

THE INVISIBLE BACKPACK

The challenges and resilience
of Central American women
journalists in exile





This study analyzes cases of 13 exiled women journalists from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. It explores the circumstances that forced them to flee, the obstacles they encountered in their new host countries, and the resilience strategies they develop to continue practicing their profession and rebuild their lives. Using testimonies and analysis, the study discusses the intersection of gender, journalism, and exile. It also outlines the additional burdens these women carry in terms of security, integration, healthcare, and economic stability. Finally, the study identifies key takeaways and proposals to strengthen their protection and support.

**Disclaimer:*

This article contains quotes and descriptions that may be disturbing and cause feelings of re-traumatization for some readers. Discretion and care are advised.



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of Central American women
journalists in exile

A project by



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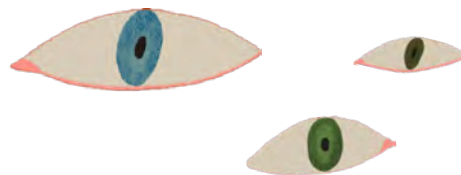
At the Casa para el Periodismo Libre, exiled journalists and media professionals can access training resources, reports, and presentations, as well as take part in activities that focus on well-being, mental health, comprehensive security, and other forms of support for continuing their work as journalists. Both a physical location and a virtual platform (periodismolibre.org), the Casa para el Periodismo Libre serves as a meeting point for allied organizations working to enhance the visibility of exiled and displaced journalists around the world.

DW Akademie founded the Casa para el Periodismo Libre project together with its Costa Rican partner, the Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX) (Institute of Press and Freedom of Expression). The project is part of DW Akademie's global Space for Freedom program, which in turn is part of the Hannah Arendt Initiative, promoted by the Federal Foreign Office.

For more information on the project, please visit:

periodismolibre.org

This study was originally published in Spanish in June 2025. The English version is a translation.



Imprint

PUBLISHER

Asociación Instituto para Libertad de Prensa y Expresión IPLEX

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This report was produced within the framework of the Casa para el Periodismo Libre project, a collaboration between DW Akademie and IPLEX, and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The authors are responsible for the report's content.

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Prologue

Working as a journalist in Central America is an enormous challenge and doing this from exile is an even greater one. And, if you are a woman, the task can seem additionally formidable.

How does the sexualization of smear campaigns influence the expulsion of women journalists? How does the process of exile complicate the responsibilities of motherhood or caring for family members? How can you access medical and psychological care when far from your home country and context? And, finally, what tools exist for resistance and the continuation of your career in exile? These are some of the questions faced by exiled women journalists.

While international interest in journalism in exile is on the rise, attention to the particular experience of women is still given short shrift. As in other areas, it's important to understand the specific challenges of these women's situations, their motivations for fleeing their countries, and the obstacles they face once in exile. It is also worth noting that women often demonstrate outstanding resilience in their ability to create community and build support networks in exile.

The Casa para el Periodismo Libre project was founded in 2024 and promoted by DW Akademie in collaboration with the Instituto de Prensa y Libertad de Expresión (IPLEX). This project is part of the Hannah Arendt Initiative and the global Space for Freedom

project which provides support to journalists at risk across the globe, including journalists in exile or on the move. As part of the activities of Casa para el Periodismo Libre we decided to carve out a specific space just for women, to consider what "spaces for freedom" mean to them and how they should be adapted to the context of exiled women journalists. We knew, from anecdotal evidence, that exile exposes women to challenges that in many cases are more complex than those faced by men. However, we also realized there was limited information available on the specific obstacles faced by women journalists in exile.

The study's goal is to fill in the knowledge gap in order to improve support responses to this challenging situation. Focused on the intersecting categories woman, journalist, and exile, this paper reveals the influence of gender on why women are forced to leave their countries of origin and how it affects their integration into host countries. Finally, we identify key areas and proposals to strengthen the protection and support for women facing this situation.

This study does not aim for statistical representation; rather, it centers on the powerful testimonies of the 13 women who participated. We are very grateful for their participation and for sharing their stories, concerns, and recommendations. We recognize that telling those stories is often difficult and painful.

We trust that this study will serve as a tool for projects like Casa para el Periodismo Libre, which support journalists in exile or displacement, and will be an invitation to more closely analyze the situation of exiled women journalists. We also hope that it will inspire greater collaboration and strengthen the networks of solidarity and resilience that these women have already begun to build.



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I. Introduction

In Central America, close to 83% of journalists report that they have been victims of violence, insults, or harassment on social media because of their work (Martínez, Rodríguez, & Jiménez, 2025). It is a figure that reflects a well-documented pattern across the region.

In Nicaragua, over 280 journalists have been forced into exile since 2018, according to the Fundación por la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED); a significant number of expulsions were directly ordered by the government. The latest annual report from the Red Rompe el Miedo Guatemala on the situation of Guatemalan journalists reveals systematic persecution of the press, driven by state actors and groups in power. The Asociación de periodistas de El Salvador (APES) recorded 277 attacks in El Salvador in just three months of 2024. Of the 84 attacks attributed to public officials, 40.5% were ordered by the president himself. In Honduras, sustained attacks, harassment, and intimidation campaigns against journalists have placed the country among the 50 worst worldwide for press freedom, according to Reporters Without Borders.

Journalism in Central America is undoubtedly high risk, but the danger is even greater for women journalists. Not only do they face the same dangers as their male colleagues, but they also suffer gender-based violence¹, including sexist and misogynistic attitudes and the repeated use of sexual harassment and sexual violence (Article 19 et al., 2023). This violence crosses physical borders and follows them on their journey into exile via the digital space. There they receive everything from threats of sexual assault and private messages of harassment to caricatures with manipulated images meant to generate fear. (Martínez, Rodríguez & Jiménez, 2023).

According to the Red Rompe el Miedo Guatemala, “Women who cover political or human rights issues face greater pressure and are often attacked not only for their work, but also because of their gender.” They specify that in Guatemala, attacks against women journalists constitute 20% of the total registered attacks during the first half of 2024. “Threats to [women journalists] can be more personalized, such as attacks on their private lives or family safety, rather than solely professional attacks,” they report.

In Nicaragua, at least 242 attacks against women journalists were recorded between 2018 and 2020 (Aguilera & Guevara, 2023), some perpetrated by state agents or parapolice entities. Meanwhile, in El



Salvador, a systematic pattern of digital harassment is evident: 49% of attacks directed against women journalists occurred on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) (APES, 2024).

In addition to structural violence, women journalists in Latin America are disproportionately affected by job insecurity, wage disparity, and economic inequality. The lack of fair wages and safety guarantees makes them vulnerable, with little leeway for weighing what are acceptable risks in dangerous contexts. Some are forced to remain in violent situations due to the need to provide for their families, and face the double burden of economic uncertainty and threats to their safety (de Frutos & Jorge, 2022).

