

Battle for Democracy

PRESS FREEDOM IN SOUTH ASIA

ANNEX: INCIDENTS OF PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS BY COUNTRY, MAY 2009 – APRIL 2010



This document has been produced by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on behalf of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN).

Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA)

All India Newspapers Employees' Federation (AINEF)

Committee to Protect Afghan Journalists (CPAJ)

Bangladesh Freedom Watch

Bangladesh Journalists' Rights Forum (BJRF)

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum (BMSF)

Dhaka Reporters' Unity

Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions (FMETU), Sri Lanka

Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ)

Free Media Movement (FMM), Sri Lanka

Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Bangladesh

Indian Journalists' Union

Maldives Journalists' Association

Massline Media Centre, Bangladesh

Media Watch, Bangladesh

National Union of Journalists, India

National Union of Journalists, Nepal (NUJN)

Nepal Press Union (NPU)

Pakistan Press Foundation

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)

Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association (SLWJA)

reporter **Reza Shir Mohammad** and **Sharaf-u-din Stanekzai** from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty were attacked by police and their equipment was confiscated as they reported on a public demonstration. Stanekzai was also briefly detained.

25 August: Radio Free Afghanistan reporter **Dawa Khan Meenapal** was assaulted by police at the site of a bomb attack in Kandahar, where 40 people were killed and 65 wounded. His wrists were bound and his recording equipment was confiscated by police, ostensibly because he had not secured their permission before interviewing witnesses.

3 October: Tamadon TV journalist and cameraman **Mahmood Fayeaz** was assaulted by police in Kabul while filming for a Tamadon TV program.

5 October: Wahkt News Agency (WNA) cameraman **Mohammad Naem** was brutally assaulted by Kabul police while documenting the murder of a businessman and two security personnel by unidentified gunmen wearing military uniforms.

12 November: **Paal Refsdal**, a 46-year-old veteran Norwegian war correspondent, and his Afghan translator were released after almost a week in captivity in eastern Afghanistan. The two men were abducted in a Taliban-controlled area near the Pakistan border on November 6, while filming a documentary for a Norwegian film company. The captors demanded the release of 12 Taliban prisoners and the withdrawal of Norwegian troops from Afghanistan. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry reportedly negotiated their release by other means.

2 December: **Nasir Ahmad Ahmadizada**, a reporter with Sepher Television, and his cameraman **Safiullah** were assaulted by members of the Islamic Revolution Movement party in Kabul while preparing an economics report. Their equipment was damaged and broken and they were warned not to air the report.

8 December: **Tahir Safi**, a reporter with Shamsad TV, and **Fahim Zerak**, a reporter with Tolo TV, were assaulted by national military forces, after reporting on how the same soldiers opened fire on a peaceful public demonstration.

16 December: **Nasto Naderi**, a journalist with Noorin TV, was badly beaten by members of a government security force, who broke into the studio where he worked, destroyed his computers and equipment, and detained him for several hours.

11 December: **Ghaith Abdul-Ahad**, a correspondent for the UK *Guardian*, was kidnapped with his Afghan fixer and cameraman in the Pech Valley in Kunar Province near the Pakistan border. The newspaper immediately enacted its emergency procedures and the men were released on 15 December. It is not known if the kidnappers were linked to any particular group though the region is a recognised Taliban stronghold.

13 December: The offices of **Sharq Radio**, a popular FM station in Jalalabad city in the Eastern Nangarhar province, were attacked by unidentified gunmen using heavy weapons and hand-held bombs. There were no casualties, but the station's transmissions were halted for a lengthy period. The police have not conducted their promised investigation.

17 December: **Nazir Ahmad**, chief editor of Arj Publications, and **Mohammad Reza Sher Mohammadi**, a reporter for Tolo Television, were badly beaten by security personnel while trying to report on the US Ambassador's visit to Herat province. When they complained to the provincial governor, they were verbally abused by his security guards, and received no apology or compensation.

