

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsfb.org/afghanistan-reporter-arrested-arbitrarily-11-07-2013,44927.html>

Asia - Afghanistan

Judicial gagging

## Reporter arrested arbitrarily, editor gets jail term

11 July 2013

Reporters Without Borders condemns a recent increase in violations of freedom of information in Afghanistan, including the arbitrary arrest of **Abdolrahman Sakhizadeh**, a reporter for the Kabul-based daily *Mandegar*, on 5 July and a 30-month jail sentence for the newspaper's editor, **Nazari Paryani**, for reporting alleged fraud during the 2009 presidential election.

"Several journalists have been abusively detained since the start of the year or have been the victims of threats or arrests orchestrated by judicial officials, often in connection with reporting critical of the authorities," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Officials frequently abuse their power in order to bring complaints against media personnel, counting on systematic cooperation from the judicial authorities. Arresting journalists and pressuring them to reveal their sources is unjustifiable and illegal."

Sakhizadeh was arrested as a result of a libel action by the head of the government's anti-corruption department, Azizullah Ludin, in connection with a 15 May story about alleged corruption involving senior officials within the department. Ludin filed his complaint although the paper published his written response two days after the original story.

Ludin is also involved in another judicial complaint against the paper, in which Paryani received a phone call notifying him that he had been given the 30-month jail sentence in absentia on 5 June. Paryani, who has appealed, was never told about the original trial, held on 2 March.

He told Reporters Without Borders: "In the current situation, with elections coming in 2014 and then the withdrawal of foreign troops, these actions may reflect a desire to impose limits on freedom of information and to pressure the media to censor themselves. There were no personal attacks in the offending articles. We criticized those concerned out of professional duty."

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, the information and culture ministry did not sign any request to prosecute the journalists, although this is required by the law in the absence of a media commission – the body that is supposed to verify media offences – which is to be formed after the election of journalists' representatives in August.

Reporters Without Borders notes the information and culture ministry's positive response to the request to annul the elections of members of the commission – in which the Federation of Afghan Journalists was not fully represented – and to hold new elections.

### Wave of violence

Reporters Without Borders also condemns a new wave of violence against journalists on the streets of Kabul. At least four journalists were attacked in a single day on 9 July.

They included **Mohammad Fahim Fetrat**, a reporter for privately-owned *Channel 1 TV*, and his cameraman, who were hit by police in the capital while doing a report on police mistreatment of street vendors.

On 9 July, **Edress Temori**, a reporter for *Channel 1*, and **Hussian Nazari**, cameraman with *3 Sport TV*, were attacked by armed individuals as they left the headquarters of the National

Olympic Committee after a news conference by its director, Gen. Zahir Aghbar. A *Negah TV* reporter managed to leave unmolested.

The National Olympic Committee, which had been upset by a *Channel 1's* coverage of Afghan taekwondo star Rohullah Nekpai's criticism of the committee, issued a short statement denying any connection with the attacks and with those responsible for the destruction of journalists' equipment.

Reporters Without Borders, which already [criticized the increase in violence and threats against journalists in April](#), is aware of around 30 cases of physical attacks and threats against journalists in Afghanistan since the start of the year.

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