

Journalism in troubled times:

The struggle for press freedom
in South Asia 2005-2006

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FOREWORD

By Jacqueline Park, director, IFJ Asia-Pacific.

Dangerous and difficult – two words that sum up much of the daily reality for journalists and media workers in South Asia.

Journalists often face daily attacks, while those who threaten journalists seem to enjoy impunity from prosecution. This culture of impunity reinforces a media environment that can often be profoundly undemocratic and hostile.

In many instances journalists are forced to do their jobs in a climate of fear and intimidation.

In the name of tackling terrorism, governments around the region have continued the crack down on democratic rights and press freedom. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the continuing tragedy that is Nepal.

Corrupt officials, insurgents, fundamentalists of all religions and gangsters with their own violent methods of silencing truth tellers, continue to strike out at journalists.

In this report you will get the full story of press freedom, democratic rights and journalists' safety in South Asia. Sadly, it details the deaths of too many of our colleagues and records the unspeakable treatment of many others. It documents the declining media freedoms so important for media independence and vital to democracy.

At the same time, journalists, media workers and friends of media freedom are fighting back.

Here you will find stories of amazing courage and professionalism by our colleagues across the region: journalists in Nepal at the forefront of the opposition to the royal coup, and its clampdown on press freedom and democratic rights; courageous Bangladeshi journalists exposing the corruption that pervades the country despite continuing horrific violence; Indian journalists in conflict prone-Kashmir and the north east facing the ire of both militants and security forces; media persons in Pakistan and Afghanistan resisting religious fundamentalism in the shape of blasphemy laws; in Sri Lanka media workers supporting holistic media reform initiatives in a country ravaged by conflict and more recently, the tsunami.

The report is testament to the professional solidarity among journalists in South Asia.

The increasing assault on journalists' rights and press freedom saw the emergence of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) in Nepal in September 2004. This unprecedented coalition of journalists' unions and press freedom organizations in South Asia, representing more than 25,000 journalists, is dedicated to building solidarity among journalists' organizations and other groups in the region. It aims to promote a safer working environment and greater respect for the work of journalists and media workers.

This solidarity is based on a shared understanding of the importance of the craft, a commitment to high professional standards, and, at the most basic level, an understanding that journalists need to support each other to do their job in safety.

As with the previous years, this report looks at the major challenges to media freedom in the past year and briefly explains trends and specific incidents – both positive and negative. A comprehensive list of cases of media freedom violations and attacks on journalists from May 2005 to April 2006 has also been compiled.

This year, we also carry reports from Bhutan and the Maldives – where democratic forces in these tiny nations are struggling for press freedom and challenging autocratic rule.

Spotlighting the cases of violence against journalists and press freedom violations plays a valuable role in not only raising awareness of these issues but also in applying pressure to ensure that the perpetrators of these assaults are brought to justice. Governments must respect democratic rights, investigate and follow up every attack and be held accountable when there is official indifference, negligence or, as in some cases, official complicity in attacks on media.

It is the duty of the state to provide an environment in which journalists are able to carry out their professional duties without fear of attack and intimidation from state and private parties. Violence and threats foster a climate of fear and insecurity that inhibits independent journalism and can promote self-censorship.

Through protest and solidarity actions and the publication of this report, the South Asia Media Solidarity Network stands as a challenge to those that violate press freedom and independent journalism in South Asia.

This report has been produced by the International Federation of Journalists on behalf of the SAMSUN with the support of IFJ affiliates, journalists and press freedom organisations across South Asia, including:

Afghanistan

Committee to Protect Afghan Journalists, Kabul

Bangladesh

Bangladesh Freedom Watch
Bangladesh Journalists' Rights Forum
Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sangbadik Forum (BMSF: Human Rights Journalists Forum of Bangladesh)
Media Watch, Bangladesh

Bhutan

Association of Press Freedom Activists, Bhutan

India

All India Newspaper Employees' Federation
Indian Journalists' Union
National Union of Journalists, India

Nepal

Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies (CEHURDES)
Federation of Nepalese Journalists
National Union of Journalists, Nepal
Nepal Press Union

Pakistan

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

Sri Lanka

Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions
Free Media Movement
Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association

Overview

In 2005-2006, South Asia witnessed renewed struggles for democracy and freedom from autocratic rule. Movements where journalists and freedom of expression advocates have been at the vanguard.

No where was this more true than in **Nepal** where King Gyanendra's last ditch effort to retain absolute power after his take-over on February 1, 2005, galvanised calls from a diverse opposition for complete democracy and press freedom. The freedom of expression situation in Nepal deteriorated significantly, despite the lifting of the emergency at the end of April 2005. Popular protests forced the king to begin to give power back to the political parties by reinstating Parliament as a first step.

Intimidation, harassment, attacks and detention of media professionals, particularly in the districts, continue unabated. Private and community FM radio stations bore the brunt of the government's attempt to prevent independent news from being aired across the geographically challenged country, to a largely non-literate population.

Armed police and the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) used excessive force, teargas and batons, and fired indiscriminately at protestors in an attempt to control the recent mass peaceful protests across Nepal, in which several demonstrators were killed and several hundred injured.

The winds of democracy were also blowing over the tiny kingdom of **Bhutan**. An absolute monarchy, there are no private organisations, political parties, social organisations or trade unions. Those who speak out against the government, king or high-profile bureaucrats face imprisonment. A hundred thousand people who were banished from Bhutan while protesting for the right to organise, free speech and culture in 1990, continue to languish as refugees.

Recently, Bhutan has been moving towards democracy under the leadership of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. With the promulgation of a draft constitution in March 2005, there is hope that the freedom of press envisaged within it will become a reality. Associations of young and dynamic journalists in exile are no longer willing to accept the denial of freedom of expression.

In the **Maldives**, the tight rein on the media by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, one of Asia's longest-ruling heads of state, showed no sign of loosening. President Gayoom's proposals of February 2005 to introduce political reform cannot address the lack of democracy that arises from denying important democratic values including multi-party democracy, the denial of registration of political parties and civil society groups, and unrelenting suppression of media freedom.

Although Fathimath Nisreen and Ahmed Didi of the banned Dhivehi language online publication, *Sandhaanu*, were released in the past year, *Minivan* journalist Jennifer Latheef continues to serve a 10-year prison term for her alleged 'terrorist act', even as international campaigns mount for her release. The obstacle of centralised authority remains, and political silencing of dissidents continues.

On April 18, 2006, *Minivan's* sub-editor, Nazim Sattar, was summoned to court and sentenced in what could be the beginning of the end for Maldives' only opposition daily newspaper. And a day after, Abdullah Saeed (Fahala), another *Minivan* journalist, was sentenced to life in prison, despite claims that the charges against him are manufactured to gag his independent journalism.

Besides its crackdown on print and online publications, the government continues to jam the independent Minivan Radio and broadcasts of a London-based radio station. It also blocks access to 30 websites based abroad. Several journalists, prodemocracy activists and political leaders have been forced into exile in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka itself has seen general erosion of the due process of law, democratic governance and peace. Basic freedoms, such as the right to life, are being severely curtailed in certain parts of the island. The overarching loss of human security, with the anxiety of another outbreak of civil war, and government opposition to news reports that criticise its approach to the peace process, has resulted in a culture of self-censorship.

Though the last year was pivotal in energising provincial media to support holistic media reform initiatives, it was nevertheless one in which the continuing erosion of media freedoms on account of violence and conflict held back some of this progress.

Four media workers – all Tamil – were killed in Sri Lanka, and many were assaulted during the past 12 months. These killings have contributed to a growing fear amongst the Tamil media community.

Up until recently the Sri Lankan media has been part of the problem, with most of the media polarised on ethnic and political lines. Covering the conflict in a fair and balanced manner still remains one of the major challenges facing the Sri Lankan media. The ethnic conflict has claimed more than 60,000 lives, displaced nearly one million people and caused billions of rupees (tens of millions of US dollars) destruction. The human cost of the war is still mounting, as the country is witnessing an undeclared intensity in the conflict.

Political, religious, and terrorist groups also create a dangerous working environment for journalists in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, where journalists have been victims of kidnapping, illegal detention and murder. Blasphemy laws are also used to silence journalists who question religious fundamentalism.

In **Afghanistan**, journalists were subjected to intimidation and threats by the security forces. Three reporters were arrested in July 2005 by national security officers while reporting the crash of a US Army helicopter. They were confined in a small room without food or water for two days and detained without charge for a further nine days by the National Security department. Similarly, journalists with al Jazeera TV were arrested by US forces and then handed over to Afghan national police and put in a lockup for five hours.

In **Pakistan**, independent coverage of military operations in the tribal areas is next to impossible due to threats and intimidation. The tribal areas have become 'no go areas' for foreign correspondents, and with the absence of local stringers it has become almost impossible to get factual reports about military operations and militants' activities.

The Pakistani media lost three lives as a result of the October 8, 2005 earthquake that devastated the Kashmir region. The earthquake killed more than 87,000 people, mostly in Pakistan-administered areas of the disputed Kashmir region. Approximately 50 journalists based in Balakot, Muzaffarabad, Karachi and Islamabad have been identified as killed, missing, injured, or directly affected by the earthquake through the loss of family members, their homes or in many cases both.

In **Bangladesh**, intimidation and harassment from politicians, the police, criminals and religious fundamentalists continued to dominate the country's media landscape. The impunity and lack of accountability of those who committed grave violations of journalists' rights is symptomatic of widespread lawlessness and lack of governance. Disturbingly, those who attempt to expose corruption and criminal activities often fall victim to these very elements.

In **India** too, journalists in the conflict-affected areas of Kashmir and the northeast bore the brunt of attacks by insurgent groups unhappy with their reports. Besides these politically volatile 'hot spots', Indian journalists were also targeted by right-wing fundamentalist groups unhappy with their reportage.

As many as 20 journalists in South Asia were killed in the line of duty from May 2005 - April 2006. Four in Afghanistan, two in Bangladesh, five in India, one in Nepal, four in Pakistan and four in Sri Lanka.

Pressure through policy and law

The media came under fire not only through direct attacks, but also through policy changes aimed at throttling free speech.

Governments across South Asia tightened legislative and policy level controls over the media, in an attempt to legitimize the suppression of media freedoms. In May 2005, the National Assembly in Pakistan passed the *Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Bill (2004)* (PEMRA). The PEMRA can impose a ban on channels in the name of 'national interest', 'national security', 'ideology of Pakistan' and 'vulgarity' – all of which are subjective notions.

In January 2006 the Pakistani Government introduced amendments to the press council legislation, which changed the press council from an independent and voluntary body to a 'special court' that could be used against the press.

King Gyanendra of Nepal, in October 2005, promulgated an Ordinance amending six of Nepal's key pieces of media-related legislation, which increased government control over the media. The Ordinance was renewed in April 2006 amidst protests from national and international organisations.

The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance (TADO) in Nepal was extended in April 2005. In addition, the *Public Security Act* continues to be used to arbitrarily detain journalists who dare to express pro-democracy views.

The global trend of enacting tougher anti-terrorism and public security laws was also seen in India, with the passing of the *Chattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005*, in March 2006. The controversial Act prohibits the media from reporting any activities that can be termed as 'unlawful activities'. In effect, it bars the media from reporting on any activities of the banned Maoist party in the strife torn state of Chattisgarh.

Similarly, the *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act*, amended after the *Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA)* was repealed, also contains several draconian measures that could curb democratic rights. The *Communal Violence (Suppression) Bill, 2005* currently pending in parliament appears to be a combination of two draconian laws – POTA and the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act*, giving the government and the armed forces unbridled powers that could severely restrict democratic freedoms and press freedom.

In Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal, the archaic *Official Secrets Act* prohibits the disclosure of 'official secrets' which have a very wide definition. Threats to use the Act continue to be made against independent media. In Sri Lanka, the *Press Council Law 1973* prohibits, among other things, publication of cabinet decisions, cabinet documents, certain defence and security matters, and certain fiscal measures and makes it an offence for a newspaper to publish certain matters.

Contempt of court continues to be used against free expression, especially when raising issues of accountability of the judiciary in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, with several journalists, editors, human rights activists and politicians in these countries currently facing contempt charges.

Freedom of Information (FOI) has yet to be established as a practice across most of South Asia. The Sri Lankan Government has still not addressed the issue of FOI despite being presented a legal draft for a *Freedom of Information Act*, which was passed by the cabinet in December 2003.

Nepal's draft legislation languishes while the parliament stands dissolved.

In India, the Indian Parliament took a positive step by passing the *Right to Information Act, 2005*, establishing the citizen's right to know, however the introduction of a new category of government bodies that will be outside the purview of the law – intelligence and security agencies established by state governments – must be viewed with disquiet.

Political control over state-owned media is a South Asian phenomenon that has yet to be completely challenged. Although the president promised to depoliticise the state-owned media in Sri Lanka, the situation remains the same. The government-owned TV, radio stations and newspaper houses remain politically controlled and used as propaganda tools for the political parties in power instead of public service media. Democratisation of state-controlled media remains one of the major challenges for the media community in Sri Lanka.

In India, radio continues to be virtually a state monopoly, even as voices clamouring for privatisation and community ownership are getting louder. Following a Supreme Court ruling in 1995 that declared airwaves to be public property, citizens groups and activists began pushing for legislation that would free the airwaves from government control. By restricting the airwaves, India lags behind neighbouring Nepal which launched South Asia's first community radio station in 1995.

In October 2005, the Indian Government referred the matter of community radio to a group of ministers deferring the matter yet again. In Phase II the plan is to allow both nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups to obtain licences to start radio stations. For the past four years or so the country has seen intense lobbying to amend current government policy which only allows educational institutions to run community radio. Political news and current affairs are still prohibited, but informative broadcasts aimed at various community users will be permitted.

Steps forward

Yet, the picture is not entirely bleak.

In a positive step forward in Afghanistan, the new policy for government-owned media outlets such as National Television/Radio and the Bakhtar news agency paves the way for an independent media. The policy frees the two institutions from direct government control, and recommends the establishment of a commission to monitor the broadcasts of National Television/Radio broadcasting and other outlets.

In India, the enactment of the *Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2006* was a welcome step. It introduced truth as a justification for contempt of court, thus allowing journalists a legal defence for their investigative stories.

The 23-member commission, established by the Afghan Government in August 2005 to inquire into the national media law, is a welcome sign that media policies and laws in tune with contemporary needs may be in the pipeline.

In Pakistan, *Sadiq News*, a newsletter of the Rural Media Network of Pakistan published with technical assistance from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the *Nawa-i-Ahmedpur Sharqia* newspaper was launched in December 2005. The Urdu-language newsletter includes information on press freedom violations, ethics and training, and is also a tool to help rural journalists learn about their rights and network with colleagues.

The media in South Asia has risen to the challenge of keeping citizens informed, of taking the leadership role in movements for democracy and good governance. Within countries, journalists' organisations have demonstrated commitment to building understanding and alliances across the

sub-continent. In an historic commitment to media reform, five of Sri Lanka's leading journalist associations came together to sign a landmark media charter in a joint expression of solidarity in November 2005.

Journalists in India and Pakistan have contributed to the peace process by attempting to overcome more than half a century of bitterness, bridge the chasm of misunderstanding created by jingoistic nationalism, and instead work together as professionals dedicated to informing their communities with balanced, diverse and fair reporting.

Journalist's organisations across the region have in one voice demanded a restoration of democracy in Nepal, and have stood firm behind their Nepalese colleagues. The outpouring of support – both moral and financial – to Pakistani colleagues affected by the devastating earthquake in October is also representative of an emerging sense of community amongst South Asian journalists.

It is this solidarity among journalists, and their commitment to the craft and principles of professional journalism and the communities they inform, which continues to shine the light in the struggle to maintain and strengthen press freedom in South Asia.

AFGHANISTAN – THREATS AND VIOLENCE **CONTINUE**

Despite improvements to the freedom of expression situation in Afghanistan over the past 12 months, journalists and media workers continue to face serious difficulties.

While the introduction of Afghanistan's new law on mass media gives written guarantees for a free press and allows Afghan journalists to criticise the government, threats and violence continue to intimidate and silence the media.

Four journalists lost their lives in the past year, including the popular television presenter Shayema Rizaye in May 2005. Rizaye was shot in her house three months after losing her job as presenter of the HOP pop music program at Tolo TV. A rumour had been circulating for several months that she was killed for her role presenting popular music, but the motive for her killing has not been established.

Pressure from government and security forces

Afghan journalists continue to come under pressure from government officials and suffer censorship, harassment and imprisonment for doing their duty. Government officials, including the security forces and, local and national police, frequently attack media workers and fail to uphold article 34 of the Constitution which protects journalists and freedom of expression.

In July 2005, national security officers arrested three reporters; Shershah Hamdard and Rohullah Noori of Radio Liberty and Dr. Shoaib of Associated Press while reporting the crash of a US Army helicopter. They were kept in a small room without food or water for two days and detained without charge for a further nine days by the National Security department.

Similarly, in January 2006, Al Jazeera reporter, Waliullah Shaheen, and cameraman, Sayed Naser were arrested by US forces and then handed over to Afghan national police and locked up for five hours. According to Waliullah Shaheen, they were arrested while videotaping roadblocks around nongovernment organisations, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Coalition military bases.

In recognition of the need for security forces to be trained in handling media persons, some 40 Afghanistan national army officers received training in media and public relations at a public affairs course held at the Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTC) on August 28, 2005. The officers were taught how to deal with local and international media and how to monitor what the media, especially the international media, is reporting about the Afghan army.

Restrictions by political, religious and terrorist organisations

Kidnapping, illegal detention and murder at the hands of political, religious and terrorist groups characterise the dangerous working environment for journalists in Afghanistan. Religious orthodoxy also played a role in restricting freedom of expression. In May 2005, Tariq Wali Por, a reporter for *Good Morning Afghanistan*, and Asif Jahid chief of *Rah Azadi* magazine, both students of the literature faculty of Heart University, were 'excommunicated' by hard-line religious groups unhappy with their views they were forced to flee Herat.

An armed group in Taimany square of Kabul city harassed Hamid Haidary, an announcer and producer with Radio Aarman. He says the group, wearing civilian clothes, stopped his car and threatened to assault him. They demanded to know why Aarman Radio always broadcasts the 'wrong' news. Daud Waqfi, a producer of religious programs for Payam-e-Solh Radio, was injured by a bomb attached to the door of his house in July 2005. Taliban spokesman Lotfullah Hakimi accepted responsibility for the attack.

Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, chief editor of *Women's Rights* weekly was imprisoned in October 2005, for three months on a charge of blasphemy. He was held for three months in Kabul's central jail on the orders of religious scholars and Muhidin Baloch, the adviser to President Karzai on religious affairs. Nasab had published an article that said: "...from the point of view of Islam, apostasy is banned but not a crime". He was released three months later after the High Court found him not guilty.

Recognising the pressures under which the media in Afghanistan operate, on July 14, the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Mr Rahin, issued a letter requesting the governors and security chiefs in Afghanistan's provinces to ensure the security of journalists and to allow them to pursue their duties. Curbs put on journalists by security authorities had created the impression that the Ministry was sluggish about journalists' rights. But Rahin said both religious extremists and press freedom advocates have pressured him over the issue of Ali Mohaqiq Nasab, the chief editor of *Women's Rights* weekly appeared in court on October 11, 2005. He was imprisoned in October 2005 for three months, charged with blasphemy and was finally released after the High Court found him not guilty. The article which resulted in Nasab's arrest and imprisonment had said: "...from the point of view of Islam, apostasy is banned but not a crime". Farida Nekzad, managing editor of Pajwok Afghan News Agency and member of the 23-member commission into the Afghan national media law said the creation of the new law is a big success for the development of independent media in Afghanistan.

Small steps forward

Despite the setbacks, there is much hope for the promotion and development of the media and freedom of expression in Afghanistan. Since January 1, 2005, almost 39 media organisations (including three newspapers, 17 magazines, three FM radio channels, two TV channels and one news agency) have been licensed by the Information and Culture Ministry. However, not all of the 39 have been able to commence operations due to financial difficulties.

The three daily newspapers granted a licence are *Chiragh* and *Rahe Nejat* which both cover news, political, and social issues, and an English language paper, *Outlook*.

The licensed television stations are Ariana Television and Shamshad Television. Ariana commenced operations in August 2005 and broadcasts social, political, entertainment news programs. Shamshad has yet to go to air but is expected to launch its programs shortly.

The Afghanistan Energy Press Association (AEPA) news agency was granted a licence and issues stories about the production and distribution of energy in Afghanistan.

On August 22, the government established a 23-member commission to inquire into the national media law. The members of the commission included representatives of the government, independent media, civil society, and human rights organisations. After 20 days of deliberations the commission drafted a new media law set out in nine chapters and 42 articles. Farida Nekzad Pajhwok, managing editor of *Afghan News* and a member of the commission, said the creation of the new law is a big success for the development of independent media and added: "The previous media law was approved and signed in 2004, and contained special rights for media outlets based on their frequency of publication. But due to the increasing development of Afghan society, the law needed to be reassessed and more action was needed for reform and development."

Nekzad said that much of the previous law had been unclear, but the new draft law contained clarifying specifications and modifications. The new law also contains a special policy for government-owned media outlets such as National Television/Radio and the Bakhtar news agency. The policy frees the two institutions from direct government control, and recommends the establishment of a commission to monitor the broadcasts of National Television/Radio broadcasting and other outlets.

Another positive development was the establishment of the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) in June 2005. Some 250 journalists from 34 provinces in Afghanistan participated in the voting and approved the bylaws of the association.

Previously, several journalist associations had existed in Afghanistan but some Afghan journalists had accused them of discrimination. The establishment of the AIJA was a demonstration of Afghan journalists putting democracy into practice. Representatives of several international associations supervised the elections to ensure the transparency and acceptability of the electoral outcome.

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BANGLADESH – REIGN OF IMPUNITY

It takes courage to be a journalist in Bangladesh. Intimidation and harassment from politicians, the police, criminals and religious fundamentalists continue to dominate the country's media landscape. The impunity and lack of accountability for those who have committed grave violations of journalists' rights are only symptomatic of widespread lawlessness and lack of governance. And disturbingly, those who attempt to expose corruption and criminal activities often fall victim to these very elements.

Throughout 2005, at least 392 journalists were harassed in 264 separate incidents. Two journalists were murdered; 180 journalists received death threats; 43 faced attacks; 81 cases were filed against journalists; 50 journalists were injured by physical torture and five journalists were arrested. Apart from these, many journalists were verbally abused by political elites, especially by the stalwarts of the ruling party, such as ministers or the speaker of the parliament.

In May 2005, Gautam Das, 28, district bureau chief of the *Daily Shamokal* was found strangled in his office; his hands and legs broken and a rope tied around his neck. Das had been threatened in the past as he had a history of writing on local extortion, drug dealing and the activities of Islamic militant groups.

For those journalists who survived attempts on their lives, carrying out their profession continues to be risky.

On May 17, Syed Monjur Morshed, editor of the English fortnightly *Horizon* was attacked with a knife while he was returning home to Goran in the city. On May 21, local armed cadres kidnapped, injured and attempted to burn, G.M. Shahid, correspondent of *Dainik Khabarpotro* and executive editor of *Aporadh Barta*.

In September, M. Mahfuz, a correspondent for *Dainik Gramer Kagoj*, was brutally attacked and seriously injured by five members of the underground Biplobi Communist Party (Janajuddha) at Harianakunddu, Jhinaidah. Mahfuz has been threatened several times for his reports. Mahfuz was left with head wounds requiring 17 stitches, after being stabbed with a dagger.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was responsible for several incidents of violence against media persons. Party workers vented their anger on journalists who dared to express dissenting opinions. In November, Habibur Rahman Hahbib, general secretary of Manikchari Press Club and correspondent of *Dainik Ajker Kagoj* and *Dainik Supravat* was beaten up by cadres of the ruling BNP. Prior to the attack, ruling party MP Wahud Bhuiyan made threats against local journalists of Khagrachari.

BNP members held a protest and set fire to the *Dainik Jugantor* in Ullahpara, Shirajganj. The incident occurred after the *Dainik Jugantor* published a report titled "Bangla Bhai – the chief of Islami Militants stays in a BNP leader's house".

Similarly, Rifat Bin Taha, journalist with the *Dainik Janakantha*, received a verbal death threat for a report he published on militants in Norail, South-West Bangladesh. The brother-in-law of a prominent MP Mufti Imranuzzaman threatened Bin Taha and his family if a retraction was not published within 24 hours.

Rafiqul Islam, a correspondent for daily *Amar Desh* in Rajshahi, was brutally attacked by members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the ruling party. Ten attackers entered the Durgapur Press Club and assaulted Rafiqul, who is the club's president. Nurul Islam, the club's general secretary, was also attacked when he tried to intervene. Prior to

the attacks Rafiqul had filed a complaint with the police after he received warnings not to report on alleged extortion by JCD members, but no protection was offered.

Nayeemul Islam Khan, editor and publisher of the *Daily Amader Shomoy* received a threat from unidentified criminals to stop publishing the newspaper immediately otherwise they would hurl grenades at the office. In August, intimidation became widespread when seven journalists from different media organisations received death threats via post in Bagerhat, warning them against writing about the local member of parliament. This was followed a month later by death threats to nine newspaper journalists in Satkhira, who received burial shrouds through the postal service. The letters warned against reporting matters relating to Islamic groups and spread fear among the journalists.

Threatening letters and burial shrouds were also sent to the president of the Gauranadi Press Club and *Dainik Ittefaq* correspondent, Giassuddin Mia, and *Dainik Ajker Kagoj* correspondent, Ahsan Ullah Mia, who had published reports about the fundamentalist group Hizbut Tauhid and the Purba Bangla Communist Party (Janajuddha). The letters were written in red ink and accused the journalists of being 'fake Muslims' and demanded that they give up journalism or risk being bombed.

A militant organisation calling itself Allah'r Dal (Allah's Group) sent threatening letters to ten local papers, including *Dainik Chandpur Kantha*. The letter demanded the release of local Allah'r Dal chief Shamim Hossein, alias Saifullah Galib, being questioned in connection to a series of bomb attacks on August 17 and October 3, 2005. In its letter, the group threatened to blow up the newspaper offices, along with other important local buildings if their demands were not met.

Proving once more that journalism is a risky profession in Bangladesh, in December, three journalists who were covering a demonstration in Gazipur, north of Dhaka, were among 30 others who were injured when a member of the Islamist movement Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh set off a bomb outside a public building. At least one person was killed in the attack. The three reporters were Nazrul Islam Badami, the correspondent of the daily *The New Nation*, Belal Hossain of the BSS news agency and Aminul Islam of the local newspaper *Ajker Janata*.

Dip Azad, bureau chief of the national Bangla daily *Jugantor* and former treasurer of Khulna Press Club, who was fortunate to escape a bomb attack on him in January 4, 2005, faces continuous threats, has been forcibly displaced and is unable to continue his work.

High-handedness by security forces

Far from bringing to justice the perpetrators of violent acts against journalists, police and security forces were themselves responsible for harassing and attacking media persons.

On July 7, 2005, ten journalists were brutally assaulted by National Security Intelligence (NSI) forces while they protested the arrest and assault of their colleagues, Sheikh Enamul Kabir and Sheikh Mamun. Ten journalists were part of a group of 15 to 20 journalists from various publications assembled to protest outside NSI headquarters. It is alleged that the NSI personnel attacked the group with bamboo sticks and iron rods, leaving ten protesters injured, two of them critically.

Kafil Uddin Anu, *Dainik Saikat* correspondent and Abdul Latif Bachchu, *Dainik Dinkal* correspondent, were arrested on false charges and threatened by a local police officer in the southeast region of Bangladesh after they published reports detailing a smuggling operation. A local member of parliament (MP) instigated the arrests and a case was filed against the reporters by an alleged smuggler.

In yet another assault on press freedom, the Government of Bangladesh cancelled the reservation for the venue of an important national journalists' convention for 'security reasons'. On November 11, 2005, the national convention against the repression of journalists, terrorism

and militancy, organised by the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), was to be held at the auditorium of the Diploma Engineers' Institute. However the NSI requested the venue authorities to cancel all reservations from November 10-14, for 'security reasons'. The reservation was cancelled just thirty hours prior to the scheduled start of the conference after being booked since October 18, 2005.

Defamation cases used to exert control

Journalists who dare to investigate and report the truth in Bangladesh often find themselves fighting cases of defamation.

In July 2005, warrants for arrest were issued against the editors of two Bengali-language daily newspapers in a defamation suit filed by a member of the ruling Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP) who stated that the newspapers had published reports implicating him and his two brothers in the murder of Sagir Ahmed, a leader of BNP's youth front.

In another instance, ruling party leader, Fakir Abu Bakkar Siddiqui, of Melandaha in Jamalpur district and chairman of Nayanagar Union Parishad (Union Parishad is the first tier of the local government) filed a defamation case against the daily newspapers; *Dainik Bhorer Kagoj*, *Dainik Prothom Alo* and local correspondents of *Dainik Shamokal* including editors and publishers of the dailies for publishing a news report on him.

In a positive move, the High Court in February 2006 granted anticipatory bail to Bazlur Rahman, editor of *Dainik Sangbad*. In July 2005, *Dainik Sangbad* published a report titled, "Conflict among local BNP members in Jamalpur". Angered by the news of his involvement in a legal case, Mosharrof Hossain filed a defamation case against Bazlur Rahman, editor of *Dainik Sangbad* and correspondent Utpal Kanti Ghosh.

But in March, the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court (CMM) issued an arrest warrant against editor, publisher and reporter of the daily *Amar Desh* in a defamation case.

Severe penalties against the media for exposing human rights violations and lack of governance are a matter of serious concern, given Bangladesh's record of gross human rights violations. According to a Bangladeshi non governmental organisation, Adhikar, the security forces have killed 396 persons between January 1, 2005 and December 30, 2005, out of which 111 persons were killed in the custody of the infamous Rapid Action Battalion (RAB); 258 in police custody, and as many as 340 persons are supposed to have died in 'crossfire'.

National mechanisms of accountability are weak, or nonexistent for the most part. Trends to tighten control also do not bode well for the right to freedom of expression. In February 2006, the Government passed a bill allowing intelligence and law enforcement agencies to tap telephone conversations. Opposition members opposed the bill and said the law is unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights of citizens, as it will infringe on their right to privacy. The impartiality of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary also leaves much to be desired. In this context, the role of media is particularly significant, and attacks on press freedom must be viewed with alarm.

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BHUTAN – SILENCED AND CONTROLLED

Bhutan is a tiny Himalayan country lying between China and India. Bhutan's modern political history dates back to 1907 when a hereditary monarchy of the Wangchuck dynasty was established under the leadership of Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, a then provincial governor of Trongsa province. Since then, India directs Bhutan's foreign policy (stated as 'guidance' in the friendship treaty of 1949) and military supply as well as being Bhutan's largest donor for economic development.

The fourth hereditary king of the Wangchuk dynasty, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, introduced many ethnic policies including 'Bhutanisation', which aimed to displace the culture, language, religion, dress etc. of other ethnic groups. Being a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic country, cultural diversity is an obvious feature of the Bhutanese population. But owing to low levels of education and a disadvantaged lifestyle, with many living in isolated areas untouched by roads and communication, many people are not exposed to political issues. The government has taken advantage of this situation and framed policies to prevent ethnic groups, aside from the ruling Ngalong, from using their mother tongue, wearing their ethnic dress, practising their religion and so on. Over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees of Nepali origin have been languishing in seven United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) managed camps in eastern Nepal since 1990 after they were expelled as alleged 'non-nationals'.

Bhutan is run by an absolute monarchy. There are no private organisations, institutions, political parties or social organisations. Bhutan bans political parties and any other form of organisation. The government bars people from criticizing the acts of the government or raising questions about the Royal family members including the king. The Driglam Nam Zha (the so-called dress and language code) and other traditional laws define anyone as a terrorist or anti-national if they are found to have spoken against the government or members of the royal family. The right to free speech, yet to be clarified, is restricted. Two tabloids have been registered recently for publication. One of them, *The Bhutan Times* (a weekly), has launched an online news service (www.bhutantimes.com) and stated that its main aim was to resist the repatriation of more than 100,000 Bhutanese who were exiled by the Bhutanese Government in the early 1990s.

