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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 reporter by sons of Aghae Taimani
- Pajhwak news agency threatened by a Provincial councilor of Parwan province.
- Journalists complain over the governor of Helmand Province
- 400 cases of violence against media staff in 1395 solar year
- Access to information in triangle meeting in Kabul
- Increasing of 12% of women in Afghan media.





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1395 solar year ended but took great sacrifices from the Afghan people, especially the media in the country. During the year, 400 cases of violence against journalists and Media staffs were recorded in Nai supporting open Media office which was very coarse and shocking figure in the history of Afghanistan.

As always, Taliban are responsible for most of the violence against journalists and media staff in the last year. Alongside Taliban are directly responsible for the murder of seven journalists, including eight Afghan journalist killed in the country, also responsible for intimidation of more than 300 journalists and media staff in Kunduz, Helmand, Farah and Uruzgan provinces as well.

Special bodyguards for President Ashraf Ghani have been identified as second category of violence perpetrators against journalists in Afghanistan. According to Nai Media Watch reports, showing that last year when President Ashraf Ghani visited Bamiyan Province, protests against the president in the province flared, and reporters that their numbers were reached to nearly ten individuals wanted to have media coverage from the protest but they were beaten and droven from the site by guards of Ghani who had gone with him to Bamiyan Province. One of the journalists in Bamiyan Province was arrested for one day before arriving of Ghani to Bamiyan Province then when he left Bamiyan Province the journalist was released from the custody.

In the latest month of Islamic solar year 1395, again few cases of violence against journalists were registered in Afghanistan. In the first case sons and followers of a cleric known as Agha-e- Taimani in Kabul, beaten the correspondent of Azadi radio and also broken his filming camera.

A provincial councilor in Parwan Province has threatened the local Pazhwak media journalists that if their publish the reports which was compiled about him he will kill them.

With all the bad news that we had In 1395 year we had some good news too. It was rumored that female employees and female journalists in Afghanistan's media have been decreasing, but the survey conducted by Nai Media Watch office, showed that in 1395 solar year the numbers of women have increased 12 percent, that is pleasing news for the Afghan media community.





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Azadi radio correspondent beaten by the cleric talisman in Kabul City.

During the phone call by Nasrat Parsa one of the Azadi radio correspondents in Kabul said to Nai office that he was beaten by a wizard man in Kabul city.

On Monday 23 Hoot, (.....) Nasrat Parsa went to the house of a famous wizard named “Aghae Taimani” to prepare a short documentary of his work. According to Parsa; when he arrived to the near of his house suddenly his two sons attacked on cameraman. First, the two men beat the cameraman and Mr. Nasrat Parsa, and then took away their camera.

Parsa added; that after passing of every moment the number of riots were increased and started to beat us without knowing the reason.

Parsa said; meanwhile, the police also arrived and I took video with my cell phone and the policeman told me that why you are capturing video by your cell phone unfortunately, instead of helping us, on the contrary, the police threatened me then moments later, the chief of Kabul police called one of his staff in the spot and asked him to pass his phone to me. While talking with me in the phone he blamed me and threatened why I have gone for making interview without informing the police and his office.

Parsa said; A few minutes later, the wizard known as Aghae Taimani came out of his house. On the first step he apologized from me but when I wanted to sue against him that his sons have beaten us and will pass his complain to MOI, he said; even the president cannot do anything, whosoever you want, you can call him!

Parsa correspondent of Radio Azadi has more complain over violent behavior of wizard’s sons and mistreatment and intimidation of police. Parsa says this behavior and intimidation of police officers led me to the Ministry of Interior and Attorney General office to claim against the police and the wizard.

He added; we called out the police to protect our lives but their mistreatment and intimidation even made us more worried than the behavior of the wizard.

He added; the police’s behavior makes people less likely to trust on police.

The ministry of interior officials said that they have received his complaint and will investigate the case.

Sediq Sediqi, spokesman of MOI office during the interview with Nai office said; Police went to the area and tried to help the reporter and take forward actions against any kind of violence, but furthermore MOI will further investigate the case.

