



IFJ South Asia Media Bulletin

16 September 2021

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

In Focus:

Pakistan media protests over proposed super regulator: Pakistan's government has proposed a controversial Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) bill that will repeal all existing media laws in Pakistan, replacing them with a single PMDA ordinance. Spearheaded by Minister of Information, Fawad Chaudry, the minister has outlined "plans" to give the new body the sole authority to regulate all film, electronic, print and digital media in the country.

Hundreds of journalists participated in a 'sit in' demonstration from September 12-13, outside the National Press Club in Islamabad before marching to Pakistan's Parliament as the government met to discuss the legislation. At a time when Pakistan already faces starkly declining press freedom and security for media professionals, if passed, the bill will effectively wipe out existing hard-won laws that presently govern the industry. But journalists say they are yet to see the full proposal. The bill's

consultation in the process will have grave implications for Pakistan's global reputation and media freedom.



Journalists participated a 'sit in' demonstration to protest against the PMDA bill. Photo Credit: RIUJ

In this bulletin:

- **Supporting our Afghan colleagues**
- **Copyright used to silence critics in Bangladesh**
- **Appeals to sack perpetrator named in #MeToo movement**
- **Exposing justice denied in the Maldives**
- **IFJ launches Special Afghanistan Solidarity Fund**

The Region

Supporting our Afghan colleagues amid fear and uncertainty:

Since the Taliban's seizure of Afghanistan on August 15, an immense effort

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media workers have been directly affected by the Taliban takeover, with many still being prevented from working and hundreds more being displaced from their workplaces and homes.

IFJ affiliates the Afghanistan Independent Journalist Association (AIJA) and Afghanistan National Journalist Union (ANJU) have told of huge numbers of Afghan journalists fleeing to Kabul from the provinces, while only a comparatively small number were evacuated from the country in the frantic final days before the US withdrawal. Journalists have been evacuated or are awaiting evacuation to Qatar, Italy, France, India, Pakistan, Albania, Canada, Germany, Mexico and Macedonia. Countless more wait in limbo in temporary accommodation.

The IFJ and other media unions and international agencies remain frustrated at the lack of progress to try and secure safe passage for those most at risk that remain in the country with international flights still not adequately functioning to address the acute demand. Both AIJA and ANJU have been working tirelessly to provide support and guidance to media workers across the nation. The IFJ thanks its affiliates for their continued efforts in the face of extreme adversity.

Afghan journalists have begun to speak out against the Taliban despite enduring fear and threats of violence, with more than 150 media workers [signing](#) an open letter to the United Nations calling for concrete action to save Afghanistan's journalists.

Following a massive solidarity drive since the crisis began, the IFJ has received significant contributions to the [IFJ Afghanistan Safety Fund Appeal](#) from journalists and unions with major donations coming in from England, Australia and Canada. Support is already being sent directly to affiliates in Afghanistan to aid journalists on the ground, with the IFJ also assessing and supporting individual cases.

National Issues

Afghanistan: Media groups inside Afghanistan [met](#) with Taliban leaders on September 3 to address concerns around journalist safety. Chaired by

Bangladesh: Government authorities and pro-government establishments have [intensified](#) attempts to silence

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Police. Hujatullah Mujadidi, vice president the Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA), is serving as a focal point for local media groups.

Bhutan: Amid increased concerns regarding the proliferation of fake news on social media, 'citizen journalism and social media' workshops were held throughout the country in August. Facilitated by the Journalist Association of Bhutan (JAB), workshops were conducted in [Bardo Gewog](#), Jamkhar Gewogf and Mendrelgang Gewog.

Maldives: Despite widespread online and offline violence towards journalists, not a single perpetrator has been [brought to justice](#), according to the new report '[Chasing Justice on impunity for crimes against journalists in the Maldives](#)', jointly conducted by Maldives Journalists Association (MJA) and the IFJ.

Pakistan: Pakistan's Supreme Court (SC) [remarked](#) on September 14 that the prevalence of shootings and torture of journalists in Pakistan shows the state of 'lawlessness' in the country. The three-member

on virtual content. According to an Asian Human Right Commission's report, [Netra News](#) was targeted after [publishing](#) a critical news story about a state minister at the Ministry of Power.

India: An appeal requesting WION News and Zee News to remove its editorial consultant M.J Akbar from his post, was [signed](#) by 158 journalists. Akbar was one of the high-profile individuals named in India's #MeToo movement on September 9.

Nepal: Media stakeholders in Nepal are [requesting](#) the government to introduce a relief package to support journalists, media workers and media organisations amid the Covid-19 pandemic. During a meeting organized by Nepal Press Institute, media workers highlighted issues of reduced field-reporting and staff redundancies, among the key problems.

Sri Lanka: The Media Organization Collective which includes IFJ affiliates, the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Union, Free Media Movement and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association [sent](#)

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harassment, also [criticized](#) Islamabad Police IG Qazi Jamil-ur-Rehman for atrocities on journalists.

calling for relief and other logistical support for Afghanistan's journalists.

MEDIA RIGHTS MONITORING

A total of 52 cases of violations were recorded between August 15 to September 15, including the killing of three Afghan journalists, 14 cases of arrest and 12 cases of attack. Afghanistan had the highest number of violations (27) following the Taliban takeover. Fahim Dashti, a veteran leader of the Afghanistan National Journalist Union (ANJU), was killed in Panjshir province on September 5 during a clash between the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRFA), while journalists Ali Reza Ahmadi and Juhad Hamidi were killed in the bombing outside the Kabul airport on August 26. More than 16 media workers were detained by Taliban militants, three journalists were attacked and another three were harassed. At least two female journalists were officially reported as being removed from their positions in media organisations.

