



## **Concept note on a Swedish based International Centre for structured support to Women Journalists Subjected to On-line Hate**

The December 2 event was a practical demonstration of the Swedish stand on Freedom of Expression and the support for the right for women to safely express their opinion. At the same time, the event highlighted the importance of free, independent and professional journalism, making an historic bound to the Swedish Freedom of the Press Act from 1766.

But what happens now, after December 2? How can a possible continuation of the support to women journalists who are exposed to on-line hate and threats look like?

In this Concept Note, Fojo Media Institute suggests a pilot for an international centre that supports media organizations/media houses and individual journalists in the East and South in their efforts to manage on-line hate, with a particular focus on women journalists.

### **Why should Sweden do this?**

Organised on-line hate, intimidation combined with disinformation are some of the most efficient tools to silence journalists who demand accountability.

These intimidations affect journalists worldwide and often lead to self-censorship and reduced transparency – not to mention personal suffering. Women journalists are particularly targeted.

The Swedish media sector is, in an international perspective, at the forefront in identifying and implementing strategies for journalists facing on-line hate and threats.

The Swedish capacity in this field within the media sector is proven both at branch level, editorial level and individual level. Additionally, the Ministry of Culture as well as a range of Swedish civil society organisations have been working consciously and actively on the issue.

### **How can it be done?**

The Fojo Media Institute has a long experience of strengthening free, independent and professional media in the East and South. Operations to manage hate speech, threats and misinformation have long been part of Fojo's activities.

The Swedish Institute on Foreign Affairs Institute conducts research and has extensive knowledge in the field, particularly is proposed as partner, together with Fojo implement the pilot project.

A special Advisory Board is proposed, composed by journalists with specific experiences and knowledge of on-line hate and its implications.

By combining the knowledge and experience of the Fojo Media Institute the Swedish Institute on Foreign Affairs and other Swedish and international actors and individuals under one ha, the centre has the possibility to become a platform:

- that investigates on-line hate, intimidation and their connection to forces that engage in disinformation,
- that creates a bridge between media industry initiatives with organizations dealing with on-line hate against journalists at the policy level, such as UNESCO.
- that provides hands-on support to media houses that wish to improve their competence in handling on-line hate against women journalists
- that strengthen networks aimed at supporting journalists subjected to on-line hate.

Proposed Swedish partner organizations are:

- Utgivarna – Interest organisation for Swedish publishers. Organises all major Swedish media companies, including public service.
- Swedish PEN
- Swedish Institutet
- Swedish Institute in Alexandria
- Kvinna till Kvinna (Woman to Woman, NGO)
- Linnaeus University, institution for media and journalism
- Institutet för Mediestudier (Swedish Institute for Media Studies)
- Civil Rights Defenders
- EXPO (NGO/magazine specialized in mapping extreme right wing organisations. The writer Stig Larsson worked for this organisation)
- The Press Ombudsman
- Ministry for Foreign Relations
- Ministry for Culture and Democracy
- MSB – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
- Sida – The Swedish International Development Agency
- Cooperation should also be sought within the private sector, particularly among IT-related companies

Potential international partner organisations include:

- UNESCO
- OSCE:s Representative for Press Freedom
- OCCRP
- INSI
- WAN-IFRA
- IMS
- Reporters without Borders
- CPJ
- GAMAG/Unesco
- Prague Civil Society Centre