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## **Foreword**

Violence against journalists in Pakistan has been continuing for years. Like the previous years, 2013 also saw no end to targeted killing of media persons.

The political and security situation prevailing in Pakistan has made the work of journalists all the more important, but at the same time prime targets of various forces.

In view of this situation, the present leadership of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) has taken upon itself the task of providing maximum assistance to the journalists to minimize their sufferings.

It has been making effort to highlight their plight at every forum, and play its role in ameliorating their sufferings, solving their problems, improving their financial situation and enabling their professional growth. PFUJ has gone to every length in achieving its targets.

After 9/11, safety of journalists has been the prime concern of the PFUJ. About a hundred journalists, photojournalists and cameramen have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Sensing the gravity of the situation, PFUJ in partnership with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) held numerous activities whose main purpose was to equip journalists with the necessary skill to work in a hostile environment. These activities apprised them of the various measures they need to take while working in dangerous areas.

Not only this, the PFUJ also sent four local missions comprising journalists to various parts of the country to get a first-hand assessment of the state under which journalists are working. These missions met media people and heard their concerns, which not only revolved around their safety but also wages, job security and the hurdles they faced in their routine work. Detailed reports were prepared by the respective missions.

Later, an international mission visited Pakistan and conducted its own assessment of the situation.

This report carries valuable information and highlights vital issues which the international mission gathered from their visits and meetings.

I hope this report serves as an eye opener to those at the helm of affairs and enables them to take immediate steps to solve the journalist community's problems.

I also take this opportunity to thank all those who had made their valuable contribution in preparing this report.

**PFUJ President  
Pervaiz Shaukat**

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**PFI PRESIDENT PERVAIZ SHAUKAT, SECRETARY GENERAL AMIN YOUSAF AND AN IFJ DELEGATION COMPRISING CHRIS WARREN, KANAK MANI DIXIT, EKO MARYADI, SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN AND MINARI FERNANDO, MEET SENATE CHAIRMAN NAYYER HUSSAIN BOKHARI AT THE PARLIAMENT IN ISLAMABAD ON MARCH 4, 2013.**

## 1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the result of an international mission to investigate press freedom in Pakistan – the most dangerous country in which to work as a journalist.

A delegation of senior journalists and press freedom advocates representing the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliates visited the Pakistani provinces of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas from March 1-4, 2013. The mission concluded with a national meeting on March 5 in Pakistan's federal capital city of Islamabad, to draw attention to the alarming deterioration in the professional environment for journalism and demand urgent remedial measures.

This visit follows an earlier fact-finding mission in 2012 that identified several key areas of concern for a free press in Pakistan:

- Violence, threats and the culture of impunity,
- Non-payment of wages, poor pay and working conditions, inadequate safety training and equipment,
- Professional standards, bias, self-censorship, corruption and partisanship, and
- Underrepresentation of women in the profession.



**(L-R) PFUJ Secretary-General Amin Yousuf, President Pervaiz Shaukat, Press Council of Pakistan Chairman Raja M. Shafqat Khan Abbasi, Chris Warren, European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Lars-Gunnar Wigemark and Kanak Mani Dixit at the national meeting held in Islamabad on March 5, 2013.**

While the political, economic and societal factors underlying these threats to press freedom vary from province to province and within each province's metropolitan and regional areas, there are many shared experiences that inform priorities for future work in defense of press freedom at a national level.

This report aims to synthesise the disparate experiences of journalists in the provinces visited by the mission and identify commonalities and key areas of concern that future project and advocacy work may seek to remedy.

### **Prior to the Mission**

The mission took place within days of three separate killings of journalists. These three killings exemplify the range and variety of hazards that journalists face in Pakistan.

On 25 February 2013 Khushnood Ali Shaikh, the chief reporter of the state-controlled Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) wire agency was killed in Karachi, the capital of Sindh province when he was struck in a hit-and-run incident with a car. Shaikh had been receiving threatening calls demanding a ransom of fifty thousand rupees in the local currency, failing which his child would be abducted. He had informed his union, his employer and the police of the threats. He relocated to Islamabad and thought that the threats had gone away. Returning to Karachi, the threats resumed. It's believed his death was not an accident and that he was deliberately targeted. Though investigations are yet to establish the true causes, Shaikh seems to have fallen victim to the rampant criminalisation that menaces the lives of all citizens' in Karachi. Indeed, Pakistan's largest and ethnically most diverse city has become an arena of politicised crime in which the competition between parties representing different sectarian interests has seriously eroded security.



**Khushnood Ali Shaikh**

Two days afterwards, in Miranshah, North Waziristan, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), journalist Malik Mumtaz Khan, on his way home, was gunned down by armed men waiting in a vehicle with tinted windows. The manner in which the hit was carried out and the vehicle that was used, suggest the possible involvement of one of the many militant groups that have emerged in Pakistan's northern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the FATA. These became one of the main staging posts in the U.S.-led 'global war on terror'. Khan had been a journalist for 15 years and had worked for



**Malik Mumtaz Khan**



TV news channel GEO and the Jang newspaper group. He was a respected tribal elder in a region where clan and tribal animosities are often held responsible for violent attacks. He was not known to have any enmities. Just weeks before his murder, he had been elected president of the Miranshah Press Club.

On 1 March 2013, Mehmood Ahmed Afridi, a correspondent for the newspaper Intikhab, was killed by gunmen travelling by motorcycle in Kalat, in the southwestern province of Balochistan. Afridi, 56, had worked as a journalist since 1995 and was president of the Kalat Press Club. Colleagues said Afridi had been waiting outside a public telephone booth when two men on a motorcycle stopped and shot him four times before fleeing.



Mehmood Ahmed Afridi

Afridi was likely a victim of the growing violence of the insurgency in Balochistan which pits a number of groups fighting for independence, against the military, para-military and security agencies of the Pakistan state. This conflict which was already proving a rather complex maze to negotiate because of the multiplicity of militant groups in the fray – some of them working undercover for the official agencies – has become ever more difficult with the entry of a sectarian element, notably with an extremist group that has been targeting a minority denomination of Islam with acts of extreme violence in recent times.

### **Press Freedom and Safety in Pakistan**

On January 10, 2013 twin blasts shook the city of Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. The blasts were intended to kill at random and have maximum impact on the general public morale. The blasts took place on Alamdar Road in Quetta at a snooker club. They followed a familiar pattern of one bomb going off and after a delay of a few minutes, when first responders including journalists were expected to gather, another more lethal blast being detonated to catch them off-guard. In all 42 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the explosion including Imran Shaikh, a cameraman with Samaa TV, and Mohammad Iqbal, photographer at NNI. Mohammad Hasan, photographer with INP and Saifur Rehman, a senior reporter with Samaa TV, were seriously injured, the latter dying of his wounds a few days later.

Two distinct phases can be identified in this story of multiplying hazards for journalists in Pakistan.

- Between early 2000 and the end of 2012, the PFUJ has identified 84 journalists as having been killed in a variety of incidents. The six who

were killed between the beginning of 2013 and the national meeting in Islamabad on March 5, bring that grim tally to 90.

- In the 12 years to 2012, a journalist was killed on average every 52 days.

A closer look at the data reveals that the pace of journalist killings has been accelerating.

- Between early 2000 and the end of 2006, 18 journalists were killed in Pakistan: on average three every year – or one every 122 days.
- In the six years to the end of 2012, 66 journalists have been killed: on average eleven every year – or one every 33 days.

While it is too early to draw conclusions about 2013, thus far the number of deaths has been reason for concern.

- A total of eight journalists have been killed in the first four months of 2013 – or one every 15 days.

The rising hazards since the beginning of the century are of course, integrally connected to the 2001 incidents best remembered today as 9/11, when Pakistan became the main staging point of a global war led by the U.S. The considerable aggravation of the situation since 2006 is in response to the strategies adopted by successive Pakistani governments to contain the eruption of disruptive forces within, failing one after the other. Initial efforts by the Pakistan federal government to work a peace agreement with the self-governing tribal groups in the FATA were rewarded with a fair measure of peace and stability. But from 2002, the situation has become increasingly turbulent. A truce began in 2005 following an effort by the Pakistan army to pacify the tribal belt with a display of overwhelming force. By 2006, this effort was seen to be unraveling.

