

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan



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Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan

MEDIA WATCH REPORT

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With the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 - 20/03/2014) coming to an end, Afghanistan has still faced victims of freedom of speech and media. The community of Afghanistan's journalists lost five members and incurred tens of violent incidents.

However, the State of Afghanistan did not undertake even a single one of tens of violent cases committed against journalists and media and, therefore, did not try and punish any perpetrator.

Given the problems and challenges in the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 - 20/03/2014), the upcoming 1393 (21/03/2014 - 20/03/2015) is predicted to bring even more challenges and violence for journalists. A number of high profile events will take place in this year which will not come free of challenges and violence: presidential elections, provincial councils' elections, and withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

The killing of a foreign journalist in broad daylight in Kabul on March 11, 2014, at a time when the city was under full-scale security measures for the funeral of the first Vice President, Marshal Fahim, raised serious questions with regard to the security of foreign journalists in Kabul. On the other hand, beating journalists in Mazar-e-Sharif alarmed danger bells for the safety of journalists in provinces generally considered as secure.

Against the backdrop of all challenges and problems that journalists have faced in the past 13 years, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan wishes a happy Nowruz to all journalists across the country and hopes that the new government administration, that will take office after the Elections this spring, can understand and work to solve the problems that journalists face. Nai calls on the new President of Afghanistan to seriously pursue the cases of violence against journalists and save the only significant achievement of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The current issue of Media Watch Newsletter contains the following topics:

- 1. A journalist killed along with his three family members in Kabul**
- 2. Afghanistan media banned news coverage of Taliban terrorist attacks**
- 3. An English journalist mysteriously killed in Kabul**
- 4. The report of the first polling on Afghanistan media in the past decade published**
- 5. Foreign troops briefly arrested a Radio Killid journalist in Ghazni**
- 6. A freelance journalist beaten in Mazar-e-Sharif**
- 7. Violence against journalists continued in the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 - 20/03/2014)**
- 8. The Chair of Baghlan Journalists Union and Head of Tanweer TV were unlawfully summoned by the Appellate Attorney Office in the Baghlan**

A journalist killed along with his three family members in Kabul

Sardar Ahmad, the reporter for Agence France-Presse along with his wife and two children was shot dead by armed terrorists in Kabul Serena Hotel in the evening to Nowruz (March 20, 2014). Sardar's other one-year-old child was seriously injured.

A group of terrorists entered Kabul Serena Hotel in the last hours of the solar year 1392 (evening of March 20, 2014), opened fire at the guests and killed nine including women and children.

Sardar Ahmad and his wife who was holding their breast-feeding child sat around the table while their six-



year-old Nilofar and four-year-old Omar were playing beside the table – all celebrating Nowruz, the New Year. Moments later, a group of four terrorists, who had already managed to enter the dining hall of the hotel, opened fire at guests including Sardar's family.

Abuzar, 18-months old, is the only survivor from Sardar's family. He was shot in his head and chest four times and was in coma for two days before gained back his consciousness in hospital.

This suicide attack which killed Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two of his three children, drew sharp reactions from governmental, non-governmental and international organizations.

The UNAMA office in Kabul condemned the attack and reiterated that such indiscriminate attacks on civilian locations were breaches of international humanitarian law.

The United States' State Department called the Nowruz evening attack on Serena Hotel very tragic. Office of the President of Afghanistan called the Taliban's attack as a crime against humanity and seriously condemned it.

Journalists, journalists unions and advocacy groups for media and freedom of speech seriously condemned the attack and the perpetrators. They agreed to ban publishing and broadcasting any statement or interview with Taliban in Afghanistan media. They also agreed to put in place a two-week ban on media coverage of all terrorist activities.

In addition to its press release, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan held a press conference in which it called the tragic loss of Mr. Ahmad and his three family members as an unforgivable crime committed by terrorists.

