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Media Watch Report

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Media Watch Report

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

- Beating a journalist in Bamian
- Arresting a journalist during travelling of the Afghan president
- Ill behavior of Bamian spokesman with a local media , Naseem Radio
- Menacing a journalist by body guards of Ashraf Ghani
- Warning a journalist by attorney general of Helmand
- Cutting power and stoppage of the media in Konduz province
- Arresting a journalist in Baghlan province by security officers
- Claiming against spokesman executive office made by Ariana News journalist
- Insulting a journalist of Khorshid TV by deputy head of Olympic
- Symbolic reaction of a newspaper called (8 Sobh) against a powerful figure in Herat province
- Commemoration of social media weeks in Nai.
- Announcing the results of survey done by Nai about bans on facebook
- Anxiety about increasing number of terrorists in social networks pages





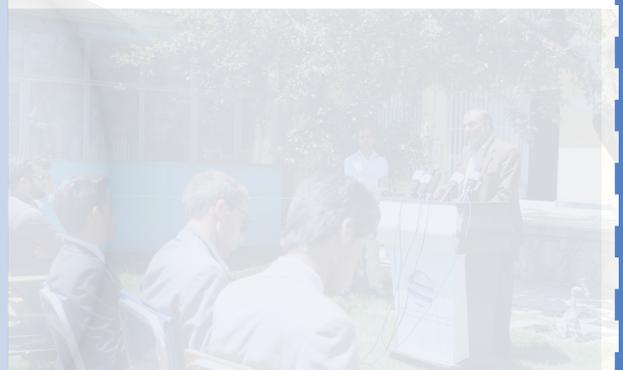
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The August month was spent mixed with violations against journalists including physical tortures and beating, arresting, menacing and insulting the correspondents. The worst violations took place coincided with president's travel to Bamian province. The sanctions and limitations against correspondents started just one day before of the travel. A "Dutch welle" correspondent Zaman Ahmadi was arrested with a group of enlightening movement by security officers and after being 28 hours in custody were released while the president had already left Bamian to Kabul. Also, during his speech, some journalists made contact with Nai, and complained about the curtails which tightened the situation with no permission to do video records and sound recording and photos were banned either.

The journalists were prohibited to put even a gadget for recording sound of the president and their mobile phone was seized in the entrance door due to tight security against and therefore they were not able to prepare an professional report about their story. Meanwhile, number of protesters who had mobbed in a gathering to show their civilized reactions against what they call it ethnical prejudice, were beaten and scattered by police using their harsh resorts such as physical violations and insulting the activists and journalists as well. The violations against journalists are not bounded only in Bamian but in Kabul there are some journalists who complain about illegal behaviors of security officers of the president. As an example, one of Kelid Radio's journalist was rudely taken off from the street of traffic jams where he wanted to take some photos from pile up of the cars due to upcoming of the president. He was menaced and insulted by special guards of the president and his phone was checked and handed back to him after cleaning necessary footages and photos of the day. Moreover, some predestined limitations against social media are tangible in this month. On the other hand, increasing the dimensions of the conflicts and insecurity around Konduz province eventuated to cutting power and as a result some media branches got out of work for some days consecutively. Some media owners, for fear of occupying the province by Taliban, had transported their machines and broadcasting instruments to some safe places.

Also in this month, for the first time a largely covered newspapers of the country abstained publishing a critical article but left half of the page completely empty in order to show its symbolic reactions against censorships and forces of a member of Herat provincial council. The newspaper (8 sobh) faced with different reactions as some blame it as self-censoring and some others admiring and call it symbolic reactions.

صبح





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Violation against journalists in Bamian:

According to the squarely contacts made by complaints, some journalists were beaten by government security forces while wanted to record the demonstration of people held on the threshold of Afghan president Ashraf Ghani` travel to Bamian. The reason for gathering was called ethnical prejudice and inequality carried out by the government among civilians, but soon later on led to violations and police used tearing gas against participants destined to scatter people. Besides the protesters, all journalists who wanted to cover the story were beaten and the police men tried to arrest some of them, but they could flee from the area. Sayed Mohammad Hashemy, correspondent of Jumhoor news agency, Ilyas Taheri correspondent of Salam Watandar Radio, Najibullah Ulfat correspondent of Nasim local radio, Ishaq Akrami correspondent of Kelid, Sayed Mahdi Mortazawi correspondent of Tamadon TV, Enayatullah Zia correspondent of Aina TV and Abass Naderi plis some other journalists were beaten while wanted to make some reports about the rally. The above mentioned people claim that their camera and other technical tools are broken by the security forces and they have grabbed their smart phones away. Unfortunately, what happened in that day, was out of our expectations particularly when the special guards of the president straightly had hands in glove with violators against civil society activists and journalists. Said Ilyas Taheri, a local correspondent of Salam Watandar Radio.