31 December: Two French journalists working for the French Channel 3 were kidnapped along with their three local fixers, reportedly by militants in the Tagab district of Kapisa province. A Taliban spokesman claimed no responsibility, and no demands have been made. On 2 January 2010 a senior executive with France Television travelled to Afghanistan to investigate, and reported that the men were in good health. As of the date of publication, the men are yet to be released and no new information regarding their status has emerged.

Arrest and Detention

2009

2 June: **Noorajan Bahir**, a reporter for the independent Killid Media Group, was arrested with his two brothers, and held for two days without charge by US-led coalition forces, who broke and destroyed several of the men's belongings at their home, and confiscated about USD 2000. They were released on 4 June.

14 June: Al Jazeera English senior producer **Qais Azimy** and Al Jazeera Arabic senior producer **Hamedullah Shah** were detained by Afghan intelligence officers two days after Al Jazeera broadcast a report by Azimy containing controversial footage of a Taliban leader in Kunduz province. Both journalists were released unconditionally on 17 June.

2010

24 February: **Shafiqullah Shadab** editor of *Kunnar Magazine* and an Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) official, was arrested by Pakistan officials in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province for unexplained reasons, and transferred to an unknown location. The AIJA has called on Pakistan to ensure his unconditional release, and to provide a full explanation.

BANGLADESH

Abduction, Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

2009

22 October: **F.M. Masum** was assaulted and allegedly tortured by the Rapid Action Battalion, a unit of the Bangladesh police, which has been responsible for similar attacks on journalists. The attack was reportedly in retaliation for the editorial stance taken by Masum's editor at the *New Age* newspaper.

19 December: **M. Abdullah**, special correspondent of the daily *Amar Desh*, was attacked by assailants in Dhaka after a report was published by the daily on alleged corruption by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son.

20 December: **Mahmudur Rahman**, editor of *Amar Desh* and former office-holder of the now-deposed BNP-led government, reported several attacks between late 2009 and March 2010. He faces several defamation cases for publishing a report on alleged corruption by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's son (see below for details of the legal case). On 13 March he was assaulted by unidentified assailants in London and on 11 February by youths reportedly recruited by the Government.

14 May: Correspondents for the newspapers **Naya Diganta** and **Desh Bangla** were wounded by Awami League activists at the Patuakhali University of Science and Technology. Awami League activists in Munshiganj also attacked a team from the private television channel **Banglavision** on 7 June, while they were reporting on political killings.

15 May: **Amar Desh** correspondents were assaulted by Chhatra League activists at Chittagong University. Chhatra League activists also wounded a correspondent from *Inqilab* for reporting on incidents of extortion on 23 June. The reports detailed attacks carried out in 2009 by supporters of the ruling party, targeting journalists reporting on incidents of tender manipulation, extortion, land grabbing and other irregularities.

2010:

29 March: **Shahidul Alam**, a photojournalist, received death threats from two unidentified youths at his exhibition of photos depicting extra-judicial killings by the Rapid Action Battalion since 2004.

Legal Cases

2009

20 December: A multibillion-dollar defamation suit was filed against the acting editor of the daily *Amar Desh*, **Mahmudur Rahman**, and publisher **Hasmat Ali**. Hanif Ali Sheikh, the general secretary of Awami League in the Natore district, filed the case with the chief Judicial Magistrate's Court. The issue was widely covered in Bangladesh and several attacks on the journalists/editors involved have resulted (see above). *Amar Desh* is owned by the BNP and Jammat-e-islami.

INDIA

Abduction, Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

2009

13 July: **Fayaz Bukhari**, Srinagar-based correspondent for NDTV, and **Rasheed Rahi**, a reporter with local news agency CNS, were threatened with arrest after interviewing the family of a youth whose death may have been a case of custodial killing by state police, and which led to large-scale civil disturbances.

