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Media Watch Report

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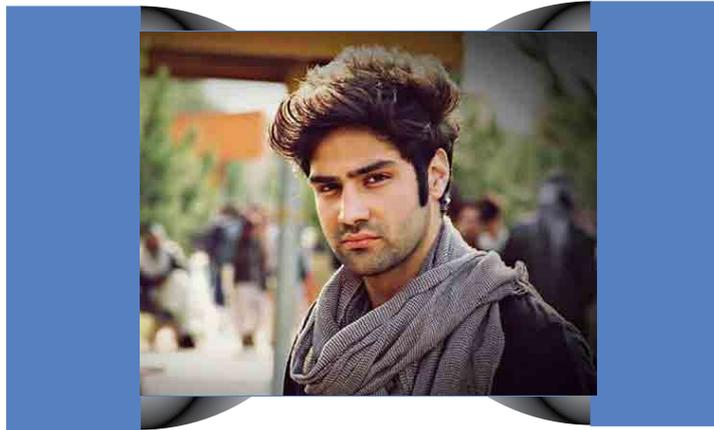


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Media Watch Report

The current issue of Media Watch newsletter covers the following topics:

- A Meetra-TV cameraman was killed in a Taliban's terrorist attack in Kabul
- Media boycotted news coverage of Taliban's terrorist attacks
- Journalists questioned the release of a child suicide-bomber from the prison, who was freed by former President Hamid Karzai two years ago
- Two journalists were injured in a Taliban's terrorist attack in Kabul
- Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan reacted to a Taliban's warning to media and journalists
- The year 2014 was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan's journalists
- A journalists escaped an assassination attempt in Kabul
- Two journalists were beaten in Kunduz province
- A journalist was released from prison in Ghor province
- Insecurity has topped the list of journalists' problems
- Nai Graduates Team demanded legal pursuit of cases of killing and violence against journalists





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As it was earlier predicted, with over 125 cases of violence, 2014 was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan's journalists. Eight lost their lives for the cause of freedom of speech while the annual average for journalists' loss of life in violence has been three casualties for the previous years.

Two rounds of presidential elections, the recount of votes, transition of security responsibilities from Nato forces to Afghanistan's security forces, deterioration of security and increase in Taliban's terror attacks in cities have all contributed to the increase in the incidence of violence against journalists in 2014.

Another important factor in an increase of violent incidences against journalists has been the government's neglect and apathy in legal pursuit of cases of killing and violence against journalists.

As media and journalists demonstrated improvements in their professional standards in 2014, they produced and published or broadcast a higher number of investigative reports which exposed more corrupt governmental figures to the public. This has further contributed to an increase in the incidence of violence against journalists in the country in 2014.

The nationwide coverage of Afghanistan's Elections events in 2014 including those of the candidates' campaigns and live coverage of polling was a landmark activity for media in the recent years.

In spite of violence and other challenges for journalists in 2014, the media community also witnessed certain achievements in this year: the final approval and signature of the Law of Access to Information, and finalization of the employment act [for media] and the scheme for establishment and activities of private media can bring legal benefits to journalists and the media community.





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A Meetra-TV cameraman was killed in a Taliban's terrorist attack in Kabul

A Terrorist Taliban's suicide attacker detonated himself in the theatre Auditorium of the French Cultural Center at Istiqlal High School in Kabul when a drama performance condemning suicide attacks was underway on December 11, 2014. A number of spectators including artists, journalists, and other citizen were injured.

Mr. Zubair Haatami, a Meetra-TV cameraman, along with his two other colleagues was injured in the attack. He was covering the drama performance. The injuries of his colleagues were superficial and they survived. Mr. Zubair Haatami was seriously injured and spent ten nights in coma in a nearby hospital before he passed away on December 20, 2014.

Mr. Zubair Haatami's family, relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues were mourning his slain body which was laid on a bed in his home's yard. Every time new visitors were entering the yard, new waves of cries and whines were breaking.

Journalists and activists from journalists' advocacy groups gathered in Mr. Zubair Haatami's burial ceremony. They criticized the government's policies toward the enemies of Afghanistan, particularly its silence against the murderers of journalists and other citizens of the country. They called it cruelty against the fundamental rights of citizens.

Mr. Zubair Haatami's family returned from Iran and resided in Kabul several years ago. Then his ill dad passed away. With Mr. Zubair Haatami's dead, now his ill mother and his younger brother and sister have lost their only breadwinner. It is overwhelming for his already ill mom to bear the loss of her dear young son and the family's only breadwinner.

