

CASE STUDY

BRAZIL

Equally Safe

Towards a feminist approach to the safety of journalists



ARTICLE¹⁹

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Abbreviations

ABRAJI	<i>Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo</i> (Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism)
AMARC	<i>Associação Mundial de Rádios Comunitárias</i>
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
FENAJ	<i>Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas</i> (National Federation of Journalists)
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
UFSC	Federal University of Santa Catarina

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About this project

What might a feminist approach to the protection of journalists look like? What concrete benefits might it bring? And could it provide solutions to the well-documented – and highly gendered – abuse that women¹ journalists face every day?

While journalists and communicators² worldwide experience threats, surveillance, attacks, arbitrary arrest, detention, enforced disappearances, and murder for carrying out their vital work, women journalists deal with additional, gendered threats, violence, abuse, and harassment – in their workplaces, when out reporting, and online. They bear the brunt of not only the increasingly hostile environment affecting all journalists but also pervasive gender-based violence, gendered discrimination, and '[gendered censorship](#)'. These risks multiply for women journalists who experience multiple, overlapping discriminations on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity/expression, and religious beliefs (among others).

Current policies and practices – even those deemed 'gender-sensitive' – are failing to protect women journalists from these risks. A bulletproof vest may be useful in some contexts, but it will not protect a woman from sexual harassment in her newsroom, abuse when she shares her stories online, or assault on public transport when she travels to an assignment. Due to this lack of effective protection measures, women journalists have, in some cases, taken the situation into their own hands, creating solutions to keep themselves and their colleagues safe. These solutions are grounded in diverse feminist approaches that place women's everyday experiences, lived realities, and protection needs front and centre.

In 2021, ARTICLE 19 set out to make these sometimes invisible practices more visible, building on our [existing programmes](#) on the safety of women journalists worldwide. We undertook original research globally and specifically in six countries – three in Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and three in Latin America (Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay) – guided by the questions:

What might feminist approaches to the protection of journalists look like, and what benefits might they bring?

From national organisations to grassroots networks, our findings document women's monumental efforts to make structural changes, tackle entrenched patterns of gender-based discrimination and violence, and enhance the safety of women journalists. The initiatives showcased in these case studies are a testament to the creativity and resilience of those working on the feminist frontlines.

1. Introduction

Country context: Brazil

Brazil has suffered a shocking decline in press freedom in recent years. In ARTICLE 19's [Global Expression Report 2022](#) – a global, data-informed, annual look at freedom of expression worldwide – Brazil plummeted to 89th place out of 160 countries, a fall from 31st place in 2015. Much of this decline can be attributed to far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, under whose leadership Brazil became a [fragile democracy](#) and one of the world's [most autocratising countries](#).

Bolsonaro's notorious [hostility to the press](#) made it difficult for journalists to do their jobs.³ Attacks on journalists and media workers have been alarmingly common in Brazil; in 2021, such attacks were at [their highest since the 1990s](#), and Brazil ranked 8th in the Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) [Global Impunity Index 2021](#), which calculates the number of unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of a country's population and ranks countries accordingly. ARTICLE 19 Brazil and South America recorded [at least 449 violations](#) against journalists and social communicators made by the former Brazilian President, his ministers, relatives, and politicians related to him (whether by blood, political party, or agenda) between January 2019 and September 2020 alone. Bolsonaro's speeches and actions instigate a 'chain reaction',⁴ empowering his followers to likewise attack journalists – online and off. In short, Bolsonaro oversaw the [institutionalisation of violence against journalists in Brazil](#), accompanied by a strategy of misinformation, delegitimisation, and stigmatisation – all mechanisms to control public debate.

Brazil is ranked 25th of 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the World Economic Forum's [Global Gender Gap Index 2021](#). Only 15.2% of parliamentarians and 10.5% of ministers were women in 2021. This lack of representation in the corridors of power is mirrored in the media; women make up 58% of journalists in Brazil,⁵ but are underrepresented in leadership roles and earn less than their male counterparts.⁶

During the Covid-19 pandemic, [pressures on journalists increased](#); in 2021 alone, 12 media outlets were closed, leaving dozens unemployed, while attacks against journalists [rocketed](#). Women, black people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people were [disproportionately the victims](#).⁷

As in [other Latin American countries](#), Brazil's media landscape suffers from a [lack of plurality](#) and representation, exacerbated by inequality; four TV groups receive 70% of the TV audience, and around [18% of the population live in 'news deserts'](#).⁸ While independent and alternative media are gaining some ground in the country, [they face significant financial challenges](#).

