



Journalist Pack

Tips for how to keep safe online



Coimisiún
na Meán

In collaboration with

An Garda Síochána
The National Union of Journalists



Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's media regulator

The role of Coimisiún na Meán

We are responsible for ensuring that Irish-based online platforms are following the rules of the Online Safety Framework.

We're also tasked with enforcing the **European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)** which came into effect on 8 August 2025. EMFA offers special protections for journalists.

If it is found that online platforms are not following the rules, Coimisiún na Meán can issue fines of up to €20 million.

Our vision: For a thriving, diverse, creative, safe and trusted media.

Why are we creating this pack?





Statistics about journalism and online hate

73% of women journalists from 125 countries said they experienced 'online violence' at work, according to a 2020 survey by UNESCO/International Centre for Journalists.

30% of journalists said they **self-censored** on social media, and 20% had withdrawn from all online interaction


– Posetti, J, Aboulez N, Bontcheva K, Harrison J, Waisbord S, 2020, *Online Violence Against Female Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidents and Impacts*

A **2022** UK survey found that almost half of women journalists said they promoted their work less online to minimise the risk it could attract, and almost one in five (18%) said the negativity they encountered had made them consider **leaving the media industry altogether**.

– Women in Journalism & Reach plc 2023, *Online Harms Against Women in Journalism and Media*, Tuarascáil Taighde 2023

A **2020** National Union of Journalists survey (of male and female journalists) in the UK found that 78% of journalists agreed that harassment is 'normalised and seen as part of the job', with half (51%) experiencing online abuse in the past year.

– NUJ Members' Safety Survey 2020



‘I would definitely be one of those people who shies away from speaking about stuff or expressing an opinion because of the vitriol that’s out there ... So you let a lot of stuff slide, and just don’t comment and don’t say an awful lot.’

– *Journalist (Wheatley, Dawn, 2023, Social Media and Online Hostility: Experiences of Women in Irish Journalism, p. 2)*

What can I do if I experience abuse online?

