



**UÇAN SÜPÜRGE**  
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**A non-sexist,  
non-ableist,  
accessible and  
inclusive media is possible!**

## **Monitoring Report on the Representation of Women with Disabilities in the News Media**

### **■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ■**



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## Introduction

Media is a concept that covers a wide range of communication tools, including all kinds of verbal, written, printed, and visual texts and images. This concept includes printed media such as newspapers, magazines, books, and brochures, as well as audio-visual communication instruments such as television, radio, and cinema. Currently, the internet, billboards, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and digital media have also been added to the scope of this concept. The media must be the voice not only of those with power and property in society but also of all those who are ignored, neglected, disempowered, alienated, and marginalised.

Media monitoring from a gender perspective deciphers the gender-discriminatory discourse disseminated by the media through the content it produces and draws attention to the violence and discrimination reproduced through communication instruments. "Media monitoring" is a new, necessary, and effective way of combating all forms of gender-based discrimination, violations, and violence in print, video, online, and social media. This is because the media is one of the spheres where the language of discrimination is most prevalent, and it is also the sphere where messages on combating discrimination can be disseminated to the broadest audience. Freedom of information, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression are the rights guaranteed by international human rights conventions. Media organisations should encourage the exercise of these rights and inform society accordingly. The media is both an effective instrument for NGOs in their advocacy activities and a goal for our fight against violence, hate, and discrimination, which it mediates or contributes to their reproduction. From newspapers to television shows, from news websites to social media, all means of communication represent a great force in solving social problems. However, since most of these instruments are commercialised for profit, they often put their social responsibilities on the back burner or even forget about them.

## Media and Women with Disabilities

Invisibility of women with disabilities leads to invisibility of their needs, experiences, problems, struggles, priorities, demands, achievements, labour, identities, and the violations of rights that they are subjected to. As incomplete and false representations circulate in the examples of women with disabilities in media contents and products, prejudices are reinforced in society, stereotypes become widespread, and well-known mistakes are repeated. In order to amend the circumstances that lead to rights violations, these violations need to become visible. In order to look at the media through the eyes of the "marginalized," to strive for their visibility in the media, to develop a perspective to ensure that all neglected communities (such as the disabled, women, refugees, children, etc.) are represented in the media without being subjected to any violations of rights, and to combat violations of the rights of the disabled in the media, it is essential to identify these violations in the first place. The way to do this is to use media monitoring with a critical approach as a human rights monitoring tool.

## Purpose and scope

The study on Monitoring Human Rights Violations against Women with Disabilities in the Media was designed to create a driving force for the media to become an important tool and advocacy space in fighting for the rights of women with disabilities. It was developed to give visibility to human rights violations against women with disabilities in the media and to encourage the production of news with a perspective that empowers women in the fight against these violations. The study also aimed to involve women with disabilities, whether organised or not, in media monitoring, to make women with disabilities in organisations active and productive, and to contribute to making other rights activists interested in disability issues.

## Research Methodology

The following five newspapers, three news websites, and three television channels were selected from the Turkish media for the monitoring study: In selecting the newspapers, the criteria were the political backgrounds, prevalence, and frequency of coverage of disability-related content in the printed sources of news subject to monitoring. It was also the news agency, which covered domestic news and disability issues the most and was the bearer of the official ideology, that was included in the monitoring. As news websites, two media outlets were selected: one mainstream website and one website engaged in human rights journalism. As for TV, the channels that were followed the most were identified.

Birgün	Posta	Sözcü	Cumhuriyet	Yeni Şafak
Anadolu Ajansı	Habertürk	Bianet		
Fox TV	CNN Türk	Star TV		

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was utilised to identify monitoring indicators.

News items about women with disabilities that appeared in selected media outlets between January and December 2022 were determined. A total of 94 news items were analysed using indicators. In addition, six TV main news bulletins were monitored and analysed on December 3, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and on a randomly selected day within the Disability Week between May 10th and 16th.

