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# Media Watch Report

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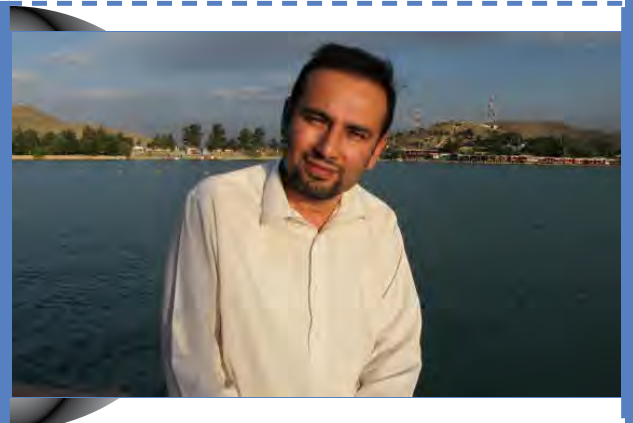
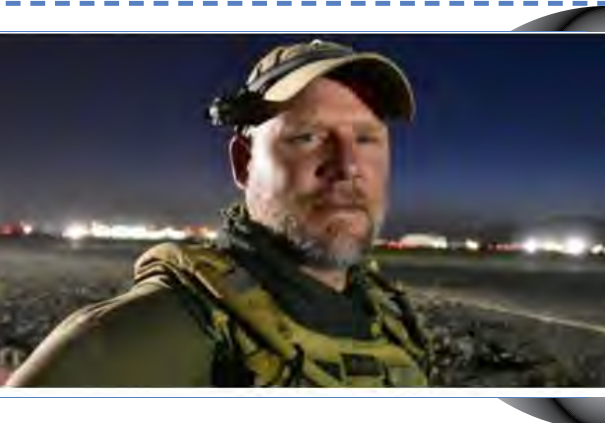


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# Media Watch Report

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

- Two Journalists were killed in Helmand province
- Police beat three journalists in Kabul city
- Police in Badakhshan province beat a Noorin-TV's local journalist
- A Maiwand-TV presenter was beaten by unidentified armed men in Kabul city
- Police in Laghman province beat a journalist
- Enekas local radio station was attacked in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province
- A BBC local journalist in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province, was briefly detained and interrogated by the security personnel
- Journalists in Daikundi province complained about Governor's misbehavior toward journalists and media
- A Shamshad-TV journalist claimed to be chased and insulted by Police in Kabul city
- Hundreds of cases of violence against journalists were reviewed
- Violence against Afghanistan's journalists has been on the rise





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June 2016 was a bloody month for Afghanistan's journalists. Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan recorded 13 cases of violence against journalists during this month.

As the harshest case of violence against journalists in June, the killing of the two journalists in Helmand province shocked Afghanistan Journalists' community. Zabihullah Tamanna and his American colleague, David Gilkey, who were working for the National Public Radio (NPR), were killed in a Taliban's rocket attack in Helmand province. The killing of these two journalists showed once again that journalists in Afghanistan still lack any safety and their lives are at risk at any time.

Six journalists were beaten in June 2016. Unfortunately all these cases of violence were committed by members of the security forces.

A number of innocent people (both Afghan and foreign) were killed and some others were injured in two separate suicide bomb attacks in Kabul. Journalists were filming and reporting about the aftermath of these attacks when security forces insulted, threatened, and even beat them.

In a separate incident, a police guard in Laghman province beat a journalist and refused to grant him permission to enter an event's site and provide news coverage.

American forces in Jalalabad city in eastern Afghanistan detained a BBC local journalist and then transferred him to security forces of Nangarhar province. Later the journalist was found to be innocent and was released.

A group of journalists in Daikundi province complained to Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan about local authorities' insulting behavior towards journalists as well as their refusal to share information with media and journalists. They have asked for immediate solving of their problems.

Despite all challenges and problems that Afghanistan's journalists and media staff members encountered in June, at least one positive development took place in the country which has been unprecedented in the past 15 years.

After the President-appointed special review committee reviewed hundreds of cases of violence against journalists, they decided that over 400 cases required legal investigation and therefore submitted them to relevant institutions.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan sent the mentioned cases to the relevant organs for further investigation as well as identification and punishment of the perpetrators who have been involved in acts of violence against journalists.





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## Two Journalists were killed in Helmand province

Zabihullah Tamanna and his American colleague, David Gilkey, were on their way from Lashkargah to Marjah district in Helmand province when they were attacked and killed by the Taliban on June 5, 2016. Mr. Tamanna had previously worked with famous international media like Xinhua News Agency and National Public Radio (NPR). Mr. Gilkey was working for NPR and was a colleague of Mr. Tamanna. Some sources reported that these two journalists were killed in an explosion caused by a roadside mine. However, some other sources reported that they were both killed in a Taliban's direct ambush.

NPR's Philip Reeves, who is in Kabul to investigate about the killing of his colleagues, told Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan: "There were five armored vehicles going to Marjah district. The first two vehicles were carrying army officers and soldiers; the third one was carrying David and Zabihullah; the fourth one was again carrying soldiers; and the last one was carrying two other journalists named Tom and Monica."

Mr. Reeves says that the three American journalists and their Afghanistani colleague were travelling to Marjah district to make a report about the security situation on Lashkargah – Marjah road. On the road, a rocket hit the vehicle in which David and Zabih were riding. They were killed on the spot, but their two other colleagues, Tom and Monica, escaped the attack unharmed.

Philip Reeves said: "Zabih and I worked together at NPR in the past one year and a half. We knew each other very well. Zabih was helping me with translation of the reports. He was the best reporter and photojournalist."

Mr. Reeves also emphasized: "I came to Kabul to help Zabih's family and share the grief of his family and friends."

Philip Reeves also said: Based on its regulations, NPR helps indiscriminately all his employees around the world who either get injured or lose their lives while on duty.

The NPR journalist also said that a memorial will be built in Washington D.C., USA, in which David and Zabih's names will be engraved as brave journalists.

