

PAKISTAN

MEDIA FREEDOM REPORT 2022



FREEDOM AFTER SPEECH



COUNCIL OF PAKISTAN NEWSPAPER EDITORS

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Summary of CPNE – Pakistan Media Freedom Report Year 2022:

In 2022, freedom of media in Pakistan faced exacerbating scenarios of jeopardy, whereas freedom of speech was continuously suppressed and sabotaged. According to CPNE's "Pakistan Media Freedom Report 2022", four media persons were killed during the performance of their duties. The brutal murder of well-known anchor and journalist Arshad Sharif, Athar Mateen, and Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi has exposed the mendacious claims of media freedom by the government and authorities, whereas the death of Sadaf Naeem, a female reporter, and journalists, during the performance of her duty as consequences of substandard safety measures.

In the Federal, the coalition-led government aggrandized the PTI Government's anti-media policies and infringed their claims of media freedom. It further continued revengeful and retaliative practices as per the previous government of PTI. According to the report, freedom of media and freedom of expression in Pakistan on the latest world index ranked 157th, which is 12 points worse off compared to 2022. Despite the new government coming into power in 2022, the malicious intimidation tactics to oppress the freedom of media, freedom of expression and information accessibility remained unchanged. These statistics and stated incidents in the issued report are derived from Media Monitoring Desk set up at CPNE Secretariat, gathered from first-hand information, various media sources, newspapers and news websites and carefully composed after a thorough investigation by CPNE's Press Freedom and Monitoring Committee.

As indicated in the report, the most gruesome murder case on the line of duty is of Anchor & Journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya, of which accusations are allegedly being pinned on certain people in Pakistan. Wherefore dreadful murder of Arshad Sharif not only threatened the Pakistani Journalists carrying out international-level investigative journalism but also inculcated fear in prospected candidates and those willing to join the media profession. The influential and authoritative people manipulated, threatened, and harassed professional journalists by wrongfully imposing their power hither and thither.

Undemocratic black law, enacted by PECA (Prevention of Electronic Crimes), is still forcibly being implemented, some of the clauses of which are negatively impacting the freedom of journalism and freedom of expression. During the past year, threats and attacks faced by media personnel in the context of freedom of expression have contradicted the claims of the democratic government in Pakistan and reflected the authoritarianism system. According to CPNE's report, in 2022, journalists, media employees and media organizations were subjected to anti-media activities due to intolerance and prejudice against media. In more than 28 incidents, 13 journalists faced violence, households of 2 journalists were attacked, 10 journalists were arrested, and cases were lodged against them, and 3 female journalists were harassed. In remuneration of factful and truthful reporting about floods and affectees in Sindh, along with Ilyas Samoo, the journalist from Keti Bandar, many journalists from different areas of Sindh were arrested on false allegations under Anti-terrorisms Act.

The case based on false allegations against Waqar Satti, an Islamabad-based journalist, under Blasphemy Act is still pending, irrespective of clear orders by High Court. Moreover, journalists also face self-censorship and other restrictions. Online harassment against journalists continued consistently in 2022. Various defamatory trends were run against journalists and media organizations. Social media trends backed by some religious and political groups triggered severe life and safety threats for journalists. Some journalists did not tolerate persistent oppression by powerful groups, moved abroad, and even there, they kept their identities hidden so that they do not meet the same end as Arshad Sharif. To combat this

situation, no acceptable, transparent, and unbiased system is available to keep data records of attacks against journalists.

Online trolling was carried out against numerous male and female journalists, including Shifa Yousafzai, Ghareeda Farooqi and others. Similarly, walking on the same path as the previous government, the current coalited government persisted in using advertisements as a deterrent against journalists. Journalists and employees of media organizations faced nonpayment of salaries in addition to several other issues. However, continued efforts by CPNE resulted in the implementation of media policy by the PTI-led previous federal government for direct payments to media organizations instead of payment through advertising agencies. Although Punjab Government is still disinclined to implement the direct payment system for media organizations, while in Sindh, with an unjust distribution of advertisements and prolonged outstanding amounts and lethargic behaviour, newspapers and magazines underwent extreme financial turmoil and were shut down.

