



Afghan Journalists Safety Committee

Six Months Report (Jan - Jun 2014)



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	ii
Preface.....	iv
Violence against Journalists Now a Commonplace.....	1
Table of Violence against Journalists (January to July 2014).....	2
Working environment for foreign journalists.....	13
Impunity of the perpetrators of violence.....	13
Media and Presidential Elections.....	14
Positive Impact of media in Successful Elections.....	15
The role, impact and position of social media in the presidential elections.....	16
Social Media and Sensationalism after the second round of elections.....	17
Presidential Candidates and their Agenda for Media and Freedom of Expression.....	17
Conclusion.....	18
Recommendations.....	19

Executive Summary

Violence against Journalists in Afghanistan

The violence against journalists has gone alarmingly high in 2014 - 60% increase during the first six months of this year compared to the same time period of the last year indicates that the scope of journalistic activities is becoming increasingly limited in the country. As of the beginning of 2014 to 1.7.2014 a total 68 cases of violence against journalists have been recorded and investigated of which five murders and the rest include verbal and physical assault and different types of threats. In the first six months of 2013, only 41 cases were recorded by the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee (www.AJSC.af).

The main causes of increased violence against media workers include election atmosphere and the ensuing insecurity, the growing indifference of the government towards the safety of journalists, and impunity of the culprits. Unfortunately, currently no specific laws that make violence against journalists punishable exist in Afghanistan.

Lack of interest on the part of Afghan government in following up with the cases of violence and murder of journalists also contributes to escalation of violence against media workers. On the other hand, the fading attention of the international community to freedom of expression and media in Afghanistan has emboldened the powerful, corrupt and anti-freedom of expression elements within and outside the government to use force and violence against journalists and increase challenges ahead of freedom of expression in the country.

Killing of media workers also increased

The first murder of a journalist this year was the mysterious case of The New York Times reporter Noor Ahmad Noori in Helmand province. The sequence was followed by the death of Shahid Nayeem, who worked as a producer with Radio Nawa in Kabul. He lost his life in a targeted Taliban suicide attack while he was heading to office. The subsequent murder of Sardar Mohammad with his three family members in the five star hotel Serena in Kabul (Taliban attack) shocked the both the journalist community in Afghanistan and outside the country. Sardar Ahmad was one of the most famous and senior journalists of Afghanistan.

Nils Horner, a Swedish journalist was working on the case of attack on the Lebanese restaurant in Kabul in March, when he was shot dead by unidentified individuals in one of the safest parts of Kabul city, Wazir Akbar Khan area. In less than one month after Mr. Horner's murder, a German journalist Anja Niedringhaus, who was on a visit to Khost province to cover elections, was killed by a policeman while her colleague Kathy Gannon was seriously wounded.

Sources of threat

Of the total of 68 cases of violence against journalists during the first half of 2014, *government officials and security forces* account for 63.23% of the cases which again shows the highest rate of involvement of the government in violence and intimidation against journalists. Similarly, *unidentified individuals* account for 16.17%, the *Taliban* account for 11.76% and *local powerful figures* account for 8.82% of the cases of violence against journalists.

International journalists more targeted

The murder of the Swedish journalist Nils Horner who was killed by unidentified individuals in Kabul followed by German journalist Anja Niedringhaus's murder by policeman in Khost province raised many concerns over safety of international journalists.

The increased threat to international journalists has resulted in a diminished presence of foreign journalists in Afghanistan contributing to poor coverage of Afghanistan's issues for worldwide audiences. This is a harmful phenomenon for Afghanistan because decreased news coverage of Afghanistan will contribute to isolation of Afghanistan from international community's agenda.

Elections and media

Media outlets played a remarkable role in the 2014 elections. They covered elections with commendable maturity and considerateness and were able to provide comprehensive awareness on the importance of elections, the process and timeline as well as introduction of the candidates and their agenda. However, after the second round of elections, some media outlets began following ethnic agenda.

Insecurity and insufficient access to information were the key challenges for journalists during the elections. Difficulty of traveling to remote polling stations and centers, and the threats of powerful individuals and armed anti-government groups has made work difficult for many journalists.

Social media also played a fundamental and effective role with regards to raising awareness about elections. Social media were an important factor in encouraging the public to participate in this process. The active presence of the users of social media, who promoted participation in elections as a national obligation, had a considerable role in increasing the public turn out. However, regrettably, social media became more polarized during the run off phase and played a destructive role by ethnicization of the elections.

None of the presidential elections candidates presented a specific well-formulated plan to contribute to further growth of the freedom of expression and activities of the media in the country. None of them were heard presenting a tailored agenda supporting sustainability and improvement of media activities. This has given a straight cause to concerns over the future of freedom of speech in the country.

In the light of increasing challenges for media and journalists, Afghan Journalist Safety Committee in cooperation with media outlets and other media support organizations has increased its efforts for the protection of media workers and freedom of expression. For instance, bringing together managers of media outlets to agree on a resolution, which obliges media to adopt a conflict sensitive approach towards electoral matters after the second round of elections was a significant achievement.

Preface

2014 is considered one of the vital years for Afghanistan and the future of freedom of speech in the country. This year will mark the first peaceful transition of political power from one elected President to another, in which media is playing a key role. Meanwhile, the attitude and approach of the upcoming administration towards journalism and freedom of speech will determine the future of freedom of speech in this country.

Challenges ahead of journalists have been on the rise during this year thus increasing threats against freedom of expression in Afghanistan. Additionally, since the candidates of the presidential elections did not have a clear and meaningful agenda for freedom of speech and treated the matter more like a marginal issue, concerns have enhanced as to how this achievement can be preserved.

