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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development****Combating violence against women journalists****Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes
and consequences****Summary*

Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 41/17, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, has prepared a report on violence against women journalists. In her report, the Special Rapporteur aims to build on the existing human rights standards and to offer a more holistic approach to addressing the specific challenges faced by women journalists, as well as their causes, and to provide recommendations to States and other stakeholders on how to tackle those issues. As such, the Special Rapporteur seeks to lay the foundation for States to establish an appropriate human rights framework, including through the development of policies or strategies to ensure the protection of women journalists.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



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I. Introduction

1. The report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, is submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution 41/17. In her report, the Special Rapporteur addresses gender-based violence faced by women journalists in their daily work.
2. The Special Rapporteur seeks to highlight the causes and consequences of gender-based violence against women journalists, which has been exacerbated in recent times by online violence, and in this regard to provide recommendations to States and other relevant stakeholders on how to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women journalists and ensure that they can work in a safe environment.
3. In preparing the present report, the Special Rapporteur sought contributions from Member States, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and media outlets. The Special Rapporteur is sincerely grateful to all those who submitted a response and shared their testimonies.¹ The Special Rapporteur is also very grateful to the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, New Jersey, for hosting an online expert group meeting on 13 March 2020 in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Association of Women in Radio and Television.²
4. For the purposes of the present report, journalism refers to an activity that consists of the collection and dissemination of information to the public through any means of communication and applies to all persons involved in a journalistic process providing information to the public, including editors, commentators, freelancers and part-time authors, communicators, bloggers and citizen journalists.³

II. Activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur

5. On 4 October 2019, the Special Rapporteur addressed the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, pursuant to Assembly resolution 71/170, presenting her thematic report on a human rights-based approach to mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive health services, with a focus on childbirth or obstetric violence (A/74/137).
6. On 29 and 30 October 2019, the Special Rapporteur attended the Beijing+25 regional review meeting organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva. During the two-day meeting, the Special Rapporteur delivered a statement on the theme of "Ending violence against women and girls: lessons and solutions from the region". The outcome document of the review recognizes the Special Rapporteur's initiative, in which she called on all States to establish a "femicide watch", or a "gender-related killing of women watch". The initiative is included in the policy recommendations on violence against women set out in the document, namely that all countries should establish multidisciplinary national bodies such as a "femicide watch", with the aim of actively working on the prevention of femicide or gender-related killing of women.⁴
7. On 31 October 2019, the Special Rapporteur met with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the course of its seventy-fourth session in Geneva, during which she discussed the framework of cooperation between the Committee

¹ The full list of submissions received can be found at www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/VAWJournalists.aspx.

² Owing to the restrictions in place as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the meeting was hosted entirely online and facilitated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership and the Special Rapporteur out of New York City.

³ See Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 34 (2011) on the freedoms of opinion and expression, para. 44; and Council of Europe, recommendation No. R (2000)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the right of journalists not to disclose their sources of information (March 2000).

⁴ ECE/AC.28/2019/2, annex I, para. 31 (j).

and the mandate on combating violence against women⁵ and provided an update on the activities of the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on ending discrimination and violence against women.⁶

8. On 25 November 2019, to mark International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Special Rapporteur and members of the aforementioned Platform issued a joint statement in which they called upon all States and relevant stakeholders worldwide to act against rape as a form of gender-based violence and a human rights violation, and to ensure that the definition of rape is based on the absence of consent, in line with international standards.⁷

9. From 25 to 27 November 2019, the Special Rapporteur participated in the Beijing+25 civil society forum and intergovernmental meeting in Bangkok, during which she delivered a keynote address at the opening session. She also participated in a variety of meetings and events coordinated by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Asia-Pacific Beijing+25 Civil Society Steering Committee.

10. On 16 January and 27 February 2020, the Special Rapporteur was invited to contribute to and participate in two meetings of the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General, both of which were held in New York. At the first meeting, the focus was on violence against women in politics and during elections and at the second meeting the issue of femicide was considered. The Special Rapporteur regards both as significant meetings that demonstrate the importance of cooperation between United Nations agencies and the mandate on topics that require a system-wide approach to addressing violence against women.

11. The Special Rapporteur has continued to lead the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on ending discrimination and violence against women. In that regard, on 2 and 3 February 2020, she participated in the third regional meeting of the Platform, which she organized jointly with the Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and in collaboration with the secretariat of the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign and the Regional Office for East Africa of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following the meeting, the expert mechanisms issued a joint statement: "Elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including its root causes, must be integrated in all efforts to silence the guns before, during and after conflict".⁸

12. Owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and the measures adopted to contain it, the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women did not proceed as planned, but rather a decision was taken to hold the session for one day only in New York on 9 March 2020. Given the circumstances, the Special Rapporteur was unable to participate in person, however her statement was circulated in writing to all delegations. In her statement, she recalled some of the specific recommendations to the Commission highlighted in her 2019 report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/41/42), including a recommendation to establish violence against women as a standing item on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women and introduce a constructive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, in addition to the oral presentation on the work of the mandate.⁹

13. The Special Rapporteur had planned to host a high-level panel in the margins of the Commission on the Status of Women, to take stock of the work of the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on ending discrimination and violence against women and to seek additional support for the initiative.

⁵ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/SRVAVW_CEDAW_FrameworkCooperation.pdf.

⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/CooperationGlobalRegionalMechanisms.aspx.

⁷ See www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25340&LangID=E.

⁸ See www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/Statement_conflict_prevention_EDVAW_platform.pdf.

⁹ The statement is available from www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/CSW/CSW64.pdf.

