at Risk (LNJAR), and the Regional Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders in MENA, expanding the Coalition’s reach.

The JiD consists of media freedom organizations that provide direct assistance to journalists and members of the media facing risks due to their work, while LNJAR offers critical legal support to journalists and independent media outlets worldwide, ensuring their continued reporting on issues of significant public interest.
Judy Taing, global head of gender and sexuality for Article 19, on the global and local scale of online violence:

“Online violence is everywhere but also localized... It helps to stay informed about incidents happening around the world, so we can coordinate responses to these attacks.”
Financial Assistance and Safety Consultations

» The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) provides emergency assistance and safety advice to journalists at risk.⁴

» Derechos Digitales is a Latin American organization that manages a Rapid Response Fund for the Protection of Digital Rights in the region.³

They are empowering Latin American activists, social movements, and civil society organizations with financial assistance, administrative support, communication tools, and technical resources to foster a free and open digital ecosystem in the region.

» Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP) provides support to human rights defenders who face digital threats and work toward strengthening local rapid response networks. DDP offers various funds aimed at enhancing digital security capacities, including the Incident Emergency Fund. This fund is specially designed to cover the expenses associated with activities mitigating the effects of digital threats or attacks.⁶

» Free Press Unlimited (FPU) provides emergency assistance, legal support, and safety advice through their emergency response fund.⁷

» International Media Support’s (IMS) Safety Fund provides immediate support for journalists who are victimized as a direct result of their journalistic work.⁸

» The IWMF’s Emergency Fund offers financial assistance to women and nonbinary journalists. This includes support for psychological and medical care, temporary relocation assistance during crises, and legal aid to address risks of imprisonment, censorship, and other relevant threats stemming from their work.⁹

The IWMF also provides one-on-one physical and digital safety consultations for journalists.

» The Marie Colvin Journalists’ Network (MCJN) is an online community specifically for Arabic-speaking women journalists based in the Middle East and Africa.¹⁰

MCJN provides holistic support to its members, including emergency financial assistance and a wide range of resources focused on addressing issues like online harassment. MCJN welcomes referrals from CAOV members.

» Reporters Without Borders’ (RSF) Assistance Desk offers financial and administrative support to professional journalists and citizen-journalists who have faced reprisals as a result of their reporting.¹¹

» The Rory Peck Trust offers a Crisis Fund and a Therapy Fund to help freelancers get back on their feet and continue their crucial work.¹²
Peer Support

FPU successfully piloted peer-to-peer support networks for women journalists in Kenya and the Balkans.

Luchadoras is a Mexican feminist collective that inhabits digital and physical public spaces. It works to drive processes of personal and collective political transformation through the creation and dissemination of stories, the use of technology, and the establishment of meeting spaces that reclaim the knowledge, strength, and power of women.  

Susan McGregor, an associate research scholar at Columbia University’s Data Science Institute, is researching the efficacy of a pilot peer-support program as a harm reduction strategy to assist individuals, particularly journalists, who are facing online violence.
Case Study:

“Pegasus attacks in El Salvador: spyware used to target journalists and activists”

According to analysis by Access Now’s Digital Security Hotline and other human rights organizations, “NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware was used to infect the devices of 35 Salvadoran journalists and activists between July 2020 and November 2021.”

This information was “initially flagged by El Faro and GatoEncerrado, and confirmed through a joint investigation by Access Now, Front Line Defenders, The Citizen Lab, Amnesty International, Fundacion Acceso, and SocialTIC.”

14
Direct Access to Information and Assistance

**Access Now** provides preventative and reactive assistance on digital security incidents for at-risk human rights defenders. Their Digital Security Helpline provides emergency digital security support and preventative assistance to civil society. Their 24/7 services are available with support in nine languages: English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, Arabic, and Italian.\(^{15}\)

The **Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI)** actively fights against online abuses that undermine civil rights and civil liberties. Through their toll-free CCRI Image Abuse Helpline, the organization offers information, support, referrals, and non-legal advice for victims of nonconsensual pornography (“revenge porn”), recorded sexual assault, and sextortion in the United States.\(^{16}\)

**Digital Rights Foundation** defends online freedom of expression and the right to privacy for women, minorities, and dissidents. They established the first dedicated, toll-free helpline for victims of online violence in Pakistan.\(^{17}\)

The **Rory Peck Trust’s** Risk and Safety Helpdesk is a pilot project providing freelance journalists with personalized security advice from industry-leading security experts. This service covers physical, digital, psychological, and legal risks for freelancers with confirmed reporting assignments in hostile environments.\(^{18}\)

**Vita Activa** is a helpline that supports women, LGBTQI+ individuals, journalists, and activists who face stress, trauma, crisis, burnout, and gender-based violence.\(^ {19}\) They provide one-to-one peer support and psychological and digital first aid via digital messaging apps. Additionally, they host online community support groups that offer information, advice, training, and solidarity in response to specific crises in different countries.
“The Digital Rights Foundation has been working to tackle online abuse for the past 11 years now. Six years ago, we established a Cyber Harassment Helpline to cater to online violence and have received about 14,376 cases...

