



نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan



Media Watch Report

Owner Nai
Monthly Report #130
March 2016

Sediqullah Tawhidi Media Watch Director and Media Analyst

0700279176-0777868270

tauhidi@nai.org.af



نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

March 2016 was yet another month full of challenges and violence for Afghanistan journalists. Two journalists were beaten up in Kabul and Faryab provinces and two media outlets were attacked in Parwan and Nangarhar provinces. Another media outlet in Nangarhar has been threatened by terrorist for a while now.

Qutbuddin Kohi, Pazhwak News Agency reporter in Faryab province, was beaten up by security officers while attending a Faryab governor's press conference. In a separate incident, unidentified armed persons stopped and beat up Omid Poya, a presenter at Negah Television, while he was on his way home.

Armed persons set fire to the broadcasting center of Arakosia Radio Station in Ghanikhel district, Nangarhar province. They entered the radio station building in an evening, beat up the guard, and put the building and all broadcast equipment including antenna and power generator to fire.

In a separate incident, Donya local radio station in Charikar city, Parwan province, was attacked by grenades. Fortunately it did not cause any casualties and only brought minor damages to the building. Jalalabad-based local radio station Moram has received threats for a while which has left its staffs in concern.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has published its 2015 annual report. It points out to severe and targeted violence against journalists and media in the past year. The report recorded 14 cases of murder in which journalists and media employees were murdered in Afghanistan in 2015. It also reports over 100 cases of other types of violence against journalists in the same year. Meanwhile, the government of Afghanistan ended the membership of country's journalists and media federation by eliminating their representative's seat from the Selection Committee. Instead, it appointed the speakers of both parliament chambers and the head of the Supreme Court to the Committee. This has raised concerns among journalists' unions and media support organizations.

In the face of so many challenges and problems, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, with cooperation from Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation, is working on finalizing Journalists' Code of Ethics. Nai has begun to hold face-to-face meetings with journalists throughout the country to listen to them and record their inputs to inform and pave the way for the National Conference on Approving of Journalists' Code of Ethics. In a recent development, Nai held a gathering of journalists from Kabul, Ghazni, Parwan, Panjsher, Kapisa, and Maidan Wardak provinces in Kabul.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

Security officers beat up a Pazhwak News Agency journalist in Faryab province

Qutbuddin Kohi, a Pazhwak News Agency journalist in Faryab province, claims that security officers insulted and then beat him up when he went to the Office of the Governor to cover a press conference on February 28, 2016.

Mr. Kohi was invited to attend a press conference at the Office of the Governor. According to him, the Office of the Governor invited journalists and media to the press conference to provide coverage for the announcement that a number of armed Taliban forces renounced violence and joined the government.

Mr. Kohi told Media Watch: “We were waiting in the Office of the Governor for the press conference to begin. When the program was still to begin, I decided to quickly run back to my office and bring the equipment that I forgot when I came here. However, security forces have already blocked the road from the Office of the Governor to our office. They did not allow me to pass it. When I told them that I was a journalist and was running to my office to bring my equipment, they verbally insulted me. I told them if you are brave enough, then go to Pashtoonkot district and fight against Taliban, not here with me. This made three security officers to run toward me and beat me up.”

Local authorities in Faryab province have said that the security officers who committed violence against this journalist were identified and arrested.

Jawed Bedar, spokesperson for the Office of the Governor of Faryab, told Media Watch: “All three security officers who beat up this journalist are now in Police’s custody and their cases will soon be referred to the Office of the Attorney.”

The spokesperson for Faryab Governor continued: “I invited journalists to the press conference myself. Security forces had taken tight security measures. When Mr. Kohi was on his way, he gets involved in a verbal dispute with the officers and then the incident takes place. All three officers who were involved in this incident are now arrested and their cases will be referred to the Office of the Attorney for further proceeding.”

The spokesperson for Faryab Governor also added: “This case will be investigated to determine why security officers committed such an act of violence.”

But the journalist who was victim of security officers’ violent behavior in Faryab province, has raised his doubts about a possible trial and punishment of those perpetrators.

