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Media Watch Report

Owner Nai

Monthly Report #128

January

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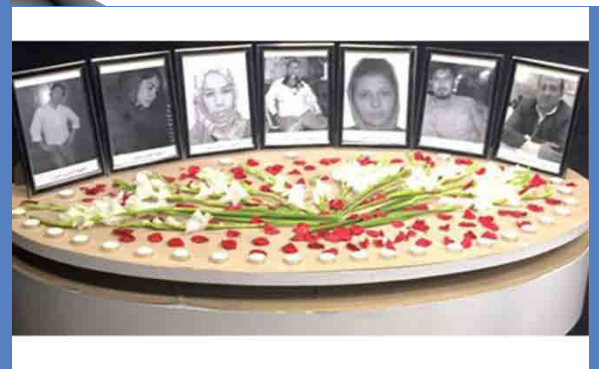


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Media Watch Report

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

- Seven employees of Tolo TV were killed and 20 others injured in a Taliban's suicide car bomb attack
- The story of one of the injured victims of Black Wednesday (the attack on Tolo-TV employees)
- A veteran journalist was killed in Nangahar province
- Police beat up a Tolo-News reporter in Badakhshan province
- A female journalist was threatened to death in Kabul city
- National Directorate of Security has imposed restrictions and censorship on journalists' activities in Baghlan province





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January 2016 was the bloodiest month in the history of Afghanistan media. Comparing to 2014, the bloodiest year for the country's media in which eight journalists and media personnel lost their lives, in January 2016 alone, Afghanistan's media community lost eight members while another 20 members got injured in the same single attack. The injured are still under treatment. Some of them have lost their sight or their limbs.

A Taliban's suicide car bomber targeted a bus carrying Tolo-TV staffers in Kabul city. Seven Tolo-TV employees were killed and other 17 staff members were injured in the incident.

The attack, which was unprecedented in the history of Afghanistan media, drew broad condemnations from institutions, unions, organizations, and states around the world. It was called as a crime against humanity and one of the most brutal actions against defenseless human beings.

Taliban threatened Tolo TV and 1 TV stations and called them as military targets shortly after the fall of Kunduz in their hands.

Tolo TV and 1 TV canals as well as a number of other media outlets broadly broadcasted Taliban's barbaric crimes against humanity and their oppression of Kunduz residents during their brief capture of the city. This infuriated Taliban and they announced those two media outlets as military targets and threatened their employees to death.

In a separate incident in the eastern province of Nangarhar, unidentified gunmen shot to death a veteran journalist of the National Radio Television of Afghanistan.

Zubair Khaksar worked for the National Radio Television of Afghanistan in Nangarhar for the past 20 years. He was on his way home from Sorkh Roud district to Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province, when unidentified gunmen shot him to death.

On the first day of 2016, police officers beat up a Tolo-TV journalist in Faizabad, Badakhshan when he filmed an attack of armed men on police forces and intended to use it in his report.

Threatening of journalists by various identified and unidentified sides continues in Afghanistan. A female journalist, who works for Maiwand private TV canal, has claimed that unidentified persons call and threaten her to death.

Media and journalists in Baghlan province complain about National Security staffs' interference and imposing of restrictions on their professional media activities to the point that it has become unbearable for them to work as media professionals in Baghlan.





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Seven employees of Tolo TV were killed and 20 others injured in a Taliban's suicide car bomb attack



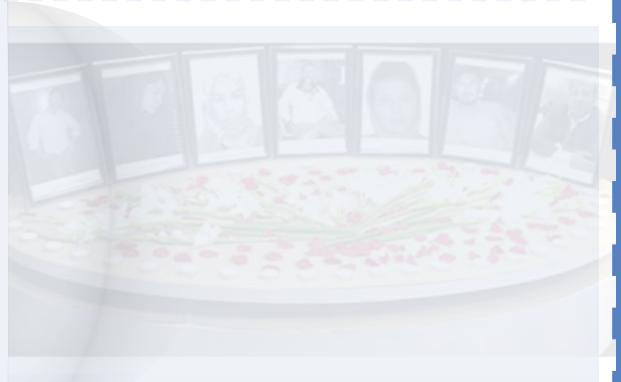
A Taliban's suicide car bomber targeted a vehicle of Tolo TV employees which killed seven and injured over 20 of them in the evening of January 20, 2016.

The Tolo-TV vehicle was on its way to take the TV station's employees to their homes at the end of their working day. Taliban's suicide car bomber targeted the vehicle on Dar-ul-Aman Road, in 6th District of Kabul city. The attack caused the heaviest casualties ever incurred by Afghanistan media community. The day of the incident was later called as "Black Wednesday."

