

Emergency in Pakistan

CRISIS MISSION RAPID ASSESSMENT



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Emergency in Pakistan: Crisis Mission Rapid Assessment

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Source: David Guttenfelder, AP

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PREFACE

The media rights situation worsened considerably in Pakistan through 2007 following a mission by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in February to report on media conditions in the country. Tensions became acute when President Pervez Musharraf imposed emergency rule on 3 November. Two amended laws linked to the emergency decree led to the immediate detention of critics and a clampdown on journalists and media outlets, especially private television and radio broadcasters. The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), an IFJ affiliate, quickly organised crisis meetings and protests of journalists and other media workers, who agreed to stand strong in defending free expression and independent media in Pakistan.

After the February mission, the IFJ issued a report which stressed that journalists in Pakistan are working in a highly dangerous environment. It recommended the establishment of a media rights monitoring network and campaigns on professional safety, media freedom, rights and working conditions. Since those recommendations were made, the overall situation in Pakistan has worsened, with the toll of deaths and injuries of journalists and media workers remaining alarmingly high.

Through 2007, seven media workers were killed, 13 were physically harmed (some very seriously), five were abducted or disappeared (one was released after 50 days) and many received direct threats. This represents a considerable deterioration over an already bad situation. The Musharraf administration restricted media coverage of controversial issues throughout the year, notably in regard to the suspension of the country's chief justice in March. A presidential decree in June gave the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority (PEMRA) the power to halt broadcast transmissions and close media offices, among other anti-democratic actions. The clampdown was consolidated after the November emergency decrees in the lead-up to elections that had been set for January 8, 2008. The emergency was lifted on December 15, but the disputed media laws remain in place. The assassination of opposition politician and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on December 27 has plunged Pakistan and the region into even more intense and complex difficulties.

The impacts of the November emergency declaration were felt immediately in the media community. Broadcasting transmissions were blocked, military personnel entered the offices of broadcasters, equipment and film were seized, and attempts were made to stop presses, among other things. In many cases, media workers and their managers defied authorities as the PFUJ, the leading organisation of journalists in the country, led a national protest movement. In some cases, authorities responded with force. Five photographers and television cameramen, arrested at a protest on November 5, were made to appear in a Karachi local court wearing handcuffs. Many other journalists and media workers were arrested, assaulted or otherwise harassed. In Abbotabad on November 4, police baton-charged a procession of journalists and lawyers, resulting in injuries to three journalists, the PFUJ reported. In Rawalpindi on the same day, police beat journalists who were covering lawyers' protests and tried to remove film from their cameras. Later in the month, a reported 160 to 180 journalists were detained at a protest in Karachi, where dozens of journalists were injured. All were later released.

During this period, authorities attached to PEMRA pressed media institutions and journalists to sign a government-mandated "code of conduct". Certain broadcasting networks – their finances under pressure due to the denial of permission to broadcast or the withdrawal of government advertising – reportedly felt compelled to sign the code. The code is of great concern to defenders of free expression because it leaves far too much arbitrary power of enforcement in the hands of government.

Even before the emergency decrees, however, it was reported that many journalists in Pakistan were leaving the profession because they feared for the safety of themselves and their families. Others reported being worn out by the constant battle to safeguard their right to report freely and with integrity. Overall, there was great professional frustration across the media industry due to poor compensation and working conditions.

In addressing the crisis of media freedom in Pakistan and among neighbouring countries, the IFJ has sought in recent years to broaden its range of contacts and collaborative relationships in South Asia. Moving beyond the formal rules of affiliation, the IFJ sponsored the formation of a broader alliance, the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN), which functions as an open platform in which any organisation committed to certain core principles of media freedom and integrity may participate. The relationships established through SAMSAN are crucial to the supportive role played by the IFJ and journalists across the region in crises such as that now occurring in Pakistan.

In November, the IFJ and SAMSAN responded quickly to provide visible support to Pakistan's media community, via the PFUJ, by organising a crisis mission in the country. The team comprised Kanak Mani Dixit, a senior editor and publisher from Nepal; Huma Ali, the PFUJ's president; and Iqbal Khattak, a Peshawar-based correspondent and representative of Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters without Borders). Time constraints and delays in processing visas meant several prospective participants could not join the mission. From November 19 to 22, the mission team inquired into the emergency and threat to media by conducting a series of discussions in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi with journalists, media owners, civil society representatives and officials of what was by then the caretaker government. They also joined journalists in their protests at local press clubs. This report presents the mission's findings.

Jacqueline Park
IFJ Asia-Pacific Director

I. INTRODUCTION



I.1. Background

In February 2007, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) undertook a four-day mission to Pakistan at the invitation of its affiliate organisation, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ). The mission visited three major cities to evaluate press freedom and journalists' safety in the country. The mission team's report, *A state of denial: The crisis of press freedom and journalist safety in Pakistan*, was published in March 2007. The mission was a response to growing alarm within the global community of journalists about the professional hazards faced by their colleagues in Pakistan. Statistics compiled just before the mission noted that fatal attacks against media professionals in Pakistan ranked third highest in the world.

The mission found a serious deterioration in the media environment, evident in an erosion of the constitutionally guaranteed right of free speech and a vastly more hazardous situation facing journalists in their daily work. Apart from these factors, the mission also recorded a pervasive sense of professional frustration at poor working conditions, inadequate compensation and the persistent default of media organisations which had failed to provide employees with the fair deal mandated in 2001 by the National Wage Board for journalists.

I.2. Lead-up to state of emergency

A second mission to Pakistan was quickly organised by the IFJ and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) soon after Pakistan's President and then Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf, declared a state of national emergency on November 3. It was already clear that media freedom and journalists' safety was on a rapid downhill course as Pakistan had swung from one political crisis to another throughout the year.

Journalists and mission representatives (centre three) Iqbal Khattak, Kanak Dixit and Huma Ali hold a peaceful protest outside the Lahore Press Club.
Source: PFUJ

During the February mission, the IFJ delegation was informed during a round-table discussion that Pakistan's Federal Government, as well as various provincial governments, were seeking to leverage discretionary powers over the placement of official advertisements in an effort to pressure media institutions and journalists to conform with the official line. The then Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mohammad Ali Durrani, told the delegation that government advertising budgets were in the region of 800 million rupees (about US\$13.2 million). An opposition senator informed the mission that the Dawn Group of Karachi – publishers of Pakistan's most widely circulated and influential English language newspaper – were particularly targeted in terms of being denied government advertising funds.