The province of Balochistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan and is territorially the largest in Pakistan, has a history of violence. Instability in Balochistan has plagued the region since the beginning of Pakistan's existence as a sovereign state, however the violence has shown a marked increase over the past years, with a number of clashes between armed insurgent groups and units of the Pakistan army and the Frontier Constabulary, a paramilitary force under army command. In August 2006, Nawab Akbar Bugti, the head of a powerful tribal group in Balochistan, was killed in an airstrike by the Pakistan military. In March 2007, the deepwater port at Gwadar in Balochistan was instated - considered key to cementing Pakistan's alliance with China and a potential game-changer in the strategic Gulf region.

Pakistan's two other provinces, Punjab and Sindh, host the country's main population centres. These provinces have experienced spillover effects from the decade-long conflict and have also suffered from a legacy of upheaval in neighbouring Iran and Afghanistan, not to mention the wider Gulf region and south Asia, over at least three decades.

Compelled to take notice, Pakistan's parliament on March 4 held a special session of an ad hoc committee on journalists' safety, to debate possible means of improving the situation. In depositions before the committee, the PFUJ suggested the appointment of a special public prosecutor to deal with attacks on the media. It also put forward a firm proposal for legally mandated insurance cover for all journalists. And until such time that comprehensive insurance coverage becomes available, compensation should be afforded by the government for the families of all media workers killed, and medical coverage for those injured.

The IFJ-PFUJ mission was in part witness to and appreciative of the stated seriousness with which Pakistan's parliamentarians took the issue of safety for journalists. Attiya Inayatullah, a member of the ad hoc committee, was particularly responsive to the demands of the media community and was sharp in criticism of the Federal Ministry of the Interior for having dispatched a low-ranking officer – a director-general - rather than the secretary, to the ad hoc committee.

## **2. PRESS FREEDOM IN THE PROVINCES**

### **Balochistan Overview**

More than 80 daily newspapers and weekly journals are printed in Balochistan, mostly in the Balochi language, with three in Pashto, and one in Brahui. Almost all the national newspapers, private television channels and national and international radio services have bureaus in Quetta and in some of Balochistan's other large cities. An estimated 500 to 600 journalists work in the province but of this number only around 140 are full-time journalists. The majority work as journalists part-time, for the government, in the private sector, or running their own businesses. The Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) and Quetta Press Club have 95 of these journalists as members. The PFUJ – with the assistance of the IFJ and International Media Support – provides services and support to the entire journalists' community and has held security and safety workshops in their respective districts and provides further safety and media rights monitoring support from the PFUJ offices in Islamabad or Karachi.

### **Threats to journalists**

Of the 95 journalists killed in Pakistan since 2000, 30 were killed in Balochistan. The situation in the province has worsened considerably since 2008, with 20 journalists killed and there has been a notable rise in threats to journalists' safety. In north-eastern districts threats often relate to reporting on paramilitary (or military) operations against the Bugti and Marri resistance, underground separatist groups, insurgent attacks on military, police and government installations, and human rights violations, such as the Internally Displaced Peoples crises and targeted killings by militant groups or in a few cases even intelligence agencies who target journalists for reporting independently in newspapers and do not follow the line of either party (militants and military). The districts of Dera Bugti and Kohlu have become virtually no-go areas for any independent media since the insurgency following the military killed the head of the Bugti Tribe and in Naseerabad-Jaffarabad entrenched form of tribalism has resulted in a culture where local media are unwilling to speak out against the tribal chief. Cases of violence against women in these areas are common though go unreported due to tribal authorities rule.

Activities of Taliban and Al-Qaeda in the Pashtun belt are the focus of reporting at national and international levels. These districts which fall along the border with Afghanistan, have a less entrenched tribal structure than in other parts of the province. The region is divided between two political elements: the anti-militancy (Taliban nationalist groups) and the pro-militancy [details]. In these

areas, journalists are mostly threatened when they report on the cross border movements of the militants.

In the Baloch-dominated coastal belt regions of Gwadar, Panjgur and Awaran, the anti-government sentiment is high among the local population and journalists are faced with pressures and threats from both the government and separatist groups. Local newspapers are open about their support for the nationalist cause of the militant groups. Local journalists are often threatened and targeted, allegedly by the government, for supporting militant groups or for reporting on issues such as extra-judicial killings and missing persons, which have become key concerns across Balochistan.

The highest number of journalists killed in Balochistan is in central Khuzdar. In this area, battles between insurgents and the state are most active in Khuzdar and journalists considered pro-government or unsympathetic to the insurgents are targeted.

The threat that has more recently emerged is from militant members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi- outlawed organisation from the Jhang district of Punjab province. The group are mostly engaged in sectarian violence and have established their presence in Balochistan by providing welfare, water facilities and food to the poor. In Nushki, Khuzdar and Kohlu, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi flags can be seen on the rooftops of the local houses. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants have retaliated against media workers who refer to them as terrorists or extremists and report on the campaign they are allegedly leading against Shia Muslims in the province.

### **Additional Problems**

Another important factor in Balochistan is the significant number of journalists who are affiliated with anti-federation or pro-federation armed groups and nationalists, so any evident bias in their reportage is seen as partisan and can lead to threats and serious safety concerns. In addition, there is political pressure, for example the Chief Justice of the High Court of Balochistan High Court, Justice Faiz Essa Qazi, banned reporting on issues relating to Baloch nationalist and separatist movements stating that "No one should report or give space to the news related to the armed, militants or nationalists groups in the province. If someone reports they will be facing jail for at least 6 months".

### **Impunity**

Despite a prominent PFUJ campaign against impunity for the killings of journalists, out of a total of 30 journalists murdered in Balochistan, police have only registered a police report on three cases: Abdul Haq Baloch killed in

Khuzdar on September 9, 2012 Muneer Shakir murdered in Turbat on August 14, 2011 and Nadeem Ghoorghanari's two sons who were killed in Khuzdar. In all three cases the investigations were not made public nor were journalists' organisations provided with any information or asked for input on any investigations. Despite the efforts of journalists' unions (including regional chapters of PFUJ) to register reports with the police about the killing of their colleagues, police have bowed to the pressure of tribal elders - which occupy a quasi-official role within Balochistan's government - and not carried pursued the investigations any further.

As the union does not have the means to cover the costs of litigation despite having registered several cases with police, the union has pursued legal proceedings with the assistance of lawyers and activists acting pro bono. Threats and intimidation of victims' families also act as further impediment to the pursuit of justice in many cases.

Chapters of PFUJ in Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan have continued to mount pressure on the government around problems associated with the issuance of First Information Report's (FIR<sup>1</sup>) registered with the police, but impunity remains a serious problem. To this day, the government has not carried out public investigations into any case other than that of Saleem Shahzad who was murdered in May 2011. Although the PFUJ had welcomed the high-profile public investigation into Shahzad death, and participated in several hearings, the final report into his murder failed to address the specific circumstances surrounding his death and the broader questions surrounding press freedom and the impunity for the murder of media workers in Balochistan and at a national level.

## **Bias**

Up to 90 per cent of correspondents in Balochistan's districts are not paid for their reporting work. In some cases correspondents themselves pay 'security' fees to the media houses and news agencies. In light of this, the motives for reporting without salary can be called into question - in some cases the purpose of reporting is to support a particular group (political, militant or business-related) while in others the aim is to have influence with governments and public officials.

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<sup>1</sup> A First Information Report (FIR) is the legal basis for any arrest. It is generally a complaint lodged with the police by the victim of an offense or by someone on his or her behalf, but anyone can make such a report either orally or in writing to the police.