It depicts that for freedom of expression, federal and provincial authorities are non-serious. As mentioned in the report, legislation for the protection of journalists and the establishment of the Journalist Protection Commission under the headship of Retired Justice Rasheed A. Rizvi is prospectively considered an effective act yet waiting for implementation.

Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) has warned in its report that history is witness to major incidents and downfalls like *Sakoot-e-Dhaka* (Fall of Dhaka) as the consequences of sabotaging media freedom. Subsequently, patriotism calls for policies as per media suggestions so that democracy prospers and freedom of expression revives for the betterment of society. We hope that the current government, along with strengthening democracy and the economy, respects the freedom of media, considering it an important pillar of democracy. Instead of subjugating and harassing journalists and media organizations, work on policies and interventions for their protection. CPNE pledges to confront intimidation and will never compromise freedom of speech and expression.

Media persons who lost their lives during performance of their duties:

According to available statistics, three journalists and media workers were killed from January 2022 up to December 2022, whereas one female journalist died in an accident as a result of a lack of safety measures.



Name: Arshad Sharif

On 23 October, the Anchor of the TV Channel ARY News, Arshad Shareef was shot dead by Security Officials in Kenya. This incident urged worldwide protests from Pakistan-based and international journalist organizations. Arshad Shareef was falsely involved in several fake FIRs because of his TV Programme. He was constantly receiving threats in Pakistan over it. In such circumstances, he wrote letters to the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, and the Chief Justice of Pakistan and informed them about above said threats and challenges being faced by the journalists. In such a situation Arshad Shareef left the country and went to Dubai, later on, he moved to Kenya for shelter, where he was unfortunately killed. The Government of Pakistan sent 2 members team to Kenya for fact-finding, which termed the incident as "Targeted Killing" precisely. On the basis of said report, Islamabad Police ultimately lodged an FIR of the murder of Arshad Shareef on 06 December 2022. The Supreme Court also took suo-moto notice of said murder and formed a new JIT for the inquiry of the murder from the very beginning. The bereaved family and the entire journalist community are awaiting yet for justice.



Name: Athar Mateen

On 18 February 2022 at 8:00 am, in North Nazimabad, Karachi, dacoits opened fire on private TV channel Samaa's producer Athar Mateen upon foiling a mugging bid, and he died on the spot. He was going to drop his kids off at school.



Name: Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi

On 28 April 2022, in the circle of Kuhna Police Station Kahnewal, several assailants opened fire at a car carrying media workers, in which TV channel 7's correspondent Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi was shot in the head. He was rushed to hospital, where he died of his injuries. According to a Police investigation, the attackers' link was found to be with the land mafia.



Name: Sadaf Naeem

On 30 October 2022, Channel 5's anchor Sadaf Naeem was crushed to death in Lahore after falling under a container during coverage of PTI's rally. Journalism groups believe this incident to be a consequence of a lack of safety provisions while covering important events.

Journalists who were directly targeted with attacks, violence, and suppression:

Repeating the history of past years, a substantial number of journalists, media workers and media organizations were targeted and subjected to intolerance-based anti-media propaganda and atrocities by various influential sources, also in 2022. In more than 28 incidents, 13 journalists faced violence, households of 2 journalists were attacked, 10 journalists were arrested, and cases were lodged against them, and 3 female journalists were harassed. Some journalists did not tolerate persistent oppression by powerful groups, moved abroad. To combat such a situation, no acceptable, transparent, and unbiased system is available to keep data records of attacks against journalists.

Violence against Journalists (13 incidents):