The body of the slain journalist arrived in Kabul and was submitted to his family two days after the incident.

Zabih's relatives, friends, and colleagues as well as some Members of the Parliament attended his funeral. After the incident, Nai released a statement, part of which reads: "The killing of these two journalists shook Afghanistan journalists' community and it shows that journalists are not safe in Afghanistan."

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan called the killing of these two journalists a big loss to the





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journalists' community in the country and asked all national and international news agencies and media to stop calling Zabihullah a 'translator'. Some renowned international media have called the famous slain journalist, Zabihullah Tamanna, as an interpreter to his foreign colleague, David Gilkey, which is unfair. Media and journalists' entities are obliged to pay to their families the due benefits of the journalists and media staffs who get injured or killed in the line of duty.

Abdulmujeeb Khalwatgar, executive officer of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, called upon the security officials at the government of Afghanistan to investigate the case of the two slain journalists and share their findings with media. Mr. Khalwatgar added: "Nai Office wants Mr. Tamanna to be correctly referred to as a 'journalists' and not a 'translator' because he was a professional journalist. The next point is to deliver Mr. Tamanna's insurance and other benefits after his death to his family. Finally, the government of Afghanistan should investigate the incident in which Mr. Tamanna and his colleague, Mr. Gilkey, was killed; and should clearly explain it to the people of Afghanistan."

The killing of the two journalists angered the President of Afghanistan. President Ashraf Ghani called the attack cowardly and "completely against all the principles and values of Islam and humanity, and against all international laws."

In a statement, President Ghani said the Taliban do not distinguish among the military, civilians and journalists, and that they killed Gilkey and Tamanna as the two were reporting on the war.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul and U.S. Army Gen. John Nicholson, commander of the U.S.-NATO Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, also offered condolences.

"David and Zabihullah, in particular, spent years in Afghanistan tirelessly endeavoring to tell the story of the Afghan people," Nicholson said in a statement.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called the killings "a grim reminder of the danger that continues to face the Afghan people, the dedication of Afghan national defense and security forces to securing their country, and of the courage of intrepid journalists — and their interpreters — who are trying to convey that important story to the rest of the world."

Officials at NPR have said that Mr. Gilkey and Mr. Tamanna were riding a vehicle as part of an Afghanistan National Army convoy when they encountered a Taliban ambush near Marjah district and their vehicle was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

The two other journalists who were accompanying Mr. Gilkey and Mr. Tamanna and were riding in another vehicle were not harmed in the attack.

Over 60 journalists have lost their lives in Afghanistan since 2001. Most of the slain journalists have been killed either in terrorist attacks or sometimes directly targeted and killed by the Taliban.

However, 2016 has been the bloodiest year for journalists and media in Afghanistan because since the beginning of the year 10 journalists and media staff members have lost their lives and many others injured





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across the country.

### **Police beat three journalists in Kabul city**

A series of terrorist attacks in Kabul city on June 18, 2016 killed and injured scores of foreign and Afghanistan's citizens. Journalists and photojournalists arrived in the attack scenes to provide news coverage and report on the incidents.

However, security officers misconducted and beat a number of journalists and photojournalists who were reporting on the attack in police district 7 in Kabul city.

A security officer beat Ghazi Rasooli, a journalist for 1-TV Network, Khaaja Tawfiq Sediqi, a journalist for 24-TV Network, and Shamrez, an Afghan photojournalist who was working with a Turkish journalist. A number of other journalists present in the scene were insulted.

Tawfiq Sediqi, a journalist for 24-TV Network, told Media Watch that security officers insulted him when he attempted to film and make a report on the terrorist attack scene in Chehel Sotoon area. They prevented him from interviewing with local people and then began to beat him.

Mr. Sediqi said that the security personnel who misbehaved with him and other journalists belonged to Police District Seven or the National Directorate of Security.

He added: "When we and other journalists arrived in the scene of explosion, we initially faced a serious encounter from security officers of Police District Seven. They did not let us in. I waited for more than 30 minutes and then interviewed with people in the scene. A policeman approached and slapped me in the face. He told us that he would break our cameras. Three officers who behaved very violently were from National Directorate of Security and the rest were from Police District Seven."

Meanwhile, Ghazi Rasooli, a journalist for 1-TV Network, was another press member insulted by security forces on the scene. Mr. Rasooli told Media Watch that while he was reporting on today's terrorist attack, a National Security officer insulted and beat him without any reason.

He added: "When we arrived in the explosion scene, they did not let us in. We waited until the investigation by the National Security was over. Then, when we wanted to film the area, a National Security officer approached and slapped me in the face multiple times without any reason."

On the other hand, Sediq Sediqi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, told Media Watch: "The soldiers who misbehaved with these journalists belonged to the National Directorate of Security. They were not police officers."





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Mr. Sediqi added: “We have instructed police forces that they have no right to misbehave towards journalists and if we find out that a police has engaged in a violent behavior towards a journalist, then we will investigate the case.”

Meanwhile security officers have conducted a body-search of a number of journalists who were reporting on another terrorist attack in 9th District of Kabul city. The security officers have used insulting words and pushed the journalists away from the scene.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan condemns the security officers’ violent actions of insulting and beating journalists while they were reporting from the scenes of terrorist attacks. Nai considers all such actions in explicit violation of the effective laws of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Abdulmujeeb Khalwatgar, executive director of Nai, says: “National Security officials must answer about their officers’ unlawful and wrong behavior towards journalists and must identify and punish the perpetrators.”

Media Watch has recorded over 10 cases of violence against journalists in June. One of these cases involves the killing of two journalists in Helmand province.

### **Police in Badakhshan province beat a Noorin-TV’s local journalist**

Kefayatullah Salimi, a local journalist for Noorin TV in Badakhshan province, claimed in a phone call to the Media Watch that security officials beat him at the entrance of the Office of the Governor.

