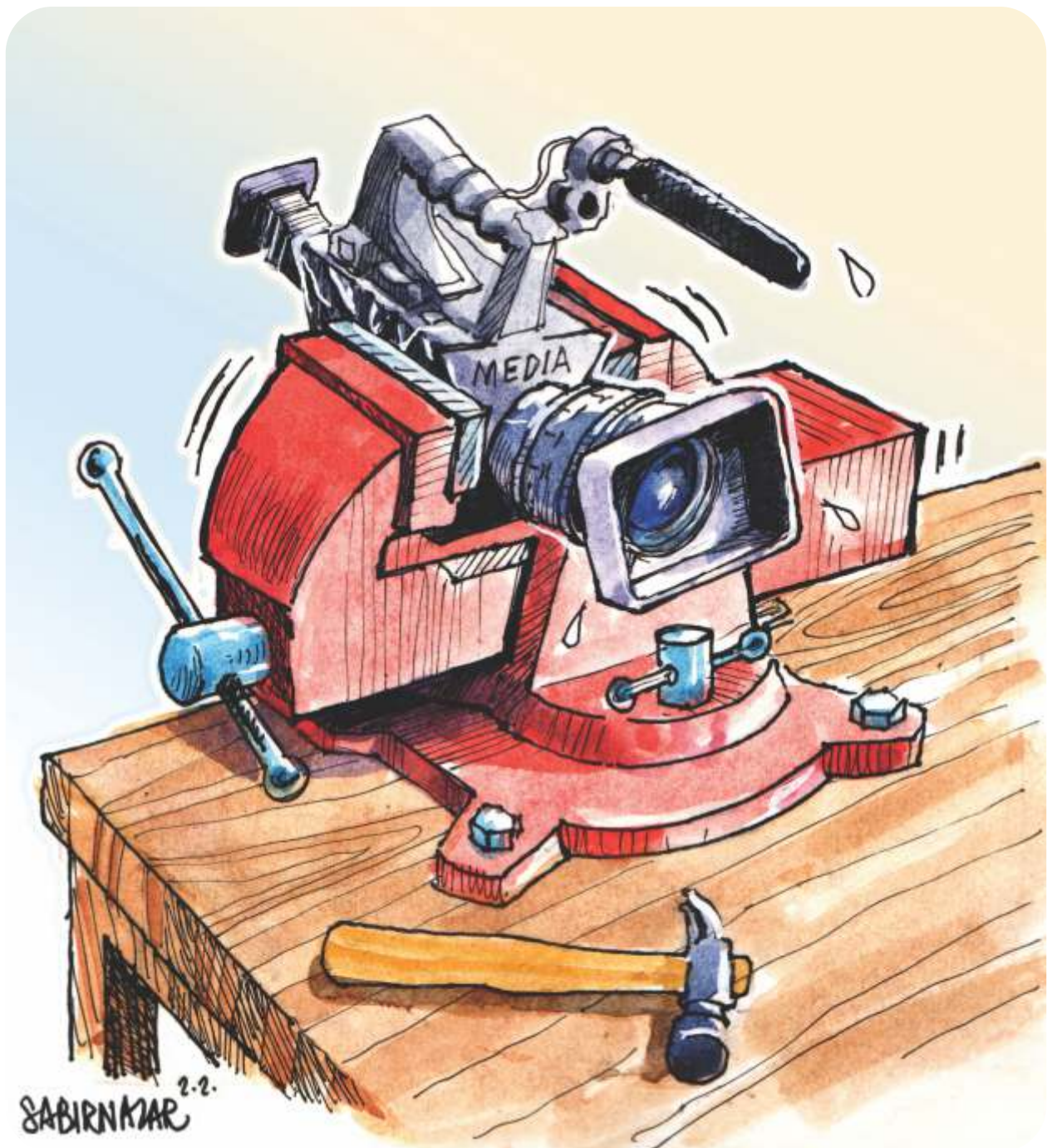


Murders, Harassment and Assault: the tough wages of journalism in Pakistan



Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2019-20
World Press Freedom Day 2020

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	02
A. Scale of violations against journalists in Pakistan and their frequency.....	04
B. Categories of violations against journalists in Pakistan.....	05
C. The most dangerous regions in Pakistan for journalists.....	07
D. The most targeted mediums in Pakistan for their journalism.....	10
E. The most vicious threat actors targeting journalists in Pakistan.....	12
List of journalists killed in Pakistan during May 2019 to April 2020.....	14

Executive Summary

At least 91 cases of attacks and violations against media and its practitioners, including journalists, took place in Pakistan over the course of one year – between May 2019 and April 2020 – signifying a worryingly escalating climate of intimidation and harassment that is adversely affecting the freedom of expression and access to information environment in the country, according to this research and analysis report by Freedom Network, an award-winning Pakistan-based media rights watchdog that tracks violations against journalists on an ongoing basis.