Thus, the newly emerging media houses have been co-opted to become repressive agents for ethnic cleansing in Bhutan. Indeed, the news portal has not posted any critical news items about the Bhutanese Government.

In the name of a free press and the right of the Bhutanese people to information, a radio station and television network (both run by Bhutan Broadcasting Service – owned by the State) and a weekly newspaper (*Kuensel*, published by state-owned Kuensel Corporation) exist, however their news content is strictly censored and they have become mere mouthpieces of the government.

Nor are there any private publication houses or organizations working in the field of the right to information. Specifically, no person is permitted to launch a private organisation or publication house with these aims. As such any one speaking out against the government, king or high-profile bureaucrats faces imprisonment. A hundred thousand people were banished from their homeland while protesting for the right to organisation, speech and culture in 1990.

The Kuensel Corporation publishes Bhutan's only national newspaper, *Kuensel*, started in 1960. Most of the reporters have three-month basic training with *The Strait Times* of Singapore. The paper is distributed every Saturday throughout the country by a string of sales agents appointed in all the dzongkhags, dungkhags and towns, while subscribers overseas are fed through mail service/e-mail. *Kuensel* readers are, generally, people with highly placed social and economic standing within the community and expatriates, posted in diplomatic missions, international organisations and multinational companies.

Early beginnings of the struggle for freedom of expression

Bhutan has been a member of the United Nations system since 1971 and is a signatory to many of UN conventions and declarations. But people are barred from enjoying their birth right as *bona fide* citizens of the country. Bhutan agreed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as soon as it became the member of the UN. Yet, Article 19 of the declaration (relating to freedom of expression) is yet to be implemented. The right to freedom of expression is one of the key elements of the human rights that states must guarantee to their citizens.

Recently, Bhutan has been moving toward becoming a democratic kingdom under the leadership of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. A positive move since, democratic values and people's rights cannot be safeguarded in the absence of an independent media.

With the promulgation of a draft constitution of the kingdom of Bhutan, there are signs of hope that the freedom of press it envisages will become a reality. The media is one of the major components that can demonstrate the democratic system in a country by explaining the extent of the people's participation in governance. A vigilant media is essential for a free and democratic society and also plays a role in ensuring that the government fulfils its responsibilities and obligations.

The Association of Press Freedom Activists (APFA), Bhutan, was initially established in 2003 and was formally created on May 3, 2004 on World Press Freedom Day to campaign for freedom of the press, and freedom of speech and expression in a democratic Bhutan. APFA is not affiliated to any political party. Young and dynamic Bhutanese journalists are now determined to introduce and defend freedom of speech, expression, press and publicity.

Press law and press freedom

There are no laws, rules or regulations regarding the press in Bhutan, nor is there press freedom. Government officials censor the news to be published or broadcasted. The government not only discourages private publications but also imposes serious penalties. Before 1990 there were few demands from the people.

Since then political groups have begun advocating press freedom and some media workers have received media training in Britain, the Netherlands, India and Singapore. *The Citizenship Act* states that anyone who has acquired Bhutanese citizenship and involved in acts against the king, such as speaking against the royal government or associating with people involved in these activities, shall be deprived of their citizenship.

Foreign cable television is banned in Bhutan as the government argues that free access to foreign television would spoil Bhutan's national identity and culture. In 1989 the king banned private satellite dishes and dismantled 28 privately owned dishes. Access to foreign television and the Internet was restored in 1999, however, some Indian news and entertainment channels were again banned in August 2005. International reporters have limited access to Bhutan.

Despite the National Assembly Rule no. 11 (drafted in 1953) which states that "Every member shall have the full right and privilege to express his thought in the Assembly. No rule or law can interfere with the member's freedom of expression," there are several constraints on press freedom. Unfortunately, the recently drafted 34-point constitution, released on March 26, 2005, does not adequately encourage the development of journalism and press freedom.

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INDIA – FREEDOM WITHOUT LIMITS

The media in India enjoyed a fair degree of press freedom as guaranteed by the Constitution, but was subjected to pressures from several quarters.

Five journalists met a violent end in the past year. Bhooma Goud, a journalist with the regional daily *Vaaritha*, was brutally killed by members of the Jana Sakthi group in Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh; while Prahlada Goala, the Golaghat district correspondent of the daily *Asomiya Khabar* was killed after he exposed the illegal felling of trees in the Nambor reserve forest – an expose that attracted the ire of the ranger-in-charge K Z Zaman Jinnah. Journalists M Sagar and Vivek Mishra appear to have become victims of routine violence and gang rivalry, while the motive of the killing of Nalin Mishra of Ranchi on March 30, this year, is still unknown.

Besides paying the ultimate price for their job of truth telling, journalists in the conflict affected areas of Kashmir and the northeast bore the brunt of attacks by insurgent groups unhappy with their views. In February 2006, unidentified gunmen in Imphal, Manipur shot at and critically injured senior journalist Ratan Luwangcha, bureau chief of the local language daily *Poknapham* and general secretary of the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU). The Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), an outlawed militant group, later claimed responsibility for the attack.

Reacting to the pressure from the KCP, and its abduction of six senior journalists, the All Manipur Working Journalists Union and Editors Forum Manipur organised a protest rally in Imphal on April 16, 2006. The journalists also handed over a memorandum to Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh urging him to initiate steps so that media persons could work freely.

The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), an armed insurgent group, accused D N Bezboruah, a veteran journalist and former editor of English daily *The Sentinel*, and Dhirendranath Chakrabarty of *Dainik Asom* of running a 'hate- ULFA' campaign in Assam and asked them to mend their ways or face the 'wrath of the masses'. The office of the English daily *Greater Kashmir* in Srinagar was attacked by members of the breakaway faction of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in February 2006.

But attacks on the media were not restricted to the usual 'hot spots'. February 2006 witnessed the media being targeted by right wing groups - over 100 members of the Shiv Sena pelted stones at *Zee News* office in Mumbai and ransacked the property in protest against the telecast of a play on Zee Alpha Marathi channel, while members of the right wing Sambhaji Brigade ransacked the office of *Loksatta*, an Indian Express group publication in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. They destroyed computers and files and broke windowpanes with rods and sticks. Reportedly, the motive behind the attack was *Loksatta's* failure to publish an article on the anniversary of Maratha King Shivaji.

Politicians and their supporters continued to use crude methods to silence journalists in sporadic incidents throughout the country. Journalist Esha Roy and staff photographer Tanushree Punwani, both with the *Indian Express*, New Delhi, were harassed by a mob and later by the police in December 2005 while working on a story to expose illegal properties owned by Delhi politicians and their relatives. Similarly, in March 2006, supporters of Mayawati, Bahujan Samaj Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister whose assets are currently under a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, attacked the van of private TV channel CNN-IBN in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh and beat up the driver and camera assistant after the channel aired a program questioning Mayawati's unaccounted wealth. And right outside the Prime Minister's residence in the capital, on April 18, 2006, supporters of the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari abused and manhandled journalists who were asking the Imam uncomfortable questions.

In an ironic assault on workers' rights on May Day 2005, police attacked newspaper staff under the banner of the newlyformed Confederation of Newspaper and News Agencies Organisations. The workers were on their way to demonstrate outside the venue of a function organised by the New-Delhi based *Hindustan Times*, a leading English daily that summarily dismissed 300 workers in 2004.

The issue of journalists' safety came into the spotlight in July 2005 when seven journalists were injured in the cross fire between the militants and security personnel while covering a grenade explosion by militants on a police vehicle in Srinagar – highlighting the need for insurance cover and safety for journalists who have to take immense risks while doing their job.

Besides crude intimidation by the security forces in Kashmir and the police in the north east, the civil administration also exerted pressure on the media. In December 2005, the Sub- Divisional Magistrate of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, served a notice-cum-interim order to editor of *Andhra Jyothi*, K Ramachandra Murthy and editor of *Leader*, V V Ramana Murthy after the dailies published news items about alleged land deals by the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service officers, other civil servants and politicians in the city. The notice said any news item published in the two newspapers that could malign the personal character and value system of any public servant should hereafter pass through a screening committee. The order, however, was annulled following the intervention of chief minister, Y S Rajasekhara Reddy as journalist unions took up the issue.

Truth now a defence for contempt of court

In the midst of a public debate on proposals to amend the draconian powers of contempt of court, the year 2006 began on a controversial note. On December 31, the asbestos-laden, decommissioned warship, *Le Clemenceau* began its journey from France to India for scrapping at the Alang ship-breaking yard. The Supreme Court's gag order on February 13, 2006, restricting all articles, write-ups, demonstrations and protests on the issue, in violation of the settled law on the issue of contempt of court, was also an infringement of the fundamental rights of citizens to protest and demonstrate on issues of public interest. The press ban was for all intents and purposes total, since the court proscribed articles expressing a 'pro or against or a middle line' opinion as to whether the *Clemenceau* should be dismantled in India.

Disparagingly referring to the media as the "third umpire", Justice Pasayat, the presiding judge of the bench observed: "Media trial is on in the matter, despite the case being adjudicated here...you refer the matter to the third umpire...are we straight umpires and the media the third umpire will do the trial".

Following soon after this draconian order, the enactment of the *Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2006* which received the president's assent on March 17, was a welcome step. By this amendment, truth can be stated as a justification for contempt of court. The amended Act substitutes Section 13 of the *Contempt of Courts Act, 1971* which elaborates the circumstances under which contempt is not punishable.

Legislative controls: two steps forward and two backwards

On May 12, by passing the *Right to Information Act, 2005*, the Indian Parliament took a positive step towards establishing the citizen's right to know. The passing of the *Right to Information Act* is the result of a sustained campaign by Indian civil society organisations and is a marked improvement on its predecessor, the *Freedom of Information Act*. The present Act legitimizes citizens' right to information and outlines the duty of the Government to provide it. Most importantly, it contains serious penalties for non-compliance and also provides for an independent appeals procedure in case of non-compliance or disputes.

This Act is also unique in that the implementation will be overseen by a body whose composition is not confined to civil servants, thus contributing to increased accountability by the Government, since corruption and misuse of official resources will now come under stricter scrutiny.

However, the introduction of a new category of government bodies that will be outside the purview of the Bill – intelligence and security agencies established by state governments – must be viewed with disquiet. This multiplies manifold the number of agencies exempt from the purview of the law, and has serious implications for the media while demanding transparency in governance. This is particularly so in the context of the archaic *Official Secrets Act* that has been used to harass and imprison journalists doing their job of informing the public. The *Official Secrets Act, 1923*, based on the 1911 UK law by the same name, continues on the statute books, and can anytime be used to stifle press freedom.

The global trend of enacting tougher anti-terrorism and public security laws was also seen in India with the passing of the *Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act, 2005*, which received presidential assent on March 13, 2006. The controversial Act prohibits the media from reporting any activities that can be termed as 'unlawful'. In effect, it bars the media from reporting on any activities of the banned Maoist party in the strife torn state.

The Act contains several draconian measures: punishment for up to seven years is provided for committing an 'unlawful' activity, the definition of which is imprecise and loose to encompass pursuits such as committing an act, uttering words, writing or making visual representations that may 'create risk or danger' for public order, peace and public tranquillity or create an impediment in the administration of law or institutions. The present definition of 'unlawful activities' jeopardises the exercise of fundamental freedoms set out under Article 19 of the Constitution and will restrict the right to hold public meetings, organise public protests, and critique government policies through the media. Further, the proposed Act gives the Government wide powers to declare any organisation as 'unlawful', and the stipulation to disclose reasons may be dispensed within 'public interest'.

This trend is unfortunate, since under no circumstances has gagging the media and silencing journalists furthered the objective of tackling armed conflict. It is only when democratic debate and the free flow of accurate information is made possible is the cause of democracy furthered.

Several senior officials in the state of Chhattisgarh threatened to arrest journalists or close down their news media for interviewing Maoists. Baliram Kashyap, a Member of Parliament of the Bharatiya Janata Party which is currently in power in Chhattisgarh, on September 1, 2005 told a local newspaper that that journalists who 'glorified Maoists' should be killed. Journalists like Kamleswar Paikra and Lakshman Singh Kusram have had to flee their home towns in Chhattisgarh due to threats to their life.

With the setting up a Task Force of the 13 'naxal-affected' states in India, it is likely that more stringent controls will follow, which will have an impact on the free flow of information. With steps like increasing the synergy between various police and para-military forces and creating armed militia like the 'salwa judum' in Chhattisgarh and the resulting militarisation of the polity, point to increased curbs on the media.

Similarly, the amended *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act*, amended after the *Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance* was repealed, also contains several draconian measures that could curb democratic rights. The *Communal Violence (Suppression) Bill, 2005* currently pending in parliament, appears to be a combination of two draconian laws – POTA and the *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act*, giving the central government and the armed forces unbridled powers that could severely restrict democratic freedoms and press freedom.

No let up in control over airwaves

In India, radio continues to be virtually a state monopoly, even as voices clamouring for privatisation and community ownership are getting louder. Following a Supreme Court ruling in 1995 declaring airwaves to be public property, citizens groups and activists began pushing for legislation that would free the airwaves from government control. By restricting the airwaves,

India lags behind neighbouring Nepal which launched South Asia's first community radio station in 1995.

Deferring the decision yet again, in October 2005, the Indian Government referred the matter of community radio to a Group of Ministers. In Phase II the plan is to allow both non governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups to get licences to start radio stations. For the past four years or so, the country has seen intense lobbying to amend current government policy which only allows educational institutions to run community radio. Political news and current affairs are still prohibited, but informative broadcasts aimed at various community users will be permitted.

Radio Raghav FM Mansoorpur 1, an illegal FM radio station started about three years ago by Raghav Mahato, a mechanic in a village repair shop in Vaishali district Bihar, brought the issue of community radio back into the spotlight in February this year. When word of its popularity spread, government officials descended upon FM Mansoorpur 1, seized its equipment and lodged a case against its owner for violating the Telegraph Act. Amidst an outpouring of popular support for the radio station, the debate about government policy on radio picked up momentum once more, although no policy decisions have been taken.

Opening the market - foreign direct investment

The doors for foreign print publications to India are opening wider and wider. The Union Government has decided to increase the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in companies publishing non-news category publications to 100 per cent. The existing cap of 74 per cent was set by the previous National Democratic Alliance Government, when it decided to open print media to foreign players.

This has paved the way for the entry of international nonnews scientific, technical, speciality magazines, periodicals and journals. Journalist unions have consistently been opposing the removal of the restriction on FDI, as they believe that news and views are not like any other commodity. Media deals in views and information critical to democracy and has the power to condition the thinking of people and influence their opinions.

The unions have also raised the concern that media monopolies would have an adverse impact on diversity of news, as well as working conditions and labour standards. The situation in the broadcast sector is also of particular concern. The explosion of private television channels in India in the '90s, while providing new job opportunities for journalists, many at relatively high wages, has also institutionalised precarious contract employment.

The move from the relative security of permanent employment under the Wage Board to insecure contract employment has the capacity to impact individual rights and press freedom as journalists have less job security. Journalist's unions argue that this could have a negative impact on the independence of journalism in India. Through contract journalism, owners and operators of media outlets have found an effective means of pushing an agenda through media publications, an agenda that can be resisted by a permanently employed, union backed and independent-minded journalist.

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MALDIVES – MUZZLING DISSENT

Since achieving independence from British rule in 1965, Maldives has been ruled by a series of iron-fisted autocrats, most recent of which is President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who came to power in 1978. Gayoom's regime has repeatedly been accused by rights groups of human rights abuses, including torture. But civil unrest, sparked by the murder of a prisoner by guards in September 2003 resulted in President Gayoom launching a reform package aimed at introducing multi-party democracy and enhancing basic freedoms.

In 2004, Gayoom convened a Special Majlis, or constitutional assembly, tasked with drafting a new constitution that would separate powers and allow for greater civil and political rights. However, in over a full year of discussions, this Special Majlis has failed to debate constitutional reforms or deliver recommendations for reform.

Political parties were legally recognised for the first time in June 2005. In order of registration, the four political parties in Maldives are: the opposition Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), the government's Dhivehi Rayyethunge Party (DRP- translated as Maldivian People's Party), The Adalath Party (translated as the Justice Party), and the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP). The government promised in March 2006 to hold the country's first multi-party elections in August 2008 but the government continues to crack-down on the MDP and the party's Chairperson, Mohamed Nasheed (Anni), is currently under house arrest and on trial for "terrorism" and "sedition" for opposition activities including criticising the president.

Despite a government pledge to enhance press freedom as part of the reform agenda, Maldives continues to score poorly according to indices of freedom. Independent media organisations critical of Gayoom's government continue to experience pressure, threats, false accusations, the imprisonment of journalists and even alleged planting of evidence by the government in the hope of silencing voices of dissent.

Media law does not provide for freedom of speech or of the press, and the government generally does not respect these rights in practice. The law limits a citizen's right to freedom of expression in order to protect the "basic tenets of Islam," and prohibits inciting citizens against the government.

President Gayoom's tight rein on the media continues

It is no surprise that Gayoom keeps a tight rein on the media, being one of Asia's longest-serving rulers.

The democratic right to freedom of expression is denied in the Maldives. There is one state-run radio station, *The Voice of the Maldives*, and one state-run television station, *TV Maldives*. The government continues to jam the independent Radio Station - Minivan Radio – that runs a shortwave service of one hour a day. The authorities also block access to 30 websites based abroad.

Of the four daily newspapers, *Aafathis*, *Haveeru* and *Miadhu* belong to senior regime officials, including President' Gayoom's brother-in-law. These newspapers rarely cover opposition activities and more reform-minded journalists working for them generally practice self-censorship. The only opposition newspaper, *Minivan Daily*, was granted a license to print in July 2005 but has been the victim of constant state harassment and intimidation.

Continued Crack-down on Opposition Journalists

Four cyber-dissidents, Mohamed Zaki, Ibrahim Luthfy, Ahmed Didi and Fathimath Nisreen were arrested in 2002 and accused of writing for *Sandhaanu*, an Internet e-mail magazine critical of the government.

They were charged with “insulting” the President, calling for the overthrow of the government, causing hatred against the government, spreading false news, and forwarding *Sandhaanu* to others via e-mail. Mohamed Zaki, Ibrahim Luthfy and Ahmed Didi were sentenced to life imprisonment; Fathimath Nisreen was sentenced to 10 years in jail. Amnesty International declared all four ‘prisoners of conscience’ and said their imprisonment was politically motivated.

Ibrahim Luthfy escaped Maldivian custody in 2003 and was granted political asylum in Switzerland, where he remains. The remaining three journalists were pardoned by the president after international pressure: Fathimath Nisreen was pardoned on May 9, 2005; Mohamed Zaki on August 18, 2005; and Ahmed Didi on February 22, 2006. Despite promises of democratising the political system, Gayoom’s government continues to violate freedom of expression rights.

One year after the August 2004 rally in Male, a sit-in in the main square in commemoration of the anniversary of the mass arrests of opposition leaders and activists was organised. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) joined Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), ARTICLE 19 and International PEN in voicing concern over the detention of Mohamed Nasheed, a writer and chairperson of the MDP who was arrested on August 12, 2005 after taking part in the demonstration calling for democratic reform. Nasheed was a former journalist for the magazine, *Sangu*; detained for criticising the government. On August 22, he was charged with sedition and terrorism for statements the government claims he made in July, which called for ‘violent overthrow’ according to *Reuters*. Police reportedly beat him after he was detained.

On August 15, 2005 *Minivan Daily*’s printers were threatened with arson, through anonymous telephone calls, if they continued to print the newspaper. Following the threats, the printers stopped printing the newspaper, forcing it to halve the size of its pages and print on the office photocopier. Under Maldives press regulations if a newspaper fails to produce three consecutive issues its license is automatically revoked.

In September 2005 police investigated journalists affiliated with the *Minivan Daily*, because of *Minivan*’s August 2 publication of an article quoting an MDP member who said those in the police force who use torture must be made to understand what pain they inflict. Government officials said that the article incited violence, and its author and editors should be subject to prosecution. In all, police have investigated 7 out of 15 *Minivan Daily* staff since the paper registered in July 2005.

On September 4, 2005, police arrested a *Minivan Daily* reporter taking photographs at an MDP rally. The reporter claimed he was kicked and beaten on the way to the police station, where he was placed in detention until September 25. He was then transferred to house arrest for an additional 20 days, after which he was released.

On October 18, 2005 *Minivan Daily* photojournalist Jennifer Latheef was sentenced to 10 year’s imprisonment for “terrorism” in a charge that was lambasted by Amnesty International as ‘politically motivated’ and by the International Commission of Jurists as “unfair”.

On December 28, 2005, Maldivian Police Commissioner Adam Zahir initiated an investigation into *Minivan*’s Colombo offices on charges that two *Minivan* employees were conducting seditious activity and arms trafficking. Sri Lankan police served a search warrant and examined *Minivan* premises in Colombo but found no evidence of criminal activity. *Minivan* writers left Sri Lanka to work from the United Kingdom.

On April 9, 2006 Mohamed Yushau, the *Minivan Daily* correspondent in the south of the country, was arrested for allegedly refusing to respond to a police summon and was put in Dhoonidhoo prison near Male. Musa Ismael, a correspondent in the southwest, was also harassed by the authorities and thinks he could be arrested.

On 18 April, *Minivan Daily's* sub-editor, Nazim Sattar, was summoned to court and charged with "disobedience to order" over the August 2, 2005 edition of the newspaper, which the government says printed an unlawful article. He faces six months in jail.

Government fabricates evidence against the media

On April 20, 2006 *Minivan Daily* reporter Abdulla Saeed (Fahala) was sentenced to life imprisonment, in a trial obviously designed to target the country's only opposition newspaper. Saeed was accused of drug possession when police said they allegedly found drugs in his clothing upon his summons to the police station. The newspaper defended its journalist, claiming that the accusation was fabricated and was an open attack by the government on the journalists from the *Minivan Daily*.

Political silencing – lack of transparency in government attacks

Accusations of terrorism have been a common excuse from the Maldivian Government in an effort to punish dissidents. "Terrorism", "incitement to violence" and "attempting to overthrow the government" are common charges against dissidents.

On May 1, 2005, the Maldivian Government stretched its arm of silencing dissent to a cable and wireless employee, Ismaili Faiz, who was arrested and detained for five weeks. Faiz was a system engineer of the country's sole Internet service provider, Dhiraagu.

He was released on June 6, 2005 without any clear explanation as to why he was detained. In fact, the charges were elusive, changing several times. He was initially accused of working with the *Dhivehi Observer*, a London-based website that is banned in the Maldives. He was later accused of links with the militant group Jamutul Muslimeen.

Similarly, the case of journalist and human rights activist Jennifer Latheef led to her being sentenced to 10 years in prison due to her supposed "terrorist act" of throwing stones at a police officer during demonstrations in 2003. The charge was based entirely on the testimony of the police officers, which were often contradictory. Jennifer Latheef is the daughter of exiled opposition leader Mohamed Latheef. The charges brought against her exemplify the devices utilised by the Maldivian Government to silence political opponents in an effort to gag independent journalists such as Latheef.

Grave concerns remain

Jennifer Latheef continues to serve time for her alleged "terrorist act", even as international campaigns mount for her release. The grave issue of centralised authority remains – political silencing of dissidents continues to reside within the trenches under the autocratic government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Despite oft-repeated commitments to press freedom by President Gayoom, suppression of media freedom in the Maldives continues unabated.

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NEPAL – A RIGHT ROYAL MESS

On April 24, 2006, King Gyanendra, forced by the rising tide of popular opposition to his autocratic regime, announced the reinstatement of Parliament which stood dissolved since the king's takeover of the government on February 1, last year. This historic breakthrough that lays the ground for the restoration of press freedom in Nepal was achieved by the consistent struggle by pro-democracy activists, with journalists at the helm. The press freedom situation in Nepal saw a significant deterioration since the royal coup of February 1, 2005.

Intimidation, harassment, attacks and detention of media professionals, particularly in the districts, have continued unabated. Journalists have been facing continuous threats from Chief District Officers (CDO) and security personnel for writing news regarding conflict and government policies and actions.

Hundreds of journalists have been arrested and detained for varying lengths of time in the past year. Journalists have also been subject to threat and harassment by Maoists. However, threats from the Maoists have reduced, especially after the understanding between Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) in November 2005.

The crackdown by the Government on peaceful demonstrations, which intensified after April 6, 2006, has revealed the brutal face of the administration. Armed police and the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) have used excessive force, tear gas and batons and fired indiscriminately at protestors in an attempt to control the mass protests across Nepal, which began on April 6. Journalists both reporting and participating in the popular protest demonstrations have been particularly targeted. There has been continuous psychological pressure on journalists and media professionals, especially in the districts.

Local administrators and army personnel routinely summon journalists in order to intimidate them. Editors, publishers and correspondents outside the Kathmandu valley are so intimidated that their capacity to write fair news regarding the activities of local security and administrative affairs is severely hampered. Media professionals across the country have been hesitant to disseminate news fairly against the security, administrators and governance.

In its latest attempt to restrict access on information of independent media in April 2006, the Government, refused to issue curfew passes to those independent media houses, which are critical of the Government, thus hampering the access to information of the Nepalese people.

Apart from psychological fear, harassment, intimidation and arrest, the Government has been trying to destabilise the media sector with various legal and administrative measures such as the restrictive Media Ordinance of October 9, 2005, renewed on April 3, 2006; interference in the media market; attacks on FM radio stations; creating division among media organisations; 'one door' advertising policy; control of media by district and zonal administrations; and the proposed media council.

Legislative controls on the media

The state of emergency imposed immediately after the royal coup was lifted on April 29, 2005 due to mounting national and international pressure. Even after the end of emergency, the Government did not allow the media to print and broadcast as freely as before the royal takeover. Restrictions on FM radio remained in practice. On May 2, 2005, just three days after the revocation of emergency, the mid-regional administrator, Rabindra Chakrabarti, issued a directive to FM stations to broadcast only "pure entertainment programs" as directed by the notice of Ministry of Information and Communication of February 2, 2005. It was illegal because the administrator had no authority to issue such a directive, which was also in violation of the Supreme Court order.

Under pressure from the RNA, the Government also issued a notice to Communication Corner (Pvt.) Ltd. on May 27, 2005 without giving it an opportunity to justify its continuation.

This decision was challenged and the Supreme Court has stayed the notice. Similarly, the Government served a notice to Rainbow FM (Pvt.) Ltd., which runs Nepal FM, on the ground of broadcasting news called *Rajdhaani Khabar* on August 3, 2005. The Supreme Court has stayed the Government action in this case well.

On April 11, 2005, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance (TADO) extended now includes new provisions that consider actions, such as disseminating information to or from Maoists, to be 'crimes related to terrorism and disruption' and if found guilty, individuals face fines of between Rs 10,000 to 50,000 (150-700 USD) and one to three years in jail. The amendment defines actions by Maoist accomplices as: those who remain in contact with, give assistance to, supply information to or disseminate information from the Maoists as being an accomplice. The legislation gives authorities a free hand to continue with arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearances, and extra judicial and summary executions. Government officials say the TADO is needed to fight the Maoists, but human rights groups say it has led to widespread human rights abuses.

Several journalists are facing charges under TADO. In addition, the *Public Security Act* continues to be used to arbitrarily detain journalists who dare to express pro-democracy views.

New media ordinance: increased controls

On October 9, 2005, the king promulgated an "Ordinance Amending some of the Nepal Act Related to Media" (the "Ordinance"), which has the effect of amending six of Nepal's key pieces of media related legislation: The *Radio Act, 1958*; *National Broadcasting Act, 1993*; *Press Council Act 1991*; *Press and Publication Act, 1991*; *National News Agency Act, 1962*; and *Libel and Defamation Act, 1959*. By amending the existing laws, the government has put severe restrictions on the exercise of freedom of press.

The Government has justified the introduction of the Ordinance on the grounds that the media needs to be 'disciplined'. The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FJN) challenged the legality of the Ordinance in the Supreme Court of Nepal on the grounds that it violates the Constitution 1990, specifically the guarantee of freedom of expression. After two stay orders, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Ordinance.

On October 18 and 19 the Ministry of Information and Communications issued public notifications instructing every FM station to stop broadcasting news, on the grounds that Section 5 of the *Broadcasting Act*, as amended by the Ordinance, made such broadcasts illegal. The Ordinance replaced the words 'news-based program' with 'informative programs'. The definition of 'informative programs' does not include information about politics, government or foreign policy but is limited to programs 'designed with a view to providing information or raising people's awareness on health, education, population, environment, weather, road transportation or those related with development activities'. The amendment thus serves to entrench the government's repeated moves against independent FM radio stations.

While the Ordinance does not prohibit acts such as broadcasting news, it has the same effect by making it more difficult or impossible for news broadcasters to obtain, or maintain, a broadcasting licence. The notification of the Ministry of Information and Communication on October 19, 2005 to FM stations made it clear that the aim of the Government is indeed to restrict news broadcasting. By the renewal of the Ordinance on April 3, 2006, the Government seeks to continue these repressive measures.

Attacks on Kantipur and Sagarmatha FM

On October 21, 2005, officials from the Ministry of Information and Communications arrived at the Kathmandu premises of Kantipur FM to check the satellite uplink. Later that same evening, the

station was surrounded by security forces, who entered the station and seized the satellite uplink equipment. On this occasion, the Government claimed that it was enforcing Section 11 of the *Broadcasting Act*, which states that 'no broadcaster may relay their broadcasting without permission of the Government.'

On October 26, the Ministry of Information and Communications issued a letter to Kantipur FM seeking an explanation as to why its licence should not be terminated on the grounds that it was broadcasting news, in violation of the amendment to the *Broadcasting Act*. Similar letters were also issued to other FM stations. On November 11, the Supreme Court refused to issue an interim order.

Kantipur and other FM stations began broadcasting news after a landmark Supreme Court interim decision on November 30 that ruled that it was the responsibility of the stations to broadcast news otherwise it would be a violation of the right to information. The court was acting on a writ against the October 19, government order to radio stations asking them to broadcast only "informative" (non-political) programmes in accordance with the October 9, ordinance.

In another attempt to silence independent radio, on November 27 the government attacked Sagarmatha FM – Asia's first community radio station – and arrested five journalists. The attack was apparently to stop the radio station from carrying a BBC Nepali service relay broadcast that included an interview of Maoist leader 'Prachanda'.

The strategy to attack independent radio stations revealed the Government's intention to silence the real voice of the people. In Nepal, a country with a high non-literate population, geographic diversity and difficult terrain, radio is the most popular form of mass communication, and the Government could not tolerate the popularity of the FM stations. By intimidating independent radio it tried to violate Nepalese people's constitutionally guaranteed right to information.

Intimidation through public policy

The government pressurised independent media through various discriminatory policies such as discriminatory classification of newspapers and the 'one door' advertising policy.

Discriminatory classification of newspapers by the Press Council

Categorisation of newspapers by the Press Council was biased and discriminatory. Those media critical of the Government were demoted as 'B' division newspapers whereas progovernment but unknown weeklies were promoted as 'A' division newspapers. It became apparent that pro-democracy daily, weekly and fortnightly papers were vulnerable to crackdown, blockade and discrimination.

Economic controls

Government control on the media extended to public advertising. It began enforcing a 'one door' policy for distributing advertisements in mid-September 2005. The policy seeks to exclude non-supportive media from receiving government-paid advertisements, a vital source of survival, especially for the small weekly and fortnightly newspapers. Much of the private sector advertising is limited to the dailies, while the Government controls about 30-40 per cent of the roughly Rs 2 billion (30,000 USD) advertising pie. After mid-September, to qualify for government advertisements, in addition to adherence to an internationally accepted code of conduct issued by the Press Council; full compliance with the *Working Journalists Act*, 1994 and be transparent in investment in the media company and its development, companies now needed to express full commitment to the nation, nationalism and to the royal family.

The policy also envisages the setting up of a welfare fund for journalists using ten per cent of the money the Government would spend on advertising every year as well as the discounts obtained from advertising. This 'slush' fund is to be used for enhancing 'professional standards of journalists, emergency support and activities related to the overall development' of the

communication sector. These seemingly straightforward goals have a different meaning in the absence of criteria to determine how the spending decisions are to be made.