Mr. Zubair Haatami lost his life due to injuries that he picked up while was on duty. Therefore, Meetra TV pledged to pay his salary for as long as the TV will exist.

The director of Meetra TV, Mr. Abdul Jabaar Aryaee, announced that his TV station will create Zubair Annual Award which will be awarded to the most competent cameraman of the year.

However, a number of citizens and journalists have criticized Meetra TV and the government of Afghanistan for their neglect of the slain cameraman's treatment process.

They believe that should the mentioned two have paid closer attention to his treatment, he would have survived his injuries. But the Meetra TV officials responded that they had not come short of any effort to help Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami's treatment process.

Immediately after Mr. Zubair Haatami and his colleagues were injured in the attack and transferred to the





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Emergency Hospital, The Media Watch journalist contacted his doctors and asked them about the possibility of sending Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami abroad for better treatment options. But the doctors commented that his condition was not even suitable for a transfer to the next room as his lungs were injured and he was unable to breathe in sufficiently without using the proper machine.

The government of Afghanistan was also prepared to send Mr. Zubair Haatami abroad. Mr. Atta Mohammad Noor, the governor of Balkh province, sent a message to the Media Watch in which he announced his readiness to send Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami abroad for seeking better treatment options. Unfortunately, his medical condition was so severe that prompted his doctors to rule against his transfer abroad.

Meanwhile, government officials said in slain Mr. Zubair Haatami's burial ceremony that the enemies of Afghanistan understood the importance and power of media. They want to hurt freedom of speech through attacking journalists and threatening media, in an attempt to create a more comfortable atmosphere for themselves to operate.

Simin Ghazal Hasanzada, deputy minister of information and culture for publishing affairs, said in Mr. Haatami's burial ceremony: "Terrorists have recently resorted to terrorizing media has through a wave of attacks through which they want to achieve their illegitimate goals."

Ms. Hasanzada added that the growth of freedom of speech in the country has been irrigated by the blood of journalists and media activists. Therefore, this hardly gained human right and value will not easily fade away. "The dead of Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami is not the first sacrifice to the cause of freedom of speech and will not be the last either. The way of freedom will continue to exist," said Ms. Hasanzada.

Mr. Zubaira Haatami was only 23 when he lost his life. His dead has caused grievance not only for his family but for his colleagues, friends, and the entire media community in the country.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan called Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami's dead a big loss for the entire journalists and media community of the country and called on the government of Afghanistan to identify and eliminate the perpetrators of the terrorist attack on the Istiqlal High School.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan sympathizes with Mr. Haatami's family and friends in their loss and wish him persistence and patience as they go through this difficult time.

The year 2014 has been the bloodiest one for the journalists so far. In total, eight journalists lost their lives throughout this year – most of them in Taliban's terrorist attacks.





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Media boycotted news coverage of Taliban's terrorist attacks

In the burial ceremony of Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami, the slain cameraman of Meetra TV, journalists and media supporting and advocacy activists in Afghanistan held an emergency meeting. In the meeting, they decided to boycott coverage of Taliban's terrorist attacks until they stop committing such attacks.

Hundreds of media activists, journalists, filmmakers, and artists took part in the burial ceremony of Mr. Haatami. In response to Taliban's terrorist attacks, they all agreed to boycott coverage of any Taliban-related news and reports.

The participating journalists, media activists, and representatives of Afghanistan's National Journalists Union issued a statement that was read before media and journalists' gathering at the end of the ceremony.

Part of the statement, read by Mr. Abdul Mujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, reads as below:

"Journalists and free media community of Afghanistan, while mourning Mr. Haatami's dead, declare the following: Terrorist Taliban has begun direct attacks on civilian population as they killed children at a volleyball playground in Paktika and journalists and members of civil society in Istiqlal High School. They do not care about civilians' safety, do not abide by Sharia laws or any combat rules of engagement. Therefore, in response to Taliban's terrorist and criminal acts, while we remain committed to the professional values of journalism and free and impartial reporting, we declare the following points:

1. From this date on, Afghanistan's media boycott publishing or broadcasting of any Taliban-related news or reports until they end their attacks on civilians and journalists.
2. From this date on, the fallen members of the National Army, National Police, and National Security as well as those of civilian citizens will be called "martyrs" in news and reports.
3. No media will quote in their news or reports from terrorist Taliban's spokespersons.
4. Afghanistan's journalists call on the national unity government of Afghanistan to establish a committee for support of war-affected journalists.
5. Meetra TV should continue to pay martyr Zubair Haatai's salary to his family.
6. A bank account should be opened under Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami's name, to which journalists and other donors will deposit their financial assistance for his family."

