

# In the balance

Press freedom in South Asia 2007-2008



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## IN THE BALANCE: PRESS FREEDOM IN SOUTH ASIA (2007-2008)

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**Cover photo:** Journalists and the media in Nepal have led a vigorous campaign for press freedom and the safety of journalists, which are fundamental to the success of democracy in any country. Here, police arrest the president of the Kathmandu Branch of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Yubaraj Bidrohi, during a protest by journalists and media workers demanding information about abducted journalist Birendra Shah in November 2007. Photo: Courtesy of Amit Sthapit, Associated News Agency, Nepal.

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## FOREWORD

The International Federation of Journalists' sixth annual assessment of press freedom in South Asia finds that there were gains and losses in 2007-08. The assessments – based on information provided by IFJ affiliates and associates in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – stress that a culture of impunity regarding attacks and restrictions on journalists remains a critical problem and an obstacle to the achievement of press freedom in the region. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism in some quarters.

The challenges for journalists and the media community in South Asia encompass a range of factors that indicate the level of press freedom in any country: Physical attacks, threats and questionable legal actions directed against journalists, media workers and media institutions with the intention of keeping critics quiet; the risks of reporting on events and issues in locations made dangerous by war and violent dissent; official and unofficial censorship; concentration of media ownership and the prevention of access to diverse sources of information; and the extent of transparency and accountability permitted by the local regulatory environment, including freedom of information and labour laws. All these factors are in play, to a lesser or greater extent, in the six countries reviewed.

The countries of South Asia and the region as a whole are on the brink of enormous change, politically and economically. In some countries, citizenries are insisting on shaking off the shackles of undemocratic governance and seeking resolution of civil conflict; in others, ruling regimes remain indifferent to accountability as they pursue internal rivalries, often violently, and tighten controls on criticism and expressions of dissent. India's weight as the regional economic powerhouse has consequences for all its neighbours.

It is too early to assess the consequences for press freedom following Nepal's historic national elections in April 2008 and Pakistan's change of government in March 2008. However, the installation of new orders in these countries offers an opportunity for journalists' organisations and defenders of human rights to push hard for positive action while the time is ripe for change and a mood of optimism prevails.

At the other end of the spectrum, Sri Lanka's apparent descent into even greater violence than witnessed in recent years has made the environment for journalists and defenders of a free media even more dangerous. Pressure must continue to be applied on the international community to engage Sri Lanka's warring power-holders in all efforts to find the road back to a peaceful resolution of

differences. Essential to the quest for peace is an independent and critical media.

Likewise, the Bangladesh situation does not look good in the short term, with the country's intense political rivalries resulting in serious negative consequences for journalists, media and press freedom overall. As with elsewhere in the region, journalists in Bangladesh need international support to fight for the right to report critically without fear of censorship and violent retribution.

In Afghanistan, secular power-holders are struggling to manage a resurgence of fundamentalist activism that threatens the re-claiming of independence of thought in the public sphere. The situation is serious and there is no room for complacency, but it should also be noted that Afghan journalists have made significant progress in recent years in moving toward a free, independent and diverse media.

In India, outright attacks on media personnel appear to occur with less regularity, at least in proportion to the population, than elsewhere in the region. However, press freedom risks being weakened by increasing concentration of media ownership that limits options for the expression of diverse views. As such, challenges in the regulatory environment are on the priority list for defenders of press freedom in the world's most populous democracy.

**Press freedom cannot, generally speaking, be achieved in isolation. It requires the combined and collaborative efforts of multiple actors: Journalists and their organisations, media owners, political power-holders, community leaders and ordinary people. Cross-border alliances and exchanges of ideas are equally significant in shaping broader ideas about the meaning of press freedom and its value in promoting and reflecting democratic processes that benefit all people.**

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shaping broader ideas about the meaning of press freedom and its value in promoting and reflecting democratic processes that benefit all people. In this sense, the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN), an alliance of journalists' organisations and press freedom defenders supported by the IFJ, has an important role to play in encouraging South Asia as a whole to embrace press freedom.

To this end, the IFJ and SAMSAN will continue to provide individuals and local organisations with support and solidarity about experiences in other communities in South Asia and globally, as well as support for training on a range of related issues – organisational leadership, safety, human rights, campaigning and advocacy – in order to present a united front across the countries of South Asia and to strengthen the local defence of press freedom and the associated fundamental rights of all people.

**Jacqueline Park**  
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director

## OVERVIEW

The media in the countries reviewed in this year's *South Asia Press Freedom Report* all faced significant threats and challenges through 2007-08. Some challenges were successfully faced, some remain to be addressed. The challenges occur along a multitude of dimensions, from political coercion and violence by State and non-State actors, to commercial compulsions and advertiser pressure, all of which have a chilling effect on good journalistic practices.

The regulatory environment in most of the countries, especially for the rapidly growing electronic media, remains ill-defined. And with governments often unwilling to act decisively against the culture of impunity for attacks against the media, journalists and media workers are frequently compelled to adopt a play-safe attitude. Even where there is no prior restraint on the exercise of the right to free speech, a hostile environment often compels the media to engage in self-censorship rather than risk retribution.

The year from May 2007 to mid-April 2008 was one of delicate political transitions in several countries of South Asia. Afghanistan continued to struggle with the problems

of reconstruction in a post-conflict situation, with institutions of law and governance still nascent. Nepal and Pakistan held firm to the course of democratisation, and the media community in both countries played a significant role in the relative success with which political change was achieved. Bangladesh remains under an "emergency" dispensation, with the media subject to significant and often capriciously enforced curbs. Sri Lanka slid further toward all-out internal conflict, as foretold last year, and the media in that country continues to be a casualty of unrelenting war.

India, the largest country in the region, continued to reflect diverse trends in its internal media dynamics. "Peripheral" regions such as the north-eastern states, Jammu and Kashmir and the central Indian plateau, continued to suffer from serious internal strife. The media was often caught between the demands of rival insurgent groups on one side and state security agencies on the other. In the big cities and the more economically dynamic states of the south and the west, the media continued to grow and diversify. However, there are worries that what appears to be a diversity of media sources is not really so and that media concentration could become the norm.

**Even where there is no prior restraint on the exercise of the right to free speech, a hostile environment often compels the media to engage in self-censorship rather than risk retribution.**



**State of emergency:** The president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, Huma Ali, rallies journalists in Islamabad in a protest against media restrictions in November 2007. Ali was backed by senior Nepali journalist and publisher Kanak Dixit (to his left), who led an emergency mission for the International Federation of Journalists to show regional solidarity for Pakistan's journalists. Photo: IFJ

Since the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan has witnessed a significant increase in media size and diversity. However, with the economy failing to pick up momentum and levels of poverty remaining high, the growth in advertising spending within Afghanistan has been modest, placing a significant impediment on the growth of an independent media. Donors who supported media development in the early years of post-Taliban Afghanistan imposed strict deadlines for media organisations to become self-sustaining, conditions that for the most part could not be met. Many donors have since pulled out, although the Afghan media continues to maintain a tenuous existence through bridging donations and other short-term financial commitments.

Readership of the print media is limited and will remain so until the literacy deficit begins to be bridged at an accelerated pace. Television audiences are potentially very large, but will remain an unrealised potential until innovative methods of bringing electricity to each human settlement in Afghanistan can be found. This leaves radio as the sector with immediate potential for the most rapid growth in content and audience.

Radio has been a growth sector in the Afghan media, supported by a reasonably growth-friendly legal and regulatory environment.

Innovative revenue models have been tested, although a reliance on influential local advertisers may undermine

the independence of broadcasters. There also have been overt and covert threats to independent broadcasting by aggrieved individuals and organisations.

The worst of the hazards faced by media practitioners in Afghanistan was represented in the murder of two women media workers within days of each other. Both had offended against strong social strictures in force. Uncertainties in the legal provisions governing the right to free expression were epitomised in the death sentence handed down in January to Syed Parvez Kambakhsh, a young journalist and student.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) worked with local journalists' organisations to seek a definitive understanding on the limits to free speech, especially where it concerns the application of blasphemy laws. Journalists' organisations have sought clarity from political and judicial authorities in Afghanistan on the free speech clauses in the national constitution. Unfortunately, the courts allowed the constitutional reference to free expression to be defeated by a clause that gives pre-eminence to customary law wherever the constitution is silent. The Kambakhsh case remains a challenge that journalists and the media community in Afghanistan have to meet. In doing so, they could well dispel many of the ambiguities in Afghan national law on the limits to free speech.

During the period under review, the media in Bangladesh has struggled to cope with a situation of domestic political consensus breaking down. The country's two main political parties could not agree on modalities

and procedures for holding parliamentary general elections. As the dispute spilled onto the streets, the country's bureaucracy and army pitched in with the extraordinary political intervention of a declaration of a state of emergency. The media was among the first to feel the pressure, as most critical social commentary vanished from print and the air-waves, on the *diktat* of the emergency administration. A semblance of business as usual was restored when the military-backed administration seemed to realise that a free media remained the only guarantee it had, in the vacuum created by the suspension of politics, to gauge public moods and attitudes. However, every juncture at which the public has challenged the regime – as with protests in Dhaka University over the course of the year and overt expressions of discontent by the farming community about the failure of essential supplies – has drawn forth new official strictures against the media.

The emergency regime in Bangladesh has committed itself to the restoration of an elected government before the end of 2008. However, ongoing investigations against corruption and official malfeasance have implicated the heads of several media organisations. Generally speaking, the media is weakly institutionalised, and the absence of a

proprietor or principal financier has led to the virtual collapse of several newspapers and broadcasters. The media in Bangladesh will

**There are worries that what appears to be a diversity of media sources is not really so diverse. Media concentration could become the norm.**

be tested in the months ahead by the need to maintain rigorous public scrutiny over the basic reforms to which the emergency administration has committed itself. In the absence of such scrutiny, public confidence in the democratic process will remain at a low ebb.

The media in India grew robustly, although concerns about diversity and choice remained high. Moreover, there was little to suggest an improvement in the conditions of employment of journalists and other workers in the regulated sector, where the Indian Working Journalists' Act applies. Growth has been very rapid in the unregulated sector and the competition among rival companies for scarce skills has perhaps led to improved wages. Employment conditions, however, are governed in the main by short-term contracts. And rapid personnel turnover has been a feature of the pattern of growth in this sector.

Significant ethical dilemmas surfaced for the Indian media over 2007-08, almost all of them as a consequence of intense competition for advertising revenue among the country's proliferating broadcast channels and print entities. Some ethical violations caused great public concern and resentment. In the circumstances, there was a tendency for the debate on media regulation to be overtaken by the advocacy of extreme measures. The Government and judiciary in India remain prepared to expand their supervisory jurisdiction over the media and all such situations seem to lend their case additional support. Although India's media remains well organised to fight back against any real or perceived threat to its rights

and privileges, public trust could be eroded by the increasing evidence that the media follows no norm other than profit maximisation.

Politics in Nepal since the nation-wide political movement of April 2006 has been characterised by gradual consolidation and delicate negotiations over the course of the democratic transition.

The persistence and patience of the diverse parties engaged in this transition have paid off in the historic general elections held on April 10, 2008, to create a Constituent Assembly that will determine the contours of the country's future political evolution. The media community, as an active agent of the process of democratisation, has acquired sufficient moral capital to ensure that strong free speech guarantees and assurances on the public right to information are enshrined in the

country's new constitution. However, the drafting of the new constitution is likely to be a long process. There is the strong prospect of a clash on fundamentals between mainstream parties that have fared rather poorly in the elections and a political group that was, until recently, an underground insurgent outfit.

There is also a vast gulf between realities on the ground and the principles of media freedom that have been agreed in the higher councils of Nepali politics. Attacks on media personnel and institutions continue to occur at an alarming rate while basic job security remains a distant dream for most journalists and media workers. Part of the problem arises from the weakly institutionalised character of the Nepali media and overall weaknesses of the economy, which continues to be dependent on aid and remittances. However, the new politics is likely also to entail a new economics. And the Nepali media community is, by all accounts, ready to negotiate the best possible outcome for free speech and the right to information in the new constitutional framework.

Although the media rights situation worsened considerably in Pakistan throughout 2007, the current year has brought renewed reasons for hope. The new governments that have been sworn in at the federal and provincial levels following nation-wide elections in February 2008 have held out early assurances that they would be mindful of the special needs of a free press. The newly installed federal government has taken early steps to rescind overly stringent regulations governing the electronic media. All possible coercive actions against the media, such as blocking television channels, have been

firmly ruled out of court by the new coalition parties.

State and non-State actors in Pakistan, however, retain formidable powers of violence and coercion, which threaten the functioning of a free media on a day-to-day basis. There has been no effort to confront the culture of impunity that prevails in cases of journalists being

harassed, abducted or attacked, often with lethal effect. The media industry also owes the community of journalists a debt for its steadfastness in adverse times in the cause of free speech and the right to information. Minimally, this debt could be discharged through the prompt implementation of the statutory wage awards for media workers that have been successively notified, only to be ignored by the industry.

The downward slide in Sri Lanka accelerated as the Government unilaterally withdrew in January 2008 from a

ceasefire with Tamil separatist insurgents. Admittedly, however, the early optimism engendered by the 2002 ceasefire had eroded all through the preceding year. The relationship between the State, civil society and the media has deteriorated rapidly. Weakening democratic commitments on the part of the authorities led in turn to an environment of impunity for corruption and human rights violations.

It has been common practice for ministers and other prominent political figures to severely impugn the patriotism of conscientious and critical-minded journalists. With few willing to publicly condemn such rhetorical excesses, the ground is prepared for more serious threats to the safety and security of journalists and media workers across the island. Physical attacks, harassment, restrictions on movement and death threats have become a part of the working lives of journalists, photographers and all those engaged in the gathering, publication and dissemination of information in Sri Lanka.

The year gone by has been one of intense turmoil in a region that is home to more than a fifth of humanity. Journalists and the media in all countries surveyed have responded constructively to the complex challenges they face. This report charts some of the developments over the past year and suggests certain future prospects. As with the previous five editions of this annual report, the IFJ and the broader forum of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network intend that this document will serve a useful purpose as a campaign and advocacy tool for local, regional and national organisations in their defence of press freedom in South Asia.



**Sri Lanka under attack:** The printing press of Leader Publications, one of Sri Lanka's major printing houses, was set alight and completely destroyed in an arson attack by an unidentified gang on November 21, 2007. Photo: Courtesy of Free Media Movement

# AFGHANISTAN

## Diversity booms but attacks continue

While independent media continues to expand in Afghanistan, the country remains a precarious and hazardous place for journalists and media organisations. Four journalists were killed during the year, while abductions, physical violence, threats and intimidation against journalists continue with worrying frequency. Attacks on journalists, death threats and intimidation came from official and governmental sources, but Taliban supporters continue to lead the way in opposing and obstructing media freedom. The threats are clearly intended to silence debate about the new Afghanistan, and to stifle the development of an independent and critical media through which such debate would be conducted.

Religious hardliners continue to apply pressure on the Government of President Hamid Karzai to impose or support harsh measures against individuals and institutions who do not bow to fundamentalist ideas about the direction of Afghan society. This is despite the clear guarantee in Afghanistan's Constitution of the right of citizens to freedom of expression. The most prominent example is that of Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh, a young journalist with the *Jahan-e-Naw* weekly and a student at Balkh University, Mazar-e-Sharif, who was sentenced to death after a four-minute closed-door hearing in January 2008, on charges of blasphemy. Kambakhsh is alleged to have downloaded



**Under sentence:** Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh, a journalist and student, faces the death penalty for allegedly downloading information from the internet about the rights of women under Islam. Photo: Courtesy of Kamran Hazar, Kabul Press

**Main Issues**

- Journalists in line of fire
- Traditional vs non-traditional law
- Women's rights to work and to be heard
- Threats by foreign forces
- Expansion of independent media
- Media Rights Charter

**Women journalists are particularly threatened as they contend with objections from some quarters – often expressed violently – about their right to express their views and work as equals alongside men.**

information from the internet about the rights of women under Islam and distributed it among a small number of his fellow students at Balkh University

Meanwhile, women journalists are particularly threatened as they contend with objections from some quarters – often expressed violently – about their right to express their views and work as equals alongside men. These are just some of the very serious challenges for journalists and aspiring journalists in Afghanistan who wish to pursue critical journalism and the promise of democracy

### Journalists killed

The media rights monitoring unit of the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) recorded four deaths of journalists from May 2007 to April 2008.

On June 6, 2007, a prominent journalist for Sada-e-Sulh (Peace Radio), Zakia Zaki, was gunned down in her home in Parwan Province, just north of Kabul. She died instantly

in the presence of her children. After the attack, the District Police Commissioner said that six suspects had been arrested in connection with Zaki's murder. However, the case was subsequently closed and there has been no further action to bring the killers to justice. Before her death, Zaki had received several threats from local military commanders warning her to shut down Sada-e-Sulh. The AIJA and the Committee to Protect Afghan Journalists (CPAJ) continue to call for the case to be investigated independently.

Earlier, on June 1, Shokiba Sanga Amaaj, 22, who worked at the private Shamshad Television channel, was shot dead at home. The AIJA could not confirm that Shokiba was killed due to her work, but she had suffered intimidation and received several threats warning her to stop working at the station. General Abdul Qadir Safi, of the Interior Ministry, told the AIJA that police had determined that Shokiba's father had killed his daughter. He was reportedly sentenced to 10 years' in jail.

In another incident underlining the dangers faced by journalists as they conduct their work, Afghanistan Radio and Television (RTA) journalist Abdul Munir was killed on December 28 while travelling to Mazar-e-Sharif. The bus on which he was travelling came under fire by armed gunmen. Munir was wounded and died in hospital.

Soon after, on January 14, a Norwegian reporter for *Dagbladet* newspaper, Carsten Thomassen, died from wounds he sustained in an attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul, while covering the visit of a European Union delegation to Afghanistan. Six others died in the blast, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility.

### Official censure and intimidation

Government officials and the military continue to be a major source of threats to press freedom and the personal

safety of journalists. The AIJA reports that government-related forces detained several journalists due to the content of their work and there are many reports of intimidation and attacks from official sources related to material published and broadcast. Several journalists were reportedly beaten by security personnel attached to the police, the Afghan National Security Directorate (NSD) and various officials. In other instances, media outlets were shut down or attacked.

On July 1, Asif Nang, chief editor of *Aman* (Peace) magazine, was arrested, reportedly on the orders of the President's office. The arrest was alleged to be due to an article by Nang that was critical of the Government's relationship with oil companies. After being held for 13 days, Nang publicly apologised to the President and was released. Meanwhile, photographer Masoud Hussaini was reportedly beaten by Karzai's security detachment on November 5, after supposedly "stepping out of line" at a press conference.

The negative attitude toward media personnel is mirrored by other officials and parliamentarians. A faction loyal to MP Noor-ul-Haq Olumi gathered all copies of *Mashal* magazine on June 23, preventing its distribution in a clear violation of Afghanistan's media law.

The chief editor of *Mashal* and the daily *Erada*, Fazal Rahman Oria, received death threats, apparently from supporters of General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Chief of Army Staff, after the magazine published an article in July alleging murders carried out by Dostum. Fazal told the AIJA he also has been frequently summoned before the Cultural Affairs Commission since publishing articles critical of members of parliament on November 15.

In another case, Muhammed Reja, manager of Daikundi Radio, was detained in Daikundi, on the orders of the provincial governor, Sultan Ali, for broadcasting a report that allegedly threatened the "national interest". He was released after six hours in detention.

Continuous censorship and threats from high ranking officials led managers of the website Kabul Press to shut down operations voluntarily on August 24. Kabul Press's chief editor, Kamran Mir Hazar, was twice arrested in 2007 by NSD forces and held without charge for varying periods of time. He fled the country in September and has since managed to make his website operational again.

