
JOURNALISTS' SAFETY ASSESSMENT REPORT

2024 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA



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SAFETY
ASSESSMENT
REPORT

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This assessment report documented the risks Ethiopian journalists faced in 2024.
It also provides evidence-based recommendations to address gaps undermining the
safety of journalists and media freedom in the country.

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The views and approaches expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the SIDA-funded "Ethiopian Media in a Time of Change: Promoting Journalism and Democracy" programme, Fojo Media Institute, International Media Support, or its donors.

About International Media Support (IMS)
IMS is a non-profit organisation working to strengthen the capacity of media to reduce conflict, strengthen democracy, and facilitate dialogue. Since 2001, IMS has supported independent journalism, media development, and freedom of expression in more than 50 countries worldwide. For more information, visit www.mediasupport.org

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**LIST OF ACRONYMS
AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ACSO	Authority for Civil Society Organizations
AHRE	Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia
CARD	Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CSoJ	Consortium for the Safety of Journalists
EGE	Editors Guild of Ethiopia
EMA	Ethiopian Media Authority
EMMPA	Ethiopian Mass Media Professionals Association
EMWA	Ethiopian Media Women Association
LHR	Lawyers for Human Rights
IMS	International Media Support
OBS	Oromia Broadcasting Network
RSF	Reporters Without Borders

FOREWORD

The safety of journalists remains a critical issue that demands urgent attention and collective action. In Ethiopia, journalists face significant challenges, including violence, harassment, and threats, which undermine their ability to report freely and safely. These challenges jeopardise individual journalists and erode the foundations of media freedom and democracy. To address these pressing concerns, International Media Support (IMS) has conducted a comprehensive assessment to evaluate the state of journalist safety in the country.

This Safety Assessment Report, carried out by an independent consultant, provides evidence-based recommendations to guide the work of IMS and its partners while informing policymaking and implementation to address gaps that undermine the safety of journalists and media freedom in Ethiopia. Utilising a localised and standardised methodology, the report offers a detailed analysis of the challenges faced by Ethiopian journalists, presenting findings and recommendations crucial for shaping future actions and fostering a safer environment for media professionals.

IMS's Preventive and Holistic Approaches to Journalist Safety are central to this report. By focusing on preventive measures and proactive strategies, IMS equips journalists with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate risks, health concerns, and conflict-related issues. This approach emphasises local ownership, capacity development, and evidence-based advocacy while promoting collective action through multistakeholder collaboration, coalition building, and consultative and collaborative engagements. These efforts aim to create a safer working environment for journalists, address emerging challenges, and advocate for legal and institutional reforms to protect journalists better and promote accountability.

IMS's achievements in journalist safety are exemplified by the establishment of the Consortium for the Safety of Journalists (CSoJ), which was legally registered in 2024, marking a significant step toward institutionalising efforts to protect journalists.

In 2022 and 2023, IMS engaged media and human rights organisations, regulatory bodies, and duty bearers in constructive dialogues and consultations to promote coordination and joint planning. These efforts culminated in the Media Sector Actors Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia for the Year 2024 and Beyond, which recommends the development of standardised methodologies, practical tools for monitoring and documenting journalist safety, and continuous evidence-based advocacy.

Raising awareness and strengthening capacity are integral to IMS's approach. Through comprehensive Training of Trainers (ToT) programs, IMS addresses various aspects of journalist safety, including risk management, physical and psychological safety, digital security, and the principles of freedom of expression. These programs are designed to empower journalists and media professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate complex and dangerous environments.

Periodic monitoring and reporting are also key components of IMS's strategy. Regular assessments, annual reports, and policy briefs provide valuable insights and lessons learned, contributing to the global agenda for journalist safety. IMS is committed to establishing systems for tracking incidents, threats, and attacks against journalists, ensuring accurate and reliable data collection to inform evidence-based safety protocols.

As we move forward, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to our partners, government institutions, CSOs, and all stakeholders who have contributed to this vital work. Your collaboration and commitment have been instrumental in advancing the safety of journalists in Ethiopia. We firmly believe that a multistakeholder approach, rooted in local ownership, collaboration and shared responsibility, is essential to creating a sustainable and safer environment for journalists. Together, we can continue to promote media freedom, uphold the rights of journalists, and strengthen the foundations of democracy.

We sincerely thank our donors, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the UK, for their unwavering support these past few years and commitment to advancing journalist safety and media freedom in Ethiopia.

Tewodros Negash Bayu

Programme Manager and Country Representative in Ethiopia

URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2024 national assessment report on the safety of journalists in Ethiopia prioritises the following recommendations that the Coalition for Safety of Journalists (CSoJ) considers urgent issues for strategic advocacy. The assessment also laid down additional recommendations to members of the CSoJ, media outlets, and other media sector actors on promoting and protecting the safety of journalists.

1. The Ethiopian government must end arbitrary arrest, detention and intimidation of journalists and protect journalists and media outlets, regardless of ownership structure, to empower them to perform their essential role in society.
2. National security bodies must refrain from unlawfully deploying physical, digital and cellphone spying techniques against journalists and ensure the necessity, proportionality, and legality of such techniques in accordance with the Federal Constitution and international human rights standards.
3. The Ethiopian government must end impunity for crimes against journalists. Law enforcement agencies should effectively, impartially, and independently investigate all alleged attacks against journalists and take all necessary steps to bring the perpetrators of crime against journalists and media personnel to justice and publicly announce results.
4. The Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives must refrain from approving the proposal to amend specific Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 clauses without proper public consultation. It must also ensure that the amendment process meets international standards and, where necessary, revise the law in compliance with legal safeguards to freedom of expression and media independence under the Federal Constitution and international human rights law.
5. The Ethiopian government must ensure that the national dialogue and the transitional justice processes consider reparations to journalists who have suffered violations due to their professional work.
6. Warring groups in Amhara and Oromia regional states must refrain from abducting, abusing and threatening journalists and adhere to international guidelines and protocols on respecting the rights of journalists, more so ensure the safety of journalists to operate in conflict zones, allowing the free flow of information that benefit citizens.
7. Non-state actors, particularly political activists, business people and firms, must stop cyberbullying, intimidating and attacking journalists to influence journalistic content in their favor, thereby placing personal and party agendas ahead of the public good.
8. The general public must refrain from smearing, discrediting, and harassing journalists and media outlets, which creates an environment of fear and self censorship and normalizes attacks on journalists and media.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past year has been defined by armed conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regional states, political tensions in Tigray, drought in South East Ethiopia, frequent earthquakes in Afar, and illegal mining in different regions, particularly in Benishangul, Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regional states, which exacerbated attacks against journalists. As a result, the safety of journalists remains a concern for Ethiopia in 2024. The assessment findings show an unprecedented increase in a wide range of assaults against journalists and media outlets in Ethiopia. The cases presented in this report illustrate specific events or instances of abuse and systemic attacks against freedom of expression and press freedom. However, the most concerning cases were observed in conflict-prone regions and regions undergoing post-conflict recovery. Journalists and media outlets in different parts of the country attempting to report conflicts, public demand for self-administration, and social, economic, and cultural rights have also been targeted. The threats journalists face take many shapes and forms, from physical, psychological and digital attacks to othering and weaponising the law to persecute journalists and silence the media. Major threats faced by journalists have been explored in this assessment report. Although the year recorded no killings, 43 journalists were arrested, imprisoned and kidnapped. The number of journalists kidnapped increased in conflict areas of Amhara, along with arbitrary detentions and home and office raids in different regions, threatening journalists from carrying out their work.

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Journalists were incarcerated at the end of 2024.

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Enforced disappearance of journalists at the end of 2024.

In the Amhara region, the conflict between Fano and government forces has been a pretext to impose a state of emergency to tighten further control on the media and to arbitrarily detain and abduct journalists in the name of “loyalty to the Amhara cause” or “national security.” Government authorities cited protecting national security and interest as a prominent factor in detaining journalists. Both independent and state media journalists were arrested or raided by security agencies, and the majority of such cases were not brought before courts. Individual journalists and their families had to fight for the release of detained journalists and struggle with their economic and psychological impact. In conflict-affected regions of Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and Oromia, journalists are kidnapped, harassed, intimidated, and physically attacked by insurgents who accused them of being accomplices of the ruling party for not producing “favourable” reports. Journalists have also been targeted for ransom kidnappings. In 2024, three journalists fell victim to enforced disappearance, and two of them remain missing. As a result, journalists are living in fear of offending the government on the one hand and becoming the target of armed groups on the other, forcing them to exercise self-censorship and abandon reporting on the ongoing conflict. Kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, financial threats, physical and digital surveillance, gender-based violence, mobility restrictions and forced disclosure of information sources impaired media independence in the past year. This assessment report further captured othering based on ethnicity and religious identity of journalists, which contributed to their exclusion from reporting on specific political and conflict-related issues and exposed them to heavy editorial scrutiny as well as denial of professional development opportunities and job promotions.

