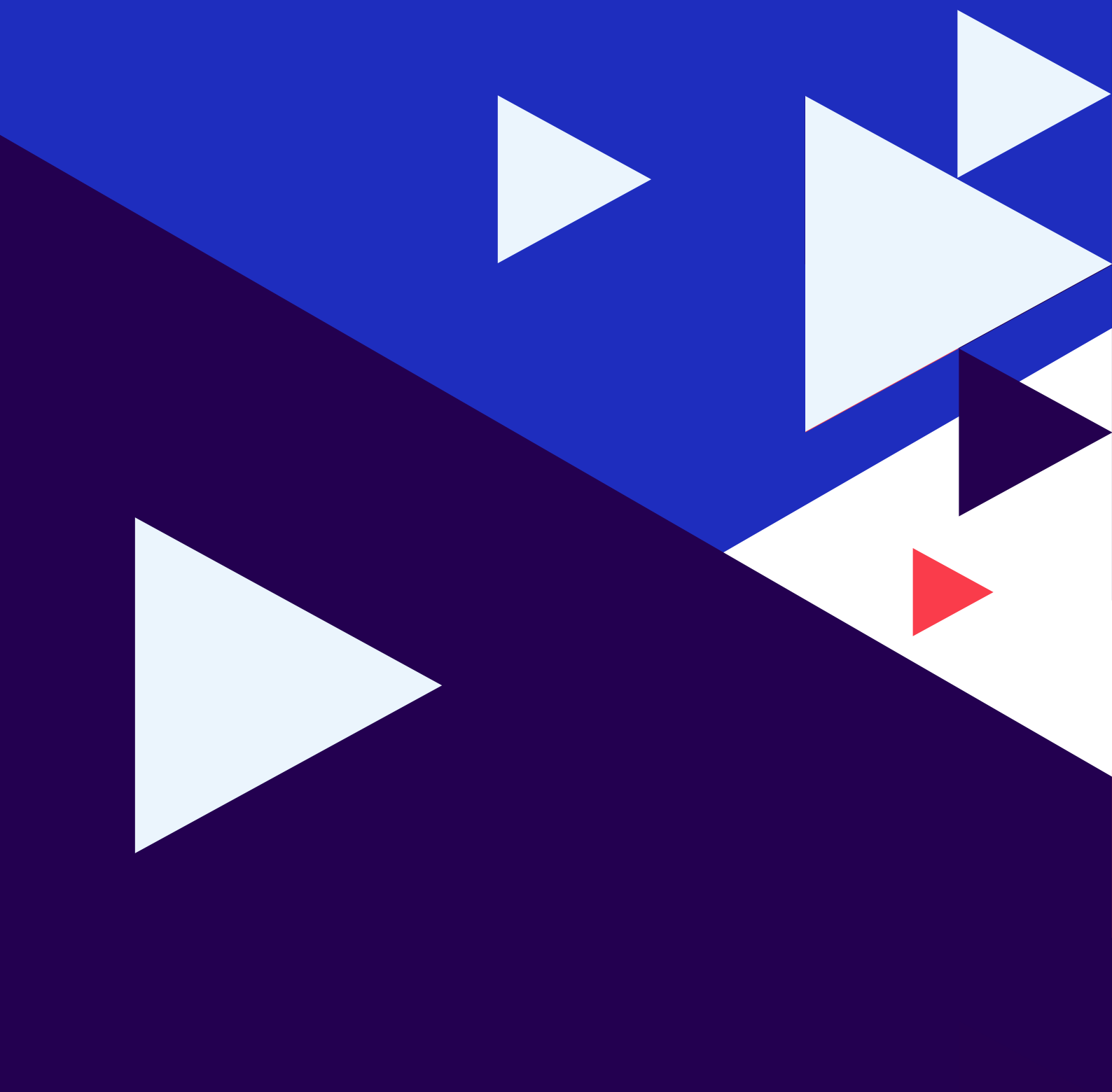


► Decent work and the safety of journalists



► Decent work and the safety of journalists



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. See: creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0. The user is allowed to reuse, share (copy and redistribute), adapt (remix, transform and build upon the original work) as detailed in the licence. The user must clearly credit the ILO as the source of the material and indicate if changes were made to the original content. Use of the emblem, name and logo of the ILO is not permitted in connection with translations, adaptations or other derivative works.

Attribution – The user must indicate if changes were made and must cite the work as follows: ILO, *Decent work and the safety of journalists*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2026. © ILO.

Translations – In case of a translation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This is a translation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This translation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO translation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the translation.*

Adaptations – In case of an adaptation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This is an adaptation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This adaptation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO adaptation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the adaptation.*

Third-party materials – This Creative Commons licence does not apply to non-ILO copyright materials included in this publication. If the material is attributed to a third party, the user of such material is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the rights holder and for any claims of infringement.

Any dispute arising under this licence that cannot be settled amicably shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The parties shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of such a dispute.

For details on rights and licensing, contact: rights@ilo.org. For details on ILO publications and digital products, visit: www.ilo.org/publns.

ISBN: 9789220434277 (print); 9789220434284 (web PDF)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/00033954>

The designations employed in ILO publications and databases, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. See: www.ilo.org/disclaimer.

The opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, views or policies of the ILO.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

► Contents

	Page
► Contents	5
Foreword	6
1. Introduction	7
2. Labour rights for free media	9
2.1. International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work	9
Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining	11
Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour	13
Equal remuneration and non-discrimination in employment and occupation	14
A safe and healthy working environment	16
2.2. Other rights at work	17
Preventing and eliminating violence and harassment	18
Effective social protection	20
3. Labour practices to address the protection of journalists	21
3.1. Prevention	21
Legislative measures	21
Social dialogue	21
Workplace policies and practices	24
Risk assessment and safety protocols	24
Training	25
3.2. Protection	26
Legislative measures	26
Social protection	26
Reporting, complaint and enforcement mechanisms	27
Legal assistance	28
Psychological support	28
3.3. Prosecution	29
Specialized prosecutorial units and priority investigations	29
Clear investigation protocols and training	29
Transparent proceedings and data collection	30
4. Conclusion	31
5. Annex: Selection of international resources relevant to journalism	32
International human rights instruments	32
Fundamental labour Conventions of the International Labour Organization	32
Other ILO standards	32
UN system plans, guidelines and reports	33
Databases and monitoring tools	33

Foreword

The International Labour Organization (ILO) joined the fight to protect the safety of journalists when the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was approved by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2012. For the ILO, journalists are key to promoting labour and human rights and ensuring public access to information and fundamental freedoms.

Journalists are also workers. As this report sets out, the safety of journalists depends not only on freedom of expression but on the enjoyment of basic labour rights. The report examines how fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as other relevant international labour standards, can promote the safety of journalists and help governments, media employers, workers, and their respective organizations develop strategies and actions for ensuring safety and protection in journalism.

Through this report we hope to contribute to the wider work of the United Nations system and the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and address the violence, harassment and other risks at work faced by journalists worldwide. International labour standards can be effective tools to protect journalists and media workers in their role of advancing public access to information and accountability.

The document was prepared by Lucy Lu Reimers, Maria Gabriella Breglia and Oliver Liang with input from social partners and key stakeholders in the UN Plan of Action, as well as numerous technical units in the ILO.

Frank Hagemann

Director, Sectoral Policies
International Labour Organization

Geneva

April 2026

1. Introduction

The work of journalists and media workers (hereafter referred to as “journalists”)¹ is key to advancing labour and human rights and nurturing democratic governance.² Independent journalism and journalists are the key to reaching Sustainable Development Goals target 16.10 (public access to information and fundamental freedoms).

Yet around the world, independent journalism is in peril. UNESCO has estimated a 10 per cent decline in the Freedom of Expression Index globally since 2012, with increases in self-censorship and government efforts to control and restrict media.³ This trend is exacerbated by changes in the business models that underpin independent journalism and a global decline in press freedom.⁴ Authorities are placing more restrictions on media freedom (including through anti-“fake news” legislation),⁵ while journalists frequently find themselves targeted for their criticism of government policies and corruption.⁶

Moreover, journalists are increasingly at risk. Since 1993, more than 1,850 journalists have been killed and hundreds of journalists are currently either arbitrarily detained, missing or exposed to threats.⁷ The majority of killings remain unresolved. According to UNESCO, 310 journalists – including 24 women – were killed between 2022 and mid-2025; more than half of these victims were journalists and media workers reporting news about conflict and war.⁸ Violence against journalists goes beyond homicides, with new phenomena such as increasing legal harassment in the form of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs);⁹ transnational repression;¹⁰ online violence; and violence specifically targeting women journalists.¹¹

In the context of ongoing structural transformations, hostile climates (including armed conflict and other crises), persistent safety threats and new digital risks, advancing the freedom and safety of journalists through joint action is more important than ever.¹²

¹ This term is in line with the terminology used in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) monitoring and reporting mechanisms related to Sustainable Development Goals indicator 16.10.1 (Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months). It is also in line with the decision of the UNESCO International Programme on the Development of Communication and the Human Rights Council's broad interpretation of journalism (see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue](#), A/HRC/20/17 (2012)).

² ILO, [The State of Social Justice: A Work in Progress](#), 2025, 15–16. This message has also been conveyed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [“Safety of Journalists”](#)).

³ UNESCO, [World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Journalism: Shaping a World at Peace](#), 2025.

⁴ UNESCO, [Journalism Is a Public Good: World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2021/2022](#), 2022, 84. Over the past five years, an estimated 85 per cent of the world's population have experienced a decline in press freedom in their country, including through expression-restricting legislation and policies in the context of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Equally worrying are the findings of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), indicating an overall weakening of democracy and the most far-reaching decline in freedom of the press in 50 years. See International IDEA, [The Global State of Democracy 2025: Democracy on the Move](#), 2025.

⁵ See OHCHR, [“Documents Listing”](#), reports on the safety of journalists; and UN Human Rights Council, [Reinforcing Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists in the Digital Age: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Irene Khan](#), A/HRC/50/29 (2022).

⁶ Amnesty International, [“India: Authorities Should Stop Targeting, Prosecuting Journalists and Online Critics”](#) press release, 3 May 2022; International Press Institute, [“Rush to Pass ‘Fake News’ Laws during Covid-19 Intensifying Global Media Freedom Challenges”](#), 3 October 2020; Human Rights Watch, [“Greece: Alleged ‘Fake News’ Made a Crime. New Law Could Lead to Journalists Being Jailed”](#), 17 November 2021; Pelin Ünker, [“Turkey Seeks to Tighten Media Control with ‘Fake News’ Bill”](#), *dw.com*, 31 May 2022; Lisa Anne Essex, [“LGBTQI Communities, A Reporter’s Guide”](#), European Journalism Centre, 2021, 4.

⁷ UNESCO, [“Observatory of Killed Journalists”](#).

⁸ UNESCO, [World Trends Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Journalism](#), 34.

⁹ OHCHR, [“The Impact of SLAPPs on Human Rights and How to Respond”](#), 2024.

¹⁰ See UN Human Rights Council, [Journalists in Exile: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression](#) (A/HRC/56/53), 2024.

¹¹ UNESCO, [Journalism Is a Public Good](#); UN General Assembly, [Report of the Secretary-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#), A/80/345 (2025).

¹² UNESCO, [Journalism Is a Public Good](#), 3.

