

## IFJ Gender Council: 8 March Report

### Gender Snapshot: International Women's Day 2016

#### **Our voices are being eroded and erased, not simply ignored**

Depending on who you source, the headline for 2015 could have been: *Lack of Progress* or *High Unemployment and Worsening Conditions* or *Entrenched Violence Against Women Journalists So Endemic, It's a Pandemic*.

It seems Journalists Trade Unions have been talking about sticky floors, glass ceilings, gender pay gaps, unfair dismissal around maternity, lack of access to jobs or training, bullying, harassment and increasing violence – for a lifetime. Everyone from the IFJ, UN, UNESCO, the ILO, Journalists Trade Unions and nations have enacted laws, made motions, charters and decisions to create the balance that is truly needed to ensure our voice is heard in a safe and fair environment. Sadly, we have yet to see many of these measures take hold or create long-lasting change.

Further, recent research shows we have hit a plateau, a place where movement and change appear non-existent. At the end of 2015, the Global Media Monitoring Project [<http://whomakesthenews.org/home>] published their 5 yearly report, with a stark conclusion: “*Progress for women in news media grinds to a halt.*” Research conducted in 114 countries, including some IFJ affiliates, showed that women make up “*only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly the same level found in the 2010 report.*”

The figures for the GMMP also show in all major topics, except Science and Health, there have been steady, small decreases – with the least amount of women reporters covering national defence and politics. Conversely, we see high numbers of women reporters covering topics such as health issues and human rights.

Even more telling are the statistics on age: as presenters and anchors we are the full 50% between the ages of 35 -49, yet drop to 29% after the age of 50. As television reporters that decline comes even earlier, falling from 52% at 19 – 34 to just 28% at 35-49 years of age.

These statistics tell us that we are still not being trusted or respected to tell the story in many regions of the globe, to analyse events, to investigate and to bring the major topics to our audiences and readers. That appearance still matters more than experience.

These findings echo many of the regional and country reports presented earlier this year to the IFJ Gender Council (highlighted below). Perhaps the rhetoric of actions is too bland, too lacking in urgency, too often repeated in the face of the current reality: in many areas and many ways, our voices are being actually eroded and erased, not simply ignored.

No one has been keeping track of the number of women that have been pushed out of the profession as a result of mass lay-offs and media closures that are the tag of a shrinking media landscape with the double punch of financial crises. Nor the number of Journalist Unions, citing declining membership as journalists are forced out the profession, have shelved Equality considerations as a luxury they can no longer afford instead of the core principles of any labour organisation: equity and justice.

Justice issues bring us to impunity. While the IFJ has been working tirelessly with a variety of international partners (UN, UNWOMEN, GAMAG, etc.) to tackle issues of impunity against all journalists, and with a focus on women, it has not yet made any impact in the

newsroom or in the field. Some of these measures are aimed at those journalists killed in the line of reporting, some target harassment, sexual violence and violence – an area that, for the most part, remains under reported and underlying throughout the globe and the field.

In the most cohesive survey of its kind to date, the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) and the International News Safety Institute (INSI) published its findings on a survey of women journalists in 2014. Two thirds of respondents admitted having received threats, intimidation or abuse in connection to journalistic work, one third that these came from their boss, half had experienced sexual harassment, and a fifth violence. Most of these abuses go unreported.

They have not spoken because of fear of reprisals: loss of job, loss of freedom, and in some cases threats and loss of life. Families of targeted women journalists are also often threatened (see Colombia below).

What is clear from the above, is that while we applaud the work of the IFJ and their international partners to place these issues at the top of the agenda, we urge all of our affiliates to search deep within their own areas to root out these unceasing, unchanging threats to equity in the news and newsrooms: ongoing systemic discrimination, harassment and violence. To implement these measures, laws, declarations and agreements with the same energy applied to silence us and take action not to allow these issues to be pushed out of the highlight and back into the shadows.

## **Highlights of Contributors and IFJ Reports**

### **Africa**

Women journalists are in many countries in the region still facing huge challenges concerning discrimination and safety issues, which are a main concern for most journalists in the region. In South Sudan, Dalia Marko, was one of five journalists and six others who were killed in an ambush near the Darfur region in January 2015. In Somalia, one of the worst countries for women to be working as journalists, and one where we have regularly seen targeted deaths, Hindiyo Haji Mohamed was killed by a car bomb in December. Mohamed was a journalist with the national television station SNTV and had lost her journalist husband to a suicide bomb three years before.

A recent meeting in Dakar discussed the enormous challenges facing the African region in its quest to strengthen gender equality in media houses, unions, associations and society as a whole. The meeting also addressed how to work regionally when realities of work conditions for women vary so greatly throughout the region, as well as the Gender Programme, Peace and Security from 2015 to 2020 of the African Union which aims to improve the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict zones in Africa.

### **Asia Pacific**

In the Philippines, Nerlita Ledesma (journalist) and Melinda Magsino-Lubis (correspondent) were killed in two separate incidences. Ledesma was killed in January of last year. Magsino-Lubis was gunned down at noon on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April by motorbike assailants as she walked down the street. She had been receiving death threats since 2005, when she began reporting on local corruption.

The IFJ Asia Pacific Regional office, in collaboration with UN Women, released a report (full report available on website) showing that representation of women "*across all areas of the media remain inadequate*", that an average of 28.6% of media workers are women, but only 17.9 in executive positions, 19.5% of senior editorial and 22.6% mid-level editorial positions. Findings also showed that 67% of respondents had not received any form of safety training.

## **Europe/Greece**

It is impossible to ignore the horrific beginning to last year and the massacre at *Charlie Hebdo* in France, where contributor Elsa Cayat was among those murdered when gunmen burst into the office and began killing.