Sediqullah Tawhidi, Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan called the attack on Sardar Ahmad and the journalist's family as a terrorist attack and asked the President to stop calling the enemies of journalists, children, women and citizens of this country as his 'brothers'.

The Media Watch Director at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that terrorists did not have the capacity to carry out such an attack unless they have been assisted from the inside of the Hotel. He called on the Government of Afghanistan to seriously pursue the case and identify the main perpetrators behind the attack otherwise people will conclude that such attacks are arranged in coordination with the State of Afghanistan.

The Office of the Agence France-Presse said that the killing of the journalist shocked and disturbed many.

Emmanuel Hoog, the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Agence France-Presse called the attack a very painful incident and a big loss for the Agence.

Director of News Department at the Agence France-Presse told media in Paris: "This was shocking news and a big loss for France-Presse. Everyone in the Agence's Office feel pathetic. Sardar Ahmad was one of our best journalists in Afghanistan. It is difficult for many to have such a journalist in Afghanistan to provide a good media coverage."

Many users of social media such as Facebook and Twitter have demonstrated their anger in response to the attack on this journalist and his family. They have shared his pictures and showed their sympathy.

Five more people, including four foreigners, lost their lives in the Nowruz-evening attack in Kabul Serena Hotel that also killed Sardar Ahmad and three members of his family.

Since January 2014, four journalists have lost their lives in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Mr. Noor Ahmad Noori was brutally and mysteriously killed in Lashkargah, Helmand Province, only

hours after he had gone missing. His body was found in a bag in Lashkargah later. Mr. Shaahed Ahmad, a young journalist who worked for Radio Nawa was killed in a suicide attack in Kabul City. Mr. Nils Horner, a Swedish journalist was shot dead by armed individuals in the most secure area of Kabul City in broad daylight which has added to the security concerns of journalists and organizations supporting media.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly condemns the killing of Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two children and calls on the State of Afghanistan to immediately identify and bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice.

Media Watch calls on the State of Afghanistan, particularly the executive branch, to put in place special safety measures for journalists. Media Watch does not believe in statesmen's chanting slogans of supporting freedom of speech. Such slogans come short of providing any protection mechanism and never translate into action.

The terrorists' penetration into Kabul's only five-star hotel, which is one of the safest spots in the country, has created many speculations as well as questions on taking guns and ammunition through several check points at the entrance of the hotel. The State of Afghanistan has to answer to all these questions and speculations.

Afghanistan media banned news coverage of Taliban terrorist attacks

After the killing of the Agence France-Presse journalist, Sardar Ahmad along with his wife and two children, by terrorist Taliban in Kabul City in the evening before Nowruz, media directors and journalists suggested a two-week ban on any media coverage of news regarding Taliban. Given the circumstances, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan supported the decision and announced the ban on news coverage of Taliban activities.

Sidiqullah Tawhidi, Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan said at a news conference on March 22, 2014: "A number of our colleagues and journalists decided to put in place a two-week ban on news coverage of Taliban activities. Nai Supports their decision and believes that terrorists do not recognize any boundary for killing humans."

Mr. Tawhidi continued: "In the past 12 years, Afghanistan media have treated Taliban with patience and referred to Taliban fighters who regularly kill women, children, students and mullahs with the same terms as they use for the National Army soldiers who lose their lives to save people."

Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan mentioned of neighboring countries' media including India's, Pakistan's and Arab countries' which call the enemies and murderers of their people as 'terrorist' and use the term 'martyr' for those who lose their lives in the fight against those 'terrorists'. However, media in Afghanistan call the former as 'armed opposition to the government'.

Mr. Tawhidi added: "We have not differentiated in our publishing and broadcasting news and reports between Taliban, police and national army. The result has been that the Taliban killed journalists starting from beheading of Ajmal Naqshbandi through the most recent incident of killing Sardar Ahmad along with three members of his family. Taliban do not regard and value the impartiality of journalists and the principles of journalism. Unfortunately, journalists' impartiality has not contributed to saving their lives."