The helpline is a toll-free number on which callers can get in touch and get legal advice, digital security assistance, and psychosocial support. The helpline also connects callers to social media companies in case of imminent threat... Women have been the largest group to report instances of online harassment, and overall, they make up 59 percent of the individuals supported by the hotline.”

– Seerat Khan, Program Manager, Digital Rights Foundation
» Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) started the “I Will Not Stay Silent” project to address various forms of power abuse like fraud, corruption, online harassment, and hate speech. The project is the first of its kind in the Arab region and includes online awareness activities, specialized training programs, and access to direct psychosocial and digital support.20

» The Games and Online Harassment Hotline published an updated version of their Games Hotline Digital Safety Guide with support from the CAOV.21 The guide covers digital hygiene and security in light of anticipated or existing threats and is tailored to women, people of color, Black, indigenous, and trans people, and anyone else whose existing oppressions are made worse by digital violence. After three years of providing critical resources and assistance, the hotline shut down in September 2023, but the guide is still available online.

» The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, in collaboration with the Marquette University Diederich College of Communication, offers 14 undergraduate journalism safety modules to help educators create a culture that promotes safety for all journalism and communication students.22

» The International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) consists of a network of more than 400 members in 55 countries. IAWRT conducts online and in-person webinars and trainings around the world, which address digital safety, digital resilience, and tactics for navigating safely online.

» The IWMF, PEN America, and the Online News Association joined forces to create a series called Digital Safety Snacks.23 It consists of eight step-by-step videos to help journalists defend themselves against online abuse.

» CPJ offers the Digital Safety Kit as a comprehensive resource designed to assist journalists in protecting their online data, bolstering device security, utilizing encrypted communications, and more.24 Additionally, CPJ has created a series of resources specifically aimed at helping journalists prepare for and manage online harassment or abuse.25

» Consumer Reports Security Planner is a free, easy-to-use guide to enhance digital safety. It provides personalized recommendations and expert advice on topics such as keeping social media accounts from being hacked, reducing intrusive tracking by websites, and locking down devices ranging from smartphones to home security cameras.26
» DDP created Tech Care to help smaller or grassroots organizations set up teams to respond to the digital safety needs of the people they work with.27

» OnlineSOS, with the support of the CAOV, developed a resource for mental health professionals. It aims to inform them about online harassment, the relatively unique challenges journalists face, and real-world examples of how trauma symptoms can be exhibited within this specific population.28 Mental health professionals can utilize this resource like a clinician tip sheet.

» PEN America’s Online Harassment Field Manual provides practical strategies for defending oneself and others against online abuse. This manual was created in collaboration with and for individuals who are disproportionately impacted by online abuse, including writers, journalists, artists, and activists who identify as women, BIPOC, and/or LGBTQIA+. It is available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Swahili.29 PEN America has also provided 50+ training sessions in their Online Abuse Defense Training Program for media organizations, publishers, universities, and professional associations across the world.

» The Rory Peck Trust’s Training Fund makes Hostile Environment and First Aid Training (HEFAT) courses affordable and more accessible to freelance journalists.30

» SFJN provides Arabic-language training and toolkits for journalists and human rights defenders on gender sensitive media coverage, reporting on gender-based violence, and interviewing survivors.31 They also focus on self-care and mental well-being for women journalists and human rights defenders.

» TrollBusters, a project of the Media Innovation Collaboratory, provides just-in-time training to newsrooms, media professionals, and journalism students operating in digital spaces around the globe.32

» Since 2020, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) has conducted dozens of trainings focused on preparing for and responding to online harassment, benefiting more than 580 journalists in Africa and Southeast Asia. They also led a “training of the trainers” for 24 women from 12 countries to promote digital safety workshops.
Legal Support

The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) engages in legal advocacy by actively opposing publication bans, production orders, and gag orders. They help protect confidential sources and work to get charges against journalists dropped.33

Media Defence supports journalists and news outlets when they are confronted with legal action as a result of their reporting. They can provide funding for legal defense and can help connect those in need to a lawyer.34