In many media outlets women journalists also face difficulties obtaining leadership roles, which limits their professional growth and decision-making capacity. Managerial positions are generally

¹ According to the United Nations, gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any act of physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering inflicted on a person because of their gender.

I. Introduction

- ▶ occupied by men and when women do secure these positions, their work is often underestimated or undervalued (Martínez, Rodríguez & Jiménez, 2023). This imbalance places greater demands on them, forcing them to constantly prove themselves in order to gain the same recognition as their male colleagues.

When the dynamics of structural violence and gender inequality are compounded by other factors, such as political repression and direct threats to freedom of expression by governments and criminal groups, some women journalists are forced to flee their countries to protect themselves and their families.

However, displacement and exile also involve constant challenges, marked by uncertainty and lack of support. For example, some exiled journalists lose their jobs or have to change professions to survive (Garrido, 2021). This affects their economic stability and hinders their future reintegration into the journalism field, limiting the possibility to continue their work.

This study attempts to provide greater visibility of their situation and promote strategies that guarantee the protection of women journalists and the full exercise of their profession. Our analysis is based on an extensive literature review, the testimonies of 13 exiled media professionals from Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and five semi-structured interviews with gender and journalism experts.

The results highlight the challenges that exile poses to the work, personal, emotional, and social lives of women journalists, but also show how this experience of loss and uprooting can result in resistance and reinvention. Finally, it presents recommendations aimed at improving the conditions of women journalists in situations of displacement and exile. We promote strategies that support, protect, and strengthen networks which help to guarantee their safety and therefore, freely exercise their craft.



II. PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE



“They kill her name”: Destroying professional identities as violence

The violence that forces Central American women reporters to leave their countries often comes from powerful actors and manifests itself in misogynistic attacks that focus on their physical appearance, sexuality, and family roles, as well as the destruction of their professional identity.

Between 2020 and 2022, women journalists in El Salvador faced a systematic harassment campaign on social media platforms, articulated by the hashtag #malqueridas². This term became a tool of digital violence with a strong misogynistic charge, used to discredit and attack journalists who were producing critical work in the face of powerful opposition, according to the Salvadorian journalists *Julieta and *Claudia³.

The attacks were not limited to professional aspects. They included personal and sexual attacks along with public humiliation: posts with offensive manipulations of images, explicit threats of physical and sexual violence, and insults that focused on their private life or marital status. These attacks were frequently linked to the accounts of government officials or people in power, suggesting a broader strategy of intimidation, as evidenced in the El Faro article *El bukkelismo se ensaña con las mujeres periodistas* (Bukkelismo is vicious against women journalists) in 2022.

“They called us ‘the ones without husbands’ and I was part of the group of journalists tagged [on social media platforms],” *Julieta* says in an interview from the country where she is in exile. The #malqueridas hashtag gained wide reach on social media and was an attack on female reporters, not only for their work scrutinizing the government, but especially for being women.

Claudia also had to leave El Salvador in 2022, when, she says, the situation was already “untenable” due to the government’s metaphorical public lynching of women journalists.

“Although men were attacked, the emphasis was on women. They created the hashtag #malqueridas and put [women journalists] into horrible, manipulated images. They said they were going to rape us, that gang members were going to dismember us, things like that. Attacks had a sexual charge and referenced our physical appearance or our personal lives. Our male colleagues didn’t experience attacks like that [...]. The weight of misogyny is always heavy. The sexual element and type of violence is very different towards women,” *Claudia* says.

Claudia and *Julieta*’s cases demonstrate that direct government repression is a common pattern of violence faced by women journalists. Political violence is used to restrict freedom of expression and discredit journalists through acts of persecution and harassment. The attacks include targeted smear campaigns, surveillance, and direct threats against family members.

² Women who are not wanted / not cherished. Unloved women.

³ For the protection of the individuals’ privacy and safety, all names have been changed.



“

Although men were attacked, the emphasis was on women.

Attacks had a sexual charge and referenced our physical appearance or our personal lives. Our male colleagues didn't experience attacks like that [...]

”

- Salvadoran journalist



Misogynistic discourse and sexual violence, recurrent ways to silence women

To silence critical female voices, misogynistic discourse often begins in the digital space. Unlike for their male colleagues, online attacks against women journalists often focus on their physical appearance, sexuality, and role as mothers. Many are forced to limit their participation on digital platforms, therefore losing a vital outlet for their work.

“I have two daughters and the attacks against me extended to them. I was told that the three of us were going to disappear, that we would be raped, that we would be killed and our bodies found in a bag somewhere,” *Claudia* recalls.

Sexual violence is a recurrent weapon of repression and can cause victims to feel isolated, in danger, and distrustful of others. The report “Nobody Leaves Because They Want To”, from Nicaraguan journalist network PCIN, focuses on the experiences of Nicaraguan women in exile, documenting how gender-based violence is intertwined with political repression. The report specifically highlights cases of sexual and psychological torture during detentions, the effects of which negatively impact the emotional well-being and resilience of victims.

Edith Rodríguez Cachera, vice-president of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Spain, says that Central American journalists she has met in Spain have suffered sexual assaults, “pure and simple.” In addition, all gender-based violence affects women both physically and psychologically. “The most alarming thing is that this type of extreme violence is normalized,” she says.

**Patricia* fled Guatemala in 2021. She talks about the sexual violence she experienced in her work environment and is adamant that “abuse persists” from employers, managers, and even colleagues of the same rank. “The worst thing is that victims of sexual harassment have a hard time recovering

emotionally,” she says. “So those who are forced into exile carry the trauma with them, making it difficult to overcome the obstacles they might encounter in their new country, things they never even anticipated,” she adds.

For example, **Saharah Hang*, a Honduran journalist who asked not to be identified, says that the attacks she suffered in her home country as a journalist caused post-traumatic stress: “Ten years later I am still in therapy.”

In fact, the violence against her did not end with exile and is an example of discrimination that continues in a host country. “Being a foreign woman also has consequences,” she explains. “I had a job where my boss tried to sexually abuse me. When I filed a complaint, no one did anything because I am a foreigner. They believe you’ll be [sexually] available to them because you need a visa. This is clearly sexist violence,” she says.

Alejandra Negrete Morayta, a communications and gender studies expert, confirms this, saying that “structural violence also permeates the lives of women in exile.” She adds: “It is a continuum of violence. They leave one circle of violence to enter another circle of gender-based violence.”

