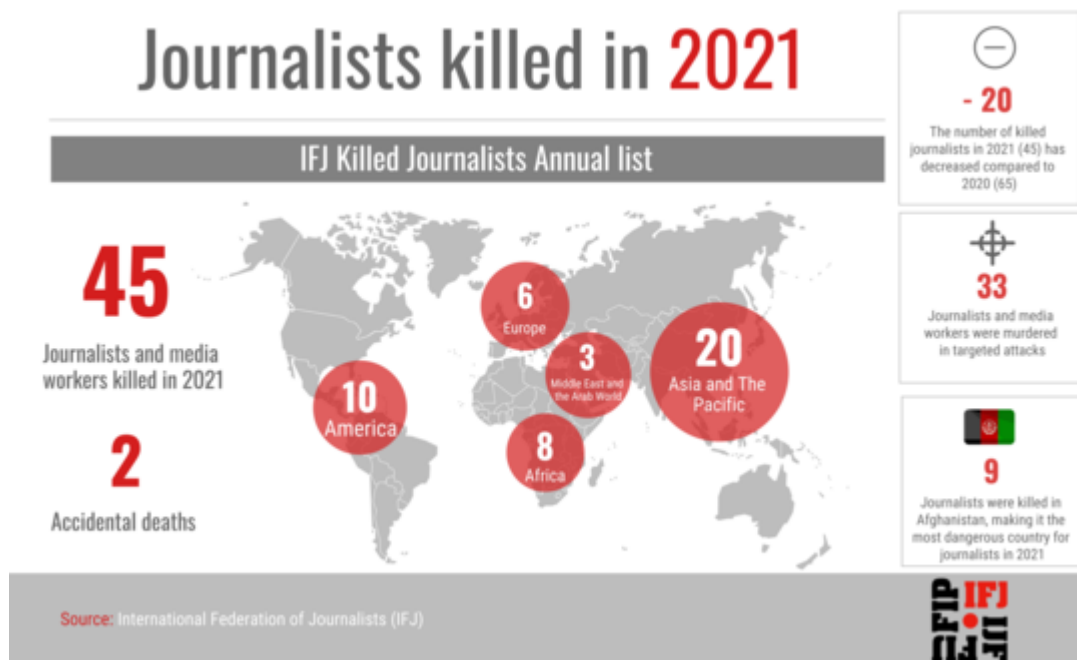


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IFJ South Asia Media Bulletin

25 January 2022

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



In Focus: Asia Pacific region tops IFJ's killed list

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currently detained, 162 of which are in the Asia Pacific region

Afghanistan topped the list as the most dangerous country for journalists in 2021, with nine journalists killed. Across South Asia, four journalists were killed in India, three in Pakistan and one in Bangladesh. The Asia Pacific was the deadliest region, with 20 journalists losing their lives.

The figure is one of the lowest since the IFJ began publishing its annual reports on journalists killed in work-related incidents. In 2020, the IFJ recorded 65 deaths, including 31 in the Asia Pacific region.

However, the high death toll has remained constant in Afghanistan as the Taliban regime took hold in August 2021. On January 1, Bismillah Adel Aimaq, the manager of Afghan radio station Sada-e-Ghor, was [killed](#) by unidentified gunmen. Three Afghan female media workers, Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat and Shahnaz Roafi, all of whom worked in Enikass TV's dubbing division, were [gunned down](#) in separate locations on March 2.

In Bangladesh, local correspondent for Bangladesh Samachar, Burhan Uddin Mujakker, was [shot in the neck](#) and fatally wounded in a "political clash" in the Bangladeshi district of Noakhali.

A Pakistani reporter for local channel Metro News 1, Shahid Zehri, was [killed](#) on October 10 when a bomb exploded in his car in the Hub area of Balochistan province, while in India, the body of reporter Raman Rashypap was [found in a mortuary](#) on October 3, a day after he covered violent demonstrations between farmers and political supporters in Lakhimpur Kheriwas.

The death toll continues to rise in 2022 with 6 deaths already [recorded](#) globally in the first weeks of January. On January 24, a reporter for Pakistan's Capital News TV, Hasnain Shah was gunned down in front of Lahore Press Club by unknown assailants in the latest incident of violence against journalists in South Asia.