## **The Mission's findings in Balochistan**

The mission met with the leadership of the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ), which is an affiliate of the PFUJ. The track record for journalists' safety in this largest province of Pakistan in geographical terms has been dismal, with thirty-two journalists killed in the reference period beginning 2000. What is even more alarming about Balochistan, is that the death toll has rapidly risen in recent years to such an extent that it is increasingly being seen as the most hazardous place to be a journalist.

The intensity of the threat in Balochistan could be indicative from the fact that in the last four months, six journalists have been killed in the province. Of the six, three were killed in one bomb blast in Quetta: Imran Shaikh, Iqbal Baloch, Saif Baloch – in the twin bomb strategy. There have been other cases in recent times of the twin bomb strategy being deployed to create maximum havoc or an initial bomb attack being prelude to a larger and sustained armed offensive designed to cause maximum damage to all who assemble at the spot to either render succour to the injured or report for the local community. In September 2010, Ejaz Raisani, a reporter for a news channel and the driver of the vehicle bearing his satellite broadcast antenna, were killed after a bomb was detonated at the venue of a political rally in Quetta and subsequently, a number of gunmen appeared at the scene to shower a hail of bullets on those who had gathered. In April 2010, Malik Arif was killed when journalists who had gathered outside a hospital to cover protests against the murder of a prominent religious leader, was bombed by a rival denomination. Lastly, the president of Khuzdar press club Naseem Gurgnadi had two sons killed in a targeted killing in 2010.

The groups that threaten journalists include the militant Islamic group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi which operates throughout Pakistan with varying degrees of local patronage, alongside several others that are situated in the Balochistan context, such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and Balochistan Liberation Youth Front (BLYF). There are in addition, a number of agencies of the Pakistan state and organizations operating overtly and covertly of intelligence agencies, which are active hazards for free and fair reporting.

In a typical case involving the conflicting pressures imposed on journalism in Balochistan, the BLA would issue a statement claiming an attack on an FC patrol that killed a number of its personnel. The FC would then, on being contacted by local journalists, entirely deny the content of the statement. This would put the journalist in a virtually impossible position. Sub-editors, who try to render militant releases in to accepted journalistic usage, are also threatened, since

these groups are typically known to demand unabridged publishing of their press releases. Every group demands top priority in news coverage on every media platform. No amendments are entertained in statements even when compelled by the needs of space.

Even when newspapers have a well-declared policy of retaining front-page space for news of national and global importance, insurgent groups are known to insist on their material being featured in this prime space. Balochistan's journalists worry that if such a demand is granted in one instance, then there would be a long line of applicants demanding similar treatment.

Political activists belonging to national parties such as the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the various factions of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) are also known to pressure and intimidate journalists. There have been cases of these political activists forcing their way into newspaper newsrooms and occupying journalists' work-spaces to pressure them into complying with particular demands.

Reporters in the field are moreover disadvantaged by their inability to control editorial priorities and choices, which are typically in the hands of staff based in cities like Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. And with all the hazards they face, journalists do not have the benefit of insurance, nor are their families assured of any manner of compensation in the event of death or injury. In Balochistan's recent troubled history, there has been only one case of a journalist being granted compensation. This was when Abdul Haq Baloch's family was given a sum of one million Pakistan rupees (just under ten thousand US dollars) after he was killed in the district of Khuzdar. Journalists believe that media owners too have been indifferent to their needs and their families'.

Veteran journalists and PFUJ leaders in the provinces and at the federal level believe that in the context of the recent boom in media and requests for information coming from Pakistan, media organizations have begun recruiting people with little experience in the profession, with limited knowledge of how to deal with hazardous situations. This exploitative business strategy is compounded further when media houses place pressure on staff to find 'breaking news', without even the most cursory assessment of the risks involved. PFUJ leaders speak of a number of instances when journalists have been injured in attacks but continue to face pressure to report from dangerous areas.

Journalists working in rural areas do not have regular salary and are often those most at risk and the sources of the danger are varied and unpredictable. While the insurgent groups which operate outside the political and legal process are a



constant threat, another category of danger is believed to stem from armed groups operating under the patronage of the state. During its last mission to Balochistan in October 2011, the PFUJ team met with the Inspector-General of the Frontier Constabulary, Major-General Obaidullah Chattel, who is mandated with overall operational responsibility for security in the province. The PFUJ listed the various incidents of journalists being killed and then identified a number that had occurred in areas in Baluchistan where no militant organisation operates. There was an onus of proof on the security agencies, the PFUJ has warned, to establish that they are not involved in these killings.

The other serious issue that confronts journalism in Baluchistan is around the fair reporting of an insurgency situation. Underground organizations are by definition, operating without any manner of legal rights. But their actions have the potential to affect public life for better or worse. This is due to the fact that when one of them declares a general strike and warns that anybody seen in a public space on the day would be fair target for retaliatory action. There are other kinds of statements issued by banned organizations which particularly target individuals or communities in addition to others where they seek glory for carrying out some particularly violent act against civilian life.

Baluchistan's journalists have faced all of these dilemmas over recent years of violence and turmoil in the province. Their cause was not assisted when the Chief Justice of the Baluchistan High Court in Quetta, Qazi Faiz Issa, rendered formal judicial ruling that journalists reporting on banned organizations would be liable to six months' imprisonment. A PFUJ delegation met him soon after this ruling was given, to argue that journalists who face the daily hazards of reporting on events in a region of violent conflict are often compelled to do things that they would not otherwise be in agreement with. While this dialogue was underway, the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry visited Quetta and made a public statement in support of the Quetta High Court ruling. At the time that this mission visited Pakistan, there were an estimated sixteen cases registered against newspapers in Balochistan for reporting militant groups' statements and press releases. There are obviously some norms that have to be honoured in conflict prone areas about incitement to violence and the celebration of violence. However, journalists around the globe, including in other troubled areas in South Asia, have been confronting this issue in recent years. And there is a growing consensus on best practices that could be adopted in these diverse contexts. That is a matter to which this report will return.

## **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Overview**

The killing of Malik Mumtaz Khan on February 27, 2013 serves as a reminder that violence against journalists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province continues.

One of the most discouraging aspects of this violence against journalists is the continued failure of governments to track down perpetrators and bring them to justice. This in turn creates a culture of impunity for those who kill, abduct, torture and threaten journalists. The suspected perpetrators of violence are a diverse group of state and non-state actors, including military, police, militants and other interest groups.

The working conditions of journalists in Peshawar have not improved to the satisfaction of journalists. More than 500 journalists are working in the city in newspapers headquartered here or in bureaus of national papers. Most of the newspapers' employees are not given appointment letters or even official press identification. Salaries in most media organisations remain low, presenting severe economic challenges to journalists in a country where the cost-of-living continues to rise.

The delayed implementation of Seventh Wage Award for newspaper employees had given some hope to media workers that wages would improve and years of wages owed and arrears might finally be paid. Unfortunately, the award was only implemented at one regional Urdu daily newspaper *Aaj Peshawar* where workers were given some benefits. The remaining media outlets including the big national organisations like Dawn Group and Jang Group continue to obstruct full implementation of the wage award. Peshawar's journalists continue to pursue the case at the Implementation Tribunal for Newspaper Employees (ITNE), but are yet to make any significant progress. The ITNE organised two hearings in Peshawar that gave some hope to journalists, but no real progress has been made despite orders issued by the tribunal. Lamentably, newspaper owners still enjoy enough power and influence to deprive working journalists of their genuine rights despite the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

### **Violence against journalists**

The upsurge in violence against journalists in Pakistan since 2001 is unmatched. At least 30 journalists have been killed in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region alone in that time. Violence against journalists has been aggravated by war in Afghanistan and its spillover effect into Pakistan. Aggressors in the conflict have

targeted journalists for their work in an effort to stifle reporting the political situation and human rights abuses.

