



# Campaign

**V**iolence against women and girls is the most widespread and most tolerated violation of human rights. It occurs everywhere: at home, in schools, on the streets and at work. Only a few countries provide protection against gender based violence in the workplace. An ILO Convention would close this gap!

Currently a proposal is under discussion at the ILO to agree on the adoption of a Convention on gender-based violence at work. However we need to get a majority of government members of the ILO Governing Body to support the adoption of a Convention. This is the Governing body that can give the green light!

## What is gender based-violence?

There is no single universally agreed definition of gender-based violence.

**GBV can be any act of violence** that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, **whether occurring in public or in private life.**

GBV is a reflection of unequal power relations between women and men in society and at work.

GBV is a serious **human rights violation.**

**For women journalists, violence and intimidation don't just happen in conflict zones, they are everyday experiences.**



## GBV in the world of work

Gender-based violence (GBV) at work, whether occurring at the actual place of work, in the field or on the way to and from work, can take on multiple forms such as:

- ❑ Physical abuse including assault, battery, attempted murder and murder
- ❑ Sexual violence including rape and sexual assault
- ❑ Sexual harassment
- ❑ Verbal and sexist abuse including online abuse
- ❑ Bullying
- ❑ Coercion
- ❑ Psychological abuse, intimidation and threats of violence
- ❑ Economic and financial abuse
- ❑ Stalking

GBV at work affects women in many different ways.

A woman might lose her job for challenging a violent colleague. She might lose her job due to being absent from work because of GBV.

She might be less able to concentrate, or work productively, and her pay, position and job security may be threatened as a result.

A woman might 'put up' with violent behaviour out of desperation to keep her job. In the worst cases, GBV at work can contribute to the death of a worker herself, or to the unborn child of the worker.

## Journalists face greater risks

The risk of exposure to violence is often greater in journalism and media, in particular where work is informal or precarious, where wages are low, where workers are

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stopped from joining or forming trade unions and where management accountability is low.

Journalism can be a dangerous profession. In order to cover breaking stories, journalists put themselves in contexts of war, conflict and natural disasters, while in order to report on corruption, human rights abuses and political chicanery, journalists often incur the wrath of the most powerful in society.

Women journalists who find themselves in such situations are sometimes the specific focus of violence.

Many women covering protests, for example during the Arab uprisings, are subjected to physical violence and sexual assaults.

An increasing number of women journalists also face threats and abuse online as a result of their reporting. Harassment of women online is at risk of becoming "an established norm in our digital society", with women under 30 particularly vulnerable.

**VIOLENCE  
is NOT  
PART OF  
THE JOB**



Nearly half the 1,000 respondents [in the research](#) by the digital security firm Norton had experienced some form of abuse or harassment online. Among women under 30, the incidence was 76%.

Harassment ranged from unwanted contact, trolling, and cyberbullying to sexual harassment and threats of rape and death.

**Almost two-thirds of the women journalists polled by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) had experienced intimidation, threats or abuse in relation to their work.**

More than 25 percent of "verbal, written and/or physical intimidation

violence.

## Economic Costs

**GBV at work has an economic impact.**

Research over the past decade in India shows that for each incidence of violence, women lose an average of 7 working days.

A survey in Nicaragua and Chile reveals that all types of violence reduce women's earnings by US\$29.5 million and US\$1.56 billion annually respectively – the equivalent of 2% of GDP.

In just one Australian state, New South Wales, the cost of dealing with health care, legal, criminal, social welfare, employment, child

**Cyberbullying, rape threats, revenge porn – women are being harassed online in almost "epidemic proportions".**

Journalist and UNICEF ambassador Tara Moss

including threats to family or friends" took place online. Digital harassment and threats directed at women differ than those experienced by men: they are misogynistic.

## Domestic violence

In addition to GBV that happens at work, **domestic violence can also spill over into the workplace**, for example through prolonged or frequent absenteeism, poor concentration and productivity, or even through being stalked at the workplace by a violent partner.

The World Health Organisation estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner

and housing issues is put at US\$1m a year. A US survey estimates that violence at work costs the economy \$1bn.

And given the scale of under-reporting these figures are probably artificially low.

## Under-reported

Global Media Monitoring Project reports have shown that news paints a picture of a world in which women are virtually invisible. Women are dramatically under-represented in the news.

