



Six Months Report (Jul - Dec 2014)



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Summary

2014 was the most violent year for Afghan journalists. This year witnessed the highest number of cases of violence against journalists in the history of Afghan media. Eight journalists lost their lives during professional work. Moreover, media organizations faced significant financial difficulties resulting from political instability, intensified insecurity and declining international aid.

Despite all challenges, the media showcased exceptional professionalism in providing press coverage to the political, security and economic transition of the country all of which happened during 2014.

Although the number of cases of violence against journalists has dropped in the second half of 2014 compared to the first half, violence and intimidation has risen compared to last year. In this reporting period, which contains July through December 2014, the cases of violence and intimidation against journalist's amounts to 61 showing 11% decrease compared to the first half of 2014, where AJSC recorded 68 cases. However, the figures show 74% increase compared to the same period in 2013 where AJSC recorded 35 cases. During 2013 a total of 76 cases were recorded by AJSC, while this number reached to 129 in 2014 which shows a 69% increase from last year.

An important point of consideration regarding the data recorded for the second half of 2014 is the increase in the number of cases of violence perpetrated by the Taliban and powerful individuals or warlords. The Taliban alone account for 21% of the cases of violence over the last six months of 2014 whereas they were responsible for 11% of the cases of violence during the first six months of 2014. Similarly, warlords accounted for 11% in the first six months of 2014 while they are responsible for 26% of these incidents during the second half of 2014. Increase in the level of violence of the Taliban against journalists should be taken serious considering the latest threat statements of the Taliban directed to media and civil society.

Although, lower than the first six months of this year and the same time period of the last year, the number of incidents of violence against journalists committed by government officials (GOV), particularly security forces, continues to remain the highest. GOV was responsible for 63% of the incidents of violence during the first six months of 2014, and now GOV were involved in 34% of the incidents during the second half of the year. This decline has been largely the result of the continued advocacy by media support organizations, which prompted senior officials of the National Unity Government to voice their support for media and freedom of expression and fulfill some of their pledged commitments.

The prevailing culture of impunity coupled with the lack of awareness on the part of government officials particularly security forces about the rights and duties of journalists constitute the biggest causes of violence and intimidation. Absence of any meaningful laws to address journalists' safety is yet another cause. Afghanistan still lacks a law that is dedicated to addressing perpetrators of violence against journalists.

Additionally, increase in the level of insecurity over the last six months including suicide attacks and roadside bombs is also considered among the causes of the unprecedented escalation of violence against journalists in 2014. In 2014, three journalists lost their lives and another thirteen wounded as a result of suicide attacks and explosions.

Lack of prosecution of perpetrators has emboldened warlords to increase attacking journalists. In the second half of 2014, warlords are responsible for 26% of violence against journalists. These figures have tripled compared to last year.

Freedom of speech is the biggest achievement of the post-Taliban Afghanistan. However, these gains are still fragile as Afghanistan is not capable of preserving this achievement without support from international community. As media is a crucial element of nation building, state building and solidification of democracy, supporting media and freedom of expression needs to remain in the agenda of Afghanistan's international partners. Equipping media outlets with the tools so that they can develop effective business plans is highly necessary.

Endorsement of Access to Information Act is yet another big achievement of Afghanistan towards strengthening freedom of expression and its role in promoting transparency. The Afghan government must ensure proper implementation of the law and prevent from meddling of the government officials and government agencies in the implementation affairs.

Female media workers need special support so that they can improve their professional skills. Afghanistan's media landscape still lacks sufficient female journalists.

Afghan president and Chief Executive Officer need to implement the pledge they made during election campaigns by signing the Commitment Letter prepared by Media Support Organizations. Actions taken in support of media during 2015 will be crucial in determining the future of media in Afghanistan.

About the Afghanistan Journalists Safety Committee

Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) is a locally managed apparatus, which assists journalists in danger and those who get injured on the job. The safety committee is the first of its kind established in Afghanistan with a comprehensive package of services from a 24-hour hotline to providing safety and first aid trainings. It also engages in advocacy initiatives with aims to improve policies and laws towards safety of journalists and enhancing freedom of expression. Based in Kabul, AJSC has official representatives in eight zones and focal points in the remaining 26 provinces. AJSC works in close cooperation with Afghan and international media support organizations including International Media Support (IMS), Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) and Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

Preface

2014 was a highly challenging year for Afghan journalists. During this year the escalation of violence against journalists was unprecedented. Moreover, many media organizations faced financial difficulties resulting from political instability, intensified insecurity and declining international aid.

