

Media Weekly Review/Week 3rd, October

In this week, most complaints of media and journalists were about financial constraints, limitations on access to information by the government and severe self-censorship. In many provinces, the departments of Culture & Information have been assigned by the government as the only source of information sharing. However, these addresses only share information of their own choice with the media and most of the time, keeping silent about incidents and social problems.

Media and Journalists Situation

During the last week, a total of 18 cases of violence and threats against journalists have been registered and reviewed by the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee.

- In Ghazni province, Mr. Wakil Ashrafi, the spokesperson of national TV was teased and insulted in a public meeting by the Taliban at the Directorate of Culture and Information of Ghazni.
- A reporter of Ayena TV, Mr. Jamal Kamalzada was beaten by the Taliban while covering a news event at Shahr-e Naw area of Kabul city.
- Khaibar Nawasht radio station building and offices have still been seized by the Taliban since the fall of Laghman province. The Taliban still occupy their building and because of this, they cannot start their broadcasting. The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee at the provincial and central levels continued its advocacy to free the office building of the Radio back to its owner but so far, there has not been any substantial progress.
- There were two radio stations in Nooristan province but they stopped their activities due to financial constraints and now there is no active radio in Nooristan province.
- A radio station called Sadai Sarhad was closed in Ghor province.
- In Farah province, two journalists were threatened. One of them was the journalist of Urooj Radio that because of a report that he prepared, was criticized by the Taliban and the second journalist was the owner of Radio Neshaat that he had broadcasted music during his program and because of this, he was summoned to the Directorate of Culture and Information and was investigated by the Taliban.
- A journalist from Kunduz province was relocated to Kabul due to threats against him in his home province.

Economic Problems

Due to financial constraints, many media houses especially in the provinces have stopped their activities and a number of other media outlets are on the verge of seizing their operations.

- The representative of media workers in Faryab province says that if financial problems continues, they will be compelled to close their media stations.
- In a number of provinces like Farah, due to financial problems, a media house has decreased its number of employees and those employees who have remained also work with much less salaries than before.

Censorship

- The representative of media workers in Faryab province says that after the Taliban took control of the province, they do not allow live broadcasting of any programs. They also say that based on the recommendations of the ruling officials, the media should only broadcast Islamic chants and songs. Broadcasting any music is not allowed.
- The journalists in Herat provinces have been told that if they want to interview any government official, they should inform the Directorate of Information & Culture first.
- In Nimrooz province, in radio programs, the guests or the participants of radio talk shows, should be approved by the IEA officials in advance, in order to be able to participate in the program.
- In Ghor province the journalists have to share their reports, even if it is security updates at the province level, with the Director of Information & Culture for approval. Broadcasting music is totally banned and radio stations have to broadcast Islamic songs and chants during breaks.

Access to Information

It is interesting that in a number of provinces like Badghis, the officials of Islamic Emirate do not interfere in media activities nor they support any media. On the other hand, in some provinces they have imposed many limitations against the journalists.

Women Media Workers Situation

The Taliban have no clear policy on work conditions of women media workers in Herat province and they say that in the future they will decide on this issue. In Badghis province when the issue of allowing women media workers was brought up with the IEA provincial officials, they are told “that for now, it is better for women media workers to stay at home”.

Positive developments:

- In Herat province, a radio station called Meraaj has restarted its activities. Its TV channel also started broadcasting for a few hours but then stopped.
- In Badghis province, two radio stations restarted its activities.
- In Nimrooz province, Barna TV and Radio, Radio Doost, Radio Voice of Sistan and National Radio & Television resumed their activities.
- In Kunduz province, a private media outlet (Oranoos TV) has restarted its activities.

Including the financial problem, self-censorship, limitations on access to information and lack of clear guidelines on what types of freedoms the journalists can have, what mechanisms have been prepared for their safe conduct of activities and how to share the information with the journalists in fast and accurate manner and dozens other issues- are the reasons that have challenged the activities of media workers in the country.