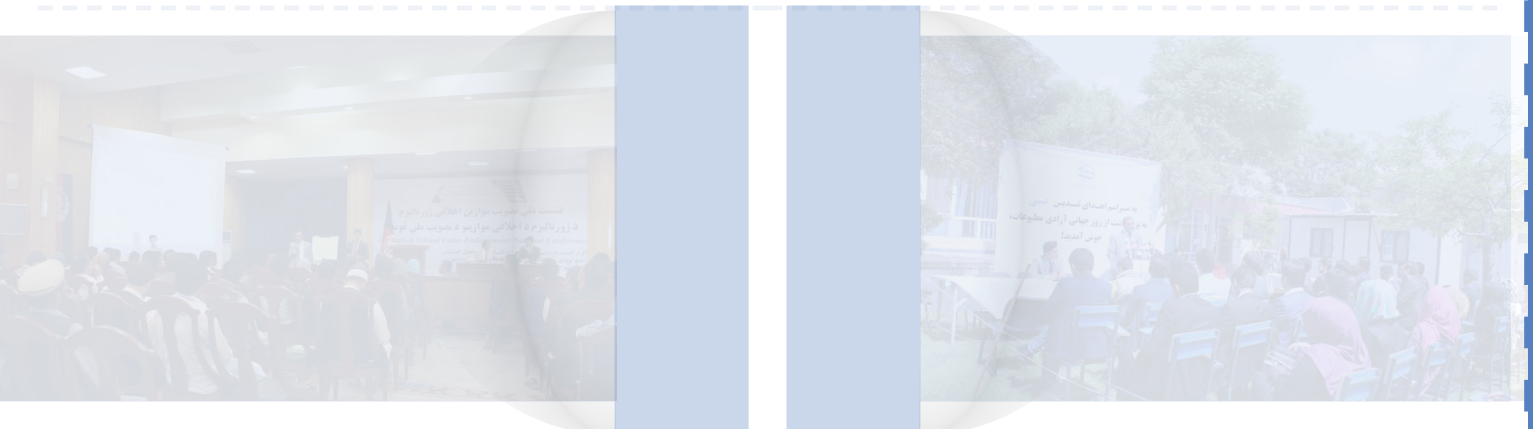
Mr. Salimi said that security guards at the entrance of the Office of the Governor, where he arrived at 10:00 AM local time to cover a press conference, first insulted him and then beat him during a body search.

He added: “When I arrived at the entrance of the Office of the Governor, security guards who all know me, asked for my ID card. After I produced my ID card, they grabbed my camera and switched it on. I protested and told them that they have no right to do so. I asked them to let me switch it on myself. Then they insulted and beat me.”

Mr. Salimi added that his colleague has filmed the incident and published it on his Facebook page.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Faisal Bekzad, Governor of Badakhshan, told Media Watch: “Although I am currently in Kabul, as soon as I learned about the incident I instructed police to identify the perpetrators and introduce them to the Office of the Attorney General in Badakhshan.”

On the other hand, Ghulam Sakhi Ghafoori, Chief of Police in Badakhshan province, told Media Watch: “We will immediately identify the soldier who has been accused to be involved in this case, interrogate him and punish the perpetrator.”





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Chief of Police in Badakhshan added: “When I was informed through Facebook that a policeman has beaten a journalist, I began investigating the case. The soldier who committed such misconduct must be held accountable.”

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the local authorities in Badakhshan province to immediately submit the perpetrator to the legal and judicial organs so that it can provide a lesson to others. Nai also calls on the Ministry of Interior to instruct police personnel to behave with journalists in accordance with law and help media and journalists to conduct their professional reporting in a safe environment.

### **A Maiwand-TV presenter was beaten by unidentified armed men in Kabul city**

Jamshid Ahmadi, a presenter of Morning Program at Maiwand TV, called Media Watch and claimed that he was beaten by unidentified armed men who have taken his money and mobile phone.

Mr. Ahmadi told Media Watch: “In the evening of May 30, 2016, when I came out of the university, a white corolla-type car stopped beside me. [The riders] forced me into the vehicle. They covered my mouth and beat me. Then they took away all my money and my mobile phone. When they wanted to kill me, I plead for my life and they spared me.”

According to Mr. Ahmadi, the abductors have kept and beat him in the car from 8:00 PM – 10:00 PM. Mr. Ahmadi was in severe pain when they ultimately threw him out of the car in Dar-ul-Aman area and escaped.

Mr. Ahmadi does not know whether the abductors were only armed robbers or were they opposing his journalistic works.

Media Watch calls upon security organs, particularly the Ministry of Interior, to immediately identify the perpetrators of this violent act and deliver them to the legal and judicial institutions.

Media staff members and other citizens in Kabul city have experienced similar cases in the past. The robbers have beaten and threatened their victims to death and robbed him of all their valuables.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that government’s inaction in following up cases of violence against journalists and punishing the perpetrators has caused a rise in the incidence of violence against journalists. Therefore, Media Watch again emphasizes on following up of cases of violence against journalists and calls upon the detective organs to identify perpetrators and deliver them to legal and judicial institutions. This will help keep the environment safe for open circulation of information in the country.







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### **Police in Laghman province beat a journalist**

Gulab Ibrahim, a journalist for Sada-e-Kawoon (Kawoon Ghag) local radio station, claimed in a phone conversation with Media Watch that police insulted and beat him on June 4, 2016.

Mr. Ibrahim said that police insulted and prevented him from entering an aid program organized by the Department of Work and Social Affairs in Laghman province. He was assigned to report on the event.

Mr. Ibrahim added: "Police did not grant me permission to enter the hall. Then I produced my ID card and equipment (camera) and explained to them that I needed to enter the hall and make a news report on the event. They still refused to grant me permission to enter the event hall."

According to Mr. Ibrahim, he decided to wait outside the hall with the hope that someone may show up from inside and take him in.

He said that while he was waiting outside the hall repeatedly asking the police guard to grant him permission, they insulted him and broke his camera.

Mr. Ibrahim also said that he contacted the spokesperson for the Governor of Laghman and the latter has promised to share with the Governor the incident of police misconduct.

