



Safety and security of journalists

Results of a global analysis



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Introduction

Mapping the threats, finding better responses

In recent years, journalism has become a high-risk profession, even in countries once considered safe. Threats are a fact of life for reporters around the world. Opponents of press freedom are numerous. They sit in parliaments and local governments, support religious or political extremists, or are part of corporations and organized crime. There is a thin line between online harassment and attacks in the newsroom, on the street or even at home with family members. Sadly, what starts as an intimidating text message can easily end in “real-life” violence.

Threats against individual journalists and entire media outlets have become one of the most serious problems for press freedom. Those who attack journalists are also attacking democratic values. Media professionals themselves are not the only ones wondering how best to



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counter this situation, but also governments concerned with the protection of journalists, international institutions and non-governmental organizations.

What are the most promising strategies to support courageous journalists? Where are the gaps in existing support mechanisms? Who needs special attention and who has not been sufficiently taken into account so far?

With these questions in mind, DW Akademie conducted a comprehensive international exploratory study between September and November 2022. As part of the German government's Hannah Arendt Initiative, 149 media safety experts and journalists from all continents were interviewed. Journalists came together at various events to discuss the most pressing challenges. Many local organizations, media networks and partners contributed important information that paints a picture of the global safety situation of media workers and existing support mechanisms. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who shared their knowledge to make this global analysis possible.

The results of our research are sobering. Across continents, there are striking similarities in the way authoritarian leaders, fanatics and criminal groups fight free press. At the same time, DW Akademie's research has provided very concrete insights into how current support for media professionals can be improved in the future.

These findings are presented in this brochure — condensed into five proposals. The recommendations are important for anyone concerned with the safety of journalists. However, they are primarily written from the perspective of international actors who, like DW Akademie, work with local partners to deliver programs that make a significant contribution to freedom of expression. In addition, this publication includes an actor mapping that will be useful for actors in the field. We are happy to share this knowledge with anyone who believes, as we do, that independent information is needed now more than ever, and that journalism is a profession that should not be life-threatening. It is an essential part of democracy.

Five key findings:
How to promote journalist safety and security

Five key findings: How to promote journalist safety and security

1

Get a complete picture of your target groups

Not all reporters are alike. Personal vulnerability varies widely — often even within a single country. It is worth taking a closer look to ensure that measures to support media professionals are truly inclusive of all vulnerable target groups. An individual's risk depends not only on how “uncomfortable” or well-known the medium for which he or she works is. It starts with who is doing the reporting. Women are fundamentally at greater risk than men. They are more likely to be exposed to sexualized violence, and have their families targeted. Reporters who belong to minorities (such as the LGBTIQ+ community or ethnic minorities) are also often at a much higher risk. Finally, in many cases there are also geographical differences. While attacks on media in the capital quickly become internationally known, too many attacks on the press outside the main urban centers go undocumented. Those victims often lack the personal contacts and resources to protect themselves. In the worst cases, this lack of protection can lead them to giving up the profession and contribute to the growth of information deserts, areas where no independent information is available.

2

Coordination is key — especially at the country level

The best support for journalists at risk is not a quick and short-term measure but a network of support that is as close-meshed and complementary as possible. This can only happen if different actors talk to each other and use their limited resources in a coordinated way. Although there are international organizations and a global exchange on the safety of journalists, coordination at the country level can still be improved given the complexity and scale of the threats in many places. This can help to avoid similar or overlapping measures. It is simply more promising to combine approaches that bring together different levels and build pressure from all sides. This includes advocacy for safer working conditions and critical monitoring of government policies (for example, protection programs for journalists). Coordination is key: National, international, regional and local actors can work hand in hand to build an effective safety infrastructure — with emergency contacts, international attention to individual cases, and mechanisms that really help media workers when they need it most.

3

Support in the crisis country first

There is no doubt that in some situations, escape is the last, best option. But it is too often followed by a series of other problems. Threats and attacks against journalists know no borders. The safe country of exile is increasingly becoming a thing of the past. Even there, media professionals may face further persecution, such as digital espionage or even physical attacks by intelligence services. In addition, they report problems with their residency status in their host country and often experience a lack of opportunities to make a living as journalists. For these reasons, it is necessary to carefully consider all possible measures in the crisis country first. For media development organizations, it is a dilemma that humanitarian aid — so necessary in many cases — is at odds with long-term media development. Every journalist who leaves the country is a small victory for the enemies of press freedom and usually means a weakening of the local media landscape. For this reason, measures in the country of origin — wherever possible — should be given priority. Journalism in difficult environments deserves respect and support — especially where there is still room for maneuver.