The report also touches on gender safety through the lenses of equality and rights to understand the abuses and challenges female journalists face based on their gender in Ethiopia. Despite the challenges journalists and media outlets faced throughout the past year, a glimmer of hope emerged as some media outlets started to boldly report on arbitrary detentions and abductions of journalists in different regions. The Ethiopian Mass Media Professionals Association (EMMPA) issued public statements demanding justice for jailed journalists. Ethiopian Media Women Association (EMWA) organised continuous roundtable discussions on gender-based violence against women journalists. The Editors Guild of Ethiopia has also launched a web portal that helps monitor journalists' safety and press freedom in Amharic, Afan Oromo, and English. Additionally, media sector actors expressed their concerns about the proposed amendment of the media law, which they felt would undermine media independence and the self-regulation of the press. More importantly, in 2024, journalism associations pushed forward a legally registered national umbrella organisation—the Coalition for Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia (CSoJ)—to defend journalists' safety better and create a conducive environment for media independence. This assessment report recommends strategic advocacy to ensure media independence and journalists' safety before, during and after the national dialogue and transitional justice processes. The report puts particular emphasis on the importance of ending impunity for crimes against journalists. It also suggests that warring parties must observe international humanitarian law and acknowledge that journalists who perform their professional duties in conflict zones retain their professional and civilian status.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About The Assessment Report

Various journalism associations and civil society organisations have been campaigning for a conducive environment that enables Ethiopian journalists to exercise their profession. In that light, International Media Support (IMS) supported local partners to play their roles in protecting and promoting the safety of journalists and press freedom. It also supported the creation of the Consortium on the Safety of Journalists (CSoJ), a collective of journalism associations and civil society organisations which aims to promote and protect the safety of journalists and media independence in the country. On December 05, 2023, IMS facilitated a consultative workshop to support CSoJ's members to design a comprehensive approach to monitor and document attacks against journalists, identify advocacy issues and develop action plans that promote collective actions to help improve freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. The consultative workshop resulted in the formulation of an action plan where the CSoJ and other stakeholders agreed on strategic engagement and evidence-based advocacy through continuous and standardised monitoring and documenting the state of the safety of journalists.

As a result, the CSoJ and media sector actors introduced and validated a context-driven assessment methodology in November 2024 that suggested an annual safety assessment on a wide range of risks Ethiopian journalists encounter. Therefore, this annual assessment for the year 2024 is based on the agreed action plan and utilises the standardised context-driven assessment methodology and tools to shed light on the safety trends of journalists and media independence in the reporting period. This assessment aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to guide CSoJ and its stakeholders' work and inform policy-making and implementation to address gaps undermining the safety of journalists and media freedom in Ethiopia.

It does so by documenting instances of physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, kidnappings and financial threats, providing a clear picture of the risks journalists face. Peculiar challenges faced by female journalists are illustrated to provide insights into developing targeted interventions that help address gender-based violence. With the increasing prevalence of online harassment in Ethiopia, the assessment captured cases of digital security threats, proposing measures to protect journalists in the digital space. The report identified gaps in legal protections and offered practical recommendations for future actions and reforms.

This report spotlights cases selected to illustrate the experiences of journalists and media outlets, identify perpetrators, highlight policy and implementation gaps and provide recommendations that help address the issue at the national level.

1.2. Brief Overview of The State of The Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia

The safety of journalists in Ethiopia has been increasingly threatened in recent years. According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Ethiopia ranked 141st out of 180 countries in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, a significant backslide from past years.¹ The decline in press freedom highlighted the growing risks journalists face, such as physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, threats, and online harassment. In November 2024, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) urged Ethiopia to protect media independence and guarantee the safety of journalists. CPJ reported that Ethiopian journalists face arbitrary detention, physical violence, harassment and legal restrictions that hinder them from practising their profession freely.² The number of media workers and journalists detained since 2019 has surpassed 200.³ From 2019 to 2024, Ethiopia has seen a troubling trend in the arrest of media personnel. There were 25 arrests in 2019, peaking at 71 in 2020, followed by 58 in 2021, 46 in 2022, and 40 in 2023.⁴ Moreover, the Ethiopian Editors Guild (EEG) compiled 27 incident reports through its web portal between March 2024 and December 2024.⁵ The pattern of assaults against journalists shows the persistent and escalating challenges to press freedom in Ethiopia. It also underscores the need for comprehensive measures to protect journalists and ensure a safe and free media environment that serves the public interest. While Ethiopia is struggling with communal conflicts and civil war, attacks against journalists in Ethiopia have increased, including abductions, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and gender-based violence.⁶ According to a report by the Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), journalists and media outlets are targeted by state and non-state actors, including political figures, insurgent groups, influential individuals, and businesspeople, threatening the safety of journalists and media freedom in Ethiopia.⁷

¹ Index | RSF

² <https://cpj.org/2024/11/cpj-urges-ethiopia-to-commit-to-press-freedom-during-un-human-rights-review/>

³ Ethiopian Press Freedom Defenders. June 2024.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ www.sojethiopia.org

⁶ Universal Periodic Review Fourth Cycle - Ethiopia - Reference Documents | OHCHR

⁷ Assessment Report. Centre for the Advancement of Democracy and Rights. 2022 Safety Handbook for Journalists.



Some participants of assessment dissemination workshop

The political climate is increasingly hostile towards the media. Journalists are frequently depicted as enemies of the state and are at risk if they report on sensitive topics such as corruption, human rights violations, and political unrest. Journalists operate without adequate legal safeguards, making them vulnerable to arbitrary arrests and harassment. The lack of solidarity among media organisations further exacerbates these dangers. The risks are compounded for female journalists, who face gender-based violence in addition to the general threats encountered by their male counterparts.

1.3. The State of Freedom of Expression and Media Independence

The regressing state of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists in the country threatens the ongoing democratisation process. It also challenges the implementation of the Federal Constitution and the international standards of freedom of expression and access to information. Currently, the right to access information in Ethiopia requires much to be done as the draft proclamation tabled to the Council of Ministers is stuck without much update on its status, which requires vigorous advocacy. Although the Federal Constitution is clear about the right to access information, the delay in enacting the Access to Information Proclamation and the initiated amendment of the Computer Crime Act exposed journalists to risks whenever they seek to obtain official information from the government and use the Internet for broadcast.⁸ Furthermore, the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185/2020 contains a broader definition of what constitutes hate, restraining legitimate political speech and failing to comply with the international standards on freedom of expression.

On October 09, 2024, the United Nations Human Rights Council received a call from 45 countries regarding the urgency of addressing the regressing human rights conditions in Ethiopia.⁹ The call emphasised the constraints on the rights to freedom of expression and the silencing of journalists and civil society. In 2024, the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) proposed an amendment to the Media Proclamation number 1238/2021.

⁸ The Media Law Reform Working Group (MLRWG) submitted the draft amended Access to the Information Proclamation to the Council of Ministers in mid-2021. The initiated amendment to the Computer Crime Act has also been interrupted for unknown reasons. Media Coalition Building Processes and Progresses in Ethiopia. Unpublished report. IMS, 2023.

⁹ HRC57 - General Debate Item 10: Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Ethiopia | EEAS

Journalism associations and human rights organisations expressed concern that the amendment would backslide the legal transformation achieved in the wake of 2018. Similarly, they warned that the proposed amendment allowing the prime minister to appoint EMA's director would toughen state media control. Civil society organisations, like the Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), called for meaningful discussion with media sector actors before revising the law. Apparently, on November 14, 2024, the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) suspended CARD, citing alleged political bias and activities contrary to national interests.

The CARD denied the allegation, highlighting procedural irregularities and affirming its commitment to impartiality and human rights. A week later, on November 21, 2024, ACSO suspended Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE); both organisations rejected the claims. These civil society organisations were actively promoting media independence and the safety of journalists.

For instance, CARD led and provided technical assistance and support to journalists' associations in the formation process of the CSoJ. CARD was also vocal against violations of the rights and dignity of journalists through its open statements and media advocacy engagements.

Conversely, LHR collaborated with the CSoJ in developing the joint action plan and helped introduce the concept of strategic human rights litigation of cases concerning freedom of expression and the safety of journalists to set precedence in advocating for the application of international human rights law in Ethiopian courts. Additionally, AHRE is acknowledged for facilitating dialogues on freedom of expression and media independence.¹⁰

¹⁰ Media Sector Actors Joint Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia for the Year 2024 and Beyond. Unpublished document. CSoJ, December 05, 2023.



The protection of freedom of expression and media independence enables journalists to report on public interest issues and play a crucial role in holding authorities accountable. Nonetheless, the state, non-state actors, and insurgents targeted journalists, making it difficult for them to exercise their professional duties. While initial political and legal reform processes were taken to improve the state of freedom of expression and media independence following the change in government administration in 2018, patterns of attacks against journalists persisted.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This assessment differs from other reports on the safety of journalists in Ethiopia in two ways. First, it utilised a context-driven assessment methodology and tools to collect and analyse data from all regions in Ethiopia. Second, the empirical basis for this assessment is primary data on a wide range of attacks against journalists collected by assessment team members who understand the local context.

The assessment utilised the standardised context-driven methodology and tools validated by the CSOJ, journalism associations, and journalists in November 2024.



Participants of Dissemination workshop held on February 13 and March 03, 2025



The methodology considers the peculiar safety risks Ethiopian journalists face and comprehensive monitoring tools to document a wide range of safety dimensions (Annex 1). Therefore, this assessment employed a qualitative design comprising a desk review, observations, in-depth interviews and analysis of media reports. In-depth interviews were conducted with 69 (46 Female and 23 Male) purposively selected journalists based on their active stake as journalists, journalism association leaders, and victims of threats against journalists.

Additionally, journalism associations organised three workshops between November and December 2024 to discuss the safety of journalists. These workshops were used to collect data that informed the analysis process. Data obtained through qualitative methods were also converted into quantitative variables to provide insights into patterns and trends of threats against journalists in 2024.

