

Research
Paper

EOJM
المركز المصري للصحافة والاعلام
Egyptian Observatory for Journalism and Media



The Dual Burden



**A look About the Conditions
of the Mothers Working
in the Field of Journalism**

**The Egyptian Observatory for Journalism
and Media**



A summary:

Journalists mothers' are exposed to many troubles and difficulties. The source of these difficulties is intertwined, on one hand; There are conditions of journalism and its current status in Egypt. On the other hand, the legislative framework that organizes the "journalist mother" work, in parallel with the conditions of gender that shed light on the tasks that society expects women to do or not, and the preemptive provisions that employers give to women, especially married or mother women.

In terms of Journalism conditions; Female journalists face basic career challenges that they have to exposure to with males alike, like daily harassment and violations while carrying out their journalistic work, starting from prevention from coverage, verbal and physical abuse, and sometimes ending with imprisonment. Female journalists are also subjected to arbitrary dismissal, legal accountability and accusations of impersonating a journalist, in the light of ongoing registration crises that journalists face and the difficulty of obtaining the Journalists' Syndicate ID.

In terms of the legal framework; Egyptian law generally took into consideration the entitlements of the working mother in all of its individual texts to her, as stated in some agreements of The International Labor Organization for Maternity Protection, whereby Egyptian law grants the working mothers maternity leave ranging from 50 days to 90 days, in line with the Maternity Protection Convention in 1992, but it is less than the period approved by the Maternity Protection Convention in 2000 (14 weeks). The law also gives the working mother the right to two periods of breastfeeding, each of them which is not less than half an hour. These two additional periods are calculated from the working hours and do not result in any reduction in the wage, and she is also entitled to obtain leave without pay for a period not exceeding two years in order to take care of her child. The employer that hires a hundred working mother or more in one place is imposed to establish a nursery.

Although Egyptian laws have provided a proper cover to protect the working mother, this protection remains incomplete and this cover alone is not sufficient enough, or it may lead to negative discrimination against women that negates the basic purpose for which it was legislated. After that many legal deficiencies appeared during practicing these rights on the ground. The actual reality of the journalists women who are working has revealed a number of legal deficiencies that require reconsideration, especially with regard to the maternity leave period, ensuring the working mother return to work at the same previous professional position after completing her leave, providing leave for the father to help the mother in caring for the child and amending the conditions for establishing nurseries to take care of the working mothers children.

The practice of journalism profession on the ground also revealed a number of legal violations that increase the burden over journalists mothers. The most prominent of which are; Failure to conclude employment contracts between the journalist and the press institution to guarantee her rights, failure to obtain a copy of the drawn up work contract or the institution does not complete the justifications for the appointment. This situation may continue with some of them for long periods last for years, without any protection or legal status.

Employers usually overlook the binding legal text on the suspension of the regulation on the women employment in the workplaces, in order to ensure that women know their rights. Although this text is binding, all the female journalists interviewed indicated that they did not see this list hanging at the workplace, in addition to that there are a number of female journalists who were not aware of their rights stipulated by the law that make them exploited by the employer.

Many employers take advantage of the lack of awareness of female journalists about their rights guaranteed by the law, so they diminish them, considering that this burdens them with an unavoidable cost. Some institutions do not prefer working for women during pregnancy and childbirth, and in the event that female journalists work part-time or work by piece and do not belong to a particular journalism institution, these challenges are more difficult, because obtaining maternity benefits remains a hostage in the employer's hand and the extent of his desire to give the mother's dues.

In spite of the existence of a clear legal text that obliges employers to establish a nursery to care for the workers' children in the institution, providing a nursery in the workplace is not implemented in most institutions even if the condition of 100 female workers is met. It seems that the institutions neglecting this law is due to the fact that the punishment for violating the text is much less expensive for the employer than establishing a nursery or taking into account maternity benefits. The law stipulates that the employer or his representative on behalf of the establishment who violates the text of the relevant article be punished with a fine not less than 100 pounds and not more than 200 pounds. As a result, it is more expensive for employers to violate the text instead of bearing the costs.