The report, released in Pakistan to mark the World Press Freedom Day marked globally on May 3 every year, reveals that the screws on media in Pakistan are being tightened through various means of censorship, including murders, threats, and harassment, resulting in increasing silence and resulting in erosion of public-interest journalism.

The data shows that no place in the four Pakistani provinces or Islamabad is safe – attacks against journalists are taking place everywhere and that shockingly the state and its functionaries have emerged as the principal threat actor wielding the biggest stick to browbeat the media into submission and growing silence.

According to the key findings of the **Freedom Network Pakistan Press Freedom Report 2020**, monitored for the period May 2019 to April 2020:

- **Scale of violations against media in Pakistan and their frequency:** At least 91 cases of attacks and violations against journalists and media practitioners were documented in Pakistan in the one year between May 3, 2019 and April 10, 2020 across all territories of Pakistan, including the four provinces and Islamabad. This is an average of over seven cases of violations a month – one every fourth day, or twice a week. The violations included killing of seven journalists for their journalism work, two cases of abductions, nine cases of arrests, detentions or confinements, 10 cases of physical assaults, half of which caused severe bodily injuries, one case of attack on the home of a journalist, 23 cases of specific written or verbal threats, 10 cases of censorship, and eight instances of legal cases registered against journalists.
- **The top three categories of violations** against the journalists in Pakistan in the period under review included 23 cases of verbal or written **threats** of murder or other dire consequences (25%), at least 13 cases of offline and online **harassment** (14%), and 11 cases of assassination attempts (12%) of which seven resulted in **killing** of journalists.
- **The most dangerous region in Pakistan for journalists:** Overall Islamabad emerged as the riskiest and most dangerous place to practice journalism in Pakistan with 34% of the violations (31 out of total 91 cases) recorded in the federal capital. Sindh was the second

worst with 27% of the violations (24 cases) followed closely by Punjab with 22% (20 cases), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 14% (13 cases) and Balochistan with 3% (3 cases).

- **The most targeted medium in Pakistan:** Of the total of 91 attacks and violations against journalists recorded in Pakistan, TV medium emerged as the single largest victim of type of media with at least 63 cases (69%) of the cases against its practitioners compared to print, radio and internet. Print media was the second most targeted medium with 25 journalists working for it targeted (28%) while three cases were recorded of online journalists targeted. No targeting of a radio journalist was documented.
- **The most serious threat actors targeting media in Pakistan:** In a whopping 42% of the 91 documented cases of violations against media practitioners in Pakistan, the victims or their families suspect the involvement of the State and its authorities and functionaries in the attacks on them compared to other influential threat actors such as political parties, religious groups or criminal gangs and influential individuals, or unidentified threat sources.