In this bulletin:

- **Attacks and job losses in Afghanistan continue to increase**
- **Kashmir Press Club forcibly closed**
- **IFJ launches campaign to assess Pakistan's digital media landscape**
- **Bangladesh makes preparations to enact fake news policy**
- **FNJ's discussion on gender disparity in Nepali newsrooms**

Several Afghan journalists have been attacked and detained in the first weeks of 2022, as the Taliban assures press freedom organisations of its commitment to an independent and free media. On January 18, Taliban spokesperson, Inamullah Samagani [said](#), “we are making efforts to create good coordination with the media and (give) good opportunities for them to survive and continue their activities. The presence of a free media is necessary for a good and accountable society.” However, incidents of attack have already increased in 2022. On January 10, Afghan journalist Noor Mohammad Hashemi, deputy director of Salam Afghanistan Media Organisation, was [attacked](#) by three unidentified men. On January 6, Taliban authorities [detained](#) three journalists, Faisal Modaris, Idris Rahimi and Milad Azizi, who had [recently covered](#) protests in the Panjshir province, reporting residents’ harsh criticism of the Taliban militia’s killing of a civilian in the area. A [recent survey](#) by IFJ affiliate, the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA), found that at least 231 media outlets have closed since the Taliban seized power, and over 60% of journalists and media workers are no longer able to work. More than 80% of women journalists have lost their jobs since August, with harsh media restrictions making it almost impossible for women to maintain positions in the media.

National Issues

Afghanistan: Amid increased censorship and economic hardship for many media workers, representatives from 85 local radio stations [met](#) with members of the Taliban on January 3 to seek the Taliban’s official position on Afghanistan’s media law. During the meeting, the representatives raised several issues including the necessity to obtain prior approval to cover news stories, a policy that bars women from working in the media and increased radio station shutdowns.

Bangladesh: On January 5, a parliamentary standing committee on Bangladesh’s Information Ministry [asked](#) the ministry to begin necessary steps to enact a policy to prevent rumours and fake news on social media. The parliamentary body put forth its recommendation at its tenth meeting at the parliament building in Dhaka. In October 2021, the parliamentary committee had [asked](#) for the establishment of a “fact-checking and counter-narrative of the fact cell” under the Press Information Department (PID).

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media platforms to share their complaints and frustrations regarding judicial decisions. On December 30, a woman [alleged](#), through a Facebook post, that a miscarriage of justice had taken place in a case related to the sale of a building in Bhutan's capital Thimpu. In another case, Lhab Dorji's daughter [posted](#) a video on Facebook on December 7, alleging that her parents were trailed unfairly. Bhutan's anti-corruption commission had previously [filed](#) a case against former Trongsa Dzongdag, Lhab Dorji, and his wife Karma Tshetrim Dolma, in 2019.

Maldives: Noting some positive development in the state of media freedom in the Maldives in the last year, Human Rights Watch (HRW) [reports](#) that the Maldivian authorities failed to adequately address threats and violence by extremist Islamist groups against journalists, politicians and activists in 2021. The report [highlights](#) the failure of the government-appointed commission to investigate the cases of journalist Ahmed Rilwan, who disappeared in 2014, and blogger Yamin Rasheed, who was killed in 2017.

Pakistan: Issuing a joint statement on January 3, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan Bar Council (PBC), Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

media body in Indian-administered Kashmir, has been [forcibly closed](#) following a raid by armed police. On January 15, a small group of journalists supportive of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party [stormed](#) the KPC offices in Srinagar and declared interim control of the organisation, with the assistance of police and paramilitary. A collective of press freedom organisations in Kashmir denounced the shutdown, terming it "highly condemnable and completely illegal".

Nepal: The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) [organised](#) a discussion with women journalists on December 29 to consider the particular challenges they face. The consultation identified the lack of willingness from media houses to employ women in leadership roles, poor safety situation, inadequate capacity development, and gender-based discrimination in the newsroom as pressing issues that hinder gender parity.

Sri Lanka: IFJ affiliates Free Media Movement (FMM) and the Sri Lankan Working Journalists Association (SLWJA) [requested](#) Sri Lanka's Minister of Mass Media and

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directives to indict Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, owner of the News International, and two of its staff, Aamir Ghauri and Ansar Abbasi, for publishing an affidavit accusing Pakistan's former Chief Justice, Saqib Nisar, of corruption. Senior journalist Ansar Abbasi [published](#) the report containing the affidavit on November 15, 2021, which accused former Chief Justice, Mian Saqib Nisar, of misconduct while in office.

suspension of Manjula Samarasekera, the Head of the Digital Media Department of state-owned Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL), from his position. The letter highlights that a government-owned media organisation disregarded the government's own law regarding the rights of its employees, with the press freedom organisations seeking justice for Allahperuma's illegal dismissal.