Strong corroboration for these accusations came in April 2007 when Hameed Haroon, the Dawn Group's publisher and chief executive officer, issued an open letter condemning the Federal Government and the Sindh provincial government for their unsubtle efforts to throttle his newspaper group by withholding spending on advertisements. Sindh's provincial minister for information, according to documentation presented by Haroon, was involved in an effort to coerce Dawn to adopt an editorial policy more favourable to a powerful political group in the province. Haroon's letter also suggested that the Federal Government was trying to exert undue financial pressure on Dawn by indefinitely prolonging deliberations over its application for a television broadcast licence. Significant investments had already been made by the group toward securing the licence.

Haroon is credited with the view that cross-media ownership is inevitable and also beneficial for the growth of Pakistan's media industry because it would enable "the large resource of talent available in the print media ... to participate in the burgeoning electronic media revolution in Pakistan". He is also on record with his strongly held belief that the statutory Wage Board has induced an excessive concern with "economism" among journalists, to the detriment of an engagement with larger matters of media freedom and the integrity of the profession.

The IFJ has reservations with Haroon's views in both these respects. The IFJ is strongly committed to media diversity as a principle, and believes that this goal is often best served by instituting some forms of control on cross-media ownership. Similarly, the IFJ operates on the understanding that decent working conditions and economic security for journalists are essential to media freedom. However, the IFJ acknowledges that Haroon's intervention as a publisher and a prominent public figure in the debate on media freedom in Pakistan served an important catalytic function at a particularly sensitive juncture for Pakistan's media.

1.3. Border conflict

Pakistan has witnessed a keen contest between military authorities and opposition political parties on the one hand and civil society institutions on the other. This is a contest in which the judiciary as an institution is expected to play a decisive role. Internationally, the country has been designated as a key battle front in the "global war on terror" led by the United States.

Both these factors have had significant bearing on media freedom in Pakistan. As the February mission observed, "The most vulnerable journalists in Pakistan are undoubtedly those operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan." Reporting necessarily has to be "extremely sensitive" in these conflict zones, since "many competing groups and communities have no respect for fair reporting".

Journalists reporting in these areas face multiple pressures. Although the Pakistan Government claims it is fully in control in these regions, facts on the ground suggest there is "much influence from the Taliban", ousted from control in Afghanistan but now operating from the porous border regions of Pakistan. The insurgents of both Afghan and Pakistani origin tend to look at journalists and media workers seeking an accurate and authentic news report as "American spies". Pakistan's state machinery, which is "in a state of denial" about the Taliban presence, refuses the media any support or protection. When local journalists or media workers get into trouble with insurgents or local government authorities, the "western principals" that they may be working for "tend to disown them", noted the IFJ's February mission report. This leaves them with no support at all, since they are typically not members of journalist unions or professional associations.

Judging from Haroon's letter in April 2007, it seems that the Government has additional reason to be wary about media scrutiny of its conduct in FATA and Balochistan. What he wrote about the Dawn Group perhaps has, in varying degrees, some relevance to the entire Pakistan media: "It is clear that objections to the propriety of the Dawn Group's editorial policies emanate mainly from President Musharraf's office and his stance is heavily influenced by key advisers who have been entrusted with responsibility for implementing crisis management and conflict control in flashpoint areas ... Also

irksome have been the Dawn Group's related attempts to monitor a recurring tendency toward covert militancy among responsible decision-makers in government."

Haroon, in this context, makes the unexceptionable demand that "the Government of Pakistan continue to submit its policies in Balochistan and its agreements with the pro-Taliban tribesmen of North and South Waziristan to the rigorous assessment of public and media scrutiny".

The IFJ believes that the Dawn Group, in reporting on these issues, is serving a significant public purpose. Government attempts to obstruct such reporting does not serve the best interests of the people of Pakistan.

1.4. Targeted attacks and front-line dangers

The February mission recorded 19 murders of journalists since 2000 and two separate instances of family members of journalists being killed as a warning. These apart, there were six recorded cases of abduction and torture of journalists between June 2006 and January 2007. Numerous instances of journalists being attacked, threatened and abused were also recorded.

These continue to be matters of great concern. Haroon's letter of April included a demand that the "Government of Pakistan desist from abducting and arresting journalists in the judicious performance of their duties, and desist from physically attacking newspaper offices". The testimony of the Dawn Group publisher suggests that coercion and intimidation have become accepted practice in the relationship between the Government of Pakistan and the media.

In May 2007, the Mohajir Rabita Council (MRC), a body believed to be affiliated to MQM, issued a public notice in which it identified several journalists as ethnic and linguistic "chauvinists" who should be treated as "enemies". Envelopes with live bullets were later found taped to the cars of three journalists, including Mazhar Abbas, the general secretary of the PFJ, on May 29. All major political parties in Sindh, including MQM, distanced themselves from this intimidation, although the threat was not retracted. In November, Abbas was honoured with the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists' International Press Freedom Award in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to journalism and defence of press freedom in Pakistan.

In July, two journalists were killed and one critically injured when a long-running confrontation between the Pakistan security forces and militants operating in and around the premises of Lal Masjid (the Red Mosque) in Islamabad broke out in an exchange of lethal gunfire. Javed Khan, a photojournalist for the daily *Markaz*, was killed on July 3 and Maulana Masud Mahmood died the following day of injuries sustained during the gun battle. Wahab Saleem, of the daily *Post*, was critically injured.

Noor Hakim Khan, a reporter for the Urdu-language daily *Pakistan* and vice-president of the Tribal Union of Journalists, was killed along with four other men, including a government official, when a bomb exploded under their vehicle on June 2. Noor Hakim was the second significant official of the Tribal Union of Journalists to be killed since Hayatullah Khan, general secretary of the organisation, was abducted in December 2005 and found dead in June 2006. In November 2007, Khan's widow, Mahrin Nisa, was murdered when a bomb was detonated outside her home.

In another reminder of the dangers facing journalists in Pakistan, a 22-year-old freelance photographer, Mehboob

PEMRA's dubious standards

Among Dawn's complaints in legal action before the High Court of Sindh was one that the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was depriving it of a broadcasting licence on the unjust grounds that print media entities were not entitled to enter the broadcast space. This was, Dawn said, an arbitrary determination by PEMRA, since other print media entities were already running flourishing broadcast operations.

This case serves to highlight how the framework of law for the electronic media in Pakistan remains a matter of ad hoc and often capricious interpretation. No law has been enacted to provide statutory backing for PEMRA's operations. Yet PEMRA has sweeping powers of supervision over the broadcast media, as was apparent from November. This means that the broadcast sector in Pakistan continues to be governed by periodic ordinances that the Federal Government may find it expedient to promulgate.

The IFJ's February mission had observed that PEMRA was conceptually ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of broadcast regulation. It was set up essentially as an instrument of the Government to enforce certain norms of "safe reporting" within the electronic media. Subsequent events have reinforced this conclusion.