2010

11 January: **Amaan Farooq**, a photojournalist with the *Greater Kashmir* newspaper, was shot and injured by police while covering the aftermath of an armed encounter between security forces and two separatist militants.

Arrest and Detention

2009

18 August: **Aniruddha Bahal** and **Sahasini Raj**, from India's web-based news portal cobrapost.com, were charged with corruption for their role in a "sting" operation that exposed a "cash for questions" racket among elected MPs. The journalists were charged with abetment of an offence.

21 September: **Laxman Choudhary** of the daily *Sambad* in the eastern state of Orissa, was arrested on the charge of "waging war against the state" for allegedly possessing Maoist literature. Choudhary, who is known for his reports exposing police corruption in his home district of Gajapati, was released on bail on 4 December. He continues to face charges of sedition.

8 October: **B. Lenin**, editor of the Tamil daily *Dinamalar*, was arrested in Chennai for publishing a statement by local film industry personality which named several prominent figures as clients and players in her prostitution racket. After film industry lobbies intervened with state politicians, Lenin was arrested,

remanded to judicial custody for two weeks, then released unconditionally after two days.

25 October: **A.S. Mani**, editor of the weekly magazine *Naveena Netrikan*, was arrested in the state of Tamil Nadu following a complaint about an article alleging a close nexus between a businessman and local MP M.K. Azhagiri.

2010:

8 January: **Brahmananda Reddy** and **Venkata Krishna**, editors at the Saakshi network's TV5, were arrested by Andhra Pradesh police after airing a report that suggested one of India's biggest corporate groups was involved in a helicopter crash that killed the state's highest elected official.

NEPAL

Media Workers Killed

2010

28 February: Today media group chairman **Arun Singhaniya** was shot dead in Janakpur. Two local armed groups, the Tarai Janatantrik Party (Madesh) and the Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha, claimed responsibility. The killing is believed to be linked to Singhaniya's opposition to the development of the Terai region in Nepal's south-east.

Abduction, Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

2009

8 June: **Milan Sharma Danai**, **Asha Gurung Prateek**, **Anajan Kumar Himali** and **Krishna Prasad Adhikari** were threatened with death by cadre of the Young Communist League after reporting on a confrontation between league activists and local people in Lamgunj, central Nepal.

10 June: **Diliraj Pokhrel** and **Niran Raj Bana**, of Avenues Television, were severely beaten by a group of more than 50 people when they arrived at Casino Venus to report on a confrontation between staff and police. Bana suffered facial wounds and his camera was damaged. Pokhrel was also badly injured.

16 June: FNJ secretary **Ram Dahal**, *Himal Khabarpatrika* editor **Kiran Nepal**, *Himal Khabarpatrika* managing editor **Indra Shrestha** and journalist **Rameshowor Bohara** were attacked by students affiliated with the All Nepal National Free Students' Union (Revolutionary), a student wing of the Unified CPN Maoists, who threw stones at their vehicle, despite the passengers producing media identification cards.

4 July: **Labadev Dhungana** and **Kumar Ojha** were forced to flee their home district after being threatened with death by cadre of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). They were threatened over a news item published in the Nepali language daily *Kantipur*.

25 July: **Shiva Oli**, a journalist in Doti district, disappeared for three days after leaving his home with three men. Oli reportedly contacted police on 28 July, explaining he had fled into hiding after the men threatened him over a report mentioning them in relation to corruption allegations.

23 August: *Nepal Samachar Patra* correspondent **Bimal Bista** was brutally assaulted by police before being taken into custody. Bista was on assignment, seeking information on some local disputes, when he was hustled into a police van and beaten.

8 December: **Tika Bista** was beaten unconsciousness by

unidentified persons in Rukum, and was flown to Kathmandu for treatment the following day. She sustained injuries to her head, legs and arms. She had been receiving threatening calls for several days before the attack in relation to a story she published earlier in the year.