Media and the government of Afghanistan should seriously abide by the mentioned points and foreign media's offices in Kabul should also follow suit for the sake of Afghanistan journalists and people.

During the declaration of the statement, some journalists voiced their critique of a number of media owners who may not abide by the statement. They demanded for another article to be added at the end of the statement to declare the non-abiding media outlets as associates of Taliban and other terrorists.





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Journalists questioned the release of a child suicide-bomber from the prison, who was freed by former President Hamid Karzai two years ago

Over 100 journalists who took part in the burial ceremony of Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami, a Meetra-TV cameraman who was seriously injured and later lost his life in a suicide attack in Istiqlal High School, demanded from the national unity government to investigate the release of a child suicide bomber who was freed from the prison by the former President Hamid Karzai two years ago. They believed that the suicide bomber who detonated his explosives in the Auditorium of Istiqlal High School was the same child suicide bomber who was caught by security forces before conducting an attack two years ago and was forgiven and freed by the former President Hamid Karzai soon after his arrest.

After the suicide attack in the Auditorium of Istiqlal High School, the pictures of the suicide bomber surfaced on Facebook. Social media users believed that the bomber was the same child who was forgiven and freed with considerable privileges by former President Hamid Karzai two years ago. However, two years later, the child suicide bomber returned and managed to detonate himself in a Auditorium packed by journalists and artists, injure many and kill some including Mr. Haatami.

The government of Hamid Karzai released many Taliban prisoners, most of whom then joined back the war fronts and shed the blood of thousands of soldiers and civilian citizens of the country.

Copies of the petition signed by over 100 journalists was sent to the Presidential Palace, Office of the Chief Executive, and National Assembly of Afghanistan.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan praised the journalists' action and asked the national unity government to consider the rightful demand of the journalists.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan also asked the judicial organs to investigate the release of the child suicide bomber, who was freed by former President Hamid Karzai two years ago, and provide compelling answers to the rightful demand of the journalists.

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a constitutional obligation to identify, try, and punish murderers of its citizens. Overlooking this constitutional obligation will severely damage the legitimacy of the state before its people and this will harm interests of the country.





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Two journalists were injured in a Taliban's terrorist attack in Kabul

Terrorist Taliban turned the show “Heartbeat: Silence after the Suicide Explosion” into a scene of heart-beat and screams. The show was intended to condemn suicide attacks.

The government officials identified the suicide bomber as a 16 or 17 year old boy who possibly hid explosives in his underwear.

The attack left many casualties including several dead and up to 20 wounded. Three journalists and media staff were also among the injured.

Mr. Naweed Mohammadi, a Meetra-TV journalist who attended the show, witnessed the explosion, and took his injured colleagues to the hospital, told Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan that he and his working team were there to record the show.

He said that they first thought the explosion was part of the show, but soon as people cried and screamed and some injured ones were saying the Word of faith, they realized that it was a real terrorist explosion.

He continued: “Cries and screams were heard everywhere; one was screaming and asking for help, another was trying to exit the auditorium; yet another was reading his Word of faith. Smoke and the smell of gunpowder filled everywhere and blurred visibility. Soon gunshots could be heard.”

Mr. Naweed Mohammadi, alone, took outside the auditorium the injured and bloody body of his colleague, Mr. Zubair Mohammadi and asked for help to transfer him to the hospital and save his life.

Likewise, Mr. Shaahed Farhosh, director of Meetra-TV programs, was severely injured in head, shoulder and legs, but was still able to walk while bending his body.

Another Meetra-TV cameraman, Mr. Shekeb Mohammadi, was also critically injured in the explosion. He later told Media Watch: “The moment the explosion happened, I could not see anything but a giant flame.”

Mr. Mohammadi was injured in the eyes and has been sent to Turkey for further treatment.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan condemned the attack on a show which itself intended to condemn suicide attacks and called the murder of a journalist and injury of another two as crimes against humanity.

Mr. Mujeeb Khalvatgar, Nai executive director said in a conference held by Nai: “We ask national and international organizations which work to promote human rights, to call such terrorist attacks as crimes against humanity and further help people of Afghanistan to advocate their cause.”

Journalism has always faced security challenges in the country. Forty-seven journalists lost their lives and over 500 cases of violence against journalists have been recorded by Nai in the past decade. This indicates that journalists face grave security challenges in the country. But no challenge will stop free circulation of information in Afghanistan.





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Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan reacted to a Taliban's warning to media and journalists

In a response to Taliban's warning to media and journalists, Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan called Taliban's terrorist attacks inhumane, un-Islamic, and crime against humanity.