The culture of impunity is perpetuated and deepened since the enforcers of the law, the police and armed forces, often show outright antagonism toward journalists. On December 4, the AIJA reported that the Tenth District Police Commander of the Kabul Police Force assaulted radio journalist Omar Mohammadi, of Radio Salam Watandar, while he was reporting on a suicide attack on the road to Kabul Airport.

Ariana TV reporter Qasim Rahimi was beaten and threatened with death by police officers on August 28 as

he made his way to attend a conference of Taliban representatives in Ghazni city. The police also confiscated his equipment. Another Ariana TV reporter, Muhammad Rasoul Adil, also was severely beaten by police at Khost city after preparing a report that contained photos of combat casualties of the Afghan National Army. He suffered permanent injuries to his back and thighs.



**Courage recognised:** Farida Nekzad receives the 2007 International Press Freedom Award from the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) for her commitment to press freedom and courage to report in impossible war-time conditions in her home country, Afghanistan. Photo: Courtesy of Naqibullah Taib, AIJA

### Hardliners gain sway

Despite threats and intimidation from government authorities, the significant majority of attacks and threats against journalists and freedom of expression and the media have been led by members of the Taliban and their supporters, mostly in relation to perceptions of Islam.

The most prominent case internationally is that of Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh, a university student and journalist for the weekly *Jahan-e-Naw*. Kambakhsh, 23, was arrested by security officials in Balkh province on October 27 and accused of blasphemy for allegedly downloading and distributing material from the internet about the role of women in Islam. Although the case was initially handled by the Provincial Attorney-General's Office, the Islamic Ulema Council called repeatedly for Kambakhsh to receive the death sentence.

On January 22, the Balkh primary court sentenced Kambakhsh to death for "insolence to the Holy Prophet". The AIJA reports that Kambakhsh was denied a lawyer, and journalists and civil society and human rights organisations were not permitted entry to the court. The court reportedly warned journalists

who protested about the process and the outcome of the hearing that they too would be in danger of arrest if they persisted with their protests.

The court said its ruling was made on the basis of its judicial discretion under Article 130 of Afghanistan's Constitution, which allows for a judgment to be based on customary Islamic law. However, Article 34 of the Constitution also defends the right to freedom of expression, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "... freedom of expression shall be inviolable. Every Afghan shall have the right to express thoughts through speech, writing, illustrations as well as other means in accordance with provisions of this Constitution."

After a storm of protest from the international press freedom community, the Upper House of Afghanistan's Parliament issued a statement criticising journalists for their protests and condemning Kambakhsh for dishonouring Islam.

However, the proceedings against Kambakhsh have since been moved to Kabul, where efforts are being made to appeal the sentence. This development follows a change of stance on the part of the Upper House, which on January 31 rejected the Balkh court's ruling and called for



**Double hazard:** While the circumstances of her June 1 death are unclear, Shokiba Sanga Amaaj, 22, received constant warnings throughout her career to stop working as a journalist. Five days later, Peace Radio reporter Zakia Zaki was killed in her home after months of intimidation and threats against her work. Photo: Courtesy of Naqibullah Taib, AIJA

a free and independent trial to be held, with full legal representation for the accused. On February 6, Karzai said in a dialogue with AIJA and CPAJ representatives that he would assess the death penalty against Kambakhsh.

In a separate case, Ghows Zelmay, a former spokesman for Afghanistan's Attorney-General, was detained on November 4. He is accused of publishing a translation into Dari, one of Afghanistan's two official languages, of the Holy Qur'an and failing to obtain authentication from duly accredited authorities. He is alleged to have introduced

misinterpretations into the Dari version of the Islamic scripture. Zelmay continues to be detained without charge. It is unclear when a trial will proceed.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Culture ordered four private television stations to stop broadcasting Indian soap operas by April 15, 2008. The warning underlined the concerns of free media proponents that the Government is increasingly bowing to pressure from hardliners seeking to obstruct freedom of expression. At the time of going to press, several of the television stations were defying the order.

**Women and their defenders under threat**

Conflicting perceptions about the role and depiction of women in Islam is a recurrent source of friction within Afghan society, manifesting itself in threats against journalists who question "traditional" understandings of Islam and in direct attacks on women who choose to make journalism their profession or to make their views known.

Since June 2007, Farida Nekzad, chief editor of Pajhwok Afghan News and vice-president of the South Asia Media Commission, has received constant threats by phone and email. These anonymous threats drew pointed reference to

the murders of Zakia Zaki and Shokiba Sanga Amaaj. Canadian Journalists for Free Expression awarded Nekzad its International Press Freedom Award in 2007, citing her fearless reporting.

Likewise, the chief editor of Zohra Radio, Zarghona Hasan, received repeated anonymous death threats through 2007 warning her not to defend women's rights. She has been forced to move home but continues her work.

On April 11, 2008, unidentified gunmen threw a grenade inside the home of radio producer Khadija Ahadi in the western city of Herat. Ahadi, deputy editor-in-chief of Radio Faryad, told the AIJA that she had received repeated phone threats regarding her programs discussing social issues and the role of women in Afghan society. It was the second such attack on her home.

In Iran, the editor of Afghanistan's monthly *Haqq-e-Zan* (Women's Rights), Ali Muhaqiq Nasab, was arrested on March 4. Documents, phones and a computer were allegedly confiscated from his home. He reportedly continues to be held without charge, although information is lacking on his situation.

**Foreign forces against media freedom**

Foreign military forces in Afghanistan have also participated actively in restricting media freedoms in the country, doing little to provide Afghan authorities with positive guidance about the role and value of a free media within a democracy.

The United States military has detained an Afghan journalist without charge at Bagram Air Base since September 2. Jawed Ahmad, 22, who works for Canadian Television (CTV), was arrested at Kandahar airport and accused of having contacts with local Taliban leaders and possessing a video containing Taliban material. His defenders point out that it is common for professional journalists to be in contact with multiple sides when reporting in a conflict zone.

A reporter for Press TV of Iran, Fayez Khorshidi, reported to the AIJA that he had been abducted on October 18 by

**Foreign military forces in Afghanistan have also participated actively in restricting media freedoms in the country, doing little to provide Afghan authorities with positive guidance about the role and value of a free media within a democracy.**



**Rights defender:** Ali Muhaqiq Nasab, the editor of the monthly *Haqq-e-Zan* (Women's Rights), was arrested on March 4 in Iran. Photo: Courtesy of Rahimullah Samander, AIJA

foreign military personnel, seemingly American, and later beaten until he was unconscious.

Meanwhile, Al-Jazeera cameraman Sami al-Hajj continues to be held in the US's detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, without charge. Al-Hajj was arrested at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border on December 15, 2001, while on assignment to cover the war against the Taliban. He was transferred to Guantanamo in June 2002.

### Positive developments

Despite the catalogue of violence and intimidation during 2007-08, there nevertheless are some signs of improvement in the media landscape for Afghanistan and perhaps even room for optimism.

The breadth and diversity of the growing media market in Afghanistan presents great opportunities for the development of strong and independent journalism in the face of persistent threats to media freedom. According to

**The breadth and diversity of the growing media market in Afghanistan presents great opportunities for the development of strong and independent journalism in the face of persistent threats to media freedom.**

the Ministry of Communication and Information, 114 new publications were registered and approved to start operations during 2007. Seven television stations, seven radio stations and several electronic media publications have also begun operations.

In the past, most media organisations were funded directly by donors, and subsequently closed when funds dried up. The coming year will be a testing time for Afghanistan's newest media organisations, but hope can be garnered from the example of the reopening of *Erada* daily, which has found alternative funding, while Al-Jazeera's programs have also resumed broadcasting through Lemar TV. Several organisations have extended broadcasting and publication to new provinces as well.

As media reach expands, the AIJA's media monitoring unit, based in Kabul, has become an invaluable tool for defending press freedom and promoting the development of independent media. The unit is a clearing house for information about attacks and legal restrictions on journalists and other actions that impinge on media freedom. By disseminating information and campaigning for the rights of journalists and media workers, the unit supports and strengthens challenges to Afghanistan's culture of impunity.

The Afghan media community has been proactive in adopting the best practices of journalism. A national summit of journalists and media organisations in Kabul in July 2007, organised by the AIJA and CPAJ with the support of the IFJ, agreed unanimously on a *Charter for a Democratic and Pluralist Media Culture and Social and Professional Rights for Media and Journalism in Afghanistan*. The Charter outlines an agenda for promoting a media culture across Afghanistan that is based on editorial independence, balance, accountability and social responsibility.

## BANGLADESH

### Trying times under emergency laws

It has been a challenging period for the media in Bangladesh since the declaration of a nation-wide state of emergency in January 2007. The extraordinary sequence of steps by President Iajuddin Ahmed followed a

#### Main Issues

- Official and unofficial censorship
- Co-option of media to political interests
- Restricted reporting of social unrest
- Right to Information exemptions
- Financial instability in the media
- Harassment and persecution

breakdown of consensus and a long political stalemate over the modalities and procedures of holding the country's parliamentary elections, which were due to be held in January 2007. The elections have since been postponed to late 2008.

In the immediate aftermath of the emergency declaration, the media had ample reason to worry. Calls made from the presidential office to all broadcast channels ordered that news and current affairs programs be suspended until further notice. The verbal advice was conveyed predominantly to the electronic media, but also had a chilling effect on the print sector.

In the days that followed, media leaders in Bangladesh communicated their unease about the new restrictions to the emergency regime. By this time the military-backed emergency administration was apparently realising the utility of a free media, since normal politics remained suspended and there was no apparent means available to the administration for gauging public sentiment.

Over the next few weeks, although there was little clarity about the shape and character of the ruling arrangement, the media generally tended to be positive in its attitude towards it. The emergency administration was seen, if nothing else, as a way out of the stalemate that had resulted from continuing disputes between the two main political parties.

The new administration, in turn, was keen to project an attitude of apolitical neutrality. It sought to foster a belief among the public that its intent was no more than to ensure a framework for free and fair elections. Since the legal framework and security arrangements for the elections were the principal ground for the bitter polarisation over the preceding months, this plea won the administration some support from the media and the public.

The administration also showed an inclination to seek the support and endorsement of the media in what it claimed would be a transitional arrangement toward a more transparent political dispensation. Media endorsement was also sought for the mission of curbing corruption, which was seen as a cause that transcended political partisanship.



**Forced to flee:** Jahangir Alam Akash was reportedly tortured in detention after being arrested by Rapid Action Battalion V personnel. He has left his home in fear of his personal safety.

### Little respect for media independence

Yet early steps taken by the administration conveyed an impression that its commitment to media freedom was conditional. On April 17, just over three months into the emergency regime, the government Press Information Department issued a letter to all newspapers, television channels and radio stations urging that “ill-motivated and misleading reports” be avoided.

The advisory letter claimed that “some of the media are publishing or broadcasting dishonest and unprofessional political statements, satirical sketches, cartoons, features, etc, which are creating confusion among the people”. Certain of the newspapers, it continued, “are publishing motivated and exaggerated reports about government officials, businessmen, professionals, intellectuals, and politicians”. All this was being done, allegedly, with the deliberate intent to “create confusion among the people”.

The administration “requested” the media to be “more vigilant to ensure that (it does) not provide any room for activities, propaganda or reports that are unnecessarily harassing or misinformative about anyone”. “The government hopes that the country’s mass media will take greater care in publishing/broadcasting apolitical and substantial news, features, discussions, satirical sketches and cartoons, in order to maintain the positive role of the

electronic and print media,” the advisory added.

There also seemed to be an effort to co-opt the media into the administration’s plans and projects, rather than to respect the media’s independent role. “The mass media’s

**The advisory letter claimed that “some of the media are publishing or broadcasting dishonest and unprofessional political statements, satirical sketches, cartoons, features, etc, which are creating confusion among the people”.**

role in carrying out the government’s ongoing multifaceted reform programs has been praised by all quarters,” the letter said. And it was because of this “positive role” that the administration was “always proactive in maintaining the freedom of the electronic and print media (despite the) state of emergency”. This “positive role” was held up as underpinning the “flexible and tolerant” approach of the Government in terms of enforcing the “provisions of the Emergency Powers Act”.

Clearly spelling out the conditions under which it would continue to show similar “tolerance”, the circular urged the country’s mass media to “take greater care” in its published or broadcast output. Subject to this clause, the circular promised, the Government would be “proactive in maintaining” media freedom.

In May 2007, administration officials literally ripped out an entire editorial under the headline “Khaki Politics in Dhaka” and an article entitled “The Dhaka Regime’s Messy Surgery” from *Himal Southasian*, an analytical monthly magazine published from Kathmandu, Nepal. Also subject

to this form of censorship was an issue of the weekly *The Economist*. In both cases, the articles remained accessible to readers in Bangladesh through the respective publications' websites.

### Coercion becomes official

This subtle change of mood was made overt and clear when the first signs of a challenge to the new administration surfaced with student protests at Dhaka University in August 2007. Coverage of the demonstrations drew a stern reminder from the administration about the special circumstances of the "state of emergency". The all but explicit suggestion from members of the administration was that the protests were instigated by media coverage and only took a violent turn on that account.

As the unrest spread, the emergency regime put the main cities of the country's six administrative divisions under curfew. Mainul Hosein, then the Information Adviser to the President, summoned a meeting of Bangladesh's leading editors and television heads to urge that they "report conscientiously and responsibly". The Government, he said, had no intention of imposing censorship in any form, although it had the powers to do so.

After the qualified reassurance of the April 17 circular, this was distinctly a threat. On September 22, several talk shows and news analysis programs went off the air in response to an administration *diktat*. This had the effect of inducing other media, including newspapers, to engage in a rigorous internal process of self-censorship, rather than risk incurring the administration's displeasure.

There was a disconnection between assurances given by the administration on journalists' rights and the manner in which such rights were interpreted at the ground level. The President's Information Adviser, for instance, had explicitly conveyed an assurance that press identity cards would be recognised as curfew passes, in the event that a journalist failed to obtain a pass from competent local authorities. But in the days of curfew that followed the student unrest, several journalists were obstructed from moving about in the performance of their duties. Many were physically assaulted, detained and subject to torture for supposed non-observance of the curfew. Although all the journalists concerned carried valid identity cards issued by recognised media houses, enforcement agencies on the ground refused to honour them as directed by the Information Adviser.

On August 23, two private broadcast channels – CSB and Ekushey Television – received a written notice from the Information Ministry warning them not to broadcast "provocative" news. On August 26, the Information Adviser again summoned editors and other media heads to a closed-door meeting, at which he expressed regret for incidents of harassment of journalists but pleaded special circumstances. According to participants at the meeting, Mainul Hosein argued that the country was going through trying times which made it incumbent on the media to show patience and forbearance.

**The written "guidelines" bore no official stamp or signature, but detailed in minute particulars what the talk shows could and could not do. For instance, it was ordained that talk shows could not be broadcast live. They must be pre-recorded and edited.**

Following another suspension, broadcast channels were permitted to resume talk shows by mid-September. The move followed several appeals from senior media people, who argued that the public deserved the freedom to discuss matters of urgent public importance, such as the floods that had ravaged vast swathes of the country and uprooted millions of people. Again, the permission granted was conditional. The Information Adviser summoned the heads of the country's broadcast sector to issue "informal guidelines" on talk shows. The written "guidelines" bore no official stamp or signature, but detailed in minute particulars what the talk shows could and could not do. For instance, it was ordained that talk shows could not be broadcast live. They must be pre-recorded and edited. Phone-ins and interactive discussions that provided for

audience participation in the talk shows were banned. As the Dhaka daily *New Age* reported on September 20, it also decreed that "statements that can create resentment towards the legitimate government of Bangladesh should be avoided".

On September 6, the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) suspended the frequency allocation of the country's first 24-hour news channel, CSB Television. The channel was ordered off the air after some irregularities came to light about the manner in which it had obtained its broadcast frequency clearances. Media observers who assessed the alleged offences of the channel believe the irregularities were minor and should, in normal circumstances, have attracted no more than the sanction of a fine. The channel's main offence, they say, might have been its coverage of the Dhaka University student protests in August, which apparently embarrassed the emergency administration.

There have been instances when media reports on a matter of immense public importance for Bangladesh – the supply of essential agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertiliser – have also attracted the emergency administration's ire. On November 13, Industries Adviser Geeteara Safiya Choudhury blamed "propaganda" for



**Raising their voices:** Journalists' leaders shout slogans in the streets of Dhaka demanding rights for journalists on June 22, 2007. Photo: Courtesy of Firoz Ahmed, Drik News

creating a sense of panic among farmers and riotous scenes at several fertiliser distribution points.

### Financial instability hits the media

The campaign against corruption launched under emergency law began quickly to destabilise the media in a thoroughly unforeseen manner. At least 11 directors and senior executive officers of media houses were detained over the year for alleged acts of corruption in their business activities. Many of them have failed to secure bail. This has resulted in the serious disruption of the day-to-day functioning of their media houses, irregular wage payments to staff, and mounting economic distress within the media community. Financial distress has led to the closure of at least one Bangla daily and the transfer of ownership of two.

The Bangla *Daily Ittefaq* has retrenched at least 140 staff members – both journalists and others – on account of financial difficulties arising from the prosecution of one of its principal shareholders. The *Dainik Janakantha* newspaper and associated publications have barely managed to pay wages and salaries on time following the imprisonment of their chairman. The Bangla daily *Ajker Kagoj* suspended publication on account of financial difficulties. Several dailies have suspended payment of wages and salaries entirely.

The financial difficulties arising on account of the detention of several media owners have been scrutinised by various bodies and found not to be press freedom issues, in a direct sense. In most cases, the media owners have several other business interests, not to mention political connections and debts. The case to be made is not one for immunity from corruption investigations, but of separating out the intricate ties that link the media in Bangladesh to other businesses. Without a legally mandated separation of the financial concerns of media and other businesses, the media will be perceived as the hand-maiden of other interests. It will consequently be held accountable for offences perpetrated by the other interest groups.

Bangladesh, however, remains very far from enacting a credible set of legal norms on media ownership.

Since promulgation of the emergency rules, the administration has cancelled the enlistment (or registration) of some 160 newspapers and other publications, allegedly for not maintaining regularity in publication. However, some of these have continued publishing after obtaining temporary injunctions from Bangladesh's higher courts.

### Draft law on right to information

The emergency administration has, in fulfilment of stated commitments to transparency, introduced a Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance for public discussion. Although it is not yet law, the ordinance could be notified at any time and would supersede, in the event of any contradiction, the relevant provisions of the country's Official Secrets Act.

Journalists' groups have studied the draft law and found it lacking in several respects. The most conspicuous shortfall is the large number of exemptions that would be granted to allow authorities to decline public requests for disclosure. Section 8 of the Ordinance sets out nine eventualities under which information could be denied. These include very broad provisions, such as potential harm to "the sovereignty, honour, (or) foreign policy" of the State, its "defence" or relations with foreign States. Any disclosure that could harm the "economic management of the Government" or "benefit or harm any particular person or organisation financially" also could be blocked. Matters related to the tax liabilities of individuals or organisations, currency exchange rates and interest rates also could be protected by prevailing secrecy laws. The list of exemptions is rounded off by one which is seemingly all-embracing in its scope: "information, disclosure of which is against public interests", could be denied to the public.

The non-specificity of many of these exemptions has journalists worried. However, they are encouraged that a debate on the right to information is at last beginning in the public domain.

**Without a legally mandated separation of the financial concerns of media and other businesses, the media will be perceived as the hand-maiden of other interests.**

### Community Radio Policy Announced

On March 12, 2008, the Government announced a policy on Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation. On March 28, it issued an advertisement inviting applications from eligible organisations and entities for starting community radio broadcasts. In terms of eligibility criteria, the policy is as permissive as can possibly be conceived. It defines a community in fairly broad terms as a "group of people who share common characteristics and/or interests such as sharing a single geographical location, i.e. a specific town, village, or neighbourhood; sharing of economic and social life through trade, marketing, exchange of goods and services". And it permits any such "community" to apply for a community radio licence. Specifically prohibited are applications from individuals, registered companies, political parties, international organisations (whether non-governmental or otherwise) and foreign media entities.