Mr. Kohi says that although all of the three involved security officers have been arrested, but it is not clear





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

whether they will be punished.

Faryab police's arrest of perpetrators of violence against a journalist is praiseworthy. It should be followed up in accordance to the laws of the country.

Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said: "By arresting the perpetrators of violence against Pazhwak journalist, Mr. Kohi, police in Faryab province has taken one step towards institutionalizing of the law. We expect that these perpetrators are referred to the legal and judicial organs to restore justice in a fair trial."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the local authorities in Faryab province to share with media community and support organizations their investigation results as well as information about the trial of the arrested perpetrators.

Unidentified armed persons beat up a Negah Television journalist in Kabul city

Omid Poya, a Negah private TV station presenter, was beaten up by unidentified armed persons in Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul city. Mr. Poya was on his way home from office in the evening of March 24, 2016 when they stopped and beat up near his home.

Mohammad Ismail Safdari, chief editor of Negah TV, told Media Watch: "When Omid gets off the vehicle, he faces three people who immediately ask him whether he works at Negah TV and then severely beat him up."

Chief Editor of Negah TV also says that members of Mr. Poya's family claim that this is a political incident but it is yet to be clear who is behind the incident.

Mr. Safdari adds that previously one of their employees was beaten up in District 3 of Kabul city and security organs are yet to arrest the perpetrators.

Fearing deterioration of their security situation Mr. Poya's family requested to keep the issue from sharing with media in the past two days.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls the attack on this journalist as a barbaric and criminal act and strongly condemns it.

There was another journalist beaten up in the same way in Police District 13 several months ago. Although the police authorities vowed to identify and arrest the perpetrators at that time, they have not done so yet. Violence against journalists has been going on in Afghanistan cities for a while now but the perpetrators of such acts of violence have rarely been arrested and punished.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the National Unity Government to honor its commitments towards protecting freedom of speech and should not allow enemies of free speech to bring





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

under question the authority of the state by attacking journalists and media.

The previous solar calendar year was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan's journalists and media with 116 cases of violence against journalists and media staffs. Nai hoped that this year sees less violence than the one before, but only a week into it and media community sees Mr. Poya's beaten up by unidentified persons in Kabul city and Arakosia Radio station set in fire in Nangarhar province. People of Afghanistan cannot bear continuation of this situation any longer.

Police is obligated to identify, arrest, and refer to the legal and judicial organs the perpetrators of violence against Negah-TV journalist Mr. Omid Poya.

Armed persons set fire to Arakosia local radio station in Nangarhar province

Unidentified armed persons entered Arakosia Radio station in Ghanikhel district, Nangarhar province, in the evening of March 23, 2016. They tied the guard's arms and legs, set fire to the station, and escaped. One of Arakosia staff members in Kabul said that a power generator, a radio antenna, and some other equipment were destroyed as a result of this criminal act.

Ataullah Khogiani, spokesperson for the Office of Nangarhar Governor, told Media Watch: "The attack was carried out by unidentified armed persons and investigation is underway to identify and arrest the perpetrators."

Mr. Khogiani added that a special operation is launched in the province to identify and arrest the perpetrators of this incident and deliver them to the legal and judicial organs. He also said that government in Nangarhar tries to provide a sound environment for media activities.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly condemns this terrorist attack and emphatically calls upon Nangarhar authorities to identify the perpetrators and prosecute and punish them.

Previously offices of Pazhwak News Agency, Radio Killid, and a number of other local media outlets were either bombed or attacked in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province. Although, after each terrorist attacks on media, Nangarhar authorities have promised the media to arrest the perpetrators, they have not acted upon their own promises after a while.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly calls upon the National Unity Government to include into their priorities protecting of journalist and media entities. They should hold neglecting authorities accountable of shortcoming in their duties.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

A bomb attack targeted Radio Donya-e-Naween in Charikar city, Parwan province

A bomb attack hit office of local radio station Donya-e-Naween in Charikar city, Parwan province in the evening of February 25, 2016. According to Radio Donya-e-Naween staff members, footages from security cameras show two motorcycle riders who stopped by the wall of the office. One of them got off his motorcycle and threw a grenade inside the courtyard of the radio station's office. Then they both escaped. The attack did not cause any casualties and brought minor damages to the office building of the radio station.