The policy is an indirect way to control content because by supporting only pro-royalist papers, the government would be affecting the finances of its opponents, leaving them with the option to either yield in terms of content or face economic hardship. The criteria for qualifying for government advertisements includes the 'positive involvement' shown towards helping build up the morale of the security forces who are actively engaged in the fight against 'terrorism' for establishing peace, and the 'circulation' of newspapers and 'popularity' of the broadcast media. The minister of information and communications chairs the central coordination committee to monitor the work of district and central committees that would actually be distributing the advertisements.

The Government's 'one door' advertisement policy has had an adverse impact on the media sector since it has limited public expenditure on advertising and imposed a virtual economic blockade on independent media. The impact of this policy has also been felt on private advertisers who are coerced by the administration to stop giving advertisements to prodemocracy newspapers and radio stations.

New Media Council

The government proposed to set up a Media Council to increase control over all media forms, including broadcasting and online journalism. This new media council is likely to have more power to curb press freedom. It is also likely to be filled with members who owe their allegiance to the king, rather than to principles of press freedom.

Broadcasting Authority

The Government is also set to introduce the *Broadcasting Authority Ordinance* to control the broadcasting sector. The Ordinance will make FM stations impossible to run with a hike of up to 20 per cent in licence fees. The intention behind the Ordinance was to make the FM stations financially weak, thereby stopping their operation. It is very likely that this authority will go beyond the role of facilitating or managing air waves as per the principles of free radio and free TV, and could be catastrophic for broadcast media in Nepal.

Efforts to destabilise the Federation of Nepalese Journalists

The Government has been trying to destabilise the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), the representative body of Nepalese journalists. The efforts of the FNJ to help journalists throughout the country through the Journalist Welfare Fund, Conflict Victims Fund, and the Journalist Relief Fund were disrupted. Because of this, the financial support offered by the FNJ to journalists, working under the tremendous threat of bombs and explosives, was seriously restricted.

The setting up of the pro-royalist National Federation of Journalists, with active support from the Government is yet another attempt to create divisions amongst journalists. Many journalists in the state-owned media (National News Agency and Radio Nepal) have lost their jobs for refusing to join the newly floated organisation.

Promotion of pro-government media using public funds

The government has been misusing public funds to support pro-government media. Government media are being used as propaganda tools. The government has been providing public funds to those media in favour of the government where as independent media are deprived of any assistance or advertisements.

Yet in the face of immense repression, the journalists of Nepal continue to lead the pro-democracy movement in the country. With their slogan of 'No press freedom without democracy,' the FNJ continues its struggle for press freedom and democracy in the country.

Report by Federation of Nepalese Journalists: www.fnjnepal.org

PAKISTAN – INTIMIDATION AND INSECURITY

While the Pakistani Government claims to have given complete freedom to the press, its actions speak louder than words; the suspicious circumstances around the kidnapping of Hayatullah Khan, over one dozen court cases under draconian laws, arrests of two editors and the baton charging of journalists' demonstrations in Lahore and Islamabad paint a story of repression, intimidation and harassment of the Pakistani media.

The violent response to breaking up of journalists' peaceful demonstrations on world press freedom day, May 3, 2005, set a significant tone for the next 12 months. Security forces wielding clubs broke up journalists' demonstrations in Islamabad and Lahore. Approximately 30 journalists were arrested in Lahore nine injured.

A year later Pakistan proved again to be a dangerous place for journalists to work when nine journalists were injured in a bomb blast in Karachi while they covered a celebration on the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammad's birth. The incident prompted the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) to launch a call for employers to ensure the full protection of media workers doing their job.

With these two events as bookends, intimidation, insecurity and violence continued to characterise the working conditions for journalists in Pakistan. Those working in the conflict areas of the north west frontier province and in south-western Baluchistan were under considerable threat, with armed clashes between militants and the army killing scores of people from both sides and the media often caught in the cross fire.

Journalist Nasir Afridi, was killed on December 4, 2005, by a stray bullet from a battle fought between the Bazi Khel and the Mala Khel tribes in northern Pakistan.

Independent coverage of military operations in the tribal areas is next to impossible due to threats and intimidation. The tribal areas have become 'no go areas' for foreign correspondents, and with the absence of local stringers it has become almost impossible to get factual reports about military operations and militants' activities.

Many journalists, who in the past used to work as 'fixers' for international media networks, now avoid doing so due to threats from both militants and security agencies. Some have even been forced to leave their homes following these threats. Hayatullah Khan, the North Waziristan correspondent for the Urdu-language daily *Ausaf*, and for the *Nation*, and photographer for the European Press Photo Agency (EPA), remains missing since he was kidnapped on December 5, 2005. Khan was abducted from his car at gunpoint by five masked assailants in the town of Mir Ali in the tribal area of North Waziristan.

It has been alleged that Khan's abduction may have been linked to his December 1, investigation from Haisori, North Waziristan, into the death of senior al-Qaeda commander Abu Hamza Rabia. Khan's report contradicted the authorities' account that Rabia had died when munitions exploded inside a house and suggested that Rabia was in fact killed by a US-made missile. Khan photographed fragments of the missile for the EPA.

Khan's family and friends have yet to hear any word of his whereabouts since he disappeared. There are conflicting claims about the identity and motives of his kidnappers. His family suspect the authorities were behind his abduction. His brother has reported that Khan told him the day before his abduction: "If anything happens to me, the government must be held responsible."

Since Khan was abducted government officials have made contradictory statements about his whereabouts and their efforts to secure his release, raising suspicions among journalists that the government is holding Khan in secret detention.

Khalilur Rehman, acting governor of the northwest frontier province, told a media delegation on December 14, that the government had made several arrests in connection with Khan's kidnapping and that the journalist would be released within days.

In Baluchistan, the government has been using pressure on the media to ensure positive coverage of the Baluch militancy. Print and electronic media have received 'press advice' from security agencies advising them not to play up statements or interviews with rebel Baluchi leaders, in particular, Sardar Attaullah Mengal and Nawab Akbar Bugti.

Agence France Presse (AFP), photographer Banaras Khan and stringer Shazadar Zulfikar, president of Baluchistan Union of Journalists (BUJ), were called twice and threatened by security agencies for their photographs and reports of Bugti. There is speculation that the government is using bribes to ensure negative coverage of rebels and favourable coverage of the military government.

While the government has yet to impose a ban on broadcast television, media workers have been 'advised' by the government not to broadcast interviews with Attaullah Mengal and Akbar Bugti and to generally underplay their statements. By and large the media has resisted this pressure and continues to broadcast lively and independent current affairs programs on private television stations.

Devastating earthquake

The Pakistani media lost three lives in the October 8, 2005, earthquake that devastated the Kashmir region. The earthquake killed more than 87,000 people, mostly in Pakistani-administered areas of the disputed Kashmir region.

Approximately 50 journalists based in Balakot, Muzaffarabad, Karachi and Islamabad have been identified as killed, missing, injured or directly affected by the earthquake, through the loss of family members, their homes or in many cases both.

Hanif Sadar, journalist with *Jang* daily newspaper, Hafeez Abdul, editor with *Jurrat* newspaper and Javed Iqbal Butt, photographer with *Jinnah* newspaper were killed. Between ten and 20 other journalists were injured, and at least 50 suffered personal losses. Many lost their homes and relatives, with several journalists losing entire families. The PFUJ and its affiliate the Abbottabad Union of Journalists (AUJ) made all-out efforts to support affected journalists and their families, while the International Federation of Journalists lent support through its Safety Fund for journalists in need.

Fair wages, fair conditions

There are not many journalists around the world who are in it for the money, but few have to love their job as much as those in Pakistan.

On October 8, 2001, the Seventh Wage Board handed down legally binding wage awards and workplace conditions for Pakistani journalists that were to be back-paid to October 2000. Close to six years later, those provisions have still not been applied. With the Eighth Wage Board now overdue, 85 per cent of newspapers in Pakistan are yet to implement the Seventh Wage Board. The majority of journalists and media employees are now working on illegal contracts, daily wages, or without official notices of appointment.

Newspaper owners are legally obliged to pay the award under the *Newspaper Employees (Condition of Service) Act 1973*, a law that was passed unanimously and has been endorsed by successive governments. Last year, the National Assembly, Senate and all four Provincial Assemblies unanimously agreed on resolutions supporting the wage award.

Yet while the government has expressed its support for the journalist's plight, it has done nothing to actively enforce the legally binding agreement. Instead, the government has continued to line the newspaper owners' pockets by increasing government advertising spending by 200 per cent in the last five years.

Newspaper employers abandon journalists

Wages are just part of the ongoing battle for journalists' rights in Pakistan. For contract employees there is also no protection in a professional crisis.

Munawar Mohsin Ali, a sub-editor for the English-language daily *The Frontier Post*, is now serving a life prison term for publishing a letter deemed blasphemous on the editorial page of his paper.

Newspaper management did nothing to assist him during his trial, in fact they went so far as to issue a statement saying that Ali had conspired against the paper to deliberately publish the offensive letter. Yet, it was remarkably easy for management to secure the release of executive editor, Mehmood Afridi, who was to stand trial in the same case.

The majority of media workers in Pakistan earn between 2,500 PKR (40 USD) and 5,000 PKR (80 USD), well under the national average wage of 6,450 PKR (110 USD), and have no access to medical insurance.

Arrests and intimidation

In the past 12 months the Pakistani Government used a variety of legal means to silence and intimidate media.

On May 28, cases were registered in Karachi against, Afzal Nadeem, of the evening newspaper *Awam*, and Asad Ibne Hasan of *Daily News*, for alleged 'anti-state' activities.

Their 'crime' was a minor mistake in reporting the exact timing of a police encounter with criminals. The section under which cases have been registered carries a maximum punishment of up to seven years in one case and three years in the other. Although *Awam* issued a clarification about the timing on the very next day, the cases were not withdrawn.

The arrest of Rashid Channa on July 24, is thought to be linked to stories he wrote about the Sindh Government and the conduct of its chief minister. It's reported that Channa's arrest was one incident in a series of steps taken by the Sindh Government against the Dawn Group of Newspapers. Rashid Channa, a reporter for the *Star*, a Karachi evening daily published by the Dawn Group of Newspapers, was arrested and charged with 'attempted murder' of a person he claims he had never heard of before.

The Dawn Group noted that in an abrupt move six weeks ago, the Sindh Government, on the chief minister's orders, banned all government advertising in the group's publications, in an attempt to silence critical opinions expressed in the group's newspapers and magazines.

In July 2005 the media became the scapegoat for a nation wide crackdown on the alleged promotion of hatred and antistate articles. In the crackdown four journalists were arrested and three newspapers were raided and eventually banned.

Mohammad Tahir, editor of, *Wajood* and *Friday Special* (supplement of the Urdu-language daily *Jasarat*, close to the Jamaat-e-Islami fundamentalist party) deputy editor, Abdul Latif Abu Shamil, were arrested on July 19, for publishing excerpts of a book that the government considered to incite religious hatred. Tahir and Shamil were detained under Articles 153 (A) and 34 of the criminal code. Shamil was released on bail in Karachi on August 5, and the Supreme Court of Sindh released Tahir on bail on September 9. The Sindh Government banned *Wajood* on August 15. It appears that the raids took place without warrants.

On July 16, 2005, police arrested the chief editor and a reporter for the daily *Zarab-e-Islam* in Karachi. The two were charged with 'incitement to religious hatred'.

Police also arrested the vendors of another radical weekly, *Zarb-e-Momin*, which has been banned. Both papers openly support Jihadist groups.

Former PFUJ general secretary, CR Shamsi is arrested by Pakistani police during a peaceful demonstration marking World Press Freedom Day in Islamabad on May 03, 2005. Security forces broke up journalists' protests in Islamabad and Lahore wielding clubs. The rallies in Lahore resulted in approximately 30 journalists arrested and nine injured.

Censorship and government control

While the Pakistani Government paid lip service to freedom of the press, it introduced new legislation that resulted in the silencing of foreign broadcast media.

On May 16, 2005, the National Assembly passed the *Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Bill (2004)* (PEMRA). The PEMRA, under Clause 27 can impose a ban on channels in the name of 'national interest', 'national security', 'ideology of Pakistan' and 'vulgarity' – all of which are subjective notions.

The PEMRA made violation of the Bill a recognisable and compoundable offence, with jail sentences of up to three years and heavy fines of ten million Pakistani rupees (168,000 USD). Further, there are still at least six to eight clauses which need debate among media organisations, before placing it for approval in the upper house.

PEMRA was first invoked on November 14, 2005 to stop three local partners of the BBC from broadcasting two daily 30- minute 'earthquake specials' produced by the BBC's Urdu service. PEMRA officials, accompanied by dozens of armed policemen, seized equipment from one of the local partner's Karachi offices and ordered two satellite television partners to stop running news content from the BBC.

On December 22, 2005, PEMRA instructed all cable TV operators to stop carrying some 30 foreign TV channels, threatening fines and arrest. The list of banned foreign channels included entertainment, sports and news channels, the majority of which were Indian channels such as *MM Movie* and *Star Network*, but also included *National Geographic* and *Fashion TV*.

In March 16, 2006, a Pakistan authority banned two Afghan cable TV stations, Tolo TV and Ariana TV which were broadcast in Baluchistan. The Pakistan broadcasting authority forbade local cable operators to retransmit the two stations, which had suggested that a recent suicide attack on an Afghan politician in Kabul may have involved the Pakistani intelligence service.

On January 27, 2006, the government introduced amendments to the press council legislation, which changed the press council from an independent and voluntary body to a 'special court' that could be used against the press. The changes proposed by the government included giving more powers to the government-appointed chairman and giving the press council the status of a civil court with powers to summon witnesses and documents, issue warrants, impose fines and cancel the licenses of newspapers and magazines that do not follow the prescribed Ethical Code of Practice for the print media. Although the ordinance on the press council was promulgated in 2002, the council has not yet become functional.

A positive development was the December 2005 launch of *Sadiq News*, a newsletter of the Rural Media Network of Pakistan published with technical assistance from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the *Nawa-i-Ahmedpur Sharqia* newspaper. The Urdu-language newsletter includes information of press freedom violations, ethics and training, and is also a tool to help rural journalists learn about their rights and network with colleagues.

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SRI LANKA – ACTING TOGETHER FOR JOURNALIST SAFETY AND MEDIA REFORM

In the past 12 months Sri Lanka has failed to improve its media industry, particularly in the areas of freedom of expression, journalists' safety, censorship and government control of stateowned media.

Sri Lanka has seen a general erosion of the due process of law, democratic governance and peace. Basic freedoms, such as the right to life, are being severely curtailed in certain parts of Sri Lanka. The overarching loss of security, coupled with the anxiety of another outbreak of war and pressure from the government not to report critically on their approach to the peace process has resulted in media self-censorship. Though the past year was pivotal in energising provincial media to support holistic media reform, it was nevertheless also one in which the continuing erosion of media freedoms on account of violence and conflict severely mitigated any progress.

Media workers' safety

Four media workers – all Tamil – were killed and many were assaulted during the past 12 months in Sri Lanka. Tamil language media in particular was targeted both by extremists and by rival Tamil groups.

Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) journalist, Relangi Selvarajah and her husband were shot dead on August 12, 2005, in Bambalapitiya, Colombo. This killing has the trademark of the ongoing killing spree of rival Tamil armed groups.

Subramaniam Sugirdharajan, popularly known as SSR, a parttime provincial journalist working for the Tamil language daily, *Sudaroli*, was shot dead in the eastern port city of Trincomalee on January 24, 2006.

A newspaper deliveryman and security guard for two Tamil newspapers lost their lives due to attacks on Tamil media. D. Selvarathnam, a security guard at the printing press for Tamil language newspaper, *Sudaroli*, was killed in a grenade attack against the newspaper on August 29, 2005. K. Navarathnam, newspaper deliveryman of *Yal Thinakkural*, was killed by unknown assailants in Jaffna on December 22, 2005. These killings have contributed to a growing fear amongst the Tamil media community.

During the past year, Tamil language journalists have been killed, received death threats, physical and psychological threats, been arrested and detained. All sides to the conflict including paramilitary Karuna group have openly subjected journalists to harassment.

The most high profile case, was the well-publicised spat between the newly elected president and a senior editor of the *Sunday Leader*, in which it was alleged that the president, used offensive language and made repeated death threats to the editor on account of a story he had published earlier.

In response to the safety crisis for journalists working in Sri Lanka, two journalists' safety-training workshops were held in February 2006 for working journalists organised by the International News Safety Institute (INSI) and supported by many organisations.

Reporting conflict

Covering the conflict in a fair and balanced manner still remains one of the major challenges facing the Sri Lankan media. The ethnic conflict has claimed more than 60,000 lives, displaced nearly a million people and caused billions of rupees (tens of millions of US dollars) worth of destruction. The human cost of the war is still mounting, as the country is witnessing an undeclared intensity in the conflict.

Up until recently the Sri Lankan media was part of the problem with most of the media polarised on ethnic and political lines. There have been several attempts to address the issue of covering conflict in a fair and balanced manner. The International Federation of Journalists – United States Institute of Peace program, which came to an end in early 2005, involved a comprehensive program of workshops in conflict reporting and the publishing of the conflict-reporting handbook and research summary, *On the Road to Peace* was published in all three languages and distributed to journalists working across Sri Lanka.

Research conducted under the program showed that the journalist community understands the problem of biased reporting and acknowledges that there has to be a change in covering the conflict.

Reporting the tsunami

Reporting the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts of tsunami-affected communities took a distant second place to the pressures of a failing peace process towards the end of 2005. While Boxing Day commemorations of the tsunami were reported widely, the context of increased violence in the north and the east commanded the attention of the media far more than the needs of communities still recovering from the devastation of the tsunami.

Tsunami victims and their voices disappeared from the media even before real reconstruction begun. After 16 months a sizable number of tsunami victims remain in temporary shelters but the news media still returned to its regular priorities of politics, war, crime and accidents. No media institutions appointed tsunami beat reporters which has resulted in issue-by-issue coverage of the tsunami rather than the larger ongoing process.

The tsunami had the biggest impact in the predominantly Tamil-Muslim north and east province, an area where the mainstream Colombo papers rarely report, stories of Tamil tsunami victims were non-existent Colombo-based Sinhala newspapers.

Media and the law

It was not only violence, intimidation and harassment that impacted on media freedom in Sri Lanka in the past 12 months. Sri Lanka's constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression continue to be out of step with its domestic laws.

Sri Lanka is a signatory to the *International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), which it signed in 1980. However the country has yet to fully respond to the UN Human Rights Committee's (UNHRC) 1995 statement, which said: *The committee strongly recommends that [the State] take urgent steps to ensure that its domestic laws are in full compliance with the covenant.*

The domestic laws to which the UNHRC is referring include the *Official Secrets Act 1995* that prohibits the disclosure of official secrets, which are broadly defined. While the government has yet to use the Act against the media, threats of the Act's use continue to be made against independent media.

The *Press Council Law 1973* is another domestic law of concern which conflicts with the ICCPR. This law prohibits, among other things, publication of cabinet decisions, cabinet documents, certain defence and security matters, and certain fiscal measures. The *Press Council Law 1973* censors the media, making it an offence for newspapers to publish certain matters; therefore the law must be amended or repealed.

Recently contempt of court has been used against editors, human rights activists and politicians. Several editors are facing charges for contempt of court. The law leaves it to judges to decide whether contempt has been committed or not. There is no clear understanding of the law among the public, media and even legal community. Although there has been a change of attitude in most democratic countries in recent years, this has not been reflected in Sri Lanka.

The sixth amendment to the constitution was introduced after the widespread anti-Tamil riots in 1983. It prohibits even peaceful advocacy for separation. It is a clear limitation of freedom of expression and should be repealed.

Inaccessibility to information remains one of the major roadblocks to freedom of expression in Sri Lanka, where a culture of secrecy prevails. The Sri Lankan Government still has not addressed the issue of Freedom of Information (FOI) despite the long and arduous process of the Editors' Guild, the Free Media Movement (FMM) and Centre for Policy Alternatives presenting a legal draft for a *Freedom of Information Act* to the government in 2003, which was then passed by the cabinet in December 2003. The new president has yet to mention FOI in policy statements to parliament.

Government disregards Geneva HRC judgment on FOE

The government of Sri Lanka is yet to take any measures to pay compensation or acknowledge the landmark victory of *Ravaya* editor, Victor Ivan, on August 26, 2004. The Human Rights Committee (HRC) found that, under Article 28 of the ICCPR, the Sri Lankan state was in violation of the Covenant. The HRC has called upon the Sri Lankan government to pay Ivan compensation of 800, 000 LKR (8000 USD), publish the judgment in full and provide a response within 90 days.

State-owned media

Democratising state-controlled media remains one of the major challenges for the media community in Sri Lanka. Although president Mahinda Rajapaksha promised to depoliticise the state-owned media in his presidential election policy manifesto, the situation remains the same.

Once Rajapaksha became president all the boards of directors, editors and director generals of state-controlled media houses were changed to political appointments. The government owned TV, radio stations and newspaper houses remain politically controlled and used as propaganda tools for the political parties in power instead of public service media.

The last year has seen an unprecedented level of interference by ruling coalition politicians in the state-owned media. Editors who have tried to take a stand against this deterioration have been removed or demoted. The government-owned Lake House Sinhala language daily newspaper; *Dinamina* has seen 14 chief editors appointed during the last 10 years. Political appointees have taken control of whole state-owned media, making a mockery of editorial independence.

Community radio stations

There are no community radio stations independent of state control in Sri Lanka. For two decades civil society organizations have asked for licences to start community radio stations but no government has conceded to their request. Community radio stations started by UN agencies have subsequently become another tool for government propaganda after the initial start-up period.

Policy for government advertisements

Advertising is another tool used by the Sri Lankan Government to exert influence and control over media. There is no transparent policy on distributing state sector advertising. The state sector of the Sri Lankan economy is large; it controls banking, lotteries, insurance, civil aviation and ports as well as other sectors. All these sectors use commercial advertisements to further their aims and objectives – the bulk of which are awarded to state-controlled media.

Media critical towards the government never win state-sector advertising contracts, whereas pro-government media are funded almost entirely on the income from government-sector advertising.

Campaign for public service values in media

Five Sri Lankan journalists' organisations, in collaboration with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), launched a campaign to promote public service values in media in October

2005. It was in response to the failure of the Sri Lankan Government to lessen its control over state media and to encourage public service values in state-run media. This campaign, facilitated by the Voices of Reconciliation program run by the Centre of Policy Alternatives (CPA) media unit and funded by Ausaid and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is a comprehensive program of activities to promote public service values in journalism.

The lack of any progressive reformist media agenda in the government undermines these initiatives for media reform in Sri Lanka. While civil society driven public service media initiatives, such as the historic Media Charter in November 2005, create the necessary foundations for public service media in Sri Lanka, the government remains reluctant to take part in developing it.

Independent newspaper and radio station adopt code of ethics

In 2005, *Ravaya* was the first independent newspaper in Sri Lanka to adopt an editorial practice code. *Ravaya* adopted a Code of Editorial Practice and a Checklist for Journalists. *Ravaya* is entirely owned by its editor and staff who participated in a series of workshops to develop in-house standards for reporting.

Neth FM became the first private radio station to adopt its own code of ethics in March 2006. Although the code of ethics resembles more or less a policy statement instead of a standard journalist code of ethics, this is a small step that could lead the station to creating a fully-fledged code of ethics for radio journalists in Sri Lanka.

Self-regulation and ethics

Media professionalism and regulation in Sri Lanka remains a key issue. The main body set up to oversee this area is the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka (PCCSL). It was founded in 2002 by The Newspaper Society comprising the publishers, The Editors Guild of Sri Lanka (representing editors), the FMM (representing working journalists) and others interested in freedom of speech and expression. The professional code of conduct agreed upon by the Editors' Guild of Sri Lanka, the Newspaper Society and the FMM serve as the guide for the PCCSL.

In practice, PCCSL has replaced the government appointed press council although PCCSL still has to be accepted by some private media institutions.

State-controlled electronic media institutions have accepted various codes of ethics at different periods, however none of them are in practice at present. Besides this, there is no self regulatory mechanism for electronic media in Sri Lanka. Also of concern is the absence of an advertising regulatory authority, this situation has led to many unethical advertisements being carried by media.

Media charter

In an historic commitment to media reform, five of Sri Lanka's leading journalists' associations came together to sign a landmark media charter in a joint expression of solidarity on Thursday, November 3, 2005.

The charter was signed by the Federation of Media Employees, the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), the SLTMA, the Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum (SLMMF) and the FMM, and supported by the IFJ. The charter sets out a commitment to the fundamental principles of journalism, including the rights and responsibilities of journalists. It goes on to call for the drawing up of codes of ethical conduct, accountable systems for self regulation by journalists, and the establishment of safeguards for editorial independence.

The document calls for a transparent and open government, demanding that political parties respect the role of the media to report in an independent and critical manner on all aspects of government, as well as the adoption of freedom of information legislation. There should also be urgent reform of the state media sector to remove direct political control over the media and to create a framework of administration, including proper funding, for state-owned media.

Trade union rights and working conditions

Journalists continue to be one of the lowest paid private sector workers in Sri Lanka. Media institutions do not invest in information technology and most of the non-English language newsrooms do not have computers and minimal Internet access.

Journalists working in the private sector are currently not organised by a journalists' trade union. All past attempts to form a journalists' trade union for private sector workers have been met with lockouts and buy-outs. In general, all private sector media institutions discourage the formation of trade unions thus depriving journalists working in the private sector of any bargaining power to improve their working conditions.

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**SPECIFIC CASES OF VIOLATION OF PRESS FREEDOM
[May 2005 to April 2006]**

AFGHANISTAN

MEDIA PERSONS KILLED

Shayema Rizaye - May 18, 2005

Shayema Rizaye's body was found after she was shot in her house three months after losing her job as presenter of the HOP pop music program at Tolo TV. A rumour had been circulating for several months that she was killed for her role presenting popular music. Tolo TV officials denied her murder had any connection with her leaving her job, adding that she had been sacked for not performing her "duty" as a presenter. Legal sources in Afghanistan believe her killer has been identified and is hiding outside Afghanistan.

Maiwand - October 20, 2005

Maiwand a reporter for Payam-e-Solh radio was killed in a mine blast in Khost province in the south of Afghanistan as he was travelling to work. Authorities believe the mine was intended for Khyal Baz, a commander in Khost province, but while the military leader survived the blast, Maiwand lost his life.

Nadya Anjman - November 5, 2005

The body of Nadya Anjman, a young journalist, poet and literature student of Herat University, was found at her home. Although the motive for Nadya's death is still unknown, police initially accused her husband, who denied the charge. Later, police said she had committed suicide by taking poison. It has been claimed that Nadya had allegedly told her aunt that, because of poverty and destitution, she would soon take an "unbelievable" action.

Fahim - December 21, 2005

Fahim, a reporter with the Mazar-e-Sharif government TV channel, died after travelling to Marmal district in Balkh province. He had complained of ill-health on his return. Doctors said his brother was not in good health and he had not taken care of himself.

MEDIA WORKERS ARRESTED

Shershah Hamdard, Rohullah Noori and Dr. Shoaib - July 1, 2005

Three reporters, Shershah Hamdard and Rohullah Noori of Radio Liberty and Dr. Shoaib of Associated Press, were arrested by national security officers while reporting the crash of a US Army helicopter. They were transferred to Kabul under tight security. The reporters collapsed unconscious after being kept in a small room without food or water for two days. They were detained without charge for a further nine days by the National Security department. They were eventually freed after a campaign by the CPAJ and AIJA.

Mohammad Salim Wahdat and Rohullah Jalali - September 8, 2005

Mohammad Salim Wahdat and Rohullah Jalali two reporters of Afghan Voice Newsagency, were beaten while reporting the celebration of Education Day. Both claim they were assaulted by 10th Security Department officers who were providing protection for the president. The reporters were badly injured and detained for more than eight hours. However, 10th Security Department officials denied the beating took place and said the pair were arrested because they were not on the official list of media to cover the event and because they had taken photographs in areas where they were not permitted.

Ali Mohaqiq Nasab - October 1, 2005

Ali Mohaqiq Nasab the chief editor of *Women's Rights* weekly and a candidate for the parliamentary elections was arrested for blasphemy. He was held for three months in Kabul's

central jail on the orders of religious scholars and Muhidin Baloch, the adviser to President Karzai on religious affairs. Nasab had published an article that said: "...from the point of view of Islam, apostasy is banned but not a crime". The Kabul High court sentenced Muhaqiq Nasab to two years jail. Nasab countered by saying his report did not offend Islam and appealed the Supreme Court. On December 21, the High Court found that Nasab had not offended Islam, and he was released.

Waliullah Shaheen and Sayed Naser - January 1, 2006

Waliullah Shaheen, a reporter and Sayed Naser, a cameraman, both of Aljazeera TV, were arrested by US forces and then handed over to Afghan national police and put in a lockup for five hours. According to Waliullah Shaheen, they were arrested while videotaping roadblocks around non-government organizations, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Coalition military bases. President Karzai had earlier issued the decree demanding the removal of the roadblocks. The news crew were arrested behind the Amani High School located near a US military base in Kabul. US soldiers seized the crews' five mobile phones and videotape camera. When they were released the mobile phones were returned but the video clips had been erased from the camera's memory.

Mujibul-Raman Inqelabi - February 2, 2006

Mujibul-Raman Inqelabi, an announcer with government radio station in Laghman province and chief editor of *Zarkamar* magazine, was arrested and questioned by officers of the governor's security department after publishing news of fighting between two tribes in the Alishang district of the province. After broadcasting the item he was summoned to the department and told by the governor that Laghman Radio belonged to the government and that nobody had the right to broadcast independent news on the station. Inqelabi was told he should only broadcast the views and opinions of the government.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Abdul Jabar Bazaar - April 1, 2005

Municipal workers from the mayor's office in Shibergan allegedly beat Aina TV's Turkmen-ethnic reporter Abdul Jabar Bazaar after the broadcast of a report denouncing the municipality's poor performance in clearing the streets of garbage. When Jabar was walking to the television station at 9am, a municipality worker held him by the collar while two others punched and kicked him. They warned him to stop airing reports against the municipality, otherwise he would face dire consequences.

Mir Hasan Mehdawi - June 2, 2005

Mir Hasan Mehdawi, chief editor of *Aftab* weekly was attacked after delivering a speech about the September 11 attacks and their effect on Afghanistan. Mehdawi recognised the attackers but refused to disclose their names. Two years earlier, the *Aftab* weekly's then editor was sentenced to death by the Afghanistan High Court after publishing a critical article under headline of "Holy Fascism". After a short time in prison, he was freed and fled to Canada.

Parwiz Shamal and Bashir Asem - July 12, 2005

Reporter Parwiz Shamal and cameraman Bashir Asem of Aina Television were beaten by security forces in Zanzaq Square near UN offices while preparing a report on a sick lady whose car was trapped in a traffic jam. Relatives of the woman had requested the drivers of some vehicles, with blacked-out windows, open the way for the car but no attention was paid to their plea. Even though they showed their reporter's ID cards, they were severely beaten and put in lock up for 30 minutes.

Mir Ali Asghar Akbarzadah - September 6, 2005

Mir Ali Asghar Akbarzadah, journalist with *Aian-e-Shahr* (The City Mirror), broadcast on Afghan National TV, was attacked near the offices of the Olympic Committee in Kabul City. Akbarzadah

claims the attack was planned by Anwar Jagdalak, general director of Afghan National Olympics Committee. The attackers armed with a knife had objected to a report prepared by Akbarzadah.

Mir Ali Asghar Akbarzadah - September 20, 2005

Mir Ali Asghar Akbarzadah, journalist with *Aina-e-Shahr* (The City Mirror) program of National TV, was beaten while filming a quarrel between municipality workers and Parliament election candidate Jamil Karzai. Photos of Karzai had been stuck in illegal locations and Karzai's bodyguards began beating the workers when Jamil's bodyguards also attacked the cameraman.

Faridoon Poia and Raziaie Sher Mohammadi - October 10, 2005

Faridoon Poia from AFP and Raziaie Sher Mohammadi from Tolo Television were beaten and threatened by Herat police. The journalists had participated in a press conference held by Herat authorities a day after the parliamentary elections in Herat.