The policy spells out the usual range of proscribed broadcast content, in terms of anything that could be deemed detrimental to the security and sovereignty of the State and friendly relations with other States. Other fairly unexceptionable prohibitions include anything that may constitute contempt of court, or incitement to an offence. However, there is some concern over the stipulation that community radio in its particular domain should "be relevant to the needs of that particular community" and "should not go beyond the community's cultural and historical heritage".

Aside from the negative proscriptions on broadcast content, there also are several positive prescriptions. The latter include speeches on developmental issues by local government functionaries and anything else that the Government may specify.

As with community radio policy elsewhere, there are limitations and norms specified for sponsored content. However, the economics of community broadcasting remain to be worked out in the particular situations defined by the stipulated licence fees and the charges payable for the use of the broadcast spectrum.

### Journalists harassed and persecuted

Many journalists and media workers were harassed, attacked and persecuted during the year under review, commonly in relation to conflicts over political interests. Torture at the hands of security personnel was commonly reported.

Jahangir Alam Akash, a reporter with the daily *Sangbad* and CSB Television, was arrested on October 23 at his home in the Rajshahi administrative division of Bangladesh by personnel of the Rapid Action Battalion V (RAB V). The arresting party was led by Major Rashidul Hasan Rashid, who had earlier had a grievance against Akash for reports he wrote for his newspaper on civilians killed in RAB V operations. Major Rashid effected the arrest on the basis of a complaint of extortion lodged by Mahfuzul Alam Loton, a local politician who had lost his trusteeship over a body administering the properties of religious institutions in the area, after several investigative reports by Akash alleged rampant financial malfeasance under his watch. Although Akash had obtained anticipatory bail from the appropriate court soon after the complaint was lodged, he was arrested on the strength of another complaint registered just four hours before personnel of RAB V raided his home.

Akash was detained until November 19 and reportedly suffered torture at the hands of the RAB V and then at the hands of the Rajshahi police. Even after he was released on bail, fresh cases have been registered against him by known offenders and he has had to seek refuge in Dhaka, rather than return to his family home.

Zahirul Haque Titu, correspondent for the dailies *Inqilab* and *The New Nation*, was detained in October in his hometown of Pirojpur, in south-western Bangladesh. He remains in jail despite efforts to secure his release. No charges were mentioned although his arrest was professedly made under section 16(2) of the Emergency



**In solidarity:** Journalists and press workers shout slogans at the Dhaka Press Club protesting the closure of a leading newspaper *Daily Ittefaq* on December 12, 2007. Photo: Courtesy of Firoz Ahmed, Drik News

Powers rules, which allows non-police law enforcers the same powers of search and seizure as the police. Titu has faced the overt hostility of Islamist elements and their allies within the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) since 2003. Many attacks against him have gone uninvestigated. Titu's case has often been a rallying point for journalists' organisations in Bangladesh.

On May 11, journalist and human rights campaigner Tasneem Khalil was arrested at his home in Dhaka by plain-clothes officers. Khalil was taken to the Sangsad Bhavan army camp and tortured. An assistant editor with *The Daily Star*, Bangladesh's leading English language newspaper, Khalil has also worked for global broadcaster CNN International and compiled reports for Human Rights Watch. Khalil was released after a day's detention and suffered serious injuries as a result of reported torture.

Arifur Rahman, a cartoonist with the Bangla daily *Prothom Alo*, was dismissed by his employers in September after fiery demonstrations by Islamic groups against a cartoon he had composed which involved a play of words on the name Mohammad. The newspaper apologised for carrying the cartoon, although neither the editor nor the publisher suffered any form of sanction. Arifur Rahman was arrested two days later. With no-one willing to stand surety for him, he was sent to prison for 30 days. After repeated extensions of his detention, he was released on March 20, 2008.

### Journalists' perceptions

The IFJ conducted a survey among Bangladeshi journalists over the year. The results of the survey testify to the widespread perception that "power politics" is the main source of conflict in Bangladesh. The problem, a majority felt, could be mitigated through constructive people-to-people contacts, with the community of journalists playing a facilitating role. The overwhelming sentiment among the respondents to the survey was that the media should focus on the "human element" in all conflicts and report in an "accurate and unbiased" manner.

Most journalists surveyed had been exposed to conflict situations. A clear two-thirds had done more than 10 stories in the preceding year on conflict situations. Fewer than 2 per cent claimed not to have encountered any conflict situation while on the professional beat.

More than 60 per cent of the respondents thought the information provided on conflict by government departments, police and military sources was "limited". More than 36 per cent thought the information from these sources was "biased".

An overwhelming 88 per cent of the respondents were prepared to characterise media coverage of conflict as "biased". More than half cited "commercial considerations" as the main reason for media bias, while just under one in five thought that media proprietors' political interests were the principal underlying factor.

Threats and physical hazards continue to be a challenge for journalists in Bangladesh. Khulna, one of the country's six administrative divisions, has witnessed the most dangerous working conditions for journalists in the country. Indeed, the phenomenon of "terrorism", involving both targeted and random acts of violence against media workers and ordinary civilians, began in the

Khulna area, according to most journalists. The threats persist to this day, with Islamic groups and radical left-wing groups contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity within the media. Every region of Bangladesh has problems specific to itself. Chittagong division, which has seen a low-level insurgency and occasional outbreaks of ethnic fighting, is also often a hazardous area for journalists. Journalists and media workers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in particular often face the denial of essential professional equipment and material, on the grounds that the generalised availability of these could help the cause of the ethnic insurgencies.

opportunities within the constitution of the boards allowing for obstructive tactics. At the current writing, it seems likely that the wage boards could announce interim awards by early May 2008. However, the timing of these formal notifications and the extent to which they will be honoured remain moot points.

Growth has been very rapid in the unregulated sector, and the competition among rival companies for scarce skills has perhaps led to improved wages. There is no basis for making a firm judgment here, in the absence of a centralised reporting and monitoring system. Employment conditions, however, are governed in the main by short-term contracts. And rapid personnel turnover has been a feature of the pattern of growth in this sector of the media.

## INDIA

### Robust growth and a loss of diversity

India's media grew robustly over the year under review. Concerns about diversity and choice, however, remained high. Firm estimates on concentration of ownership and control in the media cannot be made in the absence of reliable statistics. The greatest malaise of the Indian media may well be a lack of transparency. Even so, it seems that the quantitative growth of the media in India has been accompanied by a qualitative deterioration and a loss of diversity.

There has been little to suggest an improvement in the conditions of employment of journalists and other workers in the regulated sector, where the Indian Working Journalists' and Other Newspaper Employees' (Conditions of Service) Act apply. Two wage boards were created for media workers (nominally separate institutions for journalists and other newspaper employees, although under the same chairman) in May 2007. The boards' deliberations and sittings have been sporadic; the terms of reference are not clearly defined; and there are ample

### Media industry a star performer

According to an estimate made by a leading business lobby, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), revenues of the media and entertainment industry grew by 17 per cent in 2007, to touch an aggregate figure of INR (Indian rupees) 500 billion

(about US\$12.5 billion). This estimate places the revenue from advertising at INR 196 billion, or just over 38 per cent of the total industry turnover.

Subscriptions in the Indian media industry recover even less of the production and operational costs than counterparts elsewhere. Growth prospects, in this sense, depend significantly on the growth of advertising spending in the economy. There have been conflicting estimates of advertisement revenue growth. While the FICCI study puts the growth of advertising revenue at 22 per cent for 2007, a similar exercise by a leading advertising and market research firm puts it at a more modest 3 per cent.

The latter figure points to a more difficult situation ahead for India's media industry. There is considerable anxiety that the sliding profits reported by the Indian

#### Main Issues

- Concentration of media ownership
- Stagnant working conditions
- Dysfunctional regulatory systems
- Competition and private equity
- Uncertain standards on free speech right
- Codes of conduct and self-regulation



**Investigative journalism fettered:** Outside India's Supreme Court, three journalists and the publisher of *Midday* speak out against their conviction for "contempt of court". Right, Delhi Union of Journalists and other organisations protested against the judicial ruling. Photos: Courtesy of Midday Publications, Delhi

corporate sector and the contagion effects of economic woes in the United States could lead to significant cuts in advertising spending. This could have adverse consequences for the fortunes of the Indian media.

The surface reality is of a huge proliferation in the media. New newspapers have been launched over the year under review, many of them by major media groups. Several new radio channels have started up under the third phase of the FM broadcast licensing process. According to the most recent statistics, 350 television channels are on air, with another 100 slated for launch in the near future.

Foreign investor interest in India's media remained high. The US-based media conglomerate NBC Universal announced plans to acquire a 26 per cent stake in NDTV Networks, a holding company for broadcasters in the lifestyle and fashion segment, related through interlocking equity ownership with NDTV 24x7, an English-language news broadcaster, and its Hindi-language counterpart, NDTV India.

Global Broadcast News (GBN), which runs several television channels, has similarly, announced plans to raise INR 8 billion to fund an aggressive move into regional language broadcast and print media. This venture will be executed in partnership with the global media giant Viacom, which is already a 50 per cent equity owner in a partner organisation of GBN.

Diligent Media Corporation (DMC), a joint venture between India's top Hindi-language broadcaster and second-ranked print organisation, already has an English newspaper presence in four major cities in the western region. It has now announced plans for business dailies in Hindi for several smaller towns in the same region. It also is reported to be making aggressive takeover bids for major newspapers in Nagpur, Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram. In part, the expansion and takeover projects, will be financed through the sale of a major equity stake in the company to a foreign institutional investor.

Big corporate houses, both Indian and multinational, have been increasingly making their presence felt in the media sector. Reliance-Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, one of India's largest corporate houses, has expanded its presence in FM and announced plans to enter television broadcasting with perhaps 20 channels.

India's media has grown faster and more visibly than other sectors of a rapidly growing economy. Yet, unlike other sectors, investment rules and norms in the media remain opaque and often subject to abuse.

### **Murky investment rules and norms**

In February 2008, eight journalists from NewsX, a news channel that was then yet to be launched, resigned after a dispute with the ownership of the holding company. The episode involved public mud-slinging and allegations of journalists being wrongfully confined and forced to submit resignation letters.

A delegation of concerned journalists subsequently went to the Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the

Union Government, seeking an investigation into the financial sources of the company. While declining to intrude into what he called "internal financial matters" at the broadcasting company, the Minister urged that all clauses of the journalists' job contracts be honoured. The financial aspects were referred to the investigative arm of the Union Government's Finance Ministry.

When all else is said and the rights and wrongs determined, the immediate verdict that can be offered is that the NewsX episode did not inspire great confidence in the rules of the media game as it is played in India.

If anything, the journalists' recourse to the Government as a dispute settlement authority, and the concerned Minister's protestations that he had no authority over investment norms in the broadcast sector, pointed to a seriously dysfunctional regulatory system for the broadcast media.

At another level, the Union Government has seemed excessively diligent in scrutinising and holding up a proposal for a private equity firm's investment in the Eenadu media group in Andhra Pradesh. It has been hard to avoid the suspicion of strong political motivations, since the media group concerned has been a major backer

of the political party that happens now to be in opposition at both levels: state and union.

Since the state government in Andhra Pradesh changed hands in

2004, an investigation was launched into Margadarsi, a financial company under the same ownership as the Eenadu media group. Figures uncovered by an independent audit of the finance company suggested a pyramid scheme, and possible difficulties in redeeming all the deposits the company had gathered. India's Supreme Court intervened to mandate a scheme for the company to redeem depositor funds as they fell due.

With the fundamentals of the finance company being declared unsound by credible external evaluators, an ambiguous situation arose with respect to the media freedom implications of the state government's actions. The matter seemed to underline a critical issue for the Indian media: the need to maintain a relatively transparent ownership and financial structure and for other companies under the same ownership to maintain an arms-length relationship with the media interests.

The Eenadu group has sought a way out of its financial travails by offloading shares to the private equity (PE) group Blackstone. The US\$275 million (about INR 11 billion) that it hopes to raise from the sale of equity is, by its own admission, destined to bail out the Margadarsi finance company. These plans have putatively awakened concerns in the ruling party in the state about interlocking interests between media and other companies. In particular, one member of the Indian parliament from the state of Andhra Pradesh has been responsible for blocking approval of the PE deal on the grounds that a media company raising finance through this route should not be at liberty to divert funds to non-media interests.

**India's media has grown faster and more visibly than other sectors of a rapidly growing economy. Yet, unlike other sectors, investment rules and norms in the media remain opaque and often subject to abuse.**



**Political faction fight triggers arson:** Fire services personnel at the office of the *Dinakaran* newspaper in Madurai after an arson attack in May 2007 that killed three media workers. Right, staff of *Dinakaran* in a demonstration demanding prompt action against the culprits. Photos: United News of India.

### Regulatory vacuum

In the absence of a transparent regulatory framework, interpretations of what is right and wrong with the media often come down to contingent political interests. Cross-media ownership and the sale of media industry equity to foreign PE enterprises, which have been looked upon with relative equanimity in other contexts, are considered a matter of vital principle in the case of the Eenadu group.

In February 2008, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) introduced a discussion paper on minimum criteria for any entity opening broadcast operations. How far this consultation paper will actually influence policy is to be determined. But the TRAI paper could well be considered an effort to close the stable doors after the horse has bolted, since it questions the entitlement of several bodies that are already significant players in the broadcast media scene in India – such as religious entities, political parties and cross-linked media houses.

In its currently applicable guise, the guidelines specify certain eligibility criteria for obtaining satellite up-linking permission for television broadcasting. These include stipulations on the maximum extent of foreign equity ownership (49 per cent) and the minimum net worth of the entity seeking such permission (which varies between INR 10 million and 30 million, depending on the number of channels leased by the broadcaster).

There are no qualifications required in terms of media competence or adherence to ethical norms in any guise.

Two recent events highlight the uncertain consequences for the Indian media:

- In September 2007, a 24-hour news channel, India Live TV, was ordered off the air for one month as penalty for airing a fake “sting” operation implicating a teacher in Delhi in a non-existent prostitution racket. The case obviously warranted prosecution under legal provisions covering the offences of falsification of evidence, extortion and incitement to violence. There was also a strong case for lawful recompense to the teacher, who suffered serious

trauma and irreparable damage to her reputation. Yet the regulatory response was to take the channel off the air. No explanation has been offered for either the punishment or its duration.

- In November 2007, a radio jockey on the Red FM channel was booked under the law for inciting communal violence between the Nepali Gorkha community and others. Red FM broadcasts to various urban markets in India. However, it is not known to have a signal in Siliguri district in the state of West

Bengal, where riots broke out over allegedly disparaging remarks made against the Nepali Gorkha community. The individual concerned now faces prosecution in a West

Bengal court. Red FM offended against a basic rule of ethical journalism, which is “to do no harm”. But the sanctions that the individual faces under relevant provisions of the law dealing with the incitement to violence and creating disharmony among communities, seem excessive and illogical.

These two events draw attention to a major lacuna in India’s regulatory regime: there are no accepted standards on the exercise of the free speech right in the Indian media. Neither is there a credible regulatory framework in place. More serious transgressions (than that of Red FM) and more serious abuses (than that of India Live TV) escape sanction because they do not (for whatever reason) fuel violence on the streets. This raises troubling questions about how far media freedom can be hostage to inconsistent standards.

### Absence of accepted standards

Media rights in addressing serious failures in the governance process and the administration of justice remain undefined. In September 2007, three journalists and the publisher of *Midday*, an afternoon daily in Delhi, were convicted by the Delhi High Court for “contempt of court”. The court held the four guilty for a series of

**In the absence of a transparent regulatory framework, interpretations of what is right and wrong with the media often come down to contingent political interests.**

investigative articles and cartoons on the Indian Supreme Court's orders shutting down small commercial establishments and shops in notified residential areas of Delhi.

The articles argued that India's Chief Justice, who assumed jurisdiction over the matter, may have had an undeclared conflict of interest, since his sons were involved in the property development business. Competent legal authorities who reviewed the articles pronounced them factual and accurate.

Although the defendants have obtained a stay on the application of their sentence of four months' rigorous imprisonment, their conviction stands. Other sections of the media have failed to respond to the challenge posed by the judiciary's arrogation to itself of sky-high powers of conviction for the alleged offence of "contempt of court".

Within the print media, a new threat to diversity has emerged in the rising price of newsprint. Since mid-2007, newsprint prices have increased by more than 40 per cent, compelling many newspapers to rework their advertisement-editorial ratio, and sharpening the competition for advertisement spending.

Big print media houses such as Kasturi & Sons from Chennai (publishers of *The Hindu*), the Dainik Jagaran group in the Hindi belt, and Bennett Coleman & Co in Delhi (publisher of *The Times of India*) have launched either free or radically under-priced newspapers to tap into the market for advertisements. Many, such as Bennett Coleman and HT Media (publishers of *The Hindustan Times*), have been offering their newspapers in various combinations at massive discounts. This has made the Indian print media dependent, more heavily than ever before, on advertisement revenues for survival. Smaller newspaper groups are understandably worried, as recent demands from some of them for the enactment of a "price-page schedule" testify. This regulatory device, which has been introduced in the past and struck down by the Supreme Court as violating Article 19 guarantees of free speech in the Indian Constitution, mandates that newspapers should charge prices that reflect the volume of their content. It was devised to prevent larger newspapers from using their superior access to advertisement revenue to drive out smaller newspapers through price competition.

The country's largest print media group, Bennett Coleman, meanwhile announced plans to promote a public relations company. This is seen to be continuous with its aggressive effort to increase its share of total advertising spending. For about five years, the company has pursued a strategy, named Medianet, ostensibly to go beyond the limitations of traditional news-gathering techniques, especially in new areas of audience interest which have high potential for attracting contextual advertising – such as lifestyle, fashion, entertainment, product launches and celebrity personalities.

Medianet involved the payment of a fee for coverage in news columns. *The Times* management initially committed itself to clearly identifying every story published under Medianet. However, media analysts concluded that the practice of identifying each story that was paid for, seemed to lapse after a few weeks.

Media houses are now known to conclude "private treaties" under which they acquire an equity stake in particular companies, which they pay for through ad support. This assistance in "brand building" and "corporate image development" is more than paid for since the companies that attract the media houses' interest invariably happen to be entities that are on the verge of seeking a listing on the stock exchanges. Shares in most companies are known to appreciate wildly from the day they are listed and this gives media houses ample opportunities to cash in on windfall capital gains. There has been little public questioning of the conflict of interest issues involved in this practice, to which an increasing number of media houses in both the print and broadcast domains have resorted. With fortunes being made and lost on India's stock exchanges and investor decisions being

critically dependent on media coverage, there have been calls in recent times to put the practice of "private treaties" under the scanner from an ethical point of view.

#### Content code debate

In the context of the rapid growth in television broadcasting, India's Government has sought several times in the past to put in place a "content code" that all broadcasters would be obliged to follow. A draft code was introduced by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in July 2007 and abandoned in the face of resistance from several media organisations. The Ministry then delegated the job of evolving an agreed position to the broadcast industry and its apex organisations. According to reports available at the time of this writing, the drafting of a content code is now stymied by disagreements between two rival organisations of broadcasters.

Meanwhile, in disposing of a public interest petition arising from the "sting" operation that wrongly implicated a teacher in a non-existent prostitution racket, the Delhi High Court held on December 14, 2007, that any channel planning to broadcast programs involving a "sting" should be legally obliged to obtain prior permission from a government-appointed committee. It recommended that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should appoint a retired judge of a High Court to chair the committee, which should also comprise two others drawn from the bureaucracy.