This annual assessment report covers the year 2024, comprising cases between January 01 and December 31, 2024. It targeted journalists' media personnel and outlets, with due attention paid to women journalists, journalists at risk, and journalists behind bars in all regions. The assessment was conducted in four phases. First, the context-driven assessment methodology was formulated and validated by the CSoJ and journalists. The methodology identified practical data-gathering tools, data collection and analysis procedures. It also encompassed a comprehensive list of safety threats, potential perpetrators and reliable information sources to consider during the assessment process. In the second phase, the lead consultant conducted a political, security and legal analysis and its influence on the protection of the safety of journalists. The data analysis process is informed by publicly available data, literature, media reports, court decisions, social media posts and legal texts. In the third phase, the assessment team collected data through in-depth interviews and phone conversations using semi-structured assessment questions. The last stage involved categorising and analysing data, converting qualitative findings into quantitative variables, and writing the annual assessment report.

The assessment process encountered three significant methodological challenges: recruiting key informants, building trust, and maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of sources and journalists under attack. The assessment team used a snowball technique to effectively identify key informants who can explain the state of the safety of journalists in their region if recommended by a friend or a colleague primarily interviewed by the assessment team. Although this technique helped to gain trust, the assessment team encountered difficulties in establishing trust and obtaining quality data from journalists targeted by diverse actors in conflict areas. Some assessment participants indicated their experience of being re-victimised for speaking-out and initially declined being interviewed. Explaining the objective and the assessment's data secrecy policy helped to convince some key informants.

Establishing rapport through their colleagues and granting confidentiality helped overcome this challenge and win their trust. However, maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of key informants remained challenging, especially when specific attributes of some cases have been easily identifiable.

Consequently, confidentiality was granted by removing details of particular cases from the main report while ensuring these cases were well-documented with the utmost care. Key informants who had active cases or feared surveillance and re-victimisation for speaking out were also granted anonymity by using coded names. Informants who requested not to be mentioned in the assessment report in any way are not directly quoted.

Furthermore, the assessment team faced a lack of in-depth knowledge and awareness of journalists about safety issues. In most cases, journalists quickly identify and discuss physical attacks, particularly incarceration, kidnapping, confiscation of equipment, killings and sexual attacks against women journalists. However, many key informants appeared to tolerate detention for a short period of time as a regular occurrence. It is also alarming that assessment informants explained their experiences with psychological distress, digital surveillance and cellphone spying only when given examples.

This report is structured into four sections, following the documentation categories predefined in the context-driven methodology. The first section introduces the assessment and illustrates the state of the safety of journalists, freedom of expression and media independence. The second section discusses assessment results by classifying the threats under personal safety, infrastructural safety, gender safety, identity safety, and legal safety, following the agreed documentation categories in the standardised methodology. The third section presents the conclusion and recommendation of the assessment. Additional reference documents are annexed.



Participants of the Partners' and Stakeholders' Consultative Workshops, held on December 5 and 20, 2023, discussing the Media Sector Actors Joint Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia for 2024 and Beyond.



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3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.1. Safety of Journalists in Conflict-Prone Areas

The post-conflict context in Tigray and Benishangul-Gumuz and the ongoing conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regional states had a major impact on the safety of journalists and media independence. The assessment results show that violence against journalists has been used as a weapon of war because of its collective nature. The attacks against journalists in conflict areas aimed at controlling narratives by attacking freedom of expression and media independence. Hence, state and non-state actors have been involved in harassing, detaining and abducting journalists in order to block and distort information related to conflicts that reach society.

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arbitrary detention and kidnapping cases in conflict areas.

Armed groups arbitrarily detained journalists, confiscated their equipment and kidnapped them either for ransom or to control media narratives about conflicts. The assessment captured 13 cases of arbitrary detention, kidnappings and attacks against journalists that have occurred in conflict areas, out of which nine of the cases happened in the Amhara regional state. At the same time, Benishangul-Gumuz registered one, and Tigray three cases. Although there is an ongoing conflict in the Oromia region, this assessment did not capture arbitrary detention and kidnapping cases in the area. Journalists from Oromia have avoided travelling to conflict hotspot areas, which helped to minimise security risks. In 2024, a lack of editorial independence put journalists' safety at risk in the country. However, key informants from the Oromia region reported that compliance with authorities' interference in editorial decision-making contributed to the absence of recorded physical attacks and incarcerations in the region. Assessment findings indicate that the Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz and Tigray regions appeared risky for journalists in performing their daily work compared to the other areas. Abduction, forced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, persecution, and equipment confiscation are major attacks journalists endure in conflict-prone regions. For instance, in the Amhara region, journalists were targeted both by the government and insurgents. In August 2024, two journalists were kidnapped from Bahir Dar city by a group calling itself "Amhara Fano in Gojjam." The journalists were released after two weeks of incarceration.¹¹ Key informants from the region highlighted that armed groups forced journalists either to stop reporting about the impact of the conflict or to stop exercising journalism through physical and psychological harassment. In many instances, insurgents confiscated journalists' equipment, such as cameras, recorders, and vehicles.

¹¹ WISA1206 and ENIS1206, Annex 2



My camera crew and I went to the Amhara region using an office vehicle. We were kidnapped and detained by armed groups for two weeks and suffered a lot. Our captors told us to go back to where we came from without giving us our cameras and the vehicle back. We reported the incident to our supervisors, who in return chose to investigate us and decided that we breached professional ethics and be disciplined by paying the estimated cost of the lost properties."

Anonymous

However, media managers do not recognise such incidents as attacks targeting journalists, leading to the re-victimisation of journalists by managers and editors. Key informants expressed greater fear of equipment confiscation than of physical attacks, as media outlets often demote journalists following such incidents and deduct the cost of lost equipment from their salaries as a disciplinary measure, a financial burden many cannot afford. Conversely, regional and federal security forces perpetrated attacks against journalists in conflict-prone areas, particularly the Amhara region. Assessment findings show that the conflicts created a conducive environment for authorities to take censorship and media restrictions to a new level. The regional media had been directed to cover the conflict using only government information sources because the Amhara region has been under a state of emergency declared in August 2023, which was extended repeatedly on February 02 and August 04, 2024.

According to key informants, the state of emergency contributed to the arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists accused of "aiding illegal forces" and disseminating "false information on the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)." All cases against journalists in the Amhara region identified by assessment informants are never tried before a court. On one hand, the government security forces used the state of emergency to detain journalists arbitrarily. On the other, armed groups blamed journalists for being "complicit to government forces and disloyal to the "Amhara cause." The year 2024 was also marked by the practice of institutionalised kidnapping of journalists, particularly in conflict-prone areas. This year, in the Amhara region, three journalists were taken by government security service personnel and detained in military camps for days.¹²

¹² Anonymous

3.2. Community Radio Journalists in Conflict Areas

A lack of community funding, basic broadcasting equipment, and conflicts in Amhara, Oromia, and Benishangul Gumuz led to the disruption and closure of community radios. In the Amhara region, Debre Markos, Enjibara, and Finote Selam community radios ceased broadcasting during the assessment period.¹³

Community radio journalists in Bahir Dar have also frequently received threats from unknown groups and individuals for performing their duties. They expressed apprehension about travelling from place to place for reporting, training opportunities, and personal reasons due to fears of abduction and security threats. In the Oromia region, the Chewaka Community Radio was looted by unknown groups and was non-functional during the assessment period. Because community radios do not provide risk awareness training, community journalists in Benishangul Gumuz, Amhara, and Oromia regions opted to play music for much of the time to avoid controversy over content and potential security risks. Thanks to peace negotiated by cultural leaders—Sultans—with insurgents from neighbouring areas, Argoba Community Radio in the Afar region continued its broadcasting. However, in the Afar region, a community journalist was briefly detained by local authorities while covering a conflict between the Afar and Issa communities in December 2024.¹⁴ He was released with the support of his editors, who contacted officials at the zonal level and managed to compile his report.

¹³ Anonymous

¹⁴ Anonymous.

4. SAFETY ISSUES MONITORED AND DOCUMENTED IN 2024

4.1. Personal Safety Risks

Personal safety encompasses both physical and psychological risks, including violent attacks that threaten journalists' bodily integrity and mobility, as well as assaults on their mental and emotional well-being and their capacity to carry out reporting duties.

4.1.1. Physical Safety Risks

In 2024, Ethiopia experienced communal conflicts that contributed to the deterioration of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. The past year significantly shaped the state of media freedom and the safety of journalists by exacerbating self-censorship and external interference as warring groups attempted to control media narratives to win the battles on the ground. Assessment key informants highlighted that the restriction by warring groups and a sense of fear created by the repeated attacks against journalists restrained the media from reporting conflicts. This, in part, has contributed to the diminished exposure of journalists to deadly risks. Conversely, journalists in the Benishangul-Gumuz region could not travel to certain areas, such as the Metekel and Kamashi zones, in order to avoid attacks and abductions. While restricted movement helped protect their safety, it negatively affected the diversity of content and public voices in the media. Except for a brief detention of a community journalist in January 2024 in Afar, Zone 3 area, the region was peaceful for journalists to travel from place to place within the region. Nevertheless, travelling to Addis Ababa, crossing Metahara, Adama, and Awash for training, and performing other journalistic duties has been challenging. A key informant highlighted his experience of escaping an abduction by unidentified armed groups as he travelled to Addis Ababa in mid-2024. Although there were no killings of journalists recorded in the country, 43 journalists were arrested, imprisoned, and kidnapped in 2024. Nonetheless, the Oromia regional state recorded no arrests, detention or physical attacks. Ethiopia is among the lowest-ranked countries as media freedom is regressing due to conflicts, the spread of disinformation and fake news, and attacks against journalists.¹⁵

Number of Ethiopian Journalists Incarcerated in 2024	
Arrested	21
Imprisoned	7
Kidnapped	15
Total	43