Sections of the Pakistan media reported, and the IFJ has independently verified, that the Federal Government sought on May 12, 2007, to stop live coverage of a rally in Karachi involving Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, whom Musharraf had dismissed in March as Chief Justice. That effort, by all accounts, did not succeed. However, a sustained armed attack occurred on the Karachi offices of Aaj TV on the same day. Aaj TV was the first news channel to report that armed vigilantes belonging to Muttahida Qaumi Mahaz (MQM), a major political party of Karachi and Sindh province, were responsible for much of the violence that ensued in Karachi following the effort to block Chaudhry's rally.

It is perhaps no coincidence that MQM also had been identified by the Dawn Group as the privileged recipient of government attention. The Sindh provincial government and the Federal Government had both been highly protective of the interests of this political grouping, to the extent of intimidating the media to prevent coverage that may be adverse to its public image.

In June, radio station Mast FM 103 was ordered off the air despite obtaining prior clearance to broadcast the Urdu



A journalist at a protest rally against the emergency and PEMRA Ordinances in Islamabad. Source: Anjum Naveed, AP

language bulletins of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Proscription occurred within three days of the station obtaining permission to broadcast. The situation underlined deep contradictions in the understanding and implementation of the broadcast law, since it was PEMRA that both granted the permission and then ordered suspension of the broadcasts.

From the side of Pakistan's Government, what seemed to be a rising trend of intolerance toward the media was manifest in a prohibition decreed in early June against live coverage of all events involving the suspended Chief Justice. Within hours of the new curbs being announced, two major television networks, Aaj TV and GEO TV, were blacked out, the former almost nationwide and the latter in Lahore and Islamabad. This action was yet again a case of PEMRA's nebulously defined powers being used for distinctly undemocratic ends.

An early indication of the Government's intention to use PEMRA to restrain live coverage came a day after President Musharraf addressed a military garrison in Jehlum, when Information Minister Durrani made a statement suggesting that PEMRA's powers of enforcement could be used to restrain "unbalanced reporting and presentation".

Although the June PEMRA directive was withdrawn following nation-wide protests by the PFUJ and other like-minded bodies, Pakistan's media institutions and journalists were enjoined to adopt certain processes of "self-regulation". This was clearly an effort by the Government to hold powers of coercion in reserve, to be deployed at its convenience.

Khan, was killed instantly in a suicide bomb attack aimed at Aftab Khan Sherpao, the then Federal Minister for the Interior, in the north-western district of Charsadda on April 28.

With Pakistan's tribal areas designated as a major theatre in the international battle against religious extremism, the IFJ and other press freedom bodies have repeatedly demanded that local authorities be compelled to investigate attacks on journalists and conduct speedy criminal prosecution of those responsible. So far, the authorities have been conspicuously unresponsive.

1.5. Journalists' solidarity actions

The PFUJ is at the forefront of solidarity actions on behalf of media practitioners in Pakistan. A demonstration organised by the PFUJ on June 5 to protest the curbs then proposed on the electronic media was broken up by security forces. Several senior officials of the organisation were charged for violating prohibitory orders.

The PFUJ also participated in significant demonstrations in Islamabad on July 4, after two colleagues were killed in the Lal Masjid confrontation. The organisation thereafter sought to move safety measures for journalists to the front and centre of its list of action priorities.

As the situation worsened through 2007, the IFJ saw a need to return to Pakistan to provide advocacy support for Pakistan's community of journalists as they continued to defend the right of journalists and media institutions to report critically and fairly on events in the country. As Pakistan's authorities increasingly sought to control information, the global significance of events in Pakistan fuelled intense international interest and demand for information about what was happening within the country.

Initially, it was envisaged that a return IFJ mission would address several key areas, namely (i) broadcasting law and PEMRA; (ii) media regulation, the denial of government advertising to critical voices in the media, and efforts to evolve a transparent allocation system for government advertising budgets; (iii) informal mechanisms of coercion; (iv) professional hazards and journalist safety; and (v) employment security, in particular with regard to the evasion by major media organisations of their obligations under the journalists' Wage Board Awards. The new circumstances created by the declaration of a national emergency on 3 November demanded quick action by the IFJ to send in a team to provide visible international support to Pakistan's media community.



Police surround and beat a journalist with canes during the November protests outside the Karachi Press Club. Source: David Guttenfelder, AP

2. NATIONAL EMERGENCY AND IMPACT ON MEDIA

Musharraf, the general who took power in a 1999 coup d'état, assumed the presidency of Pakistan in 2001 and only stepped down as Chief of Staff of the Army in 2007, named three compelling reasons for his imposition of emergency rule. Political extremism and religious fundamentalism, he said, had endangered the unity and integrity of the country. The judiciary had been working at cross-purposes with the Government on crucial matters involving national security and was embarked upon a quixotic path of political activism. The media, when not overtly associated with this campaign, was guilty of serious "negativism". The declaration came just days before Pakistan's Supreme Court was to rule on the legality of Musharraf's October 6 re-election as President.

Among Musharraf's priorities after imposing the emergency, which saw a provisional constitution override the 1973 constitution, was to clamp down on the media. He quickly promulgated two separate amendments to ordinances covering the print and electronic media: the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2007.

The amendments imposed sweeping curbs to restrain the print and electronic media from carrying any content "which defames or brings into ridicule the head of state, or members of the armed forces, or executive, legislative or judicial organs of the state". Penalties for broadcasters' non-compliance included three years in jail and/or a fine of 10 million rupees (almost US\$170,000), and forfeiture of the

Musharraf's second coup

Islamabad: President General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday promulgated two separate ordinances to impose curbs on print and electronic media.

Under the ordinances which amend the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, 2002, and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, 2002, the print and electronic media have been barred from printing and broadcasting "anything which defames or brings into ridicule the head of state, or members of the armed forces, or executive, legislative or judicial organ of the state".

A new section 5A has been inserted in the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance to restrict publication of certain material. "No printer, publisher or editor shall print or publish" any material that consist of photographs of suicide bombers, terrorists (except required by the law-enforcement agencies for the purpose of investigation), bodies of victims of terrorist activities, statements and pronouncements of militants and extremist elements and any other thing, which may, in any way, promote aid or abet terrorist activities or terrorism, or their graphic and printed representation based on sectarianism and ethnicity or racialism.

The print media has also been restrained from publishing any material that is likely to jeopardise or be prejudicial to the ideology of Pakistan or the sovereignty, integrity or security of Pakistan, or any material that is likely to incite violence or hatred or create inter-faith disorder or be prejudicial to maintenance of law and order.

Similarly, section 20 of the PEMRA Ordinance, 2002, has been amended to put a bar on TV channels to "broadcast video footage of suicide bombers, terrorists, bodies of victims of terrorism, statements and pronouncement of militants and extremist elements and any other act which may, in any way, promote, aid or abet terrorist activities or terrorism".