In some cases, being a lesbian adds to the segregation. This was the experience of a Nicaraguan journalist from the Caribbean Coast who fled to Costa Rica because of the persecution she faced in her country. She says when she was attacked in her country, she didn’t know if she was being attacked for being a journalist or for being a lesbian.

“When the police officers approached me, they would insult me. Sorry for my language, but they called me ‘daughter of a bitch’, ‘lesbian’, ‘terrorist’,” the reporter recalls. I was terrified of falling prey [to violence], ▶

“

The worst thing is that victims of sexual harassment have a hard time recovering emotionally. Those who are forced into exile carry the trauma with them

- Guatemalan journalist

”

II. Patterns of violence

says. This shows that when multiple forms of discrimination are combined it makes a situation even worse.

Her testimony is not a one-off case. The report “Nobody Leaves Because They Want To” documents how LGBTTIQ+ people face intersectional violence that combines political repression with social punishment for transgressing gender norms imposed by the Nicaraguan government. Many were victims of smear campaigns, threats of “corrective” sexual violence, and constant surveillance. Some were forced to hide their identity or even “go back into the closet” as a survival strategy, deepening their trauma and sense of uprooting.

The burden of violence they carry becomes even heavier when factors such as xenophobia, homophobia, and institutional violence in host countries are piled on. “Exile creates additional labels used to discriminate against you. For example, in your country you were discriminated against for being a woman, but in exile, you are also discriminated against for being a foreigner and, more specifically, for being Central American: for your ethnic origin, for your way of speaking, for your customs. In other words, you take on a lot of things that hadn’t been an issue in your own country,” the Nicaraguan journalist adds.

“

Structural violence also permeates the lives of women in exile.

It is a continuum of violence. They leave one circle of violence to enter another circle of gender-based violence.

”

- **Alejandra Negrete Morayta**

Expert in freedom of expression and gender.



Destroying identity and self-esteem as an act of violence

Patricia was forced to flee Guatemala, and her case illustrates a type of violence that places exiled women in a position of inferiority, therefore undermining their professionalism. “They saw me as: 1) a wetback⁴; 2) belonging to a mara or a gang; and, 3), as a woman, someone who can’t produce as much as a man,” she laments.

“In the media industry, women are paid less than men,” she continues. “I was at a media outlet here in my

country of exile, where some comrades were paid 150 dollars for an article along with travel expenses. They paid me 100 dollars for an article without travel expenses. I argued that my work was as good if not better than that of my male colleagues.

They came up with absurd excuses. I try not to be defensive, but those are the facts. I was being discriminated against for being a woman and for being Guatemalan.”

⁴ The term “wetback” usually refers to immigrants who have entered the United States irregularly.

► *Claudia* from El Salvador agrees: “People disregard your professional abilities because you are a woman and a foreigner. Many think that because you are Salvadoran you don’t have the same competence as local journalists. In short, all of this restricts the possibilities you have to enter the journalism labor market,” she explains.

Erasing women journalists’ professional identities is intended to force them to censor themselves “They kill her name,” stresses Dagmar Thiel, CEO of Fundamedios. The smear campaigns and undermining of the public persona of journalists “are precisely to achieve self-censorship, silencing, and self-exile from social media platforms,” Thiel says.

In addition, women journalists generally have a harder time than their male colleagues in gaining public recognition, so rebuilding their professional identity is an even greater challenge. “That kind of [violence] erases your identity and makes you disappear,” Thiel says. “You arrive with your dead identity in exile.”

Cristina Zahar, coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), points to the specific impact of gender-based violence on those who continue working as journalists from exile. “Gender roles impose a heavier burden on women in exile than on men, which hinders their reintegration into the workplace and the possibility of continuing their work as journalists in their host countries,” she says.

Lucía Lagunes Huerta, director of the Asociación Civil Comunicación e Información de la Mujer (CIMAC), says that women journalists are intentionally underestimated intellectually, and not only because of unconscious biases. She says those who are forced into exile are considered “dangerous” in their countries of origin; they challenge power structures whose beneficiaries are bent on revenge. As a result, aggressors resort to degrading the women’s professional capacity and often promoting the idea that the women were simply implementing a plan orchestrated by others, usually a “male mastermind.”

In addition, the vulnerability of exiled women journalists is increased by the combination of gender and socioeconomic status. Many of the reporters interviewed,

especially single mothers, are forced to accept grueling or low-paying jobs in order to survive in host countries. Journalism therefore takes a backseat to the pressing needs of survival. The gender and communications expert Negrete Morayta says that in exile, the feminization of poverty⁵ is aggravated in direct relation to gender-based violence.

But the erasing of identity does not end there. The criticism of personal lives, appearance, and the familial roles of exiled women journalists is also a way to discredit their professionalism. During a meeting with journalists from Nicaragua, several said that they were criticized if they seemed to be taking care of their physical appearance, as though as exiles they don’t have the right to do so. To minimize this criticism, some women said that they neglected their physical appearance on purpose, but this in turn undermined their self-esteem. These examples all show harmful stereotypes about what it means to be a “good woman.”

“**Gender roles impose a heavier burden on women in exile than on men, which hinders their reintegration into the workplace and the possibility of continuing their work as journalists in their host countries**”

Cristina Zahar

Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean Committee to Protect Journalists.

⁵ The term “feminization of poverty” was coined in 1978 by sociologist and social worker Dr. Diana Pearce.

“

When I left my country, I lost my house, I lost my job, I lost my network of friends.

I lost everything and I'm carrying that backpack. That backpack is always there and we often ignore it

”

- Salvadoran journalist



Anxiety and somatization of stress: Consequences on mental health

A decline in mental health is an additional worry clearly expressed by all women journalists interviewed for this study. The psychological consequences of gender-based violence they suffered in their countries of origin tended to increase in destination countries.

**Diana*, a Salvadorian journalist, cannot stay in her country for more than two weeks at a time because she risks imprisonment. As a result, she says, she has become a different person: “I have no home, not in my country or anywhere else. And I got sick. I had severe gastric problems and began to suffer from hemorrhoids.” A psychologist told her that all this was a physical reaction to excessive stress, associated with her loss of identity as a journalist in exile.

Many of the interviewees require specialized care, but do not always have access. Negrete Morayta says that exiled women journalists also neglect their mental health because they consider it to be their lowest priority in such a highly vulnerable situation.

“

Exile creates additional labels used to discriminate against you

- *Nicaraguan Journalist*

”

“

I have no home, not in my country or anywhere else

- *Salvadoran journalist*

”

“I lost my hair, had dandruff flare-ups, anxiety attacks...early in the morning I suddenly wouldn't be able to breathe. And since arriving in Costa Rica I have gained 40 pounds,” says another exiled Nicaraguan journalist.