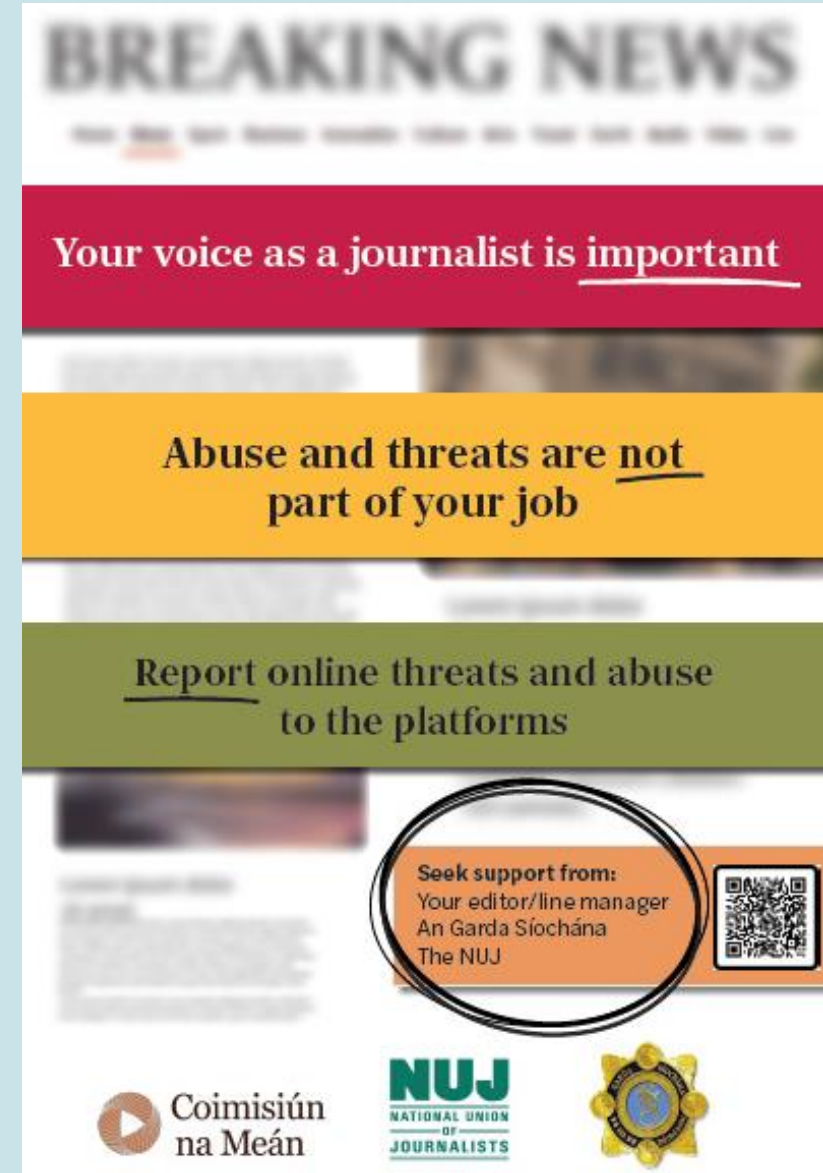


If you see or experience harmful, illegal or abusive content online, **always report** the issue to the platform first. This puts an obligation on platforms to deal with the problematic content.

Let your **editor or appropriate line manager** know if/when you receive abusive content online. By doing this, it can be documented and further action can be taken, if necessary. Ask your **Media Engagement Group (MEG)** Gatekeeper, usually an editor, about the option of the Media Engagement Group (MEG) reporting process.

Much work has been done to support journalists in Ireland. Your editor may refer your issue to the Media Engagement Group (MEG). This is a support structure for journalists which An Garda Síochána chair, along with the NUJ and media representatives. They meet quarterly to review issues of journalist safety and has direct lines into enforcement and criminal investigation channels.

If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.




BREAKING NEWS


Your voice as a journalist is important


Abuse and threats are not part of your job


Report online threats and abuse to the platforms

Seek support from:
Your editor/line manager
An Garda Síochána
The NUJ



 Coimisiún
na Meán

 **NUJ**
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS





Scenarios

What should I do?



Scenario

1

Question

I've received threatening emails, comments and social media posts from members of the public who didn't agree with my opinion piece. What was interesting was that a male colleague wrote a similar piece but didn't receive half the amount of comments. It seems to be a targeted campaign in some way as I'm getting abuse from a variety of accounts. I ignored them at first, but one post spoke about 'waiting for me' outside my place of work and there was a few very graphic and sexual posts about what they wanted to do to me.

I feel like I'm being watched and this is impacting my ability to do my job as I'm frightened. What do I do?

Scenario 1

Receiving threatening messages

Scenario

1

Answer

While people have the right to disagree with you, it's not OK that you feel frightened for doing your job. You don't have to tolerate any level of abuse and you shouldn't ignore it. In this instance, it's important that you **speak to An Garda Síochána** if you sense there is an immediate threat to your safety.

You should also **speak to your editor or line manager** as it's important they are aware of issues affecting your wellbeing and your ability to work. They may bring your concerns to An Garda Síochána's Media Engagement Group (MEG), a forum which addresses matters concerning journalist safety, including harassment and abuse, and sometimes escalating to a criminal investigation.

Scenario 1

Receiving threatening messages

Scenario

1

Further supports

Find out what support exists in your organisation to deal with this. Is there a platform partnership team that has direct contact with social media companies? If there isn't, you can report these posts and comments to the platforms where you saw them. Harassment or death threats are illegal and can be reported as 'illegal content'. Find out how to report on www.cnam.ie/howtoreport. You could also decide to block or mute the accounts, or close off comments completely.

If you disagree with a platform's decision on your report, you have the right to have certain complaints dealt with by a certified Out-of-Court Dispute Settlement Body. In Ireland, ACE is certified to resolve disputes related to the application and enforcement of online platforms' terms and conditions. As always, if you can't find a way to report or need help, contact Coimisiún na Meán at www.cnam.ie/reporttus.