The anchors and moderators of the electronic media have been barred from hosting or propagating any opinion in any manner prejudicial to the ideology of Pakistan or sovereignty, integrity or security of Pakistan that incites violence or hatred or any action prejudicial to maintenance of law and order.

TV discussions on sub judice matters or anything which is known to be false or baseless or is mala fide or for which there exist sufficient reasons to believe that the same may be false, baseless or mala fide have also been banned.

Officials of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority raided the Islamabad office of Aaj TV channel and seized live broadcast equipment without showing the required orders. Aaj TV's Director of Current Affairs, Syed Talat Hussain, said his television channel was being singled out by the government.

Excerpts from *Dawn* newspaper, November 3, 2007

broadcast licence, equipment and premises. Print publications could be barred from publishing for 30 days.

Media outlets were barred from publishing material that may aid terrorist activities, jeopardise the integrity of Pakistan, defame the administration or the army, was deemed vulgar or obscene, and promoted "ethnicism". Broadcasts of footage of militants, programs deemed to incite violence, and live coverage of incidents of violence were explicitly outlawed.

Under a new section inserted into the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance to restrict publication of certain material, the press was prohibited from publishing any material that could be construed to "promote, aid or abet" terrorism. The definition of such material that could be deemed offensive under this clause was extremely broad, including the following: photographs of suicide bombers or terrorists (except as required by the law-enforcement agencies for investigations), bodies of victims of terrorist activities, and statements and pronouncements of militants and extremist elements. The print media was also restrained from publishing any material that was likely to jeopardise or be prejudicial to "the ideology of Pakistan", and the "sovereignty, integrity or security of Pakistan".

Similar prohibitions were imposed on the electronic media. Discussions on television on matters under active judicial consideration, or on any matter deemed to be "false, baseless or mala fide" were similarly banned.

Before the amendments were announced, several leading private television networks – both Pakistani and international – were taken off the air by cable operators, acting under police coercion. And even as Musharraf went on air to announce the emergency and vowed to "preserve the democratic transition" he claimed to have "initiated eight years back", some 60 television channels all over Pakistan were ordered to end transmissions. Blocked channels included those belonging to the especially popular GEO TV and ARY One networks, as well as the BBC and CNN. Without a mandate or clear warrant, PEMRA officials raided the Islamabad office of Aaj TV and tried to seize broadcast equipment. They withdrew as journalists resisted.

Among radio stations, FM Power 99 and Mast FM 103 were ordered off the air. On November 4, authorities raided the office of FM 99 in Islamabad and seized its equipment. The radio station returned to air a week later and its equipment was returned. FM 103 also resumed transmission. The managements of both radio stations thanked the PFUJ for its role in supporting their cause.

The curbs severely restricted the operations of television and radio outlets, although newspapers continued to publish critical commentary. Blocks were also placed on many non-official news and opposition websites, but web-blogs were running hot to get information out. Some of the bigger broadcasters circumvented the blackout by informing people through phone text messages to access information through the internet. GEO TV, which broadcasts from Dubai and is the country's most widely watched cable news channel, created a live audio stream of its Urdu language channel that could be heard on satellite radio and through broadband internet connections. The BBC World Service increased its Urdu language news programs to meet the demand for information. (As the mission members were later informed, the Musharraf administration was especially



sensitive about Urdu language broadcasts, which would have a far greater impact than English programming.) A marked increase in sales was reported for newspapers, satellite dishes, radios and batteries.

Generally, however, the people of Pakistan were left with little choice but to watch unfolding events in the highly sanitised version put out by the official government-owned channel, PTV.

3. JOURNALISTS FIGHT BACK

The PFJ and a wide variety of civil society representatives responded to the decree and media ordinance amendments by organising protests across the country, with the PFJ, as the main organisation representing journalists in Pakistan, leading a call for a media boycott of all official government functions. Local units of the PFJ worked in association with press clubs in cities and the regions to work out a coordinated strategy in defence of press freedom. While newspapers immediately took a bold editorial stance against the decrees, the PFJ's reading was that the initial reaction of most of the smaller private broadcast channels was more cautious. Channel operators, the PFJ felt, were not quite willing to join the boycott because of financial duress. They were more inclined to talk terms with the Information Ministry.

Journalists in Islamabad mark the Pakistan media's Black Day on November 9 by waving black flags and carrying banners condemning the media clampdown. Source: Aamir Qureshi, AFP

Global Day of Action

Journalists' organisations and press freedom groups around the world joined forces to support their colleagues in Pakistan, in response to the PFJ's call for a Global Day of Action on November 15.

In South Asia and Southeast Asia, representatives of journalists' associations personally delivered letters of protest to Pakistan's embassies and high commissions in Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In Kathmandu, Nepal, more than 200 journalists and civil society members staged a demonstration in front of the Pakistan embassy to demand the restoration of civil rights and an end to media censorship in Pakistan. An embassy staffer refused to accept a letter of protest. Beyond the immediate region, similar actions were undertaken in Australia, Belgium, Britain, Cyprus, Finland, Mauritius, Norway, Romania, the United States and Uruguay.

Journalists' delegations met with ambassadors, high commissioners or other locally based senior officials of Pakistan. In turn, they were promised that their concerns about media freedom in Pakistan would be relayed to the caretaker government in Islamabad. Some officials, however, suggested that the Pakistan Government's push for a "code of conduct" for journalists administered by PEMRA was a legitimate exercise in supporting quality media in Pakistan.

It was the second Global Day of Action organised by the PFJ and the IFJ in 2007 in response to the rapid deterioration of media freedom and journalists' rights in Pakistan.



The President of the National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM), Norila Daud, with the Pakistan High Commissioner to Malaysia. Source: NUJM

The PFUJ also had reason to believe that two newspapers, *Ausaf* in Islamabad and *Daily Express* in Lahore, were served government notices asking them to change their editorial stance on particular issues.

In association with the PFUJ, the IFJ and SAMSUN organised a Global Day of Action among journalists worldwide. The united media stand seemed to pay partial dividends when government authorities in Karachi backed off an attempt to close a printing press belonging to the Jang Group, Pakistan's biggest media group and owner of GEO TV, on November 5.

The PFUJ's campaign and its determination to observe a nation-wide day of protest on November 15 led to a partial retraction by the Government. On November 8, Mohammad Ali Durrani, still the Information Minister, agreed to meet representatives of the PFUJ and its affiliated union, the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ), to hear out their case. The talks got nowhere, however, and journalists went ahead on November 9 with a nation-wide observance of a Black Day. Anchors for programs on television channels, which circumvented the blocks by up-linking to satellites from outside Pakistan, wore black armbands while journalists' organisations hoisted black flags at press clubs and continued to boycott official functions.

