

CLAMPDOWNS AND COURAGE: INDIA



**SOUTH ASIA PRESS FREEDOM
REPORT 2017-18**



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REGULATING DISSENT

Late March this year, Mahesh Hegde, owner of the Postcard News website, was arrested in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, on charges of causing ill-will on religious grounds. A monk of the Jain faith had a few days before, suffered serious injuries in a road accident. Hedge picked up one among many images of the monk circulating over the internet and pushed it along on his website with the embellishment that his injuries had been inflicted by a violent mob of Islamic radicals. Hegde added the legend that nobody was safe in Karnataka as long as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah rules. It just so happens that Siddaramaiah is from the main party in opposition to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Hegde's twisting of fact was clearly part of the build up to the campaign for elections to the state legislative assembly due mid-May in Karnataka. Postcard News is one among a growing ecosystem of websites that style themselves in a new idiom of nationalism, as articulating a supposedly long-suppressed majority voice in India. This idiom of majoritarian nationalism flourishes on antagonism – often confected in deliberately misreported facts – about the country's principal religious minority. It used to be referred to as 'hate speech' at one time, a very poorly defined category of offences in most parts of the world. In India, the harsh reality is that even with a surfeit of laws in place, the actual record of applying legal sanctions on hate speech has been indifferent.

A recent review of press freedom in India concluded that ultra-nationalist elements seeking to "purge" all traces of what they deem "anti-national" thinking from the public domain, have created an aura of fear among journalists and social media users. "Online smear campaigns" have been frequent, suffused with crass insults and threats of physical violence, that especially target female media practitioners. Journalists willing to run the risks have uncovered what seem to be organised efforts to capitalise on the vast scope of viral multiplication that the social media "hashtag" affords, to intimidate reporters who hold the misdeeds of elected politicians to the light.

This problem was clearly not on the minds of the official information agency of the Indian government on April 2, when it announced fresh guidelines on the accreditation of journalists, ostensibly to check the menace of "fake news". Media accreditation is granted to journalists after a specified number of years in the profession. If anything, this waiting period is sufficient assurance that professionals granted accreditation to access the official corridors in the national capital, will be immune to the temptations of fake news. The April 2 notification put journalists on notice of a "three strikes and out" policy. Any accredited media person found to have propagated 'fake news' would be put on notice and issued a formal warning after a second offence. A third transgression would lead to termination of privileges.

Following strong protests from the media community, the notice was withdrawn, with the stricture ostensibly issued from the highest political authority – the office of the Prime Minister of India – that the information agency had gone beyond its jurisdiction. Guidelines on accreditation and their revision, the Prime Minister's Office said, were within the jurisdiction of the Press Council of India (PCI) and that was the appropriate forum for debating the issue. It was not a source of comfort for journalists that the Chairman of the PCI, Justice C.K. Prasad, a retired judge of the Supreme Court of India, was already on record that he found little objectionable in the April 2 notification, since the problem it addressed was real and serious.

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It so happened that Justice Prasad had at the same time, convened a meeting of the PCI to which few of the representatives of the journalists’ unions and professional bodies were called. The reason given for the move was supposedly, the ongoing reconstitution of the PCI. Eight professional bodies – including IFJ affiliates, the Indian Journalists’ Union and the National Union of Journalists of India – wrote on the eve of the proposed meeting to the Prime Minister, urging that the reconstitution of the PCI be placed on hold since it was not in accordance with fair and democratic procedure.

This was one among a series of rather questionable decisions with a bearing on the media regulatory framework, where efforts to bring a semblance of order to a scenario of rapid flux continue to flounder. Little in the official response seems to indicate a genuine urge to get the best of the new modes of information sharing and communication, while safeguarding against hazards such as fake news. A day had not passed since the Office of the Indian Prime Minister ordered that the ‘fake news’ circular issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting be held in abeyance, before it announced the formation of a committee that will frame regulatory rules for news portals and media websites.

Five among the ten members of the committee were to be the secretaries of various ministries: civil servants who begin their careers administering a district and then serve various functional ministries in the states and the Indian union. Others were to be the representatives of the PCI, and various associations of the news broadcast and entertainment industries. Missing entirely were natives of the digital domain, of which a good number exist in India, that manage to set new standards on fact-checking both official claims made by the current regime, as well as their noisy cohorts of online propagandists.

The basic premise of the order constituting this committee to frame rules has been called out as false. The order claims for instance, that all other media – print and electronic included – are covered by certain norms, while the online media functions in a regulatory vacuum. Critics of the move point out that India’s Information Technology Act, as adopted in 2000, incorporates Section 69, which provides for the interception, monitoring or decryption of any information stored in any computer resource, if a public authority or agency of the state thinks it warranted. In 2008, Section 69A was grafted onto this act by an amendment, authorising any state agency when satisfied that it is in the interests of public order, national defence, and a number of other criteria, to order the blocking of public access to any information through a computer resource.

In a significant judgment in 2015, India’s Supreme Court struck down Section 66 of the IT Act which allowed for the criminal prosecution of certain kinds of messages posted on social media. After a number of arrests were effected under this provision of law, outrage built up to a sufficient degree for an individual to mount a legal challenge. The Supreme Court agreed with the challenge since it held the definition of an offence under Section 66 to be over-broad and vague, enabling excessive latitude for arbitrary actions by the law enforcement authorities.

In the same judgment, the Supreme Court allowed Section 69A of the IT Act to stand since its language was consistent with the provision of the Indian Constitution that provides for “reasonable restrictions” on the right to free speech. It is another matter of course, that these “reasonable restrictions” have never been systematically codified and continue to be arbitrarily interpreted by law enforcement authorities, which can silence critical voices through the mere imposition of the tortuous and unending legal process.

DEADLY RUMOUR MONGERING

For the giant social media firms and other online platforms driven by advertising revenue, the commercial calculation has proved decisive. YouTube, Google, Facebook and Twitter are known to have complied with demands from official quarters to remove certain kinds of content from their sites, simply because they all have operations in India and could potentially be subject to local liability laws. The Indian market though is of such expanse and promise that none of them would like to defy the official censor and risk being blocked.

