

# **The safety of women journalists and media workers - Albania Brief 2025**

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# Executive Summary

This brief updates the ***Women Journalists' Safety: Albania Report 2024*** and assesses developments in 2025, with reference to key dynamics observed in early 2026. The analysis combines systematic monitoring of incidents recorded in the SafeJournalists Network database with institutional data obtained through freedom-of-information requests, survey findings and qualitative evidence to identify patterns rather than individual cases. Building on the 2024 baseline, it integrates four in-depth interviews and insights from discussions at a national conference on women in media to assess how risks affecting women journalists and media workers are expressed, addressed and experienced in practice.

The 2024 analysis established that risks affecting women journalists in Albania are systemic rather than episodic, rooted in structural conditions within the media and institutional environment. It showed that gender-based attacks are primarily expressed through online harassment and reputational pressure, producing a sustained chilling effect rather than immediate physical danger, while reporting remains low and institutional follow-up limited. Crucially, the gender lens exposes underlying vulnerabilities of the media ecosystem itself, with working conditions as a central driver of vulnerability and internal newsroom dynamics as a key constraint, including editorial pressure, ownership influence and gender inequality in decision-making, which together contribute to self-censorship and limit women's participation in public-interest journalism.

The 2025 evidence confirms that risks affecting women journalists in Albania are expressed through a combination of pressures across the digital, political and professional environment, rather than through isolated incidents. Gender-based attacks are most visible in online and reputational forms, often coordinated and targeting professional credibility through misogynistic narratives, sexualised language and references to personal and family life. These forms of pressure are persistent and cumulative, producing a sustained chilling effect rather than immediate physical danger. Physical attacks remain present, particularly in the context of elections, protests and investigative reporting, but are not primarily gender-driven. Women journalists are exposed to the same high-risk environments, while the gender dimension is concentrated in non-physical forms of harm that are more continuous and difficult to address.

These risks are shaped by underlying structural conditions. Working arrangements in the media sector remain precarious, with informal employment and limited newsroom support reducing the ability of journalists to respond to threats or seek protection. Internal newsroom dynamics further constrain professional practice, including editorial pressure, ownership influence and gender inequality in access to decision-making and high-risk reporting. The broader context of 2025 reinforces these vulnerabilities: the parliamentary elections exposed persistent pressures on journalists and restricted access to information, while developments affecting digital platforms highlighted ongoing challenges in governing the space where harassment is most prevalent. Institutional response remains limited, with weak follow-up and persistent gaps in recognising and addressing gender-based risks. The impact is both individual and structural, shaping professional choices, limiting participation in high-risk reporting, and reinforcing patterns of self-censorship. Sustained targeting of a small number of high-profile women investigative journalists further illustrates how coordinated pressure operates over time. Addressing these risks requires responses that recognise their structural nature and align with how they are produced across digital, professional and institutional contexts.

# 1. Introduction and Methodology

The reporting period was shaped by a series of developments that affected the operating environment of journalists in Albania. The parliamentary elections of May 2025 intensified political pressures on the media, including challenges in accessing information, increased exposure to hostility during field reporting, and recurring tensions between journalists and public officials.<sup>1</sup> These dynamics were accompanied by sustained patterns of political rhetoric and targeting of journalists, particularly those engaged in investigative reporting, reinforcing a climate in which critical journalism remains exposed to pressure.

At the same time, broader legal and policy developments influenced the media landscape. Debates on the Criminal Code throughout 2025,<sup>2</sup> followed by amendments adopted in early 2026<sup>3</sup> that included changes to defamation provisions, raised concerns about legal certainty and equal protection of freedom of expression. In parallel, structural issues within the media sector, including precarious working conditions, weak labour protections and limited newsroom support and informal influences on editorial decisions, continued to shape the conditions in which journalists operate. These factors interact with a wider public discourse in which hostile and gendered narratives are increasingly normalised.

Developments in the digital environment further reinforced these dynamics. The temporary restriction of TikTok in March 2025,<sup>4</sup> later found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in 2026,<sup>5</sup> highlighted ongoing challenges in regulating digital platforms in line with freedom of expression standards. As digital space remains central both to journalistic work and to the spread of harassment and disinformation, these developments are directly relevant to journalist safety. Within this context, the risks affecting women journalists and media workers must be understood as part of the broader media ecosystem, while reflecting specific patterns linked to gender, visibility and participation in public discourse.

