

Media Weekly Review, Week 1 of November

During the previous week, several cases of violence against the journalists have taken place, causing a sense of worry among the media community in Afghanistan and internationally.

On October 28, Mr. Abdul Khaliq Hussaini, a Journalist working for Khama Press was beaten by armed individuals in broad day light in Kabul city. On October 29, Zahidullah Husainkhil, director of Radio Mahaal in Logar province was arrested and beaten by IEA forces. On October 30, Mr. Ali Reza, the cameraman of Iran Sada & Sima News agency was shot at by unknown armed men in Kabul city. He luckily survived the wounds. On the same date, Hussain Ahmadi, a reporter of Rah-e Farda Television was arrested in front of the Kabul Passport Directorate while preparing a report but was then released quickly. On the 4th of November, Mohammad Haroon Niroomand, a technician of Parliament TV, committed suicide by hanging himself. Mr Niromand was facing bad economical situation.

A snapshot of the provinces:

East:

Laghman: After series of advocacy efforts made by central and regional staff of the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC), the building of a local radio station that was captured by a commander of the Taliban, was finally freed; and the radio station restarted its activities.

The case of Khaibar Nawisht Radio in Laghman was closely followed by AJSC. We discussed the issue with the provincial Directorate of Information & Culture, Governor's Office, Police Chief Office and the Ministry of Interior. Finally, on the first of November, the Taliban commander evacuated the building and the radio station restarted its activity.

Nangrahar: AJSC representative met with the family of the killed journalist Sayed Maroof Sadat and gave them an amount of financial assistance. AJSC representative also met with the provincial head of the Information and Culture department and the governor's spokesman and discussed the challenges of the media workers and requested to ease up the access to information for the media workers.

Kunar: A reporter of Pajhwok News Agency Mr. Qazfi Mal was threatened by the provincial chief of Public Health department for not including his viewpoints in a report about the public health situation of the province. The issue was later resolved by the intervention of AJSC provincial focal point.

The access to information problem still exist in the eastern zone. There are many security incidents taking place on daily basis in the eastern cluster but the provincial authorities are not providing any information on these incidents. The reporters have to prepare their reports by only talking to the eye witnesses.

Southeast

Paktia: During the past week, there has been no reports of violence against the media workers in Paktia but there are still problems of access to information at a number of governmental offices. Many provincial government offices do not follow information sharing procedures in Paktia.

In the past three months a number of media outlets such as *Voice of Paktia*, *Voice of Women* and *Tahleel* radio stations and two print media have closed down and still have not restarted their activities.

In Paktia province, a total of 30 media workers have lost their jobs. This includes two female media workers as well.

Paktika: In the last weeks, a total of four radio stations closed down in Paktika. Radio Talwasa has restarted its activity but the rest of them are still closed. About 20 media workers have also lost their jobs in this province.

The general provisions that have been imposed by IEA in the country, are also applied in Paktika. For example, no officials of other department can share information with the journalists except the provincial head of the Information & Culture Directorate.

Khost: The financial constraints of the media have increased more than before. Many media houses in Khost are on the brink of closing due to financial and liquidity problems. However no media has stopped their activities yet. In Khost, 10 media workers have lost their jobs and up to 12 journalists have either left the country or have gone to other provinces.

The provincial Directorate of Information & Culture has advised media not answer any phone in calls from women during live broadcast. Media is also told not to broadcast the statements recorded during the reign of the previous government. Music is still banned in Khost and media advised to broadcast religious programs and Islamic chants instead.

Currently there are no women working in the media in Khost.

Logar: Safety of journalists, lack of access to information are problems still existent in this province. A total of three media outlets have been closed in Logar province during the past two months; *Radio Etifaq* and *Logar Gazette* among them.

Since the collapse of the former regime, around 25 media workers have lost their jobs. A total of ten media workers have left the province, two of them have gone abroad and 8 others have gone to other provinces.

The media outlets in Logar have been told by the IEA officials to continue their programs in accordance to the Islamic directions. Reporters are required to consult with the provincial authorities before publication.

Only one female journalist used to be active in Logar. She has stopped working because of fear of the Taliban.

North

No cases of violence have been reported from the north zone including Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Sari Pul and Samangan provinces.

Balkh: The issues of access to information and financial problems of media outlets are still the major challenges. The military events are covered by national TV and after some days, the Directorate of Information and Cultures after censoring and editing it, give it to the media outlets.

Jawzjan: Radio Mehran in Jawzjan province that its office building was damaged during the fights between the previous government and the Taliban; and since then, its activities had been stopped but with assistance and efforts of its employees, it has restarted its activities. With reactivation of this media outlet, a total of four radio stations, one TV channel and two newspapers are continuing their activities in Jawzjan province. Access to information is the major challenge for the media workers in Jawzjan.

Samangan: Including the national TV and Radio, two other media outlets, Radio Haqeeqat and Radio Shahrwand are active in Samangan and other media outlets are closed in this province. Access to information is a problem and no governmental office is providing requested information. The directorate of Information & Culture has not allowed women media workers to work in the media.

Faryab: Radio Maimana, Radio Tamana, Radio Momtaaz and Radio Sahat are active in Maimana, the center of Faryab province. These radios are all private and don't have any political, news, cultural and social programs and their owners have warned that if the situation continues like this and they don't have sufficient financial income, they will soon have to close their media outlets. The governmental authorities in Faryab are not responsive to the needs of these media outlets.

Sari Pul: The problems in Sari Pul province are similar as in other northern provinces. Lack of access to information is the major challenge for media workers in Sari Pul. Women media workers are staying at home and are uncertain about their future.

Northeast

Kunduz: In this week, several owners of media outlets in Kunduz sent a letter to the media union requesting exemption from financial penalties due to untimely payment of their taxes and other penalties by the Directorate of Information and Culture and Directorate of Information and Technology because of the present economic problem and lack of sufficient income that have caused several media outlets to close.

Takhar: In this week, Radio Danesh stopped its activities due to technical and economic problems. The collected data shows that a total of 100 media workers are in this province and out of this number, 25% of them have left their jobs.

This week, similar as previous weeks, lack of access to information and economic problems had created challenges to the media workers but safety and security problems also continue to exist toward the media workers.