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Media Watch Report

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

- Killing a journalist in Zabul province
- A glance to compare the number of violations with last years
- Increasing pressures on a private radio and menaces its staff
- Ascending the violation graph against journalist
- Ceasing broadcasting parliament reports
- Beating a journalist by Breshna electricity power company
- A new decree issues by the president about access to information





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The last month, October was the sequel of nightmare of last months for media and journalists. The violations which have taken place against media family in this month and prior to that was entirely incomparable with last years in Afghanistan but equal with total numbers of eight years. In this month, one of formal government journalist named “Yaqub Sharafat” was shot dead in Zabul province in Qalat city. In Daikundi, some unknown armed men entered into the studio of Naseem and after beating its staff, slinging a grenade then fled away. The strange point at this problem is that now police of the province put pressure on staff of the radio instead of identifying the criminals. Also, in this month number of journalists due to misbehaviors of parliament officials, decided not to broadcast any report belonging to the parliament for some days. Accessing to information still remained as an unraveled knot for journalists. Thus, the president inevitably has issued a decree about access to information since he had to do it, due to breaking the relevant laws by authorities, however its law already exist. Though, Afghanistan is lucky by having the access to information law, but still suffering from violations and breaking the laws.





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Killing a journalist in Zabul province:

On Sunday 16 Oct 2016 a formal journalist who was working in provincial TV station of the government in Zabul, was shot dead by some unknown persons. Yaqub Sharafat a 22 young man had joint the media family two years ago and working part time with other channels. According to Nesar Ahmad Sapand, one of his colleague he had gone with his wife to a dentist for medication and on the way back to his home, was stopped by some gunmen and murdered. The terrorists fled away from the area. “He was covering all incidents happening in this province, but this time he was killed just twenty meters far from police post” said Nesar Ahmad. He added that he belonged to a very poor family that his survivors had no enough money to bury him. He had married just one year ago producing one daughter.

The ministry of interior asked the responsible authorities to investigate about the incident and arrest those who are the perpetrators. The provincial police after two days claimed in a press release that they arrested two suspected men and their investigation is going ahead. Nai also showed its reaction against the crime through a press conference in which asked from the government authorities to identify the killers and bring justice to them. This bloody incident was condemned by other entities either like ministry of information and culture, parliament members. Also, a great number of journalists gathered in other provinces like Qandahar and Balkh condemning this coward attack. It is mentionable that before the attack, there was a clip earned by Nai, in which Yaqub Sharafat complain about some menaces and warnings that he had received just some days before his assasination. Nai sent it to ministry of information and culture and surely it can give a big clue for investigators to figure out what conspiracies existed behind the attack. Now the total number of murdered journalists come up to 12 tolls including Sharafat, while last year the final calculation at the end of 2015 showed four tolls. We believe that the untouched files of previous violations and killing cases that the government has not worked on them seriously, can effect directly in increasing such kind of carnages and violations against correspondents. Therefore, Nai has insistently asked all relevant authorities of the government to work responsibly about the murder cases of journalists. On the other hand, none-proceeding of these kinds of cases, encourage the criminals to be wicked against journalists and treat worse than before.





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A glance to compare the number of violations with last years:

Based on figures calculated documentarily by Nai, the measures of the violations happened against journalists this year is quit equal to all occurrences of eight years in the past. Thus, the records show that in recent ten months, the number of violations come up to 377 cases which clearly equivalent to eight years. Seddiqullah Tawhidi, head of media watch said that these violations mostly perpetrated by terrorist groups, governmental staff and authorities of different sectors.

According to the records, this year 96 journalists in Helmand province, 108 journalists in Farah and 13 others in Urozgan are threatened directly or indirectly. The total number of threatened journalists exceeds to 292 people who have left their residential places temporarily just because of their safety. Tawhidi believes that within 15 years of recent, there has not been any positive change in terms of journalists' condition but day by day it goes to be worse than before. He added that recently a joint commission was found including Nai and government entities regarding 700 files of violations against journalists and submitted to attorney general and home ministry but still there is no sign of feedback from their side.

A private radio under grenade bomb attack:

At midnight 11 Oct 2016 some armed people intruded into a private radio premises named Naseem located in Daikundi province and bet up its head. Later, while the attackers escaping from the area, they threw a grenade onto the radio building that as a result of explosion the premises was badly ruined. Unfortunately, there is no attempt to be made for helping the radio and its staff, but contrarily the police employees put pressures on the radio staff accusing them that this attack was done through domestic plan stemmed from within. According to Reza Wahidi, the police personnel try not to identify the main perpetrators in outside but trying hard to break the morals of their colleagues, in order to make them demoralized in proceeding their professional jobs. He added that in fact the local authorities try to follow two aims through their tactics:

- 1- To conceal their own inefficiency in doing their job for finding the criminals.
- 2- Trying to put pressure on journalists not to publish and broadcast the critical issues for the purpose of reforms. He believes that before they were working on making some investigative reports about police corruptions but while police authorities knew about it, suddenly they faced with this attack.