After Taliban attacked a drama show conducted by a group of Afghanistan's artists at the auditorium of Istiqlal High School, they issued a warning and declared that from now on the group will also attack the journalists' community, media, and civil society organizations in the country.

Responding to the Taliban's warning, Mr. Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said in a conference on December 15, 2014: "Taliban have miscalculated. They should know that media in Afghanistan have a united voice."

"If media decide to boycott Taliban, even the group's name will not exist in the country anymore," warned Mr. Khalvatgar.

Executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan also stated that no challenge can stop journalists and media from reporting across Afghanistan.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan considers attacks on civilians and public civil servants as crimes against humanity and asks all relevant national and international organizations to record such attacks as crimes against humanity and advance their advocacy programs.

Addressing the conference, Mr. Khalvatgar also spoke of the firm commitment on the side of Afghanistan's national security forces who pledged to increase their efforts to provide security for journalists, media and civil society organizations in response to the Taliban's warning.

Meanwhile Afghanistan's journalists expressed different views on the Taliban's warning. Some ignore it and say that they face such security challenges on a daily basis. Mr. Zafarshah Rohi, a journalist at 8 AM Daily, called such warnings by the Taliban as ineffective and said that journalists constantly faced Taliban's threats.

But Shaaheen Shamaal, a Noor-TV reporter, dissents. He told Media Watch that such warnings will leave bad effects on the psychology of journalists and may affect their works. For instance, he stated, from now on journalists may fear the possibility of direct attacks on media workers and only make conservative reports and footages of terrorist attacks.

According to Media Watch reports at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, 2014 was the bloodiest year for journalists. So far eight journalists have lost their lives while on duty and a high number of journalists have either been injured or faced physical violence.

However, Nai executive director believes that in spite of such challenges in 2014, media and journalists increased their reporting and acted more professionally than the previous years. For instance, he mentioned of media's nationwide coverage of 2014 elections' process as well as publishing and broadcasting of investigative reports which exposed corrupt figures as examples of improved and standardized media activities in 2014.





The year 2014 was the bloodiest year for Afghanistan's journalists

The annual report of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan in 2014 registered 125 cases of violence against journalists. A breakdown of this figure shows eight cases in which journalists were killed, nine cases of injuries, 20 cases of brief arrests, 38 cases of beating, and finally 50 cases of threats and insults against journalists. (Please refer to the relevant tables and charts in the Appendices.)

Most of the slain journalists lost their lives in Taliban's terrorist attacks. Police found the body of Mr. Noor Ahmad Noori, a producer at Radio Bost in Helmand province and a former local correspondent for New York Times, with his hands tied in the back in a plastic bag in Shormaan area of Kart-e-Lagaan neighborhood in Lashkargaah city, Helmand province on January 24, 2014.

Later, the forensic report revealed that the slain journalist was tortured and beaten before he was killed. There were signs of two stab wounds in his head.

Another victim, Mr. Ahmadshah Naimi, 20, was on the way to his work in Radio Nawa and Saba TV when a suicide attack occurred in Karat-e-Naw neighborhood of Kabul and killed him along with a number of other citizens in the early morning on January 26, 2014.

The third victim, a Swedish journalist of English origin, was shot in the head in Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood of Kabul city on March 11, 2014 and lost his life while he was taken to hospital.

Mr. Nils Horner, 51, a journalist for a Swedish radio, arrived in Kabul, Afghanistan only two days before he was killed. He was shot and killed in the highly secure diplomatic district of Kabul.

The fourth victim, Mr. Sardar Ahmad, a journalist for Agence France Presse, was shot and killed along with his wife and two children on the New Year's Day (in Afghanistan's calendar) in a terrorist Taliban attack in Kabul Serena Hotel on March 21, 2014. His only surviving child, 1, was severely injured in the attack. The attack took a toll of nine civilian casualties including children and women.

Ms. Anja Niedringhaus, 48, a veteran Associated Press photographer was the fifth journalist, who was killed when an Afghan policeman opened fire at her car in Khost, eastern Afghanistan on April 4, 2014.

Ms. Kathy Gannon, an AP correspondent, and colleague of Ms. Niedringhaus, was injured in the attack. They were on a trip to eastern Afghanistan to cover transferring of election material to that region. The police officer who shot the journalists, was arrested and brought to Kabul.

The sixth journalist killed in 2014 was Mr. Khaled Aagaah-Yaqubi. He was a presenter of entertainment programs at local Radio Lahza in Mazar-e-Sharif. Mr. Aagaah-Yaqubi was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in his home in Mazar-e-Sharif on July 12, 2014.

