



# Communique Committee of Experts

## World Press Freedom Day

### **Committee of Experts of the MESECVI calls to guarantee freedom of expression for women journalists and human rights defenders in the face of increasing violence against them.**

Washington, DC, May 3, 2023. On World Press Freedom Day, the [Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention](#) (MESECVI) salutes the women journalists and communicators who, on a regular basis, make use of the 'freedom of the press' to defend the human rights of women, especially those who have no voice.

The Committee calls for a guarantee of the exercise of this right and therefore expresses its deep concern over the increase in acts of violence against women journalists and human rights defenders throughout the region. This violence is expressed by persons in positions of authority and others in a growing process of silencing and self-censorship. Acts of harassment, both in traditional public spaces and in the virtual world; threats that seek to instill fear, attacks on the dignity and physical or sexual integrity of these persons, judicial persecution, extending to extreme acts of violence such as femicide/feminicide. These are only some of the atrocities that have been denounced as common patterns of violence against women journalists and communicators.

These manifestations of violence are aimed directly at silencing the public voice of dissident women, especially those who seek to raise awareness in the public domain on issues of gender equality, respect for diversity, denunciations of the different forms of violence against women and the defense of their fundamental rights on the public agenda.

The Committee of Experts underscores that the obligation to prevent, punish and eradicate these violent acts, is a binding requirement, not only for States, but also for the media, digital platforms, and actions of the wider public, since it is in these spaces that women journalists and human rights defenders carry out their work, and, subsequently, receive most of the attacks. In this context, the responsibility of these actors to ensure the right of women to express their voices, free from violence and discrimination, is fundamental.

The Committee recalls that the Belém do Pará Convention enshrines the right of every woman to a life free of violence in both the public and private spheres. Article 4 of this instrument obliges the States Parties to ensure that: "Every woman has the right to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of all human rights and freedoms embodied in regional and international human rights instruments. These rights include, among others: a. The right to have

her life respected; b. The right to have her physical, mental and moral integrity respected; c. The right to personal liberty and security; e. The right to have the inherent dignity of her person respected and her family protected.”

The Committee notes with concern that social networks and digital platforms have become increasingly violent spaces for women journalists and human rights defenders. Such online violence, which is fueled by hateful discourses based on hurtful and cruel gender stereotypes, has concrete consequences on women's lives and environment, generating insecurity, fear, and self-censorship.

By virtue of the foregoing, the Committee of Experts urges unequivocal condemnation of attacks against women journalists and human rights defenders, recognizing the importance of their work and the harmful impact that their silencing has on the democratic system. It also calls on States to take the necessary measures to prevent, address, investigate, punish, and redress these acts of violence. Finally, it urges the media and representatives of the new communication and information technologies to promote the responsible and respectful use of these spaces and to guarantee respect for the fundamental rights of the women who participate in them.

The Committee of Experts expresses its full willingness to provide technical assistance to the States in this or any other matter related to the prevention, attention, investigation, and punishment of gender-based violence against women, adolescents, and girls.

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*The [Committee of Experts](#) is the technical body of the MESECVI, responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation process of the Convention of Belém do Pará. It is made up of independent Experts, appointed by each of the States Parties from among their nationals, who perform their duties in a personal capacity.*