The Salvadoran *Claudia* compares the impact of the violence suffered by exiled women journalists to a backpack that you can't set down, nor that you feel like you should. This is because exile strengthens the self-perception that women are responsible for family cohesion and well-being. “When I left my country, I lost my house, I lost my job, I lost my network of friends. I lost everything and I'm carrying that backpack. That backpack is always there and we often ignore it,” she says.

The implications of gender-based violence are too often overlooked, which is why addressing these issues demands a clear and intentional gender perspective. As the testimonies demonstrate, this confluence of identities and resulting discrimination creates a system that restricts the opportunities of women journalists in exile, undermines their professional recognition and exposes them to distinct forms of violence. Their backpacks, already full, fill up even further with gender-related challenges such as job insecurity.

Patterns of violence

| Pattern of violence | Characteristics |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Digital gender-based violence</i> | Disinformation campaigns, harassment on social media platforms and defamation to discredit, self-censor and isolate women journalists from the digital ecosystem. |
| <i>Sexual violence</i> | Sexual harassment, abuse of power by authorities. Threats of rape. |
| <i>Psychological violence</i> | Erasure of professional identity, verbal attacks due to sexual orientation. Judicial harassment: Use of the legal system to criminalize journalists by fabricating accusations. |
| <i>Physical violence</i> | Death threats, armed attacks, and attacks against family members. |
| <i>Political violence</i> | Direct government repression against women. |
| <i>Structural violence</i> | Employment discrimination, disregard for professional skills, criticism of personal life due to gender roles. |

Table 1.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the analysis of the interviews.

III. OBSTACLES



Between precariousness and migratory regulation

Regularization processes, economic precariousness, and loss of opportunities to continue practicing journalism are among the main obstacles faced by exiled journalists. Added to this is the burden of gendered expectations around care work and household management, which reinforce unequal power relations and further limit their professional autonomy.

Nicaraguan journalist *Casey Flores had to leave her country in mid-2024, when plainclothes police officers on motorbikes began looking for her at her home. Persecuted for her work, she settled in a neighboring country, where she was initially well received.

However, one of the biggest obstacles she has faced in exile has been balancing the responsibilities of caring for her children, domestic work, and her work as a journalist. “In Nicaragua I had a sister who helped me with the housework, but in Costa Rica I don’t have that support [...], and it’s very expensive here. My economic situation in Nicaragua was not the same as it is in Costa Rica,” she says.

Obstacles such as complicated immigration procedures, economic precariousness, or reduced access to healthcare services, are common to all journalists living in exile, but for women are even greater because of additional, gender-related obligations such as care work and the general management of the home, a double workload that is usually non remunerated and that often goes unseen.



Without documents, exile is torture

A primary obstacle is the regularization of immigration status, according to the 13 Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran journalists in exile interviewed for this study.

They explain that their economic stability, socio-cultural integration in their host countries, physical and mental health, and the possibility of continuing to work as journalists all depend on it. “Without proper documents, exile is permanent torture,” says *Julieta*, from El Salvador.

According to international refugee standards, women journalists who are forced to leave their countries for practicing their profession are entitled to international protection. However, in practice, they are confronted by the immigration policies established by each individual country at its own discretion.

The United Nations, and specifically the report of the Special Rapporteur on Journalists in Exile of June 2024, has insisted on reinforced protection for the journalistic diaspora.

“Treating journalists as part of the wider refugee community can be problematic, as it means overlooking the specific threats and challenges faced by journalists because of their work, such as targeted surveillance and other digital threats, or attacks from their country of origin [...],” states UN Special Rapporteur Irene Khan in the report. “The protection needs of refugee journalists are urgent and distinct,” the report stresses.

Applying for asylum is a complex option. In principle, it implies not being able to return to one’s country of origin in the short term, which can increase the emotional repercussions of uprooting. But perhaps the most challenging aspect is entering into a bureaucratic process that is usually cumbersome and expensive.

Salvadoran journalist *Claudia* recalls her experience: “I formalized my asylum application in the United States in September 2022, but my case is advancing at a snail’s pace, as the team of lawyers I hired is charging me \$15,000. I had to pay a \$2,000 down payment for them to take my case and my daughter’s case. I have to make \$300 monthly pay-

ments, but I’ve been late on several of the payments and that can hurt the process. I reached out to other organizations, looking for financial support, but none of them responded.”

**Camila* is from Guatemala and has been in exile in Costa Rica for two years. She is reluctant to apply for asylum because she hopes to return to her home country even though she knows that this would require substantial changes in her country’s institutions. On the other hand, *Patricia* and **Minerva* have both processed asylum applications, in the United States and Mexico respectively, mainly to guarantee the safety of their children. Both are aware that asylum further removes them from their countries of origin and that this will result in long-term professional and emotional impacts.

Zahar, CPJ’s Latin America and Caribbean coordinator, points out that immigration procedures are generally slow and place those involved in an extremely vulnerable situation, since being undocumented limits the exercise of their basic rights and their access to essential services, such as health-care or public education for their children.



When gynecology and mental health are a privilege

A significant obstacle for exiled journalists is access to healthcare, particularly specialized care such as gynecology, mental health, and preventive check-ups.

A lack of economic stability and documentation in their host countries limits their access to public health systems, leaving them in a vulnerable situation where medical care becomes a privilege rather than a right. Some cannot afford private consultations or specific treatments, which exposes them to the risk of unaddressed health problems, especially with regard to gynecological check-ups, access to contraception, or follow-ups for pre-existing conditions.

A Nicaraguan reporter who lived in hiding in her own country due to the persecution she suffered for her work, says that during the two years she remained there she was unable to access medical care, despite having the right to it. “If you are in a safe house and you are trying to go unnoticed, you cannot go to a hospital to have a consultation because there is a record of that visit and you are afraid someone will notify the police.”

Her situation did not improve when she managed to go into exile in Costa Rica, because the medical costs were too high: “I came to Costa Rica and I can’t go to

the doctor because the cost of a gynecological consultation, for example, is double or triple what it costs in Nicaragua,” she explains.

Patricia insists that mental healthcare should be a top priority when in exile. “There’s no way to be [outside your country] and have good mental health. You can’t do it on your own and should seek support. It’s very difficult because you don’t know how long the grief is going to last while you confront the challenges of your new life,” she says.

The journalist from the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua says that she obtained refugee status in Costa Rica relatively quickly, since the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued preventative security measures for her. This enabled her to prove her need for international protection. However, even then she didn’t have all her basic needs covered: “Here you pay for health services. Since I don’t have a job that pays for my insurance, I have to pay for my own insurance, because if not, I don’t have access to health services,” she says.

