

2024 ONO Cape Town shoptalk Harassment and attacks on journalists

Tomorrow we are going to talk about “weaponizing language”. The fight over what words really mean?

In this shoptalk – we are going to talk about, what I would call, the “weaponization of relations between media and society”.

Over the last years we have seen examples of harassment and attacks on journalists.

It can be in the form of threats, humiliations etc. against journalists – or even ombudspersons.

Sometimes in direct mail or even in person – sometimes on Social Media.

But – in more severe cases - it is about governments attack on media, trying to restrict freedom of the press – and ultimately freedom of speech!

In some cases, we have even seen physical attacks on journalists, photographers and other members of the press.

How do we handle these cases – and is there anything we can do about it?

In this shoptalk we will hear contributions from two distinguished members of ONO – first Sandra Martin from Canada who is here with us – and after that we will hear and see a video statement from Miriam Lewin from Argentina.

Miriam can, unfortunately and due to the dire political situation in her home country, not be with us here today.

But first we will turn to Sandra Martin, Standards Editor, The Globe and Mail in Canada.

In her previous role as Head of Newsroom Development, Sandra worked with

The Globe and Mail's HR team to secure supports for journalists experiencing abuse, and was often the first person staff contacted when they were under attack.

Before the conference she wrote to me that a majority of attacks are directed at female journalists, they are often sexualized and/or personal, referring to family members.

Please welcome Sandra Martin of The Globe and Mail in Canada:
(Sandra)

Now – this is a shoptalk where we also want to hear from you.

So, don't hesitate if you want to chip into the discussion with your personal experience, a question or a comment.

Debate on Sandra's presentation

And now, we will turn to Miriam Lewin, head of the Defensoria del Publico – The Public Defenders Office – in Argentina.

Miriam is a radio and television journalist based in Buenos Aires with more than 30 years of experience in investigative journalism.

She has published several books and, for the last few years, she has been in charge of the Public Defenders Office, dealing with rights of the audience when it comes to audiovisual communications.

But lately, the election of president Javier Milei of the Libertarian Party has severely strained the relations between the Media and The State in Argentina.

In her recorded report, Miriam describes how these new government's policies has affected freedom of expression over the course of just four months in office.

The Argentinian media has experienced budget cuts, facilitation of the concentration of large media and repression of journalists during their work, by police forces.

It also comes in the form of dissemination of violent messages and hate speech towards the press by officials and their followers on social networks.

In her video, Miriam raises the question of what the Defender's Office can do – and what can ONO do in this context?

Let's watch the video!
(Video 11.36 minutes)