He added that the special guards and other security officers of the governor, in fact wanted to carry out a maneuver against civilians, therefore, they grabbed our smart phones and went away accusing us why we recorded the protest of people.

Akrami was beaten with his friends while going back to their offices after recording the speech of the president and accidentally faced with a rally. But as soon as they wanted to record some footages from the protest, some security officers including guards of the president came to the area and started beating them and taking away their phones. Taheri claims that thy security guards of the president have taken his professional photo camera, smart phone and ID card as well and still they have not returned them.

Ishaq Akrami as an eye witness who himself was beaten and violated by security forces stated: during taking photo from the rally, I noticed that some soldiers and security officers went on rampage and started rushing on us. I escaped but my colleagues got entrapped by them and they started beating them by their guns and sticks.





The presidential office spokesmen denied the claims of beating about the incident. Shah Hussain Mor-tazawi one of the president's spokesman said that they had provided all facilities for journalists to help their works, not to make any problem for them.

In the like manner, governor of Bamian, "Tahir Zohair" refused any claim about violation made from their side against journalists and called it just a propaganda saying could be misunderstanding between security officers who came from Kabul and these journalists. In terms of these expressions made by the government officers, the journalists believe that mostly these kind of contradictory indications and statements make the issue more complicated. They say that the journalists were not beaten only outside of the conference hall, but during the press conference either, where the president made his speech, we faced with tangible curbs like forbidding the recording his pictures and sound. One of the compliant is Najib Ulfat who was not allowed to re-enter in the conference room after he had gone outside.

After disseminating the hot news about Bamian violation against journalists and advocacy by Nai, the president communication office issued a press release regarding this incident promising to investigate about it very soon. A part of the press release says: During field trip of the president to Bamian province, some journalists complained about misbehaviors of military and security forces. In response, the president has ordered to independent directorate of local governance to share the results of its investigation with us in order to take necessary measures about it. Nai reacted against this press release emphasizing that it is not the legal right of the office (Independent directorate of local governance) to devolve the responsibility of investigation to them but the law entities. At the end Nai asked the government to shift the responsibility of investigation to an independent and impartial commission with membership of journalists federation, attorney general office, representatives of Bamian governor and journalists who are complaints in order to make sure that the issue of violation is seriously tackled and the violators introduced to the court. The government finally accepted our suggestion and the commission is going to start its work about the file in forthcoming.

Arresting a journalist before arrival of president in Bamian:

Zaman Ahmadi was arrested just one day before arrival of Ashraf Ghani in Bamian and after his departure to Kabul, he was released. As soon as he was taken by the police, his colleague made a phone call and informed us about his arrestment. The authorities in Bamian province deliberately turned their blind eyes to this matter and wasting the time giving no clue where he is. His brother nervously reported that Zaman





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is not back from his office as usual. He believed that the arrestment of his brother had directly linked with the visit of Ashraf Ghani to Bamian. So was the impression of his colleagues. On the threshold of imminent upcoming of Ashraf Ghani, they found that the media tools faced with problems and internet got lowered down unusually. The 3GB lowered to the speed of 2GB and facebook and other social pages were out of work. They claim that during this travel about 30 journalists were arrested. Some believe that the arrestment was carried out for fear of uprising and prevention from protests of civil society activists. The reporters said that the general situation was entirely militarized as if emergency condition and commuting between district, going and incoming to Bamian completely banned. After several approaches the authorities of Bamian, finally attributed the reason of arresting Zaman Ahmadi to his membership in enlightening movement. At the same time, the spokesman of Bamian province gave another reason for his arrestment and said: “he is accused for using unethical words against the government and therefore arrested for some hours”.

The Dutch welle journalist spent more than 28 hours in arrestment and after departure of Ashraf Ghani went back to his home on 09:00 pm. According to himself, the main reason for his arrestment was his sharp criticism against the inefficiency of local government of Bamian province.

Bamian province spokesman misbehave with journalist of Radio Naseem:

Najibullah Ulfat a local correspondent of Naseem Radio claims that the spokesman of Bamian government has misbehaved with him. “I posed some questions to the governor regarding making a road in a district where the governor has started its project, destroying houses of people without their permission. At this moment his spokesman pulled me from within the journalists and started menacing me that I will be punished for making such a question, what he called out of their norm and standards”. Said Ahmadi. He added it is not responsibility of the governors to create norms and standards for journalists how they should make their questions and about what to ask, but in fact it is some ways of censorships and putting bans on media. He also feels very unhappy because of pressures putting on journalists by the provincial governance asking them to avoid writing critical subjects since he personally was called to delete one of his articles about new challenges against media in facebook. But the spokesman in a contact with us





denying all claims, saying that he had asked from journalist to behave professionally and their questions should not be provocative and that was all. To clarify the claims of both sides we wanted from the government to investigate about behaviors of Bamian authorities who recently all local correspondents started complaining about them. Using different tools to make them understand and obliged to lift their limitations and bans upon journalists and media we officially explained to them that weakening the media and standing against voices of journalists means helping the corruption and despotism that is not tolerable for any one in contemporary period of history