Abdulwaheed Siddiqi, spokesperson for Parwan Governor, told Media Watch: "Police has launched investigations into this incident and searches for the perpetrators."

Parwan Governor's spokesperson added: "Unidentified armed men attacked on Radio Donya-e-Naween for the third time, fortunately no casualty or damaged were inflicted. Detective organs continue their investigations and the perpetrators have not been identified yet."

Ahmad Hanayesh, director of Radio Donya in Parwan province, says that the previous attacks were carried out on Radio Donya, not Radio Donya-e-Naween.

Mr. Hanayesh adds that Radio Donya has been operating for eight years whereas Radio Donya-e-Naween only began its broadcasting a year ago.

Similar bomb attacks have been carried out on media in Parwan province in the past. However, it is yet to be determined why media and particularly radio stations have been targeted in Charikar, a relatively secure city.

Although, after each attack on radio stations in Charikar city, authorities in Parwan province have vowed to identify and arrest the perpetrators, police have either abandoned its investigations all together or have not shared the results of their investigations with media and public.

Spokesperson for Parwan Governor said: "We have arrested five persons in connection with the previous attacks on radio stations in Charikar city, but in order to prevent any further possible problems for journalists, we chose not to share with media the results of our investigations."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the government to identify, arrest, and prosecute perpetrators of the attack on Radio Donya-e-Naween in Charikar city immediately.

Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, says: "Parwan province police is obligated to share with media and journalists' community the results of their investigations and to provide them with convincing answers. Moreover, they are obligated to identify and





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

prosecute perpetrators of such attacks which are considered as attacks on freedom of speech. The Government of Afghanistan has a lawful obligation to assure citizens and particularly journalists that their life is protected and their offices are safe. It should also assure citizens that enemies of the people and freedom of speech are prosecuted and punished.”

After the National Unity Government came to power, targeted attacks on media and journalists have been on the rise. In a previous attack a bus of Tolo-TV employees were targeted by a Taliban suicide bomber in which seven journalists and media employees were killed and near 20 others were injured.

The solar year 1394 (March 2015 – March 2016) was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan’s journalists

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan published its Media Watch Annual Report which also covers all 116 recorded cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan from March 2015 – March 2016.

According to the Media Watch Annual Report 2015-2016, 12 journalists and media employees were killed and 23 others were injured in this period. Two journalists were taken hostages by Taliban while another one was briefly detained by the government. In the same period, 15 journalists were either beaten up or encountered assassination attempts and another 63 journalists were either insulted or threatened.

Sidiqullah Tuwhidi, director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, called the last year as the bloodiest year for Afghanistan’s journalists and said that the figures of violence acts against journalists in the solar year 1394 is unprecedented in the past 14 years. Mr. Tuwhidi said: “Unfortunately 1394 was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan’s journalists. This year we recorded a bold figure of violence against journalists which is unprecedented in the past 14 years.”

Yama Behroz, a freelance journalist in Badakhshan province, was the first victim of violence against journalists in 1394. He was murdered by a bomb explosion which was placed at the entrance of his home by armed persons.

Zabihullah Pashtunyar was the second casualty in 1394. Due to poverty and low income from his media career, he also worked as a nightshift guard at Médecins Sans Frontières’ Hospital in Kunduz city. When Kunduz city fell to terrorist Taliban, Mr. Pashtunyar, while on duty, was killed in an air raid conducted by the international forces.

Amanullah Atayee, director of Asia TV Network was another victim in 1394. Unidentified armed persons shot him to death in Kabul on November 25, 2015.

A suicide bomb attack on a Tolo-TV vehicle carrying its employees to their homes killed seven journalists and media employees and injured another 20 on January 20, 2016.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

Zubair Khaksar, a veteran journalist for National Radio Television in Nangarhar province, was shot to death by unidentified armed persons while he was travelling from Sorkhroad district to Jalalabad city on January 29, 2016.