Ms. Palwasha Tokhi, a former journalist for Radio Bayan in Mazar-e-Sharif, was the seventh journalist killed in Afghanistan in 2014. She was mysteriously killed by an individual in her home in Mazar-e-Sharif on September 16, 2014

Ms. Tokhi served as a journalist at Radio Bayan-e-Shamaal for five years and went to Thailand to earn her Master's degree two years ago. After finishing her studies abroad, she came back, only days before she





was stabbed in her home and later lost her life in a hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The eighth and last journalist who lost his life in 2014 was Mr. Mr. Zubair Haatami. He was injured in a Taliban's terrorist attack during a show in the auditorium of Istiqlal High School on December 11, 2014 and later passed away in the hospital in Kabul on December 20, 2014.

Mr. Haatami was on duty to film a drama show when he along with his two other colleagues was injured in the suicide attack. Unlike Mr. Haatami's, his colleagues' injuries were not life-threatening. He spent ten nights in coma at the Emergency Hospital in Kabul and finally lost his life due to the severe inflicted injuries.

The acts of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2014 have been committed by the Taliban, the government of Afghanistan, and unidentified individuals.

In the cases of murdering of journalists, except the one in which a policeman opened fire at AP journalists and killed one of them, seven out of eight slain journalists in 2014 were killed in terrorist Taliban's attacks.

However, in the cases of beating, brief arrests, threatening and insulting journalists, the main violator has been the government of Afghanistan.

The Media Watch report also shows that violence against journalists in 2014 has increased by 64% comparing to the last year. Media Watch recorded 76 cases of violence against journalists in 2013.

Mr. Sediqullah Tawhidi, director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said in a conference for presenting the annual Media Watch report: "As it was predicted, 2014 was a bloody and unfortunate year for journalists."

Mr Tawhidi criticized the previous government administration for neglecting legal pursuit of cases of violence against journalists which subsequently contributed to an increase in the levels of violence against journalists in the country.

However, Mr. Tawhidi, expects the national unity government to take serious actions in addressing these cases and bringing an end to violence against journalists.

Mr. Tawhidi said: "Before the national unity government was formed, both leading candidates, Dr. Abdullah and Dr. Ghani pledged through a formal letter to the journalists' community that they will support media in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, in spite of problems and challenges, journalists also had significant achievements in 2014.

He particularly mentioned of media's nationwide coverage of both rounds of 2014 presidential elections as well as publishing and broadcasting of investigative as examples of improved and standardized media activities in 2014.

Unless the national unity government take practical actions to support media and journalists around the country, the current year (2015) will also see a high incidence of violence against journalists and media in Afghanistan.





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A journalists escaped an assassination attempt in Kabul

Mr. Hussain Seerat, an 8-AM-Daily journalist, was attacked by masked man while he was passing Dasht-e-Barchi Road on January 1, 2015.

Mr. Seerat told Media Watch: “Together with a friend of mine, I left Azizi Bank in Dasht-e-Barchi and got into the car. At this moment, a masked man run toward us and called on us to wait. He said loudly that he wanted to talk to us. I told my friend to move the car. The masked man got so close to us and hit the window of the car with a device but we managed to escape.”

The attack on Mr. Seerat took place just days after his private car was stolen in Kot-e-Sangi. A day after his car was stolen, Mr. Seerat received threatening phone calls. The callers threatened him to stop searching for his car and better begin to care about his own life as the bullets that should fire at him were ready.

Mr. Seerat believed that the masked man who tried to attack him belonged to the group who earlier stole his car and then threatened him over the phone.

Mr. Seerat links stealing of his car, receiving of threatening phone calls and letters, and ultimately the recent attempts on his life to his works and reports that he published in 8 AM and on social media.

He said that he has recently written on the Islamic Republic or Iran’s interferences in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and shared it through his Facebook page. He has also criticized religious and political leaders of the country who follow Iran in observation of Ashura day.

Mr. Seerat expressed his concerns about the security threats to his life that keep increasing day by day and interfere with his daily life and works.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan expressed its concerns about security threats to the life of this journalist and asked security officials to do their utmost to ensure his safety and security.





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Two journalists were beaten in Kunduz province

Mr. Najim Rahimi, chief editor of Rasanayee Daily and Mr. Nasir Ahmad Waqef, an Al-Jazeera journalist, were beaten by a special forces' policeman in Kunduz on December 20, 2014.

The two journalists were on the way to a friend's home, while they were beaten.

Mr. Rahimi was injured in the nose and traveled with his friend to Kabul to seek medical treatment. His doctors said that his nose was broken in two sites and has undergone two surgical operations so far.