A. Scale of violations against journalists in Pakistan and their frequency

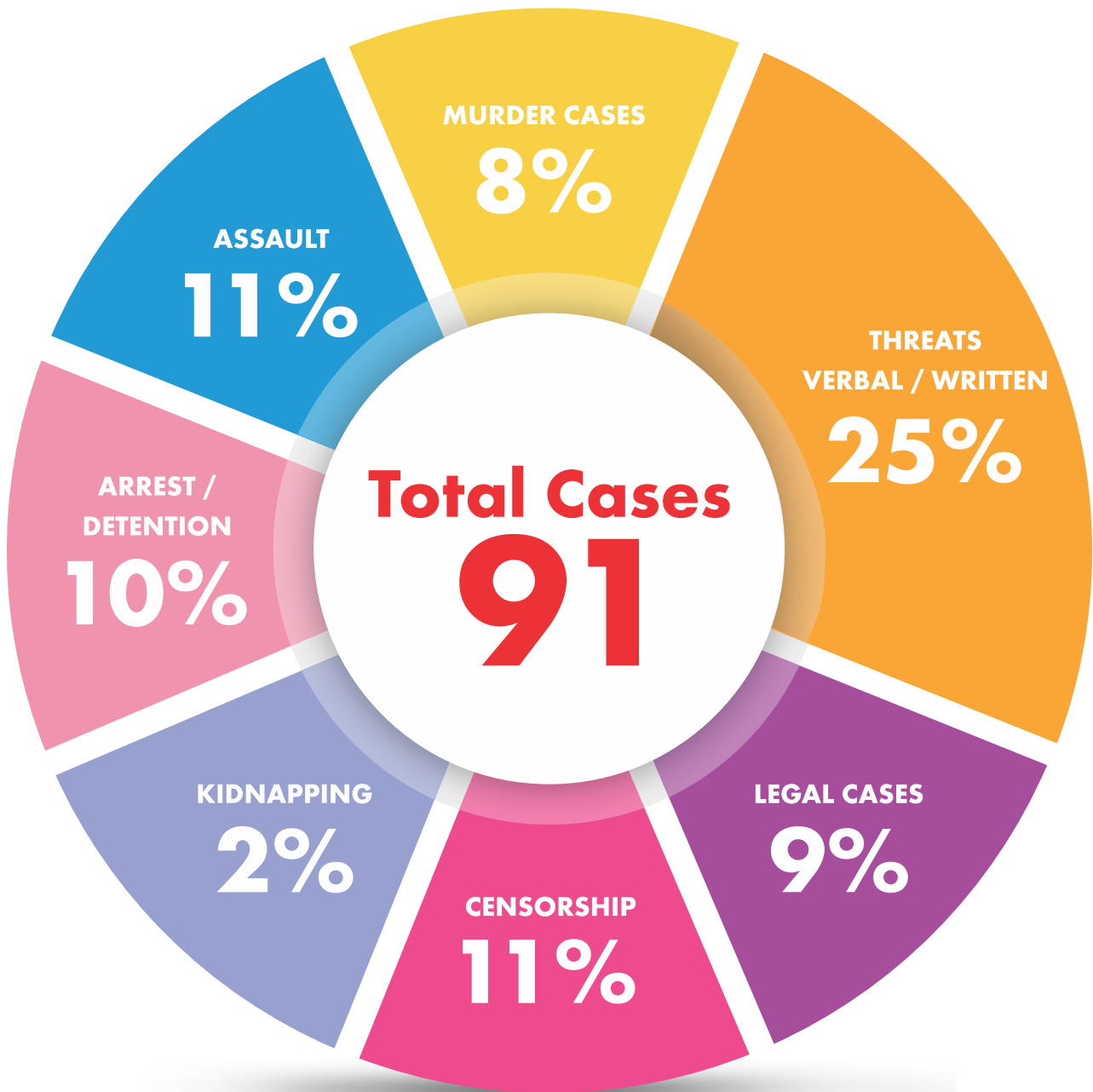
At least 91 cases of attacks and violations against journalists and media practitioners were documented in Pakistan in the one year between May 3, 2019 and April 10, 2020 across all territories of Pakistan, including the four provinces, Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. This is an average of over seven cases of violations a month – one every fourth day, or twice a week.

The documented violations included:

- 07 cases of **murders** of journalists, plus three other unsuccessful assassination attempts
- 02 cases of **abductions**, plus another four cases of unsuccessful kidnapping attempts
- 09cases of **arrests, detentions or illegal confinements** by government functionaries
- 10 cases of **physical assaults**, half of which caused bodily injuries
- 01 case of **attack on the home** of a journalist
- 23 cases of specific written or verbal **threats**
- 10 cases of **censorship**
- 08 instances of **legal cases** registered against journalists.

B. Categories of violations against journalists in Pakistan

**CATEGORIES OF VIOLATIONS
AGAINST MEDIA IN PAKISTAN (May 2019-April 2020)**



The top three categories of violations against the journalists in Pakistan in the period under review included 23 cases of verbal or written **threats** of murder or other dire consequences (25%), at least 13 cases of offline and online **harassment** (14%), and 11 cases of assassination attempts (12%) of which seven resulted in **killing** of journalists.

Killing and attempted murder: At least seven working journalists were killed for their journalism work in the period under review. The murders constituted 8% of the total 91 cases of violations against journalism practitioners. At least another four journalists – 4% of the total violations – survived assassination attempts. Cases of murders and attempted murders totaled 11, or 12% of the total violations this year.