This is the third six-month report published by Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC), which investigates journalists' safety during the first six months of 2014. Meanwhile, the report also briefly touches upon other aspects of journalism because of their intimate connection with journalists' safety with aims to provide the readers with a broader picture of the safety matters.

It is worth mentioning that recording of cases of violence against media workers has been done based on AJSC's policies and procedures. This means AJSC uses a specific definition for journalists and media workers; hence, it does not record the cases in which the legal status of the victim does not conform to the mentioned definition.

Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) is an independent Afghan structure dedicated to enhancing safety and protection of Afghan media workers and international reporters working in Afghanistan. AJSC works under the umbrella of Afghanistan New Generation Organization.

AJSC was formed based on the recommendation of Kabul Conference on Freedom of Expression, which was organized in March 2009 by International Media Support (IMS).

AJSC has a board of advisors composed of well-known media workers and civil society activists. AJSC's executive section has official representatives in eight regions of the country and an unofficial focal point in the remaining 26 provinces. This has enabled AJSC to establish representation throughout the country and provide media workers with necessary help when needed. The services AJSC offers ranges from hotlines to advocacy for safety of journalists and freedom of expression.

Violence against Journalists Now a Commonplace

The trajectory of violence against journalists continues to ascend. In the first six months of 2014, Afghanistan witnessed the death of five journalists. Additionally, there has been a 60% increase in the level of violence compared to the first six months of the last year. This indicates that the situation is becoming worse for Afghan journalists day by day placing Afghanistan among the most dangerous countries for journalists. The 68 cases of violence against journalists during the first half of 2014 is an unprecedented record ever seen. This translates to an average of one incident per three days meaning that violence against journalists has turned to a routine now.

Such violence has victimized international journalists as well – a much less significant concern before. Two foreign journalists were killed and another two wounded during these six months.

Although the atmosphere created by the Presidential and provincial council elections was the main source of increased level of violence against journalists in the year 2014, the following factors also play a role:

Continuous impunity of the perpetrators of violence against journalists. Afghan government remains reluctant in taking action against those who commit violence and intimidation. Meanwhile the threats and violence practiced by government officials against journalists prevail which constitute the biggest concerns against journalism and freedom of expression as the biggest achievement of the past decade. Even when government officials are put under pressure after committing an act of violence, in most cases they have only presented a simple apology. However, if a certain law was in place and duly enforced in this particular area, it would have significantly helped with the mitigation of threats and violence against journalists.

Absence of any laws that make violence against journalists punishable is another factor.

Lack of awareness of government officials and security forces about the legal rights of journalists in seeking information. Many government officials including police and other security forces, who are the culprits in the majority of cases of violence against journalists, do not have the necessary awareness on how to behave with journalists. Lack of education on how to treat journalists is the main reason why so many violent confrontations occur between police and journalists.

Insufficient awareness of journalists about their professional responsibilities. A sizeable number of journalists are either unaware of journalistic code of conduct and ethics of the profession or ignore it. A number of cases of violence during this reporting period have stemmed from the fact that journalists have treated events in an unprofessional and biased manner.

All of these issues mentioned have joined hands to make journalistic activities more difficult day by day. Journalists, as the eyes and tongue of the society, need more safety to undertake their job properly. Otherwise, freedom of expression as one of the biggest achievements of the government will be seriously endangered.

Table of Violence against Journalists (January to July 2014)

A total of 68 cases of violence against journalists and three cases of murder were recorded in the first six months of 2014 showing 60% increase as compared with the first six months of the last year. During the first six months of 2013 a total of 41 cases of violence against journalists were recorded. The responsibility of these incidents is shared by three categories: Government officials and security forces are in the first category and account for the biggest number of incidents which is 63.23%. Unidentified individuals constitutes the second category who account for 16.17%, The third category is the Taliban accounting for 11.76% and fourth category powerful individuals who account for 8.82% of the cases of violence against journalists.

Table 1. Percentage of Violence against Journalists based on the sources of

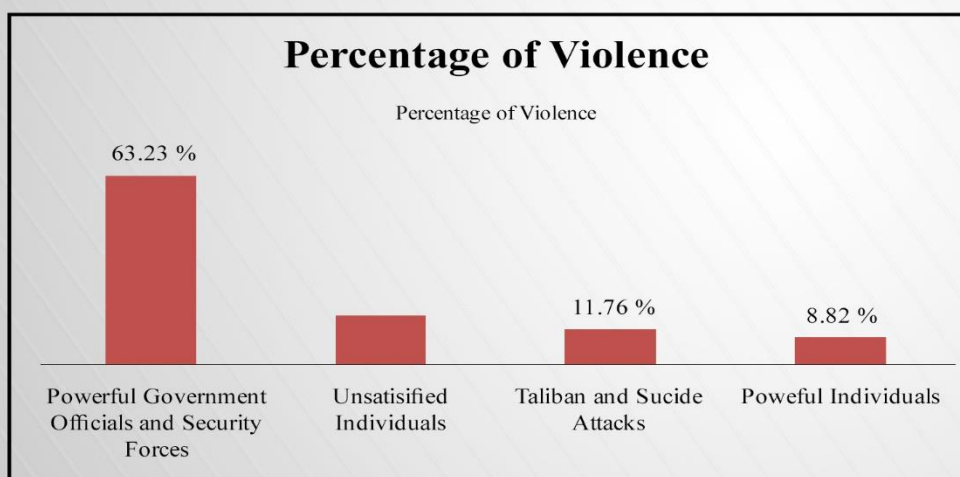
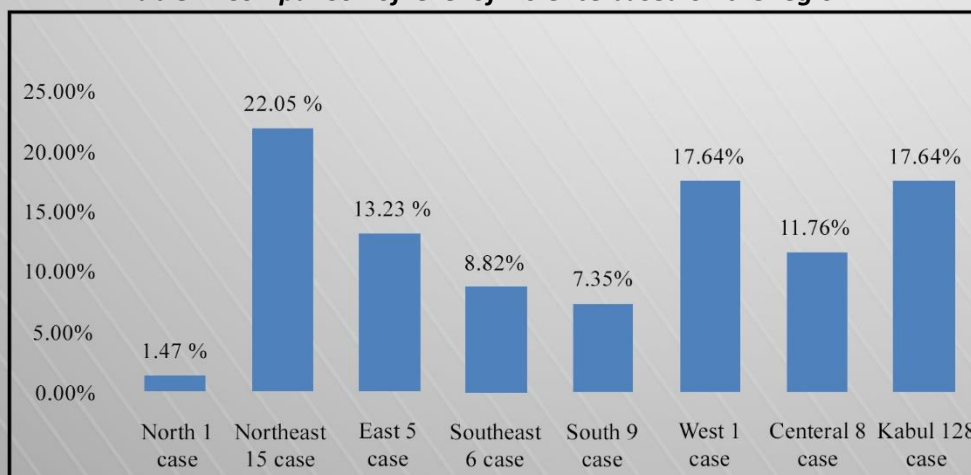