The judicial intervention, it must be underlined, came well after the offending channel had been ordered off the air by the Ministry. Yet with all this, the grounds on which the Ministry licenses channels are unclear, since the only eligibility criteria specified deal with patterns of equity ownership and the company's net worth (as already

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mentioned above). The grounds on which the Ministry cancels permissions are even less clear, since the only explanation offered in most cases is a failure to conform to the “broadcast content code” decreed by the Ministry, which is far from being an agreed document.

With voluntary codes of conduct and self-regulation being a distant prospect, India’s Government recently notified “monitoring committees” at the level of each state and every district to enforce its content code. These committees are constituted overwhelmingly by bureaucrats and police personnel. It must be emphasised that all discussions involving ethical practices in the media are currently being conducted between the Government and media ownership groups. The involvement of journalists, media professionals and civil society has so far been marginal.

ensuing period has been one of gradual consolidation and delicate negotiations over the course of the democratic transition that the people of Nepal have willed for themselves.

The moral capital that accrued to the media community from its active participation and leadership role in Nepal’s shift to democratic processes, provides the context for understanding significant changes that have occurred since 2006.

However, the months ahead will be challenging, following national elections for a new Constituent Assembly (CA) on April 10, 2008. The media community and its principal organisations – the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the Nepal Press Union (NPU) and the National Union of Journalists of Nepal (NUJN) – have sought to remain engaged in the process of change, in keeping with the high profile acquired throughout the movement for the restoration of democracy. The aim is to enshrine media freedoms and the people’s right to know securely within the new constitutional framework.

Following the formal declaration of a truce by insurgents of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M), prolonged negotiations involving the mainstream

## NEPAL

### Media and the transition to democracy

Since Nepal’s nation-wide political movement of April 2006, often characterised as the country’s second great democratic upsurge, the

#### Main Issues

- Identity politics and representation
- Election monitoring and code of conduct
- Right to Information
- Working Journalists’ Act
- Workplace disputes
- Safety and protection



**Worst fears:** Journalists and media workers demand information about missing journalist Birendra Shah at a protest organised by the Federation of Nepali Journalists in November 2007. Abducted in early October in central Nepal, it emerged that Shah was killed by CPN-M members. Photo: Courtesy of Amit Sthapit, Associated News Agency, Nepal.

political parties and civil society resulted in the adoption of an interim constitution in January 2007. This was hailed as a breakthrough. However, the optimism did not hold for long, as a breakaway faction of the CPN-M brought to the fore the issue of fair representation for people of different ethnicities. This demand became quickly enmeshed with a question of regional representation. In particular, long-standing grievances among the people of the Terai region (the southern plains adjoining Nepal's border with India) about their under-representation in the political order became a source of instability in the moves toward democracy.

The situation was compounded through 2007 by disagreements about the modalities under which the CA elections should be held. The Maoists broke off from the governing coalition in September 2007, vowing to take the matter to the streets if their demand for an election conducted under proportional representation rules was not met. Initially scheduled for November, the elections were postponed for lack of consensus among the main political players.

By January 2008, another keenly negotiated agreement was worked out on allocating numbers within the CA on the basis of directly elected constituencies and proportional representation. This made the free, fair and peaceful conduct of the elections in April 2008 possible. At the time of writing, counting of votes is in progress with results being eagerly awaited.

Media functioning during the election campaign was covered by a code of conduct drawn up by the Election Commission in consultation with the Press Council of Nepal. The monitoring of the code was entrusted to the Press Council, which recruited monitors who were assigned to different parts of the country to keep a close watch over media functioning, mainly with regard to averting "hate speech" and attacks on media.

The code of conduct has been examined by various expert groups and found to be compatible with international best practices in election coverage. At the time of writing, an evaluation of how well the monitoring process has worked is under way. Observers have drawn considerable encouragement from the fact that the elections were conducted in a mostly peaceful environment and that threats to journalists and media institutions, and also perceived violations of agreed norms on fair and balanced reporting, appear to have been minimal.

### **Demands for self-determination**

More than a dozen armed groups have emerged in the Terai region since the beginning of 2007, claiming to represent the Madhesi – literally the people in the "middle land" between the Himalayan valleys and the plains bordering India. Terai is a geographical characterisation from which activists of the new movements consciously distanced themselves. Their preference for the term Madhesi represented the

transformation of an issue of regional fairness into a question laden with complex ethno-cultural dimensions.

The Terai region currently accounts for close to half of Nepal's total population. However, settlers from the hills, who dominate politics in the region and nationally, have been identified as a distinct ethnic group that shares little in terms of identity and interests with the region's indigenous people.

With relatively easier access to India – on account of geographical proximity and cultural affinity – the Madhesi people have also suffered from the stigma of being supposedly unsuited to be national leaders in Nepal. For a while, it looked as if the violent protests and actions of Madhesi militant groups could trigger a nation-wide upheaval and upset the democratic transition. The CPN-M was convinced that the turmoil was a creation of Hindu revivalist parties from India working with the tacit encouragement of intelligence services, intent on preventing a fair election outcome.

Madhesi militants mostly targeted people of hill origin, but attacks also occurred against members of the media community. Many other groups in Nepal also have used violent tactics to press their demands in the past, and continue to do so, and they have not spared the media.

Two journalists were killed, 27 journalists and media workers were attacked, 31 were threatened and nine were detained in 2007. Already in 2008, there have been two

**On the part of the Madhesi communities, there is an acute perception that the media does not represent them adequately or fairly. In the lead-up to the CA elections, it was alleged that the mainstream media had often engaged in reporting that verged perilously close to "hate speech" and incitement to violence.**

deaths, 26 attacks, and three journalists and media workers have received threats.

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF), Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morchha (JTMM), the Maoist-aligned Young Communist League (YCL), Gorkha Line Mukti Sewa Samaj (GLMSS), the National Republican Army of Nepal (NRAN) and police personnel are among groups reported to have targeted media staff and institutions.

On the part of the Madhesi communities, there is an acute perception that the media does not represent them adequately or fairly. In the lead-up to the CA elections, it was alleged that the mainstream media had often engaged in reporting that verged perilously close to "hate speech" and incitement to violence. These are matters for the media monitors to assess and arrive at a fair determination of. A conspicuously fair and even-handed judgment would undoubtedly enhance the credibility of the process and provide valuable guidelines for the Nepali media in future years, as issues of representation for the Madhesi communities are debated in constitutional forums.

### **Legal and regulatory framework**

The provisions on freedom of speech and the right to information in the interim constitution are identical to those in Nepal's 1990 Constitution, and are considered the best assurances that can be laid down in law. There are considerable lacunae though in the manner that these provisions are interpreted in reality. The National Broadcasting Act and the Press and Publications Act, both

adopted in 1992, remain the governing statutes for the media industry. Although their provisions have been liberally interpreted to allow for a fairly healthy growth of the Nepali media, they embody some potential for imposing unwarranted curbs on the right to free speech. Licensing under the broadcasting act, for instance, is a discretionary power retained by the Government, which is itself a broadcaster.

In September 2006, a high-level media commission submitted a comprehensive report to the Government on the future shape of media policy in the country. This commission included representatives of the country's main organisations of working journalists, including the FNJ.

Partly in line with the recommendations of the commission, a Right to Information (RTI) Act was passed by Nepal's Parliament in July 2007. The FNJ's president was a member of the three-member panel that was tasked with nominating a chairman for the National Information Commission that would serve as the ombudsman for all matters involving the RTI law.

An analysis of the RTI Act by press freedom groups Freedom Forum and Article 19 has concluded that it is a sound piece of legislation, with just a few weaknesses. Two of these merit particular mention. First, the RTI Act requires that the individual making a request for information should provide a reason for so doing. Second, it is limited in its application to Nepali citizens.

Professional associations of journalists and media workers also succeeded in August 2007 in securing the unanimous consent of Nepal's Parliament for the passage of significant amendments to the Working Journalists' Act (WJA). This provides legislative backing for a long-running campaign by Nepal's journalists' community for regularisation of their working conditions and periodic wage revisions.

At the time of writing, however, neither the RTI Act nor the WJA had been implemented. The RTI Act suffers from the lack of an active publicity agent who will make its provisions generally known and encourage civic action in accordance with its provisions. The WJA has not been implemented because of the weakly institutionalised character of Nepal's media houses, their uncertain revenue streams and profits, and the paucity of advertising spending in an economy that remains among the world's poorest.

There are vast disparities in wages and working conditions across the media industry. Employees of small newspapers and radio stations earn well below prescribed minimum wages, and even these are sporadically paid, if at all. Most media staff lack job security because appointment letters are rarely issued and conditions of employment remain a matter of change and interpretation from month to month.

Decent working conditions could help to underpin a professional corps of journalists sensitive to their social responsibilities, but the achievement of such conditions remains a distant prospect in Nepal. Even so, the WJA provides the legislative backing for professional associations to work toward this goal,

including by making it mandatory for media houses to allocate a certain percentage of their revenues for the professional development of their employees.

Nepal's government also will be enjoined under the WJA to make resources available for professional development in the media industry. Although these commitments are not yet firmly established, professional organisations believe that – with some degree of donor support in the interim – the full scope of the new measures under the WJA would have a reasonable chance of success in about three years' time.

Since it was thought infeasible to completely disallow contract employment in the media, the WJA lays down a ceiling of 15 per cent for contract employees within each media organisation.

Organisations of media professionals in Nepal are also beginning a process of auditing the record of implementation of all previous wage boards. Sanctions are available under the law for non-compliance with the statutory recommendations. However, journalists' unions believe that they need not seek recourse to these sanctions and could achieve the same ends by fostering a process of dialogue and consensus.

#### Industry discord

Early in 2007, employees of Nepal 1 Television shut down production for three weeks in protest against poor working conditions and the denial of statutory safeguards and benefits, including appointment letters. An agreement was reached with the management on May 7, 2007. However, only a week after the agreement was reached, the FNJ reported the forced resignation of eight Delhi-based employees after constant threats from management.

FNJ reports of journalists being threatened in their attempts to obtain information illustrate that Nepal remains far from enjoying a safe and free media. Nepal's independent media was disrupted throughout August 2007 by serious setbacks, including the halt of printing and distribution of daily newspapers such as the *Himalayan Times* and *Annapurna Post* and the threatened closure of HBC FM radio station by Maoist-aligned unions.

**The provisions on freedom of speech and the right to information in the interim constitution are identical to those in Nepal's 1990 Constitution, and are considered the best assurances that can be laid down in law.**



**Freedom in focus:** Photographers of the National Forum of Photo Journalists stage a sit-in protest for press freedom at Maitighar Mandala, Kathmandu. Photo: Courtesy of Amit Sthapit, Associated News Agency, Nepal.

Also in August, 49 Nepali journalists who had been sacked without cause were attacked during a protest, alleged to have been directed by their former employer. They were then arrested at another demonstration.

Nepal Television and NTV-2 were blocked from August 13 and other national channels were blocked from August 18 for an indefinite period. The Nepal Cable TV Association took these actions to demand from the Government measures such as decreased renewal fees and the authority to broadcast local programs.

The resumption of broadcasts by HBC FM on September 24, after a prolonged break on account of a dispute between staff and management over working conditions, was welcomed by the IFJ and its Nepali affiliates. The IFJ was heartened by the HBC management's accession to demands that the new provisions of the WJA be implemented, such as the issuing of letters of appointment to all journalists and employees effective from the date of their joining. This was the first time an employer in Nepal had signed an agreement to implement the Act.

### Journalists targeted

On September 16, 2007, Sanker Panthi, a correspondent for the Butwal-based daily *Naya Satta*, was found dead. Panthi's body was found on the Mahendra Highway in Sunwal, Nawalparasi district, with injuries to his head and body. The president of the FNJ's Nawalparasi district

**Decent working conditions help to underpin a professional corps of journalists sensitive to their social responsibilities, but the achievement of such conditions remains a distant prospect in Nepal.**

chapter, Keshav Parajuli, informed FNJ headquarters that Panthi had not returned home from a reporting assignment on the destruction of a YCL office by locals.

In October 2007, a commitment from Nepal's Prime Minister to make public the status of missing journalist Birendra Shah was welcomed by the media rights community. A delegation from the FNJ met with then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in Kathmandu on October 30 to discuss Shah's whereabouts. Shah, a journalist associated with Nepal FM, *Dristri Weekly* and Avenues TV, was abducted on October 5 from central Nepal. However, it later emerged that Shah had been killed soon after his abduction. On November 5, CPN-M members admitted responsibility for Shah's murder.

Three international press freedom missions to Nepal during the year under review highlighted continuing concerns about the safety of journalists and media workers, especially those working for smaller media operations or as freelancers in volatile districts outside Kathmandu. The missions in August, January and April, organised with the support of the FNJ, raised concerns about journalists' safety and the ability to report without restrictions in a milieu dominated by various power-holders. These missions also provided background information, personnel and support for the media monitoring conducted during the CA elections in April 2008.

## PAKISTAN

### Optimism for a fresh start

The media rights situation worsened considerably in Pakistan throughout 2007. However, 2008 has opened with renewed reasons for hope. New governments have been sworn in at the federal and provincial levels following nation-wide elections in February. Early assurances were given by the coalition parties assuming power federally that they would be mindful of the special needs of a free press.

#### Main Issues

- New government commits to media freedom
- Build-up to state of emergency
- Media restrictions tightened
- Code of conduct
- Working conditions
- Safety and protection

On April 9, 2008, the newly installed federal cabinet took the decision to rescind all the amendments to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) ordinance that had been decreed under a nation-wide state of emergency proclaimed on November 3, 2007, by President Pervez Musharraf (then also chief of staff of the Pakistan army). The new Information Minister, Sherry Rehman, explained that PEMRA would function from then on as a regulatory body. It would not be tasked with coercive actions, such as blocking television channels, stopping the live telecast of events or forcing cable operators to do its bidding on pain of confiscation of equipment.

This decision fulfills, in part, an assurance given to an IFJ mission to Pakistan in March 2008 that rules and regulations that had blighted relations between the Government and the media would be removed within 100 days of the new Government taking office. There is, however, much that remains to be done to address the regulatory environment and to ensure the safety and protection of journalists and media workers who face enormous risks in reporting from areas made dangerous by conflict and social dissent.

The IFJ and its affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), have called for a national debate on the need for a fresh start for media and democracy in the country.

### Build-up to crisis

The year under review began with a drastic worsening of the situation for journalists and media workers in Pakistan. As background, the Government was already imposing restrictions on media functioning well before May 2007, on issues that would be of potential embarrassment: such as the protests that followed Musharraf's suspension of the country's chief justice in March 2007.

A presidential decree in June 2007 vested PEMRA with the power to halt broadcasts and to close media offices.



**State of emergency:** Anti-terrorist squad personnel arrest a journalist during a protest of journalists in Karachi. Photo: Courtesy of Dawn, Pakistan.

Tensions became acute, culminating in the imposition of emergency rule in November 2007. Two amendments to print and electronic media ordinances promulgated under the emergency decree led to the detention of critics and a severe clampdown on journalists and media outlets. Broadcasts were blocked, military personnel entered television studios and offices, equipment was seized, and attempts were made to stop presses. Authorities also confronted journalists at press clubs across the country.

A critical issue was the pressure that the authorities exerted on media institutions to sign a PEMRA “code of conduct”. With their finances under pressure on account of a direct attack on revenue streams – either through a denial of permission to broadcast or a cutback of government advertising – certain channels felt compelled to sign on to the code. However, far from being a set of principles agreed within the broadcast industry, the PEMRA code vested much arbitrary power in the administration.

Even before the emergency decrees, many journalists in Pakistan were reportedly leaving the profession because they feared for their safety. Others reported being worn out by the constant battles they had to fight merely to safeguard their right to report freely and with integrity.

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And an overarching reality was a pervasive air of professional frustration caused by poor compensation and working conditions. Journalists joined the struggle for media freedom with great courage and commitment. But there was no concealing the fact that they bore serious grievances against media organisations that had failed to provide them with the fair deal mandated by the national wage board for journalists.

#### **Financial pressure**

In April 2007, Hameed Haroon, publisher and chief executive officer of the Dawn Group, with headquarters in Karachi, Sindh province, issued an open letter condemning both the federal and provincial governments for their unsubtle efforts to throttle his media group by withholding advertisements. It was a public endorsement by a media leader of allegations that the authorities were seeking recourse to various kinds of pressure tactics in their effort to make the media fall into line.

Sindh’s provincial minister for information, according to documentation presented by Haroon, was involved in an effort to coerce the Dawn Group to adopt an editorial policy favourable to a powerful political group in the province.

Haroon also suggested that the Federal Government was trying to exert financial pressure on Dawn by indefinitely prolonging deliberations over its application for a television broadcast licence. Significant investments had already been made by the group toward securing the licence.

In a petition before the High Court of Sindh, Dawn pleaded that PEMRA was depriving it of a licence for broadcasting on the unjust grounds that print media entities were not entitled to enter the broadcast space. This was, it said, an arbitrary determination by PEMRA, since other print media entities were already running flourishing broadcast operations.

This situation highlights how the regulatory framework for the electronic media in Pakistan, even now, remains a matter of *ad hoc* and often capricious interpretation. No law has been enacted to provide statutory backing for PEMRA's operations. Yet PEMRA has sweeping powers of supervision over the broadcast media.

### Clamps tighten

Sections of the Pakistan media reported, and the IFJ has independently verified, that the Pakistan Government

sought on May 12, 2007, to stop live coverage of a rally in Karachi involving Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the suspended Chief Justice. That effort, by all accounts, did not succeed. However, there was on that day a sustained armed attack on the offices of Aaj TV in Karachi, which was the first news channel to report that armed vigilantes belonging to a major political party in the wider province of Sindh were responsible for much of the violence that ensued following the effort to block Chaudhry's rally.

In June 2007, the FM broadcaster Mast FM103 was ordered off the air, despite obtaining prior clearance to broadcast the Urdu language bulletins of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Proscription occurred within three days of the station obtaining permission to broadcast. The situation underlined deep contradictions in the understanding and implementation of the broadcast law, since it was PEMRA that both granted the permission and then ordered the suspension of the broadcasts.

From the side of the Pakistan Government, what seemed to be a rising trend of intolerance toward the media was manifest in a prohibition decreed in early June 2007, this time explicit, against live coverage of all events involving Chaudhry. Within hours of the curbs being announced, two major television networks, Aaj TV and GEO TV, were blacked out, the former almost nationwide and the latter in Lahore and Islamabad.

Although the June PEMRA directive was withdrawn following nation-wide protests, Pakistan's media institutions and journalists were enjoined to adopt certain processes of "self-regulation". This seemed, clearly, an effort by the Government to hold powers of coercion in reserve, to be deployed at its convenience.

### National and international context

Pakistan has witnessed a keen contest between military authorities and opposition political parties on the one

hand and civil society institutions on the other. This is a contest in which the judiciary as an institution is expected to play a decisive role.

Journalists reporting in areas designated as major battle fronts in the "global war on terror", face multiple pressures. Although Pakistan's Government claims it is fully in control in these areas, facts on the ground suggest otherwise. Insurgents tend to look at journalists and media workers seeking accurate and authentic news reports as spies for the United States. And Pakistan's state machinery refuses the media any support or protection. Media organisations, in turn, tend to disown workers who get caught in the political crossfire.

Judging from Haroon's letter in April 2007, it seems that the Government has additional reason to be wary about media scrutiny of its conduct in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchistan – parts of the country where the "global war on terror" has been waged with special vigour. What Haroon wrote about the Dawn Group perhaps has, in varying degrees, some relevance to the entire Pakistan media: "It is clear that objections to the propriety of the Dawn Group's editorial

**Insurgents tend to look at journalists and media workers seeking accurate and authentic news reports as spies for the United States. And Pakistan's state machinery refuses the media any support or protection. Media organisations, in turn, tend to disown workers who get caught in the political crossfire.**

policies emanate mainly from Musharraf's office and his stance is heavily influenced by key advisers who have been entrusted with responsibility for implementing crisis management and conflict control in flashpoint areas."

