

Andy Vermaut (AIDL - PostVersa): "Pakistani media faces threats and infringements."

Andy Vermaut: "The government of Pakistan mocked the rule of law by charging journalists,"

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, EUROPE, April 4, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following [the article of 11 march 2022](#) of human rights defender Andy Vermaut volunteer for the international alliance for the defense of rights and freedoms (AIDL) and his non profit organisation PostVersa, Andy Vermaut publishes one month before the international media freedom day a new part of his report regarding the press freedom in Pakistan.

Shahzada Zulfiqar, PFUJ President, says at least 60-70 journalists have been imprisoned under anti-terrorism laws. Other relevant laws include the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, the Preventing Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), and sections of the Penal Code dealing with sedition and defamation. It includes cyberterrorism, disseminating false and offensive content, hate speech, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, attempted murder, and blackmailing journalists. The Punjab Taaftuz-i-Buriyad-i-Islam Bill 2020 was roundly criticized by civil society. According to International Commission of Jurists Secretary General Sam Zarifi, censorship, physical assault, and arbitrary arrest are becoming more common in Pakistan. Following "mysterious and unnamed individuals" were "non-state actors or proscribed terrorist organisations", political parties, religious groups, state officials and intelligence services. A variety of intimidation tactics cause journalists and publishers to self-censor. Kidnappings and disappearances are used to scare whole communities. The Pakistani military intelligence has openly exploited disappearances."

[Governments are increasing pressure on editors](#), media owners, and regulators to stifle elite critics. What does it do? TV networks have been questioned about regulators like PEMRA alerting, instructing, and forbidding anchors from commenting on debate shows. The government clearly controls what is said. Many allegations show the government is silencing opponents and journalists. An EU research also acknowledges that criticizing the military or the CPEC is especially forbidden. Pakistan Regulators have stopped cable companies from delivering vital networks. GEO TV was shut down or had its audience restricted for criticizing the government. Journalists in Balochistan and KPIK claim it's harder to criticize official policies or security agencies.' "On Geo News" in May 2021, when he denounced non-democratic groups for targeting media people and Asad Toor. PFUJ: "When journalists speak out against such acts, the government adopts fascist tactics to silence them." It was widely seen as a smear campaign against Jang leader Mir Shakil ur Rahman.

Pakistan's government has been using adverts to influence the media. This is "friendly reporting" about the police. Selective media outlets have been targeted for advertising, forcing others to lay off journalists. The government has not paid for adverts. Several media outlets had to close in 2018-19. According to the IFJ's South Asia Press Freedom Report, almost 2,000 journalists and non-journalists were let off between May 2018 and April 2019. After laying off hundreds of workers and closing multiple magazines on December 15, 2018, Jang Group resigned. Pakistan Herald Publications filed a petition in the Sindh High Court in February 2020 to "punish for publishing thoughts and reports that do not comply to the beliefs and attitudes held by... high officials of the federal government." In 2020, the Federal Government deregistered over 6000 "dummy newspapers" and sacked over 1000 Radio Pakistan employees.

New 'regulations' attempt to curtail media freedom.

The Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PMRA) was approved by the federal cabinet on January 24, 2019. The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) rejected the initiative. "Active collaboration with global social media giants like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others is necessary," Pakistan's Information Minister said in November 2018. The Asia Internet Coalition (AIC) voiced concern about Pakistan's attempt at digital/internet censorship through Citizen Protection Rules (Against Online Harm) in February 2020. Authorities demanded that illicit content be removed within 24 hours or risk a 500 million PKR fine. These restrictions would imperil the AIC's survival in Pakistan. The PTI government proposes to build Special Tribunals (Media Courts) in September 2019 to resolve media-related matters within 90 days. The government had to abandon the plan owing to strong opposition, mainly from CPNE. Imposing broad restrictions on digital material is allowed under Pakistan's new "Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content Rules 2020." Protesters at the Islamabad High Court termed it cruel.

PM Imran Khan has eroded media freedom in Pakistan since his election in 2018. In terms of free speech and independent media, the country is now in one of its worst eras. Khan has strengthened the military's hold over the media. A totalitarian regime that puts suppression of free speech and dissent above its own people's wellbeing, Pakistan masquerades as a democracy.

[Media repression and murders in Pakistan](#)

In 2018, Taha Siddiqui, a journalist with France24, nearly evaded kidnapping.

In May 2018, military guards halted the circulation of Dawn newspaper after it published an interview with former PM. Disruptions persist in several regions. For interviewing former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, star journalist Cyril Ameid was branded a "traitor" and charged with treason.

Media outlets were forced to terminate staff who criticized the Pakistani establishment and army's meddling in politics and the 2018 election.

Following the purge, top prime-time news program hosts Talat Hussain, Najam Sethi, Murtaza Solangi, Mateeullah Jan, and Nusrat Javeed left or lost their positions for questioning the July 2018 elections' transparency.

In November 2018, plainclothes officers invaded the Karachi Press Club. They accused veteran journalist Nasrullah Chaudhry of Urdu newspaper Nai Baat with possessing Islamic State propaganda. Nasrullah Chaudhry was sentenced to five years in jail on December 21, 2019.