Idris Kaihan - October 12, 2005

Idris Kaihan, a Tolo Television cameraman was beaten and threatened by officers from the 10th District police in Kabul city. According to Sediq Ahmed Zada, one of Tolo TV's officials, the cameraman was beaten while filming the venue as the police blocked the road for the Supreme Court chief justice to pass. Ahmed Zada added that the authorities asked why he had filmed the vehicle of the Chief Justice and had threatened him with death.

Kanishka Shetab Malikzada Killid - October 12, 2005

Kanishka Shetab Malikzada Killid, a radio producer and reporter was beaten and threatened by four police officers from the Kabul second district police and Kabul police headquarters. He was reporting on a student demonstration over the lack of cards for the entrance exams. When he showed his reporter's card to the police chief, he was told that journalists always report the negatives about police, never the positives.

Habibullah Amin, a reporter of *Bahaar* daily, published in Peshawar, was also beaten by police at the same incident. Amin says police broke his equipment and he was beaten about the face by a metal rod. No action was taken by judicial or government authorities.

Sayed Naser Hashemi and Waliullah Shaheen - February 5, 2006

Sayed Naser Hashemi, a cameraman of Al Jazeera TV in Afghanistan was beaten by police forces in Kandahar province, and Waliullah Shaheen, a reporter with the network was insulted. The pair were reporting a suicide bomb attack opposite the gate of the police headquarters in Kandahar when police attacked Sayeed Naser Hashemi and beat him. Police took their camera and used abusive language. Police headquarters then accused Al Jazeera TV of cooperating with terrorists. He claimed that the journalists already knew about the explosion and arrived in time to capture the incident. The security chief of Kandahar province returned their camera but the clips had been erased from the camera's memory.

Civil unrest leads to attacks against journalists - February 9, 2006

February 9, 2006 was a day of civil disturbance throughout Herat that led to several incidents involving media workers. Ehsan Sarwaryar, a reporter for the Pajwok Newsagency was attacked by unknown armed people within 50 metres of the Herat police headquarters and injured in the arm. The reporter said the police did nothing to protect the journalist but, instead, gave him a weapon. "Police headquarters told me they were not able to provide any security more than this". Sarwaryar also sought assistance from a United Nations agency, but he did not receive any help.

Sharaf-u-din Stanikzai, a reporter of Radio Azadi, was attacked by an aggressive group of protestors. The windows of his car were broken. Other journalists were hurt in the same incident, among them Mohamed Raza Sher Mohamdi, a reporter for Tolo TV. Sher Mohamdi had already been harassed three times in Herat. Tariq Walipoor, a reporter for local Ariana Television, said he

has been harassed continuously in Herat, and felt so insecure he couldn't perform his reporting duties properly.

Basir Nekzaad, a reporter for the Radio Azadi lost his job. "During the disorder in Herat, I was living outside the country with the agreement of Radio Azadi. One day I got a phone call from Radio Azadi to return to my job in Herat. I couldn't return due to transportation problems and because the border was closed – this led to me being fired." He believes one reason for his dismissal was a clash of ideas with three Radio Azadi colleagues in Parag whom he says plotted against him. Mohamad Amin Mudaqiq, head of Radio Azadi in Kabul, agreed that Nekzaad was on leave in Iran during the Herat disturbances but it was a condition of his leave that, if anything urgent happened, he should return immediately. Nekzaad had explained his difficulties in returning to Herat and had chosen to resign via e-mail. Mudaqiq was unaware of Nekzaad's claim of a plot to dismiss him. A reporter of Bakhter agency, was attacked by unknown assailants. Oruzgani, a reporter for Radio America, was harassed and had to abandon his job for several days. The CPAJ in collaboration with AIJA immediately requested the government and responsible organizations to take effective measures to provide security for journalists in Herat.

Journalists attacked - February 20, 2006

Journalists in Takhar province were attacked by the President Karzai's security personnel. The President had travelled to Takhar province to inaugurate the Takhar-Badakhshan highway. The day before, security conditions were put into action while traffic was forbidden in Taloqan, the capital of Takhar province. When the President reached Taloqan, reporters were prevented from entering a hall where the president was delivering a speech. Abdul Sami Sharefe, editor in chief of *Agah* magazine, said: "All the reporters who had come to participate in Mr. Karzai's conference were surrounded by the security forces from 8am to 2pm in the yard outside the hall. Journalists were not allowed to make phone calls and security forces refused to let them film anything."

MEDIA WORKERS THREATENED AND HARASSED

Ehsan Sarwaryar - April 3, 2005

The police commander of Herat and the deputy of the Herat antiterrorism department threatened Ehsan Sarwaryar, a Pajhwok newsagency reporter, forcing him to flee Herat for a week. Sarwaryar says he was investigating the abduction of a schoolgirl. He was called by the anti-terrorism department deputy and warned to stop writing about the case or he would face the same fate as Mirwais Jalil, a BBC reporter who was killed by unknown assailants. Sarwaryar left Herat and stayed in for Kabul for a week. Danish Karokhel, Director of Pajhwok news agency, complained to Herat's governor and police chief who promised there would be no repeat of such harassment.

Tariq Wali Por and Asif Jahid - May 1, 2005

Tariq Wali Por, a reporter for *Good Morning Afghanistan*, and Asif Jahid chief of *Rah Azadi* magazine, both students of the literature faculty of Herat University, were "excommunicated" by hard-line religious groups and forced to flee Herat. According to Tariq Wali Por, they were excommunicated when Jahid asked a Saqafat (Islamic subject) teacher about common sense and revelation. Wali Por claims the teacher didn't answer the question and instead, announced their excommunication. Following this, the head of Herat University ordered the pair be expelled from the university.

Hamid Haidary - May 3, 2005

An armed group in Taimany square of Kabul city harassed Hamid Haidary, an announcer and producer with Radio Aarman. He says the group, wearing civilian clothes, stopped his car and threatened to assault him, asked him why Aarman Radio always broadcast the "wrong" news. Sediq Ahmadzada, from Tolo TV, confirmed the incident.

Sayed Sulaiman Ashna - June 7, 2005

Sayed Sulaiman Ashna, a programme announcer and director of Tolo TV, was threatened via mobile phone after interviews with Mawlawi Mutawakil, the foreign affairs minister of the Taliban regime and Arsala Rahamani, an official of the Taliban "government" and US Ambassador to Afghanistan Khalilzad. Ashna believes the threats were made by members of the Hekmatyar Islamic Party. He says the same people also threatened his family. Ashna says he had to leave his job and stay at home without economic support.

Habib-u-Rahman Ibrahim Pajhwok - July 5, 2005

Habib-u-Rahman Ibrahim Pajhwok, an *Afghan News* reporter was detained for 30 minutes while reporting on hunger striker Sediq Afghan. The reporter was threatened and his camera seized by gate keepers of Presidential Directorate Affairs administration while trying to photograph Sediq Afghan's slogans. His camera was returned to him but with the memory card had been erased.

Kamran Mirhazar - July 13, 2005

Kamran Mirhazar, chief editor of *Chai-e-dagh* weekly, was beaten while taking photos of several vehicles with blacked-out windows that had caused a traffic jam at Zanbaq square. According to Mirhazar he was beaten by plain clothed police officers and he only became aware that they were policemen after they took him to the police station. At the station he was interrogated, insulted and threatened. His camera, mobile phone and reporter's ID card were seized. The camera was returned 40 minutes later but its memory card had been erased. He was told not to stay in the area or else he would be arrested again and delivered to US forces at the Bagram US military base.

Hamid Hidary - July 15, 2005

Hamid Hidary, a presenter and producer of Arman FM radio, was beaten and threatened by people wearing police uniforms. He was assaulted for putting to air a news story about the kidnapping of Italian aid worker Clementina Cantoni and the subsequent arrest by police of the alleged culprits. Police later said they had no knowledge of the event and blamed the assault on anti-government groups disguised in police uniforms.

Daud Waqfi - July 25, 2005

Daud Waqfi, a producer of religious programs for Payam-e-Solh Radio, was injured by a bomb attached to the door of his house. Taliban spokesman Lotfullah Hakimi accepted responsibility for the attack.

Sabir Fahim - September 19, 2005

Sabir Fahim, a reporter for Internews, was insulted and harassed by police at 9am close to the National Assembly in Kabul. Fahim was trying to enter the Internews office which is close to the National Assembly. When he neared the office, all the approaches had been closed by police. He showed his Internews identity card to the police, but they not only ignored his card, they started abusing and beating me. A policeman warned him that he would beat him some more if he kept insisting on being allowed to get in to the Internews office.

Massoud Qeyam - October 19, 2005

Massoud Qeyam, a Tolo Television reporter with its investigative journalism program *6:30* was asked by the Publication Violation Commission to explain his broadcasts. *6:30* had reported on the personality and the personal skills of the Supreme Court Chief Justice and judicial corruption, and had aired interviews with a range of experts and religious scholars. In the story the reporter said, without attributing the quote: "The problems in the Judiciary are greater than the complaints." After the broadcast the Supreme Court complained to the Commission but later it was found that only the opinions of the interviewees had been broadcast.

Sher Mohamed Jahesh - December 6, 2005

Sher Mohamed Jahesh, a Pajhwok news agency reporter in Baghlan, was questioned, threatened and abused by the provincial police chief. Sher Mohamed was covering the attack on the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) of Baghlan was attacked by a mine hidden on the

roadside on the way from Andarab to Khenjan. When he asked the police chief for an interview, he refused to answer any questions. Sher Mohamed wrote in his report that he did not agree to the interview. This made the chief angry and he called him to his office and threatened him. He said that if Sher Mohamed reported like this again he would be killed by him and his staff.

Sarwar Amani - December 6, 2005

General Moslem, a senior Army commander summoned Sarwar Amani, a reporter in charge of “*The Complaints*” program on Kandahar government radio, while covering discussions in Kabul on the accountability of ministries and government departments. Amani says he was summoned to a meeting with Moslem and was told: “Those who complain about army activities in Kandahar, are the enemies of Afghanistan. You did not have to discuss their suggestions during [this week of discussion].”

Mohammad Hashem Borhan - January 7, 2006

Mohammad Hashem Borhan, a Balkh Radio and TV broadcast manager, was fired from his job by Ata Mohammad Noor, the governor of Balkh province. According to Borhan, the governor fired him for not broadcasting a press release he had issued. When Ashraf Ramazan, a Balkh candidate in the parliamentary election, was murdered three months earlier, the governor sent a biased press release to Balkh Radio and TV, but the network’s management board refused to run the release. A spokesman for the governor said Borhan was dismissed for lack of professionalism. Borhan was later replaced by someone recommended to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism by the governor’s office.

Saqi TV crew intimidated - January 18, 2006

ISAF personnel threatened a news crew from Saqi T.V in Herat. The crew was videotaping at Kandahar Gate (a region in Herat province) when they were intimidated by national police. ISAF personnel seized the reporters’ camera. When the camera was returned after a few hours the video clips had been erased from the camera’s memory. The ISAF commander apologised for his soldiers’ behaviour.

MEDIA WORKERS ABDUCTED

Ezatullah Zawab - September 2, 2005

Unknown people in Jalalabad city abducted Ezatullah Zawab, chief editor of *Meena* magazine and the local reporter for the Pajhwok News Agency in Nangerhar. He was imprisoned for six days. Before being abducted, Zawab had published an article, “Cultural statesmen today and yesterday” in *Meena* magazine, which sparked anger among some people in political and religious circles. Zawab said that during the kidnapping, he was nearly suffocated and given little food. He was asked several times why the article had “abused” scholars and mujahadeen. Zawab was later found in a distressed physical condition by a police patrol at 1am on September 8 in the Samar Khel area of Nangarhar and given medical treatment.

Mohamad Taqi Saraj, Baseer Serat and Ahmad Shah - September 14, 2005

Unknown people in the remote area of Waygal district of Nooristan province abducted Mohamad Taqi Saraj chief editor of *Bamyān* weekly, Baseer Serat cameraman of Kabul Film, and Ahmad Shah, a bodyguard. The crew were making a documentary on the election campaign of one of the female candidates. After campaigning in two outlying villages the group was returning to the centre of Waygal district when they came under the attack by a group of six armed men. Hawa Alam Nooristani, a journalist and announcer was injured by a bullet during the kidnapping. The two media workers and the bodyguard were taken away but after six days they managed to escape.

Atequallah Jalali - March 13, 2006

Unknown assailants attempted to abduct Atequallah Jalali, a journalist and the master of ceremonies of the musical programme of government television in Jalalabad. On his way home

from work, a group stopped his car in front of a hotel and told him that the head of TV station wanted him to go back to the office. He refused and then was beaten while the group tried to steal his car. Meanwhile, a passenger bus had stopped near by and the assailants escaped. Nangrahar police chief, Abdul Basir Salangi said: "What happened to Atequllah Jalali is a personal issue and has no connection with Jalalabad television and its telecasts." He added that the people who attacked Jalali have told police that the journalist owes them money.

But Engineer Zalmai the chief of Nangerhar Radio Television, confirmed Jalali's account. "Actually, the police chief does not have any information about this event. Jalali had been threatened earlier. This time the assailants blamed him for introducing Western culture. We reported this case to the intelligence department of Nangrahar province and they had arrested some suspects, but they were not the people who attacked Atequllah Jalali."

MEDIA HOUSES TARGETED

Radio Qoyash harassed by police - May 20, 2005

According to Rona, chief of Radio Qoyash, the station was harassed by police from the police headquarter of Faryab province when a story was broadcast about the murder of a youth in police custody. After the youth died, several people from Maimana city protested and the station broadcast a story about the protest including comments from the protestors. Rona said Faryab police responded to the broadcast by saying they had been defamed which led to an investigation by the Information and Culture Department and police. The investigation cleared the station of any wrongdoing.

Ali Urfan - August 17, 2005

Ali Urfan, chief of the privately-owned Bamyan Radio station established by Internews two years ago, received a letter from the chief of government-owned Radio and TV Bamyan who said that if Bamyan Radio's broadcast licence expired, their station would not be allowed to broadcast again. Instead, their licence would be handed over to the government station. In another official letter, Bamyan Radio was told to change its name to one without the word Bamyan in it, because the Government was eager to nominate the Radio and TV Bamyan as the province's radio broadcaster. Later, the chief of the Information and Culture Ministry said he was unaware of the issue.

BANGLADESH

MEDIA WORKERS KILLED

Golam Mahfuz – May 31, 2005

Golam Mahfuz, the 39-year-old editor of the daily newspaper *Comilla Muktakantha* was stabbed to death in the early morning in his house in Comilla, a town 88km east of the capital Dhaka. At the time of the murder, the police were unsure of the motive for the crime.

Request for remand of killers denied – October 18, 2005

Jessore Court denied the prosecution's request to remand seven men accused of murdering M Saiful Alam Mukul, editor of the local newspaper *Dainik Ranar*. The accused men are Jahangir alias Hatkata Jahangir of Sankarpur, Rabiul Islam Moron, Rana of Bezparar, Shahin, Tuhin, Fakrul Islam and Saiful Islam of Shamnagar in Satkhira.

Maola Box, the investigation officer in the murder case, requested that the accused be remanded to the Jessore Court on October 2, but on October 18, the court chose not to accept the request.

Gautam Das – November 17, 2005

Gautam Das, 28, district bureau chief of the *Daily Shamokal* was found strangled in his office; his hands and legs broken and a rope tied around his neck. Friends and colleagues reported that it was common for Das to sleep overnight in his office due to its distance from his home. They also claimed that he had been threatened in the past. Das has a history of writing on local extortion, local businesses, drug dealings and recently on the activities of Islamic militant groups. On November 22, Abu Taher Md. Motiur Ehsan Apollo, 28, confessed to the murder of Gautam Das to the first class magistrate under section 164.

MEDIA WORKERS ARRESTED

Journalist arrested and tortured – June 4, 2005

On June 4, the Bakergonj correspondent of *Dainik Ittefaq* was arrested and then tortured for taking photographs of police brutality.

Nurul Islam Babul, Abed Khan and Salma Islam – June 14, 2005

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court issued a summons following a case against Nurul Islam Babul, owner of the *Dainik Jugantor*, editor Abed Khan and publisher Salma Islam. On October 2, the leader of Jamate Islami filed a case against Abed Khan and Salma Islam.

Kafil Uddin Anu and Abdul Latif Bachchu – September 16, 2005

Kafil Uddin Anu, *Dainik Saikat* correspondent and Abdul Latif Bachchu, *Dainik Dinkal* correspondent, were arrested on false charges and threatened by a local police officer in the southeast region of Bangladesh after they published reports detailing a local smuggling operation. A local MP instigated the arrests and a case was filed against the reporters by an alleged smuggler.

Five cases dropped – September 19, 2005

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) legislator Shahidul Islam Master withdrew five lawsuits he had filed against 17 journalists from the national dailies *Janakantha*, *Inquilab*, *Amar Desh*, *Manabzamin* and the Jessore-based daily *Gramer Kagoj*. In an address to the Jhenaidah Press Club, Shahidul Islam said that he regretted taking legal action against the reporters. After announcing his decision, journalists from the Press Club accompanied him to the deputy commissioner of Jhenaidah to withdraw the lawsuits.

MEDIA WORKERS HARASSED/INTIMIDATED BY STATE AUTHORITIES

ATN Bangla reporter barred – June 1, 2005

On June 1, an *ATN Bangla* reporter was barred from entering into the Prime Minister's office to cover news.

Kamran Reza Chowdhury threatened by MP – June 16, 2005

An MP, Rustom Ali Faraji, rebuked and threatened Kamran Reza Chowdhury of *Dainik Jugantor* at parliament.

Kustia journalists threatened by MP – June 20, 2005

In Kustia, a Bangladesh Nationalists Party (the ruling party) MP and his cadres threatened journalists. On July 20, seven journalists of Kustia filed a general diary in the local police station after receiving threats from MP Shahidul Alam.

False charges against journalists – August 3, 2005

On August 3, Agricultural Minister Mr M.K. Anwar filed false cases against journalists.

MP attacks, threaten and file cases against journalists – August 8, 2005

In Baufal on August 8, the Bangladesh Nationalists Party (ruling party) leader and MP Shahidul Alam beat correspondent for the *Daily Ajker Kagoj* Manjur Morshed, with sticks. On August 8, the

family of journalist Mofizur Rahman Lilo was attacked for the third time. The next day, cadres of BNP (ruling party) MP attacked the journalists in Narayanganj. Seven journalists also received seven separate death threat letters in Bagerhat on August 24. On the same day, defamation cases were filed in order of BNP (ruling party) MP A.H. Selim against eight journalists including correspondent of *Dainik Prothom Alo* and *Manobzamin*.

Journalists threatened – August 28, 2005

The brother-in-law of Islami Oikkyo Jote (IOJ) MP Mufti Shahidul Islam gave death threats to journalists on August 28.

Cases filed against journalists – September 1, 2005

In Jhenaidah on September 1, a BNP (ruling party) MP filed cases against journalists.

Bangladeshi Government uses unfair tactics to disrupt journalists' conference – November 11, 2005

The Bangladeshi Government cancelled the venue reservation of an important national journalists' convention in Bangladesh in the name of 'security reasons'.

On November 11, 2005, the national convention against the repression of journalists, terrorism and militancy which was organized by the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) was to be held at the auditorium of the Diploma Engineers' Institute. The National Security Intelligence (NSI) then requested the venue authorities to cancel all reservations from November 10-14 for 'security reasons'. The reservation was cancelled just thirty hours prior to the scheduled start of the conference after being booked since October 18, 2005. In response to the decision, the BFUJ scheduled a sit-in demonstration on November 11 at 11am at the National Press Club.

Parliament attacks media – November 22, 2005

Ministers and ruling BNP lawmakers launched a blistering attack against the media during a session of parliament. MPs and ministers accused the media of tarnishing the government and accused them of publishing and broadcasting 'fake news'. The MPs demanded the introduction of a law to strengthen the press council and fight against 'yellow journalism'. The calls were spearheaded by State Minister for Housing and Public Works, Alamgir Kabir, who allegedly assaulted Alamgir Swapan, from the daily *Janakantha* at his office on November 20. Kabir denied assaulting the journalist and has claimed the incident was a 'drama staged ahead of the oppositions grand rally to undermine the government'. Kabir criticised the daily *Janakantha* claiming the newspaper was acting against the country and was engaged in character assassination of honest politicians.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Syed Monjur Morshed – May 17, 2005

Syed Monjur Morshed, editor of the English fortnightly *Horizon* was attacked by four men with a knife while he was returning home in Goran near the capital Dhaka. The men rushed at him and stabbed him in the abdomen with a knife. He was taken to hospital bleeding heavily and underwent an operation on May 19. Security forces who were on the scene failed to intervene during the attack and Morshed therefore decided not to report the incident to the police. The editor had received numerous threats in the days leading up to the assault, after he wrote an article exposing the fraudulent activities of real estate developer Iqbal Sazzad. He had also tipped off several major national dailies about cases of embezzlement that, once revealed in the press, led to the developer's arrest.

G.M. Shahid – May 21, 2005

G.M. Shahid, correspondent for *Dainik Khabarpotro* and executive editor of *Aporadh Barta* was attacked by local armed cadres in Rupganj. Shahid was returning home in the evening in a rickshaw when he was jumped by three men who threatened him at gunpoint and stuck adhesive tape over his mouth to muffle his cries for help. They then took him to a cemetery where they

beat him with a hammer, tried to burn him and also tried to bury him alive. The editor managed to fight back and yell for help, forcing his three assailants to flee the scene. It was three hours later before local

Rafiqul Islam and Nurul Islam – July 6, 2005

Rafiqul Islam, correspondent for the daily *Amar Desh* in Rajshahi, was brutally attacked by members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the ruling party. Ten attackers entered the Durgapur Press Club and assaulted Rafiqul, who is the club's president. Nurul Islam, the club's general secretary, was also attacked when he tried to intervene. Prior to the attacks Rafiqul had filed a complaint with the police after he received warnings not to report on alleged extortion by JCD members, but no protection was offered.

Sheikh Enamul Kabir and Sheikh Mamun– July 7, 2005

Sheikh Enamul Kabir was physically attacked by members of the National Security Intelligence (NSI) forces as he took photographs of political graffiti written on the boundary wall of the NSW complex at Segunbagicha. He was then arrested and taken into custody with his colleague, Sheikh Mamun, whom the NFI forces had also assaulted for objecting to the violent treatment and arrest of Kabir.

Ten journalists attacked by National Security Intelligence – July 7, 2005

Ten journalists were brutally assaulted by NSI forces while protesting the arrest and assault of their colleagues, Sheikh Enamul Kabir and Sheikh Mamun. The ten journalists were part of a group of 15 to 20 journalists from various publications assembled outside the NSI headquarters. It was alleged that the NSI personnel attacked the group with bamboo sticks and iron rods, leaving ten protesters injured, two of them critically.

Alamgir Swapan attacked and three university correspondents threatened with death – July 17, 2005

Alamgir Swapan, staff reporter of *Janakantha*, was attacked on the Social Science faculty premises of the Jahangirnagar University (JU) by approximately 35 members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the ruling party. The attackers reportedly also threatened three university correspondents with death.

Syed Hossain Saju, Tipu Sultan and Alo Hossain – July 25, 2005

On July 25, Syed Hossain Saju of *Dainik Amar Desh*, Tipu Sultan and Alo Hossain, local journalists working in *Dainik Sunshine* that published from Rajshahi were physically tortured by a Jubo League (student wing of the opposition party) leader. The journalists were believed to have been attacked because their newspapers published a local level conflict of Awami League (the opposition party).

Fakrul Akanda – late July 2005

Fakrul Akanda, a photo journalist for the local daily newspaper *Ajker Khabor* and the Dhaka-based national daily newspaper *Ajker Kagaj*, was hospitalised after being attacked by party members at a Mymensingh (South) district Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP) executive committee meeting. The meeting, chaired by committee president and former state minister for energy, AKM Mosharrif Hossain MP, disintegrated into a brawl when conflict broke out. Rival groups were fighting over issues such as the sacking of the MP, the defeat of BNP district secretary in the previous Mymensingh municipal election, formation of Bhaluka upazila BNP committee and less contact between district BNP leaders with grass-roots leaders and activists. Fakrul, office secretary of Mymensingh unit of Bangladesh Photo Journalism Association (BPJA), was hit in the head and had his camera taken by party men.

M Mahfuz – September 11, 2005

M Mahfuz, a correspondent for *Dainik Gramer Kagoj*, was brutally attacked and seriously injured by five members of the Janajuddha group at Harianakunddu, Jhainaidah. Mahfuz had published regular reports about the underground Biplobi Communist Party (Janajuddha) and had been threatened several times for his reports. Mahfuz was left with head wounds requiring 17 stitches,

after being stabbed with a dagger, and may have to have his right hand amputated after it was broken with a crow bar. Despite filing the case with local authorities, the police said they were unable to arrest anyone. Mahfuz reportedly received several death threats following the incident, demanding that he withdraw the case.

Rapid Action Battalion attack journalist – October 21, 2005

In Meherpur on October 21, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) tortured a journalist physically. On the same day in Bogra, a local leader of BNP (ruling party) assaulted a journalist physically.

Police beat two journalists – November 21, 2005

Matin, reporter of Channel 1 and cameraman Jahid Siddiqui, were severely injured after being beaten by police while covering the 14 party grand rally in Paltan. From approximately 4pm, Matin and Siddiqui were covering the grand rally in front of the National Press Club when a clash between police and strikers erupted. Police began to beat Siddiqui after he moved to cover the clash between police and protestors. Police began to beat Matin when he attempted to use his identification as a journalist to stop the beating. Matin and Siddiqui sustained injuries to their backside, feet and legs. Eyewitnesses reported that Mahbubur Rahmah, officer in charge of Ramna Thana ordered the beating of the two journalists to which he denied.

Journalist beaten in Khagrachari – November 22, 2005

Habibur Rahman Hahbib, general secretary of Manikchari Press Club and correspondent of *Dainik Ajker Kagoj* and *Dainik Supravat* was beaten up by cadres of the ruling BNP. Prior to the attack, ruling party MP Wahud Bhuiyan made threats against local journalists of Khagrachari. Wahud Bhuiyan has a long history of repressing and beating journalists.

Three journalists injured in bomb attack – December 1, 2005

Three journalists who were covering a demonstration in Gazipur, north of Dhaka were among 30 others who were injured when a member of the Islamist movement Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh set off a bomb outside a public building. At least one person was killed in the attack. The three reporters were Nazrul Islam Badami, the correspondent of the daily *The New Nation*, Belal Hossain of the BSS news agency and Aminul Islam of the local newspaper *Ajker Janata*.

Terrorist attack on correspondent of Dainik Prothom Alo – March 17, 2006

A group of terrorists attacked journalist Tuhin Azam, correspondent of *Dainik Prothom Alo* at his dormitory room at the Islamic University, Kushtia, west of the country. Tuhin is also the president of the Islamic University Press Club. According to witnesses, a group of about six miscreants stormed into the dormitory room of Tuhin Azam at the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall of the university at about 1am.

MEDIA WORKERS INTIMIDATED

Five Satkhira journalists receive threats – June 8, 2005

On June 8, five journalists of Satkhira received a letter with threats for the third time, sent to them by the Purbo Bangla Communist Party.

Daily Amader Shomoy receives threat of grenade attack – June 19, 2005

Nayeemul Islam Khan, editor and publisher of the *Daily Amader Shomoy* received a threat from unidentified criminals to stop publishing the newspaper immediately otherwise they would hurl grenades at the office. Threats by phone have occurred frequently in both the office and at the editor's residence. The editor and publisher of the daily had received threats twice before this letter arrived – either over phone or in person. The first threat came on February, the month when the newspaper was on trial publication; and the second on April 25, when the newspaper was launched in the market.

Seven journalists threatened with death – August 24, 2005

Seven journalists from different media organisations received death threats via post in Bagerhat, warning them against writing about 'our MP'. Journalists Hasanul Qaiyum of the *Manabzamin*, Ahad Haider of the *Prothom Alo*, Rob Molla of the *Janmabhum*, Babul Sarder of the *Janakantha*, Nihar Sahar of News Network of Bangladesh (NNB), Zakaria Mahmud of the *Amar Desh* and Azadul Huq of the *Sangbad*, received separate letters that threatened to attack the journalists and bomb their workplaces if they did not cooperate. Babul Sarder, general secretary of Bagerhat Press Club, filed a complaint and asked Baherhat police for protection.

Rifat Bin Taha – August 28, 2005

Rifat Bin Taha, journalist at *Dainik Janakantha*, received a verbal death threat for a report he published on militants in Norail, South-West Bangladesh. He and his family were threatened by the brother-in-law of a prominent MP, Mufti Imranuzzaman, who allegedly threatened to kill Bin Taha and his family if a retraction was not published within 24 hours.

Dainik Bhorer Kagoj threatened – September 1, 2005

On September 1, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) threatened to blow up the office of *Dainik Bhorer Kagoj*.

Nine newspaper journalists in Satkhira received death threats – September 4, 2005

Nine newspaper journalists in Satkhira received death threats and burial shrouds through the postal service. The letters warned against reporting matters relating to Islamic groups and spread fear among the journalists. Kalyan Banarjee of *Prothom Alo*, Abul Kalam Azad of *Potrodut*, Abu Ahmed of *Daily Star*, Mizanur Rahman of *Janakantha*, Subhash Chowdhury of *Jugantor*, Ramkrishna Chakrabarty of *Samokal*, Yarab Hossain of *Runner*, Kalidas Roy of *Janata*, and Raghunath Kha of *Janmobhumi*, each received the letters at the Satkhira Reporters' Club. The threats may be connected to the journalists' investigative reports on a sequence of bomb blasts across the country.

Journalists receive death threats – September 10, 2005

Two journalists received threatening letters and burial shrouds at the Gauranadi Press Club in southern Bangladesh. President of the Gauranadi Press Club and *Dainik Ittefaq* correspondent, Giassuddin Mia, and *Dainik Aiker Kagoj* correspondent, Ahsan Ullah Mia, had published reports about the fundamentalist group Hizbut Tauhid and the Purba Bangla Communist Party (Janajuddha). The letters were written in red ink and accused the journalists of being 'fake Muslims' and demanded that they give up journalism or risk being bombed.

Suraiya Bilkis – November 7, 2005

On November 7, unknown miscreants phoned Suraiya Bilkis, director of Rangamati Radio Station and threatened her by saying they would blow up the radio station.

Death threats made to Prothom Alo – November 27, 2005

The principal of a madrassa in the southern town of Lohagora made death threats against Maruf Samdani, the local correspondent of the national daily *Prothom Alo*, after the newspaper ran a story about alleged embezzlement by the principal.

Asaduzzaman Milon and press club received threats – October 18, 2005

Golam Rasul Yousuf, the public relations secretary of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) threatened to kill Asaduzzaman Milon, president of Soron Khola Press Club in Bagerhat. Golam Rasul Yousuf also threatened to blow up the Press Club. Asaduzzaman Milon is a correspondent for *Dainik Ittefaq*, a NNB (News Network of Bangladesh) and *Dainik Rannar* at Soronkhola. The threats occurred after a report was published about the illegal appointment of a lecturer at the TofalBari School and College. Several other correspondents and local journalists were present when Yousuf made the threats, but no police complaint has been made.

Militants threaten 10 local papers – October 18, 2005

A militant organisation calling themselves Allah'r Dal (Allah's Group) sent threatening letters to ten local papers, including *Dainik Chandpur Kantha*. The letter demanded the release of local Allah'r Dal chief Shamim Hossen, alias Saifullah Galib, who is being held at the Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka. Galib is being questioned in connection to a series of bomb attacks on August 17 and October 3, 2005. In their letter, the group threatened to blow up the newspaper offices, along with other important local buildings if their demands were not met.

Daily newspaper Janakantha intimidated – November 28, 2005

A group of supporters of housing minister Alamgir Kabir made a bonfire with dozens of copies of the daily newspaper *Janakantha* on November 28, after it ran a story about a physical attack by Kabir on one of the newspaper's reporters.