4

Align emergency response and media development

In many countries, threats to press freedom, and therefore democracy, require reliable, long-term initiatives. This also means that short-term aid in times of crisis is very important but is simply not enough to improve the overall situation. This is particularly evident in the work of journalists in exile. In fact, there is often a gap between emergency aid (e.g. for relocating and setting up a new media outlet abroad) and long-term media development, such as the development of sustainable business models. Even after an immediate crisis, exile media need continued funding and stabilization. One approach to solving this problem is to embed emergency programs in existing media development programs on the ground from the outset, and to design them with local partners. Working closely with locals can help ensure that support does not suddenly stop when the acute crisis is over.

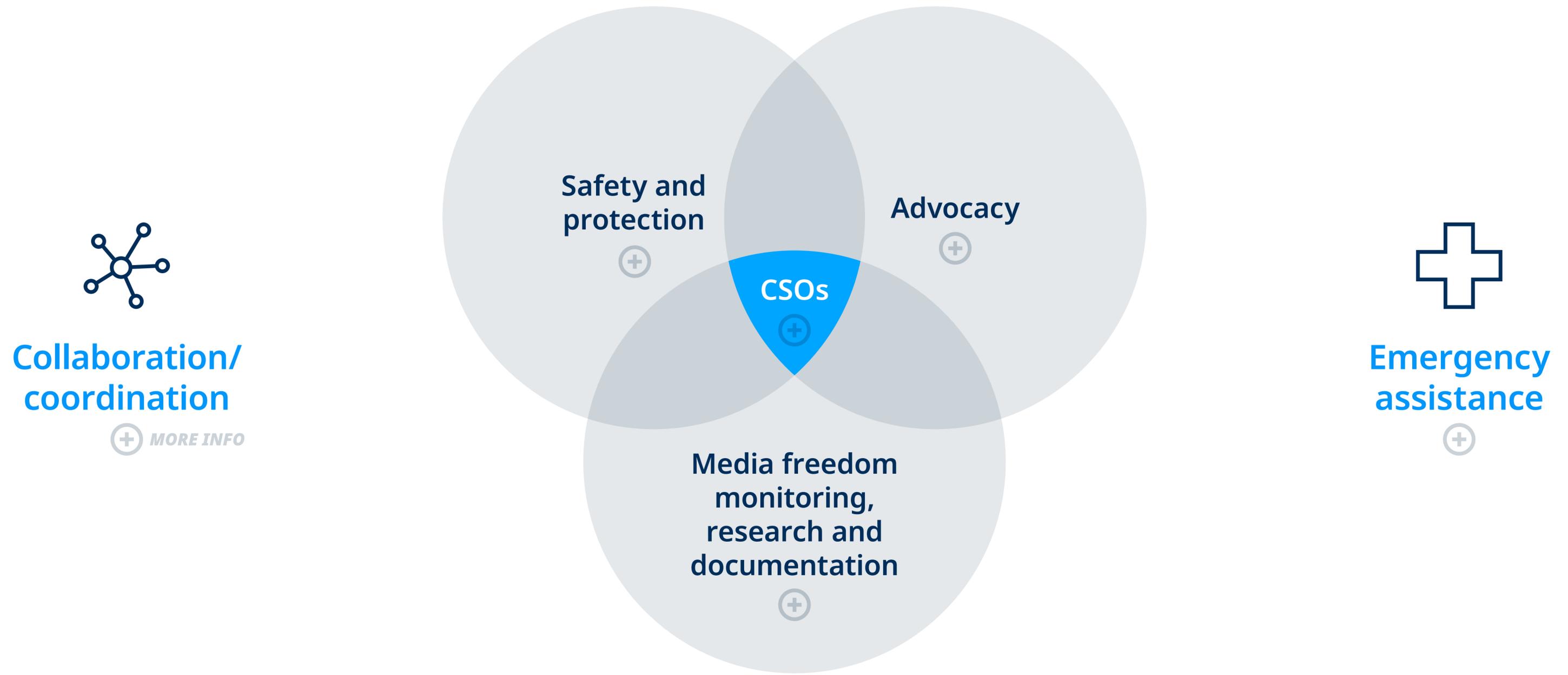
5

Take a holistic approach to media safety

The needs of media workers vary widely. Some have been detained in police stations or torture rooms and need psychosocial intervention to continue their journalistic work. Others “only” need financial support to live in exile. And often, training is the key to success, especially in the crisis country. It provides not only tips and advice on how threatened media professionals can effectively protect themselves, but also the support and “tailwind” from colleagues that has proven so important under pressure. Most programs for journalists address more than one dimension of safety (i. e. financial, physical, psychological, digital, legal). However, those approaches that address multiple needs from the outset and bring the dimensions together under one roof have proven to be particularly useful. For a long time the focus has been on the individual media professional at risk. In reality, however, support programs should involve the media as well. Both dimensions are important and interdependent: Media workers need a safe environment and the media companies themselves can only continue to exist if journalists are sufficiently trained to work safely.