The Pakistani authorities disabled the Voice of America's Pashto language radio website in early December 2018.

On December 8, 2018, dozens of individuals, including journalists, were arrested at a protest organized by the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) demanding Pashtun rights:

In January 2019, a 30-day ban was placed on the transmission of Harf-i-Raaz, a show of Orya Maqbool Jan on Neo TV.

On February 9, 2019, the FIA detained Rizwan-ur-Rehman Razi, a journalist and TV personality from Lahore, for allegedly "defaming state institutions" on social media.

A month after PEMRA banned him from appearing on any TV station for making 'false' claims, Dr Danish said the decision was unlawful and one-sided. He denied being notified or questioned about any complaint.' According to the FIA, journalist Shahzeb Allan's slanderous remarks on social media constituted "cyberterrorism." In May, a Karachi court threw down the allegations for lack of proof.

In April 2019, Shafique Ahmed, an Okara lawyer, was charged with defamation and distributing false and abusive material under the PECA.

On May 5, 2019, in Pididdan, Ali Sher Rajpar, a reporter for the Daily Awami Awaz and president of the local press club, was assassinated by Naushero Feroze of Sindh.

A journalist with Khyber News TV, Gohar Wazir, was jailed in May 2019 after interviewing PTM member Mohsin Dawar and reporting on minority Pashtun rallies.

Following demonstrations over the rape and death of a 10-year-old girl in Islamabad, officials charged Gulalai Ismail, a women's rights activist and Pashtun leader. Terrorism and slander charges were filed against her. Months of hiding. Ismail requested refuge in the US.

A show-cause notice was issued to 14 news outlets on June 1, 2019.

Dawish Chief Reporter Ilyas Warsi was slain in Hyderabad on June 14, 2019.

On June 16, 2019, Muhammad Bilal Khan, a freelance journalist and blogger, was assassinated in

Islamabad.

In June 2019, PEMRA fined News One PKR 1 million for airing 'malicious' information against NAB chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal on May 23.

On July 1, 2019, PEMRA abruptly ended a live interview with former President Asif Ali Zardari on GEO TV, hosted by Hamid Mir.

On July 9, 2019, the PEMRA shut down Capital TV, 24 News HD, and Abbtakk News Network after they aired speeches by opposition leaders. The Pakistan Broadcasters Association stated the channels were shut off without cause or notice.

In July 2019, PEMRA issued notices to 21 news TV broadcasters for not covering PMLN leader Maryam Nawaz's press conference live. Twelve unidentified guys wearing masks assaulted Jotai and his five journalist pals on July 30, 2019.

Mirza Waseem Baig, a 92 News reporter, was shot outside his residence in Sarai Alamgir, Gujrat Punjab, on August 30th.

In September, 900,000 URLs were banned for allegedly blasphemous material and/or anti-state, judicial, or military views.

Armed men shot journalist Jamil Ahmed of newspaper Azadi in September 2019.

On September 6, 2019, Zafar Abbas, a reporter for 7 News, was shot dead in Mailsi, Vehari District, Punjab.

October 2019. A 30-day suspension from all TV appearances by analyst Hafeez Ullah Niazi. In a Geo News show, Niazi accused a lawmaker. They were prohibited from covering Maulana Fazlur Rehrnan's press conference on the Azadi March in October.

Muhammad Ismail was detained in October 2019 for hate speech and cyber terrorism under the PECA.

In October 2019, the Pakistan Interior Ministry used its STOP list to drive experienced journalist and CPJ Asia Program coordinator Steven Butler back to the US.

An anti-crime journalist from Lahore was shot in the head outside her workplace on November 24, 2019. Shortly after reporting the tragedy, her brother Yasir received threats. In the lack of a functioning legal system, the family was obliged to accept the Diyat arrangement, where the prime suspect paid the family 5000 EUR.

A crowd surrounded the Dawn offices in Islamabad and Karachi on December 3, 2019 to protest

the release of the London Bridge attacker's ethnicity. Inside information from Dawn assistant editor Cyril Almeida about a high-level meeting on law and order prompted a military response. On this subject, CPNE President Arif Nizami denounced the remarks made by PTI Ministers before to the incident.

On December 26, 2019, Ajeeb Lakho, a journalist in Karachi, was charged in 17 instances, while Mushtaq Sarki, a freelance journalist, was charged in 7 cases.

On February 5, 2020, Pakistan's broadcast regulator recommends comprehensive Internet news censorship.

Pakistan prosecuted journalist Gul Bukhari with terrorism on February 12, 2020.

On February 13, 2020, Pakistan covertly approves harsh social media rules.

On February 16, 2020, Aziz Memon, a journalist with KTN News and the Sindhi-language Daily Kawish, was discovered murdered in an irrigation ditch. Javedullah Khan, a Swat journalist, was slain in Matta.