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1 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. (2025, October 23). [Albania, parliamentary elections, 11 May 2025: Final report](#). Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

2 See [alerts](#) of SafeJournalists Network and partner organisations regarding the debates on criminal code affecting freedom of expression in Albania in 2025.

3 SCiDEV. (January 2026). [Media Landscape Monthly Brief: Criminal Code Amendments and Freedom of Expression](#).

4 SCiDEV. (2025). [The anatomy of a decision restricting digital rights: The good, the bad, and the ugly. Position Paper on TikTok Ban](#). Tirana.

5 SafeJournalists Network. (2026, March 16). [Albania: Constitutional court ruling on TikTok ban reinforces freedom of expression protections](#).

Against this background, the report aims to assess how risks affecting women journalists and media workers are expressed and addressed in practice, and to identify gaps between existing frameworks and actual conditions. The analysis is based on a triangulated approach combining quantitative incident monitoring, institutional data and qualitative evidence to identify patterns rather than individual cases. The quantitative basis draws on incidents recorded in the SafeJournalists Network (SJN) Albania database for 2025<sup>6</sup>, which were systematically reviewed and cross-referenced to extract gender-disaggregated patterns and classify forms of harm. This dataset is complemented by institutional data obtained through freedom-of-information requests<sup>7</sup>, as well as survey data providing evidence on perceptions of safety, reporting behaviour and professional impact among journalists<sup>8</sup>.

Qualitative evidence is used to contextualise these patterns and includes four in-depth interviews with women media professionals, a synthesis of management-level insights on newsroom practices, and findings from a national conference on women in media<sup>9</sup>. The analysis builds on the 2024 baseline study<sup>10</sup> and is supplemented by early 2026 developments<sup>11</sup> to assess continuity and emerging trends. Across all data sources, the focus is on patterns in how risks are produced, experienced and addressed in practice.

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6 SafeJournalists Network (SJN), [SJN Albania cases 2025 dataset of incidents](#).

7 Freedom-of-information responses to SCiDEV, collected in February 2026 for the purpose of the SafeJournalists Network (SJN) indicators on media freedom and journalists' safety and this country brief: Prosecutor's Office, State Police, Tirana Court of First Instance, State Labour Inspectorate, Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection, Commissioner against Discrimination, People's Advocate, Audiovisual Media Authority, Public Broadcaster RTSH).

8 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). [Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards](#). Tirana: SCiDEV & BIRN Albania.

9 SCiDEV. (2025, December 11). [Women at the forefront: National conference highlights the need for systemic change in Albanian media](#) [Conference report].

10 Bino, B. (2025). [Women journalists' safety: Albania report 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network.

11 SCiDEV. (2025). [Media Landscape Monthly Briefs January – December 2025 and January – April 2026](#).

## 2. Protection of women journalists and media workers

The protection framework for women journalists and media workers in Albania did not undergo substantial change in 2025 and continues to reflect the structural limitations identified in the 2024 report. Existing laws and policy frameworks on media freedom, gender equality and violence remain in place, but do not recognise women journalists as a category facing specific and differentiated risks. The adoption of a new Law on Gender Equality in 2025 introduced updated provisions aligned with European standards,<sup>12</sup> but was accompanied by public backlash and disinformation campaigns, highlighting the contested nature of gender equality in the broader societal and political context.<sup>13</sup> This gap is significant in light of the forms of harm documented in 2025, where gender-based attacks are predominantly expressed through online harassment, sexualised narratives and threats extending to family members.<sup>14</sup> Developments in 2025 have been limited to operational measures rather than structural changes to the framework.

Institutional sensitivity to the specific position of women journalists remains limited. Gender is not systematically recognised as a category in case handling or reporting, and none of the competent institutions produce gender-disaggregated data on journalist-related cases,<sup>15</sup> which constrains the identification of patterns of gender-based targeting. Available data indicate that complaints registered with the police primarily concern threats and insults, including those communicated through digital channels.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, only a limited number of cases proceed beyond initial stages, with most remaining under investigation or closed without initiation.<sup>17</sup>

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12 [Law No. 64/2025 on Gender Equality](#).

13 Keta, V. (2026). [The campaign against the Law on Gender Equality was inspired by Donald Trump](#). Reporter.al

14 See examples of alerts by the SafeJournalists Network.

15 FOI responses February 2026 by State Police, General Prosecutors Office, Tirana General Jurisdiction Court, Labor Inspectorate.