It is a curiosity of the current state of the media in India, that the various excesses that are instigated through the heightened connectivity that social media enables, have never seriously attracted sanction or prosecution, or even an official reprimand. There was in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, a particularly gruesome incident in May 2017, when seven people without any obvious criminal intent, were lynched on suspicions of running a child trafficking racket. Four of the victims were cattle-traders who happened to be passing through the district at the time. They belonged to a religious faith – the largest minority in India – that has been long stigmatised for its ostensible disregard for the cow, sacralised as an object of veneration by some within the majority faith. Rumours of the child trafficking ring had circulated over WhatsApp for at least a month and may have fused with a heightened vigilantism against people of the stigmatised faith, to provoke the hideous act of violence.

Photographs and videos of the lynching were widely circulated through WhatsApp and other social media soon afterwards. There was nothing to suggest that the baleful mood had abated since, though few seemed prepared for the crime of December 6 in Rajsamand district of Rajasthan, when a young man randomly picked up a migrant worker in his neighbourhood, hacked him savagely and after failing to decapitate him, set him afire. Shot on mobile phone by the man's 14-year old nephew, the crime was soon circulating in vivid and gruesome detail on social media, gaining a nationwide audience.

In an unhinged rant delivered to the camera after completing his heinous act, the murderer spoke of his determination to avenge the insults his faith had suffered. Social media had meanwhile exploded with posts in support of the killer, with the video recording of the murder being shared using a variety of user identities. Within days, an effort at funds mobilisation had helped gather a reported three hundred thousand rupees for his wife.

Social media and the legacy outlets – print and TV – have a mutual relationship that is not yet clearly understood. But it is a likely hypothesis that excess on one side could be dampened by sobriety and responsibility on the other. In junctures of inflamed sensitivities and heightened vulnerability to violence, legacy media could conceivably play a role to lessen probabilities of contagion. Yet a close audit of media content that day and the next by the fact-checking website Altnews.in, showed that “the gut wrenching news from Rajasthan was largely ignored on prime time”.



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These skewed priorities were not confined to the news channels: a comparison of the Delhi editions of various newspapers underlined that it was shared in print too. “It is no longer surprising”, the Altnews.in study concluded, “to see sections of mainstream media gloss over news that could put the establishment in the dock for its ineptness if not subtle encouragement to elements who are out to destroy the social fabric”.

SMART PHONES, FAKE NEWS

These phenomena remain to be studied and India offers a rich laboratory with its mix of media, all of which show continuing signs of growth, though some sectors are clearly failing to get their revenue calculations right. Statistics may often have no more than a brief utility in the rapidly changing scenario of the modern media, but they could be used provisionally to gauge which way the winds are blowing. In 2011, as Robin Jeffrey – the renowned media scholar who has written celebratory accounts of how the newspaper has transformed India – set out to research the revolutionary impact of the cell phone, India had 100 million newspaper copies coming to market every day, and an estimated 600 million cell phones in use. In his book co-authored with Assa Doron and published in 2013 under the title The Great Indian Phone Book, the authors saw these figures as portending momentous change, though the future relevance of the newspaper seemed assured.

By 2017, the figures had not changed very much in respect of newspaper numbers, though there were growing doubts over how much of it was mere artifice to keep advertisers interested. Cell phone users – or at least the number of active SIM cards, which is its closest proxy – had topped one billion by then. Though these numbers tell their own story, it would remain incomplete without an understanding of how the vast population of cell phones is being used.

In September 2016 a new entity came into India’s universe of information transactions, with a splashy celebrity launch in the western metropolis of Mumbai. Promoted by India’s largest business conglomerate, Reliance Industries, under the brand-name Jio, the new entrant into the cell phone services market promised free data traffic over its “fourth generation” or 4G network (alternately called “long-term evolution” or LTE). Already vulnerable to mounting debt servicing obligations, other telecom and internet service providers were rattled. Their protests to the regulatory authority though, went unheeded.

In its June 2017 edition, the Ericsson Mobility Report which has become something of a standard reference source for trends in the telecom and internet domains, observed that total global “traffic in mobile networks increased by 70 percent” between the end of the first quarter of 2017 and the corresponding point the earlier year. “Part of this increase”, it said, “was due to one Indian operator’s introductory LTE offer that included free data traffic”. Mobile subscriptions had registered a 4 per cent growth over the year. In terms of the net additions during the relevant quarter of 2017, India had the largest number at 43 million, with China second at 24 million. “The strong subscription growth in India”, the report concluded, “was mainly due to an attractive LTE ‘welcome offer’ by one operator, with free voice and data”.

Globally, smartphones accounted for 80 per cent of the total number of new mobile connections in the quarter, a figure expected to increase rapidly. Data traffic over mobile networks in 2017 grew 70 per cent globally, with video signals accounting for over 50 per cent of total traffic. Jio’s entry in India had contributed to a dramatic growth in data traffic. Though the report uses a broader geographic category (India, Nepal and Bhutan), the vast part of the increase in data traffic in this region between 2016 to 2017 – 0.3 exabytes per month to 1.0 – could be attributed to India. Data usage per smartphone within this geographic region increased from 1.5 to 4.1 gigabytes per month over the year.

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India's trajectory is a few steps behind the global trend in some respects, though the magnitude of the transition, because of the sheer size of the country, has attracted global attention. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) has since 2011 been carrying out an annual survey of the digital media with substantial samples drawn from a large number of countries. While India is yet to figure in this annual survey, the global trends it highlights are clearly applicable in India and the evidence comes both anecdotally and from evidence from diverse sources.

In its survey published in October 2017, the RISJ identified a number of distinct trends. There was firstly, an increasing dependence on the smart phone for accessing news and information. “Distributed discovery” was becoming more important, with particular news sources less likely to be remembered than the platforms they were discovered on. Beyond these platforms, the growth of “private” messaging apps such as WhatsApp in news discovery was growing. And with all these multitudes of sources and choices, the vital attribute of “trust” was eroding in both social media and news.

SENSATIONALISM REIGNS

In a scenario of great uncertainty, traditional media have been trying to gain some leverage through the online space, driving traffic to their sites using the hashtag as bait. The hashtag strategy perhaps goes along with an editorial policy of soft-peddalling the criticism of established authority, since the largest number of mouse-clicks today seem to be reserved for news items – fake or otherwise – that embellish the image of the ruling party and its top leadership. This goes along with a tendency, especially marked in the visual media and India’s bustling ecosystem of news channels, to play up the trivial and the sensational.