As far as Equality issues, there are two different levels in Europe: the economically stronger and the countries hardest hit by the financial crisis. The former has a higher level of equality, while the latter have the highest unemployment rates for women. In many cases the economic crisis has had a very negative impact on the implementation of gender equality objectives. These issues have been marginalized in both public discourse and official policy making. There has been progress in attracting more young women to the field, but persistent patterns of inequality remain embedded within the media sector hindering advancement and resulting in lower pay than men - 17% average across EU (European Women's Lobby). The European Institute of Gender Equality survey notes that women are better represented at decision-making levels in public service broadcasting, than the private sector, but still low.

In **Greece** 1 person in 4 is out of work. For media professionals, the closure of publications and cuts throughout the private sector often means unemployment and the prospect of never being able to work again. Government statistics show there are roughly 8% more women unemployed than men, higher in the older age groups with 40% of youth with degrees remain unemployed. Family violence is on the increase and the role played by much of the media in maintaining social inequalities and power relations through negative portrayal of women is entrenching gender differences.

## **Latin America/Columbia/Mexico**

*Regional Office of the IFJ/LA and the Department of Gender FEPALC* presented their findings of a survey from September 2015, looking at gender policy and legislation, in collective bargaining and protocols of companies, and participation of women in decision-making positions, both in the media and trade unions, and discrimination and violence based on gender in the workplace. The majority of respondents at the regional level (approximately 6 out of 10) believe that women are not sufficiently represented in current union structures, and although there are women in leadership of the majority of the media, 51.4% of workers claim that this representation is less than 25%.

In Latin America we see a process of feminization of the profession (there are 70% of women in journalism schools and newsrooms begin to have more women journalists than men). However, the so-called glass ceiling remains. Women are invisible in management positions. The dangers of feminization of a profession, seen also in other areas of the globe, as more women enter the profession, the lowest wages are imposed. We also struggle with impunity, for example in the past four decades, Bárbara D'Achille, Melissa Alfaro and Isabel Chumpitaz were killed.

In **Colombia** the issue of justice, finally, has occurred in two highly publicized cases involving female journalists. Journalist Claudia Julieta Duque was systematically persecuted and threatened for years by the DAS secret-police in Colombia. Duque's case is the first in the world to obtain charges and sentencing for psychological torture of a journalist against three senior, former DAS officials. The other case is that of the journalist Jineth Bedoya, who in 2000 while doing working as a journalist was a victim of kidnapping, torture and sexual violence. The good news is that just this year, one of the people involved in the case has confessed to crimes committed.

Sadly, **Mexico** saw the first killing of a female journalist this year, Anabel Flores Salazar in February. She worked for *El Sol de Orizaba y El Buen Tono*. Salazar was held captive in her home and found dead the following day with her body showing signs of torture. According to

the Spanish News Agency EFE, staff at the El Bueno Tono had reported death threats from the crime cartel called Los Zetas because of investigative reports in the newspaper.

The issue of Gender Based Violence is high on the agenda in the country, with – for the first time – data being collected and released on violence against women journalists, at horrifying levels in the region by a local group, CIMAC. From 2002 to 2013 they documented 184 acts of violence against female journalists, with numbers sharply increasing 10-fold since 2010. Fear is so high that many women journalists are afraid to carry business cards.

### **Palestine**

In Palestine, women journalists constitute about 18% of the workers in the press sector, about 25% are associated to journalists' union, while women represent 54% of media students at universities. The Journalists' Syndicate, in collaboration with partner organizations conducted a study entitled "Factors that affect the recruitment and performance of Media Women in media institutions in Palestine, from a social perspective" and determined that the inability of the large media institutions to accommodate larger numbers of new graduates, whether they are male or female. The study also recommended the adoption of professional employment standards based on transparency, commitment to the minimum wage in the non-governmental sector, and the introduction of a media course at University on gender.

Also Palestine is part of the Arab world's social, cultural covenants, with women suffering social restrictions, as well as an increase in restrictions on women's work in the Gaza Strip in general and journalists in particular. In addition to the presence of Israeli occupation and the resulting danger to the life of journalists through targeting, 10 Palestinian journalists were killed in the most recent fighting. The union was a partner with women's organizations and the authorities in the campaign to reject violence against women and to organize campaigns in the media on this subject.

### **Russia**

In Russia, the union (RUJ) has it's own Woman Journalists Club, which gathers every month to discuss changes in legislation, equal pay during times of financial crisis, hidden discrimination in labour market, combating sexism and promotion of gender initiatives. On March 15, 2016, the RUJ and Pro Feminist web portal will hold the Sexist of The Year Award for the worst sexist media message on Russian Internet. This anti-award has existed since 2010 and has become an excellent tool to combat sexism in media and raise the issue. Additionally, the RUJ started a campaign against threats for women journalists online and prepared a report presented at the OSCE. In April 2016, the RUJ together with the Moscow International Journalist Center (a regional initiative of IFJ) will host the conference " Gender Issues and Combating Sexism in Media and Culture in Post Soviet Space."

### **United States**

Worryingly, in the United States, 24-year-old broadcast journalist Alison Parker (WDBJ7 TV station) and Cameraman Adam Ward were killed by a gunman, live on television in 2015. Eight shots were reportedly fired and footage from the camera as it dropped recorded screams, chaos and the image of the killer.

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**Sources:** IFJ, IFJ Regional Office Latin America, FELPAC, IFJ Regional Office Asia Pacific/UN Women, Global Media Monitoring Project, International Women's Media Foundation, International News Safety Institute, CIMAC and Reporters Without Borders