16 FOI responses February 2026 by State Police: Complaints registered with the State Police primarily concern threats and insults (20 of 22 cases in 2024–2025), including those communicated through digital channels, but it is not specified by gender.

17 FOI responses February 2026 by General Prosecutors Office: Only one of six cases handled by the Prosecutor's Office in 2025 was referred for trial, with the remainder under investigation or closed without initiation. No gender disaggregated data.

The gap between documented incidents and institutional handling is also reflected in reporting behaviour. Reporting to authorities among women journalists remains low. Only 14.3% of women who experienced threats reported them to authorities in 2025.<sup>18</sup> Among those who did not report, lack of trust in institutions and the perception that reporting would make no difference were the most frequently cited reasons. This dynamic is reflected in qualitative evidence, where protection is described as largely individual rather than institutional: “protection, whether legal, psychological or financial, falls entirely on the individual.”<sup>19</sup>

Legal support remains fragmented. General legal-aid mechanisms exist, but are based on income criteria and do not recognise journalists or media workers as a specific category. No dedicated mechanisms address coordinated online attacks, smear campaigns or strategic litigation, and anti-SLAPP protections remain at a preparatory stage.<sup>20</sup> Support is therefore accessed on an ad hoc basis through civil society organisations, professional associations or regional and European networks, which provide monitoring and advocacy rather than direct protection.<sup>21</sup> In practice, this reinforces reliance on ad hoc support mechanisms, with legal and psychological burdens often carried by the journalist. Institutional measures adopted in 2025, including police guidelines and prosecutorial contact points, indicate increased attention to journalist safety,<sup>22</sup> but available evidence suggests limited reach and low awareness among women journalists, particularly in relation to online and gender-based risks.<sup>23</sup>

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18 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards. Tirana: SCIDEV & BIRN Albania.

19 Quote by the representative of the Association of Journalists of Albania at SCIDEV. (2025, December 11). Women at the forefront: National conference highlights the need for systemic change in Albanian media [Conference report].

20 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards. Tirana: SCIDEV & BIRN Albania.

21 Examples of support by the SafeJournalists Network and partners of Media Freedom Rapid Response Mechanism and local organisations such as Network of Women in Media in Albania, SCIDEV, Albanian Helsinki Committee, Respublica Center, Albanian Association of Journalists and others.

22 See SafeJournalists Network analysis.

23 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards. Tirana: SCIDEV & BIRN Albania.

Labour conditions are a core component of the protection environment for women journalists and media workers. Complaints in the media sector increased in 2025, with 76% resolved in favour of the worker, indicating persistent violations related to unpaid salaries, termination of employment,<sup>24</sup> lack of social contributions and psychological pressure at work.<sup>24</sup> While institutional data are not gender-disaggregated, women-specific evidence shows that these conditions translate directly into vulnerability: 87.9% of women journalists report taking gender-specific precautionary measures, including avoiding certain assignments or locations (31%), and half report that their safety concerns are inadequately addressed or not addressed at all by their media organisation.<sup>25</sup> Qualitative evidence further indicates that job insecurity, informal arrangements and unequal workplace dynamics, including pressure under men supervision, pay disparities and the treatment of maternity as a professional constraint,<sup>26</sup> limit women's ability to report violations, seek protection or resist editorial and external pressure.<sup>27</sup> In this context, labour precarity does not operate separately from safety risks but functions as a structural condition shaping women journalists' exposure, choices and capacity to remain active in public-interest journalism.

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24 State Labour Inspectorate FOI response, February 2026: 17 complaints in 2025 (+31%), 76% resolved in favour of worker; violations include unpaid overtime, excessive working hours, informality and working-condition breaches.

25 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards. Tirana: SCiDEV & BIRN Albania.

26 In-depth interviews with four women journalists, Tirana, December 2025.

27 Mitre, O. & Karaj, V. (2025). Media freedom barometer in Albania 2024–2025. Tirana: Albanian Helsinki Committee.

# 3. Patterns and forms of incidents affecting women journalists

## 3.1 Quantitative overview

In 2025, the SafeJournalists Network recorded 42 incidents against journalists and media workers, of which 13 cases directly targeted women journalists, involving 15 women victims. Of these, six are classified as gender-based and six as gender-contextual. This distribution reflects the incidents documented and reported through the SJN monitoring system, rather than the full scope of risks affecting women journalists. Complementary survey and qualitative evidence indicate that exposure to threats, particularly in online and professional environments including the newsroom, is more widespread than captured by reported cases, and that risks are differentiated less by volume than by the form and structure of harm.