14. The Special Rapporteur had also planned to present a booklet issued by the Platform entitled: “25 years in review of the Beijing Platform for Action: contributions of the Platform of independent expert mechanisms on discrimination and violence against women towards its implementation”.¹⁰ The main message included in the booklet is that in the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and in other review processes the indispensable role played by the seven independent expert human rights mechanisms in their implementation should be recognized.

15. On 27 March 2020, the Special Rapporteur issued a press release calling on States to combat domestic violence in the context of COVID-19 and that while making significant efforts to address the COVID-19 threat, they should not leave behind women and children victims of domestic violence, as this could lead to an increase in domestic violence, including intimate partner femicides. In that context, the Special Rapporteur also issued a call for submissions on COVID-19 and the increase in domestic violence against women.¹¹ She also issued a separate call for submissions to inform her proposed thematic report to the General Assembly in October 2020 on rape as a grave and systematic human rights violation and an issue of gender-based violence against women.¹²

16. The Special Rapporteur conducted two country visits in 2019, to Bulgaria from 14 to 21 October (see A/HRC/44/52/Add.1) and to Ecuador from 29 November to 9 December (see A/HRC/44/52/Add.2). At the time of writing, proposed country visits to Mongolia and Papua New Guinea, planned for 2020, are on hold owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Manifestation of gender-based violence against women journalists

17. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women specifies that violence against women, including against women journalists, comprises 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. In its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that the definition of discrimination included gender-based violence, namely violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. Men and women journalists are both exposed to violence and threats to their safety in the course of their work; however women journalists are disproportionately targeted by gender-based violence and sexual harassment, both within the work place and online.

18. Women journalists are expected to fit into stereotyped roles and sexualized images of women and to operate within unequal power relationships between men and women in the media world. They are often targeted for being highly visible and outspoken and for their work, especially when they are breaking the rules of gender inequity and stereotypes. Many women journalists also face intersectional discrimination and gender-based violence because of other characteristics such as, but not limited to, race, religion, ethnicity or minority affiliation. Gender-based violence against women online, and especially against women journalists who use information and communications technologies (ICTs) as tools for their work, includes any act of violence that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of ICTs, such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately (A/HRC/38/47, para. 23).

¹⁰ The publication was distributed electronically to all delegations to the Commission and sent to all permanent missions on 9 March 2020. It is available from ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/Booklet_BPA.pdf.

¹¹ See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/call_covid19.aspx.

¹² See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRVAV.aspx.

19. Gender-based violence against women is a global plague that affects one in three women worldwide in their lifetime and, as such, creates a culture of normalization and tolerance of such violence in society, which means that women journalists and media workers are operating in an environment whereby systematic and structural gender-based violence forms part of their daily routine. They are subjected to different forms of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual harassment in the newsroom and in the field, and other forms of intimidation, including threats to their family. Women journalists reporting on protests and riots are at ever-increasing risk of sexual attacks, with many having experienced groping and sexual harassment, yet only a few have come forward to report their ordeal. Those reporting on feminist issues are also threatened for the type of stories they cover, which are often stories that have contributed to a change in attitude leading to public rejection of gender-based violence as a human rights violation.

20. In 2016 and 2017, Reporters without Borders registered more than 60 cases in more than 20 countries of the rights of journalists being violated in connection with reporting on the condition of women. Almost 90 cases have been registered since 2012. Those cases included murder, imprisonment, verbal attacks, physical attacks and online aggression. Cyberharassment represents more than 40 per cent of the cases registered.

21. The rise of popular movements, such as #MeToo, #NiUnaMenos and their various manifestations across the world, have highlighted sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, including the rampant sexism and discriminatory practices that pervade the newsroom. Highly visible court trials against some of the perpetrators, which have resulted in lengthy prison sentences, demonstrate the importance of such movements in prosecuting cases of gender-based violence. They have also demonstrated the change in attitude of some prosecutors and the judiciary, especially in those trials involving a jury, which had the potential to reflect changes in societal attitudes. While such cases are the exception rather than the rule, owing to the rigid criminal justice systems in many States, they nevertheless represent a positive step in the right direction that should serve as an example of good practice to be followed.

22. Online and offline harassment and abuse of women journalists is reflective of broader issues of sexism in society. In the online sphere, harassment can have significant consequences, leading to self-censorship in response to online abuse. The failure to address and reprehend online threats can be fatal, as is demonstrated by attacks on and murders of women journalists that were preceded by online hate campaigns and threats. In response to persecution, some women reporters have had no choice but to drop investigative work, avoid reporting on certain subjects, or abandon their profession altogether. According to a 2018 global survey of nearly 600 women journalists carried out by the International Women's Media Foundation, of the women who had experienced threats and attacks, nearly 30 per cent had considered leaving the profession as a result, while nearly 40 per cent admitted that they had avoided reporting on certain subjects as a result.¹³

A. Femicide, rape and sexual violence against women journalists

23. Since 1992, 96 women journalists have been killed, comprising approximately 7 per cent of all slain journalists. Sixty-eight of those women were targeted and assassinated in direct connection with their work.¹⁴ The last decade has witnessed a steady rise in such cases against women journalists, with 70 killed since 2010.¹⁵ In 2017, the Committee to Protect Journalists found that at least 72 journalists and media workers were killed in the line of duty, 10 of whom were women.¹⁶ Recent statistics suggest that in 2019, 5 out of a total of 57 journalists killed were women.¹⁷ The number of women journalists killed is

¹³ See International Women's Media Foundation and Troll-Busters.com, "Attacks and harassment. The impact on female journalists and their reporting" (2018), p. 44.

¹⁴ See Committee to Protect Journalists data on journalists killed since 1992.

¹⁵ See UNESCO observatory of killed journalists.

¹⁶ See <https://cpj.org/events/2018/03/women-in-journalism-unique-perspective-unique-threats.php>.

