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Statement submitted by Committee to Protect Journalists, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Committee to Protect Journalists affirms the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with particular regards to section J of the declaration, Women in and the Media. The Committee also supports the 62nd session of the Commission of the Status of Women; the review theme, Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions from the 47th session).

The Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. We do so by defending the rights of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal. The Committee tracks hundreds of attacks on the press each year such as killings, nonfatal assaults, restrictive legislation, imprisonment, media closures, and other threats used to silence the media. When violations do take place, we mobilize a network of correspondents who report and take action on behalf of the journalists targeted.

The Committee believes it is critical that women participate in, and have access to, the media. Women journalists can play a pivotal role in combating gender inequality and violence. However, women journalists face unique offline and online challenges that can deter their participation in the media.

Through our systematic tracking, the Committee to Protect Journalists has found that at least 81 female journalists have been killed since 1992, seven per cent of all journalists killed for their work. The majority, 58, were targeted and murdered in connection to their work. In 2016, 20 of the 259 journalists imprisoned for their work were women, according to the Committee's annual imprisoned census.

Aside from the figures around killings or imprisonment, research by the Committee to Protect Journalists indicates that women journalists face other challenges. Sexual violence is used to silence women journalists. In 2011, the Committee launched a special report "The Silencing Crime" documenting the use of sexual violence against journalists. The journalists experienced violence ranging from groping, to penetration by hands, to rape. Most of the attacks documented fell into three categories: targeted sexual violation of journalists in reprisal for their work, sexual abuse of journalists in captivity or detention, and mob -related sexual violence against journalists covering public events.

The research also indicates that following an attack, many women journalists remain silent due to social stigmas and fears of professional repercussions, for instance that they will no longer be assigned stories. Some start using pseudonyms. Some re-evaluate the type stories they cover. Others give up journalism entirely. Women journalists can offer diverse perspectives on news stories; however, technical, legal and psychological support systems can increase their ability to do so. By encouraging editorial staff to discuss these issues with their journalists and by providing safety training, watch groups, programs, networks, and experts that address women journalist's needs and concerns, we can enhance the resources available to women journalists regarding sexual violence.

The Committee to Protect Journalists therefore recommends the following:

- Encourage United Nations bodies and member states to prioritize the adoption of measures to better ensure the safety of women in the media.
- Encourage media outlets to increase training, preparation and policies dedicated to addressing the needs and safety concerns of women in the media.

- Create a culture of safety in news organizations that enables women journalists, both staff and freelance, to discuss and address these issues and ensure that management and editors are able to respond and provide resources as needed.

Addressing the online violence that women journalists face is also a priority. Journalists increasingly use information and communication technologies to report and disseminate news, and engage with their audience. This shift towards online journalism however, does not come without gender-based threats, as there is a continuum between online and offline activities. In 2016, the Committee to Protect Journalists focused its annual publication, *Attacks on the Press*, on 'Gender and Media Freedom Worldwide'. Among other things, the publication delves into cyber violence as one of the significant threats to women journalists.

Cyber violence and digital threats to women journalists include threats of rape, coordinated trolling attacks, revenge porn, cyber stalking, sextortion, smear campaigns, having private information such as email, phone number, and home address exposed (i.e. doxing), and having SWAT or military teams sent to home due to false accusations (i.e. swatting), underscoring the fact that online threats can lead to offline attacks

Cyber violence can cause women journalists to censor themselves online and purposefully maintain low online profiles. Some journalists resort to suspending, deactivating or permanently deleting their online accounts. Preventing online abuse is critical to ensuring women's right to safety in the digital space. By creating and executing guidelines and laws that monitor and reprimand abusive online activity, we can ensure women journalists are able to work safely and choose visibility instead of hiding.

The Committee to Protect Journalists therefore recommends the following:

- Encourage social media platforms to establish consistent channels for documenting and reporting online abuse of women journalists and report transparently on these efforts.
- News organizations, media development and training groups, and the U.N. should provide adequate and appropriate resources that support safety of women journalists.
- Collect, share, and recognize good practices to counter online harassment, and intimidation of women journalists in platforms for media and information and communications technologies.

As an organization that advocates for press freedom worldwide, the Committee to Protect Journalists urges the United Nations bodies and Member States to heed the ways in which women journalists are unable to access and participate in the media. Sexual violence and online violence against women in the media are direct attacks on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Through policies, legislation, programs, strategies and regulatory instruments, we can create robust initiatives that address the safety and concerns of women in the media. In turn, we can increase women's safe participation in, and access to the media.