Radio Kelid journalist menaced by security guards of the president:

Massoud Ansari who works in Radio Kelid as journalist informed us about rude behaving of president's guards. According to his indications, he intended to go to chief executive office for covering a press conference while across the road a sever traffic jam took place due to crossing the president Ghani` escorting cars from this street. He wanted to take some photo from the pile ups by his smart phone but at this occasion some guards came on the ground and grabbed his phone and let him go after insulting him. One of the body guards warned him that they can detain him for at least six months why did he take some photo from the area.

The president spokesman "Shah Hussain Murtazawi| said that he learned about this incident through facebook and promised that he will take some necessary steps in this regard and if the violation committed by security guards confirmed, he will be punished. Though the president's office promised prosecution of the incident, learning from lots of promises and making result less commissions, Nai emphatically issued a press release wanted that it should be followed practically. Nai managing director Abdul Mujeeb Khelvatgar said that it is about time that the president should prove it in practice that he and his government really defending from freedom of speech.

A journalist arrested in Helmand province by attorney general:

Najibullah Sahil a local correspondent claimed that he was disdained by Helmand government authorities. According to him, he had published a document in social pages about corruption in the province and after that he received warning. After oral warning, then he received a message that he would be arrested. "First the chief of police called me that he is going to arrest me following the decree of attorney general





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of Helmand”. Said Najib Sahil. He added that the attorney general also warned him saying: I have full authority to imprison you for several years since the law is in my hand.

The constant pressures obliged Sahil to delete his critical issues. But spokesman of Helmand attorney general refuse the claim and called it a misunderstanding between two parts.

Kunduz media stop due to insecurity:

In the wake of insurgencies in Kunduz province the power was cut and the majority of media stopped their activities. According to Shahbaz Saberi in charge of Khawar TV in Kunduz, even up to now some media are out work because of fear of insecurity and some of them have taken their instruments away to some safe places.

“Due to power cut we have not been able to restart our activities and secondly every one afraid of recurrence of past bloody incidents. So till they are not certain about the situation they are resolved not to restart their program” said Saberi. Right now there are 13 radio, 3 private TV channels and one formal TV plus some newspapers and magazines. Among these, Roshani TV channel is a private media headed by Mrs Sediqa Shirzai, always tried to continue its activities with non-stop broadcasting in order to make people aware about the situation. According to Mrs Roshani they have only ceased their TV program exceptionally in the worst condition where Taliban had occupied so many area and therefore they had preferred to stay in their own homes. She said as people need to know about the news in bad condition, therefor we always tried our best to help people and let them to know about the situation. Nai managing director, Abdul Mujeeb Khelvatgar indicated the position of Nai in a press release saying that in such a condition people need access to information more than food and commodities since access to information help them to take better decision. On the other hand, depriving people from information is clearly in contradiction with our national constitution. Nai through press releases and making contacts with government authorities asked them to take care of media and its workers cautiously, in order to reactivate the media in that province. It is mentionable that last year some media were looted while Taliban had attacked in Kunduz and as a result some of them can not perform their jobs appropriately because of the damages they suffered and economical problems.





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A media activist beaten in Baghlan province:

Abdul Nasir Ghafari who is a media activist claimed that he was beaten by security officers in Baghlan province. He said that after capturing “Dahana-e-Ghori” by Taliban he had criticized on national army that he had desired constant and strong struggle against Taliban, but his comments made some of the government authorities in the province angry. In next day, they released him after keeping one day in custody. Ghafari says that after the arrestment, Nai made contact with Baghlan authorities and requested them immediate action to release. Khelvatgar said that it is the right of every one to criticize in terms of failures of government authorities and the government should listen to citizens.

Ariana News disdained by executive chief office spokesman:

Ariana News journalist, Nasrat Parsa claimed that he was misbehaved by a spokesman of Dr Abdulla in his office chief executive official premises. According to him the main reason behind the mishandling by Mujeeb Rahimi was filming some footages and its broadcasting in Ariana TV news program about meeting Hanif Atmar wit Dr Abdullah.

He says that after misbehaving by the spokesman Mujeeb Rahimi, one of his security guards warned and apparently wanted to beat him. After all these violations, he was hampered to go and meet one of the consultants of chief executive, named Fazel Sanchariki. On the other hand Mujeeb Rahimi denied all these claims and said that the claimer has put all these accusations because of his personal aims. “Already he had applied in some vacancy posts in our office but failed due to not meeting the critieria”. Said Mujeed Rahimi. In this regard, Parsa himself confirmed that he had applied for some positions in chief executive office.

