



**REMARKS BY ZUBEIDAH KANANU
PRESIDENT, KENYA EDITORS GUILD (KEG)
ON THE STATE OF WOMEN IN MEDIA**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,
Colleagues,

Today, I speak to you not just as the President of the Kenya Editors Guild, but as a woman who has lived the realities we are discussing. I am one of the women who stepped away from the newsroom. And I remember, very clearly, conversations with fellow female journalists—brilliant, passionate, committed—who would quietly ask me: What does the future look like for us in this profession?

That question has stayed with me.

Because it was never just a question, it was a reflection of uncertainty, and in many cases, quiet despair.

As we gather here today for the launch of the report by AMWIK, we must be honest with ourselves.

The findings reflect what many of us have experienced.

And when we look at research by the Aga Khan University, the picture becomes even more concerning.

Kenya, despite its vibrant media landscape, lags behind other East African countries in:

- * Representation of women in leadership
- * Retention of women in newsrooms
- * Creation of safe and enabling work environments

This is not just data.

It is a reality playing out in our newsrooms every day.

A Profession That Is Losing Its Women

More women are exiting the newsroom.

Not because they lack skill.

Not because they lack ambition.

But because the environment is 'no longer conducive for them to stay and thrive'.

Many newsrooms still struggle with:

- * Limited growth opportunities for women
- * Unequal pay and recognition
- * Workplace cultures that are not always supportive
- * Lack of mentorship and structured pathways to leadership

Over time, this creates silent pressure, one that pushes women out, slowly but surely.

Online Gender-Based Violence: The Invisible Push

Beyond the newsroom, the digital space has become another battlefield.

Women journalists are facing online gender-based violence that is targeted, personal, and relentless.

We are seeing:

- * Coordinated trolling
- * Sexualized attacks
- * Threats and intimidation
- * Exposure of private information

This is not criticism.

This is gendered silencing.

And its impact is real:

- * Women begin to self-censor
- * They withdraw from public discourse
- * They avoid certain beats

* And many eventually walk away from the profession

Women in Media and Elections

As we look ahead to the 2027 elections, this conversation becomes even more urgent.

Elections are high-pressure periods for journalists—but for women, the risks are significantly higher.

We have seen:

Increased hostility toward female journalists covering politics

Targeted online attacks aimed at discrediting and silencing them

Safety risks in the field during protests and political events

If we do not act now, we risk going into a critical democratic process with fewer women reporting, fewer women analysing, and fewer women shaping the national conversation.

At KEG, we are committed to working with partners, including IEBC and stakeholders in the media sector, to ensure that women journalists are not only present during the elections, but safe, visible, and empowered.

The Cost of Inaction

When women leave journalism, we all lose.

We lose:

* Diverse voices

* Inclusive storytelling

* Critical perspectives that shape public discourse

And ultimately, we weaken the very foundation of journalism and democracy.

What Must Change

We must move from conversation to action.

Media houses must take responsibility for creating environments where women feel safe, valued, and supported.

This means:

- * Clear anti-harassment policies
- * Equal opportunities for leadership and growth
- * Pay equity
- * Mental health and psychosocial support
- * Strong safety measures-both physical and digital

Technology platforms must do more to address online abuse swiftly and effectively.

Law enforcement must act decisively. Online violence is real violence, and it must be treated as such.

The Role of Men: From Bystanders to Allies

This conversation cannot be complete without acknowledging the role of men.

Creating safe and inclusive newsrooms is not a “women’s issue”—it is a leadership and industry issue.

We need men to:

- * Speak up against harassment and discrimination
- * Support and mentor women in their professional growth
- * Challenge toxic cultures within newsrooms
- * Use their positions of influence to drive change

Real progress will come when men are not just observers—but active allies in building equitable and safe spaces.

Our Commitment as KEG

As the Kenya Editors Guild, we remain committed to:

- * Advocating for safer and more inclusive newsrooms
- * Building capacity on digital safety and ethical journalism
- * Supporting policies that protect journalists
- * Amplifying the voices of women in media

A Personal Reflection

I chose to continue serving journalism—but from a different space.

Not every woman has that option. And many should never have to make that choice.

Conclusion & Recognition

As I conclude, let me take this opportunity to congratulate all those who will be recognized and awarded tonight.

Your work matters.

Your resilience matters.

Your voices matter.

You represent what is possible when talent meets opportunity—and when courage meets purpose.

May your recognition not just celebrate your achievements, but also inspire the industry to do better—to be better.

Final Call

Let this moment and this report not just inform us, but move us to act.

Because a media industry that women are leaving...
is a media industry that must urgently transform.

Let us build one where women stay.

Where they lead.

And where they thrive—without fear.

Thank you.

ZUBEIDAH KANANU,
PRESIDENT

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About the Kenya Editors' Guild

The Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG) is a not-for-profit professional organisation that brings together senior print, broadcast, digital, and other electronic media editors. It seeks to: defend and promote media freedom and independence in Kenya; promote quality and ethical journalism; provide a forum for the discussion of the challenges facing media and editors; and network with other professional organisations, among other imperatives.

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