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers – in both conflict and non-conflict situations – in order to strengthen peace, democracy and development worldwide.¹³ Implemented through a multistakeholder effort, the Plan of Action addresses prevention, protection and prosecution across six areas: raising awareness; standard-setting and policymaking; monitoring and reporting; capacity-building; research; and coalition-building. The International Labour Organization (ILO) became part of the Plan of Action in April 2012, following its approval by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

Independent journalism is closely associated with human rights, both as a human right per se and as an enabler of other human rights. The safety of journalists is usually defended through the lens of human rights, in particular freedom of thought and expression, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 19) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 19).¹⁴

But the safety of journalists is also an important labour issue.¹⁵ A free press is critical for labour rights. The Declaration of Philadelphia, which forms part of the ILO Constitution, asserts that “freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress” and emphasized that this was one of the “fundamental principles on which the Organization is based”.¹⁶ By exposing abuses and the denial of fundamental human and labour rights, journalists play a key role in “making life better for all workers”.¹⁷ For instance, balanced and ethical reporting can play an important role in pushing for social change to curb child labour¹⁸ and forced labour¹⁹ or countering discrimination against migrant workers.²⁰

At the same time, labour rights are critical for a free media. This report offers a labour perspective on the freedom of expression and one of its critical building blocks: the labour conditions of journalists. Following up a mandate set out in 2014, this document is intended to provide guidance to governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, and media companies on the relevance of fundamental principles and rights at work in the media sector.²¹ It will set out how the fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as other relevant international labour standards, apply to the protection of journalists as *workers*, highlighting both good practices and the challenges and opportunities that journalists encounter.

► Box 1

The ILO was founded in 1919 and became a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946. It currently has 187 Member States and has a unique “tripartite” structure, which brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers on an equal footing to address issues related to labour and social policy. The ILO’s broad policies are set by the International Labour Conference, which meets once a year and brings together its constituents. The Conference also adopts new international labour standards and the ILO’s work programme and budget. Between the sessions of the Conference, the ILO is guided by its Governing Body. The ILO’s Secretariat has its headquarters in Geneva and maintains field offices in more than 40 countries. On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, in 1969, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

¹³ UN Security Council, [resolution 1738 \(2006\)](#).

¹⁴ OHCHR, “[Briefer on How International Human Rights Standards and Mechanisms Help Protect Journalists](#)”, 2023.

¹⁵ Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, et. al., “Conceptualizing Journalists’ Safety around the Globe”, *Digital Journalism* 11, No. 7 (2023): 1211–1229.

¹⁶ ILO, [Declaration of Philadelphia](#).

¹⁷ ILO, “[Media Engagement on Forced Labour and Fair Recruitment](#)”, 2022.

¹⁸ ILO, “[Journalists Have a Key Role to Play in the Collective Effort to Eliminate Child Labour](#)”, 2021.

¹⁹ ILO, “[Reporting on Forced Labour and Fair Recruitment: An ILO Toolkit for Journalists](#)”.

²⁰ ILO, “[Labour Migration: Guidance for Journalists](#)”, 2022.

²¹ ILO, [Points of Consensus: Challenges faced by Governments and Social Partners with respect to Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Sector](#), GDFMCS/2014/7, 2014.

2. Labour rights for free media

Journalists face a wide array of risks in the course of their work, ranging from discrimination and violence to threats against their fundamental freedoms, such as the right to express opinions and associate freely, and in extreme cases face threats against their life. These challenges are particularly acute in crisis and conflict situations, during which journalists can face physical attacks (including killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture) and other harmful acts (such as manipulation, harassment and censorship from both state and private actors). Such pressures not only endanger the safety of journalists but also undermine efforts to respect, promote and realize their fundamental rights at work and compromise the integrity of their reporting.

Moreover, many journalists face economic challenges. Since the late twentieth century, the number of employed journalists has declined significantly and the real salaries of the remaining journalists have decreased or remained mostly stagnant, while their workloads have increased.²² In parallel, the business model of journalism has changed, with increasing reliance on freelance and independent journalists to create content.²³ A survey published by the World Association of News Publishers in April 2025 shows that 60 per cent of the journalists interviewed have experienced burn-out, while 62 per cent are forced to supplement their income with other types of work to make ends meet.²⁴ A free press depends not only on fundamental freedoms but also on the economic and social conditions that allow journalists and media workers to perform their duties with integrity and independence. Respecting, protecting and realizing labour rights is therefore a vital precondition for safeguarding independent media and implementing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

In this section, we provide an overview of the fundamental principles and rights at work and other international labour standards and discuss their relevance for protecting journalists, particularly in the light of the growing risks and challenges they face.

2.1. International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

Over the course of the ILO's long history, the Organization's constituents (governments, employers and workers) have drawn up a set of standards, consisting of international Conventions and Recommendations, which set out basic principles and rights at work and are collectively referred to as international labour standards.²⁵

The international labour standards are primarily instruments to help governments (in consultation with employers and workers) to draft and implement labour law and social policy in accordance with internationally accepted standards. ILO Conventions are legally binding instruments; that is, ILO Member States have an obligation to implement the international labour Conventions they have ratified. ILO Recommendations are not binding and can serve as guidance for law and policymaking. At the same time, international institutions, multinational enterprises and non-governmental organizations can benefit from this knowledge by incorporating the principles of these standards into their policies, operational objectives and day-to-day action.²⁶

In 1998, the ILO identified eight core Conventions covering subjects that are considered to be the fundamental principles and rights at work:²⁷

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

²² Mirjam Gollmitzer, "Employment Conditions in Journalism", Oxford Research Encyclopedia, 26 March 2019; UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*.

²³ ILO, *Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Industries*, GDFMCS/2014, 2014; Philipp Rottwilm, *The Future of Journalistic Work: Its Changing Nature and Implications* (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2014), 18.

²⁴ Taktak, "Survey of European Journalists", March 2025.

²⁵ ILO, *Rules of the Game: An Introduction to the Standards-Related Work of the International Labour Organization (Centennial Edition 2019)*, 18.

²⁶ ILO, *Rules of the Game*, 17.

²⁷ ILO, *Rules of the Game*, 17.

- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

In 2022, occupational safety and health (OSH) was included as one of the fundamental principles and rights at work, and as a result the following two Conventions were also designated as fundamental Conventions:

- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
- Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187).

All ILO Member States, even if they have not ratified the fundamental Conventions listed above, have an obligation, arising from the very fact of their membership in the Organization, to respect, promote and realize, in good faith and in accordance with the Constitution, the principles concerning the fundamental rights which are the subject of those Conventions, namely:

- freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;
- the effective abolition of child labour;
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and
- a safe and healthy working environment.

Addressing these fundamental labour rights and other international labour standards provide a unique labour-based approach to supporting the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.²⁸

► Box 2

The ILO supervisory system

International labour standards are backed by a supervisory system that is unique at the international level and that helps to ensure that countries implement the Conventions they ratify. The ILO regularly examines the application of standards in Member States and points out gaps in implementation. If there are any problems in the application of standards, the ILO seeks to assist countries through social dialogue and technical assistance.

The ILO has developed various means of supervising the application of Conventions and Recommendations in law and practice following their adoption by the International Labour Conference and their ratification by States. ILO supervisory mechanisms include the regular examination of periodic reports submitted by Member States on the measures they have taken to implement the provisions of the Conventions they have ratified; a representations procedure and a complaints procedure of general application; and a special procedure for the freedom of association. This special procedure applies to all ILO Member States, regardless of whether they have ratified the Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining or not.²⁹

Journalists can draw the attention of ILO supervisory bodies to issues related to applicable international labour standards through national or international representative employers' and workers' organizations.

²⁸ While the elimination of child labour is a core element of the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work, its direct relevance to the journalism sector is limited. Professional journalism typically operates within regulated, adult-dominated labour markets in which child labour is rare. Therefore, this document does not address child labour in detail, focusing instead on those fundamental rights most directly applicable to journalism and media work.

²⁹ For further information, see ILO, "[International Labour Standards](#)".

Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

The journalism profession is characterized by a wide spectrum of employment relationships and of civil and commercial contracts relating to work. This spectrum includes traditional open-ended employment contracts, fixed-term contracts, project and contract work, self-employment and freelancing. Some relationships in this sector are commercial and fall outside the scope of the employment relationship and its concomitant rights and responsibilities.³⁰ In many countries, freelancers – whether serving multiple clients or only one – now make up the majority of journalists.³¹ While independent employment has benefits, such as allowing workers editorial freedom and variety, as well as flexibility in performing their tasks/duties, contract work also comes with challenges,³² including implications for how well journalists are protected against the risks they face in their day-to-day work. Such arrangements can result in the exclusion of journalists from full OSH protection, social security coverage and trade union representation. Moreover, non-employee status can in some cases drive journalists to take greater risks to cover dangerous topics, or to succumb to commercial or political pressure to adapt coverage in order to secure further employment.³³

Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, as enshrined in Conventions Nos 87 and No. 98, are essential foundations for securing the safety of journalists. These Conventions ensure that journalists and all workers in the media and culture sector – regardless of the nature of their employment relationship – can freely form and join unions.³⁴ Unions can advocate journalists' and media workers' rights and voluntarily engage in collective agreements that address the various issues related to their work, including with respect to wages, working time, training and OSH protection against the unique psychophysical risks facing their profession. These rights also provide protection against retaliation, dismissal, blacklisting and other reprisals linked to union membership or collective action.

While the fundamental principles and rights at work apply to all workers, in practice, some workers are limited when exercising the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.³⁵ Freelance journalists working remotely or for multiple clients are generally more difficult for unions and journalists' associations to reach. They may also not be receptive to unionizing for fear of losing their jobs.³⁶ Some trade unions also exclude self-employed workers.³⁷ Moreover, competition laws may also prevent self-employed workers from unionizing and engaging in collective bargaining.³⁸

As a result, self-employed journalists who engage in freelance, contract and casual labour are often not covered by collective agreements. As many jobs in print and broadcast media are transforming into freelance jobs in digital media, almost every major journalist union has seen a declining membership in recent years.³⁹ Overall, the growth in diverse employment relationships and a trend towards deregulated individual negotiations have resulted in the fragmentation of collective bargaining in the sector.⁴⁰

³⁰ ILO, *Points of Consensus*.

³¹ Georgios Terzis, ed., *European Media Governance: The Brussels Dimension* (Intellect, 2008), 143.

³² IFJ, *The Changing Nature of Work: A Global Survey and Case Study of Atypical Work in the Media Industry*, 2006.

³³ Francesca Barca, "Freelance Journalists in Europe: The Costs of Independence", *euobserver*, 22 August 2025; Robert Mahoney, "Going it Alone: More Freelancers Means Less Support, Greater Danger", *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 27 April 2015.

³⁴ ILO, *Points of Consensus*.

³⁵ Minawa Ebisui, "Non-Standard Workers: Good Practices of Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining", 2012, *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 217.

³⁶ IFJ, "Journalists' Unions in the Digital Age: Organising for Growth", 2020.

³⁷ ILO, *Points of Consensus*.

³⁸ ILO, *The Future of Work in the Arts and Entertainment Sector*, TMFWAE/2023, 2023.

³⁹ IFJ, "Journalists' Unions in the Digital Age".

⁴⁰ ILO, *Points of Consensus*.

The ILO supervisory bodies have noted that the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining cover all employers and workers without establishing distinctions based on their contractual status.⁴¹ Similarly, the ILO supervisory bodies have on multiple occasions reaffirmed the right to collective bargaining in respect of fixed-term and temporary workers, part-time workers, apprentices and outsourced or contract workers.⁴² As for part-time employees, while their particular circumstances may call for differentiated treatment and adjustments (for example, with regard to the definition of bargaining units or rules of certification), the basic rights of association and collective bargaining should be afforded to part-time employees as well.⁴³

In recent years, the ILO has increasingly focused on the access to collective bargaining of workers in diverse forms of work arrangements in general – and of self-employed workers in particular. The ILO supervisory bodies have reiterated the universal character of the principles and rights enshrined in the fundamental Conventions. In 2019, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work called upon all Members to strengthen the institutions of work to ensure adequate protection for all workers. It reaffirmed the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means of providing legal protection to workers, emphasizing that all workers should enjoy adequate protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, taking into account respect for their fundamental rights.