Taliban groups, the country's powerful military and the intelligence agencies are suspected to have a hand in the kidnapping, beating, killing and torturing of the reporters in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Following the killings of journalists Allah Noor and Amir Nawab in 2005, attacks against journalists spiked in this region. Since then, the situation has worsened each year and has resulted in journalists fearing for their safety. Demands by the journalist community to bring perpetrators to justice or provide journalists with better protection have fallen on deaf ears. Journalists have resorted to self-censorship in order to assure their safety.

The first journalist to be killed in 2012 was Mukarram Khan Atif, a journalist from Mohmand tribal agency, in the Charsadda district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He had migrated to Shabqadar to avoid harm but, despite this, was pursued to his new location and killed. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack and said they targeted him for working with Voice of America's Pashto-language Deewa Radio.

Mohammad Aamir, a van driver with ARY news channel, was the second journalist to be killed in 2012. He was killed by police, firing during anti-Islam protests in Peshawar on September 20, 2012.

Similarly, Malik Mumtaz Khan, North Waziristan Agency correspondent for the country's largest media organisation Jang Group, was ambushed in his home town near Miranshah, the headquarters of the agency on February 27 2013, to become the first victim in KP and FATA this year. He was on his way home when unknown attackers, in a car with tinted windows, opened fire and killed him. Malik Mumtaz was a very experienced and balanced reporter and his murder has caused immense fear among the journalists working in this extremely challenging part of the world.

### **Threats**

The military or Taliban militants hold sway in the tribal areas and control everything there. Most of the tribal areas continue to be no-go area for journalists. As journalists from the rest of the country cannot travel to most of FATA, a large number of tribal journalists have left their areas of origin due to the deteriorating security situation, threats made against them or the overall hostile environment.

When Malala Yousafzai was shot and injured in Swat in October 2012, the media criticised TTP, which had claimed responsibility for the attack. The coverage infuriated the TTP and led to threats at media organisations. Several media organisations took security measures to prevent possible Taliban attacks. In Peshawar, *The News* and *Geo News* television offices came under serious threat. They increased the number of guards, put sand drums in front of the building and asked reporters and sub-editors to work from home. The situation in Malakand region, in Swat Valley, a district controlled and destroyed by the Taliban, has improved in terms of physical attacks on journalists. However, their freedom to report independently is still limited, as the military still holds influence over the region.

### **Working conditions**

Working conditions of journalists in Peshawar continue to be poor, and salaries remain low. Only 25 per cent are properly paid for their work, with the vast majority either unpaid or underpaid. Some journalists even receive salaries that are less than the government's declared minimum wage. The Seventh Wage Board Award, an award that determines newspaper employees' salaries, is in favour of the journalists' claims on pay and working conditions but has not been effectively implemented. Consequently, it has no positive impact on the salaries and allowances of journalists. A further problem is news organisations failing to issue appointment letters, creating a sense of insecurity among the journalists.

The majority of journalists have no medical insurance, and life insurance is all but non-existent. The Khyber Union of Journalist (KhUJ) has initiated a project to provide health insurance to all its members, which has been appreciated by journalists across the country.

The newspapers that come out from Swat, Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad, Kohat, Mardan, Mansehra and other cities have among the worst working conditions for journalists. In rural areas, including those in FATA, journalists have been working unpaid, including journalists at several of the region's television channels. Many work in journalism part-time and cannot fully concentrate on the profession as they have to have another job or operate a business to make a living.

### **Safety and security**

Safety and security have been a major challenge for journalists in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Almost all journalists working in hostile environments have not been trained adequately by their employers. It is the primary

responsibility of news organisations to provide safety and security training in view of the prevailing security situation, but they have failed to materialise in nearly all cases. Even in troubled areas, organisations have not given safety equipment to the reporters, leaving them vulnerable to attacks. Nevertheless, the IFJ, Internews, the PFUJ and Intermedia have been delivering training on safety and capacity-building with the support of Peshawar Press Club and Khyber Union of Journalists. Despite these efforts, there is an undeniable need for more training and equipment to improve the safety situation for journalists in the region.

### **Women in journalism**

Women continue to be excluded from the profession in FATA and almost all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Peshawar, only 20 female journalists are working. There is a stated desire by media organisations to include women, and women journalists say they don't feel discriminated against in the Peshawar Press Club or Khyber Union of Journalists. Shahida Perveen, a senior female member of the KhUJ, says having 20 female journalists is "an important development." "Some years back, women could not think of joining this field," she said. "But now the trend among women to come to this field is getting wider."

Previously, the few female reporters were confined to narrow reporting 'beats' like women's activities which offered little opportunity to develop or display their skills as reporters, she added. Perveen said female reporters are now given the same assignments as their male counterparts. "It has given women confidence and a level playing field and they have proved their worth," she said.

In Peshawar, women now occupy a diverse range of roles within media organisations, yet Perveen identified the area's low literacy rate among women and social norms as barriers for women's entry to the profession. In the rest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the whole of FATA, not a single female journalist is known to be working.

### **The Mission's findings in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the FATA**

In a set of comprehensive mission reports from the various provinces of Pakistan, based on mission inquiries conducted in 2011 and released in 2012, the PFUJ had made certain observations about the situation in KP and the FATA. Aside from the precarious state of physical security, there were continuing legal and financial hazards, which were summed up as follows:

"For the more than 400 journalists working in KP and the FATA, employment conditions are unsatisfactory. Most newspapers do

not provide letters of employment or IDs showing that the journalist work for a media organisation. Salaries are meagre, leaving journalists unprotected legally, financially and physically”.

That situation continues to prevail and has been aggravated considerably since these observations were recorded.

The PFUJ is stepping up efforts to organise journalists’ unions in the KP and FATA. There are at present two unions in KP, which is a conglomerate of twenty-five districts. The Khyber Union of Journalists (KhUJ) is based in the provincial capital of Peshawar and the Abbottabad Union of Journalists (AUJ), based in the second largest city of the province, are both affiliated with the PFUJ.

In the troubled FATA, the Tribal Union of Journalists (TUJ) is the single most important body of journalists, though it is not an affiliate of the PFUJ, because of the constitutional position. The PFUJ is required under its constitution to affiliate only local units in centres where newspapers are published and relevant national laws are applicable.

The FATA in this sense has a unique status within the federal political system as national laws are not considered operative here due to the agreement between the political leadership of Pakistan from the time of the state’s creation and local tribal notables. The legal framework for the administration, rather, is the quaintly named Frontier Crimes Regulations promulgated over a century back by the British imperial rulers in India and designed to safeguard local tribal autonomy while securing the broader interests of stable borders that the central administration required.

By virtue of this, the law that safeguards journalist’s rights to fair wages and working conditions, the Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) Act of 1973, or NECOSA, has no legal force in the FATA.

There are some signs of change. In October 2011, the federal government in Pakistan, in consultation with the provincial government of KP and local notables, decided to extend the national law governing political parties to the FATA. This was considered a move of historic consequence, since it could potentially bring a region regarded as a buffer zone between autonomous political entities, without a right to the practice of ordinary politics, into the mainstream of competitive democratic politics.

The PFUJ has now demanded that where there is political activity, there should be media freedom too. This means that NECOSA could soon be extended to the FATA, perhaps in time for upcoming elections to the national and provincial

assemblies. This may possibly correct one of the ambiguities in the position of journalists in the FATA. The TUJ has more than 300 journalist members and began a process of internal democracy in 2007, which brings it closer in conformity with the PFUJ practices. Other towns in KP province – such as Swat, Kohat, Charsadda and Miranshah – also have unions, which could be potentially affiliated with the KhUJ. They cannot be directly affiliated with the PFUJ because these towns do not have two local newspapers, which is a requirement under the PFUJ statute.

Another form of association for journalists in the FATA has been the press club, of which the region has twenty. Because of unsettled conditions though, many journalists have been relocated from their original places of work. Several have clustered in Peshawar and this has meant that the press clubs and unions in their home districts have become dysfunctional because of non-participating membership.