The following journalists lost their lives in the incident:

1. Sayed Mohammad Jawad Hussaini, video editor at MOBY Group for the past seven years.
2. Zainab Mirzaee, Dari (Persian) dubbing artist at MOBY Group for the past two years.
3. Mehri Azizi, a key member of the graphic department of MOBY Group for the past five years.
4. Mariam Ibrahimi, a Dari (Persian) dubbing artist at MOBY Group for the past six months.
5. Mohammad Ali Mohammadi, a Dari (Persian) dubbing artist at MOBY Group for the past five years.
6. Hussain Amiri, worked in decoration department in MOBY Group for the past eight years.
7. Mohammad Hussain, a driver in MOBY Group for past six years.

Afghanistan Journalists' Federation (AJF), which constitutes of the absolute majority of journalists' unions, media entities, and Afghanistan's renowned media, called the attack day as "Black Wednesday". In a press release, Afghanistan Journalists' Federation condemned in the strongest possible terms the brutal terrorist attack on Tolo-TV





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employees and called upon the government to pay attention on the security and safety of media employees.

Part of the press release by Afghanistan Journalists' Federation (AJF) reads: By organizing and conducting this brutal and criminal attack, Taliban terrorist group proved that they have no respect for or commitment to any values of humanity, human rights, and free media activities. Their crime shows the terroristic nature of this retrogressive group.

Another part of the AJF's press release reads: Afghanistan Journalists' Federation and Afghanistan media will respond in various dimensions and steps to this unforgivable crime of Taliban terrorist group and will share their important decisions with the people.

In their press release, Afghanistan Journalists' Federation (AJF) has emphasized that "this grand and unprecedented crime will change the relationship of media with Taliban terrorist group. Terrorist Taliban will pay a dear price for their unforgivable action. From now on, Afghanistan media will impose serious changes in its news coverage policy towards terrorist Taliban."

There are concerns regarding the presence of individuals in the current political system that in fact support terrorists and organize broad actions against freedom of speech and media. Afghanistan Journalists' Federation and Afghanistan media strongly demands from the leadership of the National Unity Government to immediately identify and bring to justice those elements of terrorist groups who operate from within the political system, spread propaganda and plot terrorist activities. Members of the federation supports the State's any decisive action against terrorist groups.

Afghanistan Journalists' Federation (AJF) called upon all foreign and domestic media which operate in Afghanistan to strictly regard the country's effective laws, particularly articles on "Prohibition of Promoting Terrorism and Propaganda". We call upon the government to take serious measures to follow implantation of the law and prosecute the violators.

In addition to security problems, media employees and journalists constantly face intra-organizational problems. For this reason, the AJF demanded from media owners to provide the work compensation to the journalists and media personnel, particularly those who lose their lives or get injured in the line of duty, in accordance with the "Regulation on the Establishment and Operation of Privately Owned Mass Media".

The AJF's press release emphasizes that those media that refuse to follow the articles of the AJF's statement will lose the federation's support.

The AJF's press release, in its final part, calls upon the government to dismiss and prosecute those Kabul security officials who have neglected their duties in preventing this terrorist attack.

Other journalists' unions and freedom of speech and media support organizations also condemned Taliban's at-





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tack, each separately.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan and Afghanistan National Journalists' Union (ANJU) condemned Taliban's attack as a crime against humanity and called it as the most tragic incident in the history of Afghanistan media.

Part of Nai's statement reads that "with their criminal and brutal attack, Taliban showed that they consider every civilian person as a military target."

After fall of Kunduz in the hands of Taliban in the fall of 2015, they committed countless acts of crime against humanity to the citizens of Kunduz. When media outlets, particularly Tolo News TV canal broadcasted Taliban crimes, the terrorist group announced that they considered Tolo News and 1 TV stations as military targets and threatened to target their staffs. Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon all the media and journalists across the country to regard the joint decisions made by journalists' unions and institutions and take a solid joint position against such criminal acts of Taliban.

The story of one of the injured victims of Black Wednesday (the attack on Tolo TV employees)

Sayed Hasib Sadat, a cameraman for Tolo TV, who was injured in Taliban's terrorist attack on Tolo-TV employees, shared with Media Watch his eye-witness account of the Black Wednesday incident.

In the past, Mr. Sadat had filmed many terrorist attacks in different parts of the county. He has witnessed many such incidents and filmed Taliban's crimes in Kunduz after the city fell in their hands recently. He has many memories from such incidents. This time, however, he was a victim in one of such attacks where he found himself in the middle of smoke, fire, and chopped limbs and parts of his close colleagues' bodies.

