



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations Office  
CH 1211 Geneva  
Switzerland

Your ref.:

Our ref.:

Date:

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**Report of the Secretary-General on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.**

Reference is made to letter dated 22 December 2016 regarding the follow-up on UN General Assembly Resolution 70/162 "The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity" and the submitted questionnaire.

Please find attached information from the Government of Norway, including the Norwegian Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Children and Equality, as response to the submitted questions.

Yours sincerely

Lajla Jakhelln  
Director

Siri Andersen  
Senior Adviser

## Questionnaire for Member States for the report of the Secretary-General on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. NORWAY.

### Question 1

Journalists' vulnerability to hate speech and other forms of written intimidation and abuse in the online environment has received increased attention in Norway over the last couple of years.<sup>1</sup> In particular, it has been debated how women journalists, together with prominent female politicians and contributors to the public debate suffer from trolling, misogyny and sexual harassment online. Concern has been voiced about the possible negative effect on women journalists' reporting, but also on women's freedom of expression and contribution to the public debate in general.

A comprehensive study made among Norwegian journalists and editors found that male and women journalists receive approximately the same amount of threats, harassment, and other forms of oral abuse as a response to their reporting.<sup>2</sup> However, women journalists experience significantly more sexualized harassment and online abuse as responses. Some of the key findings from the study, documenting the clear age and gender differences, are highlighted in a recent OSCE-publication:

*Almost half of the journalists in our study say they have experienced online harassment in the past five years – and there are no gendered differences here. One in four has received threats in the same period – more men than women. Male journalists are more likely to experience physical confrontation than women, while women receive more comments on their appearance and obscene phone calls. Approximately one in four women and one in 20 men have received sexualised comments or threats. Age plays a part too: almost twice as many young female journalists (aged 26-35) report that they have experienced harassment compared to their male colleagues of the same age; when we look at older journalists the results are reversed.<sup>3</sup>*

As to the impact of this intimidation and harassment, 9 per cent of the affected journalists said that they had changed their reporting as a direct consequence of their experiences. There were no gender differences here. From those who had experienced sexualized harassment, more men than women journalists said it had an impact on their reporting (6 per cent men and 2 percent women).<sup>4</sup> The study also documented that those journalists who suffered from emotional distress because of the online abuse, were more likely to moderate their reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> Hatefulle ytringer, delrapport 1: Forskning på art og omfang, by Marjan Nadim and Audun Fladmoe, Institutt for samfunnsforskning Rapport 2016:14 (p.30),

<http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2016/2016-14>

<sup>2</sup> Ytringsfrihet, sårbarhet og sosial "skamming": Journalisters erfaringer med hatytringer i norsk offentlig, by Aina Landsverk Hagen and Ida Drange in the periodical SOSIOLOGI I DAG, volume 45, NR. 4/2015, <http://ojs.novus.no/index.php/SID/article/viewFile/1178/1169>

<sup>3</sup> Shame, shock and speech injuries: Online harassment against journalists in Norway, by Aina Landsverk Hagen in "New Challenges to Freedom of Expression: Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists", OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, p. 17 <http://www.osce.org/fom/220411?download=true>

<sup>4</sup> Ytringsfrihet, sårbarhet og sosial "skamming": Journalisters erfaringer med hatytringer i norsk offentlig, by Aina Landsverk Hagen and Ida Drange in the periodical SOSIOLOGI I DAG, volume 45, NR. 4/2015 (p. 107)

## Question 2

The *Ministry of Culture* does not monitor or collect information about gender-specific barriers and human rights violations, or risks thereof, faced by women journalists.

## Question 3-6

According to the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security* there are no special measures aimed at protecting women journalists. The Norwegian Penal Code is gender-neutral and contains provisions on both violence and intimidation. The specific circumstances of each case will be decisive for which provisions would be applicable. Further, the police has a number of tools and instruments to be used for the protection of persons including journalists, exposed to violence and threats, e.g. restraining order, security alarm, secret address and anonymity measures/hidden identity. The majority of women, who are covered by these measures, are women who face risk of violence and intimidation by former partners. The Ministry is, however, aware that the police also has implemented protective measures and safeguards for journalists at risk or journalists facing concrete threats.

*The Ministry of Culture* has not adopted any measures, nor are we aware of any policies or government initiatives aimed to specifically address harmful stereotypes, discrimination and other human rights violations experienced by women journalists. Norway has strong anti-discrimination laws, which will apply.

### *The Gender Equality Act:*

The Gender Equality Act provides the framework for all efforts to promote gender equality in Norway. Its purpose is to promote equality irrespective of gender. It prohibits all discrimination on grounds of gender, but with a particular aim at strengthening the position of women. It applies to all areas of society. The Act provides a basis for proactive measures as well as being an important guarantee against discrimination.

The Act requires public authorities, employers and employer and employee organizations to work actively and systematically to promote gender equality. It also requires employers to report annually on the gender equality status and activities in their enterprises.

The Act enables authorities and others to introduce special measures for one gender for a limited period in order to promote gender equality.

### *Hate speech*

The Norwegian Government launched a new strategy to combat hate speech in November 2016. Hate speech represent an obstacle to an open public debate based on mutual respect. The strategy aims to prevent and combat hate speech, and outlines measures for different sectors of society, such as the work place, schools, academia, law enforcement and the media.<sup>5</sup> Priorities in the media sector include promoting media pluralism and modernizing

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<sup>5</sup> The strategy is available at [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/72293ca5195642249029bf6905ff08be/hatefulleytringer\\_uu.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/72293ca5195642249029bf6905ff08be/hatefulleytringer_uu.pdf)

media laws regulating media liability. Further, the Government will facilitate arenas for exchange of knowledge and experience. Platforms, including online meeting spaces, for children and youth will be of particular importance.

#### **Question 7**

Under reporting to the police and lack of capacity to follow-up hate speech crimes within the law enforcement agencies might pose a challenge to ensure accountability for cases of illegal online abuse of women journalists. The above-mentioned strategy outlines several measures that aims to enhance the police's ability to investigate and prosecute hate speech crimes.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Question 8**

The Ministry of Culture has not cooperated with any relevant UN entities on the specific issue of the situation of women journalists.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security has not previously reported to United Nations agencies on investigations of attacks on female journalists.

#### **Question 9**

None at the time of reporting.

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<sup>6</sup> Strategy pages 28-35