



31 October, 2014

Muhammad Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister of the Islamic State of Pakistan
Islamabad, Pakistan

CC: Mr Masood Khan – Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Pakistan
Mr Abdul H.A. Hakeem – Officer-in-Charge at UNESCO Islamabad
Mr Timo Pakkala – Resident Coordinator of United Nations, Pakistan

RE: Combating growing impunity against journalists in Pakistan

Dear Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif,

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its global affiliates including the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) intend to bring your attention to the very serious issues of impunity against the working journalists in Pakistan ahead of the UN International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists on Sunday, November 2.

Over the past decade, Pakistan has consistently been ranked one of the most dangerous places on the planet to practice journalism. Wanton targeting of journalists, including verbal and written threats, physical attacks, kidnappings and killings have been alarmingly high in Pakistan.

Nearly 60 have been killed in the last six years and more than 100 since 2000. In 2014, nine journalists and four media workers have been killed and there have been threat calls to a number of notable journalists. The deaths include the shocking murders of two journalists – Irshad Mastoi and Abdur Rasool – in a single incident in Quetta, Balochistan in August while the Lahore-based president of our affiliate the PFUJ, Rana M. Azeem, himself has been amongst the journalists receiving a high number of life threats.

The killings of Mastoi and Rasool illustrate the shocking situation in the Balochistan province where the threats and violence the working media persons face is especially vicious. Six journalists have been killed the province in the last two years.

But perhaps the most disturbing fact these intolerably high levels of violence against journalists in the high level of impunity that surrounds them. The Pakistan State and its justice system has consistently failed to provide protection or justice to the journalists and their families though in one lone case they have managed to identify and convict the killers of Wali Babar, whose attackers were identified and convicted but who still remain at large, yet to be apprehended. This situation must change and urgent steps are needed by the Government, the media sector and the civil society to reverse the tide.

Since 2012, the United Nations acknowledged Pakistan as a country needing special attention and action in terms of support to combat impunity against journalists when it was included among the five pilot countries for implementation of its 'UN Action Plan on Attacks on Journalists and Issues of Impunity'.

In November 2013, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Pervaiz Rasheed endorsed the Action Plan and pledged at an international conference in Islamabad on behalf of your Pakistan Muslim League-N Government to support and implement suggestions and steps to prioritise the increasingly compromised safety of journalists. And yet,



between that commitment and now over a dozen more journalists and media workers have been killed without any sign of a reduction in the levels of impunity for crimes against Pakistani journalists.

In fact, Pakistan's death toll now leads the world tally as the most lethal for journalists in 2014 to date.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate in Pakistan along with journalist unions around the South Asia region make a fervent appeal to your Excellency and your Government to take the following urgent steps to restore the sagging confidence of the journalists' community in the State's ability and interest to protect them

1. The urgent appointment of full-time federal and provincial special prosecutors dedicated to investigation cases of attacks against journalists as and when they happen and pursuing their cases in the courts to provide them justice. This should be institutionally underpinned by allocation of offices, dedicated staff and necessary budgets for the prosecutors.
2. Investigation into the cases of all journalists killed in Pakistan since 2000 and pursuit in the courts of their relevant provinces – to provide long-awaited justice to their families.
3. The families of the targeted journalists be awarded appropriate compensation and financial assistance to minimise their miseries.
4. Passage of a law on media safety, in consultations with working journalists and their representatives, which provides for mandating institutional measures and protections, including by employers, to journalism practitioners, support for investigations against attackers and their prosecution, and uniform compensation packages for families of the deceases, as well as medical and legal aid.
5. Nomination of a full-time focal person to represent the Federal Government on the issue of journalist safety to engagement with the Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS), an independent multi-stakeholders alliance of media, civil society and parliament working to promote a safer environment for journalists and media workers.
6. Reforming the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) law, which governs the independent broadcast sector of the country which employs over 16,000 journalists and nearly ten times as many non-journalist workers, to encourage adoption of safety protocols that discourage unnecessary risk taking that bring danger to journalists.
7. Declare that November 2 will be officially marked and observed every year as the 'National Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' to coincide with the declaration by the UN to observe November 2 as the 'UN International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists'.
8. It is recommended that journalists working in vibrant areas to provided safety kits so that they could safely perform their duties. This has already been promised by the Information Ministry but yet to be materialised.

The IFJ, the PFUJ and undersigned IFJ affiliates urge your Excellency and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to reaffirm your commitments to freedom of expression and protection of journalists and accept these representative demands from the largest community of Pakistani journalists who are facing extensive harassment and intimidation often characterised by extreme violence.

The growing list of journalists been attacked and killed in Pakistan for their work, without an official policy declaring zero tolerance against this practice and outlining a proactive mechanism



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JACQUELINE PARK
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director
ELISABETH COSTA
General Secretary

to combat impunity, is a stark negation of the rights to freedom of expression, access of information and safety and security of individuals, enshrined in the Pakistani Constitution and promised to all citizens and journalists.

We thank you in anticipation of proactive police and procedural support and offer any assistance that can help in this regards and promote a safer environment for journalists in Pakistan.

Yours Sincerely,

**Afghan Independent Journalists Association
Adnan Rehmet, International Media Support, Pakistan
Bangladesh Manobadhikar Songbadik Forum
Delhi Union of Journalists, India
Federation of Nepalese Journalists
Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka
Freedom Network, Pakistan
Indian Journalists Union
Journalists Association of Bhutan
National Union of Journalists, India
National Union of Journalists, Nepal
Nepal Press Union
Open Society Foundation
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists
Sancharika Samuha, Nepal
Shahzad Admad, Bytes for All
Sri Lankan Working Journalists Association**