Mr. Sadat says: "In the first moments of the explosion, I could not hear any sound and could not see any fire. When I got conscious and opened my eyes, I tried to learn what just happened. For several moments I could not understand what has just happen. After several minutes, I found myself in the middle of fire, smoke, and chopped and inured bodies of my colleagues. I saw some of them with missing hands, legs, or both. I saw passer-by women and children who got injured and were screaming. I also tried to scream once or twice but could not raise my voice. I pulled myself out of fire and smoke while I was watching my colleagues burning in the fire and all screaming for help. Ultimately a guy of good faith picked and put me in a car and took me to Isteqlal Hospital which was close to the incident site. On the way to the hospital I could answer two phone calls. One of them was my mother. I told her that I got injured and just reached the hospital. Then, due to bleeding, I lost my consciousness again and I do not





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remember anymore.”

Mr. Sadat will never forget that ominous moment in which, as he said, he saw chopped pieces of his dear colleagues' bodies burning in the middle of fire and smoke while they were screaming for help.

Mr. Sadat continues: “When I gathered my senses and tried to find out what just happened, I saw my colleagues with broken and bloody heads and faces. Parts of their bodies were scattered all around and some injured ones were calling names of their dear ones: Father! Mother! However, as if it was the doomsday, no one cared for no one and there were blood, fire, and smoke everywhere.”

Mr. Sadat says that if Taliban continue their terrorist attacks and the State of Afghanistan fail to stop their terrorist and suicide attacks on freedom of speech, then reporting and circulating of information and freedom of speech will see inevitable setbacks in Afghanistan.

Nearly three months ago, terrorist Taliban threatened to death Tolo-TV and 1-TV journalists and staffers after the mentioned TV networks broadcasted the news of countless acts of crimes against humanity committed by Taliban against civilians in Kunduz after they captured the city. Taliban announced that they will consider both TV stations as military targets.

The State security forces took special security measures for the offices of both media outlets, but Taliban's suicide car bomb attack on a Tolo-TV vehicle, which was carrying th TV station's staffers to their homes, caught many off guard.

Mr. Sadat, one of the Tol-TV staffers who was injured in Black Wednesday attack, says that a number of international organizations, embassies, and Afghanistan National Department of Security had earlier assured Tolo-TV officials that the threats were solved; as a result, Taliban caught all sides off guard by conducting suicide car bomb attack and reach their goals.

The condition of Mr. Sadat is improving day by day but he remains concerned about safety of his colleagues, for the future of journalism, and continuation of war and insecurity in his country. He asks about his injured colleagues and says that those dear ones who were riding together with him in the same vehicle to their homes, were looking forward to seeing their children and families. Alas some of them turned blind and will not be able to see their dear ones anymore; some others lost their hearing and will not be able to hear their dear ones anymore; and some of them lost their limbs and will not be able to touch and hold their family members anymore.





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A veteran journalist was killed in Nangarhar province

Zubair Khaksar, a veteran journalist and presenter of the National Radio Television in Nangarhar province, was shot to death by unidentified armed individuals in the vicinity of Sorkh Roud district, Nangarhar province in the evening of January 29, 2016.

According to one of his colleagues, Mr. Khaksar was earlier threatened to death by Daesh (=ISIS). However, security officials in Nangarhar province say that Mr. Khaksar had not spoken about such a threat in the past.

Ataullah Khogiane, spokesperson for Nangarhar governor, told Media Watch that investigations about the perpetrators of this murder case have been launched: "The investigations on the murder of Mr. Khaksar have led us to some findings. Since they are still ongoing, I cannot share with you any further details."

The spokesperson for Nangarhar governor assured media and journalists that the government has stepped up its efforts to protect them.

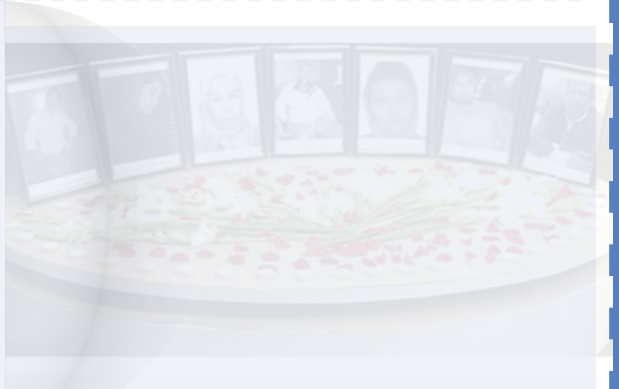
Security officials in Nangarhar province said that Mr. Khaksar was shot to death by people who were travelling in the same vehicle from Sorkh Roud district to Jalalabad city.