Among other aspects, the authorities in Haroon's judgment may have found irksome "the Dawn Group's related attempts to monitor a recurring tendency toward covert militancy among responsible decision-makers in government".

### National emergency and impact on media

At the moment that he imposed a nation-wide state of emergency, Pakistan's president named three compelling reasons for the harsh decision. Political extremism and religious fundamentalism, he said, had endangered the unity and integrity of the country. The judiciary had been working at cross-purposes with the Government on crucial matters involving national security and was embarked upon a path of political activism. The media, when not overtly associated with this campaign, was guilty of serious "negativism".

Curbing the media was among Musharraf's priorities after declaring the emergency. To this end, he promulgated two separate amendments to ordinances covering the print and electronic media. The amendments imposed sweeping curbs restraining the print and electronic media from carrying any content "which defames or brings into ridicule the head of State, or members of the armed forces, or executive, legislative or judicial organ of the State". Penalties for broadcasters' non-compliance included three years in jail and/or a fine of Pakistan rupees (PKR) 10 million (more than US\$160,000) forfeiture of the broadcast licence, equipment and premises. Print publications could be barred from publishing for 30 days.

Media outlets were barred from publishing material that may aid terrorist activities, jeopardise the integrity of



**Force against freedom:** A melee erupts in Karachi as police use batons against journalists demanding freedom of the media after the imposition of a state of emergency. Photo: Courtesy of Dawn, Pakistan.

Pakistan, or “defame” the administration or the army. Anything deemed vulgar or obscene, and anything that promoted “ethnicism”, was also banned.

Under a new section inserted into the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, the press was prohibited from publishing any material that could be construed to “promote, aid or abet” terrorism. The definition of such material that could be deemed offensive under this clause was extremely broad.

Even before the amendments were announced, several leading networks – Pakistani and foreign – were taken off the air by cable operators acting under police coercion. Likewise, without a mandate or clear warrant, PEMRA officials raided the Islamabad office of Aaj TV and seized its live broadcast equipment.

While newspapers continued to publish critical commentary, the clampdown severely restricted the operations of television and radio outlets. Even so, some of the bigger stations circumvented the blackout by informing people through mobile phone text messages to access information through the internet. Sales of newspapers, radios and satellite dishes are reported to have increased markedly.

Even as Musharraf went on the air to announce the state of emergency, some 60 television channels were ordered off the air. The people of Pakistan were left with no choice but to watch the unfolding events in the highly sanitised version put out by the government-owned PTV. The channels that were blocked included ARY One World and GEO. Among the radio stations, FM 99 and FM 103 were ordered off the air. The administration was especially sensitive about Urdu language broadcasts, which were, for obvious reasons, expected to have a far greater impact than English programming.

### Journalists fight back

The PFUJ, as the leading representative organisation of journalists in Pakistan, led the protests against the emergency by calling initially for a media boycott of all

government functions. Local units of the PFUJ worked in association with press clubs in cities and the regions. While newspapers immediately took a bold editorial stance, the initial reaction of most of the broadcast channels – according to the PFUJ reading – tended to be cautious. Channel operators, the PFUJ felt, were not quite willing to join the boycott because of financial duress. They were more inclined to talk terms with the Information Ministry.

The united media stand, with all its qualifications, seemed to pay partial dividends when government authorities in Karachi backed off an attempt to close a printing press belonging to the Jang Group, Pakistan’s biggest media house, on November 5, 2007.

Many media owners joined the PFUJ in criticising the Government for allowing four small broadcasters to resume their domestic transmissions after signing documents of virtual surrender and agreeing to comply with the amended ordinances. The PFUJ saw the actions as a blatant attempt by authorities to fracture the unity of the media and drive a wedge between media ownership interests and working journalists.

### Broadcasters targeted

In the immediate wake of the declaration of emergency, the Government seemed worried in particular about the ARY and GEO networks, known for their independence in news and commentary. While the authorities apparently could suffer independent reportage and analysis in the English media, the evolution of independent and mass-based Urdu television seemed

to be a new challenge, to which the Government responded harshly.

There were concerns, however, that the overwhelming focus of the protest actions on large media houses, in particular GEO-TV, eclipsed the challenges faced by provincial newspapers and by FM radio stations whose equipment was confiscated. There was a fear that once the big media houses were placated, the larger issue of media freedom might lapse into neglect.

### Revenue withheld

The Government also used indirect economic means to pressure media houses to conform. This had been occurring throughout the year, but intensified with the emergency declaration.

The bans on GEO-TV’s sports and entertainment channels clearly had little to do with national security concerns. Rather, they seemed to point to the Government’s intent to throttle the network financially, since these channels were the main revenue sources that helped sustain news and other expenditure-heavy operations. GEO-TV’s president put the revenue losses suffered by his channel at US\$500,000 a day. Significant revenue-earning opportunities were lost because the Government effectively stopped the network from telecasting Pakistan’s cricket tour of India, which was of immense interest to advertisers and audiences alike.

GEO-TV initially circumvented the bans by up-linking to a satellite from its offices in Dubai. However, under

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pressure from Pakistan, the Dubai authorities shut down that operation mid-November.

Some television channels were allowed to resume after unstated conditions were met, such as the removal of popular anchor-persons and hosts from news and current affairs programs.

In December, the High Court of Sindh decided after 19 days of hearings to dismiss two petitions filed by GEO TV to challenge bans on four of its channels. The PFUJ estimated then that the court's decision put in jeopardy the jobs of some 1200 of GEO-TV's employees because of the revenue loss caused by the inability to broadcast.

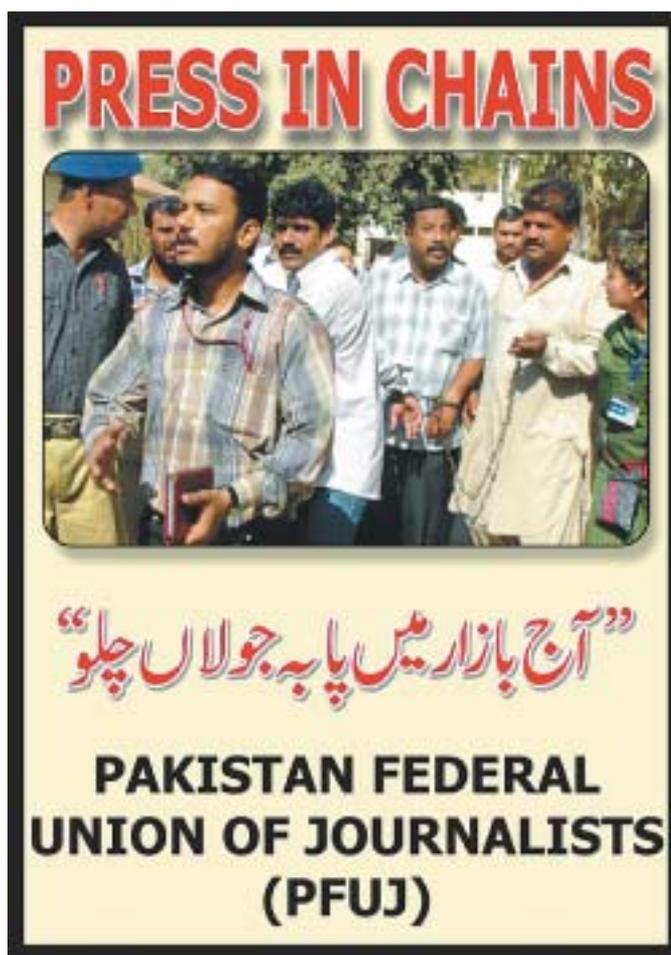
#### PEMRA functioning

One of the main concerns of the media community in the early days of the emergency was PEMRA's increasing and arbitrary power to restrict freedom of expression and inhibit a culture of journalistic inquiry. Officials claimed that the PEMRA code of conduct was nothing more than a statement of the obvious principles of ethical journalism. However, the media community was unprepared to accept this bland statement of good intentions at face value, since the basic fact was that the code was conceived as an instrument of coercion.

PEMRA's opaque and arbitrary mode of functioning was very much the pattern even before the emergency. As a body, PEMRA comprises individuals from a bureaucratic or security services background, with little sensitivity toward media issues and media freedom and independence. The Federal Ministry of Information, which nominally is the administrative ministry for PEMRA and has had a longer institutional history of interaction with the media, is in truth powerless in determining how the entity functions. PEMRA, it is believed, is responsive only to the *diktat* of Pakistan's President.

#### Journalists and media bosses unite

It was a significant feature of the response to the Musharraf regime's clampdown that various sectors of the media came together for the first time, it is believed, in a quarter century. Meetings were held between the PFUJ, the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) and the Pakistan Broadcasters' Association (PBA) in Karachi on November 21. Another meeting took place in Islamabad on November 22.



**Freedom shackled:** A PFUJ poster depicts media personnel arrested at a protest in November 2007, made to appear in a Karachi court in handcuffs.

While there remain latent issues dividing these bodies, such as the implementation of the Wage Board award, there seemed to be general agreement on the need to unite against the larger challenge placed before the media by the emergency.

While the first moves of the new Federal Government point toward a less fraught relationship between the authorities and the media in the months to come, much lost ground remains to be recovered.

#### Attacks on journalists

Murders of journalists and attacks on their families continue to cause concern, with 11 journalists and media workers killed during the period under review. The wife of a journalist abducted in 2005 and murdered soon after – though his body was recovered only mid-2006 – was also murdered in 2007. Media personnel were killed and seriously injured in the course of reporting on volatile events such as the return to Pakistan of exiled opposition

leader Benazir Bhutto and the siege of Lal Masjid in Islamabad, and were also targeted for death as a consequence of the content of their work.

Haroon's letter of April 2007 included a demand that the "Government of Pakistan desist from abducting and arresting journalists in the judicious performance of their duties, and desist from physically attacking newspaper offices". From the testimony of Dawn's publisher, it seems that coercion and intimidation had become accepted practice in the relationship between the Government and the media.

In May 2007, the Mohajir Rabita Council (MRC), a body believed to be affiliated to one of the most influential political parties of Karachi and the wider province of Sindh, issued a public notice in which it identified several journalists as ethnic and linguistic "chauvinists" who should be treated as "enemies". Envelopes with live bullets were later found taped to the cars of three journalists, including Mazhar Abbas, PFUJ general secretary, on May 29, 2007. Though the political party that was believed to be closely affiliated to the MRC, dissociated itself from this threatening gesture, the event cast a long shadow over relations between Pakistan's media and the country's political authorities over the year. With the political change of 2008, the media is hopeful of a more constructive engagement with those in authority, though past experience shows that it does not take much to disrupt the most optimistic expectations.

## SRI LANKA

### A rapid downhill course

#### Main Issues

- Culture of impunity
- Emergency regulations and media restrictions
- Government and military intimidation
- National media policy

The past 12 months have seen a continuing deterioration in the relationship between Sri Lanka's state and civil society actors, including the media. The intensification of the ongoing conflict as the Government withdrew from a ceasefire agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in January 2008 and the continuing erosion of democratic practices throughout the island have created an environment that is conducive to violence, the violation of human rights, impunity and corruption.

Verbal and physical attacks, harassment, restrictions on access and vilification of media personnel have become a common feature in the lives of journalists, photographers and all those engaged in the gathering, publication and dissemination of information in Sri Lanka.

The lackadaisical approach of law enforcement agencies toward complaints made by media personnel about attacks

and harassment has enhanced the culture of impunity for attacks on the media community. No progress has been made in any investigations into killings of journalists that have occurred during the period under review. In addition, media personnel have filed complaints of being summoned to several provincial police stations for interrogation about the content of their news reports. These interrogations amount to intimidation and interference with the right of journalists and media workers to engage in their profession.

#### Emergency regulations

A range of emergency regulations has been promulgated that restrict access to conflict-affected areas for civil society actors, including humanitarian agencies and the media. The regulations enable arbitrary arrest and detention, and control dissemination of information considered to be contrary to the interests of national security. They have been used in the following ways:

- To detain journalists, as seen in the case of six media workers linked to the website outreachsl.com in early March 2008.
- To force the closure of newspapers such as *Maubima* and radio/television stations, such as those run by ABC radio.
- To prevent journalists and media workers from carrying out their profession, as in the case of two French journalists who were detained while trying to follow the story of the family of a young Tamil detainee.



**Ministerial misconduct:** Labour Minister Mervyn Silva abused media personnel in front of a leading prelate and ejected them from a function in Kelaniya on April 10, 2008. Photo: Courtesy of Free Media Movement.

Access to areas of the country's north and east where the military conflict is ongoing is extremely restricted, and the state-created Media Centre for National Security (MCNS) has a monopoly on official information regarding the conflict. As a consequence of these restrictions, members of the media remain unable to provide an accurate picture of the conflict to their viewers and readers, and the people of Sri Lanka are deprived of their right to know exactly what kind of war is being carried out against the people of the north and east in the cause, supposedly, of their security.

### Widespread intimidation

Restrictions on journalists and media institutions are coupled with systematic and regular attacks on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and on individual members of civil society, including those engaged in media freedom issues. The Parliamentary Select Committee on NGOs continues to summon key officials of NGOs in order to inquire into the nature and scope of their activities and their funding portfolios. Several groups that use media strategies as a part of their program activities have been subject to strict scrutiny. While there are objections to the idea of being subject to scrutiny in the interests of accountability and transparency, human rights groups question the politicisation of the process, for example, in the selection of the NGOs that are called in for investigation. In addition, extremist groups have launched a relentless attack on all those who speak up for human rights and justice in Sri Lanka, including those who advocate media freedom. Young Asia (YA) TV is one television production company that has been subject to harassment in this manner.

In terms of media freedom, it is a matter of particular concern that government officials and politicians – including the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, not to mention the government spokesman and the Minister of Information and Media – have at various times made speeches that have indiscriminately attacked journalists and media organisations. This is despite rhetorical commitments to media freedom and to ethical media practices.

In the period immediately before the year under review, the Sinhala weekly *Maubima* (Motherland) was forced to close in March 2007 after public criticism from the President regarding the paper's coverage of the situation in the north and east. The publisher and others involved with Standard Newspapers Private Ltd., the company that printed and published *Maubima*, were detained and their accounts frozen on the basis of accusations that they were involved in supporting terrorist activity.

Soon after, in April 2007, controversy erupted around an incident in which the Secretary of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, the President's brother, phoned the editor of the *Daily Mirror*. He used violent and obscene language to register a protest



**Media stalked:** Lal Hemantha Mawalage a producer in the news division of the SLRC was hospitalised after attackers cut him with a sharp knife on January 25, 2008. The incident is believed to be related to the Mervyn Silva-SLRC confrontation. Photo: Courtesy of Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka

against the newspaper and the journalist responsible for a report on the plight of internally displaced people in Mutur, in the country's east.

Attacks on defence columnist Iqbal Athas followed the same pattern. Athas, of *The Sunday Times*, had been afforded personal security following attacks against him in 2004, but the Government withdrew the protection in September 2007 on the grounds that Athas was no longer threatened. Responding to protests regarding the withdrawal of the security for Athas, MCNS spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella declared that anyone who criticised the army at that juncture could be considered to be a traitor since he or she was undermining the morale

of the security forces. This opinion was reiterated by military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara.

Since the end of December 2007, there has been constant controversy surrounding the state-owned television station, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC). The violence that erupted within the premises of the SLRC on December 27 following a visit by Labour Minister Mervyn Silva, developed into a campaign of intimidation and violence against employees of the SLRC, some of whom were present during the altercation between the Minister, his bodyguards and SLRC staff. The Government's failure to take any disciplinary measures against the Minister has further contributed to an erosion of faith in the democratic system in Sri Lanka.

The conflict that erupted between media organisations and the State over the December attacks on the Voice of Tigers radio station, owned and operated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north of Sri Lanka, also indicates the level of mistrust and lack of respect for the media and for media personnel that prevails in the

**Emergency regulations enable arbitrary arrest and control dissemination of information considered contrary to the interests of national security. Members of the media remain unable to provide an accurate picture of the conflict to their viewers and readers, and the people of Sri Lanka are deprived of their right to know exactly what kind of war is being carried out against the people of the north and east in the name of their security.**

country. Several statements were issued by media freedom organisations in Sri Lanka and outside, including by the head of UNESCO, condemning the deaths of Voice of Tigers workers during the air attacks on the station. Media and Information Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa challenged these sentiments on the grounds that none of those killed in the attacks had been issued with a media identity card from his ministry and therefore could not be considered to be media personnel. According to the ministry's figures, using this criterion, only one journalist was killed in Sri Lanka in 2006-07.

### Policy and legal frameworks

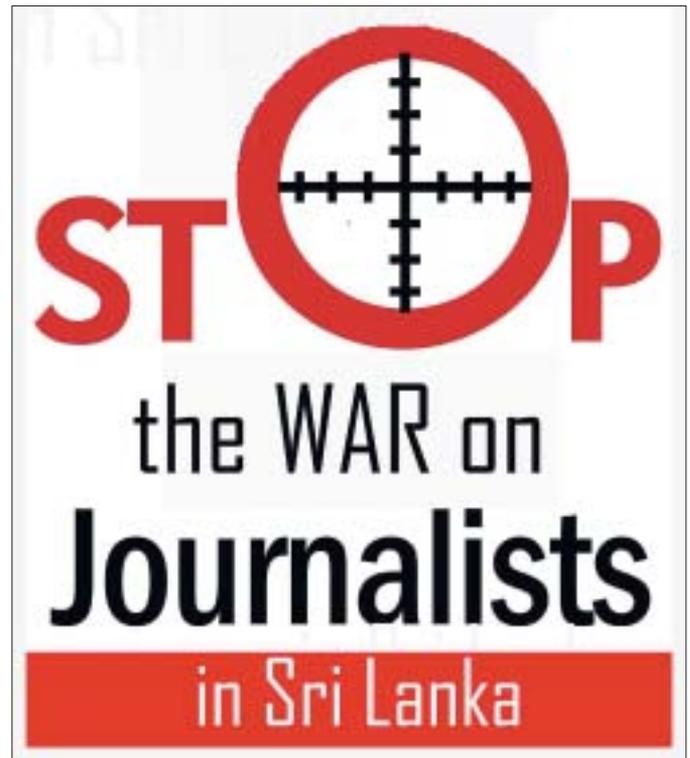
Despite repeated promises by the State to come out with a media policy, no concrete proposal had emerged by March 2008. Instead, representatives and spokespersons for the government have constantly declared that they would impose further restrictions on media personnel if the media continued to be critical of the Government, and of the conflict. At one point there was a serious attempt to reinstate the criminal defamation laws that had been withdrawn in 2002. However, the widespread outcry against this measure, locally and internationally, seemed to influence the Government to reconsider this option.

Similarly, on October 29, 2007, the President signed a Gazette Notification of Emergency Regulations that would have limited the publication of almost all information relating to the conflict, covering troop movements, military operations and military requisitions. Once again, these regulations were withdrawn on November 1 as hastily as they had been promulgated. However, strict controls on the media were imposed through the emergency regulations promulgated in December 2007, which broadly encompass all activities that could be construed to have an impact on national security, and which extended the scope of criminal liability to executive officers of corporate bodies.

On August 22, 2007, the Ministry of Mass Media and Information released a document entitled *Proposed National Media Policy* for public consultations. In early March 2008, Minister Yapa said the Government had prepared a media policy with the assistance of 22 experts and extensive research, but he refused to divulge details of the policy.