This tendency was most in evidence over the year under review in coverage of the death of the Bollywood actor Sridevi Kapoor – often celebrated as India’s first female superstar – in a hotel room in Dubai in February 2018. A thorough forensic audit was a legal necessity under Dubai law, given the circumstances of the death. This process alone and the findings that emerged were sufficient to trigger a frenzy of speculative reporting on India’s news channels, complete with news anchors and reporters re-enacting the hotel room scenes in the minutes before the actor’s death. It was sharply critiqued as “voyeuristic” and “insensitive” by commentators in India’s relatively more sober print media. Social media meanwhile, brimmed over with posts using the “death of news” hashtag or its equivalents.

Reporting that takes on and explains the full implications of policy choices the government has committed itself to, could be hazardous. In February 2018, The Tribune, headquartered in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh, ran a series of stories on the security vulnerabilities of an ambitious national database of Indian citizens. The reporter assigned to the story was able to obtain biometric and other information about registered Indian citizens through the mere payment of five hundred rupees (about USD 8). In response, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which runs the project, filed a criminal complaint against the reporter, the newspaper and its editor.

This manner of “strategic litigation” to stop critical reporting was in evidence in a story carried by The Wire, a news portal that has earned a substantial readership with its energetic fact-checking of official statements and claims. In October, the news portal ran a story documenting how a company owned by Jay Amit Shah, son of the ruling party president, had increased its annual revenue an astounding 16,000 times in just a year.

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It was subsequently learnt that Shah had contacted the legal officers of the Government of India for advice even before the story was published, after getting a sense of what was coming from the news portal’s outreach effort to verify facts. Once the story appeared, Shah filed a criminal defamation suit for no less than a billion rupees (USD 15 million) that had all the hallmarks of an official censorship attempt through the endless harassment of court summons and adjournments.

Two senior journalists from Vice India – the local arm of a global website – quit when pressured to kill a story about an activist of the ruling party’s youth wing, who was with full and informed consent, willing to render a candid account of his experiences as a gay individual within an intolerant political milieu. In a phone call to the reporters, the chief executive of Vice India cautioned that a phone call from the ruling party president was the last thing they wanted to receive.

Police raids in June 2017 on the offices and other premises of New Delhi Television (NDTV), on unsubstantiated allegations of money laundering, led to worries that one of the few news channels willing to give critical voices some space, was under threat. In Kashmir, always a challenging milieu for journalism, news photographer Kamran Yousuf was arrested while covering demonstrations in September 2017, on charges of causing public disorder and fomenting unrest. In a charge-sheet filed in court three months later, the National Investigative Agency (NIA) – a specialist arm dealing with terrorism offences – accused Yousuf of not being a “true journalist”. To merit that status, the NIA wrote, he would have to show greater commitment to covering events such as the “inauguration of a hospital, school building, road, (or) bridge”, or the “statement of political parties or the government of India”.

BITING THE BULLET

Two journalists were killed in the restive North-East of India, both in the state of Tripura. Sudip Dutta Bhowmik, a 49-year-old journalist working for a local daily in the state capital of Agartala, was shot dead in November, within the base of an armed police force specialising in anti-insurgency operations. He had in the weeks prior, published a series of reports on corruption within the top command of the force.

Just two months before, 27-year-old Shantanu Bhowmick, who worked for a news channel in Agartala was seized by armed activists as he covered a demonstration of the Indigenous Peoples’ Front of Tripura (IPFT). He was taken away from the scene of the demonstration and his body found at a spot some 30 km from the state capital. In elections to the state legislative assembly held in March 2018, the IPFT in alliance with the ruling party at the national level, won eight of the nine seats it contested and assumed a number of offices in the state cabinet.

Gauri Lankesh, editor of an eponymous weekly journal published from the southern Indian city of Bengaluru – capital of Karnataka state – was shot dead as she entered her home early one evening in September 2017. As the Indian media community sought to come to terms with the shock and trauma, one of the many warriors for the new hyper-nationalism in the virtual space tweeted a message that the “merciless” murder of “Commy (sic, Commie) Gauri Lankesh” was all about her deeds coming back to haunt her.

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Gauri Lankesh was an outspoken journalist who inherited Lankesh Patrike, a newspaper that her equally irreverent and iconoclastic father had founded and named after himself. She had since kept that effort at sharp social critique afloat under her own name, associating herself with human rights causes and speaking up strongly and frequently against the effort to stifle dissent under the cloak of the new nationalism.

Gauri Lankesh's assassins were waiting for her as she arrived home and sped away on motorcycles after shooting her dead. The method was eerily similar to that employed in three murders of public figures involved in campaigns against superstition and religious obscurantism: Narendra Dabholkar in the western Maharashtra city of Pune in August 2013, Govind Pansare in the southern Maharashtra town of Kolhapur in February 2015 and M.M. Kalburgi in the northern Karnataka town of Dharwar in August 2015. Unlike in the three earlier instances, one arrest has been made in the Gauri Lankesh killing. K.T. Naveen Kumar, allegedly an activist of an extremist group from a southern district of Karnataka, was arrested in March 2018, six months after the murder. Very little has since come to light about the circumstances of the murder and the others who may have been involved.

Incitement to murder, sexual violence and extreme nationalism – which often takes the form of a bullying partisanship for Indian sport, principally involving the iconic national cricket team – have become accepted parts of social media practice. Mainstream media which has long years of experience in the more sober and responsible idiom, could potentially call out these abuses, but financial fragility renders their voice weaker than in earlier years. The menacing prospect today in India is that the mainstream media may be opting to piggyback on the rampant abuses of the social media, to retrieve their commercial fortunes from a rapid plunge into the red.



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KASHMIR: SIMMERING VALLEY

For more than three decades, journalists in Kashmir have been braving the challenges of living and reporting in a conflict zone. While the territorial dispute and internal strife are decades old, since the 1990s, Kashmir has been in the throes of an armed insurgency, and intense militarisation and arbitrary use of draconian laws. The media has had to balance pressures from all sides: the government, security forces, militants, and the Kashmiri public. Journalists perform the difficult task of informing the public while risking life and limb, dashing headlong into dangerous volatile situations with no protective gear or safety training. Precarious working conditions – low wages, no job security, benefits, medical, life or risk insurance exacerbate the risks for journalists in Kashmir.