Although regional journalists experienced repeated attacks, national and foreign journalists were also targeted during the assessment year. For example, on February 22, 2024, authorities detained Antoine Galindo, a French web journalist, on allegations of trying to “create chaos and violence” after he interviewed a member of the Oromo Liberation Front.¹⁶

4.1.1.1. Journalists Who Fled Their Country

In addition to journalists harassed, threatened and incarcerated, 10 journalists (9 Male and 1 Female) were forced to go into exile, fleeing multiple arbitrary arrests, intimidation, inhumane treatment, physical attacks, confiscation of equipment and orchestrated robbery (Annex 5). For instance, Bekalu Alamirew (founder and chief editor of YouTube-based media outlet Alpha Media) and Belay Manaye (cofounder of the YouTube-based media outlet Ethio News) say that they experienced repeated detention and a wide range of attacks until their last release in June 2024.¹⁷ Both journalists claimed that they decided to flee following “life-threatening” warnings from government security forces. Key informants indicated that even when journalists fled their country, their family members became target of attacks, repeated house searches and intimidation, often being asked for the whereabouts of exiled journalists and their work equipment left behind, such as laptops and recordings. According to CPJ, at least 54 Ethiopian journalists and media workers have gone into exile since 2020.¹⁸

10
Journalists
were forced
into exile.

¹⁷ Ethiopian Journalists Forced to Flee After Threats from Government Security Forces - Ethio Eyewitness News

¹⁸ Fleeing prolonged media crackdown, Ethiopian journalists struggle in exile - Committee to Protect Journalists

4.1.1.2. National Security and National Interest as a Justification for Threatening Journalists

Moreover, journalists and independent media were labelled as threats to national security. In many circumstances, national interest and security have been raised, coupled with ethnocentrism and terrorism with alleged links to armed forces in Amhara and Oromia regions to justify the incarceration of journalists. For example, Gobeze Sisay of The Voice of Amhara was arrested in May 2023 and charged with terrorism along with 50 codefendants, four of whom were journalists Meskerem Abera, Genet Asmamaw, Tewodros Zerfu and Dawit Begashaw, who are still behind bars.¹⁹ During the year 2024, intimidation and arbitrary detention by regional security forces threatened the protection of journalists and their information sources, deterring them from investigating sensitive stories. According to informants of this assessment, local authorities at woreda (district) and kebele (locality) levels perpetrated violence against journalists, unlike other times. For example, on December 29, 2024, in Tigray, three journalists who went to Asgede district, Meili locality, to investigate the “environmental, health and social impacts of illegal gold mining in the region” were kidnapped by unknown armed groups.²⁰ Although the media outlet the journalists work for has stated that they were released hours after the incident, journalists were blocked from investigating the illicit mining story in the area.²¹ More so, perpetrators were not tracked and faced no accountability. Similarly, a senior journalist in Addis Ababa was arbitrarily detained by security forces for reporting illegal mining and corruption in the mining sector allegedly involving authorities.²² Journalists reporting on social and cultural issues were also targeted. A case in point is the detention of four journalists by the police in the Kembata Zone, Hadero Tunto district, on January 11 2025.²³ The journalists travelled to the area to report on the traditional cattle census practice of the Donga community in the Central Ethiopia Regional State.

¹⁹ National Security: The Unconstitutional Card Muffling Freedom Of Expression

²⁰ Anonymous

²¹ https://x.com/Tigrai_TV/status/1873357519793311901?t=D3JzdiZljjvAeGonDjyfeQ&s=03

²² TERA052, Annex 2.; National Security: The Unconstitutional Card Muffling Freedom Of Expression

²³ Anonymous

However, they were detained for hours by local authorities, who threatened them to leave the area and prevented them from covering the event. The assessment findings further show that media professionals and support staff, particularly camera crew and drivers, are equally targeted, kidnapped and arrested by state and non-state actors. By the end of 2024, none of the perpetrators of attacks against journalists were tried before the courts. Journalists, particularly those reporting politics, have been receiving death threats, and the situation is bad when the content is shared online, and even worse if its a female journalist as genderized attacks are often used.

4.1.1.3. Enforced Disappearance of Journalists

The year 2024 saw the enforced disappearance of three journalists in Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states. A journalist from Amhara Media has been allegedly abducted by unknown armed groups in the North Showa zone, and no one has heard from him since November 2024. His family and friends believed that he was kidnapped for ransom. In January (no specified date) 2024, a camera person with Benishangul Gumuz TV was abducted by armed groups when he travelled back to Assossa with his wife from a family visit to a village 60 km away. Armed groups stopped the public bus, singled out and kidnapped him. His family believed he was kidnapped for ransom, but the abductors made no contact with the family. It has been almost a year since he vanished, and there has been no active search for his return.²⁴

3

Enforced disappearance of journalists at the end of 2024

²⁴ AMOH346, Annex 2.

In August 2024, a senior journalist was forcefully taken from his home by unknown groups. His family did not know his whereabouts until a video clip allegedly shared by insurgents circulated on social media in November 2024 in which his family to recognised him.²⁵ Family members and friends asserted that they have no information on whether the journalist appeared voluntarily or forcefully in this video. The journalist remained in captivity until the end of December 2024.

4.1.2. Psychological Safety

Assessment findings show that in 2024, two journalists sought mental health treatment with the support of their colleagues and family members.²⁶ However, this assessment could not establish any relationship between work-related stress and the health threats these journalists faced. Some respondents highlighted work-related stress, fear of persecution, and uncertainty about their future professional lives due to contextual factors such as conflicts and insufficient savings, which exposed them to psychological risks. Journalists in Tigray reported higher levels of post-traumatic stress as a result of the war and the slow recovery in the region following the end of the war. Key informants noted that, although the war ended two years ago, journalists in Tigray witnessed and experienced human suffering that threatened their psychological well-being. One journalist described experiencing disturbing recollections of such events, forcing him to avoid reminders of the war. He stated that he still struggles with disturbing memories of specific places and dates that affected both his personal and professional life. Key informants from Tigray have also expressed ongoing anger and distress even after the peace deal. Media outlets in Tigray recognise the importance of the psychological safety of journalists but lack the resources or expertise to provide adequate support.

²⁵ Anonymous

²⁶ Anonymous

Additionally, journalists in the Amhara region reported feelings of fear, anxiety, and heightened suspicion of their environment due to frequent attacks and abductions experienced by themselves and their friends. A journalist working for a regional media branch stated that his movement is restricted to commuting between home and the office; it has been over a year since he visited his family living in other parts of the region, as his “inner self” reminded him that anyone could attack him or his family if he travelled.

4.1.2.1. Demonising Journalism: A Precursor to Safety Risks

Public figures and officials use their visibility to discredit and intimidate journalists and media outlets. As a result, the general public tends to demonise and disrespect journalists, leading to a persistent pattern of impunity for crimes committed against them. A journalist from Sidama asserted that demeaning and insulting journalists and media outlets, rather than debating the reported facts, have normalised attacks against journalists. Most assessment respondents emphasised that press conferences have been used to humiliate journalists as ignorant, liars, and corrupt. Often, the public dismisses reports as false news, unverified, and politically biased, suggesting that the profession lost its value in society. Key informants highlighted a lack of professionalism and partisanship as factors contributing to the erosion of public trust and support for journalists and the media. A lack of credibility and trust from the public has created a sense of fear for journalists in Afar and Somali who report on issues such as politics, local governance, and current affairs.

**What is
happening to us
is unexplainable.**

**I cannot trust
anyone, not even
my shadow.**

A journalist from
Amhara region

Key informants indicated that physical and emotional attacks against journalists who venture out to collect public opinion (vox-pop) have become regular occurrences in these regions. Similarly, journalists from Amhara, Tigray, Benishangul Gumuz, and Addis Ababa reported discomfort in gathering public opinion on issues related to politics, rights, and conflicts.

According to key informants, 2024 was characterised by challenges for journalists to act independently from political, ethnic, and religious interests due to the escalating conflicts in various parts of the country and controversies within religious organisations. The rapidly changing political, economic, and social context has also affected journalists' ability to remain impartial. This is partly because media outlets, journalism associations, and regulatory bodies have failed to create an enabling work environment. Key informants from South Ethiopia struggle to prove their neutrality, as authorities assume that journalists, by default, are party members or sympathisers. Conversely, regional journalism associations lack a strong membership base and trust to promote professionalism and ethics to ensure the safety of journalists.

A journalist from Amhara expressed her disappointment in journalism associations, which she described as “crippled and biased” for amplifying the voices of journalists from the regions. She asserted that these associations remain silent when journalists outside of Addis are attacked. In contrast, a journalist from the Somali region emphasised that authorities targeted region-based journalism associations and labelled them as “political”, undermining their credibility to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Political interference in media continued to become a norm. Key informants claimed that authorities pressurised editorial and media governance by assigning editors and media leaders, often political cadres. This led to the blacklisting of information sources and journalists who tend to perform their work ethically and professionally as “extremists and foreign agents.”

If we produce a story that exposes corrupt authorities, we will be labelled ‘loyalists’ to one of the despised political or ethnic groups. If we abandon reporting on politics or governance, we will be called a “gluttony cadre.”

A journalist from Sidama

In 2024, authorities demanded that a series of television interviews produced by the Office of the Prime Minister be broadcast on state and selected private media.

The series exclusively featured authorities explaining the government's achievements and plans on diverse issues.²⁷ Assessment informants said this approach interferes with the media's independence to choose and decide on content and impacts the media's duty to create opportunities for diverse opinions. More importantly, it negatively affects the credibility of journalists by the general public. As a key informant put it, “No one trusts you, even the government,” which is a perception such an approach creates against journalists.