The draft policy document contained, for the most part, standards for the media rather than policy directions. As such, it was very clear that the Government intended to establish its own framework for the media.

In September 2007, the IFJ joined nine journalists' organisations in Sri Lanka – including the Free Media Movement (FMM), the Sri Lanka Working Journalists' Association (SLWJA), the Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions (FMETU), the Editors' Guild and the



**Global call for action:** The International Federation of Journalists has initiated an international campaign to Stop the War on Journalists in Sri Lanka. Photo: Courtesy of Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka

**It is a matter of particular concern that government officials and politicians – including President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Government's spokesman and the Minister of Information and Media – have at various times made speeches that have indiscriminately attacked journalists and media organisations.**

Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) – to submit recommendations to the Government for the development of a national media policy. The recommendations included the following: enacting a right to information law; transforming state-controlled media into genuine public service media; amending the Contempt of Court Act along the lines of similar laws in democratic countries; and

amending the Parliamentary (Powers and Privileges) Act.

While the President has on previous occasions, referred to the Media Ministry's initiative to create a media policy for the nation that would be a framework for depoliticising the state-owned media institutions, the reality is quite different. In addition, the much-hoped for right to information law remains outside the realm of possibility at this moment.

Although a pension scheme for media personnel was formally approved in 2006 with the passing of the Social Security Benefits Scheme for Media Personnel Act, implementation has been held up due to lack of funds allocated from the Treasury, as well as delays in drawing up a pension scheme that would meet the needs of media personnel.

## AFGHANISTAN

### Media Workers Killed

June 1 2007: Shokiba Sanga Amaaj, who worked at the private Shamshad Television channel, was shot dead at home. The AJIA could not confirm that Shokiba was killed due to her work, but she had suffered intimidation and received several threats warning her to stop working at the station.

June 6 2007: Zakia Zaki, journalist and producer of Peace Radio, gunned down inside her home near Kabul. Unidentified gunmen fired seven bullets into her. She died instantly in the presence of her eight-year-old son. The case remains unsolved.

December 28 2007: Abdul Munir, producer and presenter of Afghanistan Radio Television in Jawzjan (RTA-Jawzjan), was shot dead, when he was traveling from Jawzjan to Mazar-e-Sharif and his bus came under attack by an armed gang of looters.

January 14 2008: Carsten Thomassen, a Norwegian reporter for Dagbladet, was killed after a suicide bomb attack at the Serena Hotel in Kabul. He was hit by gunfire during the attack and later died during surgery.

### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation.

May 24 2007: Abdul Manaf, a journalist of Radio Saday-e-Nejrab was on his way to a relatives' house in Kapisa Province, when he was fired upon by an unidentified gunman. He was seriously wounded when a bullet struck his left thigh.

May 30 2007: Ahmad Shokib Dost, reporter for Ariana TV, was mistreated by security officials inside the parliamentary house while he was preparing a report of the day's parliamentary session.

June 12 2007: Farida Nekzad, chief editor of Afghanistan's only independent news agency, Pajhwok and the vice-president of South Asia Media Commission received death threats by both phone and email.

June 23 2007: copies of the *Mashal* weekly in Kandahar city, were gathered by a faction loyal to MP Noor-ul-Haq Alumi, preventing its distribution.

July 24 2007: Fazal Rahman Oria, editor in chief of *Mashal* weekly received death threats from supporters of General Dostum, the Commander in Chief of the Afghan National Army. Also a letter from the office of the Chief of Army staff was sent to the Media Violation Commission of the Information and Cultural ministry, warning of the consequences should they ignore it.

June 27 2007: Abdul Muaeed Hashimi, Regional Reporter of Pajhwok Afghan News Agency and Khan Wali Kamran, Reporter of Ariana TV, were stopped by police. Both journalists and their driver were badly beaten by armed National Security Directorate (NSD) officers and the Laghman governor's bodyguards, with the butts of their AK-47s.

August 4 2007: Kamran Mir Hazar, chief editor of website Kabul Press was arrested after publishing articles critical to high ranking government officials and was later released. Hazar shut down Kabul Press because of the constant intimidation and pressure from officials.

August 12 2007: Yawali Ghagh Radio was attacked by Taliban forces. In previous incidents they abducted the station's security guard and set the station on fire.

August 15 2007: Sayed Ismail Ansari, Director of ART in Kunduz told the AJIA, he had been receiving death threats for two weeks in the form of text messages, letters and phone calls from Taliban insurgents.

August 22 2007: Charles Dubois and Patrice Roy, cameraman and journalist for Radio-Canada Television, traveling with Canadian troops from Zerai District, Southern Kandahar to

Kandahar city sustained injuries when a roadside bomb hit their vehicle.

August 28 2007: Qasim Rahimi, Ariana TV reporter, was stopped and beaten by security officials on his way to attend a press conference of Taliban representatives at the Red Crescent Society office in Ghazni province.

August 30 2007: copies of *Kuner* magazine were confiscated by Governor Farmanullah Zahid, before they could reach the public, after an article critical of the Kuner Governor had been published.

September 2 2007: Ghulam Ali Sarem, chief editor of *Etesam* monthly magazine, came under attack from the ANA when he was photographing the result of a suicide attack in an army bus which killed 30 people and injured 20 more.

September 12 2007: Marajuddin Manzoor, was forcefully prevented from entering the radio station he manages because it had been taken hold of by Khwaja Abdul Rahim, District Chief of Karabagh with the support of the US media organisation Internews. The issue was later resolved.

September 24 2007: Radio Stations Milli Paygham and Radio Istiqlal, both established with the technical support of Internews, a US-based media organisation, were attacked by unidentified gunmen.

September 30 2007: Farid Ahmad, the cameraman of Afghanistan Radio Television (RTA) was injured when he was trying to film an underground mine being demolished.

September 2007: Lal Pacha Azmoon, senior Journalist, and provincial representative of AJIA in Nangarhar received death threats for a year and a half, from persons, who identified themselves as loyal to the Taliban.

October 10 2007: Mohammad Hanif Elham, presenter of Ariana Radio programme, Emroze Der Tarekh told the AJIA that he had received threats more than four times in the previous five months, from anonymous callers.

October 12 2007: Mujhad Jawad, reporter with Liberty Radio told the AJIA that after broadcasting reports condemning suicide attacks, he received threats from the Taliban.

October 18 2007: Fayez Khorshidi, reporter for Press TV of Iran was abducted by foreign military and beaten until he became unconscious. He said after regaining consciousness he was interrogated, then released.

October 22 2007: Dayan Ahmadi regional reporter of Liberty Radio for Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces received death threats from the warlord Habib-ur-rahman, about whom he had published critical stories.

November 2 2007: chief editor, Khalil Amiri and coordinator, Sheer Agha Nejati of Faryad Radio came under the attack of gunmen just outside their office in the western province of Herat. Both journalists were badly beaten and Amiri was injured.

November 5 2007: Masoud Hussaini, photographer for Associated Press, was beaten by the security guards of the Afghan president.

November 12 2007: a rocket struck Radio Saday-e-Nejrab but didn't cause any damage. Previously the station's manager Abdul Mutalib Hamid had received anonymous death threats.

November 15 2007: Fazal Rahman Oria, chief editor of the daily *Erada* had been frequently summoned before the Religious and Cultural Affairs Commission to explain his publication of articles critical of government members.

December 3 2007: Ali Asghar Akbarzada, producer of the programme *Ayna-e-Shahr* RTA was targeted by unidentified gunmen, when he was on his way home. He was unhurt.

December 4 2007: Omar Mohammadi, radio journalist for Salam Watandar, was verbally abused and threatened by police and their district commander, while covering a suicide attack on the road to the airport in Kabul.

December 25 2007: Shoaib Ahmadi, reporter for *Cheragh* daily, was preparing reports about the achievements of an Afghani boxer. As a result of an argument the journalist was kicked and punched by the Olympic Committee's Head of Kickboxing.

December 15 2007: *Kabul Shahan* weekly was forced to relocate its offices after the newspaper's owner, Sidiqullah Sahil, received a threatening letter stamped and signed by the Taliban Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

December 30 2007: Mina Habib, a journalist of *Cheragh* daily was forced to delete pictures by police after she had photographed police beating a boy selling from a roadside cart.

February 13 2008: Journalist Attaullah Sahil, presenter and reporter of Estiqlal Radio in Logar province was beaten by personnel of the Afghan NSD in Logar province.

February 18 2008: five journalists from various media were threatened with guns by security officials outside the Balkh prison as the Deputy Minister for Commerce and Industries, Zia-ud-din Zia, visited the site.

March 28 2008: Radio Zafar attacked when two armed gunmen entered the premises, tied up the security guards and set the station on fire.

April 6 2008: Radio Faryad producer Khadija Ahadi's, home attacked with a grenade. Part of her home was destroyed. Khalil Amiri, owner and chief editor also reported being interrogated by the ANSD.

Date Unknown: Muhammad Rasoul Adil, regional reporter of Ariana TV, was beaten by police when he was preparing a report using photos of bodies of Afghan National Army (ANA) officers in Khost province. He sustained serious trauma to his arms and lower back.

Date Unknown: Reporter Waliullah Shahin and three colleagues at al Jazeera television – a cameraman, technical engineer and driver – came under attack from an unidentified gunman on their way to Helmand province. Waliullah Shahin was hit by a bullet which injured his foot.

Date Unknown: Sher Mohammad Jahish, chief editor of Radio Arzoo in Pulkhumri city has received threats on more than 16 occasions. These threats followed two broadcasts by Radio Arzoo, which exposed a mail-order fraud.

Date Unknown: Habib Saeedi, journalist for Trajmir Radio in the Baghlan province, told AIIA that he published a report of an armed conflict between two local commanders. He was then abducted, beaten and held in captivity for more than 12 hours by the two commanders. He was rescued by police.

#### Abduction and Detentions

July 1 2007: Muhammad Asif Nang, chief editor of Aman Magazine and spokesperson for the country's office of administration was arrested by security officials on the request of President Hamid Karzai for an article he published. He was detained for 13 days.

July 25 2007: Afghan Danish Journalist, Najeeb Khawaja, his Afghan driver and translator, who worked for an international magazine were kidnapped by Taliban insurgents from the residence of tribal leader, Haji Madar and held in detention for 14 hours.

July 25 2007: German Journalist, Park Tock, a translator and driver kidnapped from the residence of tribal leader, Haji Madar and held in detention for 14 hours by Taliban insurgents from Taangar village.

August 8 2007: Kamran Mir Hazar, chief editor for website Kabul press and reporter of Salam Watandar Radio, was re-arrested outside his office by gunmen of the ANSD. Following increasing pressure from journalists, media activists, AIIA and CPAJ he was released after six hours of detention unharmed.

August 28 2007: Mohammad Zahir Bahand, reporter of Salaam Watandar was kidnapped by two armed men on motorbikes, who identified themselves as Taliban. First they tied and covered his eyes and then he was interrogated. He was freed after an hour.

September 2 2007: Javid Ahmad, a journalist with Canadian TV (CTV) was arrested in Kandahar, after allegations he had improper contact with Taliban. He has been kept in military detention without charge.

October 6 2007: Mujahid Kakar, chief editor of Lemar TV, was arrested by security officials for allegedly publishing an inappropriate picture from a suicide attack. Kakar was released on the same day.

October 27 2007: Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh, reporter for *Jahan-e-Naw* daily and journalism student at Balkh University, was arrested by security officials for allegedly downloading an article with anti-Islamic content. He has been sentenced to death for blasphemy and remains in detention.

November 4 2007: Ghows Zelmay, spokesman for the Attorney General, was arrested by police, in the Torkhum area, at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ghows Zelmay published a Dari translation of the Quran. He remains in detention.

November 4 2007: Aziz Ahmad Tassal, reporter for Institute of War and Peace Reporting, Abdul Samim from al-Jazeera TV, Aziz Ahmad Shafi, a freelance journalist, and Abdul Wadoud Hejranwere detained and for questioning by security officials after interviewing the Taliban. They were released after several hours in detention.

November 25 2007: four journalists from *Cheragh* daily detained for several hours by security officials after a controversial article was published.

November 28 2007: Ehsanullah Shahidzai, journalist for RTA was detained by the Afghan NSD and accused of having ties with Taliban rebels. He was released on December 4.

Ongoing, from December 15 2001: Al-Jazeera cameraman Sami al-Hajj, known as prisoner 345 is the only journalist held at Guantánamo Bay. A Sudanese national, he has been detained as "an enemy combatant" for more than five years without trial. Al-Hajj was arrested at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, while on assignment to cover the war against the Taliban. He was transferred to Guantánamo in June 2002.

Date Unknown: Amir Shah and Fifnik Abrashi, reporters for Associated Press (AP), were detained when they attempted to report on the police search of Tolo TV. Police detained both journalists for several hours. Their release came after AP communicated with the President's office in Kabul.

Date Unknown: Muhammad Reja, Manager of Daikundi Radio was detained for six hours on the command of Daikundi's Governor, Sultan Ali after he published a report linked to the country's economic and financial ministries.

## BANGLADESH

### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

May 6 2008: the Shiddirgonj Press Club was attacked and searched for journalists by local government cadres who verbally abused the Club staff and threatened to return with weapons.

May 8 2008: the President of the National Press Club received a letter from the Islamic militant outfit Jadid Al-Queda threatening to blow up the Club in 10 days.

May 12 2008: Sajidur Rahman, general secretary of Kamalgonj Press Club and correspondent of Dainik Manabzamin in Srimangal, received a death threat from an unidentified person on his telephone.

May 14 2008: Mostaque Ahmed staff correspondent for *Dainik Janakantha* and Siddiqur Rahman Khan, senior staff correspondent for *Daily New Age* were reportedly beaten by the Chairman of the Technical Education Board and held for hours in a paramilitary camp stationed at the board office.

June 4 2008: Sixteen of Dhaka's top press photographers and instructors of the photojournalism institute Pathshala received death threats in a letter which read "If ignored, we will kill you, your staff and your whole family".

June 30 2008: Motaraf Hossain Mukul correspondent for *Daily Dinkal* and *Daily Uttarkone* and President of Dhamaihat Pauro Press Club was threatened by a forest officer for a news report on corruption.

July 2 2008: Ruhul Kabir Jewel, a correspondent for *Daily Manabzamin* in Faridpur received a death threat from the wife of an alleged killer from Anowar Jahid town.

August 22 2008: Razibur Rahman, correspondent for *Dainik Janakantha*, Gokul Chandra Biswas, correspondent of *Daily Jai Jai Din* and Mukul Hossain, correspondent for the *Daily Khabar Patra* were beaten and assaulted by students during a protest at the Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh.

August 24 2008: M.A.A. Awal, correspondent for the *Daily Khabar Patra* and editor of *Weekly Narshingdir Kagoj* was injured by a group of attackers near his residence in Kauria Para town.

October 23 2007: Shamshul Alam, President of Rangamati Press Club and District Correspondent of Channel 1 was attacked by an unidentified person. Two arrests have been made in connection with this attack.

November 2 2007: Nazrul Islam, President of Sripur Press Club received a death threat for publishing a report on a notorious drug dealer in Sripur.

November 17 2007: Mohammad Azizur Rahman Azam, correspondent for *Bangladesh Today* in Laxmipur received a death threat from an unidentified person in relation to one of his colleagues.

November 2007: Abdullah Al Amin Biplob, President of Gafargoan Press Club and Garfargaon correspondent for the *Dainik Shamokal* and Ashraf Uddin Sijel, Gafargaon correspondent for the *Dainik Destiny* were threatened over the phone.

November 27 2007: Manik Lal Dutt, correspondent for the *Dainik Destiny* was seriously injured in an attack by a person who was arrested and detained following a report written by Dutt.

November 29 2007: Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Laxmipur correspondent for the *Dainik Shamokal* was attacked and seriously injured by a gang.

December 6 2007: Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, correspondent for *Dainik Ittefaq* in the Sher E Bangla Agricultural

University was seriously injured in an attack motivated by his reporting of several unlawful activities in the area.

December 7 2007: Atique Rahman Tipu and Abdus Salam, two journalists from Munshiganj were assaulted by on-duty police officers as they were trying to take photographs of a suspect.

December 23 2007: Mongthoaimroy Marma a journalist from Thanchi of Bandarban was attacked by a group of unidentified people.

January 6 2008: M.Z. Hossain, the Comilla District Correspondent of *Daily Jai Jai Din* was threatened by professional drug deals following a report published about illegal drug business in the area.

January 11 2008: Sohel Sani, a special correspondent of *The Banglabazaar Potrika* and executive member of Dhaka Reporters Unity was attacked by an unidentified group with weapons as he was returning home from work.

January 21 2008: Shawpan Mirza, Sirajganj District Correspondent of Ekushey Television and Moktar Hossain of *The Daily Destiny* received death threats on their mobile phones.

February 2 2008: Zahid Hasan, a correspondent for the private television channel Bangla Vision was attacked by a convicted criminal inside a C'Nawabganj court despite police security.

February 25 2008: two photographers Jahangir Hossain and Sohel were assaulted by police from the Tangail District while they were taking photos of police torturing a truck driver. The Police Superintendent confiscated the camera and threatened to lock them up.

February 2008: Shwadhan Bikash Chakma, Baghai Chhari correspondent of the daily *Prothom Alo* was threatened with death by an unidentified group who warned the newsman to stop writing about irregularities at Shialda Government Primary School.

### Abductions and Detention

May 11 2007: Tasneem Khalil an assistant editor for *The Daily Star* and a human rights campaigner was arrested at his home in Dhaka by plain clothes police officers and taken to Sangsad Bhavan army camp where he was tortured.

July 16 2007: Anwar Hossain Mintu a correspondent for the *Dainik Janakantha* in Jamalpur district was detained by police under the state of emergency rules and forced to go to court the next day.

July 17 2007: Toyebur Rahman, correspondent for the *Daily Bhorer Kagoj* was arrested without charge. The courts refused his bail plea and he was sent to jail.

September 2007: Arifur Rahman, a cartoonist with Bangla daily *Prothom Alo* was dismissed by his employers and was arrested for a controversial cartoon involving a play on the word Mohammad. After repeated extensions on his detention, he was released on March 20, 2008

October 23 2007: Jahangir Alam Akash a reporter for the *Daily Sangbad* and CBS Television was arrested at his home in the Rajshahi administrative division of Bangladesh for reports he wrote about civilians killed in army operations

October 2007: Zahirul Haque Titu correspondent for *Inqilab* and *The New Nation* was detained at his home in Pirojpur and remains in jail on charges under the Emergency Powers rule

November 15 2007: Mohammad Anwar Hossain, publisher and editor of *Chuadanga Darpan* was issued an arrest warrant for articles written about corruption at the Chuadanga citizens council.

November 29 2007: Mizanur Rahman, Ashikur Rahman Jewel, Uzzal Mia and Moniruzzaman were arrested during a raid on the office and press of the *Daily Totthyo Dhara* which was allegedly publishing without legal approval from the authorities

December 27 2007: S.M. Abdur Rafi Panna, Managing Editor of the *Dainik Uttaranchal* was arrested by joint forces. Panna was accused of violating the emergency powers act.

January 19 2008: Rafi Rahman editor of the *Dainik Poschimanchal* and Chuadanga Correspondent of the *Daily Bhorer Kagoj* was arrested under the emergency act which his family believed was a false case filed by rival groups

February 23 2008: all journalists and office staff of the weekly *Shirsha Kagoj* were charged with contempt for not disclosing the source of a news story headlined "A Judge Too Whitened Black Money"

May 2007-May 2008: Nine journalists have been arrested and detained on charges of alleged fraud and extortion. However, their journalist colleagues have expressed concern that the charges are unfounded and are instead used as a false reason to detain and silence media workers. The journalists involved are, Shahbaz Khan, Asadul Haque Palash, A.K.M. Moinul Haque Moin, Jahangir Alam Akash, Sheikh Mahbub Hossain Limon, Sadek Hossain Chowdhury, H.M. Samrat, Mong Charu Marma and Kamal Hossain.