From 2016 onwards, the spike in unrest and mass uprising of ordinary Kashmiris -- especially youth - following the killing of militant leader Burhan Wani by security forces in July saw special challenges for the media.

EMERGENCE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA

When the armed insurgency erupted in 1990 following what is termed the ‘Gawkadal massacre’ when paramilitary forces opened fire, killing about 50 unarmed protesters, there were only five or six Urdu newspapers being published from Srinagar. The international press was ejected from the Valley, and until 1995, there was no English dailies published in Kashmir (national dailies published from Delhi were distributed in the Valley). Now, there are about 61 registered Urdu newspapers, the prominent ones being: Al Safa Aftab, Srinagar Times, Kashmir Uzma, Nida-e-Mashriq, Uqaab and Afaaq. The main English dailies out of 34 are: Greater Kashmir, Rising Kashmir, Kashmir Images, Kashmir Observer, Kashmir Monitor, Kashmir Life, Kashmir Times and Kashmir Reader. These newspapers took on the challenging task of reporting the militancy and its impact on common Kashmiris, the might of the Indian state and human rights violations committed by the security forces and also by the armed militants.

There are no television channels based in the state other than cable TV and national channels broadcast in J&K, which are sometimes blocked by cable operators under directions of the state government.

Journalism as a profession is not yet institutionalised in Kashmir. Structures of recruitment, wages, promotions and benefits are not uniform in any media house. For most media houses, the small scale of operations and lack of standard procedures leaves journalists and media staff vulnerable and their jobs insecure. Precarious working conditions are exacerbated by the conflict. Salaries are poor, with journalists working for as little as Rs 5000 (USD 80) per month. Interns often carry out major tasks, sometimes with no salary for up to six months. In such a scenario, there are no appointment letters, medical benefits, insurance or pensions or provident funds. Written contracts are not drawn up and jobs and work assignments go according to oral agreements which are not binding. Reporters who travel for stories usually end up paying for conveyance themselves, unless they are lucky enough to hitch a ride with their colleagues from the national or international media. Photojournalists buy their own equipment, having to bear the costs of repairs and upgrades themselves. Phone bills are also borne by reporters.

In addition, saturation of the job market, with newly established journalism schools in Baramulla and Anantnag producing 120 graduates every year contributes to a glut in fresh entrants working for very low wages just to be able to gain experience and bylines, thus devaluing professional journalism.

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Alongside, the growth of new media has not been matched with an understanding of working conditions of online journalists who are expected to be on standby 24x7. Not only do journalists in the electronic media have to broadcast, they also have to write for the website in English and Hindi and also send photographs. All of this for the same salary.

The lack of investment in professional journalism is displayed in the poor salaries paid to field reporters, and minimising expenditure by relying on newspaper vendors and hawkers in the districts to phone in with local updates which are then subbed and packaged as “news” – thus completely bypassing professional journalists. Another phenomenon peculiar to Kashmir is to make use of government employees as sub-editors in the evening. They package agency news in the manner required by the publication, for very little payment.

New technologies and mobile telephony are rapidly changing the way news is generated and disseminated. Like in other parts of the country, verification and other tenets of professional journalism are often sacrificed for speed and volume of outreach.

INTIMIDATION AND RISKS

Since the armed conflict erupted in 1990, 21 journalists have lost their lives in targeted killings, or caught in the cross-fire. Assaults from all sides of the conflict – militants, the military and state-sponsored renegades (‘surrendered militants’ or Ikhwanis) had made journalism a hazardous profession during the 1990s. Abduction, parcel bombs and intimidation were not uncommon.

The risky balancing act of the Kashmiri media continues even today, and was mentioned in the report of the Press Council of India, ‘Media and Media Scenario of J&K’ released during a visit of the Council to Srinagar in October, 2017. The report noted that there were two narratives – of the Kashmiri media and the “media of the rest of India”. It went on to note that the “journalists in Kashmir have to manage the reality of walking on the tightrope amidst the threats of gun and political arm-twisting”

Today, while targeted killings are not the norm, journalists continue to be vulnerable while covering the conflict. Reporters from the districts receive more threats and physical assaults from security forces than those based in the capital Srinagar, and there is little recourse, it appears. Regular visits by army personnel and intelligence officers to the homes of journalists and harassment of their families, has become routine enough to be unremarkable – the annoyance and surveillance being borne as a fallout of working and living in a conflict zone. Journalists report being picked up and taken to Military Intelligence (MI) camps and interrogated, sometimes being detained with no charges. Questions about their stories sometimes leads to self-censorship to minimise harassment to families.

In a conflict situation, the identity of Kashmiri journalists is often deliberately blurred by the authorities. Freelance photojournalist Kamran Yousuf was picked up on September 5, 2017 by the counter-terrorism unit, the National Investigation Authority (NIA) and lodged in Tihar jail in capital Delhi. The 20-year-old from Pulwama town in South Kashmir was covering protests by civilians who were pelting stones at the security forces, a unique form of resistance in the Kashmir Valley. He was accused of pelting stones himself, and charged with serious crimes like criminal conspiracy, attempting to wage war against India, and sedition.

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The Kashmir Young Journalists' Association was the first to stand up publicly and assert that Yousuf is a professional journalist, support for his cause soon gathered force. Though he was released on bail about six months later on March 14, 2018, fighting the court case will be a long and arduous process.

As Yousuf's experience shows, press photographers are particularly at risk, since they rush to the spot of incidents even as they are unfolding. Except for those who work for national or international media, local press photographers and video journalists do not have protective jackets or helmets. Due to the nature of their work, they are at the frontlines of conflict with no protection. Mir Javid, a journalist in Kupwara was deliberately targeted with pellets in August, blinding him in one eye despite extensive surgeries.

Likewise, photojournalist Zuhaib Maqbool, 30, blinded in one eye by pellets aimed at him and his colleague Muzamil Matoo, by the security forces in September 2016. Multiple painful surgeries later, he is yet to fully regain his vision. His cameras costing about Rs 200,000 which he calls his "eyes" were also damaged. Yet, they have no medical, risk or life insurance cover. Funds were raised through a Facebook campaign for their medical expenses. There were more than 1261 incidents of stone pelting in Kashmir in 2017, each of these risky for journalists to cover.