Mr. Waqef, an Al-Jazeera journalist who has also been beaten, told Media Watch: "Najim and I sat in the front seat of a taxi and called [our friend] to give his home address to us. He mentioned the name of a commander and asked us to drop off the taxi near the commander's house. To confirm, we repeated the name of the commander. In this moment, a policeman who was in the backseat of the taxi, attacked us and gave us kicks and boxes on the face. We insisted that we were only journalists but he did not hear. He attacked us again when we dropped off the taxi in front of the police Special Forces command."

Mr. Rahim has been severely injured in his nose and could not easily talk. He only said that they were innocent and the government of Afghanistan should punish the perpetrator.

Kunduz authorities reported that they arrested and punished the police officer who beat the two journalists.

Said Sarwar Hussaini, Kunduz police spokesperson, told Media Watch: "We condemn the actions of this police officer. We arrested him and will expel him from police ranks."

Mr. Hussaini added that they will introduce the trespassing policeman to the judicial organs and will do the same to anyone who may commit such actions.

Journalists and media staff in Kunduz have faced many problems in the recent months. They have even been beaten by the bodyguards of the ex-governor of the province.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan condemned beating of the two journalists by a policeman in Kunduz and expressed its concerns over increasing violence against journalists in Kunduz.

Media Watch called on Kunduz police authorities to expel and punish any trespassing police who commit violence against journalists, exactly as the Kunduz police spokesperson pledged.





A journalist was released from prison in Ghor province

Mr. Mohammad Yasin Azhand, director of broadcasting at the Ghor local TV canal, stated that due to a plot arranged by the local powerbrokers, he was first arrested and then tried in the municipal primary court where he was pledged guilty and penalized to four years of imprisonment and \$40,000 financial punishment.

A month later, now, Mr. Azhand has been freed on bail. He told Media Watch that the entire drama was a plot to silence him. He has been reporting on problems in his community and was sharing important news with other journalists.

Mr. Azhand said that after he heard the rule of the municipal primary court, he did a hunger strike to protest the rule and called on the judicial organs to fairly and inclusively assess and judge the case. He also thanked Nai and other media advocacy organizations and added: “These efforts made the Ghor Provincial Appellate Court to void the municipal primary court’s rule and order a new investigation into the case.

Since the plaintiff in Mr. Azhand’s case has substantial influence in Ghor province, he has demanded that his case be transferred to the capital, Kabul. Nai’s latest information indicate that Mr. Azhand’s case has been transferred to Kabul.

Mr. Azhand said that the municipal primary court’s rule was based on incomplete investigations carried by the provincial attorney’s office and therefore he wanted to revise and restore justice in the case.

“Plots against me were formed after I published my reports in media about the municipality’s land confiscation,” added Mr. Azhand.

Ghor authorities have welcomed Mr. Azhand’s release and asked for a fair and impartial investigation of his case.

Said Anwar Rahmati, Ghor province caretaker told Media Watch that Ghor provincial administration supports a fair rule in Mr. Azhand’s case.

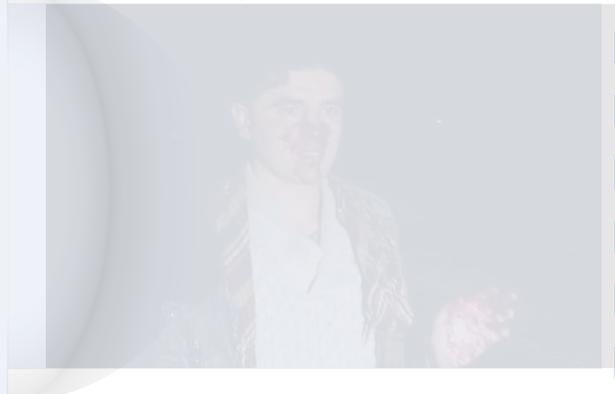
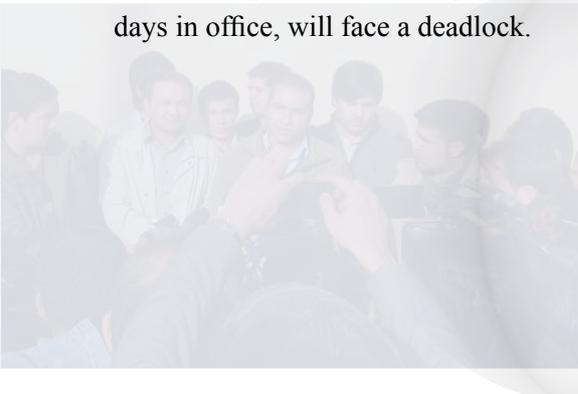
Some journalists in Ghor province claim that whenever they expose authorities’ corruption or cases of breaking the laws, they immediately come under pressure and threats and are forced to turn to self-censorship. They refer to Mr. Azhand’s case as a proof or their claim as he started to face trials and even imprisonment after he exposed cases of municipal land confiscation.