Assault: At least 10 journalists were physically assaulted in the period under review, of which four sustained serious injuries. This category of violation constituted 11% of the total 91 violations against the journalists.

Arrest and detention: At least five journalists were arrested and another four detained illegally by official authorities in the period under review. A total 9 such cases were documented, or 10% of the total 91 violations recorded.

Threat: Specific written and verbal threats constituted the largest frequent category of violations against journalists in the period under review with 23 cases documented, or 25% of the total 91 violations.

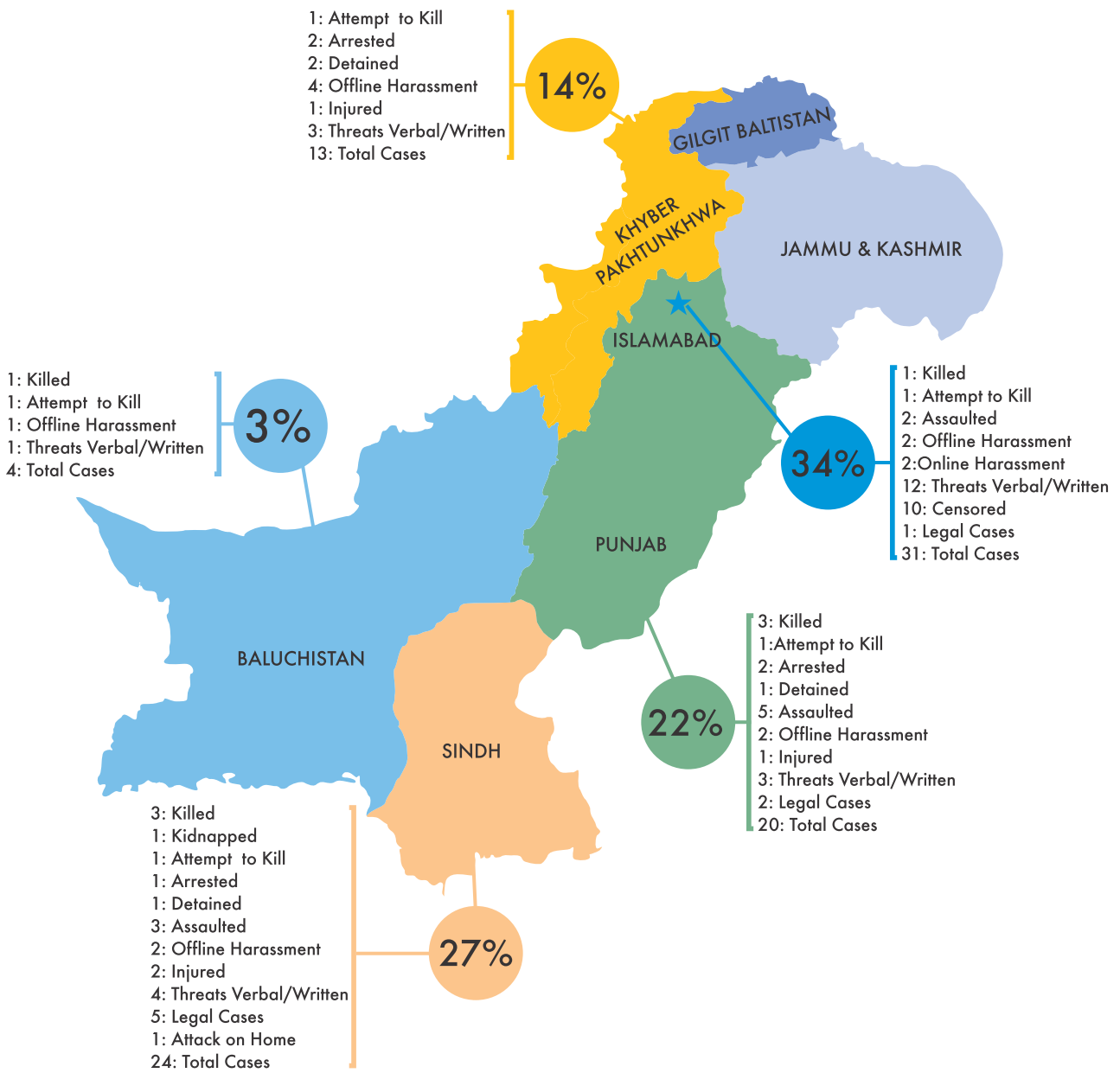
Abduction: At least two cases of abduction of journalists were documented in the period under review, or 2% of the total cases of 91 violations.