A dimension of gendered impact is not captured by incident classification. Several 2025 cases targeted media outlets<sup>28</sup> and non-profit media organisations<sup>29</sup> rather than individual journalists. These incidents occurred in newsrooms where women constitute a significant share of the journalistic workforce, including editorial and on-air roles. When such cases are recorded as institutional attacks, rather than as events distributing harm across newsroom staff, the gendered impact of these incidents remains only partially visible in the data.

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28 The Focus Media Group case of [9 August 2025](#), in which the State Police surrounded the building hosting News24, BalkanWeb, Panorama and Gazeta Shqiptare, cut the electricity, blocked access for journalists and staff, and halted News24's broadcasting, directly affected around 230 media workers in editorial environments where women constitute the majority of leadership and of on-air presence. The SafeJournalists Network has monitored and raised [alerts](#) regarding this major incident. Reaction of press freedom groups [here](#).

29 Examples of attacks against [Faktoje](#), [Birn Albania](#), [Citizens and others](#) are documented by the SafeJournalists Network.

Incident category	Number of cases		Number of cases reported to competent authorities (police, prosecutor)		Number of cases in which formal proceedings were initiated		Number of cases containing gender-based elements
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	
Death threats	3	1	2	1	1	0	1
Other threats	23	6	1	1	0	0	5
Physical attacks	16	6	3	2	3	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>

Table 1: Incidents against journalists in Albania, 2025 ([SafeJournalists database](#))

### 3.2 Other threats and harassment

In 2025, 23 cases of threats and harassment were recorded, of which 6 directly targeted 7 women journalists.<sup>30</sup> They include defamatory articles, coordinated social media attacks, and direct verbal threats, often accompanied by misogynistic narratives, sexualised language, or references to personal and family life. A defining feature of these attacks is their coordinated nature: all six women targeted online were subjected to multi-account or multi-platform attacks within a short time frame. These attacks are not random. They are typically linked to professional visibility or reporting on politically sensitive issues.<sup>31</sup> Their objective is not only to intimidate, but to discredit and undermine credibility. Reporting and institutional follow-up remain limited. Only one case is confirmed as reported to authorities, and none resulted in prosecution. This reflects both low reporting and limited effectiveness of existing mechanisms in addressing online and coordinated forms of harm.

<sup>30</sup> All cases can be accessed at the SafeJournalists Network database of incidents: [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#).

<sup>31</sup> For example, journalists, including women, covering the work of the Special Prosecution Against Organized Crime and Corruption are frequently subjected to verbal attacks by political actors and their proxies across the digital public and media spheres.

### 3.3 Threats to life and physical safety

Three cases of threats to life and physical safety were recorded in 2025, including one involving a woman journalist.<sup>32</sup> The case affecting a woman journalist is classified as gender-based and involved threats communicated through digital channels that extended to her children. This reflects a distinct pattern in which gender-based intimidation operates through family vulnerability rather than direct physical proximity. While the number of cases is limited, their nature is significant. Threats are increasingly mediated through digital platforms complicating both identification and legal response. Information on reporting and prosecution remains incomplete.

### 3.4 Actual / physical attacks

In 2025, 16 cases of physical attacks were recorded, including attacks on journalists, media workers and media organisations. Six cases<sup>33</sup> directly involved women journalists. These incidents are classified as gender-contextual rather than gender-based. They occur in field reporting environments such as elections, protests and investigative assignments, where exposure is shared with male colleagues. Notably, four of the six cases involving women journalists occurred around the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2025,<sup>34</sup> indicating the role of political context in shaping risk. Physical attacks include obstruction, intimidation and direct confrontation by officials, political actors or private individuals. While women journalists are present in these environments, the data do not indicate gender as the primary vector of these attacks. One case was referred for trial under Article 237 of the Criminal Code (assault in the course of duty), representing the only confirmed prosecution outcome for incidents involving journalists in 2025.<sup>35</sup>

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32 The SafeJournalists Network [alert](#).

33 All cases can be accessed at the SafeJournalists Network database of incidents: [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#), [Alert](#).