Many media owners joined the PFUJ in criticising the Government for allowing four small broadcasters to resume their domestic transmissions after signing documents of virtual surrender and agreeing to comply with the amended ordinances. The PFUJ saw the actions as a blatant attempt by authorities to fracture the unity of the media and drive a wedge between media ownership interests and working journalists.

In a following phase of action, the PFUJ expanded its coordination committees to include other unionists, lawyers and human rights advocates. Owners of newspapers and broadcasters were also invited to join.

4. CRISIS MISSION

The state of emergency brought a new sense of urgency to plans by the IFJ and SAMSUN to conduct a follow-up to the February mission. With the judges who had made an unprecedented challenge to the state establishment having been ousted from the bench and placed under house arrest throughout 2007, it devolved upon journalists, lawyers and human rights activists to respond to Musharraf's announcement of the Provisional Constitutional Ordinance (PCO) and his anti-media actions. The attack on the media was part and parcel of the larger issue of civil liberties.

The mission from November 19 to 22 was organised quickly in order to provide immediately visible support for local journalists. It was led by Kanak Mani Dixit, editor of the Kathmandu-based magazine *Himal*, and included Huma Ali, president of the PFUJ, and Iqbal Khattak, of Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters without Borders). The mission's priority was to reassure local journalists, unionists, human rights advocates and others of international support at an especially dangerous time for Pakistan's media. The mission aimed to draw international attention to the media crisis in Pakistan and hold discussions with journalists, owners and



Journalists, diplomats and a wide cross-section of civil society attend the IFJ-PFUJ roundtable meeting in Islamabad in November. Source: IFJ

managers of media houses, human rights advocates, unionists and officials of what had become the caretaker government when the Pakistan National Assembly was dissolved at the end of its five-year term on 15 November.

4.1. Islamabad conference

The PFUJ and the mission team led a well-attended roundtable conference in Islamabad of about 30 senior journalists and representatives of journalists' associations, media institutions, civil society and diplomatic missions, coinciding with the November 20 deadline set by the PFUJ for the Government to restore media freedom. As a result of the discussion, the delegates unanimously adopted a declaration calling on Musharraf to revoke his anti-media ordinances (see box).

The imperative of cooperation in defending free expression and media independence was a significant recurring theme of the discussion. Naeem Mirza, representing civil society, said it "is dangerous to act, but it is also dangerous if we do not act". He proposed that journalists, lawyers and civil society representatives had to coordinate their campaigns for a free media and independent judiciary. Talat Hussain, whose talk show on Aaj TV was banned, called for greater cooperation among working journalists and the owners and managers of media institutions. He said the struggle for media freedom was a "battle for the soul of Pakistan" and all stakeholders – including the PFUJ, the All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) and the Pakistan Broadcasters' Association (PBA) – had to unite to defend free expression and media. Another area requiring greater solidarity was to resolve demarcation divisions among various forms of media. Najib Ahmed, of FM 99, urged the print media to give greater coverage to government efforts to block radio broadcasters. "We need to battle for professional journalists. We should not compromise on journalism," he said.

Other speakers included Imtiaz Alam, a senior journalist and representative of the South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), who noted media institutions and journalists were under attack from both the Government and extremists. Investigative journalism could not be safely undertaken in

Islamabad Declaration

We, the participants representing the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and other members of civil society, hereby declare our strong and unified defence of the right to a free media and free expression, and demand that the right to know should not be taken away from the people of Pakistan. The liberty and safety of journalists and editorial independence are principles of press freedom that we hold as sacrosanct and non-negotiable.

At the very outset, we denounce the imposition of the Provisional Constitutional Order announced on 3 November, 2007, and call for a rollback of all decisions and actions associated with that order. We believe in the reinstatement of the independent judiciary as existed before that date, and believe in the return to the Constitution of 1973 as the only way forward to democracy, pluralism and people-power.

In the meantime, we condemn, as actions against the people of Pakistan, all steps against the media carried out under the PCO [Provisional Constitutional Ordinance]. We condemn the two anti-media amendments to press ordinances, as well as the so-called code of conduct that is unilaterally sought to be imposed on media organizations. We condemn the government for having prevented the coverage of the movement opposing emergency rule. We condemn the detention of journalists. We condemn the ban on satellite television channels. We condemn the pressure put on independent press groups. We condemn the amendment of the PEMRA laws, meant to hurt television broadcasters. We condemn the seizure of the equipment of FM radio stations.

We believe that the government's anti-media actions represent a coordinated policy to prevent the people of Pakistan from receiving independent news and analysis. To this end, the policy is also aimed at attacking the livelihoods not only of thousands of journalists but tens of thousands of individuals working in media organizations throughout the country.

At a time when the life and livelihood of journalists is suddenly in danger, we demand that the government seek out the whereabouts of Riaz Mengal, reporter of 'Intikhab' in Khuzdar District, Balochistan. We demand that the government arrest the killers of the widow of the late journalist Hayatullah Khan, and provide for the welfare of the couple's children as well as their relocation from North Waziristan.

The continuous demonstrations by journalists taking place throughout the country are a reminder to the government that the demand for freedom of expression is held dearly by the media world of Pakistan. We commend journalists who have continued these demonstrations throughout the country, and who have dared to face arrest and incarceration.

We demand that the government immediately revoke the two amendments to the ordinances as well as withdraw the so-called code of conduct. We demand that the charges brought against journalists who have been fighting for freedom after the imposition of emergency rule must be immediately dropped.

We believe that President Pervez Musharraf has crossed all bounds in seeking to continue his autocratic rule by muzzling the voice of media, and pledge never to give up the fight for press freedom and the people's right to know.

*Adopted by delegates at the PFUJ-IFJ roundtable conference
Islamabad, November 20, 2007*

Pakistan's current climate, he said, adding, "Unless there is a constitutional guarantee, press freedom cannot be sustained."

Bushra Aitzaz Ahsan, the wife of lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan, a leading campaigner for independent media and human rights, also attended the discussion while the imprisoned editor of *The Frontier Post*, Rehmat Shah Afridi, sent a message from Lahore prison to express solidarity with the PFUJ and its campaign.

Almost at the same time as the meeting was considering its declaration, authorities were arresting a reported 160 to 180 journalists at a protest of journalists in Karachi.

4.2. Information officials non-committal

Also on 20 November, the mission team met the caretaker Minister for Information, Nisar Memon (who had replaced Durrani), at his Islamabad office. The meeting was also attended by federal information secretary Syed Anwar Mahmood and PEMRA's chief, Iftikhar Rasheed. The IFJ-PFUJ delegation was joined by RIUJ president Afzal Butt and other senior PFUJ office bearers.