¹⁷ See UNESCO observatory of killed journalists.

considerably lower than that of their male counterparts but the ratio of women journalists killed to the overall number of women in the media is not available. For each killing of a woman journalist, it would be important to conduct an analysis of such cases from a human rights and gender perspective, in order to determine whether there was a gender motive that would lead to the killing being classified as femicide, in line with the categories proposed by the Special Rapporteur in her 2016 report on the modalities for the establishment of a “watch” system for femicide or gender-related killings (see A/71/398). Depending on the circumstance, such killings could also fall under the category of intimate partner- or family-related femicide.

24. In addition to killings, sexual violence, including sexual assault and rape, and in particular the threat of rape, continue to be used as a form of gender-based violence and as a tool to undermine the credibility of women journalists and discourage them from working in the media. Many women media workers have reportedly experienced sexual violence in relation to their work, with the most frequently recounted act being unwanted touching of a sexual manner.¹⁸

25. In 2011, while reporting on a protest, Lara Logan, a correspondent for CBS News, was violently separated from her crew and security by a mob of men who proceeded to brutally sexually assault her and almost kill her. She has recently spoken up about her ordeal and her experience of being a survivor of sexual assault while reporting. She is now challenging the way in which the media covers such attacks.¹⁹

26. Another woman journalist, who was also reporting from on a protest was gang-raped in broad daylight, while in November 2012, a young student journalist was also gang-raped in while making a documentary on women’s rights.²⁰ In January 2020, several protesters mobbed a female freelance journalist. The aggressors reportedly threatened her with rape before pursuing her and continuing the attack by shaking her car while she was inside it.²¹

27. Other tools that are used to dishonour, disgrace and humiliate women journalists include fabricated reports of rape and sexual violence. Women journalists who relate their stories of sexual violence often have their testimonies queried, disregarded as false or seen as an attempt to self-promote.

28. Beyond the threat of ill-treatment and even torture, many women journalists in detention also face threats of rape and sexual violence. At the time of writing, 27 women journalists were being detained across the world, with many being held in appalling conditions.²² Of those detained, many have faced sexual harassment and threats of rape during police interrogation, while those enduring detention under conservative regimes have been rejected by family and friends who believe they were raped in prison.

29. While only a few cases of sexual assault against women journalists have ever been documented, many women journalists are now speaking up and recounting their testimonies. Some of those testimonies have been documented in recent years and many of the assaults have been found to fall into three general categories: targeted sexual violation of specific journalists, often in reprisal for their work; mob-related sexual violence against journalists covering public events; and sexual abuse of journalists in detention or captivity.²³

¹⁸ See, for example, International Women’s Media Foundation and International News Safety Institute, “Violence and harassment against women in the news media: a global picture” (2014).

¹⁹ See Annabelle Sreberny, “Violence against women journalists”, available at www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/publications/gamag_research_agenda_sreberny.pdf.

²⁰ See Reporters without Borders, “Women’s rights: forbidden subject” (2018).

²¹ See www.huffingtonpost.fr/2019/01/13/menacee-de-viol-par-des-gilets-jaunes-une-journaliste-raconte_a_23641318/.

²² See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “RSF marks International Women’s Day with call to release detained female journalists”, 7 March 2019.

²³ See Committee to Protect Journalists, “The silencing crime: sexual violence and journalists”, 7 June 2011.

30. One case in particular has encouraged other women journalists to speak out. In 2009, female reporter Jineth Bedoya publicly recounted her personal experience of having been subjected to brutal rape while reporting on right-wing paramilitaries in May 2000.²⁴

31. Despite the fact that more women journalists are speaking up, the vast majority continue to refrain from reporting on sexual violence perpetrated against them, often because of the cultural stigma attached to reporting sexual abuse or the fear they will dishonour their families and tarnish their own reputation. Many women journalists, especially those who want to work in the field, are reluctant to disclose an assault to their editors for fear they would be perceived as vulnerable and be denied future assignments.

B. Discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace

32. The media and ICTs have enabled and expanded the opportunities for millions of women to actively participate in political, economic, cultural and social life. However, stereotypes and discriminatory practices continue to exclude many women around the world from participation in public debate and the free expression of their opinions, or from accessing information on an equal basis with men. In 2019, the New York Times established the Women's Project, aimed at correcting gender imbalance and with a view to better reflecting diversity in society. In doing so, it has been tracking the gender of every contributor published in its daily letters page. In February 2020, the tally was 43 per cent women and 57 per cent men. There were consistent patterns showing that on issues related to politics, the economy and foreign affairs the majority of submissions come from men.²⁵

33. Women journalists who challenge patriarchal stereotypes of disapproval of their participation in public life face a situation of violence and gender-based discrimination, as well as differentiated forms of violence from State and non-State actors. The targeting and abuse of women journalists mirror larger patterns of sexism and gender-based violence that seek not only to punish women for voicing critical or dissenting opinions, but also for speaking out as women. They may also implicitly seek to limit coverage of women's issues and issues of interest to women. In conservative societies, shaming female journalists may also serve to shame the family as a whole.

34. While recent years have witnessed an increase in the number of women opting for journalism as a career, social norms and gender stereotypes continue to present considerable challenges that prevent women from working in the profession on an equal basis with men.

35. In some cultural and social contexts journalism is deemed to be an inappropriate occupation for women and one that is incompatible with marriage or family values. For those women who manage to forge a career in journalism, not only do they face the same risks as men in terms of threats and intimidation, but many also have to contend with the menace that lurks within their own workplace or newsroom.