²⁷ Office of the Prime Minister - Ethiopia (@PMEthiopia) / X a sample TV interview broadcast on different media outlets.

4.2. Legal Protection and Safety

This section documented the legal threats faced by Ethiopian journalists, including unfounded accusations, arbitrary arrests without court warrants, the misuse of laws to harass journalists, and fragmented, protracted court cases. It also examined how the law was weaponised to jeopardise journalists' safety and suppress public interest reporting.

In 2024, journalists and their families faced an abrupt and arbitrary house raid carried out by police and security personnel. Some journalists reported being taken to police stations at night, often on Fridays, resulting in systematic detentions exceeding 48 hours. Others indicated that their professional equipment—such as cameras, audio recorders, flashcards, and data storage hard drives—laptops and mobile phones were confiscated. They were also coerced into making confessions and disclosing their sources of information. A key informant highlighted that he was insulted as a “braggart” by the police officers for requesting to consult his lawyer before police interrogation. In numerous instances, journalists detained by the police, even for brief periods, were covering stories related to the conflict in Amhara and Oromia, the economic reform policies and processes, corridor development issues, and illegal mining.

Seven journalists (5 males and 2 Females) were brought before the courts under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, Criminal Code, Computer Crime Act, and Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation (Annex 4). These journalists and their lawyers had to attend prolonged hearings, often postponed repeatedly. Meanwhile, the Federal Supreme Court, in December 2023, suspended the trial of Meskerem, Genet, Dawit, and Gobeze indefinitely, awaiting a ruling on codefendants who had been charged in absentia. In August 2023, Abay Zewdu was arrested and sent to a military camp in Awash Arba. He was transferred to a prison in Addis Ababa in January 2024. As of April 2024, Abay remained in detention on terrorism-related charges.

7
Journalists
were
imprisoned
at the end
of 2024

Additionally, Mohiyadin Mohamed Abdullahi was apprehended at his residence after posting on social media about the traffic disruptions observed in Jigjiga, the capital of the Somali Regional State, following Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to the region in February 2024. However, authorities claimed that Mohiyadin was charged under the hate speech and disinformation proclamation with inciting public unrest through a Facebook post and was sentenced to two years in prison. Assessment findings show that the judiciary and police used vague, worded court submissions.

The most frequently used national law during 2024 is the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation No.1176/2020, followed by the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No. 1185/2020. Additionally, the state of emergency in the Amhara and Oromia regions led to the imprisonment of journalists, many of whom are under the custody of regional security forces. Particularly in the Amhara region, journalists were abducted and detained by regional security forces for allegedly harming national security simply for covering the conflict and its impact in the region.

For instance, Yeshihasab Abera, a journalist from the Amhara region, is believed to be in the custody of security forces, and the reason for his detention remains unknown. Key informants indicated that Yeshihasab was not produced in court within 48 hours of his arrest, as authorities requested by his family and friends claim that his detention was initiated by the Command Post.²⁸

Assessment findings indicate that detentions and criminal prosecutions were used as a tactic to restrict media reporting on conflicts. Journalists covering conflicts faced arbitrary accusations of crimes under the Computer Crime Act, Criminal Code, Anti-terrorism Proclamation, and Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation.

For instance, on November 25 2024, Meskerem Abera was sentenced to one year and four months after being found guilty of “using a computer to attempt to incite riots, unrest and conflict.”²⁹ The majority of defendant journalists faced charges containing vague clauses regarding extremism, terrorism, espionage, discrediting the national defence force, propagating violence, and disseminating disinformation via social media. Reporting on conflicts and interviewing individuals with dissenting voices also resulted in incarceration. Conversely, key informants argued that the deterioration of the protection of journalists’ safety and media independence contributed to the spread of disinformation and the escalation of conflicts in the country.

Although media law decriminalises defamation, journalists investigating corruption and injustices have faced imprisonment due to alleged harm to the reputations of government officials. For instance, a journalist employed by South TV and Radio was detained for covering a corruption case linked to the construction activities of the Hadiya Development Association, where the public allegedly accused the authorities of corruption. Authorities in the Central Ethiopia region arrested the journalist for tarnishing their reputation and image and prevented the publication of the story broadcast.³⁰

4.2.1.1. The Proposed Amendment of the Media Law and Legal Safety Risks

On 6-7 November 2024, Addis Ababa hosted the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. During the conference, a representative of the Ethiopian government avowed the country’s commitment to promoting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists by amending restrictive laws and opening up the media space to ensure the free flow of information necessary for democracy to flourish in the country.

²⁹ Ethiopia: Behind Bars for 20 Months, Meskerem Abera Sentenced for Inciting Unrest — Coalition For Women in Journalism

³⁰ Anonymous

However, on October 29 2024, just a week before this international conference, the House of Peoples’ Representatives referred the proposal of amending Ethiopia’s Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 for review by the Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs. The relatively “liberal” media law, which came into force on February 02 2021, was generally welcomed as it improved press freedom by introducing an independent media regulatory body, self-regulatory mechanisms, and rules regarding media ownership, as well as licensing and registration requirements and procedures. According to assessment informants, the proposal to amend Media Proclamation 1238/2021 originated from the Ethiopian Media Authority. The Authority argued that the existing law restrained it from fulfilling its responsibility to regulate the media. The Authority’s deputy director asserted that the amendment aims to enhance the EMA’s efficiency and effectiveness, as the implementation process has “revealed gaps in the authority’s governance structure and a lack of mechanisms to prevent content that could harm national security and mutual coexistence.”

Nevertheless, the proposed amendment will repeal key clauses of the media law, particularly Article 8(2), which mandated the House of Peoples’ Representatives to appoint the Director General of Ethiopia’s Media Authority. Under the proposed amendment, this mandate would shift to the Prime Minister. The amendment will also annul Article 9(1 and 2), stipulating transparency in the nomination and approval of EMA’s board members and Article 11(6), which specifies board members’ nonpartisanship.

If parliament ratifies the proposed amendment, responsibilities such as issuing warnings, renewing licenses, and suspending operations previously overseen by the board would fall directly under the Authority’s jurisdiction. Among the key changes flagged by civil societies and human rights defenders is the transfer of these board responsibilities to the Authority. The CSOs argue that the proposed amendment will concentrate power in the hands of the executive and open the door to partisan control over the media regulatory body.

Key informants asserted that the existing Media Proclamation 1238/2021, enacted following the 2018 political reform, remains a significant legal framework for protecting press freedom and the safety of journalists. Most importantly, the proposed amendment lacks adequate public consultation and input. Nonetheless, journalists and media associations expressed their concerns regarding the implications of the proposed amendment to media law on the safety of journalists and press freedom and called for more robust and inclusive discussions to address the identified shortcomings.³¹ The comparatively liberal media law, ratified in February 2021, has been challenged by several factors hindering its proper implementation, mainly political interference, attacks on journalists, restricted access to official information, and the spread of disinformation and fake news. According to key informants, amending the media law will exacerbate the existing challenges that threaten the safety of journalists as the proposed clauses discourage self-regulation of the media and encourage self-censorship.

4.2.1.2. Deploying Administrative Measures to Restrict Media Independence

Administrative means were used against independent media, including warning letters, threats to shut down media outlets, refusal to renew accreditations, and summoning media owners and editors to control media narratives. Incidents of media violations recoded in 2024 indicated that enforcing registration and regulatory requirements may undermine press freedom. For example, the EMA issued warning letters to Asham TV and Abbay TV. In his address to journalists and media professionals regarding the proposed amendment to the media law, the EMA's Deputy Director emphasised that his office sought to resolve disputes with the media through discussion, citing constructive engagement with Asham. He stated: "Had we not been wise enough to handle Asham's case through frequent discussion, it might have led to the termination of broadcasting long ago."³²

³¹ Editors Guild of Ethiopia. Editors' breakfast meeting, December 12, 2024.

³² *Ibid*

However, the Authority cited Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021 in warning letters, emphasising media outlets' duty to operate within the law. On October 19, 2024, the Authority issued a final warning through a letter numbered ኢጠጠ/2113/424. The letter stated that Asham repeatedly broadcasts disinformation and content that exacerbates conflict and undermines the mutual coexistence of the people.

In response, Asham asserted that the warning was unfounded and its broadcast content had not been fairly monitored. Conversely, EMA's warning letter to Abbay TV regarding a broadcast of an entertainment show that violates the rights and dignity of women and that normalises "rape culture" was praised by journalists and women's rights advocates.³³ On September 30, 2024, the Addis Ababa City Mayor's Office and the Addis Ababa Peace and Security Administration Bureau warned media leaders about the corridor development, an urban infrastructure project and the war in Amhara in a negative way.³⁴ A key informant said journalists cannot report the corridor development process unless they get a "go-ahead" from authorities. In April 2024, journalists who video recorded as Piassa, a historic neighborhood of Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, was demolished were harassed and forced to delete the material by security forces who also threatened them not to report about the issue. Assessment results indicated that journalists investigating issues related to the government's "corridor development" faced harassment for "painting government's effort black" and "hindering efforts to improve the lives of urban dwellers." In many instances, authorities utilised the broad term "national interest", which has been used to curtail legitimate reporting on issues that are believed to be spearheaded by the Prime Minister or those near his power circle.

³³ Local TV show slammed for normalising 'rape culture' - Ethiopia Observer

³⁴ የልተሰማው የኤምራትስ ቲቪ ቢልዮን ዶላር ብድር | ለሚደናዎች የተሰጠው ማስጠንቀቂያ | ለመደመር መፅሀፍ ግዢ የአፋር ክልል የመደበው ገንዘብ

4.3. Infrastructural Safety

This section presents digital and financial threats and risks to the professional survival of journalists, including digital and cellphone surveillance and threats to job security.