## INDIA

### Media Workers Killed

May 9 2007: Three employees of the Tamil daily *Dinakaran* were killed when their office in Madurai was fire-bombed by partisans of a political party faction.

April 1 2008: Mohammed Muslim Uddin a correspondent of *Asamiya Pratidin* and a member of the Morajhar Press Club was killed after being attacked by an unidentified armed group.

### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

August 2007: Pressure from militant groups and retaliatory action by state government and security agencies in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur, led to closure of media.

October 2007: Media groups shutdown in north-eastern state of Manipur for four days in response to threats from an outlawed military group.

November 2007: Journalists seeking to cover a story in the Nandigram area of West Bengal were subjected to severe harassment and intimidation.

January 18, 2008: Two senior journalists of Bengali daily *Dainik Sambad*, stopped at gunpoint, searched and humiliated near a camp of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Tripura state.

February 25, 2008: Armed vigilantes belonging to the Bodo People's Front (BPF), intercepted a delivery van belonging to the newspaper, *Asamiya Pratidin* on February 25 in Kokrajhar district of Assam. They destroyed the entire cargo of the day's edition, before setting the van ablaze.

Date Unknown: Three journalists of NDTV and television news ANI beaten in Patna when seeking comment on murder case from legislator of the Janata Dal Party.

Date Unknown: The offices of *Outlook* magazine in Mumbai, capital of Maharashtra state, were attacked by vigilantes of a local political party, the Shiv Sena.

### Detention and Abduction

September 2007: Publisher and three employees of the Delhi afternoon daily *Midday* sentenced to four months rigorous

imprisonment by Delhi High Court for alleged "contempt of court" in reports involving a former Chief Justice of India.

December 2007: P. Govindan Kutty, editor of *Peoples' March*, in Kerala, was arrested in Kochi and detained for two months. Police personnel seized his computer and other assets and ransacked his home and office.

December 2007: Prashant Rahi was arrested by police in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand and charged with being a commander of the Maoist insurgency. Alleged to have been subject to continuous torture.

December 2007: Pittala Srisailam, the editor of an online news portal, was arrested for alleged involvement with Maoist underground.

January 2008: Prafulla Jha, a journalist in the central Indian state of Chattisgarh, was arrested by local police, for alleged involvement with the Maoist insurgent movement and denied bail.

## NEPAL

### Media Workers Killed

July 5 2007: Prakash Singh Thakuri, Kanchanpur-based freelance journalist was abducted from his home. On July 8, a group calling itself the National Republican Army Nepal (NRAN) took responsibility for his death.

September 18 2007 Sanker Panthi, a correspondent for the Butwal-based daily newspaper was found dead on the Mahendra Highway in Sunwal, Nawalparasi district with injuries sustained to his head and body.

October 5 2007: Birendra Shah, journalist affiliated to Nepal FM, *Dristri Weekly* and Avenues TV, was abducted and killed. His death was only confirmed by Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) who also claimed responsibility.

January 12 2008: Pushkar Shrestha, the editor of local weekly newspapers *New Highway* and *New Season*, was shot in his right shoulder by a representative of the Jwala Singh faction of the Janatantrik Terai Mutki Morcha (JTMM-J). He later died in hospital.

### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

May 2 2007: Yuvraj Adhikary, correspondent of Radio Nepal attacked and chased by members of the Maoist-aligned Young Communist League (YCL) while reporting.

May 18 2007: Dambar Nidal, a reporter for *Sundur Sandesh* weekly, attacked by a policeman in his hotel over an article he had written.

May 22 2007: commander of armed group Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha issued death threats to four journalists and two human rights workers, if they did not publicly disown a report they had filed.

May 27 2007: Durga Sharma, local correspondent of Nepal One Television and *Nepal Samacharpatra* daily, was hit several times by members of the YCL.

May 31 2007: journalist Prem Chandra Jha receives death threats and abuse from school principal over an article he wrote.

June 12 2007: eight journalists resign from Nepal TV 1 after repeated threats and attacks from management.

June 16 2007: representatives of the *Chure Sandesh* weekly and *Kayakairan* national daily were attacked by police personnel.

June 17 2007: Yadhav Poudel of the *Morning Times* and Mechi Tunes FM, and Narayan Khadka, correspondent of the *Nepal*

*Samacharpatra* daily, sustained injuries when they were attacked by unidentified demonstrators.

June 20 2007: lives of journalist threatened by local Nepali Congress leader in Gorkha district, over reports on timber smuggling.

June 17 2007: Cadres from Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) burned editions of the *Nepal Samacharpatra Daily* and pro Maoist newspaper *Janabidrohi Daily*, and publication halted on June 20 after pressure from newspaper vendors.

July 2 2007: Bibhusanraj Shakya, photo journalist of *Rajdhani* daily newspaper, was attacked by taxi drivers at a Nepal army-run petrol pump.

July 2 2007: Krishna Dhungana, correspondent of *Naya Patrika* daily, was verbally harassed at the special courts in the Latipur district.

July 10 2007: Gyanendra Khadka a reporter for the *Nepal Samacharpatra Daily* was attacked by a group of about six armed police.

June 11 2007: Kantipur publications van was stopped and set alight by a group calling itself Gorkha Line Mukti Sewa Samaj.

July 16 2007: Parshuram Shah, publisher and editor of the *Janadharana Weekly*, received death threats from staff members of the Siraha District Development Committee (DDC).

August 9 2007: 49 journalists who had been recently sacked without cause, were attacked during a protest, alleged to have been directed by their former employer Gorkhapatra Corporation.

August 12 2007: transmission of HBC FM, Kathmandu-based private radio station under threat from Maoist Ganatantrik Radio Workers' Forum.

August 30 2007: Nemling Lama, journalist and senior member of its Nepali Federation of Journalists was attacked while covering a news story.

September 8 2007: *Young Guys* journalist, Tanka Bahadur Dalani, attacked by members of the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM).

September 9 2007: Priyanka Panta, newsreader of Gadimai FM at Birgunj, was assaulted and robbed by an unidentified group.

September 16 2007: Dilli Bahadur Satyal a correspondent for the daily Kathmandu newspaper *Kantipur* received a death threat from a local businessman in Doti.

October 10 2007: journalist Sanjaya Santoshi Rai was assaulted by six people. He was robbed and attacked with a knife.

October 10 2007: Bhuwaneshwor Adhikari, editor and publisher of *Tikapur Daily* was threatened and verbally abused by a police officer.

October 13 2007: reporter for Radio Lumbini, Bhim Prasad Gurung was shot in the chest by an unknown group.

October 13 2007: publisher and editor of *Satya Sandesh Daily*, Bijaya Tiwari received a death threat from revolutionary organisation, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morchha (JTMM).

October 23 2007: journalist Bhasa Sharma, was attacked by a group of youths. Members of the journalist's family were also attacked.

October 23 2007: special correspondent of *Himal Khabar Patrika*, Rameshwor Bohara, was attacked while on his way home.

October 29 2007: FNJ central committee member and associate editor of *Sagarmatha Television* Ramjee Dahal was denied entry to Parliament by police. Members of the police took Dahal's identity card before discarding it and body searching him.

November 5 2007: Narayan Shah, President of the FNJ Rukum chapter received a death threat from a Maoist District leader.

November 13 2007: R K Patel, correspondent of Radio Birgunj and *Prateek* daily, received death threats from a police officer at a police post in central Nepal.

November 16 2007: Ram Kumar Elan, correspondent of *Naya Patrika Daily* and Girija Adhikari, publisher of *Sama Weekly*, received threats via telephone.

December 6 2007: Correspondent for the *Rajdhani Daily* and Sagarmatha Television, Birendra K.M., was attacked by members of the Armed Police Force.

January 12 2008: a representative of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Krishna Ojha, was attacked by an unknown group of assailants on the Ilam-Fidim Highway in eastern Nepal.

January 23 2008: freelance journalist, Manoj Sah, was severely injured in a brutal attack by a dozen people in eastern Nepal.

January 30 2008: a bomb was thrown at Radio Station Indreni FM 97.6 in Birgunj.

February 3 2008: *Narayani Today* newspaper was stormed by an angry mob who verbally abused staff members, damaged the office building and burned official documents. Due to the attack the newspaper stopped publication for an unspecified time.

February 12 2008: Ganesh Sah, news correspondent for Janaki FM was reportedly attacked by Armed Police Force personnel in the eastern Terai district of Siraha. Sah suffered head injuries.

February 16 2008: Bujaya Kumar Pathak, editor of weekly *Birat Darpan*, was attacked by MPRF cadres in Biratnagar, in the eastern Terai district of Morang.

February 15 & 17 2008: Subodh Singh Tharu, a Nepal Television cameraman forced to stop filming when they were confronted by protesters in separate incidents at rallies.

February 17 2008: Gokul Shrestha, reporter and cameraman Amrit Bhatta, both of Sagarmatha Television, were assaulted and had property stolen by an unknown group at a rally in Sallaghari, near Kathmandu.

February 20 2008: Kantipur Publications vehicle full of newspapers and magazines was burnt by cadres of the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) in the eastern region of Nepal.

February 26 2008: Four journalists Madan Thakur, a member of FNJ Rautahat chapter; Arun Yadav, of *Pratik Daily*; Ramgir Mukhiya, of *Mathrubhumi Daily*; and Dinesh Sah, of NTV attacked by Armed Police Force personnel after covering conflict between police and local residents.

March 4 2008: Nawaraj Pathik, chief editor of *Nayen* weekly was threatened by Maoist cadres on March 4 for an editorial about the relationship between crime and politics in eastern Nepal.

March 28 2008: Deepak Oli, *Gorkhapatra* district correspondent, and president of FNJ Bajhang chapter was attacked and threatened by police in far-western Nepal. Oli sustained injuries to his head and back.

March 30 2008: radio station Radio Ramaroshan, threatened by CPN-M leader Jhankar Bahadur Rawal who said he would seize control of radio station in retaliation for broadcasts he alleged were against his group.

April 5 2008: Maya Adhikari, journalist for Adhikola FM, reportedly detained for two hours by CPN-M cadres, while on way to monitor elections.

April 7 2008: Om Hamal, Nepal 1 TV correspondent attacked by a CPN -M group after covering an election meeting. Hamal suffered a minor injury to his face.

April 7 2008: Nabaraj Pathik, Nepal 1 TV journalist was attacked by members of the Young Communist League in eastern Nepal.

April 7 2008: YCL members seized the printing facility of the weekly *Sindhu Prabaha* in Chautara, near Kathmandu. Members of the group also stole printing plates and copies of the publication.

#### Abduction and Detention

May 22 2007: *Shree Janamat Daily* photojournalist Shree Shresha Rai and newspaper carrier Ram Sigdel were stopped by members of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF). They were harassed and held for two hours.

June 20 2007: Hridayaraj Gautam, District member of Press Chautari and editor of "*Khulamanch Weekly*", abducted.

September 6 2007: Prabhu Yadhav, reporter for English-language weekly publication *Young Guys*, was kidnapped by a gang of armed assailants, before being brutally beaten.

October 3 2007: Journalist Pappu Gurung, was abducted from his home.

November 5 2007: Nepali police detained 14 FNJ protesters who were peacefully protesting over the disappearance of journalist Birendra Shah.

November 13 2007: Police detained the 25 journalists who were protesting for obstructing the entrance gate to the office of the Nepal Government's Secretariat. The journalists were held at the Mahendra Police Club for two hours.

November 24 2007: Govinda Ghimire, the president of the Sunsari chapter of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), was abducted, beaten and threatened with death by a police official. He was released after two hours.

## PAKISTAN

#### Media Workers Killed

June 2 2007: Noor Hakim Khan, a reporter for the *Pakistan* newspaper was killed in a bomb attack on his car in the northern areas.

June 17 2007: Noor Ahmed Solgani, a reporter and presenter for *Khabrein* was shot dead in Pir Jo Goth by two armed men.

July 3 & 4 2007: Javed Khan, a photographer for Markaz and the UK-based DM Digital TV television station and Maulana Masud Mehmood, a reporter for *Daily Islam* were killed while covering clashes between police and student of Lal Majid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad.

October 19 2007: Arif Khan, senior cameraman for ARY One World was killed in bomb blasts targetting opposition leader Benazir Bhutto in Karachi.

October 19 2007: Azar Abbas Haidri, a staff reporter for *The Post* was shot dead in Karachi. The police called Haidri's death a targeted killing.

November 17 2007: Mahrun Nisa, the wife of slain journalist Hayatullah Khan was murdered in a targeted bomb attack on her home in North Waziristan

November 23 2007: Zubari Ahmed Mujahid, a journalist for *Jang* newspaper was shot dead by an unidentified gunman on a motorcycle in an alleged revenge attack for his investigative activities about corruption and mistreatment of the poor.

February 9 2008: Chishti Mujahid, a senior journalist working for *Akbar-e-Jehan* was murdered by a militant group, the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) in retaliation for an article he wrote about the killing of Baluch nationalist leader Balaach Mari.

February 29 2008: Sirajuddin, a correspondent for *The Nation* was killed in a suicide bomb blast in the Swat Valley's Mingora town. Eighty-one people including *Shawal* reporter Hazrat Bilal were injured

April 14 2008: Khadim Hussain Sheikh, bureau chief of Urdu daily *Khabrein* and stringer for Sindh TV in Baluchistan was shot dead by gunmen while traveling to work with his brother Ishaq on a motorbike

#### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

May 12 2007: Anwar Abbas a photographer for Aaj TV and two unnamed cameramen received serious head injuries when armed groups entered the Aaj TV's Karachi offices, attacking journalists and confiscating equipment at gunpoint

May 22 2007: Twelve journalists were verbally abused and branded "chauvinistic" in a press release issued by the Mujahid Rabita Council (MRC) Among the names on the list were: Zaffar Abbas, resident editor of Dawn Islamabad, Mazhar Abbas, AFP Bureau Chief in Karachi, Azhar Abbas, head of Dawn TV, Ayaz Amir from Dawn, Sajjad Mir, an anchor for TV ONE, Shaheen Sehbai, head of ARY One World, Dr Shahid Masood, anchor of GEO TV, Aneeq Ahmed, anchor of ARY One World, Asfar Imam, Aaj TV, Zarar Khan, Bureau Chief AP Karachi, Zahid Hussain, GEO Chief Reporter, and Irfan Siddiqui, a *Nawa-e-Waqat* columnist

May 29 2007: Mazhar Abbas, secretary general of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and two other senior journalists found live bullets wrapped in envelopes in their car in Karachi. Representatives of the MRC claimed responsibility for the act.

July 3 2007: Israr Ahmed, a cameraman for CNBC news channel was critically injured after being hit by three bullets in the Lal Masjid uprising. Wahab Saleem, photographer for the *Post*, Raja Zafar photographer for *Express* and Absar Ahmad a senior journalist with GEO TV were also injured.

September 17 2007: Shakeel Turbai, the son of a journalist, was badly beaten by a gang in retaliation for an *expose* published by his father.

September 30 2007: Sailab Mehsud, editor of regional news website Karwan-e-Qabial and journalist for *The News* and *Al-Jazeera* received a phone call from a military intelligence officer threatening to abduct and kill him for a report he wrote about a clash between the army and the Taliban in South Waziristan.

October 19 2007: Rashid Ali Panhwar, an Associated Press of Pakistan journalist, Talat Anjum, a cameraman with APNA television, Syed Athar Hussain a photographer with the *Jurrat* daily and Arif Hasan, a cameraman from Dawn TC were injured in a bomb blast directed at Benazir Bhutto.

November 2007: Five photographers and TV cameramen were detained in Karachi during a protest by civil society organisations outside the Karachi Press Club. They were released 48 hours later.

November 6 2007: Lala Asad Pathan a senior ARY One World television journalist went into hiding after authorities raided his home in Sukkur and detained two of his brothers who are not journalists.

February 12 2008: Six journalists were critically injured in a bomb blast in Khuzdar at an election campaign press conference. Five of the journalists were reported as being Ayub Baluch, from GEO TV, Munir Noor, from Rang TV, Abdullah of KTN and stringers Latif Baluch and Munir Shakir.

February 29 2008: Hazrat Bilal a journalist from *Shawal* newspaper was seriously hurt in a bomb blast in Mingora that killed *The Nation* correspondent Sirajuddin.

March 13 2008: cameramen and journalists were attacked, chased and beaten while reporting on a demonstration organised

by the women's movement of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM-H) outside the Karachi Press Club. A media driver was taken hostage by the armed protesters who warned journalists not to broadcast footage

April 9 2008: Three journalists were injured, including a camera woman from GEO TV whose arm was broken, while covering confrontations between rival political groups in Karachi. Four cameras were snatched and two media vehicles were torched by protesters.

#### Abduction and Detention

June 17 2007: Latif Khosa, staff reporter at the Urdu daily *Jang* was kidnapped by intelligence agencies in Baluchistan.

August 10 2007: Munir Mengal, the head of Baloch Voice TV station was detained by police in Qalat shortly after being released from a 16-month military detention under a 30-day custody order in Baluchistan.

September 19 2007: Babar Hussain, a senior Dawn TV correspondent was reportedly abducted and interrogated by members of an intelligence agency in relation to a report on a suicide bombing in Pakistan's capital.

September 2007: Riaz Mengal, a journalist for the *Intikhab* newspaper in Baluchistan was reported missing by his family after writing articles about stolen car trafficking. His family suspected a government minister was involved in his disappearance.

December 28 2007: Ten journalists reporting on events related to the assassination of Benazir Bhutto were arrested under anti-terrorism and riot law. Some of the detained journalists worked for Kawish Television Network (KTN) and *Daily Kwaish*.

February 29 2008: Hameed Baluch, and Khalid Khosa, both journalists at the *Azadi* daily, were reported missing to police by their families. Khosa was last seen at a press conference in Nasirabad and Baluch was reportedly abducted in Taftan, near Pakistan's border with Iran

## SRI LANKA

#### Media Workers Killed

April 16 2007: Subash Chandraboas, editor of the Tamil-language monthly magazine "Nilam" ("the Ground") was shot dead at his residence in Thirunavatkulam, Vavuniya.

April 30 2007: Selvarahj Rajivarman, a crime reporter for the *Uthayan* newspaper was killed after investigating reports of disappearances in the Jaffna area. He was 23.

August 1 2007: Nilakshan Sahadavan, 22, a student journalist at the Jaffna Media Resource Training Centre (MRTC) and a part-time journalist, was shot dead by gunmen on motorcycles in Jaffna, around 4am during curfew hours.

November 27 2007: Isaivizhi Chempian (also known as Subajini), Suresh Linbiyo, a technical desk worker and T. Tharmalingam were killed when Sri Lankan Air Force jets bombed the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Ealam (LTTE) radio station Voice of Tigers (VOT), Radio presenters K. Jenanai, 34, and Anparasi Rajkumar were wounded in the attack.

#### Physical Harm, Threats and Intimidation

May 8 2007: The Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance (SLTMA) expressed concern over the continuing ban in the East on certain Tamil newspapers. Unidentified armed persons attacked many newspaper agents and transporters. SLTMA stated that the people in the areas, namely Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee, were deprived of the right to know what is happening around them.

May 16 2007: Navarathnam Parameshvatan a Jaffna based freelance journalist was threatened by a political group connected to the government after a verbal dispute over a news item he provided to a Jaffna newspaper

May 16 2007: Sonali Samarasinghe the editor of *The Morning Leader* was questioned by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Sri Lanka Police for over four hours in relation to series of investigative articles published in the *Sunday Leader* and *Irudina* news papers last year.