Censorship: At least 10 cases of officially enforced censorship were documented in the period under review, constituting 11% of the total 91 violations recorded.

Legal threat: At least eight cases were documented in which journalists were served with legal notices for various alleged infractions, or 9% of the 91 total cases of violations.

C. The most dangerous regions in Pakistan for journalists

**MOST DANGEROUS REGIONS IN PAKISTAN FOR JOURNALISTS
(May 2019-April 2020)**



Overall hostility: Overall, Islamabad emerged as the riskiest and most dangerous place to practice journalism in Pakistan with 34% of the violations (31 out of total 91 cases) recorded in the federal capital. Sindh was the second worst with 27% of the violations (24 cases) followed closely by Punjab with 22% (20 cases), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 14% (13 cases) and Balochistan with 3% (3 cases). No violations were documented from Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Risk to life: In terms of threat to the lives of journalists, Punjab and Sindh emerged as the most dangerous regions in Pakistan with three journalists killed in each of the two provinces as well as one unsuccessful assassination attempt each in both provinces. Islamabad was second with one journalist murdered while one case of unsuccessful assassination attempt each was recorded in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. No attempts on the lives of journalists were documented in Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Bodily harm: In terms of physical assaults and bodily harm, Punjab emerged as the most violent region in the country for journalists documenting 5 of the total 10 cases – 50% – of assaults of journalists during the period under review, followed closely by Sindh with 3 cases (30%) and Islamabad with 2 cases (20%). No physical assault was documented in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Arrest: In terms of arrests, detentions and illegal confinements, of the total nine cases documented, including five arrests and four illegal detentions, four occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including two arrests and two illegal confinements), three in Punjab (two arrests and one case of illegal detention), two cases in Sindh (one case each of arrest and illegal detention). No arrests or illegal detentions of journalists were reported from Balochistan, Islamabad, Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Capture: In terms of abductions and attempted kidnappings, a total of two cases were reported – one journalist kidnapped each in Sindh and Islamabad. No cases were reported from Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Threats: In terms of specific written and verbal threats that journalists received, of the total 23 cases, 12 (52%) were documented in Islamabad (11 verbal and one written), four in Sindh (three verbal and one written), three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (two verbal and one written), three in Punjab (all verbal) and one in Balochistan (verbal). No specific threats were documented against journalists in Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

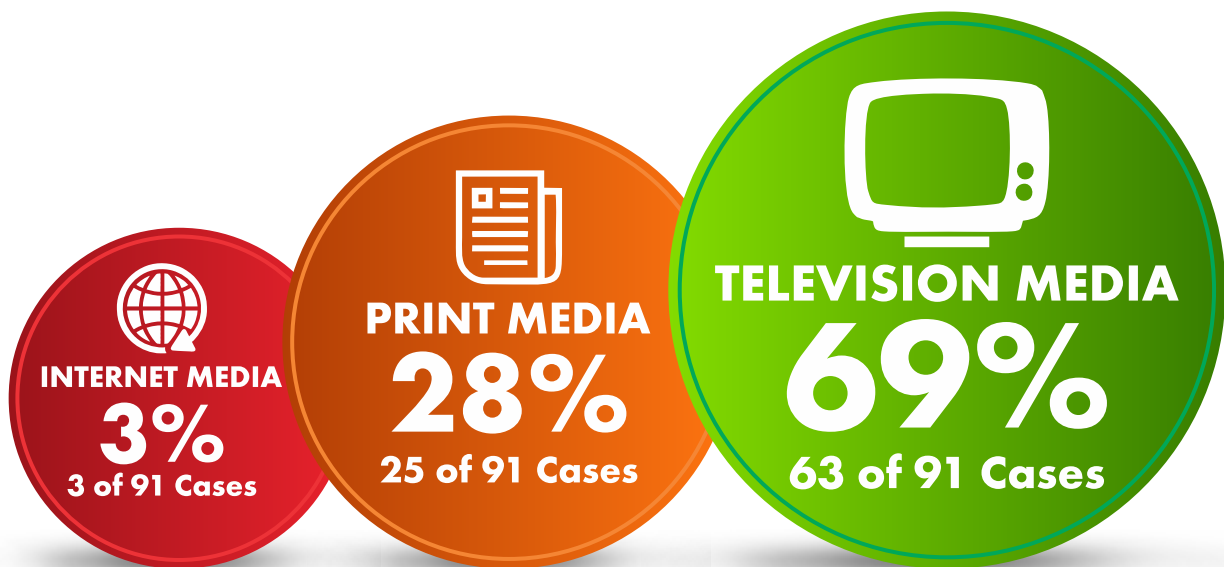
Legal: In terms of legal cases registered against journalists, of the total eight cases documented, Sindh emerged as the most hostile for journalists with five cases (72%), Punjab was second with two cases and Islamabad third with one case. No legal cases against journalists were documented in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

