

Afghanistan Media at a Glance

(First week - December 2021)

Access to information situation in Balkh province has improved. Journalists in Balkh province are invited to most government meetings and information is shared to some extent. Furthermore a dispute between the governor of Kunar province and a local journalist was resolved through the mediation of the Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee.

Eastern Region:

Journalists still struggle and face difficulty accessing information in Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan provinces.

On the 9th of 30 November, at around 2:00 PM, clashes broke out between ISIL-affiliated militants and the forces of the Islamic Emirate and continued until 9:00 AM. Around 11:00 am information about the incident was shared with reporters and were allowed to visit the site. This caused troubles for accurate reporting by reporters and media. These kinds of problems of access to information in Nangarhar province still persist.

In Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman provinces 6 independent local media outlets have been shut down so far and some other media outlets are facing economic problems leading to their closure.

Due to economic problems media are currently dismissing female staff and male media workers are working without any pay and benefits.

Kunar: A dispute between the governor and a local correspondent of Pajhwok News Agency was resolved through mediation of Afghan Journalists Safety Committee. The local correspondent Mr. Qazafi Mal had reported about increase of robberies in the province. The Governor had treated the report as unacceptable and had apparently threatened the correspondent.

Subsequently representative of the AJSC spoke with the Governor and Director of Information and Culture of Kunar Province and the issue were resolved between the parties.

Additionally, AJSC provincial representative along with a group of journalists met Mr. Mohammad Qasim Khalid governor of Kunar and discussed the problems journalists are facing in the province. The representative of AJSC asked the governor and other provincial officials to ensure safety of journalists, access to information and freedom of expression and to address other challenges journalists are facing.

The governor promised full cooperation with journalists and added that provincial departments were entirely new and a big change has been unveiled in the departments so it may require them to wait a while getting all occurring challenges tackled.

Nangarhar: Representative of AJSC for the eastern region met with Director of Information and Culture to follow up on the promises made to journalists.

Director of Information and Culture for Nangarhar had recently promised AJSC and media officials to ensure access to information rights at all provincial departments. Spokespersons would be appointed to address access to information and local media problems and safety will be given special attention.

In this follow-up meeting, the Director of Information and Culture was acknowledged for appointing a spokesman for Nangarhar Police Headquarter. Directorate of National Security and other provincial departments were in the process of appointing spokespersons for their respective departments.

Department of Information and Culture was requested for reduction of electricity costs for media offices and stations which the Director of Information and Culture promised to share the issue with the relevant entities.

Laghman: As per the request of AJSC representative, Director of Information and Culture along with the Committee representative visited audial media stations in the province.

In order to address the problems of audial media in Laghman province, the AJSC representative and the Director of Information and Culture of Laghman province visited various audial media. Media officials shared their media-related problems including economic and broadcasting problems.

Southeast Zone:

Khost: Problems of access to information still persists seriously and the problems are more prevalent in the security agencies as well as of attorney general's provincial office.

Although no journalist has yet been subjected to violence since the new government came to power in the province, there are still fears of violating journalists' safety. The media is facing unavailability and lack of professional staff as a number of professional media workers have either left their jobs or remained unable to carry out their duties properly.

Spokespersons for the new government are unaware of media-related issues and require AJSC and other media-supporting organizations to provide special training programs.

Violence against journalists in the province is lower than in the past yet journalists are worried about their future.

Logar: The provincial Director of Information and Culture promised AJSC representative to cooperate with journalists in accessing to information and provide required facilities.

A print media (Logar Jaridi) resumed operations after a three-month interruption.

With persistent efforts of AJSC co-operation of government provincial spokespersons with the media and journalists has improved. The Director of Information and Culture for Logar Province asked AJSC representative for conducting capacity building programs for journalists and media workers.

North-east Region:

Takhar: AJSC along with a group of local journalists met Director of Information and Culture for Takhar Province and shared problems journalists are facing. The Director promised not to hesitate to cooperate with journalists.

Baghlan: Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation had traveled to Baghlan province last week. Security guards of the acting minister did not allow a correspondent from Bakhter New Agency to enter the program to report on the visit

North Region:

Balkh: Access to information has relatively improved. Journalists are invited to government meetings especially in development, economic, urban and cultural meetings. Provincial departments have not yet appointed spokespersons.

Sar-e-Pul: Journalists in Sar-e-Pul province have called for easier access to information. Journalists and civil society activists in Sar-e-Pul province met with the provincial director for information and culture and discussed on facilitation of access to information and elimination of censorship. The head of information and culture of the province termed the problems as short-lived and called on journalists and civil society activists to fulfill their responsibilities to society.

Faryab: AJSC representative in Faryab province met with the director of information and culture and asked to solve the problems of journalists and spoke on the issues of violence against journalists, economic problems of the media and unemployment of journalists and called on the provincial office to pay attention to solving these problems.

The Director of Information and Culture thanked AJSC for its cooperation in establishing coordination between the government and journalists and promised to share information with journalists in a timely manner and pay serious attention to journalists' safety.