Violence against women journalists in Brazil

State violence and misinformation

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has found that, in their stigmatisation and harassment of the press, Bolsonaro and his high-level officials disproportionately targeted women journalists. This discouraged reporting on – and by – groups at risk of discrimination, silenced those who speak out against violence, and reinforced systematic inequalities.

Misinformation⁹ has been one of Bolsonaro's favoured strategies in his war on journalists; between 2019 and 2020, he made an average of three false or distorted statements each day, often with the aim of delegitimising the media and turning the public against it. For example, he wrongly accused journalist Bianca Santana of publishing 'fake news' after she wrote an article about the relationship between Bolsonaro's family and friends and the men accused of murdering councilwoman Marielle Franco. His accusation led to a series of attacks against Santana, which were denounced at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council, where she told the UN: 'The Brazilian State has an obligation to guarantee a safe environment for women journalists.' Bolsonaro recanted his comment and apologised, but – with the support of several groups from the black and feminist movements in Brazil – Santana successfully sued the President, who was forced to pay her 10,000 reais (approximately USD 237).

Online harassment and abuse

Women are disproportionately the targets of online attacks against journalists in Brazil – and these attacks increased by 140% in 2020 compared with the previous year. Bolsonaro and his sons were personally responsible for much of the online harassment media workers suffer in Brazil, and the majority of Bolsonaro's attacks have taken place online.

The anonymity of social media empowers bullies to undertake coordinated attacks against women, which continue with impunity due to ineffective content moderation. In 2022, InternetLab analysed the Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp accounts of 200 journalists, of whom 133 were women. It found that the violence against them was coordinated, and that the majority of violations predominantly impact women; on WhatsApp, 2 of the 3 most-attacked journalists were women, while on Twitter, 4 of the 5 most-attacked journalists were women.

Having an online presence is essential for journalists to place and promote their work. Yet these coordinated online attacks can leave women journalists with little choice but to abandon social media, at least temporarily. This, in turn, puts them in a situation of economic vulnerability. For example, in 2020, a Brazilian journalist experienced coordinated attacks online after publishing a story about a sexual assault at a beach club in the south of Brazil. She was sued for moral damages and had to shut down her social media accounts to escape the harassment. This led to her losing job opportunities.

As Jéssica Gustafson – journalist, researcher, and co-founder of *Rede de Jornalistas e Comunicadoras com Visão de Gênero e Raça* (Feminist Network with a Gender

and Race Perspective) – told us: ‘If a journalist uses social media to connect with employers [and] sources of information, she can lose her way of living or have more difficulty to develop her job.’

A further example is [Lola Escreva](#), a blog about *machismo*, misogyny, homophobia, and racism. The blog’s Argentine-Brazilian author, Lola Aronovich, is frequently the target of misogynist attacks – including death threats – which she shares with her followers (over 180,000 at the time of writing) on [Twitter](#).

Violence against women journalists at work and home

Violence against women in general is a huge problem in Brazil, with [over one in three women experiencing gender-based violence in their lifetimes](#).

In 2021, ABRAJI (Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism) [recorded](#) 62 women journalists being attacked, offended, intimidated, and threatened in the exercise of their work across a total of 78 episodes. This amounts to six attacks per month. Furthermore, 34.6% of the attacks specifically targeted their gender or sexuality.

In 2018, an ARTICLE 19 Brazil and South America [study](#) found that, of 46 women social communicators, 65% had suffered psychological violence at work or home, 57% had experienced bullying and harassment at work, and 6 had experienced death threats while conducting their work. The main aggressors were family members and political or public agents.

Black and indigenous women are disproportionately the victims of femicide and domestic violence in Brazil, and [more trans women are killed in Brazil than in any other country in the world](#). Transgender Europe [reports](#) that, between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, 125 trans people were murdered in Brazil, the [overwhelming majority](#) of whom were trans women. However, Brazil’s National Association of Trans and Queer People recorded [175 murders](#) of trans women in 2020 alone, highlighting the lack of accurate data in the country.