Task Force Butler is an organization of veterans that aims to eradicate the rising threat of extremists in the U.S. by imposing legal, social, and economic costs on extremists and others driven by hate. This prevents them from using their time and resources to harm individuals and communities. Task Force Butler frequently partners with small newsrooms, supporting reporting on extremism, and proactively sharing verified data and research with journalists. They have also trained journalists on open-source intelligence techniques, in addition to working in hostile environments.
Since July 2020, the Coalition has issued 16 statements of support for women journalists experiencing online attacks. In January 2022, the Romanian investigative journalist Emilia Sercan was targeted by numerous well-orchestrated smear campaigns after she reported on a case of plagiarism by the Romanian Prime Minister. As a result of the abuse, CAOV released a statement of support for Sercan in April 2022, and a year later, Sercan spoke to the CAOV about how that helped her through this experience:

“These statements [of support] were sent to the Romanian Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the General Prosecutor, and the chief of Romanian police. They just show that I’m not alone, that I am supported by international organizations.”
Rana Ayyub is an acclaimed Indian journalist and opinion columnist for The Washington Post, known for her investigations into human rights abuses, religious violence, and political corruption. Ayyub has been subjected to persistent harassment and threats from the Modi government due to her critical reporting. In February 2022, she was accused of money laundering in connection with her charitable efforts to support those affected by COVID-19 in India, leading to the freezing of her bank accounts. The government’s attacks have fueled intensified threats from online trolls, and the CAOV released a statement in support of Ayyub, urging the government to halt its attacks on her, which have fueled intensified threats from online trolls.35

The CAOV – along with the Press Freedom Partnership – ran an ad in The Washington Post as part of their show of solidarity with Ayyub.36
In March 2023, the Coalition featured a new series of videos by Right to Be, an organization with a storytelling platform where individuals facing online harassment can share their experiences and receive support from a vetted community of bystanders. This video, titled “Right to Be HEARD,” features journalist and content creator Jareen Imam, who shares her personal encounter with online harassment while reporting on the Capital Gazette shooting and its impact on her and her team. The video emphasizes the importance of allyship, including sending messages of support. It also encourages individuals to educate themselves, their families, and their communities about the consequences of online harassment.

Ana Velasquez, Public Relations and Anti-Online harassment Manager for Right to Be, highlights the following gap in the ecosystem:

“One-to-one support is important, but we should also focus more on community response... Having a support system has proven to reduce trauma for the person experiencing online harassment... People are being advised to change the way they behave online, but this is taking responsibility away from others, including aggressors...”
Published by the IWMF in 2022, the Mental Health Guide for Journalists Facing Online Violence offers valuable insights and practical strategies for journalists to mitigate the mental health impact of online attacks. The guide includes a mental health self-evaluation chart to assess the effects of online violence, downloadable exercises for managing mental health challenges, and a list of resources and organizations offering support with issues related to online violence. At the International Journalism Festival in 2023, the IWMF’s deputy director Nadine Hoffman facilitated a panel discussion featuring Flora Schulte Nordholt from FPU, Nabeelah Shabbir from ICFJ, and psychoanalyst Ana Maria Zellhuber Pérez, to raise awareness about solutions and strategies to support the mental health of journalists attacked online.
Fostering Research and Knowledge Exchange

Strategies for Digital Safety Support

» **Article 19** and **CPJ** collaborated on a [briefing](#) about the hostile and often violent environment that women journalists face when reporting on Iran. The findings are based on interviews with women journalists from the Iranian diaspora who cover the country for different media organizations. These journalists are frequently subjected to attacks, like death threats and doxing, as a result of their work.³⁷

» **FLIP**, also known as the [Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa](#), defends press freedom in Colombia through activities like monitoring incidents of online violence against journalists. In May 2023, FLIP released a report on moderating online content and promoting peacebuilding in post-conflict Colombia. The report aims to empower civil society to advocate for increased transparency from online platforms.³⁸

» **IMS** released a learning brief titled “[Online gendered disinformation and sexist hate speech](#)” in March 2023. It sheds light on the issues of online gendered disinformation and sexist hate speech targeted at women, girls, and nonbinary people in the media. It also provides insights into the actions that media development organizations can take to combat these challenges.

» **IT for Change** does research and advocacy work to understand women’s experiences of online violence in India; patterns of online misogyny and gender-based hate speech; issues around access to justice faced by survivors of online violence; and gaps in technological, legal, and institutional efforts to tackle online violence against women.

» **Meedan** is a San Francisco-based organization that conducts research and publishes reports on topics like [online violence against women in politics](#) and the mental health challenges faced by fact-checkers and journalists who experience online violence or witness it through graphic materials.

» The feminist publication **Ms. Magazine** raises awareness about issues of online harassment.³⁹

» **La Asociación de Tecnología, Educación, Desarrollo, Investigación, Comunicación (TEDIC)** is an organization dedicated to defending and promoting human rights in digital environments, with a particular focus on gender inequalities and their intersections. They have conducted exploratory research, including reports titled [Gender Violence on the Internet in Paraguay](#) and [Non-Consensual Image Dissemination in Paraguay](#).
Equality Labs is a Dalit, feminist civil-rights organization ending caste apartheid, white supremacy, Islamophobia, gender-based violence, and religious intolerance. They closely monitor social media in South Asia to track religious extremism, hate speech, and disinformation, with a particular emphasis on how caste and religious extremism manifest on different platforms.