1. On 24 January 2022, a reporter of *Rohi TV* Multan, Abdul Rasheed and a cameraman of *Roznama Azad Safar* Multan, Asif Khokhar, were assaulted/tortured in the office of assistant commissioner District *Haripur* of Division *Bahawalpur*.
2. On 27 March 2022, during protests in D Chowk Islamabad, workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) blisteringly attacked the media by assaulting deployed media workers of Aaj TV and Hum TV and destroyed DSNGs.
3. On 27 March 2022, in Bhakkar, a correspondent of Daily *Ausaf*, Zahid Sharif Rana, was tortured because of publishing news against a gambling site. Afterwards, the suspects were arrested on the notice of District Police Office (DPO).
4. On 12 April 2022, PTI workers harassed New TV's Director of Current Affairs, Nasarullah Malik, during a rally in Lahore.
5. On 1 May 2022, in Saddar Karachi, workers of PML-N assaulted ARY's reporter Chand Nawab during a protest outside ARY's office.
6. On 12 June 2022, in District Chichawatni, Yasir Hussain, a reporter for the TV channel Public News was attacked by PTI workers.
7. On 30 June 2022, the chief editor of the news website iNEWS, Ahmer Shaheen, was attacked by two assailants in the Sui Gas Area of Lahore. They intercepted his car, opened fire at it, and then took his laptop and phone.
8. On 1 July 2022, TV channel GNN's reporter Idrees Abbasi was assaulted by a security guard of former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Qasim Suri.
9. On 2 July 2022, a Senior Journalist and a reputable analyst of a private TV channel, Ayaz Amir, was attacked by unidentified persons in Lahore who also snatched his phone. Anchor Imran Riaz was also arrested and FIRs were lodged against him.
10. On 2 July 2022, in Rajanpura, Neo News reporter Hanif Baloch was assaulted.
11. On 30 August 2022, the President of Lahore Press Club, Azam Chaudhry was threatened with a parcel containing a Kalashnikov bullet as a symbolic warning. The incident was a consequence of his protest against the ban on various TV channels, and it was condemned by CPNE along with all journalism organizations.
12. On 16 October 2022, a reporter of Daily *Wahdat* Peshawar, Aatish Mehsood, was attacked by a local contractor for pointing out flaws in the developmental work in North Waziristan. The victimized journalist identified and published news about using sub-standard materials in the contract.

13. On 26 November 2022, employees of DHQ Hospital Khar in Bajor, accompanying the Medical Superintendent, attacked Khyber News' reporter Zahid Jan and seized his mobile phone and other possessions. He was reporting about the post-mortem of a double-murder case.

Attack on houses of journalists (02 Incidents):

1. On 29 June 2022, in Panjgur, unidentified assailants targeted the house of Umar Majid, President of Panjgur Press Club and fled the scene. However, no casualty was reported.
2. On 16 December 2022, Bureau Chief of Daily Sada-e-Watan Lahore Naseer Ghumman came under attack by firing in Sialkot. He was doing reporting about the inquiry of a Rs.4 crore corruption case involving TMA Chief Officer Zubair Watto, after which the said incident took place.

Arrest and False Cases against Journalists (10 Incidents):

In the Federal, the coalition-led government aggrandized the PTI Government's anti-media policies and infringed their claims of media freedom. It further continued revengeful and retaliative practices as per the previous government of PTI. The details are as follows:

1. On 6 February 2022, the Chief Editor of an Online News Agency, Mohsin Jamil Baig, was arrested when Federal Investigation Team's Cyber Crime Wing raided his house on a complaint lodged by previous government's former Minister Murad Saeed former minister of the previous government.
2. On 06 July 2022, the anchor of Express News Imran Riaz Khan was arrested from Attock in the late hours. He had dozens of sedition and mutiny cases against him in Sindh and Punjab which were established after the regime change in Pakistan in April 2002. Before the arrest, he had obtained protective bail from Lahore High Court for said cases on 23 May 2022. At the time of arrest, Imran Riaz was residing in Lahore on a security bond. He was also offloaded from a Dubai-bound flight on 15 July 2022 at the request of the Police as he was blacklisted by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).
3. On 10 August 2022, cases were filed against the CEO of ARY, Salman Iqbal and Anchor Persons Arshad Sharif and Khawar Ghumman under the false allegations of sedition.
4. On 19 August 2022, at 4 pm, a false FIR was lodged against Daily Awami Awaz's correspondent Ilyas Samoo after which he was arrested and detained for four days. His crime was factful reporting about health, education, the land mafia, and the grim condition of flood victims in Keti Bandar. To probe the case, an inquiry team has been formed on the instructions of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.
5. On 28 August 2022, the former president of the Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists and reporter of Geo News, Waqar Satti, faced false allegations of blasphemy when PTI workers lodged a case against him for a video uploaded on social media by PTI workers. Rawalpindi Bench of Lahore High Court rejected the allegations. After that, Punjab Government prosecuted the case, and it is still open.
6. On 9 August 2022, Emad Yousaf, the Director of News of ARY, was arrested after police raided his house at night. His family was harassed during the incident.
7. On 22 August 2022, the anchorperson of Bol TV, Jamil Farooqi, was arrested and tortured on the basis of the Youtube Program. Afterwards, he was released on bail.