Actor mapping for media safety worldwide

Work areas of the organizations



Collaboration/
coordination

[+](#) MORE INFO

Safety and
protection

[+](#)

Advocacy

[+](#)

CSOs

[+](#)

Media freedom
monitoring,
research and
documentation

[+](#)



Emergency
assistance

[+](#)

Global organizations working across sections

- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
- Free Press Unlimited (FPU)
- International Press Institute (IPI)
- Article 19
- Rory Peck Trust (RPT)
- International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
- International Media Support (IMS)
- International Media Women's Foundation (IWWMF)
- PEN International
- Freedom House
- World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA)
- Index on Censorship

Regional and national organizations working across sections



Americas



- National CSO
- Regional CSO

Africa



Europe



■ National CSO

■ Regional CSO

Middle East



Asia



- National CSO
- Regional CSO

Examples of organizations working on...

... physical safety

- A Culture Of Safety Alliance, ACOS
(Global)
- International News Safety Institute, INSI
(Global)
- International Research & Exchange, IREX
(Global)
- International Media Support, IMS *(Global)*
- Internews *(Global)*
- James W. Foley Legacy Foundation *(Global)*
- Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa
(Colombia)

... psychosocial safety

- Dart Center *(Global)*
- Trust for Trauma Journalism *(Global)*
- Vita Activa *(Global)*
- Aluna Acompañamiento Psicosocial
(Latin America)
- Lviv Media Forum *(Ukraine)*

Examples of organizations working on...

... digital safety

- Access Now (*Global*)
- Electronic Frontier Foundation (*Global*)
- International Women's Media Foundation (*Global*)
- Reporters Without Borders (*Germany*)
- Troll Busters (*USA*)
- Digital Rights Foundation (*Pakistan*)
- Derechos Digitales (*Latin America*)
- TEDIC (*Paraguay*)

... legal safety

- Media Defence (*Global*)
- Cyrus Vance Center for International Justice (*Global*)
- Free Press Unlimited Legal Defence Fund (*Global*)
- Press Freedom Defense Fund (*Global*)
- Digital Freedom Fund (*Global*)
- Media Legal Studies Association (*Turkey*)
- Tornavoz (*Brazil*)
- Propuesta Cívica (*Mexico*)
- Mass Media Defence Centre (*Russia*)
- Vosieda West Africa (*Africa*)
- Ossigeno per l'Informazione (*Italy*)

Media freedom monitoring, research and documentation

Document cases and data on killed,
jailed and missing journalists

Report on press freedom issues,
safety guides and advisories

- Committee to Protect Journalists (*Global*)
- Reporters Without Borders (*Global*)
- Media Foundation for West Africa (*Regional*)
- Gulf Centre for Human Rights (*Regional, MENA*)
- Voces del Sur (*Regional, Latin America*)
- The Media Institute of Southern Africa (*Regional*)
- European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (*Regional, Europe*)
- Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (*National, Colombia*)
- Human Rights Network for Journalists (*National, Uganda*)
- Samir Kassir Foundation (*National, Lebanon*)