The organization specializes in countering disinformation originating from Hindu nationalism and sees itself as a vital link between the United States and the Global South, conducting extensive research on right-wing movements in South Asia and the failures of American tech companies in addressing these issues.

Equality Labs provides a safe space for researchers who document violent chains of evidence, while also developing innovative methodologies tailored to the region. As part of their pilot research, they produced a report that presents critical analysis of disinformation and hate speech targeting Indian minorities on Facebook India. The report highlights alarming pitfalls and failures of Facebook India’s content moderation policies and their implementation, and presents numerous examples of hate speech and calls to violence against minorities.

Given that more than 350 million caste, religious, gender, and queer minorities are currently vulnerable to this hate speech in India, the report offers timely and expert analysis along with potential solutions.

Following the publication of their report, Equality Labs collaborated closely with media outlets such as The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal to raise awareness about the issues surrounding Facebook India. Their research, combined with their organizing efforts, contributed to the removal of the director of public policy for Facebook India and South Central Asia, along with the team responsible for failing to address anti-Muslim hate speech on the platform.
With the backing of UNESCO, ICFJ published a 300-page book titled *The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists*. This report examines the evolving challenges encountered by women journalists who face persistent and severe online violence. A significant recommendation stemming from this study is the establishment of an Online Violence Early Warning System. Research conducted by ICFJ revealed that “20 percent of women journalists surveyed said they had been attacked or abused offline in connection with online violence they had experienced.” In response, ICFJ is developing an Online Violence Alert and Response System aimed at detecting, predicting, and ultimately preventing acts of violence aimed at women journalists.
Advocacy Toward Media Organizations

Problem Statement

Newsrooms lack understanding, motivation, and resources to protect and support journalists effectively against online violence. Root causes include a failure to proactively prioritize the issue, resulting in insufficient investment in tools, processes, and safeguards to address online violence. Limited comprehension of the nature and scale of online violence leads newsrooms to underestimate the issue. Communication gaps related to newsroom policies, unclear roles and responsibilities surrounding online safety, and the exclusion of freelancers from newsrooms’ responsibility of duty of care contribute to their inadequate response. Economic challenges in the media industry also prevent newsrooms from investing their time or money in the issue, and many newsrooms lack the bandwidth to find or implement the resources that do exist. Newsroom culture enables the uncurbed growth of online violence:

**Newsrooms may assume online violence is confined to the Internet, downplaying the potential mental-health impact and underestimating the likelihood the violence will spill over into the real world.**

Marginalized groups are disproportionately affected, but under-represented in newsroom leadership. Newsrooms may not consider the consequences of losing diverse staff, including systemic inequity, reduced journalism quality, turnover costs, and reputational damage. This issue is further compounded by practices like blaming or penalizing journalists facing harassment and neglecting the organizational responsibility of responding to abuse.
Media industry establishes standards to protect and support journalists against online abuse.

Newsrooms use better tools, policies, and procedures to safeguard journalists before, during, and after incidents.

Newsrooms actively combat race and gender-based oppression in their culture, practices, and stories.
Strategies for Digital Safety Support

Kat Duncan, director of innovation at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri, says:

“Since the pandemic, we have seen a shift of newsrooms and organizations starting to realize they need to provide more support for their teams in this space. Not just providing tips for safety, but also data security training and tools, dedicated time to see therapists, and having a plan for if online violence turns into personal threats. I’m glad to see this, though of course I’d always like to see more.”

» In spring 2022, the Center for Ethical Leadership in Media partnered with the University of Texas at Austin to launch a new course that focuses on fostering ethical behaviors in newsrooms. The open-source curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including ethical leadership, creating safe and fair newsrooms, giving voice to values, shaping organizational culture, working in teams, and gaining self-awareness. The goal of the curriculum is to equip newsroom leaders and staff with the necessary tools to cultivate safe, fair, and dignified work environments.

» The ACOS (A Culture of Safety) Alliance is a coalition of 130 news organizations, freelance journalist associations, and press freedom NGOs working to champion safe and responsible journalistic practices. ACOS signatories endorse and promote The Freelance Journalist Safety Principles, which are a set of global standards and practices for news organizations and the freelancers who work for them. The second principle states:

“News organizations should stay up-to-date on standards of care and safety, including digital, legal, physical and psychological aspects, and consistently advance awareness of safety standards among staff and freelance contributors.”
When addressing gaps in the digital safety support ecosystem, CPJ emphasizes the need for more training and ongoing engagement with newsrooms, particularly in providing enhanced support for freelancers. To tackle this issue, CPJ offers workshops that specifically cover online harassment for newsrooms and journalist networks.43

The Global Cyber Alliance (GCA) has developed the Cybersecurity Toolkit for Journalists, which aims to empower independent journalists, watchdogs, and small newsrooms by providing them with valuable information and tools to protect their sources and reputation.