36. According to a study conducted by the International News Safety Institute on violence against women journalists between 2013 and 2014, almost two thirds of respondents indicated that they had been confronted with some form of intimidation, threat or abuse in relation to their work, varying from verbal abuse to death threats. The majority of incidents had occurred in the workplace and were often committed by male bosses, supervisors and co-workers.²⁶ Another study carried out in 2017, revealed that 48 per cent of the nearly 400 women journalists from 50 countries who participated in an online survey had experienced various forms of work-related gender-based violence, ranging from

²⁴ Ms. Bedoya submitted her case in the context of call by the Special Rapporteur for submissions for the present report.

²⁵ See New York Times, "Women, please speak out", 14 February 2020.

²⁶ See International Women's Media Foundation and International News Safety Institute, "Violence and harassment against women in the news media: a global picture".

untoward comments or advances, sexual innuendo and brief physical contact to actual sexual assault.²⁷

37. In addition to the overt harassment faced by women journalists and media workers, in some countries they are also affected by outside factors, including inflexible working hours, partial or no access to reasonably priced and quality childcare, inadequate parental leave policies and negative social attitudes. The impact of such patterns of discrimination, which also affect other groups of women, is exacerbated by the long working hours typical of the organizational culture of many media outlets.

38. With regard to public media, the preliminary results of a worldwide survey conducted by the Global Alliance on Media and Gender and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicate that of a sample of 32 countries, only 15 per cent have allocated budgets to the promotion of gender equality among the staff of State-owned media. Thirty per cent of those countries have policies to ensure gender balance in media management positions and 18 per cent have policies in place to ensure the same balance among the staff of journalists.²⁸

C. Online violence

39. While the expansion of the Internet and digital platforms is creating new social digital spaces and transforming and reshaping society, it is also enabling new forms of online violence against women. Women journalists have become increasingly targeted as visible and outspoken representatives of women's rights. In her report to the Human Rights Council in 2018, the Special Rapporteur specifically tackled the issue of online violence against women and explained that the violent and gendered nature of the threats against women journalists often led to self-censorship. Some resorted to the use of pseudonyms, while others maintained low online profiles, an approach that can have a detrimental impact on their professional lives and reputations. Others decided to suspend, deactivate or permanently delete their online accounts, or to leave the profession entirely (A/HRC/38/47, para. 29).

40. Ultimately, the online abuse against women journalists and women in the media is a direct attack on women's visibility and their full participation in public life. The anonymity of perpetrators further heightens the fear of violence, resulting in the sense of insecurity and distress experienced by the victims. In addition to the impact on individuals, a major consequence of online and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence is a society where women no longer feel safe, either online or offline, given the widespread impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence. Online violence against women journalists not only violates a woman's right to live free from violence and to participate online but also undermines the exercise of democracy and good governance, and as such creates a democratic deficit (*ibid.*).

41. Indeed, over recent years women journalists have become increasingly impacted by this form of gender-based violence.²⁹ Not only are they more exposed to online attacks than their male counterparts but they are also forced to contend with increasing online abuse (often misogynistic and with sexualized content), stalking and harassment.³⁰

42. Emerging forms of online violence against women such as "doxing", "sextortion" and "trolling", as well as the non-consensual distribution of intimate content (or "revenge porn"), are also being used to defame and silence women journalists. Technology has therefore transformed different forms of gender-based violence into something that can be

²⁷ See International Federation of Journalists, "IFJ survey: one in two women journalists suffer gender-based violence at work", 24 November 2017.

²⁸ See UNESCO, *Media and Gender: a Scholarly Agenda for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender* (Paris, UNESCO, 2014).

²⁹ UNESCO, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Special Digital Focus 2015*, p. 90.

³⁰ UNESCO, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development 2017/2018. Global Report*, p. 157.

perpetrated across distance, without physical contact and beyond borders, with anonymous profiles to amplify the harm to the victim (see A/HRC/38/47).

43. A study carried out by the International Press Institute in 2019 across 45 newsrooms in five countries revealed that women and minority journalists were not only more often targeted online but that the attacks experienced were particularly malicious and often highly sexualized. The study also revealed that muzzling journalists who report on certain politically or socially disputed topics and who express different opinions, is the principal purpose of online attacks. Breeding fear and self-censorship among journalists and publicly demeaning them is a key method of silencing them.³¹

44. Campaigns aimed at discrediting women journalists professionally are frequent and often infer that women journalists rely more on personal interest or opinion rather than intellectual analysis. The attacks are usually accompanied by messages of a macho nature and of belittlement and humiliation. Messages aimed at humiliating women journalists for their physical appearance, without necessarily referring to their journalistic skills, are also common, often comprising nasty or degrading comments in connection with their style of dress.³²

45. One clear tactic is the smearing of women journalists who challenge power or question the status quo as threats to security, stability and national identity, or as purely political actors whose criticism is ideologically driven and therefore biased. Closely connected to that development is the phenomenon of online harassment targeting journalists, especially women journalists. While in some cases such harassment may reflect organic expressions of anger at journalistic content, in others it is orchestrated, or at least tacitly encouraged, by politicians and political parties.

46. Many women journalists are subjected to angry messages, threats and taunts online in response to their reporting. As part of a series on the rising global phenomenon of online harassment, The Guardian commissioned research into the 70 million comments left on its site since 2006 and discovered that of the 10 most abused writers 8 were women, the 2 men were black and 2 of the women were lesbians. The study found that on all news sites where comments appeared, too often things were said to journalists and other readers that would be unimaginable in person. It also found that articles written by women attracted more abuse and dismissive trolling than those written by men, regardless of what the article was about. The study revealed that since about 2010, articles written by women consistently attracted a higher proportion of blocked comments than articles written by men. Articles about feminism attracted very high levels of blocked comments, as did rape.³³

47. Another example of online harassment was the creation of the Ligue du LOL (Laugh Out Loud League), a private Facebook group initiated by a number of renowned male journalists and commentators in 2009. The platform was used by some of its followers to instigate group harassment of other journalists, principally women. When the group was exposed, several of the complicit journalists were dismissed and court proceedings were launched against the media outlets for which they worked.