The FATA consists of seven ‘agencies’ as they are called in the persisting use of colonial administrative vocabulary. There are also six ‘frontier regions’ or FRs, which are partially administered from the province, and serve as a buffer between the federal-provincial administrative hierarchy, and the relatively autonomous procedures practiced in the FATA.

In this complex administrative hierarchy, it is often difficult to understand where journalists should go for justice when they face continuing attacks. In the grim catalogue that the PFUJ has assembled, KP and the FATA account for a total of thirty-one journalists being killed. Malik Mumtaz Khan, already referred to, has been the most recent of these. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which is reflexively identified with any atrocity against civilian life in KP and the FATA, has denied involvement in the killing. When this mission visited in the first week of March, there was in short, no real understanding within the local journalistic community, of what could have been responsible for Malik Mumtaz Khan’s killing.

### **Sindh Overview**

In Sindh, senior journalists have reported that journalists are routinely killed, unjustly detained, abducted, beaten and threatened by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, militants, tribal and feudal lords and even some political parties which claim to be democratic. As in other provinces visited by IFJ missions, the problem of impunity for the violent elements that were posing persistent threats to journalists and media workers was identified as a major impediment to press freedom.



Many journalists report working under immense mental and physical pressure from the state and non-state actors which as a result was having a deleterious effect on their independence and impartiality. “Pressure and intimidation has forced the journalists to adopt self-censorship, particularly in the conflict areas and even in Karachi”, said former PFUJ Secretary General Mazhar Abbas. He said that free media is essential to democracy in Pakistan as it promotes transparency and accountability, a prerequisite of sustainable economic growth. The impunity enjoyed by those who attack journalists is seriously hampering press freedom in Pakistan and all stakeholders, including media organisations, the government and civil society should unite to devise mechanisms to ensure the safety of working journalists.

*Express Tribune* editor Kamal Siddiqui said that in order to control the alarming rise in the number of violent attacks against media, and to end impunity for those who attack journalists and media workers, it is necessary for criminal cases to be registered, investigated and prosecuted. He said there is a need to create awareness among owners of the media organisations of the realities and threats being faced by the journalists working in the field, especially in conflict areas.

Amir Mehmood, Secretary General of the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) said that it is not uncommon for a Pakistani journalist, or their family, to



live under a constant cloud of fear and intimidation. He said that complaints were on the rise and that the Taliban threats for punishing those channels and reporters who reported on issues relating to Jihadi outfits in an unfavourable light. Threats were also common toward media outlets that did not air the Taliban's point of view.

As a result, media organisations are in the unenviable position of having to try to cover Pakistan's war against terror and follow the code of conduct they have agreed with the government, while being mindful of potential retribution for unfavourable representations of belligerents in the conflict. It is worth mentioning here that an ordinance issued by PEMRA, the state-run electronic media regulatory authority, prohibits news channels from accommodating the militants' viewpoint and forbids them from broadcasting "statements and pronouncements of militants and extremist elements."

### **The Mission's findings in Sindh and Karachi city**

Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, is Pakistan's largest city, with an estimated population of 18 to 20 million. Violence has been endemic in the city since the 1980s and was to begin with, mostly sectarian and marked by mob violence. According to one of the respondents that this mission met it has since been transformed into targeted killings. In the first two months of 2013, there have been 473 killings in Karachi, of which 80 percent were targeted. Overall, 70 percent of the killings would be with outright criminal motives and the others would be originating in sectarian and personal animosities.

The land mafia is significant and active in Karachi with sections of the police force believed to be in collusion. The mafias are also linked to drugs and arms. There are political, sectarian, criminal and gang wars. The Inspector-General of Police for Sindh Province, Farooq Leghari, recently said in testimony before the Supreme Court that 1600 criminals were possibly employed within the police force. The law enforcement agencies lack the will to control the killings and several of the targeted killings are carried out by hired killers.

With its huge population, and localities segregated by community and ethnicity, Karachi is also an easy place to hide for militants and criminals from all over Pakistan. The security situation is far different in Karachi than in Balochistan, KP or the FATA. Elsewhere, in the assessment of a local journalist this mission interacted with, the conflict is focused and involves identifiable antagonists. Karachi has imported into its confines all the conflicts and tensions from all of Pakistan, aside from having several that are uniquely its own. As one of the respondents that this mission spoke to put it: "Here we have the ethnic and

sectarian conflict, compounded by the competition between political parties, with the criminal underworld adding another layer”.

The media in Karachi, as elsewhere in Pakistan, is free to report. As a city with the largest media community in Pakistan, Karachi has succeeded in ensuring that individual reporters are not hemmed in by any advisory or restriction. However, as a matter of practical necessity, journalists have to be extremely careful about reporting on militant groups. “You can be marked. You also have to be careful in regard to the intelligence agencies, and even the political parties and their links to the underworld and militant groups”, said a journalist that this mission spoke to:

“The sheer power of certain politicians, such as the President, means that journalists have to deliberate carefully before using his name. Business tycoons, who also invariably happen to be politically influential, rarely come in for criticism”.

As elsewhere in Pakistan, the arrival of television news channels has taken the consumption of news to a different level. Karachi’s media community think, like counterparts elsewhere, that in the days of print journalism, the visibility of journalists was considerably lower, as too was the risks they were compelled to undertake as part of their job. There is also more opportunity in the liberalized media environment, for illicit cash hoards to be laundered by investing in television. In securing this measure of legitimacy, the TV news operator also gains political power that serves to protect his other business interests.

This ethically unsound culture also infects the manner in which media houses engage journalists. Owners often get away with only issuing identity cards to journalists. With no assured monetary compensation for his effort, the journalist is compelled to work several jobs, because of which he is likely to face multiple kinds of threats. “Every journalist is doing multiple jobs, the same television journalists could be reporting for Geo, Khyber and NNI news agency”, said one of the journalists this mission met. This also increased the dangers of the reporter using his/her journalism as a ‘badge’ to be active in his/her other areas of interest. There are even instances where part-time journalists own hotels, or run arms shops. One problem is with the training of the newsroom anchors, secure in Islamabad or Karachi, as they interview the field reporter and taking a live feed. These can be very dangerous for the person in the field.

## **Punjab Overview**

By Raja Riaz Ahmad

In Pakistan's largest province Punjab, safety issues for journalists are seen to be slightly different to other provinces visited by the mission, as no journalist is known to have been killed by the pressure groups, governmental security agencies, political parties and criminal elements usually associated with such attacks.

Not a single culprit had been arrested so far by the law enforcement agencies. "Geo News reporter Wali Baber Khan was killed in Karachi on January 13, 2011 and the First Information Report was lodged with police but authorities failed to arrest any of the killers or even protect witnesses to the crimes. For this reason people involved in the cases – police, witnesses and the person who lodged the FIR – had been killed by unknown assailants who left no clue behind them," PFUJ Federal Executive Committee Member Raja Riaz said.

The mission found that working journalists in Lahore face numerous problems as they had no job security, salaries were not paid on time and a large number of journalists were forced to work for meagre salaries. Contracting is widespread and problematic as media house owners do not give permanent recruitment letters to employees. Security is the primary concern for the field reporters, camera operators and photojournalists, especially as employers do not provide safety equipment to field staff:

"I am a photojournalist working with different organisations for the last fifteen years, but my salary is yet not enough to make ends meet. It is difficult for me to pay the school fees of my children. I run my affairs with great difficulty. Security is another issue as my office doesn't provide me with life saving jacket. I narrowly escaped two times while covering bomb blast scenes," photojournalist Amjad Hussain told the follow up mission.

Female reporters are reported to experience sexual harassment by their colleagues, seniors and sometimes by the management of the media houses, in addition to other problems. They are considered as an 'easily available commodity'.

"The male colleagues treat us not on equal grounds, but rather consider us as 'second rate' individuals with fewer capabilities. Sometimes the management of the media houses also make unwelcome sexual 'advances'. Female journalists are paid less

than their male colleagues despite working on the same assignments,” Gonilla Gill, a female print media journalist said.