Reporters already have been faced these kinds of violence by different individuals, but this is the first time that a wizard does violence against the reporters.





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Fahim Kodamani a journalist of a private TV named Emrooz, previously faced violations during the special program about wizards, magicians and their activities. But this time it was a serious violence that eventuated to beating a journalist.

Nai media watch office has been more affected by the mistreatment and misbehavior of wizard's sons and Police officers, and requesting the ministry of interior of Islamic republic of Afghanistan to follow and handle the complaint of the reporter.

The reporter asked the police for protection and help, on the contrary, the police say to reporter why without permission you have gone to there, which shows the depth of the crisis. Nai supporting open media office once again definitely wants the complaint of the reporter should be considered and clean those police officers that cause bad name and infamy for security forces of Afghanistan.

Pajhwak News Agency was threatened by the provincial councilor

One of the provincial councilor of Parwan Province, with its gunmen broke into the headquarter of Pajhwak news agency in Kabul city and has threatened if a report in which he is involved in corruption and forgery would be published then he will take reporter into his car and will take him away from his office.

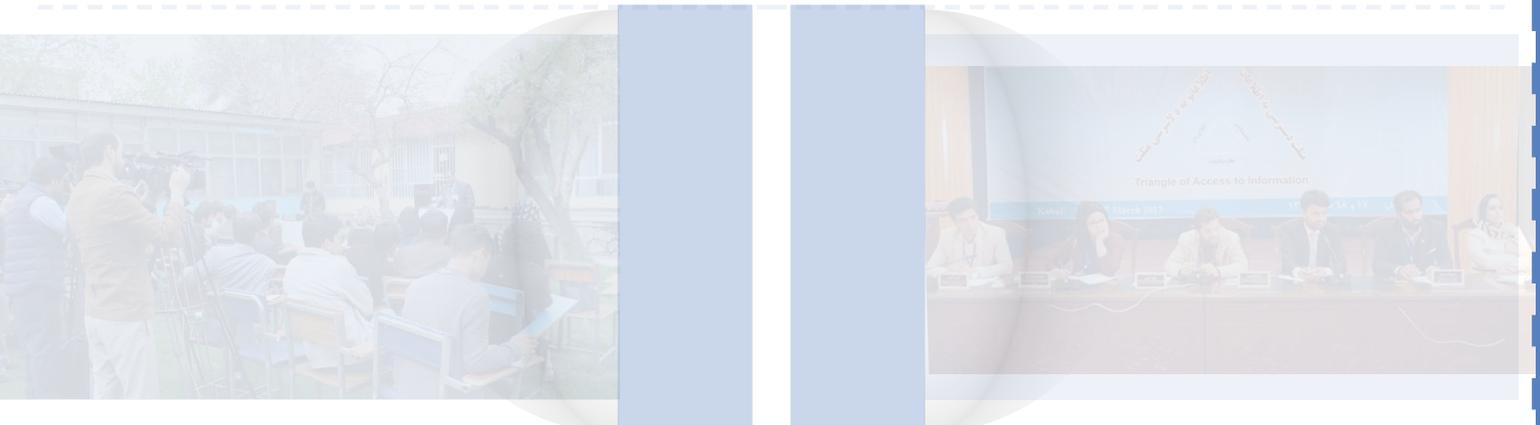
Esmatullah Mohammadi, provincial councilor of Parwan Province has been accused of attempting land and property usurps at Bagram district of Parwan province and also his high school diploma is fake. He also has been charged that raid on the Office of Tribal Council of Mr. Kharoti in Bagram district.

A reporter of Pajhwak news agency, who refused to say his name to Nai office, said: "Pajhwak Afghan News agency has found the result of a delegation sent by the president in which the document shows that Mr. Esmatullah Mohammadi provincial Councilor of Parwan province high school diploma is fake and also public has raised their complaint about the raid on Kharoti Council office.

This reporter of Pajwak news agency said: " on 10 of Hootmonth our correspondents had a phone call with Esmatullah Mohammad and quickly he reacted and said:" I graduated from high school or no, what is the relation with you? What are your issues; you are just from media and why waste your time with these types of words.

