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Thomson Reuters Foundation launches new tool to protect journalists against online violence

30 June 2022

London, UK - Amid a climate of escalating threats and targeted attacks on journalists, the [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#) (TRF) has today launched a new tool to strengthen their resilience to online violence.

[TRFilter](#) is the first tool for journalists and media practitioners to document and manage online harassment and abuse, enabling them to regain control of their social media feeds, take action against perpetrators, and protect their well-being.

Developed in partnership with [Google's Jigsaw](#), TRFilter syncs with the user's Twitter account and uses machine learning technology to automatically recognise and flag harmful comments. It limits journalists' exposure to abusive content by allowing them to hide comments and block or mute accounts at scale, without reviewing the content. The tool also allows users to create reports to download and share with third parties as needed, for example their employer or law enforcement.

While many journalists are harassed in deliberate efforts to control the free flow of information, women are disproportionately affected. Nearly three-quarters¹ of women journalists have experienced online violence; threats include physical and sexual violence, and even death threats. This barrage of abuse – intended to discredit or silence journalists – can take a significant toll on the victims, impacting their mental health, affecting their physical well-being and leading to self-censorship. Current guidance often points to users limiting their social media activity or asking a third party to filter the harmful content when they feel distressed.

“After months of work alongside our partner, Jigsaw, I am excited to launch access to a tool that will empower journalists and media practitioners targeted by online violence around the world,” said **Chief Executive Office of the Thomson Reuters Foundation, Antonio Zappulla**.

“Journalists’ mission of accurate and independent reporting is integral to the survival of a democratic society. It is imperative they have access to practical solutions that match the rapid evolution of the digital and legal warfare used to silence them.

¹ [The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists; research discussion paper](#), UNESCO, ICFJ

“The Foundation’s extensive experience of collaboration with global partners, combined with our unique ability to leverage the twin engines of media and the law, places us at the centre of international expertise to support media freedom and defend human rights. We will continue to work tirelessly to protect journalists and the future of independent media, to strengthen free, fair and informed societies.”

With a legacy of more than 30 years working to bolster the ecosystem for independent media around the world, TRFilter is the latest in a suite of initiatives that TRF, in collaboration with partners, has pioneered to offer journalists practical solutions to defend their mission of reporting the truth and protect them from persecution.

As women journalists report missing work to recover from incidences of harassment, quitting their jobs, and even leaving the profession altogether, this scourge of online violence has become a workplace safety issue. Last year, TRF partnered with [UNESCO](#), the [International Women's Media Foundation](#) and the [International News Safety Institute](#) to develop a range of [practical and legal tools](#) for journalists, media managers and newsrooms to address the challenges experienced by reporters and media workers and strengthen responses to online and offline harassment. In addition to English, [new versions](#) of these guides have been made available in six languages – Russian, Arabic, French, Italian, Spanish and Chinese.

From “fake news” and disinformation laws to false allegations of fraud, corruption and breaches of copyright, laws continue to be weaponised to crack down on press freedoms. The [Legal Network for Journalists at Risk](#) (LNJAR) strategically coordinates the different legal services offered by organisations that work to protect journalists and independent media outlets. From urgent legal representation to ongoing assistance for the duration of a case, to efforts to improve the legal environment in which the media operates, the LNJAR provides a single-entry point into an ecosystem of support.

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Notes to Editor

- For more information about how the tool works, please refer to our [FAQs](#).

About the Thomson Reuters Foundation

The [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#) is the corporate foundation of Thomson Reuters, the global news and information services company. As an independent charity, registered in the UK and the USA, it works to advance media freedom, foster more inclusive economies, and promote human rights. Through news, media development, free legal assistance and convening initiatives, it uses the combined power of journalism and the law to build global awareness of critical issues faced by humanity, inspire collective leadership and help shape a prosperous world where no one is left behind.

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