

Confronting Journalism's Misogynistic Trolls | Project Syndicate

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Before the Internet revolutionized how news was gathered and shared, journalists rarely had to worry about the threat of virtual violence. The main risks they faced were in the field: the physical and psychological safety concerns of reporting on disaster and conflict. But today's media battlefields are increasingly online, and more than ever, it is women who are coming under fire.

According to Demos, a UK-based think tank, female journalists are three times more likely than their male counterparts to be targeted by [abusive comments on Twitter](#), with perpetrators frequently using sexualized language (such as "slut" and "whore") against their targets. In 2016, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe published [research](#) showing that women working in the media were internationally and disproportionately targeted by gendered threats, noting that the abuse had "a direct impact on their safety and future online activities."

The threats of violence against women working in the media often extend to family members, and the intimate nature of the attacks, received as they are on personal devices outside the professional parameters of the newsroom, also heightens the impact. Here we see the blurring of virtual, physical, and psychological frontlines of safety.

While this digital vitriol is not new, the misogynistic tenor is clearly deepening. Unless media executives begin to take these trends seriously, the voices of women journalists could be silenced.

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