However, Mr. Rahmait, the former governor and current caretaker of Ghor province, disagreed with journalists’ claims and believed that during his tenure as the governor of the province for the past two years, no journalist has been threatened and subjected to violence for exposing [the truth].

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan considers pressing journalists and making up cases against them as unlawful activities and condemns both.

Media Watch calls on legal and judicial organs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to handle transparently and rule fairly the case of Mr. Azhand in a court in the capital Kabul.

If law breakers and corrupt officials influence courts and offices of attorney’s, then anti-corruption campaign, which was promised by the president and the chief executive of the national unity government in their first days in office, will face a deadlock.





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Insecurity has topped the list of journalists' problems

Kherad weekly held a conference titled "More than a decade of experiencing freedom of speech in Afghanistan" in Kabul. Journalists and media activists participated in the event.

Nai executive director, Mr. Abdulmujeeb Khalvatgar, a participant to the conference said: "Insecurity still tops the list of challenges that journalists face in Afghanistan."

Mr. Khalvatgar added: "providing personal and professional security to the journalists is among the responsibilities of the security institutions of Afghanistan. However, in some occasions, these very institutions have been involved in creating insecurity for journalists."

"In many cases, journalists insist on getting access to information which angers powerbrokers and government authorities who then threaten or beat journalists," added Mr. Khalvatgar.

In his address to the conference, the founder of Kherad weekly and Kherad online, Mr. Fazel Karim Aimaq, stated that despite myriad challenges, media have played an awakening role for the public in the past 13 years.

Commenting on Kherad weekly, Mr. Aimaq praised the weekly's policy of impartiality and respecting of freedom of speech. The weekly never edited the material that were sent to it to publish.

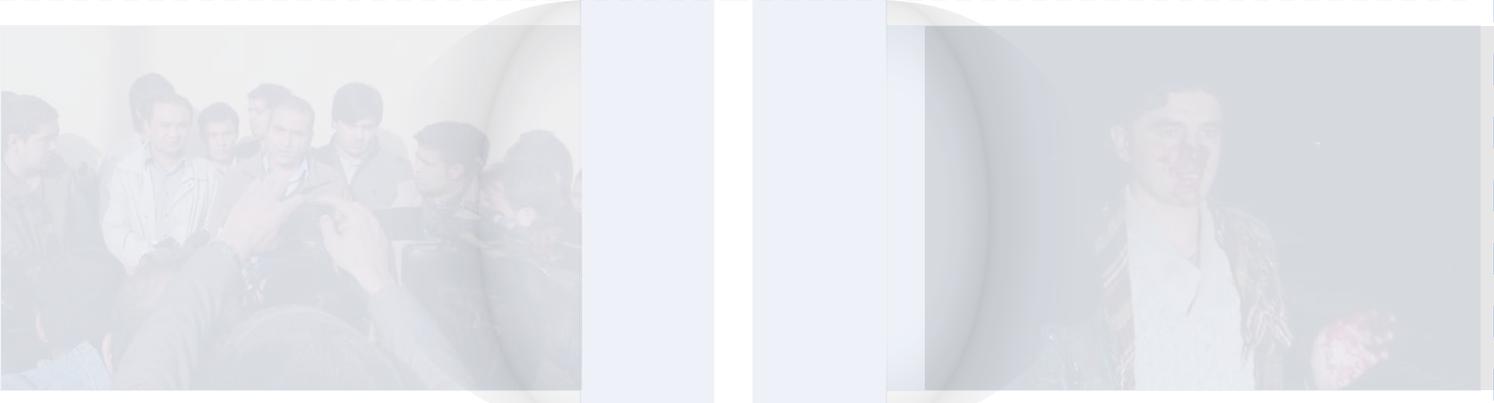
Another participant, Mr. Hashmatullah Raadfar, former head of media commission at the Independent Election Commisison, said: "The longer the government sustained, the tighter and smaller the circle of freedom of speech became. We had not witnessed today's limitations in previous years. Now the plant of freedom of speech has turned to fruit and not every ax can threaten to uproot it."

Meanwhile, Mr. Mohammad Sediq Zaliq, journalist and university professor of journalism, discussed the challenges and problems of print media and concluded that it is hard for them to compete with media giants.