However, despite all challenges, the media showcased exceptional professionalism in providing press coverage to the political, security and economic transition of the country all of which happened during 2014. The successful, responsible and deliberate coverage of the presidential elections is considered a historical success for the fledgling Afghan media. Furthermore, the rigorous coverage of the post-election issues, specifically the focus on government's performance during the first 100 days, adds to the level of credit Afghan media deserve. Despite all these achievements, the challenges against media and journalists need to be taken seriously. Violence and intimidation, among many other challenges, is becoming bigger hazard towards free media and freedom of expression. If these challenges remain unaddressed, the Afghan media will remain in a precarious condition.

This is the fourth biannual report of AJSC, which explores journalists' safety during the second half of 2014. To paint a broader picture of the safety matters, this report also covers certain developments during this reporting period, which have a direct or indirect role on safety. The report includes a short overview and statistics of the cases of violence against journalists, a broad analysis of the state of media and freedom of expression and the important matters that all stakeholders need to consider in relation to the future of media in Afghanistan.

It is worth mentioning that recording of cases of violence against media workers has been done based on AJSC's policies and procedures. AJSC only records those cases where the subjects are actively working for media as well those who are established freelance journalists.

Violence against Journalists

Although the number of cases of violence against journalists has dropped in the second half of 2014 compared to the first half, violence and intimidation has risen compared to last year. In this reporting period, the cases of violence and intimidation against journalist's amounts to 61 cases showing 11% decrease compared to the first half of 2014 where AJSC recorded 68 cases. However, it shows 74% increase compared to the same period in 2013 where we had 35 cases. **Overall, 2014 witnessed the highest number of cases of violence against journalists in the history of Afghan media.** During 2013 a total of 76 cases were recorded by AJSC while this number reached 129 in 2014, which shows a 69% increase from last year. 8 journalists lost their lives during professional work in the year 2014, five of them in the first six months and three of them in the second.

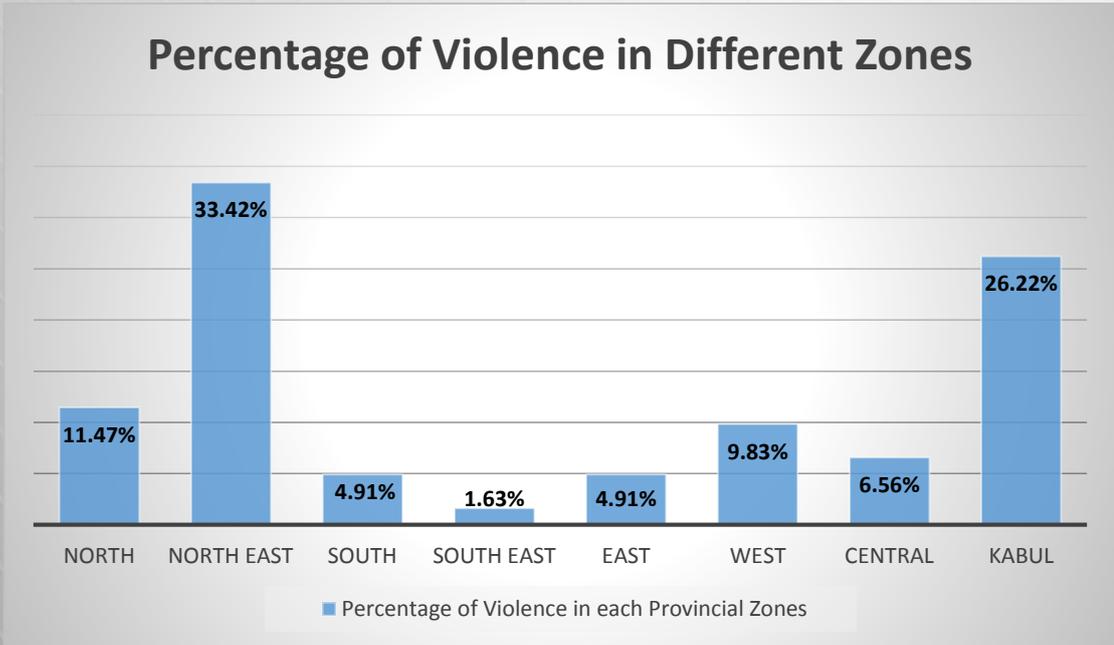
An important point of consideration regarding the data recorded for the second half of 2014 is increase in the number of cases of violence perpetrated by the Taliban and powerful individuals or warlords. The Taliban alone account for 21% of the cases of violence over the last six months of 2014 whereas they were responsible for 11% of the cases of violence during the first six months of 2014. Similarly, warlords accounted for 11% in the first six months of 2014 while they are responsible for 26% of these incidents during the second half of 2014.

Although lower than the first six months of this year and the same time period of the last year, the number of incidents of violence committed by government officials continues to remain the highest. Reported responsible for 63% of the incidents of violence during the first six months of 2014, government officials are behind 34% of cases during this reporting period. This decline has been largely the result of the continued advocacy by media support organizations and the emphasis voiced and certain actions taken by the senior authorities of the National Unity Government in support of the journalists and freedom of speech.