However, in an interview with Media Watch, Matiullah Safi, Chief of Police in Laghman province, rejected the journalist's claim of being beaten by the police and added: "The journalist himself behaved violently towards the policeman and insulted him."

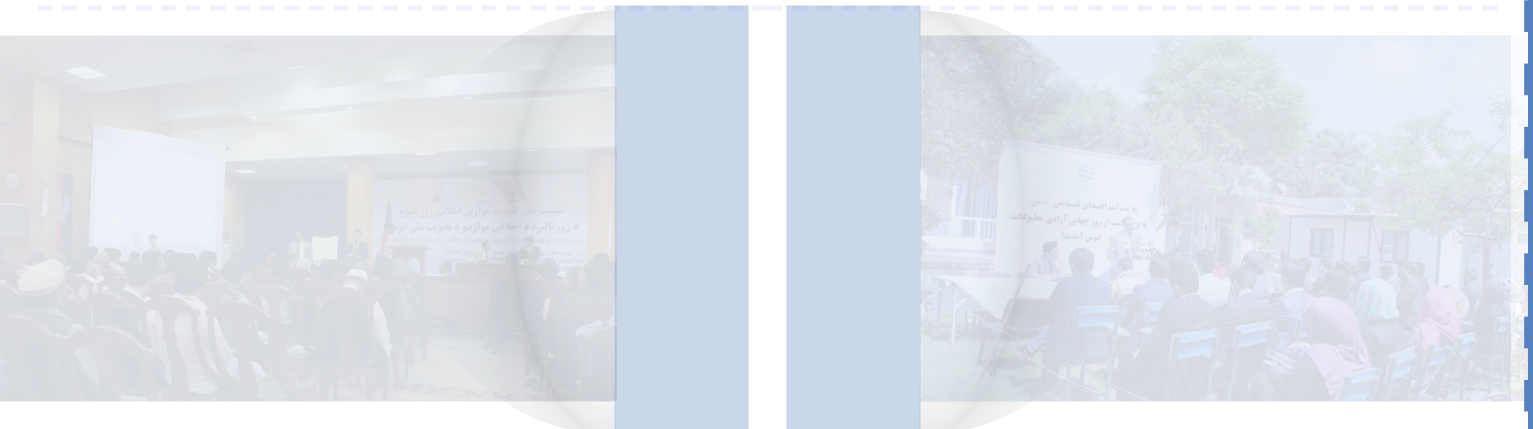
Chief of Police in Laghman added: "The journalist himself was to blame. When the guards at the entrance asked him to switch on his camera, he not only refused to do so but also insulted the guard. Nobody has insulted him. He himself threw out his camera and broke it. While he himself was to blame, we still apologized to him."

Although Chief of Police in Laghman province accepts shortcomings in police works, he insists that police had no fault in this particular case.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan believes that insulting and misbehaving towards journalists is increasingly forming a challenge for media community in the country. It has repeatedly asked the government to come up with an accurate and feasible plan to tackle this challenge.

In this particular case where the journalist has claimed that police insulted and beat him and broke his camera, it is important that it should be referred to the legal and judicial organs for a thorough investigation. The perpetrator and the victim should be identified and the results of the investigation should be made public.

As well as we do not tolerate violence against journalists and media staff members, we equally have zero tolerance against any journalist who violates the ethical principles and effective laws and insults security personnel.





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Media Watch calls upon authorities in Laghman province as well as the Ministry of Interior to investigate the case in a fair and transparent manner and refer it to legal and judicial organs so that the perpetrator and the victim are identified and dealt with.

### **Enekas local radio station was attacked in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province**

A bomb attack targeted office of local radio station Enekas in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province on June 8, 2016. Fortunately, the explosion caused no damage or casualty.

According to the officials in this local radio station, three automatic bombs were placed near the entrance of the radio station, two of which went off while police discovered and defused the third one.

Nasratullah Sahebzada, chief editor of Enekas radio station, told Media Watch: The bombs were connected to a mobile and were placed inside an oil barrel. The explosion caused no damage or casualty.

The chief editor of Enekas radio station said that along their office, there were offices of cable TV network, Nangarhar Journalists' Union, and a number of other media outlets located in the same building. He added that it was not clear which office was the target of this bomb attack.

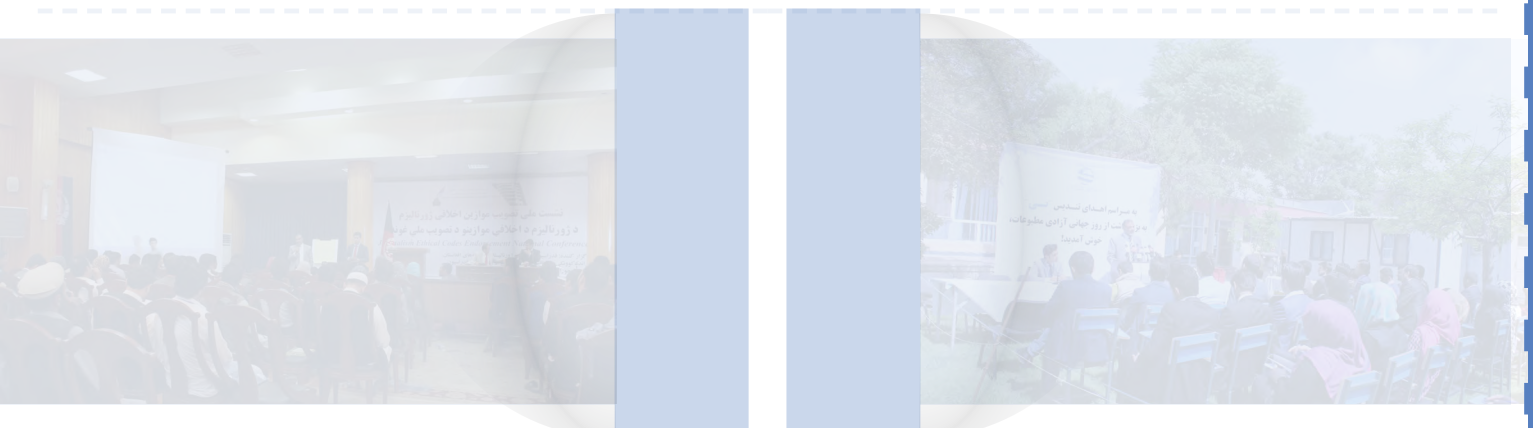
In similar incidents in the past, the office of Radio Television Sharq and the provincial offices of Radio Killid and Pazhwak News Agency have been targeted in Jalalabad city. Those attacks caused damages to their targets. This is the first time that Enekas radio station is targeted though.