Scenario 1

Receiving threatening messages

Scenario

2

Question

I'm a reporter and I recently attended a political rally for work. I introduced myself to a group of attendees and explained I was a journalist from XXXX. I asked the group why they were there and why they supported that candidate. The group refused to answer my questions and instead began to ask me questions. They told me I was 'fake news' and had an agenda and wouldn't print the truth. They began live streaming the conversation they were having with me, following me and videoing me. They searched for my name online, found my email address, my social platforms and somehow my home address. They then tagged my name and shared this information online, requesting that their followers harass me. What can I do here? I'm beginning to think that this career is not for me.



Scenario 2

Non-consensual sharing of personal information online, with malicious intent

Scenario

2

Answer

If you feel an immediate threat to your safety, you should **contact An Garda Síochána**. When others share your personal information online without your consent (like your personal phone number or home address), this may be considered a form of harassment. You should report any post that reveals your personal information to the platform where you found it as it may break their community guidelines or rules. It's also important to **let your editor or line manager know** so they are aware of issues affecting your ability to do your job.



Scenario 2

Non-consensual sharing of personal information online, with malicious intent

Scenario

2

Further Supports

If your social media account is linked to your employment, you may need to discuss your settings with your editor. You could consider closing comments and exercise extreme discretion in sharing contact details. If, when you report these posts to the platforms, you don't get a response or they don't remove the posts containing your personal information, you should be able to appeal this decision. If you don't get this chance to appeal, you can get in touch with Coimisiún na Meán.

Scenario 2

Non-consensual sharing of personal information online, with malicious intent

Scenario

3

Question

Some posts that I wrote online about a certain topic were removed. I didn't get any reason for this and I'm not sure why it happened. What can I do here? As a journalist, I felt I was contributing to a democratic debate. I'm not happy my posts were just removed. Is this censorship? Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

Scenario 3

Removal of content online

Scenario

3

Answer

The Online Safety Framework includes the Digital Services Act which outlines clearly that any decision around a user's content (i.e. removal or restriction) must be explained and a **statement of reasons** must be given for this decision. Platforms must also give you the option to appeal their decision.

There may also be an option to visit the **Out-of-Court Dispute Settlement Body** process for certain complaints. By providing this statement of reasons to the user, it supports freedom of expression and gives transparency to the content moderation process. If this doesn't happen, Coimisiún na Meán, who plays a role in enforcing these rules, would like to know.

Scenario 3

Removal of content online

Scenario

3

Further supports

The European Media Freedom Act (which came into force on 8 August 2025) recognises the important contribution journalists make to society. As such, recognised media will have the right to receive reasons for the removal of their content *before* it takes place. If this doesn't happen, Coimisiún na Meán would like to know. You can report to Coimisiún na Meán through our form at www.cnam.ie/reporttous.

Scenario 3

Removal of content online

Scenario

4

Question

I saw manipulated images of me promoting a product online. This is a scam and my image was used without my permission. This affects my credibility as a journalist as these ads allude to my support of a lobby group. What can I do here? What are my rights? Do I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

Scenario 4

Image manipulation/deepfakes

Scenario

4

Answer

If your image is used as an advertisement, or amended to be a manipulated image without your consent, this can have legal consequences. If you see a scam online, you may **report it as illegal** on the platform where you saw it. Reporting harmful and illegal content should be easy to find and easy to use on platforms. If you find that it isn't, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán.

Scenario 4

Image manipulation/deepfakes

Scenario

4

Further supports

In a situation like this, you may also choose to go to An Garda Síochána with screenshots as evidence. In some cases, you may choose to take legal action against the organisation who produced the advertisements. Other journalists in the past have publicly declared that they are aware of fake advertisements about them, and this may be a helpful approach to take.