Table 2. Comparison of level of violence based on the region



NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
1.	Northeast	Nasir Ahmad Sadeq	1 TV	Cameraman	Verbal Threatening	Mohd. Momand, Director of Water and Power-Takhar	4/1/2014	Takhar	Nasir Ahmad was threatened by Director of Water and Power of Takhar Province during an interview when he asked difficult questions which infuriated the director.
2.	Northeast	Shafiqullah Poya	Khhorshid TV	Reporter	Verbal Threatening	Mohd. Momand, Director of Water and Power-Takhar	4/1/2014	Takhar	Nasir Ahmad was threatened by Director of Water and Power of Takhar Province during an interview when he asked difficult questions which infuriated the director.
3.	South	Zalmai Halimi	RTA ZABUL	Reporter	Beating	Najib Ludin, nephew of Director of Education Zabul Province	4/1/2014	Zabul	Zalmai Haleemi had aired a report on issues facing Shajoi district of Zabul Province. After airing the mentioned report, he was threatened and beaten by nephew of the provincial director of Education. However the director of education expressed unawareness.
4.	South	Mohammad Qalyar	RTA	Cameraman	Beating	Najib Ludin, nephew of Director of Education Zabul Province	4/1/2014	Zabul	Mohammad Qalyar had assisted Zalmai Halimi in preparing the report investigating problems in Shajoi district. He was also threatened and beaten by the nephew of the director of education of Zabul province. However the director of education expressed unawareness.
5.	Central Region	Latif Azizi	Khhorshid TV	Reporter	Beating	Bodyguards of, Presidential Advisor	8/1/2014	Kabul	Correspondent Latif Azizi was beaten by bodyguards of Presidential Advisor when they were videotaping traffic jam and the inappropriate behavior of police with roadside vendors. Azizi was beaten by the mentioned bodyguards when he was trying to rescue his driver from being beaten by the bodyguards.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
12.	Northeast	Ajmal Omari	Toneer TV	Reporter	Violent Behavior	National Security Officials	1/2/2014	Baghlan	Ajmal Omari, Toneer TV reporter, was verbally threatened by national security officials while he was producing a report on university admission exam.
13.	Central Region	Haroon Sekandari	Kabul News TV	Cameraman	Violent Behavior	Daud Sultanzoi, Presidential Candidate	8/2/2014	Kabul	Due to asking personal questions from Presidential Candidate Daud Sultanzoi, Haroon Sekandari, cameraman of Kabul News TV, was detained for three hours at the interview site and was released after he was threatened verbally and his tapes were erased.
14.	Southeast	Mohammad Rahman Ayaz	Gharghasht TV	Reporter	Verbal violence	Maseehullah Fazli, Deputy Director of Education, Khost Province	9/2/2014	Khost	Mohammad Rahman Ayaz, Gharghasht TV reporter, was verbally threatened because he had placed Maseehullah Fazli's quote following the quote of the first interviewer in the report.
15.	Southeast	Saber Pawzi	Gharghasht TV	Cameraman	Verbal violence	Maseehullah Fazli, Deputy Director of Education, Khost Province	9/2/2014	Khost	Saber pawzi, Gharghasht TV Cameraman, was verbally threatened because he had placed Maseehullah Fazli's quote following the quote of the first interviewer in the report.
16.	West	Safiullah Nazari	Mehr TV	Manager	Threaten to Death	Unidentified Individuals	12/2/2014	Herat	Shahpoor Saber, Ashan Radio Reporter, was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmi Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
17.	Northeast	Majid Salem	Radio Qarghan	Reporter	Verbal threatening	From an unidentified address	11/3/2014	Baghlan	Majid Saleem, reporter of Radio Qarghan, received threat by telephone from an unknown address. Although not sure, he blames a member of provincial council for this act.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
18.	West	Shahram Nazari	Azadi Radio	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Azadi Radio Reporter Shahram Nazari was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
19.	West	Farooq Faizi	VoA	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	VoA Reporter Farooq Faizi was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
20.	West	Khalil Noorzayee	Iran News Network	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Khalil Noorzayee, Reporter of Iran News Network, was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
21.	West	Shahpoor Saber	Ashna Radio	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Shahpoor Saber, Ashan Radio Reporter, was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
22.	Central Region	Naweed Noori	Kabul Pressistan	Translator & fixer	Psychological Trauma	Unidentified individuals	11/3/2014	Kabul	Naweed Noori was assigned to international journalist Nils Horner as a translator and fixer. Nils was shot dead in Wazir Akbar Khan area by unidentified individuals only two days after Naweed had worked with her. He was interrogated by police for two consecutive weeks. He has undergone a psychological trauma ever since.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
18.	West	Shahram Nazari	Azadi Radio	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Azadi Radio Reporter Shahram Nazari was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
19.	West	Farooq Faizi	VoA	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	VoA Reporter Farooq Faizi was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
20.	West	Khalil Noorzayee	Iran News Network	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Khalil Noorzayee, Reporter of Iran News Network, was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
21.	West	Shahpoor Saber	Ashna Radio	Reporter	Verbal violence & detainment	Zalmai Rasool's campaign team	11/3/2014	Herat	Shahpoor Saber, Ashan Radio Reporter, was detained for one hour after an argument with security officers while videotaping the signboard of Zalmai Rasool's campaign office in Herat province.
22.	Central Region	Naweed Noori	Kabul Pressistan	Translator & fixer	Psychological Trauma	Unidentified individuals	11/3/2014	Kabul	Naweed Noori was assigned to international journalist Nils Horner as a translator and fixer. Nils was shot dead in Wazir Akbar Khan area by unidentified individuals only two days after Naweed had worked with her. He was interrogated by police for two consecutive weeks. He has undergone a psychological trauma ever since.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
23.	Central Region	Nils Horner	Swedish Media	Reporter	Murder	Shot-dead by unidentified individuals	11/3/2014	Kabul	Swedish Correspondent Nils Horner was shot dead in Wazir Akbar Khan area, Kabul city. The motive of the act still remains unclear.
24.	Central Region	Rahmatullah Nekzad	Al-Jazeera	Reporter	Beating	Local people	19/3/2014	Ghazni	Al-Jazeera Reporter Rahmatullah Nekzad was beaten by local people for filming the victims of an explosion near Ghazni Province Security Command.
25	Central Region	Mohd. Qaseem Solamal	Azadi Radio	Reporter	Wounded	Unidentified individuals	20/3/2014	Kabul	Mohammad Qaseem Solamal was shot in both legs by two unidentified motorcyclists in district 4 of Kabul city at 7:10 pm when he got out of his car at his doorstep. As of yet, the cause of the shooting remains unclear.
26.	East	Mahmood Wakman	RTA	Reporter	Wounded	Suicide attack	20/3/2014	Nangarhar	Mahmood Wakman was wounded as a result of suicide attack on RTA building in Nangarhar province.
27.	Central Region	Hekmatullah Aryan	Radio Killid	Producer	Detainment	Security forces	25/3/2014	Ghazni	Hekmatullah Aryan was detained for 48 hours by national security officers for unknown reasons.