4.3.1. Digital Safety and Surveillance

In 2024, access to the Internet was frequently shut down, particularly in conflict-prone areas. Social media platforms and numerous VPN services were also blocked, hindering journalists from accessing and sharing online information. Journalists in Amhara and Oromia conflict areas have faced frequent internet shutdowns. During the assessment period, journalists in Tigray and Benishangul Gumuz have also reported slow internet connections. The government predominantly controls the internet and telecommunication infrastructure through EthioTelecom, which enables it to restrict information flow and access and conduct cellphone surveillance on citizens.³⁵ Assessment respondents highlighted that cell phone spying, particularly eavesdropping on journalists, threatened journalists' digital security. For instance, in April 2023, a recorded phone conversation allegedly between Meskerem Abera and a Fano militia member was leaked by government supporters on Twitter, raising a concern that Meskerem was under communications surveillance. Some informants reported that they frequently hear unusual sounds such as clicks, hashes, echo-like noises, and overlapping telephone conversations whenever they make calls. This leads them to believe that their phone communications are being intercepted. The main threat identified by key informants is receiving phone calls from unknown numbers, during which no one speaks from the other end. Users of the free version of TrueCaller stated that, in most instances, these calls do not display names. However, some respondents mentioned that in rare cases, names are provided, yet the number will not connect if they attempt to call back.

Most respondents to the assessment received threats from authorities, influential business owners, and prominent individuals through social media and phone calls. For example, exiled journalists underscored persistent physical and digital surveillance as a factor that forced them to flee the country. One female journalist recounted experiencing threats from a businessman and his supporters through repeated calls from different numbers following her report about a company that allegedly exploited and denied its employees payment for overtime work. Journalists have also indicated that they regularly face online harassment and coordinated social media defamation campaigns by various groups. A key informant stated that he encountered online attacks from the "government digital army," which aimed to discredit his reports and intimidate him for allegedly taking sides based on his ethnic background.

4.3.2. Financial Threats

Financial and social insecurity strained journalists in performing their daily work professionally and ethically during the assessment period. Key informants contended that journalism in Ethiopia is not a well-paying profession with journalists in private media sectors earning less than their counterparts working for state media outlets. This disparity stems from a decline in advertising revenue and uncertainty within the media industry, fostering social and economic instability for journalists. Assessment findings indicated that journalists' employment and salary conditions have worsened, and it has become difficult to maintain decent living standards due to high inflation and increasing cost of living. The situation is significantly worse for journalists at South TV and Radio Agency, which has been serving four regions since the referendum that divided the previously Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region into four separate regions, i.e., South, Sidama, South West, and Central Ethiopia. Nonetheless, South TV and Radio is grappling with insufficient funding.

“
Taking brown envelopes is becoming normal.
Regional authorities using STVR pay bribes in exchange for positive reports. They (authorities) prefer to bribe journalists rather than contribute their annual budget share allocated to run the media outlet.

A reporter from South West Ethiopia

Additionally, the contestation between the newly established regions over the media outlet often jeopardises the financial safety of journalists. Delayed salary payments and limited per diems for fieldwork affected the lives of journalists in these areas. The journalists reported this case to the EGE via the Sojethiopia web portal, and the Guild communicated the matter to the Ethiopian Media Authority, which negotiated with the regions to ensure that journalists are paid without delay, alongside other services such as teachers and medical personnel. Assessment findings indicated that journalists in Addis Ababa are also pursuing brown envelopes due to financial difficulties arising from the high cost of living. Despite the government’s promise of salary adjustments after the devaluation of the Birr in August 2024, journalists continued to be underpaid. A key informant stated that media outlets with stringent ethical guidelines against brown envelopes have also relented, and their journalists are now accepting envelopes in exchange for content. Women are often more susceptible to financial challenges because they do not often negotiate their starting salaries well during employment, particularly in privately-owned media.

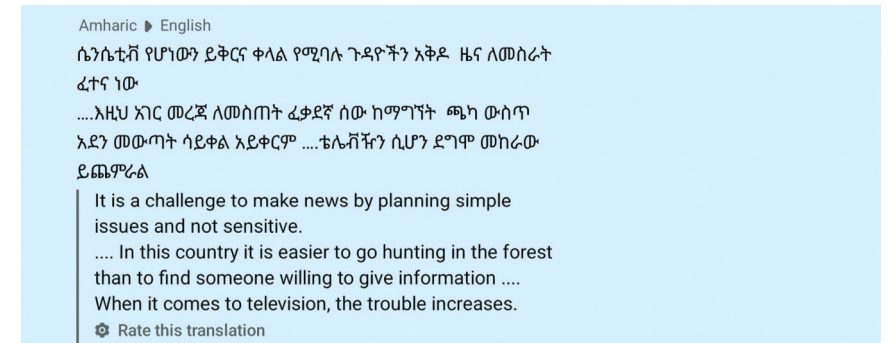
Key informants from Addis Ababa indicated that economic pressures have also compelled some women journalists to become involved in “undesired sexual relationships” with their information sources and supervisors. A male journalist has highlighted the disparity between his earnings and his family’s needs. Key informants working for online and privately owned media outlets reported varying salary scales for similar roles within an organisation, as well as a lack of proper employment contracts that safeguard them against arbitrary dismissal and precarious working conditions that leave them vulnerable to delayed payments and deprivation of the right to rest, fair treatment in job promotions, and periodic salary increments. Unlike their counterparts, journalists in the Afar region receive a hardship allowance to help offset the additional costs and risks associated with their work. Nonetheless, freelance journalists in Somali, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa reported that they must obtain a trade license and a tax identification number.

“
Everyone who watches me on TV believes I am rich. No one would believe me if I said that I am financially challenged to cover my children’s school fees with skyrocketing house rent and living costs.

A journalist from Addis Ababa

This contradicts the very nature of freelancing— characterised by no permanent employment and inconsistent reporting engagements. Freelance journalists across various regions are also denied access to official information and the ability to record audio and video content in public spaces due to a lack of recognition as journalists. This infringes upon their right to access information and freedom of expression, subsequently impacting their earnings. The above screenshot illustrates how challenging it is for journalists in the private media sector to obtain information from anyone on any issue, which will affect the quality of stories and the time and budget the journalist and the media outlet would require to produce content.³⁶

Figure 1. A screenshot of a Facebook post about news sources



The shutdown of online and commercial media, coupled with EthioSat’s increased satellite transponder lease fees introduced in April 2024, has contributed to journalists’ financial difficulties.³⁷ A key informant stated: “The increased satellite lease fee has already impacted my employer since the introduction of the devaluation, making it difficult for us to request a salary increase.” The liquidation of media outlets has also resulted in layoffs and job losses despite some individuals securing employment through freelancing. On October 09, Oromia Broadcasting Service (OBS) announced on its Facebook page that it had ceased broadcasting due to the high cost of the satellite lease and a lack of foreign currency to pay for it.³⁸ Key informants noted layoffs, and the station has likewise been inactive in posting content on its Facebook page.

36 Anonymous
 37 Broadcasters Cry Fault Over ‘unjust’ Satellite Lease Payments
 38 <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18PWbUtH9H/>

4.4. Gender Safety

This section presents the risks and threats female journalists face based on gender. It discusses sexual abuse, harassment, denial of maternal health rights and benefits, and discrimination at workplaces as gender-specific attacks against female journalists.

4.4.1. Gender-Based Violence in the Media

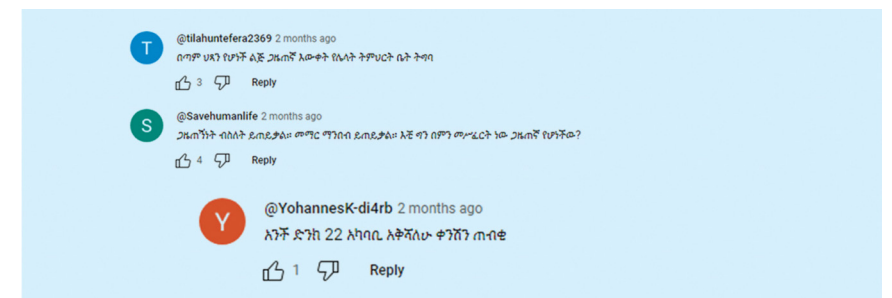
The year 2024 posed threats against women journalists in Ethiopia. This assessment report documented two cases of imprisonment of women journalists in 2024 and a wide range of threats based on their gender, including denial of maternity leave rights, denial of equal opportunities for employment, promotion, rest and reporting assignments. Assessment findings show that the majority of informants believe that gender discrimination, online violence, death threats and sexual harassment are risks for female journalists in Ethiopia. However, many of them, including those who experienced sexual assault, rape and discrimination, fear to report their cases for fear of re-victimisation.

Both state and non-state actors have routinely targeted women journalists in an attempt to intimidate and silence them from reporting on political issues. A woman journalist employed by one of the private television stations in Addis Ababa stated that she was followed by a vehicle without a registration plate that allegedly attempted a hit-and-run attack. Although the incident occurred while she was walking with a friend and had witnesses to testify, she did not report the case to the police because, as she stated, "the vehicle disappeared quickly from the area, leaving no trace." The journalist said she did not believe reporting the case to police would bear fruit.³⁹

2 Women journalists behind bars at the end of 2024

The most common tactics used to target women journalists who report on politics, the economy and conflicts include death threats, sexual assault, online harassment and character assassination. At least two journalists received death threats online and in phone calls and intimidating comments by vigilantes prompted by their journalistic work during the assessment year. Such attacks inflicted significant psychological harm, leading women journalists to practice self-censorship or leave the profession altogether.