Scenario 4

Image manipulation/deepfakes

Scenario

5



Report

Scenario 5

Why reporting is important

Question

I know not everyone will agree with what I write or say and that's OK. I know that I need to raise concerns with my editor and I may need to go to An Garda Síochána when my safety is threatened. However, a lot of the abuse I get regularly is more subtle, like insults or name-calling. If I report to the platforms, I'm told that it doesn't violate their terms and conditions. The amount of low-level abuse I receive is really unsettling though – it's either a slow drip of people questioning my professionalism or a pile-on of abuse. Is there any point in me reporting this?

Scenario

5



Report

Scenario 5

Why reporting is important

Answer

We understand it must be frustrating. **You are correct to go to An Garda Síochána** if you receive death threats, or if you feel an immediate threat to your safety. Under the Irish Online Safety Framework, there are three laws that aim to tackle harmful and illegal content online. One of the key stipulations is that reporting should be easy to find and easy to use. Coimisiún na Meán enforces these rules. As a journalist, disagreement is inevitable, but **abuse and threats are not and should not be a part of your job**. Reporting abusive content to the platforms is the first step you can take to address this.

Scenario

5

**Report**

Scenario 5

Why reporting is important

Answer

You should report abusive content to the platform and if you don't like their decision (to remove, restrict or allow the content to stay up), you can make a complaint. If you can't find a way to report, contact Coimisiún na Meán as we would like to know if platforms are following the rules or not. You also have the right to access an out-of-court dispute settlement process, provided by a certified Out-of-Court Dispute Settlement Body, if you are not happy with certain decisions taken by an online platform.

Scenario

5

Further supports

In all instances, you should **take screenshots** of any abuse you receive online, and **report it to your editor or appropriate line manager**. This will enable them to keep a record and gather evidence, which might help determine whether other colleagues (including from other organisations) are also being targeted or not.

Other Irish journalists have found this method successful in the past and the offending poster was prosecuted for harassment.

Scenario 5

Why reporting is important



Report

How to report abusive content online





Video: The difference between reporting harmful and illegal content



www.cnam.ie/howtoreport

How to report **illegal** content online

1

You should **report illegal content to the platform** where you saw it using the **form for reporting illegal content**.

You may need to share your email address and the reasons why you think the content is illegal.

2

Once **illegal content** has been reported, the platform must reply and provide you with a **decision** on how it has dealt with your report, setting out reasons for its decision. The decision must be timely.

3

If you are unhappy with a **platform's** decision following a report, or **their removal** of content, you can **appeal** that decision on the platform.

It should be clear to you how to do this, and the appeal mechanism should be easy to find.

4

If you think the platform has **not met its obligations**, you can **complain** to Coimisiún na Meán at www.cnam.ie/reportous

How to report **harmful/abusive** content online

1

If something is **harmful**, but not illegal, it may be in breach of the Online Safety Code or platform community standards (i.e. the platform's rules or terms and conditions), so you should **report it to the platform**.

2

Once harmful content has been reported, platforms may reply to acknowledge the report, but you may not get reasons as to why they are removing the content or not. The decision must be timely.

3

If you are unhappy with **a platform's** decision following a report or their removal of content, you can **appeal** that decision on the platform.

It should be clear to you how to do this, and this appeal mechanism should be easy to find.

4

If you think the platform has **not met its obligations**, you can **complain** to Coimisiún na Meán at www.cnam.ie/reportous

What is illegal content?

If the content is:	It <u>may be</u> illegal under:
A credible threat of violence	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of a campaign of harassment (such as cyberbullying) - Threatening or grossly offensive communication that causes you alarm or distress 	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020
Threatening, abusive or insulting and intended or likely to stir up hatred against a group of people on account of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, membership of the Travelling Community or sexual orientation	Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989
An unsolicited image of someone's genitals that cause distress, fear or alarm	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017
An intimate image shared without consent	Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020
Encouragement of terrorist activity or a threat to commit an act of terrorism	Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act, 2005

This table is a high-level summary. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it represent the position that Coimisiún na Meán may take in the context of any regulatory proceeding in which the meaning of the provisions concerned is in issue.

