



Journalism safety and the actuality of achieving gender equality in the media landscape of Uzbekistan

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 6 th December 2022 Accepted: 12 th December 2022 Published: 12 th December 2022	Uzbekistan faces socio-political changes in the last years and the impact of these turnouts are reflected in the media landscape of the country. Several cases show that the issues of gender equality and the safety of journalists are becoming more threatening. Some journalists suffer from political pressure, harassment, and physical or psychological threats. The analysis of the most discussed real cases can be the authentic example reducing of the freedom of the press in the country.

Keywords: media landscape, the safety of journalists, media freedom, gender equality, censorship.

Introduction

The profession of a journalist rounds out the top ten list of the world's most dangerous occupations¹. In contrast to the other top-ranked professions, such as mining, firefighting, or fishing, journalists are featured on this list due to the negative impacts and demands placed on them, rather than the danger of their job and working conditions. Because "Even in the countries with high rankings in terms of democracy, prosperity, freedom of speech, freedom from corruption, and other comparable indicators, social network blocking, harassment, and threats against journalists and other mass media workers are on the rise.

Literature review

In his speech at the International Federation of Journalists 2003 international conference on the topic of "Safety of journalistic activity," Kyrgyz journalist Kuban Mambetaliev stated that "Safety is such an important factor in journalistic activities that its full provision affects complete, high-quality, the fast and responsible performance of the task"². Moez Chakchuk, UNESCO Assistant Director for information and communication, emphasizes that a journalist risks his life in any dangerous situation and that this information can save the lives of millions of people. He also considers the threat to journalists' safety as a threat to freedom of expression³.

Based on the foregoing, the problem of security is not only a journalist's privacy, but also a vital requirement for providing quality and timely information to society and the global media landscape, and it is also necessary for the functioning of other indicators of freedom of speech.

Guy Berger Director, Division for Freedom of Expression and Media Development, describes the importance of the issue as follows: the issue of journalist safety is linked to the end of the Cold War. This historic shift in UNESCO's focus was a signal to the organization to place press freedom on the national agenda and re-unite the rest of the world in support of the notion under one ideology⁴.

Before being dispatched to locations where various illnesses are disseminated, journalists must be educated in all essential hygienic precautions and provided with protective gear, and professionals who travel to report from military activities or natural catastrophes must have tactical training. In such conditions, journalists must operate under extreme psychological stress in addition to physical safety issues. Some journalists work under the pressure of covering a constantly changing situation, while others are traumatized by external pressures on their profession or by

¹ [ТОП-10 самых опасных профессий мира | Novation.by](#)

² Mambetaliev K. Bezopasnosti raboti jurnalista.

³ [UNESCO stresses importance of safety of journalists amid COVID-19 pandemic](#)

⁴ Berger, G. Why the world became concerned with journalistic safety, and why the issue will continue to attract attention. The assault of journalism: Building Knowledge to Protect Freedom of Expression. Nordicom. University of Gothenburg, 2017. –P. 33.

seeing catastrophic conditions and brutal confrontations.

The thoughts of the chairman of the International Media and Communication Research Association, Dr. Sadia Jamil, in this regard contribute to enhancing the possibilities offered by the aforementioned experts. In the course of his investigation, the scientist proposes the following types:

1. Physical dangers - murder, kidnapping, arrest, imprisonment, physical or sexual assault, rape, injury, etc.
2. Psychological risks - stress and pressure.
3. Financial risks - job insecurity, salary disparities, and the danger of forced termination of employment.
4. Legal threats include impunity for crimes against journalists, improper trials, and the presence of laws against the manipulation of journalists.
5. Social and emotional risks - anxiety, fear, depression, and low self-esteem.
6. Gender-specific risks - threats that a journalist may experience as a result of his or her gender.
7. Digital risks - online threats, such as hacking, abusive or threatening e-mail or text messages, and unpleasant social media remarks.
8. Public threats - violent, immoral, and abusive treatment of journalists in custody by the local public⁵.