Furthermore, the ILO supervisory bodies have repeatedly noted that Conventions Nos 87 and 98 cover all employers and workers, without establishing distinctions based on their contractual status.⁴⁴ At the Global Dialogue Forum on Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Sector held in 2014, constituents agreed that “[f]undamental principles and rights at work apply to all workers in the media and culture sector, regardless of the nature of their employment relationship”.⁴⁵

Collective bargaining for independent contractors has sparked debate in multiple countries, in particular with regard to the challenges that arise at the intersection of competition law and the right to sufficient bargaining power to be able to influence their working conditions.⁴⁶ In response, “jurisdictions around the world have taken action to clarify the application of competition law, with varying outcomes”.⁴⁷ In certain countries, legislation does not recognize self-employed workers’ right to create or join unions, while in other countries self-employed workers cannot collectively negotiate their working conditions through their representative organizations, based on the assumption that self-employed workers are undertakings and their grouping would facilitate a concentration of power in the hands of one group and would affect free competition. With regard to the importance of competition law in preventing unfair competition, in some countries, such as Ireland, this law has been amended to reflect the specific reality of certain categories of workers in the arts and entertainment sector, allowing voice-over actors, freelance journalists and session musicians to engage in collective bargaining.⁴⁸ However, the extent to which self-employed workers can engage in collective bargaining continues to vary depending on how national jurisdictions interpret and apply competition regulations.⁴⁹

Moreover, the ILO has called for governments to “ensure that competition legislation does not obstruct the right of media and culture workers to freedom of association or to engaging in social dialogue”.⁵⁰ Some countries have implemented legal reforms to address the unique circumstances of certain groups of self-employed workers. For

⁴¹ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022: Collective Bargaining for an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery*, 2022, 51.

⁴² ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, 42; ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-level Social Dialogue for Economic Development and Social Progress*, 2024, 181.

⁴³ ILO, *Freedom of Association: Compilation of Decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association*, sixth edition (2018), para. 1278.

⁴⁴ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, 51.

⁴⁵ ILO, *Points of Consensus*, para 3.

⁴⁶ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024*, 55.

⁴⁷ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024*, 124.

⁴⁸ ILO, *The Future of Work in the Arts and Entertainment Sector*, 64.

⁴⁹ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, 17.

⁵⁰ ILO, *Points of Consensus*, para. 7.

example, in Ireland, the Competition (Amendment) Act 2017 explicitly establishes that the prohibition against price-fixing agreements does not apply to collective agreements involving specific categories of self-employed workers, such as voice-over actors, freelance journalists and session musicians.⁵¹

The determination of the employment relationship is also an important factor in establishing labour rights, especially in relation to “disguised employment relationships”, such as those that might arise in certain situations if a freelancer regularly works for a single employer. The Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 (No. 198) requires that Member States’ national policies provide guidance on “the distinction between employed and self-employed workers” (Para. 1(4)(a)). Moreover, measures should be in place to “combat disguised employment relationships” (Para. 1(4)(b)), while these national policies should not “interfere with true civil and commercial relationships” (Para. 8)). A lack of a well-defined classification system with clear criteria in national regulatory frameworks can make it challenging to differentiate between workers who are “mis-classified” as self-employed – affecting their access to collective bargaining – and those who are genuinely self-employed. The ILO’s *Social Dialogue Report 2022* highlights regulatory steps taken by several countries to ensure the correct classification of workers, either as employees or self-employed, especially in response to the growing prevalence of diverse work arrangements. These measures have included “clarifying the employment status of workers and ensuring that workers in diverse forms of work arrangements enjoy the right to bargain collectively”.⁵²

Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour

The human right to freedom of opinion and expression includes the right “to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.⁵³ Through their work, journalists help to ensure that this right is fulfilled and defended, yet undue pressure from governments means that journalists in some instances pay a heavy price.

In recent years, numerous legal initiatives have emerged that threaten journalists’ freedom of expression.⁵⁴ These laws, often framed as measures to enhance transparency or protect national interests, can in fact undermine media independence. For journalists, these laws can create an atmosphere of fear, mental stress and self-censorship, making it more difficult for them to carry out their work freely and critically. For instance, UNESCO’s *World Trends Global Report on Freedom of Expression and Media Development* (2021 – 2022) recorded that in 2021, at least 160 UNESCO Member States still deal with defamation as a criminal rather than civil law matter, while the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) observed an increasing misuse of legislation in recent years that do not comply with human rights standards.⁵⁵ At the same time, a raft of new laws has been passed in the last five years that ostensibly take aim at misinformation and disinformation, cybercrime and hate speech but in fact have potentially grave implications for media freedom.⁵⁶ At least 57 laws and regulations across 44 countries have been adopted or amended since 2016 that contain overly vague language or disproportionate punishments that threaten online freedom of expression and media freedom.⁵⁷

A significant trend is the introduction of “foreign agent” laws, which require organizations receiving foreign funding to be labelled as foreign agents and impose stringent regulations, as well as the misuse of financial laws to pressure, silence and intimidate journalists and media outlets.⁵⁸ These laws place journalists and media outlets

⁵¹ ILO, [Achieving Decent Work in the Arts and Entertainment Sector: The Role of Collective Bargaining – Policy Guidance Note](#), 2025, 12.

⁵² ILO, *Social Dialogue Report*, 2022, 17.

⁵³ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 19.](#)

⁵⁴ See OHCHR, [“Documents Listing”](#), reports on the safety of journalists; and UN Human Rights Council, *Reinforcing Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists in the Digital Age*.

⁵⁵ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*; UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*.

⁵⁶ United Nations Human Rights Council, [Summary Report of the Expert Seminar on Legal and Economic Threats to the Safety of Journalists](#) (A/HRC/55/39), 2023.

⁵⁷ UNESCO, [The “Misuse” of the Judicial System to Attack Freedom of Expression: Trends, Challenges and Responses](#), 2022.

⁵⁸ UNESCO, [“The Misuse of Financial Laws to Pressure, Silence and Intimidate Journalists and Media Outlets: Issue Brief”](#), 2024.

under constant scrutiny and expose them to potential harassment or legal action, limiting their freedom to investigate and report on sensitive issues.⁵⁹

In some countries, compulsory labour is still used as a punishment for expressing political views, while journalists who express dissident views or criticism of (political) authorities are especially at risk.⁶⁰

Convention No. 29 and its 2014 Protocol, as well as Convention No. 105, provide the international legal framework for protecting individuals from forced labour. Convention No. 29 defines forced or compulsory labour as “all work or service which is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (Art. 2(1)). Convention No. 105 supplements Convention No. 29 and establishes, among other things, that forced or compulsory labour should not be used as “a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social or economic system” (Art. 1(a)). The ILO’s Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) has considered that the range of activities which must be protected under this provision should comprise freedom to express political or ideological views (which may be exercised orally or through the press and other communications media), as well as various other generally recognized rights, such as the right of association and of assembly, through which citizens seek to secure the dissemination and acceptance of their views and which may also be affected by measures of political coercion.⁶¹ The CEACR has also expressed concern about the use of forced labour as a punishment for expressing political views and has repeatedly recalled this prohibition in relation to the sentencing of journalists.⁶²

The CEACR has also noted that “in a number of countries, defamation still constitutes a penal offence punishable with sanctions involving the obligation to perform work [and] has emphasized the importance of amending the defamation provisions, so that they do not constitute penal offences punishable with sanctions involving compulsory labour.”⁶³

Equal remuneration and non-discrimination in employment and occupation

Discrimination based on gender and race remains prevalent in the journalism sector, with age discrimination being increasingly reported.⁶⁴ After a slow and steady rise in women’s share of visibility and voice in the news, progress has stagnated since 2010.⁶⁵ For instance, only 41 per cent of reporters in legacy media news articles are women and, even though the situation is slightly better in online news, women are not in top editor and manager positions in many countries.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ mfr.eu, “Media Freedom Rapid Response: Monitor”.

⁶⁰ IFJ, “Russia: Four Journalists Sentenced to Forced Labor”, 14 April 2022); Grant Peck, “Myanmar Court Sentences US Journalist to 11 Years with Hard Labor”, AP, 12 November 2021; Ilaria Allegrozzi, “Burkina Faso Releases Conscribed Journalists, Activist”, *Human Rights Watch*, 31 July 2025.

⁶¹ ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face: General Survey on the Fundamental Conventions Concerning Rights at Work in Light of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008*, ILC.101/III/1B, 2012, para. 302.

⁶² ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face*, para. 266; ILO, *Application of International Labour Standards 2022: Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations*, ILC.110/III(A) 2022, 323, 342.

⁶³ ILO, *General Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session (2024). Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)*.

⁶⁴ Limited evidence exists on discrimination based on age. However, several cases have been reported of journalists who have been victims of ageism. See, for example, Jake Kanter, “BBC News Journalists Lodge Age Discrimination Complaint”, *deadline.com*, 12 June 2025; Karen Ross, “Gendered Agism in the Media Industry: Disavowal, Discrimination and the Pushback”, *Journal of Women & Aging*, 36, No. 1(2024), 61–77.

⁶⁵ UN Women, “GMMP 2025 Highlights of Findings: Progress on a Plateau – Gender Equality in and through the World News Media across 30 Years of Media Monitoring”, 2025.

⁶⁶ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 97; Simge Andi, Meera Selva and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, “Women and Leadership in the News Media 2020: Evidence from Ten Markets”, fact sheet, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 8 March 2020; Luba Kassova, *From Outrage to Opportunity: Perspectives of Women of All Colors in News Leadership and Coverage*, AKAS, 2022, 16; UN Women, “GMMP 2025 Highlights of Findings”.

Minorities are under-represented among journalists and top editors in some countries,⁶⁷ with people from racial, ethnic, religious and other minority groups representing only 6 per cent of the persons seen, heard or spoken about across traditional and digital news worldwide,⁶⁸ with significant variations across countries.⁶⁹ Journalists and voices from the LGBTQA+ community are even more under-represented.⁷⁰

This has implications for the content produced by media outlets, such as a lack of reporting on issues of gender equality and a persistent bias towards men's perspectives in the news.⁷¹ In its extreme consequences, discrimination pushes journalists to self-censoring, withdrawing from media altogether.⁷²

Moreover, discrimination based on the employment relationship compounds other vulnerabilities in the media and culture sector. High stress levels, bullying and harassment, intense workloads and anti-social working hours pressure working mothers into part-time, temporary or freelance positions,⁷³ with the risk of lower social protection coverage⁷⁴ and poorer professional and working conditions.⁷⁵

Women are also consistently paid less than their men counterparts. For example, in Brazil, women journalists earn on average 5.7 per cent less than men for the same work;⁷⁶ in the United Kingdom, an analysis reveals that men are paid more than women in all but two of the 33 media companies that submitted their pay gap figures for 2022.⁷⁷

Sexual harassment, "a manifestation of sex-based discrimination", is prevalent in newsrooms and the culture/entertainment industry more broadly.⁷⁸ For instance, research in 20 countries found that on average, 41 per cent of women (and 12 per cent of men) experienced sexual harassment of some kind in the workplace – overwhelmingly perpetrated by fellow employees or management; women and gender non-conforming media professionals were almost three and a half times more likely to experience harassment than men.⁷⁹ Worryingly, the majority of cases (80 per cent) went unreported due to fear of negative impact – including job loss and retaliation.⁸⁰

Convention No. 100 requires Member States to promote and ensure the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

⁶⁷ Alexandra Brzozowski, "[Diversity in Media Sector: Still Lots of Room for Improvement](#)", Euractiv, 25 November 2020; Kirsten Eddy, Meera Selva and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, "[Race and Leadership in the News Media 2022: Evidence from Five Markets](#)", Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 21 March 2022.

