

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/afghanistan-afghan-government-urged-to-06-03-2013,44167.html>

Asia - Afghanistan

More violence

## Afghan government urged to guarantee journalists' safety

6 March 2013

Reporters Without Borders is concerned about an increase in harassment and violence against journalists and sanctions against news media. Since the start of the year, two radio stations have been closed by the authorities and at least 12 journalists have been arrested or attacked by police in various parts of the country.

"We urge the authorities to do their duty by guaranteeing journalists' safety and respecting their right to report the news," Reporters Without Borders said. "Mistrust and accusatory attitudes towards journalists and news media are endangering freedom of information. The threats against the media and impunity for those who attack journalists must end."

In one of the latest cases, *Radio Galat Jagh* manager **Taymour Shah Sahzadeh** was detained by the police for four hours in the southeastern province of Zabol on 27 February, since when the station's broadcasts have been suspended.

Confirming the suspension, *Radio Galat Jagh* editor in chief **Abdolsedigh Mirvissi** told Reporters Without Borders on 3 March: "The station is being punished for broadcasting a report about an anti-corruption protest and for broadcasting an interview with a parliamentarian on the same subject." *Radio Galat Jagh* had been broadcasting with the support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which reportedly withdrew this support at the request of Zabol's governor after he was singled out for criticism by the protesters.

*Radio Nassim*, a local radio station based in the central province of Daykandi, was the victim of harassment and reprisals by the governor, the police chief and local representatives of the information and culture ministry on 14 February.

Station manager **Mohammad Reza Vahedi** told the [Pajhwok new agency](#): "The governor banned officials from answering our questions while the information and culture ministry illegally tried to insist on our revealing our source for a programme about the security situation in the province."

The governor and the head of the local information ministry office denied this, but the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders confirms that independent media are subject to harassment.

Ten journalists were threatened and attacked by members of the security services in Jalalabad, the capital of the eastern province of Nangarhar, on 24 February while trying to cover a suicide bombing at the provincial security headquarters. All reporters were prevented from entering the building.

*Tele Jondon* reporter **Zyar Khan Yad** told news media: "I was attacked three times in the course of the 15 minutes that I was filming the event." Several journalists were similarly the victims of violence by security forces a month earlier in Kabul.

**Hamed Abidi**, the editor of the weekly *Active Youth*, received a telephone threat in Kabul on 17 February in connection with an article he had published about the construction of a privately-owned car park. The unidentified person who made the threat claimed to be close to the authorities.

The photographer **Farzaneh Vahedi** received a similar threat the same day in the northeastern province of Badakhshan about a documentary she has made about the activities of a charity that helps women.

Reporters Without Borders is also worried by increasingly accusatory official statements concerning news media and journalists, and by government decisions restricting freedom of information.

On 26 February, the council of ministers banned "the use of foreign accents and languages on radio and TV," a decision that follows President Karzai's directive to the information and culture ministry on 1 October 2012 to prosecute media acting against "the national interest."

Overly vague terms are often used by the authorities to ban TV broadcasts. Such allegations of acting against national interest, anti-Islamism and now "foreign accents and languages" are often used as a pretext for censorship in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan rose 22 positions in the [latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) and is now ranked 128th out of 179 countries.

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