8. On 28 August 2022 in Bhan Syedabad, police tried to arrest a correspondent of Daily Awami Awaz, Adam Maingal, because he published news about corruption in welfare for flood victims. The case is still in hearing in Sehwan Court.
9. On 30 August 2022, in District Jacobabad, a false case was lodged by the in-charge of the Health Center against the correspondent of Daily Awami Awaz, Basit Marheeto for reporting about flood victims.
10. On 6 September 2022, the correspondent of Awami Awaz, Nasrullah Gadani, was arrested because of reporting the eviction of minorities from tent settlement Mirpur Mathelo Flood Victims. Later, he was released after the journalists' protest. However, the case is still in process.

Harassment of Female Journalists (03 Incidents):

Social media trolling against journalists continued consistently in 2022, and harassment in this shape was carried out against numerous male and female journalists, including Shifa Yousafzai, Ghareeda Farooqi and others. Various defamatory trends were run against journalists and media organizations. Social media trends backed by some religious and political groups triggered severe life and safety threats for journalists.

1. On 11 March 2022, the anchorperson of *Sach TV*, Batool Rajpoot, was harassed by PTI's MNA Kanwal Shauzab.
2. On 18 August 2022, unethical trends against the anchorperson of GNN, Ghareeda Farooqi, were run by PTI activists on *Twitter*.
3. On 2 December 2022, the female anchor of HUM TV, Shifa Yousafzai's house, was forcibly invaded by unknown men who harassed her security guard. Priorly, she also complained about being trolled on social media.

Ban on TV channels and Court Orders:

- 17 January 2022: PEMRA prohibited airing the interview of former DG FIA Bashir Memon at the request of FIA.
- 21 March 2022: PEMRA issued a show cause notice to Dunya News' Chief.
- 23 April 2022: PEMRA issued a show-cause notice to ARY News for airing "fake/unverified news" based on informal sources.
- 9 May 2022: PEMRA issued directives to broadcast media to refrain from airing content against government institutions.
- 9 September 2022: Sindh High Court banned the transmission of the private TV channel Bol News.
- 17 September 2022: Islamabad High Court directed PEMRA to restore transmissions of ARY News.
- 6 October 2022: PEMRA issued a show cause notice to ARY News.
- 6 October 2022: Islamabad High Court ordered PEMRA to restore ARY News.

Using Government Advertisements to Deter Journalism:

On 11 April, with the change of government, retracing the previous government, the newly formed coalited government persisted in using advertisements as a deterrent against journalists and tame media in 2022. Journalists and employees of media organizations faced nonpayment of salaries in addition to several other issues. However, continued efforts by CPNE resulted in the better implementation of media policy by the PTI-led previous federal government for direct payments to media organizations instead of payment through advertising agencies. Although Punjab Government is still disinclined to implement the direct payment system for media organizations, while in Sindh, with an unjust distribution of advertisements and prolonged outstanding amounts and lethargic behaviour, newspapers and magazines underwent extreme financial turmoil and were shut down. It has become unaffordable for newspapers to pay salaries to employees and manage newsprint costs and other expenditures. It indicates that neither freedom of expression is a priority for authorities, nor they are sincere in this regard.

Legislation for the Protection of Journalists:

In 2021, the Journalists Protection Bill was approved by Parliament on the federal level but without further development. Whereas in Sindh, after approval of the Sindh Journalists Protection Bill 2021, in 2022 Bill for the protection of journalists and the establishment of the Journalist Protection Commission under the headship of Retired Justice Rasheed A. Rizvi is prospectively considered an effective development, however implementation it is still adjourned.

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