⁶⁸ UN Women, *GMMP 2025 Highlights of Findings*.

⁶⁹ In 2021, none of the news outlets sampled in Brazil, Germany and the United Kingdom had a non-white top editor, whereas the percentage of non-white top editors in the United States of America was 33 per cent. When looking at the percentage of non-white journalists, comparative assessments also indicate disparities: in 2022, only 6 per cent of journalists in the United Kingdom and 9 per cent of journalists in the United States of America were non-white, whereas 34 per cent of journalists in Brazil and South Africa, respectively, were non-white. See Brzozowski; Grieco; and Thomas Hanitzsch et. al, *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe* (Columbia University Press, 2019).

⁷⁰ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 2022, 97.

⁷¹ Luba Kassova, "[The Missing Perspectives of Women in News: A Report on Women's Underrepresentation in News Media](#)", The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2020, 16.

⁷² Elodie Vialle, "[Stand up for Journalism: Ending the Silence on Online Harassment of Journalists](#)", European Federation of Journalists, 2025.

⁷³ IFJ, *Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism*, 2009.

⁷⁴ ILO, *Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Industries*, 5, 10.

⁷⁵ As noted by a worker participant from Ireland at the 2014 Global Dialogue Forum on Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Sector; see ILO, *Global Dialogue Forum on Employment Relationships in the Media and Culture Sector: Final Report of the Discussion*, GDFMCS/2014/10, 2014.

⁷⁶ Federação nacional dos jornalistas, "[Maioria dos jornalistas empregados formalmente são mulheres, brancos e com idade entre 30 e 39 anos](#)", 5 January 2024.

⁷⁷ Charlotte Tobitt, "[Gender Pay Gap at UK Media Companies Narrows to 12%](#)", *PressGazette*, 14 April 2023.

⁷⁸ ILO, "[Policy Brief on Sexual Harassment in the Entertainment Industry](#)", 2020, 2; Jason Schwartz, "[Media Outlets Reassess Their Newsroom Cultures](#)", *Politico*, 22 November 2017.

⁷⁹ Vincent Peyrègne, "[Global Study Analysing Sexual Harassment in Newsrooms Released by WAN-IFRA Women in News](#)", WAN-IFRA, 26 January 2022.

⁸⁰ Suranjana Tewari, "[Al Jazeera Staff Allege Harassment and Bullying Went Unchecked](#)", BBC News, 17 October 2022.

Convention No. 111 requires ILO Member States to eliminate “all discrimination, in respect of all aspects of employment and occupation, through the concrete development of equality of opportunities and treatment.”⁸¹ It also defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, and political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation” (Art. 1(1)(a)), with the possibility of extending protection to address discrimination on the basis of other criteria.⁸²

Notably, the CEACR has understood sexual harassment as a form of discrimination that should be addressed within the requirements of Convention No. 111, urging governments “to take appropriate measures to prohibit sexual harassment in employment and occupation”.⁸³ The Committee has also repeatedly reaffirmed the need to guarantee protection for individuals in the context of employment and occupation against discrimination on the basis of political opinion.⁸⁴ Should an individual be suspected of, or engaged in, activities prejudicial to the security of the state (this is distinct from being targeted on the basis of political opinion and “shall not be deemed to be discrimination” (Art. 4), though the Committee has recalled that the exception should be interpreted restrictively), the Convention protects the affected individual’s right to appeal to a competent body established in accordance with national practice.⁸⁵

A safe and healthy working environment

The drive “to be the first to break the news” incentivizes many media outlets and journalists to work around the clock, sometimes without overtime pay. Long shifts at odd hours can be both physically and mentally disruptive, as well as damaging to personal life; freelancers, especially, can feel pressured to work over night to deliver by deadlines. Moreover, between 80 and 100 per cent of journalists have been exposed to a work-related traumatic event.⁸⁶

The high-intensity nature of the work – combined with the psychological impacts of a 24-hour news cycle, heavy equipment and props, online harassment and offline attacks – can cause journalists and other media professionals (including editors and managers) to be at greater risk of accidents, anxiety, burn-out and psychological trauma.⁸⁷

When covering crises such as armed conflict, violence, natural disasters and global pandemics, journalists’ physical safety is at heightened risk, due to both incidental exposure and specific targeting.⁸⁸ The need to break stories quickly means that there is often little time to conduct risk assessments for journalists embarking on assignment.⁸⁹ In addition, journalists often lack basic training on how to navigate dangerous environments.⁹⁰ Freelance journalists, especially, lack support in this regard and often have to pay for their own safety training.⁹¹ Moreover, even indirect exposure to traumatic content – especially if repeated frequently – can cause post-

⁸¹ ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face*.

⁸² ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face*.

⁸³ Duncan Chappell and Vittorio Di Martino, *Violence at Work*, third edition (ILO, 2006), 266. The Committee noted that sexual harassment undermined equality at work by calling into question the integrity, dignity and well-being of workers, as well as weakening the bases upon which work relationships are built and impairing productivity.

⁸⁴ Cuba-CEACR observation on Convention No. 111. referring to a 2013 CEACR observation.

⁸⁵ ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face*.

⁸⁶ River Smith, Elana Newman et al., “Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists: Research Overview”, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, March 2019.

⁸⁷ Desiree Hill, “News Managers Are Traumatized, Too”, Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), 15 August 2018; River Smith and others, “Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists: Research Overview”, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, March 2019; ILO, *OSH Guidebook for TV Journalists and Media Workers*, 2022.

⁸⁸ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 89.

⁸⁹ European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), “[Project Safety4Journalists](#)”, 7 April 2021.

⁹⁰ EFJ, “[Safety of Journalists: Media Employers Need to Fulfill Their Duty of Care](#)”, 13 July 2022.

⁹¹ EFJ, “Safety of Journalists”.

traumatic stress disorder among journalists and media workers.⁹² The financial precariousness facing journalists can also worsen their mental health.⁹³ In general, there is little mental health support, particularly for journalists who fall outside of the category of “on-the-ground” reporters,⁹⁴ with freelancers most likely to pay for their own mental healthcare.⁹⁵ For instance, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic compounded challenges to the health and safety of journalists, as those who were able to continue work faced the risk of exposure to the virus⁹⁶ and experienced mental health crises alongside other front-line workers.⁹⁷

Convention No. 155 is the cornerstone international labour standard for protecting workers from occupational hazards; it provides for the adoption of a coherent national OSH policy, as well as specifying action to be taken by governments and within enterprises to promote OSH and improve working conditions. The 2002 Protocol to Convention No. 155 (not considered a fundamental Convention) calls for the establishment and periodic review of requirements and procedures for the recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases.⁹⁸ Another fundamental instrument, the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), aims to establish coherent national policies and programmes on OSH.

With regard to action at the enterprise-level, Convention No. 155 requires employers “to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, the workplaces ... and processes under their control are safe and without risk to health” and “to provide, where necessary, adequate protective clothing and protective equipment to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, risk of accidents or of adverse effects on health” (Art. 16). The Convention also provides that there should be arrangements at the level of the undertaking under which workers and their representatives are given adequate information on measures taken by the employer to secure OSH; are given appropriate training in OSH; and are enabled to enquire into, and are consulted by the employer on, all aspects of OSH associated with their work. The Convention further provides that workers and their representatives, for their part, should cooperate with the employer in the field of OSH, and that workers should also report to their immediate supervisor situations that could present an imminent and serious danger to their life or health. Importantly, the Convention provides that “the employer cannot require workers to return to a work situation where there is continuing imminent and serious danger to life or death ... until the employer has taken remedial action” (Art. 19).

Convention No. 187 requires ratifying States to formulate national policies, systems and programmes for OSH, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers.

The Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161) provides for the establishment of enterprise-level OSH services that are entrusted with preventive and advisory functions.⁹⁹ The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) provides that workers should have the right to receive medical care where an accident or a prescribed disease results from employment, including incapacity for work or total or partial loss of earning capacity (Art. 32).

Together, these Conventions provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the safety and well-being of journalists and media workers across diverse and often hazardous working environments.

2.2. Other rights at work

In addition to the fundamental principles and rights at work, other international labour standards are highly relevant to the journalism and media sector. Instruments such as the Violence and Harassment Convention (No.

⁹² Interview with journalist Hyo Jin Park, 13 October 2022.

⁹³ Emma Thomasson, “[Stronger Minds, Stronger Media: Why Protecting Journalists' Mental Health is Essential for Journalism's Future](#)”, EFJ, 2025.

⁹⁴ Interview with Hyo Jin Park, 13 October 2022.

⁹⁵ EFJ, “Safety of Journalists”, 2022.

⁹⁶ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 84.

⁹⁷ Olivia Messer, “The COVID Reporters Are Not Okay. Extremely Not Okay”, Study Hall, 6 May 2021.

⁹⁸ ILO, *Rules of the Game*, 2019, 74.

⁹⁹ ILO, *Rules of the Game*, 74.

190) and Recommendation (No. 206), 2019, as well as Convention No. 102 and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), although they are not classified as fundamental, provide essential guidance for promoting safe, equitable and secure working environments. These standards are particularly pertinent to journalists, whose work often exposes them to violence, insecurity and economic precarity, and their effective implementation can make a significant contribution to advancing the objectives of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Preventing and eliminating violence and harassment

Journalists are often faced with violence and harassment, as they do not necessarily work in an office setting and are exposed to third parties, conflict and disaster, as well as other unforeseen situations. According to UNESCO, journalists are specifically and intentionally targeted with violence and harassment, with such violence compounded by stereotypes and prejudices related to ethnicity, religion and gender, with women being at particular risk of sexual harassment and violence.¹⁰⁰

In many respects, the violence faced by journalists is getting worse. As the perception of journalists as neutral and independent observers is increasingly being undermined, media workers are more frequently attacked during protests, harassed online and stigmatized in public speech, including by politicians.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the increasingly digital media landscape exacerbates journalists' exposure to violence, as many online and social media platforms amplify impunity since perpetrators are difficult to identify. Journalists who are women and/or belong to minority groups are especially targeted by online harassment and abuse.¹⁰² For instance, while 64 per cent of white women journalists (compared to 73 per cent of women respondents overall) reported having experienced online violence, the rates for minorities and additionally marginalized communities of women were significantly higher.¹⁰³ In a 2025 survey of women in the public sphere, UNWOMEN found that there was an increase in the measure of connection (perceived as either correlation or causation) between online violence and offline harm experienced by women journalists and media workers over the past five years. In the 2020 survey, 20 per cent of respondents in this group associated the offline attacks, abuse or harassment they had experienced with online violence. By 2025, that figure had more than doubled to 42 per cent for women journalists and media workers.¹⁰⁴

Journalists reporting from the front lines of conflict are especially vulnerable.¹⁰⁵ For instance, about half of journalist deaths occur in armed conflict zones. In the majority of cases, lethal crimes against journalists go unpunished.¹⁰⁶ The sense of impunity further exposes journalists to violence and inhibits independent reporting, as journalists are increasingly forced to self-censorship in an attempt to protect themselves.¹⁰⁷ Specific fields such as environmental journalism have become increasingly perilous. Reporters investigating climate issues, deforestation and pollution often operate in remote areas, exposing themselves to physical danger, legal retaliation and violence.¹⁰⁸

Journalists also increasingly face what is often referred to as "lawfare" – the use of repressive laws, abusive legal proceedings and criminal prosecution – to intimidate or silence critical reporting.¹⁰⁹ SLAPPs are increasing and are

¹⁰⁰ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 2022, 89; Richard Adams, "CBS News's Lara Logan Suffered "brutal" Attack in Tahrir Square", *The Guardian*, 16 February 2011.