What makes him to believe and claim like this is the behavior of attackers who were sarcastically told him during beating on that night that his tongue became honed and sharp very well nowadays. He also aston-





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ished how they could dare to attack in their office where there is the security office nearby and sure they have heard the voice of explosion but did not come for their help. The head of Naseem Radio believe that the attack was not planned by the terrorist groups since, they have no active movement in the area. He surmises that possibly it is the work of some specific elements within the local government structure who can not tolerate their critical activities for disclosing some facts about their corruption through media. The attack took place in one of the safest place of the country where hits the suspects of every one about mentioned elements and the government should respond convincingly about that. Abdul Mujeeb Khelvatgar, managing director of Nai said under no circumstances we can accept that there was a terrorist group behind the attack but could be the official employees of the government or their affiliates.

Nai concern about increasing violations against journalists:

The records indicate that balance of violations against journalists got high and higher just in recent weeks. From the killing case of Yaqub Sharafat to other types of violations against Taj Mohammad Sekandar and Rahmatullah Naik zad who were threatened by different figures, all of them occurred in this month. Sekandar, journalist of Kelid Radio claims that one of security officers has disdainfully behaved with him in Ghazni province. Hassan Hakimi is threatened by a member of senate after publishing a critical issue in Ghor province and afterwards summoned by police. Ahmad Wali Sarhadi is another violated journalist who has suffered in Zabul because of publishing an article relating ministry of public works which Taliban has seized one of their cars in that province what they wanted to keep it secret. In the latest event, Saboor Sareer, editor of Afghanistan times is wounded severely and the attackers after grabbing his handhelds items like mobile phones etc escaped away. In the latest incident, unknowned people attacked and killed Yaqub Sharafat in Zabul province while he was going to his home.

Journalists stopped broadcasting reports of Parliament:

The journalists all together symbolically stopped covering the parliament stories and reports. This decision was in reaction of misbehaviors of parliament security officers. Romal Khoram, a reporter of “Jahan” TV who is an eye witness of misbehaving of security officers of parliament, said that this kind of





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misbehaving exist every day against them. The journalists are strictly checked up and after going into the media room, they are not allowed to speak among themselves and treated with dictatorship. Abdul Raof Ibrahimi, head of parliament said that they will meet with journalists closely and will solve the problem.

A journalist of private TV beaten:

Najim Sultani, a journalist of Jowandoon TV through his contact with Nai, claimed that he was beaten by Power company of Breshna, security guards. He added while going to his office, some security guards of “Breshna” company had blocked the road and did not let him go. While he introduced himself as journalist they became more furious and started beating him.

He added after waiting for 30 minutes while noticed that he will be very late in his office, he introduced himself with his ID card as journalist and asked the guards to let him go, but they became violent against him while knowing he works in media.

The government should make sure about access to information:

Just some days ago, President Ashraf Ghani has issued a decree about implementing the access to information law, that accordingly the ministries and provincial governors are obliged to prepare the necessary information to journalists and civilians on time. For the moment, that is a very constructive approach that Nai appreciate it. In a conference, Tawhidi asked that the government should do its best to make it happened in practice, since many governmental offices are not ready to implement it and that is only possible while the government approve some budget for initiating specific office in the frame of each ministry.

In one part of the decree it is mentioned that all spokesmen of governors and other entities are obliged to hold press conference on monthly basis and share their reports with journalists. But in this regard, Nai suggested that if these press conferences reflect only the daily works of government offices, it will not be very interesting for media and people, but should be concentrated about crucial issues like contracts, achievements, challenges, failures etc. On other hand, to codify and issue laws and decrees are not enough but the real commitment about practical implementation demand feasible approaches like supervision and monitoring that the government should consider about, said Tawhidi in a press conference. According to an assessment done by Nai during last month, the biggest challenge towards journalist is access to





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information and 72% of violations have been just because of this problem. Now the bothering question is why journalists and media are exposed to violations of different groups including government staff, nevertheless the law exist and what is the reason behind it which make the president fell back upon issuing another decree for practicing the rules? Certainly, the new decree of president for officials about sharing information and access to information by people is a great job but it could be better if seeking some practical approaches as aforementioned.





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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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