Existing protection mechanisms in Brazil

The [Brazilian Constitution](#) guarantees the right to freedom of expression and access to information, and forbids censorship. However, there are gaps in the Brazilian legal framework regarding protection measures. For instance, the safety measures included in the [National Programme of Protection for Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists](#), which was implemented in 2004 and has included social communicators since 2018, are [not sufficiently effective for those at risk](#); journalists have reported that its measures do not correspond to the reality of their work, and the programme has a long waiting list.

Due to the inadequacy of state action in the face of soaring violence, some journalists’ associations have established their own protection mechanisms. Artur Romeo, Head of Protection at RSF for Latin America, characterised these as ‘network[s] of support and solidarity focused on the care and the self-care logic’.

For example:

- **FENAJ** (National Federation of Journalists), a trade union that represents all the journalists' unions in Brazil, developed a National Committee on Gender in 2017, which undertakes research and works to improve coverage of subjects related to gender, race, and ethnicity.
- **ABRAJI** promotes training on journalists' safety and is developing a platform through which women journalists can report gender-based violence.
- **Rede Nacional de Proteção a Jornalistas e Comunicadores** (National Network of Journalists' and Communicators' Protection), a network of Brazilian civil society organisations, launched a protection platform in August 2021 and plans to undertake gender-specific actions.

The feminist movement in Brazil

The feminist movement in Brazil has a long history. Cristina Scheibe Wolff (Professor of Women's History at UFSC, whose research focuses on gender, feminisms, and women in the resistance against South American dictatorships) told ARTICLE 19 that, in the 1960s, Brazil's military regime persecuted feminists, who organised in small groups across the country to protect themselves and resist the regime. These groups were the genesis of the Brazilian feminist movement.

More recently, actions around International Women's Day (known as '8M' because it falls on 8 March) have been particularly striking. Thousands of women across Brazil have taken part in these mobilisations, which have largely been instigated by black Brazilian women's movements, and which have demanded justice for the murder of councillor Marielle Franco (who was targeted for being a black bisexual woman in politics), called for an end to violence against journalists (such as the reporter Patrícia Campos Mello¹⁰), and protested against Bolsonaro's aggressive behaviour. Brazilian feminists also led the *Ele Não* (Not Him) movement in the run-up to the 2018 election and played a pivotal role in the *Fora Bolsonaro* (Stop Bolsonaro) movement that later denounced his actions. Although Bolsonaro won that election, these movements were crucial in informing the population of the misogynistic characteristics of his political project, and continued to mobilise during his premiership; for example, in September 2021, indigenous women held the second Indigenous Women March to coincide with a Supreme Court judgment on their right to claim their land.

These examples highlight a facet of the contemporary feminist movement in Brazil that is particularly relevant to this case study: women creating their own networks to collectively resist the attacks they face. This can be seen among women journalists and social communicators, too. For example:

- *Jornalistas contra o Assédio* (Journalists Against Harassment) was founded in 2016. In 2020, its members undertook a coordinated action on Twitter calling for an end to attacks and harassment against women journalists at work, using the hashtag *#MulheresJornalistasEmLuta* (*#WomenJournalistsInTheFight*). In just two hours, the hashtag attracted more than 10,000 tweets. The collective also created a public petition calling on Twitter to tackle targeted attacks against women journalists.
- *Rede de Jornalistas e Comunicadoras com Visão de Gênero e Raça* (Feminist Network with a Gender and Race Perspective), mentioned earlier for its work defending a journalist who was sued and hounded off social media for publishing a story about a sexual assault at a beach club, works to protect women journalists.
- *Associação Mundial de Rádios Comunitárias* (AMARC) (Gender Perspective to Strengthen Community Radio Broadcasters) is profiled in depth in the next section.



2. Case studies

Introduction

To identify feminist approaches to the safety of journalists in Brazil, ARTICLE 19 conducted desk research and carried out interviews with women journalists and communicators, as well as with specialists in gender, feminist studies, and the media.

Considering the lack of information on violations against women journalists and social communicators in Brazil, it was first necessary to map and categorise them. We began by reading news articles about violence against journalists in general (with a particular focus on incidents since 2015), which yielded a list of journalists who had experienced some type of violence. We then searched online in Portuguese, Spanish, and English for information about attacks against women journalists in particular. This enabled us to create a list of cases of gender-based violence against journalists or communicators and to map out existing protection mechanisms and authorities' responses. We also conducted online research to find intersectional feminist protection initiatives for journalists.