¹⁰¹ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 92, 95; Mark Grant, *Reporting Safely: An Assessment of Risk Management Practices Employed by News Organisations in Support of Journalists Operating in Areas of Conflict, 2009-2019*, International News Safety Institute, 2022, 3.

¹⁰² UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity; Vialle.

¹⁰³ Julie Posetti et al., *The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence against Women Journalists*, Research Discussion Paper (UNESCO, 2021).

¹⁰⁴ UNWOMEN, *Tipping Point: The chilling escalation of online violence against women in the public sphere*, 2025.

¹⁰⁵ See UN General Assembly, *Disinformation and Freedom of Opinion and Expression during Armed Conflicts: Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression*, A/77/288 (2022).

¹⁰⁶ Globally, 87 per cent of journalist killings remain unsolved; see UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 92, 95.

¹⁰⁷ Mária Žuffová and Roberta Carlini, eds, *Safety of Journalists in Europe: Threats and Best Practices to Tackle Them* (European University Institute 2021), 10; Jackie Harrison and Stefanie Pukallus, "The Politics of Impunity: A Study of Journalists' Experiential Accounts of Impunity in Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Mexico and Pakistan", in *Journalism* 22, No. 1 (2018): 303–319.

¹⁰⁸ UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity; UNESCO, *Press and Planet in Danger: Safety of Environmental Journalists; Trends, Challenges and Recommendations*, 2024.

¹⁰⁹ OHCHR, "The Impact of SLAPPs on Human Rights and How to Respond", 29 April 2024; Council of Europe, *Annual Report by the Partner Organisations to the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists: Wanted! Real Action for Media Freedom in Europe*, Council of Europe, 2021, 8.

leveraging defamation, privacy and data protection laws to intimidate journalists by introducing burdensome legal costs.¹¹⁰ Lawfare can be a form of harassment and its effects on freedom of expression for journalists are significant.

Repressive state censorship also takes the form of imprisoning journalists, including on spurious charges of terrorism, treason and, most recently, pandemic-related restrictions.¹¹¹ The year 2020 marked the highest number of imprisoned journalists on record since 1992¹¹² and as of the date of preparation of this report, 330 journalists are detained in prisons, 204 of them for “anti-state” charges.¹¹³

The rise of artificial intelligence and social media has also intensified the risks, including in digital spaces.¹¹⁴ Notably, the dependency on digital tools/resources during the COVID-19 pandemic intensified journalists’ exposure to these risks, especially for freelancers and other contract workers who often lack organizational support.¹¹⁵ Around the world, journalists face a broader pattern of threats, including coordinated disinformation campaigns, digital privacy and security breaches and online threats of physical and/or sexual violence that sometimes spill offline.¹¹⁶ In this regard, the Media Freedom Rapid Response recorded more than twice as many spoofing incidents in 2024 compared to 2023. These cases involved attackers impersonating journalists in order to mislead audiences or damage their reputations.¹¹⁷ Artificial intelligence has amplified abuse by making it easier to create deep fakes and conduct doxing and harassment.

Journalists also face heightened risks from online surveillance and hacking, which compromise not only their safety but also that of their sources. Despite the digital risks, many journalists lack adequate access to or knowledge of digital tools (for example, end-to-end encryption) that can help protect them.¹¹⁸

As a consequence, an increasing number of journalists report mental health issues (including post-traumatic stress disorder), employment and productivity impacts and the need to self-censor.¹¹⁹ Persistent online violence and harassment forces some journalists to leave the profession altogether.¹²⁰

Convention No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 provide a common framework for preventing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Convention defines violence and harassment as “a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment” (Art. 1(a)). Notably, the definition does not include “intent” as one of its constitutive elements but rather focuses on the “unacceptability” of the behaviour. Examples include threats, insults, sending offensive words or images, using offensive language or abusing a position of power. Importantly, the Convention protects “[all] persons working irrespective of their contractual status”, including “persons in training ... workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers ... and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer” (Art. 2). The Convention thus covers the wide range of attacks encountered by journalists and media workers, including online violence and harassment, whether they occur as independent instances or as a combination of behaviours.

Convention No. 190 requires Member States to adopt an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. Importantly, the Convention takes into account employers’ broader responsibilities with regard to ensuring the safety of their employees. Thus, ratifying

¹¹⁰ Plaintiffs usually do not expect to win; instead, such lawsuits are aimed at inflicting reputational damage and silencing independent journalism. See Open Government Partnership, *Democracy Beyond the Ballot Box: Open Government Partnership Global Report, Vol. 1*, (2019), 17.

¹¹¹ Council of Europe, *Annual Report by the Partner Organisations*, 8.

¹¹² UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 2022, 93.

¹¹³ Committee to Protect Journalists, “[Explore CPI's Database of Attacks on the Press](#)”.

¹¹⁴ See UN Human Rights Council, *Reinforcing Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists in the Digital Age*; Alice Baroni, Leen d’Haenens and Wai Han Lo, “[Protecting Journalists from Harassment: Comparing Existing Protection Mechanisms and the Effects on Democracy](#)”, in *Success and Failure in News Media Performance: Comparative Analysis in the Media for Democracy Monitor 2021*, edited by Josef Trappel and Tales Tomaz (University of Gothenburg, 2022), 61.

¹¹⁵ Julie Posetti et al., “The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence against Women Journalists”, 7.

¹¹⁶ Julie Posetti, et al., *Online Violence against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts*, (UNESCO, 2020), 1.

¹¹⁷ *mfr.eu*.

¹¹⁸ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 96.

¹¹⁹ Julie Posetti et al., “The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence against Women Journalists”, 13.

¹²⁰ Maria Žuffová and Roberta Carlini, “Safety of Journalists in Europe”, in Žuffová and Carlini, eds, 2021, 7.

States are required to pass legislation that requires employers to take “appropriate steps commensurate with their degree of control to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work” (Art. 9). Such steps include the provision for Member States to “adopt and implement ... a workplace policy on violence and harassment ... take into account violence and harassment and associated psychosocial risks in the management of occupational safety and health ... identify hazards and assess the risks of violence and harassment ... and ... provide to workers and other persons concerned information and training” (Art. 9 (a)-(d)). In view of this, Recommendation No. 206, which provides further guidance on the application of Convention No. 190, calls on ILO Members to fund, develop, implement and disseminate “materials for journalists and other media personnel on gender-based violence and harassment, including its underlying causes and risk factors, with due respect for their independence and freedom of expression” (Para. 23(f)).

Convention No. 190 extends protection beyond the physical workplace to “places where the worker is paid, takes a rest break or a meal, or uses sanitary, washing and changing facilities ... during work-related trips, travel, training, events or social activities ... through work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies ... in employer-provided accommodation ... and ... when commuting to and from work” (Art. 3 (b)-(f)). Journalists exposed to violence and harassment on assignment and/or facing violence and harassment through work-related communications (including social media platforms) are thus also covered under the Convention.

Together, Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 offer a robust framework for protecting journalists’ physical safety, psychological well-being and freedom to work without fear – which is essential to safeguarding press freedom and ensuring that media workers can carry out their role in informing the public.

Effective social protection

In case of acts of violence or harassment against journalists, social protection can provide important benefits, in particular unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old-age, disability and survivors’ benefits, as well as health protection. Journalists can face challenges in accessing social protection, partly owing to the types of contracts they are employed under and the characteristics of their work. In fact, in many countries, entitlement to social protection benefits under social insurance schemes is determined by the type of activity, contractual relation and labour income. Freelance journalists, for example, are unable to contribute for the time periods required to be eligible for benefits, such as old-age pensions, due to low contribution density (resulting from interrupted employment histories). In addition, national social protection systems may not be sufficiently adapted to the realities of such workers, which will also impact their social protection coverage.

In most countries, contributory schemes cover formal employees with employment contracts; these schemes may be extended to the self-employed, but this is often on a voluntary basis, and the worker is responsible for both the employer’s and employee’s share of contributions. In others, the self-employed may simply be excluded by law. Indeed, people working as journalists are regularly considered to be independent contractors (that is, they are not employees) and as a result may not be covered by social insurance mechanisms.¹²¹

Convention No. 102 provides for the granting of social security benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability and survivors, as well as health protection. Recommendation No. 202 provides guidance to governments for establishing social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees, which “should ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential healthcare and to basic income security, which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level” (Para. 4).

For journalists and media workers, this framework supports the right to medical care after injury or trauma, income support during periods of unemployment or assignment loss and protection in old age – thereby helping to ensure that those who play a vital role in informing the public are not left without support when facing illness, danger or financial insecurity.

¹²¹ Carlos Galian, Margherita Licata and Maya Stern-Plaza, *Social Protection in the Cultural and Creative Sector: Country Practices and Innovations*, ILO Working Paper 28 (ILO, 2021).

3. Labour practices to address the protection of journalists

Creating a safe environment for journalists requires a response that is cross-cutting and involves multiple stakeholders, including governments, employers' and workers' organizations, media, NGOs and academia. Building on this foundation, labour practices can play a critical role in creating safer working environments for media professionals. This section explores how such practices align and reinforce the three pillars of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety and of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity: prevention, protection and prosecution. By examining these pillars through the lens of labour rights, the discussion highlights practical pathways for strengthening journalists' safety at work.

3.1. Prevention

Prevention is the foundation for reducing the risks and vulnerabilities that journalists face in their daily work. Social dialogue is the critical entry point for developing, applying and implementing international labour standards, thus ensuring adequate legal frameworks. Workplace policies and protocols, comprehensive risk management systems and training further reinforce prevention efforts by addressing OSH, violence and harassment and discrimination.

Legislative measures

Legislation is a cornerstone of protecting journalists and creates the enabling conditions in which they may work safely and independently. For instance, in Mexico journalists are recognized as workers entitled to fair labour standards (Federal Labour Law, 2012) and authorities are obliged to provide security and risk assessments for journalists under threat (Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, 2012); thus, labour recognition is combined with physical protection obligation. In Sweden, the Freedom of Press Act and Employment Protection Act (1949) protect journalists both as workers and as bearers of press freedom. In Argentina, the Statute of the Professional Journalist (Law 12.908, 1946) defines professional journalism and regulates working conditions, pay and social benefits. In the European Union (EU), Recommendation 2016/4 on the protection and safety of journalists and other media actors requires Member States to adopt effective preventive measures in order to protect the physical safety of journalists. In some instances, legislative measures can function as a deterrent. This is the case, for example, in the Netherlands, where offences incur higher sanctions if they are committed against journalists.¹²²

However, difficulties have arisen with regard to balancing action on hate speech/cybercrime and safeguarding the freedom of speech/the press (as well as the right to privacy), particularly online,¹²³ and also with regard to ensuring that any restriction of fundamental rights meets established public-interest criteria, such as the three-part test.¹²⁴ Legislation that gives law enforcement authorities far-reaching investigative powers can put journalists at risk. In the United Kingdom, for instance, leading news organizations criticized the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act for endangering the journalists' sources.¹²⁵

Social dialogue

Social dialogue refers to all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among the representatives of governments, employers and workers. It provides a structured platform for improving labour conditions for journalists and media professionals worldwide and is aligned with the multistakeholder

¹²² Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 16.

¹²³ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 5.

¹²⁴ The three-part test requires that limitations are provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim and are necessary and proportional. See UNESCO, "[The Legitimate Limits to Freedom of Expression: The Three-Part Test](#)", video.