Journalists mothers are exposed to an inferior view in the society related to the problems of gender issues, as they face the "stereotyping" and the stereotype image that society defines for women, supported by the views of employers, and the media speech that is not sensitive to gender. Women in Egyptian society are subject to a set of customs and traditions that confine them in the reproductive role; beginning with pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and then taking care of the children, which she is fully entrusted with most of the time. At the same time, she is committed to tasks in her work that sometimes requires her to be present in the late hours of the night or travel to remote places as well as she must be available to any missions that are sudden and quick to respond to all her communication ways and in a constant state of alert to pack her stuff and cover the events any time. These missions must be accomplished to prove her serious and commitment in the field that witnesses intense competition in exchange of few job opportunities, which is an additional effort related to bearing the workload and promotion.

Besides these challenges; Female journalists have recently faced a new kind of challenge related to the spread of Corona virus pandemic (Covid-19), as many women are threatened with losing their work or reducing the number of working hours. As for female journalists who work from home, they face a great challenge because of their enduring childcare at the same time as she carries out her work, especially after the decision to close schools and nurseries, which forced women to be next to their children all the time, that became like "she went to work with her child".

Within this framework; The Egyptian Observatory for Journalism and Media (EOJM) presented many recommendations that taking them in application would improve the conditions of female journalists who are working in journalistic and media fields. These recommendations are:

- **First: For the Labor Law - Employing Women:**

- 1- All national legislation should be reviewed in the line with international conventions and covenants concerned with protecting and promoting the rights of female journalists.

- 2- Amending the text on providing nursery at the workplace in the event that there are 100 female workers in the institution, by reducing this large number and changing the word (female worker) to (male and female worker).

- 3- Adding an article that guarantees the provision of paid parental leave, for the worker who has had a child, in order to take care of his wife and new child and reduce the pressure that this period causes on the female alone.

- 4- Increasing the penalty for the employer who fails to comply with the articles related to the women employment.

- **Second: For the Journalists' Syndicate:**

- 1- Amending the articles of registration in the Syndicate to allow all practitioners of journalistic work to join it, thus ensuring protection against any arbitrary measures taken by its affiliated institutions.

The "Observatory" has previously proposed an amendment to the articles of registration in the Journalists' Syndicate, you can view more details [view this link](#).

- 2- Establishing a nursery belongs the Syndicate to include the children of male and female journalists.

- 3- Establishing a committee within the Syndicate to look into gender issues, aims to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women in journalism institutions.

- 4- Providing the necessary legal and material support to female journalists who have been subjected to arbitrary measures because of their gender.

- 5- Forming sub-committees within journalism institutions to discuss problems of gender issues within institutions to assist in monitoring and analyzing data with the concerned authorities and civil society organizations.

- **Third: For Civil Society Organizations:**

1- Conducting awareness campaigns for female journalists about their rights at the workplace; by organizing workshops and trainings to familiarize them with these rights, and using information, communication technology and social networks in order to tackle the structural causes of discrimination and violence against women.

2- Providing support and assistance to female journalists whose rights have been violated, and providing the necessary legal support and assistance.

3- Working to urge journalism institutions to implement gender-sensitive policies within governmental and non-governmental journalism institutions.



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“Gender Equality”

program This program seeks to empower Egyptian women journalists and media workers and raise their awareness to obtain their full rights and support them to reach decision-making positions within press and media institutions. The program also aims to educate media and media institutions on how to provide a safe and gender-sensitive work environment, and finally pressure to issue laws and legislation And policies to protect women within the press and media institutions To achieve these goals, the program works on a set of activities, namely:

1-Contributing to the development of knowledge production on the conditions of women in the press and media

2- Monitoring and documenting violations of female and male journalists, and issuing a quarterly report on these violations

3- Work on submitting legal proposals to the bodies concerned with organizing journalistic and media work in Egypt and the legislative authority in order to create a safer and more stable environment for female journalists and media workers.

4- Establishing a set of trainings and workshops for female journalists and media workers to familiarize them with their legal, economic and social rights, and introduce them to technical and technical support mechanisms and digital safety tools and skills.

5- Providing psychological and legal support for female journalists and media workers through a group of psychologists and lawyers present in the observatory.