Harassment: Of the total 13 cases of harassment (including 11 offline intimidation and two online cases), at least four cases were documented from Islamabad (two cases of offline and

online harassment), four cases from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (all offline) two cases of offline harassment Sindh and one similar case Balochistan. No harassment case was documented from Gilgit Baltistan or Azad Kashmir.

D. The most targeted mediums in Pakistan for their journalism

MOST TARGETTED MEDIUMS IN PAKISTAN
(May 2019-April 2020)



- 1: Killed
- 1: Kidnapped
- 1: Threat

- 3: Killed
- 2: Attempt to Kill
- 1: Arrested
- 2: Assaulted
- 2: Harassment
- 1: Injured
- 12: Threats
- 1: Censored
- 1: Legal Case

- 3: Killed
- 2: Attempt to Kill
- 1: Kidnapped
- 4: Arrested
- 4: Detained
- 8: Assaulted
- 11: Harassment
- 3: Injured
- 1: Attack on home
- 10: Threats
- 9: Censored
- 7: Legal Cases

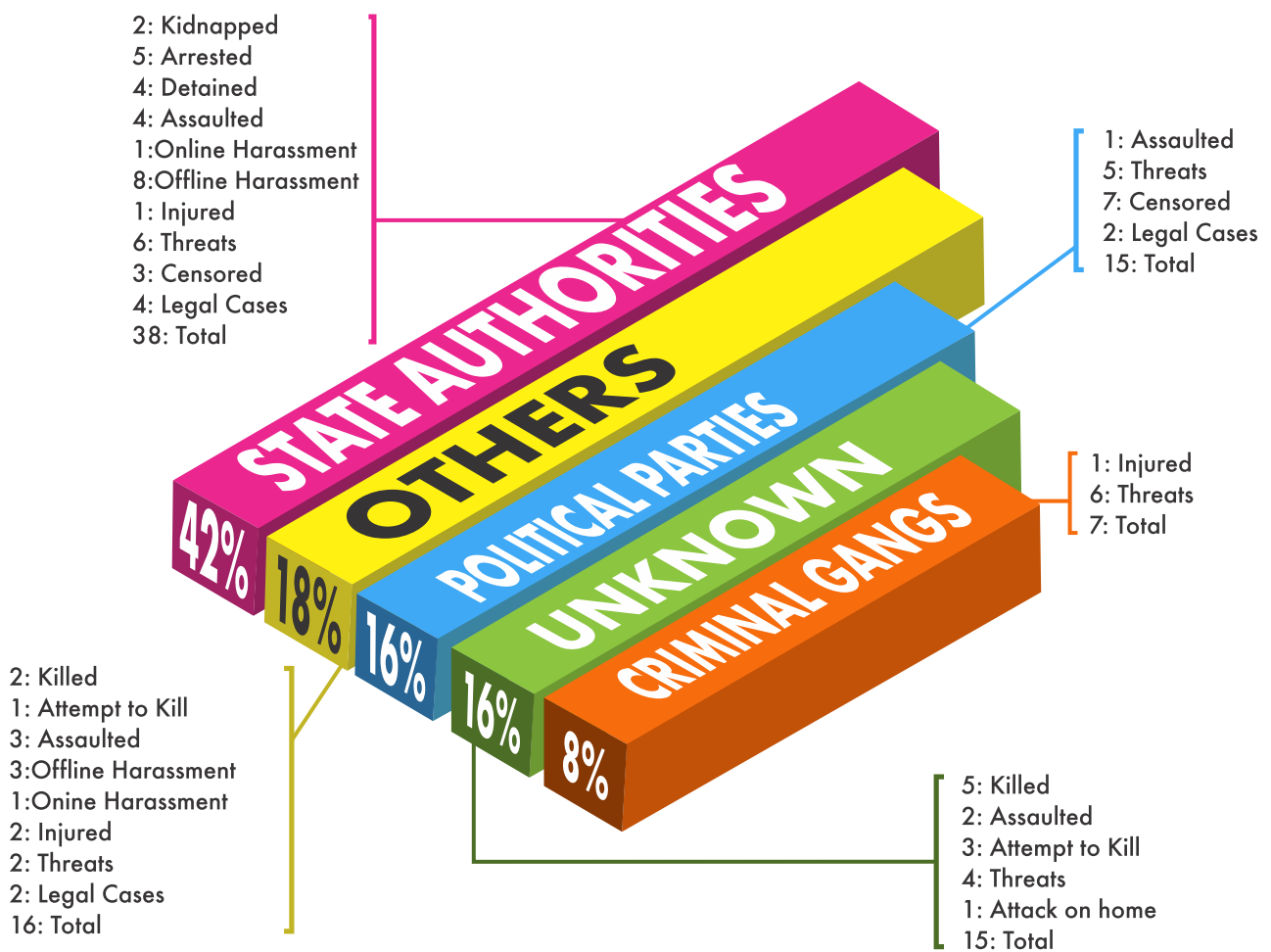
TV and print media in crosshairs: Of the total of 91 attacks and violations against journalists recorded in Pakistan in the period under review, TV medium emerged as the single largest victim of type of media with at least 63 cases (69%) of the cases against its practitioners compared to print, radio and internet.