On March 2, 2020, the Pakistani government banned two independent media organizations. As of March 12, 2020, the National Accountability Bureau detained Mir Shakil-ur-Rehman, CEO, owner, and editor-in-chief of the Jang Media Group. That the media group covered the Bureau allegedly prompted this. 4 men convicted of murdering Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in 2009 were set free on April 2, 2020.

Sir Shakil-ur-Rahman, editor-in-chief of the Jang Group and 73 other journalists were imprisoned on April 27, 2020.

Sikh journalist Zulfiqar Mandrani was slain in Jacobabad on May 26, 2020. DG ISI, DG Military Intelligence, and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Imran Khan are asked to monitor their movements and social media to stop their "rhetoric against Pakistan".

Pakistani human rights groups and journalists accused a politician from the governing PTI party of instigating violence against a prominent Geo TV anchor Hamid Mir, putting his and his family's lives in risk on June 5, 2020.

After being kidnapped and tortured by Intelligence agents, Pakistani Minister Faisal Vawda resorted to social media to mock and humiliate journalist Umar Cheema. Cheema was kidnapped in September 2011.

Matiullah Jan was taken in broad daylight in Pakistani capital on June 21, 2020, only days before he was to appear before the Supreme Court on a contempt case related to a tweet. Jan was handcuffed, hooded, and tortured for 12 hours before being released. The film from a security

camera plainly exposes the police participation in the kidnapping.

On June 19, 2020, operatives of the Pakistani Balochistan Levies force abducted and beaten Saeed Ali Achakzai, a reporter for 5amaa TV, and Abdul Mateen Achakzai, a reporter for Khyber TV.

About June 8, media reported on a COVID-19 quarantine facility in Chaman City. Anwar Jan Kethran, a Balochistan reporter with the Naveed-e-Pakistan daily newspaper, was killed by two gunmen on July 23, 2020 in Barkhan, a city in the province's northeast. Anwar's relatives accused Balochistan's Food and Population Minister Abdul Rehman Kethran of orchestrating his murder.

20 female journalists published a joint statement on August 12, 2020, criticizing a cyber-harassment campaign by the Pakistani government, officials, and supporters. Women journalists in Pakistan endure significant threats including rape threats and verbal abuse in attempt to 'silence' them."

Neo TV was fined PKR 500,000 for broadcasting Khalil-ur-statements Relinian's Qamar's in August 2020.

31.08.2020 The Pakistan Bar Council, HRCF, and PFUJ denounced the death threats against prominent journalist Ahmed Noorani for investigating the economic fortunes of former army officer and PM Imran Khan's Special Assistant.

"Freedom of speech is more threatened under this Government than under martial rule regimes," the statement said.

5 Sept 2020: Shaheena Shaheen, publisher of Dazgohar magazine and PTV talk show anchor, promotes women empowerment in Balochistan, was killed at Turbat. Shaheen is Pakistan's second female journalist slain in 2019 after Urooj Lqbal.

9 Sept 2020: Former military general and advisor to PM Imran Khan, Sajid Gondal, the Director of Pakistan's Securities Exchange Commission, was reported missing after sharing media allegations about his alleged fortune accumulation. The Islamabad High Court noted the "abysmal state of governance, lack of rule of law and impunity against crime" in Pakistan's capital, as well as the lack of accountability among the protectors of fundamental rights.

12 September 2020: Human rights organizations in Pakistan denounced the filing of a sedition lawsuit against famous journalist and former PEMRA chairman Absar Alain and the arrest of Pakistan journalist Bilal Farroqi under outmoded criminal defamation/sedition legislation.

The Islamabad-based reporter Asad All Toor was charged with "spreading misinformation" against Pakistan's institutions and army on Twitter. His FIR was found infructuous after 16 sessions in four courts over 70 days.

25.09.2020 Abid Hussain, a Jurm-o-Saza reporter, was killed in Mandi Bahaudclin, Punjab. His attackers yelled at Hussain before shooting him.

Young reporters were threatened by police officers in Model Town Lahore on December 9, 2020. Their phones were confiscated and they were forced to erase data.

7 December 2020: Two unidentified attackers killed Qais _laved, a minority Christian journalist from Dera Ismail Khan, KP.

18.03.2021 Ajay Lalwani, a Puchano news journalist, was killed in Sukkur. Lalwani, a minority Hindu, was shot three times and died on the way to the hospital.

Outside Absar Alam's Islamabad home on April 20, 2021, an unknown attacker shot and injured him. Alam has been a vocal opponent of the state. The police accused Alam with sedition and "high treason" in September 2020.

The district government is suspected of being involved in the sugar fraud, according to journalist Hidayat Ullah. On May 25, 2021, three unidentified males forced their way into the Islamabad flat of journalist Asad All Toor. They badly injured him after introducing themselves as a security agency. They stole his phone and other electronics. Authorities accused Toot- with sedition in September 2020, which was subsequently rejected.

"Suspended" Hamid Mit, one of Pakistan's most popular television talk show hosts, when he spoke during a demonstration in sympathy with Asad Toor on May 29, 2021. The establishment allegedly compelled him to apologize publicly.

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