

"Online Gender-based Violence is increasing rapidly in Indonesia. Data from Komnas Perempuan, The National Commission for Eradication of Violence against Women, who is an independent state body for the enforcement of women's rights in Indonesia, showed an extremely sharp rise (348%) of OGBV cases in Indonesia during the pandemic in 2020. OGBV is increasingly used as a tool to create chilling effect for women journalists and HRDs. Globally, for instance, OGBV against journalists are increasing. A 2021 global study on online gender violence against women journalists commissioned by UNESCO involving 901 journalists from 125 countries around the globe documents that "nearly three quarters (73%) of our survey respondents identifying as women said they had experienced online violence because of the work they do as journalists. SafeNet very recently, last year in 2022 published a report documenting OGBV against women HRDs in Indonesia. OGBV against women journalists and HRD manifest in various forms of abuse, such as: misrepresentation (e.g. manipulated or synthetic media of women journalists to cause harm), breach of privacy and digital security (e.g. hacking, doxxing, interception, surveillance), online harassment (e.g. sending threats to damage professional and personal reputation, threats of sexual assault and physical violence), and coordinated 'doxing' or 'pile-on' attacks and disinformation campaigns. Many of these abuses are what known as 'legal but harmful' content.

The impacts resulting from OGBV against women journalists and HRDs are not only felt by the individuals and their close ones, but also impose a chilling effect on participation in public debate in general. As noted by UNESCO, "online violence against women journalists is designed to: belittle, humiliate, and shame; induce fear, silence, and retreat; discredit them professionally, undermining accountability journalism and trust in facts; and chill their active participation (along with that of their sources, colleagues and audiences) in public debate." For this reason, attacks against journalists should be considered as attacks towards democracy.

Law and regulations can and should play an important role in shielding women journalists from OGBV. In reality, however, the effectiveness of the regulatory framework in this area has been frequently called into question, particularly in the Southeast Asia Region. For instance, in IWMF and Troll Busters' 2018 global survey, it was found that OGBV of women journalists "is often underestimated by media management and minimized by authorities and others who are best positioned to provide support" and calls for a better framework for "claims be thoroughly investigated by management, law enforcement, social media platforms and others". Similarly, the 2021 UNESCO-commissioned global study also notes that "only 11% of the women journalists surveyed had reported instances of online violence to the police" and "only 8% of the women journalists surveyed and just a few of our interviewees had taken legal action." Therefore, it is essential to critically engage with tech companies, as the main enablers of OGBV, to tackle these challenges. Especially when there's a lack of confidence of the current regulatory framework to seek effective redress."