Ataullah Khogiani, spokesperson for the Office of the Governor of Nangarhar, said: Investigations are going on to identify and capture the perpetrators.

Mr. Khogiani added: "It is likely that terrorist groups like Daesh have committed the attack. Security forces arrived at the scene of the incident and defused the third mine. The perpetrators have not been identified yet and investigation is ongoing."

Local authorities in Nangarhar province have previously promised to identify the perpetrators of attacks on journalists and submit them to the legal and judicial authorities. However, it seems that they have not kept their previous promises and that the shortcoming of security officials has paved the way for further attacks on media. Enemies of freedom of speech should know that such terrorist attacks cannot hinder the advances of freedom of speech as it has already turned into a national value in Afghanistan.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon the local authorities in Nangarhar province to immediately identify the perpetrators of this attack and submit them to legal and judicial organs.





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## **A BBC local journalist in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province, was briefly detained and interrogated by the security personnel**

Nematullah Karyab, a local journalist for BBC in eastern provinces of Afghanistan, was detained by U.S. Special Forces in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province on May 29, 2016.

After his release, Mr. Karyab told Media Watch that he was detained by the U.S. Special Forces in Jalalabad city. After they interrogated him for several hours, they submitted him to Afghanistan's National Security officers. Mr. Karyab spent a night in the latter's custody before they released him.

Mr. Karyab said that during his detention he was not tortured but they asked him about a range of issues. He believes that the reason behind his detention was similarity of his name to that of a Taliban's commander in Kunar province. He added: A Taliban's commander in Kunar province is also called Nematullah Karyab and that he was detained due to "the similarity of his name" to that of this commander.

Authorities in Nangarhar province as well as officials at BBC confirm detention of the journalist by the security officers, but do not comment on the reason behind his detention.

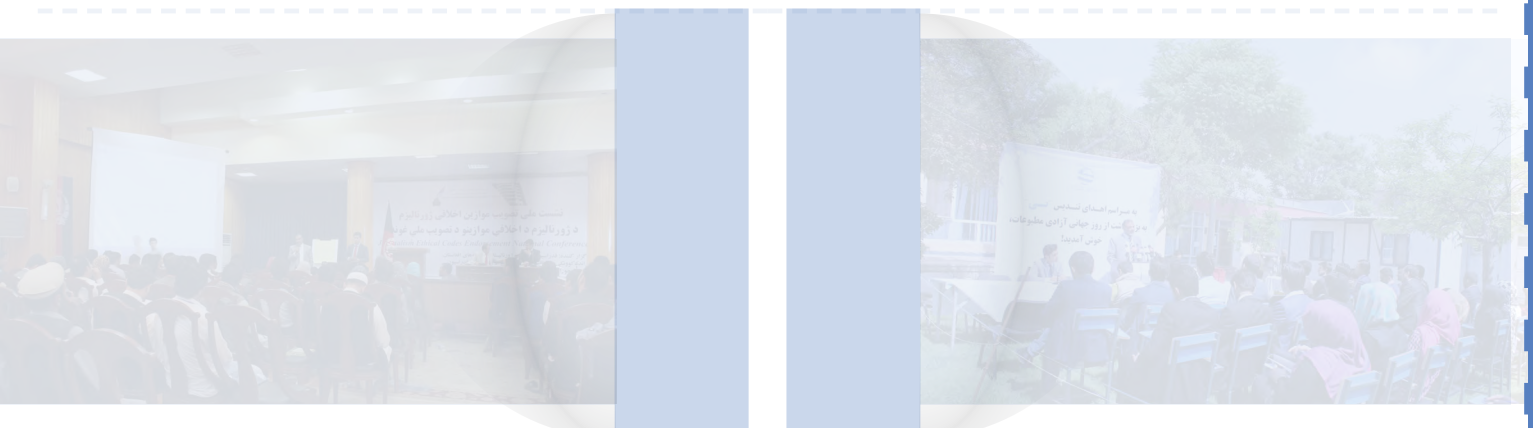
In a phone conversation with Media Watch, Ataullah Khogiani, spokesperson for the Office of Governor of Nangarhar, confirmed arrest of Mr. Karyab and assured that he will be soon released.

The spokesperson for Nangarhar Governor said: "He has been detained and interrogated on an issue that was related to him. He will be released soon."

On the other hand, Abdulmujeeb Khalwatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said in a statement: "Authorities in Nangarhar province are obliged to immediately clarify the reason behind detention of the journalist. If he was arrested due to his journalistic activities, he should be released immediately. And if detention of Mr. Karyab is related to issues other than his journalistic activities, it should be immediately clarified."

It is worth mentioning that Nematullah Karyab was detained by security officers in Kabul last year and after investigations he was released one or two days later.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls detention of journalists without any clear cause as worrisome for the journalists' community in the country. It suggests that security officials should conduct thorough investigations before taking the decision to arrest a journalist. This will prevent cases of arresting journalists without any previous credible evidence from happening again in the future. Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan strongly condemns arresting and detention of journalists with regards to their journalistic and reporting activities. Such actions are in clear violation of the effective laws of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Once again, Media Watch calls upon authorities in Nangarhar province to immediately clarify the reason behind detention of Nematullah Karyab, a local BBC journalist in eastern Afghanistan, and announce it to the public through media. Otherwise speculations





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will rise among media circles that the government attempts to restrict freedom of speech.