Reporter during the talks with the councilor, stressed the need for balance in reporting about him, but the councilor said: "I have no idea, do not want to talk regarding this case with you.

A day after calling that reporter wanted to have the view of councilor in regarding the documents which were obtained, Esmatullah. Mohammadi with a few bodyguards who were armed, without permission entered into headquarter of Pajwak news agency office in Kabul and talked with the director and editor of the news agency. Councilor of Parwan province said to Afghan reporter; "The case of land grabbing was six years ago, if I was





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usurper six years ago, then there is government, people, justice and I should have been arrested before.”

Councilor of Parwan province testified about the case of a high school and said that from CEO of the government to the majority of high-ranking officials do not have high school documents, or documents are forged. You should be reporting about them.

The councilor with steep words said: “It is the duty of the government on land grabbing and research on other topics and media don’t have the right to research in this case.

Mohammadi, in continuation of the meeting for about an hour in the office of Pajhwak News Agency has lasted threat and said that if the official report on usurping and fake educational documents would be published then he will pull him on the ground with his vehicle.

During the phone call the CEO of Pajwak news agency told to Nai office; the research and investigation about the accusation of land grabbing by Parwan councilor is ongoing but due to security issues to reporter, we have transported him to Kabul in order to be protected.

Karokhail also says that the councilor of the provincial council during the contact with Pajwak office has apologized for his threatening behavior.

Nai Media Watch office’s reporter has failed in repeated attempts to speak with Esmat Mohammadi in this case. Later we were informed that Mr. Esmat Mohammadi, the councilor of Parwan province traveled abroad and was not available in the country.

Nai Media Watch office has been concerned from the increasing threats against journalists and request national unity government to take forward enforcement actions against offenders of law and bullies.

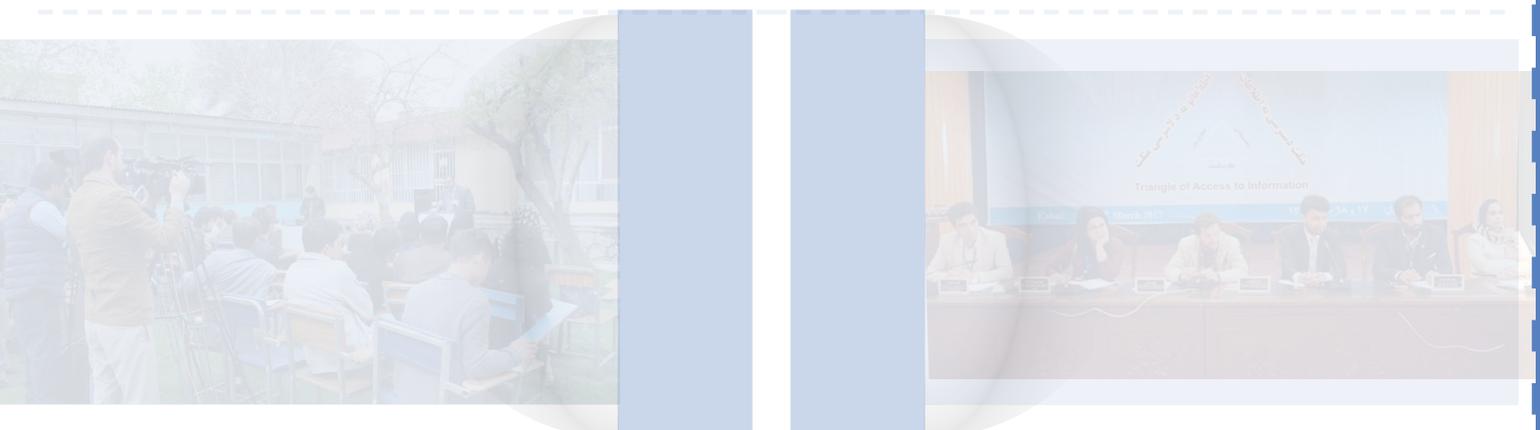
Research reports of corruption in which participants are exposed and outlaws, to prepare the report it is not without risk and such cases seem more recently.

Afghan national unity government if really wants to succeed in the fight against corruption; then there is no resolute support unless of supporting freedom of expression and the media.