Eight journalists threatened – December 1, 2005

On December 1, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) threatened eight journalists working with *Dainik Prothom Alo*, *Dainik Ittefaq*, *Dainik Janakantha*, *Dainik Jugantor*, *Dainik Amar Desh*, *Dainik Sangbad* and news agencies BSS and BTV.

Embargo placed on journalists in Chittagong – December 6, 2005

In Chittagong on December 6, police commissioners placed an embargo on journalists from collecting information from the police station.

NEWSPAPERS ATTACKED

Dainik Jugantor, Ittefaq, and Prothom Alo attacked – June 28, 2005

Cadres of Jatiya Party attacked the office of *Dainik Jugantor*, *Ittefaq* and *Prothom Alo* in Rangpur on June 28.

Dainik Amader Shomoy receive threats – June 28, 2005

Dainik Amader Shomoy was threatened that it would be blown up and its editor Nayeemul Islam Khan also received threats through a letter written by an unknown person or a group.

Dainik Jugantor set on fire – October 18, 2005

Leaders of the BNP held a protest and set fire to the *Dainik Jugantor* in Ullahpara, Shirajganj. The incident occurred after the *Dainik Jugantor* published a report titled "Bangla Bhai – the chief of Islami Militants stays in a BNP leader's house". BNP leaders accused the paper of publishing false information without searching for the truth, and denounced the report as yellow journalism. No complaint was filed with police.

DEFAMATION AND CONTEMPT OF COURT CASES

Warrants for arrest for editors of two Bengali-language daily newspapers – July 2005

Warrants for arrest were issued against the editors of two Bengali language daily newspapers in a defamation suit filed by a member of the ruling BNP who stated the newspapers had published reports implicating him and his two brothers in the murder of Sagir Ahmed, a leader of BNP's youth front.

BNP leader filed case against three dailies – February 2, 2006

A ruling party leader, Fakir Abu Bakkar Siddiqui, of Melandaha in Jamalpur district and chairman of Nayanagar Union Parishad (Union Parishad is the first tier of the local government) filed a defamation case against daily newspapers *Dainik Bhorer Kagoj*, *Dainik Prothom Alo* and local correspondent of *Dainik Shamokal* including editors and publishers of the dailies for publishing a news report on him.

Dainik Sangbad editor gets anticipatory bailment – February 12, 2006

The High Court granted anticipatory bailment of Bazlur Rahman, editor of *Dainik Sangbad*. At the same time, Court also issued a rule to the government to show cause why he would not get permanent bailment. Bazlur Rahman came to the bench consisting of Justice Mohammad Abdur Rashid and Justice Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan and applied for bailment. In July 2005, *Dainik Sangbad* published a report titled, "Conflict among local BNP members in Jamalpur." The report said that Mosharrof Hossain, member of Jamalpur district BNP, had a case against him while he was in Kuwait. This is why he had to return to Bangladesh and join politics. After the news was published in the newspaper, Mosharrof Hossain filed a defamation case against Bazlur Rahman, editor of *Dainik Sangbad* and Utpal Kanti Ghosh, correspondent who did the report.

Arrest warrant issued against editor and publisher of Amar Desh – March 17, 2006

The Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court (CMM) issued an arrest warrant against editor, publisher and reporter of the daily *Amar Desh* in a defamation case. Lawyers SM Nazrul Islam and Royhan Morshed filed the case against the *Amar Desh* Saturday magazine, *Bhimrul* for jeering at lawyers by saying 'Ainjibi Finejibi' in the cover story. The Magistrate of the CMM, Rafiqul Islam pressed a charge-sheet in absence of the accused editor, Amanullah Kabir, publisher Md Haashmat Ali and reporter Masud Kamal.

MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS

Leaders in Modhupur to censor newspaper distribution – November 9, 2005

On November 9, *Dainik Shamokal* published a report, which revealed that a committee had been formed by influential local leaders in Modhupur to censor newspaper distribution. This censor board would decide which newspapers should be supplied among the readers. Modhupur Pourasava chairman, Shahidul Islam alias Sarker Shahid, the influential leader of BNP (ruling party) and Jubodal (student wing of ruling party) leader Babu Bikas Chandra Ghosh performed the role of chairman in the board. On the morning of November 7, the board granted supply to all newspapers in Ghatail, Gopalpur, Dhanbari and Modhupur except *Dainik Ittefaq*, *Dainik Shamokal* and *Dainik Janakhantha*.

Government advances phone-tapping laws – February 12, 2006

The Jatiya Sangsad passed a bill allowing intelligence and law enforcement agencies to tap telephone conversations. Opposition members opposed the bill and said the law is unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights of citizens, as it will infringe on their right to privacy.

INDIA

MEDIA WORKERS KILLED

Bhooma Goud, June 10, 2005

Journalist, Bhooma Goud, working for the regional daily *Vaaritha*, was brutally killed by members of the Jana Sakthi group in Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh. Two persons on a motorcycle chased the journalist and shot him near his house after the extremist outfit suspected him of being a police informer.

M Sagar, June 17, 2005

Sagar, correspondent of the daily *Shah Times*, was killed after he objected to celebratory gun firing in Muzaffarnagar town in Uttar Pradesh. The incident occurred late at night when Sagar was working in his office and a wedding party was being held downstairs. Some people were firing into the air in celebration and when Sagar asked them to stop, he was shot dead.

Vivek Mishra, September 13, 2005

Vivek Mishra, the bureau chief of Hindi daily *Raj Express* in Betul, Madhya Pradesh, was shot dead by a group of miscreants in broad daylight in his office. The killing was apparently to settle scores with Mishra's brother who was involved in a gang rivalry. The office assistant, Manoj Arya, who was the sole witness to the murder, was also subsequently killed by the miscreants.

Prahlada Goala, January 6, 2006

Prahlada Goala, the Golaghat district correspondent of the daily *Asomiya Khabar* was murdered near Golaghat town, Assam, by unidentified assailants. He had written a series of articles exposing the illegal felling of trees in the Nambor reserve forest and reportedly attracted the ire of the ranger-in-charge, K Z Zaman Jinnah.

Nalin Mishra, April 4, 2006

Nalin Mishra, editor of Ranchi-based *Jharkhand Today* magazine, died under mysterious circumstances. His body was found in an abandoned house at Ranchi in Jharkhand with his hands and legs tied. The 42-year-old journalist was last seen on March 28, in Kumhar Toli. This is the first time that a journalist has been killed in Ranchi. The autopsy report suggests that Mishra was killed on March 30. Ranchi journalists, unhappy with the investigation, said if police had swung into action when Mishra went missing, he could have been saved. The motive for his killing is not known.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Hindustan Times workers - May 1, 2005

In an ironic assault on workers' rights on May Day, police attacked newspaper staff under the banner of the newly-formed Confederation of Newspaper and News Agencies Organisations, who were on their way to Greater Noida to hold a demonstration at the venue of a function organised by the *Hindustan Times*, a leading English daily. In spite of the fact that prior permission for the march had been obtained, police stopped the workers and when the latter tried to proceed they attacked them injuring three people.

Journalists of NDTV, May 5, 2005

Some police personnel in NOIDA, on the outskirts of Delhi, allegedly assaulted reporter, Sunetra Chaudhary and cameraperson, Pooja Arya, of news channel NDTV while they were pursuing a story relating to a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case against new state chief secretary, Neera Yadav. The police reportedly confiscated their tripod and headphones and had nearly seized their camera when the team managed to escape. A case was registered with Noida police station.

Shikha Das, August 26, 2005

A group of people attacked journalist, Shikha Das, with knives in Pithora in Mahasamund district of Chattisgarh. Some of her assailants were alleged to be members of the locally powerful Gardia family and the attack is believed to be related to a story which Shikha wrote in the Hindi daily *Jansatta*. In her report she alleged that Sanjay Gardia and his wife were involved in the trafficking of women, which was carried out under the cover of a centre for impoverished people.

Mahalingam, Rajesh Kannan and Babu, August 31, 2005

Reporter Mahalingam, cameraman Rajesh Kannan and asst cameraman Babu of Jaya TV, Chennai, Tamil Nadu were allegedly assaulted while covering a victory celebration of transport employees who had been offered a salary increase and other benefits by the state government. They were seriously injured and hospitalised after allegedly being assaulted by a gang of people at the event.

Sajjad Ahmed, Tabrez Madni, September 13, 2005

Cameramen Sajjad Ahmed of *Doordarshan Kendra* and Tabrez Madni of *Zee Kashmir* were allegedly beaten up by a major of the Army's Road Opening Party and some of his troops near *Radio Kashmir* in Srinagar when they sought reasons from the Major who was stopping traffic on

the busy Maulana Azad Road in Srinagar. The two cameramen had to be admitted to hospital for treatment. A First Information Report (FIR) was registered in the Kothi Bagh police station in this connection.

Pritam Brahma Chowdhury, December 31, 2005

Pritam Brahma Chowdhury, the Kokrajhar correspondent of *The Telegraph* was attacked by unidentified assailants at about 10pm. With their faces covered with black cloth, the attackers barged into the house looking for the reporter. Finding the reporter was not there, they ransacked the house and attacked two of his family members. They threatened dire consequences if the journalist did not stop writing news. A case was registered with the Kokrajhar police. The Kokrajhar District Journalist Association organised a protest rally demanding security to media persons, and submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ajay Singh.

Ratan Luwangcha February 9, 2006

Unidentified attackers in Imphal, Manipur shot at and critically injured senior journalist Ratan Luwangcha, bureau chief of the local language daily *Poknapham* and general secretary of the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWJU). The incident took place early in the morning when Ratan was reading the newspaper at his home. The Kangleipak Communist Party, a rebel group, has claimed responsibility for this attack. Regional journalists organised a publication strike in protest against this barbarous act.

Robin Phukan and Parag Bhuyan, February 17, 2006

Journalists Robin Phukan of the daily *Asomiya Pratidin* and Parag Bhuyan of *Dainik Janambhumi* were allegedly assaulted by police when they went to Kakopathar, Assam to cover a visit by state chief minister, Tarun Gogoi. Both of them were hospitalised with serious injuries. The incident occurred when police assaulted local people who were wearing black badges and shouting slogans against the chief minister and his government. In protest, the local journalists boycotted a press conference of the chief minister.

G Srikanth, March 21, 2006

Senior copy editor with *Times of India* in Hyderabad, G Srikanth was manhandled and dragged to the police station by the Punjagutta police in Hyderabad without any provocation. He was detained and subjected to further rough treatment throughout the night. Police picked up Srikanth from a roadside tea stall when he was returning home from his night shift. They refused to listen when he showed his identity card and took him to the police station where he was detained for nine hours as the police sought to trump up charges against him. They even snatched away his cell phone, denying him opportunity to communicate with his family.

Imam supporters scuffle with Delhi journalists, April 18, 2006

A scuffle broke out between media persons and supporters of Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari outside the Prime Minister's residence. As per the complaint lodged by Mohammad Yusuf Ansari, correspondent with Zee News, he asked the Shahi Imam a question about the issue of reservations for backward Muslims. The journalists insisted that Mr Bukhari should stay to answer their queries after his meeting with the Prime Minister. But the supporters of Imam, including his brothers Yahya and Tariq, lost their temper and started abusing the media persons. They even seized microphones from television reporters and threw them away. A complaint has been filed against the Imam and his supporters at the Chanakya Puri police station. The Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, described the incident as 'unfortunate' and has given his assurances that the matter will be looked into.

MEDIA WORKERS INJURED

Seven journalists in Srinagar, July 29, 2005

Seven journalists were injured in the cross fire between militants and security personnel while covering a grenade explosion by militants on a police vehicle in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir.

Ejaz Ahmed and Amir Ahmed (ANI), Manzoor Ahmed (India TV), Muzamil Rashid (*Srinagar Mail*), Firdous Ahmed (*Zee Kashmir*) and Amir Hussain (*Subhe Kashmir*) sustained injuries and were shifted to hospital. Sahara TV cameraman, Muzaffar Ahmed, was also seriously injured as he sustained bullet injuries to his abdomen.

MEDIA WORKERS HARASSED

Sadashiv Patra, May 3, 2005

An assistant sub-inspector of Phiringia police station in Phulbani, Orissa attacked and injured ETV's Phulbani correspondent Sadashiv Patra and damaged his camera. The journalist had gone to an eatery to inquire about an attack on two men by the police official. Later the correspondent lodged an FIR with the Phulbani town police station. The director general of police regretted the incident and suspended the assistant sub-inspector.

Anand Swaroop Verma, May, 2005

Anand Swaroop Verma, senior journalist and editor of *Samakaleen Teesari Dunia* magazine was harassed by the CBI officials in connection with the murder of Mahendra Singh, a member of the Legislative Assembly from Jharkhand who was killed on January 16, 2005 while addressing a meeting to his constituency in Giridih. The CBI officials visited Verma several times in his house at odd hours of the day and night and enquired about the phone calls allegedly made to him from the mobile phone of the slain MLA after his murder. His harassment could be related to the fact that he is very active and vocal in India on questions of democracy in Nepal.

N Venu Gopal, May 30, 2005

Noted journalist and editor of *Veekshanam*, N Venu Gopal, was illegally arrested on May 30 along with Pinaka Pani, editor of *Aruna Tara* literary magazine. They were picked up by the Special Branch of Andhra Pradesh police and were tied with ropes, blindfolded and illegally confined for 72 hours. Venu Gopal, a diabetic dependent on insulin injections, was denied any medication for 72 hours. They were accused of conspiracy against the state, though police subsequently failed to substantiate the charges.

Praveen K Singh, Amir Haque, June 26, 2005

Praveen Singh, executive editor, *Clean and Hygiene* and Amir Haque, associate producer, *Aaj Tak*, TV Today were brutally assaulted in the police station at Karol Bagh, New Delhi, by the sub-inspector and six other unknown persons. Their request to make a formal complaint was rejected. The motive for the unprovoked attack is not known. The two journalists, who are members of the Delhi Journalists Association, approached concerned police officers up to the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police, but their efforts to register an FIR proved futile.

Arun Kumar Rajnath, July 27, 2005

The online news site *South Asian Tribune* reported that its New Delhi correspondent, Arun Kumar, Rajnath was harassed and threatened by Indian Government agents. In the report, the *Tribune* detailed a series of intimidating phone calls and emails which Rajnath said he had received over the previous two months. The caller, identified as an Indian intelligence agent, reportedly offered Rajnath kickbacks (which he refused) in return for publishing articles unfavourable to India's neighbouring countries.

Gautam Dheer, August 28, 2005

On midnight of August 28, a Punjab police team picked up *Indian Express* principal correspondent, Gautam Dheer, from his house in Chandigarh, without giving any reason. Later DGP S S Virk claimed that Dheer had been arrested for threatening a minor girl allegedly raped in Nayagaon village. The same morning, the Chandigarh edition of the *Indian Express* had carried Dheer's report about two Nayagaon residents complaining to the Punjab State Human Rights Commission alleging police harassment at the hands of inspector general of police, Sumedh Singh Saini, who was heading the investigation into the rape incident. Following strong protests by the journalists,

the Punjab government ordered a probe against the Special Investigating Team that arrested Dheer. He was released on bail on August 29, 2005.

Esha Roy, Tanushree Punwani, December 25, 2005

Journalist Esha Roy and staff photographer Tanushree Punwani, both with *Indian Express*, New Delhi, were harassed by a mob and later by the police. They were working on a story to expose illegal properties owned by Delhi politicians and their relatives. They were surrounded by a mob who abused them and demanded to have the photographic evidence back and lodged a false complaint against the journalists for allegedly demanding a bribe of 50,000 INR (1,100 USD) to kill the story. The police, instead of helping the two journalists intimidated them further by claiming that the charges were serious and that they could be arrested. Subsequently they could manage a formal complaint.

Kamlesh Paikra, January 16, 2006

Kamlesh Paikra, the Bijapur correspondent with *Hindsatt*, a daily published from Jagdalpur in Chattisgarh, was forced to flee his home and lost his job after having been subjected to harassment for months by police because of his reporting on the Naxalite guerrillas (local name for the banned Communist Party of India - Maoist). Paikra and his family had been the target of harassment since April 2005. Members of the anti-Maoist Salwa Judum militia had ransacked his home and several police officers in Bijapur and tried to get him to reveal his sources. The threats became more frequent after he refused. His elder brother, a headmaster of a village school was arrested on grounds of possessing Naxalite literature and uniforms. Though he was released on bail, the case is still pending. Another Bijapur-based journalist Lakshman Singh Kusram, was threatened by police at the beginning of January 2006 after reporting in a local publication that women had been beaten by members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) police.

Alok Tomar, February 23, 2006

Police arrested Alok Tomar, editor of the Hindi-language magazine *Shabdarth* in New Delhi and confiscated several hundred copies of the magazine because a cartoon of the prophet Mohammad had been carried in the magazine. The cartoon was reprinted in the magazine to accompany an article that criticised the original publication of the controversial Danish cartoons. Tomar remained in jail, but was eventually released on bail on March 2, 2006 after paying 50,000 INR (1,100 USD) under the guarantee of a co-signer.

False cases on journalists in Andhra Pradesh

Police in Andhra Pradesh have allegedly started a practice of implicating journalists in false cases particularly relating to atrocities on Daliks (formally untouchable casts), underprivileged tribes, and attacks on government officials. Such cases had been slapped against senior journalist, Nellore S M Basha, who was detained by the sub inspector of Udaygiri on September 28, 2005 on the charge of attacking an executive engineer. P V Kondala Rao, reporter *Business Standard* and president of Warangal District unit of Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) was arrested on March 12, 2006 in an 'attempt to murder' case.

Diganta Das, April 1, 2006

NE TV reporter Diganta Das was implicated in a false case and was arrested by the superintendent of police of Halflong, Assam. Das was reportedly beaten up in police custody. He had reportedly complained to the Election Commission that the SP was working for the ruling congress in the ensuing state assembly elections. Das was released following a strong protest by local journalists.

Sripal Shaktawat, April 4, 2006

Sripal along with his crew from *Sahara Samay* TV channel were allegedly manhandled by the police while conducting a sting operation on illegal abortion in a private hospital in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The journalist and his colleagues got involved in an altercation with the hospital authorities leading to lodging of FIRs from both sides. Police brought the TV crew to the police station and allegedly assaulted them. Protesting against the police harassment journalists sat on

a dharna on the stairs of Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) and boycotted Assembly proceedings for the entire day on April 5.

MEDIA WORKER MOLESTED

Woman journalist with CNN-IBN March 15, 2006

A gang of miscreants allegedly poured gulal (coloured powder) and water colours on a woman journalist working with TV channel CNN-IBN in Bangalore. There were 40 persons, who were playing holi (festival of colours) at that moment. The miscreants tore her clothes and also damaged electronic equipment and a camera. She was immediately whisked away in the television OB van by the cameraman and the driver. She lodged a complaint with the Bangalore Police Commissioner.

MEDIA WORKERS THREATENED

D N Bezboruah August 1, 2005

The ULFA accused D N Bezboruah, a veteran journalist and former editor of English daily *The Sentinel*, and Dhirendranath Chakrabarty of *Dainik Asom* of running a 'hate-ULFA' campaign in Assam and asked them to mend their ways or face the 'wrath of the masses.'

Manipur journalists' protest rally against Intimidation, April 18, 2006

Media persons from All Manipur Working Journalists Union and Editors Forum Manipur organised a protest rally in Imphal against the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) that allegedly took six senior scribes as hostages for not publishing or airing the full text of a press statement issued by the outfit. KCP also allegedly banned publication of an English daily for three months for misquoting a statement. The banned outfit took five editors of local dailies and a news editor of a local cable network, as hostages on April 16. The journalists were freed the next day after the full statement was aired on the TV channel and published in the newspapers. The journalists also handed over a memorandum to Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh, urging him to initiate steps so that media persons could work freely.

MEDIA HOUSES ATTACKED/INTIMIDATED

Pressure from armed groups in Manipur, June 14, 2005

Manipur Hill Journalists' Union suspended publication of all Churachandpur-based newspapers from June 16-19, 2005 in protest against 'interference' and 'pressure' from several armed groups. The All Manipur Working journalists' Union and Editors' Forum of Manipur also joined the protests and ceased publication of all Imphal-based newspapers on June 20, 2005.

Threat to India TV, July, 2005

Hindi news channel India TV reportedly received a threat from some unknown persons. S S Sharma from the news channel lodged a complaint saying that they had received an envelope containing two live cartridges and some powder, suspected to be potassium cyanide with the threat that someone from the channel would be killed. The cartridges were handed over to the police. The threat might be linked to some of the sting operations conducted by the channels against politicians and film stars.

Zee News, February 8, 2006

Over 100 members of the right wing party, Shiv Sena pelted stones at Zee News office in Mumbai and ransacked the property in protest against the telecast of a play on Zee Alpha Marathi channel. Several employees were injured in the attack and some of them were rushed to a nearby hospital. The property ransacked included furniture and vehicles belonging to Zee News.

Greater Kashmir, February 9, 2006

The office of the English daily *Greater Kashmir* in Srinagar was attacked by members of the breakaway faction of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. Three employees including a senior editor were injured and the office was ransacked by the attackers who also threatened the staffers with 'dire consequences' if they did not publish all the statements issued by the group.

Loksatta, February 19, 2006

Members of the right wing Sambhaji Brigade ransacked the office of *Loksatta*, an Indian Express group publication in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. They destroyed computers and files and broke window panes with rods and sticks. The reason behind this attack is supposedly due to the fact that *Loksatta* had not published any article on the occasion of the anniversary of Maratha King Shivaji.

CNN-IBN Channel March 7, 2006

A group of people attacked the van of private TV channel CNN-IBN in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh and beat up the driver and camera assistant. The attack occurred two days after the television channel aired a program dealing with the unaccounted wealth of the Bahujan Samaj Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister, whose assets are currently under a CBI probe.

GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE

Andhra Jyothi, December 8, 2005

Revenue Divisional Officer, Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, served a notice-cum-interim order to the editor of *Andhra Jyothi*, K Ramachandra Murthy and editor of *Leader V V*, Ramana Murthy in his capacity as Sub-Divisional Magistrate. The dailies had been publishing adverse news items about alleged land deals by IAS, IPA officers, other civil servants besides politicians in the city. The notice said any news item published in the two newspapers that could malign the personal character and value system of any public servant should hereafter pass through a screening committee. The order, however, was annulled following the intervention of chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, as journalist unions took up the issue with him.

MALDIVES

MEDIA WORKERS JAILED

Mohamed Nasheed – August 12, 2005

Mohamed Nasheed, former journalist for the magazine, *Sangu*, now writer, chairperson of the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and honorary member of English PEN was arrested after taking part in the peaceful demonstration calling for democratic reform on 12 August, 2005. The demonstration involved a sit-in in the main square in commemoration of the anniversary of the mass arrests of opposition leaders and activists in 2004. On August 22, 2005, Nasheed was officially charged with sedition and terrorism for statements the government claimed he made in July that called for "violent overthrow". Nasheed was imprisoned from 1991 to 1993 and again from 1996 to 1998 for his writings.

Ibrahim Rasheed – August 14, 2005

Ibrahim Rasheed, managing director of the state-owned weekly *Adduvas* was imprisoned on August 14, 2005.

Abdullah Saeed (Fahala) – October 13, 2005

Abdullah Saeed, reporter for the *Minivan Daily*, , arrested on October 13, 2005 against a backdrop of a crackdown on opposition leaders. International concern was raised over the authorities' criminal prosecution processes after accusations that the government was involved in the fabrication of charges against opposition journalists such as Saeed. Saeed was accused of drug possession by police when they allegedly found drugs in his clothing upon his summon to

the police station. The *Minivan Daily* defended its journalist, claiming that the accusation was fabricated and merely a pretext; an open attack by the government on journalists. On March 26, 2006, Saeed was sentenced to two months in jail for refusing a urine test Saeed said his refusal was due to his fear that the sample would be tampered with. He was further sentenced to life imprisonment on April 18, for drugs possession with intent to deal.

Jennifer Latheef – October 18, 2005

Jennifer Latheef, documentary filmmaker, human rights activist and photojournalist for the paper *Minivan Daily*, was sentenced to ten years in jail on October 18 for a supposed “terrorist act” of throw a stone at a police officer during political demonstrations on September 20, 2003 while protesting the deaths of five prisoners of conscience under torture. Latheef, who is the daughter of Mohamed Latheef, founder and ambassador for the Maldivian Democratic Party who had been exiled because of his pro-democracy beliefs, was imposed with the harsh sentencing based entirely on the testimony of the police officers, which were often contradictory.

During the weeks leading up to the trial, Latheef’s health deteriorated steadily, largely due to the stress of the trial. She was hospitalised in early October 2005 and was unable to attend an October 13 hearing at which five other dissidents on trial with her received 11-year sentences.

She continued to be held in poor conditions in a prison on the island of Maafushi, some 20km south of the capital of Malé. Her cell is small and filthy, in a building where political and ordinary prisoners are lumped together. The toilets in the cell are blocked, emitting a terrible stench. She had no access to water that is fit to drink, or the daily treatment she needed to regulate her blood sugar level.

On 22 December 2005, she was transferred from Maafushi Jail to house arrest on medical grounds.. Doctors prescribed physiotherapy for spiral column injuries and recommended that she rest for mental exhaustion. Despite her physical condition, authorities continued to put pressure on her by going to her home three times on December 25 in an attempt to take her back to prison. The authorities are refusing Latheef permission to go abroad for medical treatment. Latheef continues to serve her time for her alleged “terrorist act”, as international campaigns mount for her release.

MEDIA WORKERS HARASSED

Sirshan Zahir – August 12, 2005

Sirshan Zahir, cameraman filmed Mohamed Nasheed’s arrest on August 12. Following this, 15 masked policemen forcibly entered and searched his home at around 3am several days following the event.

Aminath Najeeb – August 19, 2005

Aminath Najeeb, editor of the independent newspaper, *Minivan Daily*, was hauled to the police station twice and threatened with prosecution and detention for an article on the August 1, 2005 protests.

Nazim Sattar – April 18, 2006

Minivan's sub-editor, Nazim Sattar, was summoned to court on 18 April and charged for 'disobedience to order' in relation to an article published in the newspaper on August 2, 2005. If found guilty Nazim faces up to six months in either exile, imprisonment, or house arrest or a fine of up to Mrf. 150.00 (about USD 1,200).

NEWSPAPERS ATTACKED

Minivan Daily targeted – August 31, 2005

The *Minivan Daily*, an online newspaper (minivannews.com), was granted permission to publish a print edition on July 26, however intimidation by the authorities led to its suspension of normal

publication. After caving in to threats made by unknown assailants, who threatened to burn the printers down if they continued to print the newspaper, the printers stopped producing the publication at the end of August, it continued to circulate in photocopied form only.

Minivan Radio raided – December 28, 2005

On December 28, 2005, ten Sri Lankan police officers raided the Colombo premises of the radio station, Minivan, and website, Minivannews.com in search for arms. They found none. The raid was prompted by baseless claims from the Maldivian Police Chief Adam Zahir to counterparts in Sri Lanka. Since then, some of the Maldivian journalists fled Sri Lanka for fear of further reprisals. The station briefly stopped broadcasting as a result.

Minivan staff arrested – April 9, 2006

Mohamed Yushau, the *Minivan Daily* correspondent in the south of the country, was arrested on April 9, for allegedly refusing to respond to a police summons and was put in Dhoonidhoo prison near Male.

STATE AUTHORITY HARASSMENT

System engineer detained – May 1, 2005

On May 1, the Maldivian Government stretched its arm of silencing dissent to a cable and wireless employee, Ismaili Faiz, who was arrested and detained for five weeks. Faiz was a system engineer of the country's sole Internet service provider, Dhiraagu. He was released on June 6, 2005 without any clear explanation as to why he was detained. In fact, the charges were elusive, changing several times. He was initially accused of working with the *Dhivehi Observer*, a London-based website that is banned in the Maldives. He was later accused of links with the militant group Jamutul Muslimeen.

MEDIA WORKERS RELEASED FROM JAIL

Fatimath Nisreen – May 9, 2005

Fatimath Nisreen, a cyber-dissident for the online publication *Sandhaanu*, was released after spending three years in prison and under house arrest. Nisreen was arrested along with Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee, Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed Ibrahim Didi in 2002 for running the online e-mail magazine that was critical of the government. They were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment, accused of libel and "trying to overthrow the government". While Luthfee managed to escape while on treatment in Sri Lanka, Mohamed Zaki and Ahmed continued to be under house arrest. Their life imprisonments were later reduced to 15 years in jail. During her imprisonment, Nisreen was banished to an island far from home, although she was eventually allowed to return to the capital, Male to live under house arrest. She was sentenced to five years in prison and she was not due to be released until February 2007.

Mohamed Zaki – August 18, 2005

Mohamed Zaki, cyber-dissident in the online e-mail magazine, *Sandhaanu*, was freed on 18 August 2005. He was jailed in January 2002 and then put under house arrest in January 2004 because he was partially paralysed with a back problem. The charges against him were in relation to his involvement with the newsletter that criticised human rights violations and corruption and he was sentenced to life imprisonment on July 7, 2002. His sentence was reduced to 15 years in 2003.

Ahmed Didi released from jail – February 22, 2006

Ahmed Didi, an Internet journalist was pardoned from house arrest. He received a life sentence four years ago after being arrested on February 5, 2002 and held in solitary confinement for several months before his life imprisonment sentence. Because of his work as a founder of Dhivehi-language Internet publication *Sandhaanu*, Didi was charged with defamation, incitement

to violence and treason. His sentence was later reduced to 15 years and he was transferred from prison to house arrest. Three of his colleagues were also given long prison terms for their involvement in the banned news outlet but Didi was the last one in custody.

NEPAL

MEDIA WORKERS MURDERED

Maheshwor Pahari - October 4, 2005

Maheshwor Pahari, reporter for the Pokhara based *Rastriya Swabhiman* weekly, died in custody from tuberculosis on October 4, 2005 after authorities repeatedly refused to provide treatment. Pahari, aged 32, died just one week after being transferred from the main prison in the western city of Pokhara to the city's regional hospital. Although doctors had been recommending his transfer to Kathmandu for treatment, the prison authorities refused to do so. Until the end, police refused to let his friends and fellow journalists see him. Only his wife was able to talk to him for a few minutes in hospital. Pahari had been ill for several months but the prison guards refused to provide him with the necessary medicines or improve his conditions of detention. He was held with about 100 other detainees in a cell designed for 20 prisoners. Publication of Pahari's paper *Rastriya Swabhiman* was stopped after Maoist rebels broke the cease-fire in August 2003. Although he had no proof, the security forces hounded him for years because they suspected him of links with the rebels. He was arrested on January 2, 2004 and secretly held at Phulbari barracks, near Pokhara, under the anti-terrorism law. As he left Kaski prison on May 13, 2005 on completion of a six-month sentence, he was rearrested and taken to Ward police station in Bagar, a northern district of Pokhara.

MEDIA WORKERS ARRESTED

Nagendra Upadhyaya - July 20, 2005

Nagendra Upadhyaya, publication director of the weekly *New Malika*, based in Teekapur in the far-western Kailali district, and reporter for the daily *Abhiyan*, based in Mahendranagar in the same region, was arrested on July 20, 2005. He was placed in custody under the anti-terror law, *The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADO)*. The local administration accused him of helping Maoist militants. He was released on January 5, 2006.

Harihar Singh Rathour - September 19, 2005

Harihar Singh Rathour, correspondent of *The Kathmandu Post* for Dailekh, was first harassed, detained and then arrested without a warrant on September 19, 2005 for his alleged ties with the Maoist forces. Before his arrest, Rathour denied accusations that he was working with Maoists. Rathour was harassed by RNA personnel earlier in the year when a military official summoned the journalist after he published an article stating that soldiers were using children in neighbouring villages as spies. On September 21, 2005 journalist Harihar Singh Rathour was released from police custody in Dailekh District after being held for three days. A mission led by Mahendra Bista, general secretary of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), negotiated Rathour's release after police barred any contact with friends or family during his three-day arrest.

Shyam Shrestha - January 19, 2006

Shyam Shrestha, editor of *Mulyankan* magazine was arrested by security forces from his residence, along with human rights activists and senior leaders of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), in an attempt to foil the alliance's protest demonstration. Shrestha remains in detention at No. 2 Post of Armed Police Force at Maharajgunj under the *Public Security Act*.