The visiting mission also met Naveed Kashif, managing director of Dunya News, one of the four largest media houses that own a TV channel and a newspaper. Kashif, a former civil servant, told the mission that they had developed Standard Operating Procedures for their colleagues and never put field staff’s lives at stake.



Dunya News does not recruit journalists on contracts but rather gives employees permanent roles. They receive life and health insurance and pay consistent with Pakistan’s wage award at all levels.

After meeting the journalists in Lahore, Punjab’s capital and main media hub, the mission decided to visit a small city of Gujranwala in the north-east of Punjab province to meet full-time journalists, working on local publications, and correspondents working for the large media houses based in Pakistan’s principal cities. The mission observed that while the dynamics of journalism in Gujranwala were different from those the bigger cities like Lahore, the day-to-day realities of being a journalist are often the same.

Gujranwala is a city where about 100 publications of a different nature – daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly – are published. National titles like *Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Daily Pakistan* have set up bureaus there, while *Daily Express* and *Daily Dunya* have full offices operating under the supervision of a resident editor. The national television channels have also set up their bureaus and some other papers have recruited correspondents. About 300 journalists work in the city

including five female journalists and three journalists identifying as Christian – a religious minority in Pakistan.

In Gujranwala, full-time journalists work for local publications and correspondents attached to national dailies and TV channels. One thing was common among all journalists – they were facing financial hardship, as the profession does not pay them well enough to cover their living expenses. Exploitation in the hands of media houses is a common complaint of staff reporters and correspondents, who report that they are being paid very low wages, provided with no medical cover or sick leave. An average salary for these reporters is in the range of PKR 8000 per month (USD 80). Regular payment of salaries is another issue they face. Since local publications rely only on local advertising, revenue generation is erratic and reporters of these publications can go without salaries for months. There are no government checks and balances on these organisations to ensure regular payment of salaries.

Many are not paid at all by their employers. It is a disturbing fact that the correspondents working for national newspapers are not given salaries, but in fact pay hefty amounts in the form of ‘security’ – an amount never returned to the person even after leaving the organisation. The media houses demand large payments to secure key appointments. Correspondents are also liable for the expenses of running large media organisation’s offices in such cities. As a result, generating revenue through advertising for the employer is also considered part of their duties. Job security can be easily undermined by a higher bidder who has the means to cover these expenses, and professional standards and impartiality suffer as a result.

These journalists have no professional training and their education level is often also very low. The total knowledge they have to survive in the profession they acquired from their seniors who also lack professional expertise. Media owners do not give any support or protection when their correspondents face threats from criminal gangs, political parties and the state. Thus, journalists in such cities are forced to compromise on the objectivity of their work.

### **The Mission’s Findings in Punjab**

The PFUJ is concentrated on the protection of journalists and the defence of their rights. Editors and owners’ groups mostly discuss revenues and advertising, including when they approach government authorities. These include the Council of Pakistani Newspaper Editors (CPNE), the All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS), and the Pakistan Broadcasters Association. The CPNE is said to be controlled by owner-editors, so that they rarely send working editors to

important meetings. Some media groups were quite proactive in fighting for press freedom, and also for socio-political causes – such as Geo on the Hudood Laws. However, the owners seem to have decided to go for more social causes, such as Geo being engaged now on an education campaign. The Jang Group has kept up with its Aman ki Asha campaign for India-Pakistan friendship and the attacks on this from the other media houses has ceased. The primary fault of the media groups is the undermining of the role of ‘working editors’ and the proprietors as editors is the norm. Members of the APNS are also members of the CPNE, and they tend to put a higher priority on the former organization which fights for economic benefits, rather than the latter which is the designated custodian of editorial freedom. Said one proprietor editor: “I am a pure editor. I do not go for advertising. I never went for government ads.” One respondent said that 80 percent of the members of CPNE are themselves owners. As one disillusioned journalist observed: “The PFUJ and CPNE talk past each other, they do not interact.”

Advertising, including by political parties and government continues to be a source of leverage. However, government activism is now relatively at a low ebb while commercial advertisers – from the telecom, real estate and multinational business sectors -- are important enough to stifle some reporting. New entrants here are the political parties. The upcoming election campaign, perhaps in the months of May and June, could be a bonanza for media houses, print and electronic, because the trend is towards massive paid advertising by political parties. Three more channels are slated to come up before elections. During this time, there is expected to be much pressure on individual reporters. “Elections are a boom time for most media houses, which are running at a loss”, said one of the journalists that this mission spoke to.

What has changed for journalists is that the direct government pressure is much less now than in the 1980s. Now the threat to security is from non-state actors and intelligence agencies. “Dealing with the state was much easier than dealing with the militant groups, which we now have to do”. One suggestion was that during the time of President Pervez Musharraf the pressure was from the government, but now it was from elsewhere, mainly from political parties. They monitored what the individual reporters were doing, even to the extent of studying the tickers. The parties maintain “intelligence” on the journalists. There is a particular focus on Karachi because it is the media hub. From the time of governmental threat, today it is important to redefine the pressures on journalists, and they include armed forces (including intelligence), political parties, and extremist groups. There is outright killing to “stop the voice” but also economic arm twisting. And even if the influence of government advertising has diminished, it still amounts to about 30 percent of the print advertising market.

Media houses are also seen to have little interest on the training of journalists. Said one journalist:

“The number of journalists has increased exponentially over the years, but the quality has not improved concomitantly. One of the challenges for the PFUJ is how to battle the corruption within the press clubs”.

Most journalists working for television are on contract without job security, and the number in permanent positions within print media has also shrunk sharply. The training of journalists is also affected by the fact that there is little sense of history, of the struggles of the Pakistani media for freedom of press, and there is also little chronicling of the media evolution. There seems to be a great divide between the glamour jobs in television for a few, and the job security and wages of regular journalists. There were some concerns raised about the plethora of journalist associations that had sprouted, including associations of reporters, photographers, desk editors and so on, mainly because this was seen to be a way of seeking and gaining access to a variety of perks.

English language media, with its distancing from politics conducted in the vernacular, is less vulnerable to pressures. “We do not matter to the Taliban – not yet,” said one journalist from an English language newspaper. Some English language print journalists became vulnerable once they came on broadcast television, speaking in Urdu. The English papers are read mostly by those in government, the military, donor organizations, embassies, and the non-governmental sector (both national and international). However, things are changing as English language readers increase so too does that vulnerability.

Militant groups follow journalists very carefully, to see what is reported and how it is reported, and those who cross the red line can be challenged. This is what appears to have happened to Daniel Pearl and Saleem Shahzad. Security is now such a concern that journalists make it a point to move in groups when going out on reporting assignments. It helps to move as a group with Sindhi, Pashto and Urdu-speakers in the group so that encounters with different groups can be handled. Regardless of beliefs or affiliation, journalists are profiled by militants according to name, especially in the context of sectarian violence in Balochistan and Sind. Journalists in the field are forced to work for more than one employer. As a result when he is in trouble, or is killed, there is no sense of loyalty among the employers to come with support. Journalistic professionalism is also compromised because the journalists are asked to double as advertising agents for their media houses – while this does at least help journalists to achieve a

relative degree of economic security (and not to work for more than one media house), it does compromise media professionalism.

There are no controls on cross-ownership of print and electronic media. That battle was lost in 2005, it is said, even though the PFUJ warned that it would create monopolies with the ability to blackmail the government of the day. The cross-ownership is found across the spectrum, including Geo, Express, Dawn, Dunya, KTN-Sindh, Apna TV, Aaj, Nawa-i-Waqt, and others. Those who do not have cross-ownership are working on this predicament.