Journalists complain over of lack of access to information in Helmand.

From some time onwards reporters in Helmand have raised their complaints over lack of access to information and applying of pressure and threats against media and journalists in the province.

Some of the journalists in Helmand claimed that the governor of Helmand Province always stood against journalists and freedom of expression and prevents information. Recently the reporters have found an official





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document that the Helmand police provincial commander has ordered the security forces to avoid media coverage from the first line of war and war zone in Helmand Province. It also mentioned to allow the reporters in front lines of the war.

Bahis Ayat, Ariana News reporter who was covering the war in Helmand province; after his visit to Helmand he told to Nai office that the situation is critical and it is difficult to get the facts of the war in Helmand.

The journalist claims that any information about the war has been kept secret and journalist don't have access to information. Bahis says "Local journalists who are active in Helmand, told us that there are many limitations and do not want to inform us about the war in the province.

Bahis said, after the first report of Helmand prepared and published then the next day, Commander of ANCOP police took him to his office called and said; you have to report the news whatever the governor wants and we will guide you.

Bahis says after the publication of the first report, no official and Security forces were able to talk in front of the camera, even up to a week we were unable to talk with governor only the provincial council was now in front of the camera interview.

According to Bahis, security officials answered to our questions, saying: "The governor has ordered not to talk to reporters."

Bahis Says, When we contacted with governor's office then we were told to keep waiting and showed us that the Governor doesn't have time, and after much insistence after a week we managed to have an interview with the governor of the province.

According to Bahis Ayat, Ariana News reporter in the days that he was there wanted to participate in Helmand military operation against the rebels, but the military forces did not let him.

According to the reporter, the authorities in Helmand province are more than any other group impose limitations on reporters and that was the only reason he left Helmand Province.

The reporter of Ariana News says, access to Information in this province is so critical that whoever who wanted to report about war, insecurity and corruption in Helmand, even if someone criticized on social media sites the governor in some way will arrest and suppress them.

But officials in Helmand province say that these constraints are for such as saving the lives of journalists and safety of them, we are obliged to protect the lives of reporters.

Omar Zowak Helmand governor's spokesman, in an interview with Nai office said: "besides of sharing information our goal is to protect lives of the journalists. Provincial government said according to the insecurity in





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Helmand, they don't want to harm journalists and reporters and should be in full immunity.

The spokesman added; The provincial government is not opposed of reporting from war in the first line, but the concern is that if they go out there without coordination with the provincial administration may be jeopardizing their lives.

Helmand governor's spokesman says the provincial government has always tried to be media partner and addressing the problems of journalists and reporters. The government official claimed those Government institutions have not shared information with reporters, called them in the provincial office and stressed that journalists should have access to information.

Helmand governor's spokesman told to reporters that certainly there will be no obstacle to the work of journalists and the field of access to information for journalists has provided more than before.

Nai media watch office since before has received complaints from reporters in Helmand Province that authorities restricted journalists working in areas of the province and faced with serious problems regarding the access to information.

During the past two months several cases of violence against journalists registered in that province, all of it was the approach of government officials with reporters.

Hiding or concealing facts from the public and journalists could have negative consequences on the body size of the government. Such secrecy makes the rumors heated and terrorist groups benefit from it in better ways.

We once again urge the authorities in Helmand province according to the law set free the journalists on demanded information and provide them with adequate precision.

Meeting was held under name of (triangle) access to information in Kabul City:

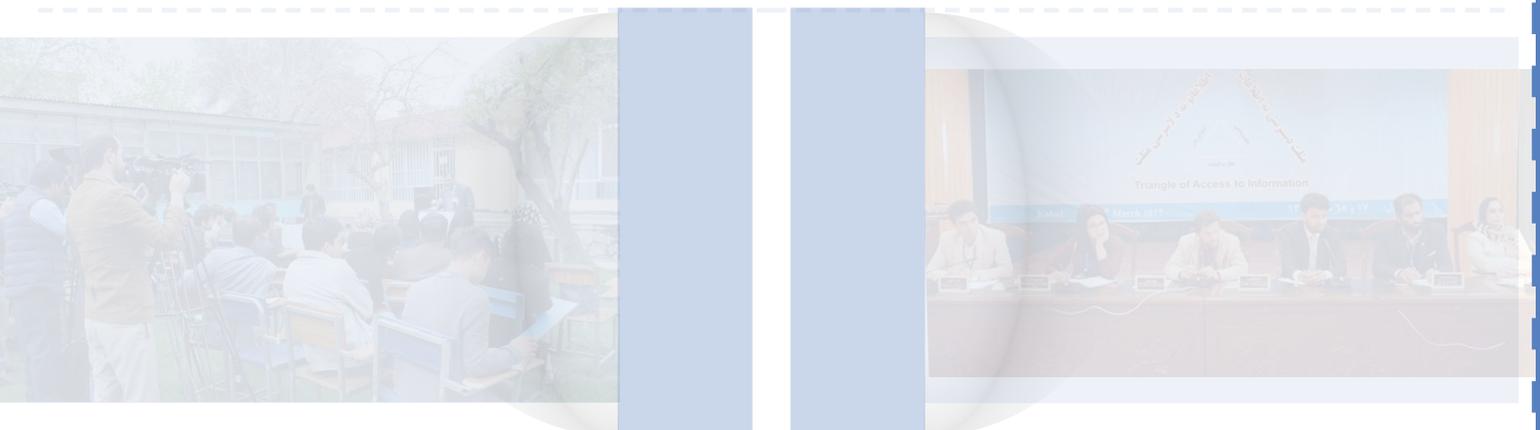
Triangle access to information was held on Tuesday, 17 Hoot of 1395 in Kabul by Afghanistan national union to support coordination among agencies, journalists, government and the Commission of access to information

According to the organizer of the meeting; access to information triangle has three sides that if the sides do not have the communication and coordination, the aim of which is access to information, will be missed.

Three sides of the triangle are:

1. Applicant of Information (journalists, citizens, students and all)
2. Provider of information (state institutions that hold data)
3. Monitoring (Commission on Access to Information)

The reason for setting up this meeting is that we are responsible for conducting the program, harmony and





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mutual understanding between all three sides of the knowledge and focus to all three sides under one umbrella to put the proper ways to facilitate the access to information.

In this session criticized over the infeasible access to information law, the law about three years ago, on the first working days of the national unity government was signed by the President.

Official organizers emphasized that the lack of awareness among citizens of their rights to access to information and lack of information by government agencies, the two main problem is lack of access to information law in the country.

Fahim Dashti, head of Afghanistan's National Journalists Union said at the meeting: the triangle is the applicant, notification and monitoring services. He added: "We want the relationship between the Commission access to information, media and government spokespersons will consolidate and co-ordinate with each other to advance their work.

Mr. Dashti added, according to the law on access to information, every government agency must make a reference to the notification; the national unity government has no serious action in this regard yet.

Fahim Dashti, who is also a member of the Commission on access to information, says culture of hiding information has been still remained in state institutions. He criticized the government over lack of access to information law enforcement.