Zubair Khaksar worked for the National Radio Television in Nangarhar province in the past 20 years. He had also served as the acting chair of the organization and then as general director for broadcasts at the state-run media National Radio Television in Nangarhar province. He was moderating national and cultural conferences and seminars in that zone of the country.

Amrullah Rawan, evaluation director at National Radio Television in Nangarhar province, who was a close colleague of Mr. Khaksar, says that killing of this veteran journalist has affected all journalists and cultural figures in Nangarhar province.

Mr. Rawan continues: "At the time I began my work at National Radio Television in 2002, Mr. Khaksar was director for broadcasts here. He behaved friendly towards his colleagues. His presence in the national and cultural meetings and events made those events interesting."

In addition to his other cultural and media activities at National Radio Television, Mr. Khaksar was also presenting programs in Pashayee language. His programs aimed at promoting Pashayee language.





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It is worth to mention that Mr. Khaksar was also active in politics. He was providing Nangarhar governor with consultations on cultural and media subjects as well as on freedom of speech. He was appointed as cultural consultant to Nangarhar governor a week before he was killed.

Abdulmujeeb Khalwatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said in a statement: "The first month of 2016 was the bloodiest month in the history of Afghanistan media. Eight journalists and media employees were killed in this month. Afghanistan media's bloodiest year has been 2014 in which eight journalists were killed."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan expresses its concerns over targeted and direct attacks on journalists and media staffers and calls upon the government of Afghanistan to take appropriate and adequate measures for protection of journalists and mend media employees.

Nai also calls upon the government of Afghanistan to investigate murder of Mr. Khaksar in Nangarhar province, identify and punish the perpetrators.

Eight media staffers and journalists including Mr. Khaksar and seven Tolo-TV employees were killed in January 2016, which makes it the bloodiest month in the history of Afghanistan media so far.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan condemned in strongest possible terms the murder of Zubair Khaksar, a veteran journalist for National Radio Television in Nangarhar province. In statement to the press, Media Watch called murdering of innocent citizens, particularly of journalists and media employees, against any ethical, religious, and humane values.

The State of Afghanistan has fallen short in identifying and prosecuting perpetrators of violence against journalists in the past 14 years. This has heartened the enemies of freedom of speech. The government of Afghanistan is obliged to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of this crime as well as those who have been involved in the past 56 cases of murder of journalists in the past 14 years.

Police beat up a Tolo News reporter in Badakhshan province

Nemat Ahmadi, a journalist for Tolo TV in Badakhshan province, claimed in a phone conversation with Media Watch that police officers have insulted and beaten him up before the public in Faizabad city, Badakhshan province.

Mr. Ahmadi says: "When irresponsible armed persons attacked police forces inside Faizabad city on January 1, 2016, I decided to film the incident. However, police forces assaulted and beat me up."

The Tolo-News reporter also says that the police officer, who beat him up, did later regret his actions and apologized. However, in order to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future, Mr. Ahmadi moved forward and registered his complaint with the Police Headquarters in Badakhshan.

Police officials in Badakhshan reported punishing of their perpetrator officer and said that once a police officer's involvement in misbehaving towards journalists and other people is proved, then they would proceed in accordance





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with law to punish the perpetrator officer.

Sakhi Ghafoori, Badakhshan Police Chief, told Media Watch: "Two police officers engaged in unprofessional behavior towards this journalist and Badakhshan Police Headquarters immediately investigated the case and dismissed the two officers. However, Mr. Ahmadi, the journalist who was beaten by these police officers, has forgiven the perpetrators and asked Police Headquarters not to dismiss them."

Badakhshan Police Chief says that in order to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future to set a precedent for other officers, he decided to shift the perpetrator officer to a remote post in the province.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly condemns any insult and mistreatment of journalists as a criminal act.

Media Watch welcomes the in-time actions taken by Badakhshan Police Headquarters. In order to prevent such acts from happening in the future, Media Watch demands that police officers should be trained about the role and duties of journalists. They should learn that like police and security forces, journalists also have duties to report and circulate information to the public about different events and developments around the country.

A Maiwand-TV female journalist was threatened to death in Kabul city

Adela Sherzai, a journalist and moderator of political programs in Maiwand TV claims that unidentified persons have been threatening her to death recently.

