

**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACE WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN THE
MEDIA FIELD***Jo'rayeva Iroda Umid kizi**Master of Uzbekistan University of Journalism and Mass Communications**E-mail: juraeva.i101001@gmail.com**Tel.: +998885424333*

Abstract: This article analyzes the role of women journalists in the media sphere of Uzbekistan and the world, the opportunities available to them, and the challenges they face. Women's journalism plays an important role not only in delivering information but also in promoting gender equality in society. The article highlights the professional achievements of women journalists, their working conditions, and the issues of safety and leadership, supported by statistical data and real-life examples.

Keywords: women journalists, media, gender equality, opportunities, challenges, Uzbekistan, journalism, discrimination, leadership, safety.

The equal rights of women and men in all spheres are enshrined in the basic legislative documents of many democratic states, in particular in the Constitution of Uzbekistan and in international human rights instruments. These include documents such as the UN Charter (June 26, 1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948), and the Covenants on Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the UN in 1966. These international agreements contain about 70 standards that define general human rights that are equal for men and women.

After Uzbekistan gained independence, women's issues have become a priority area of state policy. To date, the rights and interests of women have been reflected in more than 80 regulatory legal documents. Against the background of global processes, issues of gender equality, especially in journalistic activities, are emerging as one of the urgent problems.

Women's entry into journalism has been met with many stereotypes around the world. Although in developed countries this process has been relatively easy due to the widespread adoption of liberal values, respect for human rights, gender equality and feminist ideas, in most Eastern countries this situation has developed much more complicated and slowly. This is explained, first of all, by the fact that the role of a woman has been associated with traditional social roles such as running a household and raising children. Therefore, in many cases, women have faced obstacles in choosing journalism and their professional growth has been hindered by cultural and social norms.

It is no secret that for a long time, journalism has been dominated by men around the world. In the 67 countries studied in the international "World of Journalism" survey, men made up 57 percent of all journalists surveyed and 62 percent of all junior and senior managers in the editorial hierarchy.

Mira Iqbal, a photojournalist and author for The Express Tribune, originally from Pakistan, writes: “When I was studying abroad, I often defended the image of a Muslim woman, saying that wearing the burqa does not mean she is oppressed. It is psychologically terrifying to have to deal with this mentality every day, hoping that one day it will change. The idea that a woman in a vulnerable situation needs protection is almost always there, and while there are sometimes positive aspects to this situation, it often leads to a violation of boundaries. One day, I came across a man who said, in a rude manner, ‘You can’t be a journalist, you are a woman!’ He called his two-year-old remark ‘advice.’ A year later, I met the same man again, and I only recognized him when I greeted him: ‘I am so sorry for what I said to you; you are “You have proven your strength very well,” she said.

On this basis, it can be said that female journalists around the world still suffer from various social stereotypes. The personal experience and comments of one of the recognized journalists on this topic once again emphasize the need to think openly and continuously on this topic and pay attention to this problem.

In addition, the messages posted on Twitter by Agnieszka Pikulitska-Wilczewska, a Polish journalist living in Tashkent, on February 1, 2021, caused widespread discussion on social networks. According to her, the issue of granting accreditation to a journalist dragged on for 6 months, during which a person named Rustam, posing as a ministry employee, approached Agnieszka.

“He kept texting me with a proposal to meet, even though I was rejected. A few days later I said I wasn’t interested in any contact other than work. His answer was: ‘Why? Do you have a boyfriend?’ I had to be polite, after all, I was waiting for accreditation for a long time,” Agnieszka wrote.

In 2023, Irina Matviyenko, the founder of the independent anti-violence project “Nemolchi” in Uzbekistan, was forced to temporarily leave the country due to death threats. She reported this on her Telegram channel.

At the end of April, she received a threatening message. An unknown person wrote that he had to kill the activist by the end of the month. At the same time, he said that he knew all the information about her.

Later, Irina Matviyenko announced that she had left Uzbekistan for several weeks.

“After receiving the death threat, my behavior changed. I tried to treat it as if it were someone’s stupid joke, but it was scary to get on the subway, walk along the corridor to the office. I made the final decision last week after a session with a psychologist. According to him, the style of the message resembles that of a psychopath. This spring there is a much higher than usual increase in mental illnesses. This psychopath can kill me. That’s why I thought I should leave the country for a few weeks,” writes Irina Matviyenko.

Today, hundreds of local and international organizations and movements operate around the world that protect the rights and interests of female journalists, eliminate discriminatory and criminal situations against them, and provide due recognition to the work of women working in the field of journalism. Among them are:

1. International Women’s Media Fund;
2. Coalition of Women in Journalism;
3. Women's Fund for Peace and Human Rights;

4. African Women in Media (AWiM);
5. Journalism and Women Symposium (JAWS);
6. Union of Women Film Journalists;
7. Association of Women Journalists;
8. International Women's Media Fund;
9. National Federation of Women's Press.

However, despite all kinds of advocacy, ideological campaigns and international efforts aimed at ensuring the legal protection of journalists, the safety of media workers remains a pressing global problem today. Statistics show that journalism is one of the most dangerous professions, and in many countries, situations threatening representatives of this profession still persist. Even in countries with high levels of freedom of speech, democratic principles, and social stability, journalists and information providers are subject to pressure and persecution, and restrictions are imposed on social media.

After Uzbekistan gained independence, dozens of regulatory and legal documents aimed at implementing the rights and interests of women were adopted and entered into force. In particular, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 760-I dated April 14, 1999 "On Additional Benefits for Women"¹, Article 22 of the Law "On Elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan" dated August 29, 2003, as well as the Presidential Decree No. PF-1084 dated March 2, 1995 "On Measures to Increase the Role of Women in the State and Social Construction of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-4245 dated September 30, 2010 "On Additional Measures to Strengthen the Social Protection of Women" and the Decree No. PF-3434 dated May 25, 2004 "On Additional Measures to Support the Activities of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan "On" decrees on ensuring women's rights, their participation in the political and cultural strata of society, and measures taken against discrimination against women's rights have shown their effectiveness since the first years of our independence.

The Council of Women Journalists was established under the Creative Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, the word women and journalism has become synonymous in two ways. On the one hand, coverage of topics related to women in journalistic materials has increased, and on the other hand, women themselves have begun to enter journalistic activities with bold steps. The number of materials written by women journalists and authors has increased. Now women have begun to speak their minds to the whole world not only as journalists, but also as bloggers.

However, when it comes to gender issues in journalism, it is important to note that women have overcome discriminatory and stereotypical barriers in society and have managed to enter this field. And since then, for several centuries, female journalists have been trying to overcome existing problems and create their own career paths.

The participation of women in journalism not only enriches the information space, but also plays an important role in establishing gender equality in society. Although women journalists have achieved many successes globally and locally, they still face various stereotypes, social pressure, safety and professional equality problems. In the case of

Uzbekistan, despite significant steps being taken to protect the interests of women in state policy, there are still issues that need to be resolved in practice.

Therefore, a systematic approach is needed to ensure gender equality in journalism, create a more comfortable and safe working environment for women, encourage their leadership potential, and eliminate stereotypes. In this regard, legal frameworks, education, training, international exchange of experience, and mass campaigns that serve to change social consciousness are important.

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