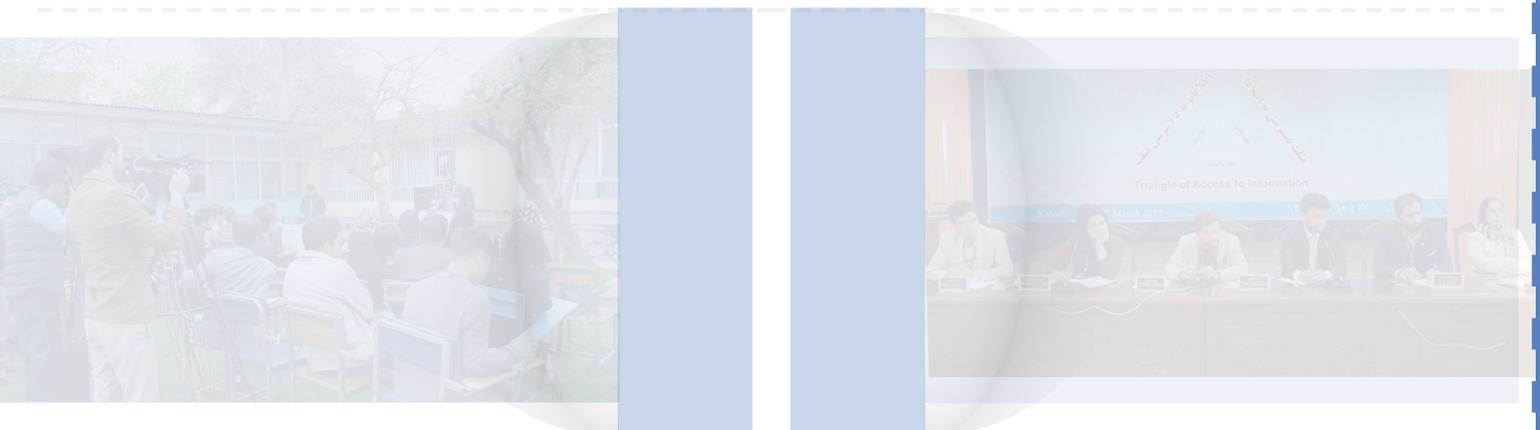
National unity government is not responsible for the Commission of access to information and these have been established by government but even not prepared to give one Afghan currency to the commission. So far the Commission has not received any budget to monitoring the access to information. When a structure doesn't has material and intellectual resources, then would not work correctly. "

Mr. Dashti noted that the Commission has done anything so far on access to information has been the help of international institutions.

As examples abbreviated the work of the Commission in order to institutionalize access to the information, said: " We at least in 22 government offices and close to a 30 non-governmental offices have raised awareness program among the public, competencies and obligations on access to information and sources of information and Commission made clear mentality, but the culture and mentality notification by the government is still very weak."

Mr. Dashti said that despite hearing complaints from the media over lack of access to information, but since the established of the commission half and one year has been passed, but only five complaints have been registered in this regard to the Commission.

Meanwhile, Abdul Mujib Khalwatgar, CEO of Nai supporting open media in Afghanistan, one of the speakers





at the meeting, said: “When we discuss about access to information in Afghanistan, there are some positive points available if we compare it to some outside countries.

Mr. Khalwatgar believe that lack of awareness of access to information as legal right of citizens and specially journalists and lack of providing information by governmental organizations are two main challenges in the country.

Khalwatgar added the situation of access to information is not ideal, either there should be some changes in policy and procedures of access to information commission or government should establish another institution in order to address the issues of citizens.

Mr. Khalwatgar stressed in the meeting that 30 percent of violence against journalists in Afghanistan was due to access to information last year.

He responded to the responsible government that claimed to have access to information in Afghanistan is easy, for example, several major cases happened in the country and yet people don’t know of how the events happened and remind us saying: people of Afghanistan still don’t know how the event of professor Rabbani, former Afghan president that was killed, the event that Ahmed Wali Karzai was killed in the country.

However Dawakhan Menapal, deputy spokesman for President mentioned in the meeting and said the government committed in providing information to citizens, therefore the president on the first days of his working signed several ease policies of Access to Information in fear to the information issued by the President.

Meanwhile, Nader Naderi, President’s media advisor spoke at triangle meeting and said; access to information is still a long way ahead of us to be able to take the law into reality.

He mentioned reasons about why the Access to Information can’t be properly implemented and stated: The first reason is the lack of capacity in both the applicant and provider of information, second because the culture of secrecy of information by some officials, third the structured corruption in government departments.

According to Mr. Naderi, when a journalist have full access to important decisions and contracts then it is natural to expose the corruption of the administration, something that corrupt officials will never accept it.

Naderi continued his speech, saying that “classified information” needs the close work of the right of access to information commission and government institutions.

Media adviser to the president in relation to complaints about the lack of cooperation of governmental spokesmen to providing information said; this is the obligation of the media before demanding the information that they should have the necessary knowledge and understanding about their demands. If a media has necessary understanding about the information that is requested, be certain that no responsible government would say “no”.