The IFJ also recorded 19 media rights violations in India, including a raid on the premises of two television channels, PB 24 News and Duranta TV, and three daily newspapers, Pratibadi Kalam, Kalmer Shakti and Daily Deshar Katha in Tripura on September 8. Jammu and Kashmir authorities raided the homes of four journalists in Srinagar on September 8 and thrashed 12 journalists during news coverage regarding the Muharram procession in Srinagar on August 17.

Other key cases reported from the region were the Bangladesh government's attempt to curb social media platforms and local police attacks on two reporters from Avenues Television in Nepal.

Media Rights Violations

[Violations by Type](#)[Violations by Country](#)

Subscribe	Past Issues		Translate ▼	
	Attack	12	Bhutan	0
	Censorship	2	India	19
	Harassment	18	Maldives	0
	Internet Shutdown	0	Nepal	5
	Law	1	Pakistan	0
	Economic Pressure	2	Sri Lanka	0

FEATURED ACTIONS

Afghanistan: The *Afghanistan* National Journalists' Union (ANJU) and Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) are [providing](#) assistance to journalists and media workers to find appropriate measures for their safety. Both are continuing to assess the needs of the journalists and [campaign](#) for journalists' safety and. IFJ and coordinating with Taliban leaders and international communities for the safety and wellbeing of journalists in Afghanistan.

Bangladesh: The Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum (BMSF) [conducted](#) journalists training on Covid-19 online on August 21. The half-day workshop was attended by more than 50 journalists and was aimed at increasing the sensitivity of journalists to presenting accurate information on Covid-19 and to raise the general public's awareness through reportage on the pandemic.

South Asia - SAMSN: As mounting attacks and threats against Afghan media and journalists coincided with the United States' departure from the country on August 30, the IFJ and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN), [urged](#) the SAARC national governments and international communities to provide a safe haven to Afghan journalists.

Sri Lanka: A media organization collective in Sri Lanka, which includes the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Union (FMETU), Free Media Movement (FMM) and Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association (SLWJA), [wrote](#) to the Inspector General of Police in Colombo requesting the release of Keerthi Ratnayake, a journalist from Lanka e News who was arrested on August 14 and stands accused of providing intelligence information to the Indian embassy in Sri Lanka.

IFJ Blog

In a country like Pakistan, where critical voices find little space and attacks on critical media continue, the dream of a free media remains elusive, [writes](#) Mazhar Abbas.

IFJ At Work:

Maldives: Chasing Justice - impunity research report launched

The Maldives Journalists Association (MJA), the Maldives affiliate of the IFJ, launched its report entitled *Chasing Justice* in the Maldives on August 22. The [report](#) looks at the political history of the Maldives and the impact of autocratic governments on freedom of expression and press freedom and also examines crimes against journalists and the efforts of the incumbent government to fight against impunity. It also includes the findings of a national media survey with journalist responses to press freedom, press safety and the issue of impunity.

Pakistan: Strengthening solidarity for digital workers

The IFJ held a workshop on September 7 on the future of digital media and organising women and young media workers in Pakistan. The workshop evaluated and assessed three major digital media research projects funded under the IFJ's Pakistan project on working conditions and gender equality, funded by the [National Endowment for Democracy](#). The new digital working group emphasised the critical need for unions and press clubs to engage digital media workers as part of their membership grow and for structural reform to promote diversity and inclusivity.

India: NWMI and MSSF partner to raise fund for Afghanistan women Journalists

The [Network of Women in Media in India](#) and Australia's Media Safety and Solidarity Fund are [carrying out](#) fundraising efforts to provide support to Afghanistan's women journalists. 'Journalists for Afghanistan' [was launched this month](#) to raise funds to support female journalists who have been heavily impacted by the Taliban overthrow. Associated Press is allowing its images from its Afghanistan coverage to be sold as part of the fundraiser. It will go toward evacuation efforts, finding safe houses or aiding resettlement for these courageous women.

and the [Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development \(IRADA\)](#) indicate large-scale forced dismissals of journalists from Pakistani media houses and non-payment of media workers arrears are [increasing](#) in Pakistan.



Print from 'Journalists for Afghanistan' fundraiser of military patrol in the province of Helmand, December 10, 2009. Credit: Kevin Frayer / AP

FROM THE MEDIA

- Women's rights thrown to wind in Afghanistan: Taliban bans co-education and female voices on TV, radio - from [Timesnownew.com](#)
- Individual rights can't be deprived unless authorized by law- from [Kuenselonline](#).
- Ridiculous fake news by Indian media might be created under govt support: observer - from [Global Times](#).
- For a bona fide press: On weeding out 'fake journalists'- from [The Hindu](#)
- Afghanistan media struggle to chart path through Taliban upheaval- From [Financial Times](#)
- Press and Taliban- from [DAWN](#)

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Submit videos in [Social Impact Media Awards \(SIMA\)](#)'s [international documentary and educational media competition](#)

Apply for [National Humanities Center's fellowship for the 2022–23 academic year](#)

Apply for [COP26 Climate Justice Journalism Fellowship \(Online\)](#).

Enroll in [Free, online course on newsletter strategies for journalists](#)

Enroll in [Product Strategies for Journalism: Free online course teaches how to align editorial, audience, business and technology](#)

Read and share: When home becomes your newsroom – The [IFJ guide](#) to ensure your rights at home #RIGHTSATHOME #SAFETELEWORK

Read [Truth in a Time of Contagion](#) – IFJ's 2020-21 South Asia Press Freedom Report

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