



IFJ South Asia Media Bulletin

15 July 2021

Welcome to the IFJ's monthly media bulletin for South Asia's Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN).

IN FOCUS: IFJ launches landmark review of Pakistan media labour laws

Despite the existence of a long-established and extensive constitutional and legal framework, Pakistan's media workers face a redundant and ineffective labour law system that is failing to protect essential worker rights. In a new report launched by the IFJ on July 13, the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA) in its assessment found critical weaknesses in Pakistan's labour rights landscape for media workers; from a non-inclusive legal framework for women, electronic and online/digital journalists to a lack of recognition of freelance media workers to an overall poor awareness and understanding of media laws among media workers. [Decent Work in Pakistani Media: An assessment of labour laws and the impacts for media workers](#) is a critical and much-needed analysis of the labour framework impacting journalists and media workers in Pakistan today, in the wake of endemic issues of non-payment of wages, massive job losses and a parlous overall working environment for professional journalists. As well as outlining the key laws intended to support media workers, the IFJ report sheds a light on the deficiencies of the legal framework and the poor implementation and funding of media regulators that run counter to the principles of decent jobs in Pakistan's media. Read the report, [here](#).

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DECENT WORK IN PAKISTANI MEDIA AN ASSESSMENT OF LABOUR LAWS & THE IMPACTS FOR MEDIA WORKERS

IFJ report - 'Decent Work in Pakistani Media: An assessment of labour laws and the impacts for media workers'

In this bulletin:

- IFJ and South Asian journalists support Afghan media colleagues
- Bangladesh journalists targeting under [Digital Security Act](#)
- India ITR crackdown on free speech
- New IFJ members in Afghanistan and the Maldives
- Sri Lanka refuses to investigate sexual harassment cases
- IFJ launches Union to Union pilot projects in South Asia

The Region

IFJ and South Asian journalists say Afghan media colleagues need support: With the Taliban [reported](#) to have raised its flag above key borders, media monitoring of Afghanistan has documented increasing instances of Taliban control and disruption of media outlets and threats to media. Condemning the attacks, the IFJ's South Asia affiliates expressed solidarity with Afghani journalists as the situation intensifies ahead of the US withdrawal from the country in September. IFJ affiliate the Afghanistan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) [reported](#) Taliban threats to at least eight media outlets including Badghis National Radio and Television, Private TV Obur, Radio Hanzaleh, RadioSimim, Ghazali Radio, Radio Nariman, and Baghis

Taliban seize control of more areas of Afghanistan. The IFJ has received a number of appeals for assistance to flee the country as staff and freelance journalists for international media outlets report concerns for their safety and the failure of employers to act. The IFJ said: “Major international news organisations are being accused by Afghan journalists of ignoring their pleas for help. It is entirely unacceptable that journalists who have worked, often at great personal risk, to cover the conflict in Afghanistan should be left to fend for themselves. Media employers have a duty of care, not just to their full-time staff but to those freelance journalists who are often at the forefront of covering such conflicts”.

National Issues

Afghanistan: With the impending withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, Qala-e-Naw saw the [first assault](#) by the Taliban on a provincial capital since troops started to depart the country. The Taliban assault left eight media outlets displaced and media vulnerable to further attacks.

Bhutan: The third Board meeting of the Media Council of Bhutan held on June 24 [elected](#) Needrup Zangpo as its new chairperson. Zangpo was [serving](#) as the Executive Director at Bhutan Media Foundation.

Maldives: A Maldives Parliament standing committee on independent institution has controversially put forth a [complaint](#) to the Maldives Media Council (MMC). The IFJ and the Maldives Journalists Association (MJA) said it represents a “clear conflict of interest”.

Bangladesh: Journalists in Bangladesh continued to be targeted under the controversial [Digital Security Act](#). Three journalists were investigated, Tanvir Hasan Tanu, Rahim Shuvo, and Abdul Latif Litu for charges for charges under the act.

India: The Indian Supreme Court is currently [debating](#) the constitutionality of Section 124A of India’s Information Technology Rules, 2021 with the rules being used as a tool to crackdown on free speech.