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Naderi added; Access to information is directly linked to the accountability of the agencies and institutions, if we don't create necessary mechanisms and common sense then take accountability cannot be done in proper sense.

Access to Information Act on 31 Saratan of 1393 solar year by Parliament by a majority of six chapters and 32 articles were approved and during the same year in Qaws month of solar year the Act was approved by the president.

According to the law, the media has the right to obtain the information they need on various topics, from concerned governmental institutions and should provide the demanded information to the media.

It is noteworthy that last year (2016) more than 400 cases of violence against journalists were recorded, which 30 cases of violence were due to the efforts of journalists to access to information.

Nai media watch office has sent the name and profiles of the reporters to the commission of access to information in order to obtain the attentions of the authorities in this regard.

1395 Solar year ended with about 400 cases of violence against media staff.

1395 Solar year was the most violent year for journalists and media staff in Afghanistan. According to the annual report of Nai Media Watch office, During 1395 Solar year, a total of 395 cases of violence have occurred against journalists and media staff across the country.

Eight reporters during the same year lost their lives, 53 cases of beaten of reporters, eight journalists were injured, three journalists temporarily detained and had been released and 322 cases of threatened and insulted journalists has been registered in Nai office.

Most violence has occurred by the Taliban and in the second step special guards of President are accused of beaten of journalists in Bamiyan.

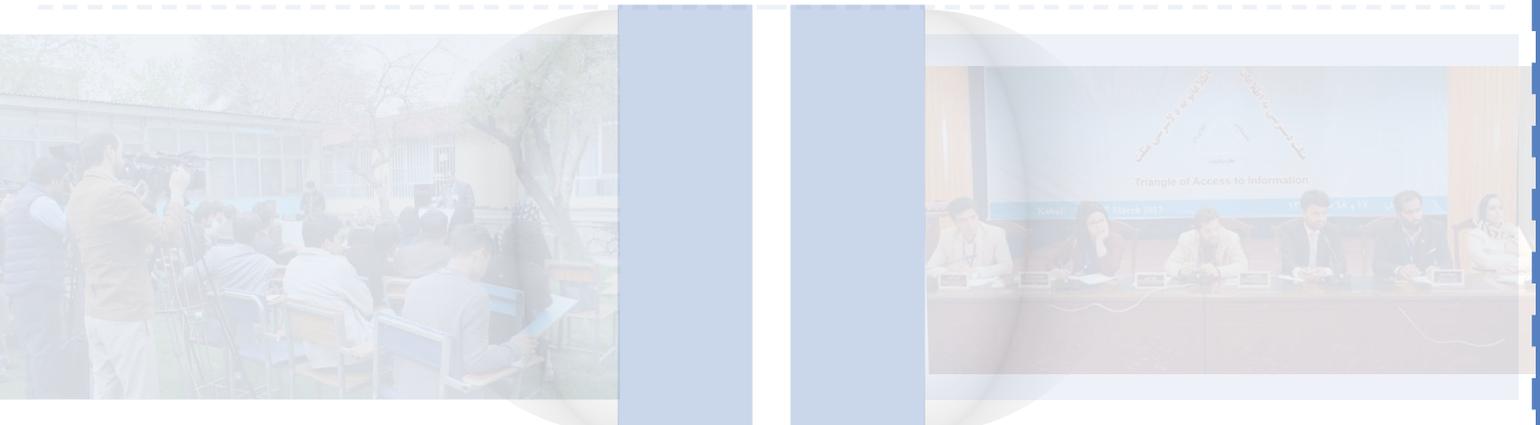
During the 1395 journalists who have lost their lives in Afghanistan are as follow:

Zabihullah with his American colleague (David Golki) who worked with National Radio of America on 16 Jawza of 1395 solar year while reporting in Helmand province shot and killed by the Taliban.

Hussain Mohammadi, a former TV reporter of Negah Television was killed at the terrorist attacks in Kabul Dehmazang area against brightness movement protests that took place on 27 Saratan 1395 Solar year.

Yaqoub Sharifi is the fourth journalist has been killed in Afghanistan, this reporter was working in national television in Zabul province, which on 25 date of the same year was shot dead and killed by unidentified gunmen attackers in Qalat City and managed to escape from the area.