Khem Bhandari - January 22, 2006

Khem Bhandari, editor of *Abhiyan* daily from Mahendranagar, Kanchanpur, was arrested on January 22, 2006 and issued with a seven-day notice for allegedly attacking policemen while

returning home from his office. Bhandari had been writing fearlessly about the irregularities committed by officials in the region. He was subjected to torture while in custody and released on January 25, 2006 following successful negotiations by a high level FNJ mission.

Keshab Neupane - January 23, 2006

Keshab Neupane, reporter for the Biratnagar based daily newspaper *Darshan Dainik*, was detained at Singhadurbar ward police office. He was not allowed to inform family members about his detention for four days, nor meet any outsiders or use any communication facilities. Following his release on February 14, 2006, Neupane is currently suffering from pain in his chest, back, liver and abdomen, as well as a cough and urinary bladder problems.

Shiva Patel and Prabhu Hajara- January 25, 2006

The local administration of the Parsa district issued the 90-day detention of Shiva Patel, publisher and editor of the weekly *Madhesh Darpan*, in the southern town of Birgunj, and Prabhu Hajara, a Birgunj-based correspondent of the weekly *Dristi*, published from Kathmandu. Both were picked up from their residences on January 25, 2006. Patel and Hajara are known for writing and reporting critically on local as well as national political issues, including the royal takeover of 2005.

Lokraj Pandey - January 27, 2006

In the far-western town of Dhangadhi, local authorities sentenced Lokraj Pandey, a newspaper journalist for *Sudur Sandesh*, to threemonths detention on charges of taking part in opposition protests.

Chamina Bhattarai - January 28, 2006

Chamina Bhattarai, reporter with reputed daily paper *Prateek*, published from Birganj in central Nepal, was arrested while she was reporting news about a local protest rally. She was charged under the *Public Security Act* with detention orders for three months.

Bhawana Prasain - February 8, 2006

Bhawana Prasain, correspondent of the *Majdoor Aawaz* monthly was arrested while collecting news of a SPA protest program. She was illegally arrested and detained at Central Prison, Tripureshwor, on various allegations. She was released on March 15, 2006.

Dharma Gautam & Dhiren Chemjong - February 9, 2006

Journalists Dharma Gautam, founding president of FNJ, Ilam chapter, and Dhiren Chemjong, former FNJ member, were arrested at a peaceful demonstration held in protest against the election at Ilam. While in detention, they were treated brutally. They were released on February 13, 2006.

Jaya Prakash Gupta - March 3, 2006

Jaya Prakash Gupta, editor of Kathmandu based *Disha Nirdesh* weekly was arrested from his office. Police took him to court asking for remand. He was detained at Hanumandhoka police office. He was arrested because he wrote news of a bomb blasted where the king was residing. He was arrested on the accusation of a state offence. He was released on March 20, 2006 due to pressure from the international mission.

Hom Prasad Basyal - March 4, 2006

The RNA arrested Hom Prasad Basyal, reporter of Maoist's Janaganatantra Radio Nepal. According to the press release from the Special Regional Administrator of the FM Machin Rokka, Basyal was arrested from Butwal while he was reporting. He remains in detention.

Suresh Prasad Yadhav - April 4, 2006

Suresh Prasad Yadhav, district correspondent of *Purba Weekly* was arrested while reporting on a rally at Koteswor, Kathmandu. The rally was organised by the Terai community to express their

solidarity with the democratic movement. He has been detained at Maharajgunj No. 2 police barrack and remains in custody.

Laxmi Prasain - April 5, 2006

Laxmi Prasain, chief editor, of the *Kutumba* weekly, was arrested from his house for his involvement in the protest organised by the FNJ. He remains in custody.

Shudarshan Acharya, Bhaktadhowj Bhojara, Shyam Badan KC and Kamal Koirala - April 6, 2006

Shudarshan Acharya and Bhaktadhowj Bhojara, two central representatives of the FNJ, Shyam Badan KC, editor of *Kathmandu Shandhaykalin* and Kamal Koirala, chief editor of *Roadmap* weekly were arrested for their involvement in a protest organised by the FNJ. Among the arrested journalists, Acharya and Bhojara were detained at the women's training academy, Jawalakhel. They remain in custody.

Kanak Mani Dixit, senior journalist and editor of the magazine Himal South Asia and Kedar Sharma, journalist of Himal Media - April 8, 2006

Kanak Mani Dixit, senior journalist and editor of the magazine *Himal South Asia* and Kedar Sharma, journalist of *Himal Media*, were arrested while defying curfew orders imposed by the government to foil peaceful political demonstrations. Police took them into custody along with two-dozen human rights activists and professionals as they tried to hold a protest rally in front of the TU Teaching Hospital at Maharajgunj. They have been detained at Duwakot armed police office. Neither family members nor FNJ members are allowed to meet them. They remain in custody.

Hari Narayan Gautam - April 9, 2006

Hari Narayan Gautam, secretary, FNJ Dhulagiri Branch was arrested while reporting on the democratic movement organised by the SPA in Baglung. His detention was extended for 20 days.

MEDIA WORKERS DETAINED FOR FEWER THAN 48 HOURS

Ishwori Ojha, R. L. Shramjivi, Madhu Acharya - June 13, 2005

Police arrested 44 scribes, including journalists Ishwori Ojha, R.L Shramjivi and Madhu Acharya, from a peaceful protest against the government's crackdown on media at Banepa of Kavre district. The protest rally was organised by the Kavre district branch of the FNJ.

48 journalists arrested in Kathmandu - June 13, 2005

Plain-clothed vigilantes arrested 48 journalists while attending a peaceful demonstration. They were released after 48 hours. Vigilantes mistreated the journalists and forced them into a police van and minibus. Three journalists were injured when the police baton charged them.

Ishwori Ojha - June 22, 2005

Ishwori Ojha, president of the FNJ, Kavre Branch and 11 other journalists were arrested while attending a peaceful demonstration demanding press freedom. Police took action when participants were reciting poems about democracy.

Murari Kumar Sharma, Bindu Kanta Ghimire, Kiran Pokhrel, Shital Koirala, Shiva Devkota, Umesh Gurung, Kishore Karki - June 29, 2005

Police arrested journalists Murari Kumar Sharma, Bindu Kanta Ghimire, Kiran Pokhrel, Shital Koirala, Shiva Devkota, Umesh Gurung and Kishore Karki while they tried to enter Singha Durbar, the main government secretariat, to stage a sit-in protest in front of the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC), demanding complete press freedom in the country. Nepal Press Union (NPU) organised the protest.

Bhadra Nath Adhikari - July 8, 2005

Regional Administrator for Nepal's central region, Rabindra Chakrabarty, summoned Bhadra Nath Adhikari, editor and publisher of the bi-monthly newspaper *Grameen Samachar (Rural News)* published from the Southern city of Birgunj. He was detained for about 24 hours. *Grameen Samachar* reported in its issue dated June 29, 2005, that Chakrabarty had used his influence to prevent investigation into the suspicious deaths of three Indian workers at Star Cement Industry, a local business, after allegedly taking a bribe of 200,000 NPR (approx. 3,000 USD). A week after the publication of the report, Adhikari was arrested by local police and taken to the office of the district administration. Adhikari was released the next day, after he agreed to sign a statement saying he would ask his paper's executive editor to report to the regional administration office.

Ramakanta Gautam - July 31, 2005

Security personnel arrested Ramakanta Gautam, a distributor for Kantipur Publications, in the western town of Pokhara on July 31. Gautam was handed over to police the next day and later released, after spending nearly 18 hours in army detention. According to *The Kathmandu Post*, security personnel blindfolded and beat Gautam while he was in custody, accusing him of being a Maoist cadre. They also asked him about the whereabouts of the underground Maoist leaders. According to Gautam, army personnel continued to beat him severely even though he repeatedly told them he was a newspaper distributor, not a Maoist. They reportedly threatened to bury him in a ditch. Gautam later learned that he was being held at the RNA's Phulbari barracks.

Nakul Kaji and Raj Kumar Pokhrel - August 22, 2005

Nakul Kaji, editor of the *Bibechana Daily*, and Raj Kumar Pokhrel, column writer for the daily, were arrested in relation to a story published in the paper entitled "Police post can be removed from Birtamod". Police took the pair to the district police office at Chandragadhi but released them after three hours on the condition they publish a correction.

80 journalists arrested – September 16, 2005

80 journalists including Bishnu Nisthuri, FNJ president and Mahendra Bista, general secretary were arrested whilst attending a peaceful demonstration for democracy and press freedom. The majority of journalists were picked up by police prior to the protest and were released in the evening. Defying the government's ban on demonstrations and rallies, journalists assembled at Ratnapark and chanted slogans demanding immediate restoration of press freedom and democratic rights of the people. President Bishnu Nisthuri and general secretary Mahendra Bista were arrested even before the program started.

Sunsari - October 30, 2005

Police arrested 30 journalists from a rally organised by media persons demanding to rescind the media ordinance.

Durga Karki, Dipak Babu Aryal, Dipak Raj Pandey, Punya Bhandari and Rajendra Bhandari - November 27, 2005

Kathmandu based community radio station, Radio Sagarmatha, was raided by police at around 9pm for attempting to carry a BBC Nepali service relay broadcast that included the interview of Maoist leader Prachanda. Station staff were arrested, equipment was confiscated and the state administration delivered a letter to the station to suspend all broadcasts. Journalists Durga Karki, Dipak Babu Aryal, Dipak Raj Pandey, Punya Bhandari and technician Rajendra Bhandari were arrested.

Santosh Neupane - December 6, 2005

Santosh Neupane, editor of *Hetauda Sandesh Daily* was arrested unannounced and was mentally tortured in custody. Central regional administrator, Rabindra Chakraborty, called Neupane to his office on a Sunday and was interrogated for eight hours. Prior to this, he was threatened with murder via telephone if he wrote news against the royalists. Chakraborty interrogated him about five separate news items published in his daily newspaper surrounding a rally organised by opposition parties and the reprinting of an interview of Maoist leader, Prachanda.

Yem Birahi - December 19, 2005

Yem Birahi, reporter of *Rajdhani* daily was arrested without reason while returning home and was detained for two and half hours at Janasewa police station, Bishalbazar, during which he was assaulted by security personnel. The police used foul language and seized his media identity card.

Moti Paudel and Kamal Panta - January 2, 2006

Moti Poudel, reporter of *Kantipur* daily, and cameraperson Kamal Panta of Kantipur Television Network, were arrested from the premises of the Surkhet Appellate Court. The journalists were covering news regarding the court's decision on a *habeas corpus* petition. Plainclothes police reportedly assaulted Panta as he was trying to take pictures of security men re-arresting the four persons (suspected Maoists) released after the court's order. The police were acting on orders from Police Inspector Gobindha Pathak of the Regional Police Office. Panta was accused of working as an informer for the Maoists and was taken to the police station. Panta sustained minor injuries from the beating. Journalist Poudel, who went to Panta's rescue, was also arrested. Police inspector Rajkumar Silwal of the District Police Office also snatched Panta's camera and deleted the pictures, stating that he was ordered to do so by a 'higher authority'.

Damodar - January 22, 2006

Damodar of *Bikalpa Weekly* was arrested from a protest rally at Hanumandhoka, while he was reporting. He was released on the same day.

Dil Bahadur Ayr - January 25, 2006

Dil Bahadur Ayr, a journalist affiliated with Dadeldhura based *Janamat* weekly, was arrested on charges of taking part in a prodemocracy rally organised by opposition parties. Ayr said he was only there to cover news about the rally.

Shiva Devkota & Raju Thapa - January 26, 2006

Shiva Devkota, chairperson of NPU district committee in Nuwakot and Raju Thapa former chairperson of the FNJ, Nuwakot branch, were arrested at 2pm while reporting news at a mass rally organized by the SPA against the nomination for the municipal poll called for February 8. They were detained for three hours.

Janak Neupane, Chandra B.C, Sitaram Jaisi - January 27, 2006

Journalists Janak Neupane, Chandra B.C. and Sitaram Jaisi were arrested by security forces at Dailekh in the afternoon.

Narayan Timilsina - January 28, 2006

Plain-clothed police personnel entered the newsroom of Sri Nagar FM radio station in the western district of Palpa and took journalist Narayan Timilsina into custody. Despite it being a public holiday, Timilsina was driven to the District Administration Office of Palpa, where he was interrogated for nearly two hours by officials about a news item aired by the FM station. Timilsina was then released. He was also made to sign an affidavit saying that the FM station would not air any material that may be deemed 'objectionable' by the local administration.

Manohar Kumar Pokhrel - January 29, 2006

Manohar Kumar Pokhrel, FNJ central council member was arrested on January 29, 2006 at Rajbiraj and was mentally tortured for four hours. He was released on the same day.

Rajesh Bidrohi, Janak Rishi Rai, Bhim Rai Jwala, Ramesh Shrestha - January 31, 2006

Rajesh Bidrohi, vice president of FNJ Sunsari branch; Janak Rishi Rai, district secretary of FNJ; Bhim Rai Jwala; and Ramesh Shrestha were arrested for reporting on a poetry recitation on democratic issues. Led by Inspector Rajkumar Baidawar, a police team brutally beat the journalists and then took them to the Regional Police Office in Dharan, where they were physically and mentally tortured.

31 journalists arrested on 'Black Day' - February 1, 2006

At least 31 journalists were arrested when police took action at a peaceful rally held to mark February 1 as a 'Black day'. FNJ president Bishnu Nisthuri; vice presidents Sanjay Shantoshi Rai and Gangadhar Parajuli; secretary Balram Baniya; treasurer Hemanta Kafle; general secretary Mahendra Bista; and Ram Hari Silwal were all injured during the arrests. In Jhapa, at least 30 journalists were arrested from the FNJ branch office. In Morang, the police arrested secretaries Dilli Pokhrel, Bishnu Pathak, and Mahendra Bista. On Taplejung, secretary of the FNJ Taplejung branch Khagendra Adhikari and members Rajendra Shrestha and Gajendra Tummyang were also arrested from the rally.

Govinda Sharma - February 4, 2006

Security forces detained Govinda Sharma, a reporter for the daily *Hamro Samrachana* published from Nepalgunj. Security personnel at the Nepalgunj check-point arrested Sharma when heading towards Nepalgunj from his house at Khajura. Sharma later said security forces held him saying he was a Maoist. He was released after an hour-long interrogation. Sharma also said the security personnel assaulted him.

Rajbiraj - February 4, 2006

At least ten journalists were arrested when police took action against protestors at a peaceful rally held to protest nationwide arrests and detention of journalists. Arrested journalists included, Prakash Khatiwada, Baidhnath Jha, Dharendra Shah, Avedesh Shah, Manohar Pokharel, Deepak Chintan, Raju B.K, Kamanand Majhi and Shyam Prakash Yadav.

Sunsari - February 3, 2006

Security personnel detained at least three journalists whilst attending a democratic poetry recitation program. They were detained at Purwanchal Armed Police Office.

Ravi Dhami - February 4, 2006

The army arrested journalist Ravi Dhami in Kanchanpur for taking photographs of a program organised by pro-democracy demonstrators. He was released after an hour.

Jitendra Khadga - February 4, 2006

Jitendra Khadga, chairman of Youth Journalists Society in Saptari was mistreated by security personnel and detained for two hours.

J B Ghale Magar & fellow journalist – February 7, 2006

Vice president of the FNJ Dhankuta chapter, J B Ghale Magar, and a journalist from Udhgosh daily *Tikaram Ghimire* were arrested whilst monitoring pro-democracy demonstrations.

Bhimarjun Regmi - February 7, 2006

News chief of Tulsipur FM, Bhimarjun Regmi, was captured by the army. He was released after three hours.

Suresh Kabra - February 8, 2006

Suresh Kabra, member of FNJ in Chitwan, was arrested from Bharatpur and then assaulted by police while collecting news on municipal election. Police Sub Inspector Pradeep Thapa beat him with the butt of a gun and seized his identity card.

Amar Sunar - March 2, 2006

Amar Sunar, correspondent with the RSS and Rajdhani in Dailekh, was arrested whilst attending training related to conflict journalism. Police searched his residence the night prior to his arrest and arrested him without a warrant notice.

Kathmandu - April 5, 2006

13 journalists were arrested from Baneshwor. They were arrested at a peaceful protest rally organised by the Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy (PAPAD). The rally was organised to express solidarity for the SPA's four daylong protest program. Police used force on the participants and brutally manhandled them. Those arrested were: Bishnu Nisthuri, president of the FNJ; Mahendra Bista, general secretary; Balram Baniya, secretary; Binod Pahadi, central committee member; Harihar Birahi, senior journalist; Gopal Thapaliya, president of SAFMA Nepal; Kosh Raj Koirala; Sudarshan Acharya; Krishna Humagain; Yuvraj Acharya; Bharat Pokherel; Navaraj Sharma; and Rishi Dhamala. During the incident, Gopal Thapaliya was injured and Mahendra Bista was wounded. The arrested journalists were detained at the Ward Police Office in Tinkune. They were later shifted to the Police Club at Brikutimandap and were released the same day.

Kathmandu - April 5, 2006

24 journalists were arrested during a peaceful gathering, organized by the FNJ, in protest against the arrest of 37 professionals, including 13 journalists, from a demonstration organised by the Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy (PAPAD) on the same day. The arrested journalists were: Shiva Gaunle, vicepresident of FNJ; Hemanta Kafle, treasurer; Purna Basnet, central committee member; Kanak Dixit, senior journalist; Gyan Ram Shrestha; Laxman Karki; Bal Kumar Nepal; Navin Paudyal; Baburam Dhakal; Rojan Rai; Ujir Magar; Kiran Pokhrel; Indra Baniya; Damodar Dawadi; Govinda Chaulagain; Prakash Silwal; Lila Raj Khanal; Rajendra Aryal; Bimal Gautam; Dharmendra Jha; Uddhav Acharya; Nirmala Sharma; Shankar Layal Malla; and Dev Raj Rimal.

They were detained at Janasewa police office.

Parsa - April 6, 2006

12 journalists were arrested during a protest rally organised against the arrest of journalists. The rally was organised by PAPAD. The arrested journalists were: Shatrughan Nepal, president of FNJ Parsa branch; Krishna Khanal, treasurer; Dipendra Chauhan; Shree Ram Raimajhi; Sanjay Shah; Shiva Patel; Kapil Dev Yadev; K.C. Lamichane; Dhruva Shah; Sudip Shrestha; Baidyanath Thankur; and Gaya Yadev. They were detained at the district police office in Birgung, the district headquarters of Parsa.

Shom Nath Shuseli, Devi Chhettri, Ashok Bantawa and RohitChandra Bhattarai - April 6, 2006

Shom Nath Shuseli, president of FNJ Ilam chapter; Devi Chhettri, FNJ central council member; Ashok Bantawa, executive member of FNJ Ilam; and Rohit Chandra Bhattarai were arrested while reporting on the democratic movement organised by the SPA at Ilam, in the eastern district of Nepal.

Khem Bolakhe, Gokarna Adhikari, Girija Adhikari, Sunil Khadka and Hari Humagain - April 7, 2006

Khem Bolakhe, secretary of FNJ Makwanpur branch, Gokarna Adhikari, treasurer, Girija Adhikari of *Pratik Dainik*, Sunil Khadka of *Nikash Weekly* and Hari Humagain of *Hetauda Shandesh* were arrested whilst attending a peaceful protest rally organised by PAPAD and other professional organisations against the arrests of journalists and professionals. The police also charged the participants of the rally. All were detained at the district police office in Makwanpur.

Tribhuwan Paudel - April 7, 2006

Tribhuwan Paudel, executive member of FNJ Kaski chapter and reporter for the Pokhara based Annapurna FM, *Pokhra Hotline* and *Himal Khabar Online* was arrested while reporting on the democratic movement organised by the SPA in Pokhara. Paudyal was arrested when he tried to protest the arrest of a human rights activist from the rally. He was detained at the police barracks.

Butwal - April 9, 2006

18 journalists were arrested from a peaceful rally held to protest the arrest of journalists at Butwal, western city and headquarters of Rupendehi district. The arrested journalists were:

Kamala Kunwar; Dinesh Pandey; Dipak Gyawali; Sher Bahadur K.C.; Dipendra Baduwal; Dipendra Kunwar; Top Raj Sharma; Amrit Giri; Yub Raj Pandey; Hari Sundar Bashi; Shyam Lal Pokharel; Siddhi Charan Bhattarai; Laxman Paudel; Manoranjan Sharma; Arjun Shrestha; Ramesh Pokharel; Pradip Acharya; and Krishna Pokharel. The journalists claimed police also used excessive force prior to their arrest.

Ram Bahadur Ayr, Yogendra Balayer, Dil Bahadur Chhatyal, Min Bahadur Bum and Rana Bahadur Bohora - April 9, 2006

Ram Bahadur Ayr, editor of the *Bimb Weekly*, *Rajdhani Daily* correspondent Yogendra Balayer, Dil Bahadur Chhatyal, Min Bahadur Bum and Rana Bahadur Bohora were arrested while protesting at a rally organised against the government arrests of journalists and professionals.

Sanjay Santoshi Rai, Bijay Shantoshi Rai and J.B. Ghale Magar - April 9, 2006

Sanjay Santoshi Rai, vice president of the FNJ, Bijay Shantoshi Rai, president, Dhankuta chapter and J.B. Ghale Magar, vice president, FNJ Dhankuta were arrested while participating at a peaceful rally organised by the Appellate Court Bar Association against the arrests of journalists and professionals across the country. Magar was severely beaten before his arrest and consequently received a severe head injury. All were detained at the District Police Office in Dhankuta.

Karna Bahadur Karki, and D. R. Ghimire - April 9, 2006

Karna Bahadur Karki, former vice president of the FNJ, and D. R. Ghimire, president, FNJ Rupendehi chapter were arrested whilst reporting news on the democratic movement organised by the SPA at Butwal.

Sita Ram Jaisi - April 9, 2006

Sita Ram Jaisi, executive member of FNJ Dailekh was arrested while reporting the protest staged by the SPA. He was released the next day.

Thirlal Bhushal - April 9, 2006

Kathmandu Post reporter, Thirlal Bhushal, was arrested from his residence.

Jagat Saud and Prayag Joshi - April 10, 2006

Jagat Saud, *Farwest* correspondent, and Prayag Joshi, correspondent with *Sudur Sandesh*, were arrested while reporting on the democratic movement organised by the SPA at Dhangadi. Joshi was severely beaten by police despite having shown his media identity card. Joshi has already been released while Saud remains under custody.

Chitwan - April 11, 2006

Ten journalists were arrested during a pro-democracy rally against the nation-wide attack on journalists and professionals. The following journalists were arrested: Bishnu Chimeki, central committee member, FNJ Janak Aryal president, FNJ-Chitwan chapter, Narayan Sapkota, secretary, Babu Ram Ghimire, treasurer of FNJ-Chitwan chapter, Krishna Giri, Hari Prasad Pokhrel, Binod Adhikari, Sanad Kumar Chaudhari, Anup Raj Kanel and Hari Prasad Upreti. All the arrested journalists were detained at the Women's Police Academy, Chitwan.

Yagya Raj Thapa, Pushkar Thapa and Umesh KC Narayan -April 11, 2006

Yagya Raj Thapa, Pushkar Thapa and Umesh KC Narayan were arrested while reporting news of the democratic movement organised by the SPA at Dailekh. Police assaulted them before their arrest and all were threatened against further action and warned not to report on the democratic movement. They were released after six hours of detention.

Kathmandu - April 12, 2006

29 journalists were arrested as they participated in a peaceful protest rally organised by the FNJ against the government's attack on the media and freedom of expression. Those arrested were: Mahendra Bista, secretary general, FNJ, central committee members of FNJ, Ramji Dahal, Binod

Pahadi, Nirmala Sharma, Kishore Shrestha, Damodar Dawadi, Bharat Raj Pokhreal, Rajendra Aryal, Punya Bhandari, Ishwori Neupane, Ishwori Wagle, Damber Giri, Dipak Acharya, Chet Nath Dhama, Amar Nath Dhakal, Shree Babu Karki, Nav Raj Sharma, Sanat Acharya, Sita Ram Baral, Rohit Dahal, Surya Neupane, Santhosh Kanel, Bharat Khadka, Dev Raj Rimal, Nanda Rishi Neupane, Krishna Humagain, Shiva Devkota, Kapil Kafle and Shyam Bashnet. All the arrested journalists were detained at Singhadurbar Ward Police office, Kathmandu.

Pokhara - April 12, 2006

21 journalists were arrested at a peaceful protest organised by Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy (PAPAD) against the curfew and restriction order on demonstrations. The arrested were: Ganga Dhar Parajuli, vice-president of FNJ, Badri Binod Pratik, former vice president of the FNJ, Rabindra Bastola, president, FNJ Kaski chapter, Madhav Sharma, Nav Raj Subedi, Him Nidhi Laudari, Bal Krishna Kaucha, Shiva Sharma Chanchal, Krishna Anjan, Bishnu Prasad Bhandari, Aarju Bista, Dol Raj Pokhrel, Bishwa Shankar Palikhe, Hari Bastola, Binod Dhaulagiri, Beda Nidhi Timilsina, Sanjay Kishore Bastola, Navin Sigdel, Bibhu Bhushal, Punya Poudel and Yem Sangeet Shrota. All arrested journalists were kept in the Area Police office, Pokhara. The journalists were arrested when the police interfered with the protest and used excessive force on participants. Police also manhandled the journalists before arresting them.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Narendra Oli - May 15, 2005

Maoists detonated a bomb in the house of Narendra Oli, program presenter of Nepal Television and secretary of the Independent Journalists' Society of Nepal. His house in Dang, grains and a mill were damaged in the attack. His brother and father who also live in the house were luckily out of the house when the Maoists detonated the bomb.

Bharat Shahi, Bhimsen Rajbahak, Kamal Pariyar, Rodan Rai and Gyanendra Sharma - September 6, 2005

Police baton charged the five journalists while they were covering a protest rally organised by the SPA. Bharat Shahi, editor of *Chuli Sandesh* weekly was hit in the head. Bhimsen Rajbahak of *Communication Corner*; Kamal Pariyar of *Jana Sangarsha* weekly; Rodan Rai, photographer for the *The Himalay Times*; and Gyanendra Sharma, cameraman of Nepal One TV were manhandled by police. Unidentified vigilantes posing as journalists apparently incited the police by using abusive words.

Anil Raut - September 14, 2005

Security personnel attacked newspaper hawker, Anil Raut, and threw away his cycle and papers in the Janakpur municipality, Ten Devi Chowk.

Dhanaraj Pandit Bajura - October 27, 2005

Dhanaraj Pandit, sub-editor of *Hiuchuli Express* and central council member of Bajura was beaten by police while collecting news about a political party.

Abadesh Kumar Jha - October 30, 2005

Abadesh Kumar Jha was seriously injured when a group of unidentified people beat him at Rajbiraj.

Ram Bahadur Rawal - November 01, 2005

Ram Bahadur Rawal, correspondent with *Dristi Saptahik* was attacked while on his way home from the office. Rawal was seriously injured and was treated at Bajura Hospital. It was assumed security personnel from the Jwala Regiment Battalion attacked him after he had disseminated news about autocracy.

Upendra Man Singh, Sanchit Lamichane - November 28, 2005

Maoists looted media equipment worth 500,00 NPR (7,200 USD) from Upendra Man Singh, photojournalist for Kantipur Television; Sanchit Lamichane from *Boss Magazine*; and other journalists at Sikaicha of Taplejung. They captured the equipment for 22 hours. Maoists also looted equipment worth between 40,000-200,000 NPR (600-3,000 USD) from Singh and a camera with a Nikon lens from Lamichhane. The equipment was returned after 22 hours.

Ramesh Bista - December 5, 2005

Ramesh Bista, central member of the FNJ and program presenter of Sagarmatha FM was ill-treated by Litterateur Narendra Prasai. It is claimed the assault occurred when Bista was attending an idolunveiling program of national icon Araniko.

Prakash Acharya - December 19, 2005

Prakash Acharya, journalist for the *Gorkhapatra Daily*, was brutally attacked by the police while returning from Ratna Rajya campus. He was seriously injured.

Yem Birahi- January 21, 2006

Police manhandled Yem Birahi, a reporter with *Rajdhani* daily in Kathmandu as he was returning home from the office. Police briefly detained him and released him later. No reason for the detention was given.

Mahendra Thapa - January 24, 2006

Annapurna Post correspondent, Mahendra Thapa, was brutally beaten by police. He was on his way to a highway crossroad where students and police were pelting stones at each other. Police baton charged and brutally beat him, despite Thapa having flashed his media identity card. He was seriously injured.

Chandra Bista - January 24, 2006

Police manhandled a group of journalists as they were covering a pro-democracy demonstration at New Road, Kathmandu. A camera belonging to Chandra Bista of the private-sector Channel Nepal Television was damaged when the police fired water cannons to disperse the activists.

Ghanashyam Khadka, Pradeep Kafle, Rishi Ram Pokharel, Narayan Khadka - January 26, 2006

Ghanashyam Khadka, *Kantipur* correspondent for *Tanahu*; Pradeep Kafle, district president of the FNJ; Rishi Ram Pokherel, editor of *Tanahu Aawaz Weekly*; and Narayan Khadka, correspondent of *Bhanjyang* daily were beaten by police. Pokherel's right hand was injured and a camera damaged when the police baton charged.

Ramesh Bishta - February 1, 2006

Ramesh Bishta, FNJ central committee member was injured when police baton charged him and used water canons indiscriminately. He received a dislocated knee and other serious injuries.

Mahendra Bista and Ram Hari Silwal - February 1, 2006

General Secretary Mahendra Bista and Ram Hari Silwal were injured during a protest when police baton charged and used water cannons.

Sunil Neupane - February 1, 2006

Morang based journalist, Sunil Neupane, was manhandled by police at a protest on the anniversary of the February 1, 2005 royal coup.

Bijaya Santoshi Rai, Nagendra Rai - February 1, 2006

Bijaya Santoshi Rai, president of Dhankuta Branch and Nagendra Rai, member of the FNJ, Dhankuta were beaten and manhandled by security personnel during a rally taken out on February 1, 2006 marking it as a 'Black Day'. Bijaya Santoshi's right hand and thumb were injured. Nagendra Rai was seriously injured and his movie camera was also confiscated.

Kishor Jung Thapa, Bhimlal Shrestha, and Damodar Neupane Gorkha - February 1, 2006

Kishor Jung Thapa, Bhimlal Shrestha, and Damodar Neupane Gorkha were manhandled by police.

Gopal Dewan - February 8, 2006

Gopal Dewan, a journalist from *Aujar Weekly*, was beaten by security forces.

Upendra Pokharel - February 8, 2006

Upendra Pokharel, reporter for *Kantipur Daily*, was manhandled when he took photographs of a soldier casting a vote at the municipal poll at Kakarvita. The army also snatched the reel of the camera.

Kali Bahadur Malla and Rabindra Shahi - February 14, 2006

Kali Bahadur Malla, sub-editor of Kalikot based *Surkhet Sandhyakalin* and district correspondent of *Samacharpatra National Daily*, and Rabindra Shahi were brutally beaten by army personnel whilst returning home. They were beaten with the butt of gun on the accusation of favouring the Maoists. Both were seriously injured.

Narendra Nath Yogi - March 4, 2006

Narendra Nath Yogi, president of FNJ Bara Branch was manhandled by assistant sub-inspector Lal Bahadur Bhandari while collecting news about a rape committed by police personnel. The A.S. Inspector didn't give the information although Yogi flashed his press card. He instead assaulted him while using foul language.

Satya Prasad Shrestha - March 23, 2006

Satya Prasad Shrestha, district correspondent of *Nepal Samacharpatra* and advisor of Network for Human Rights, Kalaiya branch and president of the Human Rights and Peace Society was injured when Maoists indiscriminately fired bullets in front of a newspaper shop at Bharat Chowk of Bara district. He was reading a newspaper in front of the shop when the bullet was fired.

Madhav Basnet - April 7, 2006

Madhav Basnet, correspondent with the *Dristi Weekly*, was severely beaten by police at Gongabu, Kathmandu. Basnet suffered severe injuries to his right leg and hand. The incident took place while Basnet was reporting the news of the democratic movement organised by the SPA. The beating occurred despite Basnet showing his media identity card to police.