### **Journalists in Daikundi province complained about Governor's misbehavior toward journalists and media**

Access to information at the offices of the Afghanistan State administration has posed a serious challenge before journalists.

Journalists face multiple challenges and obstacles in asking for access to information. In a recent episode, a number of Daikundi journalists have penned an open letter to Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, in which they have complained about lack of access to information in their province.

Directors of three local radio stations in Daikundi, including Radio Daikundi, Radio Nasim, and Radio Aftab, have signed the letter and sent it to the Nai Office. In their letter to Nai, they have written that access to information in Daikundi province has been a difficult challenge for journalists and that sometimes authorities in their province, particularly Governor of Daikundi, insult those who ask for access to information.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan received the open letter penned by journalists in Daikundi, and forward it as an attachment to a separate letter to the Ministry of Information and Culture and to the Independent Directorate of Local Governance and asked them to solve the problem in accordance with the effective laws.

Mirza Hassani, chief editor of Radio Aftab in Daikundi province and a signatory of the open letter to Nai, told Media Watch: We have repeatedly asked the Office of the Governor for access to information; however, they have not only denied us access to information but have also insulted us.

Mr. Hassani added: "The journalists' problem with Daikundi Governor arises from his denying of journalists' access to information. Journalists repeatedly go to the office of the governor and ask for information. Officials usually procrastinate, keep the journalists waiting for even a month, deny them access to information, and ultimately insult them."

Sayed Anwar Shahaab, chief editor of Radio Daikundi also complains about provincial officials' misbehavior towards journalists and their refusal to share information with them. He said: "Media directors and editors in Daikundi province had a meeting with the Governor two months ago. In the meeting, he promised to share information with journalists. However, ever since then the Governor has not only broken his promise, but the situation of access to information has gotten worse."

Reza Waahedi, chief editor of Radio Nasim in Daikundi province told Media Watch: Whenever we went to the Office of the Governor and asked for information, the officials procrastinated and did not want to share information with us. Sometimes we have waited for more than ten days to get information on a





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specific topic.

Mr. Waahedi also said: “The spokesperson for the Governor does not have the right of sharing information or making interviews with media. We contacted the press liaison and asked them to solve this problem. We want to interview the spokesperson and they say that the governor has not granted the permission to talk to media.”

Part of the open letter penned by journalists and media directors in Daikundi province about the Governor’s insulting behavior towards media and journalists reads: “A few days ago Governor Muradi’s entourage scorned Mohammad Reza Waahedi and asked him why he entered the Office of the Governor with his worn-out shoes. Sayed Anwar Shahaab, chief editor of Radio Daikundi, and Mirza Hassani, chief editor of Radio Aftab have also experience such scornful behavior from the Governor’s entourage.”

To clarify the issue and the reason behind Daikundi officials’ refusal to talk to journalists and share information with them, Media Watch contacted Daikundi Governor.

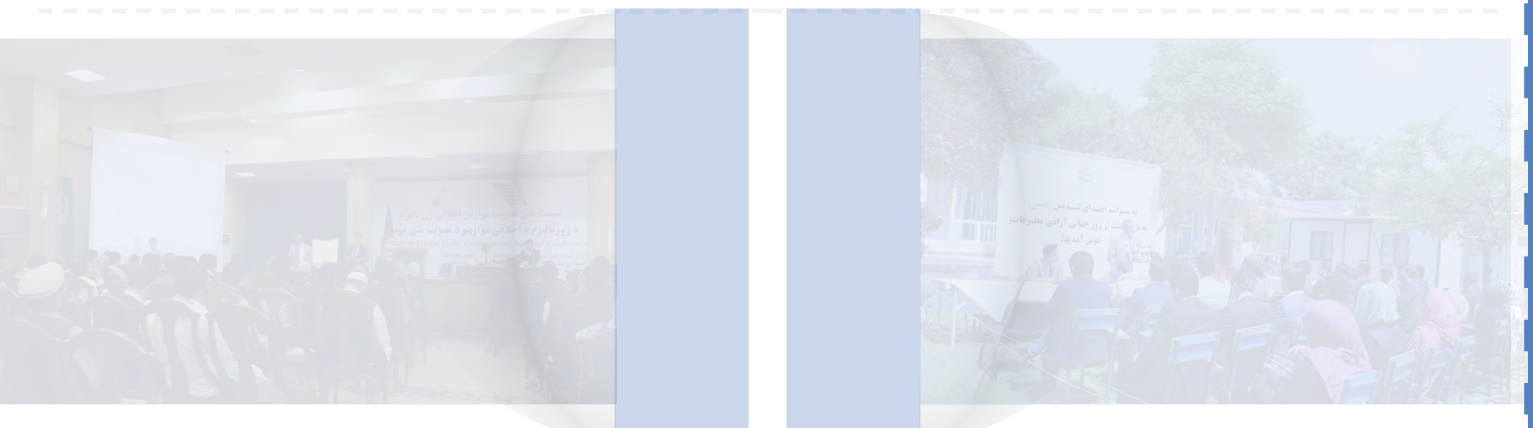
In an interview with Media Watch, Masooma Muradi, Governor of Daikundi, rejected all accusations against the local authorities in Daikundi province and called it a misunderstanding. She said that both the Governor and other officials at Daikundi administration have frequently shared information with media and that they believe in freedom of speech and access to information. She described journalists’ complaint about lack of access to information as a misunderstanding. Ms. Muradi added that there might have been work pressure on some days which may have made the journalists wait for few minutes.

The Governor continued: “We believe that information should reach journalists in the shortest time and we have frequently shared information with journalists immediately. If I have been very busy at times, I have assigned the spokesperson to share information with journalists. Now that journalists have made such a claim, I think there is a misunderstanding.”

Meanwhile Daikundi Governor also commented on the claim that the spokesperson was not allowed to talk to journalists: It is the press liaison’s duty to cooperate with journalists and there has never been any obstacle on their work.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan cannot tolerate any longer the high-ranking state authorities’ scornful behavior as well as their refusal to share information with journalists. It asks state authorities to investigate such incidents, identify perpetrators and deliver them to the legal and judicial organs.