Nematullah Zahir, a local reporter of Ariana News television on 14 Haqrab of the same year was killed. Mili-





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tary operation on the outskirts of the Helmand against the Taliban was conducted, Mr. Zahir with a group of journalists had gone to the area for reporting, but his vehicle crossed with Land mine along the road which was placed by the Taliban group.

Qazi Mohammad Nasir Muddasir, chairman of National Public Message Radio, on 26 Qaws of 1395 while returning from duty towards his house in Mohammad Agha district of the province was killed by unknown persons. Before this several times he was threatened by the Taliban.

On 21 Jadi of 1395 in a series of attacks by the Taliban in the entrance gate of National Assembly TV, two employees of parliament (MPs) TV were martyred.

Ms. Farida and Mr. Nurullah two employees of the TV when they wanted to go home from the office in front of the TV were victims of this terrorist attack and died.

Taliban is known of massive violence against journalists and media staff in Afghanistan. 8 journalists have been killed in Afghanistan on 1395 Solar year, seven journalists have been killed directly by the Taliban, and only one journalist was killed by unknown persons in Zabul province.

Abdul Mujib Khalwatgar the Director General of the Nai Office during a press conference held to announce annual report, said: "The number of violence is staggering increased than last year."

In addition Taliban being responsible for murder of seven journalists, the group is responsible for 320 cases of violence and other threats against Afghan journalists as well. This includes threats to journalists and media staff in four provinces (Kunduz, Helmand, Farah and Uruzgan). When the Taliban took control for the second time in Kunduz Province, also parts of the cities of Lashkarga, Farah and Tarin-Koot, that Taliban threatened majority of media staff and journalists to death and they fled their homes for a long time.

Nai office believes that according to the figures recorded in the Nai Media Watch office more violence conducted by the Taliban on reporters, In the second step the president's special guards are accused of beaten journalists in Bamiyan Province. Khalwatgar said a large part of the violence against journalists have been conducted by the Taliban and then bodyguards of President.

While in 1394 solar year, 114 cases of violence against journalists and media staff in Afghanistan registered in Nai Media watch office. on 1394 Solar year, 12 journalists had lost their lives, The Taliban terrorist attack on Tolo TV vehicle in which 7 people died and about 20 others wounded.

It is noteworthy that the number of reporters that face serious violence such as threats and beatings from powerful individuals and Mafia encountered, request from Nai office to not insert their names in the list.





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An increase of 12% of women in Afghan media.

Nai office findings show that contrary to the beliefs there was 12 percent increase than 1394 solar year in Afghan women media workers and journalists in Afghanistan media.

On the last day of the solar year 1395 a survey launched by the Nai Office, show that currently 12,553 people are working in the Afghan media. Among that 2133 people which make 17% are female media staffs in Afghan media.

Abdul Mujib Khalwatgar Director General of Nai Office during a press conference held to announce the results of the survey had been held, said: “Contrary to what we heard that there is decrease in presence of women in the media, but according to Nai findings were the witnessed of an 12% increase in Afghan media staffs in Afghanistan.

According to the survey, the total of Female who works in Afghanistan, 25 percent of whom are working in television and the remainder of them works in radio and print media.

Previously with the growing insecurity and the escalation of violence in the country, believed to be the number of staff and reporters of women in Afghan media has decreased, but this survey launched recently by the Nai office, found that contrary beliefs, the presence of women in Afghan media has increased relative to 1394.

Khalwatgar also said the increase shows that along with all the insecurities and problems of cultural and security threats, we see the increased presence of women in the media.

As the survey shows, the presence of women in Afghan media has increased, and this presence have pleased us and the country’s journalism community, thus Nai office suggest the Afghan government to name the 1396 solar year as the year of supporting women journalists in the country.

The final survey by Nai office shows that the presence of women has increased with all the present problems, But the Nai supporting open media still believe that support of government and international institutions still need to see a greater presence of women in the media of Afghanistan.





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Attention!

All journalists and media organizations are hereby notified that Mr. Atiqullah Saket 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 0777274099 or via email at: saket.atiq@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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