Hari Narayan Gautam - April 8, 2006

Hari Narayan Gautam, secretary, FNJ Baglung chapter received a serious head injury while reporting the movement staged by the SPA at Baglung.

Himal Sharma, Ram Bahadur GC, Ram Krishna Sharma, Khim Bahadur Karki and Yougendra Milan Satyal - April 8, 2006

Himal Sharma, Ram Bahadur GC, Ram Krishna Sharma, Khim Bahadur Karki and Yougendra Milan Satyal were injured when police baton charged during a SPA movement at Baglung.

Suresh Regmi - April 8, 2006

Suresh Regmi, journalist with the Chitwan based Synergy FM, was beaten by police while covering the news of a protest organised by the SPA.

Tej Prakash Pandit - April 8, 2006

Tej Prakash Pandit, chief editor of *Nayayug Bani*, was beaten by police while gathering news on the protest staged by the SPA in Kathmandu.

Santosh Sharma, Shyam Shrestha, and Tilak Koirala – April 8, 2006

Police manhandled Santosh Sharma, reporter for Kantipur Television, Shyam Shrestha cameraman and Tilak Koirala, reporter of Nepal One television when they were covering news of the protest organised by the SPA.

Bed Prakash Dhakal - April 9, 2006

Bed Prakash Dhakal, sub-editor of the *Annapurna Post*, was arrested from the compound of Cyprus School at Sukedhara, Kathmandu; he also received beatings from police. He was waiting to be picked up by his office car when the incident occurred. Some teachers from the school were also beaten when they protested against police beating him. Dhakal was beaten despite showing his media identity card.

Bhadra Sharma - April 9, 2006

Bhadra Sharma, correspondent with *Budhabar Weekly* was severely beaten by security personnel while on his way to his office at Panga, Bhaktapur.

Tek Raj Joshi, Tika Upreti and Prayag Joshi - April 9, 2006

Tek Raj Joshi, reporter of Dhangadi based Ghodaghodi FM, Tika Upreti and Prayag Joshi of Sudur Sandesh were severely beaten while reporting news on the democratic movement staged by the SPA at Dhangadi, the far western district of Nepal.

Binod Poudel - April 9, 2006

Binod Poudel, correspondent for *Annapurna Daily*, was beaten by police while reporting news on the democratic movement. He was severely injured in the incident.

Balram Baniya, Akhilesh Tripathi, Gopal Khanal and Ekindra Kunwar - April 10, 2006

Police brutally beat Balram Baniya, FNJ secretary; Akhilesh Tripathi, editor of *eKantipur*; Gopal Khanal, assistant senior sub-editor; and Ekindra Kunwar, reporter at *Boudha*, Kathmandu. The incident took place when they arrived at the demonstration organised by the SPA. They were deliberately singled out and targeted by the police once they realised they were from Kantipur Publications. In a frenzied attack, police rained batons on them and used abusive words. Over a dozen police surrounded the four journalists from all sides and started systematically beating them even as they showed their press cards. Police also hurled stones at photojournalist, Saligram Tiwari. The journalists were later treated for massive swollen backs, limbs and legs.

Om Prakash Upadhyaya - April 10, 2006

Om Prakash Upadhyaya, *Himalayan Times* correspondent for the Parbat district, was brutally beaten by security personnel while reporting. Police didn't spare him even though he flashed his media identity card.

D R Pant - April 10, 2006

Police took D R Pant, FNJ vice president and *Kantipur* reporter under control, systematically beat him and snatched away his camera while he was covering a protest demonstration. Pant, who was seriously injured in the police beating, was treated for severe bruises.

Lavdev Dhungana - April 11, 2006

Lavdev Dhungana, president of the FNJ Pachthar chapter was brutally beaten by police. The incident occurred when Dhungana was participating in a protest rally organised against the continuous arrest and attacks on journalists and professionals. Five police personnel rounded him and beat him brutally despite Dhungana showing his media identity card. Dhungana received severe injuries to his head and was treated in hospital. He had four stitches to his head.

Keshav Bhattarai, Narayan Dhungana - April 11, 2006

Keshav Bhattarai, central council member, FNJ and Narayan Dhungana, reporter of *Bargikrit Dainik* were beaten by police at Ratnanagar, Chitwan. The incident took place when they were reporting the news of the democratic movement organised by the SPA at Ratnanagar. They were beaten even though they showed their media identity cards to the police.

Krishna Yogi - April 12, 2006

Krishna Yogi was severely beaten by police while reporting a torch rally organised by the SPA at Myanglung of Tehrathum, in the eastern district of Nepal. He received severe injuries to his head and wrist.

Rabindra Kumar Chaudhary, Kushal Babu Basnet, Shanta Rai and Mohan Gole - April 12, 2006

Security personnel used sharp objects to beat journalists Rabindra Kumar Chaudhary, Kushal Babu Basnet, Shanta Rai and Mohan Gole who were reporting on a peaceful rally organised by the SPA at Udayapur against the autocratic regime.

MEDIA WORKERS HARASSED/ THREATENED

Prem KC, Banke - June 12, 2005

Prem KC, correspondent of NTV regional transmission centre, Kohalpur was threatened by Man Bahadur Ghale, Banke Office chief to remove him from his job if he didn't give up his post of president of FNJ Banke branch. He was threatened because he actively participated in the movement for press freedom.

Umesh Gurung - June 29, 2005

Maoist insurgents threatened Umesh Gurung, Ilam correspondent of the state-owned Radio Nepal and editor of the local weekly *Sutradhar Shree*. The rebels asked him to quit his job with the radio station and join their 'people's war' within two months. Gurung said earlier the Maoists placed him under house arrest for several weeks. He said he managed to escape their district headquarters and is currently living in the eastern town of Biratnagar.

Kishore Karki - June 29, 2005

Maoists threatened Kishore Karki, editor and publisher of *Blast Times* newspaper, published in the eastern town of Dharan, and his colleagues saying that they would take action against them if the newspaper criticised their activities.

Jaya Kurmar Rokaya, Humla - July 13, 2005

Jaya Kumar Rokaya, Humla correspondent of *Kantipur*, was threatened by the Maoists in a letter accusing Rokaya of being a part of the District Monitoring Committee and that he allowed it opening an office in his residence.

Gokul Baskota - July 21, 2005

Death threats by some unidentified people were made against Gokul Baskota, executive editor of *Dristi Saptahik*. He said that the unidentified people were enquiring about him near his residence at Lokanthali of Bhaktapur.

Dhir Bahadur Shahi - July 29, 2005

Local administration sought clarification from Dhir Bahadur Shahi, publisher and chief editor of Birendranagar based *Pharakhato Weekly* for half an hour on the news "Sign of militarization in Surkhet" published on July 27, 2005.

Tanka Bahadur Chettri - August 3, 2005

A patrolling team of the RNA mistreated special representative of the *Nawa Paricharcha Weekly*, Tanka Bahadur Chettri.

Krishna Kumar Khanal, Bijaya Kushwaha - August 8, 2005

Krishna Kumar Khanal, editor of *Birgunj Report* daily, publisher and treasurer of FNJ district branch and managing director, Bijaya Kushwaha, were threatened and asked to clarify an article by the District Administration Office, Parsa on the monarchy written by Hareram Mahato. They were forced to sign a statement that they won't publish future news on the monarchy.

Tekendra Dhakal - August 12, 2005

Tekendra Dhakal, editor of Jhapa based weekly *Jhulkegham*, received a letter from ANFSU (revolutionary) warning him of physical action against him if he sticks pamphlets on public places. ANFSU (revolutionary) also accused him of being a spy and threatened to kill him.

Krishna Jwala Devkota - August 22, 2005

Unidentified people who claim to be security personnel threatened to kill *Kantipur* reporter, Krishna Jwala Devkota. The telephone and email threats started after his news story titled "Why doesn't army speak".

Ram Raj Pokherel - August 27, 2005

Some armed persons claiming themselves to be security personnel raided the room of Channel Nepal TV reporter, Ram Raj Pokherel. They searched his room for about 25 minutes. They also interrogated him in a very offensive manner.

Saraswati Karki - September 15, 2005

Saraswati Karki, *Kantipur* correspondent for Damak, was threatened via telephone by Major Uttam Khadka of Jabarjung Battalion regarding the news that was published on September 14, 2005 in the *Kantipur Daily*. The news was about security personnel beating 12 civilians. He asked her to leave the job and threatened to break her legs.

Kamal Neupane - October 19, 2005

Kamal Neupane, Dailekh correspondent of *Nepal Samacharpatra Daily* was threatened by Maoist district committee member, Lachiram to take action if he doesn't leave his job. He has been accused of writing news against the 'people's war', advocating against the Maoists and cooperating with the monarchy.

Dilliram Khatiwada - December 30, 2005

Dilliram Khatiwada, *Kantipur* correspondent for Saptari at Rajbiraj was threatened by the son of the village president, Muktinath Mandal, for writing news against his father.

Bed Prakash Timilsina, Sailendra Kharel - January 6, 2006

Bed Prakash Timilsina, *Kantipur* correspondent and Sailendra Kharel, photojournalist were mistreated and threatened by security personnel deployed at Bheri Zonal Hospital. The pair were at the hospital to collect news on those injured during the Maoists attack on Ranjha.

Benup Raj Bhattarai, January 8, 2006

Police forced Benup Raj Bhattarai, *Kantipur* correspondent at Ilam, to reveal a source by threatening him. Police also questioned him on the news regarding the royal visit to Ilam when some students showed black flags protesting against it.

Dhiren Chemjong - January 28, 2006

Dhiren Chemjong, former central member of the FNJ, was threatened and mentally tortured by the army. RNA battalion commander Sudarshan Bikram Rana gave him a threatening order to present himself at the army barracks for no reason. When he didn't agree to present himself, army personnel threatened to come and take him forcibly from his house.

Yekindra Kumar Kunwar - February 12, 2006

Yekindra Kumar Kunwar from Achham Sandesh, was called to appear before the Maoists District People's Court and threatened with action if he failed to appear within seven days of the release of the notification.

Birendra Rawal - February 12, 2006

Birendra Rawal, editor of Dhangadi based paper *Hamro Saptahik* received continuous threats and repeated phone calls to appear at the so-called Maoist Court because of the news he had written.

Divakar Devkota, Arjun Kumar Shah and Suman Pyakurel - February 1, 2006

Security personnel entered the residences of journalists Divakar Devkota, Arjun Kumar Shah and Suman Pyakurel at Rajbiraj and searched their house without any reason.

Arjun Prasad Shah - February 1, 2006

A security team led by Colonel Saroj Prasad Shah searched the house of and mentally tortured Arjun Prasad Shah, FNJ central council member at midnight.

Hemanta Paudyal - February 2, 2006

Security personnel of unified command surrounded the office of Hemanta Paudyal, editor of *Sudur Sandesh* daily, and thoroughly searched his office looking to arrest him. Paudyal somehow managed to escape them. They left his office after three hours.

Ganesh Pandey - February 20, 2006

Army officer of Besisahar Garuddal Barrack, Prakash Pokherel threatened to kill, Lamjung correspondent of *Nepal Samacharpatra*, Ganesh Pandey. The army reprimanded him for printing news about a Maoists initiative to construct a road saying the paper published the photo related to the army without permission. They scolded him using foul language.

Rajesh Gurung - February 25, 2006

Rajesh Gurung, photojournalist for *The Himalayan Times* daily was ill treated by police inspector Ramesh Basnet when he reached Gaushala Ward Police Office to get information about the royal visit at Pashupatinath Temple on the day of Shivaratri. The inspector verbally abused him as soon as he entered the premises of the police station.

Pabitra Kumar Khadka - March 8, 2006

Armed police deployed at Tatopani custom took Pabitra Kumar Khadka, FNJ central council member and managing editor of *Shree Abhilekh* weekly under control for an hour and warned that he would be enlisted as a terrorist in the future. He was threatened due to the news published in his paper. DSP Deepak Thapa forced him to reveal the source of the news. Thapa asked why he didn't write news about the army and Maoists, and expressed anger for writing news against armed police. He was taken to the DSP's office and was threatened for an hour.

Nemish Gautam, Roshan Sanwa, Laxmi Mishra and Benup Raj Bhattarai - April 6, 2006

Security personnel assaulted journalists Nemish Gautam, Roshan Sanwa, Laxmi Mishra and Benup Raj Bhattarai while they were reporting on a democratic movement organised by the SPA.

MEDIA CENTERS TARGETED

Ghodaghodi FM - May 18, 2005

Maoists looted Ghodaghodi FM station at Attariyain, Kailali.

Communication Corner - May 27, 2005

Information Ministry sent a written order to close Communication Corner, a syndicate audio content provider to Nepalese broadcasters. In the letter, it was said that it should be closed since it has been running illegally. The organisation was established after legally registering it.

Rainbow FM - August 3, 2005

The government served a notice to Rainbow FM, which runs Nepal FM, on the grounds of broadcasting a news program called *Rajdhaani Khabar* on August 3, 2005. The Supreme Court had stayed the government action in this case.

Janajyoti Press - September 14, 2005

Security personnel captured materials printed for a civil gathering from Janajyoti press at Damak and warned not to print such materials in the future.

Dristi Weekly - September 14, 2005

The police patrol led by Singhadurbar ward police office inspector entered the office of *Dristi* weekly at Kathmandu and started beating its staff. Office assistant Amar Khadka and central advisor of Nepal Press Union, Bam Bahadur DC were injured in the beating.

Dhaulagiri FM - January 27, 2006

District Administration Office (DAO) of Baglung in western Nepal warned Dhaulagiri FM radio station not to air any programs not based on fact and encouraged 'anti-social' elements. The DAO alleged that the FM radio station was airing 'baseless' news items without verifying them. The DAO also warned that it will take action against the FM station "in accordance with the law, if its programs were found to be encouraging 'anti-social elements' and not based on truth". Dhaulagiri FM has refuted such allegations and said that it airs news only after verifying it and quotes authentic sources.

Radio Paschimanchal - February 1, 2006

The transmission of Radio Paschimanchal has stalled since February 1, 2006. It was damaged after the army used the station as a shelter during the clash with the Maoists on January 31, 2006. Several rounds of bullets were fired during the clash, damaging the equipment dipole, tower, antennae, recording room, control room, live transmission room, transmitter room, station manager's room and other equipments. FM broadcasting cannot be resumed until the compensation is provided. FM has presented the total damage of worth Rs. 170 million (2.5 million USD) to the police.

Sandhyakalin Upatyaka Daily - March 5, 2006

Police restricted the selling of Kathmandu based *Sandhyakalin Upatyaka* daily after the detention of the editor of the daily paper, Jaya Prakash Gupta. Gupta was arrested in relation to news published in the paper.

Annapurna FM - March 7, 2006

Police interfered and stalled the broadcasting of Annapurna FM at Pokhara, which was being transmitted through a generator during load shedding. The transmission was stalled after three police personnel cut the connection line of the generator. The FM station is situated near the District Police Office. Chief of the District Police Office and SP Rabi Shrestha said that they cut the line because it was causing disturbance to them.

Blast Daily - August 1, 2005

Maoists forcefully stopped the selling of Dharan based daily *Blast* because it wrote news on secretary Umesh and regional bureau member Sushil.

Independent media houses - August 9, 2005

Government refused to issue curfew passes to some independent media houses, including the *Kathmandu Post* and its sister publication *Kantipur*, after the ministry of information and communication excluded Kantipur Publication's name from the list of the media houses getting such passes for vehicles to ferry staff and drop newspapers. They were denied curfew passes saying that only government approved media houses could be granted curfew passes.

Paradarshi daily - April 9, 2006

Army personnel attacked the office of Chitwan based *Paradarshi Daily*. Army personnel hurled stones at the paper's office on the accusation of dissemination of news related to movement and exaggeration of police action.

ADMINISTRATION AND LEGAL PRESSURE**Kanak Mani Dixit - May 3, 2005**

Security officials barred Kanak Mani Dixit, editor of *Himal Fortnightly*, from flying out of the country saying they had orders from authorities. Dixit was to leave for Colombo for a three-day long seminar.

Kanak Mani Dixit - May 18, 2005

Lalitpur District Administration Officer interrogated Kanak Mani Dixit, editor of *Himal* news magazine over an article he had written, terming it against the spirit of the February 1, 2005 royal proclamation. Dixit denied the charge and said his article called for constitutional and democratic process in Nepal.

Kathmandu - May 21, 2005 The government passed a law to control the free media. It said that no individual or organisation would be provided a licence to operate radio, television and publications. The ordinance also mandated the individuals or organisations to choose any two media within one year. Failure to do so would mean revocation of radio and television licences. FM stations had been barred from publishing any 'new[s]-related program' as the relevant clause in the *National Broadcasting Act 2049*, now contained the term 'informative programs.'

Kantipur Publications - May 24, 2005

Nepal Press Council (NPC) sought clarification from Kantipur publications who allegedly defamed the government. Publications had reported the government's preparation to amend media laws to 'gag the press'. The council said that the article was a breach of the code of conduct.

Radio Karnali and Bijaya FM - June 7, 2005

Radio Karnali from Jumla and Bijaya FM from Nawalparasi were forced to stop airing their programs after the government didn't allow them to purchase new back-up transmitters to replace the old ones.

Kathmandu - June 14, 2005

The government banned all news related programs on FM radio stations with warnings of licence cancellation and imposition of fines if FM stations violated the ban.

Hike in postal rate - June 15, 2005

Postal rates increased by 90 percent. According to Mahendra Bista, general secretary of the FNJ, the hike will affect the distribution of papers.

Kathmandu - June 15, 2005

Security personnel did not allow journalists to enter Tribhuvan International Airport when they arrived to collect news about Nepal Congress president G.P Koirala returning.

Insn.org and samudaya.org - June 30, 2005 Authorities blocked two websites, www.insn.org and www.samudaya.org. Both sites had been posting hard-hitting statements from Maoists as well as the government.

Reporters, Nepal Television - July 29, 2005

Nepal Television started to monitor its reporters through the District Administration Office.

Nepal FM - August 3, 2005

Ministry of Information and Communication asked Nepal FM 91.8 radio station to explain why the station should not be banned. In a letter to the radio station, the ministry accused Nepal FM of breaching the national *Broadcasting Act*.

Kantipur Daily - August 21, 2005

The Press Council issued a letter to *Kantipur* daily asking it to give clarification on a cartoon strip that was published by the newspaper. The council said that the cartoon was against the present constitution, multiparty democratic system and historic people's movement.

Ordinance amending some of the Nepal Act Related to Media - October 9, 2005

His Majesty King Gyanendra promulgated an 'Ordinance amending some of the *Nepal Act Related to Media*' (the 'Ordinance'), which amended six of Nepal's key pieces of media-related legislation. The amendments entrench restrictions imposed on the media by the government during the three-month state of emergency that ended in April 2005, and impose new limitations that will further undermine freedom of expression, press freedom and the right to receive information in Nepal.

Kantipur FM - October 26, 2005

On October 26, 2005 the government issued a twenty-four hour ultimatum to Kantipur FM to come up with a formal explanation for failing to comply with the recently introduced media ordinance. The government threatened to revoke the station's licence should it fail to submit the written explanation within the stipulated time or if the explanation was not satisfactory.

Kathmandu - November 6, 2005

Officials at the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) called various FM radio stations in the Kathmandu valley and summoned them to the Ministry. Some of the stations obliged while a number of others did not. Those who visited the Ministry were asked to sign a paper saying that they were not airing news, as directed by the government. The new media ordinance, introduced by the government, prohibits FM radio stations from broadcasting news and news-based programs that criticise the king and royal family members, among others. The law includes provisions for jailing reporters for up to two years in defamation cases.

Janaprabhakar Saptahik - March 21, 2006

Janaprabhakar Saptahik, a Nepali weekly, stopped its publication because of a resource crunch. The publisher/editor of the weekly blamed the closure on the one door advertisement policy introduced by the government.

Rabindra Shah - March 15, 2006

Rabindra Shah, editor of *Bishwo Jagaran* weekly was issued a notice to appear to the office of Chief District officer for clarification on some issues that was published in his newspaper. Notice has been issued for publishing an article regarding family planning campaigns.

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance (TADO) expanded - March 26, 2006

Nepalese anti terrorism law, *TADO*, now includes new provisions that consider actions, such as disseminating information to or from Maoists, to be 'crimes related to terrorism and disruption' and if found guilty individuals face fines of between 10,000 to 50,000 NPR (150 –750 USD) and one to three years in jail. The amendment defines actions by Maoist accomplices as: those who remain in contact with, give assistance to, supply information to or disseminate information from the Maoists as being an accomplice.

Independent FM Stations - March 30, 2006

The Home Ministry has asked, in writing, for Kathmandu based independent radio stations to broadcast Home Ministry's request urging people not to participate in the four-day general strike called by the SPA. The request was entitled 'Home Ministry's Request' and was attached with a covering letter that read, "The ministry requests to air the matter before your evening and morning Nepali news bulletins on March 30, April 1 and April 2, and to send the bill to the ministry for payment."

Mahendra Mandal 'Banwari' - March 30, 2006

Security personnel confiscated the camera of Mahendra Mandal 'Banwari', correspondent of Rajbiraj based paper *Krishna* daily when he took a photograph of Biswa Niranjana Pradhan, Deputy Superintendent of Police who was taking photographs of students taking School Leaving Certificate exams at Happy Land English School.

MEDIA WORKERS DISPLACED

Nepalgunj - September 17, 2005

Around one and half dozen journalists in Dailekh decided to leave the district due to the insecurity caused by the state authorities. The journalists called the situation in the district life threatening and appealed to national and international media and human rights organisations to ensure their safety.

Krishna Hari Ghimire, Dwarika Kafle - January 11, 2006

Dwarika Kafle and Krishna Hari Ghimire, editor and associate editor respectively of the weekly *Jana Prabhat*, published in Sindhuli district, have been displaced from their offices and were forced to move to Kathmandu. According to Ghimire they had no option but to flee the district upon receiving credible threats to their lives in connection with their professional work. The associate editor said a senior army officer threatened them in connection with their participation at a mass meeting in December 2005 organised by the Citizens' Movement for Peace and Democracy - a civil society initiative that is campaigning against the February, 2005 royal takeover. The mass meeting was covered prominently in *Jana Prabhat*. Ghimire said he was still traumatised and that he and his colleague, Kafle, could not return to their offices unless there was a full guarantee of their safety and security.

MEDIA WORKERS ABDUCTED

Som Sharma - May 16, 2005

An armed group of Maoist insurgents abducted Som Sharma, reporter of *Aankha*, from his residence in the eastern district of Ilam. He was released on July 10, 2005 following several rounds of negotiations with a delegation of the FNJ.

Bikram Giri, Mahendranagar - June 3, 2005

Bikram Giri, Darchula correspondent of *Kantipur* daily was abducted by Maoists from Byas village, on his way to Kalapani to collect news. He has been released.

Nepalgunj - June 2, 2005

Censorship was still in effect in Bajhang, a far-western district, where a government peon was heading the undeclared censor section. He was authorised to scrutinize news and edit the materials filed by local correspondent at District Development Committee.

Dinesh Chandra Thapaliya - July 3, 2005

An unidentified group abducted Dinesh Chandra Thapaliya from Environment Radio and a monthly magazine, *Rastriya Prerana* from his residence at Kailali.

Chandramani Kattel and Bimal Shakya - November 21, 2005

Chandramani Kattel, Biratnagar correspondent of *Blast Times Daily* and a Dharan based journalist, Bimal Shakya, were abducted by Maoists from Durgapuri of Rajghat. He has been released.

Ram Dhama - November 4, 2005

Ram Dhama, Dadeldhura correspondent of *Nepal Samacharpatra* and district secretary of FNJ was abducted by Maoists while on his way home from the market. He was released after two days after being interrogated about news published in *Kantipur* on June 2, 2005.

PAKISTAN

MEDIA WORKERS KILLED

Sadar Hanif – October 8, 2005

Sadar Hanif, journalist with *Jang daily* newspaper was killed in the earthquake that devastated the Kashmir region on October 8, 2005. Between ten and 20 other journalists were injured, and at least 50 suffered personal losses. Many lost their homes and relatives, with several journalists losing their entire families.

Abdul Hafeez – October 8, 2005

Abdul Hafeez, editor of *Jurrat* newspaper was killed in the south asia earthquake on October 8, 2005.

Javed Iqbal Butt – October 8, 2005

Javed Iqbal Butt, photographer with *Jinnah* newspaper was killed in the south asia earthquake on October 8, 2005.

Nasir Afridi – December 4, 2005

On December 4, Nasir Afridi, president of Darra Adam Press Club and correspondent for the daily Urdu language newspaper, *Khabrain*, was shot and killed while driving his car in northern Pakistan. Afridi was killed by a stray bullet from a battle going on between the Bazi Khel and the Mala Khel tribes on his way to the press club to attend a meeting. A truck driver was also killed in the attack. Bazikhel tribesmen had taken a tribesman from the Mulakhel tribe hostage and a fight ensued between the two warring factions. Afridi died on his way to the hospital.

MEDIA WORKERS MISSING**Hayatullah Khan – December 5, 2005**

Hayatullah Khan, the North Waziristan correspondent for the Urdu language daily, *Ausaf* and for the *Nation*, along with photographer for the European Press Photo Agency (EPA), remains missing since he was kidnapped on December 5, 2005. Khan was abducted by five masked assailants at gunpoint from his car in the town of Mir Ali in the tribal area of North Waziristan. No one has claimed responsibility for his abduction.

It has been alleged that Khan's abduction may have been linked to his December 1, 2005 investigation from Haisori, North Waziristan, into the death of senior al-Qaeda commander Abu Hamza Rabia. Khan's report contradicted the authorities' account that Rabia had died when munitions exploded inside a house and Khan's report suggested that Rabia was in fact killed by a US made missile. Khan photographed fragments of the missile for the EPA. Khan's family and friends have yet to hear news of Khan's whereabouts since he disappeared from his kidnapers or the authorities. There are conflicting claims about the identity and motives of his kidnapers. His family suspect the authorities were behind his abduction. His brother has reported that Khan told him the day before his abduction: "If anything happens to me, the government must be held responsible."

Since Khan was abducted government officials have made contradictory statements about his whereabouts and their efforts to secure his release, raising suspicions among journalists that the government is holding Khan in secret detention. Khalilur Rehman, acting governor of the Northwest Frontier province, told a media delegation on December 14, that the government had made several arrests in connection with Khan's kidnapping and that the journalist would be released within days, yet Khan remains unaccounted for. The tribal areas where Khan disappeared - South and North Waziristan - and areas close to the Afghan border have become 'No Go Areas', for foreign and local correspondents. Many journalists reporting from these areas have received threats by both militants and from intelligence agencies.

Munir Mengal – April 7, 2006

Munir Mengal, the head of Baloch Voice, a Baluchi-language TV station based in the United Arab Emirates, went missing after he arrived in the southern city of Karachi on a flight from Bahrain on April 7, 2006. Baloch Voice, is the world's first Baluchi-language TV station and is due to begin

broadcasting by satellite in July 2006. The show is due to carry films, sport and entertainment programs in Baluchi, Brahui, English and Arabic. Mengal's sister, who lives in Pakistan, believes that intelligence agents inside Karachi international airport arrested Mengal. It has been reported that the military intelligence agencies are wary of the launch of the new station and were trying to discover the origin of Baloch Voice's funding, suspecting foreign funding.

MEDIA WORKERS KIDNAPPED

Abdul Aziz Lasi – February 15, 2006

Abdul Aziz Lasi, bureau chief of the regional daily, *Intikhab*, was kidnapped and held for one day by military secret services in Balochistan in the south-west. It's reported that the main suspect in the kidnapping is the military secret services. Abdul Aziz Lasi was abducted on February 15, in Hub, north-west of Karachi. He had just taken photos of the bodies of three Chinese engineers murdered in the province, at the scene of clashes between security forces and armed groups.

MEDIA WORKERS JAILED

Mohammad Tahir and Abdul Lateef Abu Shamil arrested – July 19, 2005

Mohammad Tahir, editor of *Wajood* and *Friday Special* (supplement of the Urdu-language daily *Jasarat*, close to the Jamaat-e-Islami fundamentalist party) and deputy editor, Abdul Lateef Abu Shamil, were arrested on July 19 for publishing excerpts of a book that the government considered to incite religious hatred. Tahir and Shamil were detained under Articles 153 (A) and 34 of the criminal code. Shamil was released on bail in Karachi on August 5, and the Supreme Court of Sindh released Tahir on bail on September 9. The Sindh Government banned *Wajood* on August 15. Two of Tahir's colleagues, Ali Ataf and Zakirullah, went into hiding following Tahir's arrest. The arrests were part of a nation wide crackdown on the alleged promotion of hatred and anti-state articles. Police claimed the weeklies were printing content that could incite religious hatred. Quotes from a police official indicate that they were acting on orders from higher authorities. It appears that the raids took place without warrants.

Rehmat Shah Afridi – April 6, 2006

The Pakistani Supreme Court upheld a life sentence imposed on former *Frontier Post* and *Maidan* daily editor, Rehmat Shah Afridi for alleged drug trafficking. Afridi has been insisting innocence since his arrest by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in 1999. It has been reported that the police investigation and the initial judicial decisions were marred by irregularities, manipulation and harassment. The two death penalties passed on Afridi in 2001 were sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2004 by the Lahore High Court, which ruled that hashish trafficking was not a crime punishable by death. The courts have themselves, on several occasions, condemned the police for its mishandling of the investigation, especially for the destruction of evidence. It has been reported that Afridi's family has gathered ample evidence showing that Afridi, who is from the tribal areas, was the victim of retaliation by the US Government-financed ANF for his reports accusing it of abuse of authority and corruption.

MEDIA WORKERS ARRESTED

Afzal Nadeem and Asad Ibne Hasan arrested – May 28, 2005

On May 28, cases were registered in Karachi against, Afzal Nadeem of the evening newspaper *Awam* and Asad Ibne Hasan of *Daily News*, for alleged 'anti-state' activities.

Their 'crime' was a minor mistake while reporting the exact timing of a police encounter with criminals. The section under which cases have been registered carries a maximum punishment of up to seven years in one case and three years in the other.

According to the reported story, the Home Minister Rauf Siddiqui said that there had been an encounter at 3pm in which one abducted person was rescued and four kidnappers killed. The

police chief however said that the encounter took place at 4pm. This discrepancy indicated that the kidnappers might have been killed in an extra-judicial manner, or a 'fake encounter', which is very common in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi. Although the *Awam* issued a clarification about the timing on the very next day, the cases were not withdrawn.

Journalists arrested in raids - July 16, 2005

On July 16, police arrested the chief editor and a reporter of the daily, *Zarab-e-Islam* in Karachi. The two were charged with 'incitement to religious hatred'. Police also arrested the vendors of another radical weekly, *Zarb-e-Momin*, which has been banned. Both papers openly support Jihadist groups. These steps have been taken against the backdrop of a wave of arrests of militants throughout Pakistan. More than 200 people have been arrested and aids have been launched against scores of religious schools.

Rashid Channa arrested and detained overnight – July 24, 2005

Rashid Channa, a reporter for the *Star*, a Karachi evening daily published by the Dawn Group of Newspapers, was arrested by police on the afternoon of July 24, 2005 and detained for approximately 12 hours before being released at 1am the following day. On July 25, Channa was charged with 'attempted murder' of a person he claims he had never heard of before. A statement released by the Dawn Group claimed Channa was detained on the orders of Mohammed Ali, secretary of Arbah Ghulam Rahim, chief minister of Pakistan's southern province of Sindh.

The statement added that Channa's detention appears to be linked to stories he wrote about the Sindh Government and the conduct of its chief minister. It's reported that Channa's arrest was one incident in a series of steps taken by the Sindh Government against the Dawn Group of Newspapers. The Dawn Group noted that in an abrupt move six weeks ago, the Sindh Government, on the chief minister's orders, banned all government advertising in the group's publications, in an attempt to silence critical opinions expressed in the group's newspapers and magazines.