Nepal: The Press Council Nepal has been [called out](#) for not having the authority to monitor the contents of social media after it issued a statement to caution a journalist for posts on social media.

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in Pakistan including the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists criticized the passage of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Privileges (Amendment) Bill, 2021 saying the bill curbs the freedom of expression.

government has controversially elected not to pursue an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment in Sri Lanka media institutions despite a deluge of female journalists reporting incidents of harassment on Twitter.

Media Rights Violations

A total of 16 media rights violations were recorded in this period, including defamation investigations in India into three journalists on July 4 and an investigation of news website Newsclick by the Income Tax Department. There were two attacks on journalists, ten cases of harassment, and one killing. Pakistani anchorperson Nadeem Malik was issued a notice by Pakistan's FIA counter-terrorism wing following comments he made on his program. On June 29, Indian journalist Pateshwari Singh was hit by a vehicle and beaten after reporting on a politician in Uttar Pradesh. Also in Uttar Pradesh, authorities initiated a criminal investigation on against, news outlet The Wire and three journalists Rana Ayyub, Saba Naqvi, and Mohammed Zubair. In Pakistan, journalist Muhammad Bilal Ghauri was summoned for questioning for alleged defamatory remarks made on his YouTube channel. In India, Sulabh Srivastava, a journalist affiliated with the private television channel ABP News, died a day after he filed complaints to Uttar Pradesh Police seeking protection on June 13.

Violations by Type

Killing	2
Arrest/Detention	2
Attack	2
Censorship	1
Harassment	8
Internet Shutdown	0
Law	1
Economic Pressure	0

Violations by Country

Afghanistan	1
Bangladesh	4
Bhutan	0
India	1
Maldives	0
Nepal	6
Pakistan	4
Sri Lanka	0

Bahadur Shahi, the speaker of provincial assembly of the Province 6 government and Minister for Internal Affairs and Law of Karnali Province, Sita Kumari Nepali requesting for revisions on a bill introduced to establish 'Karnali Information Technology and Mass Communications Academy'. The letter claims that the bill was introduced without any consultation with stakeholders.

Sri Lanka: Media Collective, a network of media rights organizations including Free Media Movement (FMM), Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions (FMETU), Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, Tamil Media Alliance and Sri Lanka Young Journalists' Association conducted a media briefing on July 12. The briefing expressed the Media Collective's protest against ongoing Anti-Democratic actions in Sri Lanka including attacks on media and press by Sri Lankan authorities.

New IFJ affiliates: A meeting of the IFJ's Executive Committee on June 29 unanimously agreed to admit three new journalist representative organisations to be members of the IFJ in the Asia-Pacific region – the Myanmar Journalist Association, Afghanistan National Journalist Union (ANJU) and the Myanmar Journalist Network (MJN). The leaders of the two new South Asia affiliates shared their messages with IFJ:

"MJA is excited to be back as a member of IFJ. When MJA was revived in 2020, one of the key aims of the ExCo was to regain IFJ membership as this will help amplify MJA's voice on advocacy for journalists and media rights." – Mohamed Hamdhoon, MJA

"Afghan media and journalists are facing huge challenges and threats. Government is weaker than the past to be able to provide security for journalists and media workers. Past experience shows that media and journalists were declared as military targets by Taliban. But still journalists and media are doing their best to fulfill their responsibilities and trying to survive this critical period." – Faheem Dashty, ANJU

IFJ Blog

A senior police officer threatening a highly respected journalist is likely to have a chilling effect on journalism if it goes unchecked, writes Ruki Fernando.

IFJ At Work:

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its regional union strengthening work under the global Union to Union project. The projects in South Asia include work in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India.

FROM THE MEDIA

- Why RSF deems PM Khan a 'press freedom predator' – from [DW](#)
 - The Indian government continues to harass journalists. I'm facing prison over a tweet. – from [The Washington Post](#)
 - How Lock Reporters in India Exposed the Pandemic's True Death Toll – From [the Global Investigation Journalism Network](#)
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TAKE ACTION!

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Submit your entries for [The AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards](#)

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