“

If you are in a safe house and you are trying to go unnoticed, you cannot go to a hospital to have a consultation because there is a record of that visit and you are afraid someone will notify the police

”

- Salvadoran journalist

Baking cakes, factory work or caring for children: Finding other ways to survive financially

Another major obstacle journalists face when arriving in host countries is economic precariousness. They are forced to take any job they can find, further removing them from their chosen profession. Moreover, the challenge lies not only in finding work, but in finding decent working conditions. In many instances, self-employment, where financial instability is constant, is the only alternative.

From Mexico, *Minerva* tried to keep her job at a Guatemalan community media outlet, but the outlet was financially strained, “They never had the money to pay me and when they did, the payment was only ten dollars per story. It’s very difficult to survive on that kind of income.”

The journalist from the Caribbean Coast established and has tried to maintain a media outlet that reports on her home country via digital platforms. However, she does this as a calling, not as a profitable activity. Her work doesn’t provide her with a regular income and is not enough to support her in Costa Rica.

Sometimes she has no choice but to work long hours: “Right now I put papers in a place to work on at night. I say, well, I’ll work at night, I’ll sleep for a while during the day and I’ll try to write pieces for a while at home, an hour a day..., because I don’t want to let go of journalism, to be honest. My heart breaks at the thought of it. I’ve been working in this field for 15 years, it’s my life.”

“I learned to bake cakes to survive,” she adds. She has also worked as a nanny. “It is physically and emotionally exhausting to know that, if no work surfaces next month, I won’t have enough to pay rent or buy food.”

In addition, immigration restrictions prevent women from obtaining work permits, forcing them to seek alternatives in the informal sector. **Thirzia Galeas*, a journalist originally from Honduras, says, “We look for any way to survive. I, for example, work as a packer in a plastics factory [in the United States].”

Casey Flores, for her part, is grateful that she and her family have received successive financial support from four non-governmental organizations linked to the pro-

motion and defense of freedom of expression. “We’ve been able to survive with that money, because otherwise we would be on the street,” she explains. “With our salaries we would only have enough to eat or to pay the rent where we live here in Costa Rica, but we wouldn’t be able to pay both.”

Re-entering the journalism trade is also complicated by the difficulty of recovering and re-establishing the relationships that the profession requires. Forced displacement leads to the weakening or total loss of relationships with information sources in the countries of origin, making it very difficult to record, verify, and disseminate news events remotely.

On the other hand, a comprehensive understanding of how institutions in the country of exile function, and its political, economic, and social actors is a complex task that requires a long-term commitment. If, in addition, it is a non-Spanish-speaking country, mastering the host country language can become an insurmountable barrier.

No less important is the lack of relationships with potential employers and the loss of legitimacy of a career forged over years in the home country.

Minerva’s testimony illustrates this: “[In the past] I never had to send out a resume because work just landed in my lap because people knew me, knew my work, and that was all that was necessary,” says this Guatemalan journalist who fled her country in 2023. “I didn’t even keep my diploma. And it turns out that here, in my country of exile, diplomas are important to employers,” she adds.



“

I don't want to let go of journalism, to be honest. My heart breaks at the thought of it. I've been working in this field for 15 years, it's my life

- Nicaraguan journalist

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Impossible expectations: Social pressure to sustain family ties

Another major obstacle exiled journalists face is the fracturing of their family ties. This separation is both physical and emotional, and creates a sense of loss that impacts both the journalist and her loved ones. Distance becomes an insurmountable obstacle when it comes to raising children, caring for elderly relatives, or simply sharing everyday moments.

Camila, a journalist from Guatemala, says she had to leave her daughters behind when she left her country: “I was very depressed [and there were] issues at home because of my absence. My two teenage daughters had very serious psychological problems and continue to have them. It’s been very difficult to be without them [without my family].”

Guilt becomes a constant burden, especially for journalists who have the responsibility of caring for others. The perception that their decisions have negatively affected their children, or that they have put their family at risk, is reinforced by patriarchal structures and biased perceptions of how a woman should behave, holding them responsible for the situation, instead of supporting them. In this case, exile is a struggle for survival and an internal struggle against self-accusation and the weight of familial responsibilities.

This guilt reflects the pressure of gender stereotypes: women as the main caregivers and responsible parties for their families, relegating their own needs and aspirations to a position of lesser importance. “From the moment you become a mother, you kind of accept

guilt as something that simply comes along with it. Having children means I always carry with me a tiny suitcase of guilt,” says the Guatemalan journalist *Minerva*.

“Everything you do affects them directly,” she says, explaining that her children were seven and nine years old when she first had to go into exile. At the time, “two of the people I loved most, my mom and the father of my children who was still alive then, blamed me for the situation. They both said: ‘you put the lives of your children at risk.’ Now, in this second exile, the people who love me the most are the ones who say to me: ‘You screwed up again.’ In other words, I’m the one to blame,” she laments.

Adapting to a new country is not only an individual challenge; it becomes a shared family process when children are involved. Cultural differences, language, and uncertainty about the future affect the emotional stability of the whole family. In addition to facing her own anguish, the journalist must become her children’s emotional support, hiding her own pain to maintain the appearance of stability.

In these situations, Lagunes Huerta, director of CI-MAC, believes that support networks are essential for women journalists to overcome the isolation that exile brings. She imagines these networks as spaces conducive to building solidarity and sisterhood.



“

***I was very depressed
[and there were] issues
at home because of my
absence.***

***My two teenage
daughters had very
serious psychological
problems and continue to
have them.***

***It's been very difficult to
be without them***

”

- Guatemalan journalist

Obstacles

| Obstacle | Characteristics |
|--|---|
| <i>Immigration status</i> | Slow and restrictive regularization processes that limit access to employment and basic rights. |
| <i>Physical health</i> | Limited access to basic public health services. |
| <i>Mental health</i> | Depression, anxiety, and stress due to uncertainty and forced exile, without adequate access to psychological care. |
| <i>Family situation: Gender roles (mother, caregiver, provider)</i> | Separation from the family, maternal guilt, and difficulties in remote parenting. |
| <i>Employment status</i> | Gender inequality in the labor market, precarious jobs, and exclusion from formal journalism. |
| <i>Non-existent or weak support networks</i> | Isolation and lack of information on available resources. |

Table 2

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the analysis of the interviews.

IV. RESILIENCE



“You can’t do it alone, you have to have a network”: The ability of rebuilding oneself

The range of resilience strategies that journalists in exile have developed is broad and includes activities such as continuing to work in their field, making the diaspora visible in host countries, creating support networks, and developing manuals to better navigate bureaucratic procedures

Every story of exile is personal, and each of the journalists forced to flee their countries has faced obstacles and challenges based on their own abilities and potential. This has led them to develop different forms of resilience. Some have even discovered that “there is a life after exile.”

