

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/pakistan-harsh-law-used-to-threaten-25-07-2012,43104.html>

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Asia - Pakistan

Heavy-handed treatment

## Harsh law used to threaten journalist in South Waziristan

25 July 2012

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Reporters Without Borders deplors the threats made by a Pakistani government official against the journalist **Farooq Mahsud** on 20 July in the South Waziristan tribal region in the west of the country. Mahsud was threatened with arrest under the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR).

"We are concerned about the difficulties faced by journalists who work in the tribal areas," the press freedom organization said. "Besides the overall insecurity in this region close to the Afghan border, there are threats from both the Taliban and the local authorities.

"The Frontier Crimes Regulations, frequently used against journalists, is a sword of Damocles for media workers in the tribal areas and an obstacle to greater respect for press freedom in the region.

"The law gives government officials in tribal areas special powers to prosecute and fine, and even expel, someone from the area if he or she is found to be a threat to civil order."

On 20 July, Mahsud telephoned the assistant political officer, Hameedullah Khan, who mediates between the authorities and the local population, seeking information from an official source about returning internally displaced people from South Waziristan.

The official responded by threatening the journalist, questioning his right to carry out such an investigation and threatened him with arrest if he published his report.

Mahsud works as a freelance reporter in the Dera Ismail Khan border area for outlets including *96 International Radio Network* and *Metro One TV*.

The Frontier Crimes Regulations were enacted under British colonial rule and have been in force since 1901. They apply only in regions known as Federally Administered Tribal Areas. They confer broad powers on officers and civil servants who are responsible for maintaining law and order and act as intermediaries between tribal groups and the federal government.

Pakistan is in 151st place in the World Press Freedom Index of 179 countries compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

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