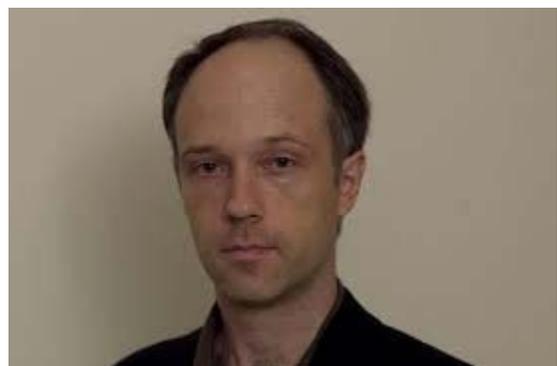
Mr. Tawhidi believes that Taliban intend to create fear and terror among people through conducting terrorist attacks; by refusing to cover their terrorist attacks media can prevent them from reaching their objectives.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan appreciates the conduct of media during the period of the ban on the coverage of Taliban-related news and reiterates that banning on the broadcasting and publishing reports and news regarding terrorist activities is not considered as censorship. Media in a society have the responsibility to support national values and national interests which also includes public security.

A foreign journalist killed in Wazir Akbar Khan area in Kabul City

A Swedish journalist of English origins was shot by armed individuals in Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul City on March 11, 2014 and lost his life on the way to the hospital.

Mr. Nils Horner was 51 years old and worked as a journalist for a Swedish radio. He arrived in Afghanistan two days before he was killed here. He was targeted in Wazir Akbar Khan area which is considered as one of the most secure neighborhoods of Kabul City where foreign embassies and offices of many international organizations are located.



Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly condemns the killing of Mr. Nils Horner.

Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, Mr. Sediqullah Tawhidi, said in a press conference: “the mysterious killing of Mr. Nils Horner, the Swedish journalist, has severely shocked the media and journalists’ community in Afghanistan.”

Mr. Tawhidi called on the President to emphasize on detective organs to identify and arrest the perpetrators behind this murder.

At the same time, Mr. Sediq Sediqi, the Ministry of Interior’s spokesperson, said that this foreign individual has been shot dead by a pistol fire and investigations on the case continue.

Meanwhile, residents of Kabul City comment that while there are many security personnel in the area, they are more involved with their own security than providing security for citizens.

Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan said: “Killing journalists in these sensitive circumstances will create serious security challenges for journalists and prevent them from providing accurate reports on the elections.

At the same time, a number of journalists who work for different media outlets in the country say that despite the fact that journalists face multiple challenges, such security challenges will not prevent them from their professional works.

On the other hand, some other journalists say that unless such security threats and violence against journalists are prevented, they may leave negative impacts on journalists and may even affect the national elections process.

The Swedish journalist had previously traveled to Afghanistan at three different times: first, when the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001; next, to cover the presidential elections in 2009; then, to meet with a number of officials including with Mr. Stefan de Mistura the then UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Afghanistan in 2010.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that killing and beating of journalists have created an uncertain and fearful atmosphere in the journalists’ community. This may lower the morale of the journalists who, in turn, may not be able to fulfil their effective role in the upcoming elections.

Providing physical, mental, and financial security for journalists is among the obligations of the State. When journalists are beaten, injured, or even killed in the most secure parts of the country, it is an indication that the State has overlooked its obligations.

Sadly the cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in the last decade have remained silenced and abandoned and no perpetrator has been identified or brought to justice. This indicates

that the State has remained indifferent about violence against journalists and has come short in its commitment to defend freedom of speech and media.

The role of media and journalists is very crucial in the upcoming presidential election which will for the first time mark a peaceful transition of political power and therefore will be a turning point in the political history of Afghanistan. However, if there is not a secure and trustful environment provided, the journalists will not be able to work as they are expected.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls on the President to order a thorough investigation of the two above-mentioned cases and task the security forces to take special measures to provide a secure and trustful environment for journalists and media.

