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Asia - Pakistan

Two slain

Two news agency journalists shot dead in Quetta

31 August 2014

The agency's accountant was also killed when gunmen opened fire inside its offices

Two gunmen yesterday stormed into the offices of the Online news agency in Quetta, in the southwestern province of Balochistan, and opened fire, killing bureau chief **Irshad Mastoi**, trainee journalist **Abdul Rasool** and office accountant **Muhammad Yunas**.

The shooting confirmed Balochistan as one of the world's deadliest places for media personnel, a region where all journalists are at risk.

"We offer our condolences to the families of these courageous media workers and urge the authorities to temporarily step up security around the news agency's offices," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"This attack took place in a supposedly high-security district and yet the killers were able to flee without any difficulty. Impunity reigns in Balochistan. The authorities have a duty to arrest those responsible and bring them to justice."

Mastoi, who was secretary-general of the Balochistan Union of Journalists, told Reporters Without Borders in 2012 that he was in a delicate position, caught between Balochi rebels insisting that his agency carry their statements and the Pakistani intelligence services threatening reprisals if he yielded to rebel pressure.

The Pakistani army and Balochi rebels continue to clash in Balochistan, jeopardizing the safety of the reporters who have stayed to cover the situation. Because of threats, journalists in Khuzdar, a city to the southeast of Quetta, closed their local press association at the start of this month, while others have had to flee their homes as a result of an offensive by government forces.

The Online news agency already lost one of its journalists in 2011, when one of its reporters, **Munir Ahmed Shakir**, [was gunned down](#) while covering a demonstration in Khuzdar.

Pakistan is ranked 158th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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