Ms. Sherzai told Media Watch: "It has been for a year that unidentified people call in my mobile phone and threaten me to death."

However, Ms. Sherzai has not taken those threats seriously and have continued her work.

Ms. Sherzai's concerns increased after her father-in-law was mysteriously murdered in Kabul and the perpetrators remained unidentified.

Ms. Sherzai has reported to the police the threats she has been receiving. However, she says that Kabul Police has not done anything considerable to stop them.

Ms. Sherzai also adds that not only the phone-call threats have not been solved but several motorcyclists have in multiple occasions chased her on the way between her office and home recently. She is concerned that they might hurt her.

Officials at the Ministry of Interior have assured Ms. Sherzai that police will do whatever they can to protect her.

Sediq Sediqi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, told Media Watch about investigating of the recent threats: "Ministry of Interior will not allow anyone to threaten journalists and limit reporting and circulation of information."

Nai Supporting Open Median in Afghanistan considers those threats as ostensible acts of violence against journalists and calls upon the security and intelligence organizations to identify and arrest perpetrators of those





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threats.

Meanwhile, there were 95 cases of violence against journalists registered last year which makes it the worst year for freedom of speech and journalists in Afghanistan.

Although Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has repeatedly called upon the government of Afghanistan to arrest and punish perpetrators of violence against journalists in the country, the media family has rarely witnessed government's arrest or punishment of those perpetrators. This has contributed to constant increase in the incidence of violence against journalists in Afghanistan.

National Directorate of Security has imposed restrictions and censorship on journalists' works in Baghlan province

A number of journalists and media outlets in Baghlan province complain from security institutions, in particular from the National Directorate of Security in the province. The complaining journalists say that in most of the cases National Security officers prevent them from accessing and publishing information.

Sher Mohammad Jahesh, director of Tanweer local TV canal in Baghlan province, says that after they broadcasted a documentary report about police's indifference and negligence at the entrance gates of Pol-e-Khomri city, the National Security has barred their journalists from attending security conferences.

According to Mr. Jahesh, after broadcasting critical reports and news, National Security administration sends correspondence to the office of Tanweer TV station and demand explanations.

Director of Tanweer TV station says that if their reports have any problems or if anyone has a complaint about them, in accordance with the Mass Media Law, they can register their complaints with the Commission for Investigation of Media Violations and Mass Media Commission for further proceedings. No governmental institution is allowed to directly interfere with media reporting and attempt to restrict open circulation of information.

Yet it is not Tanweer TV Canal alone that experiences this problem. There are other media outlets in Baghlan too that raise the same complaints about interferences into their professional works by the National Security administration.

Hamed Sherzai, chief editor of Adeeb local radio station in Baghlan province also says that the National Security administration usually interferes in the works of local media outlets and journalists in the province.

Journalists of nationally broadcasting media outlets, whose work area is in Baghlan province, raise the same complaints about illegal interferences of the National Security administration in media affairs.

Habib Sherzai, Tolo News reporter in Baghlan province, shared with Media Watch his complaints about the interference and censorship efforts made by the National Security administration into media affairs.

Mr. Sherzai says: "National Security administration detained me for broadcasting of a report during the recent war





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in Kunduz. Later they released me.”

After multiple efforts by Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan to contact National Security administration in Baghlan province, one of their officers ultimately told Media Watch to speak and discuss such complaints with their central office in Kabul.

Media Watch did not manage to get the views of the National Directorate of Security on the problems faced by Baghlan media outlets and journalists. However, local authorities in Baghlan province say that there was a misunderstanding developed between the National Directorate of Security in Baghlan and a number of media outlets. It has been solved in a face-to-face meeting between both sides.

Shokria Hussain Yaqeen, director of Information and Culture in Baghlan province, told Media Watch: “Journalists complaints about the National Security administration was a misunderstanding which was addressed and solved in joint meeting among the journalists, the Information and Culture Department and the National Directorate of Security in Baghlan.”

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that any censorship and imposing of restrictions on the works of journalists and media outlets is in violation of the Constitution and other laws of the land. Nai calls upon all security institutions, particularly the National Directorate of Security, to cooperate with journalists and media as the law dictates.

Creating obstacles on the way of media and journalists will damage the grounds of understanding and cooperation between journalists and state institutions and will open the ground for enemies of the people and the state of Afghanistan to exploit.

Therefore, Media Watch appeals to the government of Afghanistan, particularly to the National Security officials, to treat journalists in accordance with law and to stop violating Afghanistan's effective laws intentionally or unintentionally.





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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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