

Threats of Violence

Responses and considerations for journalists facing threats of violence online.

[When and How to Use an Online Harassment Action Plan →](#)

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Now

These are the absolute first steps to take. Do this before deciding what to do next.

- **Secure your physical safety**
 - Call 911 if it's an emergency and if you are comfortable working with the police
 - We understand this can be contentious and is not a viable option for everyone. The benefit of reporting a threat to law enforcement is that it starts a trail of evidence for you, in case further threats are made and you decide to take further action in the future, such as filing a lawsuit. Consider making the report with a friend, family member or colleague if you do not want to approach LE on your own.
 - Consider whether you need to get to a safe place until you decide your next best step. If you don't have the resources to change your location, consider reaching out to an organization that offers emergency assistance to journalists and be sure to

tell a friend about your situation. It's important someone is aware of what's going on (see below).

- If you're concerned about [doxxing](#) or [SWATing](#), consider alerting your local police about your concern so that they are aware of potential calls or reports made to your address.
- **Don't engage with the perpetrator.**
- **Document the threats.** Take screenshots, save emails, print records. Store this in the cloud for easy access. Consider sharing a copy with a friend or colleague and request their help in gathering documentation. Find out if your employer or the media organization you work with has an established process for supporting staff facing threats and harassment. This not only provides a structure for you to follow, but also ensures leadership is aware of the situation.
- **Tell a trusted friend, loved one, colleague and your employer (or, if a freelancer, your editor).**
 - Make sure you don't feel alone and that others know about what you're going through. They may be able to help you document events, report messages to platforms or contact law enforcement. Have an emotional action plan in place to take care of yourself.

Next

Then, choose what to do:

- [Report the threats](#) to the relevant platform.**
- Conduct a [threat assessment](#) to gauge the severity of the threat.**
- Limit or lock down your social media accounts.** For example, you have the option to make your social media accounts private for as long as you want. This may provide some helpful distance from the events taking place.
- Review the settings for location services on your phone and laptop. Consider whether you want to allow social media platforms to include your location with your posts.
- If you're concerned for your loved ones, let them know about the threat**
 - This keeps them informed on how to protect themselves and keep their, as well as your, personal information secure. For example, you might let your family know to not accept friend requests from strangers and to beware of unfamiliar phone calls. In cases where you're worried about doxxing or

SWATting, they may want to consider contacting local law enforcement about the threat.

Also

You may want to:

- Take a break.** Eat good food, drink water, listen to calming music—whatever comforts you. It's O.K. to step away.
- Request help from colleagues or friends if the situation overwhelms you.**
- Monitor communications and mentions on other platforms.** You can ask a trusted friend or colleague to help if you need space from the situation.

Consider

"Good to know", once you feel more secure and less overwhelmed.

- Avoid doxxing the person making threats; it may antagonize them.
- Remember that you did nothing wrong and this is not your fault.
- Try not to draw extra attention, such as by giving an interview, which might provoke your harasser.
- Consider contacting a [legal resource or attorney](#).

Future

Extra steps to take with time—when you have breathing room.

- Contact a professional organization for help, including your union if you belong to one. Many organizations offer direct emergency funds or support, including [IWME](#), [CPJ](#), and [Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press](#).
- Develop secure communications. Make sure that your device isn't compromised (consider switching temporarily to a burner or backup phone) and that you use an encrypted messaging app like Signal. For direct support, you can connect with [AccessNow's Helpline](#). They can help you improve your digital security.
- Consider using a service like [DeleteMe](#) to delete your personal identifying information from white pages, directories and data broker websites. Note that it can

take weeks for companies to remove your information. It's also worth asking your employer or editor if they can cover the cost of such a service.

Additional Resources:

- [When Does Online Harassment Turn Into a True Threat](#)
- [Is This Online Threat Real?](#)
- [How to Use DeleteMe to Scrub Private Info Off the Internet](#)
- [How to Report Online Harassment to Various Platforms](#)
- [The Holistic Security Manual](#)
- [NYTimes Security - How to Dox Yourself on the Internet](#)
- [13 Security Tips for Journalists Covering Hate Online](#)
- [Author Talia Levin's quick tips for people facing severe online harassment](#)
- [Tips for Talking to Family & Law Enforcement](#) (please note this link was last updated in 2016)
- [Know Your Trolls: A 30 Minute Course for Journalists](#)
- [The Difference Between Blocking and Muting](#)

Quick Links to Other Action Plans:

- [Digital Security](#)
- [Emotional Wellbeing](#)
- [Proper Documentation](#)
- [Two Factor Authentication \(2FA\)](#)
- [Communicating with Your Employer and Colleagues](#)
- [Threat Modeling](#)