The women in exile interviewed for this report have developed a variety of resilience strategies, from finding their own opportunities to continue working as journalists, to finding or strengthening support networks in their host countries.

While “resilience” is defined in different ways and its meaning is often debated, the term provides a valuable framework for analyzing the strategies described by the journalists interviewed. According to the inter-

national organization Oxfam, resilience involves the development of three types of capacities: 1) absorption, to cope with crisis; 2) adaptation, learning to innovate and make gradual changes in lifestyles; and 3) transformation, both of the those directly affected and that of the environment (OXFAM, 2016).



1. ABSORPTION

Knowing your rights and exercising them as the first resilience strategy

Awareness of rights – particularly their right to international protection because they are persecuted – is one of the key resilience strategies of exiled journalists.

States are obliged to adopt special prevention and protection measures for journalists who face heightened risk because of their work. In cases of exile, that risk comes from persecution that creates forced displacement, and the obligation to protect applies equally to the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

According to Negrete Morayta, although exiled journalists still face significant obstacles in effectively using Inter-American jurisprudence on freedom of expression, some have already begun to make advances. *Minerva*, for example, was a beneficiary of protection measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights during an initial forced displacement within Guatemala. This allowed her to

prove that she was a persecuted journalist and therefore qualified for protection in Mexico, where she now resides.

The experiences of exiled journalists noted in this report show that legal arguments are necessary, but insufficient. What these women have learned in their new host countries includes the conviction that they cannot passively wait for assistance from state or nonstate actors; instead, they have recognized their own capacity to improve their quality of life.

2. ADAPTATION

The importance of self-care and community in navigating the new reality

After the initial stages of migratory grief, women journalists identified the importance of self-care and attention to their mental health, even if they did not always have access to public services or the economic resources to pay for private therapy.

Sometimes it's as simple as walking through San José, Costa Rica and enjoying the light at sunset, says Guatemalan journalist *Camila*. Sometimes art can be a type of therapy, as the Honduran journalist Ninfa Gallo has done. She has also clung to her faith: "I think my greatest motivation has always been God."

Many also find new ways to build a more tightly knit community. "Finding other compatriots who are going through the same situation helps you realize that you are not the only one," says *Julieta*, emphasizing the

importance of community in navigating the new reality. "[It's important] to realize that it's not wrong to talk about what makes you feel depressed, what makes you feel sad."

Minerva from Guatemala says that she has joined other exiles in Mexico in helping migrants who are extremely poor and live in tents set up in a public square: "Periodically, we bring them food and clothes. That experience has helped me to not see myself as a victim, because I know that I am capable of helping other people who have also fled their countries."

Saharah Hang from Honduras recalls that her first jobs in Costa Rica were peeling vegetables, washing dishes, and making and selling crocheted fabrics. But for the six of the last ten years she has been in exile,

IV. Resilience

she has been part of a human rights organization that supports asylum seekers. She proudly notes that she continues to interview people: "One of the things that has helped me strengthen my resilience is realizing that I can do other things to continue practicing journalism." She adds, "It's nice to talk with other people who are also in exile and embrace one another. We can share experiences, even cry together."

Periodically, we bring them food and clothes. That experience has helped me to not see myself as a victim, because I know that I am capable of helping other people who have also fled their countries

- Guatemalan journalist





Professional reinvention: journalism in exile as an act of resistance and resilience

Patricia's departure from Guatemala was particularly traumatic. After investigating a criminal network sexually exploiting girls at foster homes, she received death threats and was the victim of two armed attacks. After someone put a gun to her head, she finally left; she wasn't willing to continue risking her life.

She's gone through stages of sadness and depression, but after living in exile for more than three years, she has found a strategy of resilience: "Although I have three children to support, and despite all the obstacles that Central American women encounter breaking into U.S. media, I've been able to work as a freelance journalist," she explains. "I like being a journalist. I love my job and I'm very good at it."

Patricia now writes news articles for a media outlet aimed at the Guatemalan community living in the United States. "It's something that keeps my hope alive and reminds me that I'm a journalist," she says enthusiastically.

Diana, who risks imprisonment in El Salvador, has found financing sources abroad that allow her to

maintain and consolidate the feminist media outlet she has founded. She is considering expanding news coverage of issues of interest in other Central American countries and Mexico, and won't let exile take journalism away from her

Since being in exile in Costa Rica, *Camila* has also successfully reinvented herself. Together with about twenty other journalists she worked with at one of Guatemala's leading newspapers, she has assembled and now leads an elite team dedicated to investigative journalism. "Although the persecution hasn't ended, and part of our Guatemalan team is still in an extremely vulnerable situation, we embarked on this new adventure in April 2024," says the reporter. Her new media outlet remains steadfast in rigorously scrutinizing corruption and violations of freedom of expression that occur in her home country.

In the words of one of the Nicaraguan journalists, "Work helps you stay busy. If I continue working for publications, I can continue to do my part to bring about change in Nicaragua."

3. TRANSFORMATION

The importance of making the diaspora visible

Casey Flores says that many Costa Ricans do not know what is happening in her native Nicaragua, and one of the exiled journalists' most fundamental needs is to be seen and listened to with empathy. In other words, to make the diaspora visible.

To mark Nicaragua's National Journalists's Day on March 1, 2025, Wendy Quintero, vice president of the Observatorio de Agresiones a la Libertad de Expresión en Nicaragua (part of PCIN), which operates out of Costa Rica, once again drew attention to the exile of women journalists from her country: "It is not a day of celebration, but of resistance," she said.

For the Salvadoran journalists *Claudia*, *Julieta* and *Diana*, a strategic way of resisting and continuing to practice journalism from exile has been to become actively involved in collective actions that highlight the exodus. As women and defenders of freedom of

expression, they incorporate a gender perspective into every action they undertake to help others who, like them, have been forced to flee.

Julieta serves as a mentor in a community space for journalists from El Salvador exiled in the United States. It facilitates dialogue with state and non-state individuals and organizations interested in contributing to the improvement of their living conditions in that country. She also works to enhance the visibility of the intersectionality of different types of discrimination experienced by exiled women.

"Neither inside nor outside El Salvador is there enough discussion of the implications of gender-based violence and why a gender component must be included in resolving these types of problems," says the journalist. "The first thing to do is to increase awareness about the sources of discrimination."



“

Neither inside nor outside El Salvador is there enough discussion of the implications of gender-based violence and why a gender component must be included in resolving these types of problems

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-Salvadoran journalist

Support and collective work to create change and create a future

“By helping other people you help yourself,” is a belief shared by the journalists interviewed for this study.