The report of the first polling on Afghanistan media in the past decade published

Approaching to the end of the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 - 20/03/2014) Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan in cooperation with Nai's Graduates Team conducted a polling on the decade-long media activity in the country. The polling participants included 80 journalists and media directors and over 200 residents of Kabul including youth, women, businesspeople, students and university instructors.

Mr. Sediqullah Tawhidi, Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, stated in a press conference the goals of this polling as following: "We wanted to find out about where we stand now after a decade of media activities. Do people support us? Have the intra-organizational problems of media entities been solved yet? Does censorship still exist? Have the organizations supporting media and journalist work properly?"

Participants in this polling believe that the State should not interfere into media affairs and if it makes publishing and broadcasting policy for media then media and journalists will undoubtedly lose their freedom of activity.

Interviewees also stated that the majority of people get their news and reports through domestic media and only some citizens refer to foreign and international media for getting information. Some citizens usually go to international media because of the lack of accurate statistics in domestic media reports.

Interviewed citizens usually supported music, entertainment and satirical programs and called broadcasting them as essential. They wanted the original music of Afghanistan and the musicians

to be supported. A few among the interviewees also stated their opposition to the mentioned programs and called them against religious mandates.

The majority of journalists and media directors who took part in the polling believe that journalists face multiple threats during reporting and such threats even claim the lives of some journalists every year.

Journalists participated in the polling stated that the State wants to censor but faces legal challenges, therefore, it tries indirectly to put limitations on media which has not been successful yet. Some also believed that the State has neither directly nor indirectly interfered into media affairs but it is local powerbrokers who try to press and censor some reports.

The majority of citizens who took part in this polling confirmed that media report on corruption in the country but yet not to a sufficient extent and suggested to increase such reports.

In the areas of capacity building and professional work, the participating journalists stated that journalists have gained more skills and significantly improved in preparing and producing reports and news; yet they suggested that media educational institutions as well as academic institutions should further work in this area.

The interviewed citizens believed that media's political programs and analyses have basically contributed in raising the level of public awareness and that through these programs people had the opportunity of learning about multiple political figures, groups and opinions. They supported such programs and analyses. Yet they emphasized on media and independent journalists to maintain their neutrality.

Also the participating citizens in this polling liked the discussions and debates among political figures, groups and parties that are broadcast through media. They believed that such political debates and discussions are better than fighting in the country.

Participants stated that media have the capacity to criticize the Statesmen and are in fact the only entities to do so. Some thought that media give enough attention to this subject while others believed that the number of criticizing programs was not enough.

The all-around countrywide news coverage was another topic that the journalists and media chief editors were asked about during the polling. Some of them believe that insecurity, war, and presence of some local powerbrokers have prevented journalists and reporters to travel to and cover news stories in all parts of the country. But some others believed that this challenge has largely been dealt with.

Self-censorship among journalists is another challenge in reporting in Afghanistan. The majority of those journalists who participated in the polling said that self-censorship exists in media and has grown wider in the recent years.

The majority of journalists and chief editors who participated in the polling believed that independent media in the country have not reached financial independence and had to be funded by donor agencies and countries that assist Afghanistan.

The journalists who took part in the polling said that in the absence of the Law of Access to Information they have faced difficulties in obtaining information for their professional work.

Lack of access to information is among the persistent problems for Afghanistan journalists which can be solved by approving of the Law of Access to Information. Lack of such approved Law prevents journalists from producing investigative reports.

The journalists also responded to questions about the role of government's spokespersons in providing information. They said that only a few of them have provided information. They specifically complained about the spokespersons for the Office of the President, Ministry of Defense, National Security Directorate, and a number of provincial government offices.

There were different opinions on the role of media and news agencies with some called their role as prominent while others did not agree. Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has been referred to as a successful organization.

Most of the journalists said that they have been continuously facing intra-organizational problems and mentioned of the absence of a recruitment and benefits law for journalists. According to the participating journalists, owners of media organizations as well as chief editors are left free to recruit or dismiss journalists as they wish. A large number of journalists also complained about lack of transportation services, lawful holidays and increasing their salaries.