Print media was the second most targeted medium with 25 journalists working for it targeted (28%) while three cases were recorded of online journalists targeted. No targeting of a radio journalist was documented.

- Of the seven journalists **killed**, three worked for TV, three for print and one for an online journalism platform.
- Of the four journalists who **survived assassination attempts**, two worked for TV and two for print.
- Of the two journalists **kidnapped**, one each worked for TV and internet media.
- Of the 10 journalists **assaulted**, eight worked for TV and two for print.
- Of the four journalists **injured**, three worked for TV and one for print.
- Of the five journalists **arrested**, four worked for TV and one for print.
- Of the four journalists **detained** illegally, all four worked for TV.
- Of the 11 journalists who faced **offline harassment**, nine worked for TV and two for print.
- Of the two journalists who faced **online harassment**, both worked for TV.
- Of the 10 journalists who faced targeted **censorship**, nine worked for TV and one for print.
- Of the eight journalists against whom **legal cases** were registered, seven worked for TV and one for print.

E. The most vicious threat actors targeting journalists in Pakistan

THREAT ACTORS TARGETING JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN (May 2019-April 2020)



State authorities: In a whopping 42% of the 91 documented cases of violations against media practitioners in Pakistan in the period under review, the victims or their families suspect the involvement of the State and its authorities and functionaries in the attacks on them compared to other influential threat actors such as political parties, religious groups or criminal gangs and influential individuals, or unidentified threat sources.

Among specific threat actors, the State authorities were not suspected of involvement in any of the five journalists killed but were allegedly involved in injuring one journalist, kidnapping two, arresting, detaining and keeping in illegal confinement nine journalists, assaulting and injuring four, harassing nine, enforcing censorship on three and registering a legal case against four journalists. Thus, the state authorities demonstrated an arsenal of various ways in which to harass and harm journalists in Pakistan.

Political parties: Surprisingly the second largest specific common category of threat actor identified by the victims or their families are political parties – constituting 16% (15 cases).

Political parties were allegedly involved in assaulting one journalist, issuing verbal and written threats against six, enforcing censorship on seven and instituting legal cases against two journalists.

Others: A group of miscellaneous ‘others’ (including feudal lords, land mafia, traders, individual clerics, etc.) with 18% (at least 16 cases) are also a distinct overall category of actors targeting journalists in Pakistan for their journalism work.

These ‘other’ categories of threat actors killed two of the seven journalists murdered, failed in an assassination attempt on a third journalist, assaulted three, injured two, harassed four, issued verbal threats against two and registered legal cases against another two journalists.

Unknown: The victims and their family, as well as the authorities and their employers, have been unable to identify perpetrators in 16% cases (15 distinct cases).

‘Unknown’ actors were involved in killing five of seven journalists murdered, making unsuccessful attempts to murder another three, assaulting two, attacking the home of one journalist, and issuing verbal threat to four journalists.

List of journalists killed in Pakistan during May 2019 to April 2020

The following is a list of the seven journalists killed in the period under review.