Women journalists are few in number, though more women than men graduate from journalism school. There are no female photojournalists and few reporters, the latter having to face additional vulnerabilities covering the volatile political reality that is Kashmir. Most are ghettoised in feature writing or 'soft' beats. Gender discrimination and sexual harassment are realities for women journalists negotiating the predominantly male world of media in this state.



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Online abuse and intimidation are growing problems. Reporters in the electronic media had had to go to the extent of deactivating their social media accounts due to the barrage of abuse within minutes of posting any story. WhatsApp messages from all over the world range from a “friendly nudge” to give a certain angle, to open threats. A reporter with a national channel said that on one occasion, an extremist leader threatened to broadcast a call to burn his house from the local mosque.

The conflict in Kashmir has led to a peculiar inversion of competitive “breaking news” and “exclusives”, particularly in the electronic media. Given the immediate and wide outreach of television, correspondents of national channels say that they are cautious about breaking news, especially about militant groups or human rights violations by the army. Therefore, they share information and newsflashes go out simultaneously on tickers of all channels, thus reducing the risk for individual journalists. The vulnerability of Kashmiri journalists who live in the Valley is much higher than “parachute” journalists from Delhi or international channels who visit for a few days and leave, with no stakes in life in the Valley.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

News-gathering and verification are fraught with challenges in Kashmir. From obstacles to physically accessing villages on the contentious Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border with Pakistan, to routine denial of information from official sources, getting the complete story and a quote from all sides is virtually impossible. In a recent case where a ‘suspected militant’ was killed in Uri (a border area), villagers said he was a civilian – a grazer. But it was impossible to verify because journalists were denied access and officials refused to comment.

In some areas, though official permission is obtained, the authorities on the ground do not accept the permissions and passes issued by other authorities. When curfew is imposed, which is routine during military operations, combing, crackdowns or even civil strife, obtaining curfew passes is difficult. Even with passes in hand (issued by the civil authority – the District Magistrate) the military personnel on duty do not permit journalists to enter the spot where incidents have taken place. When the military does take journalists to specific areas, it is usually in the nature of embedded journalism, and extremely controlled.

Official statements are often too late in coming, making it impossible to include quotes of relevant government and military sources within the schedule demanded by a daily news cycle. This routine stone-walling means that the official version is missing from news stories. Senior journalists say that while there is no direct censorship, circumstances are created to make it difficult to work. There is no system in place to talk to the responsible person in the police or security agencies to get the official version. Another way in which the army controls the flow of information and testimonies from affected populations is to intimidate villagers to the extent that common people are afraid to talk to journalists due to fear of repercussions.

Access to information is severely restricted during shutdowns of the telephone network or the internet. The penetration of the internet and mobile telephony is high. However, during military operations, mass protests and demonstrations, the internet is shutdown or slowed down to a speed that renders it useless. Such blockades are routine after military operations involving armed militants resulting in casualties, and last for least four days till after the funeral rites are completed, with a view to preventing popular mobilisation around the deaths of militants.

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The internet is also often shut or slowed down on Fridays, when public gatherings around mosques are likely to be volatile and turn violent with stone pelting. According to statistics generated by the Delhi-based the Software Freedom Law Centre, India, Kashmir experienced 32 shutdowns in 2017 and 13 in 2018.

The struggle for journalists to get accreditation and the strict government control over this process is another method of blocking access to information.

GOVERNMENT CONTROL

Most of the papers published from Kashmir are priced nominally, around Rs 3, and do not earn sufficient revenue through sales or subscriptions. None of the Srinagar-based newspapers is owned by a business house or corporation. Local business has been hit by the insurgency and corporates from outside the state are loath to spend advertising revenue here. Some Indian corporations have been issued directives not to advertise in J&K.

These papers depend heavily on government advertisements and paid public notices. This source of revenue comes at a price of course. The Central Government Department of Audio Visual Publicity (DAVP), disburses advertisements, but with strings attached. Some publications receive advertisements disproportionate to their circulation (some print a token hundred copies for the record, while raking in large advertisement revenue). The content of these publications is impacted by the dependent relationship between the newspaper industry and the establishment, especially for economic survival. Pro-government publications are favoured with government accommodation, land, and other ‘privileges’ for propagating the official line. Those who do not play the game, pay a price.

In October 2017 the Home Ministry issued a letter addressed to senior officials of the state government and the Jammu & Kashmir police, saying: “It is understood that some newspapers in J&K are publishing highly radicalised content. This is against the Constitution of India as well as the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.”

The letter further says, “...publishing of anti-national articles in the newspapers of the state should be strictly dealt with. Such newspapers should also not be given any patronage by way of advertisements by the state government. This may be circulated to all concerned for strict compliance.” The message cannot be clearer. This was seen by editors in Kashmir as a form of censorship and direct control.

Editors say that even when reporting facts, Kashmiri papers are labelled as ‘anti-national’. In 2016, a publication which carried a photo of [militant leader] Burhan Wani on his death anniversary, had its advertisement revenue cut off on grounds that it was ‘promoting’ militancy, though journalists say that if large crowds are attending the funerals of slain militants in large numbers, this is a reality which they are duty-bound to report. At a meeting with the Director of Information, editors were told “If you take government advertisements, we also expect something.”

Although central government revenue (through the DAVP) has largely been curtailed, state advertising revenue to the tune of about Rs 32 crore was disbursed in the year 2016-2017. However, this was not reflected in the status of salaries or benefits to working journalists, many said. Some journalists felt that the government could exercise control not by censorship of content, but by making minimum standards, salaries and benefits mandatory and deny advertisement revenue to publications that did not comply.

INDIA: KASHMIR



ORGANISING FOR RIGHTS

The journalist community in Kashmir has been organised in various associations: Kashmir Press Photographers Association; Kashmir Journalists Corps; Welfare Association of Journalists; Kashmir Correspondents' Club. The Kashmir Young Journalists Association founded in 2016 aims to serve the interests of fresh entrants into the profession and the Kashmir Editors Guild was set up in 2016 to lobby for issues related to editors. The Jammu and Kashmir Journalists' Union, with about 30 members, is active in the Jammu region of the state, but not in the Kashmir Valley. An initiative to re-launch the Kashmir Union of Working Journalists which had been active in the 1980s, as well as a proposed Press Club provides hope for a united journalists movement to confront the challenges ahead.