Global Press is dedicated to establishing independent news bureaus, staffed by local women reporters, in regions that receive little media coverage. They have developed an industry-leading Duty of Care program to address the unique needs of local women journalists who may not have the option of being extracted from challenging situations. This holistic system prioritizes physical, emotional, digital, and legal security.44

Furthermore, the CAOV includes newsroom partners, such as Vox Media and The New York Times.
IPI has developed an effective protocol for newsrooms to address online harassment, drawing on a decade of global research on the issue. The Protocol incorporates best practices gathered from 45 European newsrooms and has been translated into six languages. It outlines specific steps and measures that newsrooms can take to protect their journalists from the professional and personal harm that harassment can produce, ranging from reporting to risk assessment, support mechanisms to tracking and reassessment.

Javier Luque Martínez, Digital Media Coordinator at IPI, says: “Our focus on newsrooms is because they are the first line of defense for journalists, both employed and those hired as freelancers.”
The IWMF is actively working to promote a culture of change within newsrooms to address online violence. As of 2020, the IWMF provides tailored training and consultations for newsrooms, helping them establish effective safety policies. Drawing from this experience, the IWMF published a policy guide for newsroom management, offering templates and guidance for creating and implementing online abuse policies that prioritize the well-being of staff.45

In 2023, the IWMF launched the News Safety Cohort, which brings together 16 media organizations from around the world, including The Salt Lake Tribune, High Country News, and The Center for Public Integrity, among others. The cohort provides a platform for peer learning, enabling newsrooms to share best practices and lessons learned. It also offers customized safety training with a focus on gender and identity considerations, support for developing newsroom safety protocols, and access to the latest resources and one-on-one consultations with leading safety experts.46
Advocacy Toward Platforms

Problem Statement

Platforms like social media or search engines do not consider online violence to be a serious problem and are not incentivized to address the issue, despite the availability of extensive data establishing it is an issue. Designers and developers neglect to implement adequate safeguards against bad actors, assuming benign user behavior. In addition, platforms often have a workplace culture that is biased against the needs of people with marginalized identities. Platforms prioritize their business models, relying on technical solutions like AI instead of investing in adequate moderation or user protection. Rather than resolving the problem, platforms focus on liability protection when faced with pressure or whistleblowers. Hate speech may be tolerated when it is advantageous for their advertising relationships, and policy implementation can be overridden by political aspirations. Internal silos disconnect content moderation from decision-making related to curbing violence, while shareholders and advertisers reinforce existing biases. Platforms are unreliable when it comes to supporting targets of online violence and addressing acute cases. Legislation and accountability of platforms varies across countries, leading to compliance and enforcement challenges. Impunity for perpetrators is widespread, particularly in authoritarian states where platforms collaborate with governments against human rights groups and activists.

The CAOV seeks to address these issues of inadequate incentives, biases, poor support, and global governance challenges.
CAOV members develop practical blueprints for creating less violent online platforms and engage in independent and collective advocacy efforts.

Platforms make commitments to address online violence and engage with advocates for solutions.

Platforms, advertisers, and shareholders enact and comply with legislation to curb online violence.

Platforms make effective, genuine, and systematic efforts to address online violence.
Strategies for Digital Safety Support

During interviews, numerous Coalition member organizations highlighted their advocacy efforts to encourage social media platforms and technology companies to assume greater responsibility for the digital safety of journalists and other individuals facing online violence.

Amnesty International’s report, *Toxic Twitter – A Toxic Place for Women*, examines women’s experiences on social media including the scale, nature, and impact of violence and abuse directed toward women on X (formerly known as Twitter), with a particular focus on the United Kingdom and the United States. The report calls for Twitter to publicly share detailed information about violence and abuse against women and other groups, to enhance reporting mechanisms, to provide clearer guidelines on identifying and handling abuse, and to actively educate users to create a safer and less toxic environment.

Block Party is a platform dedicated to combating online harassment by offering a comprehensive suite of anti-harassment tools designed specifically for social media platforms. Its primary objective is to enable users to enjoy the personal and professional advantages of social media while minimizing the detrimental effects on their mental health caused by harassment. Zoelle Egner, head of marketing and growth for Block Party, says:

“There are lots of gaps, but we’re especially focused on the inability for third parties to help provide tools to protect people who experience online abuse. We need the platforms to provide open APIs to authorized agents so they can take action on behalf of consumers to help keep them safe!”

