**South Asia Media Solidarity Network Bulletin February: Government fails to restore internet in Kashmir**

**BREAKING:**

**India: Despite Court order, the government remains apathetic to restore internet**

Media workers remain unable to access the internet in Kashmir despite the government claiming the internet has been restored following the court-ordered review. On August 5, 2019 communications from Kashmir were cut off following India’s revocation of Article 370, ending the partial autonomy and statehood of Jammu and Kashmir.

On January 10, 2020, India's Supreme Court termed the communications shutdown "impermissible". On January 14, the government re-introduced limited 2G services. Later on January 28, 2G services were extended to cover 301 websites. Journalists in Kashmir informed the IFJ that the 2G service is painfully slow and unusable. Read more [here](https://samsn.ifj.org/india-despite-court-order-government-remains-apathetic-to-restore-internet/).

**Pakistan: Media in Pakistan failing to pay salaries with deadly ramifications**

The practice of delaying salary payments has become increasingly common in Pakistan with some of the worst offending media companies delaying payments by as much as ten months, despite journalists continuing to work and provide professional services. The term “death by stress” is now well-known. The IFJ and PFUJ have documented more and more cases of the extreme repercussions of non-payment of wages on media workers in the country in the past year. Read more [here](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/pakistan-media-in-pakistan-failing-to-pay-salaries-with-deadly-ramifications.html).

**IFJ releases annual report on  journalist killings**

The IFJ published its annual report on journalist killings [*Roll Call of Deaths and Tragedies*.](https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user_upload/IFJ_2019_Killed_Report_FINAL_spreads.pdf) While it is hard to measure success in campaigns to stop journalist killings, the year has presented some breakthroughs in the Asia-Pacific region and some pause to consider just how far we’ve possibly come. The IFJ mourns the 49 journalists who were murdered in 2019, including nine journalists from South Asia.

**Blogs:**

**Pakistan: Death by stress**

Another media worker has fallen victim of death by stress. Fayyaz Ali, who was a camera operator at news channel Capital TV, died of a fatal heart attack the day he was laid off on January 21.

Read more of Lubna Jerar Naqvi's [blog here.](https://samsn.ifj.org/death-by-stress-in-pakistan/)

**Attacks on journalists**

**Bangladesh: Journalists attacked covering election**

At least nine journalists were attacked while reporting on the Dhaka City Elections on February 1. Media workers across Dhaka from *Agami News*, *Press Bangla Agency, Bangladesh Partidin, Business Standard, Poribortan.com, Jugantor, Daily Nayadiganta* and *Daily Inqilab* were assaulted during their coverage of polling booths. The attackers were allegedly members of the Awami League (AL) party and its student organisation the Bangladesh Chhatra League. Read more [here](https://www.thedailystar.net/dhaka-city-elections-2020/attacks-on-journalists-covering-city-polls-1862119).

**Arrests and Detainment**

**India: Police summoned journalists for publishing banned outfit’s statement**

Police summoned media workers, Naseer Ahmad Ganie, from Outlook Magazine, and Haroon Nabi, from the news agency CNS, for questioning on February 8 for allegedly publishing a statement of the banned Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and sharing a post on WhatsApp. The statement from JKLF called for shutdown on Sunday and Tuesday – two key dates marking the hangings of former members.  Read more [here](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/india-police-interrogate-journalists-for-publishing-banned-outfits-statement.html).

**Pakistan: Journalist Critical of government detained for 'Anti-state' Facebook Posts**

Pakistani journalist, Azhar-ul Haq Wahid was detained for five days for publishing "anti-state" comments on Facebook. The police report said Wahid posted “anti-state and defamatory material against the public functionaries and state departments”. Wahid was arrested on January 16 in Lahore. Read more [here](https://www.news18.com/news/world/pakistan-journalist-critical-of-imran-govt-army-detained-for-anti-state-facebook-posts-2467707.html).

**Harassment**

**Sri Lanka: Tamil journalists receive death threats**

Leaflets threatening to kill seven Tamil journalists were left at the Batticaloa Press Club and a nearby bus stop in Batticaloa, a city in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The leaflets were found under the door of the Batticaloa Press Club and at the nearby bus stop at 2:30 pm on January 23. The pamphlet contains a picture taken earlier this month of all seven attending a memorial of murdered journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge who was assassinated. [Reports](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/sri-lanka-to-reopen-investigation-into-2009-murder-of-lasantha-wickrematunge.html) have stated the current president of Sri Lanka Gotabaya Rajapaksa was responsible for Lasantha’s assassination. Read more [here.](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/sri-lanka-tamil-journalists-receive-death-threats.html)

**Censorship**

**Pakistan: Government introduces controls for digital creators**

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and Pakistan’s federal cabinet began introducing legislation to regulate and fine digital content through January. Starting on January 8, PEMRA proposed a regulation to introduce fees for digital creators, which could result in users who earn money from content on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube forced to pay between PKR 5,000,000 (USD 32,500) and PKR 10,000,000 (USD 65,000).