Looking at the nature of incidents and those who perpetrate them, one can conclude that the prevailing culture of impunity coupled with the lack of awareness on the part of government officials particularly security forces from the rights and duties of journalists constitute the biggest causes of violence and intimidation. Absence of meaningful laws to address journalists' safety is yet another cause.

Additionally, increase in the level of insecurity over the last six months including suicide attacks and roadside bombs is also considered among the causes of the unprecedented escalation of violence against journalists in 2014.

In 2014, three journalists lost their lives and another thirteen wounded as a result of suicide attacks and explosions. Apart from this, reluctance of security officials and other relevant government authorities to identify those responsible for violence against journalists is another source of problem. Unidentified individuals constitute more than 24% of perpetrators of violence against journalists. They include those who have targeted journalists in daylight and have fled after killing, injuring or beating them. These figures have tripled compared to last year, indicating that security forces have not seriously pursued such attacks to identify the culprits. In one instance the Imam of a mosque in Kabul city assaulted a journalist in the presence of police officers but the police did not stop him (see the table of violence for more details).



No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
1	Central	Rahmatullah Marjankhel	Rana Production	Reporter	Beating	Ghazni Governor Body Guards	1/7/2014	Ghazni	Rahmatullah Marjankhel was beaten by governor's body guards after he was denied entrance to the journalists vehicle, which took them to a conference in governor's office.
2	West	Edris Amini	Saqi TV	Presenter	Wounded	Unknown Armed Individuals	2/7/2014	Herat	Edris Amini was beaten and stabbed with a knife by unknown people near his brother's shop
3	Central	Aziz Ahmad Atal	Zhowandun TV	Reporter	Beating	Powerful Individuals	2/7/2014	Kabul	Aziz Ahmad Atal was beaten near his house by powerful individuals after he made a report about one of presidential candidates.
4	North	Shamsuddin Shams	Mitra TV	News Editor	Death Threat	Members of Junbeshe Milie party	5/7/2014	Balkh	Shams claims he was threatened to death in the elections day by son-in-law of General Dostum. He says the reason for the threat was his report from Samangan.
5	North	Khalid Agah	Lahza Radio	Presenter	Mysterious Murder	Unknown Individuals	7/7/2014	Balkh	Unknown individuals killed Khalid Agah. His family reports that Khalid was murdered inside his house in the afternoon. Investigations in this regard are on going
6	South	Bashir Ahmad Nadim	Pajhwok News Agency	Reporter	Wounded	Suicide Attack	9/7/2014	Kandahar	Bashir Nadem went to make a report from the suicide attack. During the reportage another attack occurred which injured the journalist.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
7	South	Abdullah	Hewad TV	Cameraman	Wounded	Suicide Attack	9/7/2014	Kandahar	Abdullah went to make a report from the suicide attack. During the report-age another attack occurred which injured the journalist
8	South East	Abdul Maqsood Azizi	Pajhwok News Agency	Reporter	Threat	Unknown Individuals	19/7/2014	Logar	Abdul Maqsood Azizi produced an investigative report that showed Governor's involvement in corruption. After the release of the report unknown individuals through phone threatened him.
9	West	Khalil Noorzai	Voice of America Radio	Reporter	Verbal Abuse	Herat NDS Director	23/7/2014	Herat	Khalil Noorzai asked several questions that made Herat Governor uncomfortable. After the interview NDS Director called him a traitor and spy and abused him verbally
10	South	Ahmadullah Noori	Hewad TV	Cameraman	Insult	National Security Forces	27/7/2014	Kandahar	Ahmadullah Noori was reporting about security measures of eid celebrations when the security forces soldier insulted him.
11	East	Tahir Sapi	Shamshad TV	Reporter	Arrest	National Directorate of Security	1/8/2014	Nengarhar	Tahir Sapi was arrested by NDS mysteriously. He was later released due to AJSC's intervention.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
12	North East	Aref Danishjo	Noor TV	Reporter	Verbal Abuse	Criminal Investigation Police	4/8/2014	Takhar	Aref Danishjo wanted to enter Police HQ of Takhar, meanwhile he had an argument with the criminal investigation police who threatened to beat him.
13	East	Rahmatullah Zeyarmal	Ariana TV	Reporter	Threat	Nengarhar Chief of Police	8/8/2014	Nengarhar	Rahmatullah Zeyarmal was threatened by the Police Chief during an interview when he asked about the insecurity in the city. his recordings was also deleted.
14	Central	Ehsanullah Amiri	Wall Street Journal	Reporter	Arrest and Threat	Security Forces	11/8/2014	Kabul	Ehsanullah Amiri was arrested when he was photographing the suicide attack in Kabul.
15	Central	Rahman Mirzad	Rahe Farda TV	Cameraman	Beating	Ashraf Ghani Campaign Team	11/8/2014	Kabul	Ashraf Ghani campaign team beat Rahman Mirzad when he was filming the audit process. The reason was called to be crossing the perimeter of media.
16	Central	Fawad Noori	Khurshid TV	Cameraman	Beating	Ashraf Ghani Campaign Team	11/8/2014	Kabul	Ashraf Ghani campaign team beat Fawad Noori when he was filming the audit process. The reason was called to be crossing the perimeter of media.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
17	West	Alauddin Mohammady	Ghor TV	Editor	Assault	Unknown Individuals	16/8/2014	Ghor	Mohammady was attacked when he left office to home. Two motorcyclists came close to his vehicle and started shooting. The reason behind the attack is unknown.
18	West	Abdul Qayoum Pedram Qazizada	Arezo TV	Reporter	Death Threat	Abdullah Akbari, Commander of Ins	18/8/2014	Herat	Abdullah Akbari threatened Abdul Qayoum Pedram in a Facebook discussion.
19	Central	Taj Mohammad Bakhtari	Freelancer	Filmmaker	Death Threat	Taliban	21/8/2014	Kabul	Taj Mohammad was threatened to death by a member of Taliban after his documentary about a young girl was aired in Saba TV. The reason behind the threat was the fact that the Taliban member was related to the girl.
20	North	Etalla Noori	Ariana TV	Reporter	Beating	National Army Commander	23/8/2014	Sar-e-Pul	Etalla Noori was beaten by the National Army Commander in Sar-e-pul city.
21	East	Ajmal Sadat	Abaceen Radio	Reporter	Kidnap	Unknown Individuals	28/8/2014	Nengarhar	Ajmal Sadat was kidnapped near his workplace. However, he was able to run away from the kidnapers.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
22	Central	Mohammad Rahim Arya	RTA Ghazni	Reporter	Wounded	Taliban	4/9/2014	Ghazni	Mohammad Rahim Arya was wounded when a suicide attack targeted NDS office, which is next to RTA office. His injuries were mainly due to cuts from broken glass.
23	Central	Mohammad Hassan Rahimi	Awaye Afghan	Reporter	Beating	National Directorate of Security	4/9/2014	Ghazni	Mohammad Hassan Rahimi and few other journalists were beaten by NDS guards when they wanted to make reports of the attack on the directorate.
24	Central	Mohammad ullah Sareer	Ariana TV	Reporter	Beating	National Directorate of Security	4/9/2014	Ghazni	Mohammad ullah Sareer and few other journalists were beaten by NDS guards when they wanted to make reports of the attack on the directorate.
25	Central	Ratib Noori	Tolo News	Reporter	Beating	Security Forces	16/9/2014	Kabul	Ratib Noori was beaten by police forces when he went to make a report from a suicide attack near supreme court
26	Central	Zia Daud	Maiwand TV	Reporter	Wounded	Suicide Attack	16/9/2014	Kabul	Zia Daud was on his way to make a report when he was wounded in the suicide attack near Supreme Court

