



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JACQUELINE PARK
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director
ELISABETH COSTA
General Secretary

4 September, 2014

Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri,
Founding Leader,
Pakistan Awami Tehreek,
365 M, Model Town Lahore, Pakistan

Dear Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri,

RE: Concern on media rights and journalists' safety

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to condemn and express our concerns over incidents of violence against journalists and media houses during the ongoing political demonstration.

The IFJ represents more than 600,000 media workers in 131 countries, including our affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ).

On a number of occasions, your supporters have shown intolerance towards the media and have attacked journalists and media workers. The IFJ is seriously concerned by these attacks and condemns the violence used against journalists who are just doing their job.

On September 1, over 800 PAT and PTI protesters stormed the Pakistan TV building in the early afternoon, holding a number of staff hostage and forcing management to shut down the transmission of PTV News and PTV World. They also stole weapons from security guards manning the building and damaged a number of PTV vehicles. There have also been reports of violence and manhandling against PTV staff.

On August 30, anti-government demonstrators attacked the office of Pakistan's leading TV channel Geo News in Islamabad. Protesters were on a march toward the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's House, when the crowd of angry demonstrators gathered outside the Geo News office, pelting it with stones. Some stick-wielding protestors reportedly also attacked the satellite van of Geo News as the staff in the building struggled to escape. No one was hurt in the incident but the building was damaged in the onslaught.

Similarly, a Geo TV journalist was forced to leave the venue of a sit-in protest after he was abused and his microphone was snatched away. On August 15, journalists and media workers were forced to lock themselves in the Digital Satellite News Gathering van after PTI/PAT cadres started kicking on the van and called for them to leave immediately. The following day, journalists were again attacked and forced to flee the rally venue.

We all know that Pakistan is one of the most dangerous countries for media and the journalists are fulfilling their responsibility under a hostile working condition and safety situation. At the time, when they have to bear the attacks from unknown groups, it is extremely worrying that even responsible political parties and the state's security agencies assault media and journalists.



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As political parties aspiring for democratic rule in Pakistan, your commitment to democratic values, human rights, and the freedom of expression should be unconditional and demonstrative. To ensure your commitment to democracy, the IFJ respectfully encourages you to:

- Immediately offer unconditional public apology to all journalists and media workers attacked and manhandled by your cadres;
- Immediately stop attacking media and media persons; and urge your cadres not to attack media and media persons;
- Express your commitment towards media rights, freedom of expression and respect to opposition voices;
- Probe all cases of assault on journalists and media houses and bring their attackers to justice

I strongly advise that the democratic system of Pakistan will further worsen if the attacks on media continues and responsible political parties like PTI and PAT, and responsible leaders like you continue to create hostile situation for media.

Let me take this opportunity to remind you that democracy can't prosper without vibrant media giving platform to pluralistic opinions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jim Boumelha', is written over a horizontal line.

Jim Boumelha
President
International Federation of Journalists