

## Media Weekly Review

With 45 days passed of the Taliban government and their promises on protection of freedom of speech and media safety, still the journalists and media are facing serious problems including limited access to information, threats and violence of physical and psychological nature.

### Violence Against Media Workers

During the past week, the Afghanistan media society lost one of its members, Sayed Maroof Sadat, an afghan journalist who was shot dead in Jalalabad city by unknown gunmen. The perpetrators of his killing have not been arrested so far and the local officials haven't stated anything about his murder.

### Media Reporting Quality

Due to the closure of more than 70% of media outlets in the country and also fleeing of dozens of journalists and media workers from Afghanistan, media reporting quality has reached to its lowest level in the last 20 years. Development of this situation toward positive or negative direction depends upon a number of factors such as international assistance, economic situation and IEA's commitments towards the media including media safety and legislation.

### Media Outlook

- **Economic challenges:** After the collapse of the previous government and disruption of banking and financial system in the country, majority of media outlets have encountered problems that have compelled them to either furlough many media workers or the media workers themselves have left their jobs.
- **Management & Capacity Problems:** After fleeing of dozens of media managers and journalists from the country, the existing gap affected the management and production quality of the majority of media outlets.

### Cases:

- **Stopping of broadcast of (Khyber Nawescht) radio due to its Building Capturing in Laghman Province:** The Taliban have captured the Radio Khyber Nawescht building and using it as a military base. This has caused the broadcast of the radio to stop since the fall of the province to the Taliban to this moment. The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee staff member says that this issues has been discussed with the Director of Information & Culture and the Governor of Laghman province for several times but so far no action has been taken by the IEA local authorities.
- **Closure of Tanweer TV and Radio Arezo-ha in Baghlan Province:** Activities of these media outlets, subsidiaries of Tanweer Group, were siezed after the Taliban ordered them to stop broadcasting because the land and the building have been used illegally by the current land owner. The office building of Tanweer Group has been built ten years ago with the permit of former head of Baghlan provincial council. The land was initially a property of state textile company. Totally, this building housed for media outlets: Tanweer TV, Radio Arezo-ha, Radio Sana and Selsela Weekly.
- **A group of Armed men enters the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee Office:** Last week, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, a group of armed men who introduced themselves as the Taliban intelligence officials, entered the premise of the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee office. They quickly left after searching the office compound and inspection of AJSC's vehicles. AJSC contacted the

Ministry of Interior immediately after the incident. Officials at Ministry confirmed the identity of the armed men and explained that it was a misunderstanding.

## Access to Information

It has been around two months that the new government is in place but, the access to information issue is facing challenges. This issue is more obvious in the provinces than the capital Kabul. However, in a meeting held between the AJSC and the Ministry of Interior of IEA, the officials promised that after fixing of some internal problems, the provincial offices will be able to provide more access to information for journalists and they will remove current limitations on access to information.

- **Banning of journalists from news coverage:** Last Sunday-night on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, IEA forces conducted an operation on an ISIS house in Kabul. IEA announced the end of their operation in the last hours of that night; and the next morning, the reporters arrived at the scene for coverage. After spending about ten hours at the premise, they were not allowed to shoot or conduct interviews.
- **Banning IEA Officials from Talking to the media:** IEA provincial officials of Information & Culture departments of Herat and Kandahar issued orders to the rest of government officials asking them to avoid talking to the media. According to this order, if needed, media can contact the provincial directorates of Information & Culture for interviews etc. In a number of provinces, the Taliban have asked the journalists to share their prepared reports with the provincial directorates of Information & Culture before publishing.
- **Banning of journalists from coverage of a protest gathering:** During last week, the doctors at the Public Health Directorate of Balkh province organized a gathering to protest against the kidnapping of a doctor. Although the media was officially invited to cover the gathering but the Taliban didn't allow media to cover the event.

## Afghan Journalists Safety Committee Advocacy

- **Release of a Radio Manager from Detention:** Mr. Zia Rahman Farooqi was released from detention after AJSC repeated requests from IEA. Last week, Mr. Farooqi, the manager of Radio Speenghar was released from detention after several follow-ups by AJSC provincial coordinator and AJSC's continuous contacts with the officials at the Ministry of Interior in Kabul. Zia Rahman was arrested by the Taliban in Nangrahar province on the suspicion of links with ISIS.
- **Release of a Freelance Journalist, Murtaza Samadi:** A freelance reporter was released after several advocacies of the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee. Mr. Samadi was arrested on September 7/2021 accused of organizing a protest and provocation of people in Herat province. The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee met with the officials of the Ministry of Interior (Moi) and requested the release of him and the Moi officials agreed and released Murtaza Samadi.

## Positive News

With all the current issues and problems, the IEA specially the Ministry of Information & Culture at least say that they have not put any limitations towards the media nor they have any intention to do so. During multiple meetings held between the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee and the IEA media affairs officials, they pledged that the journalists should contact them in case of any threat and access to information issues and they will sort out the problem.