



IFJ South Asia Media Bulletin

16 December 2021

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

In Focus: Afghan women journalists tell their stories

"I want to show the Taliban and their allies that women never accept defeat," says Noor Begum (named changed), an Afghan journalist and activist, who established a radio station run solely by young women before the Taliban takeover. In *Their Own Words: Afghan Women Journalists Speak*, a joint report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI), tells the lived experiences of women journalists like Noor, struggling for their rights and their professions since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. According to IFJ Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Dear, around 95 per cent of women journalists have been left unemployed because so few are able to continue their work. However, many women are determined to continue their work and tell their stories, even as the Taliban continue to impose [new restrictions](#) on the media, including a [dress code](#) on women journalists. The [report](#), supported by Norsk Journalistlag and launched on Human Rights Day on December 10, marks the culmination of 16-Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Through commissioning this report, the IFJ continues to shine a spotlight on Afghan women journalists and urges the international community to extend support in the shape of humanitarian



In this bulletin:

- The pandemic death toll continues to rise for journalists in South Asia
- Taliban announces eight 'guidelines' to restrict media content
- Access to information still a major challenge in Bhutan
- Andhra Pradesh journalists seek Covid-19 compensation
- RTI commission sans officials in Sri Lanka
- IFJ organises Gender Equality and Safety training in Pakistan

The Region

408 journalists have lost their lives to coronavirus in South Asia: As a deadly new surge of coronavirus cases spreads across South Asia many journalists have suffered, with at least 408 journalists and media workers in the region losing their lives to the virus. The Switzerland based Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) [reveals](#) that India has endured the second highest number of journalist deaths due to Covid-19 in the world, recording 278 fatalities since the virus' outbreak in March 2020. Similarly, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal [are placed](#) under the category of 'most affected countries', with the death tolls standing at 68, 27 and 23 journalists respectively. Bangladesh is at the sixth position in the global ranking, Pakistan is the seventeenth and Nepal is the

The IFJ's affiliates in South Asia note that the high numbers of coronavirus related death was due to a shortage of oxygen and the incapacity of hospitals in the region to adequately deal with the unprecedented number of patients and those deceased. They state that the journalists have been consistently put at risk due to the nature of their work, with many reporting on the front line with a lack of adequate safety measures, leading to a high number of infections. Veteran Indian journalist, [Vinod Dua](#), is the latest media worker to lose their life to Covid-19 in South Asia.

National Issues

Afghanistan: The Taliban has [announced](#) a set of eight religious 'guidelines' that restrict the broadcasting of media that contravenes Islamic values, with several edicts exclusively targeting women journalists and media workers. The guidelines, announced on November 21 by the Taliban's Ministry of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, called on broadcasters to cease airing soap operas or dramas featuring women. The restrictions also instruct all women journalists to wear an "Islamic hijab" while at work.

Bhutan: Media editors and leaders in Bhutan have [stated](#) that journalists' access to information has continued to be a major hurdle in 2021. Sourcing reliable information, particularly from government authorities, bureaucrats, and policymakers, is a particular

Bangladesh: Amid the increased number of attacks on media workers in Bangladesh, including through the misuse of the Digital Security Act (DSA), [a report](#) by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) shows that more than 65% of journalists want to change their profession. The report, shared at a discussion entitled 'Investigative Journalism in Bangladesh: Institutional Challenges of Mass Media' held on December 9, pointed out the lack of internal professional practice, good governance, proper human resource policy and management in the newsroom.

India: Journalists in the state of Andhra Pradesh [organised](#) a hunger strike on November 23, demanding the state government provide compensation to the family members of journalists who have lost their lives to Covid-19. In March, the government of Andhra Pradesh

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

prevented from covering major stories due to a lack of access to information. Bhutan's [Civil Service Act](#) explicitly bars civil servants from passing information to journalists that may be considered 'against' the royal government.

Maldives: The Asian and Pacific Training Centre for ICT for Development (APCICT/ESCAP) [organised](#) a webinar on 'Data Protection and Privacy' for Media/Information Officers and Journalists from November 16-18. The event, hosted in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology of the Maldives, comes at a crucial time for the country as the government drafts the new Privacy and Personal Data Protection Act. The webinar was aimed at enhancing the knowledge of policymakers, journalists and civil servants on the importance of data privacy and protection.

Pakistan: The Advertisements Complaints Redressal Committee (ACRC), which was [formed](#) to resolve grievances from national and regional newspapers regarding the government's advertisement distribution, met for the first time on December 4. The committee assured that through careful development of guidelines and procedures it will do its utmost to resolve the issues. Pakistan's government [is accused of](#)

6555) payable to the family members of journalists who succumbed to coronavirus, but it has not been actioned. The hunger strike received widespread support from the journalism fraternity and political leaders.

Nepal: The Ministry of Women, Children Youth and Sports of Nepal's Province No. 2 [issued](#) a statement criticising a news publication that revealed the reckless actions of the bodyguard of Province No. 2 minister Birendra Singh. On November 30, Kantipur Daily published [an article](#) stating that the bodyguard unnecessarily [fired](#) a pistol three times during the ward level General Convention of the Ruling Nepali Congress in the Sarlahi district. The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) also condemned the press release by the ministry over the Kantipur Daily report.