¹²⁵ Chris Johnston, "[Journalists Must Fight for Better Legal Protection, Say Top News Executives](#)", *The Guardian*, 16 October 2014.

approach underpinning the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

For instance, in the United Kingdom, cross-sectoral social dialogue between employers, media organizations (including the National Union of Journalists, the News Media Association, the Society of Editors and the National Council for the Training of Journalists) and law enforcement led to the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists in 2021.¹²⁶ The Plan includes commitments to train police officers and journalists; enhance the capacity of the criminal justice system in tackling crimes against journalists; support journalists and their employers in building the resources they need to protect personal safety; and help online platforms tackle the wider issues of abuse online, among other things.¹²⁷ In 2022, a similar national action plan was adopted in Somalia, following consultations/social dialogue organized by the National Union for Somali Journalists, with the support of the African Union and the technical help of the ILO and UNESCO.¹²⁸

In Europe, journalists' unions and associations have launched a campaign that led to the signing of the Charter on Journalists' Working Conditions in 2019.¹²⁹ The Charter aims to raise the benchmark for journalists' working conditions across Europe, as well as to enhance trust between professional journalists and the general public. It restates core labour rights (for example, the right to freedom of association), as well as standards that are especially relevant to the sector (for example, authors' rights and the right to safety and protection, including through access to training). The Charter is open to signature for all journalists' associations, private and public media organizations, and authorities. Recently, social partners in the European Economic and Social Committee endorsed a report on labour rights for journalists and media professionals laying down similar principles for improving the working conditions of journalists in Europe.¹³⁰

Collective bargaining has also proved successful in addressing equity and diversity in media, discrimination and harassment.¹³¹ This was the case, for example, in the first Guild contract between a media outlet and the Writers Guild of America, East, which provides a first-of-its-kind diversity provision that ensures that at least two candidates from groups traditionally under-represented in journalism will be interviewed for any vacant bargaining unit position not created for a specific candidate.¹³² The collective bargaining agreement between another media company and the Writers Guild of America East commits the company, among other provisions, to provide its employees with a health and safe work environment, free from sexual harassment or harassment based on actual or perceived race, ethnicity, creed, colour, national origin and so on. It also creates a diversity committee and establishes quarterly reports with demographic statistics and salary information for each employee.¹³³

Social dialogue is essential in times of crises. For example, many freelance journalists faced the loss of jobs and income during the COVID-19 pandemic due to their limited access to social protection. Organizing with unions emerged as a key step for them to cope with the loss of job and income resulting from the pandemic and it also boosted representation among freelancers.¹³⁴

Establishing standing bodies for social dialogue can help improve working conditions through an iterative/institutionalized process of regular exchange. One example is the EU audiovisual sector social dialogue committee, which allows employers' and workers' representatives (including journalists' associations) to discuss and take action on a range of issues, including employment challenges and opportunities encountered by

¹²⁶ United Kingdom, [National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists](#), 9 March 2021.

¹²⁷ Rajeev Syal, "[UK Launches Action Plan to Prevent Harassment and Abuse of Journalists](#)" *The Guardian*, 8 March 2021.

¹²⁸ *ATMIS News*, "[Somalia Journalists Adopt a National Action Plan to Strengthen Work Safety and Security](#)", African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), 6 September 2022). The National Action Plan seeks to champion a multidimensional approach to the safety of journalists that acknowledges the physical, legal, mental, gendered and technological dimensions of violence and the various means of harassment against journalists and the resulting impact on the profession.

¹²⁹ EFJ, [The Charter on Journalists' Working Conditions](#), 12 February 2019.

¹³⁰ European Economic and Social Committee, [Labour rights for journalists and media professionals as a safeguard for independence and truthful information \(own-initiative opinion\)](#), SOC/828, 3 December 2025.

¹³¹ Nicole Cohen, Madison Trusolino and Natasha Grzincic, "Diversity and Equity from Below: Media Worker Unions and Collective Bargaining", *Media Industries* 12, No. 1 (2025): 4.

¹³² Writers Guild of America East, "[The Intercept Ratifies First Union Contract with Landmark Diversity Provisions Press Room](#)", 25 July 2018.

¹³³ [Collective bargaining agreement between Writers Guild of America, East and Vox Media](#), 9 September 2025.

¹³⁴ IFJ, "[Freelance Journalists: Organizing Is Key to Survive the Pandemic](#)", 22 March 2021.

journalists and media workers (for example, new type of contracts and work patterns and the trend toward greater flexibility and mobility).

In this last regard, collective bargaining has been used to address a number of issues in journalism, such as insurance in relation to attacks and aggression, work carried out remotely at a distance (distant engagement), working hours, compensation, legal counselling and other matters.

Collective agreements resulting from voluntary negotiations between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organizations and one or more workers' organizations to determine working conditions and terms of employment¹³⁵ are an effective means of addressing a number of issues related to journalists' safety, including their financial stability.¹³⁶ The collective agreement for the media sector signed in Togo in 2022 includes a clause about equality in employment, by which the social partners undertake to fight against all discrimination in terms of employment and profession, in particular during the recruitment of journalists and other media professionals and during the application of the employment contract. The agreement adds that discrimination means any distinction, exclusion or preference, including on the basis of sex, which may reduce or alter equality of opportunity or treatment in matters of employment or profession.¹³⁷ In Italy, the National Contract of Journalistic Work 2009–2013 provided journalists supplementary insurance covered by the media company for damages sustained in service as a result of attacks, aggressions, riots, strikes, street demonstrations and hooliganism.¹³⁸ The State Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Daily Press Sector in Spain provides that media employers set out a basic schedule of working hours for journalists and covers work performed outside such hours.¹³⁹ Another collective agreement in Argentina provides for benefits for injury, disability and death suffered by journalists due to violent acts.¹⁴⁰ Collective bargaining has also been used in Denmark,¹⁴¹ Greece,¹⁴² Montenegro¹⁴³ and Qatar¹⁴⁴ to address labour issues in news media.

Collective bargaining agreements can also specifically help tackle violence and harassment against journalists. For instance, Deutsche Welle (the German international public-service broadcaster) adopted two collective agreements to tackle sexual harassment and transgressive behaviour, respectively; the latter extends protection also to interns and freelancers.¹⁴⁵

Given the prevalence of freelance and diverse work arrangements in the sector, a critical issue in collective bargaining is the determination of how extensively these collective agreements include such workers. The situation varies significantly across different countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, the National Union of Journalists has concluded collective agreements covering the use of freelancers as casual workers on the employer's premises and covering physical and digital risks, as well as another agreement covering minimum rates for editorial work supplied by freelance contributors. In other countries, such as Germany and Austria, collective agreements are extended to cover freelancers who are categorized legally as being in an economically dependent relationship with the host company.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁵ ILO, [Collective Bargaining: A Policy Guide](#), 2015.

¹³⁶ Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 1211–1229.

¹³⁷ Togo, *Convention collective des journalistes et professionnels des média du Togo*, October 2022.

¹³⁸ Stefano Chiusolo and Maurizio Borali, "[Il Contratto nazionale di lavoro giornalistico commentato articolo per articolo](#)", I Quaderni dell'Ordine dei giornalisti della Lombardia, 2009.

¹³⁹ Spain, [Resolución de 7 de junio de 2024, de la Dirección General de Trabajo, por la que se registra y publica el Convenio colectivo estatal del sector de prensa diaria](#).

¹⁴⁰ Argentina, [Convenio de Prensa Televisada \(124/75\)](#), August 1975.

¹⁴¹ IFJ, "[Bargaining Victory Ends Six-Month Battle for Freelance Union Rights in Denmark](#)", 28 April 2014.

¹⁴² IFJ, "[Greece: New Collective Agreement to Boost Gender Equality in State and Public Media](#)", 29 May 2024.

¹⁴³ EFJ, "[Montenegro: Historic Collective Agreement Improves Employees' Rights at Public Broadcaster RTCG – European Federation of Journalists](#)", 3 July 2019.

¹⁴⁴ IFJ, "[The IFJ and Al Jazeera Sign Historical International Framework Agreement](#)", 10 December 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 17.

¹⁴⁶ Andrew Bibby, [Employment Relationships in the Media Industry](#), (ILO Working Paper No. 295, 2014), 18.

Workplace policies and practices

Newsrooms increasingly implement specific workplace policies and procedures to protect journalists from violence and harassment. Such policies include, for example, covering dangerous events as a team rather than individually. Thus, Agence France Presse tries to ensure that video journalists are not sent out alone to cover dangerous demonstrations but are always accompanied by either a text journalist or a photographer. Supervision also emerges as a good practice. Several newsrooms appoint a team leader who is responsible for the equipment and for making decisions on safety when journalists are sent on assignment, as well as for ensuring that locally hired staff have enough training and/or experience.¹⁴⁷ In some cases, a professional security adviser may accompany teams and offer logistical support, for instance in securing safe accommodation and vehicles.¹⁴⁸ Several media outlets have appointed specific editors to deal with specific safety concerns such as online harassment and gender-based harassment and violence.¹⁴⁹

In order to shield journalists from online harassment and abuse, some newsrooms have introduced strong authentication measures for audiences/readers to participate in online discussions (for example, the requirement to use real names).¹⁵⁰ Collective authorship (that is, disguising the identity of individual journalists/contributors) is another strategy that has been used to protect journalists who are reporting on sensitive topics. Thus, a major news outlet in Lithuania does not include the names of journalists who debunk misinformation.¹⁵¹ Other media organizations have pioneered innovative tools to limit their employees' exposure to online toxicity. The Thomson Reuters Foundation, for instance, has developed an application called TRFilter, which identifies harmful or abusive comments made in English on a Twitter account, blurs the comments and provides "toxicity scores" to help a user decide whether to view the posts; one of the app's features is its ability to create reports of harassment that can be shared with third parties such as newsroom editors or authorities.¹⁵²

The International Press Institute has developed a specific protocol for newsrooms to protect journalists from online harassment and support them if attacked. The International Women's Media Foundation has similarly developed a guide for protecting newsrooms and journalists against online violence. The UNESCO Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Policies for Newsrooms include recommendations for how to tackle harassment and abuse originating from within newsrooms/the workplace (for example, establishing reporting mechanisms for sexual harassment).

Risk assessment and safety protocols

When it comes to prevention, many larger media organizations have risk assessment and safety protocols/procedures in place to protect journalists (both staffers and stringers).¹⁵³ A survey of a number of media companies revealed a set of best practices in this regard, including "careful risk assessment, attention to training, supervision, post-assignment debriefing, sharing of safety information and awareness of post-traumatic stress".¹⁵⁴

Enterprise-level focal points and procedures for risk management can help ensure that journalists and media workers are protected as much as possible when embarking on assignment. At one French media company, a specific adviser is responsible for the prevention of risks during reporting assignments, helping journalists weigh the news value of each story against the risks that reporting on it entails.¹⁵⁵ At a German media company, a special security department oversees journalists' travel to high-risk regions and increasingly also domestic protests.¹⁵⁶ At the BBC, every potentially dangerous assignment requires a detailed written assessment of the risks and steps taken to mitigate the risks; appropriate training for all those involved (whether staff, stringers, consultants or

¹⁴⁷ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, *Safety Guide for Journalists: A Handbook for Reporters in High-Risk Environments*, 2015, 77–81.

¹⁴⁸ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 77–81.

¹⁴⁹ Nic Newman, *Digital News Report: Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2022*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 10 January 2022), 39.

¹⁵⁰ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 15.

¹⁵¹ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 15.

¹⁵² Esther Sun, "Digital Tool Helps Shield Journalists from Online Violence", *Voice of America*, 15 July 2022.

¹⁵³ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 13.

¹⁵⁴ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 78.