In response to the mission members' expression of concern about PEMRA's agenda and the media clampdown, the minister said the caretaker government was willing to discuss issues concerning media. However, he gave no clear commitment to a question about whether the Government would pledge to reverse the media laws promulgated under the state of emergency.

Since the mission, the minister has continued to meet with the PFUJ as well as the APNS and CPNE, but without an agreed resolution to their differences.



PFUJ President Huma Ali addresses a crowd of journalists during a peaceful rally in Islamabad. Source: IFJ

4.3. Solidarity in Lahore

Further discussions were held with senior editors and representatives of civil society in Lahore, where the Islamabad Declaration prepared by the round-table conference was released publicly and mission members joined another rally of journalists at the Lahore Press Club. A public discussion at the club included Ayesha Haroon, editor of *The News*; Malik Nasrullah, ARY One TV's bureau chief; Tahir Malik, editor of *Waght*; Nauman Yawar, Aaj TV bureau chief; Abid Hasan Minto, senior lawyer; Khalid Naeem Hashmi, GEO TV bureau chief; and columnist Ayaz Amir. They all stressed a need to broaden the movement for a free media and human rights, adding that the community of journalists must not allow the Government's gag on media to continue.

"There is a broad consensus that the people of Pakistan want rule of law, press freedom and respect for human rights. We will win this struggle as there is widespread support from all around," Ayaz Amir said.

The mission members also visited journalists who were staging a "hunger camp" at the club, and reiterated that the IFJ and the international community of journalists would stand by Pakistan's journalists in their battle for the right to free expression.

Later, a visit was paid to the offices of GEO TV and ARY One TV to express solidarity with senior management and editorial board members. (A mission representative had earlier met with GEO management and the publisher of *Dawn* in Karachi.) GEO and Ary One senior manager thanked the mission members, the IFJ and the international community for supporting the struggle for press freedom in Pakistan.

It was evident throughout the mission's meetings in different cities that the presence of the IFJ delegation was a great source of encouragement for local journalists and media houses as they continued their protests and campaigning. Several specifically noted that they did not feel as though they were struggling alone. Nawaz Tahir, a Lahore-based senior journalist, said, "I feel as if the whole world is standing by us."

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1. Economic pressure

Pakistan's Government has used not only direct means but also indirect economic means to pressure media houses to conform with the regime's line. This was occurring throughout 2007, but intensified with the emergency declaration. The IFJ and the PFUJ were already concerned about regulatory issues in regard to government bodies



Staff and supporters of the GEO television network light candles to highlight the impacts of the Government's crackdown on the media. Source: David Guttenfelder, AP

denying advertising to media establishments seen to voice criticism, and supported efforts before the emergency to evolve a transparent and fair system of allocation of government advertising budgets.

As an example of the targeting of revenue streams of major players, the bans enforced against GEO TV affected not only its news channel, but also the network's sports, entertainment and youth channels, which could not reasonably be said to pose a threat to national security. The effect was that the network immediately lost revenue for advertising that would normally accompany its most popular programs. Significant revenue-earning opportunities were lost because the network was effectively stopped from telecasting Pakistan's cricket tour of India, which attracts massive television audiences and hence is of immense interest to advertisers.

As the mission found through its interactions with Imran Aslam, the president of GEO TV, the Government's intent appeared to be to throttle the network financially, since its sports, entertainment and youth channels were the main revenue sources for sustaining news and other expenditure-heavy operations. GEO TV put its revenue losses at US\$500,000 a day.

GEO TV initially circumvented the bans by up-linking to a satellite from its offices in Dubai. Under pressure from Pakistan, the Dubai authorities shut down that operation on November 17. The mission members encountered a deep sense of disquiet among the media community in Pakistan over the exercise of extra-territorial powers of censorship by the Pakistan authorities. In late November, Dubai rescinded its ban, but it remains the case that people in Pakistan can only access the GEO service via satellite because local cable operators continue to block its transmissions in Pakistan.

Government advertising continues to be withheld from the Jang Group of papers, while the managers of GEO TV and Jang negotiate with authorities for a solution. The PFUJ notes that the stand-off is very serious in terms of the long-term prospect that similar pressure could be used against smaller media institutions, which may be less able to withstand a confrontation that results in the denial of revenue.

Meanwhile, the mission learnt that some television channels were permitted to resume broadcasting after certain unstated conditions were met, such as the removal of popular anchor persons and hosts from news and current affair programs.

Ethical journalism and codes of conduct

Freedom of speech and freedom of information are the foundation of quality journalism that serves a public need for information so that people can make informed decisions. Fundamental to any code of ethics and conduct for journalists is that journalists draw up the code themselves and that media is independent and dedicated to freedom of expression. At its World Congress in 1954, the IFJ adopted a Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists. These principles include:

Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

The journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism.

Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in matters of professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of any kind of interference by governments or others.

These principles were endorsed during the Pakistan mission when journalists and a wide range of representatives of civil society issued a declaration on 20 November. The Islamabad Declaration said:

The right to know should not be taken away from the people of Pakistan. The liberty and safety of journalists and editorial independence are principles of press freedom that we hold as sacrosanct and non-negotiable . . .

The Islamabad Declaration is in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Pakistan has signed and which says in Article 19:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers.

Journalism and the public at large suffer when politicians and governments meddle in media affairs. Journalists across the world, and also in Pakistan, are adamant that there must be no new rules, codes or regulations designed by governments to restrict the media and silence critics. Governments can, however, create an enabling environment for media freedom by removing obstacles to press freedom and improving the status of people in journalism.

For more information on ethical journalism, see: *IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists* (Amended 1986)



Police prepare for action at a journalists' rally in Islamabad. Source: IFJ

5.2. PEMRA code of conduct

A significant concern raised during the mission was the increasing and arbitrary power of PEMRA to restrict freedom of expression and inhibit a culture of journalistic inquiry. The mission delegates underlined their concerns about PEMRA and its "code of conduct" for journalists in meetings with representatives of the caretaker government, including caretaker Information Minister Memon. The delegates made it clear that there was concern not only within Pakistan but also internationally about authorities threatening penalties if media institutions did not sign a government-devised code of conduct.

One television professional with whom the mission met indicated that there may have been some excesses or errors committed on the part of media outlets in the process of live coverage of the "judicial crisis" earlier in the year. However, any problem on this front could not be resolved reasonably and democratically by authorities applying a heavy hand.

The mission found that pressure on media institutions to sign the PEMRA code indicated a misunderstanding of the principles of ethical and responsible journalism. The minister and officials expressed incredulity that journalists would question and resist the PEMRA code. The officials said the code was merely a tool to promote quality and ethical journalism. (A similar discussion took place after the mission, when two Pakistani special envoys to the European Commission sought a meeting with the IFJ's Brussels office.)