Access to information is one of basic rights of the citizens, which is guaranteed in the Constitution. Moreover, in agreement with the Constitution, the Law of Access to Information, which was approved in the National Assembly and signed by the President, further elaborates and guarantees this right to the citizens and particularly to the journalists.





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Neither any state/non-state institution nor any high/low ranking authority can violate clear articles of the Constitution and Law of Access to Information or deny citizens and journalists their right to access to information. Repeating such actions means that the Constitution and other effective laws of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are not acceptable to some authorities. Therefore, Media Watch demands from the highest-ranking authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to determine the fate of those state officials who frequently violate the laws of the country and to submit them to the legal and judicial authorities.

### **A Shamshad-TV journalist claimed to be chased and insulted by Police in Kabul city**

In phone conversation with Media Watch, Parwez Safi, a news presenter at Shamshad TV claimed that police has insulted him.

Mr. Safi said that he was on his way from office to home in the afternoon of June 18, 2016, when he learned that a Ranger vehicle from Public Order Police Department was chasing him on Qala-e-Zaman Khan road. Then the police vehicle stopped in front of his car and police threatened and insulted this journalist.

Mr. Safi also said to Media Watch: “The Ranger vehicle appeared again and stopped in front of my car. Someone got off the car and began calling me abusive words. I tried to make them understand that there might have been a misunderstanding, but they did not allow me to talk.”

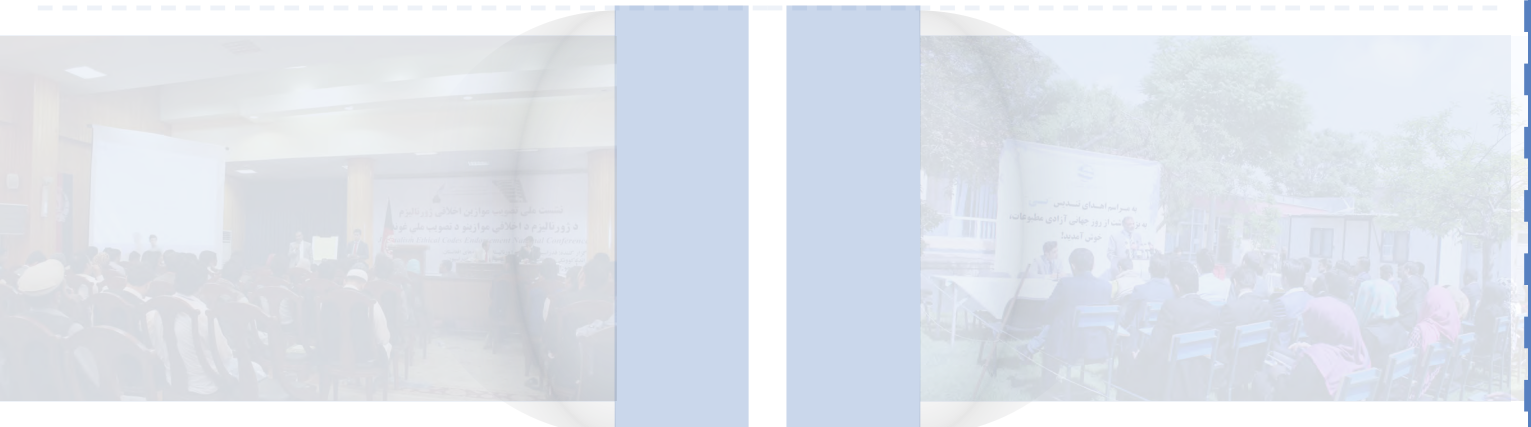
According to Mr. Safi, the people in the police vehicle have threatened him to death.

Mr. Safi said that there were three persons in the police vehicle, one of which was dressed in a military camouflage uniform while the two others were dressed in private clothes. He does not know why these policemen behaved with him in such a way.

Mr. Safi added that after the incident he contacted 119 police service and reported the incident to them. Sediq Sediqi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, told Media Watch that the incident was caused by a misunderstanding: “We followed up this incident and assigned police officers to investigate the case. After the investigation we found out that it was caused by a misunderstanding.”

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan considers this incident as a clear act of violence against journalists and calls upon the Ministry of Interior to punish the perpetrator of this violent act in accordance with law.

No justification of any insulting, threatening or beating of journalists by the police personnel is acceptable. Even if this case was caused by a misunderstanding, the perpetrator should still be questioned in accordance with effective laws so that such incidents do not happen again.





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### **Hundreds of cases of violence against journalists were reviewed**

The Review Committee for Cases of Violence against Journalists, which was formed by a presidential decree about two months ago, delivered 427 out of 600 cases of violence against journalists to the legal and judicial organs for prosecution.

A presidential decree dated January 30, 2016, ordered serious review and investigation of cases of violence against journalists.

Based on this decree, the Legal and Judicial Committee at the Office of the President formed the five-member Review Committee for Cases of Violence against Journalists. The latter consisted of the representatives of the Office of the Attorney General, National Directorate of Security, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Information and Culture, and Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation.

It took the Review Committee two months and multiple sessions to review 679 cases of violence against journalists which were recorded by Nai Supported Open Media in Afghanistan. A breakdown of these cases included 60 cases of murder, 46 cases of injury, 222 cases of beating, 84 cases of arrest, 29 cases of abduction, and 238 cases of verbal abuse and death threats.

Afghanistan Journalists' Federation submitted all these cases to the relevant organs on May 31, 2016.