They agree that the weakening of professional identity can be faced more successfully if done collectively. Journalists like *Casey Flores* have worked with the Nicaraguan journalist network PCIN to develop collaborative journalism projects and to continue working in her field. “So, there’s some hope,” she says.

Edith Rodríguez Cachera of RSF Spain stresses the importance of unity among exiled women journalists. “It’s important to create organizations which have a spokesperson who can speak for their members. Also, at the very least, that they have material that explains who they are and what is happening in the country from which they fled,” she says.

That’s why *Diana* from El Salvador is sharing her experience with others: “Based on my transit through Spain, Mexico, Colombia, and Costa Rica, I am putting together a manual for journalists and human rights defenders in Central America,” she says. “They should be informed about the procedures to request protection, and which organizations can help them.”

“Surrounding yourself with people who have gone through the same thing as you and now have a stable life here in Costa Rica helps you to see that there is a life after exile, that there is a life after starting over from scratch in another country”

-Nicaraguan journalist

“Sisterhood is not imposed, it’s woven”

- Lucía Lagunes Huerta
Executive Director of the Women’s Communication and Information Civil Association (CIMAC)

Given the scarcity of more formal networks mainly sponsored by civil society organizations, journalists have created informal spaces where they can meet and share experiences. While on a smaller scale, these informal networks have legitimacy and strength as they are built by the beneficiaries themselves, who share historical and cultural values because they are from Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Surrounding yourself with people who have gone through the same thing as you and now have a stable life here in Costa Rica helps you to see that there is a life after exile, that there is a life after starting over from scratch in another country,” says one of the Nicaraguan journalists.

“These solidarity networks are not only profession-based, but have also been formed by feminists,” Lagunes Huerta points out. “A Mexican colleague who was exiled told me that her main emotional support were feminist organizations, and that they never left her side.”

“Sisterhood is not imposed, it’s woven,” she says. She encourages exiled women journalists to recognize the power that coming together gives them – a power similar to the one they once had working together in a newsroom. *Claudia* from El Salvador sums it up: “You can’t do it alone. You have to have a network.”

Collaborative journalism often serves as a tool for resilience where democratic structures are weak and freedom of the press is restricted. This know-how is also part of the luggage that exiled journalists carry into their host country, and where they can then unpack it and remodel it to use.

For example, exiled journalists from Nicaragua have acquired the skills and understanding of what it’s like to work within authoritarian contexts, and have the possibility to develop safety protocols and workshops that incorporate a gender perspective to share with other journalists in Central America facing similar challenges. With this approach, exiled journalists would be the facilitators of the training sessions

and share their contextual knowledge with colleagues across Central America.

In telling their stories of exile, most of the Central American journalists interviewed said they wanted to overcome the obstacles they have faced in their host countries. Although almost all identified sources of discrimination and additional challenges because they are women, they also recognized that they have – and can apply – the tools they acquired as journalists to face adversity, overcome obstacles, and build new spaces of expression, both as individuals and as professionals.

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By helping other people you help yourself

- Journalists in exile

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V. Considerations

The research and interviews bring to light two important aspects that need to be taken into account: gender perspective and intersectionality.



1 Violence against women journalists in exile cannot be analyzed in isolation, since it intersects with factors such as sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, institutional violence, and job insecurity. This creates an ecosystem that restricts their opportunities, increases their vulnerability, and undermines their recognition as professionals

2 Being a woman and a journalist means facing different challenges simultaneously: the struggle to be heard in a media space dominated by men and the difficulty of addressing sensitive issues such as human rights. This double burden reflects the patriarchal and authoritarian structure that characterizes many repressive situations in Central America.



3 Gender stereotypes represent a significant barrier for women journalists. A critical analysis of these stereotypes allows us to understand how society has constructed and perpetuated them, limiting women's opportunities and reinforcing gender inequality. Questioning and challenging these roles is critical for ensuring that women, both in exile and in any other context, can fulfill their potential without the constraints imposed by these social norms. To do this, it is necessary to implement a cultural and structural change that recognizes and values their contributions in all areas, including journalism.

4 The fear of sexual violence in detention is not a baseless fear for journalists: this type of violence is used as a control strategy designed to demobilize and silence critical voices inside and outside the country.

5 State repression and political violence in Central America affect women journalists in distinct ways. In some cases, the government uses digital harassment and smear campaigns to discredit them, affecting their safety and encouraging self-censorship. Journalists who investigate corruption or abuses of power also often face political persecution and social exclusion, forcing them into exile under difficult conditions.

6 Immigration restrictions prevent exiled journalists from obtaining work permits in host countries, thus forcing them to work in the informal sector or collaborate remotely with international media. However, these options do not guarantee economic or professional stability.



7 Exile is not just a geographical displacement, but also a process involving the emotional stability of journalists. Uncertainty about the future, pressure to find stability, and a constant sense of vulnerability lead to high levels of anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues.

8 Although some journalists seek psychological support and health services, the lack of access to adequate services and the urgency of resolving economic and immigration issues delay attention to their emotional and physical well-being. The normalization of stress and trauma in the exile community exacerbates this situation.

9 Migratory uncertainty and labor discrimination generate high levels of anxiety and stress. Self-care, along with connecting with other exiles, has emerged as a critical strategy for coping with the emotional impact of forced displacement.

10 Economic instability and a lack of immigration documents make it difficult to access medical care, especially in areas such as mental health, gynecology, and preventive check-ups, which leaves women journalists additionally vulnerable.



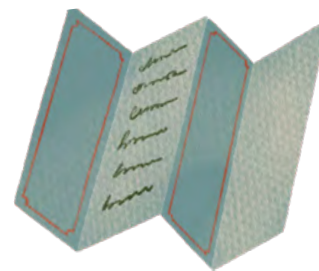
11 Despite the difficulties of exile, some journalists have managed to continue their reporting work, adapting to new conditions and exploring different approaches to their professional practice. To denounce and disseminate information, they have resorted to digital tools and established alliances with international media and organizations.

12 Support networks play a fundamental role in the resilience of exiled journalists, although they have considerable limitations in their scope and effectiveness. International trade organizations provide logistical and legal support, but in some cases are unable to reach journalists in situations of greater vulnerability. On the other hand, feminist networks provide closer and more emotional support, generating spaces of solidarity that allow women to overcome isolation.

However, these networks face sustainability issues due to a lack of stable funding, which limits their long-term responsiveness. In addition, the dispersion of women journalists in different countries and the lack of coordination between trade unions and feminist networks make it difficult to create a comprehensive support system.

VI. Recommendations

The following are recommendations that could improve the exile processes for women journalists.



1 *An intersectional approach to protection policies:*

The complexity of the violence faced by exiled women journalists calls for an intersectional approach in protection and support policies. It is important for international bodies and human rights organizations to consider these multiple dimensions to ensure adequate and effective responses.