The PEMRA code, however, was not developed cooperatively with journalists. It is not being promoted in an environment of free expression but in one of repression. Under the PEMRA code, journalists are constrained by self-censorship and cannot fulfill their duty to inform citizens by reporting frankly on the administration that governs them. The mission members sought to make it clear to the authorities that it was essential for media professionals to create their own codes of ethical and professional conduct, based on fundamental principles of freedom of expression and independence.

Many television channels and radio stations resumed broadcasting in the days following the conclusion of the IFJ mission. However, the resumption appeared to be conditional on signing the PEMRA code of conduct, although the number of such signatures gathered could not be verified.

5.3. PEMRA's functioning

The mission learnt from various interactions that PEMRA's opaque and rather arbitrary mode of functioning is very much part of a pattern in Pakistan since long before the declaration of emergency rule. PEMRA itself comprises individuals from a bureaucratic or security services background, who show little sensitivity toward media issues and media freedom and independence. The Federal Ministry of Information in Islamabad, which nominally is the administrative overseer of PEMRA and which has had a long institutional history of interaction with the media, is in truth powerless to determine how the authority functions. Rather, the ministry has little jurisdiction, except in determining the content of broadcasts on official government channels. PEMRA, it is believed, is responsive only to the diktat of Pakistan's President.

5.4. Urdu media

In the immediate wake of the emergency declaration, the Government seemed concerned in particular about the ARY and GEO television networks, which are known for their independence in news and commentary (ironically having come to the fore in recent years as Musharraf opened the way for an expansion of electronic media). While the authorities apparently could suffer independent reportage and analysis in the English language media, the evolution of independent and mass-based Urdu television, with the ability to influence mass public opinion, is a new challenge.

The mission was not of long enough duration to allow for an understanding of the level of activism within the Urdu media, but the report card seemed mixed. The suggestion was made that in some cases, a lack of journalistic professionalism and job security, the greater pressures imposed by the Government on Urdu media, and the weaknesses of smaller Urdu media houses made the Urdu media more vulnerable to government attack than was the case with media operating in English. Newspapers such as those in the stable of the Karachi-based Jang Group seemed more active in protesting the clampdown, but it was also suggested that this may be due to the group's ownership of GEO TV.

5.5. Lack of mass movement

The mission found that the torch of civil rights was being held aloft by journalists, lawyers and human rights activists, with the expectation that political parties preparing to contest national elections would be able to pick up on their freedom campaign and deliver a true people's movement. However, as Musharraf announced that national elections would be held on January 8, 2008, and that emergency rule would end on December 15, it was unclear that the political parties would unite to organise such a mass popular movement. The mission noted an evident disappointment in its discussions with protest leaders that ordinary people appeared reluctant to engage in such a movement.

5.6. Concern for small outlets

Concerns were expressed to mission members that the challenges faced by provincial newspapers and FM radio stations whose equipment was confiscated was being eclipsed by an overwhelming focus of attention on the large media houses. This concern was evident in the comments by Najib Ahmed, of FM 99, at the Islamabad round-table conference, when he called for print media to highlight more strongly the Government's efforts to control radio broadcasters.

Fears were expressed that some of the proprietors of large media institutions would not sustain their commitment to the higher principles of media freedom and free expression once they had the chance to negotiate with authorities.

5.7. Journalists and media bosses unite

A significant response to the Musharraf regime's clampdown on the media was the coming together of various sectors of the media industry for the first time in a quarter century, according to the PFUJ. Several meetings were held between the PFUJ (representing working journalists), the All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS, representing publishing houses), the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), and the Pakistan Broadcasters' Association (PBA) in Karachi and Islamabad.

In addition, the PFUJ, APNS and CPNE, together representing print media interests, joined forces in a high-level meeting with then Information Minister Durrani and other senior officials on November 15 to urge a full withdrawal of amendments to the print media ordinance, noting that remedies to low-intensity problems in certain areas of the print media could easily be dealt with under the Pakistan Penal Code, the Maintenance of Public Order Act, and the Defamation Ordinance 2002. The print media representatives also suggested that the amended PEMRA ordinance covering electronic media be reviewed and all private channels be restored with their broadcasting rights.

While latent issues still divide journalists' associations and media owners, such as the implementation of the long delayed 2001 Seventh Wage Award, there seemed to emerge a general agreement on the need to unite against the larger challenge placed before the media by the amended ordinances. But while the print media appeared more organised from the beginning against state attempts to control content, electronic media suffered more serious problems.

As PFUJ president Huma Ali observed at the Islamabad round-table conference, the PFUJ aimed to join forces with organisations of newspaper owners and editors because the regime's attack on free expression went beyond the concerns of journalists alone and involved the future of the media as a socially relevant institution in Pakistan.

6. POST-MISSION

6.1. Murder

Following the conclusion of the mission, Zubair Ahmad Mujahid, a veteran reporter and investigative reporter, was murdered. According to media reports, which have been corroborated by the IFJ's partners on the ground, Mujahid, who was renowned for his coverage of the situation of the poor, was shot and killed by an unidentified motorcycle-borne gunman on November 23 in Mirpur Khas, Sindh. His murder brought home once again the extreme dangers that journalists confront in Pakistan in the daily performance of their duties.

6.2. Police complaint

On November 29, a clutch of police complaints was registered against office-holders of the PFUJ and the RIUJ for allegedly displaying placards portraying "anti-state" sentiments at a public demonstration in Islamabad on November 14. The

police complaints represent a potential source of continuing persecution of media personnel campaigning for professional freedom and dignity. In a meeting with the PFUJ on December 2, the caretaker Information Minister reportedly assured the PFUJ that the complaint would be withdrawn.

6.3. Court rules against GEO TV

After 19 days of hearings, the High Court of Sindh decided on December 4 to dismiss two petitions by GEO TV that challenged the bans on four of its channels. The court endorsed a claim by the Musharraf administration that all rights stood suspended in the light of the emergency declaration (which itself would be withdrawn on December 15).

The PFUJ estimated that the decision put at risk the jobs of some 1200 GEO employees because the inability to broadcast was severely denting advertising revenue, as noted above. The regime has clearly singled out GEO TV. Its request to Dubai to block GEO's broadcasts from the United Arab Emirates and the local proscription of the network's youth, entertainment and sports broadcasts were blatant attempts to arm-twist the network into compliance with government diktat.

6.4. Emergency and election coverage

During the mission, PEMRA and other officials gave assurances that the clampdown was temporary. Since then, however, PEMRA tightened controls further by banning broadcasters' live coverage of events related to the national elections, at that time set for January 8.