48. Perhaps one of the most chilling factors is that for a number of women journalists harassment does not always remain online and has often spilled over into reality. In November 2017, shortly after publishing a report criticizing Internet trolls for sabotaging an application (app) used by women to report instances of harassment in the street, a woman journalist was the target of cyberattacks herself. She received a flood of emails threatening her with rape and violence, and attempts were made to hack her social networks and accounts. The attacks escalated with “doxing” attacks, meaning that her personal details

³¹ See International Press Institute, “Newsroom best practices for addressing online violence against journalists. Perspectives from Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom” (2019).

³² Ibid.

³³ See Becky Gardiner and others, “The dark side of Guardian comments”, 12 April 2016.

and home address were publicly leaked. Her home address was used to register her name on pornography and paedophile websites.³⁴

49. In a survey about female journalists' perception of their own safety and freedom, 85 per cent of respondents said they felt less safe than they had five years earlier. They said that they faced worse harassment for covering key subjects, such as local or national politics or extremism. That harassment from readers and online trolls ranged from unsolicited sexual messages to threats of violence, rape or death and included the publication online of reporters' private information.³⁵

50. In some instances, threats of violence and abuse against female journalists are so severe that high-profile female journalists take multiple precautionary measures in case the threats made against them online transpire offline.

51. In addition to the psychological and professional harm that online abuse and harassment can cause to individuals, there are social harms, too. Of those adults who have experienced harassment online, many have also witnessed others being harassed. That can in turn lead to the silencing of people who might otherwise contribute to public debates, particularly women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and people from racial or religious minorities, who see others like themselves being racially and sexually abused.

52. Despite growing evidence of online violence against and physical attacks on women journalists, many media organizations do not have formal policies or protocols in place to protect their employees. In a global study of women journalists conducted in 2018 by the International Women's Media Foundation and Troll-Busters.com, 26 per cent of women journalists indicated that they did not know how to report threats and harassment.³⁶ Online and offline abuse is often underestimated by media management and minimized by colleagues, the authorities, law enforcement agents and others who are best positioned to provide support.

IV. Situation of women journalists who face multiple and intersecting forms of violence

53. While women journalists face the same risks as their male peers when they investigate and report on corruption, organized crime and human rights violations, they also face specific gender-based risks owing to the fact of being women and at the intersection of other identities, such as race and ethnicity. The intersection of these multiple identities may increase the risk of certain women facing obstacles or difficulties in the full exercise of the right to freedom of expression, or may have a differentiated effect on certain groups of women. Such factors often also lead to particular forms of discrimination against those who make up those groups.

54. The underlying reasons for targeting any journalist are to undermine their credibility, to humiliate them or to discourage them from reporting on certain topics. When journalists are indigenous women, women belonging to minorities, and/or lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women, they may face an added level of discrimination, in ways that often intersect with their indigenous, and/or minority or lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex identities.

55. In the particular case of indigenous women journalists, the risk of experiencing violence as a result of their work may increase, owing to the combination of structural patterns affecting community media; intersectional discrimination against indigenous women; and the high public profile they may acquire in defence of the rights of indigenous peoples and/or the rights of women in their territories. The combination of such factors

³⁴ See Amnesty International, “#Toxic Twitter - violence and abuse against women online” (2018), section 2.

³⁵ See International Women's Media Foundation and Troll-Busters.com, “Attacks and harassment. The impact on female journalists and their reporting”.

³⁶ See “Attacks and harassment. The impact on female journalists and their reporting”, p. 41.

often exposes indigenous women journalists to a greater risk of stigmatization and persecution in certain contexts, whether by State or non-State actors.³⁷

56. The prevalence of gender stereotypes and prejudices means that the work of women journalists is often undervalued in many indigenous communities and that they encounter significant barriers to accessing key programming schedules and covering issues of general interest or the political agenda.

57. Specific attacks and abuses of lesbian and transgender women journalists are often underreported, inadequately documented and/or denounced. They range from threatening comments by readers to sexual harassment and violence and even murder. They can also include retaliation for covering lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues.

58. Representation of minority groups in the media, including women from such groups, is a crucial means of promoting the participation of minorities in society and incorporating pluralistic approaches. However, despite these international standards, journalists from marginalized communities, particularly women journalists and media workers, continue to be underrepresented.

59. In many countries women of colour are particularly discriminated against, face negative assumptions about their ethnicity, preventing them from undertaking certain assignments, are subject to sweeping generalizations and are often passed over for white colleagues.

60. In addition, for women journalists who identify as members of ethnic or religious minorities, the harassment can be extreme.

V. Risks and threats faced by women journalists and media workers reporting from war zones

61. Journalists and other media professionals face considerable danger when reporting from war zones, however many journalists want to work in the field regardless of the risks. As the nature of today's conflicts have become more complex, media professionals face an increasing risk of being wounded, killed, detained or kidnapped while reporting. While in the past they were able to use their status as journalists for protection and as a means of communicating independently with different actors of the conflict, today they are becoming direct targets in their own right. For female international journalists that threat is exacerbated simply by the fact that they are women and they face an increased risk of sexual assault or rape at the hands of warring parties or the public.

62. Women war reporters also face discrimination and hostility from their bosses and colleagues. They experience sexual violence, although they are discouraged from complaining about assaults so that they can keep working. There are also threats related to the local environment, with male contacts often hired out of necessity to guard their lodging, drive their cars or act as informal translators. In such circumstances, women journalists are expected to carefully cultivate friendly relations and to avoid uncomfortable situations whereby they may be forced to reject sexual advances, which could lead to a predicament that is precarious at best or violent at worst.