From our research and interviews, we identified the following two case studies, which we explore in depth in this section:

- **Nós, Mulheres da Periferia** (We, Women from the Periphery): an intersectional feminist [website](#), created by a group of women journalists in 2014, that platforms black women who live on the outskirts of big cities. Jéssica Moreira, journalist and co-founder of the website, told us that, while other feminist outlets existed before theirs, none 'had a point of view by a geographic place. And we would like to show the women from their eyes.' Like many feminist initiatives in Brazil, the website was launched on International Women's Day. It is part of a wider trend of Brazilian feminist journalists producing their own independent journalism and online outlets (other examples include [Azmina](#), [Portal Catarinas](#), and [Geledes Institute](#)).
- **Rede de Mulheres da AMARC** (Gender Perspective to Strengthen Community Radio Broadcasters): a network of women journalists and communicators established in 2010 within *Associação Mundial de Rádios Comunitárias – Brasil* (AMARC–Brasil). The network exists to bring women journalists and communicators together to address the gender-based issues and violence they experience. ARTICLE 19's research has found that self-organised networks like this are a key characteristic of feminist approaches to the safety of journalists – not only in Brazil but also across Latin America more broadly.

Nós, Mulheres da Periferia (We, Women from the Periphery)

'We are women that created a website to write texts and register stories that were not found anywhere. In a country where women are on the sidelines of leadership in the media industry, *Nós, Mulheres da Periferia* is a journalistic company founded and self-managed by peripheral and black women.'

– *Nós, Mulheres da Periferia*

Beginnings

Nós, Mulheres da Periferia (hereafter *Nós*) is an intersectional feminist [website](#) that platforms black women who live on the outskirts of big cities. It originated in 2012 when a group of women journalists and social communicators wrote an article in the *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper about the daily challenges women in such locations face. This became an inaugural manifesto for *Nós*, which began to take shape shortly afterwards – initially as a collective of journalists and later, in 2014, as an independent media outlet. Speaking of *Nós*'s creation process, co-founder Jéssica Moreira said: 'We were born before being born.'

All of *Nós*'s members are journalism graduates and were working journalists before setting up the website. Their professional practice is therefore informed by critical thinking around traditional journalism and the need for plurality and diversity. However, Jéssica told us, when *Nós* was first established, they had not yet realised they were feminists. This realisation arose from participating in feminist events, debates, and discussions, which they were frequently invited to. 'Nowadays, we identify ourselves with subjects such as gender, race, and territory, and nobody denies being a feminist,' she said.

The journalists behind *Nós* live and write in São Paulo's peripheral neighbourhoods – the poorest areas in the city. The issues they address relate to not only daily life in those neighbourhoods and what it means to be a peripheral woman but also economics, international politics, popular movements, reproductive and public health, and commuting. As such, the subjects they tackle extend far beyond the peripheries.

Implicit bias, explicit attacks

While *Nós* has largely been welcomed, it has also faced various threats – from implicit bias to explicit attacks. The outlet has implemented various strategies to deal with these.

Implicit bias

Some individuals and organisations – including Facebook and [Instagram](#), with whom *Nós* has faced difficulty getting their accounts verified – have refused to accept *Nós* as a media outlet run by professional journalists, instead assuming that it

is a social movement. Jéssica attributes this to implicit sexism – a refusal to accept that peripheral women can do what *Nós* is doing:

‘The difficulties are between the lines. They are not used to seeing women in leadership roles.’

She also told us that *Nós* has to clear a higher bar than other media outlets, in terms of journalistic standards, because any mistakes it makes are weaponised against it.

Hacking

Nós has also suffered direct attacks that have put its work and contributors’ safety at risk. In May 2021, its social media accounts were hacked and its content replaced with images of violence and armed men. This happened the day after *Nós* covered popular demonstrations against Bolsonaro – coverage that attracted racist and misogynistic attacks against the outlet, including insults like ‘*negras burras*’ (‘dumb black women’). This episode generated a lot of fear among *Nós*’s journalists, who implemented digital security measures to protect themselves from further attacks. Jéssica also highlighted the wave of solidarity they received from organisations like ARTICLE 19, the Brazilian Bar Association, RSF, Network of Journalists from the Periphery, and other independent and feminist media outlets.