¹⁵⁵ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 13.

contractors); the identification of appropriate safety equipment (including personal protective equipment (PPE), first aid kits and communications equipment); and the appropriate level of management sign-off for the deployment, based on the understanding and acceptance that the risks justify the editorial ambitions. Staff, moreover, “undertake high risk work on a completely voluntary basis and have the absolute right to decline such work without penalty or any other detrimental consequence”.¹⁵⁷

An increasing number of editors provide their journalists with PPE, such as bulletproof vests, helmets and breathing masks.¹⁵⁸ The International Safety Fund was established by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to provide financial assistance in a range of emergency situations, such as those involving threats, violence and threats thereof, prosecution, settlement in exile and illness. Given the risk of sexual violence, France Médias Monde also provides staff on assignment with kits to use after a sexual attack, containing a morning-after pill, broad-spectrum antibiotics and a tri-therapy kit for emergency anti-HIV treatment until the victim can be given treatment in hospital.¹⁵⁹

Post-assignment debriefings are invaluable in terms of sharing information/providing feedback and improving safety procedures/preventive measures for the protection of journalists. At France Médias Monde, post-assignment debriefings are attended by senior news editors, all of whom are members of the team, as well as technical representatives. The agency also set up a dedicated platform for sharing information on current conflicts and crises, country profiles, recommendations on hotels and itineraries, and checklists and tutorials (for example, how to put on a bulletproof jacket). At the BBC, post-assignment debriefing must include “a verbal or written summary of the assignment, reporters’ and editors’ experiences, and any relevant new information or advice that will help inform future risk assessments and improve safety procedures”.¹⁶⁰

Training

Training builds journalists’ capacity to recognize and mitigate both physical and psychological risks, contributing to reduce harm for both journalists and management.¹⁶¹ Many news organizations ensure that their journalists, both staff and freelance, working in dangerous places receive appropriate training in first aid and working in hostile environments”.¹⁶² Hostile environment and first aid training (HEFAT) plays a particularly important role in keeping journalists on assignment as safe as possible; HEFAT programmes generally span several days and comprise both classroom training and realistic simulations of dangerous situations. Several organizations offer HEFAT courses tailored to the needs of journalists. In the United States of America, the International Women’s Media Foundation launched a pilot programme to train a new generation of HEFAT trainers attuned to the specific threats faced by women journalists.¹⁶³

In order to tackle digital risks (for example, surveillance), newsrooms in several EU member countries provide cybersecurity training for their staff. In Luxembourg, the Government provides cybersecurity training to journalists as part of a broader educational initiative (Bee Secure).¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, a number of guidelines tailored to specific national contexts or circumstances are available to support journalists in enhancing their personal safety.¹⁶⁵ An example is the Guidelines for Newsrooms in West Africa, which provides recommendations on how West African newsrooms can combat online attacks and enhance the safety of their employees (especially women journalists). Other examples are the guidelines on the safety of journalists published by UNESCO and Reporters without Borders.

Other training initiatives target enforcement authorities, contributing to a safer external environment for media workers. For example, in Germany, the regional police forces in Saxony have received training on how to protect

¹⁵⁷ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 80.

¹⁵⁸ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 80.

¹⁵⁹ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 80.

¹⁶⁰ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders, 82.

¹⁶¹ UNESCO, *Journalism Is a Public Good*, 89.

¹⁶² UNESCO and Reporters without Borders.

¹⁶³ Maria Alejandra Silva Ortega, “[The Safety Training Community Should Reflect the Journalists That It Serves](#)”, *Poynter*, 17 February 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Silva Ortega.

¹⁶⁵ IFJ, “[New Guidelines for Journalists Who Face Online Harassment and Abuse](#)”, 30 June 2021.

journalists from attacks during protests.¹⁶⁶ UNESCO's "Global Toolkit for Law Enforcement Agents: Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Safety of Journalists" is a comprehensive manual for the training of security forces on freedom of expression.

Journalists' organizations have also contributed directly to capacity-building. In Africa, for example, the Federation of African Journalists, in collaboration with international partners, including the African Union Commission, has supported training initiatives for journalists and union leaders on safety risk awareness, addressing violence against women journalists in high-risk country contexts, as well as on applying Convention No. 190 to promote safe newsrooms, labour rights and responses to violence and harassment.

Advocacy campaigns on such themes as "A gender-equal media for a gender-equal future"¹⁶⁷ and "Stop violence against women journalists"¹⁶⁸ can also be important tools to promote change and tackle violence and harassment at work.

3.2. Protection

The protection pillar centres on strengthening institutional mechanisms, safety nets and support systems to safeguard journalists when risks arise. Reporting, complaint and enforcement mechanisms provide early warning and rapid response tools for journalists under threat.¹⁶⁹ These systems enhance coordination between media organizations, unions and law enforcement, bridging the gap between labour protection and press freedom. Within the framework of the fundamental principles and rights at work, protection also extends to ensuring safe and decent working conditions, including access to social protection measures that mitigate the impacts of injury, unemployment or other occupational risks. Legislative measures play a central role in this regard by establishing clear rights and obligations for employers, ensuring that journalists – whether staff or freelance journalists – are covered by labour and social protection laws, and by setting out remedies for violations.

Legislative measures

As mentioned previously, legislation is key for creating the enabling conditions in which journalists may work safely and independently (see section 3.1 above). It also plays a crucial role in providing access to social protection (see below) and ensuring that mechanisms are in place to support those facing threats or violence in the course of their work (see below).

Targeted legislation has also proved successful in curbing hate speech/online harassment. In Germany, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) of 2017 allows anyone based in Germany to report content believed to be unlawful and obliges online platforms to remove unlawful content under the scope of the act. While media "was initially very critical of the NetzDG", many now perceive it as a helpful tool to fight online hate speech.¹⁷⁰ Colombia established the No Es Hora de Callar, a fund aimed at preventing, protecting and supporting female journalists victims of violence. The fund was created through Law 2358, following a 2021 Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruling, which held the Colombian State accountable for violations, including kidnapping, torture and sexual violence, inflicted on a female journalist.¹⁷¹

Social protection

Social protection – or social security – provides benefits to individuals on the basis of risks faced across the life cycle (for example, unemployment, disability, maternity and so on) and to those suffering general poverty and social exclusion. However, it is common for contributory social protection schemes to cover only formal employees with

¹⁶⁶ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 49.

¹⁶⁷ IFJ, "[International Women's Day: IFJ calls for 'A Gender-Equal Media for a Gender-Equal Future'](#)", 7 March 2025.

¹⁶⁸ IFJ, "[Stop Violence against Women Journalists – for an ILO Convention!](#)".

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, the "[Media Freedom Rapid Response](#)", which was created by a coalition of media freedom organisations to provide quick and direct support, from medical assistance and legal support to training and advocacy.

¹⁷⁰ Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 6.

¹⁷¹ Siliva Higuera, "[Colombia crea fondo de US 500.000 dólares anuales para combatir violencia contra mujeres periodistas](#)", *Lat Am Journalism Review*, 11 October 2024.

employment contracts. Even though such schemes may be extended to the self-employed, this is often on a voluntary basis and the worker is responsible for both the employer's and employees' share of contributions, making participation (sometimes prohibitively) expensive.¹⁷²

Due to the widespread reliance on freelance labour in journalism, a significant share of workers risk being excluded from existing social insurance mechanisms. Tailored insurance and health plans can help bridging this gap. For instance, some insurance providers cater specifically to freelance journalists, offering tailored health and pension plans.¹⁷³ Meanwhile, organizations such as the IFJ and Reporters Sans Frontières provide special safety insurance for journalists going on dangerous assignments.¹⁷⁴

Reporting, complaint and enforcement mechanisms

Enhanced reporting, complaint and enforcement mechanisms are critical for fighting impunity and ensuring the safety of journalists. In Sweden, a system of national contact points was set up for this purpose and additional human/financial resources were allocated to investigate crimes against journalists.¹⁷⁵ In the Netherlands, the PersVeilig Protocol was concluded between law enforcement (police and public prosecutors) and journalists' associations to reduce threats and violence against journalists, by assigning priority to the investigation and prosecution of those suspected of perpetrating acts of aggression and violence against journalists. Moreover, a dedicated platform allows journalists to report incidents and seek support/training.¹⁷⁶ In Belgium, the Flemish Association of Journalists established a hotline for reporting incidents of physical and verbal violence perpetrated against journalists, which also provides legal advice/support.¹⁷⁷ In Serbia and subsequently in Montenegro, commissions were established to investigate the murder of journalists following the break-up of former Yugoslavia – thereby countering the culture of impunity concerning the killing of journalists in times of war and political instability.¹⁷⁸ In the United Kingdom, the National Union of Journalists launched the Journalists' Safety Tracker in 2024 to capture incidents reported by journalists involving unacceptable abuse or threats of violence encountered in the course of their work.¹⁷⁹ Another major development is the appointment by the United Kingdom Government of journalist safety liaison officers in every police force to provide safety guidance ahead of high-risk assignments, including protests.¹⁸⁰

In 2014, the Council of Europe established the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, a unique mechanism that relays relevant information to governments about threats to journalists and media freedom. Partner organizations submit "alerts" documenting specific threats/attacks; public authorities are then invited to "reply" by detailing preventive, protective or remedial measures.¹⁸¹ Since its launch, the Platform has recorded more than 800 alerts documenting physical attacks, detention and imprisonment, harassment and intimidation, and instances of impunity.¹⁸² The Platform thereby acts as an early warning system that prompts dialogue and action to advance coordinated policy responses/preventive measures.

¹⁷² Galian, Licata and Stern-Plaza, 23.

¹⁷³ Audiens, "[Le Régime Prévoyance/Santé Des Journalistes Rémunérés à La Pige](#)".

¹⁷⁴ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders.

¹⁷⁵ European Commission, "[Recommendation on the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists](#)", fact sheet, 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Netherlands, PersVeilig, "Journalisten Zorg Voor Jezelf! PersVeilig Helpt", 2022; Netherlands, PersVeilig, "[Press Safety Protocol](#)", 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Vlaamse Vereniging van Journalisten, "[VVJ richt Meldpunt in voor agressie tegen journalisten](#)", *VVJ Nieuws*, 18 March 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Open Government Partnership, 11; EFJ, "[Serbia: Commission to Solve Wartime Journalists' Murders Expanded](#)", press release, 9 August 2018.

¹⁷⁹ National Union of Journalists, "[Journalists' Safety Tracker](#)".

¹⁸⁰ United Kingdom, "[Officer for Journalist Safety Now in Every UK Police Force to Promote Media Freedom](#)", press release, 6 October 2025.

¹⁸¹ Council of Europe, "[Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#)".

¹⁸² Žuffová and Carlini, "Safety of Journalists in Europe", 14.

Legal assistance

Legal aid and counsel, as well as financial support, are commonly cited by investigative journalists as being the most valuable resources needed to protect against harassment and violence from both state and non-state actors; they are also commonly identified as the most lacking resources.¹⁸³

Nevertheless, a number of organizations and funds offer free resources, legal assistance and/or financial support to support independent journalists and media professionals facing legal threats (for example, SLAPPs), including the Global Media Defence Fund, the Legal Defence Fund, Media Defence, Media Freedom Rapid Response and the Legal Network for Journalists at Risk.

Some Governments (for example, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) have also adopted and/or instigated regulation geared towards protecting journalists from abusive lawsuits (anti-SLAPP statutes).¹⁸⁴ In the EU, where abusive litigation has mushroomed in recent years, the Commission adopted in 2024 a directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings. The directive allows courts to swiftly dismiss “manifestly unfounded” court cases, impose dissuasive penalties to those who bring such cases to court and refuse to recognize or enforce judgements in SLAPP cases from non-EU countries.¹⁸⁵ The Commission also adopted a recommendation that encourages Member States to ensure that training is available to enable legal professionals and potential SLAPP targets to improve their knowledge and skills in order to effectively deal with such court proceedings.¹⁸⁶ The United Kingdom Government has also announced legal reforms (for example, of libel laws) to discourage SLAPPs against journalists.¹⁸⁷

Psychological support

Professional mental health support can help mitigate the psychological impacts of covering traumatic events, persistent online/offline harassment faced by journalists/media professionals, and the challenges of remote working and social isolation.