Responding journalists reported that they were happy about professional training services at the Nai Media Institute and the Journalism Schools. Yet they did not think they were sufficient and believe that due to shortage in professional cadres, media have often committed errors and mistakes in reporting.

At the end of the report on this polling, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan presents a set of concrete suggestions on more freedom of speech and safety of journalists as following:

- The Law of Access to Information should be immediately approved, signed, and taken effect.

- The Government of Afghanistan has the responsibility to provide a secure environment for journalists to work. It should specifically prioritize journalists' security on the eve of the elections through putting specific measures in place and notify the public about it.
- The Government of Afghanistan should revise the job descriptions of its spokespersons and recruit them only for the purposes of providing information for media and other inquiring organizations.
- The Ministry of Information and Culture should immediately finalize the establishing of Media High Council so that the latter can start working on preparing the general media policy in the country.
- The Ministry of Information and Culture should press other government institutions to pursue the cases of violence against journalists so that none of them can be left behind or abandoned.
- The Ministry of Information and Culture should immediately establish the Mass Media Commission.
- The Ministry of Information and Culture, in cooperation with other relevant institutions, should assure the journalists' community in the country that they will not be pressured or threatened by government institutions anymore.
- International organizations and donor countries should continue their support to the independent media in Afghanistan.
- National journalists' entities should strengthen and promote the media sector through advocacy and capacity building programs more than before.
- Media owners and chief editors should revise their contracts with journalists and base them, at least, on the country's currently effective Employment Law.
- Media should maintain professionalism and neutrality in their programs and should refrain from any ethnic, linguistic, or regional inclinations in their professional work.
- Media should further focus on their political programs and should increase the number of such programs.

- The Ministry of Higher Education and other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations should pave the way for further standardized education in the fields of media and journalism.
- People should also help media in reporting from remote areas which in fact help people back in providing them with timely information.
- Media should produce more investigative reports and programs and help in advancing public's political and social consciousness.

American troops briefly arrested a Radio Killid journalist in Ghazni

Afghan and American Special Forces conducted a military operation in Andar District of Ghazni Province on March 26, 2014 at 12:00 am. They detained a number of local residents including Mr. Hekmatullah Arian, Radio Killid's Journalist in Ghazni Province. He was released from detention 24 hours later.

Hekmatullah Arian told Media Watch: "After a long period of time I decided to spend a night with my family which lives in Andar District of Ghazni Province. It was 12:00 am that a number of Afghan Special Forces entered our home, first beat me and then submitted me to the American forces. They (the Americans) took me to an unknown place and when learned that I am a journalist, they behaved well with me, turned me to the Andar District police. Then I was released."

The Afghanistan and American Special Forces arrested Mr. Arian on the charges of having relations and cooperating with terrorists and Taliban. He said that the Americans wanted to find out what kind of relations he had with Taliban.

But security officials in Ghazni province say that the Afghanistan and American Special Forces carried out the joint operation to arrest a terrorist Taliban's renowned commander.

Engineer Lotfullah Kamrani, Andar District Police Commander, told Media Watch via phone: "Hekmatullah Arian lives in Lewaan Village of Andar District which is the birthplace of Idris, one of the cruelest commanders of Taliban who called himself the butcher of government officials. The Afghanistan and U.S. Special Forces carried out an operation to arrest this commander but unfortunately the journalist traveled to his home to visit his family and got arrested in the operation. He was freed after the investigation."

Mr. Arian rejected all allegations of relations with Taliban and mentioned, in addition, of the threats that he received from terrorist Taliban.

Mr. Arian said: “Taliban have warned me several times and for this reason I had limited the number of my visits to home and the family.”

The journalist also mentioned about the good treatment that he received from the Andar District’s Police Headquarters. He said that after the American forces submitted him to Andar Police, the latter behaved very well with him.