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27	North	Palwasha Tokhi	Bayan Shamal Radio	Former Reporter	Murder	Unknown Individuals	16/9/2014	Balkh	Palwasha Tokhi used to work with Radio Bayan Shamal during 2008-2012. She was stabbed and murdered in her house by unknown people
28	North East	Jamshid Kandali	Ghaziyan Takhar Radio	Editor in Chief	Verbal Abuse	Criminal Investigation Officer – Police HQ Takhar	22/9/2014	Takhar	The reason for the verbal abuse between Jamshid Kandali and the officer is personal. However, it was later resolved after AJSC's middling.
29	North East	Ghofran Arman	Cheragh Radio	Reporter	Beating	A Security Guard of Kunduz Governor	1/10/2014	Kunduz	Ghofran Arman and his colleague was beaten by Governor's security guards when they went for an interview with the governor. This beating happened despite the fact that the journalists showed their IDs.
30	North East	Islamuddin Sahib zada	Culture and Media Foundation	Reporter	Beating	A Security Guard of Kunduz Governor	1/10/2014	Kunduz	Islamuddin Sahib zada and his colleague was beaten by Governor's security guards when they went for an interview with the governor. This beating happened despite the fact that the journalists showed their IDs.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
31	North East	Abdul Mateen Mobarez	Khoshi Radio	Executive Director	Arrest and Threat	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Abdul Mateen with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
32	North East	Mohammad Jawed Forogh	Khoshi Radio	Reporter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Mohammad Jawed Forogh with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
33		Raz Mohammad Rahimi	Khoshi Radio	Director	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Raz Mohammad Rahimi with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
34	North East	Baryali Mushtaq	Khoshi Radio	Presenter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Baryali Mushtaq with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
35	North East	Hedayatullah Noori	Khoshi Radio	Presenter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Hedayatullah Noori with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
36	North East	Naweed Mobarez	Khoshi Radio	Reporter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Naweed Mobarez with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
37		Qari Enayatullah	Khoshi Radio	Presenter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Qari Enayatullah with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
38	North East	Baryali Mushtaq	Khoshi Radio	Presenter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Abdul Shokor Ghafari with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
39	North East	Noor Gul Andarwal	Khoshi Radio	Presenter	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Noor Gul Andarwal with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
40	North East	Abdul Karim Modaber	Khoshi Radio	Editor in Chief	Arrest	Powerful Individuals	9/10/2014	Baghlan	Abdul Karim Modaber with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
41		Roeeen Rahnosh	Khama Press	Editor	Wounded	Unknown Individuals	12/10/2014	Kabul	Qari Enayatullah with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
42	North East	Abdullah Rasooli	Kunduz Mediothick	Provincial Manager	Arrest	Security Guards of Kunduz Governor	14/10/2014	Kunduz	Abdullah Rassoli was arrested by governor's security guards because of his support for members of medio-theck.
43	Central	Noor Ahmad Payeez	Khurshid TV	Presenter	Beating	National Directorate of Security	15/10/2015	Kabul	Noor Ahmad was beaten after a verbal abuse by NDS.