Haroon Rasheed and Iqbal Khattak – January 14, 2006

Security forces arrested Haroon Rasheed of the BBC World Service's Urdu-language section and Iqbal Khattak of Pakistan's *Daily Times* on January 14, 2006, while covering reactions to a US air strike on a village that was supposedly being visited by Al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri. A total of 18 people were reportedly killed in the air strike but not, apparently, Zawahiri. The authorities also confiscated a video cassette from a cameraman working for the US television news agency APTN, who had just filmed in the village. Rasheed and Khattak were arrested while taking photos of soldiers on the streets of Khar, which is the capital of the Bajaur Agency and lies 60km north of Peshawar. The journalists were taken to the office of Fahim Wazir, the area's political administrator, who told them their reporting was contributing to insecurity in the region. The two journalists refused to let Wazir check the reports they planned to send. Before letting them go, he threatened to ban them from this tribal area.

Haroon Rasheed, Haji Mujtaba & Inam-ur-Rahman were arrested – March 6, 2006

Haroon Rasheed, of the Urdu-language service of the BBC World Service, Haji Mujtaba, a stringer for Reuters, and Inam-ur-Rahman, a contributor to the APTN news agency were arrested by security forces in the tribal zone of North Waziristan while trying to cover clashes between the Pakistani security forces and the Taliban around Miran Shah. Officials on March 7, 2006 also seized cassette tapes belonging to Inam-ur-Rahman.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Journalist beaten in Northern Areas – March 20, 2006

Nisar Abbas, journalist with the privately-owned Geo TV and daily *Jang* newspaper was beaten by a rifle butt by an army officer in Skardu, in the northern area of Pakistan. The attack occurred when the military raided a ceremony organised by a humanitarian nongovernmental organisation.

The ceremony - as it involved a gathering of more than five people - was prohibited under Article 144 of the criminal code.

Journalists arrested and beaten - May 3, 2005

Security forces wielding clubs broke up a rally of around 50 journalists who had gathered peacefully to mark world press freedom day in front of the parliament building in Islamabad.

The same day, security forces in the eastern city of Lahore charged some 200 journalists, leaving nine injured, as they gathered in preparation to rally at the Punjab governor's residence in support of better working conditions. President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pervez Shaukat, and former secretaries general of PFUJ, Fouzia Shahid and CR Shamsi were among approximately 30 journalists arrested by police and detained for more than two hours before being released.

The journalists were bundled inside two buses and taken first to a local police post and then to Sahala Prison in the city suburbs. Police snatched equipment from them and confiscated their mobile phones. They were released after three hours. Journalists sent to cover the National Assembly sitting decided to stage a walkout from the day's session in protest at the treatment of their detained colleagues. Opposition members of parliament joined in their protest against repressive police methods taken against a peaceful demonstration. In Karachi, journalists and rights groups staged a sit-in outside Governor House to condemn the police action against journalists in Islamabad and Lahore.

Three homemade bombs thrown into journalist's home in Gilgit – July 23, 2005

Unknown persons threw three homemade bombs into the home of Khursheed Ahmed, bureau chief of the daily *Khabrain* in the city of Gilgit, capital of Pakistan's Northern Areas. Ahmed is also president of the Gilgit Press Club. Two of the three bombs detonated while the third did not explode. The blasts caused damage to the roof of the home and smashed a toilet, but caused no injuries to the seven persons in the house. The attackers fled the scene under the cover of darkness.

Press reports quoting Ahmed said the attack may be the result of his support for the administration's decision to close the weekly publications; *K-2*, *Azan*, *Naqara*, *Wadi* and others for publishing provocative statements about religious factions. Ahmed said he had no personal enmity but added that he had strongly opposed a proposed dialogue between the local administration and members of banned sectarian parties in Gilgit, in connection with the weeklong deteriorating law and order situation in the city. This was the second time Ahmed's house was targeted. On March 3, 2005, unidentified persons threw a similar homemade bomb into his home, causing loss of property. Police are investigating the case and have arrested several persons.

Journalists tortured by army personnel – September 15, 2005

Daily Express Faisalabad photographer, and executive committee member of the Faisalabad Union of Journalists, Asadullah was attacked and threatened with death after taking photos of youth by members of the National Logistic Cell (NLC), (a division of Pakistan's army) at a busy intersection outside Chiniot bazaar. NLC personnel took Asadullah to their camp office, took his camera and violently beat him. When confronted by other journalists who visited the site after hearing of the incident, the NLC personnel verbally abused the journalists. Local police arrested two NLC personnel after Asadullah and other journalists alerted them about the incident. The district police chief ordered the case to be registered and the arrested NLC personnel charged for threatening the photographer with dire consequences, torture and illegal detention.

Bomb attack on journalist's house – December 16, 2005

Dilawar Khan Wazir, a stringer for the BBC Urdu-language service and the English language daily *Dawn*, escaped a bomb attack on his house in Wana, the capital of South Waziristan. None of his family were injured in the early morning blast. It was believed that the explosion came in

retaliation for his participation in a discussion on the US Government-funded *Voice of America* about the unstable security situation in the tribal areas. Local sources say that Wazir has now left Waziristan with his family out of concern for their safety. Wazir also received minor injuries earlier this year when unknown gunmen opened fire on a group of journalists traveling in a van from a press event in South Waziristan. Two journalists were killed, but no one has been arrested.

MEDIA WORKERS THREATENED AND HARASSED

Journalists harassed at Lahore Airport- April 16, 2005

Police confiscated cameras, phones and laptops from journalists, editors and photographers who were accompanying Asif Ali Zardai, leader of the opposition Pakistan Peoples Party from a recent trip to Dubai at Lahore Airport. The police action prompted the journalists to stage a sit in at the airport for several hours after police blocked them from leaving unless they handed over their equipment for checking. Journalists were finally allowed to leave, once police agreed not to check equipment and to return previously seized equipment after removing film, cassette tapes and memory cards.

Police search newspaper office – July 19, 2005

On July 19, 2005, police in Sindh Province searched the offices of at least four Karachi-based publications, including the weeklies, *Friday Special*, *Wajood* and *Ghazi*, as well as the daily *Ummat*.

Indian journalist refused entry on arrival in Lahore – July 22, 2005

Immigration officials at Lahore Airport refused entry to Indian journalist Harider Baweja, of the privately-owned weekly *Tehelka*, on her arrival at Lahore international airport (in the eastern province of Punjab) on July 22, 2005. The journalist was denied entry despite the fact she had a valid seven-day visa. She was told she was on a 'visa violation' blacklist and the Immigration Department, which is under the Interior Ministry's authority, declined to give her any further explanation. Foreign Ministry officials denied that her name was on a blacklist. Baweja said she had visited Pakistan a dozen times in the past 15 years and did not understand why she was barred this time.

Two journalists threatened by a mufti in tribal area – February 24, 2006

Khyber Agency reporters Nasrullah Afridi and Khayalmat Shah were threatened by a local mufti, Munir Shakir. Afridi, a correspondent with the daily papers, *Mashriq* and *The Statesman*, and Shah, president of the Tribal Union of Journalists (TUJ) in the Khyber Agency (west of Peshawar), were threatened by the mufti in clandestine radio broadcasts on February 24, 2006 after they reported on clashes between his supporters and those of rival mufti Pir Saifur Rehman for control of the Khyber Agency region. Munir urged his supporters not to believe 'false stories' in the press and urged them to read papers such as the banned extremist paper *Zarb-e-momin*. Both journalists asked for government protection.

Journalist's home broken into – March 12, 2006

On March 12, 2006, unknown assailants broke into the house of Rasheed Channa, reporter for *The Daily Star*, in Karachi. They took away his computer, data CDs, some personal files, various documents, and some valuables, including Rs 4,000 (approx 66 USD) in cash. Channa claimed that it was not a simple robbery because the personal files, data CDs and newspaper clippings taken had no monetary value. He also said he had received threats a few days before from Muhammad Ali Arain, special secretary to chief minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim, for publishing stories about corruption. The incident is reminiscent of Channa's July 2005 experience, when plain-clothed police detained him and seized his computer, CDs and personal files.

MEDIA CENTRES TARGETED

Gunmen fire on Reuters Television correspondent – May 14, 2005

Mujeebur Rehman, the correspondent for the *Daily Times* and Reuters Television in Wana, South Waziristan tribal area was attacked during a shooting which took place in Dhog, a village near Wana. Rehman sustained a minor injury to the hand in the attack. Four masked gunmen in a vehicle opened fire on Rehman at around 6:45am as he was traveling to Wana. The assailants have not been identified and their motive is unclear.

Government raids several newspaper offices – July 2005

Police in Karachi cracked down on Islamic fundamentalist publications in the past week, raiding the offices of several newspapers, arresting four journalists and several newspaper vendors, and confiscating copies of the publications. Police raided and shut down the offices of the fundamentalist Urdu-language weekly *Zarb-i-Islam*, arresting editor Nasir Ali Jahangir and assistant editor Mohammad Saleem. During the raid, police confiscated copies of another weekly, *Zarb-i-Momin*. In a raid on newspaper stands that followed, police arrested at least five vendors, Mohammad Imran, Abdul Latif, Abdul Rehman, Mazhar Abbas, and Mohammad Irfan. In a separate raid, police shut down the offices of the Urdu language weekly *Friday Special*, a subsidiary of the daily *Jasarat*, and arrested assistant editor Abdul Latif Abu Shamil. *Jasarat* is a publication associated with *Jamaat-i-Islami*, an opposition Islamic political party. On the same day, police searched the offices of the weekly *Wujood* and arrested editor Mohammed Tahir. They also raided the offices of the weekly *Ghazi* and daily *Ummat*. Police told local reporters that the weeklies published articles that incited hatred and violence, and that the raids followed orders from ranking government authorities.

Printing press raided– December 13, 2005

Many daily newspapers in Karachi faced delays and problems due to the police raiding a printing press on December 13, 2005 on suspicion that it was printing a banned publication. The police also stopped one newspaper from being printed in any other printing presses. Citi Press, which prints a number of publications including the dailies *Jasarat*, *Amn*, *Imroze*, *Evening Special*, *Karachi*, *Morning Special* and *Assas* was raided by a Station House Officer (SHO) from the city's Methadar Police Station. According to the owner of Citi Press, Mohammad Ali, officer Mohammad Ali Bajwah raided the press and alleged that the press was involved in printing the banned weekly *Zarb-e-Momin* which had ceased more than a year ago.

CENSORSHIP AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Newspapers banned – August 15, 2005

On August 15, the Sindh Government revoked the publishing licenses and effectively banned the weekly publications of *Wajood* and *Friday Special*, along with the Islamist weeklies, *Zarb-e-Islam* and *Zarb-e-Momin*, for allegedly inciting religious hatred. The newspapers denied the charges. The banning of the newspapers followed the arrest of the editors, Mohammad Tahir and Abdul Latif Abu Shamil on July 19. The licences were cancelled under Section 19 of the *Press and Publication Ordinance 2002*, in the interest of 'maintenance of public order and tranquillity.'

Censorship in Kashmir – November 14, 2005

On November 14, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), stopped three local partners of the BBC from broadcasting two daily 30-minute 'earthquake specials' produced by the BBC's Urdu service. PEMRA officials, accompanied by dozens of armed policemen, seized equipment from one of the local partner's Karachi offices and ordered two satellite television partners to stop running news content from the BBC.

Radio station closed for broadcasting BBC program – November 14, 2005

PEMRA raided a private FM radio station in Karachi and shut down its transmission for alleged violation of laws regulating the operation of radio stations. PEMRA officials assisted by the local police raided the FM 103 radio station and seized its transponders, antennas and other broadcast equipment. Press reports in the daily *Dawn*, quoting a representative of the radio station, said police and PEMRA officials mistreated the staff and used abusive language.

Foreign television channels banned – December 22, 2005

PEMRA issued an order on December 22, 2005 instructing cable TV operators to stop carrying some 30 foreign TV channels, threatening fines and arrest. Most of the banned channels are Indian. The list of banned foreign channels sent on December 22, 2005 to all Pakistani cable operators included entertainment, sports and news channels. The list named Indian channels such as *MM Movie* and *Star Network*, but also *National Geographic* and *Fashion TV*.

Assault on newspapers in Sindh – December 23, 2005

A group of armed men threw a petrol bomb into the offices of the *Sukkur* edition of the Sindhi-language daily newspaper *Khabroon*, setting the reception area on fire. The attackers, believed to be Sindhi nationalists, hurled threats at the newspaper staff and fired shots in the air. Prior to the attack, the entire staff of *Khabroon* had resigned over what they termed the 'misuse' of public money by the Federal Ministry of Information who had issued advertisements in favour of the controversial Kalabagh Dam. Sindhi nationalist parties continue to harass the staff and vendors of the newspaper. Copies of the newspaper have been seized and set on fire in a number of cities, including Mirpurkhas, Ghotki, Waro and Thal. There have also been reports that other newspapers carrying advertisements supporting the dam have been set on fire in various cities.

ADMINISTRATIVE, LEGAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON MEDIA WORKERS OBSTACLES TO THE DOMESTIC FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

Journalists restricted – January 13, 2006

Authorities restricted journalists from entering Bajaur Agency after a US missile strike targeting suspected al-Qaeda militants in Damadola village killed civilians. That attack sparked protests from tribal residents and the government in Islamabad, which complained that the United States had not notified them in advance. On January 14, authorities in Bajaur briefly detained two journalists who were reporting on the incident. *Daily Times Peshawar* bureau chief Iqbal Khattak and BBC World Services correspondent Haroon Rashid were warned against reporting in the areas and released after two hours.

Journalists' restricted entry into Commerce Industry – January 31, 2006

The Ministry of Commerce restricted the entry of media persons into its premises in an attempt to restrict reporting on trade related issues, particularly on the ongoing trade negotiations with foreign countries after issuing a circular in which the officials of the ministry were directed to avoid meeting journalists, otherwise punitive measures would be taken against them.

Twelve websites blocked – February 28, 2006

The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) blocked access to twelve websites that posted the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, which appeared in the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten*. The PTA ordered internet service providers to block the website <http://www.blogspot.com> (or <http://www.blogger.com>), taking down thousands of weblogs hosted by this tool. The shutting down of the one blog hosted by blogger.com resulted in the filtering of all websites sharing the same domain name.

Television stations banned – March 16, 2006

A Pakistan authority banned two Afghan cable TV stations, Tolo TV and Ariana TV, broadcasting in the southwestern province of Baluchistan. The Pakistan broadcasting authority forbade local cable operators to retransmit the two stations, which had suggested that a recent suicide attack on an Afghan politician in Kabul may have involved the Pakistani intelligence service. Tolo TV said the station had always tried to report regional, nation and international events in a balanced way and would continue to put out impartial, good quality news even if it concerned local authorities. The privately-owned station, set up in October 2004, has done wideranging investigative reporting, unlike government-run stations.

MEDIA AND THE LAW

Media bill a setback to press freedom – May 16, 2005

The National Assembly passed the *Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Bill (2004) (PEMRA)* on May 16. The PEMRA, under Clause 27 can impose a ban on channels in the name of “national interest”, ‘national security’, and ‘ideology of Pakistan’ and ‘vulgarity’ – all of which are subjective notions. The PEMRA made violation of the Bill a recognisable and compoundable offence, with sentences up to three years and heavy fines of ten million rupees (168,000 USD). Further, there are at least six to eight clauses which need debate among media organisations, before placing it for approval in the upper house.

Amendments to Press Council legislation – January 27, 2006

The Pakistani Government introduced amendments to the press council legislation which changed the press council from an independent and voluntary body to a ‘special court’ that could be used against the press. The earlier structure of the press council had been made controversial by the government’s proposing of new amendments in a bid to squeeze the national press. The changes proposed by the government included giving more powers to the government-appointed chairman and giving the press council the status of a civil court with powers to summon witnesses and documents, issue warrants, impose fines and cancel the licenses of newspapers and magazines that do not follow the prescribed Ethical Code of Practice for the print media. Although the ordinance on the press council was promulgated in 2002, the council has not yet become functional.

SRI LANKA

MEDIA WORKERS KILLED

Relangi Selvarajah – August 12, 2005

Unknown assailants killed journalist Relangi Selvarajah and her husband on Friday August 12, 2005. Relangi and her husband were shot at approximately 1pm in Bambalapitiya, Colombo. Relangi Selvarajah was a full-time journalist at the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC). She had previously worked as a part-time TV presenter at the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Cooperation (SLRC). This killing has the trademark of the ongoing killing spree of rival Tamil armed groups.

D. Selvarathnam – August 29, 2005

Around 6pm on August 29, 2005 two people entered the printing press premises of Tamil language newspaper, *Sudaroli* and hurled two grenades towards the door. D. Selvarathnam, a security guard who was at the door was seriously injured and admitted to the general hospital where he later died from his injuries.

K. Navarathnam – December 22, 2005

A newspaper delivery man for the Tamil language newspaper, *Yal Thinakkural*, K. Navarathnam was killed by unknown assailants in the northern capital of Jaffna. *Yal Thinakkural* is the Jaffna edition of the Colombo-based Tamil daily *Thinakkural*. The killing of Navarathman resulted in strengthening the existing fear amongst the journalist community in Jaffna.

Subramaniam Sugirdharajan – January 24, 2006

Subramaniam Sugirdharajan, popularly known as SSR, a part-time provincial journalist working for the Tamil language daily *Sudaroli* was shot dead in the eastern port city of Trincomalee around 6am on January 24, 2006. He was 35 years old and the father of two children, aged three and two. The assailants were on a motorbike and fired at him from close range.

MEDIA WORKERS JAILED

Hiran Priyankara Jayasingha- May 16, 2005

Hiran Priyankara Jayasingha, a Puttlam district provincial journalist of *Lankadeepa* newspaper was arrested, tried in court and charged with trespass and impersonation when he tried to take photographs of a hotel being built by a member of parliament on the water catchment area of the Tabbowa reservoir. The member of parliament is Range Bandara of the United National Party. Journalist Jayasingha told Free Media Movement (FMM) that he denies the charges levelled against him by the police. The hotel being constructed was clearly an issue of public interest and the journalist had every right to report it.

S. Ramesh, Mawathagama – August 19, 2005

S. Ramesh, Mawathagama, a correspondent for the Tamil language daily, *Veerakesaree* was arrested under emergency laws by officers of the Kurunagala Police on August 19, 2005 in the afternoon. The Kurunagala police station refused to give information on the arrested journalist when FMM office bearers contacted the station. He was released without any charges after a months detention.

MEDIA WORKERS ARRESTED

P. Yadurshan – August 8, 2005

P. Yadurshan, a photojournalist for the Tamil language newspaper, *Sudaroli* (published in Colombo) was assaulted while covering a protest rally by the People's Liberation Party (JVP) in front of the railway station in the Fort district. Yadurshan's camera, mobile phone and wallet were confiscated and his hands were tied behind his back by the supporters of the JVP, then he was handed over to police at the Pettah police station.

Prathateepan – December 17, 2005

Prathateepan, a senior journalist, was arrested and kept for 12 hours in Kirullapona police station without any reason. He was photographed and finger printed and made to give a lengthy statement regarding his whereabouts that was recorded by the police.

MEDIA WORKERS ATTACKED

Photojournalist for Lankadeepa newspaper – January 6, 2005

Security offices at the Ministry of Education manhandled a photojournalist for *Lankadeepa* newspaper in front of deputy minister, Nimala Kothalawala.

Owner of Sathdina newspaper – February 11, 2005

The proprietor of the *Sathdina* weekend newspaper and some of his employees were brutally assaulted at midnight on February 11, 2005, by a group led by the opposition leader of Kotte Urban Council, Janaka Ranawake. This attack was carried out when they were putting up posters to promote the newspaper.

Prasad Purnamal – February 16, 2006

Prasad Purnamal a provincial journalist working for MTV TV network and ANCL newspapers, was assaulted, his TV camera worth 100,000 LKR (100 USD) smashed and a still camera worth 30,000 LKR (300 USD) taken away by supporters of ruling political party of the district on February 16, 2006, at Puttlam, a town on the western coast. Prasad was covering a clash between two groups of ruling party supporters after they had handed over nominations for the local government elections. Prasad suffered minor injuries and made a complaint to the police.

Upul Shantha Medagadara – May 6, 2005

A politically-agitated mob assaulted journalist, Upul Shantha Medagadara, and tried to damage his camera at a political protest at Thamankaduwa, Polonnaruwa district in the north western province on Friday May 6, 2005. The incident took place at a rally organised by the opposition, United National Party (UNP), to protest the government's agricultural policy.

Sun TV relay tower bombed – June 2, 2005

There was a bomb attack on the Sun TV relay tower in Vavunia, northern province. No one was harmed and no one was arrested.

Manager of printing press threatened – October 16, 2005

An arson attack took place on the printing press of the *Sunday Leader* and *Irudina* weeklies. A group of seven or eight people armed with clubs and knives entered the premises of the printing press at Rathmalana Colombo around 8pm on October 16, 2005. The group threatened the manager with dire consequences if he continued to print the newspapers, and set fire to bundles of returned newspapers. The workers were able to extinguish the fire thereby saving the printing machine.

T. Sabeswaran, Winston Jeyan and G. Jerad – December 19, 2005

Three journalists: *Thinakural* staff reporter, T. Sabeswaran; *Thinakaran* (Lake House) reporter, Winston Jeyan and *Namathu Eelanadu* reporter, G. Jerad were beaten and their cameras damaged by state security forces. The journalists were covering a peaceful demonstration by students and staff at the University of Jaffna when the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) baton charged and opened fire at the demonstrators

MEDIA WORKERS THREATENED AND HARASSED

Mohamad Sally – February, 2005

Mohamad Sally, a provincial journalist from Trincomalee received death threats after the killing of co-worker, journalist Subramaniam Sugirdharajan, on January 24 2005, by unknown gunmen.

Lasantha Wickrematunge – February 20, 2005

Airport officers detained and allegedly harassed *Sunday Leader* editor, Lasantha Wickrematunge, for more than 30 minutes over a case of mistaken identity. Emigration and Immigration Chief P.B. Abeykoon said there had been an order from the National Intelligence Bureau that a passenger named Wickrematunge should not be allowed to leave the country.

Clode Gurubavila – February 24, 2006

Journalist, Clode Gurubavila and lawyer, Manoj Thilanga, who presented a weekly political review called *Deshapalana Sathiya* on Sawarnavahini TV, were threatened with a pistol around midnight on February 24 2006, in Boralla, Colombo. Two persons alighted from a black cab at a traffic stoplight and threatened the two presenters, mentioning their program.

Lasantha Wickrematunge – March 2005

Lasantha Wikrematunga, editor of the *Sunday Leader*, received death threats on his mobile phone from unknown sources claiming to be defenders of the motherland.

Victor Ivan and Sunanda Deshapriya – May 11, 2005

Convener of the FMM and chief editor of *Ravaya* newspaper, Victor Ivan, and the spokesperson for the FMM, former editor *Yukthiya* newspaper and freelance journalist, Sunanda Deshapriya, received death threats in a letter from an extreme group calling itself 'Theraputtabhaya' signed by commander 'Mayadunne'. Other leading civil society figures received the same letter on the same day, May 11, 2005. The letter claimed responsibility for the killing of journalist, Darmarathnam Sivaram, and said that all traitors should be ready to become fertiliser if they continue to betray the motherland. Darmarathnam Sivaram, a leading Tamil journalist in Sri Lanka was abducted and killed on April 28, 2005.

Journalists assaulted – June 14, 2005

Journalists Tissa Ravindra Perera and Jagath Niroshana of *Lakbima*; Sirimewan Kasturiaracchi of *Divaina*; Tanuja Darmapala of *Silumina*; Tilak Perera of *Sunday Observer*; Amal Samantha of Rupawahini Corporation; and Prasana Fonseka of *Lakjana* were assaulted and abused by Mr.

Chandrasekara, a leading politician belonging to the parliamentary Opposition. The assault took place when this group of defense-round journalists were on their way back from covering a passing out parade at the cadet office at Diyathlawa military camp. Chandrasekara was arrested, appeared in court and been given bail.

Sunday Observer journalist threatened – June 29, 2005

A *Sunday Observer* journalist was threatened with abusive language by supporters of the JVP at their annual convention, when he refused to allow JVP members to examine the contents of his document case.

Dayaseeli Liyanae – July 14, 2005

Lankadeepa education journalist, Dayaseeli Liyanae, was threatened at the Ministry of Education by security guards

Deputy minister abuses media – July 25, 2005

Deputy minister Mervin Silva used abusive language to threaten journalists and owners of a number of media organisations outside the Fort magistrates courts where journalists had gathered to cover the deputy minister's son being produced in court by police after an incident at a night club in Colombo. Apart from threatening journalists and media owners, the language used was abusive and unprintable.

Sudaroli newspaper attacked August 2, 2005

The Tamil language newspaper, *Sudaroli*, was attacked by an unidentified man who threw a grenade into the *Sudaroli* office in Wellawatta, Colombo on the evening of August 2 2005. *Sudaroli* is a Tamil language newspaper published in Colombo by the Udayan group. A special police team later removed the unexploded grenade. *Sudaroli* newspaper plays an important role in the Colombo media landscape by bringing a Tamil nationalist perspective to unfolding events related to the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Sasikumar – August 21, 2005

Upcountry Tamil language journalist, Sasikumar of *Ragala Thinakural*, was detained for a few hours by Uda Pussalalwa police on August 21 2005, because he took photos of a minister.

Suderoli Vidyadarn – August 22, 2005

Editor, Suderoli Vidyadarn, reported to FMM that he had been receiving death threats from unknown sources.

Raja Katugampola – October 26, 2005

The private security guards of the state-controlled SLBC physically assaulted the SLBC news director, Raja Katugampola. The assault took place on October 26 2005, in the chairman's office. Katugampola was admitted to the National Hospital, Colombo following the attack. FMM reported that the assault took place following a heated debate in which the chairman insisted on the need for impartial and balanced coverage of news and current affairs during the presidential election campaign.

Rani Mohamed and Berty Mendis – November 1, 2005

Two journalists, Rani Mohamed and photographer Berty Mendis were assaulted by a group of people, including an army major, while reporting on the killing of Lieutenant Colonel T. Meedin. The assault took place at the residence of the late Colonel on the afternoon of Tuesday November 1, 2005. According to Rani Mohamed, they were assaulted by a group of people, including the major who is a brother of the late Colonel. During the assault, the attackers seized Rani Mohamed's mobile phone and Berty Mendis's camera.

Indika Weerakoon – November 3, 2005

Swarnawahini TV cameraman, Indika Weerakoon, was assaulted on November 3, 2005, at Hiniduma, Galle, while covering an election rally of presidential candidate prime minister, Mahinda Rajapaksha. The incident began when the Swarnawahini reporting team was threatened which

led to Weerakoon being singled out and assaulted by party supporters. A day before this incident, the prime minister's media spokesperson, minister Mangala Rajapaksha, told media representatives that the airwaves were public property. He added that those private TV stations, which he said were supporting the opposition candidate, should be careful because their broadcast licenses might not be automatically extended.

I. H. A. Wahab – November 14, 2005

A grenade was thrown into journalist I.H.A. Wahab's house in Akkareipattu at midnight on November 14, 2005. Wahab is a provincial correspondent for the state-run television station ITN and Tamil language newspaper, *Thinakaran* in the Muslimdominated eastern town of Akkareipattu. The grenade exploded destroying some glass windows of the house. No one was injured in the incident.

Media personnel and artists threatened – December 15, 2005

Media personnel and artists seeking a negotiated settlement for the national problem received threatening messages from an organisation called the 'Lion Liberation Army' (Sinha Vimukthi Hamudawa).

Newspaper Namathu Eelanadu searched – December 25, 2005

Government security forces searched the editorial, administrative and press sections of the Tamil daily *Namathu Eelanadu* in Jaffna on December 22. *Namathu Eelanadu* is one of the four daily newspapers published in the capital of war ravaged northern province, Jaffna.

Chairperson of MTV-MBC – January 1, 2006

There have been reports of an alleged conspiracy to assassinate the chairperson of the MTV-MBC media network. The issue was first reported by *The Sunday Leader* on January 1, 2006 and followed by MTV-MBC network carrying the same story on January 3, 2006. The network has three popular TV channels and four popular radio channels broadcasting in all three languages used in Sri Lanka. The MTV-MBC network made complaints to the police and the highest authorities of the country regarding this dangerous situation.

Newspaper Yarl Thinakkural searched – January 5, 2006

SLA soldiers cordoned off and searched the office of Jaffna daily, *Yarl Thinakkural*, on Friday January 5, at 2.45 pm. According to information received by Free Media Movement, the SLA searched the editorial section, press section, administrative section and advertisement section.

Lasantha Wikrematunge – January 11, 2006

The editor of the *Sunday Leader*, Lasantha Wikrematunge, complained to the inspector general of police alleging that the president threatened him with abusive language over the telephone regarding a recent article published in his newspaper. Wikrematunge sent his letter of complaint to the inspector general of police on January 11, 2006 and a copy of the letter to the FMM. According to Wikrematunge's complaint the president used abusive and threatening language on the grounds that the *Sunday Leader* had mentioned his wife.

Lasantha Wickrematunge – February 1, 2006

Wimal Weerawamsa, propaganda secretary of the JVP, made a statement in Parliament inciting hate against the editor of the *Sunday Leader*, Lasantha Wikrematunge. Weerawamsa's statement was in response to a report published by the *Sunday Leader* on an alleged terror attack on Colombo by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The secretary branded Wikrematunge a traitor. The statement by Weerawamsa undermined the media's role to hold those in public office accountable.

ADMINISTRATIVE, LEGAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON MEDIA WORKERS

Editor charged – May 2005

A contempt of court case was filed against the editor of daily, *Lankadeepa*, for publishing a statement issued by the main opposition political party that criticised a court ruling. Later the case was dropped.

Three journalists interrogated – February 11, 2006

Three journalists from *Irudina* weekly and one journalist from its sister English daily *The Sunday Leader* were summoned to the police crime branch of Colombo and questioned about an article published in *Irudina* weekly on Claymore mines. Police questioned the journalists about the management structure of the Lithira publications, which publishes both newspapers. Writing on Claymore mines is not an offence, this was a clear attempt to harass and intimidate the two weeklies.

Victor Ivan – March 2006

The Human Rights Committee of Sri Lanka (HRC), called on the government to pay 800,000 LKR (8000 USD) compensation and acknowledge the landmark legal victory of Victor Ivan, *Ravaya* editor on August 26, 2004. The HRC found that the Sri Lankan state was in violation of article 28 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) The HRC calls on the government to compensate Ivan, publish the judgment in full and provide a response within 90 days.

OBSTACLES TO THE DOMESTIC FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

Iqbal Athas – July 26, 2005

According to the newspaper reports, the Sri Lankan president asked the inspector general of police why he is not using the *Official Secrets Act* against Iqbal Athas, defence columnist for the *Sunday Times* accusing him of damaging national security by exposing military secrets. The president made the comments when speaking to a closed meeting of 1000 top military and police officials in Colombo on July 26. The Presidential Office did not send a correction to the story or issue a statement contradicting the story.

Directors' films vilified – September 22, 2005

Military spokesperson, Brigadier Daya Rathnayaka branded internationally acclaimed and award winning films, which dealt with 20 years of war in Sri Lanka as 'new terrorism'. Articles by other military and political leaders have started to appear in mainstream newspapers in Sri Lanka condemning these films and filmmakers. Statements attributed to a military spokesperson appeared in an English language daily on September 14, 2005, stating that films by prominent directors such as Asoka Handagama, Prasanna Vithanage, Sudath Mahaadivulwewa and Vimukthi Jayasundara were a "new terrorism" and "foreign funded cinema".

OTHER VIOLATIONS

Voters harassed – November 24, 2005

It was reported that voters in the presidential election from the north and east were harassed on November 17. In a democratic society the right to vote is an essential and fundamental human right. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka has confirmed in its landmark judgments of 1998 that the right to vote is inseparable from the right to freedom of expression.

Journalism unions protest against harassment – January 12, 2006

On January 12, 2006 a joint demonstration was held in front of the Fort Railway Station in Colombo against the security forces for their harassment of Tamil media workers and media institutions using the *Emergency Regulations*. The Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA), Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance (SLTMA), Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum (SLMMF), Media Employees Trade Union Federation (FMETU) and the FMM all participated in the protest.