Media Watch condemns violence and misbehavior toward journalists and calls on the violators to avoid such unlawful behavior toward Afghanistan’s journalists.

Although the American troops apologized to the journalist for detaining him during the military operation, such incidents are in essence unacceptable to Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan. Nai calls again on Afghanistan Special Forces to try their utmost to keep safe the civilians, particularly the journalists, during their military operations.

A freelance journalist beaten in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province

Unidentified men attacked and seriously injured a journalist in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province, on March 11, 2014.

Mr. Mokhtar Wafayi, a freelance journalist and chief editor of Howaida analytical and news website and weekly, was on his way home from office when he was attacked and injured by unidentified armed men near Bakhtar High School.

Mr. Wafayi told Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan: “When I was on my way home, four armed men with their faces covered stopped me. After a brief conversation in which they asked me why I publish contentious articles recently, they attacked and hit me in the face and head with knives and tip of their guns.”

The attack on this journalist triggered a wave of reactions among organizations supporting media. Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan convened press conferences in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul, condemned the attack on this journalist, and called on security officials to peruse this case. Mr. Noor Agha Sharifi, Nai regional direction in Mazar-e-Sharif told journalists in the press conference: “Mr. Wafayi had informed Nai about threats from unidentified individuals before this attack happened.”

Also Mr. Sediqullah Tawhidi, Director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan told journalists in a press conference in Kabul” “Several days passed after the attack took place and the perpetrators are still remained unidentified.”

Mr. Tawhidi called on security officials in Balkh Province to seriously pursue the case, identify and arrest the perpetrators.

Mr. Tawhidi also added: “Although journalists played a crucial role in reporting on elections and other incidents, yet, if the government does not take necessary security measures, journalists will feel insecure and threatened which will in turn affect the reporting process across the country.

Balkh officials report of investigations on this case. Mr. Munir Farhad, spokesperson for Balkh Governor told Media Watch: “Mr. Wafayi has not yet presented any evidence on the perpetrators so that it can help identifying and arresting them.”

Attacks on journalists across the country have created concerns among media and civil society circles. They have repeatedly asked the government to try more in providing security for journalists in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, media and organizations defending journalists’ rights in Balkh Province condemned the attack on the journalist and called on the government to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

Seventy-three cases of violence against journalists recorded in the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 – 20/03/2014)

The solar year 1392 ended with 73 cases of violence against journalists recorded. Journalists faced serious challenges in the past year including killing, brief detention, beating, insulting and threatening.

In total, five journalists were killed, seven others injured, eight were briefly detained, twenty-eight were beaten and twenty-five were either threatened or insulted in 1392 (21/03/2013 – 20/03/2014). Pressures from the government and lack of access to information made other challenges that further limited journalists’ activities in Afghanistan last year.

Government officials found responsible for 48 incidents mostly including beating and threatening journalists. They, therefore, stand first among the perpetrators of violence against journalists. On the other hand, Taliban and other terrorists come first in committing heavy crimes against journalists with 10 incidents of heavy violence including killing and injuring journalists.

International forces also come among violators with four incidents of violence against journalists including unlawful brief detention of journalists. Five other incidents of violence against journalists have been committed by unidentified persons who the Government of Afghanistan has not been successful in identifying them.

Some incidents of violence against journalists have been committed by peacekeepers and security guards at media facilities which have increased concerns among organizations supporting journalists and media.

Mr. Nils Horner, the Swedish journalist of English origins, who worked for a Swedish radio, was mysteriously killed in Kabul City on March 11, 2014. The killers escaped from the scene. Mr. Ahmad Shaahed, a you journalist, who worked as a presenter with Radio Nawa, was killed along with a number of other citizens in a suicide attack in Kabul on January 26, 2014. Taliban claimed the responsibility for the attack. Mr. Noor Ahmad Noori was mysteriously killed in Lashkargah City of Helmand Province on January 24, 2014. Another journalist, Mr. Mohammad Mohsen Hashemi was disappeared for six days before his body was found in a well close to his home in Nijrab District of Kapisa Province. His brothers were accused of murdering him but later found innocent in the appellate court. Mr. Mozamel is another journalist whose body was found on April 27, 2013 after he was kidnapped in Kunduz Province.