Areto Labs is a technology company dedicated to fostering positive and inclusive digital communities.

Marina Banister, director of public relations, said:

“Areto Labs currently addresses the issue of online violence and harassment through its machine learning technology and social media moderation software. The company combines automated digital community management features with innovative counteractive measures to track, moderate, and counteract social media harassment and abuse. By utilizing cutting-edge machine learning algorithms, Areto Labs aims to detect abuse and harassment that may go unnoticed by traditional social media moderation tools.”
» **Convocation Research and Design (CoRDs)** creates public-facing research and advocacy work that explores topics like how online harassment affects journalists and activists. They have partnered with the Mozilla Foundation, UltraViolet, and Coworker.org to call on Slack to provide a blocking mechanism to enable remote workers to stop abusive messages from reaching them.

» **The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE)** urges social media companies to ban extremist and hateful movements from utilizing their platforms for organizing, propagandizing, and recruiting. GPAHE works to influence community standards policies, leading to policy improvements and the de-platforming of hate and extremist groups and individuals.50

» **SuperBloom** provides workshops to help practitioners and organizations design technology interventions that improve safety and privacy and shift power in the tech ecosystem.51 They also maintain a “Knowledge Base” of practical resources for designers, developers, activists, and researchers on their website.

» **Thomson Reuters Foundation** created TRFilter, a free web application powered by machine learning technology, in partnership with Google's Jigsaw. This innovative tool is designed to automatically identify and flag harmful comments on X (formerly known as Twitter). TRFilter is the first tool for journalists and media practitioners of its kind, specifically developed for journalists and media professionals to document and manage online harassment and abuse, and to regain control over their social media feeds.52

» **Tall Poppy** is a startup that seeks to empower employees to be proactive against online harassment and personal security threats by providing them with step-by-step guidance, conducting digital footprint assessments, and offering advanced security reviews.53 They also offer a resource page.
Ecosystem of Support: Joint Campaign by Network Members

» In 2022, DEMOS, IMS, and IAWRT joined forces on a multimedia campaign funded by the CAOV. The primary goal of the campaign was to encourage social media tech companies to create tailored risk assessments and action plans to enhance the digital safety of journalists. The campaign resulted in two poignant videos that seek to raise awareness among the tech community about the challenges journalists face on digital platforms and to illustrate the human cost of gendered disinformation and other forms of online harm. For instance, the first video shares the fictionalized story of Ana, a journalist from Moldova, who encounters a series of online attacks including hacking, death threats, and image-based abuse that aim to intimidate, discredit, and silence her.

The video concludes with several calls to action, urging platforms to ensure clear communication channels with journalists to swiftly rectify errors, to invest in local context expertise for informed moderation systems, and to develop and publish comprehensive risk assessments and data on how their systems may contribute to harm.

Moreover, Women in the News Network (WINN) received funding from the CAOV to produce a series of testimonial videos featuring prominent journalists from Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina. These videos shed light on the issue of online violence in Latin America and advocate for change through the powerful campaign #BastaDeViolenciaOnline (#EnoughOnlineViolence).
Katherine Townsend, director of policy says: "[The] Web Foundation sees online gender-based violence (OGBV) as an existential threat to the founding purpose of the web: a space that is for everyone." In response, they are organizing a series of four consultations involving tech companies, civil society organizations, digital rights experts, and women in public life from various regions. These consultations aim to foster constructive dialogues and address the issue of online gender-based violence and abuse. Following the consultations, the Web Foundation will facilitate policy design workshops that provide a unique opportunity for participants and tech companies to collaboratively develop solutions to combat online gender-based violence, employing an innovative and human-centered approach.

CAOV Member Spotlight: Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) engages in research and advocacy while developing tech products to combat online hate, disinformation, and extremism. One of their notable contributions is the Social Pattern Library, which offers a curated set of product recommendations for social media platforms and designers. This library serves as a valuable resource for shaping the architecture of safer online social experiences, providing visual and interactive examples. For instance, if a platform regularly encounters posts containing misinformation, a corrected version of the post is displayed, accompanied by the previous version placed behind a warning. This approach fosters transparency and positive discourse, allowing the platform to educate people on the differences between misinformation and fact.