Ali Sher Rajpar

City reporter of *Daily Awami Awaz* Karachi and president of the local press club was killed on May 05, 2019, in Pididdan area of District Naushero Feroze (Sindh). He had been receiving life threats from the town chairman. He was shot five times just near the press club gate. He died on the spot.

Ilyas Warsi

Chief Reporter of *Daily Kawish* was killed on June 14, 2019 in Hyderabad (Sindh) at his flat by unknown persons.

Muhammad Bilal

A blogger on social media was killed on June 16, 2019 in Islamabad by unknown persons. He died on the spot when shot.

Mirza Waseem Baig

The reporter for *92 News* was shot dead outside his home on August 30, 2019 in Sarai Alamgir District Gujrat (Punjab) by unknown person. He died on the spot.

Zafar Abbas

The reporter for *7-News* was gunned down in Mailsi in District Vehari (Punjab) while he went for coverage on September 06, 2019. He was kidnapped by unknown persons and shot dead during captivity.

Urooj Iqbal

The reporter for *Daily Anti Crime* newspaper was killed on November 24, 2019 in Lahore (Punjab) outside her office. She died on the spot. This is the first case of a woman journalist killed in Pakistan.

Aziz Memon

The reporter for *KTN News* and *Daily Kawish* newspaper, was found shot dead in an irrigation canal on February 16, 2020 in Mehrabpur area of District Naushero Feroze (Sindh).

DISCLAIMERS

- **DATA:** the data used and analyzed in this report was generated by the **Pakistan Press Club Safety Hubs Network**, which **Freedom Network** helped establish and manages in partnership with National Press Club in Islamabad, Karachi Press Club, Lahore Press Club, Quetta Press Club and Peshawar Press Club. The hubs monitor and document threats and attacks against journalists using pre-developed templates with cases cross-verified by press clubs, journalists' unions, media houses and journalists and/or their families. The hubs also provide intermediation assistance for victims. In serious cases, the victims are assisted through the **Pakistan Journalists Safety Fund (PJSF)**, also managed by Freedom Network.
- **LIABILITY:** The list of threat actors is based on information provided by victims or their families and alleged involvement of suspected threat actors cannot be independently verified either by the Pakistan Press Clubs Safety Hubs Network or Freedom Network.
- **CASES:** The list of cases included and considered for analysis in this report is based on cases documented by the Pakistan Press Clubs Safety Hubs Network that have been brought to their notice. This is not necessarily an exhaustive list. The actual number of violations against journalists in Pakistan may be higher than the cases documented here.

ABOUT FREEDOM NETWORK (www.fnpk.org)

Freedom Network is a Pakistan-based independent media and development sector research, advocacy and training organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). It was established in 2013.

In 2017, Freedom Network was awarded the prestigious global [French Human Rights Prize 2017](#) by the Government of France for “its efforts for safety and protection of journalists and promotion of freedom of expression.”

OUR MISSION: To protect civil liberties, including freedom of expression and access to information, and promote an informed society that sees media as a key partner in a democratic and pluralist Pakistan.

OUR OBJECTIVES AND EXPERTISE:

1. To serve as a watchdog on the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and Internet and of civil society

- a. Through 24/7 monitoring of the rights to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and online
- b. Through monitoring and documenting violations of freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and Internet
- c. Through researching the causes, symptoms and case studies of the violations of freedom of expression in all forms of media
- d. Through monitoring violation of the right to expression of non-media sections of society such as human rights groups, development practitioners, and the performing arts industry.

2. To promote an ethical and professional media

- a. By promoting, supporting and conducting advocacy, research, analysis and training initiatives for media
- b. By promoting, supporting and conducting initiatives to help civil society strengthen its stakeholding in a pluralistic, independent, open and professional media with emphasis on professional ethics and journalism best practices
- c. By strengthening the interface between media and civil society by improving professional development communications within and for development sector organizations as well as for their supporters and donors.
- d. By promoting a culture of safety and security for journalists and media houses through advocacy, research and training on issues of safety and impunity against journalists.

3. To serve as an advocate for freedom of expression and access to information as fundamental rights

- a. Through a broad range of advocacy, research and analysis initiatives
- b. By promoting and building synergies between and among media and civil society stakeholders
- c. By promoting citizens' participation on issues relating to freedom of expression and access to information
- d. By conducting assessment missions, studies, research, translations of resources in multiple languages on its own and for other organizations for wider national and international audiences.