2010

2 March: *Janakpur Today* editor **Brij Kumar Yadav** received indirect death threats from the central chairman of the Terai Janatantrik Party (Madhesh), **Mukesh Chaudhary** aka **Arjun Singh**, who called a journalist attending a meeting of the FNJ's Dhanusha chapter and warned Yadav would be killed within a week.

3 March: **Manoj Kumar Gharti**, a journalist with the *Naya Patrika* daily, reported that an unidentified caller threatened to kill him over an article he wrote about Kathmandu-based media entrepreneur **Jamim Shah**, who was murdered in February.

PAKISTAN

Media Workers Killed

2009

26 March: **Raja Asad Hameed**, Islamabad-based senior reporter of the English daily *The Nation*, was shot and killed by unknown armed men.

11 April: **Wasi Ahmad Qureshi** a correspondent of the *Balochistan Express*, and **Mohammad Siddique Mosiani**, his co-worker, were fired upon by unknown people in Balochistan's Khuzdar district. Qureshi died of chest injuries in hospital. Mosiani survived. The attackers were reportedly members of the Baloch Liberation Army.

14 August: **Siddique Bacha**, Mardan district correspondent for Aaj TV, was shot dead by unknown people as he made his way home from work. There were reports the killing was related to a family dispute, but family members claimed he was killed by people associated with the Taliban.

24 August: Veteran Afghan journalist **Janullah Hashimzada** was shot dead by four unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas as he travelled from Afghanistan's Eastern Nangahar Province to Peshawar in Pakistan.

2010

17 February: **Ashiq Ali Mangi**, 30, a reporter for Mehran TV, was shot dead outside the Khairpur Press Club in Pakistan's Sindh province by an unidentified gunman. It is believed he was targeted after airing footage of a feud between two local groups on the privately owned Mehran TV.

Abduction, Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

2009

9 June: AVT Khyber cameraman **Malik Imran** and his driver suffered serious bullet injuries when security forces fired at a vehicle carrying a team of journalists travelling to the Swat Valley to report on the conflict between Pakistan's armed forces and insurgents. Khyber TV reporter **Lihaz Ali** and a photographer for a national daily paper, **Abdul Majeed Goraya**, escaped injury.

9 June: National Press Club secretary **Afzal Butt** and RIUJ President **Shehryar Khan**, RIUJ Finance Secretary **Bilal Dar** and journalists **Raja Aftab**, **Mehboob Shah** and **Khalid Gardazi** were among nine journalists injured when police baton-charged

a peaceful protest by members of the Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists outside Pakistan's Parliament in Islamabad.

June: **Behroz Khan**, a senior journalist in the NWFP district of Buner had his house ransacked and torched by militants. The same month, the house of another reporter, **Rahman Buner**, was dynamited. Militants in the area are suspected to be responsible for the attack.

18 August: *Daily Asaap*, an Urdu language newspaper, was closed temporarily after receiving threats from paramilitary forces. The newspaper's management reportedly said "our office in Quetta has been under siege by the Frontier Corps and security forces for the past two weeks".

19 August: The Frontier Corps deployed forces in the area around the offices of the *Baluchistan Express*, an English language daily, and *Azadi*, an Urdu daily, up to August 23. The action blocked off premises housing the two newspapers for more than two days.

4 September: **Irshad Akhter**, a Baloch journalist, was tortured by members of the Paramilitary Frontier Corps in the Turbat district of Balochistan.

5 November: **Umer Aslam**, a reporter for City-42 TV channel, was assaulted by police while reporting on a students' demonstration in Lahore.

2010

19 January: The home of Dawn TV reporter **Aziz Syed** was attacked with stones and bricks in Islamabad. No one was injured. News reports critical of official security and intelligence agencies filed by Syed may have been the motivation for the attack.

SRI LANKA

Media Workers Killed

2010

12 February: **Puniyamoorthy Sathiyamoorthy** a journalist who worked for range of Tamil publications, was killed in crossfire while reporting in the Mullatheeva district in the country's troubled north.

