

Stereotypes of gender in conflict – and best practices in avoiding them

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The paper takes as its starting point how journalists' safety is a precondition for free expression and free media. Based on interviews and discussions with experienced female war and conflict journalists from different countries worldwide, the discussion evolves around questions linked to what particular challenges and opportunities women journalists face, and how their security best can be ensured when covering war and conflict zones. Women war correspondents face the same challenges as their male colleagues as well as some additional ones linked to their gender. However the paper will also discuss whether there may be some advantages for a woman journalist covering war and conflict too. The deliberations have a direct bearing on debates about female journalists' safety online and offline, about the importance of the presence of female journalists covering war and conflicts, and how this may serve as an indicator of freedom of expression, civil rights and media freedom in general.

The paper will also look into some examples of how gender is portrayed in journalistic coverage of conflict and war. Some of the questions will be What are the typical stereotypes used? Are women always portrayed as passive victims? Do we have a language for male victims? And what about female violent actors? How can journalists find new ways to portray gender and at the same time open up for nonviolent responses to conflict?

War reporting has traditionally been a male activity. There is, though, no deterministic link between sex/gender and more peaceful news or a more peaceful world. Through analysis, the paper reveals how the framing of different femininities and masculinities affects the reporting and our understanding of war and conflicts.