Media law expert Karim Bahriev's approach to the issue of the safety of journalists is even more precise and attracted our attention as he reveals and complements the previous two types. According to the researcher, the safety of mass media representatives is classified into three categories:

1. personal safety - protection from physical and moral threats;
2. legal security - the perfect creation of legal norms governing journalists' activities;
3. political safety - protection from political threats⁶.

Results and discussions

It is no secret that media workers in Uzbekistan endure threats to their physical and psychological safety. On August 6, 2021, journalist Feruza Najmiddinova, a reporter for the online media outlet "Qalampir. uz", published the critical article entitled "Do restaurants in "Tashkent city" have a "tank"?". According to the decision of the special commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on July 20, 2021, public catering establishments in Uzbekistan, such as restaurants, cafes, kitchens, and teahouses are only permitted to operate in the open air from 08:00 to 20:00, and meaning journalistic material violates this decision in the study area. The majority of cafes and restaurants in Tashkent city, however, are full until 10:00 PM and serve customers both inside and outside. After this critical report, on August 7, a video discrediting Feruza Najmiddinova was distributed on social media. According to blogger Nargiza Soatova, the video was shared in a Facebook group which is followed by 35,000 followers. "And the admins of that community slandered and held back without hesitation," the blogger added. Following that, the internet publication "Qalampir. uz" issued its official message. People recognized that this video was nothing more than slander, but the fact that the law did not punish those who spread it demonstrates that there are weaknesses in our country's protection of journalists. As a result, the journalist suffered a severe psychological blow.

According to an analysis of the conflict situation between two journalists from "Kun. uz" news website, Bahodir Ahmedov, Zafar Solijhanov, and Tashkent city governor Jahangir Ortikhojaev, journalists suffer more psychical threats than physical ones. In November 2019, an audio recording of the governor's speech to journalists, which has full of terrifying threats addressed toward "Kun. uz" journalists, was discussed publicly. "Following that, Bahodir Ahmedov and Zafar Solijhanov announced their resignation via their social media profiles. It was more than just a message: it was a warning of a major threat to himself."⁸

Indeed, the Information and Mass Communications Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the parties responded to such official threats against journalists, but in all of these speeches, the populace was advised not to spread divorce information until a legal evaluation of the situation was done. None of the political circle representatives believed that the moral damage and psychological pressure inflicted on the journalists would force them to strengthen their internal censorship in the future and force other journalists to "draw the right conclusions," stifling freedom of speech and press once more.

"Gazeta. uz" released an article titled "Threats against me have begun - an Osh journalist who exposed the situation of Uzbek travelers" on August 11, 2022. The article discusses the threats made against Shahrukh Saipov, a journalist who highlighted issues such as the unpleasant attitude of local taxi drivers toward Uzbek citizens in the Osh district of Kyrgyzstan and charging many times higher charges. "...intimidation and threats began with acquaintances and networks." My phone number and address are also frequently requested by my acquaintances. I've been strolling along the street for a few days, and folks have been attempting to help. That is, they intend to drag me into a dispute. Such activities, in my opinion, are planned by cab drivers or other parties," the journalist stated in an

⁵ Jamil, S. Freedom of expression and threats to the journalists' safety: analysis of conflict reporting in journalism education in Pakistan. Journalism Education, Volume 6 (№ 2), -P. 10.

⁶ <https://www.amerikaovozi.com/a/6514043.html>

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYNJUcW28Go>

⁸ <https://azon.uz/index.php?content/views/kun-uz-va-ortiqhodjaevning-sulhi-samimiy>

tendency, which is widespread around the world, is also prevalent interview with the publication's reporter⁹. The symptoms of a threat to a journalist's privacy are evident, and this in Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

Expressing our research and analysis on the safety of journalists and gender equality in the world's media landscape, we have witnessed that these issues are not only important indicators of freedom of speech, but also have an urgent importance for the development and balance of journalism, which is constantly changing and, in fact, serves to change the times. The integration of such trends in the world media landscape into the national mass media requires a special responsibility from the practicing representatives of the field as well as from the researchers.

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⁹ [«Менга нисбатан таҳдидлар бошланди» — ўзбекистонлик йўловчилар муаммосини ёритган ўшлик журналист – Газета.uz \(gazeta.uz\)](#)