Media Rights Violations

The IFJ recorded 14 media rights violations in the South Asia region from December 15, 2021, to January 25, 2022, including one killing. On January 24, a reporter for Pakistan's Capital News TV, Hasnain Shah was gunned down in front of Lahore Press Club by unknown assailants.

Out of four cases of attack, two were from Afghanistan, one was from India and one was from Bangladesh. On January 15, the Taliban attacked journalist Zaki Qais in Afghanistan and, on January 10, Noor Mohammad Hashemi, deputy director of Salam Afghanistan Media Organisation, was assaulted by an unidentified group. In Bangladesh, Hossain Baksh, a cameraperson for the news channel ATN News, was attacked by an unknown group while covering the elections of the Madhabpur union under Kamolganj Upazila of Moulvibazar on January 12.

The IFJ documented four cases of harassment during the period. On December 21, several journalists from Nepal were barred from reporting on parliamentary affairs, while reporters Premchandra Jha and Pankha Bahadur Shahi from Nepal were harassed. Indian journalist Jitendra Jaiswal was detained under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), sections 151, 107, and 116, on January 10. Manjula Samarasekera, Head of Digital Media Department of state-owned Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL), was illegally dismissed from his position. A charge against News International's owner, Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman,

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**Violations by Type**

Killing	1
Arrest/Detention	1
Attack	4
Censorship	0
Harassment	4
Internet Shutdown	0
Law	3
Economic Pressure	1

Violations by Country

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

Featured Action

Sri Lanka: The Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions (FMETU), in partnership with the British Council, Colombo, and the Rainbow Institute of Communication, [concluded](#) a '*Mediathon*' on December 16, 2021. The event was an intensive 21-hour online training, focusing on social inclusion and ethics for journalists. A total of 130 journalists, from newspaper, radio, television and digital media, as well as media students, representing all main communities and languages in Sri Lanka, successfully completed the training. The *Mediathon* focused on the role of media in fostering attitudes and behaviours that build a socially cohesive, peaceful and prosperous society.

Pakistan: The IFJ launched a digital campaign, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), to assess Pakistan's digital media landscape, promote digitalisation in the media, and build the capacity and labour rights of digital media workers. Five digital journalists have been chosen as campaigners to undertake the project. Following the initial training, the campaigners began digital campaigns in their towns and provinces using Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups, Twitter accounts, and audio-visual content.

IFJ Blog

In an excerpt from a joint campaign by the IFJ and the Network of Women in Media, India, and supported by Norsk Journalistlag, Afghan journalist Makia

made an escape, first to Pakistan, and now starting life anew in Canada. Read the full transcript [here](#).



IFJ At Work:

Gender Equity and Safety training in Karachi: The IFJ, with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), arranged a two-day Gender Equality & Safety Training workshop for members of the National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad on December 21-22, 2021. Around 21 members of the NCP participated in this two-day training workshop, with participants and trainers discussing journalists' rights, gender equality issues, breaking the glass ceiling, ending harassment at the workplace, securing salary increases and the promotion of more women in decision-making positions.

FROM THE MEDIA

- Nepal can do much better – from [The Kathmandu Post](#)
- Hate speech in the time of free speech – from [The Hindu](#)
- Almost 80% of Afghan journalists changed profession post Taliban takeover – from [Business Standard](#)
- Right to internet must be fundamental right – from [Kuensel](#)
- Judiciary's silence more dangerous than online videos – from [Kuensel](#)
- Declining standards of journalism – from [The Kathmandu Post](#)
- Taliban Rules Bring Uncertainty for Provincial Media – from [Voice of America](#)

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Apply for the ILO's e-learning program - [Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work](#)

Submit nominations for the [2022 Anja Niedringhaus Courage in Photojournalism Award](#)

Apply for [Peggy Girshman Idea Grants](#)

Apply for the [2022 Ochberg Fellowship](#)

Apply for [The One World Media Award](#)

Register for the [Asian Press photo Competition](#)

Read and share the [IFJ 2021 Killed List](#)

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

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

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**International Federation of Journalists
Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO)**
245 Chalmers Street
Redfern, NSW, 2016
Australia

Contact IFJ Asia-Pacific:
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