2 *The streamlining of immigration processes:*

The slowness of immigration processes is one of the main sources of uncertainty and vulnerability for exiled journalists. To address this, we suggest that human rights and press freedom organizations assume a more active role in dialogue with governments to streamline bureaucratic procedures.



In addition, legal support programs should be established to provide advice at each stage of the immigration process for journalists and their families. Since many women travel accompanied by dependents, it is also essential to streamline immigration procedures for their companions, thus ensuring comprehensive protection. These measures must be applied with an inclusive and effective approach to the relocation and support processes.

3 *Long-term financial support programs with a focus on sustainability:*

Many initiatives supporting exiled journalists provide one-off financial assistance. While it creates initial relief when facing challenges like job insecurity, it is important to think about models of continuity. To strengthen their effectiveness, it is essential that organizations dedicated to the protection of journalists hold discussions with donors to highlight the importance of long-term support programs, including monitoring and accompaniment elements.

4 *Strengthening support networks:*

Support networks are critical to reducing the isolation and exclusion of exiled women journalists. To ensure their effectiveness, they must operate on two complementary levels. At the local level, it is key to provide immediate support in host countries, ensuring access to legal services, psychological care, and job opportunities. At the transnational level, the connection with international communities allows their voices to be amplified, generates professional support, and facilitates their re-entering into the journalism field. The coordination between these two levels optimizes resources and strengthens the protection of journalists in vulnerable situations. It is also necessary to promote coordination among different support networks, avoiding the dispersion of efforts and optimizing the available resources. In addition, these initiatives must be promoted and made more visible so that journalists who require support can access them in a timely manner.



5 *Creation of digital reporting platforms:*

The creation of platforms for reporting and documenting digital violence, designed to record cases of cyberbullying, smear campaigns and deepfakes, is a key strategy for exposing these attacks and strengthening protection and advocacy actions. These platforms should also include training in digital security and self-protection, in addition to promoting alliances with technological platforms and international organizations for the elimination of violent content and the punishment of aggressors. It is critical to offer training and tools to protect women journalists from online harassment, surveillance, and other forms of digital violence that are often gender-based.



6 *Awareness and public protection policies:*

Raising awareness and promoting public protection policies can improve the security and stability of exiled women journalists. It is crucial that host countries recognize gender-based violence as a valid cause for asylum applications, which would speed up migratory regularization processes and guarantee access to basic rights. It is also important to implement strategies to raise awareness about patterns of violence in journalism, demonstrating its impact on women's freedom of expression and democracy.

7 *Creation of a specialized monitorial body:*

The establishment of a specialized monitorial body would make it possible to monitor and analyze the various forms of violence and discrimination that affect exiled women journalists. Through periodic reports, this organization would make visible the legal, labor, and social barriers they face, generating concrete data for political advocacy and the formulation of protection and accompaniment strategies.



8 *Promotion of a comprehensive approach*

Various analyses have pointed to the need for a comprehensive approach to the protection of exiled women journalists, with actions in the short, medium, and long term. Some experts interviewed recommend, in the short term, the creation of service guides and spaces for legal advice that facilitate immigration procedures and labor insertion. In the long term, it is essential to advance research that examines and harmonizes legal frameworks to improve protections for journalists at risk. To ensure their effectiveness, these initiatives must be accessible, targeted, and tailored to the needs of exiled journalists.

9 *Gender mainstreaming:*

Organizations should ensure that their activities and support programs are gender-sensitive. For example, given the disproportionate weight placed on women in caregiving roles, organizations could facilitate access to childcare services or assistance for dependent family members. These initiatives would help increase women's participation in activities and support their recovery and professional advancement.



10 *Specialized psychological support:*

It is imperative to offer specialized psychological support that addresses the particular consequences of gender-based violence, discrimination, and uprooting. This requires the expertise of professionals with experience in trauma, gender-based violence, and migration, as well as the creation of safe spaces that allow the free and non-judgmental expression of the experiences of those affected. This support could also be extended to their dependent family members.



11 *Development of entrepreneurship programs:*

The development of entrepreneurship and economic empowerment programs that incorporate a gender perspective is essential to addressing the job insecurity and economic inequality that affect women. These programs may include vocational training adapted to the demands of the labor market in the host country, support for entrepreneurship, and the creation of professional networks that facilitate reintegration into the journalism field or other sectors.

12 *Mentoring and professional accompaniment programs:*

Implementing mentoring and professional accompaniment programs would connect exiled journalists with experienced mentors and colleagues in the host country and internationally, providing guidance, support, and opportunities to rebuild their professional careers.



13 *Promotion of research on the subject:*

It is essential to promote interdisciplinary and comparative studies that address the specific issues faced by exiled women journalists in different national and regional contexts. This research must not only document the experiences and challenges faced but also propose recommendations that contribute to the strengthening of Latin American journalism.

Methodology

This research was developed following an exploratory sequential approach, in which each stage of the process is connected to the next to ensure a coherent progression (Creswell, 2015).

First, we analyzed the relevant literature to identify the categories of the study. To delve deeper, we reviewed 24 documents, including reports, news articles, and academic papers, published in the last five years. These sources offer a broad and diverse overview of the challenges women journalists face before and during exile. That general overview exposed the violence and displacement they suffer and highlighted their capacity for resilience, the support networks they encounter, and the strategies they developed to continue their work outside their borders.

The literature shows a predominance of qualitative studies, particularly those using semistructured interviews, narrative approaches, and case studies. Some documents opted for documentary analysis, using reports from international organizations and news archives to contextualize the dynamics of exile. Some documents opted for documentary analysis, using reports from international organizations and news archives to contextualize the dynamics of exile.

Although less frequently, we also found comparative studies that explore differences between national and regional contexts, as well as quantitative research that uses surveys to measure impacts on aspects such as economic loss, access to employment, and psychological well-being. This methodological diversity highlights the complexity of the phenomenon and the importance of approaching it from complementary perspectives in order to achieve a more complete understanding.

We identified a small number of specialized studies on exile, journalism, and gender. The lack of more sources highlights the need for research that would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and develop a foundation for its approach at different levels.

Between December 2024 and January 2025, we conducted five semi-structured interviews with gender and journalism experts and 13 interviews⁶ with exiled journalists from Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. For interviewees who requested confidentiality, we assigned aliases and modified details that could enable their identification. Aliases are marked by an asterisk (*) the first time they are mentioned; they are then written in italics. This ensured the protection of their identity during the presentation of testimonies and findings.

⁶ The interviews were carried out before the positioning of Donald Trump's administration in the US, so no new challenges that may have arisen for journalists as a result of this event were contemplated.

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