

Reporters Without Borders

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Asia - Afghanistan

Good initiative

Reporters Without Borders backs media code of good conduct

25 June 2014

Reporters Without Borders supports the "Code of Good Conduct" that Afghan journalists' associations and media executives have signed with the aim of ensuring that the current post-election crisis in Afghanistan is covered professionally and responsibly.

Afghanistan has been rocked by a political crisis since the second round of the presidential election on 14 June, above all as a result of allegations of electoral fraud by one of the candidates, Abdullah Abdullah.

The authority of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) has been badly undermined. At the same time, media have been fuelling the crisis with aggressive comments about certain ethnic groups and even hate speech.

Journalists' associations, media freedom groups and leading national media* signed the Code of Good Conduct on 24 June. All have stressed the importance of the role of the media and journalists, and have urged media personnel to "remain impartial as regards ethnic and religious communities and political tendencies in order to provide coverage that is in the public interest."

The Code of Good Conduct has also been signed by the head of the Media Centre (an offshoot of the information and culture ministry), representatives of both candidates, the United Nations mission in Afghanistan and the IEC.

The code's 11 articles call for ethical coverage of events without inciting hatred, especially during news broadcasts. The code urges journalists to be professional while moderating debates and interviews, and recommends not interviewing those who encourage hatred towards religious and ethnic communities. It also urges journalists to do serious investigative reporting, to inform the public about any irregularities or fraud, and to press the authorities and election officials for explanations.

"We support this Code of Good Conduct because freedom of information must be exercised in a responsible manner," said Réza Moïni, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Iran-Afghanistan desk.

"Journalists are not like other citizens, inasmuch as people pay a great deal of attention to what they say. While following a code of conduct, it is important that Afghan journalists are free to investigate the allegations of irregularities during the presidential elections, because its credibility is at stake."

On 28 March, Reporters Without Borders issued a report about media freedom in Afghanistan that is entitled "Presidential election in Afghanistan: local media on the front line." RWB also launched an information campaign aimed at preparing journalists for the election and protecting them while they were covering it.

The [Handbook for Journalists during Elections](#), which RWB produced jointly with the International Organization of the Francophonie, was translated into [Persian](#) and [Pashto](#), and copies were distributed to Afghan journalists who attended seminars that RWB organized in Kabul and in Sayad (in the northeastern province of Kapisa) in September 2013. Reporters Without Borders invites Afghan journalists to read the Handbook's recommendations again.

Afghanistan is ranked 128th out of 180 countries in the 2014 [Reporters Without Borders press](#)

[freedom index.](#)

**Tolo TV, Shamshad TV, On TV, Lemar TV, Ayena TV, Metra TV, Aryana TV, Tamadon TV, Khorshid TV, Radio Killid, Radio Amozegar, the Pajhwok news agency, the 8 Sobh, Mandegar and Arman Meli daily newspapers, the Nameh e Kherad weekly, the National Union of Journalists of Afghanistan, the Afghan Independent Journalists Association, NAI (a media freedom group), the Association of Women Journalists and International Media Support.*

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