## Baseline

The results of the monitoring study were analysed in the context of rights and freedoms provided within the scope of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Additional Protocols, the General Comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities, Law No. 5510 on Social Security and General Health Insurance, Law No. 2828 on Social Services, Law No. 3294 on Encouraging Social Assistance and Solidarity, Law No. 5393 on Municipalities, Law No. 5216 on



Metropolitan Municipalities, and the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2023-2025.

## Monitoring Findings

Within the scope of the monitoring study, women and girls with disabilities were grouped under the following headings;

- Violence: Sexual abuse, violence against women, femicide, neglect
- Gender norms: marriage, sexuality, reproduction
- Care: Dependent living, self-sacrifice, poverty
- Success Stories: Miracles in sports, arts, education
- Life and Development: Health care, social security, autonomy
- Accessibility: Natural disasters, emergencies, public life

The monitoring findings draw attention to the violation of the rights of women with disabilities, particularly in news content, by recognising the inadequate or underrepresentation of women with disabilities in media content and supporting their media visibility. It provides evidence that the media not only violates the human rights of women with disabilities but also discriminates against and marginalises them, in addition to making them invisible and neglected as individuals. It was also noted that there were news stories that were free from stereotyping, that treated the disabled woman or girl as an individual with rights rather than as an object of the news, or that included the views of those entitled to those rights. These were limited in number, and the framing of these news items focused on women's success stories and "heroized" women with disabilities. However, these news items failed to draw attention to the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in other areas of life (education, health, accessibility of public spaces, romantic or social relationships) on the basis of both ableism and gender. To sum up, the monitoring study revealed that the media portrayed women and girls with disabilities from a certain perspective and with stereotypes.

As Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association, this time we have utilised our efforts regarding rights-based media literacy for the egalitarian and fair use of mass media, which we have been experiencing for years, in the context of the intersectionality of women and girls with disabilities. Unfortunately, our assumptions have been confirmed. We have once again witnessed that the news media follows women and girls with disabilities mostly in cases of violence, caring labor, and success stories (mostly in sports). The headlines, spots, visuals, language, and content of the news present women and girls with disabilities to readers as dependent, victimised, in need of help, in need of protection, and lacking autonomy rather than as individuals.

This monitoring study also showed that the functioning of how the state fulfils its obligations is insufficient for the virtual realisation of rights for every disabled person, especially women with disabilities. The intersectional violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, especially in terms of living independently, personal mobility, participation in public life, and having adequate living standards due to gender-based discrimination, has been portrayed once again. The direct and indirect discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities, emphasised in the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 3 on Women and Girls with Disabilities, and the

discrimination by association "faced by persons based on their connection with a person with a disability" (such as domestic labour if the caregiver is a woman (mostly a mother) and the burden of caring for her disabled child, thus reflecting on her employment rights), coincide with the findings of the monitoring study. On the other hand, we have also seen that the role of the public administration in taking measures, protecting women and girls against all forms of violence, maltreatment, and neglect, and punishing the perpetrators, within the scope of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is not adequately and effectively carried out, which is also lacking and even more severe for women with disabilities.

The legal and administrative measures and empowerment practises committed by the Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities and the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023-2025), which are the reflection of these international standards at the national level, must be urgently reviewed by in particular the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Social Security Institution, Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations, governorships, district governorships and municipalities through participatory methods with non-governmental organizations, professional experts, academicians, and an environment of coordination and dialogue must be created for more effective, inclusive, realistic and sustainable implementation. There is a need for measures and interventions that do not ignore the multiple disadvantages faced by women with disabilities due to gender inequality, poverty, and discrimination based on ethnic, religious, and citizenship status and that provide specific solutions to these issues at the local level. In addition, in order to change the masculine, discriminatory, and exclusionary language and perspective of the media, the Supreme Council of Radio and Television, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey must urgently include the representation of women with disabilities in the news media and the access of women with disabilities to communication tools, information, and news sources in their efforts to identify and prevent discrimination.