CAOV Member Spotlight: World Wide Web Foundation
GLAAD works toward increased media accountability and community engagement, ensuring the visibility of authentic LGBTQ stories. In their 2023 Social Media Safety Index (SMSI), GLAAD provides industry-wide recommendations and assesses LGBTQ user safety on major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok. The SMSI report identifies several problems, including insufficient content moderation, harmful algorithms, and a lack of transparency and accountability within the industry. These issues disproportionately affect LGBTQ users and other marginalized communities, making them more vulnerable to hate, harassment, and discrimination.\textsuperscript{57}
Enhancing Regulatory Policies: Safeguarding Against Online Violence

Problem Statement

The absence of a universal definition of online violence and the inadequate enforcement of existing legislation against online violence are significant challenges. Many countries lack appropriate legal frameworks to address it, and variations across countries and contexts further complicate the development of effective legislation. For instance, in authoritarian-leaning states, government agendas may clash with freedom of expression and the rights of journalists.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies often fail to act on reported cases, and online violence often falls into a legal gray area, not fitting established definitions for defamation or attacks on press freedom. In certain instances, legislation intended to combat online harassment is misused to censor journalists.
UN resolutions are amended, empowering journalists and CSOs with improved networks and resources to enforce legislation.

Activists push for legislative change based on the UN resolution, leading to increased success in prosecuting cases of online violence.

Countries adopt and implement legislation for enhanced protection of individuals, including journalists.
Strategies for Digital Safety Support

» IT for Change is a global organization based in Bengaluru, India with a focus on the Global South. They are dedicated to leveraging digital technologies to advance human rights, social justice, and equity. IT for Change actively contributes to national legislative and policy efforts and engages in crucial international policy discussions.

As a member of the Global Digital Justice Forum, IT for Change provided input for the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which would outline shared principles for an open, free, and secure digital future for all.58 In addition, the organization is engaged in a project that addresses gender-based hate speech in the online public sphere using three main strategies: (a) highlighting blind spots in dominant legal frameworks that prevent effective recognition of sexist/misogynistic speech online as a violation of women’s rights; (b) offering ways to reform content governance and intermediary liability legislation to ensure timely redressal; and (c) building a proof-of-concept model to resist normalization of sexist speech online.59
CAOV Member Spotlight:
Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Media4Women (M4W) is a global campaign of FPU and partners highlighting the importance of gender equality in and through the media. In March 2023, the M4W campaign focused on the impact of online harassment on women journalists. Flora Schulte Nordholt, policy and advocacy officer at FPU, wrote:

“We are part of the Coalition Against Online Violence, where we lead the Regulatory Work Group. In this role we identified that there is an urgent need for effective regulation in addressing online violence. But ultimately, of course, the responsibility to take action lies on the shoulders of all stakeholders, meaning: newsrooms, platforms, and policy makers together.”

In an interview with the IWMF, Schulte Nordholt says:

“The main gap in the regulatory sphere is a lack of consensus by governments on what online abuse is. What would help our efforts is getting more coalition members on board to map the regulatory issues by country. Mainly knowledge exchange between everyone working on regulatory issues, including best practices.”
The Rural Digital Youth Resiliency Project conducts investigative reporting and research to advance public understanding of the unique online risks faced by rural youth in America. Their work delves into the tactics employed by extremist groups and susceptibility to violent extremism in rural communities. They focus on researching the impact of misinformation and disinformation, dangerous rhetoric, and political violence on community members, particularly young people. The project also documents the mechanics of online platforms, algorithmic influences, networks, and tactics used to influence young people in Appalachia. Notably, excerpts from their research and related media works have been shared in briefings and testimonies presented to influential bodies like the Senate Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Digital Security, as well as the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Hearing on Domestic Violent Extremist Groups and the Recruitment of Veterans.
Part III

Recommendations for Digital Safety Support
The following recommendations were formulated by the CAOV.

**Strategies for journalists:**

» Learn about and implement effective strategies for digital safety to proactively prevent and effectively manage incidents of online harassment.

» Employ all available precautions and protective measures when operating online.

» Leverage support systems, including civil society organizations, to receive assistance and guidance when confronted with online violence.

» Utilize influence to raise awareness of online violence and to help build urgency around the problem.

**Feedback from CoRD:**

“I’ve noticed that if someone in the general public faces harassment, even if they are fairly technically savvy, they aren’t finding this broader community for support. A lot of folks in the general public aren’t making their ways to security guides or even the helplines... At Convocation, we are about to start creating videos for TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram as a way to potentially help bridge this gap and try to get information from experts in the hands of the general public...”
Strategies for media organizations:

To take a proactive approach to mitigate harm from online violence:

» Establish specific policies and plans with clear roles and responsibilities.

» Invest in training, tools, and resources to implement these policies and plans.

» Evaluate opportunities for safety and take proactive steps to minimize risk.

» Ensure staff and freelancers are aware of the newsroom’s role and responsibility for protecting them from online abuse related to their work.

» Efficiently distribute and adopt policies and protocols, integrating online abuse into safety planning.

To move toward a culture of proactively addressing online abuse:

» Proactively address online violence, using best practices and lessons learned.

» Regularly check in with the affected journalist to follow up on the case, at least for an established period of time.

» Avoid retaliation against staff or freelancers who report online violence.

» Recognize online harassment as defamation rooted in racism, misogyny, and oppression.