63. Over the last decade, male and female reporters have been facing increasing threats, from abduction to imprisonment, kidnapping and ultimately murder, while women journalists are increasingly facing gang rape and sexual assault. Many women journalists have become freelance by necessity because they are fleeing different forms of harassment or abuse suffered in a media institution or outlet, or because they have been fired for complaining about discrimination or mistreatment. Once working independently, they no longer have the type of protection (including income safety) that they had when employed. Freelance women journalists in developing countries and in societies that lack press freedom are especially unlikely to be given any tools by the media organization that hire

³⁷ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Annual Report 2017, vol. II, Annual Report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, ch. II.

them that might keep them safe. They often work alone on stories, in dangerous environments and without health and travel insurance or safety equipment, such as flak jackets and helmets. In order to save money, they may stay in unguarded hotels and ride on insecure public transportation. They do not benefit from security advisers or lawyers who can assist them when they are detained or charged with wrongdoing by the authorities. They are therefore much more vulnerable to attacks, violence and torture without any kind of safety net to protect them.

VI. Reporting on gender-based violence against women

64. The media, including both male and female journalists, plays a fundamental role in reporting on gender-based violence against women by highlighting it as a systematic and widespread phenomenon with a focus on State responsibility to prevent and combat it, particularly if they report in a gender- and victim-sensitive manner. The media is crucial to changing attitudes related to gender-based violence against women, as was demonstrated through its reporting on femicide, which led to the formation of popular movements such as #NiUnaMenos and #MeToo. Media reporting on such issues is an important game changer, as it can demonstrate how widespread gender-based violence really is. The media has the power to change public opinion and in doing so can put pressure on Governments to introduce changes to law and practice to combat it.

65. Reporting on gender-based violence is complex and sensitive and often requires discussion of issues that are deemed taboo and publicly highlighting intimate and distressing matters. In countries where tradition and religion play an important role in everyday life, reporting on such issues can be difficult and may carry certain risks. Women journalists who report on issues of gender or women's rights often face attacks and abuse.

66. Women journalists face unique threats in special circumstances and in particular contexts, such as in times of crisis, during election periods, at public demonstrations and in conflict zones. While progress has been made in terms of training, self-regulation, the establishment of journalistic codes of ethics and media monitoring, much remains to be done, particularly in view of the emerging fundamentalist discourse and the global backlash against women's rights.

VII. Application of the international legal framework on the protection of women journalists

A. International legal framework and State obligations

67. Freedom of expression as a key human right is enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The latter guarantees the right of everyone to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his or her choice. The right is applicable to both female and male journalists as provided for in article 3 of the Covenant. In addition to these important, but gender neutral, provisions of international law, additional protection is provided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a number of regional instruments. Such instruments play a key role in ensuring that the right of women journalists to enjoy freedom of expression without gender-based discrimination or violence is protected.

68. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by Member States in 1995, women and the media were recognized among its 12 critical areas of concern. Two strategic objectives are set out in section J of the Beijing Platform for Action: the first is to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; and the second is to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

69. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in its targets 5.1 and 5.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 5, places a focus for the first time on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres. Of specific relevance to the safety of journalists is target 16.10 of Goal 16, which aims to ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. As set out in the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, indicator 16.10.1 of Goal 16 requires quantification of the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates.

70. In September 2016, the Human Rights Council unanimously adopted resolution 33/2 on the safety of journalists, in which it unequivocally condemned the specific attacks on women journalists in the exercise of their work, including sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence, intimidation and harassment, online and offline, highlighting the need to address the gender-specific threats faced by women journalists.

71. In 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/175 on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, in which it acknowledged the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work and underlined the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists, including in the online sphere. In particular, the Assembly emphasized the importance of effectively tackling gender-based discrimination and gender stereotypes in the media, and enabling women to enter and remain in journalism on equal terms with men while ensuring their safety.

72. In its resolution 38/7 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet, the Human Rights Council echoed its resolution 33/2 in unequivocally condemning online attacks on women, including sexual and gender-based violence and abuse of women, in particular where women journalists, media workers, public officials or others engaging in public debate are targeted, and called for gender-sensitive responses that take into account the particular forms of online discrimination. The Council also called on States to use the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on 2 November 2018 to launch concrete initiatives to provide better protection for journalists in their countries.

73. On 5 July 2018, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 38/5, in which it addressed discrimination and violence against women in digital contexts, including the impact on their freedom of expression (paras. 10 (g) and 11 (a)).

74. In addition, in 2012 UNESCO developed the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In line with the Plan of Action, the protection of journalists should not be limited to those formally recognized as journalists, but should cover others, including community media workers and citizen journalists and others who may be using new media as a means of reaching their audiences. The obligation on States to ensure the effective exercise of human rights involves not only negative obligations of non-interference, but also positive obligations to secure those rights for everyone within their jurisdiction.

75. A preliminary assessment of effectiveness of the Plan of Action was provided in the report prepared by UNESCO in advance of the multi-stakeholder consultation on strengthening its implementation (August 2017).³⁸ In 2019, UNESCO launched a global, one-year-long study on effective measures in countering online violence against women journalists, to be published in late 2020.

76. In a joint statement in March 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women stressed that online gender-based abuse and violence assaulted the basic principles of equality under international law and freedom of expression, and stressed

³⁸ Available from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/report_-_multi-stakeholder_consultation.pdf.

that ensuring an Internet free from gender-based violence enhanced women's empowerment. They also highlighted the fact that women victims and survivors needed transparent and fast responses and effective remedies, which could only be achieved if both States and private actors worked together and exercised due diligence to eliminate online violence against women.³⁹

77. Legislation intended to protect women against online violence but not carefully designed in accordance with the international human rights framework may have adverse collateral effects on other human rights. For instance, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has already pointed out that any State-imposed content restrictions should be provided by law, pursue one of the purposes set out in article 19 (3) of the Covenant and respect the principles of necessity and proportionality (A/HRC/17/27, para. 24 and A/66/290, para. 15).