In a separate hacking attack in 2020, an article on *Nós*’s website was deleted a few weeks after being posted. The article highlighted the actions of paramilitary groups, which control elements of organised crime in Brazil, in relation to a boy’s death. The content was never retrieved, nor the perpetrator discovered. *Nós* had taken measures to protect the journalists who produced the story – one of whom lived in the region where the death occurred – including attributing the article to the newsroom as a whole rather than to any individual journalist, but this episode had a chilling effect on the outlet, which decided not to reinstate the article or discuss it further.

The risks of having skin in the game

Geographically, demographically, and emotionally, the journalists of *Nós* are much closer to the stories and people they report on than is usual in the mainstream media. While this adds authenticity to their coverage – they have skin in the game, unlike many other outlets – it also comes with its own set of risks: physical, emotional, and psychological.

For example, Jéssica lives and works in the Perus region, where the Brazilian dictatorship killed and buried anti-regime militants – an issue that *Nós* deals with in its coverage. Speaking of a series of interviews she conducted about the dictatorship with people in her region, she told us: ‘All the sources cried and I cried with them.’

Another example is a report *Nós* published on domestic violence in a locale where the reporters involved lived, worked, socialised, and had relationships. This necessitated a range of mitigation measures for both the journalists and

sources. One of the sources was ultimately removed from the story for her own protection, and the reporters also broke off pre-existing relations with some of the sources who were involved in the case.

Nós's response to threats and attacks

All the aforementioned risks can take a toll on journalists' mental health, sense of security, and ability to do their work. *Nós* has instituted several measures to mitigate these risks: since 2020, it has held full-day meetings at the end of each year to discuss group issues; in recognition of the mental health impacts of the work, it brings in a psychologist every three months to work with the group; and the outlet has the permanent services of a lawyer and an IT professional to deal with digital threats and the repercussions of its reports.

Jéssica believes that building and partaking in networks is also essential to protect *Nós* and its journalists. The project has always been close to social movements, especially peripheral ones, and is now integrated into various networks, such as the International Network of Gender Journalists. Researcher and journalist Jéssica Gustafson, author of the book *Jornalistas e Feministas* (Journalists and Feminists), views self-organised networks as a promising protection mechanism. ARTICLE 19 has similarly found that such networks are a key feature of feminist responses to the safety of journalists in Brazil, as in other Latin American countries.

Current focus

Nós currently has four focus areas: editorial (journalistic production), fundraising (to ensure financial autonomy), institutional (investing in networks and contacts), and administrative. The outlet is supported by donations, partnerships (such as with the Vladimir Herzog Institute and RSF), foundations (such as the Open Society, Rosa Luxemburg, and Oxfam Brasil), and funding organisations (such as the Emergency Fund for Latin America).

At the time of writing, seven journalists who work for *Nós* are full-time staff, and a further five have part-time contracts. This is a significant development since the website's inception, when it was an extracurricular project for all involved.

Rede de Mulheres da AMARC (Gender Perspective to Strengthen Community Radio Broadcasters)

○ **Beginnings**

Representatives of AMARC–Brasil created Rede de Mulheres da AMARC (hereafter *Rede*) in 2010. *Rede* brings women journalists and communicators together to address the gender issues and violence they experience in their work on community radio stations across Brazil. Being a community radio broadcaster is an important role in Brazil – especially in rural or isolated locations that the mainstream media does not reach, where community radio is sometimes the only source of information.

Célia Rodrigues, a journalist and radio broadcaster, founded *Rede*. She has 50 years' experience as a broadcaster, and has specialised in gender coverage for half of her career. She told us: 'What we see is that violence has not changed. The reality hasn't changed much [since the 1970s].' Célia uses her own history to help others fight discrimination and sexism in the radio system. When she was young, she said, she did not denounce the harassment she experienced, because: 'If it reached my parents, they probably would take me off the radio.' In the 1980s, she also had to hide her work as a radio broadcaster from her then-husband: 'I used to take my tape recorder and go out on the street [after my then-husband went to work]. If he knew, he would say that I was disobeying him and stop me from working.'

○ **Tackling sexual harassment in the workplace**

Today, as Dóris Macedo (President of AMARC–Brasil) told us, more women than men work in community radio in Brazil, but despite this strong presence, they still face risks. Sexism, social inequality, and environmental conflicts are endemic in parts of Brazil, and their tentacles reach into community radio. Women broadcasters who expose these topics sometimes experience intimidation and gender-based violence, both within the workplace and in their local community.