34 The SafeJournalists Network statements [here](#) and [here](#).

35 SafeJournalists Network [alert](#).

## 4. Online harassment

Women journalists report three main forms of online harassment in 2025: defamatory or smear content published through online portals and amplified via social media; coordinated misogynistic attacks targeting professional credibility; and direct threats, including death threats and threats extending to family members. Among those who experienced threats, 38.1% report online harassment and 33.3% report threats directed at family members, indicating that digital attacks frequently extend into the private sphere.<sup>36</sup> Institutional measures to address these risks remain limited. In 2025, the State Police adopted journalists' safety protocol, while the Prosecutor's Office operationalised its Circular through dedicated prosecutors and the establishment of a cybercrime section at the Tirana First Instance Court.<sup>37</sup> However, these measures are not designed to address coordinated and anonymous forms of online attack. No cases involving journalists were classified as cybercrime in 2024-2025, and of the documented cases affecting women journalists in 2025, only one was reported and none resulted in prosecution.<sup>38</sup>

Qualitative evidence indicates that online harassment against women journalists is not an isolated or purely digital phenomenon, but the visible expression of deeper structural dynamics within the media, political and economic environment. Women journalists who are visible or engaged in investigative reporting are disproportionately targeted through coordinated campaigns combining misogynistic narratives, sexualised insinuations and reputational attacks.<sup>39</sup> Linked to public-interest reporting and amplified across digital platforms, these attacks operate as a mechanism of control, reinforced by precarious working conditions, limited editorial autonomy and weak institutional support.

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36 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards. Tirana: SCiDEV & BIRN Albania.

37 FOI responses by State Police and General Prosecution Office, February 2026.

38 FOI responses by State Police and General Prosecution Office, February 2026.

39 SCiDEV. (2025, December 11). Women at the forefront: National conference highlights the need for systemic change in Albanian media [Conference report].

Online threats	Number of cases		Number of cases reported to competent authorities (police, prosecutor)		Number of cases in which formal proceedings were initiated		Number of cases containing gender-based elements
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	
Death threats	3	1	2	1	1	0	1
Other threats	10	4	1	1	0	0	4
<b>Total online</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 2: Online harassment against women journalists, 2025

## 5. Investigations into attacks on journalists and media workers

Investigations into attacks against women journalists in 2025 were conducted within general prosecutorial and policing structures, without a specialised investigative approach adapted to the forms of harm most frequently affecting them. Cases involving women journalists rarely progress beyond initial stages, particularly where threats are delivered through digital or anonymous channels.<sup>40</sup> In such cases, evidentiary thresholds related to the identification of perpetrators frequently lead to closure at the preliminary stage.

All complaints registered by the State Police were forwarded to the Prosecutor's Office, indicating procedural compliance at the intake stage.<sup>41</sup> However, only one case involving journalists was referred for trial in 2025, under Article 237 of the Criminal Code.<sup>42</sup> The remaining cases either remain under preliminary verification or were closed without initiation, particularly in cases involving threats or harassment where perpetrators could not be clearly identified. However, law enforcement agencies do not have data specific for women journalists.

Investigations do not take into account gender-based violence or the specific nature of attacks affecting women journalists. Institutional systems do not record or classify cases in a way that captures misogynistic narratives, sexualised threats or family-targeted intimidation. As a result, incidents involving gender-based elements are processed as general offences, without analytical or procedural distinction. The legal qualification of cases reflects similar limitations. Existing provisions are applied primarily to individual and identifiable perpetrators, while coordinated or anonymous forms of harm remain difficult to address within current frameworks.

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40 Bino, B. (2025). [Women journalists' safety: Albania report 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network.

41 FOI responses by State Police, February 2026.

42 FOI responses by General Prosecution Office, February 2026.

Communication and effectiveness of safety contact points remain limited. Awareness of designated contact points within the State Police and Prosecutor's Office is low, particularly among women journalists, and follow-up communication in reported cases is described as inconsistent. This contributes to limited engagement with formal mechanisms. There is no procedural distinction in investigative practice when the victim is a woman journalist.<sup>43</sup> In practice, this means that journalists exposed to gendered and digitally mediated forms of harm carry a disproportionate evidentiary burden when reporting cases.

Developments in early 2026 introduced changes to the legal framework relevant to the protection of journalists. Amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in January 2026 strengthened criminal-law protection against violence and serious threats targeting journalists, including provisions under Articles 237 and 238 concerning attacks and threats in the course of duty.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, defamation was partially decriminalised through an exemption limited to journalists described as "registered" or "recognised." However, this category is not legally defined and introduces a status-based approach to protection, raising concerns regarding legal certainty and equal protection of freedom of expression.<sup>45</sup>

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43 Bino, B. (2025). [Women journalists' safety: Albania report 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network.