Help sections on various platforms

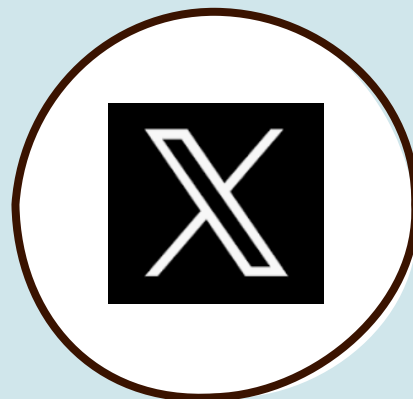
Procedures for reporting content that goes against the community rules/terms and conditions	Procedures for reporting illegal content
How to report on Facebook	How to report on Facebook
How to report on Instagram	How to report on Instagram
How to report on X	How to report on X
How to report on TikTok	How to report on TikTok
How to report on LinkedIn	How to report on YouTube
How to report on YouTube	How to report on Google
How to report on Google	How to report on Bing
How to report on Bing	Other platforms: see link here for further information

How to report illegal and harmful content on the platforms

Visit our website www.cnam.ie/howtoreport for step-by-step guides (with pictures) on how to report harmful and illegal content on various platforms. More to come!



YouTube



X

Coimisiún na Meán

How to Report Illegal Content in Videos on the YouTube App

1 In order to report a video on YouTube on your phone, you'll need to **log in**.

2 If you'd like to report content in a video that you think breaks the law, under the video, tap the **report** flag (you may need to scroll across for this as it might not be visible at first).



How do I contact An Garda Síochána?

How do I report an emergency?

If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.

An emergency is any incident which requires an immediate Garda response, for example:

- A danger to life
- Risk of serious injury
- Crime in progress or about to happen
- Offender still at scene or has just left

How do I report other crimes?

To report a non-emergency crime, you can attend any Garda station.

A Garda can take a report of a crime from you in person in any station. You can find details on your local Garda station [here](#).

Is there a process for journalists?

If you are concerned about an incident and are not sure what to do, speak to your editor about your options. You can consider making a report via the **MEG reporting process** to An Garda Síochána for recording. At your request you can seek advice and guidance on safety from a **Crime Prevention Officer**. The MEG reporting process is not for emergency or live situations.

How do I report a hate crime?

Click [here](#) to report a hate crime online to An Garda Síochána.

Always report any incident you perceive as motivated by hate to An Garda Síochána.

If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.

Reporting to An Garda Síochána post incident



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The NUJ



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Coimisiún na Meán, the NUJ and An Garda Síochána recognise that during high-profile events – such as elections and matters of national security – exposure for journalists can be heightened. Journalists are reminded that they can also report threats, harassment or any other potential criminal activity to An Garda Síochána post high-profile incident. Incidents should be reported as early as possible.

Securing and retaining evidence such as screen grabs, etc. is important in this regard.

Information should include:

- the specific threats made
- their identities (if known)
- the time the threats were made
- the location of the content, such as the exact URL(s)
- relevant screenshots/details of engagement with the platform(s).

Supports for you



Support

- **European Commission:** Protections for Journalists
- **Media Engagement Group (Ireland)**
digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/eu-countries-show-progress-taking-measures-improve-journalists-safety
- **Garda Cybercrime support**
www.garda.ie/en/crime/cyber-crime/cyber-crime-awareness.html
- **Be Media Smart:** www.bemediasmart.ie
- **FactCheck resources:** www.factchecking.ie
- **NUJ Journalists Safety Toolkit**
www.nuj.org.uk/advice/journalists-safety-toolkit.html
- **NUJ Journalists' Rights Social Media**
www.nuj.org.uk/static/f7735963-49a3-46e6-ac495ed65307b264/5ddf3d08-1e06-4d6e-a51a364ab094473f/Social-media-journalists-rights.jpg

Report

Coimisiún na Meán Contact Centre

- Available Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Online query form www.cnam.ie/reportous
- You can make a complaint to Coimisiún na Meán if you feel online platforms are not following the rules. If you have a query, staff at the centre can signpost relevant support services about your rights online and other online safety issues.