B. Regional response

1. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

78. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has created special mechanisms that can raise issues concerning the safety of journalists through the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and access to information.

79. In November 2017, participants in a conference on the safety of journalists and ending impunity for crimes committed against journalists in Africa, organized by UNESCO and the Federation of African Journalists, adopted the Nairobi Declaration on National Mechanisms for Safety of Journalists. The conference also adopted the Addis Ababa resolution on the creation of an African Union working group on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity in Africa.

2. Council of Europe

80. Article 17 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) requires States parties to actively encourage the private sector and the media to contribute to the prevention of violence against women. It explains the rationale for the private sector and the media to engage in the fight against violence against women, offering practical advice and setting out good practices. The importance of collaboration between Governments, the private sector and the media to promote measures to prevent gender-based and domestic violence is also emphasized.

81. In 2016, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation (CM/Rec(2016)4) on the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors. In the resolution, the Committee recognized that women journalists and other female media actors faced specific gender-related dangers, including sexist, misogynist and degrading abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment and sexual aggression and violence, and that such violations were increasingly taking place online (para. 2). In the guidelines set out in the appendix to the recommendation, States were called upon to "take appropriate preventive operational measures, such as providing police protection, especially when it is requested by journalists or other media actors, or voluntary evacuation to a safe place. Those measures should be effective and timely and should be designed with consideration for gender-specific dangers faced by female journalists and other female media actors" (para. 9).

82. The Council of Europe platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists documents attacks on journalists and aims to improve the protection of journalists by fostering early warning mechanisms, better addressing threats and violence and improving the capacity for responding to them.

³⁹ Available from www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21317.

3. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

83. Regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have also taken initiatives. In order to address the increasing number of online attacks against journalists and bloggers, in 2015 the OSCE Representative on freedom of the media launched a project on the safety of female journalists online (#SOFJO), which included a full-length documentary, entitled *A Dark Place*, to highlight the experiences of female journalists who have been affected by online harassment.⁴⁰ In 2016, the Office of the Representative on freedom of the media commissioned a report on countering online abuse of female journalists.⁴¹

4. Inter-American system for the protection of human rights

84. Within the inter-American system for the protection of human rights, article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights recognizes the right of every person to exercise freedom of expression and generates positive obligations for States to protect journalists who are at special risk of being victims of violence and to investigate the facts with due diligence.

85. Furthermore, article 7 (b) of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention) provides that States parties condemn all forms of violence against women and agree to pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, policies in order to prevent, punish and eradicate such violence and undertake to apply due diligence to prevent, investigate and impose penalties for violence against women.

86. In June 2017, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted resolution 2908 (XLVII-O/17) on the right to freedom of thought and expression and the safety of journalists and media workers, in which it reaffirmed that journalism must be practised free from threats, physical or psychological aggression, or other acts of intimidation. In the resolution the Assembly expressed concern “for the particular risks faced by women who practice journalism, who are also victims of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence, even on the Internet” and urged member States to implement strategies to end impunity for crimes against journalists and share good practices, and recommended that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression continue with their activities concerning the safety of journalists.

C. Protection of journalists at the international level: examples of good practices

87. The issue of the safety of journalists is raised in the context of the universal periodic review. In their specific recommendations, States have recommended, inter alia, the release of journalists held for exercising their freedom of expression; the removal of libel and defamation as criminal offences; the investigation and prosecution of all allegations of the torture and ill-treatment of journalists; and the modification of legislation to repeal criminal responsibility for exercising freedom of expression, particularly online, and to protect journalists from harassment (A/74/314, para. 22).

88. The United Nations treaty bodies have also raised concerns and made recommendations about the safety of journalists in their concluding observations on State party reports. For example, the Human Rights Committee has expressed concern regarding reports that journalists are subjected to intimidation, harassment and ill-treatment as a result of the exercise of their profession (CCPR/C/MDG/CO/4, para. 49). The Committee against Torture has similarly expressed deep concern about reports of journalists being subjected to threats, intimidation, harassment, surveillance, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance

⁴⁰ See www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/405026.

⁴¹ OSCE Representative on freedom of the media, “New challenges to freedom of expression: countering online abuse of female journalists” (2016).

and killings, and recommended that necessary measures be taken to ensure investigation, accountability and effective remedies for victims (CAT/C/AFG/CO/2, para. 43, and CAT/C/PAK/CO/1, paras. 22 and 23). The Committee also recommended that journalists be protected from reprisals for their work (CAT/C/AFG/CO/2, para. 44).

89. The special procedures of the Human Rights Council perform a key preventive function through the individual complaints procedure under which any individual, group, civil society actor or national human rights body can submit information on alleged violations of human rights to the special procedure mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, whose mandate has issued many communications over the years on violence against journalists.

90. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women is mandated to seek and receive information on violence against women, its causes and consequences, from Governments, treaty bodies, specialized agencies, other Special Rapporteurs responsible for various human rights questions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and to respond effectively to such information. The Special Rapporteur receives and transmits two kinds of communications: one is an urgent appeal when reliable and credible information is received concerning cases which involve an imminent threat, or fear of threat, to the right to personal integrity or life of a woman. The other is an allegation letter, which is used to highlight violations that have already occurred and/or to general patterns of violations. They can also be used to raise concerns over a particular legal framework and its application as regards violence against women. The Special Rapporteur may send allegation letters requiring Governments to clarify the substance of cases of violence against women that she has received.