Feroz Mozaffari, a photojournalist who was on his way migrating to Europe, was drowned together with his family members in the waters between Turkey and Greece.

In the solar year 1394 (March 2015 – March 2016), 64 cases of violence against journalists were committed by Taliban, 26 cases by the government of Afghanistan, 21 cases by unidentified persons, and one case by the international forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Tuwhidi says that targeting and killing of a group of Tolo TV journalists was a case of an unprecedented scale which happened last year. In general, targeted attacks on media and journalists were on the rise in the solar year 1394. He adds: “Neither mass-killing of journalists nor targeted attacks on media by terrorists were a trend in the previous years.”

In solar year 1394, freedom of speech in Afghanistan also faced another challenge: mass migration of journalists and media professionals from the country.

Due to lack of personal and professional protection, rampant corruption, increasing insecurity, and a vague future, a high number of media professionals along with other citizens of the country, accepted serious risks and left their country in the past year.

Sidiqullah Tuwhidi, director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, called upon the government to assure media professionals for their personal and professional protection so that the latter stay and continue to work in their country. He said: “The government of Afghanistan should fulfil its obligations towards protecting of journalists thus does not let a new generation of media professionals leave their country. In order for Afghanistan media not to face a shortage of professional cadres, the government should provide journalists with firm assurances on their safety.”

Another challenge that clearly persisted throughout the year involved intra-organizational problems of media entities. In spite of the fact that Afghanistan Government’s Cabinet approved the Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media and that it is now printed on the Official Gazette and is effective, some media entities continue to have intra-organizational problems.

Mr. Tuwhidi also called upon the Ministry of Information and Culture to ensure implementation of the Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media put an end to intra-organizational problems of media entities which media professionals continue to encounter.

A decrease in the number of female media professionals and journalists in Afghanistan media was another





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

challenge that affected media and journalists' community throughout the year. Due to spread of insecurity in cities and villages across the country, particularly after the fall of Kunduz city in the hands of terrorist Taliban, a great number of female media professionals and journalists left their jobs in media sector.

Executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan called upon the government of Afghanistan to take practical measures for protecting of personal and professional security of journalists and media professionals.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan urges the National Unity Government to not allow the last year's challenges and bloody violence against journalists and media continue into this year. Media Watch also calls upon the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to create sound employment programs, launch serious anti-corruption campaign, and provide personal and professional protection for all citizens including journalists and media professionals. Only by taking these measures it will be able to prevent migration of young professional cadres to other countries and to protect the most important achievement of the people and state – freedom of speech.

By providing practical assurances regarding personal and professional protection of journalists and their families, the State can save freedom of speech and its own prestige.

Daesh terrorist group has threatened Radio Moram in Nangarhar province

Najiba Moram, director of Radio Moram based in Nangarhar province, which broadcasts for the four eastern provinces told Media Watch that every now and then terrorists in Nangarhar province threaten her colleagues and herself.

According to Ms. Moram, Daesh terrorist group in eastern Afghanistan has threatened each media entity in the region separately and has threatened each one to either join the group or else will get destroyed.

This threat by terrorists has raised concerns among journalists and media professionals in eastern Afghanistan.

Ms. Moram says that after such threats, the environment has got tighter and narrower for media activities and journalists, particularly female media professionals, cannot conduct their professional activities and reporting in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

She adds that after journalists have been threatened by terrorists, an increasing number of them have left the country for Europe.

Ms. Moram adds that if terrorists' activities are not tackled, media activities in eastern Afghanistan, particularly in Nangarhar province, will fade and one can fear that one day the media may go silent in this





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

province.

Previously, local offices of Pazhwak News Agency and Killid Radio as well as several other local media in Jalalabad city, the capital of Nangarhar province, were targeted by bombs and armed attacks. Although, after each terrorist attacks on media, Nangarhar authorities have promised the media to arrest the perpetrators, they have not acted upon their own promises after a while.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly calls upon the National Unity Government to include into their priorities protecting of journalist and media entities. They should hold neglecting authorities accountable of shortcoming in their duties.