May 2007-ongoing: *Uthayan* newspaper was threatened by Sri Lankan Army personnel not to publish any news of the student agitation calling for the immediate release of the four students arrested by the police

May 16 2007: Ranjith Rajapaksa, *Lankadeepa's* Hatton provincial correspondent was threatened by prison officers at Hatton railway station to report on a derailment. His media vehicle was also attacked.

May 30 2007: Sajeewa Chinthaka, *Lakbima* photojournalist was allegedly assaulted by a group of Navy personnel who demanded his national identity card as he was returning to his newspaper office

May 30 2007: Pasan Samarawickrama, *Lakbima* provincial journalist was chased out of an Urban Council Committee meeting at the Weligama UC premises by Chairman of Weligama UC

May 2007: Saman Pathirana Polonnaruwa District Correspondent for the MTV/MBC Media Network was threatened with death by Illegal river sand miners while covering mass scale illegal sand miners around Wasgamuwa forest reserve and Amban Ganga River. Acting on his complaint Polonnaruwa police arrested suspects.

June 8 2007: Jaffna *Thinakural* News Paper office was searched by the Army. Nothing incriminatory was found in the search

June 14 2007: Parameshwari Munusami was attacked by two armed people with State security ID who demanded her national ID and passport. Despite waiting at Rajagiriyia Police Station as instructed, her passport and ID were not returned. Parameshwari told the FMM that the person who took her IDs was the same person who bundled her into a van and threatened her against speaking to the media and politicians in April this year.

June 18 2007: Colombo based Tamil language newspaper *Verakesari* was searched by the Army and asked to provide details and personal addresses of all employees, including editorial staff. Nothing incriminatory was found by any search.

June 2007: Vincent Jeyan, the last Tamil freelance journalist in Jaffna, working for AP and local media in the volatile Jaffna Peninsula in the north, fled to Colombo after he received death threats via a text message from a satellite phone. He was acting as the Jaffna coordinator for the international Press freedom Mission to Sri Lanka when he received the death threat.

June 23 2007: Suranga Rajanayake, a correspondent for *Lankadeepa* and SLRC in the Gampola district was threatened with death by a gang for an article he wrote against treasure hunters. The gang members were reportedly close political supporters of one senior minister in the government. He has made a complaint at Gampola Police Station against the death threat at Gampola Police.

June 28 2007: K. P. Mohan the Tamil daily, *Thinkural's* Defence Correspondent was harassed by air force officers at a security check point in Colombo as he was returning from a news conference on the current security situation in the country. Despite producing a media identity card issued by the Information

Ministry, he was verbally abused by the officers. He was assaulted and seriously injured again by a group of armed Air Force personnel at Fort on June 29. He was on his way to the Presidential Secretariat to cover a meeting between President Rajapaksa and the Maha Sangha.

June 2007: Sandaruwan Senadeeram, editor of Lanka-e-News a widely read Sinhala and English news website received a number of threatening emails including one with a photograph of small weapons. It said "You are publishing your all nonsense news, slinging mud under the labeled of free media. Don't be such a Bad egg. It smells very bad. Someday you will punish by the public".

June 2007: N. Jeevendran, a Tamil language producer of Young Asia TV received email threats accusing him of supporting LTTE.

July 14 2007: B. A. Wijerathna Podibanda the TV/SIRASA Aralaganvila provincial correspondent was threatened and assaulted by Mahaweli Authority officials for filming Araganvila Children's Park. The officials confiscated some of his equipment. Five media organisations and local journalists' organisation held a protest demonstration in Aralaganvila on 23<sup>rd</sup> Monday July 2007.

July 16 2007: United National Party (UNP) MP Lakshman Kiriella, lashed out at a female journalist of Derana TV on June 13 and shouted at a male journalist of the same station June 16 at the Parliamentary Complex. He claimed that Derana journalists have a political agenda. Derana New Director Shehan Daranage said his station had no political agenda and its journalist was free to ask any question anywhere.

August 7 2007: Rupe Silva, the mother of slain journalist Sampath Lakmal was threatened with death by unidentified person, posing as a CID officer. Journalist Sampath Lakmal (26) was gunned down on July 01, 2006, in Dehiwala, south of Colombo. The police have not produced any suspect before the courts for the last 12 months.

August 10 2007: Jafrall Askhant a journalist for the Tamil daily *Werakesari* was verbally abused by Deputy Minister K.A. Faiz for who threatened to kidnap and "finish off" the journalist, claiming that a story he had written was incorrect.

August 15 2007: Iqbal Athas defence correspondent and associate editor of *The Sunday Times* was fired for exposing an allegedly corrupt purchase of Mig 27 fighter jets by the Sri Lankan government. The case was under the investigation of the Barbary commission of Sri Lanka. Government leaders accused Athas of having created a national security threat by exposing the deal.

August 16 2007: Sahampathi Manage of Sirasa TV, Kulasingha Chaminda from ABC Radio and Sarjeeewa Mathaweea from *Swarnawahini* were forcibly removed while covering a protest at Mayuarapura, Hambantota, in which police wielding batons charged upon unarmed peasants. All three made complains to the relevant authorities, no action was taken.

August 27 2007: W.G. Gunarathna local editor of *Lankadeepa* newspaper was threatened by a person posing as an Air Force officer for translating articles written by *The Sunday Times* Defence Correspondent Iqbal Athas. Both newspapers are published by the same group.

August 29 2007: Freddie Gamage and other editorial staff for the *Meepura* newspaper was threatened by security staff of ELSUMA factory in Daluwakotuwa, Negambo because of an article on rights of ELSUMA factory workers which appeared in August.

September 6 2007: Parameshwari Munusami was followed by two unidentified people who she reported were the same men who abducted her after her release in May and confiscated her passport and ID card. On this occasion, Parameshwari had run

into a nearby police station for safety and later lodged a complaint at the Human Rights Commission in Colombo.

September 17 2007: Mr Wijesingha the Pottuvil correspondent for *Lankadeepa* and *The Daily Mirror* newspapers was verbally abused by a Deputy Inspector General for covering an on-going police recruitment programme at Pottuvil police station. The DIG confiscated his camera and tape recorder.

September 20 2007: Janith Vipulaguna a Young Asia TV journalist reported to FMM that he has been receiving various threats including death threats over phone for months. According to his letter released to the public, anonymous callers are now giving him death threats.

September 22 2007: Sirasa TV crew members were threatened by people connected to Labour Minister Mervyn Silva to stop covering a public meeting of the minister despite receiving official invitations to cover the event. Minister Mervyn Silva has himself threatened the station on several occasions, once saying that he is ready to use his official pistol against them. His verbal threats have been recorded and shown on Sirasa TV.

September 14 2007: Indika Sakalasooriya a journalist for *The Nation* was questioned by Criminal Investigations Department (CID) over his report, published on September 9 about an Aston Martin super luxury car allegedly owned and bought by a highly placed politician.

October 2 2007: Iqbal Athas was 'named and shamed' on the Ministry of Defence website for his coverage of defense-related matters in Sri Lanka, accusing him of assisting in the psychological operations of the LTTE terrorists.

October 8 2007: All Sri Lankan media organisations were threatened by Director General of the Media Centre for National Security (MCNS) Lakshman Hulugalle who told the media, "We consider anyone who criticizes the defense forces to be a traitor to the nation as such people undermine the lives of armed forces personnel." The statement was reported in the *Daily Mirror*.

October 18 2007: a Sirasa TV correspondent was verbally abused by Labour Minister Mervyn Silva and chased away from the Mount Lavinia court premises where he was covering a case related to Silva's son, who was in prison over a case of alleged assault.

October 26 2007: *Meepura* journalists were verbally abused and chased away from an opening ceremony in Negambo by a police officer.

November 8 2007: Wasantha Pradeep and I.K.A. Waruna Sampath from Sirasa TV were assaulted by a gang in Ranminithanna, Tissamaharamaya while on an assignment to cover killings and the destruction of two villages by unidentified persons.

November 27 2007: Karunarathna Gamge a journalist for *Divaina* newspaper was verbally assaulted by the President of Tamankaduwa local government authority in Polonnaruwa for covering a story related to garbage whilst taking some photographs.

December 13 2007: Nimal Jayarathana from *Lakbima*, J.K. Jayakody from *Divaina*, and Wijerathna Podibabdara from Sirasa TV were harassed and sent away by Samurdhi officials for reporting abuse of power by government officials in the Polonnaruwa district

December 16 2007: the wife of Anuruddha Lokuhapuarachchi a senior Reuters photojournalist was questioned at their home in Ratmalana, by officers of the Criminal Investigation Division who posed as telephone repairman for Sri Lanka Telecom.

December 27 2007: T.M.G. Chandrasekara, news director of SLRC was assaulted by Labour Minister Mervyn Silva and a group of unidentified armed men because SLRC did not broadcast a speech made by him the previous day at a public meeting

December 30 2007: a group of Wee Radio supporters who were putting up posters of the station were assaulted by supporters of Minister Mervyn Silva.

January 2 2008: Mahanumi Suburamanyam was threatened by paramilitary cadres as he was trying to cover a claymore bomb attack.

January 2 2008: Chevaan Daniel, the head of MTV, Kingsley Ratnayaka, Sirasa director, and Susil Kedelpitya Sirasa news director, three leading media personnel of the MTV and MBC TV-Radio networks filed complaints against underworld gang members who had allegedly been ordered to kill them for their protests of Mervyn Silva's assault on the SLRC

January 4 2008: sections of the Sri Lankan media were labeled "traitors" in an interview by the commander of the Sri Lankan army Major General Sarath Fonseka published in the state-controlled Sinhala daily *Dinamina*

January 5 2008: Sanath Balasuriya president of the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association (SLWJA) and Dharmasiri Lankapeli general secretary of the Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions (FMETU) report threats against their lives and fear that they will be targeted for assassination in relation to Mervyn Silva's assault on SLRC

January 7 2008: Sri Ranga Jeyarathnam host of the "Minnal" programme on Shakthi TV was accused by Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare Mr K.N. Douglas Devananda of being "a traitor" and "conspiring with the LTTE to promote terrorism"

January 7 2008: Poddala Jayantha was assaulted by Sri Lanka police at his home in an apparent attempted abduction.

January 9 2008: Mr E Saravanapavan, managing director of Uthayan newspaper reported threats against the newspaper, warning him to stop functioning immediately.

January 23 2008: Indika Sri Aravinda, a TV journalist was arrested by civic police under suspicion of being an LTTE member and verbally abused at Mount Lavinia police station where his media accreditation card was not accepted

January 28 2008: Suhaib M Kasim the associate editor of the state-controlled Tamil daily *Thinakaran* was stabbed at his home in Colombo in an attack related to his position at the newspaper

January 30 2008: the mother of Duleep Dushantha, media worker of the state-owned Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) was threatened by two armed men searching for her son and warned that if she informed the police she would be killed. The attack is believed to be related to Duleep's protests of the SLRC - Mervyn Silva incident

January 30 2008: Dushantha Darshana a part-time SLRC newsreader who read the live news of Mervyn Silva's intrusion in the SLRC offices was forced to hand over his SLRC ID card and leave the premises by authorities

January 31 2008: twenty-one SLRC journalists were interrogated by the Criminal Investigation Department in relation to the SLRC - Mervyn Silva incident

February 12 2008: M.S.M. Noordeen and S.M.M. Musthafa, two Muslim journalists, were denied access to a press conference at the Batticaloa Secretariat by policemen.

February 14 2008: Susil Kindelpitya news director of Sirasa TV was followed by a hostile group that forced open the door of his car in an apparent attempt to harm him.

February 15 2008: Parameshwari Munusami reports that she and her relatives are being followed by unidentified people. The unidentified people have reportedly shown photos of her to taxi drivers saying she is a wanted woman.

February 28 2008: Priyal Ranjith Perera, Assistant Director News Camera at the SLRC who was involved in videotaping the SLRC-Mervyn Silva incident was harassed by a gang of four who approached him at home in Pitakotte

March 15 2008: Ravi Abeywickrama, a SLRC music producer received death threats on his telephone

March 16 2008: the house of Sunethra Athugalpura, from *Lakbima* and her husband Sashi Kumara from Sirasa TV News Producer was ransacked by an unknown gang. Nothing was stolen, leading Kumara to consider it an act of intimidation

March 20 2008: journalists from MTV and MBC TV were threatened by Labour Minister Mervyn Silva who told them to "find a place to hide"

March 20 2008: Samanala Graphic printing press was ordered to suspend all print runs by police due to a poster allegedly campaign for a main opposition party. Two police officials guarded the premises while it was searched and printing plates were confiscated

#### Media Workers Attacked

June 27 & 28 2007: K.P. Mohan, defence report for the Tamil daily *Thinakural* was assaulted twice on consecutive days by officials manning roadblocks over an argument about a media accreditation card

August 15 2007: K.P. Mohan defence reporter for the Tamil daily *Thinakural* was attacked with acid while returning home from hospital where he was being treated for injuries suffered in a previous attack

November 21 2007: the printing press of Leader Publications which publishes *The Sunday Leader*, *Morning Leader* and *Irudina* was destroyed by arsonists causing damage of millions of rupees. The *Morning Leader* print run was in operation when the armed gang of 15 forced themselves into the printing house and set it on fire.

January 10 2008: Victor Somaweera a Bingiriya provincial journalist was stabbed and threatened with a gun to his head by an identified person. Despite reporting the incident to the police, the perpetrator was not arrested.

January 16 2008: U.S.A. Bandara, a provincial correspondent for Sirasa TV was assaulted by a ruling party politician while covering the aftermath of an attack on a civilian bus in Okkampitiya, Monaragala. At least 27 passengers were killed and more than 50 persons were injured as the result of the attack.

January 25 2008: Lal Hemantha Mawalage a producer in the news division of the SLRC was cut with a sharp knife while returning to his home in Athurigiriya by two men on a motorcycle. The incident is believed to be related to the Mervyn Silva-SLRC confrontation. Mawalage was among those who spoke live on behalf of SLRC employees as the whole SLRC staff protested against the minister's intrusion.

February 2 2008: M.P. Dias a photographer attached to the Ceylon Tourist Board was assaulted for not offering his seat the Office in Charge of Rambukkana Police while covering a story at Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

February 23 2008: Sugath Dharmapriya, a news producer of the Derana TV channel covering the bomb blast on a bus in Mount Lavinia, a suburb of Colombo, was abused and assaulted by a Senior Inspector of the Mount Lavinia Police, Mahesh Perera.

February 28 2008: Pankaja Sankalapa, a journalist for the Independent Television Network (ITN) verbally abused by a chief monk Getamane Siridhammakitti Thera of a Buddhist religious school in Mathara. The monk has assaulted journalist Pankaja for his coverage of a sexual abuse story involving him on ITN.

March 5 2008: Ranjani Aluthge a librarian for the SLRC was cut with a razor knife while traveling home on a public bus. The attack on Ms Aluthge was linked to her participation in the protest against the infamous Mervyn Silva incident in December 2007.

March 14 2008: Arunasiri Hettige, Assistant Director (Supplies) of the SLRC was attacked on his way to work at a bus stop in Kottikawatta suburb, Colombo. A club affixed to a sharp object on his neck was used to attack him. Hettige represented the SLRC Workers Unions at a meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March with government leaders regarding the infamous Mervyn Silva incident in December 2007.

March 14 2008: the family of female Tamil journalist Parameshwari Munusami was attacked by a mob in their village. Her father and sister were seriously injured in the attack before they were rescued by the Gampola Police. This is not the first time a gang of thugs has threatened Parameshwari and her family

#### Abduction and Detention

May 1 2007: Sivanathan Sivaramya, a female journalist, was arrested at the entrance of a World Press Freedom Day conference organised by UNESCO in Colombo and accused of being a suspected suicide attacker from the LTTE.

May 30 2007: Tiran Alles, chairman of Standard Newspapers Ltd and former Civil Aviation Authority Chairman was remanded by the Terrorist Investigation Division and was released without charge after three months detention.

June 1, 2007: Parmeshwari Munusami was released from detention after the Attorney General advised police that despite “a volume of incriminatory material against Parameshwari”, the evidence was not sufficient to charge her. A Foreign Ministry statement detailing this decision appeared in the government-owned *Daily News* (01/06/2007).

October 24 2007: Arthur Wamanan a journalist for *The Sunday Leader* was arrested by Criminal Investigating Department after a complaint lodged by Minister Mano Wijeratne who the journalist had contacted for her comment on a story.

November 5 2007: Anthonypillai Sherin Sithranjan, 36, a newspaper delivery person of Jaffna based Tamil daily *Yal Thinakkural*, was reported missing taking papers for distribution from *Yal Thinakkural* office in K.K.S Road at 6:00 a.m. on 5<sup>th</sup> November. His whereabouts remain unknown.

November 17 2007: Vadivel Nimalarajah, proofreader for Jaffna based newspaper *Uthayan* was abducted by an unidentified group after being last seen cycling home.

December 2 2007: Ranga, a journalist for the Tamil daily *Sudaroli* was arrested and searched by Rajagiriya Police and detained without charge for 12 hours

December 24 2007: Capucine Henri and C. Simon from France 24 news channel were detained by the military for videotaping a Tamil family visiting their detained relatives on Christmas eve. The journalists were released without charge after 43 hours

February 12 2008: Gemunu Amarsinghe a photojournalist working for Associated Press (AP), was arrested by Civil Defense Committee members while he was covering students entering Isipathana College, Colombo. He was released nearly two hours later after intervention by media institutions and organizations.

March 6 2008: N Jesiheran, owner of E-Kwality printing press and his partner Valamarthi, were arrested without charge for their involvement with [www.outreachsl.com](http://www.outreachsl.com), a news and features website. Jesiheran remains in detention

March 7 2008: J.S. Tisseinayagam the editor of [www.outreachsl.com](http://www.outreachsl.com) and freelance journalist, was arrested without charge by the Terrorist Investigation Department. He remains in detention and has filed a Fundamental Rights case against the government in the Supreme Court

March 7 & 8 2008: K. Wijesinghe a journalist, Uthayanan, a visual editor and Ranga Lasantha a cameraman for [www.outreachsl.com](http://www.outreachsl.com) were arrested without charge. They were released on March 13.

March 8 2008: S. Sivakumar (alias Balasubramanium Wasanthan), spokesperson of the Free Media Movement and Editor of the bi-monthly Tamil language *Sarinihar* magazine was arrested, questioned by Terrorist Investigation Department (TID) and released on the same day. On March 7, the TID took one of his cousins hostage to compel him to appear before them.

March 27 2008: Susanthi Thambirasa, who had been arrested on the charge of being a LTTE suicide bomber in November 2006, was freed by the Colombo Magistrate's Court

#### Media Workers Displaced or in Self-Exile

June 2007: Vincent Jeyan, an Associated Press correspondent left Jaffna immediately after receiving a death threat via text message. He remains in hiding.

July 2007: dozens of Tamil-language journalists left Sri Lanka in fear of their lives. Their names have been withheld for safety reasons.

September 2007: J. Jeevendran a Tamil program producer fled Sri Lanka because of continuing death threats and hate mail by extremist groups.

November 10 2007: K.P. Mohan, defence correspondent for *Thinakkural* fled to Switzerland in fear of his safety and his life after three attacks were launched against him and no perpetrator had been arrested.

March 2008: Sanath Balasuriya, president of Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association left the country temporarily after receiving repeated death threats over his leading role in media protests against minister Mervyn Silva's intrusion into the SLRC offices



The IFJ is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that promotes coordinated international action to defend press freedom and social justice through the development of strong, free and independent trade unions of journalists. IFJ Asia-Pacific coordinates IFJ activities in the Asia-Pacific region. The IFJ works closely with the United Nations, particularly UNESCO, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, WIPO and the ILO, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Union, the Council for Europe and with a range of international trade union and freedom of expression organisations. The IFJ mandate covers both professional and industrial interests of journalists.

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