28.	Southeast	Anja Niedringhaus	Associated Press	Photographer	Murdered	Firing by police	4/4/2014	Khost	Anja Niedrin Ghaus, Associated Press Photo Journalist, who had travelled to Khost from Kabul for elections coverage, was shot dead by local police. The reason for the attack remains unclear.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
29.	Southeast	Kathy Gannon	Associated Press	Photographer	Wounded	Firing by police	4/4/2014	Khost	Kathy Gannon, Associated Press Photo Journalist, who had travelled to Khost from Kabul for elections coverage, was shot dead by local police. The reason for the attack remains unclear.
30.	Southeast	Neshanuddin Ahangar	Associated Press	Fixer	Psychological Trauma	Police	4/4/2014	Khost	Due to murder and injury of his two colleagues, Neshanuddin has been psychologically traumatized.
31.	West	Khalil Rasooly	Saaqi TV	Reporter	Verbal violence	Police	5/4/2014		Khalil Rasooly was trying to obtain interviews and pictures from voters in a polling station but he was affronted by police and expelled from the polling station.
32.	East	Ahmad Naseery	Chakad TV	Reporter	Verbal violence	Police	5/4/2014	Herat	Ahmad Naseery was trying to obtain interviews and pictures from voters in a polling station but he was affronted by police and expelled from the polling station.
33.	East	Mahboob Shah	Pajhwok Afghan News	Reporter	Beating	ANA	5/4/2014	Nengarhar	Mahboob Shah along with his cameraman Babrak were visiting a polling station for elections coverage in Lalpoor district where the ANA forces stopped and beat them and broke their cameras after a verbal clash.
34.	East	Babrak Amirzada	Pajhwok Afghan News	Cameraman	Beating	ANA	5/4/2014	Nengarhar	Babrak Amirzada was visiting a polling Station for elections coverage in Lalpoor district where the ANA forces stopped and beat them and broke their cameras after a verbal clash.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
35.	Central Region	Tamim Hamid	1 TV	Reporter	Attempt to kidnap	Unidentified Individuals	6/4/2014	Khost	Kathy Gannon, Associated Press Photo Journalist, who had travelled to Khost from Kabul for elections coverage, was shot dead by local police. The reason for the attack remains unclear.
36.	West	Hassan Hakimi	Pajhwok	Reporter	Beating	Public Order Police	10/4/2014	Ghor	Hassan Hakimi was beaten by police while he was covering a public protest
37.	West	Alauddin Mohammadi	Ghor RTA	Reporter	Beating	Public Order Police	10/4/2014	Ghor	Allauddin Mohammadi was beaten by police while he was covering a public protest.
38.	West	Naqibullah Amini	RTA	Reporter	Beating	Public Order Police	10/4/2014	Ghor	Naqibullah Amini was beaten by police while he was covering a public protest.
39.	West	Abdul Qadeer Ghafoori	Journalists' Union	Reporter	Beating	Public Order Police	10/4/2014	Ghor	Abdul Qadeer Ghafoori was beaten by police while he was covering a public protest.
40.	West	Wazir Noorani	Roz Monthly	Reporter	Beating	Public Order Police	10/4/2014	Ghor	Wazir Noorani was beaten by police while he was covering a public protest.
41.	West	Mohammad Ahmadi	Saaqi TV	Cameraman	Beating	An old man	12/4/2014	Herat	Mohammad Ahmadi and Atefa Ghafoori were taking an interview while they were attacked by an old man who then Apologized.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details.
42.	East	Ziyar Khan Yaad	Jhwandoon TV	Reporter	Beating	Public police Order	13/4/2014	Herat	Ziyar Khan was heading to a youth gathering in youth directorate when public order police asked for his ID and after an argument they beat him up.
43.	Northeast	Gul Rahim Niazman	Ashna TV	Reporter	Threaten to Death	Probably by a Taliban from Dasht Archi district of Kunduz province	18/4/2014	Kunduz	Gul Rahim was threatened for allegedly airing biased reports and not including Taliban's views as well as censoring the reports that benefit the Taliban.
44.	Central Region	Akbar Rostami	8 AM Daily	Reporter	Beating	Traffic Police	23/4/2014		Akbar Rostami was producing a story on driving license issuance and brokers' role in traffic police department when the officials noticed that he was a journalist. They behaved harshly with him and two officers even beat him and take him to a room for interrogation. After he contacted his employer as well as Ministry of Interior, he was released after 45 minutes and the deputy traffic police director apologized to him.
45.	Central Region	Ahmad Behzad	Deutschewelle	Reporter	Verbal threatening	Ali Yawar Seerat	11/5/2014	Bamian	Deutsche Welle Correspondent was beaten by Chancellor of Bamian University after he published a report on corruption in the mentioned university. He says has also been threatened by telephone several times due to this report.
46.	Central Region	Saifullah Maftoon	Pajhwok	Reporter	Violent Behavior	Police	13/5/2014	Ghazni	Saifullah Maftoon, along with a few other journalists, was taking pictures and clips of the wounded of an explosion in an hospital when police confronted him dropped him out of the hospital.
47.	Central Region	Abdul Malik Asem	Kabul News TV	Reporter	Violent Behavior	Daud Sultanzoi, Presidential Candidate	8/2/2014	Kabul	Due to asking personal questions from Presidential Candidate Daud Sultanzoi, Abdul Malik Asem, cameraman of Kabul News TV, was detained for three hours at the interview site and was released after he was threatened verbally and his tapes were erased.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
48	Central region	Kamran Alokozay	Rana	Reporter	Violent behavior	Police	13/5/2014	Ghazni	Kamran Alokozay, along with a few other journalists, was taking pictures and clips of the wounded of an explosion in an hospital when police confronted him dropped him out of the hospital
49	Central region	Rahmatullah Marjankhel	Rana	Cameraman	Violent behavior	Police	13/5/2014	Ghazni	Rahmatullah Marjankhel, along with a few other journalists, was taking pictures and clips of the wounded of an explosion in an hospital when police confronted him dropped him out of the hospital
50	Northeast	Abdul Basir Haqjo	Radio Amo	Manager	Violent behavior	Governor's bodyguard	20/5/2014	Badakhshan	Abdul Basir Haqjo was barred by governor's bodyguard from entering the governor's office where a press conference was about to start. The bodyguard also used abusive language.
51	South	Alauddin	Associated Press	Reporter	Verbal Violence	PD 3 police, Kandahar	25/5/2014	Kandahar	Alauddin along with a few more reporters was producing a report at an explosion site where head of police district office was also killed, but he was not allowed to prepare the report and face verbal violence and threatening by police.
52	South	Abdul Manan Arghand	Kabul News	Reporter	Verbal Violence	PD 3 police, Kandahar	25/5/2014	Kandahar	Abdul Manan Arghand along with a few more reporters was producing a report at an explosion site where head of police district office was also killed, but he was not allowed to prepare the report and face verbal violence and threatening by police.
53	South	Sediqullah Alizai	Pajhwok	Reporter	Verbal Violence	PD 3 police, Kandahar	25/5/2014	Kandahar	Sediqullah Alizai along with a few more reporters was producing a report at an explosion site where head of police district office was also killed, but he was not allowed to prepare the report and face verbal violence and threatening by police.
54	South	Ahmad Ludin	Shamshad TV	Reporter	Verbal Violence	PD 3 police, Kandahar	25/5/2014	Kandahar	Ahamad Ludin along with a few more reporters was producing a report at an explosion site where head of police district office was also killed, but he was not allowed to prepare the report and face verbal violence and threatening by police.

