

# #EndImpunity: Pakistan

- Number of journalists killed since 2005: **106**
- Prosecutions: **3**
- One journalist killed every two months on average
- Most Dangerous: **Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA**



Pakistan has long been among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, with 106 journalists and media workers having lost their lives since 2005. Since 2010, 77 journalists and media workers have been killed in the line of duty: almost one journalist killed every two months. Armed insurgencies and sectarian violence account for a number of these killings but many of them raise suspicions of the involvement of the state's institutions.

The killers of journalists mostly walk free, as Pakistan has so far recorded only three convictions. Among those three convictions, one was in 2016 when the killer of Jang Group journalist Ayub Khattak was sentenced to life imprisonment by a district court in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Khattak was shot dead on October 11, 2013 for his reporting about the drug business. The conviction was successful as his family vigorously pursued the murder charges against the accused. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have seen 31 cases of journalist murders, and none, except in Khattak's case, have been convicted so far.

**Only 1 out of 10 deaths  
in the media is investigated**

**#endimpunity**



Earlier convictions were recorded in the cases of Geo News TV reporter Wali Khan Babar, killed in 2011, and American journalist Daniel Pearl, murdered after his abduction in Karachi in 2002. Babar was killed in 2011 in a targeted attack sponsored by a political party in Karachi city. It is the only case after Pearl's murder that saw justice being delivered in 2015, with two receiving death sentences and four others getting life terms in prison. However, justice did not come easy as at least five witnesses were killed during the process of investigation and trial, and an appeal by the convicts is pending in the Sindh High Court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA are dangerous zones for journalists, with 31 losing their lives since 2005 – three of them in 2017 alone. However, Balochistan – termed 'Cemetery for Journalists' in the IFJ South Asia Press Freedom Report 2014 – remains the most dangerous province for journalists with 31 killings since 2007.

A judicial commission's report submitted in August 2015 concluded that Balochistan remains the worst flashpoint for media practitioners in the country and that the climate of fear and threats of reprisals prevent witnesses to assist the authorities in combating impunity against the attacks and intimidation. The report says that in absence of evidence and witnesses, no banned militant organization or government agency such as police, local administration or any other group could be held responsible for any journalist's killing.

A welcome step in fighting impunity has been the draft of the Journalists Welfare and Protection Bill. As one the key reasons behind Pakistan's failure to effectively fight impunity is believed to be the lack of a legal framework, the government prepared the Bill in 2016 and held consultations with stakeholders. In October, Minister of State for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb said the Bill was ready to be presented before the cabinet for approval.

Justice for killed Pakistani journalists, except Wali Khan Babar and Ayub Khattak, remains elusive. The investigation into Babar's murder was pushed along only after the journalist community, who also closely followed the progress of the case, mounted countrywide pressure. Impunity has taken deep root in Pakistan, particularly with the rise in terrorism after the country aligned itself with the US-led coalition against al-Qaeda and other militant groups in post-9/11 Pakistan.

The atmosphere of lawlessness in Pakistan has not only contributed to more attacks on journalists but also forced many journalists to self-censor in order to survive. In many cases, there were reports suspecting Pakistan's intelligence services' involvement but the government has failed to investigate and punish the murderers. With only three verdicts and one case in the court in more than 100 killings since 2005, impunity in Pakistan is at its worst.



**1 journalist is killed every 10 days in the Asia Pacific**

**International Federation of Journalists**

<http://www.ifj.org/campaigns/end-impunity-2017/>

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