In the last decade, 45 national and foreign journalists lost their lives and 450 cases of violence against journalists have been recorded across the country. Government organizations are responsible for 200 of the cases whereas, the rest of the cases have been carried out by Taliban and illegal armed individuals and groups.

The main challenges involving journalism in the country today include lack of access to information imposed by the government, economic problems, and low professional standards.

Increasing level of public awareness, persuading people to participate in elections and in exposing corruption and corrupt authorities are among landmark media achievements in the country.





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

Nai Graduates Team demanded legal pursuit of cases of killing and violence against journalists

Nai Graduates Team is comprised of 1,200 journalists and students of journalism in Afghanistan. They team demands from the state of Afghanistan to judicially pursue and rule cases of violence against journalists and punish the perpetrators.

In a press conference, Nai Graduates Team said that in the last 13 years, 45 national and foreign journalists lost their lives while on duty and 450 cases of violence against journalists have been recorded across the country. But the former government administration has not pursued any of these cases.

Mr. Raamin Shaareq, Nai Graduates Team coordinator for Kabul zone, said in this conference: “Leaving the perpetrators of violence against journalists untried and unpunished has been a main factor to the increase in violence against journalists.”

Nai Graduates Team joined Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan in their repeated calls on the state and government of Afghanistan to pursue the legal and judicial cases of violence against journalists and prevent more violence against journalists and media community in the country.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan supports the call of the Nai Graduates Team and once again demands from the national unity government to reinvestigate all cases of murdered journalists, identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.





Appendices

Table 1: Cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2014

Cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2014		
Type	Incidence	Percentage (%)
Murdered	8	6.4
Injured	9	7.2
Arrested	20	16
Beaten	38	30.4
Threatened and insulted	50	40
Total	125	100

Chart 1: Cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2014

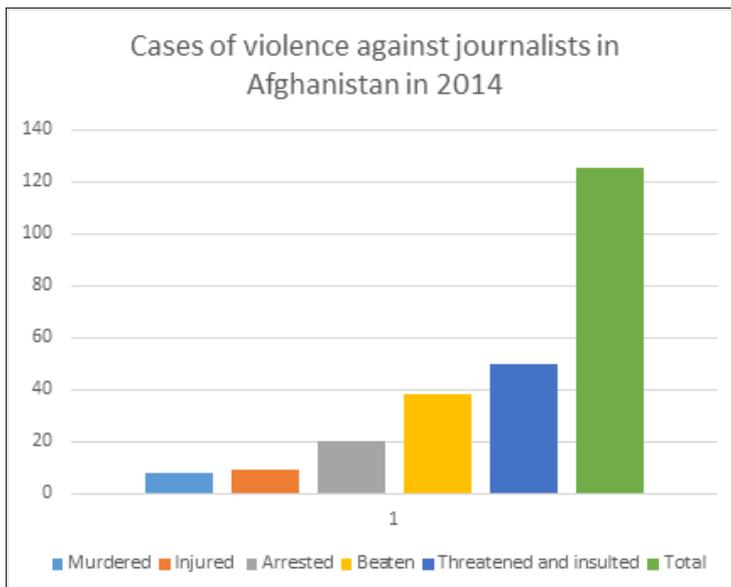
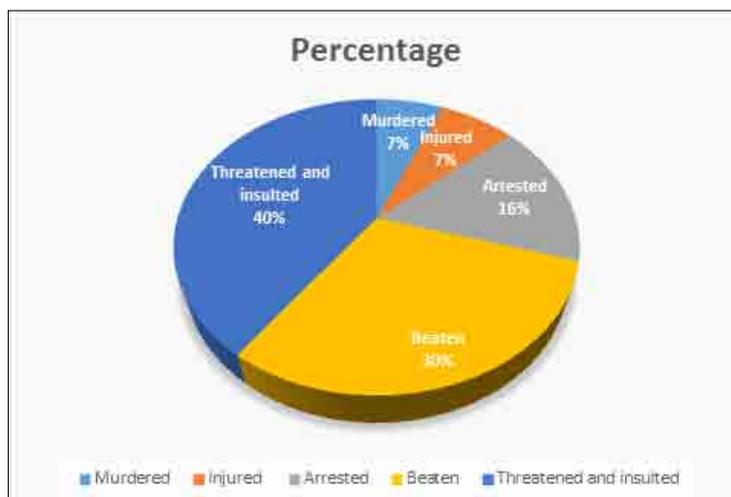


Chart 2: Cases of violence against journalists in Afghanistan in 2014 (Percentage breakdown)





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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/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.

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