[NL] Report on the safety of female journalists in the Netherlands

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On 1 December 2022, a major report on the safety of female journalists was published. It included the finding that 8 out of 10 female journalists in the Netherlands have experienced some form of intimidation, aggression, or threats; and that this was “alarmingly common”. The report was published by PersVeilig - a well-known joint initiative of Dutch journalists and law enforcement, comprised of the Dutch Association of Journalists, Dutch Association of Editors in Chief, the Dutch Police and the Dutch Public Prosecution Service - and aims to strengthen the position of journalists against violence and aggression, including when reporting threats.

In September 2022, PersVeilig commissioned the research into the safety of female journalists and, following a survey of over 290 female journalists in the Netherlands, published a 48-page report detailing a number of significant findings. First, as mentioned above, 82 per cent of female journalists have experienced some form of intimidation, aggression or threats; and almost a third of female journalists experienced this monthly (19 per cent), or more often (11 per cent).

Second, more than half of female journalists had experienced online aggression at least once in the past twelve months, particularly via Twitter (50 per cent). The research showed that, compared to the entire professional group, female journalists were more often confronted with aggressive or intimidating statements via social media and less often with face-to-face incidents. A third of female journalists who had experienced aggression, threats or intimidation, perceived the incident to have been discriminatory on the basis of gender and that they had been abused or belittled on that basis.

Third, the research showed that aggression, intimidation and threats have a major impact on the work of female journalists. For six out of ten female journalists, aggression, intimidation and threats affect the way they do their job. In most cases, that meant choosing words more carefully (52 per cent), treating people differently (35 per cent), avoiding certain social media (23 per cent) or no longer publishing about certain topics (19 per cent).

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Finally, 37 per cent of female journalists had not discussed an incident with an employer or colleague; while in only 7 per cent of cases, a report had been made to the police.

Notably, the report followed the recent announcement, by the Dutch State Secretary for Culture and Media (Staatssecretaris Cultuur en Media) and Minister for Justice and Security (Minister van Justitie en Veiligheid), of a series of new measures to protect press freedom and safety in the Netherlands (see IRIS 2022-8/15). The measures will include further research into specific aspects and target groups of harassment against journalists, such as online intimidation, aggression against female journalists and against journalists with a non-Western background, with the results providing insight for better policy.

PersVeilig, Research on safety of journalists, 1 December 2022

PersVeilig, Onderzoek veiligheid journalisten, 1 december 2022

https://www.persveilig.nl/over-persveilig/onderzoek

Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten, Gevolgen online agressie tegen vrouwelijke journalisten groot, 1 december 2022

https://www.nvj.nl/nieuws/gevolgen-online-agressie-tegen-vrouwelijke-journalisten-groot

Dutch Association of Journalists, Consequnces of online aggression against female journalists, 1 December 2022

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