INDIA



MEDIA VIOLATIONS: MAY 2017 - APRIL 2018

Killings of journalists: 8 (Male: 7, Female: 1)

Threats against the lives of journalists: 7 (Male: 5, Female: 2)

Other threats to journalists: 0

Non-fatal attacks on journalists: 34 (Male: 29, Female: 5)

Threats against media institutions: 1

Attacks on media institutions: 2

Killings of Journalists

May 15, 2017: Madhya Pradesh Shyam Sharma, journalist with Agniban, a local evening newspaper, was on his way to Manglia Square in Indore when his car was stopped by two assailants on motorbikes. They asked him to wind down his window, slit his throat and fled the scene. A passer-by saw Sharma bleeding heavily and rushed him to hospital. He was moved to another hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

September 5, 2017: Karnataka Gauri Lankesh, 55, a senior journalist and editor of Kannada language weekly Gauri Lankesh Patrike who had received a series of threats from Hindu extremists of whom she was critical, was shot dead outside her home in Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bengaluru. As she returned from work, unidentified gunmen on a motorbike shot at her. Lankesh died on the spot after receiving gunshots to the head and chest. One arrest has been made so far.

September 20, 2017: Tripura Santanu Bhowmik, 28, journalist with Dinraat, a cable television channel in Tripura state, northeast India was attacked and fatally wounded while he was covering a protest in Mandwai near Agartala, the capital of Tripura. He suffered head injuries from sharp objects during clashes between supporters of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), a tribal party agitating for a separate state, and the Ganamukti Parishad, wing of the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI-M), the ruling party in the state. Bhowmik was covering the protest and road blockade by the IPFT when he was attacked, possibly with sticks and rods. The police rushed him to a hospital where doctors declared him 'brought dead'.

November 21, 2017: Tripura Sudip Datta Bhowmik, 49, senior journalist with the Bangla language Syandan Patrika and contributor to local television channel News Vanguard was shot at point-blank range by a trooper at the battalion headquarters of the paramilitary Tripura State Rifles (TSR), near state capital Agartala. Bhowmik had recently exposed financial irregularities in the TSR. He was taken to the hospital only three hours later, where he was declared 'brought dead'.

November 30, 2017: Uttar Pradesh Naveen Gupta, 35, correspondent for Hindi daily Hindustan, was shot dead in Bilhaur in Kanpur district by bike-borne assailants as he came out a public lavatory behind his brother's shop. He died on his way to hospital with five bullets to his face and torso.

March 25, 2018: Bihar Naveen Nishchal from Dainik Bhaskar and Vijay Singh, who worked for a Hindi magazine, were killed when their motorbike was hit by a car near Garhani on the Arrah-Sasaram highway. The car was driven by a former village head, who has several criminal cases against him. Nishchal's family says that he had received threats in the days preceding his death.

March 26, 2018: Madhya Pradesh Sandeep Sharma, an investigative journalist, was deliberately crushed by a truck in Bhind, and died in hospital. In CCTV footage of the incident, the truck can be seen suddenly swerving and crushing Sharma who was riding a motorbike. Sharma had recently done two 'sting' investigations about sand mafia for a regional TV station, News World, and made allegations about the involvement of police officials. Sharma had reportedly sought police protection following the publication of the reports but it was not provided.

Threats against the lives of journalists

September 24, 2017: Kerala Biju Muthathu, a TV journalist in Kerala received death threats after his documentary aired. The threats related to the title Thendigalude Daivam or 'God of Beggars', about a temple that shelters the aged and destitute.

September 24, 2017: Tamil Nadu The editor of The Covai Post Vidyashree Dharmaraj and reporter AR Meyammai based in Coimbatore, received death threats over Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and VoIP calls for a story on their website about a ritual of parading half-naked pre-pubescent girls at the Yezhaikaatha Amman Temple in Madurai.

INDIA



MEDIA VIOLATIONS: MAY 2017 - APRIL 2018

Threats against the lives of journalists

September 30, 2017: New Delhi At least four journalists filed police complaints in Delhi and Noida after receiving death threats via WhatsApp. The calls and messages warned that anyone critical of the government, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party would meet the same fate as journalist Gauri Lankesh. Mohammad Ali, a reporter with The Hindu daily, chief reporter of Firstpost, Debobrat Ghose and Sonal Kapoor of NDTV were among more than a dozen journalists who have received similar messages on WhatsApp. Ravish Kumar of NDTV has also received death threats on WhatsApp.

Non-fatal attacks on journalists

May 1, 2017: New Delhi New Delhi police officers assaulted journalist Meghnad Bose, of The Quint, while he was recording a Facebook live video. Bose was held by policemen, slapped multiple times and detained inside a police van for 30 minutes before being driven to the police station.

May 3, 2017: Andhra Pradesh Four unidentified people beat up Telugu TV channel reporter Nallamilli Rama Reddy, at Pittala Vemavaram village in Andhra Pradesh. Reddy, who had recently filed two stories on illegal sand mining, was seriously injured and taken to hospital.

May 5, 2017: Kashmir Police beat up journalists covering protests after the Friday prayers in Sopore. The Station House Officer (SHO) of Sopore Mudasir Geelani reportedly led the police attack, in which Varmul Post photojournalists Eeshan Peer and Mohd Younis, were injured.

May 16, 2017: West Bengal Police attacked several photojournalists and camerapersons who were covering a fire in the Kohinoor building on the well-known Park Street in Kolkata. Police attacked the media workers, accusing them of obstructing the fire department. The driver of a police van kicked and pushed several photojournalists, in front of police officers who took no action.

May 22, 2017: West Bengal At least 50 media workers were attacked and beaten by police officers and personnel of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) as they covered a protest march organised by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in at the Esplanade in Kolkata, West Bengal. The attack saw at least a dozen journalists and media workers seriously injured.

