

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/pakistan-new-york-times-bureau-chief-14-05-2013,44612.html>

Asia - Pakistan

## New York Times bureau chief ordered to leave on eve of elections

Reporter expelled

14 May 2013

**Reporters Without Borders** deplores [New York Times](#) Islamabad bureau chief **Declan Walsh**'s expulsion from [Pakistan](#) on 12 May. Walsh was handed an interior ministry note on 9 May, two days before key parliamentary elections, giving him 72 hours to leave.

The note said his visa had been cancelled because of "undesirable activities" but gave no other explanation.

*"Deporting a foreign journalist at the very moment when historic elections are taking place is a complete contradiction of the democratic hopes raised by the elections,"* Reporters Without Borders said. *"This decision can only be regarded as a deliberate attempt by senior government officials to prevent impartial coverage. Walsh is a leading Pakistan specialist, whose expulsion is deeply regrettable. It suggests that this kind of practice could recur whenever the electoral interests of senior officials are at stake. They must nonetheless realize that democracy is not going to take hold in Pakistan without respect for freedom of information."*

*"Here I go. Hard to believe this is happening,"* Walsh [tweeted](#) as he headed for the airport early on the morning of 12 May, accompanied by [Dawn](#) journalist Cyril Almeida and a convoy of security officials, ending his nine years in Pakistan.

The expulsion order, which police officers handed to him outside his home, consisted of two sentences: *"It is informed that your visa is hereby cancelled in view of your undesirable activities. You are, therefore, advised to leave the country within 72 hours."* The interior ministry refused to give him any additional information.

In a protest letter to the interior minister, [New York Times](#) executive editor Jill Abramson said the charge of undesirable activities was "vague and unsupported" and described Walsh as a *"reporter of integrity who has at all times offered balanced, nuanced and factual reporting on Pakistan."*

Aged 39, Walsh had been based in Pakistan since 2004, initially reporting for the London-based [Guardian](#) newspaper. He joined the New York Times in January 2012. His reporting focused on Pakistan's political upheavals, Islamist insurrection and tension with the United States over its drone strikes.

Photo : Declan Walsh