Figure 2. A screenshot of an online death threat a female journalist received on YouTube



A case in point is the story of a key informant from Tigray, who received online death threats and chose to resign from the media outlet where she worked as a political reporter. This journalist, who opted for anonymity to avoid further attacks, emphasised that she was subjected to intimidation by online commenters, who labelled her as childish, uneducated, and a prostitute simply for practising her profession, as illustrated in the screenshot above taken from the media outlet's YouTube channel. She asserted that online death threats were alarming enough for her to resign and take some private time. She cited one of the comments in the above screenshot, which roughly translates as, "You dwarf, I know you live around 22. Your days are numbered," as an example of an online threat posted on the youtube account of the TV station she worked for.⁴⁰ The majority of female key informants indicated that they were verbally harassed and discriminated against regarding promotion and reporting assignments based on their gender.

Some have also experienced sexual assault by their information sources, particularly those in positions of power and privilege. For instance, a female journalist from Addis Ababa highlighted that she experienced psychological distress due to frequent phone calls, demands for private meetings, and unexpected visits from a political figure she interviewed. She asserted that the perpetrator threatened her repeatedly, which led her to decide against seeking support from others.⁴¹ Consequently, she was further subjected to verbal abuse by colleagues who believed she was involved in a sexual affair with the perpetrator, placing her safety at risk.

In 2024, condoning and justifying gender-based violence against women manifested in various ways within the Ethiopian media landscape. Key informants noted that violence against female journalists in the workplace was excused as “love affairs” or attributed to “the victim being outgoing.” there is resistance to preventing workplace harassment in media outlets by establishing clear reporting and redressing mechanisms. Consequently, many opted not to report sexual assaults, and the reported cases have not been thoroughly investigated. Often, perpetrators are protected and respected, and complaints are usually submitted to male supervisors. Gender and work ethics desks in some media outlets are not adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge, resources, and protection to investigate gender-based workplace harassment. For example, a female journalist in Addis Ababa took a harassment case against her supervisor to the work ethics compliance desk seeking justice. However, the response she received was that she should not consider this harassment but rather a compliment on her beauty. What was more shocking to her was the assertion by the male desk officer that more men in the organisation could ask for sexual relations with her had they not been mortified. The majority of female respondents indicated that reporting gender-based violence within the organisation does not achieve justice and that they prefer to report cases to journalism associations.

⁴¹ Anonymous

However, the Ethiopian Media Women Association (EMWA) received two harassment complaints from Dire Dawa during the assessment period. One of the applicants reported sexual violence and workplace discrimination. Her case was referred to human rights organisations for legal aid. However, the case did not proceed to court because this human rights organisation had closed. The second case involved sexual harassment and job loss. Although the victim strongly believes that she was dismissed from her job because she did not accept a sexual relationship, the media outlet contested her contract termination on the grounds of disciplinary measures for poor performance.

4.4.1.1. Women Journalists in Conflict Zones and Post-conflict Recovery

Editors in conflict-prone areas, particularly in Amhara and Oromia regions, believed that women journalists are more at risk than their male counterparts more so if they go to dangerous places or cover conflicts. Consequently, in many cases, women were not assigned to cover conflicts, which indirectly contributed to the safety of women journalists, as there are no recorded cases of women being kidnapped or detained by warring groups. A key informant from Amhara stated, “It is not a matter of being female or male that counts in this case; the situation is perilous for journalists, irrespective of gender.” Women journalists in conflict areas asserted that being female actually benefited them in such contexts, as armed groups seemed less likely to target women journalists. Nevertheless, the general public belittles, insults, and assaults women journalists, particularly those who anchor the news on broadcast and online media. Assessment findings illustrate that female journalists are commonly perceived as being interested in stories related to social issues, alleviating the suspicion that they will cover conflicts and thereby protecting them from attacks.

However, this perception also reinforces the stereotype that women are incapable of reporting on politics, conflicts, and other complex matters, portraying them as less professional or capable than their male counterparts. Assessment findings from Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz, where ethnic tension is a contextual factor affecting journalists' safety, indicate that it is becoming increasingly risky to be a journalist, and all aspects of safety risks are inherent to the profession. In post-conflict recovery situations in Tigray, women journalists equally experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Key informants emphasised that the slow post-conflict recovery in Tigray is, in part, due to the media's failure to accurately and impartially address the conflicting narratives surrounding the 2020 Tigray War and the public's interest in rehabilitation and reintegration following the Pretoria Accord, which negotiated peace between the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian federal government. However, journalists in Tigray, particularly women, face external pressures stemming from post-conflict crises, such as increased unemployment and societal trauma resulting from the two-year war. The division of the TPLF into two political factions in 2024 also affected the safety of journalists in general and female reporters covering politics in particular as the two TPLF factions contested to win popular support for their respective political agendas.

4.4.1.2. Equal Opportunities for Women in the Media

Journalism in Ethiopia is still marked by gender inequality, and men continue to occupy top media management positions. The harmful beliefs and the weak media systems in the country exposed women journalists to sexual assault, demeaning and unfair treatment in workplaces. Women are particularly vulnerable to financial difficulties due to rising living costs and declining revenues of media outlets. This situation resulted in job losses and salary reductions that disproportionately impacted women journalists. The changing nature of the media market, coupled with gender discrimination, has driven more women journalists to freelancing and forced them out of permanent employment. Key informants highlighted that female freelancers are paid less than their male counterparts for the same level of work.

Assessment findings show that women journalists are often assigned to social and entertainment issues, while men cover political and economic issues. Female journalists in Tigray are relatively more engaged in covering political and conflict-related issues than their counterparts in other regions. However, women in the national media landscape continue to be discriminated in reporting assignments. For example, a female political reporter in Addis Ababa was forced to give up the story credit and presentation of political analysis on which she had worked independently to a male colleague. She was told the issue was "too hard to be presented by a female journalist."⁴²

I returned from maternity leave in August, and shortly after, I applied for a job promotion that the organisation announced.

However, my supervisor informed me that I could not instantaneously benefit from maternity leave and a job promotion.

Anonymous

The Afar region has only four female journalists in total. Consequently, the workload expected of female journalists compels them to be on duty longer than their male counterparts each week. According to informants, the effort to balance the voices of males and females in story production has led female journalists to spend extended periods in studios. This situation has also resulted in women being denied their rights to rest, training opportunities, and volunteer work for community services. Women are often not assigned to field reporting, as they must remain in studios to read the news.

In 2024, women who aspired to join the media workforce in Ethiopia experienced gender bias and discrimination in hiring and onboarding processes. Assessment informants from Addis Ababa indicated that they were asked about their marital status and plans during job interviews. They were also required to undergo pregnancy tests to secure journalism jobs. For instance, a woman journalist was hired by a media outlet in Addis Ababa with a contract that stipulated a forty-day probation period to secure her position as a permanent employee. During the probation period, the journalist was asked to undergo a medical check-up, and the results showed she was pregnant.

Breastfeeding is a lot of hustle for female journalists. Allowing 30 minutes of lactation break per day seems challenging for media outlets, while they tolerate male colleagues known for their bad (kat chewing) habit of arriving late to work

Anonymous

Despite her “remarkable performance”, she was dismissed within the probation period without sufficient explanation. According to key informants, this is due to the misconception among editors and media managers that women cannot perform their journalistic duties if they are married and have children.

Additionally, a pregnant female applicant in Benishangul successfully passed the entrance exam to be employed as a journalist. Nevertheless, she was denied the opportunity because she was pregnant. According to assessment respondents from the region, women enjoy maternal health rights once hired and are given equal opportunities with male counterparts in promotions. The situation is different in Amhara and Addis Ababa, where key informants explained that maternity leave has been considered a privilege rather than a right. Women who returned from maternity leave had been discriminated against from promotion, training opportunities and salary increments, and they also struggled to breastfeed due to prolonged working hours, unexpected field assignments, a lack of support from workplace supervisors and a lack of flexible scheduling at work. Additionally, media outlets do not provide breastfeeding journalists with a supportive work environment that helps them perform their duties with stability and satisfaction. Many media outlets in the country do not offer on-site child-care space and services. As a result, breastfeeding journalists experience challenges as they try to continue lactating while working. For example, a female journalist was scrutinised for taking a lactation break during lunchtime break.⁴³ This assessment revealed that male and female journalists hold differing views regarding gender-related disparities in pay and promotions. While women feel they face discrimination due to their gender, men contend that women can achieve equal pay and promotions if they are competent in their roles.

43 Anonymous

However, the experiences of women journalists across various regions indicate they are more likely to receive lower pay and fewer promotions than their male counterparts. For instance, a female journalist from Amhara competed for the editor position.

Despite her superior education and work experience compared to her male competitor, the opportunity was awarded to him, prompting her to complain. After a prolonged exchange, she was granted the well-deserved position.⁴⁴ Similarly, a female journalist from Addis Ababa covered the responsibilities of her supervisor for more than nine months and displayed the utmost capability in performing the job. Nonetheless, the media outlet assigned a male supervisor with less experience and education to the role she had covered well.⁴⁵

Equally concerning is the issue of media professionals, such as those engaged in female audience outreach and advertising, who face discrimination based on gender. An informant stated that even when female media professionals possess greater capacity, education, and experience, they are overlooked for senior positions, as media outlets often advertise these roles externally.