June 9, 2017: Delhi Journalist Basit Malik was investigating the alleged demolition of a mosque in Sonia Vihar, Delhi when a mob he was speaking to became violent and assaulted him for almost two hours after learning that he had a Muslim name “While I was speaking, the mob kept jostling me around, and several people continued to hit me. I was unable to ascertain the identity of the attackers, and kept reiterating that I was a journalist. Then, the mob dragged me from the lawn and made me stand with my back to a wall that appeared to be a part of the haveli. The men surrounded me, and pointed their phones at me, recording videos... The mob kicked me, punched me, and slapped me. They continued to take videos of this assault.”

August 7, 2017: Odisha Ramesh Rath, a Balipatna based journalist working for Pragativadi, an Odia language daily was attacked by two bike-borne miscreants with a sharp weapon in Odisha. Rath sustained a deep cut on his back.

September 23, 2017: Uttar Pradesh Several journalists were injured when police ‘baton charged’ the group as they covered violent clashes at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Uttar Pradesh. Four journalists sustained injuries and needed treatment in hospital. The police also damaged their cameras and other equipment.

September 24, 2017: Kerala Sajeev Gopalan of Kerala Kaumudi was hospitalised after an attack by police officials in front of his house. Gopalan had published stories critical of police.

January 23, 2018: Meghalaya Freelance journalist Biplab Dey, who regularly contributes to The Assam Tribune and the Meghalaya Guardian, was assaulted by a group suspected to be members of the All Rabha Students’ Union in Athaibari, West Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya, northeast India, when he went to document the evidence of illegal transportation of timber to Assam. The attackers snatched Dey’s camera and mobile phone to destroy evidence.

March 10, 2018: Assam Police in the state of Assam in India’s Northeast, brutally beat up about six journalists, including News18 TV journalist Emmy C Lawbei while on assignment covering a students’ demonstration. Lawbei and other journalists were at the Assam-Mizoram state border on assignment where students were protesting after the Assam administration issued prohibitory orders. The police used force to disperse the students, Lawbei and other journalists were chased and beaten.

INDIA



MEDIA VIOLATIONS: MAY 2017 - APRIL 2018

March 26, 2018: Delhi Delhi police assaulted two women journalists and snatched away the camera of one while they were covering the demonstration organised by students and teachers of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India on March 23. One male journalist was also beaten up and sustained injuries. Anushree Fadnavis, a photojournalist with the Hindustan Times daily, was roughed up and her camera was snatched away by policewomen “I was clicking photographs of a student being dragged when the police targeted me,” Fadnavis said. “They were talking about snatching and breaking my camera. I kept pleading with them to spare my camera.” The police officer on duty also roughed up and grabbed another woman journalist by her breasts. The two journalists had filed separate complaints accusing the police of assaulting and molesting reporters at the site of the JNU protest.

April 9, 2018: West Bengal Photojournalist Biplab Mondal of The Times of India daily was forcibly undressed, illegally confined and beaten while other journalists and photojournalists were attacked in Alipore, Kolkata, West Bengal on April 9, 2018 while they were covering the filing of nomination papers for the polls to the local bodies (panchayats). The attackers, allegedly affiliated to the ruling Trinamool Congress, saw Mondal taking pictures of the violence that broke out during the nomination, asked him to delete all the pictures and attacked him when he refused. Other journalists, including ETV’s Manas Chattopadhyay, were also attacked and forced to delete pictures from their mobile phones. Chatterjee sustained injuries on his right hand. The journalists alleged that the police were present but did not intervene to stop the violence.

April 17, 2018: Meghalaya Two masked motorcycle borne miscreants threw an IED (improvised explosive device) at the house of Patricia Mukhim, editor of Shillong Times daily at Umpling, Shilong. No one was injured in the attack.

Threats against media institutions

September 28, 2017: Arunachal The Adi Baane Kebang Youth Wing (ABKYW), the youth wing of the organisation for the indigenous Adi people, destroyed and burned copies of The Arunachal Times daily newspaper at the Indira Gandhi Park; and uploaded a video of it on social media. The ABKYW has also ‘banned’ the distribution of the daily in East Siang district and issued what it calls a ‘show cause notice’. The ABKYW has been critical of the daily for ‘ignoring their voice’ and ‘not backing their demands’ while the newspaper maintained that it had remained neutral and covered all sides.

Attacks on media institutions

August 25, 2017: Haryana After the self-styled ‘godman’ Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was found guilty by a special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court, on charges of rape and sexual assault of two female devotees in 2002, his followers ran amok and attacked media vehicles and journalists in Haryana and Punjab. At least four outdoor broadcasting (OB) vans of media houses – NDTV, Republic TV, India Today and E24 – were toppled, damaged and burnt near the court premises in Panchkula, Haryana. Apart from this, at least 38 media personnel have registered complaints with the police regarding loss of equipment and damage to vehicles. Reporter Rakesh Kumar and video journalist Shipendar Happy from PTC News were attacked and robbed in Sirsa, near Dera Sacha Sauda, the headquarters of Ram Rahim Singh.

September 20, 2017: Kerala Asianet News regional offices in Kerala were attacked, reportedly for its series of news reports about the alleged involvement of the state minister encroaching on land for his plush resorts.

Other notable incidents / development

Arrest/Detention

June 21, 2017: Karnataka The Speaker of Karnataka legislative assembly K B Koliwad authorised the one-year imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000 (USD 200) of Ravi Belagere, editor of weekly tabloid Hai Bangalore, and Anil Raj, editor of a local tabloid Yelahanka Voice for publishing reports criticising the members of legislative assembly (MLAs). Belagere was punished for the article published in September 2014 about Koliwad’s attempt to get into state cabinet. Koliwad himself moved a motion on breach of privilege by the editor and had chaired the hearing as the chairman of the privileges committee. Raj, was punished on the basis of a motion by two other MLAs which the committee found to be defamatory.

September 4, 2017: Kashmir Kamran Yousuf, a freelance photojournalist, was picked up in Kashmir. Yousuf, 23, resident of Pulwama in South Kashmir who contributed photographs to several local newspapers including the Greater Kashmir, was arrested by the National Investigation Authority (NIA) on grounds of instigating stone pelting at security personnel and was transferred to New Delhi for interrogation the next day. He was released on bail on March 14, 2018.