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
55	North	Ghulam Hussain Nadeem	Radio Bayan North	Reporter	Threaten to death	Manager of Radio Hafeez Majidi	25/5/2014	Balkh	Ghulam Hussain Nadeem worked with Radio Bayan North, a radio funded by foreign troops, for seven years. Recently he was terminated without cause and when he asked about the reason of his termination the Afghan manager of the radio, Hafeez Majidi, threatened him to death.
56	Northeast	Nasir Ahamd Waqef	Al-Jazeera	Reporter	Verbal violence	Qand Agha, Deputy Director of PD2	26/5/2014	Kunduz	Nasir Ahmad was taking pictures of an explosion that had occurred near Kunduz city when the deputy director of PD2 threatened and prevented him.
57	Northeast	Ajmal Kakar	Pajhwok	Reporter	Verbal violence	Qand Agha, Deputy Director of PD2	26/5/2014	Kunduz	Ajmal Kakar was taking pictures of an explosion that had occurred near Kunduz city when the deputy director of PD2 behaved violently with him
58	Northeast	Folad Hamdard	Associated Press	Reporter	Verbal violence	Qand Agha, Deputy Director of PD2	26/5/2014	Kunduz	Folad Hamdard was taking pictures of an explosion that had occurred near Kunduz city when the deputy director of PD2 threatened and prevented him.
59	Central region	Mujtaba	Khorshid TV	Reporter	Wounded	Suicide attack	6/6/2014	Kabul	Mujtaba was wounded in the suicide attack on Presidential Candidate Abdullah Abdullah's convoy
60	Central region	Sayed Shafi	Khorshid TV	Cameraman	wounded	Suicide attack	6/6/2014	Kabul	Sayed Shafi was wounded in the suicide attack on Presidential Candidate Abdullah Abdullah's convoy
61	Central region	Majid Sayeedi	Freelance	Photographer	wounded	Suicide attack	6/6/2014	Kabul	Majid Sayeedi was wounded in the suicide attack on Presidential Candidate Abdullah Abdullah's convoy

