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Call for submissions

Gender Justice and the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Deadline:	14 June 2021
Issued by:	Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression
Purpose:	To inform the thematic report on the right to freedom of opinion and expression and gender justice for the 76th session of the General Assembly

Background

The Special Rapporteur will present a thematic report on gender justice and the right to freedom of opinion and expression to the 76th session of the General Assembly. She has identified the empowerment of women and girls as one of the priorities of her mandate.

In June 2013 the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 23/2, calling on the mandate to report on the role of freedom of opinion and expression in empowering women. This will be the first report in the 27 years' history of the mandate to be devoted exclusively to the challenges that women face in exercising their freedom of opinion and expression.

The report will focus on women in the public sphere, including women journalists, human rights defenders, politicians, feminist activists and other public figures, and analyze issues through a gendered lens and from a feminist perspective.

As the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action proclaimed, women's human rights are interdependent, indivisible and interrelated. The right to freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental for the enjoyment of a whole range of human rights, and for women's political and economic empowerment and public participation. However, sexual and gender based violence, harassment and discrimination, as well as multiple legal, systemic, structural and cultural barriers remain major impediments, denying women full enjoyment of their rights, including freedom of opinion and expression.

While digital technology has expanded opportunities for women to access information, communicate, mobilize and raise their voices, it has also exposed them to new and severe threats. Freedom of opinion and expression is not only suppressed but also weaponized against women in the digital sphere.

Drawing on the experiences of women, using an intersectional approach and focusing on online and offline dimensions, the report will set out the main challenges that women face in exercising their freedom of opinion and expression in the public space, analyze the international legal framework from a gender perspective, as well as the roles, responsibilities and practices of States and non-State actors including the internet intermediaries, and propose recommendations.

Key Questions

Please see below issues on which the Special Rapporteur would appreciate input from stakeholders. The questions are indicative only and it is not necessary to respond to all of them. You may address other issues but please keep in mind that the main focus of the report is women journalists, human rights defenders, politicians, feminist activists, women leaders and other women in the public space.

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1. a. What barriers, challenges and threats do women in the public sphere face in exercising their freedom of opinion and expression online and offline?
- b. What are the distinct challenges faced by those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination?
- c. How have the pandemic, economic crises and recent political unrests affected women's ability to communicate, protest and access information online and offline?
2. Can you provide examples or information on ways in which freedom of opinion and expression has been abused or appropriated to undermine women's human rights?
3. What in your view are the key elements of a gendered perspective on the human right to freedom of opinion and expression? What would a feminist perspective add to the understanding of this right?
4. Do you see any legal gaps, inconsistencies or controversies that should be clarified in this report, e.g. between protecting the right to freedom of expression and protecting women from ICT violence? Please indicate any specific issues in the international legal framework that in your view would benefit from further analysis in this report.
5. a. What legislative, administrative, policy, regulatory or other measures exist in your State to promote and protect women's freedom of opinion and expression online and offline? To what extent do these measures take into account intersectionality?
- b. In your view how effective are they in supporting women's empowerment and public participation? Please provide statistical data and judicial decisions, where available.
6. What legal administrative, policy or other measures exist in your State to protect women from sexual and gender based violence and harassment online? How effective are they? What impact have they had on women's empowerment and public participation, including freedom of expression?
7. What do you believe States should do to a) uphold women's human right to freedom of opinion and expression b) protect women from violence, harassment and intimidation online and offline and c) promote women's public participation?
8. a. What specific measures have platform providers and intermediaries taken to i) protect women's freedom of opinion and expression; ii) protect women from online gender based violence, harassment, intimidation and disinformation; iii) promote women's equal access to the digital space; iv) address grievances and provide remedies to women users; v) ensure accountability of the intermediaries?
- b. To what extent do you find these measures to be fair, transparent, adequate and effective in protecting women's human rights and promoting women's empowerment?
9. What do you think internet intermediaries should do to protect women's right to freedom of opinion and expression and make the online space safe for women?
10. What role has legacy media played in aggravating or addressing the challenges women face in exercising their freedom of expression? What do you think the legacy media can do to empower women and make the public space safe for them, especially for women journalists?
11. Please provide examples of good practices by States, internet intermediaries or other stakeholders to enhance women's right to freedom of opinion and expression and empowerment and public participation of women.

Please share any relevant documents, reports, news or academic articles that you believe should be considered by the Special Rapporteur in the preparation of her report.

How and where to make the submissions:

E-mail address:	freedex@ohchr.org
E-mail subject line:	Submission to GA report - SR on freedom of expression
File format:	Word, PDF
Accepted languages	English, French, Spanish

All submissions will be posted on the OHCHR website at the time of the report's publication, except those containing a clear request not to be made public.

[Access to information in international organizations \(2017\)](#)

[The role of digital access providers \(2017\)](#)

[Contemporary challenges to freedom of expression \(2016\)](#)

[Freedom of expression, states and the private sector in the digital age \(2016\)](#)

[The protection of sources and whistleblowers \(2015\)](#)

[The use of encryption and anonymity to exercise the rights to freedom of opinion and expression in the digital age \(2015\)](#)

Contact information

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