

PRESS RELEASE

Bangladesh: Editors and managers acknowledge prevalence of discrimination against women in media

ARTICLE 19

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‘After talking and working with Bangladeshi journalists on women’s participation in the media for the past one year we have found evidence of shocking levels of discrimination against women in the media.

Discrimination against women and gender-specific forms of attack are a constant in the work place and this affects negatively on the freedom of expression of women in the Bangladeshi media’, said Tahmina Rahman, ARTICLE 19 South Asia Director.

‘Despite some success stories women’s participation and representation in decision making is still significantly low, only 0.6 percent occupy editorial and management positions. Women face many challenges, including low pay and a lack of protection from threats, harassment and fraudulent litigation,’ she continued.

The report, due to be published in March, contains statistics and case studies demonstrating a range of discriminatory issues raised by women journalists, who comprise just seven per cent of their profession in Bangladesh.

Media leadership including editors, CEOs and management were shocked by what they heard from women journalists present at the meeting.

Abdul Qayum, Joint Editor of daily newspaper Prothom Alo stressed: ‘Media houses cannot shy away from these issues, it is in their own interest to acknowledge the prevalence of gender discrimination and censorship, and only then they will be able to develop good practices to make the media free from it.’ Qayum urged media houses to formulate their own recruitment policy to ensure access to all opportunities for women journalists.

‘There can be no impunity for perpetrators of sexual harassment’, said Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO of Boishakhi Television. Bulbul called on media houses to be gender-sensitive and create favourable work environments for women.

Parveen Sultana Jhuma, Secretary of women journalists’ organisation, Nari Sangbadik Kendra urged media management to reserve 25 per cent of jobs for women.

Tasmima Hossain, Editor of the fortnightly magazine Annanya, noted that women should come forward more often to take up the challenges of journalism and take active steps to develop their professional skills and update their knowledge bank.

The Roundtable meeting organised by ARTICLE 19 was held on 30 January and titled ‘Promoting and Enhancing the Rights of Women Journalists in Bangladesh’.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information, please contact Tahmina Rahman, tahmina@article19.org +880-171-303-9669
- The Roundtable was attended by leading journalists and media leadership of the country including Chief Executive Officer of Baishakhi Television Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Abdul Qayum senior journalist and Joint Editor, Prothom Alo, Tasmima Hossain, Editor, Fortnightly

Annanya and Bhanu Ranjan Chakrabarty, head of news, ATN Bangla. Nasimun Ara Huq Minu and Parveen Sultana Jhuma President and Secretary respectively of Nari Sangbadik Kendra (National Women Journalists Association) also spoke at the event.