44 SCiDEV. (2026). [Media Landscape Brief January 2026: Criminal Code Amendments and Freedom of Expression](#).

45 See [statement](#) by the SafeJournalists Network.

## 6. Impact on women journalists

Threats and attacks against women journalists in 2025 have a cumulative impact on their sense of safety and professional practice. Survey data show that 17.2% of women journalists report gender-specific threats linked to their work, and among those affected, 60% indicate that these threats have influenced their reporting at least to a moderate extent.<sup>46</sup> This points to a sustained impact on psychological wellbeing, which qualitative evidence describes as persistent and, in some cases, normalised within professional environments, where repeated exposure to harassment is increasingly treated as part of routine journalistic work.<sup>47</sup>

These pressures translate into slow but persistent changes in professional behaviour. A large majority of women journalists report taking gender-specific safety measures and 8.6% report having modified, delayed or abandoned a story specifically because of gender-related risks.<sup>48</sup> Qualitative evidence indicates that such decisions are shaped not only by immediate threats, but also by expectations of limited institutional support and the professional costs associated with pursuing sensitive topics. As one senior editor noted, women journalists often are “prejudged in terms of availability and capacity,”<sup>49</sup> particularly in roles requiring continuous or high-risk engagement.

The impact extends to professional opportunities and visibility. Qualitative evidence does not show a uniform pattern across all outlets, but it does show a recurring imbalance between women’s strong presence in the profession and their access to senior editorial authority and high-risk assignments. Interviews and management-level findings indicate that women are often concentrated in operational, on-screen or less visible forms of work, while men are more often represented in top editorial and decision-making roles; women editors-in-chief are described as very few, and differentiated task allocation remains a recurring feature of newsroom practice.<sup>50</sup>

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46 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). [Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania’s Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards](#). Tirana: SCIDEV & BIRN Albania.

47 Indepth with women journalists, December 2025 and conclusions of 18 interviews for the development of the Gender Equality Policy Document for Media in Albania, see [here](#).

48 Canga, E., Xhaferaj, O., et al. (2026). [Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania’s Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards](#). Tirana: SCIDEV & BIRN Albania.

49 Indepth with women journalists, December 2025.

50 SCIDEV. (2025, December 11). [Women at the forefront: National conference highlights the need for systemic change in Albanian media](#) [Conference report].

The impact of threats and harassment on women journalists in Albania is cumulative and structural rather than episodic. It develops over time through repeated exposure, the normalisation of online pressure, and incremental adjustments in professional behaviour that reshape how work is carried out. Its effects are often less visible than direct harm: women remain present in the profession, but engagement with high-visibility roles, sensitive topics and public-facing reporting is uneven and, in some cases, reduced. Qualitative and survey evidence suggests that these patterns are not solely the result of individual choice, but are shaped by coordinated pressure, limited institutional response and broader constraints within the media environment. The consequence is a narrowing of women's participation in areas central to public-interest reporting and accountability journalism, with implications for media pluralism and the diversity of perspectives in public debate.

## 7. Conclusions

In 2025, the most significant development was the consolidation of risks affecting women journalists into a more structured pattern that cuts across digital, political and professional environments. Gender-based harm continues to be concentrated in online and reputational forms, but the evidence from 2025 shows more clearly how these attacks function: they are often coordinated, linked to moments of professional visibility, and reinforced by wider political and media dynamics that amplify pressure. Physical attacks are not persistent and the gender dimension is expressed most strongly through sustained non-physical harm that accumulates over time and is harder to document, investigate and remedy.

What emerges most clearly from the 2025 evidence is that the risks affecting women journalists are produced by structural conditions rather than by isolated hostile acts. Digital harassment operates alongside political pressure, undue influences, smear tactics, weak institutional response, precarious employment and unequal newsroom power relations. These conditions shape exposure to threats and the capacity to resist them. Women journalists continue to work in an environment where legal and psychological protection is limited, labour insecurity remains widespread, and access to decision-making and high-risk reporting is uneven. The consequence is not simply vulnerability at the individual level, but a gradual reshaping of professional practice: more caution, reduced visibility, constrained access to sensitive topics, and narrower participation in public-interest journalism.