Only 24% of news subjects – the people who are interviewed, or whom the news is about – are female. Women's points of view are





rarely heard in the topics that dominate the news agenda; even in stories that affect women profoundly, such as gender-based violence, it is the male voice (64% of news subjects) that prevails. While the study found a few excellent examples of exemplary gender-balanced and gender-sensitive journalism, it demonstrated **an overall glaring deficit in the news media globally**, with half of the world's population barely present.

### Campaigning for change!

Trade unions, together with womens' and feminist organisations and other civil society allies, are campaigning for a ground-breaking **International Labour Convention** on gender-based violence in the world of work.

### Why there is a need for an ILO standard on GBV?

**Violence against women and girls is the most widespread and most tolerated violation of human rights.** It occurs everywhere: at home, in schools, on the streets and at work. Only a few countries provide protection against gender based violence in the workplace. An ILO Convention would close this gap!

Workplaces are an important environment in which to address violence. GBV in the world of

work is one of the most important and widespread obstacles to women's economic empowerment, autonomy and independence – and to the realisation of gender equality.

There is currently no internationally agreed law that deals with the many different forms of gender-based violence in the workplace.

Currently a proposal is under discussion at the ILO to agree on the adoption of a Convention on gender-based violence. However **we need to get a majority of government members of the ILO Governing Body to support the adoption of a Convention.**

Sexual harassment, psychological violence, threats, and bullying are common practices in the workplace.

By ratifying an ILO Convention, governments commit to put their laws in compliance with the standard.

The enforcement of adequate laws is crucial to prevent gender-based violence at work. Trade unions play a key role to ensure laws are enforced and rights are respected!

An ILO Convention would send a strong message that **violence is NOT part of the job.**

It would help to give workers a voice to stand up against gender-based violence, and negotiate **collective agreements** (LINK) that address GBV. It would help workers and employers agree on **policies** (link) to prevent and address GBV in the workplace. It would empower women workers to take action.

**Thirty-five per cent of women worldwide have experienced violence whether physical and/or sexual.**

Between 40 and 50 per cent of women experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work.

### Join the Campaign!

- ❑ **Call a meeting** with your government and present an official trade union statement with arguments in support of an ILO Convention on gender based violence
- ❑ **Contact the government** member(s) of the ILO Governing Body and ask them to support a Convention
- ❑ **Send postcards to the Ministers** of Labour and Women's affairs and present a petition signed by a broad constituency including women's groups, human rights networks and

unions members among others.

- ❑ **Form coalitions** of trade unions, womens' and feminist groups and other civil society allies to raise awareness of the impact of GBV at work and the forms that it takes.
- ❑ **Collect stories** from workers about how GBV at work affects them

**Sexual attacks against journalists have the effect of silencing the messenger and blocking the dissemination of news and information. In the same manner as other types of attacks, sexual aggression is a direct assault on the internationally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression and access to information.**

Columbia University School of Journalism



❑ **Call meetings** with your government to explain why action is needed at the international and national level to outlaw gender-based violence at work – you can use the arguments set out in our briefing. (LINK)

❑ **Call meetings** with employers to explain how an international standard on GBV would benefit business and industrial relations and why employers should support such a standard.

women workers' experiences of gender-based violence and use the results to inform your discussions with governments and employers, and other actors, as well as your organising and bargaining agendas.

❑ **Engage male champions** of change (e.g., from amongst your membership, politicians, the world of sports, fathers, etc.)

❑ **Use the press and social media**

**Many female journalists have closed down their social media accounts because of the threats and abuse they were receiving online.**

*Global Editors Network*

❑ **Send or email a letter** or a petition to the key government and independent or opposition members of Parliament/Congress calling for an ILO Convention on gender-based violence.

❑ **Meet with your Ministers** of Labour and Women's affairs and seek their support.

❑ **Hold meetings** with your membership to inform them of the importance of the issue and what they can do to make a difference at the workplace and national levels.

❑ **Include** issues of gender-based violence on your union's bargaining agenda.

❑ **Conduct workplace surveys** on

(Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc.) to highlight and spread awareness of the extent of the problem and the need for an international labour standard on gender-based violence.

*Please keep the IFJ informed of your campaigns: [xxxxxx@ifj.org](mailto:xxxxxx@ifj.org)*

*We will add them to our end gender-based violence campaign page.*

**International  
Federation of  
Journalists**  
Residence Palace  
Rue de la Loi 155  
Brussels

[ifj@ifj.org](mailto:ifj@ifj.org)  
[www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