Sri Lanka: The Sri Lankan government [has not been able to fill](#) the five vacant commissioner positions on the [Right to Information \(RTI\) Commission](#). The commission has been non-functional since September 30, after the terms of three ex-commissioners expired the remaining two commissioners resigned from their posts. Civil society watchdogs and media rights groups have called for the immediate

curb free speech.

Media Rights Violations

The IFJ recorded 15 media rights violations in the South Asia region from November 15 to December 15, 2021, documenting two arrests, eight attacks, four cases of harassment and one misuse of the law. Journalists Samriddhi K Sakuna and Swarna Jha were arrested in the early hours of November 14 in the Tripura state of India for alleged criminal conspiracy and spreading of communal hatred. Pakistani journalists Haider Sherazi and Ambreen Fatima, Sri Lankan journalists Vishwalingam Vishwachandran, Abdul Salam Mohammad Yasim, H.S.M. Halaldeen and A.L. M Rafaidee, and Nepali journalists Ujyalo Network Shubas Darnal and Raman Bam were among the eight attacked. An Indian journalist, Anirban Roy Choudhury, was charged by the police on December 4 while three other Nepali journalists were harassed during their field-reporting. In Afghanistan, the Taliban announced eight religious 'guidelines' restricting the broadcast of media that contravenes Islamic values, with several edicts exclusively targeting women journalists and media workers.

Violations by Type

Killing	0
Arrest/Detention	2
Attack	8
Censorship	0
Harassment	4
Internet Shutdown	0
Law	1
Economic Pressure	0

Violations by Country

Afghanistan	1
Bangladesh	0
Bhutan	0
India	3
Maldives	0
Nepal	5
Pakistan	2
Sri Lanka	4

Featured Action

India: The Indian Journalists Union (IJU), to mark the National Press Day of India on November 16, [urged](#) the journalist community to collectively defend press freedom. The IJU [listed](#) killings, attacks, intimidation, harassment, arbitrary detention and the misuse of law as tools to bar journalists from performing independent reportage. The statement maintains that media houses

media.

Nepal: The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) [organized](#) a discussion on the 'situation and challenges of journalists from Dalit communities'. The meeting identified that journalists from Dalit communities suffer caste-based discrimination, a lack of participation in newsroom decision making processes and disproportionate representation. The discussion stressed the need to introduce a capacity development program to ensure journalists from the Dalit community are represented. "Stringent advocacy on issues of Dalit journalists is needed", the discussion concluded.

IFJ Blog

Representatives from the Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ) discussed the gender issues in Pakistan's media, [writes](#) Lubna Jerar Naqvi.

IFJ At Work:

Pakistan Gender Equality and Safety training: The IFJ, with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), [organised](#) a two-day Gender Equality & Safety Training in Karachi on November 25 and 26. The training aimed to enhance the capability and knowledge of women journalists regarding gender equality and safety in the workplace. The event raised awareness of journalists' rights, gender equality issues and the safety concerns of journalists when reporting in the field. Participants and trainers discussed methods to break the glass ceiling, secure salary increases and promotions, and end workplace harassment.

IFJ and its affiliates mark the UN's 16 Days' Activism Against Gender Violence: To mark the United Nations' 16 Days campaign against gender-based violence, the IFJ and its affiliates [called on](#) governments worldwide to ratify International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 190. The ILO passed the new convention on 10 June 2019, aiming to end violence and harassment in the workplace. [According to IFJ statistics](#), almost 65% of women media workers have experienced intimidation, threats or abuse concerning their work, in a severe threat to freedom of expression and freedom of press. Read the report [here](#).

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

FROM THE MEDIA

- How Bangladesh's Digital Security Act Is Creating a Culture of Fear- from [CARNEGIE](#)
- 'This is a fight to finish': Journalists take to streets against curbs on parliament entry- from [newslaundry](#)
- Afghan Journalists in Exile Keep Spotlight on Their Homeland- from [The Wall Street Journal](#)
- Everything Changed Overnight': Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime – from [The New York Times](#)
- Internet shutdowns bleeding businesses, hitting country's image- from [Business Standard](#)

TAKE ACTION!

Submit entries [2022 World Press Photo Contest](#)

Submit entries [Investigative journalism contest](#)

Apply for [Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics \(FASPE\)](#)

Apply [GNI Newsroom Leadership Program](#)

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

Read [The Covid-19 Story: Unmasking China's Global Strategy](#)

Subscribe to the IFJ and its weekly [newsletter](#)

Donate to the [IFJ Safety Fund](#).

**In Solidarity,
IFJ Asia-Pacific**

Stay updated with IFJ - [Subscribe](#)

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Redfern, NSW, 2016
Australia

Contact IFJ Asia-Pacific:
www.ifj.org/regions/asia-pacific

Copyright © 2021 International Federation of Journalists, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list

This email was sent to [<<Email - correo electrónico>>](#)

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

International Federation of Journalists · Rue de la Loi 155, City of Brussels, Belgium · City of Brussels 1040 · Belgium