44 Anonymous

45 Anonymous



I was accused of not delivering well in my assignments in a meeting. But I did not know they were discussing me, although I was in the meeting hall. When we left the meeting hall, a friend who speaks the language told me about it. I was furious that I was not able to defend myself. I rushed to my supervisor, burst into tears, and asked him why he did not speak in a language I understood so that I could defend myself.

He said, “Learning the local language is up to you.”

Anonymous

4.5. Identity Safety

This section discusses marginalisation of journalists based on perceived ethnic and religious identity, place of birth, and political views to discriminate them from exercising their profession without fear and favour.

4.5.1. Othering

During the assessment period, othering contributes to the deterioration of press freedom in the country. Key informants indicated that they faced discrimination based on ethnicity and religion. Journalists felt their contributions were undervalued, while another group received recognition in the workplace based on their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most assessment respondents believe advocating for diversity, particularly in regional media outlets, poses risks in ethnically divided communities. In these media outlets, certain groups continued to be marginalised and excluded from reporting tasks and employment benefit packages, such as promotions and training opportunities. Key informants argued that their colleagues and supervisors mistreat journalists working in regions with which they are not ethnically associated. Regional media organisations broadcast in at least two languages and employ journalists with various ethnic backgrounds and language skills. Occasionally, these journalists do not speak the local languages and have been denied interviews by regional authorities in a language that would be common for both. Accessing official information from local authorities is also challenging due to language barriers and biases surrounding journalists' identities. Additionally, their supervisors and the media outlets that employ them do not provide translations of meetings, minutes, and notes, which hinders their ability to convey opinions and makes them feel ostracised by their colleagues and supervisors.



My colleagues and I were once detained while on a reporting mission in the Amhara region.

The captors asked for our identity cards and released me for simply thinking my name sounds from that area.

A freelance journalist from Addis Ababa

Furthermore, journalists encountered othering when travelling to various regions for reporting assignments. They are discriminated against more because of their individual ethnic and religious identities and the ownership structures of their media outlets.

A key informant remarked, “If you are from private media, you will automatically be harassed by regional authorities and security forces under the assumption that you are anti-government.” In many instances, the names of journalists and media outlets are also used to label journalists and discriminate against them based on identity. In 2024, the names of media outlets heavily influenced by the ethnic polarisation in the media landscape contributed to attacks on journalists. Key informants noted that moving from region to region to report while carrying equipment marked with regional media logos is challenging in a politically divided society.

4.5.2. Forced Disclosure of Information Sources

Key informants consider protecting their information sources as the right to do their work per the media proclamation and professional ethics in journalism. However, some assessment respondents stated they encountered undue pressure from editors in newsrooms, diverse groups, and influential individuals to disclose their information sources. For instance, in February 2024, a journalist broadcast information from a source stating that a factory in the area emits pollutants, affecting the community. The factory owner complained to media managers, demanding to know the source of the information and to prohibit the rerun of the programme. The journalist was interrogated by his editor about the identity of his source, but he refused to disclose it. Later that evening, the factory owner went to the journalist's home, forced him into a car, and took him to the media outlet's studio at gunpoint, demanding all audio and written materials used to produce the news. The journalist stated that the attempt was to find any clues leading to the information source.⁴⁶

Most respondents cited incidents where they clashed with editors, media owners and media managers as they refused to disclose information sources. Journalists from state media outlets state that the “political” appointment of editors and others in top editorial positions compromised their professional exercise as they often are assigned to conduct “pre-arranged” interviews where sources seem to provide a “scripted” response to their questions. During the assessment year, a tendency to blacklist information sources that are critical to the government has also been observed. In cases where journalists arrange and conduct interviews on “sensitive issues” such as politics, the economy, and conflicts, they are asked to disclose information sources even when the sources spoke off the record. Journalists in private media have also said that owners directly interfered in their work, particularly in selecting information sources, and they frequently urge journalists not to interview people with opposing views. A key informant said that media owners are pressured to interfere in journalistic work as they receive warnings from authorities and business people who threaten to terminate the registration and discontinue advertisement. As a result, their interference reaches the level of editing out words and information deemed unfavorable to subjects of news stories.

5. CONCLUSION

Journalists in Ethiopia are facing a wide range of safety threats employed as tactics to intimidate journalists and control narratives. In addition to government security forces and insurgent groups, political figures and businesspeople have attacked journalists who reported on politics, conflicts, business, and finance. In most cases, local authorities at the woreda (district) and kebele (locality) levels perpetrated violence against journalists. Safety risks such as incarceration, kidnapping, sexual assault, and financial and legal threats are systematically used by state and non-state actors to hinder the ability of journalists and media outlets to perform their jobs freely. On the one hand, federal government security agencies have resorted to harassing journalists and independent media for reporting on conflicts and issues related to government development projects. On the other hand, armed groups have carried out targeted attacks against journalists, forcing them into hiding and inducing others to self-censor, thus normalising a cycle of intimidation.

Kidnapping and arrests are among the most prominent attacks against journalists in the country, partly due to ongoing conflicts and unstable political and economic dynamics that have enabled state authorities and non-state actors to target journalists. Impunity has also shielded authorities, armed groups, and prominent individuals, allowing them to conceal their crimes within the fractured political and legal system. In Ethiopia, where journalists have been arrested and imprisoned in large numbers, no perpetrator has ever been brought to court for crimes committed against journalists. Conversely, national security and public order offences are frequently invoked to arrest and detain journalists and stifle dissenting voices in the media. The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, in conjunction with the Computer Crime Act, Hate Speech and Disinformation Suppression Proclamation, and the Criminal Code, has provided legal cover for various fabricated offences aimed at silencing the press. Most notably, in cases involving imprisoned journalists, two or more proclamations are often combined to prosecute them, resulting in vague charges built on unfounded claims. This illustrates how authorities weaponise the legal system to attack journalists. Additionally, there have been instances where female journalists were sexually assaulted by those in positions of power and privilege, leaving them vulnerable to re-victimisation.

Against all odds, throughout 2024, journalism associations and civil society organisations have condemned attacks and arbitrary detentions of journalists. Some private media have also reported about specific attacks against journalists, including those who fled the country in fear of persecution. While these responses indicate ongoing efforts to protect journalists and press freedom, a more coordinated effort is urgently required to document cases of violence against journalists accurately and to advocate for the safety of journalists and press freedom. The subsequent recommendation section outlines specific actions that media sector actors can take to improve the state of journalists' safety.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. The CSoJ and Its Member Organisations

- The CSOJ must establish a communication system for member organisations and individual journalists to report threats and follow up on cases.
- The CSOJ and its member organisations must, through strategic advocacy and engagement, urge authorities to implement effective measures to protect press freedom and the safety of journalists.
- Promote strategic litigation to end impunity and promote the safety of journalists without delay.
- Enhance and use the SOJ Ethiopia web portal to systematically monitor and document cases of attacks against journalists, identify areas of concern, and prepare and carry out timely advocacy that suggests remedial actions and reports from authorities and other media sector actors, considering gender-specific dangers faced by female journalists and other female media professionals.
- Advocacy work promoting the safety of journalists in Ethiopia must also consider campaigning to promote and protect all in the media sector, including technical and support staff, i.e., media marketing professionals, audience outreach experts, broadcasting technicians, camera crews, and drivers.



Participants of the Consultative Workshops held on 5 and 20 December 2023.



6.2. The Government

- Refrain from targeting journalists and media outlets for doing their jobs.
- Refrain from approving the proposal of amending the Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021, which meets international standards.
- Protect journalist and community radios in conflict-prone areas from attack by non-state actors.
- Investigate the reported attacks against journalists by CSOJ and other concerned bodies and inform the public about the investigation's progress.
- Ensure respect for human dignity and enforce the prohibition of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic and religious background, and incitement to hatred and othering within the media and communities.
- Designate points of contact to facilitate dialogue between authorities, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and the CSOJ on the safety of journalists and media independence.

6.3. Media Outlets

- Ensure editorial independence by providing adequate funding and enabling editors to make impartial and ethical decisions in content production.
- Provide risk awareness training, digital security training, protective health and safety equipment (e.g., medical packs, helmets, respirators, and flak jackets), and war risk insurance for journalists, particularly those deployed to report conflicts.
- Establish an internal policy to ensure that journalists are fairly compensated for their work and that their contract agreement clearly states their rights to rest, maternal leave, risk insurance, and terms and conditions under which the employment contract could be renewed or terminated.
- Provide comprehensive and equitable work conditions to all journalists, particularly female journalists and freelancers, including maternity and annual leave, health, and travel insurance packages.
- Expose crimes against journalists and media outlets through a coordinated campaign and media reports and show solidarity with journalists who survive attacks.

6.4. Human Rights Defenders

- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission must establish communication channels designated for journalists and media actors to report and seek redress for harassment at the hands of authorities.

6.5. International Media Development Organisations and Donors

- Strengthen support for journalism associations and civil society organisations so that they continue and scale up efforts to establish resilient alliances for the safety of journalists, track and respond to safety issues, provide safety training for journalists, and engage in strategic advocacy for press freedom.
- Encourage and recommend that the Ethiopian government give its full political support to create safe and unimpeded conditions for journalists to perform their professional duties, including guarantees of free access to information and protection of confidential sources at all levels of government structure.
- Create emergency response mechanisms and protection measures to ensure that journalists and media organisations facing threats have access to legal defence and representation funds, cash assistance, and medical support in their own country and consider relocation assistance when necessary.
- Ensure that emergency response and protection measures consider gender-specific threats female journalists and media professionals face.



IMS is a non-profit organisation working to support local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. www.mediasupport.org

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