Organizations working on advocacy

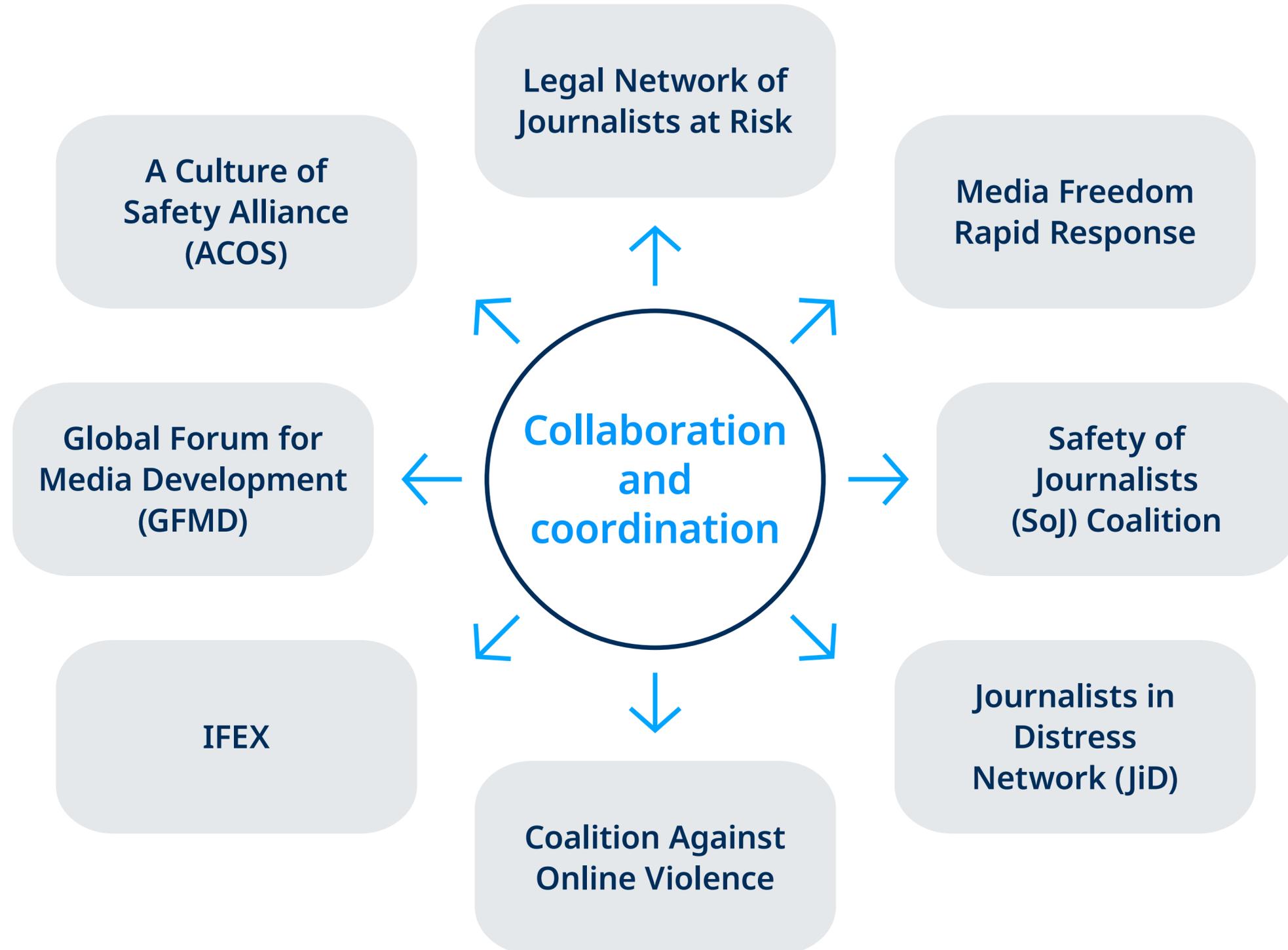
Key topics

- Impunity
- Imprisoned journalists
- Freelancer safety
- Law and policy
- Online harassment and surveillance
- Gender and violence against women journalists

Key Players (examples)

- Article 19
- A Culture of Safety Alliance, ACOS
- Global Forum for Media Development
- IFEX
- International Media Support
- Free Press Unlimited
- Reporters Without Borders
- Media Foundation for West Africa
- Gulf Center for Human Rights
- Committee to Protect Journalists

Global networks



Emergency assistance

Journalists
and media outlets



SOS



National press
freedom organizations

Global press
freedom organizations

Regional organizations
and networks



Journalists in distress
network/Media freedom
rapid response/Legal network
for journalists at risk

- Emergency relocation
- Equipment
- Basic living support
- Medical support
- Family support
- Psychosocial support
- Security measures
- Legal support
- Prison support
- Safety consultations
- Safety training
- Journalists in exile



Temporary shelters

- IPYS (*Latin America*)
- SKeyes (*MENA*)
- IPLEX (*Central America*)
- Lviv Media Forum (*Ukraine*)
- Cadal (*Latin America*)
- Nottingham U. (*South East Asia*)
- Carey Institute (*Global*)
- English PEN (*Global*)
- Maisons des Journalistes (*Global*)
- ECPMF (*Europe*)



Support in exile

- FPU
- NED
- JX Fund
- FOJO
- MICT
- DW Akademie
- RSF Germany



DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

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