In mid-December, PEMRA sent a letter of warning to the managements of private television channels saying that they could not broadcast live reports, including phone-ins, about the election and topics deemed to be in breach of the amended PEMRA ordinance. Penalties for a breach included three years in jail for journalists, fines of up to 10 million rupees (about US\$165,000) and cancellation of the broadcaster's licence.

The move came just days before Musharraf lifted emergency rule, increasing concerns that the amended laws may become entrenched within the legal system whatever the outcome of an election.

6.5. Assassination of Benazir Bhutto

The assassination of Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi on December 27 has raised tensions in Pakistan even further and added to the complexity of negotiations for a restoration of media rights and freedom in the country. Pakistan's National Election Commission has announced a postponement of the January 8 elections until mid-February. At this writing, it is not certain that the elections will proceed. Whatever the outcome, the key concerns noted in this report remain at the forefront for media professionals and institutions in Pakistan, namely that the contentious amendments to media laws be reversed.

6.6. PFUJ campaign continues

The PFUJ has continued its vigorous campaign to demand



Journalists arrested in early November are taken to court in Karachi wearing handcuffs. Source: PFUJ

repeal of the amendments to the two media ordinances at the heart of the clampdown on the media. The caretaker Information Minister has informed the union that he has recommended the disputed elements in the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, be deleted. He has invited the PFUJ to submit a draft regarding the PEMRA (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2007. The PFUJ, however, remains steadfast in its position that both amended ordinances must be withdrawn.

After a meeting between government officials and the PFUJ on November 28, the government named Justice (retd) Mansoor as chairman of the Implementation Tribunal for Newspaper Employees (ITNE), which deals with the Wage Award. The PFUJ believes the move is a forward step in negotiations on working conditions.

Meanwhile, the PFUJ has initiated a third phase in its protest strategy, which was to be reassessed after January 10, when a new parliament had been expected to sit following the election. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto and consequent turmoil about whether or not an election will proceed demand a strategic rethink, but the aims of the PFUJ remain the same.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Revoke amended laws and restore broadcasting rights

The Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, and the PEMRA (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, must be revoked to allow a return to the relatively free media environment that had been developing in Pakistan in recent years. All political candidates are urged to commit to the withdrawal of the anti-media laws regardless of who holds government, and to

pledge support for a strong charter of rights guaranteeing basic media freedoms, without fear or favour. All electronic media must be promptly permitted to resume broadcasts.

7.2. Devise independent code of ethics

Authorities must be ordered to desist from using the PEMRA code of conduct as a tool for forcing the compliance of journalists and media outlets. Training is required to support journalists in developing and implementing an independent code of ethics. The PFUJ, the IFJ and other concerned professional bodies have undertaken to work on this issue and raise awareness among the wider citizenry about the social value of such a code. It is imperative that journalists design their own code without government interference.

7.3. Implement Seventh Wage Award

A starting point for improving the state of media freedom in Pakistan is the employer organisations. The new relationship emerging between journalists' associations and media owners in the face of the current crisis provides an opportunity for constructive engagement and agreement on issues of fair compensation and decent working conditions for journalists, even as it is understood that the government-initiated disruption to revenue generation may be used as a diversion to stall the long delayed implementation of the 2001 Seventh Wage Award.

It is perhaps especially essential that journalists in small media outlets benefit from such engagement in view of concerns raised during both the February and November IFJ missions that poor working conditions in some areas are not only having a negative impact on the professionalism of media workers but also on their ability to withstand repressive tactics (as represented by PEMRA's arguments for a government-mandated code of conduct).

7.4. Ensure fair allocation of advertising budgets

Efforts should continue to evolve a transparent and fair system of allocating government advertising budgets.

7.5. Provide professional safety and security

Journalists and media workers in all regions of Pakistan require far greater assurance of safety and security in the conduct of their work, whether investigating corruption or conflict or attending events that are made dangerous by the tensions existing in the country. Employer organisations must take the initiative, but government and police authorities also must be required to investigate all attacks on journalists thoroughly and to hold to account those who are responsible. Journalists' organisations such as the IFJ and PFUJ can support professional safety and awareness by implementing a media rights monitoring network similar to safety office systems now operating in Nepal and the Philippines.

7.6. Maintain international support

It is crucial that the international community of journalists assure journalists and their associations in Pakistan of continuing and visible support. Local journalists' awareness of and appreciation of international attention, as demonstrated during the Global Day of Action on November 15 and during the IFJ-SAMSN mission, clearly had an impact in helping to shore up the confidence of Pakistan's defenders

of media freedom to continue their struggle. This external advocacy also had the positive effect of helping to draw journalists' associations and media owners into a new collaboration that should not be underestimated in its importance, both for freedom of expression in Pakistan and a cooperative effort to give people in Pakistan the benefits of critical quality journalism.

8. CONCLUSION

The November mission found not merely a grave deterioration in the situation facing journalists in terms of security, freedom and working conditions, but also a significant shift in the public mood. While ministers and officials with whom the February mission team met were usually keen to put on record their respect for the principle of a free media, the situation encountered in November was significantly different. There seemed among officials and security personnel a more accusatory attitude and a tendency to hold journalists individually responsible for serious problems within the industry, including physical attacks, intimidation and the overall government effort to retain control. This speaks of a growing mood of intolerance within Pakistan's official establishment and represents a clear danger to media freedom and the rights of citizens to be informed and to give peaceful expression to dissent.

Independent journalists and media practitioners in Pakistan came together in an unprecedented manner to challenge the November emergency decrees and to stand up for media freedom and independence. The international community of journalists needs to understand and appreciate the decades-long struggle in which the journalists of Pakistan have been engaged.

However, there is some room for optimism that the recent and unprecedented unity among various sectors of Pakistan's media in the face of authoritarian diktat may provide a strong front for recreating the conditions for a return to the free and independent media environment that had been emerging in Pakistan in recent years. It is an irony that a freer media environment had, prior to the current travails, expanded under the Musharraf regime. The evidence of a new solidarity between journalists and their employers, as well as the wider civil society, in defending the basic principles of freedom of expression and free media offers room for hope that these principles can still be achieved in Pakistan. Such an achievement will also allow the space for media professionals in Pakistan to improve their skills and work for the highest values of journalism.

The Musharraf regime's naked clampdown on media must be condemned unequivocally, as must its more insidious and indirect methods of control. The unity of media professionals in the face of governmental harassment and repression is the only way that they can serve the right of the people of Pakistan to be informed.

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The IFJ is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that promotes coordinated international action to defend press freedom and social justice through the development of strong, free and independent trade unions of journalists. IFJ Asia-Pacific coordinates IFJ activities in the Asia-Pacific region. The IFJ works closely with the United Nations, particularly UNESCO, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, WIPO and the ILO, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Union, the Council for Europe and with a range of international trade union and freedom of expression organisations. The IFJ mandate covers both professional and industrial interests of journalists.

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