

Media Weekly Review, 3rd Week of November

There are both positive and negative news from our zones over the previous week on many issues such as freedom of expression, situation of journalists, and the media. The majority of the positive news concerns the yet-sporadic developments on coordination mechanisms between media workers and provincial Directorates of Information and Culture. but the reduction of media workers and the chaotic conditions of media houses suffering from financial crises remain at large.

East

Nangrahar: While there have been no reports of violence against journalists in the east, there are still challenges on the issue of access to information. Journalists in Nangrahar, Kunar, and Laghman provinces wait days for a response from official authorities, and in most cases, they do not receive one. Another problem that media workers in the east continue to face is the poor economic condition of media, which has led to the closure of some of the outlets.

Nuristan: There is a significant media void in Nuristan province, with two private radio stations having closed due to financial difficulties following the collapse of the government, no other media outlet is operating provincially except the state/government radio.

Laghman: Hussain, a new radio station with 16 personnel, two of whom are women, has begun broadcasting in Laghman. This radio station currently broadcasts a 16-hour program on daily basis.

Northeast

Takhar: The media situation has improved last week in comparison to the week before that, and somewhat an acceptable level relationship has been built between media workers and government officials, with several joint meetings held, and their media program production and broadcasting have also improved. However, a shortfall of professional media workers is an existential problem for media houses. Most media outlets have one or two professional employees, and lack of or substandard wages is the most common cause for media workers leaving their jobs.

Badakhshan: Economic problems, lack of support (media development projects and advertisements), work-related hardship, financial penalties, and governmental censorship on content; have put media outlets in a tough condition, including the threat of financial collapse.

Due to financial difficulties, Radio Banowan, a women's radio run by women, has been closed since last week. And yet, none of the six media outlets that have been shutdown have reopened their doors.

Kunduz: Last week, media workers and organizations in Kunduz met with the UNAMA regional office in Kunduz to discuss their concerns and request attention and collaboration. One of the main issues the media is concerned with is financial penalties and other penalties imposed by the Information and Culture Ministry's Frequency Line and Work License fees. Another concern is the cost of license renewal, which, according to media houses in Kunduz, is nearly four times higher than in other northeastern provinces. For example, renewing a license in Takhar province costs 14000 Afs, but in Kunduz, it costs more than

60000 Afs. The representatives of UNAMA office met with the director of Information and Culture of this province who promised his cooperation on this particular issue. The media owners have also requested the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee to cooperate with them on this and resolve the issue.

Central

Bamyan: During the past week, only the National Radio and Television has started its programs in this province and has a few hours limited broadcasting mostly covering the activities of provincial government offices.

Maidanwardak: Fortunately, after the new changes in government, no media outlets have been closed in this province and all media outlets are active but because of financial crisis, about 6 media workers have lost their jobs. Unlike other provinces, there have been no provisions imposed on media outlets by the government yet.

Southeast

Paktia: The only tangible “progress” in this province was invitation of journalists to the governmental meetings and events but still the journalists, like in other provinces, have difficulty accessing the information especially from security institutions.

The provincial coordinator of the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee met and discussed this issue with the Paktia provincial Directorate of Information and Culture who promised that in addition to the government civilian offices, the journalists would be able to contact the security institutions and get timely information.

Also in last week, a two-day training workshop was conducted for spokespersons of the civil-governmental offices by the Information and Culture Directorate of this province. The authorities said that the aim of this training to the spokespersons of governmental offices was to train them how to provide precise, factual and timely information to the journalists.

In comparison to the previous weeks, there have been good news about coordination and cooperation among the journalists and governmental authorities last week but unfortunately there are still lots of problems lying ahead of media.