NO.	Region	Name	Media	Designation	Type of Violence	Culprits	Date	Province	Details
62	Northeast	Abdul Wadood Wahedi	Radio Bayan Shamal	Reporter	Threatened to death	Taliban	10/6/2014	Kabul	Abdul Wadood Wahedi aired several reports featuring the Taliban's defeat and loss of many combatants. Hence he was threatened on phone from unknown unbers by the Taliban to death for airing such reports.
63	South	Nisar Ahmad Tapand	Radio Yawwalai	Reporter	Beating	Ansari, commander of Public Order Police	10/6/2014	Zabul	Nisar Ahmad was reporting football games. The commander's favorite team lost the game. Nisar was filming the happy moments of the winning team. This added to the commender's anger who beat Nisar and broke his camera. However, the commander says he dos not have any problem with Nisar.
64	Central region	Jamshid Habibi	Pajhwok	Reporter	Violent behavior	Governor of Wardak	14/6/2014	Wardak	Jamshid Habibi asked the security chief a question on police' role in elections in a press conference where the governor's spokesman interfered and threatened the journalist and behaved violently with him.
65	East	Jamshid Malikzai	Radio Killid	Reporter	Violent behavior	Irresponsible individuals	14/6/2014	Nangarhar	Jamshid Malikzai was collecting information on voting process in Dara-e-Noor district when a commaneder of irresponsible armed individuals seized his technical equipment including camera and tape recorder and threatened him with violent words.
66	Northeast	Bashir Ahmad Ghezali	Radio Azadi	Reporter	Threaten to death	Irresponsible armed individuals	16/6/2014	Baghlan	Bashir Ahmad Ghezali had aired a report on kidnapping of a young girl. The kidnappers, who were arrested following the release of the report, threatened him.
67	South	Khalid Haidari	Benawa website	Chief Editor	Detainment	National security officers	17/6/2012	Kandahar	Khalid Haidari is currently living in the U.S. He was departing for Kabul but in Kandahar airport he was arrested by national security officers at the order of Toorialai Weesa the governor of Kandahar province. Kandahar governor's spokesman said to AJSC representative in the south that this action was taken in response to the reports published in Benawa website about Kandahar governor.
68	Southeast	Ali Mohammad Nazari	Pajhwok Afghan News	Reporter	Threaten to death	Taliban district chief	22/6/2014	Paktika	Ali Mohammad Nazari was threatened to death by the Taliban's district chief because he had published a report commenting that the elections went well.

Working environment for foreign journalists

The murder of the Swedish journalist, Nils Horner by unidentified gunmen in Kabul in March 2014, and the German photo journalist, Anja Niedringhaus as well as the injury of AP reporter Kathy Gannon a month after in Khost province raised alarm about the safety of foreign journalists in Afghanistan. Both of the cases were not properly investigated by the Afghan government so that the motives behind these killings become clear.

Coverage of election events in 2014 is of significant importance. However, violence against foreign journalists has led to the reduction of presence of international journalists in the country.

Kidnapping is another risk for foreign journalists working in Afghanistan. International journalists stationed in Kabul have reduced their travels from the center to the provinces and rural areas and even do not want to appear on the streets of the cities. Whereas in the past there was the certainty that as journalists they had little fear of someone harming them because of their being foreign.

What is the negative impact of this phenomenon on Afghanistan?

Since most foreign journalists, because of having better skills and experiences and less vulnerability to be prosecuted by the government, resort to producing compelling investigative reports, their active presence in the media sphere of Afghanistan can be a great help to Afghan media in terms of breaking controversial stories. These stories are then followed by the Afghan media—a highly important interaction in the endeavor to inform the public about important happenings.

Any decline in the publication and release of such reports by foreign media will particularly have an adverse effect on the revelation of important issues such as corruption, obstinate actions and behaviors, and security matters among others.

On the other hand, decline in the presence of foreign journalists will drop Afghanistan off of the global agenda—a phenomenon that is highly needed until Afghanistan achieves sufficient stability and until Afghanistan's achievements of the past decade become solid and irreversible.