Afghanistan's journalists faced many challenges in accessing information in the solar year 1392 (21/03/2013 – 20/03/2014).

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan is deeply concerned about the increase in violence against journalists and believes that lack of legal pursuit of the cases and punishment of perpetrators only adds to the concerns of journalists and organizations supporting freedom of speech.

In the past 13 years, 39 journalists have lost their lives and hundreds of others encountered multiple incidents of violence, yet, the Government of Afghanistan has not dealt with any single one of those cases.

Failure in legal pursuit of cases of violence against journalists and media in Afghanistan have heartened the enemies of freedom of speech more than ever to carry out more violence. Continuation of this trend has heavily hit in the face of freedom of speech in the country.

Media Watch calls one more time on the Government of Afghanistan to save the values of freedom of speech and media, which have been gained at a high price, through applying appropriate

strategies and do not let such achievements fall victim to the demands of a handful of powerbrokers and those disregarding the laws.

The Chair of Baghlan Journalists Union and Head of Tanweer TV were unlawfully summoned and questioned by Appellate Attorney Office in Baghlan

Dr. Khalil Narmgoy, a veteran journalist and Chair of National Journalists Union in Baghlan, and Mr. Sher Mohammad Jahesh, Head of Tanweer TV in Pol-e-Khomri City of Baghlan Province were summoned and questioned by the Appellate Attorney Office in Baghlan on the basis of complaints submitted against them by the National Security Directorate in the Province on March 19, 2014.

Both journalists were summoned and questioned after they spoke out about beating of some journalists as well as participants of Konkori Exam in that province.

Dr. Khalil Narmgoy told Media Watch: “Now it has been several times that provincial officials from National Security Directorate beat journalists for various reasons. In my interview with journalists I said that whoever violates the Constitution of Afghanistan is considered a national traitor.”

“After several days passed, the provincial office of the National Security Directorate has sent an official letter to the Office of the Attorney in the province and has stated that in my interviews with media I have called the National Security Directorate as national traitors,” added Dr. Narmgoy.

Sher Mohammad Jahesh, Head of Tanweer TV in Baghlan, who has been one of the protestors against the National Security officials’ beating of his TV’s journalists, said that his name has also been mentioned in the same letter and he has been summoned for several times so far.

Mr. Jahesh said that as Dr. Narmgoy put it, whoever violates Media Law is a national traitor and by such conduct, the National Security Directorate, in fact, confesses that they are the traitors.

Media Watch tried to get the views of the National Security officials in Baghlan, but they did not agree to be interviewed.

At the same time a number of journalists unions have asked in a statement for lawful pursuit of the case.

According to the provisions of the Mass Media Law, any kind of complaints from media and journalists should be first followed and evaluated through the Mass Media Commission. No other institution has the mandate to summon and question journalists and media before that.

Article 43 of the effective Mass Media Law charges the Mass Media Commission with the mandate to evaluate complaints from media and refer them to legal and judicial organs. However, the Ministry of Information and Culture has not established the mentioned Commission yet.

Attention!

All journalists and media organizations are hereby notified that Mr. Mohammad Qasem Rahmani works with the Media Watch in the capacity of Media Lawyer. Those journalists and/or media outlets that face legal issues in connection with their media related and journalistic activities, or need consultation on performing such activities, may contact him by phone at **0799 830 905** or via email at: m.qasim@nai.org.af.

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To obtain a soft copy of the report, please visit the following link: <http://www.nai.org.af/Mediawatch.htm>

Note:

1. *To maintain confidentiality and to protect sources it was not possible for Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan to corroborate the incidents by carrying out additional investigations.*
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