Later on January 28, Pakistan’s federal cabinet approved a separate piece of legislation without any consultation that would require social media platforms to establish an office in Pakistan. The legislation also empowered the government to fine social media companies PKR 500,000,000 (USD 3,240,000) if the company refuses to comply with directions made by the Ministry of Communications. Read more [here](https://samsn.ifj.org/pakistan-government-clamps-down-on-digital-creators/).

**Union Wins**

**Nepal: National Assembly removes burdensome fines for journalists**

The Nepal National Assembly removed the burdensome draft provisions in the new Media Council Bill on February 6. The original bill introduced a licensing scheme and fined journalists, publishers and editors up to NPR 1,000,000 (USD 9,000) for breaching the code of conduct. The provision was removed following the stringent advocacy from media right organisations including Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Nepal Press Union (NPU), media fraternity and other civil society organisations in Nepal. Read more [here](https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/media-council-bill-upper-house-drops-mandatory-licensing-for-journalists/).

**Nepal: Journalist declared innocent**

Tanka Bahadur Sunar, a journalist from Darpan Post was found innocent of defamation charges by Jhapa District Court on January 21.The charges alleged a defamatory story was published on the Darpan Post online news portal. The court conceded that the posts were published on a different page and dismissed the case against Sunar. Read more [here](http://freedomforum.org.np/success-story-journalist-tanka-sunwar-announced-innocent-by-the-court/).

**Regional Solidarity**

**Afghanistan: Afghan Media outlets demand free flow of government’s information**

In a joint statement issued by the media outlets on February 4, the Afghan Independent Journalists Association and 30 Afghan media outlets demanded increased access to government information. Read more [here](https://samsn.ifj.org/aija-urges-to-ease-free-flow-of-information/).

**Sri Lanka: Journalists mark ‘Black January’**

Journalists called on Sri Lanka's government to take meaningful action to investigate journalist killings and disappearances on the 'Black January' commemoration on January 28. Among the key demands, journalists at the Lipton Circus, Black January event on January 28 called on the new Gotabaya Rajapaksa government to end impunity and secure justice for outstanding unsolved cases of media personnel who have died, disappeared or been injured whilst pursuing their profession. The commemoration was organised jointly by IFJ affiliates, the Federation of Media Employers Trade Union (FMETU), the Free Media Movement (FMM) and Sri Lanka Working Journalist Association (SLWJA) with the Sri Lanka Muslim Forum, the Sri Lanka Young Journalists Association and the Tamil Media Alliance. Read more [here](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/sri-lanka-impunity-still-reigns-as-journalists-mark-black-january.html).

**Opportunities**

**CUNY seeks application for Business Journalism Fellowship**

The McGraw Center for Business Journalism at the City University of New York's Craig Newmark School of Journalism offers a fellowship program to support in-depth coverage of business and the global economy. The program is accepting applications for in-depth text, video or audio pieces. Fellows will receive grants of US$5,000 a month for one to three months. Applications for the Summer 2020 Fellowships are due on July 10, 2020. Read more [here](http://www.mcgrawcenter.org/the-harold-w-mcgraw-jr-business-journalism-fellowships/).

**ICFJ seeks nominations for the 2020 Knight International Journalism Award**

The International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) is seeking nominations for the 2020 ICFJ Knight International Journalism Award. The awards honour journalists whose coverage or media innovations have a significant impact on the lives of people around the world. Nominees can be reporters, editors, technologists, media managers, citizen journalists or bloggers who are from and work in Africa, Asia, Central/Eastern Europe, Latin America/Caribbean or the Middle East. The deadline for the nomination is February 21. Read more [here](https://ijnet.org/en/opportunity/nominations-open-2020-icfj-knight-international-journalism-awards-worldwide).

**For further information contact IFJ Asia - Pacific on   
+61 2 9333 0918**

*The IFJ represents more than 600,000 journalists in 140 countries*

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