Impunity of the perpetrators of violence

One of the main reasons behind increased violence against journalists is the existence of impunity for perpetrators of violence and intimidation. In recent years, hundreds of cases of violence against journalists have been recorded and so far even a handful of cases haven't been investigated, and worse than anything is the fact that most of the perpetrators of violence against journalists have been government workers, particularly those working with the security agencies.

Many experts consider lack of rule of law and lack of political will on the part of the Afghan government to protect journalists and freedom of expression as the major contributors to impunity. Excessive

negligence of the Ministry of Information and Culture, which is the only government body in charge of creating a friendly and safe working environment for journalists and its reluctance in following cases related to the violence and murder of journalist has also turned the situation more conducive to expansion of impunity.

So far there is no evidence that proves that the Ministry of Information and Culture worked with other government agencies in following even one case of violence against journalists or followed the prosecution of perpetrators to obtain results. Even the Ministry hasn't shown a reaction at the level of denunciation of a crime against journalists.

The Ministry's Media Violation Investigation Commission, which was founded to address media violations handles such cases based on the commission members' political taste rather than following their actual mandate which is to serve as an oversight and regulatory body for the practice of journalism.

On the other hand, declining attention of the international community to freedom of expression and media in Afghanistan has created the opportunity for the adversaries of freedom of expression to exploit the situation and ratchet up their efforts to restrict the space for media and media workers.

Media and Presidential Elections

Afghan media played a remarkable role in informing and encouraging the public to take part in the elections. They began roundtable debates about elections almost at the beginning of 2013. The extensive coverage of election related issues had an important impact in engaging Afghans with electoral issues thus increasing enthusiasm to take part in the process.

Additionally media outlets' efforts to revolve electoral discussions around agendas rather than personalities forming the teams compelled prominent presidential candidates to develop electoral platforms—a phenomenon that did not exist in the country's previous elections.

Most media outlets' coverage of the Election Day in both rounds of elections was admirable. Most outlets strived to strike an equal balance between positive happenings and negative incidents. For instance, an explosion in a certain part of the country during Election Day was not treated as breaking news so that people are not frightened of going to polls.

However, some media organizations were also accused of violating professional principles and standards for supporting certain candidates in their coverage of election issues and following ethnic agendas. This was particularly noticeable during the second round of elections mainly because the society was to a large extent divided along ethnic lines and this was unconsciously influencing the work of journalists.

In order to bring into attention of media workers the importance of media's role in a fragmented society, Afghan Journalists Safety Committee with the help of some other media support groups organized a series of gatherings with the editors of media outlets to prompt media managers to treat the matter with utmost sensitivity and caution. As a result of four gatherings, the working group developed and approved a resolution consisting of 11 articles which entailed all aspects of work related to covering of election issues. This was one of the major actions of the media community and it was

widely welcomed outside Afghanistan and even such a model was recommended for other countries that are experiencing election related tensions.

The following link contains information about the names of the media outlets and the types of misconduct committed by media outlets during the coverage of elections. It has been compiled by the Media Commission of the Elections Commission which is mandated to monitor the conduct of media during the elections.

http://iec.org.af/pdf/mediacommission/reports/mmpa_weekly_report_05-04-2014_dari.pdf

Media programs were increasing as the Election Day approached, particularly the electronic media in a way dedicated most of their broadcasting time to elections.

Media Positive Impact of Media in Successful Elections

Media outlets, as part of their awareness raising endeavor, provided sufficient information about the importance of elections, the way the election process was organized, election timeframe and identification of candidates and their agendas.

Rahim Nahimi, the spokesperson for the Fair and Free Election Foundation (FEFA), a local election watchdog organization said in an interview with the Safety Committee, "It was the media that encouraged people to take part in large scale in both rounds of elections and also revealed issues related to election fraud. He applauded the important role media and media workers played in the success of both rounds of elections.

One special successful feature of covering elections was presidential debates where candidates presented their agenda for important issues of the country and debated each other's platforms. Most of these programs embodied high standards of content and production comparable to such programs produced by the Western media.

- Media displayed significant maturity in covering elections by dedicating most of their airtime to the process. The efforts of both journalists and their media organizations for innovation and creativity in developing programs is admirable.
- Live coverage of the campaigns of candidates in different parts of the country was a progress compared to previous elections.
- Broadcasting different election campaign plans and programs in an equal way and maintaining their neutrality compared to elections in the previous years.
- Live national broadcast on Election Day from all the provinces as well as live coverage of discussions in the center was another important feature.

Despite all achievements, journalists and media also faced some challenges.

Wali Arian who works with 1TV as a reporter says, the reports and media have played a very important role in the election process, however, in many provinces the Independent Election Commission provincial offices did not provide sufficient information to journalists but in the polling stations where the journalist themselves were present, they were able to report every moment. He considers insecurity

and lack of sufficient information for the journalists as the main challenge ahead of their work in covering elections.

For example, during the first round of elections on the 5th of April, Mr. Babrak Amirzada, Pajhwak news agency reporter together with Mahbob Shah the photographer of the said agency, travelled to Lalapor district in order to report from a polling station, however, the Afghan National Army soldiers didn't allow them to report and after a tense argument their cameras were broken and they were beaten by the those forces.

Also, during the runoff, Radio Kellid journalist in Nangarhar, Mr. Jamshid Malikzai faced verbal assault in the Dar –e- Noor district and after a few hours of delay he was not allowed to prepare his report.

He added that the militia of a local commander who was supporting a particular candidate didn't allow him to collect information about the polling in this district. Lack of permission to some journalists to report from polling stations, particularly from women polling stations as well as insecurity, were other challenges that the journalists faced during the Election Day.