The biggest problem in protecting women journalists lies in the mismatch between how these risks are produced and how protection systems are designed. Existing institutional mechanisms are built around individual, identifiable incidents, while the predominant forms of harm are coordinated, anonymous, cumulative and often embedded in professional and digital environments. Gender-based motivation is not recognised in case classification, institutional data do not make women journalists visible as a specific category, and investigative practice remains poorly adapted to online and reputational harm. At the same time, protection is still too often displaced onto the individual journalist, while the structural conditions that generate risk, newsroom inequality, informal employment, weak collective safeguards, and low institutional trust, remain insufficiently addressed.

The impact of this gap is wider than the safety of individual journalists. It affects who can remain visible, who can report on sensitive issues, and whose perspectives are represented in public debate. In that sense, the safety of women journalists is directly connected to media pluralism, accountability journalism and democratic participation. More effective protection requires a shift from reactive and fragmented responses towards an integrated approach that connects legal protection, investigative practice, labour conditions, newsroom standards and digital governance to the actual forms through which harm is experienced.

## 8. Recommendations

### **For decision-makers and policy-makers**

- Remove status-based distinctions in legal protection. Replace the concept of “registered and recognised journalists” with a function-based approach that protects all individuals engaged in public-interest expression, including freelancers, researchers and civil society actors.
- Introduce mandatory gender-disaggregated data systems. Require all competent institutions (police, prosecution, courts, regulators) to record and publish data on cases involving journalists, including gender, type of harm, channel (online/offline), and outcomes.
- Strengthen governance of digital platforms. Ensure that any regulation of online platforms complies with freedom of expression standards, while introducing clear obligations and procedures to address coordinated harassment, smear campaigns and gender-based abuse.

### **For police, prosecution and judiciary**

- Develop specialised investigative protocols. Introduce clear procedures for handling coordinated, anonymous and cross-platform online attacks, including guidance on evidence collection, digital tracing and pattern recognition.
- Improve case classification. Ensure that investigations identify and record gender-based elements, forms of coordination, and patterns of repeated targeting, rather than treating cases as isolated offences.
- Strengthen follow-up and accountability. Introduce internal review mechanisms for cases closed at the “mosfillim” stage, particularly in cases involving online harassment and threats.
- Enhance visibility and accessibility of contact points. Improve communication around journalist safety contact points and ensure consistent follow-up with complainants to build trust in institutional mechanisms.
- Integrate training on gender-based violence and digital harm. Equip prosecutors, judges and law enforcement officers with practical tools to understand and address gender-specific and online forms of harm.

## **For media organisations and editorial leadership**

- Establish internal protection mechanisms. Adopt written policies and procedures for handling harassment, including confidential reporting channels, crisis response protocols and clear responsibilities.
- Provide comprehensive support to journalists. Ensure access to legal, psychological and digital security support for journalists facing threats, as part of a duty of care.
- Address structural inequalities in newsroom practice. Review assignment practices, career progression pathways and access to high-risk reporting to ensure equal opportunities for women journalists.
- Improve labour conditions. Formalise employment relationships, ensure timely payment of salaries and social contributions, and provide safeguards for maternity and work-life balance.
- Promote gender-sensitive editorial standards. Integrate gender perspectives into reporting, sourcing and representation, including in coverage of politics, security and economic issues.

## **For professional associations and trade unions**

- Develop collective protection mechanisms. Establish coordinated response systems for journalists facing harassment, including rapid support, legal assistance and public advocacy.
- Strengthen legal assistance capacity. Provide accessible guidance and representation in cases involving online harassment, defamation and strategic litigation.
- Advocate for labour rights in the media sector. Promote transparency, fair contracts and compliance with labour standards, particularly for freelance and local journalists.
- Facilitate peer support networks. Support the development of networks of women journalists to share resources, experiences and strategies for dealing with risk

## **For civil society and international partners**

- Sustain independent monitoring and documentation. Continue systematic tracking of incidents, with a focus on gender-based dimensions and emerging patterns such as coordinated online attacks.
- Support institutional capacity-building. Provide technical assistance to law enforcement, judiciary and regulators to address digital harm and gender-based violence.
- Use international frameworks for accountability. Integrate findings into EU accession processes, the Rule of Law Report, and Council of Europe mechanisms to ensure sustained oversight.
- Promote integrated approaches. Support initiatives that link media freedom, gender equality, labour rights and digital governance, recognising their interdependence.
- Strengthen public awareness and resilience. Support programmes that address gender-based disinformation, online abuse and media literacy, particularly in politically sensitive contexts.