### **Dealing with insurgent groups and official security anxieties**

The situation for journalists in certain parts of Pakistan is seen to be one of proliferating threats with no assurance that the state agencies would be effective in maintaining safety and security. Journalists are often unable to resist the pressures and blandishments of various political groups and non-state actors. A serious ethical crisis has ensued with journalists being unable to distance themselves and report objectively on criminal gangs. In Balochistan province particularly, the ongoing conflict between separatist groups and the armed agencies of the Pakistan government, create multiple hazards for journalists. Political sympathies as expressed in editorial comment, could often invite retribution. Additionally, reporting on any one side of the conflict is often viewed by the other as a hostile act.

In the circumstances, a code of conduct that is adopted by journalists in particularly vulnerable areas and widely published as the absolute standard of media conduct from which no departures would in any circumstances be tolerated would be a step towards meeting shared threats. An example, from the state of Manipur in India, where journalists have united to adopt a code of conduct, could be something to draw from. The Manipur code comes out of a complex mix of objectives: to reassert editorial autonomy in the news dissemination process, while providing fair coverage to voices of dissent and ensuring that the media are not seen under any circumstances as accessories to acts of violence.

The first challenge the media had to face was that of identifying what voices of dissent have a legitimate claim to being represented in the media, irrespective of their status under the law. A basic requirement that the media has imposed, is that every statement or claim should have an identifiable source. And that once the source is identified, the editor will decide on how strong the claim to fair coverage is. Any invitation to a press conference, similarly, should have an identifiable source and press releases should be duly signed and bear an



organisational seal. All invitations and press releases should be distributed by the organisation concerned and in no instance will a journalist or a media organisation take on the responsibility on behalf of any political group.

A source of hazard for journalists in conflict situations is that they often, by compulsion or by choice, take on the responsibility of getting the word out on behalf of various political groups – including armed underground outfits. Once a zero tolerance policy is announced and widely broadcast, the groups themselves should be persuaded to honour it. And journalists would be actively dissuaded from volunteering for this manner of service to any manner of political group.

The Manipur code similarly stipulates that when rival claims are made by organisations that conform to all the above requirements, the editor will use his discretion and in most instances, give equal space to both. If there is a threat to human life inherent in any of the claims, the editor will have the right to delete the offending sections from any statement.

Where there are legitimate expectations or anxieties that a particular news report could create communal tension or offence, editors would have the right to delete or omit the concerned material. In all but the minor grievances that could be settled through a letter to the editor of the concerned news organisation, the local union would be the first agency or institution that should be approached by any aggrieved person. The local union would address the concerned grievance according to a transparent set of norms and criteria. And if there has been a violation of the code of conduct, it would institute appropriate sanctions.

Needless to say, the problem with the Manipur code has been, most significantly, to institute the kind of sanctions that could deter repeated breaches. A further source of difficulty is the unrelenting attitude of the state government and the security forces deployed in large numbers in Manipur.

The problem of implementation is complicated by the lukewarm support from other media stakeholders, such as the proprietors. Profit imperatives and political motivations that drive the media are often in conflict with professional standards. Journalists' unions should actively engage with this issue and ensure that profit compulsions are not pursued at the expense of professional ethics and safety.

### **The fight against impunity**

One of the most chastening realities of life in Pakistan is that no incident of a journalist's killing, barring the abduction and subsequent murder of the U.S. national Daniel Pearl in 2002, has ever been taken to court. In very few cases

have the first information report (FIR) recording the occurrence of a crime and opening investigations, registered with the police. This is almost always because of the climate of fear and intimidation that prevails. After the killing of the Geo News reporter Wali Khan Babar in 2011, five possible witnesses were killed in what seemed to be targeted attacks in the city of Karachi.

In the abduction of Hayatullah Khan in 2005 and his subsequent mid-2006 killing after six months in captivity, a judicial commission of inquiry was appointed which submitted its report to the governor of KP. This report has never been made public. Hayatullah Khan's killing had stirred up widespread anxiety and resentment because it occurred after a series of his reports had called into question official government versions of events in the FATA and KP, and suggested that foreign forces were more operationally active in the region than the government was prepared to accept. The judge Sardar Mohammad Raza has given a few interviews since his report was submitted, which have not indicated much about what his findings were. The report submitted in 2007, still remains confidential.

The inquiry report into the killing of Syed Saleem Shahzad, submitted in January 2012, observes how deeply traumatic the incident was. It was not just Shahzad's family and the community of journalists that was left "in a state of shock", it observes, but also "the public at large", since the "net of suspicion was cast, amongst others, on institutions of the state itself".

On the basis of its extensive interviews and investigations, the Justice Mian Saqib Nisar commission concluded that "in all probability, the background of this incident is provided by the War on Terror". This conclusion is warranted by the fact that as an "investigative reporter, Saleem's (sic, Shahzad's) writings probably did, and certainly could have, drawn the ire of all the various belligerents in the War on Terror – the Pakistani state, the non-state actors such as the Taliban and al-Qaida, and foreign actors".

Any one among these diverse elements could in the assessment of the commission, have "had the motive to commit the crime". As a journalist, Shahzad was clearly "in contact with all of these". The commission does not rule out the possibility that the "incident" may have been linked as some witnesses asserted, to the "subsequent drone attack on Ilyas Kashmiri". Kashmiri, an Islamic militant working in Pakistan's northern areas was a high-value target who had been reported dead at various times in the past, until an interview that Shahzad did with him in 2010 established quite firmly that he was alive and active in the insurgency in Afghanistan and the wider region.

The Nisar commission allowed for the possibility that there may have been some agencies interested in determining Kashmiri's whereabouts and could have picked up Shahzad for that reason. The drone attack that killed Kashmiri took place four days after Shahzad's murder. With a surfeit of hypothesis before it, the commission admits that it has been "unable to identify the culprits behind this incident", despite looking very hard "for the kind of substantial evidence/tangible material - direct or circumstantial - which would allow it to single out the culprits from the various suspected quarters".

With this admission of failure or inability, the commission "urges the competent authorities to continue all investigations in the ordinary course of the law, and to interrogate whosoever needs to be interrogated, diligently and without any fear". Certain of the commission's findings on the functioning of the state agencies have been welcomed, such as its recommendation "that the balance between secrecy and accountability in the conduct of intelligence gathering be appropriately re-adjusted, with the aim of restoring public confidence in all institutions of the state".

There is also a firm conclusion that the more important agencies, such as the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) be made

"more law-abiding through a statutory framework carefully outlining their respective mandates and role; that their interaction with the media be carefully institutionally streamlined and regularly documented; that all the Agencies be made more accountable through effective and suitably tailored mechanisms of internal administrative review, Parliamentary oversight, (and) that a forum of Human Rights Ombudsman be created for judicial redressal of citizens' grievances against Agencies, particularly the grievances of the Press against attempts to intimidate, harass and harm them".

Though not within its mandate, the commission also recommended "that the Press be made more law-abiding and accountable through the strengthening of institutions mandated by law to deal with legitimate grievances against it". Certain observers have held that this recommendation, made without context, may be unwarranted since it addresses a separate set of issues altogether. Like much of the official commentary in South Asia on rising atrocities against journalism, this seems suspiciously to be about blaming the messenger.

The Nisar commission report was met with a subdued reaction in Pakistan, given the delicate state of the relations between the country's most vital institutions. There was broad public approval though, for its proposal to bring the intelligence agencies under some form of parliamentary oversight.

The U.S. based campaign and advocacy body, Human Rights Watch, called on the government of Pakistan, to "redouble efforts" to find Shahzad's killers, following the inconclusive inquiry by the Nisar commission. It pointed out that the state intelligence agencies had by no means been relieved of the burden of suspicion. The early investigative failure, in letting personnel of the agencies off without serious interrogation, may have hampered the subsequent course of the inquiry, Human Rights Watch pointed out. "The commission's failure to get to the bottom of the Shahzad killing illustrates the ability of the ISI to remain beyond the reach of Pakistan's criminal justice system", it said: "The government still has the responsibility to identify those responsible for Shahzad's death and hold them accountable, no matter where the evidence leads". Justice for Syed Saleem Shahzad as indeed for all the other journalists killed in Pakistan's years of turmoil, still remains elusive.