In general, compared to the concerns that existed regarding the situation of journalists during the Election Day, journalists did not face many challenges and they managed to do their work to a large extent in an appropriate manner.

The role, impact and position of social media in the presidential elections

Apart from traditional media, Social Media also played a prominent role in the success of the presidential elections. By extensively debating issues related to the process, the candidates' agenda, Social Media, particularly Facebook, did its part in raising the bar for all candidates to offer better platforms and elevating the voters' expectation and criteria for supporting candidates.

What was most important among all was Social Media users' consistent efforts in associating elections with national pride and voting with national duty of citizens. This had a big role in raising turn out in the elections.

The candidates and their campaign teams also extensively used social media to reach out to their target audiences. As a matter of fact, Social Media became an important component of campaigning for most of the candidates.

Despite the fact that the social media is new in Afghanistan and the number of its users is limited because of the availability of Internet, in the last few years the social media have played a very effective role in revealing controversial happenings.

What was of paramount importance in this elections was the Social Media's growing role in setting agenda for the traditional media. Traditional media had to pick any electoral issues that were widely discussed in the Social Media.

With the beginning of the election process, dozens of pages were created under the names of the campaign teams of presidential and provincial council candidates.

Social Media and Sensationalism after the second round of elections

Some social media users in Afghanistan especially after run off controversies have been engaging in sensationalists debates and incite hatred about the opponent candidates and their camps.

Accusations, defamation, abusive words, posting photo shopped and insulting pictures and usage of vulgar language, which incited numerous hatred, were some features of the practice. Most of the users in their statements and writings failed to observe the social norms of a human society and the sensitivities that exist in the Afghan society. Such behavior did play a role in increasing the gap between the ethnic groups in the country and in eroding the trust that emerged between different sects of the society in the past decade.

The issue became so concerning that the Afghan government began to debate closing Facebook in Afghanistan. Although, the government's debate was aimed at reducing the level of tensions on Social Media, it did not have much impact on Facebook users.

Presidential Candidates and their Agenda for Media and Freedom of Expression

Considering the fact that media and freedom of expression are the biggest achievement of Afghanistan in the past decade, many expected the presidential elections candidates to present a clear and meaningful agenda for protecting these gains and expanding them. However, none of the candidates presented any solid agenda about the protection of these gains and promotion of freedom of expression—a disheartening phenomenon to many, particularly media community and civil society activists.

Lack of comprehensive plans for freedom of expression and media in the presidential candidates' programs could be attributed to their view of the freedom of expression as a cultural debate within the framework of the government, and since security, politics and economy were the hot topics, debates surrounding media and freedom of expression were marginalized.

Lack of attention about media and freedom of expression on the part of candidates has risen concerns about the future of these gains in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

- 2014 is considered as one of the most dangerous years for journalists and journalism community in Afghanistan. Serious and meaningful measures are needed to reverse the trend.
- Growing culture of impunity for perpetrators of violence against media workers in 2014 has led to the continuation of violence against journalists and lack fear of punishment among the perpetrators. This shows that violence against journalists will continue to uptrend unless effective and meaningful measures are taken to reduce violence.
- Despite the violence, Afghan media have demonstrated special merit in covering one of the most important prerequisites of democracy (2014 elections), which is a very strong proof for the maturity of the Afghan media. From the beginning of election campaign process until the run off, majority of journalists and media outlets impartially, timely and comprehensively covered all election events to inform the public about the process. Social Media also played a significant role in engaging citizens with electoral matters and associating the process with national pride. However, after the second round of elections, social media and some media outlets played a more destructive role than constructive.
- Lack of plans for the protection and expansion of free speech and media by the presidential candidates is a concern towards preserving these gains in Afghanistan.

Recommendations

1. The escalation of violence against journalists by 60 % indicates and the government's indifference shows reluctance of the government for the freedom of expression and the right for access to information. Government of Afghanistan should adopt necessary measures in this regard as safety of journalists is the prerequisite to freedom of expression and free flow of information. Enshrining necessary provisions in the law to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of violence in Afghanistan should be among the priorities of government of Afghanistan in future.
2. Lack of awareness about the treatment of journalists by the employees of the security agencies has led to the enhancement of violence against journalists, as personnel of security agencies is responsible for a bulk of cases of violence against journalists. In order to prevent the escalation of violence, the security agencies should include the correct treatment of the journalist in their educational and training curriculums and train their forces on how to behave with the journalists and media.
3. In addition to perpetrators of violence in the security agencies, lack of professionalism among journalists is also one of the factors of violence against them. Media organizations should launch programs for increasing the professional quality of their journalists' and arrange training on ethics of journalism for their staff.
4. Mass and social media played the most important role in informing the public about the election process and creating the medium to transmit the presidential candidates programs to the public. Each one of the two leading presidential election candidates should give written commitments to the journalist community that they will be supporting the freedom of expression, safety of journalists and media in Afghanistan.
5. The international community should take up a firm position with regards to protection and supporting of the freedom of expression and strive to incorporate this achievement as an element in all political agreements and treaties with Afghanistan. Since the international community is funding major part of the Afghan government expenditures, therefore, this leverage can be used to put pressure on Afghan government for more protection of the journalists in Afghanistan. Additionally, the international media support organizations should strive for better coordination in their attempts to supporting media. Lack of necessary coordination will reduce the positive impact of their work.
6. The future government should adopt necessary and practical measures to maintain the freedom of expression, safe working environment for journalists and professional capacity building .Freedom of expression is one of the biggest achievement of the Afghan government in the last decade the future government should make serious and meaningful efforts in this regard.