In 2017, for example, a female community radio broadcaster was sexually harassed by a male co-worker at a radio station in São Paulo state. Célia Rodrigues explained that the man tried to kiss the woman, and only stopped when she said she had a boyfriend (which she did not). As such, Célia said: 'The respect was not for her, but for the supposed boyfriend.'

In response, *Rede* held several meetings to support the journalist and organised an educational workshop at a national meeting. According to Célia and Dóris, both men and women communicators attended the workshop. At the start of the

workshop, women repeated phrases that their male colleagues often uttered to show how offensive they were. 'They [the men] started to get embarrassed, and some of them left the room,' says Célia – reactions that, in her and Dóris's view, show how difficult men find it to understand that their jokes can be offensive, aggressive, or obscene. Célia also told us it was difficult for the women to talk about workplace violence and harassment when the men who had committed such acts were also present.

The workshop organisers also distributed balloons emblazoned with misogynistic slurs that women had heard, and advocated for those who practise gender discrimination or harassment to change their behaviour. But Célia and Dóris recall that, although the workshop became the main event of Rede's general assembly, there was not much practical change afterwards. In Dóris's view, to engender real change, such activities need to be undertaken regularly and over a long period.

Intersectional discrimination

Rede held further workshops the following year (2018), in partnership with ARTICLE 19, which more than 40 community radio broadcasters attended. In a documentary called *Mulheres de Expressão* (Women of Expression), produced by ARTICLE 19 and featuring women who attended the workshops, community radio broadcasters debated their role, the violence they experienced, and representation in the media. In the documentary, Theresinha Ferreira, from *Rádio Quintal* in Minas Gerais, recalls the prejudice and difficulties she has experienced as a black female broadcaster:

'If you ask me: "Have you already suffered any difficulty to be in the media, to be a radio broadcaster, to work on TV?", I will tell you: "Yes, because I am a woman, I am black," and then you already can imagine the difficulties that I had to go through to get where I am today.'

Another participant in the documentary, Angelica Araújo – Executive Coordinator of *Associação de Rádios Populares* (Association of Popular Radio Stations) in Pernambuco state – agrees:

'It's not easy being a woman in this field of communication. We face many challenges. I have been facing them until today, because I am a woman, because I am a lesbian, and because I am black. And I have to deal with these three prejudices, and it's very complicated. It's difficult because you don't get a management position, a director's position. You get lower positions. What is given to you are minor things because you are not a man, because you are not heterosexual, because you are not white, because your hair is bad [according to] other people.'

○ The importance of self-organised networks

At the workshops, women broadcasters worked together to develop protection strategies, again showing the centrality of self-organised networks to feminist approaches to journalists' safety in Brazil (as elsewhere in Latin America). These networks assist in devising common strategies to improve working conditions, infrastructure, and legislation. They should be developed within both community radio stations themselves and the communities where those stations are located – because empowering women communicators also means strengthening their voices within their communities, including when speaking out about violence, abuse, and harassment.

○ Current focus

Currently, Célia told us, *Rede* works with other institutions and independent media to debate ways to fight violence against women and develop mechanisms to protect journalists and social communicators in Brazil. To ensure the continuity of these actions, both *Rede* and community radio stations require financial support.

3. Conclusions

In Brazil a significant proportion of journalists are women – almost 60%, according to Brazilian Journalists Profile 2021. Yet the interviewees in this study point to a deeply challenging, patriarchal environment for women journalists. However, as in other South American countries that are part of this research project, there is still a lack of data regarding the particular context of women journalists in the country.

Nevertheless, comparing cases of violence against women and men in journalism reveals the prevalence and nature of violence against women. There is a fundamental gender-based component to the violence towards women that makes attacks on women journalists very different to those on men. In parallel, a very diverse range of women suffer from these violations in Brazil. This reinforces that the only way to achieve a truly intersectional, holistic approach to combating such violence is to employ diverse strategies of protection. These strategies must include what are called, in Brazil, ‘social communicators’ (or ‘communicators’).

The country must urgently address two key aspects of the violence that Brazilian women journalists experience: digital violence and violations promoted by political and public agents. All of the relevant stakeholders – including media outlets, media platforms, and the state itself – must put in place measures to prevent and tackle these kinds of violence, which have concrete impacts in terms of impeding women’s freedom of expression in Brazil. The state and regional governmental entities should publicly condemn violence against journalists, online or offline, and public and political actors should refrain from contributing to an environment in which it is too often unsafe for women to speak freely. Among other initiatives, the state should develop accountability policies and measures to prevent the repetition of harmful statements by public and political actors that promote violence against women journalists.