INDIA



MEDIA VIOLATIONS: MAY 2017 - APRIL 2018

October 27, 2017: National Capital Territory Vinod Verma, a senior journalist formerly with the BBC, was arrested by the Chhattisgarh police in the early hours of the morning on charges of extortion. Verma allegedly had in his possession a “sex-tape” purportedly of a Chhattisgarh Minister who filed a complaint of blackmail. Verma had been part of a Editors’ Guild of India fact-finding team to look into the situation of journalists in conflict-hit Chhattisgarh state. A special court of the Central Bureau of Investigation granted him bail on December 28, 2017.

November 5, 2017: Tamil Nadu G Balakrishnan (Bala), an independent editorial cartoonist based in Tirunelveli district, was arrested by the Crime Branch wing of Tamil Nadu police for a cartoon he posted on social media criticising the district administration and Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami. He was accused of “obscene representation” and defamation and was booked under Sections 67 of Information Technology Act and 501 of the Indian Penal Code. He was released on bail a day later.

December 10, 2017: Kashmir Kashmir police arrested French freelance journalist Paul Comiti in Srinagar for ‘violating visa regulations’ by filming protest activities in Kashmir, and presented him to the court, which remanded him on custody for five days. Comiti, 47, was visiting Kashmir to carry out research for his documentary on a business visa valid until December 2018. The police charged him with violating the Passport Act and carrying out activities not permitted under a business visa.

Censorship

July 22, 2017: West Bengal Police raided the office of Nepali-language satellite TV channel, ABN, asked the employees to vacate the office, stopped the broadcast and then sealed the office. They were acting on complaints lodged by the Darjeeling district cultural and information department. The police alleged that the employees of the media house shared news about the ongoing demonstrations on Facebook after telecasting the news, instigating agitators to turn more violent.

August 24, 2017: Kashmir Kashmiri users and activists received official notices from Twitter, warning that their online content could be acted upon in the future. This came after Twitter received a complaint from the Indian government, asking it block over 100 accounts and tweets that have been found “propagating objectionable content”. Most of the content and accounts appear to involve Kashmir and Kashmiri issues. It is unclear how many accounts or tweets Twitter has officially blocked.

Harassment

June 5, 2017: New Delhi The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) raided the residences of Prannoy Roy, the executive chairperson of NDTV, in New Delhi and Dehradun in connection with allegations of Roy and NDTV causing losses to a private bank by defaulting loans. The CBI said it had registered a case and raided four places belonging to Roy and his wife Radhika Roy.

June 19, 2017: New Delhi Ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesperson Nupur Sharma filed a police complaint against journalist Rana Ayyub over a tweet that Sharma claimed to be ‘defamatory, hate-filled and derogatory’. Ayyub, the author of Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover Up, a book about the 2002 Gujarat riots, that implicates BJP top leaders for the riots, had tweeted a comment on the Presidential candidate by an alliance backed by BJP. The complaint stated that Ayyub’s tweet reflected ‘extremely casteist, hateful and disrespectful mindset’ against the scheduled castes or dalits, which the candidate represents. The complaint asks for Ayyub to be booked under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act, which appears to be a disproportionate use of law.

August 4, 2017: Karnataka Dhanya Rajendran, a senior journalist and editor-in-chief of digital news platform The News Minute, was mentioned more than 30,000 times on Twitter abusing her for her tweet about a movie.

October 9, 2017: Gujarat Businessman Jay Shah filed a criminal defamation case in Ahmedabad, against reporter Rohini Singh and editors Siddharth Varadarajan, Sidharth Bhatia and MK Venu, of the news portal The Wire for the report ‘The Golden Touch of Jay Amit Shah’ highlighting a dramatic increase in some of his businesses since Narendra Modi became prime minister. The story based on annual filings of Shah’s companies with the Registrar of the Companies, was published by The Wire, a not-for-profit independent news website. Jay Shah is a son of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Amit Shah.

INDIA



MEDIA VIOLATIONS: MAY 2017 - APRIL 2018

January 7, 2018: New Delhi The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) filed a police complaint against The Tribune daily and its reporter Rachna Khaira over an investigative story. The case was lodged by a deputy director of the UIDAI with the Delhi Police Crime Branch cyber cell naming Khaira as well as sources quoted in the news published on January 3 exposing the breach of the database of the national identity card Aadhar containing personal information of citizens, for a fee. In the complaint, the UIDAI has accused the newspaper and media of cheating by impersonation, forgery, using forged documents and IT-related offenses.

April 14, 2018: Andhra Pradesh A police report was filed against journalist and cartoonist Swathi Vadlamudi in Hyderabad for a cartoon depicting mythical gods on the issue of rape for ‘deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs.’ Vadlamudi also received online abuses by Hindu groups.

Regulations

May 9, 2017: New Delhi The Supreme Court of India issued an order banning news media from publishing statements by Calcutta High Court judge CS Karnan, who accused other senior judges of corruption. A bench headed by Chief Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar, while sentencing Justice Karnan to six months in prison on charges of contempt of court, ordered that “since the incident of contempt includes public statements and publication of orders made by the contemnor, which were highlighted by the electronic and print media, we are of the view, that no further statements made by him should be published hereafter”.

April 4, 2018: India The Information and Broadcasting Ministry of India has formed a committee without any representation of working journalists to recommend regulations for online media. On April 4, the Ministry constituted a 10-member committee including secretaries of three ministries, two departments, and representatives of the Press Council of India (PCI), News Broadcasters Association (NBA) and Indian Broadcasters Federation (IBF) to ‘frame and suggest a regulatory framework for online media / news portals including digital broadcasting and entertainment / infotainment sites and news /media aggregators’. The terms of reference of the committee include to ‘delineate the sphere of online information dissemination which needs to be brought under regulation, on the lines applicable to print and electronic media’.

Internet Shutdowns

From May 2017 to April 2018, the internet was shut down or deliberately slowed down on 82 occasions in different parts of India. In most cases, the justification given for an internet shutdown was “to maintain law and order”, and many shutdowns were either pre-emptive or reactive measures in the face of mass, or potentially violent public protests. For example, in the volatile Kashmir Valley, which experienced nearly half of the shutdowns in India, clamping down on communications generally followed military operations in which militants or civilians are killed. In Darjeeling, a 45-day internet shutdown was ordered due to political demonstrations, protests and clashes by activists seeking a separate state. For a complete listing please refer to the chapter on Internet Shutdowns.