Certain circles in the Office of the President removed journalists' representative seat from Selection Committee

After the Parliament rejected President's first decree on electoral reforms, he issued another decree which includes sweeping changes in the Selection Committee.

President Ghani's new decree on electoral reforms removed the seats for two members and added new seats for speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses and the head of the Supreme Court.

Based on the new decree, Fahim Dashti, who represented Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation, and Nader Hotak, who represented Civil Services Appointment Administration, lost their membership in the Selection Committee.

In a press conference in Kabul, Fahim Dashti disclosed behind-the-scene deals, conspiracies, and plots which led to removal of his name from the Selection Committee. He called certain circles in the Office of the President (Arg) as the main challenge on the way of electoral reforms in Afghanistan.

Dashti named the President's National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar, Political Advisor Akram Khpolwak, and the Minister of Finance Iklil Ahmadi as officials who he believes mainly object electoral reforms.

Fahim Dashti, executive chair of Afghanistan's National Journalists' Union and a former member of the Selection Committee, says that interferences and conspiracies by known circles in the Office of the President (Arg) have hindered electoral reform process. He adds: "Taking all the games into account, I believe that the President does not have a hand in these conspiracies. They are staged by other people in Arg. The Office of the Chief Executive does not have the capacity and capability to prevent such conspiracies unfortunately. Perhaps also the President is misled by the incorrect advises of some people circling around him."

Fahim Dashti reported conspiracies and plots staged against him right from the early days that he was





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

selected to the Selection Committee to represent Afghanistan's Media and Journalists' Federation.

He says: "By whatever reason, certain circles in Arg did not want a representative of journalists' community to be a member of the Selection Committee. They particularly did not want me to be a member of the Committee."

Mr. Dashti also said about the Parliament's rejection of the President's first decree: Some Members of the Parliament told me that the government sent the decree to the Parliament and the same government also made efforts to make Parliament reject it. "Some Members of the Parliament directly told us that the same government, that sent the decree to the Parliament, wanted it to be rejected by the Parliament."

The Senate was set to reject the House of Representatives' decision but due to the lobbies connected to certain circles in the Office of the President (Arg), the Senate followed the House and rejected the President's decree.

Mr. Dashti comments that if the government initially wanted the Presidential Decree to be implemented properly, what need did it feel to send it to the Parliament to get their approval? And if it was a lawful process, then why the new decree did not follow suit? Why the new decree was printed on the Official Gazette on the same day as it was issued and it was not sent to the Parliament at all?

Mr. Dashti believes that the President does not have a hand in all these conspiracies and he is misled by the incorrect advises of some people circling around him."

Fahim Dashti added that one of the previously mentioned officials (Hanif Atmar, Akhram Khpolwak, and Iklil Hakimi) will be a candidate in the next presidential election. He said to the audience that once this would happen, they will recall his remarks. "We observe two types of positioning here: The first one is based on personal and –perhaps– group interests and originates from the Office of the President (Arg). There are certain persons including Hanif Atmar, Akhram Khpolwak, Iklil Hakimi, and some other ones standing behind it. The second positioning comes from the Office of the Chief Executive which involves one step ahead one step back as it has been throughout the last year and half."

Mr. Dashti says: "I disclosed these points because people of Afghanistan have the right to know what is going on and is being framed in the back scene and how major decisions are taken in the government."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan expresses its concerns over removal of the media representative seat from the Selection Committee. A media representative in the Committee could have indicated transparency in the Committee's activities. However, after the seat was removed, it seems that the government does not believe in bringing reforms to the electoral commissions and, on the contrary, there are certain circles around the President that try to sabotage the upcoming elections in their own interests.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan expressed concerns over the bad situation of journalists and media in the country

Given the statistics of violence against journalists recorded by Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan in 2015 and 2016 so far, there are growing concerns about continuation of violence against journalists as well as obstacles against media activities in Afghanistan.

After Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan published the statistics of recorded violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2015, concerns among media professionals have increased about lack of personal protections. Due to such concerns over lack of personal and professional protections, a high number of journalists have left their jobs and the country altogether and head for European countries through illegal ways.

Spread of insecurity and lack of protection and security for journalists and media are among the factors that have raised concerns among Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan and other journalists' support groups.

Sidiqullah Tuwhidi, director of Media Watch at Nai, expressed his concerns over media and journalists' bad situation and added that statistics of violence cases against journalists, as recorded by Nai, indicate that media and journalists are not having a good year ahead of them. Mr. Tuwhidi said: "Given the spread of insecurity, lack of personal protections for journalists in the current year, terrorists' targeted attacks on Afghanistan's media sector and freedom of speech, and last year's bloody incidents all indicate that the situation of media activities and open circulation of information in the country may remain as bad as that of the last year's or may even get worse.

Mr. Tuwhidi said that due to personal and professional protections, an increasing number of media professionals leave their jobs and the country and migrate to European countries. This will cause Afghanistan's media to face shortage of professional cadres. He added: "The government of Afghanistan is obligated to provide security and protection for media and journalists in the country so that journalists and media professionals do not migrate out of their country."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that if media professionals continue to leave the country and the government of Afghanistan does not take appropriate measures to provide essential personal and professional protections for all journalists and if effective laws and regulations continue to remain unimplemented, then Afghanistan's media will incur in a great loss.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls again upon the National Unity Government to provide a sound environment for journalists, media professionals, and cultural activists. It should not see only how





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

easily these preachers of freedom are leaving the country. Otherwise, freedom of speech, which has been hardly achieved by people's sacrifices in the past decade and a half, will be lost again.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan expressed concerns over National Unity Government's lack of practical programs to support and protect media

As insecurity grows and violence against media and journalists are on the rise, media professionals and media support groups criticize the government ever louder.

Although the National Unity Government, in its early days, apparently announced its support for media and journalists, targeted attacks conducted by terrorists on several media entities and government's lack of response to them, have contributed to increasing doubts in the government and its support for media. Some began to believe that the National Unity Government supports media and journalists only on the paper and has no intention of materializing its support towards them.

Sidiqullah Tuwhidi, direction of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, says: "After the attack on Tolo-TV personnel in Kabul, the government of Afghanistan apparently drafted programs to take security measures. However, these programs have ever since remained only on the paper and the government has not taken any practical step yet."

Mr. Tuwhidi said that in its initial reaction to the terrorists' attack on Tolo TV personnel, the government established a coordination committee between the media and the government entities so that it can provide security measures to media under the observation of the National Security Council. However, the ways in which the government may take essential security measures have remained unknown.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls one more time upon both leaders of the National Unity Government to honor and implement the promises that they made during their electoral campaigns and provide essential measures and effective programs in protecting media and journalists in the country.

The Ministry of Information and Culture should immediately put an end to the name dispute between two TV stations

As it is claimed, the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has issued licenses to two television networks under one identical name. This has created disagreements and protests between the officials from both television stations.

Jahan TV based in Parwan province and another Jahan TV based in Kabul city have been involved in a legal battle over the issue caused by their identical names. They have taken their disputed issue to the





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

legal and judicial organs as well as to the specific commission for solving journalists and media claims at the Ministry of Information and Culture. As each day passes, their legal battle intensifies.

Officials from Jahan TV in Parwan province held a protest tent in Kabul city to draw to the issue the attention of the Ministry of Information and Culture, journalists' unions, and organizations supporting freedom of speech.

Mir Abdulmaqsood Mirzad, director of Jahan TV based in Parwan province, described to Media Watch the purpose of their protest as following: "The purpose of our protest tent is to draw attention to the unlawful action of the Department of Publishing and Broadcasting at the Ministry of Information and Culture by which they cancelled the license of the Parwan-based Jahan-e-Warzesht TV, later renamed as Jahan TV, and reissued it to another television channel in Kabul. We have claimed through the courts and the office of the attorney to get our license back, but no one listens to us. We were ultimately forced to hold this protest tent."