It is important to recognise and learn from existing strategies adopted by women journalists in this context. The creation of media outlets run and staffed by women, with a feminist perspective or a focus on women’s conditions in the country, is one of the main strategies that the research revealed. This strategy is currently resourced through supportive networks, civil society organisations, and other feminist groups. But it exists to fill a gap in state provision: it does not remove the need for the state to adopt specific measures to ensure that journalists have more equitable access to resources.

Brazil must also properly invest in and improve its public programme of protection (the National Programme to Protect Human Rights Defenders, which includes journalists, communicators, and environmentalists), implementing intersectional, gender-focused monitoring and other support for all women journalists. Moreover, to take a truly intersectional approach to violence against all women, the state should carry out a broad internal process of diagnosing what aspects of the structures and culture of the state reinforce and feed inequalities of gender, race, and class. It should use these data to develop policies that eliminate such structures and build firm foundations to ensure freedom of expression truly based on equity. This should be central to the elaboration and implementation of public policies, making it possible to combat this kind of violence in its full complexity.

Notes

- 1 ARTICLE 19 uses 'women' and 'men' to refer to all those individuals who identify themselves as such.
- 2 ARTICLE 19 uses a functional definition of journalists and communicators, as per the [UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 34](#): 'Journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors, including professional full-time reporters and analysts, as well as bloggers and others who engage in forms of self-publication in print, on the internet or elsewhere'.
- 3 For instance, an RSF [report](#) found that 580 online attacks against journalists in Brazil were made by the so-called 'Bolsonaro System' formed by Jair Bolsonaro, his three sons (a senator, a federal congressman, and a Rio de Janeiro councillor), and a group of ministers. The [IACHR](#) reported that threats to freedom of expression in the country have worsened since the 2018 elections, with 'an increase in the number of threats by authorities to the life and bodily integrity of journalists and other media workers'. Another [report](#), by the Brazilian Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters (which includes 21 state broadcasters' associations), found that the number of press freedom attacks more than doubled in 2020.
- 4 As told to ARTICLE 19 by Maria José Braga, President of FENAJ.
- 5 According to the 2021 [Brazilian Journalist Profile](#) study, developed by the UFSC in cooperation with researchers from the Journalists' Labour and Identity Network (Retij/SBPJOR), the average Brazilian journalist is a single white woman.
- 6 Nunes, D. (2021) *Escalada da Precariedade das Mulheres Jornalistas – Transformações do Trabalho e Subjetividade*, Florianópolis: Insular. Pontes, F. S. (2017) 'Desigualdades Estruturais de Gênero no Trabalho Jornalístico: O Perfil das Jornalistas Brasileiras', *E-COMPÓS*, 20, 1: 1–15.
- 7 For the impacts of the pandemic on women, LGBTQI+ people, and peripheral communities in Brazil, see: Ferreira L. and da Silva, V. R. (2020) '[O Ano da Pandemia e Seu Impacto nas Mulheres, Pessoas Negras e LGBTQ+](#)', *Gênero e Número*, 22 December. *Gênero e Número* and Sempreviva Organização Feminista (2021) '[Sem Parar: O Trabalho e a Vida das Mulheres na Pandemia](#)'. Souto, J., Donaria, K. and Santos, T. (eds) (2021) [Coronavírus nas Favelas: A Desigualdade e o Racismo sem Máscaras](#), Rio de Janeiro: Movimentos.
- 8 A 'news desert' is an area that lacks local or independent media, limiting the plurality of voices and the free flow of information.

- 9 An emblematic example was a televised speech to the nation on 24 March 2020, in which Bolsonaro called Covid-19 a 'little flu', refuted scientific advice, and accused the media of creating panic in the population. See: Philips T. (2020), 'Bolsonaro says he "wouldn't feel anything" if infected with Covid-19 and attacks state lockdowns', *The Guardian*, 24 March.
- 10 Campos Mello, P. (2020) *A Máquina do Ódio: Notas de uma Repórter Sobre Fake News e Violência Digital*, São Paulo: Cia das Letras.



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