Khorsshid TV journalist violated by Olympic deputy head:

Sadam, a journalist of Khorshid TV claims that he was insulted by Massoud Mobariz who introduces himself as deputy head of Olympic, while he had gone for making a report in that organization. He says that duplication in that office caused that two persons at the same time work for the same position and bearing one title. When he made an interview with a designated man as deputy head of olympic, he faced with another man named Mobariz that claimed he is the real deputy and why he made the interview with another person.





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According to Sadam for the moment this organization is divided into two different segments and this man asked us not to reflect the activities of another segment headed by Zahir Aghbar and he will not allow Khorshid TV to come inside in future for making the report.

Mahmoud Hanif acting head of Olympic committee said it was only an oral problem between them but they strongly believe in freedom of speech.

Nai asked the authorities of Olympic to investigate about the incident and never should misbehave with media and journalists because of their domestic problems.

8 sobh symbolically protest in Herat:

The newspaper of 8 sobh left one of its pages completely empty for the purpose of showing its reactions against censorship symbolically. Some believe that it means that they protest against powerful people like representative of Herat council, Kamran Alizai. Parviz Kawa editor of the newspaper explained the reason behind this symbolic action that they wanted to protest against powerful people and by this way we cared about safety of our colleagues.

Facebook faces systematic problems:

Although there are plenty internet service in the country but still facebook faces with some limitations. Through a survey carried out by Nai, it was figured out that the majority of facebook users 88% complained about the limitations. 29% of the participants were female and the rest male. The result of the survey was announced by Seddiqullah Tawhidi in a press conference. "The limitations against facebook which clearly stand against 34 article of the constitution will result in depriving people from access to information. The social networks and media can significantly help the government in struggling against corruption. Daily tens of corruption files are disclosed through facebook. So, Nai asked persistently the government instead of closing or slowing it, should use the information which leaks through this wisely. .

Social media week commemoration in Kabul:

Nai has been celebrating the 22 of July as journalist week since five years. On fifth of Aug Nai celebrated this day under the name of international access of citizen to information. In this week there are some interesting topics every day like importance of media, second day about effective use of media regarding international events, third day about immigration and its effects on journalists, fourth day about Afghans





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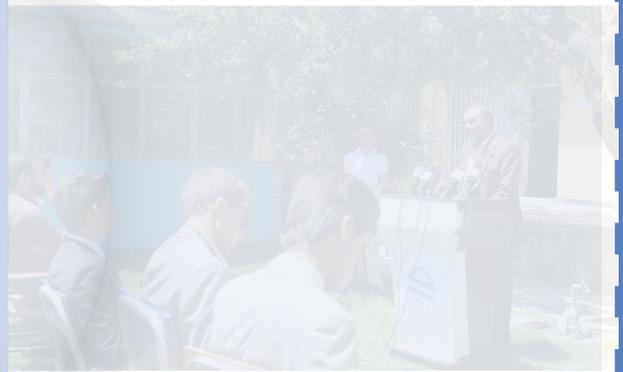
living outside and their achievements and fifth day about reflecting sport news. The head of media watch said in the ceremony that users of internet and social pages should never disseminate the rumors, since it will decrease the importance of the media but they can perform better job in forming the mindset of people. Nai five years ago while suggested allocating one week for this respect, also asked UNISCO to record one day of the year with the name of social media, but still there is no any feedback. Also, it has asked the ministry of labor to record one day of the year in Afghan calendar by this name but still they have not responded to this suggestion. The main purpose of these proper names for one week and one day is to make people thinking about good usage and importance of media and to avoid from publishing propaganda and forbidden issues.

Facebook users concern about increasing number of terrorists:

The significant role of mass media is not ignorable but very prodigious in all of the world from spring of Arab world to, Syria, Iraq, US, Germany, France, Bangaladish and so on. “As much as the social media are organized, they will be more effective, otherwise they will be like an instruments for abusing and insulation.” Said Tawhidi in a press conference.

Using fake names are another problem which is very problematic for civilians and some users with false Ids have put lots of scandals to the addresses of good people. Tawhidi added that prevention from hacking is the direct responsibility of ministry of communication and the ministry has to settle the safety of IDs in order to provide better services.

But worse than previous concerns, there are some anxieties exhibiting terrorist’s clips which are very terrible. One of social media users, Zahra Joya said: Now there are some groups who share the beheading civilians and other bleeding clips which are shocking. Meanwhile some users are very happy about using internet and social media. One of social media users named Noor Mohammadi said that for the moment every one is deemed as a media since the majority of people access to internet. Presently, three persons out of ten use the social networks. The figures show that the number of internet users exceed up to six millions but still there is no legal framework for misusers.





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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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