The protest tent was held on a street in Kabul city for six days. Later, after mediation by some of the representatives of Parwan province in the Parliament and the Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in Publishing Affairs, it was removed.

Apparently the problem will be solved in a council of elders in which officials from Parwan-based Jahan TV has committed themselves to accepting the solutions which will be resulted from the council.

Media Watch tried to reach out the Ministry of Information and Culture and obtain their view on the issue but the latter did not respond.

Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, says: "Since the Ministry of Information and Culture is responsible for issuing the licenses to television stations and networks, it should have thoroughly reviewed all documents presented by both television networks and then decided to issue the license under the name of "Jahan Television" only to the one entitled side. They could have ended the dispute in this way." Otherwise, Mr. Khalvatgar believes that this problem can harm both media and the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that continuation of the current situation helps neither media nor the state. Therefore, it emphasizes that the government of Afghanistan should immediately address the issue and should solve it in accordance with the relevant effective laws.

Afghanistan's Journalists' Code of Ethics to be finalized soon

Given the importance of Journalists' Code of Ethics, Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation, with cooperation from Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, has begun to hold face-to-face meet-





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

ings and discussions with journalists from all over the country.

Journalists from Kabul, Maidan Wardak, Ghazni, Parwan, Kapisa, and Panjsher gathered in Kabul on March 30, 2016 and discussed Afghanistan's Journalists' Ethics Code. They exchanged views and presented their suggestions to inform and enrich the process.

Nearly 80 journalists took part in the gathering and were later divided into several work groups and discussed on the draft of journalists' ethics. They finally presented their views and suggestions to inform the points that they thought should have been included in the draft.

Sayeda Mojgan Mostafawi, Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in Publishing Affairs, also took part in the gathering. She called the border between journalists' code of ethics and rights a narrow and fine one and added: "As a university professor of journalism, I will grade a journalist zero if he or she does not follow code of ethics for journalists – no matter if such a journalist holds a masters or a doctoral degree." Prior to this gathering, there were six regional conferences held in the centers of each zone.

Journalists from norther and northeastern zones gathered in Mazar-e-Sharif city, from western zone in Herat city, from southwestern zone in Kandahar city, from southeastern zone in Khost city, from eastern zone in Jalalabad city, and from the central zone in Bamyan city. They discussed the draft Code of Ethics and presented their suggestions and views to Nai office.

A grand national conference is planned to be held in Kabul city in which journalists from all across the country participate and ratify a final version of the Journalists' Code of Ethics which will reflect suggestions and views of journalists from initial gatherings.

Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said about the importance of Journalists' Code of Ethics: "Journalists always work with people. There are occasions and cases where people, without discussing the main issue at question, simply accept them based on their trust on journalists. Therefore, we need codes and principles that can keep a journalist's conscience alert and awake in his professional works. We call such principles as the code of ethics for journalists."

Mr. Khalvatgar also said that although journalists and media professionals have previously practiced a number of professional ethic codes, Afghanistan's Media and Journalists Federation decided that the country's media community should have a written, unified, and national code of ethics that can be acceptable to all journalists across the country.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan invites all journalists who are interested in sharing their views on the draft of Journalists' Code of Ethics to participate in the last review and consultation meeting which will be held in Kabul on March 30, 2016. They can assist the journalists' community of Afghanistan in ratifying a unified Journalists' Code of Ethics.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

It is worth mentioning that Afghanistan's Media and Journalists Federation, in cooperation with Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, will hold the national conference of Afghanistan's journalists in Kabul soon. Participating journalists from all over the country will ratify Afghanistan's Journalists' Code of Ethics.

Various media entities have practiced their own code of ethics in the past. However, such codes were not practiced by all. Nai executive director hopes that once the unified Journalists' Code of Ethics is ratified, its acceptance and practice by all journalists across the country will be guaranteed.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has been working on Afghanistan's Journalists' Code of Ethics for the past eight years. Nai has prepared the current draft of the country's Journalists' Code of Ethics after studying journalists' codes of ethics of neighboring, regional, and other countries as well as considering values, customs, and traditions of people of Afghanistan. The entire process has been implemented through a series of separate gatherings and meetings with journalists from all over the country in which they have contributed their inputs to the process.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan demanded the government to implement the Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media

The Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media that was published in the Official Gazette five months ago, is yet to be properly implemented.