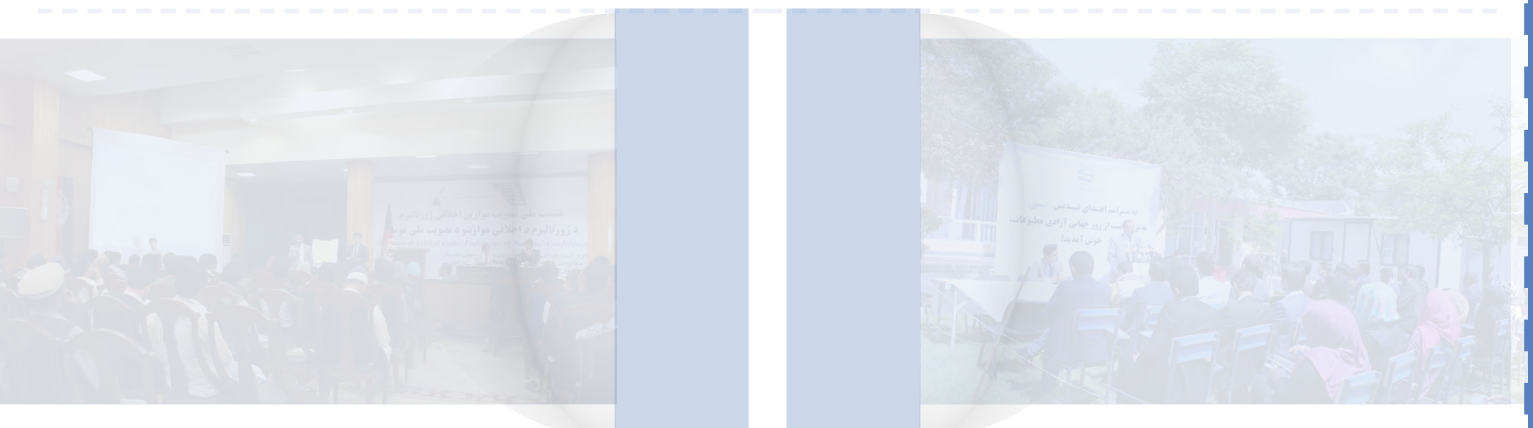
Abdulmujeeb Khalwatgar, executive director of Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan and member of the Review Committee for Cases of Violence against Journalists, said in a press conference: "Out of all these cases, 252 ones were left aside due to the passing of time and that Afghanistan legal and judicial organs had no access to the perpetrators of those cases. However, the remaining 427 cases were reviewed and officially submitted to the relevant organs for further investigation today."

Mr. Khalwatgar also said cited lack of legal and judicial tracking of case of violence against journalists as one main reason behind the rise of violence against journalists.

Afghanistan's Journalists and Media Federation called upon the government to immediately investigate these cases to challenge people's lack of trust on the legal and judicial institutions.

It is worth mentioning that Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has recorded a total of 679 cases of violence against journalists since 2001. So far except in a few cases, the government has not paid any attention to these cases and the legal and judicial institutions have not investigated them.

Media Watch at Nai welcomed the President's decision to form the Special Review Committee for Cases of Violence against Journalists and expects that it leads to a timely proceeding of these cases and ultimate punishment of the perpetrators. Punishing the perpetrators of violence against journalists can help improve the profile of the government in one hand, and can lead to a decrease in the incidence of violence against journalists on the other hand.





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### **Violence against Afghanistan's journalists has been on the rise**

Violence against journalists in Afghanistan has turned into a challenge now. Fifteen years into the era of freedom of speech and media in the country, Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan has recorded unprecedented figures of violent cases against journalists.

In the latest episode, in less than a month time, Media Watch has recorded ten cases of violence against journalists, including killing of two journalists in southern province of Helmand.

The majority of the violent incidents are committed by terrorists. For instance, two NPR journalists, Zabi-hullah Tamanna and David Gilkey were killed by Taliban in Helmand province in June 2016.

Sidiqullah Tuwhidi, director of Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, said in a press conference: Media Watch at Nai has recorded over ten cases of violence against journalist in the past 20 days.

Mr. Tuwhidi called June the bloodiest month for journalists in Afghanistan and added: "We recorded over ten cases of violence against journalist in the past 20 days. This means that violence against journalists is on the rise and Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan is concerned about it."

Mr. Tuwhidi also said that recording ten cases of violence against journalists in the past 20 days indicates that the violence against journalists is likely to increase considerably until the end of the year.

Meanwhile Media Watch Director commented on the latest letter which was issued by the government and instructed foreign journalists to refrain from roaming in the city without guards. He called the instruction as a step to restrict freedom of speech.

Mr. Tuwhidi added: "The government's letter has created a big problem for foreign journalists in Afghanistan. It is not possible that every foreign journalist who comes to Afghanistan goes around with an armed guard in Kabul or other provinces to collect information. We demand that the government should immediately take a separate decision about journalists. The government of Afghanistan is obliged to provide security in every part of the country so that journalist can collect information. It is simply not possible for a journalist, foreign or domestic, to walk around with an armed guard."

Mr. Tuwhidi also expressed his concerns about local authorities' lack of cooperation with journalists in provinces. He said that in most of the cases, chiefs of police in the provinces do not cooperate with journalists and this is a violation of the Law of Access to Information.

He added: "Whenever journalists contact police chiefs in the provinces, the latter refuse to share information with journalists and say that they are not allowed to talk to media. They suggest that media should contact the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior. This situation has made the situation of open circulation of information even harder."

Journalists in some provinces including Kandahar, Zabul, Ghazni, Badakhshan, Sar-e-Pul, and Nangarhar have complained to Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan about lack of access to information in







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their respective provinces and asked for addressing of this problem.

Media Watch contacted the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior and shared with him some of the claims made by the spokespersons for provincial police chiefs. Mr. Sediqi, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, said that it has all been caused by misunderstanding and he will address it.

Spokespersons for police chiefs in a number of provinces have told journalists that the Ministry of Interior has sent them a letter and officially instructed them to refuse talking to journalists and refer them to the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior if they have any questions about security or police.

Media Watch at Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan calls upon officials at the Ministry of Interior and asks them to address this problem.

On the other hand the source of this letter should be revealed. Which institution has sent such a letter to the police chiefs in the provinces and banned their spokesperson from talking to media.





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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](mailto:m.qasim@nai.org.af).

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

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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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