» Overcome the idea of a zero-sum game between supporting journalists and maintaining credibility.

To reduce the harm of online violence during an incident:

» Assign a dedicated task force or equivalent to deal with a crisis.

» Involve the affected individual in decision-making.

» Explicitly preempt retaliation against those speaking out on abuse.

» Establish a culture of trust when journalists report online abuse.

» Provide easy access to support for journalists facing online harassment.

» Center the needs of the journalists being targeted.

To address racism, misogyny, and other forms of oppression:

» Establish and nurture sustainable career pathways for people from diverse backgrounds while prioritizing their protection from burnout.

» Drive positive change within newsroom culture, practices, and storytelling to actively confront race- and gender-based oppression.

» Recognize that online abuse can be in response to a journalist’s identity and understand that the impact can vary in severity depending on the unique experiences of the targeted individual.
**Strategies for platforms:**

» Employ designers and engineers who prioritize safeguarding principles in their work, ensuring that user experience and product design actively promote safety and well-being.

» Allocate additional human resources to combat online violence across various areas, like UX design, product development, content moderation, and governance, among others.

» Implement recommendations from the CAOV, such as the establishment of an Online Violence Early Warning System to detect, raise awareness of, and mitigate online threats, particularly where there are heightened risks of offline harm.

» Abide by regulations in good faith, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and guidelines.

---

**Africa Women Journalism Project (AWJP) on the need for content moderation:**

There is a need for “**Nuanced response and support mechanisms that take into account cultural and linguistic factors**, which the platforms may not (be) able to decipher, leading to inaccurate identification and removal of content...” It is also crucial to understand “How to get the platforms to respond promptly to requests regarding trolling and harassment, especially when the content is in a language or context that the algorithms are unable to identify.”
Cartooning for Peace on the need for content moderation:

“Cartooning faces a paradoxical situation… Cartoonists frequently face online violence, leading to self-censorship… On the other hand, they are also victims of the fight against online violence when their cartoons are censored on major platforms, like Facebook, or their accounts are suspended because the platforms don’t consider the satirical meaning of their creations… Most of the time, their requests to recover the content are ignored.”

Strategies for platform users and the general public:

» Deepen knowledge and awareness of online violence.

» Develop competencies in media literacy, data privacy, and other relevant areas to ensure safer platform usage.

» Engage in activities that challenge the power of platforms, such as targeted campaigns against advertisers or participating in walk-outs.

» Demonstrate solidarity with journalists who experience attacks and support their requests to remove harmful content.

» Subscribe to independent news outlets and actively seek out news from sources beyond social media platforms to diversify news diet.
Strategies for civil society organizations and activists:

» Advocate for policy solutions at both national and international levels.

» Raise awareness among policymakers about the issue of online violence in their countries.

» Conduct awareness campaigns to educate law enforcement officials about online violence and its impact.

» Support the enforcement of existing laws and regulations related to online violence whenever feasible.

Feedback from Areto Labs:

"To tackle the issue of online violence effectively, Areto Labs requires continued research and development to stay ahead of evolving tactics used by perpetrators. This involves ongoing improvement of their machine learning algorithms to detect and counteract new forms of abuse and harassment. Additionally, collaborating with other organizations, researchers, and experts in the field can help identify and address gaps in the ecosystem, such as improving the accuracy of detection and ensuring the ethical moderation of online content."
Part IV
Endnotes
5. https://www.derechosdigitales.org/sobre-el-fondo-de-respuesta-rapida/
6. https://www.digitaldefenders.org/funding/
15. https://www.accessnow.org/help/
17. https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/cyber-harassment-helpline/
20. https://iwnss.arij.net/
25. https://cpj.org/resources-for-protecting-against-online-abuse/
29. https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/
31. https://media.sfjn.org
32. https://tinyurl.com/TB
33. https://caj.ca/advocacy/legal-advocacy/
34. https://www.mediacentre.org/apply-for-case-support/
36. https://twitter.com/wppressfreedom/status/1495395937820282884?s=20&t=CV8yMvx-JvF-ReErBrUAQHQ
37. https://www.article19.org/onlineharassment/
40. https://www.equalitylabs.org/facebookindiareport
42. https://www.acosalliance.org/the-principles
43. https://gcatoolkit.org/journalists/
44. https://www.globalpress.co/explore/duty-of-care
49. https://www.blockpartyapp.com/landing/
50. https://globalextremism.org/hold-tech-companies-accountable/
51. https://simplysecure.org/
52. https://www.trfilter.org/
53. https://www.tallpoppy.com/
54. https://www.instagram.com/reel/ClIi0r8iq4x/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
57. https://www.glaad.org/smsi
61. https://www.rdyr.org/
Coalition Against Online Violence
Mapping Report 2024