Some media outlets have set up specific programmes to prepare workers for traumatic assignments (for example, training on trauma-informed reporting) and support workers experiencing psychological distress. Reuters staffers receive training on active listening, empathy and self-care techniques through the Reuters Peer Network, while some media outlets provide mental-health-focused training for their teams.¹⁸⁸ The post-assignment debriefing can be an invaluable tool/mechanism for detecting possible signs of post-traumatic stress among journalists following dangerous/potentially traumatic assignments. At France Médias Monde, a psychologist is available at headquarters to take part in post-assignment debriefings. Some editors rely on colleagues to keep an eye on returning reporters for signs of post-traumatic stress.¹⁸⁹

A number of journalists’ associations and other organizations have developed guidelines, compiled good practices, established networks and funds to provide preventive training and targeted psychological support for journalists. UNESCO has developed a guide for psychologists to support journalists facing psychosocial emergencies or crises.¹⁹⁰ The European Federation of Journalists has documented good practices ranging from peer support to social media campaign.¹⁹¹ The Dart Center offers on-site and remote consultation and educational services relevant to trauma reporting (see also the Journalist Trauma Support Network). The Journalists in Distress Network (made up of 24 international organizations) provides direct assistance to journalists and media workers. The Black

¹⁸³ Susan Coughtrie and Poppy Ogier, *Unsafe for Scrutiny: Examining the Pressures Faced by Journalists Uncovering Financial Crime and Corruption around the World*, The Foreign Policy Centre/Justice for Journalists, 2020.

¹⁸⁴ Index on Censorship, “Co-Chairs of UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition Welcome Government’s Action on SLAPPs” 20 July 2022.

¹⁸⁵ Jennifer Rankin, “EU Announces Plans to Protect Journalists from Vexatious Lawsuits”, *The Guardian*, 27 April 2022.

¹⁸⁶ EU, *Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/758 of 27 April 2022 on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings (“Strategic lawsuits against public participation”)*.

¹⁸⁷ Jessica Elgot, “UK to Clamp down on Libel ‘Lawfare’ by the Rich in English Courts”, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2022.

¹⁸⁸ Olivia Messer, “The COVID Reporters Are Not Okay.”

¹⁸⁹ UNESCO and Reporters without Borders.

¹⁹⁰ UNESCO, *Guide for Psychologists in the Emergency Care of Journalists*, 2024.

¹⁹¹ Emma Thomasson, “Stronger Minds, Stronger Media”.

Journalists Therapy Relief Fund provides financial assistance for journalists of colour unable to pay for mental health support.¹⁹²

3.3. Prosecution

The prosecution pillar focuses on strengthening the rule of law and ensuring that justice mechanisms respond swiftly, fairly and transparently to offences committed against journalists and media workers.

In this context, prosecution not only refers to the act of bringing perpetrators of physical attacks to justice but also encompasses the legal enforcement of journalists' professional and labour rights, consistent with the fundamental principles and rights at work. This includes addressing arbitrary arrests, intimidation, wrongful dismissal, retaliation against union activity and the misuse of laws – such as defamation or national security provisions – to criminalize legitimate journalistic work.

Good practices in this area highlight the importance of specialized prosecutorial units, clear investigation protocols and cooperation between law enforcement, media institutions and civil society. Training and capacity-building for prosecutors and judges are equally vital to ensure that they understand the specific risks faced by journalists and that they apply relevant international standards on freedom of expression and workers' rights. For example, the guide for legal professionals on protecting freedom of expression and media in Serbia helps in the identification and addressing these risks, while ensuring that genuine legal claims are adjudicated fairly and in line with human rights obligations.¹⁹³ Moreover, transparent proceedings and data collection on crimes against journalists strengthen both accountability and public confidence.

Specialized prosecutorial units and priority investigations

Designated units (or at least a clearly mandated prosecutor or department) ensures that offences against journalists are not lost among general crime cases. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Sarajevo Canton appointed a special prosecutor to serve as a contact point for communication and coordination between journalists' associations, judicial authorities and law enforcement in cases involving attacks or threats against journalists. In addition, the prosecutor's office created a dedicated registry to monitor and manage both new and ongoing cases concerning journalists, ensuring that they are handled efficiently and given priority.¹⁹⁴ In Somalia, a special prosecution unit is mandated to investigate and prosecutes crimes against journalism; it also provides capacity-building training and awareness activities among journalists, the public and law enforcement officers regarding international human rights obligations and the commitments of States in relation to the safety of journalists.¹⁹⁵

Rapid response mechanisms and priority investigation for cases involving journalists also help ensure that offences against journalists are not lost among general crime cases. As mentioned above (see section 3.2), in the Netherlands, the PersVeilig Protocol agreed between law enforcement and journalists' associations prioritizes the investigation and prosecution of those suspected of perpetrating acts of aggression and violence against journalists.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, in Albania, prosecutors and leaders of prosecution offices must prioritize cases concerning the safety of journalists and the media. They are also responsible for continuously supervising the judicial police officers who handle such investigations in order to guarantee both their timeliness and their quality.¹⁹⁷

Clear investigation protocols and training

UNESCO and the International Association of Prosecutors developed the Guidelines for Prosecutors on Cases of Crimes against Journalists, which aim to enhance the knowledge and capacity of prosecutors to investigate and

¹⁹² International Women's Media Foundation, "[Black Journalists Therapy Relief Fund](#)".

¹⁹³ Council of Europe, [Guide for Legal Professionals on Freedom of Expression, SLAPPS and related ECHR Standards](#), 2025.

¹⁹⁴ Council of Europe, "[Special Prosecutor for Attacks and Threats against Journalists](#)".

¹⁹⁵ Somalia, "[Special Prosecution Unit](#)".

¹⁹⁶ Netherlands, PersVeilig, "Journalisten Zorg Voor Jezelf!"; Netherlands, PersVeilig, "Press Safety Protocol".

¹⁹⁷ *Albanian Daily News*, "[GP Approves the Circular 'On the Investigation of Cases Pertaining to the Safety of Journalists and the Media'](#)".

prosecute crimes and attacks against journalists, including gender-based crimes and other forms of hate crimes.¹⁹⁸ They have informed several capacity-building activities at both the national and international levels. While such guidelines and training initiatives do not include specific reference to fundamental rights at work, they contribute to strengthening the enabling environment in which journalists can safely exercise their fundamental labour rights and to promoting safe working conditions by addressing violence and impunity.

Transparent proceedings and data collection

Transparent legal proceedings and consistent data collection are key to protecting journalists' rights, including their fundamental labour rights. At the same time, collecting accurate data helps identify trends in violence and impunity, allowing for better resource allocation and targeted protections. Several databases track threats to the safety of journalists – notably the Council of Europe's Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists; the UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists; and the Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists. Such databases monitor these issues primarily from a human rights and freedom-of-expression perspective. The ILO Information System on International Labour Standards (NORMLEX) systematically records the comments and observations of the CEACR with respect to ratified Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations submitted by ILO Member States from the standpoint of labour rights, contributing to unveiling violations in law and in practice of the fundamental rights at work of journalists.

¹⁹⁸ UNESCO and International Association of Prosecutors, "[Guidelines for Prosecutors on Cases of Crimes against Journalists](#)", 2020.

4. Conclusion

Addressing the issue of the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity of perpetrators that attack journalists is a serious and complex human rights issue, linked to the freedom of expression and thought. As this report shows, it is also a labour rights issue, as the safety of journalists is linked to such matters as freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; forced or compulsory labour; discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and a safe and healthy working environment. International labour standards can provide tools for governments and employers' and workers' organizations, as well as individual enterprises and journalists, for tackling issues linked to journalist safety from a labour perspective.

At the heart of such efforts lies social dialogue and the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders, as envisioned by the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Safe journalism is a common interest of media enterprises and the journalists working for them, and solutions developed together through representative organizations can help improve the safety, quality and sustainability of this important profession.

5. Annex: Selection of international resources relevant to journalism

International human rights instruments

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). 1948. Foundational human rights instrument affirming freedom of expression (Art. 19), a cornerstone for journalist protection.

[International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). 1966. Legally binding treaty guaranteeing freedom of expression, due process and protection against arbitrary arrest or violence.

[Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#). 1966. Allows individuals – including journalists – to submit complaints to the UN Human Rights Committee.

[Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#). 1984. Prohibits torture and ill-treatment, which journalists often face when detained or targeted.

[International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance](#). 2006. Relevance to cases where journalists are abducted or “disappeared” due to their reporting.

[Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#). 1979. Addresses gender-based violence and discrimination; essential for understanding risks facing women journalists.

Fundamental labour Conventions of the International Labour Organization

[Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 \(No. 87\)](#). Protects journalists’ rights to form unions and professional associations.

[Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No. 98\)](#). Ensures workers’ rights to negotiate collectively about conditions of work.

[Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No. 29\)](#). Prohibits forced labour, including coercive practices affecting journalists.

[Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 \(No. 105\)](#). Strengthens protections against state-imposed forced labour or punishment.

[Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#). Sets minimum working age; relevant for youth participation in media sectors.

[Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\)](#). Prohibits hazardous work and exploitation of children.

[Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#). Affirms equal pay for equal work.

[Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#). Prohibits discrimination at work, including in media employment.

[Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#). Establishes standards for safe and healthy working conditions.

[Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 \(No. 187\)](#). Encourages national systems that promote ongoing OSH improvements.

Other ILO standards

[Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#). Addresses violence and harassment in the world of work, including online abuse.

[Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 \(No. 206\)](#). Provides guidance on implementing Convention No. 190.

[Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention, 1952 \(No. 102\)](#). Sets basic guarantees for income security and health protection.

[Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 \(No. 202\)](#). Guides States in creating minimum social protection guarantees.

[Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 \(No. 198\)](#). Provides guidance on establishing whether an employment relationship exists in situations in which the respective rights and obligations of the parties concerned are not clear.

UN system plans, guidelines and reports

ILO. 2024. [Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: Trade Union Initiatives, Strategies and Negotiations since the adoption of the Convention on Violence and Harassment \(No. 190\) and its Recommendation \(No. 206\), 2019](#). Collection of trade union initiatives and strategies preventing, addressing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work.

---. 2022. [Violence and Harassment at Work: A Practical Guide for Employers](#). Focuses on the general principles in the prevention and management of violence and harassment at work.

UN. 2012. [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#). UN system-wide strategy to prevent attacks, protect journalists and prosecute crimes.

---. n.d. [Annual Thematic Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion](#). Key thematic analyses of threats, digital surveillance, gendered harassment and legal harassment.

UNESCO. 2021. [Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Policies for Newsrooms: Guidelines and Checklist](#). Guidelines to improve gender safety, equality and workplace culture.

---. 2022. [Global Toolkit for Law Enforcement Agents: Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Safety of Journalists](#). Training guidance for law enforcement on freedom of expression and journalist protection.

---. 2024. [Guide for Psychologists in the Emergency Care of Journalists](#). Framework for psychological first aid and trauma-informed support.

---. n.d. [Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity](#). Biennial global monitoring report assessing killings, attacks and accountability.

UNESCO and International Association of Prosecutors. 2020. [Guidelines for Prosecutors on Cases of Crimes against Journalists](#). Detailed guidance on investigating cases and combating impunity.

UNESCO and Reporters without Borders. 2017. [Safety Guide for Journalists: A Handbook for Reporters in High-Risk Environments](#). Practical safety manual for journalists working in dangerous contexts.

Databases and monitoring tools

ILO. [Information System on International Labour Standards \(NORMLEX\)](#). Database of ILO Conventions, ratifications and observations relevant to labour rights in the media sector.

UNESCO. [Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists](#). Key reference source for national policies and protection mechanisms.

---. [Observatory of Killed Journalists](#). Comprehensive global database tracking journalist killings since 1993.

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

sector@ilo.org
ilo.org/sector