Failure in implementation of the Regulation has caused the problems and challenges of media professionals and journalists to persist and as a result, in some cases, they have lost their rights and privileges. Nai receives tens of complaints from journalists and media professionals every month. They include problems such as delays in monthly payments, unfair contracts, lack of employer's clarity in determining leave, holidays, and overtime working. The complaining journalists share with Nai their concerns about such problems.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the owners of media entities to adjust their employment contracts in accordance to the Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media and regard the rights and privileges of their employees accordingly.

Nai also calls upon the National Unity Government, in particular from the Ministry of Information and Culture, to take practical steps towards the implementation of the Regulation and protect the rights and privileges of media professionals.

The Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Private and Mass Media was published in the





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

Official Gazette on November 7, 2015 and has been legally effective ever since. The Regulation defines and regulates the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of media professionals with regards to the media entities.

Journalists' unions and organizations supporting journalists' rights welcomed approval and operationalization of the Regulation and believed that once effective it will solve a big part of intra-organizational challenges and problems that media professionals and journalists face. However, five months have passed since the Regulation went effective and journalists and media professionals still complain about violation of their rights and privileges by their media entity employers.

Nai believes that one of the main purposes of media is to provide a ground conducive to the rule of law in a society. This necessitates that media owners themselves should obey and regard rule of law first and foremost.

Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation called upon international media to maintain their impartiality

A while ago, a number of journalists and media activists launched a campaign titled "Hold Accountable the BBC Persian and Pashto Services" and prepared an open complaint regarding the news coverage by BBC Afghanistan of Taliban's terrorist attack on Tolo TV employees.

The campaign was launched after BBC broadcasted an interview with Taliban's spokesperson in Pashto and Persian.

The open complaint called BBC's broadcasting of that interview as against BBC's publishing principles, in violation with professional impartiality, and spreading Taliban's threats and propaganda against Afghanistan media and journalists.

The 8 AM Daily published the text of the open complaint which demanded BBC's response. On February 27, 2016, BBC director of language services sent a letter to 8 AM Daily and announced that BBC was thoroughly investigating publishing of that interview. The letter accepted the criticism that publishing of the interview was not in accordance with the BBC's publishing principles and assured Afghanistan's media community that BBC will do its utmost to prevent such professional mistake from happening again. This response letter was published on 8 AM Daily, Issue of February 28, 2016.

Afghanistan's Media and Journalists' Federation which supports media freedoms under the frame of professional principles in journalism and defends safety of journalists and media professionals welcomed BBC's decision. It also calls upon BBC directors to pay serious attention to maintaining its impartial





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

stance and to protect the trust of its audience so that such professional mistakes as the one regarding broadcasting of that interview with Taliban spokesperson does not happen again.

The Federation regards BBC as one of the pioneering entities in professional journalism in the world and therefore expects that the entity does not compromise its credibility as a professional, fair, and impartial media outlet.

The Federation also called upon all international media with specific broadcasting for Afghanistan to regard impartiality and the country's public interest and refrain from following any personal or political agenda in their professional news coverage and reporting from Afghanistan.

If cases of such violations are suspected, the Federation will investigate the issue and will introduce the violating journalist or media entity to the Media Complaints and Investigations Commission.





نی حمایت کننده رسانه های آزاد افغانستان
Nai supporting open Media in Afghanistan

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.

For more information on Media Watch project please contact our team at:

Mohammad Saber Fahim

Media Watch Senior reporter

Cell# +93 (0) 700-266-727 saber.fahim@nai.org.af - saberf4@gmail.com

Nasir Ahmad Noori

Media Watch reporter

Cell# +93 (0) 787-201-915 nasir.noori@nai.org.af - nasirnoori92@yahoo.com

To obtain a soft copy of the report, please visit the following link: <http://www.nai.org.af/Media-watch.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.

Copy right is reserved for Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan