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44	North East	Shahbaaz Saberi	Khawar TV	Editor in Chief	Beating	Security Guards of Kunduz]Governor	16/10/2014	Kunduz	Shahbaaz Noori had a verbal argument with head of Kunduz provincial council and Director of Education department. After the verbal argument he was attacked by the two officials and the security guard beat him and confiscated his camera fearing he may film it.
45	North	Abdul Basir Samadi	Bayan Shamal Radio	Reporter	Threat	Unknown individuals and insurgents	16/10/2014	Balkh	Abdul Karim Modaber with nine colleagues were arrested after the radio broadcasted a show that the local mullahs disapproved of. The mullahs attacked the radio and demanded their immediate closure. The radio was restarted its broadcast and the members were released after AJSC's pressures.
46	Central	Massoud Hossaini	Associated Press	Photojournalist	Beating	Local Mullah	18/10/2014	Kabul	Massoud Hossaini was reporting a demonstration about the closure of a local café (Cafa Honar). A local mullah attacked him and police didn't interfere.
47	North East	Ajmal Aryan	Azadi Radio	Reporter	Attack by Gunmen	Unknown Armed Individuals	23/10/2014	Kunduz	Ajmal Aryan was attacked on his way to center of Kunduz from a district.
48	North East	Abdullah Sahel	Shamshad TV	Reporter	Verbal Abuse	Security Forces	18/10/2014	Kabul	Abdullah Sahel was making a report about the suicide attack on Attorney's office when the intelligence officers of security forces verbally abused him. He was able to finish his report when the attorney office employees middle d and resolved the issue.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
49	Central	Jawid Yousufi	Arzu TV	Reporter	Wounded	Suicide Attack	4/11/2014	Kabul	Jawid Yousufi was injured in the attack on 3rd district when he was on his way home from office.
50	North East	Zalmai Ashna	Pajhwok News Agency	Reporter	Harassment	New Kabul Bank Security Guard	4/11/2014	Takhar	Zalmai Ashna wanted to make a report about the work incompetency of Kabul Bank. He was harassed and beaten by bank's security guard. The issue was later resolved through police HQ.
51	West	Nazir Haidari	National TV	Reporter	Wounded	Taliban	14/11/2014	Farah	Nazir Haideri was injured in roadside bomb.
52	North	Meetra	Bayan Shamal Radio	Reporter	Threats	Unknown Individuals	15/11/2014	Balkh	Unknown people attacked Meetra's house and threw stones at her house.
53	West	Yaseen Azhand	Ghor RTA	Head of Publications	Imprisonment	Ghor Province Court	11/30/2014	Ghor	Yaseen Azhand was accused of financial embezzlement and with an unfair trial he was convicted.
54	North	Jabbar Jebran	Panjshir Weekly	Editor in Chief	Imprisonment	Provincial Officials	2/12/2014	Panjshir	Jabbar Jebran published a controversial poem in his weekly and was accused of blasphemy.
55	Central	Shekib	Mitra TV	Videographer	Wounded	Suicide Attack	11/12/2014	Kabul	Shekib was in French Cultural Center making a report about a theater that condemned suicide attacks. A suicide attack happened during the show and injured Shikeb and his team.

No	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
56	Central	Shahid Farhosh	Mitra TV	Videographer	Wounded	Suicide Attack	11/12/2014	Kabul	Shahid was in French Cultural Center making a report about a theater that condemned suicide attacks. A suicide attack happened during the show and injured Shahid and his team.
57	North East	Nasir Ahmad Waqef	Al Jazeera	Reporter	Beating	Police	20/12/2014	Kunduz	Nasir Ahmad was beaten by police when he got of his car to make a report about the suicide attack.
58	North East	Najim Rahimi	Rasana News Paper	Reporter	Beating	Police	20/12/2014	Kunduz	Najim Rahim was beaten by police when he got of his car to make a report about the suicide attack. His nose was broken.
59	North	Alem Rahman Yar	Azadi Radio	Reporter	Threat	Unknown Armed Individuals	20/12/2014	Jawzjan	Rahman Yar has been getting threats in the past two months after he made a report about the interference of Turkmenistan and presences of unknown armed groups.
60	Central	Zubair Hatami	Mitra TV	Reporter	Martyred	Suicide Attack	21/12/2014	Kabul	Zubair was in French Cultural Center making a report about a theater that condemned suicide attacks. A suicide attack happened during the show and injured him badly. He was in intensive care unit for few days and passed away there.
61	Central	Ghulam Hussain Seerat	8AM Daily	Reporter	Death Threat	Unknown Armed Individuals	31/12/2014	Kabul	Mr. Hussain was on his way to work when armed bandits stole his car. The next day he was threatened through phone and was asked to forget about his car.

Threats of the Taliban and warlords

The data for the second half of this year reveals increase in the level of violence and intimidation of the Taliban and warlords compared to previous years. This becomes significant considering the latest threat of the Taliban directed against media and civil society.

The escalation of Taliban's violence and their explicit statements declaring war against media and civil society is most likely an indication of a shift in their strategy concerning media. Some analysts believe that the Taliban and other terrorist groups have come to terms with their failure to persuade the media to adopt a friendly tone towards them. On the other hand, the Taliban feel they have failed in the propaganda war over public perceptions, therefore, they are left with the only option of disturbing the public discourse by creating fear.

In a very recent incident a suicide bomber blew himself up at a live theater show on suicide bombers at the French Cultural Center in the Afghan capital Kabul. Claiming responsibility for this terrorist attack, the Taliban directly threatened the media and civil society activists. They threatened to utilize any means to stage attacks against media organizations and civil society activists who speak against them or convene gatherings for this purpose. In their press release, the Taliban accused the music broadcasting media of promoting the western culture adding that such media are allies of the 'occupiers' (referring to the Western countries) and they will be targeted.

Some analysts consider the Taliban's announcement a propaganda maneuver and believe that attacking the media will further marginalize them. Although subsequent to their statement, no attacks specifically targeting reporters or media have been carried out, the Taliban's approach to media organizations and media workers within the next six months will clarify their true position in this regard.

Of note is the fact that threats by the Taliban and other terrorist groups have failed to hinder journalistic activities in Afghanistan in any way and the journalists continue to do their jobs as usual.

Commitments and Achievements of the New Government

Support for freedom of expression was not treated as a priority in the electoral campaigns of the leaders of the National Unity Government. Noticing the reluctance of the candidates, media support organizations prepared a letter of commitment and the leaders of the current government, Dr. Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah signed it. It was a remarkable gesture of support for media and freedom of expression by both individuals.

Although the President and the Chief Executive Officer of the government voiced their support for freedom of expression, the mentioned letter of commitment further strengthens their promise. In this document the government recognizes freedom of speech as a fundamental right of the citizens and commits itself to supporting it.

Overall, this document contains articles, which, if enforced, will contribute to further development and strengthening of freedom of speech and media. You can find the commitment letter on AJSC website www.ajsc.af.

After the government change, the new leaders stressed on the fulfillment of the promises they had made during the electoral campaigns. They did implement some of them. For example, article 4 and article 5 of this document were implemented during the first two months of the new government.

Article 4: I will instruct the relevant judicial bodies to reexamine and investigate cases of murdered and injured journalists and share the results of these investigations with the media and the people of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, I will make decisive and comprehensive efforts to prosecute the culprits of violence through legal channels. In order to pursue this issue, I am committed to establishing a new authoritative commission, the members of which will include, among others, representatives of journalists and media support organizations.

Article 5:

I am committed to taking decisive measures to enforcing the Access to Information Act, which has recently been approved by the parliament and sent to the president for endorsement.

President Ashraf Ghani endorsed the Access to Information Act. Afghan media and the public gained this achievement after several years of waiting. Meanwhile, the First Vice President, General Abdurrashid Dostum ordered the Attorney General to reopen and investigate the files of 43 journalists who lost their lives over the past ten years. He also ordered establishment of a special commission to re-examine all of the cases and submit a

report to the Vice President on the outcomes of the investigation. He also donated \$10,000 to Journalists' Trust Fund opened by Ministry of Information and Culture.

Apart from this, the Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah also promised during the last days of 2014 that the Media Violations Commission, which was established in violation to the Mass Media Law, will be dissolved.

Additionally, the President lifted the ban on The New York Times reporter Matthew Rosenberg's reentry to Afghanistan in the early days of his government. During the last days of President Karzai's government, Matthew wrote an article about the possibility of a coup and formation of a new government by some high-ranking government officials to avert political crisis caused by the 2014 presidential election impasse. The mentioned article infuriated President Karzai to the point that he ordered the Attorney General summon him to his office. As a result, Mr. Rosenberg was expelled from Afghanistan and his right to return to the country was seized.

Also, it did not take long for the President to call a meeting with media representatives. In this meeting President Ashraf Ghani clearly encouraged the media supporters and journalists to put forward all the expectations they had from the government and pledged that he would act upon their demands. In addition, the President has so far showed positive reaction to a number of reports published by media, which is an indication of the fact that the President takes media seriously. For instance, when an article on the corruption in one of the government entities was published by Mandegar newspaper, the President personally talked over the phone with the chief editor as well as the author of the newspaper assuring them of appropriate actions to address the issue. Meanwhile, the fact that the president is placing too much emphasis on investigative journalism is also promising.

These are some examples of the government's achievements in the area of freedom of speech. However, we should keep in mind that the government is obliged to put in action the commitment letter in its entirety.

Owners of Media Organizations and Their-

Obligation towards Their Staff

During the current reporting period a few incidents occurred that arose questions about the state of support of media owners to their staff. Most of the owners of media organizations in Afghanistan are wealthy individuals. Some of them even own charity organizations but they have failed to provide the needed support to their staff upon emergency need.

In one instance, owner of a local media outlet, who ranks high among the wealthiest individuals of Afghanistan, refused to support one of the journalists working for his outlet who was struggling between life and death.

In another instance, a journalist who was shot and injured in an armed attack; the media proprietor not only did not extend any support to him but also denied paying his backdated salary.

Such a behavior can neither be justified from an ethical nor administrative perspective. In such cases the proprietors are least likely to support their staff. On the other hand, the way media managers sometimes treat their workers is contrary to all principles and codes of conduct. In some cases media workers are dismissed by their managers without regard to the morals of human dignity, code of conduct and administrative procedures and even their salaries are withheld. While job security is considered one of the major challenges facing media workers, no actions have been taken to date to address this issue. For more information please read the survey on AJSC website produced by AJSC involving this issue.

Future of Media against the Backdrop of -

Shrinking International Aid

The amount of aid provided by international community to Afghanistan is decreasing year after year.

What will be the impact of a complete cessation of the international aid on media? What kind of media was this aid vital for? And what options do media have in the absence of this aid? In order to answer these questions, we should first classify the media based on their sources of funding.

From a funding perspective, Afghan media are classified in three categories:

Category 1: Includes media, which have been able to establish themselves by developing effective business plans. With their income from commercials and media projects, such media outlets have not only made themselves self sufficient but also expanded considerably. For this category of media the cessation of the international aid will not have vital consequences, although they might suffer some decline in income, area of operation and expandability. The concern here, however, is that there are very few media outlets of this type.

Category 2: Are media that have been established by political or religious figures or organizations and act largely as partisan or ideological media. These outlets exist to support the political objectives of their funding sources. Cessation of the international economic assistance will have marginal impact on the status of these media at worst. However, since these media act largely as a conduit for political propaganda rather than independent media, their existence will not make a remarkable contribution to institutionalization of freedom of speech and democracy. In some cases such media are even likely to stand against freedom of speech and democracy.

Category 3: Includes the small independent media, which constitute the vast majority of media outlets in Afghanistan. Since this category of media is strongly dependent on the

International aid, any halt in such aid has had and will have detrimental consequences for them.

But the question is what kind of destiny is awaiting this category of media? At least three different scenarios are probable.

First, the majority of these outlets will collapse when the international aid comes to an end, precisely in a manner that dozens of print and electronic media had to close their doors due to lack of financial resources. Among these outlets were a sizable number of radio stations, which used to run by direct financial assistance of the international troops before the pull out, but were then handed over to the provincial authorities. Provincial governments failed to fund them due to lack of resources and the outlets were closed down.

Secondly, it is probable for these outlets to refer to wealthy politicians for financial aid so that they can survive. They are also likely to be hunted by the regional intelligence services who are after promotion of their political agenda; in which case they can be assumed to have been compromised professionally. On the other hand, reduction of independent media will expand the space for partisan media that pursue specific goals and ideologies, which will in turn further restrict freedom of speech.

Thirdly, the small media can focus on the small-scale local market, although this will result in serious staff reductions and limitation of the scope of their activities. Since airtime in the big media is very expensive, the small media can introduce lower commercial rates to target the small businesses. However, this requires resilience, creativity and professionalism of the media, which is not the case with many of the outlets.