91. To date only a few journalists have availed themselves of the communication procedure to address alleged violations (A/HRC/39/23, para. 9). Special procedure mandate holders sent 15 communications to countries in 2017 in relation to the rights of journalists, 22 in 2018 and 10 between January and April 2019. Since 2010, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has sent nine joint communications to States related to violence against women journalists and the Special Rapporteur encourages women journalists to use the complaints mechanism.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

92. **At present, the right of women journalists to be safe and free from gender-based violence is protected by a number of international human rights standards and by specific women's rights instruments related to the prohibition of discrimination and gender-based violence against women. In practice, however, these instruments have yet to be fully applied by using the synergies between them. There is also a lack of knowledge and use of the complaints procedure available under the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and other mandates. A gender-sensitive approach at the international and national level is required to ensure the implementation of human rights instruments that are specifically aimed at discrimination against women and gender-based violence, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant regional instruments, for the creation of an enabling environment in which gender balance and the empowerment of women journalists can be fully respected and reflected in their work. In the case of women journalists, that entails, first of all, the obligation of States to include a gender perspective in all initiatives aimed at creating and maintaining a safe and favourable environment for free and independent journalism.**

93. **In that context, Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations to States:**

(a) **Fully apply international human rights standards on the freedom of expression and the protection of journalists, as well as women's rights instruments related to the prohibition of discrimination and gender-based violence against women, using the synergies between them to ensure the safety of women journalists working in**

independent news media and government-affiliated media entities, freelancers and other news media workers, including photo-journalists, editors and camera operators;

(b) Ratify the International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (190) and use it jointly with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to extend protective measures to women journalists in the formal and informal sector by recognizing that the “world of work” for a woman journalist extends beyond a traditional workplace and environment, and that violence and harassment come in many forms;

(c) Bring laws, policies and practices fully into compliance with obligations and commitments under international human rights law and, where necessary, amend them so that they do not limit the ability of women journalists and media workers to carry out their work independently and without undue interference;

(d) Prohibit and criminalize sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence against women journalists, including threats of rape and other forms of gender-based violence such as online or ICT-facilitated forms of violence against women journalists, encourage reporting of harassment or violence, remove any statute of limitation for prosecution and provide adequate reparations and compensation for victims;

(e) Recognize “doxing” against women journalists as a form of gender-based violence against women and address it through relevant legal and policy measures, including the establishment of a reporting mechanism for women journalists who become victims of it;

(f) Address factors that increase the likelihood of violence and harassment in the world of work for women journalists, including discrimination, abuse of power relations and cultural and social norms that support violence and harassment, and create internal mechanisms against sexual harassment in the workplace;

(g) Train male journalists on gender-based violence against women by sensitizing them to gender equality and gender-based violence against women and girls;

(h) Create special investigative units or independent commissions, such as media councils and tribunals that are independent of government, to address issues related to women journalists, in particular gender-based violence;

(i) Support the establishment by media organizations or civil society of early-warning and rapid-response mechanisms, such as hotlines, online platforms or 24-hour emergency contact points, to ensure that journalists and other media actors have immediate access to protective measures when threatened;

(j) Undertake adequate measures to protect the rights and safety of women journalists involved in situations of armed conflict, during periods of elections, in peaceful assemblies during times of crisis, climate change, natural disasters and health pandemics (such as COVID 19), taking into account their specific role, exposure and vulnerability. Also take appropriate gender-specific and timely preventive operational measures, such as providing police protection, especially when it is requested by journalists or other media actors, or voluntary evacuation to a safe place;

(k) Establish a dialogue with journalists’ organizations and civil society for the promotion of best practices for the gender-specific protection of journalists and other media actors and for combating impunity;

(l) Develop protocols and training programmes for police, prosecutors and judges who are responsible for fulfilling State obligations concerning the protection of the freedom of expression and human rights of women journalists and other media actors. The protocols and training programmes should be used to ensure that the personnel of all State agencies are fully aware of the relevant State obligations under international human rights law and humanitarian law, and the actual implications of those obligations for each agency;

(m) Establish information-gathering mechanisms, such as databases, to permit the gathering of verified information about attacks on and gender-based violence against women journalists;

(n) Reaffirming the recommendations made in the report of the Special Rapporteur on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (A/HRC/38/47), implement the principle that the human rights and women's rights that are protected offline should be protected online;

(o) Establish an effective response to online gender-based violence against women journalists and efficient cooperation with Internet intermediaries in that regard;

(p) Cooperate and support the use of the communications procedure of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, to address individual and systematic problems faced by women journalists.

94. The Special Rapporteur recommends that United Nations agencies:

(a) To ensure further awareness-raising and implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, coordinate a United Nations system-wide approach among relevant agencies, funds and programmes, as well as among other international and regional organizations, Member States, the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and on freedom of expression, and the Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on ending discrimination and violence against women. Pay particular attention to paragraph 1.17 of the Plan, which recognizes that women journalists face increasing dangers, highlighting the need for a gender-sensitive approach when implementing human rights instruments on the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination against women;

(b) Support cooperation and coordination at the international level, including through technical assistance and capacity-building, with regard to ensuring the safety of women journalists, and encourage national, subregional, regional and international human rights mechanisms and bodies, including the relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and in particular the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, treaty bodies and national human rights institutions to continue to address the relevant aspects of the safety of women journalists in their work;

(c) Promote and support the use of the communications procedure of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women;

(d) Establish an information-gathering mechanism permitting the collection and swift dissemination of information about threats and attacks against women journalists among law enforcement agencies;

(e) Facilitate the integration of the needs of women journalists in the private sector news media through workers' representatives at the national level.