### **Wages and working conditions**

Recent years have seen rising defaults by Pakistan's media industry on assurances of fair wages and working conditions held out under national law. For Pakistan's journalists, the NECOSA is a basic charter of rights, which recognises fair wages and working conditions as an absolutely vital part of the guarantee of media freedom. Yet the minimum wage levels specified under national law are rarely paid and the assurances of job security have remained largely, unfulfilled.

The media boom of the last decade may have benefited some of the journalists who enjoy a high public profile. But the majority remain poorly paid and insecure in their terms of employment. In the last three years especially, even the payment of regular salaries has become a rarity in several media houses which continue to face the consequences of shrinking advertising spending and economic slowdown.

The PFUJ won a significant victory when the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2012 directed the body charged with implementation of statutory wage scales, to submit a report on the level of compliance in the news industry. The decision was handed down by a three-member bench of the court, headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, in March 2012. At the urging of the PFUJ, the bench summoned the chairperson of the Implementation Tribunal for Newspaper Employees (ITNE), Nasir Hussain Haidri, to explain the situation.

Pakistan's journalists have gained from the active interest of the country's higher judiciary. In May 2011, the Sindh High Court in Karachi, dismissed identical petitions filed by APNS and the Herald Media group, which sought to quash the Seventh Wage Award for journalists and newspaper workers, announced in 2000. The matter though, went in appeal to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which declined to issue any form of temporary restraint against the implementation of the Seventh Wage Award. At a hearing of the case in July 2011, Pakistan's Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry wondered out loud why the "seths" (or newspaper owners) were not implementing the award. "Workers", he said, are "part and parcel" of any industry, almost like its "backbone".

In October 2011, the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the constitutional validity of NECOSA under which the Seventh Wage Award was determined. In a 75-page judgment written by the Chief Justice, the Court held that "the Seventh Wage Board Award dated October 25, 2001, shall hold the field until it is modified or varied by a later decision of the board published in the manner provided in section 11(2)" of the Act. Since then, a number of newspaper groups have begun implementing the Seventh Wage Award. Some newspaper groups have sought to neutralize the financial benefit accruing to journalists by withdrawing other allowances that were negotiated through the decade of stalemate over the implementation of the award. An Eighth Wage Board is long overdue.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problems faced by journalists in Pakistan are manifold, complex and intrinsically connected to broader social, cultural and economic factors. Immediate and continued efforts from the international community of journalists and press freedom advocates are required to overcome these problems – though solutions may in many cases prove elusive. It is therefore recommended that the following steps be taken:

#### **Media development programs must strengthen the existing institutions of journalism**

Working with journalists must include working with and where ever possible, through the press institutions of the country. Organisations such as the PFUJ and the press clubs have broad networks. These can provide solidarity and support and also help provide venues and forums for safe houses and safety structures. These networks need support so that they are strengthened, particularly as many of the activists in these networks are themselves targeted by extremists. Support includes capacity building and also the commitment of donors to work and implement through these existing networks rather than creating new side networks which will only serve to weaken the national structures which are established.

#### **Capacity Building/Training**

- Training – Already much is being done with regards to this; however there must be emphasis on reaching those journalists most at risk and tailoring training to different needs.
- Safety workshops have proven effective for training journalists working in the remote and dangerous areas of the country and should be continued, and rolled out in other regions and districts as necessary.
- More work is required to establish ties with correspondents working in Pakistan’s remote and rural districts to help eliminate the practice of non-payment of reporters and payment of ‘security’ payments to employers. Further union building and capacity development work should be carried out in concert with any future safety training workshops.

## **Justice through journalism**

- Journalists and journalists unions can and should investigate and consequently publicise the facts around individual cases. In some countries (where the law allows), this can lead to direct prosecutions. In Pakistan the PFUJ is preparing 16 cases for filing. Similarly, in the Philippines, the NUJP and other groups have prepared material and worked with families to launch prosecutions. Detailed investigations in, for example, the case of Saleem Shahzad was given greater publicity by journalistic investigations, including international investigations.

## **Advocacy**

- Journalist's safety is about real people and not just statistics. It is vital that work on the monitoring, collation and follow up is conducted.
- Work needs to build on existing networks to ensure country-wide perspective to reflect the different aspects of the crisis in different regions.
- Improved strategies for engagement with judicial processes and the legal community are needed to intensify the national and international campaigns to end impunity and to assist journalists requiring legal representation and advice.
- Engage with the major political parties and seek commitments not to harass or threaten journalists. Also, to the extent possible, need to reach out to the non-state actors.
- The PFUJ and its international network of supporters must continue the legal campaign for the full implementation of Seventh Wage Board Award.
- Continued pressure must be mounted on employers to provide adequate safety training and equipment, especially in high-risk areas such as Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA.
- Above all, there is a great need for continued expressions of solidarity with reporters in the remote and dangerous districts of Pakistan so that those who seek to impede press freedom are aware the international community of journalists and press freedom advocates remains engaged with the struggles of journalists in the country.

### **Respect for minorities and women in the newsroom**

- Respect for journalists starts in the newsroom. Women, in particular, face particular challenges of safety. Sexual harassment is a serious issue throughout south Asia and needs to be understood in the construct of a safe working environment. The IFJ and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) is about to launch a major project in the region on safety for women journalists in south Asia to assist in addressing this.

### **Funding**

- Emergency safety support plays an essential role in assisting at-risk journalists, their families and witnesses and should be continued. Although primarily this is a responsibility for government and employers, donors should look at ways to increase their provision of direct assistance and journalists can also work together to support the families.
- The work of previous IFJ projects should be continued and expanded through renewed support from international donors.

### **Documentation**

- Work needs to build on existing networks to ensure country-wide perspective to reflect the different aspects of the crisis in different regions. The monitoring network set up by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists in the civil war is a good model.
- Best practice models internationally must be considered. For examples, the Philippines Safety offices have proved to have a significant impact on the work of journalists and the monitoring of cases in the Southern Philippines. We should consider funding a safety office in areas of high risk such as Balochistan/KP-FATA.

### **Care for the families**

- Although primarily this is a responsibility for government and employers, journalists should work together to support the families. For example, in the Philippines, the IFJ works with the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines runs a scholarship fund to pay the education costs of about 100 children of journalists killed. This is supported by donations from journalists in Australia and New Zealand and also some support from in country. Similarly, in Nepal, the IFJ works with the Nepal Children's Education Fund (also supported by donations from Australian



and New Zealand journalists) supports the education of 23 children of murdered journalists.

### **Advocacy and dialogue**

- Political - engage with the major political parties and seek commitments not to harass or threaten journalists.
- Reach out to non-state actors and those that threaten journalists to the extent possible

### **Working with employers**

- Employers must demonstrate a commitment to their journalists if we are to expect anyone else to. Programs must work with employers to gain their commitment and a demonstration of this to fight impunity and implement fair working conditions.

Resisting impunity starts at home. If employers do not respect their journalists, why should we expect anyone else to? Respecting journalists and repudiating impunity means respecting the decisions of the Wages board, creating a cooperative environment in the newsroom, recognising journalists as employees, not contractors, and accepting obligations for the families of a killed journalist. And engaging with other stakeholders to confront the crisis.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This report is the result of an international mission to investigate press freedom in Pakistan – the most dangerous country in which to work as a journalist. In March of this year a delegation of senior journalists and press freedom advocates representing the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliates visited the Pakistani provinces of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the FATA. The mission concluded with a national meeting on March 5 to draw attention to the alarming deterioration in the professional environment for journalism and demand urgent remedial measures. This visit followed an earlier fact-finding mission in 2012 that identified several key areas of concern for a free press in Pakistan including violence and a culture of impunity. This report has analysed the predicament of journalists in each area in an effort to identify commonalities and key areas of concern that future project and advocacy work may seek to remedy. Further, it has offered extensive recommendations to ensure that immediate and continued efforts from the international community of journalists and press freedom advocates are required to overcome these problems.

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