Media Workers Missing

2010

24 January: **Prageeth Eknaligoda**, Lanka-e-News.com online reporter and cartoonist, disappeared two days before the country's presidential elections. Eknaligoda is reported to have written several articles during the election campaign in favour of defeated candidate **Sarath Fonseka**. He had been abducted in August 2009, but released after 24 hours, in an incident believed to be a warning of repercussions if he continued his critical commentary.

Abduction, Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

2009

2 June: **Poddala Jayantha**, a senior journalist and president of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association, was abducted by six unknown people and bashed repeatedly with wooden and metal poles. Jayantha's fingers were crushed with a heavy wooden block to "prevent him from writing", his left leg was broken and he suffered head injuries.

27 June: The Tamil newspaper *Uthayan* received a letter purporting to be a "final warning", to shut down or risk lethal

retaliation. The letter accused the paper of being "pro-terrorist" and of "confusing" the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. The paper continues to publish under heavy guard.

24 June: Tamil newspapers *Uthayan*, *Valampuri* and *Thinakkural* in Jaffna were attacked as they began distributing the day's editions. A 26-year-old delivery agent of *Thinakkural* was reportedly assaulted at the same place in Jaffna city, and suffered serious injuries.

2010

14 January: BBC journalist **Thaksila Dilrukshi Jayasena** was injured and her equipment stolen after a political campaign she was covering in the central town of Polonnaruwa turned violent.

27 January: **Shantha Wijesuriya** was questioned and threatened when he photographed military personnel changing the number plates on a vehicle belonging to a supporter of **Sarath Fonseka**. He was forced by soldiers to delete the photos but escaped the scene soon after. Journalist **Sri Lal Priyantha** who was accompanying **Wijesuriya** was also threatened.

28 January: **Ravi Abewikrama**, of the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation, was assaulted by the Deputy Transport Minister **G.D. Somapala** for criticising the stations election coverage as biased.

28 January: The Kurunagala home of **Gunarathna Liyanarachchi**, of the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation, was attacked by an unknown group, causing extensive damage.

29 January: **Sandaruwan Senadeera**, editor of Lanka-e-News, received 40 threatening phone calls in 45 minutes. The previous day, the Lanka-e-News offices had been surrounded by an unknown group who questioned passers-by about Lanka-e-News staff for almost two hours, before padlocking the building and leaving. On 17 and 23 February, armed groups stationed themselves around the office, though no attacks were reported.

1 February: **W.I. Premarathna**, **J.S. Palitha** and **D.A. Gunarathna**, ANCL media workers and active members of Lake House National Employees' Association, affiliated to the opposition United National Party, were assaulted by unknown individuals for expressing their support for **Sarath Fonseka**.

2 February: **Rizvi Maharoof**, a correspondent with Sirasa TV, was brutally assaulted by supporters of a politician in Anuradhapura. He was admitted to hospital. His camera and mobile phone were destroyed.

27 February: **N. Parameswaran**, Jaffna correspondent for the *Daily Mirror*, *Lankadeepa* and the BBC Tamil service, was illegally held by supporters of the Sri Lanka Peoples' Party, a party within the ruling coalition, as he gathered information from internally displaced peoples outside the party's office in Jaffna.

Arrest and Detention

2010

29 January: **Chandana Sirimalwatte**, editor of the Sinhala newspaper *Lanka*, was detained without charge for 18 days before being released on 16 February. *Lanka* is aligned with a political party that had strongly backed the rival candidate in the presidential election. The premises of *Lanka* were also sealed by police without warrant or explanation. The office was unsealed by a court order on 2 February.

19 March: **Ruwan Weerakoon** a defence commentator and columnist for two prominent English-language publications, was arrested by the Terrorist Investigation Division. **Weerakoon** was considered to have a close association with **Sarath Fonseka** when the latter commanded the Sri Lankan Army.



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