A small number of these outlets have so far been able to become almost self-sufficient by recruiting professionals for their marketing and financial affairs. But these media have also terminated more than half of their staff because of lack of funds, or have cut down on their salaries by 20 to 50%.

This means that cessation of international aid will fundamentally impact the independent media operations in Afghanistan--changes will that not be pleasant to supporters of democracy and freedom of expression. The impact of the fading international aid is already visible.

Conclusion

The Afghan media had a challenging year. Based on the collected data, threats to journalists' lives continue to remain the biggest challenge during the second half of 2014 posing a serious threat to journalism, free media and freedom of expression. Meanwhile the economic hardship many media outlets are facing has made them resort to downsizing of their personnel and limiting their activities as part of the coping mechanism. Results of AJSC's survey reveals journalists' pervasive concerns over job security.

But despite all of these challenges, it appears that the new government understands media's role in fighting corruption and consolidation of democracy. Some of the steps the new government took, including the meetings of the President, the Chief Executive Officer and the First Vice President with journalists and their emphasis on protection of media and freedom of expression, are promising.

The multiplicity of challenges against journalists, especially the escalation of violence and threats has not undermined their commitment and dedication. The multitude of ups and downs, particularly the 2014 presidential elections, provided the journalists and media with a wealth of experience.

The threats and violence of the Taliban and other unidentified individuals may evolve to an extensive campaign of fear. The financial challenges of the media should be taken seriously because the decrease in the number of independent outlets increases the coverage and audience base of the biased or politically motivated media. On the other hand, in the wake of the new phase of freedom of speech in Afghanistan since 2001, Afghan journalism has now reached a crucial stage. It is the time for the media proprietors and managers to think strategically about the future of their outlets and take necessary measures to protect them.

Recommendations

AJSC offers the following recommendations as solutions to the challenges brought up in this report:

Recommendations to the Afghan government:

- The will the National Unity Government has so far demonstrated to safeguard and strengthen freedom of speech is inspiring. However, this is not sufficient and the government needs to fulfill all of its promises to media and make constant efforts to uphold the values of freedom of speech as the biggest achievement of the last decade.
- Implementing the provisions of the commitment letter signed by the leaders of the current government is not only their legal obligation but also an effective tool in ensuring safety and job security of journalists. Civil society organizations and the people of Afghanistan are waiting to witness the implementation of each and every provision of the commitment letter.
- The relevant bodies of the government need to begin an awareness campaign to inform the government workers about the rights and duties of journalists. We also recommend that treating journalists should become part of the training curriculum of security forces. (AJSC is ready to cooperate in developing the needed materials).
- The judiciary organizations in the government need to launch an extensive anti-impunity campaign against the perpetrators of violence against journalists.
- The government should consider subsidized services to media, including electricity costs. This can lift some of the financial burden on the media.
- The government should take seriously the warning given by the Taliban and the violence caused by unidentified individuals. Freedom of speech will suffer serious damages if these warnings are followed by actions.

Recommendations for the International Community and International Media Support Organizations:

- Freedom of speech is the biggest achievement of Afghanistan since 2001. Currently Afghanistan is not in a position to preserve this achievement without support from the international community. Should the international community stop its aid to media, many small it will make many small media outlets susceptible to closure or dependency on the regional political or intelligence elements. Support for media is a crucial element of nation building, state building and solidification of democracy so this needs to remain as part of the agenda of international community in Afghanistan. Equipping media outlets with the tools so that they can develop effective business plans is highly necessary—an area international supporters can be very useful.
- International media support organizations and groups need better coordination among themselves and with AJSC on issues of providing support to journalists in danger. Previously, such attempts have been marred with obstacles and delays due to absence of a properly functioning cooperation mechanism.

Recommendations for Media Owners and Managers:

- Media workers deserve job security. Should this be compromised for any reason, including unfair contracts or discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or gender and so on, the result will be a lowered output in addition to making staff feel disgraced.
- Owners and managers of media outlets are primarily responsible to help their staff in emergency situations arising during professional work. Negligence in such cases is not justifiable. Media proprietors and managers are supposed to provide meaningful support to their staff in emergency situations.

Recommendations for Media Workers:

- According to data collected by AJSC, a great number of the instances of violence against journalists take place following the verbal argument of journalists with the security forces or government officials. In order to minimize such incidents, it is advisable that journalists stick to professional behavior and avoid engaging in such arguments. Journalists like others are also obliged to comply with the laws and rules. Being a journalist does not mean being above the laws.
- Journalists must strictly adhere to the rules, principles and ethics of journalism during production of stories. Compromising journalistic standards has been a reason behind intimidation and violence against journalists in some circumstances.
- Journalists need to establish better working relationship with media support organizations so that they receive the necessary support upon need.