



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JACQUELINE PARK
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director
ELISABETH COSTA
General Secretary

16 December, 2014

Mr. Imran Khan,
Founder/Chairman,
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf,
Sector G-6/4, Islamabad, Pakistan

Condemnation of Attacks on Journalists

Dear Mr. Khan,

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Asia-Pacific, representing journalists and trade unionists in the region, writes to express its serious concerns over the ongoing and repeated incidents of violence and abuses against journalists and media workers in Pakistan – in particular surrounding the political demonstrations organized by your party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The IFJ represents more than 600,000 media workers in 134 countries, including our affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ).

In our earlier letter on September 2, the IFJ raised this matter after similar incidents of intolerance by your cadres towards the media. We also understand that in a meeting with PFUJ later the same month, promises and commitments were made that the incidences of violence and abuses against media would not continue.

The IFJ and the PFUJ had accepted these undertakings as a positive sign for the safety of media workers. However, given the seriousness of the latest attacks including an apparent escalation at attacks directed at female journalists, the IFJ is concerned these statements by you appear to be hollow promises and that political thugs are continuing this onslaught to silence the media.

To outline more clearly on these incidents:

- On December 15, Geo News presenter Sana Mirza was abused while broadcasting live in Lahore. She was forced to take shelter in the TV van after abusive slogans were chanted against her and bottles were pelted at her. During the same event, Geo News senior reporter Ameen Hafeez and a cameraman were injured while giving cover to Mirza. They were attacked with slingshots. Hafeez was hit on the head with a glass ball and collapsed.
- On December 14, Journalists of Geo News TV, AbbTakk TV, the News and the Jang, including senior journalist and PFUJ's former secretary general Mazhar Abbas, were restricted from performing their duties by the PTI cadres in Karachi. Your hostile cadres forced the reporting crew of the Jang Group to stay on the roof of the Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) van and disrupted their reporting with loud and abusive slogans. The PTI cadres also pelted the van with water bottles.
- Female Geo News journalist Sidra Dar was also harassed shortly after you concluded your speech in Karachi. The enraged workers pelted Geo's DSNG van with stones and empty bottles. The PTI workers tried to drag Dar out of the van and yelled abusive language at her.

With continued abuses against journalists, six female journalists in recent weeks have come under attack from your cadres. All of them work for Geo News. Sana Mirza in Lahore; Sidra Dar in Karachi; Farhat Javed, Amna Amir and Maria Memon were attacked in Islamabad and Faisalabad.



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On November 30, small explosives described as crackers, were thrown targeting the DSNG of Dunya News, Dawn News and Abb Tak News channels after the conclusion of a PTI political rally at the Faizabad Interchange. The attack left five media workers injured.

The IFJ is aware of your accusations against the Jang Group, in which at a PTI rally you accused the newspapers of propaganda against yourself and the PTI. Such accusations can only further escalate the violence against journalists and whip up aggressive sentiment.

The IFJ global network, along with our strong journalist community in Pakistan, express deep concern at this state of affairs whereby the media has become the target in this political stoush.

Given your respected global political standing on democracy, the IFJ and its affiliates expect democratic leaders to be the influencers of opinion on the vital role of the media and the principles of freedom of expression. Democracy cannot prosper without a vibrant media to give platform to pluralistic opinions.

We are astutely aware that Pakistan is one of the most dangerous countries for media and that journalists are endeavoring to fulfil their responsibilities under the some of the most hostile working conditions in the world. At this time, when they continue to bear attacks from unknown groups and myriad forces, it is deeply worrying that even responsible political parties, such as PTI, are playing a role in exacerbating that volatile environment.

As a political party aspiring for democratic rule in Pakistan, your commitment to democratic values, human rights, and the freedom of expression should be unconditional and demonstrative. To ensure your commitment to democracy, the IFJ respectfully encourages you to:

- Immediately offer unconditional public apology to all journalists attacked, cease the types of criticisms that are inflaming these attacks;
- To continue a dialogue with the IFJ and the PFUJ in working toward building a safe and free environment for freedom of expression in Pakistan, including respect to opposition voices

I strongly advise that the democratic system of Pakistan will further worsen if the attacks on media continues and responsible political party, and responsible leaders like yourself, continue to create hostile situation for the media.

We look forward to your response to these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Worthington', written in a cursive style.

Jane Worthington
Acting Director
IFJ Asia-Pacific