An Garda Síochána: Call 999 or 112 in case of emergency. In a non-emergency, contact any Garda station or ask your editor/MEG Gatekeeper about the Media Engagement Group reporting process.

NUJ: info@nuj.ie

● How the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) can help

You can report an issue to the NUJ by emailing info@nuj.ie. The NUJ can advise and support on various issues, or can represent or refer your matter onto the MEG, if appropriate.

There is an **Ethics Hotline** you can call to discuss your concerns. You can email ethics@nuj.org.uk or call 00 44 845 450 0864.

The NUJ has a **code of conduct** which allows you to understand what is expected of you, and others, in your role as a journalist.

**The role of the
NUJ**

Appendix





**Ireland's Online
Safety Framework**

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**New rules
online**

**Digital
Services
Act (2023)**

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**Online
Safety Code
(2024)**

+

**Terrorist
Content Online
Regulation
(2024)**

=

**Online Safety
Framework**

The era of self-regulation is over – it is being replaced by statutory regulation.

What is Ireland's Online Safety Framework?

Online Safety and Media Regulation Act (OSMR)

Digital Services Act

EU regulation that aims to build a safe, fair and trusted online environment

By law, platforms must:

- have easy to use and easy to find reporting mechanisms (including providing the decision made on the content reported)
- set out in their terms and conditions how their algorithms work
- clearly label advertisements.

Larger platforms must carry out external audits on risk mitigation measures (e.g. how they are working to ensure their platforms are safe).

Online Safety Code (OSC)

Irish code that applies to providers of video-sharing platform services (VSPs) based in Ireland.

VSPs must state in their terms and conditions that illegal and harmful content is not allowed.

VSPs must allow users to report content and tell them how they acted on their report (e.g. removing the content).

VSPs are obliged (as appropriate):

- to have effective media literacy measures and tools
- to raise users' awareness of those measures and tools.

Terrorist Content Online Regulation (TCOR)

EU regulation that aims to stop the sharing of terrorist content online and allows for its speedy removal from platforms.

Terrorist content includes the promotion, glorification and encouragement of terrorist activity, as well as calls to action for others to engage in such acts.

As the competent authority in Ireland under the Regulation, An Garda Síochána is the only organisation that can force a platform to remove terrorist content. The platform has one hour to remove the content when An Garda Síochána issue a notice.



European Media Freedom Act

Digital Platform Protections (Article 18)

Media organisations receive special treatment (**media privilege**) on very large online platforms, including 24-hour notice before content removal, priority complaint handling, direct communication channels and mandatory dialogue when content is repeatedly restricted.

Anti-Surveillance and Source Protection

Prohibits spyware use against journalists and families (with narrow exceptions), protects confidentiality of journalistic sources and communications, and prevents prosecution for maintaining source confidentiality.

Editorial Independence and Legal Remedies

Safeguards against political interference in editorial decisions, guarantees sustainable funding for public media, provides right to judicial protection, and requires each EU Member State to designate independent authorities to handle journalist complaints about surveillance.

For more information, visit our website, or go to this [link](#).
Read the 'cheat sheet' from Cullen International: www.cullen-international.com/news/2024/03/-INFOGRAPHIC--Cullen-cheat-sheet-on-the-EU-Media-Freedom-Act.html

Your rights under the Online Safety Framework

The right to be protected from harm

The way online platforms use recommender systems 'for you' feeds must be set out in their terms and conditions.

Users should be easily able to modify or select their preferred options and have more control over what they see in their feed.

The right to report

It is important to report harmful and illegal content to the platform where you saw it first.

There should be an easy to find and easy to use reporting mechanism.

The right to express yourself

If a platform removes your content, you have the right to know why and the right to appeal this decision.



Thank you

We would appreciate if you could take a few minutes to complete [this](#) short feedback form.

